Navigating gender diverse worlds assembled upon binary expectations:

Investigating the experiences of trans people living in Britain.

Dissertation submitted in the fulfilment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Human Geography

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Declaration

I, Lo Lanfear, confirm that the work presented in this dissertation is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated inthe dissertation.

Signed: [redacted]

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Abstract

In many ways, trans individuals and communities in Britain are flourishing as they embody and expand gendered possibilities, raising the social visibility and legibility of gender diversity. Yet life in Britain remains predominantly assembled around sexgender expectations that hinder and harm those who do not, or cannot, conform to cis-heteronormativity. This is acutely manifest in the news and social media where, trans peoples' identities, bodies, lives and intentions are routinely delegitimised, sensationalised and scrutinised within the 'Trans Debate'. Following a trans studies ethos that responds to the historic and on-going devaluing and/or dismissal of trans peoples' expertise within medicine and psychiatry, the media and academia, the knowledge and experiences of trans people are foregrounded in this research. Correspondingly, the methodology used integrates participatory photography and narrative writing, and in-depth semi-structured interviews.

Collaborating with a group of 12 participants, this research investigates trans peoples' experiences of negotiating spaces that are conditioned by cis-heteronormativity, as well as accessing, creating and sustaining spaces of belonging. All participants are trans adults living in Britain, and they vary by sexgender, and ethnicity, migration status and experiences, disability, and age, among other differences. This research demonstrates the necessity of understanding how transphobic and cis-heteronormative (mis)representations and ideals operate through socio-spatial relations. They shape, and often limit, trans peoples' participation in public life, by intensifying anxieties, and demanding calculated and laborious practices in order to access certain spaces comfortably, or at all. The thesis investigates how spaces and imaginaries have been individually and collectively instrumentalised through the Trans Debate, in ways that give an impression of progress to stalled discourses with harmful repercussions. These findings build from and contribute to research across a range of disciplines and fields, creating intersections between urban studies, gender studies, queer studies, and trans studies. The insights it offers may positively inform a wide range of practices, including urban design and planning and journalism.

Impact Statement

This research was designed with the intention of having impact inside and outside of academia. While some impact is immediate, most will likely be incremental. My analyses of the harmful impacts of how sexgender-segregated and gender-neutral spaces have been instrumentalised through transphobic arguments in the news and social media, and the imperative to prioritise and learn from trans peoples' knowledge, have been published in two book chapters *Queer Sites in Global Contexts* (Mowlabocus and Ramos 2021) and *Contentious Cities: Design and the Gendered Production of Space* (Berry et al. 2021). Contributors and chapters in these edited collections span global contexts and the work will therefore have potential impact within academic research and teaching internationally. The research informs my teaching in London-based academic institutions, and public speaking within and outside academia, and will potentially impact upon audience members, including university staff and students (e.g. UCL 2014-2021, Ravensbourne 2019; University of Westminster 2018; Museum of London 2020; Tate Modern 2017). Public speaking activities have been largely local, but through online events during the COIVD 19 pandemic, have had a national and international scope. The impact includes communicating the value of participatory approaches that foregrounds trans peoples' voices in research and curricular on trans issues, and including trans people in research and curricular on gender and sexuality broadly. This research has informed 3 reports co-authored with Ben Campkin on LGBTQ+ nightlife in London, one of which is cited in the London Plan 2021 and over 50 news articles and broadcasts internationally (Campkin and Marshall 2017).

This research has informed a co-authored article in *Architecture Australia* (Fileborn and Marshall 2020), a national publication with an academic and professional readership. Informed by this research I have consulted on a guide to trans inclusive toilet provision by *Good Night Out Campaign* and LGBTQ+ anti-violence charity *Galop*. The guide will inform practices within hospitality venues nationally. Furthermore, interviews with UK-based drinks industry magazine *Imbibe* have been featured on *Instagram Live*, and in online and in print articles about trans inclusion in hospitality in 2020.

Informed by research findings and featuring participants' contributions, I will design a zine that share insights about trans peoples' lives, the challenges they encounter, and thespaces of belonging they create. This will be complemented by an 'executive summary' style report outlining key findings and recommendations. The report and zine will be freely available, hosted on the project website, and disseminated among project partners, and relevant organisations in Britain. Online hosting gives these outputs potential global reach, but they will likely be more impactful nationally. These documents are intended to support and inform advocacy work being undertaken by trans and LGBTQ+ organisations. E.g. findings concerning the harmful impact of the Trans Debate are pertinent to organisations like All About Trans who train journalists.

There is potential for the report to impact the practice of built environment and planning professionals, academics and policy-makers who influence the design and provision of spaces and services for the diversely gendered general public, especially where sexgender-segregation has become convention.

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INTRODUCTION

Being a smalltown boi raised in pre-internet Devon and schooled under the cloak of Section 28 has contoured how my life has unfolded in untold ways. Transness lit up my radar around 2012. Until then, age 26, I'd given little thought to trans men and women's lives and identities, didn't (knowingly) know any trans people and had never heard of genderqueer. A friend confided that her parents could not – or would not – fully accept her brother – a trans man – for who he is. As someone who had long struggled to comfortably embody and embrace their gender, or even know what to do with their gender expression, and who had spent their adulthood tussling for parental acceptance against a tide of homophobic shame, my friend's brother's circumstances struck a chord. A resonance that still vibrates.

From then to now, the so-called Trans Tipping Point has come and gone …… contrived media controversies have escalated and dissipated and escalated again and… public consultations, surveys, reviews and inquiries have opened and closed and opened and closed and opened and closed and … Trans peoples' lives have been debated and debated and debated and debated and…

In the meantime, my gayness has blossomed into a queerness that extends through my gender and sexuality. I know myself better and have re-shuffled my social co-ordinates as a person who is trans and non-binary and queer. More than that, I find joy and belonging in embracing, embodying and genderfucking masculinities and femininities.

My gender tends to slip through gaps of social recognition much of the time and the paraphernalia of binary sexgender is catapulted at me way faster than I can dodge. A "ladies" here, a "madam" there. Privileged as I am as a 'cis- passing' white, middle-class person, stepping out of my carefully and caringly assembled queer and trans circles means stepping into social interactions that can feel confronting and laborious, punctuated as they are by the banal but not benign sting of misrecognition.

Becoming more connected with trans and queer people, communities and organisations has multiplied the gender possibilities in my reach. I have experienced the strength and potential of communities where we are seen, we are knowable, and the rules are molded around us. In making and partaking in community spaces many of us seek to suture wounds from our own pasts, forge new routes, and repair the treacherous potholes in those well-trodden paths.

Cis womanhood can be a wonderful, generous, and spacious place to reside, but it wasn't working for me, I was working for it. Womanhood felt to me like a narrow, hard seat at a windy bus stop where you awkwardly perch when you're weary, on the move, and have nowhere else to shelter. I could sit and shift around but couldn't settle. In 2021, my gender feels like sinking into a soft, roomy chair in a cosy sanctuary, warmed by the promise and possibility of multiple destinations and paths of travel.

Throughout global societies and cultures sex, gender, and sexual diversity are contextually embedded and historically evolving phenomena (Feinberg 1996; Snorton, 2017; Chiang, Henry and Leung 2018; Fausto Sterling 2019; 2012; 2000; Manion 2020). Yet, binary sexgender norms have been established and naturalised through bio-social and medico-legal orders, enforced through Western imperialist and national political and legal apparatus, and spatialised via the built environment. Sexgender norms are performatively and repeatedly cited through embodied practices and expectations around dress, demeanour, social roles, and kinship, and follow dividing lines that intersect and splinter along and across multiple vectors of difference. Although stifled, stigmatised, and criminalised, the realities of sexgender confound the orderly and immutable veneer of male/female, heterosexual/homosexual binaries, and expand the boundaries of sex, gender and sexuality in British society. In this thesis, I aim to enhance understandings of how these contradictions, and the dominant binary sexgender socio-spatial order, are negotiated in the everyday lives of trans people living in contemporary Britain.

Since the 1990s, the interdisciplinary academic field of trans studies has produced critical and innovative scholarship contesting the pathologisation, sensationalisation and objectification of trans peoples' lives, bodies and identities (Stryker 1994; Stone 1991; Feinberg 1996; Green 2004; Stryker and Whittle 2006; Stryker and Aizura 2013; TSQ 2014; Malatino 2020). This thesis contributes to trans studies by examining geographies of gender diversity through the lived experiences of women, men and non-binary people with trans identities living in Britain.

This research departs from the position that the most authoritative perspective concerning a person's gender is their own and understands sexgender as being enmeshed within socially embedded onto-epistemological processes of being-through-knowing and knowing-through-being (Barad 2003; Phipps 2016; Garner 2014; Sullivan 2014). Using a research practice that combines participant photography and narrative writing/speaking with in-depth semi-structured interviews I investigate how trans peoples' voices productively complicate and extend political, academic, and social understandings of gender. Responding to ethical concerns around the politics of knowledge production and hierarchies, the narratives and knowledge of trans people is foregrounded in this research. I aim to explore how participants' experiences and self-knowledge might complicate and illuminate the operations of hegemonic sexgendered social order, and the assumptions, attitudes, practices and regulations shaping the contexts in which trans lives are embedded.

Guided by the knowledge and experiences of participants, I have sought to explore everyday aspect of trans people's lives as they negotiate the dominance of cis-heteronormativity in the social and spatial order. Accordingly, the following questions guided my research:
What are the implications of prioritising trans people's narratives and attributing authority to their self-knowledge for understanding gender diversity in Britain?
How are binary logics that operate in gender, queer, and urban studies complicated and contested through participants' lived experiences? These binaries include male/female, masculine/feminine, cis/trans, binary/non- binary, hegemony/transgression, stability/fluidity, public/private, rural/urban.
What do the everyday lived experiences of trans people living in Britain elucidate

about the spatialisation of sexgender, and creation of gender through socio-spatial relations?
The last decade has seen a growing number of people making sense of themselves and living visibly as people with trans identities and histories (Whittle et al. 2007; UK Trans Info 2015; Richards et al. 2016; Aitken et al, 2015; Pearce et al. 2020). While neither uniform nor unified, trans communities and people are flourishing, from creating social infrastructures offering mutual support and care, to trans writers, artists, and cultural producers increasing the affirmative presence of trans people in the mainstream and subcultural media. Commonly, cultural production by trans people has oriented around personal experiences, highlighting challenges faced as they move through the world, as well as the joys found in being oneself, and finding belonging and community. Here we can look to queer, non-binary, British-Iraqi drag artist, writer and filmmaker Amrou Al-Kadhi, whose work frequently grapples complexities of gender and faith (2019; 2018). Or non-fiction writing by Juno Roche, such as *Queer Sex* (2018), *Trans Power* (2019), and *Gender Explorers* (2020), which centre Juno's own and other trans peoples' experiences and knowledge. Travis Alabanza's writing and performance powerfully dissects the transmisogyny that they and other trans-feminine people encounter in public (2017[a][b][c]; 2020). Or, we could look to the curatorial direct action of E.J Scott in founding the Museum of Transology, an ever-expanding collection of objects representing trans, non-binary and intersex people's lives designed to 'halt the erasure of transcestry' (Scott 2020). The visibility of trans people serves to increase the social legibility and acceptance of diverse possibilities for gender, resonating with individuals who come to make sense of themselves as trans. Here, personal narratives do the work of humanising a social group who have and continue to be vulnerable to stigmatising and dehumanising ideas and behaviours. In this research, I investigate everyday ways that trans people navigate lives that are shaped by varied forms of hyper-visibility and hyper-vulnerability (Pearce et al. 2020: 2; Raha 2017:633)

The veracity and morality of trans people's identities, intentions and bodies have been fiercely debated, dissected, and defended in British news and social media with increasing intensity over the last decade (Baker 2019). Frequently, this entails locating trans people, a trans person, or shadowy 'trans lobby' at the centre of a controversy, usually concerning propriety of trans peoples' presence in public spaces

with (cis) women or children (Baker 2019; Schilt and Westbrook 2015; Fae 2018). An archetypal example of the genre is entitled 'Children sacrificed to appease trans lobby' by *The Times* columnist Janice Turner (2017) who dissects and misgenders Travis Alabanza, their trans femininity, and experiences of being denied access to Topshop fitting room, against company policy. As a consequence of being positioned in the eye of a media storm, trans people – especially women – are routinely forced to defend their ability to know their own gender and safely share space and services with cis women. All the while, trans writers are doing the work of making the discrimination trans people *actually* encounter in those same contexts visible. For instance, this is evident in Paris Lees' 2016 article in *The Guardian* entitled, 'Fears around gender-neutral toilets are all in the mind: Allowing trans people to use gender-neutral facilities doesn't put women at risk. It's just a distraction from the very real violence we face every day.' That experiences and fears of transphobia hinder trans peoples' safety and comfort across various contexts is strongly articulated by trans people in surveys by trans and LGBTQ+ organisations and campaigns (Whittle et al. 2007; Bachmann and Gooch 2018; Bradley 2020). A key strand of this research focuses more deeply upon the affects and effects of the so-called Trans Debate in the everyday lives of people whose sexgender and/or gender expression do not conform, either wilfully or involuntarily, to normative expectations. In this thesis, I address how particularly spaces have been instrumentalised as a meansof amplifying, sustaining and legitimising the Trans Debate.

Across government policy and public health in Britain, the knowledge of trans people concerning their own gender has been relegated below that of medical, psychiatric and legal professional who gatekeep services and official recognition (Pearce 2018; Gender Recognition Act 2004; Sharpe 2020; Sharpe et al. 2018). Following sustained trans activism, the Gender Recognition Act 2004 introduced legal gender recognition for men and women with trans identities and histories (Burns 2013; 2014; Hines 2009). The GRA states that Gender Recognition Certificate applications must be decided upon by a panel of legal professionals and medical practitioners (including psychologists). Applicants must submit 'proof' demonstrating to panel members that they fulfil specific criteria, including that they: (a) have a gender dysphoria diagnosis; (b) have 'lived in the acquired gender for a period of two years'; (c) intend 'to continue to live in the acquired gender until death' (ibid.); (d) have

provided reports from a registered medical practitioner or psychologist practicing in the field of gender dysphoria and a report by another registered medical practitioner (who need not practice in that field) (Gender Recognition Act 2004; Section 2 and 3). While progressive at the time of implementation, amongst trans communities and organization the GRA is widely considered insufficient and intrusive (GIRES and TENI 2018; English 2020: Stonewall 2017). Hierarchies of knowledge and expertise are at the crux of the push for reform of a statutory system of self-declarations, as introduced in differed forms in Argentina (2012), Denmark (2014), Columbia, Ireland, Malta and Norway (2015), Belgium (2017), Portugal, Chile and Brazil (2018) (Sharpe 2020: 1). Specifically, the denial of trans peoples' expertise concerning their own gender is built into a system that requires trans men and women to prove their gender to appointed experts who gatekeep legal recognition. Linked to these inter-connected questions of knowledge and hierarchies of expertise is the lack of legal recognition for – and governmental de-legitimizing of – genders that do not fit a woman/man binary.

The Equality Act 2010 codifies 'gender reassignment' as a protected characteristic, thus making discrimination on the basis of gender reassignment unlawful. Gender reassignment is defined as applying to 'a person who 'is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex' (Equality Act 2010). Protection under the Equality Act 2010 does not require a gender recognition certificate (ibid.) and it is the Equality Act 2010 rather than the GRA that protects trans peoples legal right to access to spaces and services that align with 'gender role in which they present' (EHRC 2011, para 13.57). Exclusion of a trans person is lawful only where 'where the exclusion is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim' (ibid.). As examined in this thesis, protections under the Equality Act 2010 encompass architectural typologies of space, for example sexgender-segregated public toilets and changing room, as well as unique sites such as the Kenwood Ladies' Bathing Pond. Although the scope of gender reassignment beyond trans men and women has been unclear, a recent landmark employment tribunal judgement rules that non-binary and gender fluid people are covered by the protected characteristic of 'gender reassignment' (Taylor Vs Jaguar Land Rover Ltd 2020; Cooke and Oscar 2020). The lack of access to appropriate toilet facilities at

work formed part of the case brought by the claimant in Taylor vs Jaguar Land Rover Ltd (2020). In most situations, the Equality Act 2010 has broader and more immediate spatial implications than the GRA concerning trans people as a protective measure that includes but extends beyond legal action. As examined in this thesis, the logic of segregating spaces according to sexgender is complicated by people with non-binary genders. Furthermore, the disciplinary operation of cis-heteronormative binary sexgender through segregated spaces profoundly shapes trans peoples' experiences of, and approaches to, using them, revealing the limitations of equalities legislation.

During the period of research, the *Gender Recognition Act 2004* and *Equality Act 2010* shaped the lives of trans people. Specifically, multiple public consultations, surveys, inquiries, and reports concerning trans peoples' rights, protections and equality by government bodies, and campaigning and media reporting around these have raised the public profile of, and produced controversies about, the spatiality of trans peoples' participation in public life (HM Government 2018; 2020; WEC 2016; Turner 2019; Thorn 2016; Topping 2018). The polarised dynamic integral to and produced by the Trans Debate that plays out in British news and social media has extended through submissions to government inquiries and consultations, which have in turn, been heavily debated in the press (Sharpe et al. 2018; Harrisson 2018; Lewis 2018[c]; Gilligan 2018[a]). Legally, the *Equality Act 2010* has broader and more immediate spatial implications than the GRA for trans people. Yet, the *Equality Act 2010* has been frequently overlooked in in media reporting, while proposed GRA reform and the idea of 'self-identification' have featured more prominently in media discourses concerning trans peoples' access to single sexgender spaces (Gilligan 2018[a]; Harrison 2018; Lewis 2018[c]). As this thesis shows, the effects of the Trans Debate, in which the GRA and public consultations have been implicated, have been to stoke controversies that shape the embodied, affective and emotionalgeographies of trans peoples' everyday lives and spatial negotiations.

DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

Before outlining the sections of this thesis, here I clarify some key terms. I follow the anthropologist David Valentine in understanding sexuality, sex and gender as situated within geographically, culturally and historically specific ways of knowing, being and relating (Valentine 2004). Sex and gender are understood as being socio-culturally formed and informed and open to the possibility of change (Holm 2020; Butler 1990; 1993; Stryker 2008; Cotton 2014). I follow gender studies scholars Nina Lykke (2010), Sølve M Holm (2020) and Ann Fausto Sterling (2019) in reflecting the interconnectedness of the biological and social, natural and cultural, material and discursive of sex and gender, where it is pertinent in this thesis by using the term sexgender. Like Holm (2020), I do not separate the terms with a hyphen (sex-gender) or slash (sex/gender), in order to signal the entanglements between sex and gender. The rigidity of alignments between sex and gender that underpin cis-heteronormative sexgender expectations, are reconfigured, related and resisted by transness. Of course, sexgender intersects with other material-discursive, bio-social, natural-cultural phenomena that are associated with social categories of ethnicity, race, class, ages and disability (ibid.).

In this thesis, I move between sex, gender and sexgender in order to be specific about the topic of discussion. For instance, I refer to sexgender-segregated toilets, since the logic of this spatial order is premised upon cis-heteronormality understandings of sexgender. I refer to sexgender-policing, rather than gender-policing, since it is, in no small ways, the integrity of cisnormative sexgender alignments that is under scrutiny. However, I speak about gender diversity as gender diversity and gender diverse to refer to myriad historic and contemporary realities and possibilities relating to gendered identities, embodiments, expressions and experiences, since, in the context of contemporary Britain, this encompasses everyone, cis, trans, non-binary and otherwise. I do not mark individuals as gender diverse, but rather describe societies as collectively being constituted by people with a diverse array of genders. In using diverse and diversity, I recognise the

superficiality with which diversity discourses have been mobilised as a smokescreen for inaction (Ahmed 2012) and seek to put these words to work in meaningful ways that speak to the lived realities of gender and the inadequacies and erasures enacted by cis-heteronormativity.

The term transgender emerged during the 1970s in the US by people who used it to describe their own identities and to differentiate themselves from people who did not seek to surgically transition, and to offer a self-identified alternative to being categorised as transsexual or transvestite (Stryker 1994: 251: Stryker 2008: Feinberg 1996: x). In this way, transgender was initially premised upon a sex/gender, social/biological binary, yet through the 1980s and 1990s this distinction loosened as transgender became consolidated as an umbrella term that encompasses a coalition of gendered identities and expressions, including transsexual (ibid.). In the words of Susan Stryker transgender includes gender identities, practices and expressions that ‘cross over, cut across, move between, or otherwise queer socially constructed sex/gender boundaries’ (1994: 251). Vitally, transgender became a flexible term and identity that people describe themselves as, rather than a matter of diagnosis and pathology.

I approach trans in a way that resists essentialised classification or fixed destinations and is open to myriad and unfolding possibilities. My understanding of trans draws from Susan Stryker’s description of transgender as the ‘movement across a socially imposed boundary from an unchosen starting place’ (2008:1). In referring to trans people, I refer to people whose gender differs from their birth-assigned sex, which includes men, women, and people who are non-binary, genderqueer, agender, and who self-identify as trans, transgender and/or transsexual. I follow Lim and Browne (2009) in using trans to avoid the binary logic implicit in transgender and transsexual, which can parallel sex/gender dichotomies. However, I do so recognising the significance of transgender as a non-pathologizing and more expansive alternative to transsexual. When referring to transness in this thesis, akin to Stryker’s ‘trans phenomena’, I am referring to the aspect of a trans person’s gender identity, expression or embodiment, ‘that calls our attention to the contingency and unnaturalness of gender normativity’ (2014: 40).

Similarly, ‘non-binary’ is used flexibly in this thesis, reflecting how it has come to operate in British society in the twenty-first century through the vernacular of people who have used it as means of making sense of their own genders and socially positioning themselves. Non-binary functions as an identity and an umbrella category to describe genders that are between, beyond and both man/women categories (Twist et al. 2020). Emerging during the early 1990s in the US, genderqueer precedes non-binary as a term denoting gendered positions that do not align with one’s birth-assigned sex and resists the oppression of binary sexgender norms (Wilchins 1995: 4; Stryker 2008: 20; Honkasalo 2020). Non-binary can be used in conjunction with other terms, including genderqueer. For example, a person might describe themselves as non-binary, agender, and trans, as one participant in this research indeed does. Non-binary is arguably somewhat awkward and blunt in the literal way that it is situated within the schema of sexgender, and paradoxically produces a binary/non-binary binary. It is also at odds with other gendered identities and umbrella terms like trans, in situating people as who they are not, rather than who they are. Yet the vagueness granted by this positioning offers a particular openness to a range of possibilities for doing gender, which becomes evident in this thesis. Indeed, in practice non-binary operates in rather agile and expansive ways, as a social category that has emerged in response to, and in resistance to, the prevalence of hegemonic sexgender order that has served to obfuscate realities and possibilities of gender that exist beyond cis/trans and man/woman. Similarly to cis (See below), non-binary usefully accounts for power relations and multiple social positions within and in relation to trans experiences, while sustaining investments in social categories and binary thinking (Enke 2012; Pearce et al. 2020: 7).

The pre-fix cis comes from the Latin, meaning ‘on this side of’ and its usage in the context of sex and gender emerged through the practices of 1990s trans activists in marking the social position of people whose birth-assigned sex and gender align, which otherwise goes unmarked, and is assumed as default. Thus, the intention is to locate trans not as an ‘Other’, but as an alternative and equal but minority social position (Aultman 2014). In this thesis, I use cis in this way, while recognising the plural and shifting gender possibilities within its scope. Masculinities and femininities as social-coded co-ordinates assume multiple forms and meaning, that include but

are not limited to hegemonic or highly valued modes (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). For instance, cis also encompasses masculine women, feminine men, and men and women whose gender expressions integrate facets of femininities with masculinities.

I understand cisnormativity as negating trans peoples' existence and validity by assuming that biological sex is essential, binary and immutable, and determines a person's gender (Bauer et al. 2009: 365). The cultural convention of assigning one of two biological sexes at birth (or in utero) based upon genital morphology, and the sexgender expectations proceed from such, can be understood as cisnormative. Heteronormativity is understood as the privileging of dominant forms of heterosexual kinship and gendered embodied practices, norms and relations that have become culturally accepted as constituting the 'natural' social order (Weiringa 2014; Butler 1990; 2004). Throughout this thesis I commonly use cis-heteronormative in recognition of the entanglements between sexual, sexgender norms, their socio-material and spatial forms and disciplinary functions, and the logic underpinning them.

I approach transphobia as an intolerance toward gender diversity, that involves a range of negative attitudes, feelings or actions toward trans people, and potentially gender non-conforming people. This can manifest as emotional disgust, fear, violence, anger, or discomfort felt or expressed towards people who do not conform to sexgender-related social norms and expectations. Hate crime charity Galop describes transphobia as 'active' – intentional discrimination against trans and gender variant people, or 'passive' – unintentionally assuming that gender is binary and immutable (Galop 2021). Although I recognize the value of passive and active in illustrating the different forms that transphobia can take, I choose a different approach. I do not delineate a clear border between cisnormativity, cis-heteronormativity, and transphobia, since there are overlaps in their underpinning logics, structural operation and individual enactments. In this thesis, when I situate a practice or discourse as transphobic I am describing an action with intention, whereas I use cis-heteronormativity to denote ways that intersecting sexual and sexgender norms operate in ways that are disciplinary, which is far from passive.

Finally, as I elaborate upon in Chapter 1, in referring to the Trans Debate I do not suggest that trans people's lives, bodies, identities, intentions and worthiness of equality are debatable, as is often the point of interest or contention in news and social media. I understand the Trans Debate to be a genre of social phenomena that is both precise and nebulous. Precise in that through repetitious consolidation the Trans Debate has been uncritically constituted as a knowable entity, which has become self-legitimising and self-sustaining. That is, the existence of the Trans Debate becomes justification for writing an article that contributes to the canon of the Trans Debate. The Trans Debate is nebulous in how it is co-constituted by an incoherent ensemble of media articles and social media arguments that debate, deride and defend trans people. Some of these may operate at the peripheries and involve critiques of the Trans Debates' flawed premise and the harmful impact upon trans peoples' lives. In this thesis, I am interested in the latter; what the Trans Debate does and how it is spatialised in the lives of trans people living in Britain.

THESIS STRUCTURE

To foreground the empirical work, Chapter 1 takes the form of a literature review that draws from strands of feminist and queer thinking, as well as trans and urban studies, and media discourses, to explore key texts, concepts, perspectives and critiques that inform my theoretical approach and that impact the lives of trans people. I construct an approach that integrates queer scholarship's attentiveness to the disciplinary operations of cis-heteronormativity, with trans studies' privileging of transpeoples' knowledge, voices, and embodied lived experiences. An influence from urban studies upon this approach is drawn from assemblage thinking and non-representational theories (Bender and Farias 2010; Malatino 2020: 39, Puar 2012; Lorimer 2005; Wylie 2007; Colls 2012; Thrift 2008; Massumi 2002). The sensitivity to constellations of relational dynamics that texture every experiences and spatial practices, and their onto-epistemological contestations of foundationalist and positivist binaries, make assemblage thinking and non-representational theories a valuable tool for trans studies.

Chapter 2 connects theory and practice, outlining a methodological practice with a participatory and collaborative ethos, and which incorporates participant photography

and narrative writing, and in-depth, semi-structured interviews; I outline the more practical and processual aspects of the research design. I discuss the intellectualand ethical rationales behind these choices and the value of my chosen methods individually and together.

The following empirical chapters are each oriented around a spatial focus, with Chapter 3 examining public toilets, Chapter 4 considering the Kenwood Ladies Bathing Pond, Chapter 5 investigating clothes shopping, and Chapter 6 exploring home. Of course, entire research projects can and do focus upon a single spatial typology, and thus engage more extensively with existing literature than the scope of this research allows for. In this project, research with a single-space approach has been invaluable to each chapter, for example Sheila Cavanaugh's (2010) *Queering Bathrooms* in the case of Chapter 3. While noting this limitation, the multi-spatial approach taken in this research has proven beneficial in allowing for a level of spatial specificity within each chapter and the exploration of complexities therein, while facilitating analyses across and between spatial contexts. Doing so has enabled thinking through how spatial relations and mobilities operate within the experiences of trans people whose everyday lives entail navigations within and between different spatial contexts.

Chapter 3, the first empirical chapter, considers public toilets, a choice that responded to the frequency with which participants highlighted public toilets generally, and those located in specific contexts, as significant to them. The chapter opens by examining how public toilets have been situated as a 'battleground' in the Trans Debate, and considers how morally-loaded spatial imaginaries have fused with stigmatising figurations of trans women, to invoke a politics of fear concerning women's and gender-neutral toilets. Public toilets are a disciplinary architecture that serve as ideal sites in which to situate transphobic discourses that evoke anxieties around trans people due to the moral and aesthetic cis-heteronormative spatial imaginaries invested in them. In particular, part of this chapter unpicks the particularly intense attention on trans women and their predatorial figuration in media discourses. Having examined the cis-heteronormative milieu that awaits trans people in public space, and intensifies in public toilets, I am guided by participant narratives in investigating how public toilets are negotiated by trans people who are

non-binary, women and men. Participant evidence shows the effects of the Trans Debate to be particularly acute in the context of public toilets, particularly in generating anxieties, forcing calculations, and demanding certain emotional labour and embodied practices from trans people. While toilets are commonly discussed in general terms, participants highlight the necessity for recognising how certain contexts, like airports and restaurants, or pubs and bars with an inebriated clientele, are particularly challenging and anxiety inducing for trans people, and the corresponding value of gender-neutral options.

Chapter 4 builds upon the analysis developed concerning public toilets to analyse the instrumentalisation of the Kenwood Ladies' Pond on Hampstead Heath in North London within the Trans Debate. Why focus upon an exceptional site like the Ladies' Pond, when exploring the everyday lives of trans people? Having investigated how a synthesis of spaces, imaginaries, cis-heteronormativity and transphobia as mobilised through Trans Debate affects trans peoples' access to public toilets, this chapter considers the function of shifting spatial imaginaries in sustaining this hostile media and social landscape. I contend that by progressively and opportunistically embedding the same arguments that fix trans people as controversial figures, trans women as frauds and predators, and cis women as vulnerable across different spaces serves to justify and sustain a stunted debate fuelled by unfounded and transphobic claims. In other words, re-locating the anti-trans discourses in different spaces, with specific imaginaries and moral investments, gives the illusion of progress and proof to un-evolving, unevidenced arguments. The Ladies' Pond is particularly interesting in this regard as relatively few trans women appear to use the Pond, which is geographically inaccessible to the vast majority of women living in Britain. Why did the Ladies' Pond resonate to the point of becoming a central focus in the Trans Debate during 2018 and 2019, *and* a battleground in a public consultation by the *City of London Corporation*, who manage the site? I content that sharing key commonalities and vital differences with public toilets, a similarly potent but more general space, made the Ladies' Pond an especially powerful site for trans-exclusionary women to instrumentalise and campaign around. Importantly for this research, the Ladies' Pond was identified in the contributions of two trans women who participated in this research, who raise questions of agency and participation in debates, as well as connections between encounter, experience and knowledge.

The final part of the chapter considers how the Pond became embroiled inthe *City of London Corporation's* 2018 public survey on their 'Gender Identity Policy'.

Chapter 5 explores fashion retail spaces and gender expression through the experiences of three non-binary participants and draws upon Sara Ahmed's thinking on 'wiggle room' and social categories (Ahmed 2014[b]). Following participants' narratives, this chapter analyses the practices, labours and calculations demanded of people whose identities and style do not align with cis-heteronormative expectations, as they navigate the spatial and material arrangements and social relations within fashion retail spaces. Participants raise issues relating to visibility and the privileging of white, skinny, masculine-coded, androgyny as a non-binary aesthetic, which is neither achievable or desirable for all non-binary people and speaks to the masculine-coded orientation of many so-called gender-neutral garments. Furthermore, the differing privileges and implications of visibility among trans people, how these are shaped by gender expression, and the stigmatising and devaluing of trans femininities are considered. This includes a discussion of the mobilisation of women's changing rooms in the Trans Debate. Analysing how participants negotiate fashion retail spaces offers the opportunity for understanding contrasting tactics – from quietly subversive practices to boldly taking up of space, and efforts to educate – and how experiences can differ between types, sizes, and geographical location of clothing shops.

Chapter 6 the final empirical chapter, turns attention toward experiences of home, identity and domestic belonging, putting participants' experiences of home in dialog with feminist and queer research on home, and as well as the comparatively small body of research on trans peoples' relationships to, and experiences of, home. Guided by participants, I consider a range of living arrangements, including living with a partner, relationship breakdown, living alone, negotiating being a parent, an adult child living with a family, and assembling house shares. Participants' narratives highlight the value and contingencies of being able to feel belonging and be embraced as oneself as an everyday reality, in ways that are particular to trans people. Variously, analyses of participants' experiences show the porosity and relationality between public, urban and rural, the value of privacy, and how locating one's identity and feeling of belonging in the home can require careful spatial, social

and temporal negotiations *within* the home, from having own's own space, to creating house rules. The disciplinary potential of political economic governance, and material and spatial design of neighbourhood and social relations among neighbours are shown to affect people differently across their lifetime and shift according to socio-cultural dynamics.

The conclusion reflects on the theoretical and methodological approach of this research, connects research questions with analytical findings and makes recommendations pertinent to academia, journalism and the build environment sector. It contends that assemblage thinking and trans studies offer complementary approaches to investigating study of spatiality of trans peoples' lives and learning from trans peoples' knowledge. I consider the value of personal narrative and experiences in enabling an analytic sensitivity to the complexities, textures and contour of participants lives and the inadequacies of oppositional binaries across a range of contexts. Learning from this, I highlight the imperative to take seriously the harmful affective force of the Trans Debate upon the lives and wellbeing and trans people, and the ways that particular spaces and value-laden imaginaries have been implicated. In doing so, it outlines original contributions concerning how the disciplinary production and functions of cis-heteronormativity and transphobia, affect and are navigated by trans people, in the spaces they use, move through, and reject in their everyday lives across Britain.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The multidisciplinary field of trans studies emerged in the USA during the 1990s, as an challenge and response to inadequate understandings of trans phenomena within feminisms, queer theory, and medical and psychiatric discourses. My engagement with salient strands of these disciplines form the building blocks of the approach and ethos of this research. In the following, I contextualise this research by mapping key texts, disciplinary perspectives and critiques that inform my theoretical and methodological approach, and analysis. Although I draw on twentieth century histories in the empirical chapters, this thesis is predominantly focused upon contemporary Britain. Due to similarities and crossovers in aspects of healthcare, public policy, feminist, trans and queer activism and academia, and social networks, I engage with Anglophone, trans-related literature produced in Britain and North America (Drescher 2010; TSQ 2014; Stryker 2008; Shenjé 2017; Doan 2010; Browne et al. 2010).

The literature review begins by discussing 'transsexuality' through medical and psychiatric knowledge production and practices, due to the continuing influence and persevering relevance of this lens, and the respective key critiques of these discourses by trans activists and academics. Next, attention turns to the contemporary media which profoundly conditions the lives of trans people living in Britain. Over the last decade, British media platforms are a context in which the voices of trans writers, and stories about trans lives increasingly feature. Yet, simultaneously, under the overarching banner of the so-called Trans Debate, trans people continue to be scrutinised and stigmatised. In the media, anti-trans discourses, including current iterations of older transphobic feminist narratives are prominent, and trans peoples' own knowledge and experiences are frequently excluded and devalued. The subsequent section explores strands of feminism that, as will become evident in the empirical chapters, informs the contemporary trans-exclusionary 'feminism' and transphobic journalism that constitutes part of the Trans Debate. This section on feminisms, then explores trans feminist discussions of transmisogyny, and the authority of knowledge concerning one's own gender. Next, I discuss queer theory, focusing upon tensions and schisms between its theoretical

potential and its limitations where trans peoples' identities and lives are concerned. Finally, to detail an approach taken in this research, I shall explore trans studies in conjunction with urban studies, identifying key scholars and concepts.

MEDICAL CLASSIFICATIONS AND THEIR CONTESTATIONS

With heightened trans visibility in the UK and North America, terms such as 'trans', 'transgender' and 'transsexual' have been adopted into English vernacular. In approaching trans as an identity, I share Valentine's (2004: 217) view that identity categories must be understood as tools that help us comprehend experiences rather than valid descriptors of experience. As trans studies scholars have aptly argued, the lives of people with trans identities and/or histories cannot be homogenised into a singular 'trans experience' (TSQ 2014; Hale 2009[1997]; Stryker 1998, 2004; Browne et al. 2010; Prosser 1998; Namaste 1996; 2000).

Today, trans is increasingly understood and used to signify identities that are strikingly at odds with the term's origins within twentieth-century medical and psychoanalytic knowledge and practices (Stryker 1998; 2004; Dresher 2010; Holm 2020). Medical and psychiatric discourses on 'transsexualism', and the supposedly universal pathological models produced through them, continue to affect the lives of trans people, whether or not they medically transition. In order to comprehend the present-day meanings and usages of trans and transgender, we must recognise and examine the enduring cultural relevance of these histories, and how they are contextualised and often rebuked by trans studies scholars and activists' critiques of the pathologisation of sexgender non-conformity (TSQ 2014; Drescher 2010; Holm 2020). I shall, therefore, identify key moments in these histories of classifying gender non-normativity in order to contextualise the project of trans studies more broadly.

Understanding sex, gender and sexuality as separate but intersecting categories is possible only in contexts where sex, gender and sexuality are considered to be distinct areas of experience (Valentine 2004: 219). This is reflected in twentieth-century histories of medical and psychiatric practices concerning sex, gender and sexuality in Western Europe and North America (Meyerowitz 2002; Drescher 2010; Drescher et al. 2012; Serano 2007). In *The History of Sexuality* ([1976]; 1980) Michel

Foucault traced historic processes of knowledge production and classification in the West through which homosexuality became institutionalised as a ‘deviant’ counterpart to heterosexuality, its symbiotic, ‘normal’ categorical Other (Namaste 1994). Foucault’s work did not attend to the production of ‘transsexualism’ as a similarly pathologised category (Stryker 2014), although he did write on the diaries of Herculine Barbin, an intersex person who lived in nineteenth century France (Foucault 1977). Nonetheless, sexology, medical and psychiatric research evidence shared histories between discourses producing ‘homosexuality’ and ‘transsexualism’ as diagnostic categories, and by extension, ‘homosexual' and ‘transsexual’ as parallel social identities.

Austro-German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1886) documented cases of individuals living as, or wishing to live as, members of the ‘opposite’ sex, and those with same-sex desires. Pathologising and designating these cases as perversions, Kraft-Ebing’s work influenced medico-legal texts of the time (Drescher et al. 2012). In inter-war Germany, sexologist and physician Magnus Hirschfield (1923) is considered an early gay rights advocate; he was the first to distinguish between same-sex desire and living as (or wishing to live as) the ‘opposite’ sex. This distinction was not widely adopted within psychiatry or physiology until it was taken up by US-based sexologists. Specifically, it is reflected in the work of psychoanalytic scholar Robert Stoller (1964), endocrinologist Harry Benjamin (1966), psychiatrist Richard Green (1974), and psychologist John Money (1994). As this summary shows, throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth century, research by European and American psychiatrists and physicians contributing to the development of sexology as a discipline was accompanied by the construction of taxonomies, which institutionalised ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ (psycho)pathological sexgendered identities, behaviours and desires.

The reach of these gender classifications and discourses extends far beyond twentieth-century American and European sexology. They have influenced the World Health Organisation’s *International Classification of Diseases (ICD),* an internationally authoritative diagnostic system that has formed the basis for a substantial amount of NHS healthcare policy and guidance in Britain since 1979 (Drescher et al. 2012; NHS 2012; 2017; NHE 2016). Successive versions of the ICD

demonstrate epistemological shifts within mainstream sexology, psychiatric and physiological discourses and practices (Berglund et al. 2008; Garcia-Falgueras & Swaab 2008; Rametti et al. 2011; Zhou et al. 1995; Drescher 2010; Zucker et al. 2016; Drescher et al. 2012; Meyer-Bahlburg 2010). Tracing histories of diagnosing transsexualism, Drescher et al. (2012: 573) state that, despite a plethora of research, existing scientific knowledge cannot empirically pinpoint whether 'transsexuality' is 'purely a mental disorder or a disorder with another physical cause'. Arguably, focusing on 'disorders' and causes rather than understanding sex, gender and sexual diversity to be a natural human variation is itself scientifically questionable (Lane 2009; Fausto-Sterling 1993; 2000; 2012; Drescher et al. 2012; Robles et al. 2016). Such a lack of consensus on scientific criteria differentiating between what Drescher et al. (2012: 573) term 'normal and pathological gender identity' questions the authority of dominant psychiatric and medical models of gender.

Research practices in psychology and psychiatry that embrace trans and queer studies' critiques of the pathologisation of sexgender non-conformity are evident in Britain (Wiseman and Davison 2011; Nagoshi et al. 2012; Richards et al. 2016). Clinical psychologists have argued in support of affirmative approaches focusing upon the stigmatising effects of social environments (Wiseman and Davison 2011). These arguments highlight the embedded nature of binary discourses about sex and gender in Western societies, and the corresponding need for psychologists to embrace queer deconstructions of sexgender within cis-heteronormative discourses. Indeed, with a profound departure from pathologising models, Wiseman and Davison (2011: 531) encourage clinicians to 'reflect and discuss the multiplicity that is possible within human experience, recognising the ways of thinking and knowing that we are embedded in'. Similarly, writing on non-binary and genderqueer genders in the *International Review of Psychiatry*, Richards et al. (2016: 96) argue against pathologizing clients who 'disrupt the gender dichotomy through challenging its very ontology'.

When discussing relationships between trans people and healthcare, including psychiatry, it can be assumed, or tacitly implied, that there are oppositional and mutually exclusive groups of cis 'experts' and trans patients and critics (Speer and

Parsons 2006; Drescher 2010). However, the work of trans researchers and practitioners should not be overlooked. For example, the authors of Richards et al. (2016) are a group of psychology, psychotherapy and psychiatry practitioners who specialise in gender, sex, and sexuality. Meg-John Barker, one of the co-authors, is a therapist and activist-academic, and a non-binary person who focuses their research, writing, and practice upon queer, gender diversity, critical sexology and ethical non-monogamy approaches (David and Barker 2015; Richards and Barker 2013). Julia Serano's writing on trans heath draws upon her knowledge as a trans woman, trans feminist, activist, spoken-word artist *and* developmental biologist (Serano 2008; 2009; 2010; 2020). *CliniQ* (2017) in London is a trans-led and trans-founded service offering sexual health, mental health and wellbeing services for trans people, their partners and friends. Thus, practitioners, researchers, activists and academics can and do inhabit multifaceted subjectivities, and speak from perspectives that are informed by personal experiences and positionalities as well as professional training. In short, being a psychiatric or medical professional and being gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer and/or trans are not mutually exclusive, nor are these discrete domains of knowledge. Indeed, it is telling that researchers and practitioners in medicine and psychiatry with lived experiences of being trans, queer and/or gender non-conforming appear inclined towards non-pathological, affirming approaches that embrace sex and gender diversity (Serano 2008; 2010; Richards and Barker 2013; Lane 2009; 2009).

A more detailed analysis of trans health is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, excellent critical analyses of trans healthcare in Britain have been produced by scholars such as sociologist Ruth Pearce (2018), as well as the *Trans Pregnancy Project* led by Sally Hines (Riggs et al. 2020), and from therapeutic and psychology practitioners and researcher such as the aforementioned Meg-John Barker (Richards and Barker 2015; Richards et al. 2018). While this thesis does not directly engage with trans healthcare, it follows and understands the medical and psychiatric pathologisation of transness in order to underpin social stigmas and media sensationalism that trans people negotiate in their everyday lives.

MEDIATING THE BRITISH MEDIA

The Trans Debate mediates the lives of trans people – and some cis gender non-conforming people – who must negotiate its effects in their everyday social interactions across a spectrum of public, pseudo-public, and private spaces. I understand the Trans Debate as discourses that have solidified through repetition to become a known, recognised and legitimised 'thing' – perhaps even a canon – that has come to be frequently mobilised in the name of feminism and women's interests, often by well-meaning journalist seeking to remain 'neutral'.

There is no evidence that trans people pose a public threat. On the contrary, trans people are disproportionately vulnerable to harassment and abuse. The Trans Debate and the transphobic journalism that has preceded it can be directly and indirectly implicated (Hasenbush et al. 2019; Sharpe 2020; Bachmann and Gooch 2018; 2017; Whittle et al. 2007; Bradley 2020). As well as directly targeting specific trans people, the news media plays difficult to measure but nonetheless tangible role in forming public opinion, especially regarding topics that readers possess little direct knowledge or experience of (Philo and Happer 2013). Thus, the ways in which this debate is framed, and the notion of this being a debate in itself, serves to limit the potential for social change, and impedes trans people capacities to live lives that are unencumbered by anxieties stemming from other peoples' cis-heteronormative expectations and transphobic attitudes and practices. In referring to the Trans Debate in this thesis, I am not suggesting that trans people and their lives are debatable, nor am I interested in debating trans peoples' lives, identities, or becoming embroiled in defending trans people against claims that they pose a threat to women, children, and society as a whole. I am interested in the resonance of these claims, the effects of which reverberate through societies, and profoundly mediate trans peoples' lives across various spaces and geographical locations.

Media reporting on 'trans issues' in the British media has intensified over the last decade, with trans people's lives, rights, and access to public space subjected to increasing public scrutiny under the auspices of the Trans Debate which is often oriented around women's spaces, and frequently depicts trans people as unreasonable and aggressive (Baker 2019; Fae 2018; Belcher 2018). Whilst this has

opened space for journalism by trans writers (Lees 2018; McConnell 2014; Roche 2016[b], Al-Kadhi 2018, Necati 2018), transphobic discourses are frequently published across the tabloid press, broadsheet newspapers and broadcast media, with representations that regularly sensationalise, objectify, and lack concern for trans people's lives (Bindel 2015; Turner 2018; Vine 2018). Using a corpus linguistic approach to analyse the prevalence of keywords from a large body of articles on trans people published in the British press in 2012 and 2017-2019, Paul Baker observed a shift in the volume and tone of reporting. In 2012, with a corpus of circa 900 articles, Baker found that in large sections of the press trans people were represented as 'receiving special treatment lest they be offended, as victims or villains, as involved in transient relationships or sex scandals, as the object of jokes about their appearance or sexual organs and as attention-seeking freakish objects' (Baker 2019). Baker did find a relatively small amount of some more positive representations, but rather than showing trends, these were more sporadic, and less easy to find (Baker 20112). Revisiting the process, Baker analysed a corpus of 6,400 articles, signalling an increase of about three-and-a-half times more articles written about trans people in the two-year period studied. Baker observed an enormous increase in representations of trans people as being 'easily offended' – from 8 cases in 2012 to 586 cases in 2018-2019 – and found that trans people were increasingly situated in relation and proximity to conflict –via words including *aggressive, demand, harassed, bullied, confronted, militant, outspoken, pressure* – locating 5 instances in 2012 compared to 334 in 2018-19 (ibid.). Baker asserts that the results point to the construction of trans people as newsworthy because they are unreasonably quick to take offence, angry and difficult, thereby justifying locating trans people at the centre of a controversy and debate (Baker 2019). A further representation was to connect trans people with crime, via words including *killer, prisoner, criminal, murderer, rapist, jail* and *kill*, which occurred with *trans(gender)* 3 times in 2012, and 608 times in 2018-19 (ibid.). This is not new, Baker notes, highlighting similar pattern in his corpus linguistic analyses of news stories about gay people in the early 2000s, Muslims in the 2000s, and feminists in the 1990s and 2000s. Baker's comparative analyses of trends in media representations of trans people signals shifts and continuities in tone, content and the intensity of reporting. My engagements with media representation in this research complement Baker's

approach by using closer engagements with a smaller number of media discourses, and by considering how these are related to trans peoples' lives.

Debate formats, and journalists positioning themselves as engaging in the Trans Debate – which effectively situating the existence of trans people as debatable – are common across the press, with public toilets frequently invoked as contentious battlegrounds for trans rights (Ahmed 2016; Thorn 2016; Castricum 2018; Sharpe et al. 2018; Lewis 2018[b]). Unsurprisingly, a recent study by *Stonewall* found that 48% of trans respondents felt uncomfortable using public toilets in Britain (Bachmann and Gooch 2017: 23). The significance of the spatial focus of the Trans Debate and related transphobic discourses is examined in Chapters 3 and 4 regarding public toilets and the Kenwood Ladies' Pond respectively, and, to a lesser extent, in Chapter 5 concerning changing rooms in fashion retail spaces.

In 2010, in response to the detrimental impact of misrepresentative media reporting upon trans individuals and communities, *Trans Media Watch*, and later *All About Trans* were formed with the aim of reducing intentionally transphobic journalism (Fae 2018; Belcher 2018; Trans Media Watch 2010; Liu and *On Road Media* 2017). A biological-essentialist logic, has been frequently mobilised by journalists casting trans women as threatening (cis) women and 'their' spaces, thus situating trans people's existence and interests in false opposition to cis women and feminism (*The Guardian* 2018; Lewis 2017; 2018[a][b] 2019; Turner 2018; Bindel 2015). Of course, feminism is a plural and fragmented field that includes trans-exclusionary feminisms (Jeffreys 2014[a][b]; Bindel 2009), *and* the strands of feminisms informing this research, in which intersectionality is integral and all genders are recognised (Hines 2017; Phipps 2019; Koyama 2003; Crenshaw 1989; Guobadia 2018; de Vries 2015).

The Trans Debate has acute implications for the lives of trans people who comprise a small part of the population, meaning that much of the British public has little experienced-based knowledge about trans people, and are, thus, susceptible to how trans people are unfavourably framed in the British press. Indeed, the media is a predominant source of knowledge about trans people which shapes the social

contexts in which trans people live their lives (Shelley 2008; Heinz, 2012; McInroy and Craig 2015; Cliff 2019). Indeed, multiple studies have found transphobic journalism to heighten trans people's anxieties about their public safety (Liu and AAT 2017; McNeil et al. 2012; McInroy and Shelley 2015; Bradley 2020). Anxieties that are sadly well-founded. A survey by *Stonewall*, Britain's largest LGBTQ+ charity, reported that 41% of trans respondents experienced a hate crime or incident (Bachmann and Gooch 2018) and the 81% rise in reported transphobic hate crime between 2016-17 and 2018-19 (BBC 2019). The severity of this 81% spike is likely due, in part, to increased reporting, rather than purely a rise in incidents. Nonetheless, as Laura Russell of *Stonewall* commented in response: 'these statistics are the real life consequences of a society where transphobia is everywhere – from the front pages of newspapers, to social media, and on our streets' (Russell in BBC 2019[b]).

Such issues are further demonstrated in the *Transphobic Hate Crime Report 2020* by the UK LGBT+ anti-violent charity *Galop*, which is designed to 'illustrate the nature of transphobia in the UK and its ability to permeate the lives of those experiencing it' (Bradley 2020: 3). In a survey of 227 respondents, 4 in 5 has experienced a form of transphobic hate crime in the last year, including physical and sexual assaults and threats of physical and sexual assaults, as well as experiences transphobia online (60 per cent), in the street (50 per cent), at work (30 per cent) and at home (25 per cent). Around 70 per cent of respondents said transphobia had impacted their mental health, and their daily routine, left over 50 per cent of respondents feeling less able to leave the house (Bradley 2020). In this study, only 1 in 7 reported their experience to the police, suggesting that the BBC's figures drawn from police data are the tip of the iceberg. Indeed, a third of respondents to *Galop* said that they experienced too many incidents to report them all (Bradley 2020: 4). Respondents reported direct and indirect intimidation via newspapers (ibid.: 39), noting that 'public vilification and scaremongering from the media', particularly newspapers, impacts their lives and amplifies the fear that people will act on the words of transphobic columnists (ibid.: 8). Furthermore, almost 90 per cent of respondents said that 'seeing transphobia happening to someone else made them worried they would experience it' (ibid.: 4). These data evidence a prevalence of incidences and anxieties about transphobic harassment in different public and

pseudo-public spaces, as well as the home and online. In doing so, the Trans Debate in the British press is implicated in producing and platforming sensationalising and stigmatising discourses that affect the everyday lives of trans people. This highlights the complementary contribution made by this thesis in enhancing quantitative data with qualitative research into how the Trans Debate affects trans peoples' experiences and negotiations of particular kinds of spaces.

FEMINIST FACTIONS

This section traces the trajectories of often competing feminist perspectives concerning trans phenomena. Like any feminist issue, it is not possible to speak of a single feminist perspective. It is, however, fair to say that the question of *who* is entitled to claim womanhood – and on what grounds – has been, and remains, a contentious matter within feminism where trans women are concerned. I adopt a trans feminist position that it is for women to self-define and have their capacity to know their own gender recognised as authoritative and authentic (Williams 2016; 2020; Simpkins 2016; Watson 2016). While, this chapter is inevitably women-oriented, there are wider implications of these discussions regarding the legitimacy of all trans peoples' senses of self and access to space. As will become clear, echoing certain medical and psychiatric discourses, the perspectives of trans-exclusionary feminists tend to exclude, or disavow trans peoples' voices and experiences.

In the following, I discuss feminist factions that have emerged and solidified around accepting trans womanhood and the inclusion of trans women in women's and feminist spaces. Subsequently, I examine scholarship by trans-exclusionary feminists and its contestation by intersectional feminists, trans feminists and trans-inclusive radical feminists. This is structured around key issues in trans-exclusionary feminist arguments, biological determinism, and the role of violation, deception and agency. The section then concludes by focusing upon intersectional, trans feminist approaches and their contributions to trans studies and feminism regarding plurality, trans womanhood, negotiating normativities, and creating concepts that name specific issues faced by trans women.

Feminism has always been plural, while often oppressive and variously privileged towards the interests and perspectives of white, Western, heterosexual, middle–upper class, cis women. Trans-exclusionary radical feminism (TERF) emerged through its use by cis women in the late 2000s who wanted to distinguish their radical feminism from that of other radical feminists who seek the exclusion of trans women from women's and feminist spaces and the category of womanhood (Smythe 2018; Pearce et al. 2020[b]). Since then, TERF has become a commonly used term amongst trans people and trans-inclusive cis feminists (Pearce et al. 2020[b]). As I argue in this literature review, contemporary iterations of trans-exclusionary feminism in Britain rely and build upon the legacies of transphobic feminism that prevailed in 1970s Anglo-American feminism (Williams 2016). Indeed, the distinction made by the term TERF is pertinent to often forgotten histories of trans inclusion in women's movements and gay liberation, including radical feminist and lesbian spaces since the 1970s in Britain and North America (Stryker and Bettcher 2016; Heaney 2016; Williams 2016; GLF 1980; Power 1995).

Adeptly and comprehensively analysed in the essay collection *TERF WARS* (Pearce et al. 2020[b]), trans-exclusionary radical feminists have continued to campaign against trans equality, inclusion and rights. Sheila Jeffreys' (2008) contestation of the *Gender Recognition Act (2004),* which granted legal gender recognition to trans men and women, is one example. Contemporary trans-exclusionary discourses are relatively common within strands of contemporary feminist activism, mainstream journalism and broadcast media (Ditum 2017; Bindle 2004; Vine 2016; BBC Newsnight 2016a). That said, I am not convinced that TERF is useful as an umbrella term. In 2017 *BBC Radio 4's* 'Women's Hour' presenter Jenni Murray penned a *Times* article arguing that trans women could not 'lay claim to womanhood', which included the phrase 'I'll admit to feminist, but radical or separatist? No' (Murray 2017). Since not all feminists who oppose trans people's inclusion in feminism and womanhood are necessarily radical in their feminism, or politics, I use the term 'trans-exclusionary feminist' in this thesis. This also speaks to the social and spatial aspect of trans-exclusionary feminist practices which are commonly oriented around, and instrumentalise women's spaces, as I analyse in Chapters 3 and 4, and to a lesser extent in Chapter 5.

Biological determinism, violation and deception

Trans-exclusionary feminists' rejection of trans women as 'real', and related efforts to exclude trans women from women's, feminist and lesbian spaces, are rooted in biologically deterministic understandings of sex. Such understandings are particularly integral in trans-exclusionary strands of feminism that inextricably link 'transsexuality' and 'transgenderism' to medical establishments, discourses and practices (Raymond 1979; Hausman 1995; Jeffreys 1997; 2008; 2014[a]).

Trans-exclusionary feminist perspectives that are premised on biological determinism stem from a belief that womanhood requires being *assigned* female at birth. The concept of gender was introduced in American discourse during the mid-1950s by sexologist John Money and his colleagues (Money 1955; Holm 2020). Informed by working on studies with intersex people, the distinction between sex and gender emerged from a need to account for non-normative alignments between a person's congenital anatomy and their sense of self and social interaction and position. Subsequently, sex/gender and associated biological/social distinctions gained influence across Western public cultures (Holm 2020). Accordingly, trans-exclusionary feminists, some of whom position themselves as 'gender critical', have argued that gender is a product of conservative, patriarchal values of masculinity and femininity, which are re-produced through trans healthcare practices (Jeffreys 1997; 2008; Hausman 1995; Raymond 1979). Consequently, trans-exclusionary feminists have formed unlikely alliances with Conservative Lords arguing against the *Gender Recognition Act 2004 (*Jeffreys 2008; Bindel 2004; McQueen 2016). In this way, trans-exclusionary feminism overlooks how sex is socio-cultural as well as biological, and neglects biological diversity, including intersex variations (Lane 2009; Fausto-Sterling 1993; 2000; 2012; Butler 1999 [1990]; 1993; Holm 2020).

At this point, the opposing politics of trans-inclusive and trans-exclusionary feminists crystallise. Broadly, trans feminist and trans-inclusive feminists recognise expansive gender possibilities and diverse experiences of womanhood that intersect with ethnicity, sexuality, class, disability and other forms of difference (Rubin 2003; McQueen 2016; Phipps 2016; Hines 2020). In contrast, trans-exclusionary feminist arguments depend on strict separations between sex (biological) and gender (socio-cultural) whilst privileging sex as an immutable fact, and locating trans women

as perpetuating oppressive gender stereotypes while never being able to be ‘real’ women (Jeffreys 1997; 2003; 2008; 2014[a]; Murray 2017). Following this logic, oppressions experienced by trans people are the effect of societal oppressions inflicted by rigid, patriarchal sex role systems (Raymond 1979: 16). Within such approaches, trans women tend to be figured as men who are victims of hegemonic sex roles, with gender dysphoria resulting from unhappiness within this system (Bettcher 2014a). The solution to the ‘problem of transsexualism’, claimed Raymond in *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male*, is to ‘morally mandate it out of existence’ (1979: 178). This influential argument sought to bolster a biologically determinist case for trans-exclusionary feminism with a moral claim against the acceptance of trans women as ‘real’ women, and against the existence of trans people at all. Thus, trans women’s claims to womanhood are unequivocally rejected and trans people, their sense of self and the practices through which they transition, especially where medical, are antithetical to the trans-exclusionary radical feminist cause of eliminating gender. As evidenced in Chapters 3 and 4, I read feminist arguments such as Raymond’s, as a precursor to discourses by trans-exclusionary feminists and the transphobic journalist in the contemporary Trans Debate. Discourses seek to morally mandate trans women out of women’s spaces by locating trans women and their presence as a moral problem. This is, I argue in this thesis, a driving logic that creates controversies which fuel the Trans Debate.

A crucial feature of the moral economies that trans-exclusionary feminists have traded on, and that transphobic journalists and feminists continue to cash in on, are figurations of a trans women as a monolithic, fraudulent, monstrous, and malevolent figure (Raymond 1979; Jeffreys 1997; 2008; 2014[b]; Hausman 1995; Bindel 2004; Greer 1999). Linking transness with violation and deception has become a central theme within trans-exclusionary feminism (Raymond 1979; Jeffreys 1997; 2014[a]; Greer 1999). For example, Janice Raymond (1979: 104) argues:

> All transsexuals rape women’s bodies by reducing the real female form to an artefact, appropriating this body for themselves. However, the transsexually constructed lesbian-feminist violates women’s sexuality and spirit, as well. Rape, although it is usually done by force, can also be accomplished by deception.

By discussing trans women who are lesbian feminists, Raymond speaks to frictions within feminist and lesbian feminist communities around trans-inclusion during the 1970s and 1980s (Stone 1991; Heaney 2016; Phipps 2016; Williams 2016). In this particular example, rape – most commonly associated with and enacted as the violent sexual violation of women by men – is used to describe the perceived violation of (cis) women's bodies, sexualities, and spirit by the existence of trans women, who 'deceptively' appear as 'real' women. The specific words chosen, *rape*, *constructed* and *deception* emphasise the view that trans women are not 'real' women, rather they are deceptive men, who violate women through their very existence, especially when occupying lesbian, feminist and women's spaces. 'Transsexually constructed' signals the perceived falsity and illegitimacy of trans peoples' genders, sexualities, and politics as women, lesbians and feminists (Stryker and Bettcher 2016; Williams 2016).

Key aspects of Raymond's above quote are channeled through contemporary trans-exclusionary feminism (Jeffreys 1997; 2008; 2014[a]; Hausman 1995; Greer 1999; Bindle 2004). Following Raymond's logic, trans women are constructed while cis women are natural, a rationale with ongoing spatial implications that play out in the Trans Debate, as I discuss in Chapters 3 and 4. For example, Raymond (1979) is an early example of how trans-exclusionary feminist arguments construct a zero-sum logic regarding womanhood in which the existence of trans women – whether or not a space is shared – violates and takes something away from cis women. Through this approach, not only are trans women situated as threatening and violating, rather, zero-sum arguments of this kind maintain and justify the exclusion of trans women from 'real' womanhood, on moral and biological grounds. Similar arguments around violations and threats to women's bodies, society and spaces have been echoed by Sheila Jeffreys' (1997: 70) in her contention that 'transsexualism' is 'dangerous to the health and social survival of those on whom it is practiced, and could be seen to constitute a human rights violation'. These claims are spatialised in trans-exclusionary arguments (Jeffreys 2014[b]) that trans women using women's public toilets constitutes violation through deception (Phipps 2016; Jeffreys 2014[b]; Roche 2016[a]). Of course, as will become evident in this thesis' empirical chapters, the real and potential fear of conflict, sexgender-policing and forcible exclusions from public

services, such as public toilets, can seriously limit access to public spaces for trans and gender non-conforming people (Browne 2004; Roche 2016[a]).

By understanding a person as becoming trans through medical interventions, yet never achieving their 'desired' outcome of legitimate womanhood or manhood, trans-exclusionary feminism denies the possibility of trans people to know their own gender, and inextricably links transness to medical procedures. For example, in criticising trans activism, Jeffreys aligns 'transgenderism' with queer and trans activism and post-structuralist/post-modern queer theory, whilst maintaining a medicalising, essentialising, biologically deterministic stance (Jeffreys 1997; 2008; 2014[a]; Stryker and Bettcher 2016). In doing so, Jeffreys contends that most 'transgenderists' had 'the operation when they still believed they were going to become "real" women' then questioned this approach upon discovering a more progressive political theory on gender, or when they realised they were not really "women"' (1997: 57). This statement clearly overstates her capacity to *know* the feelings, beliefs and lived realities of trans women, especially given the absence of evidence for her claims. As will become evident from my subsequent discussion of queer theory, the link drawn between trans and queer activisms and academia, which is used to argue for the falsity of claims that transgender identities are progressive, is reductive.

Trans studies scholars and activists tend not to link transness to, or determine a person's identity via, medical procedures and bodily configuration. Rather self-definition, informed by a person's gendered sense of self, tends to be considered authoritative. This is evident in arguments in favour of amendments to the *Gender Recognition Act 2004* which enable legal recognition based upon a statutory declaration (WEC 2016). Indeed, contrary to legacies of feminist thought and methodologies that built upon critiques of positivism (Haraway 1988) and the neglect difference among women (hooks 1990; Crenshaw 1989), trans-exclusionary feminists' argument obfuscates varied and complex experiences of womanhood, and deny the legitimacy of trans womanhood. To the nominal extent that trans men feature in trans-exclusionary feminist literature, they have often been dismissed as tokens, used tactically to legitimise claims that trans phenomena are not limited to trans women. Non-binary and genderqueer people have tended to be figured as

people deludedly seeking to deny the realities of sexgender (Turner 2017; Pearce et al. 2020[a]: 3). Such exclusions serve to support contentions that 'transsexuality' is a patriarchal 'male' phenomenon, observable only amongst trans women (Raymond 1979: xxiii, 27–28, 140; Jeffreys 1997: 68; Bettcher 2014[a]; Serano 2007: 48). This overarching skew toward focusing on trans women and trans-feminine people endures through the contemporary Trans Debate in Britain.

Trans-feminism

At the turn of the twenty-first century, trans studies were emerging as an interdisciplinary academic field, as trans and gender non-conforming writers were finding platforms, especially in feminist, gay, lesbian and queer circles. 1991 saw Sandy Stone publish *The "Empire" Strikes back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto,* her repost to Janice Raymond (1979), which became a key text within trans feminism and trans studies. In 1998, Susan Stryker edited a trans special issue of the journal *Gay and Lesbian Quarterly*, whilst British academic and activist Stephen Whittle penned the Guest Editorial for 'a trans issue' of the *Journal of Gender Studies* (1998). Concomitantly, Jacob Hale, a philosophy and trans studies scholar, published his 'Suggested rules for non-transsexuals writing about transsexuals, transsexuality, transsexualism or trans' (2009[1997]). More recently, cis feminists are increasingly embracing trans-inclusive feminism (Heyes 2003; Overall 2009; Phipps 2016; Hines 2017) and trans feminists are increasingly contributing to feminist conversations (Koyama 2003; Serano 2007; Bettcher 2014a; Stryker and Bettcher 2016; Enke 2012; 2018; Raha 2017).

A prominent function of trans-feminism has involved challenging simplistic understandings of trans people. An early example is Sandy Stone's *Posttranssexual Manifesto (1991)* which made an influential case against concealing one's trans status within a cisnormative social fabric, and against the construction of histories that hide one's past, as was traditionally a medical requirement (1991: 291-99). Drawing from Donna Haraway's 'cyborg' (1985) and Gloria Anzaldúa's 'mestiza' (1987), Stone advocated the value of speaking from hybrid subjectivities, constituted by plural, often seemingly incongruous, fragments and influences. In such work, trans feminism, along with trans studies, has complicated and contested reductive figurations of 'the transsexual' common to trans-exclusionary feminism and

medical/psychiatric models such as ‘true transsexuals’ and ‘autogynophiles’ (Blanchard 1985; 1989; 2005; Speer and Parsons 2006; Newman 2000: 400; Jeffreys 1997; Greer 1999). Literature challenging reductive figurations of ‘the transsexual’ and ‘transsexuals’ includes Anglo-American perspectives in which trans women, men and non-binary writers speak from their varied experiences (Stryker 1994; Mock 2014; Koyama 2003; Serano 2007; 2013; Green 2006; Lester 2017). More recently, trans studies scholars have worked to decentre Western, Anglo-American voices and experiences. This move is reflected in special issues of *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, including the theme of *Trans/Feminism* (Stryker and Bettcher 2016) featuring articles from Spain, Mexico, Russia, China and Africa, on *The Issue of Blackness* (Ellison et al. 2017) and *Decolonizing the Transgender Imaginary* (Aizura et al. 2014). Within urbans studies, this approach is evident in the edited collection *Queer Sites in Global Contexts* (Ramos and Mowlabocus 2021).

Solidarity across different experiences of womanhood – and recognition of diverse trans voices as valid sources of knowledge – have become central to trans-inclusive, intersectional strands of feminism, variously addressing oppressions that affect women differently depending upon their backgrounds, identities and experiences (Overall 2009; Heyes 2003; Butler 2004; Watson 2016; Bettcher 2014[a]; Phipps 2016; Hines 2017; 2020). Unsurprisingly, intersectional approaches to trans-inclusion and trans-feminism echo arguments variously made by black and post-colonial feminists who critiqued the unitary subject of mainstream western feminism, and questioned whose voices get to be heard (hooks 1990; Crenshaw 1989; Spivak 1988).

By engaging with the lived realities of trans peoples, including quotidian negotiation of cis-heteronormativities, trans feminists have further contested facile figurations of trans women as fraudulent predators and patriarchal handmaidens, which can be traced back to the trans-exclusionary feminism of people like Janice Raymond (1979). Telling personal stories, in all their complexity, arguably holds the potential for trans people to complicate normative discourses with more nuanced realities and senses of self. For example, research in trans feminism and trans studies, including this thesis, illuminates how specific socio-spatial contexts necessitate forms of gendered embodiment and expression that are intended to achieve safety and/or

social and institutional recognition. As such, trans feminist knowledge challenges accounts proffered by trans-exclusionary feminists (Greer in Clarke-Billings 2015; Jeffreys 1997; 2014a; Raymond 1979) whilst illuminating particularities and privileges integral to their projects of eradicating gender stereotypes. Accordingly, in exploring trans peoples' negotiations of social norms across different spatial and geographical contexts within Britain, this thesis is guided by the stories told by the trans women, men and non-binary research participants.

Trans feminists have played a vital role in producing and circulating knowledge written from trans people's perspectives and creating language addressing trans-related issues. A prominent instance is Julia Serano's coinage of transmisogyny to describe specific, overlapping forms of oppression and marginalisation experienced by trans women and trans-feminine people, which are not adequately encapsulated by misogyny or transphobia (Serano 2007). By giving language to, and thus heightening visibilities of particular oppressions, 'transmisogyny' has become a term that is widely used within trans and certain feminist communities (Faye 2016; Kacere 2014). Examples of transmisogyny include disrespectful and sensationalised media representation depicting trans women as sexually predatory, deviants, pitiful frauds and/or ridiculous pretenders (Serano 2007; 36; TMW 2011). Part of the value of transmisogyny as a term stems from its ability to name problematic representations and attitudes in social and media contexts, which disproportionally focus negative attention upon trans women and feminine people (Serano 2007; Dawson 2017). Of course, not all social and/or media focused on trans women constitute transmisogyny. Indeed, it is increasingly the case that trans women, and to a lesser extent trans men and non-binary people, have been given and are creating journalistic platforms in the UK (Jacques 2012; Dawson 2017; McConnell 2014; BTB 2017). Much media coverage by journalists who are cis has, however, continued to sensationalise, demonise and de-legitimise trans women (Vine 2016; Murray 2017). A high-profile instance in England involved Lucy Meadows, a primary school teacher and trans woman who was publicly 'outed' by Richard Littlejohn in a *Daily Mail* column entitled 'He's not only in the wrong body… he's in the wrong job' (quoted in Pridd 2013). Meadows took her own life months later, and Michal Singleton, the coroner assigned to Meadows' case, condemned the press, especially the *Daily Mail*, for the harassment, 'ridicule and humiliation and character assassination' that

she was subjected to (Pridd 2013; Gupta 2020). Although transphobia is experienced by trans men and transmasculine people in the media, with the exception of sensational headlines about pregnant men, levels of ridicule andscrutiny are significantly fewer (Dawson 2017; Roberts 2011; Baynes 2017).

A further context in which transmisogyny is prominent is the disproportionate level of violence and harassment inflicted upon trans women and trans-feminine people in public, especially people who are visibly trans (or perceived as trans), whether or not their non-normative gender expression is a preference, or involuntary (Namaste 1996; Serano 2007; 36; Schmider 2017; Talusan 2016; Alabanza 2017). For example, data from the United States National Coalition of Anti-Violence Program's *Hate Violence Report* (2012) showed that 53 per cent of anti-LGBTQ+ homicides were committed against trans women, and that trans women of colour were disproportionately affected. This intersection of race, gender, and often socio-economic status is starkly reflected in reports from the US (Krell 2017). Furthermore, the deaths of trans women have regularly been misreported in media, with journalists using 'he/him/his' pronouns and previous 'dead' names (Schmider 2017; Talusan 2016).

In London, statistics relating to hate crime against LGBTQ+ people show an increase since 2014, with trans people being more likely than other cis lesbian, gay and bisexual people to experience verbal (77 per cent), physical (32 per cent) and sexual violence as part of a hate crime (Antjoule 2016: 3, 5, 7; Hartley 2017a). Although the *Galop* report does not break down 'trans' as a category for data collection and statistical generation, out of the trans interviews quoted in the report, all four are trans women, and significant levels of violence were reported by gender-fluid (35 per cent) and non-binary people (34 per cent) (Antjoule 2016: 3, 5, 7). Without more specific knowledge about the gender expression of the survey respondents, it is impossible to ascertain the extent to which transmisogyny has contributed to the instances of sexgender-policing and the experiences of violence. That said, experiences of transmisogyny in the form of street harassment are a rather common theme in the writing, including social media posts, of trans women and feminine people. For example, Travis Alabanza, a black, queer and non-binary trans femme performer, poet and artist, regularly documents their experience of transmisogynistic

street harassment in their work, as previously noted (Alabanza 2017[a][b][c]; 2018[b]). As such, transmisogyny, as a concept created and used by trans people, powerfully and productively, illuminates forms of marginalisation experienced specifically by trans women and trans-feminine people across various contexts. In doing so, the term makes visible the disproportionate levels of violence inflicted upon trans women and feminine people, and highlights how oppression overlaps with others – transphobia, misogyny, homophobia, racism for example – in ways that shape activist and community discourses and experiences in public spaces.

Whilst quantitative survey data can be useful in examining the prevalence of violent oppressions driven by homophobia, transphobia and transmisogyny, in the context of this research, I seek to explore experiences of public space which can often involve various forms of sexgender–policing in more depth. In order to address the finer textures of these experiences, their relationships to gender expressions and identities, and their embeddedness in specific social, spatial and geographical contexts, I have worked with a smaller number of participants using participatory photography and narrative writing/speaking as well as in-depth interviews. This is discussed in greater detail in the methodology section of this document.

Conceptions of selfhood and gender articulated by trans feminists have influenced my approach in this research (Serano 2007; Bettcher 2014[a]). Transmisogyny tends to be fixated upon devaluing and policing femininity, and positioning trans women and trans-feminine peoples' gender and its expressions as artificial. Accordingly, Serano (2007: 399) has argued that trans women are unfairly judged:
it seems incomprehensive that so many women could so actively gravitatetowards femininity unless there was something about it that resonated withthem on a profound level.

I follow Serano in recognising the necessity to acknowledge the authority and authenticity of a person's sense of self, its expression, and the language used to communicate it. Fellow trans feminists have highlighted however, that through her attentiveness to 'the personal', Serano somewhat overlooks the ways that gender is fundamentally relational (Bettcher 2014[a]; 2014[b])–a point that echoes queer critiques of gay liberationist movements that prioritise individual rights, self-

realisation and assimilation over more collective politics and intersecting structural oppressions (Spade 2013; Conrad 2010). This point highlights the value of situating experiences and ideals in socio-spatial contexts in order to explore how one's sense of gender and the social fabric in which people live are embedded–and approach that I adopt in this research. Elsewhere, Talia Bettcher (2014[a]) has challenged 'wrong body' accounts of transsexuality and 'beyond the binary' understandings of gender that emerged in the 1990s. Both concepts, she argues, invalidate trans identities. Firstly, by delegitimising the gender of trans people who do not feel dysphoric about their genitals. Secondly, by restrictively positioning all trans people in relation to a gender binary. Thus, Bettcher aims to provide non-marginalising accounts of trans politics that argue for one's sense of self to be presumed valid as a starting and crucial point to respective theory and politics (2012: 245-6). This aim constitutes an important political move that is fundamental to trans studies, and, increasingly, to strands of feminist, gender studies and queer scholarship (Butler 2004; Phipps 2016; Fileborn 2020).

Feminisms at home

Responding to geographers' explorations of homes as sites of emotional attachments, authentic meaning and value during the 1970s (Seamon 1979; Saunders 1989; Relph 1976), feminist scholars highlighted oppressive and inequitable power relations embedded within the 'traditional' Western home and its complicity in reproducing patriarchal labour relations (Blunt 2003; Blunt and Varley 2004; Varley 2008; McDowell 2003; Young 1997; Massey 1994; Oakley 1974). Iris Marion Young (1997), whose thinking I draw upon throughout Chapter 6, questions the 'deep distrust of the idea of home for feminist politics' (1997:157) that critiques the private sphere as depoliticising and exploitative, and negates the normative positive values of home, which should be 'democratized rather than rejected' (1997: 157). Here Young (1997) builds upon and supports vital intervention by women of colour, lesbians and/or working-class women who questioned the white, Western, heterosexual, middle-class subjects who have predominantly been figured within, and authored, feminist analyses of home. Countering this universal casting of homes as sites of oppression, these critiques offer analyses in which home emerges as more complex, political and multifarious sites of dignity, and of resistance to, and

recuperation from oppressive social structures (Pratt 1984; hooks 1990; McDowell 2003; Ahmed 1999; Young 1997; Pratt 1999; Price-Chalita 1994; Varley 2008).

Iris Marion Young (1997) recognises the value of feminist critiques of home, whilst pushing against rejections of home as a merely privileged and oppressive site. Feminists, Young contends, must make a claim to at least four normative values of home, which should be minimally accessible to all, while attending to interconnections, identities and context specificities (Young 1997: 161). These normative values are: 1) a place of *safety* where one can 'retreat from the dangers and hassles of collective life' (Young 1997: 161); 2) *individuation*, meaning the 'extension of the person's body, the space that he or she' takes up, and performs the basic activities of life (ibid. 162); 3) the *privacy* to enable a person to have 'autonomy over admission to a space and its contents' (ibid.); 4) *preservation*, the value of home as a 'site on the construction and reconstruction of one's self' and centrality of 'safeguarding the meaningful things in which one sees the stories of one's self embodied' (Young 1997: 163-4). Rather than a nostalgic elsewhere, preservation entails future-facing forms of remembrance, which affirms the pain and joy that 'brought us here' (1997:154). Vitally, Young maintains the necessity to 'criticize a global society that is unable or unwilling to extend those values to all' (ibid.). I share Young's commitment to these four normative values and in Chapter 6, I investigate their resonances with specificities of trans peoples' lives and offer the trans feminist value of *ordinariness*, the capacity for a domestic belonging and relations in which one's self is unremarkable and embraced.

QUEER TENSIONS AND TRANS STUDIES

Queer theory has been influential within trans studies as a theoretical and political project grounded in anti-essentialist, post-identitarian approaches that unsettle naturalised cisnormative and heteronormative practices and processes (Stryker 2004). Yet, trans studies scholars have critiqued queer tendencies to misunderstand transgender phenomena by privileging sexuality and celebrating 'trans' as a site of gender fluidity, whilst rarely engaging with trans people themselves, and how they variously make sense of, and live, their identities (Stryker 2004; Whittle 2006; Hines 2010; Namaste 1999). Thus, whilst I shall not relinquish queer thinking altogether,

the participatory ethos of this project is shaped by shortcomings in queerscholarship.

The following section explores the productive potential of queer theory in relation to trans phenomena as well as insightful critiques offered by trans studies scholars. I begin by sketching the academic origins, intellectual lineages, and mission of queer thinking within academia (Namaste 1994; Halperin 2003). The subsequent portion focuses upon Judith Butler (1999[1990]; 1993; 2004) and Jack Halberstam (1994; 1998a, 1998b; 2011), key figures within queer thinking. The work of these scholars is particularly relevant to this project since it is imbued with queer commitments to expanding gender possibilities, although it also exhibits levels of abstraction that trouble many trans activist and trans studies scholars (Prosser 1998; Namaste 1999; 2009; Stryker 2004).

Queer origins

According to David Halperin (2003), 'Queer Theory' was coined as a provocative joke by Teresa de Lauretis who, when naming a conference at the University of California in 1990, sought to challenge the perceived complacency of gay and lesbian studies, and feminism. The extent to which the conference title was inspired by queer activism of the 1980s is contested (Halperin 2003; Namaste 1994; 1999). Nonetheless, through her jovial gesture, de Lauretis sought to *make theory queer* by challenging the heterosexist assumptions underpinning much academic theorising, and to *queer* theory, by questioning that which was rendered deviant by theories of sexual desire and pleasure (Halperin 2003: 340). 'Queer', de Lauritis (1991: iii) stated, was intended to focus upon differences within and between lesbians and gay men–attending to race, gender, and class, for example–and to reveal historic and social silences (Namaste 1999). Through deconstructive analyses of disciplinary social norms, queer theorists have explored understandings and expressions of gender and sexuality that exceed heteronormative and homonormative logics and expectations (Butler 1999[1990]; 1993; 2004; Halberstram 1994; 2011; de Lauretis 1991; Sullivan 2003; Duggan 2002).

The inception of queer theory can productively be understood as an intervention that added momentum to, and a uniting umbrella for, common strands of deconstructive

research concerning sex, gender and sexuality. With a turn toward post-structuralism within lesbian and gay studies and feminism already in motion, the 1990s became an important decade for queer theory. Indeed, the formation of queer theory as a field involved the retrospective adoption of pre-existing literature as seminal texts, including Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's literary and critical theory of *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) and Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999[1990]). In this early phase, queer theory and activism captured the imagination of trans activists and scholars. In 1994, Namaste (2000; 2009) advocated the potential of post-structuralism and a queer approach within sociology, illuminating the critical intellectual value of Michel Foucault whose work has profoundly influenced queer thinking–particularly through Judith Butler's writing (1999 [1990]; 1993). Broadly, Foucault's oeuvre can be read as motivated by questions relating to the disciplinary operations of knowledge and power. Indeed, Namaste (1994) highlights the centrality of questions of knowledge within the emergence of poststructuralism, and the significance of epistemological shifts made by poststructuralist scholars during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s (Foucault 1972[1969]; 1980[1976]). At that moment, informed by established approaches within Western thought, prevailing understandings of 'agency and structure ascribed intentionality to the subject' (Namaste 1994: 221). Such ideas informed a Cartesian foundationalist philosophy, grounded in the default figure of a rational, independent (male) subject (ibid.). Post-structuralists challenged the positioning of freethinking subjects as the source of political and moral thinking by contending that subjects are unavoidably situated within complex political and historical webs of relations. These intersecting networks, infused with power, determined which subjects appear, and how. Thus, subjects are understood as neither autonomous, nor as capable of creating themselves or their social worlds. Subjects are not, therefore, *prior* to socio-economic, cultural, political, and moral structures, rather, they are produced in and through the structures, norms, and discourses that constitute them (Namaste 1994).

Above, I discussed the historical roots and politics of knowledge production inherent to the classification of 'transsexual' and 'homosexual' through medical and psychiatric discourses. Deconstructing the production and perpetuation of heteronormative and cisnormative knowledges and 'truth' claims has been integral to challenging the pathologisation of sexual and gender non-conforming practices,

desires, and identities (Butler 1999[1990]; Sedgwick 1990; 1998; Stryker 2004; 2014; TSQ 2014; Namaste 1994). Yet trans subjectivities have revealed shortfalls in queer approaches to knowledge, power, and agency that are traceable as legacies of Foucault's 'docile bodies'[1] who are precluded from possessing agency and intentionality (Barad 2003; Brown et al. 2010). By outlining these queer origins, I aim to illustrate where certain seeds of discontent, regarding trans studies' critiques, were sown. As will become clear in the following sections, whilst valuable in situating subjects within a disciplinary web of socio-cultural norms, queer approaches have proven limited in their capacity to account for lived experiences.

Performance, fictions and failures

Influential contributions to queer theory have argued for the validity of diverse possibilities and realities for genders and sexualities. These approaches have powerfully disrupted the assumed 'naturalness' and 'stability' of gender and the characteristics ascribed to sex, sex roles, and gender that often are presented as innate and immutable within heteronormative and cisnormative discourses. Deconstructive approaches applied within queer thinking, often Foucauldian or Deleuzian in their influences (Namaste 1994), have embraced gender and sexuality for their fluid and subversive possibilities (Butler 1999[1990]; 1993; 2004; Halberstam 1994; 2011; Garber 1992; Davis 2009; Giffney 2004). Though queer thinking has tended to focus disproportionately upon sexuality, it is pertinent that certain scholars have engaged with sex, gender and gender diversity in their research.

Judith Butler's (1999[1990]) conception of performativity engages with the productive forces and effects of regulatory and disciplinary power (ibid.; Barad 2003). Through readings of practices–such as drag–which disobey heteronormativity, Butler interrogates the conditions of intelligibility and legitimacy by which human subjects emerge. She does this by critically examining prevailing heteronormative norms, values and practices that constitute and govern ways of being and knowing. Gender and sexual normativities, she concludes, are created and sustained through

[1] Theorised by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1979), 'docile bodies' refers to bodies subjected to panoptic surveillance and institutional regulation by seemingly invisible forces andtechniques that discipline, naturalise and order social norms.

Embodied repetitions of stylised, citational acts that reify established social meanings, maintaining their 'naturalness' (Butler 1999[1990]: 178).

Gender, from this perspective, 'is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results' (Butler 1999[1990]: 25). Gender is neither a 'stable identity nor a locus of agency from which various acts follow' (ibid.: 179); through re-signification, *'the illusion of* an abiding gendered self' is (re)produced (ibid.: 178 original emphasis). Thus, this conception of performativity powerfully rebuffs essentialised notions that gender expression and identity necessarily correspond with birth-assigned sex, and that biological sex is untainted by cultural ideals. Extending this de-constructive move, Butler contends that notions of 'abiding masculinity or femininity are also constituted as part of the strategy that conceals gender's performative character and…possibilities' (1999[1990]: 180). The enduring contribution and influence of this theorisation of performativity has been to emphasise embodied practices within thinking around sexgender as socio-cultural phenomena, whilst unsettling their presumed stability, fixity, and naturalness of by revealing the maintenance and disruption of social norms (Nelson 1999; Browne 2006; Davis 2009).

By positioning gendered practices and expression as performed rather than innate and entirely socially, culturally, historically and/or biologically determined and fixed, Butler aimed to 'expand our sense of what gender realities could be' (in Williams 2014). Following *Gender Trouble* (1999[1990]), gender increasingly featured in queer scholarship with trans subjectivities celebrated as symbolising queer theory's overarching project of challenging heteronormativity by 'rendering categories of sexualities, genders and spaces fluid' (Browne 2006:886; Hines 2010; Davis 2009; Giffney 2004).

Somewhat similarly, in *F2M: The Making of Female Masculinity* Jack Halberstam used *gender fiction* to conceptualise 'a body taking its own shape, a cut-up genre that mixes and matches body parts, sexual acts, and postmodern articulations of the impossibility of identity' (Halberstam 1994: 210). One of the few scholars focusing upon queer and trans masculinities at the time, Halberstam critiqued notions that trans men are more radical than butch lesbians in their gender embodiment and

expression. In an effort to describe multiple ways that gender may be 'fictionalised', Halberstam (in)famously claimed 'We are all transsexuals. There are no transsexuals' (1994: 212), and argued that '[s]urgery is only one of many possibilities for remaking the gendered body' (1994: 225). Halberstam sought to carve out space for female masculinities under the trans umbrella by challenging understandings of 'butch' as embodying less accomplished versions of manhood (Bettcher 2014[a]). While making an important intervention in hierarchies ordering queer and trans masculinities–from a trans studies perspective–there are issues with Halberstam's linking of trans embodiment with surgery. In doing so, there are inadvertent echoes of trans-exclusionary feminist arguments that inextricably link trans bodies with medical procedures and institutions (Raymond 1979; Hausman 1995). That said, the ethos of Halberstam's arguments diverge greatly from trans-exclusionary feminists (Raymond 1979; Hausman 1995; Bettcher 2014[a]). Halberstam (1994) sought to unsettle the position occupied by trans men by finding a space for female masculinities to sit alongside trans masculinities under the trans umbrella as equally valid embodied expressions of gender and identity–a commitment that is shared by other queer studies scholars (Butler 1999[1990]; Davis 2009; Browne 2006; Nelson 1999).

The language and phrases employed by queer thinkers have been criticised for their inability to resonate with trans people themselves, often failing to reflect their realities and senses of self (Prosser 1998). Halberstam's queer notion of gender as 'fiction' echoes (mis)readings of Butler's concept of performativity and the *'illusion of* an abiding gendered self' (1999[1990]: 178), by alluding to a kind of artificiality and flexibility regarding gender. From the perspectives of some trans activists and scholars, this has been the crux of critiques of queer theory approaches (Prosser 1998; Whittle 2006: xi). For instance, Stephen Whittle, a British trans equality campaigner and legal scholar, has argued that it 'is all very well having no theoretical place within the current gendered world, but that is not the daily lived experience' (2006:xii). Similarly, Jay Prosser (1998), a humanities scholar specialising in gender, bodies and autobiography, has critiqued the understanding of gender as performative (Butler 1999[1990]) and fictional (Halberstam 1994). Specifically, Prosser (1998) condemned misrepresentations within queer theory that neglect the lives, self-knowledge and voices of transsexual people, emphasising how–for many

people–gender is not *experienced* as performative, or fictional. Thus, to conceptualise gender as such, undermines trans women and men's abilities to see themselves as–and be seen socially as–real men and women. While 'genderqueer' arose during the 1990s (Wilchins 1995), 'non-binary' was yet to emerge as an identity and umbrella exempting these terms from these critiques of 'queer'. However, we can look to figures like Leslie Feinberg and their writing (1996; 1993) for trans and gender possibilities that are both, beyond and between 'man' and 'woman'. In contexts where 'man' and 'woman' remain the most, or only, legible and acceptable option, genders that (appear to) disobey and exceed this binary are less readily socially and legally recognised as real. The *Gender Recognition Act 2004*, which enables the sexgender of trans men and women to be legally recognised, is a legislative example of this. Thus, I share Stephen Whittle's (2006: ii) emphasis on the importance of understanding trans people's daily lived experiences. As the non-binary participants and I further show in this thesis, those quotidian experiences *can* involve not being able to find a place within the prevailing binary gendered order across many contexts, such as public toilets and clothes shops.

Broad questions emerge here regarding the ethical and conceptual merit of theories that do not resonate with the experiences of the people who find themselves in the focus. Who is theory written for, who does it speak to, and what does it do? I would argue that the personal and social positions and experiences of the writer and audiences are often salient. For the queerly-inclined, who embrace locating gender upon unstable 'fictional' ground, this approach may not register as problematic. Indeed, it is arguably relevant that Jack Halberstam describes their gender as 'improvised at best, uncertain and mispronounced more often than not, irresolvable and ever shifting' (2012). They write from a place of being assigned female at birth and embracing masculinity, whilst feeling able and inclined to celebrate gender's queer possibilities. This is also reflected in their approach to queerness, trans subjectivities, and female masculinities throughout their oeuvre (Halberstam 1994; 1998a; 1998b, 2011).

As a non-binary person who embraces queerness personally and politically, I am drawn to Halberstam's and Butler's expansion of the possibilities of genders and

sexualities. Yet, I have also experienced my identity being devalued and dismissed as less real and unworthy of recognition. Since many trans people are regularly forced to defend the authenticity of their gender–in their daily lives, academic debates, and the media–it is understandable why situating gender as performative, illusionary, fictional, and as a 'failure' might hit a nerve (Halberstam 1994; 20011; Butler 1999[1990]; Nash 2010; Antjoule 2016; Whittle et al. 2007; BBC Newsnight 2016a; 2016b; Cromwell 1999). Embracing gender's queer possibilities often requires a privileged level of ontological security in one's social position that is not always available to people whose gender identities and expressions exceed normative expectations, even inadvertently (Davis 2009). Furthermore, not all trans people understand themselves and their gender as queer, or have queer political commitments; many trans people experience their gender as a stable reality, and coordinate for how they interact with their social worlds (Whittle 2006; Davis 2009).

The repercussions of one's gender being understood as artificial may range from tedium, to emotional and physical pain–from social isolation, to death (Antjoule 2016; NCAVP 2013). The ideals invested in relationships, practices and knowledges that naturalise and structure cis-heteronormativity enact epistemic violence by constructing 'trans' as unreal. The consequences can be severe, since the idea of sexgender 'deception' has served to 'justify' physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and harassment toward trans people (Sharpe 2012, 2017; Namaste 1996, 2009). During the 1990s, these circumstances led trans activists Jeanna B. and Xanthra Phillippa to produce a badge targeting queer theory which proclaimed that 'Our blood is on your theories' (Namaste 1994). Indeed, in the United States, and akin to 'gay panic' legal defence strategies, 'trans panic' defenses have been deployed to justify the murder of trans women by cis, heterosexual men, and to successfully diminish charges to manslaughter (Lee 2014). Looking at queer theory from the perspective of trans activists and scholars brings the salience of these concerns into sharp focus. Thus, in this research I seek to harness valuable aspects of queer thinking, while prioritising the narratives and experiences of trans people, with the ambition of producing research that connects with, and reflects, complexities present in their everyday, lived experiences. In doing so, I aim to explore various ways in which trans people make sense of their genders and related identities.

More recently, queer studies scholars whose research involves trans people and identities appear to have taken on earlier critiques of queer theory (Ahmed 2016; Butler 2004; Lim and Brown 2009). For instance, in *Undoing Gender* (Butler 2004: 34-5)*,* which is partly informed by engaging with trans and intersex social movements, Butler addresses the question of *who* is excluded from the category 'human'. Central to this text are questions concerning violence, the accepted limits of legible humanity, and the categories–such as gender–that constitute it. Butler argues that violence against trans people is not recognised as such because it 'emerges from a profound desire to keep the order of binary gender natural or necessary, to make of it a structure … that no human can oppose, and still remain human (2004: 34-5). Thus, Butler's thinking in *Undoing Gender* (2004) is especially instructive in its attentiveness to inter-connectedness between dehumanising sexgender-policing practices, and transphobic violence that punishes perceived transgressions as a means of sustaining the hegemony of a cis-heteronormativity social order.

Abstraction and agency

Trans studies scholars and activists are not alone in critiquing post-structuralist queer theories and concepts such as Butler's 'performativity'. Given the influence of Butler's writing, certain issues within her approach have also travelled across disciplinary boundaries. For instance, geographer Lise Nelson incisively critiqued Butler's work, and geographers' uncritical engagements with it (Bell et al. 1994; McDowell and Court 1994) which borrow the 'language of performativity', and engage with more insightful aspects of Butler's queer theory whilst overlooking its limitations (Nelson 1999: 332).

Although 'performativity' centres embodied practices, shortfalls in Butler's predominantly text-based approach have produced an abstracted subject and do not account for intention and agency in producing social change which is instead located as an unconscious slippage (Nelson 1999; Nash 2010). Accordingly, Butler forecloses the possibility of conscious intervention, resistance, agency, and vis-à-vis processes of individual and social change that subvert normativities (Nelson 1999; Nash 2010). Similarly, Karen Barad critiques Butler from a posthumanist perspective, suggesting that–although performativity is valuable–her theorisations on

materialised, discursive practices are constrained by the passivity of her subject whose lack of agency Barad links to Foucault's 'docile bodies' (Barad 2003). These critiques recognise the value of performativity in revealing relationships between embodied practices, discourse, and heteronormativity, but there are issues concerning the levels of passivity and abstraction figured within Butler's subject (Barad 2003; Nelson 1999; Nash 2010).

Thus, Butlerian 'performativity' is limited in its capacity to account for legislative shifts, such as those that were brought about through the sustained campaigning by trans activists during the 1990s culminating in the *Gender Recognition Act 2004* (Burns 2013; 2014). Increasing the voice and presence of trans and non-binary people in the public eye communicates the possibility of trans, and the experiences of being a trans person, to those who have not previously encountered trans people. The Internet has proven a decisive technology in this process of increasing trans visibility and uniting trans people and communities (TMSA 2017; BTB 2017). Of course, the effects of heightened visibility vary including reaching people who come to identify as trans themselves, increasing trans awareness amongst the general public, and attracting the vitriol, sexgender-policing, and abuse by people with transphobic views (Gibbs 2015; Valentine 2016; Gossett et al. 2017). These brief examples show the importance of accounting for–albeit limited–agency and intentionality in resisting social norms and driving social change, as well as attending to the multifaceted ramification brought through processes of change. Accordingly, I follow Nelson's call for geographers to temporally and spatially locate performativity, by attending to how ontologically 'situated, knowing subjects do identity' (1999: 351)–an approach that offers a means of harnessing valuable elements of Butler's conception of (1999[1990]) performativity, whilst addressing its limitations.

Responding to criticisms of her earlier work, Butler has clarified that 'performativity was not intended to imply that a 'person's felt sense of gender was...“unreal”' or 'chosen' (in Williams 2014). She has also stressed the need to attend to what people feel, how bodily experiences are registered, and how gender possibilities could be expanded (ibid.). For instance, by arguing that bodily practices 'have the capacity to alter [and contest] norms in the course of their citation' (Butler 2004: 53). *Undoing Gender* (2004), thus, accounts better for trans peoples' intentionality and agency in

disrupting and extending established boundaries of cisnormativity and heteronormativity. Informed by earlier criticisms, a shift aligning Butler more closely with trans studies is evident (Butler 2004; Williams 2014; Ahmed 2016).

Towards empiricism

Trans studies scholars, as I have discussed, have criticised queer (mis)understandings of trans subjectivities as fluid and/or homogeneous. During the early 1990s, although queer theory witnessed a boom in literature on drag (Butler 1999[1990]; Garber 1992; Tyler 1991), it appeared incapable of connecting with the everyday lived experiences of people who identify as transgender and/or transsexual (Namaste 1994: 299; 2000). Thus, Namaste argues, 'queer theory refuses transgender subjectivities even as it looks at them' (1994: 299). While queer theories have celebrated trans people for embodying subversive and expansive gender possibilities, medical and psychiatric discourses and trans-exclusive feminists have variously positioned trans people as reproducing gender stereotypes (Hines 2010; Nash 2010). Despite vast differences between queer studies, medicine and psychiatry, and trans-exclusionary feminism as fields, each of them largely falls at the same hurdle of overlooking the complexities within and between trans subjectivities and disregarding the voices of trans people speaking from personal experiences and self-knowledge (Browne et al. 2010). Through epistemologies that privilege deconstruction and abstraction, queer theorists have overlooked the knowledge, agency, voices and the diversely situated, embodied, experiences of trans people (Doan 2010; Stryker 1998, 2004; Nash 2010; Browne et al. 2010; Hines 2006; 2009; 2010; Prosser 1998; Namaste 1996; 2000; Davis 2009). Instead, queer approaches have often, and ironically, constructed homogeneous, abstracted transgender 'subjects' that function largely as methodological tools for deconstructing gender (Hines 2010: 599). Accordingly, auto-ethnographic approaches have proven invaluable to Trans Studies - such as Petra L. Doan's (2010) 'The tyranny of gendered spaces – reflections from beyond the gender dichotomy'. That said, there is precedent for auto-ethnography as a valuable feminist and/or queer method (Holman Jones and Adams 2010; Ettorre 2019). Some of these auto-ethnographic texts rooted in feminist, queer and sexuality studies, are engaged with in this thesis, for example, Betsy Lucal's (1999) 'What it means to be gendered me: Life on the boundaries of a dichotomous gender system' and bell hook's (1990)

writing on homeplace in *Yearning: Race Gender and Cultural Politics.*

Accordingly, trans studies scholars have increasingly made ethical arguments for theory to be read through empiricism in order to advance conceptualisations of transgender lives (Nash 2010; Hines 2010; Stryker 2004; Doan 2010; Browne et al. 2010; Namaste 2009: 29). This thesis is profoundly informed by this ethos, and is grounded in theoretically-informed empirical research that centres trans people in knowledge production. Without dismissing the intellectual value of queer theorists, I follow Namaste in contending that 'truly transformative intellectual practice' (2009: 27) must collaborate with trans individuals and communities and seek to address communities' political, intellectual,and pragmatic issues through research. As such, drawing from queer approaches that tend to the intersections between social, institutional dynamics within trans people lives is key to this project.

ASSEMBLING TRANS URBAN STUDIES: CONVIVIAL CROSSINGS, AND PRODUCTIVE FRICTIONS

'If queer theory was born of the union of sexuality studies and feminism, transgender studies can be considered queer theory's evil twin' suggested Susan Stryker (2004: 212), 'it has the same parentage but willfully disrupts the privileged family narratives'. How then, do we, as scholars working in trans studies, productively engage with, and draw from, our genealogies and ongoing family connections with strands of feminist, sexuality studies and queer theory, whilst forging paths that avoid their pitfalls, where trans peoples' identities and lived realities are concerned? This chapter has explored strands of medicine, psychiatry, feminism and queer theory, highlighting how these disciplines have influenced trans studies, including through critiques by trans and gender non-conforming academics and activists. I have sought to show how these critical engagements inform the project of trans studies. To recap, I borrow from the journal *Transgender Studies Quarterly* website (TSQ 2017), which describes the field as exploring:

> … the diversity of gender, sex, sexuality, embodiment and identity in ways that have not been adequately addressed by feminist and queer scholarship. Its mission is to foster a vigorous conversation among scholars, artists, activists, and others that examines how 'transgender' comes into play as a category, a

process, a social assemblage, an increasingly intelligible gender identity, an identifiable threat to gender normativity, and a rubric for understanding the variability and contingency of gender across time, space, and cultures.

While this research centres around participatory ethos and empirical focus, my research design, ethics, practice, and analysis are informed by theoretical considerations, concepts and critiques. In foregrounding the lived experiences of trans people there has been a kind of reciprocity and reflexivity across the research process as I have sought to respond to participants' knowledge, by putting them in conversation with the thinking and material that their narratives ask for–sometimes even demand. In this way, I have approached this research with an ethos of openness, following my participants' lead, sometimes taking meandering trajectories, unexpected directions and, at other times, paths I might otherwise have dodged. For instance, I set out on this research feeling reluctant to engage with the Trans Debate in the British media, and the architectural typologies of space like public toilets that are so often instrumentalised in the service of transphobia and misogyny. I was concerned about inadvertently legitimising the debating of trans peoples' bodies and identities, and effectively allowing my agenda to be dictated by transphobic people and cis-heteronormative anxieties. I wanted participants to set the agenda, and to explore the richness and nuances of trans peoples' lives beyond the narrow and misrepresentative views that co-constitute and perpetuate the Trans Debate. Yet, participants' narratives demanded that, if they must navigate this hostile terrain as they go about living their everyday lives, then they should also do so in this research. In this, they guided me through the richness and nuances of their lives as trans people who negotiate on a daily basis the repercussions of 'the Trans Debate and cis-heteronormative social expectations, spaces, imaginaries, and architectures.

The aims of this research demanded an approach that is open and responsive to trans peoples' lives, and the variety of forces that shape them. I am inspired by the openness of 'weak theory' and non-representational geographies (and the closely related assemblage thinking) (Wright 2014; Thrift 2008). Rather than seeking to close down, categorise, model, or make grand claims, 'weak theory' is a 'practice of attending and attuning' to the things, emotions, affects, and ways of knowing that texture our lives (Stewart: 2008: 72: Wright 2014). 'Weak theory' is not pre-defined,

or fixed–it sees flux and openness, it embraces possibilities, trajectories, entangled connections and multiplicities, and it allows for partiality, inconsistency, tension, and contradiction (Wright 2014: 2-3; Sedgwick 1997; Stewart 2008; Tomkins, 1963). With a similar ethos, non-representational geographies offer a style of thought that is attentive and attuned to the more-than-representational and more-than-human relationships, and potentialities for the spaces and societies in which we live our lives (Anderson and Harrison 2010; Lorimer 2005; Wright 2014, Thrift 2008, Colls 2012).

In the following, I trace key influences in the theoretical approach and ethos taken in this research. I begin with Henry S. Rubin's (1998) thinking on the value of phenomenology in trans studies, before moving on to discuss Sara Ahmed's (2006) queer phenomenology and wider influences upon the analyses across this thesis. I then develop this discussion by turning attention to research using non-representational theories. To highlight the value of incorporating non-representational geographies and assemblage thinking–with trans studies broadly, and in this thesis specifically–this section ends by outlining how these engagements inform my understanding of concepts, entities, and processes that I analyse in this work.

Rehabilitating phenomenology

In 1998, Henry S. Rubin published 'Phenomenology as Method in Trans Studies' in the journal *Gay and Lesbian Quarterly* positing phenomenology as a productive path for scholars seeking to surpass the impasse reached by queer theorists and feminists who have–for reasons discussed above–tended to locate trans people as having a 'false consciousness' concerning their self-knowledge. Since phenomenology 'legitimates the knowledge of the subject while pointing out the critical possibilities that result from the subject's negotiation with the world', Rubin argues that a phenomenological approach offers a useful tool for 'grasping experience' (Rubin 1998: 267). Although Sartre and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology has been justifiably critiqued for 'reproducing forms of domination encoded in educated, financially secure, white, heterosexual, masculinist, and European subject positions', Rubin contends that insights from Foucauldian discourse analysis can correct such absolutism, while returning legitimacy to knowledge 'generated by the experiencing "I"' (1998:265). Rubin's 'rehabilitated phenomenology' (1998: 279) responds to feminist and queer thinking that has

erased trans peoples' experiences, subjectivities and voices, and denied authenticity and legitimacy, and trans people's capacity to know who they are. '[A] body as it exists for oneself is the point of reference by which the whole world unfolds' Rubin contends (1998: 268). Thus, subjectivities can be productively understood as discursively constituted, as well as meaningfully experienced and practiced by knowing subjects. Trans subjectivities demonstrate the relevance of our interior lives, of one's sense of self, of being and becoming who one knows oneself to be, without resorting to a foundationalist free-thinking subject, or the unconstrained phenomenological "I" (Rubin 1998: 267; Nameste 1992: 221). In this thesis, my research design, practice, and analysis are inspired by Rubin's advocacy of the imperative to engage with trans people on their own terms, recognising the validity of experiential knowledge, as well as the ways in which sex, sexual and gender norms inescapably structure and discipline our lives, even as we resist and exceed them.

In framing the *Non-Binary Lives* anthology, co-editors Jos Twist, Ben Vincent, Meg-John Barker and Kat Gupta highlight how (2020):

> [t]he stories that we tell, and those that are told about us, help us to form an understanding of who we are… When it comes to gender diverse people, many powerful forces determine the stories and broader narratives that are told about us: medical systems, historians, the media, religious leaders, film makers, and politicians, to name but a few. Yet, we also have the power to tell our own stories.

Indeed, various forms of story-telling by trans people are forms of knowledge production that are crucial in contesting the stigmatising and pathologising transphobic claims, while enhancing understandings of the plural realities of trans lives. Yet, working with experience-as-evidence must be approached critically, with an appreciation of the situatedness of knowledge. In an influential post-structuralist critique of the function of experience-as-evidence in the writing of history and feminist analyses, queer and post-colonial historian Joan W. Scott (1991) expresses concerns regarding a neglect of *how* subjects are differently constituted. Relying upon experience as neutral knowledge and evidence risks essentialist and ahistorical understandings of identity, and negates the constructed nature of forces that condition experiences and limit agency, Scott argues. This uncritical faith in

experiences, thus, obscures how difference is established and operates, including through the actions of variously constituted subjects (Scott 1991). In short, 'experience is at once always already an interpretation and something that needs to be interpreted' (ibid.: 797). If knowledge is gained through visceral experience, and that knowledge is represented though writing, speaking – including narrating personal stories – and the production of visual materials, amongst other means, following Donna Haraway (1988), we must understand knowledge as situated, rather than consider knowledge drawn from experience to be unassailable evidence. As Rubin suggests, to take knowledge drawn from experiences seriously, does not negate attending to the situatedness of that knowledge, and the contingency and construction of the social categories and processes that condition our lives. As Scott notes (1991), the experiences are subjected to conditions that mediate agency, and often constrain our choices; a claim that resounds decades later.

Hil Malatino's thinking in *Trans Care* (2020) is instructive here, in relating the conditioning of gender and its recognition:

> we all [trans people] recognize gender as a morally loaded laborious *process …* And our labor is alienated, insofar as we don't own what we produce and we rely on someone else to determine its value and worth.
>
> This means that we labor under conditions we don't choose, conditions that many of us actively want to destroy. But we also understand, intimately, that the concept of autonomy that underwrites romantic myths of the insurrectionary subject can't hold. Gender recognition is sustained by a web of forces that we don't control … Because we exert agency in determining our forms of life and flesh, but that agency is always only one part of a much broader assembly into which our flesh–and its possibilities–are grafted.

Writing from a position of experience as a trans person, Malatino (2020: 42) highlights how trans lives are mediated by forces beyond our control, and how our gendered labours operate under socially constructed conditions that impose lesser or greater resistance according to our will or capacity to pass the litmus test of gendered decency. Nonetheless, trans people can, and do, exert varying degrees of agency in how our identities evolve, and lives unfold. To mark oneself according to

an identity–as any combination of trans, non-binary, woman, man, agender, or otherwise–is to locate oneself legibly, according to social categories that are both constructed *and* abundantly real, carrying consequences that profoundly shape lived experiences. For non-binary people in particular, the constructedness of gendered categories is perhaps particularly apparent, with 'non-binary' emerging relatively recently as an identity and umbrella category that gives a name to historically enduring gender pluralities that go beyond and between a man/woman binary. Indeed, the experiences of feeling, and being made to feel, illegible are common amongst people with non-binary genders, as participants in this research attest.

In this research, when placed in conversation with the knowledge and voices of participants, it is the work of scholars whose analyses combined post-structuralist, intersectional, assemblage, and phenomenological thought that proved most productive. These theories are neither entirely reconcilable, nor oppositions, as Rubin attests in the research with trans men (1998). The generative potential of this approach is evident in Sara Ahmed's work which features frequently across this thesis. While this is perhaps most overt *in Queer Phenomenology* (2006), Ahmed is, across her oeuvre, consistently attending to experiences, orientations, sense, emotion, affect, and agency, as well as the operation of institutions, power, knowledge, and identity, especially in relation to race, sexuality and gender, including transgender (2004; 2010; 2012; 2014[a][b]; 2006[a][b]; 2017; 2019). Akin to Rubin's 'rehabilitated phenomenology' (1998), though 'not properly phenomenological', Ahmed suspects that 'a queer phenomenology might enjoy this failure to be proper' (2006: 543). Ahmed puts the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, Husserl and Heidegger, as well as thinking by feminist philosophers working in the phenomenological tradition, including Judith Butler and Iris Marion Young, in closer dialogue with queer studies. In doing so, she considers what it would mean for the latter to 'pose the orientation of sexual orientation as a phenomenological question' (2006[b]: 543), and examines the 'orient' in 'orientalism' (Ahmed 2006[a]). Ahmed demonstrates how phenomenological thinking offers a resource to queer studies through an orientation towards spatial, temporal, emotional and affective dimensions of social relations and embodied practices as well as the situatedness and contingencies of the paths we tread, follow, and forge as our lives and identities unfold. Although Ahmed's queer phenomenology does consider gender, it does not

consider transness, though her thinking aligns with trans critiques of queer theorising of trans lives, and she has subsequently and specifically included trans people, subjectivities, and lives in her work (Ahmed 2016; 2014[a][b]).

For example, in her thinking on 'wiggle room' and 'willfulness', which I engage with in Chapter 5, Ahmed's wiggle room offers a lens for considering social categories, including gender, which are embodied, spatial, in process, and operate in relation to social norms that shape and spatially contain mobility, movement, and experience. In doing so, she accounts for agency and intention in refusals to be 'fully determined from without' (Ahmed 2014[a]: 192). Here emerges the potential of producing and expanding possibilities while negotiating the disciplinary force of normative social structures, categories and relations. As I show in Chapter 4, Ahmed's (2016: 31) thinking on the hammering of transphobia is productive when put in dialogue with trans people's different responses to the Trans Debate and the quotidian violence proliferated through the relentless questioning and stigmatising of trans people lives, bodies, and identities–a hammering that impacts embodied, emotional, affective aspects of trans peoples' lived experiences and spatial practices in context-sensitive ways.

More-than-representation

Non-representational theories (NRTs) emerged during the 1990s, particularly through the work of Nigel Thrift (2008) amongst others (Lorimer 2005; Wylie 2007; Dewsbury et al. 2002) and contributed towards a wider shift within geography towards assemblages (McFarlane 2011; Farias and Bender 2010). This turn somewhat echoes disciplinary trajectories elsewhere, for example, Rosi Braidotti's nomadic feminism (1994) and posthumanism (2013) and Grosz's corporeal feminism (1994). Rooted in the phenomenology of scholars such as Merleau-Ponty (2002), NRTs foregrounds embodiment, disrupts binary oppositions, and attends to socio-material relationships and interactions *between* **'**body *and* society, culture *and* nature, thought *and* action, representation *and* practice' (Wylie 2007:151, 164; Thrift 2008). NRTs representations are understood as being continually produced and ontologically operating *in* and *of* social worlds of embodied practices, rather than epistemologically enshrouding or being inscribed *upon* the ontic (Wylie 2007:164; Anderson and Harrison 2010).Thus, embodied practices and interactions,

discourses, opinions and aesthetics, materialities, and objects *enact and circulate* socio-cultural meanings and values within contingent real-world contexts (Wylie 2007:166, Anderson and Harrison 2010: 9). As Chapters 3 and 4 demonstrate, there are resonances between the relational onto- epistemology of NRTs and assemblage thinking, and the function of discourses enacted through the Trans Debate. When circulated through print, broadcast, and online media, visual and textual discourses are not passive, but carry 'event potential' that conditions social interactions (Massumi in Puar 2012:61). Discoursesthat invoke spaces, bodies, and practices to figure trans people as dangerous and fraudulent consolidate transphobic and cis-heteronormative ideals, and shape the social interactions and expectations which trans people negotiate and navigate everyday.

Broadly in NRTs, the 'social' is conceived as a 'weaving of material bodies that can never be cleanly or clearly cleaved into a set of named, known and represented identities' (Anderson and Harrison 2010:13). Feminist geographers, including Jane M. Jacobs and Catherine Nash (2003: 275), have raised concerns that bodies in NRTs 'are not figured through multiple social categories of age, sex, ethnicity, race and dis/ability', while appreciating that this emerges from a commitment to avoid positioning bodies according to pre-defined, immutable differences with essentialised meanings, values, and significations (Colls 2012: 431). A schism emerges here that resembles the tensions highlighted through trans studies scholars' and activists' critiques of post-structuralist queer and feminist theorisations that ignored trans peoples lived realities, secure sense of self, and gendered legitimacy. Following Lise Nelsons' (1999) argument against the uncritical application of Butler's performativity in geography, I have sought to attend to how trans identities are *done* by ontologically situated, knowing subjects–subjects who negotiate social worlds that are *both* profoundly inflected by demographic differences and social categories that name them, *and* are socially constituted by a messy, interweaving of material bodies, that in their plurality complicate and expand those same categories. It is, I seek to show, a *both/and*, not the binary oppositional *either/or*. That is to say, there is an imperative to attend to social differences and systemic inequalities and oppressions, *and* recognise how we *all* become situated, *and* situate ourselves vis-à-vis social categories without obscuring unrulier aspects of how identities are lived, including how we resist them. The resistance to binary oppositions in NRTs, influenced by

phenomenology's challenge to Cartesian dualisms, offers a valuable lens for complicating the fixity and veracity of binaries that structure a cis-heteronormative order *and* other social orders that are contoured by restrictive understandings of transness and gender non-conformity.

In this research, the participants and I demonstrate the inadequacies of reducing man/woman, male/female, sex/gender and masculine/feminine, cis/trans–even binary/non-binary–to oppositions. As previously noted, 'non-binary', for example, operates as an identity category that, in cleaving out space between the binary confinement of man/woman/male/female binaries, can appear inadvertently trapped, linguistically at least, in producing yet another binary. The realities of how non-binary identities are *done* reveal a plurality of possibility, even within the small group of people collaborating in this research. For one participant, 'non-binary' describes living as a trans woman *and* cis man, while other participants used different combinations of terms to position themselves as trans, non-binary, and agender. Another participant approaches social interactions with new individuals encountered through certain social circles, by telling people that they use 'they/them' pronouns. This is a tactic for avoiding gendering themselves where possible, but describe their gender as 'non-binary and trans' when required to. Similarly, I describemyself as trans, non-binary and genderqueer, a combination which is specific enough to be seen among my queer and trans social circles, and which is semi- legible beyond them, and yet vague enough to have breathing space. Thus, even this brief snapshot demonstrates the value of an understanding of gender that complicates the kind of binary thinking that dominates the social and material structuring of our lives in Britain, as elsewhere. Sex, gender and sexgender is neitherbinary nor linear: it is an 'array of diverse experiences and performances', to borrow Petra L Doan's words (2010: 638). In this research, the diversity of gender and gendered possibilities is understood as including *all of us,* and encompasses people who have never been asked to identify *as* or *with* a gender, and those who may be reluctant to *do* gender, or to *be* gendered by others.

Akin to NRT and rooted in the work of Deleuze and Guatari (1987), assemblage thinking has been embraced by scholars, including geographers of gender and sexuality Catherine J Nash and Andrew Gorman Murray, who seek alternative

modes to conceiving 'subjects, bodies, affects, and moments that reflect the indeterminacy, multiplicity and temporality of these events' (Nash and Gorman Murray 2017: 1525; Massumi 2002; DeLanda 2006; Puar 2007, 2012). In this, assemblage thinking considers the constellation of material, emotional, affective, spatial, temporal, discursive, representational, embodied, institutional and processual forces, intensities and becomings that form and informs our lives.

Similar to Ahmed (2006[a]) and Rubin (1998), writing on intersectional assemblages, Jasbir Puar suggests that there are 'convivial crossings' (2012: 50) and productive frictions in bringing together epistemologies that, in illuminating the others' blind spots, provide productive analytic possibilities. Indeed, in *Terrorist Assemblages* Puar (2007: 213) contends that:

> [I]ntersectional identities and assemblages must remain as interlocutors in tension … intersectional identities are the byproducts of attempts to still and quell the perpetual motion of assemblages, to capture and reduce them, to harness their threatening mobility.

Emanating from a black feminist legal scholarship, intersectionality seeks to engage with political and legislative instructions, and their associated forms of disciplinary administration and social normativity, where power collides, interlocks, and intensifies in the lives of people who are simultaneously subject to multiple oppressions (Crenshaw 1989; Puar 2012). While intersectionality highlights the importance of understanding forces of structural oppressions for those whose lives are lived at the nexus of multiple marginalised identities and allied structural oppressions, assemblage thinking disrupts the orderliness, or fixity, of an intersectionality lens, to delve into the messiness, and more-than-human aspects of the everyday textures of our ever-unfolding socio-spatial relations and realities.

Highlighting the resonances of assemblage thinking to those whose lives do not seamlessly align with fixed, stable, rights-bearing liberal subjects, Hil Malatino suggests that 'assemblage thinking comes easily to trans folks' (2020: 39). They continue:

> Most of us find Eurocentric myths of maximal agency, atomistic selfhood, and radical self-possession a really hard sell. We lack the privilege of having an uncomplicated "I" (and the ability to conjure oneself into such an "I" is always

> a product of privilege, to be sure). Recognition comes to us in the form of a gift–though we tell others what pronouns to use, what names, how to refer to us, we're also thrown directly into a series of complicated ratiocinations as we attempt to infer how others are understanding their conferral of gender untous … we exert agency in determining our forms of life and flesh, but that agency is always only one part of a much broader assembly into which our flesh–and its possibilities–are grafted (Malatino 2020: 39, 40).

The suggestion here is not that assemblage is only relevant to trans people. All of our genders are constituted by assemblages of social norms, sexgender designations, bodily contours, anatomical forms, chromosomal configurations, hormonal chemistries, surgical interventions, senses and feelings, pronouns and embodied practices, exogenous chemicals from facial cosmetics, hair styling and hygiene products, the adornment of clothing and jewelry objects, the list goes on… For trans people, these assemblages are neither *more constructed*, or *less natural*, but they are likely *more apparent* to those of us whose social conditions endow us with a 'complicated "I"' and sometimes the people we socially encounter (Malatino 2020: 39). Herein, the relational ontology of assemblages, where or how we *do* gender, intermingles with social recognition (or misrecognition) through gender conferred onto us. This has profound implications for everyday experiences in the spaces traversed and resided in through our domestic and public lives. As will become clear in the empirical chapters of this thesis, the voices of participants, as they verbally and visually narrate their lived experiences, demand an approach thatis attentive to these fine-grained gendered assemblages of everyday life.

For clarity, I shall outline how this theoretical approach informs my understanding of relationships between embodiment, becoming, emotion, affect, sense, imaginaries, space and architecture, which feature as key concepts and phenomena in this research.

Embodied becoming and affecting emotions

Drawing from phenomenology, I understand *embodiment* as the site of experiences and subjectivity in which social and personal, cultural and natural, social and biological, discursive and material, representation and practice, and mind and body inseparably entwine (Grosz 1994; Wylie 2007:164; Engdahl 2014). As such,

embodiment is conceived as the experiential basis, condition, and context through which subjects socio-materially interact with–and relate–to objects, and inhabit spaces, often in unseen or in unthought ways (Grosz 1994:86; Wylie 2007:147-8; Griffen 2007:7). Connected with embodiment, *becoming* is a particularly productive concept since *all* bodies–trans, non-binary, cis–are understood as emerging through processes of *becoming* (Coffey 2013:14; Garner 2014). While *being* implies a level of stasis, *becoming* usefully captures an in-between, 'a folding-in of external influences and a simultaneous unfolding outwards of affects' (Braidotti 2000: 159; Garner 2014). By applying to all forms of embodiment, *becoming* encompasses difference, accommodating the ways in which lives and identities are sustained and experiences are made stable through repetition, as well as periods and processes of transformation (Sullivan 2006**:** 561**)**. As such, *becoming* challenges assumptions concerning the 'unnaturalness' or 'constructedness' of trans bodies, when positioned in opposition to cisnormative identities and experiences (Garner 2014; Coffey 2013).

Emotions are understood as embodied phenomena that 'shape, and are shaped by, our interactions with the people, places and politics that make up our unique, personal geographies' (Davidson and Bondi 2004: 373). Accordingly, emotions are integral, and sometimes intangible, features of everyday life that are situated within and around the body–the principal site of emotional experiences (Davidson and Milligan 2004: 523-4). Understanding emotions in this way is particularly productive given its attentiveness to individual and collective lived experiences in various spatial, social-cultural, political and geographical contexts. Closely related to emotion is *affect*, which is perhaps the most abstract and nebulous of these concepts and has been a topic of debate amongst scholars whose research has taken an 'affective turn' (Anderson and Harrison 2010). These debates are beyond the scope of this document, thus, I shall outline my approach to *affect*, as distinguish from, but closely related to, emotion. Affects–'the capacity to affect and to be affected' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 257)–are central to embodied experiences. Geographers suggest that affects can be understood as "a kind of vague but intense atmosphere" (McCormack 2008: 6). Although affects might be felt in the body, they are relational and not possessed by subjects; affects circulate in-between subjects, objects, and socio-spatial environments through their interactions (ibid..).

Emotions relate to discursive categories that correspond with existing social meanings and experiences, however, affects are non-conscious experiences of

intensities (McCormack 2003: 495; Davidson and Milligan 2004). It is the force of affective intensities that produce emotions and determine their intensity and character. Affects cannot be easily articulated, and are somewhat ineffable since they are always non-conscious and precede thought (Shouse 2005). Despite this abstraction, the 'affective turn' within social, culture, and political disciplines informed endeavours to write embodied experiences back into academic analysis. This move responded to the perceived neglect of embodied experiences through the rise of post-modernism and post-structuralism (Phipps 2016: 3; Ahmed 2004; 2010; Davidson and Milligan 2004). The embodied, affective, and emotional geographies of participants guide this research and illuminate the necessity to take these aspects of lived experience seriously, especially regarding the affective force of cis-heteronormativity upon the emotions and embodied practices of trans people.

Making sense of gender

When considering the sense of self and gender, which is central to this research, it is helpful to draw from dictionary definitions regarding particular usages of sense. Specifically, 'sense' is a noun, a 'feeling that something is the case' (OED 2017), and 'sense' as a verb describes '[b]e[ing] aware of (something) without being able to define exactly how one knows' (ibid..). This chimes with the phase 'the gender I know myself to be', a common expression used by trans people to communicate the authenticity and authority of their sense of self (Doan 2010). A trans friend recently recounted a related anecdote: When delivering trans-awareness training, he asks participants, who are most often cis, to describe how they *know* their gender without resorting to biology and by avoiding clichés. Thus, he is asking participants to justify their gendered sense of self, and how they situate themselves in their social world. Whilst familiar for trans people, this position is almost always alien to cis participants, who regularly find themselves speechless. Considered together, this suggests that emotional, embodied, and sensory intersections where *knowing* and *being*, mind and body coalesce may remain invisible to those whose lives move smoothly along a normative path (Ahmed 2006). Furthermore, that moving-against-the-grain of normativities not only makes these intersections more visible, it also creates a necessity to articulate a sense of self that challenges normativities whilst remaining situated in relation to them.

Sense, in the meaning described above, creates space for acknowledging the legitimacy and significance of self-knowledge as informed through embodied experiences, as something that does not require 'objective' evidence to prove exactly how one knows. This strongly indicates the value of exploring further and learning from experientially (in)formed self-knowledges and senses of self as narrated by participants. Given the present context in which trans people experience a lack of social recognition, institutional requirements to prove their gender, and sexgender-policing from members of the public, considering the collective social, political and theoretical implications of *sense* has the potential to contribute toward trans studies and activism (Whittle et al. 2007; Antjoule 2016 *Gender Recognition Act 2004*, Valentine 2015). Theoretically, I am interested in exploring the productive potential in how self-knowledge and one's corresponding sense of gender, informed by embodied experiences across different spatial and geographical contexts, may complicate academic distinctions between epistemology and ontology (Barad 2003).

The value of senses of gender is supported by Jason Lim and Kath Browne (2009) whose perspective is informed by participatory action research with trans people in Brighton. Sense of gender is conceptualised as one, of various registers in which genders are lived, experienced, and felt in ways that are known through embodiment, but are not equivalent to bodily materiality. Attentiveness to *sense* enables researchers to do justice to the complexities of trans people's narratives and experiences by moving beyond mind/body, knowing/being(becoming), gender/sex dualisms, and by complicating oppositions between queer deconstruction and the stable senses of gender that people commonly experience. Other 'registers' include performativity, and structured systems of sexgender discourse that function though social norms and institutions (Lim and Browne 2009; Butler 1999[1990]). This conceptualisation is informed by a theoretical reading of empirical material comprising of trans peoples' testimonies. The overarching aim of conceptualising senses of gender is its potential value in understanding experiences of dissonance between aspects of one's embodiment and 'expectations and norms enacted through social institutions and discourses of gender' (Lim and Browne 2009: 6.3).

Similarly, this research is guided by a participatory ethos, and aims to do justice tothe complexities within the narratives gathered by enhancing understandings of

gender diversity in ways that benefit trans people's lives. I, likewise, understand sense of gender as a productive concept when considering how trans peoples' experiential knowledge relating to heteronormativity and cisnormativity can productively enhance understandings of gender. This project differs from Lim and Browne (2009) given my collaboration with participants from multiple cities across Britain using visual and verbal narratives and in-depth interviews, rather than surveys and focus groups with a single-location (Brighton) residents.

Spatial imaginaries and disciplinary architectures

Spatial imaginaries feature across the chapters in this thesis, most prominently in Chapters 1 and 2, due to the ways in which moralised gendered spatial imaginaries embedded in public toilets and the Kenwood Ladies' Bathing Pond have been instrumentalised within the Trans Debate, and have shaped the lives of trans people in Britain. My thinking on imaginaries is influenced particularly by scholars working across the field of Urban studies. For urbanist Edward Soja, imaginaries are 'the interpretative grids through which we think about, experience, evaluate, and decide to act in the places, spaces, and communities in which we live' (Soja 2000: 324). Thus, imaginaries are heuristic lenses that shape integrations within given spatialand social contexts.

Urban studies scholars Christoph Lindner and Miriam Meissner contend that urban imaginaries meaningfully interconnect 'structures and signs, minds and bodies, facts and subjectivities, actualities and virtualities, economies and ecologies of urban social space' (2018: 6), with the relational 'and' (rather than an oppositional 'or') of assemblage thinking and NRTs. Urban imaginaries enmesh the spatial, political, and aesthetic dimensions of a site with material, conceptual, and experiential dynamics, as well as embodied practices and relations (Lindner and Meissner 2018). Furthermore, imaginaries have a temporal dimension; they are historically embedded, often future-oriented, always in transition, and frequently in tension with competing visions. Particularly relevant to Chapter 3, concerning fashion and shopping, and Chapter 4, which explores belonging and home, are imagined urban and rural communities. Work by the anthropologist Kath Weston (1995) on the function and realities of gay urban imaginaries of the 'Great Gay Migration' in 1970s and 1980s North America, which drew upon Benedict Anderson's *Imagined*

Communities (1983) is instructive here. In this research, the imaginaries and realities of living in rural, pastoral, urban, suburban and inner cities emerged as salient in relation to participants' transness, especially in preferences and reservations towards inhabiting certain cities, districts and sites therein. Furthermore, imaginaries are constituted by normative ideas and moral values attached to gender, sexuality, class, race, and bodily ability that form and inform architectures, landscapes, and the built environment in ways that shape trans peoples' lives across an array of public, pseudo-public, private and domestic spaces. Accordingly, imaginaries are understood to serve as an influential co-constituent in the assemblages in which all lives are emmeshed.

The disciplinary potential of architectural forms and functions, spatial design and designations, and the building environment features within this analysis, and across this thesis, particularly concerning public toilets, fashion retail spaces and the domestic home. Drawing upon Michel Foucault, Paul Preciado highlights the urgency to understand architecture as constituting modern biopolitical technologies since 'most architecture theories still presume that the body and gender, racial and sexual identities are given, and that they exist before architecture practice starts' (2012: 132). As architect Joel Sanders has argued, 'architecture is not a simple or neutral aesthetic category to which gender is merely applied…architectural forms and gendered bodies mutually reinforce each other's feigned timelessness and stability' (in Crawford 2010). Gender-charged moments in architectural history trace back to the Roman architecture of Vitruvius, for whom 'architectural norms begin with gender norms' (Crawford 2010: 520), Crawford argues that it might be considered 'an archive of gender' (ibid..: 517). Rather than transness being a new and hitherto silenced concern for architects and architectural theorists, Crawford contends transness is already inherent, and repressed by conventional architecture (2010). Indeed, what Susan Stryker (2014: 40) called trans phenomena – 'anything that calls our attention to the contingency and unnaturalness of gender normativity'–has been disciplinarily pushed to the margins and occluded from a dominant sexgendered biopolitical order. Yet, just as the ontological realities of sexgender plurality are nothing new nor straightforward, neither is the mutually constitutive relationship between gender and architecture, with Crawford reading 'transgender' as present within Vitruvius's *De Architectura.* Furthermore, Crawford suggests that architectures

are affective archives, 'where people's shared memories and affective experiences of particular architectural features define a site as much as anything else and moving through certain spaces makes us tap into our own archives of emotional experience' (2010: 519). In this project, I follow Preciado and Crawford in seeking to disrupt taken-for-granted ideas imbued by genders and architecture, and their mutual constitution, in ways that attend to the social-material dimension of architecture, especially those that produce, naturalise, and sustain sexgender-segregation in public and pseudo-public spaces.

More recently, Crawford has illuminated how textures, or archi-textures, shape the conditions 'of possibility through which our bodies meet our environments' (2020). From blues for boys and pinks for girls, to coloured hanky codes and moral grey areas, virginal whites and the innocence of pastels, to the optimism of rose-coloured glasses, it is clear that, in Crawford's (2020) words, 'pantone is political'. But, he contends, so too are textures (ibid.). Colour and textures are similarly and concurrently imbricated in gender and sexual norms, as well as racialised and classed, and pervade design, vocabularies, and tastes (ibid.). Drawing from, and expanding Crawford's examples of textural metaphors, we might think of the 'roughness', 'toughness' and 'hardness' of idealised heterosexual masculine embodiment and behaviours, the 'softness' and 'bubbliness' of femininities associated with normative figurations of women, and the 'failed' masculinity of gay men, and those men who evade manual labour. Working class environments, especially where racialised, might be described as socio-spatially 'gritty' or 'rough' areas. One might be 'tight' or 'loose' with money and certain behaviours and language are marked as 'coarse'. 'Sexualized notions of social class unfold in almost onomatopoetic fashion', Crawford illustrated, and 'marble counters are "sleek"; car salesmen are "slick"; pick-up artists are "smooth"'. In this research, Chapter 3 opens with a participant's description of 'the battle for gender acceptance in the gendered public space' as a 'never-ending *daily grind*', which speaks to the textures that constitute her everyday life as a trans woman: the frictions felt as she socially and spatially navigates acceptance in gendered public spaces, living a life that unfolds in ways that moves against the grain cis-heteronormativity. Like Crawford (2020), I consider the textural to be political, and entangled with social norms and meaning. In this research I have been attuned to ways in which the textural connects with the

embodied, emotional, affective and spatial material and the social elements and assemblage of the everyday lives of trans people.

Concepts and contestations regarding space are at the heart of urban studies, a field where various disciplines coalesce, including architecture, urban planning, and human geography, and which is where my wider research into LGBTQ+ peoples' lives has been departmentally and intellectually situated (de Certeau 1984; Soja 2010; Lefebvre 1991[1974]; Massey 1994; 2005; Harvey 2001). To outline the plethora of spatial theories and thinking across these disciplines is beyond my scope here, and I do not aim to evaluate spatial concepts in themselves in this research. Rather, I aim, here, to outline an approach to space that I intend to be evident in my analysis which focuses upon participants' experiences, and trans peoples' lives.

To borrow from influential feminist geographer Doreen Massey, 'geography mattersto gender. And it does so in a whole variety of ways' (1994: 178). This project was inspired by a call from geographers Kath Browne, and Catherine J. Nash, and sociologist Sally Hines (2010) for trans geographies that explore:

> 'spatial[s]ing of gender...the creation of gender through socio-spatial relations...[and] the challenges and resistances trans people experience in the spaces...they use, create and reject' (Browne et al. 2010: 574)

Within scholarship based in the UK and Ireland, there is a rich and varied body of feminist, queer, and sexuality studies exploring the spatialising of gender and sexualities, and the gendered and sexual charges of socio-spatial relations within urbans studies, and geographies, and architectures more broadly (Massey 1994: 2005; Varley 2008; Blunt 2003; Bell et al. 1994; Bell and Binnie 2006; Penner 2013; Rawes 2019; Browne 2004; Brown 2009; Hubbard 2001; 2011; Beebeejaun 2016). Yet, rarely have trans people figured within analyses of the gender, sexualities and spaces–with relatively few exceptions (Browne and Lim 2010; Lim and Browne 2009; Marshall 2017; 2020[a][b]; Campkin and Marshall [2016; 2017; 2018[a][b]; Choi 2013). Similar patterns, as observed above, are evident elsewhere in anglophone urban studies concerning gender and sexualities (Gorman Murray 2006; 2007[a][b], Knopp 2004; 2007; Fenster 2005; Oswin 2008). Scholars within this wider realm, including Petra L Doan (2007; 2010), Paul Preciado, (2012), Vivian K. Namaste

(1996), Max J. Andrucki and Dana K. Kaplan (2018), Joel Sanders, Susan Stryker and Terry Kogan's Stalled! project (Stalled! 2021), and Lucus Crawford (2020; 2015 2010) have created enormously valuable work that could be similarly located as trans urban studies.

Even where trans people, and the limits of binary gendered perspective are acknowledged in more nuanced work, this does not always extend through analyses (Gershensen and Penner 2009; Beebeejaun 2016). For instance, Yasmin Beebejaun's contests the neglected gender in 'the right to the city' literature in urban studies. She highlights Petra L Doan's (2010) auto-ethnographic insights regarding the 'tyranny of gender' that she negotiates as a trans woman across a public-private continuum of space. Yet, as the topic turns to public toilets provision, it is only tacitly cis women and men who feature in the discussion of the gendering of everyday spatial inequalities. While problematising binary gendered thinking in certain instances, these same binaries remain uncritically intact paragraphs later (Beebeejaun 2016). Nonetheless, I share Beebeejaun's advocacy for more scholarship that analyses the gendering of everyday lives and rights to cities and city spaces, and, thus, bridges urban studies and gender and feminism studies. In this research, I attend to how the gendering of everyday life and socio-spatial practice is negotiated, and the ways that sexgendered oppressions work to impede–even deny– practices, privacies, activities, mobilities, and spaces that are easily taken-for-granted when trans and gender non-confirming people are overlooked, or only fleetingly included. In this thesis, I argue that trans peoples' lives and identities have been historically and persistently sensationalised, Othered and cast as ominously extraordinary, and, so, the textures of the everyday are a vital focus.

In engaging with the *spatial* in this research, my sense that non-representational geographies and assemblage thinking would offer an aptly agile approach was affirmed by what participants' knowledge and lived realities demanded to form my analysis. Assemblage thinking allows an understanding of the socio-spatial in terms of emergence, multiplicity, mobility, and indeterminacy, and as constituted through more-than-human, more-than-representational elements that (re)produce a provisional form. It takes into serious consideration the embodied, sensory, affective, textural and emotional aspects of the everyday life (Anderson and McFarlane 2011;

Anderson and Harrison 2010). In this work, I am interested in how the everyday is gendered generally, and, specifically, how the quotidian lives of variously gendered trans people are, have been, and continue to be enmeshed within, and negotiated, according to gendered socio-spatial relations.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has reviewed literature that connects with certain critiques and circumstances that this thesis responds to, and informs how I have approached researching gender diversity in Britain by investigating the lived experiences of trans people. At the crux of the literature review, across fields and disciplines, are historical and contemporary contestations and hierarchies concerning knowledge focusing on who has the authority to know a person's gender, the capacity to make an onto-epistemological claim to the lived reality of one's gender and receive social acceptance accordingly.

As the empirical chapters will show, the legacies of these hierarchies and contestations are evident within the Trans Debate in the British media which affect the socio-spatial relations that trans people must contend in their everyday lives. Trans studies scholars and activists' critiques of trans-exclusionary feminism, medical and psychiatric practices and processes, and strands of queer thinking are vital in highlighting the imperative to foreground the voices, knowledge, and experiences of trans peoples. In this research, I seek to harness valuable aspects of queer thinking and feminism, while prioritising the narratives and experiences of trans people with the ambition of producing research that connects with, and reflects, complexities present in their everyday, lived experiences. Due to the embeddedness of this research, and how trans people experience and negotiate different spatial contexts, assemblage thinking and research by urban studies scholars and geographers on space, imaginaries, and architecture, offer an agile approach to engaging with the fine-grain textures, complexity, and plurality of trans lives.

2. METHODOLOGY

In designing the research methodology for this thesis, I draw inspiration from Kath Browne's and Catherine Nash's writing on queer methodologies, which emphasise the need to recognise the implications of 'how "we" actually "do" research as "social scientists" given our...[theoretical] attachments' (2010:1). This chapter illustrates how the theoretical approach outlined in the Literature Review is translated into my methodology using participant photography, narrative writing/speaking and semi-structured, in-depth interviews. This research is registered with the UCL Data Protection Officer and ethical approval was granted following a full review of my application by the UCL Ethics Committee (Project ID 7855/001). Since ethical considerations inform every aspect of my research design and practice, I discuss ethics throughout this chapter rather thanin a designated ethics section. This chapter begins by discussing how this research responds to Jacob Hales (2009[1997]) *Suggested Rules for Non-Transsexuals Writing about Transsexuals, Transsexuality, Transsexualism, or Trans_*(Figure 2.1). I then develop this by outlining key aspects of the research process and the rationale underpinning them. Specifically, I consider partnerships with organisations,creating public resources, the consent process and anonymity, research scale and focus, language, and participant recruitment. The next section contains a more detailed discussion of the individual research methods – participatory photography and narrative writing, and semi-structured, in-depth interviews – and how they work together as a whole. In a shorter final section, I reflect upon my methodology, considering aspects that did not unfold as expected, and how this has shaped the analysis and structure of this thesis.

TRANSLATING THEORY INTO PRACTICE

Originally produced in 1997, Jacob Hale's (2009 [1997]) list of fifteen rules for cis people writing about trans people has enduring relevance regarding how trans studies' ethos and theory can be translated into an ethical research practice. Hales rules are as follows:

1. Approach your topic with a sense of humility: you are not the experts about transsexuals,transsexuality, transsexualism, or trans_. Transsexuals are.
2. Interrogate your own subject position

3. Beware of replicating the following discursive movement: Initial fascination with the exotic;denial of subjectivity, lack of access to dominant discourse; followed by a species of rehabilitation.
4. Don't erase our voices by ignoring what we say and write, through gross misrepresentation (as Hausman does to Sandy Stone and to Kate Bornstein), by denying us our academic credentials if we have them (as Hausman does to Sandy Stone), or by insisting that we musthave academic credentials if we are to be taken seriously.
5. Be aware that our words are very often part of conversations we're having within our communities, and that we may be participating in overlapping conversations within multiplecommunities
6. Don't totalize us, don't represent us or our discourses as monolithic or univocal
7. Don't uncritically quote non-transsexual "experts," e.g., Harry Benjamin, Janice Raymond
8. Start with the following as, minimally, a working hypothesis that you would be loathe to abandon: "Transsexual lives are lived, hence liveable"
9. When you're talking about male-to-female transsexual discourses, phenomena, experiences, lives, subjectivities, embodiments, etc., make that explicit and keep making itexplicit throughout
10. Be aware that if you judge us with reference to your political agenda (or agendas) taken as the measure or standard…that it is equally legitimate (or illegitimate as the case may be) forus to use our political agenda(s) as measures by which to judge you and your work.
11. Focus on: What does looking at transsexuals, transsexuality, transsexualism, or transsexual _____ tell you about *yourself*, *not* what does it tell you about trans.
12. Ask yourself if you can travel in our trans worlds. If not, you probably don't get what we'retalking about. Remember that we live most of our lives in non-transsexual worlds, so we probably do get what you're talking about.
13. Don't imagine that you can write about the trope of transsexuality, the figure of the transsexual, transsexual discourse/s, or transsexual subject positions without writing abouttranssexual subjectivities, lives, experiences, embodiments.

14. Don't imagine that there is only one trope of transsexuality, only one figure of "the" transsexual, or only one transsexual discourse at any one temporal and cultural location.
15. If we attend to your work closely enough to engage in angry, detailed criticism, don't take this as a rejection, crankiness, disordered ranting and raving, or the effects of testosterone poisoning.

Hale's rules coalesce around inadequacies in how trans people have been understood, positioned and represented by cis researchers and writers, which will be familiar following the literature review in this thesis. Recognising diversity amongst trans people, Hale highlights the significance of these rules for 'trans-folk writing across trans-trans difference' (2009 [1997]). On expertise, Hale advocates trans people being considered experts on trans phenomena and criticises uncritical quotations of cis experts. The authority and validity of trans peoples' knowledge has been relegated below that of cis people with certain academic credentials, Hale contends. Furthermore, in including and prioritising trans peoples' voices and knowledge, researchers must be attentive to the potential for misrepresentation. Expanding upon issues of misrepresentation, Hale warns against the totalisation of trans discourses and people as monolithic across time, culture and space. Be specific and acknowledge diversity within and between trans peoples' genders and identities. Avoid exoticising trans people as objects of fascination and denying their agency in the process. Consider what researching trans people reveals about yourself and gender more broadly, not only about trans people.

Much of the emphasis within Hale's rules concerns the need to centre trans peoples' lives and the ways they are lived and are liveable. Abstract discussion of theory, discourse, and subject position must, he argues, be accompanied by and grounded in explorations of embedded, embodied lived experiences. Furthermore, language used by trans people in relation to trans phenomena often derives from intra and inter community conversations, and if one is to understand the meaning of such language one must engage meaningfully with these communities. Finally, positionality is a key theme. Specifically, he emphasises inter-subjective power-relations, and the need for writers to question what motivations their interest in trans people and corresponding ethical commitments to faithfully represent and contribute to trans communities.

As will become clear in this chapter, this project responds to Hale (2009[1997]), as well as to calls by geographers and trans studies scholars to produce research that prioritises the voices of trans people as a means of advancing understanding of trans lives. Accordingly, its design ensures that participants exert considerable influence over the research trajectory by highlighting spaces and experiences that are relevant to them in response to broad themes. I have sought to translate my theoretical commitments, as discussed in the literature review, into a research practice that is attentive to negotiating researcher positionality and foregrounding participants' voices. Rather than producing knowledge *on* research *subjects,* this project is participatory in ethos and involves working *with* participants whose knowledge and expertise hold the potential to intervene within and positively inform dominant social attitudes, public policy and academic thinking.

In this project, tasks involving participant photography and narrative writing respond to research themes that were intended to give the research and participants focus, whilst allowing for a range of interpretations and responses. I sought to create collaborative researcher-participant relationships in which participants occupy positions of relative power within the research process as sources of authoritative knowledge, while understanding participants' narratives – visual, written and verbal – as 'socially constructed and socio-historically specific' (Hines 2009: 92; Plummer 1995).

Using the material generated by participant photography and narrative writing to (semi) structure in-depth interviews has been integral to how participants' voices, perspectives and experiences are foregrounded. This aspect of the research design is a vital mechanism through which participants have exerted significant influence over the research, by deciding the spaces and experiences that structure interviews. I began this research as a person who described themselves as a queer, cis woman in 2014, and during 2018 – toward the latter stages of field work – came to make sense of my gender as genderqueer and non-binary, and consider myself trans. My methodological approach was informed partially by my positionality in 2014 as a cis woman and the centrality of participants' collaboration, experiences and perspectives to the aims of the project. Accordingly, I located myself as an 'outside observer ... and active learner' (Choi 2013: 122). Throughout this research and through this shift

in my own identity and positionality, I have understood that researching trans people's experiences necessitates a heightened attentiveness to misrepresentation (Hines 2009). This shift in researcher identity and positionality during a research process is by no means unique (Nelson 2020; McDonald 2013) and demonstrates the value of researcher reflexivity and the unfixed and unfolding nature of gender and sexual identities.

With these personal shifts in my identity, Hale's rules remain relevant, not least as a reminder to exercise critical subjectivity as a researcher, whatever our own subject positions are and how these change. In this work I have collaborated with participants who have a range of gender identities and expressions, varied ways of being trans, of doing, and relating to, their and other peoples' transness. With each interaction with participants, I have sought to maintain a humility in not presuming to know or know better, and not assuming sharedness in our experiences and perspectives, including where my own experiences and subjectivity have resonated closely with a participant's narrative.

As discussed in my literature review, ethics are a key issue within trans studies and activism (Namaste 1994; Browne et al. 2010; Whittle 2006; Hale 2009[1997]). Indeed, the nature of my relationship, accountability and contribution to Britain's trans communities is a vital concern since this project involves asking members of these communities for their time, knowledge, emotional and intellectual labour. My research process (outlined in Figure 2.1) responds by collaborating with partner organisations and producing accessible material with the capacity to contribute towards trans communities more tangibly than a PhD thesis, and academic presenting and publishing might conventionally allow.

Partner organisations from across Britain were approached to collaborate in this project by feeding back on the proposal and assisting with publicising recruitment. The partner organisations I am working with are *Scottish Transgender Alliance*, *Wipe Out Transphobia*, who are based in Wales, and England-based *Gendered Intelligence*. In return for their input, partners will receive copies of and be credited on public resources produced through the project – specifically, a concise report and a zine/pamphlet comprising of participants' visual and verbal narratives. My intention

is that these resources will contribute toward the trans awareness and education work of these partner organisations. In feedback on my initial proposals, no concerns were raised, but the importance of aspects of the project, such as attentiveness to diversity, inclusion and prioritising trans voices, was emphasised. Furthermore, Scottish Transgender Alliance requested the use of excerpts from participants' narratives, as appropriate, for use in their trans awareness training. In response, I added this as an option on consent forms.

Research process:

1) Consultation with project partners on proposal

2) **Call for participants**

3) **First meeting with participant** to discuss the project and address any concerns.

4) **Task one:** send guidance on themes *creating spaces of belonging* and *navigating gender-segregated spaces (Appendix 2).*

5) **Interview one:** semi-structured by task material

6) **Task two:** send guidance on theme *encountering institutional spaces (Appendix 3).*

7) **Interview two:** semi-structured by task material and reflections on participation

8) **Data transcription and analysis**

9) **Research and write up empirical chapters, and submit thesis.**

10) **Produce zine, update website, report for partners and participants**

Figure 2.1 Research Process

Public resources

In addition to a doctoral thesis, I will produce a public website, report and zine/pamphlet that has the capacity to enhance public understanding of gender diversity. The zine and report will be available on the website as electronic documents. Subject to consent, the website will also publish participants' visual and verbal narratives. By creating publicly accessible resources for individuals and organisations interested in learning or teaching about gender diversity in Britain I aim to extend the social and political impact of this project. For participants whose involvement is driven by activist commitments, these resources can be incorporated

into their other work. Copyright for visual and written narratives will remain with participants, who, via the detailed consent forms, will grant me use of the images and narratives for particular outputs relating to the project.

Consent forms

The consent process is integral to how I negotiate my researcher positionality and translate theory into practice (Appendix 1). Ensuring participants choose to participate in an informed way and are fully aware of how their knowledge will be used in each strand of the project, allowing for foresight and reflection regarding their contributions, are crucial ways that I have negotiated inter-subjective power relations within the research process. Given the public and academic strands of this work, offering detailed options for opting in and out has been vital in enabling participants to make informed decisions about whether or not they want their written, verbal and visual material to feature in the different elements: the thesis, website, zine and academic publications. Most participants consented to all the material contributed being used in each strand of the research, with two participants stipulating that their images are not used in any of the public aspects of the project.

This research was designed using a two-stage consent process. The first form was completed between our initial conversation about the project and before their participation in the research commenced. Participants were invited to complete a second consent form after the second task and interview, which was intended to offer an easy means of changing or further specifying their consent preferences in light of changes in their lives, having produced new materials, and having had time to reflect on their contributions. In practice, only a couple of participants completed a second consent form. One participant changed their name between our first communications and our first interview. Of course, I used their chosen name as soon as informed, but the second consent form allowed them to record their chosen name and to change how they described their sexuality.
Regarding consent-giving capacity it is necessary to consider how this research responds to the British context. At the time of designing this research, ‘transsexualism’ was classified as a psychopathology, diagnosed as ‘Gender Identity Disorder’ and categorised as a Mental Health Condition by the World Health

Organisation (WHO 2010). NHS Gender Identity Services have historically been based within Mental Health services. This has since shifted with the introduction of 'Gender Identity Disorders' with 'Gender Incongruence' in the WHO International Classifications of Diseases version 11 (WHO 2020). Since the 1990s, activists campaigning for trans rights have challenged the pathologisation of trans identities as a mental illness (Drescher 2010).

In the context of my research ethics, at the time of applying for ethical approval from UCL, trans people were identified as a potentially vulnerable group. Of course, trans people may experience certain vulnerabilities due to mental, emotional and/or physical health conditions, social isolation or prejudice (Robles et al. 2016). Nonetheless, it is unethical to predefine a trans person as vulnerable or lacking consent-giving capacity by virtue of their trans status. Following trans studies scholars and activists, I too challenge the psychopathologising of trans people as disordered, and the designation trans people as a homogeneously 'vulnerable' group. By using detailed, informed consent procedures and discussing the nature of the project with potential participants, I sought to ensure that those interested in taking part felt capable, not pressured to do so, and they knew that they may withdraw at any time. There was space on consent forms for participants to make requests and highlight any issues, and through our ongoing communication, accommodations to the research processes were made as requested. For example, for one participant this included not naming the city where they live and differentiating between their personal identity as a person who does not describe themselves as queer but does understand themselves to be part of queer community. For another participant the accommodation was to interact over Facebook messenger rather than meet in person, or to speak via phone or videocall.

Anonymity and data protection.

All personal data has been processed and kept in accordance with the European Union's General Data Protection Regulations and UK Government's *Data Protection Act 2018.* As this is scholar-activist research with publicly accessible elements, I found the most ethical approach to anonymity was to respect participants' agency by allowing them to decide whether they preferred to remain anonymous in some or all aspects of the project. Since some may understand their participation as part of their

own activist practice, imposing unwanted anonymity upon them seems unethical. Indeed, one participant expressed specifically on their consent form that 'I don't need anonymity'. Any personal details, such as participants home addresses, or specific facilities that they use, which could be traced with harmful consequence, including by inadvertently 'outing' a person, has not been published in any part of the project. Where requests relating to anonymity have been made, these have been accommodated. All participants were given the option of using and choosing a pseudonym (Appendix 1) since pseudonyms that I selected may unknowingly have been uncomfortably close to a previous person's name. Three participants opted for pseudonyms and selected these themselves.

Scope and focus

This project is a situated study with comparative elements, grounded in participants' embodied experiences in, and perceptions of, multiple spaces within and between geographical locations across Britain. It is not a specifically comparative study, which would require larger participant numbers and deeper geographical and cultural contextualisations of the locations explored.

At the heart of my methodology, research design and the thematic structure are tensions concerning researcher-participant intersubjectivity. These tensions have interconnected pragmatic, theoretical and ethical implications. For instance, inspired by the ethos of trans studies and activism, this research foregrounds participants' narratives and seeks to place participants in positions of power within a collaborative research process. In order to facilitate this, rather than designate specific spaces, I have identified broad themes to which participants can respond. These are *Creating spaces of belonging, Navigating gender-segregated spaces* and *Encountering institutional spaces,* the selection of which was informed by the work of trans scholars and activists (Doan 2010; Cromwell 1999; Stryker and Whittle 2006; TSQ 2014). By using themes to structure the research, I aimed to help focus the topics discussed and to give participants something to work with, whilst leaving significant potential for a range of responses. As a researcher, this approach involved relinquishing a considerable degree of control over directing topics of exploration and, therefore, embracing an openness and uncertainty in relation to the direction of the research, which links to the theoretical ethos discussed previously. Although I do

not seek to draw generalisable conclusions from a 'representative sample', I aimed to, and succeeded in, collaborating with participants with a range of genders, ethnicities, class backgrounds, sexualities, faiths, abilities and ages (see Figure 2.2).

I had planned to work with 10-15 participants and ended up working with 12. As anticipated, working with this relatively low number of participants provided a sufficiently large group to allow for commonalities and differences to emerge and ensured the capacity to grapple with complexities and plurality present within trans communities, between participants, and in participants' own experiences. In practice, when it came to coding and analysing participants' contributions, I ended up with far more material than it would be possible to include, if I was to closely engage with each participant's contribution across all three research themes. As result, I chose to focus largely upon the research theme *Navigating gender-segregated spaces*, which informs Chapters 1, 2, and 3. This enables a detailed investigation to into different forms of sexgender-segregated spaces – public toilets, the Kenwood Ladies' Pond and fashion retail – and how they have been negotiated and experienced by trans people with different genders. In Chapters 1 and 2, there is a focus upon how specific imaginaries invested in public toilets and the Ladies' Pond have been mobilised through the Trans Debate, shaping how trans people experience and navigate those spaces. As such, the first part of Chapter 1 and 2 focus upon analysing these imaginaries and how they have been instrumentalized through the Trans Debate. These opening sections 'set the scene' that precedes trans people who use these spaces, and shapes social inter-action beyond them, and thus the lives of trans peoples in the pages of this thesis. Chapter 3 largely focuses upon non-binary participants' negotiations of gendering in fashion garments and spaces, although it does contain some discussion of fashion retail changing rooms becoming embroiled in the Trans Debate. Chapter 4 offers something of a continuation and counterpoint to the other chapters in its analysis of home, identity and domestic belonging. Akin to the chapters that precede it, Chapter 4 examines the socio-spatial operation of cis-normativity and the ways in which participants navigate this in relation to their homes and living arrangements. Yet, this chapter also considers domestic arrangements, relationships and practices through which participants have found, created and sustained spaces in which they feel belonging and are embraced.

I conducted the research for the theme *Encountering institutional spaces,* and participants contributions were as rich and compelling as for the first two themes. However, it became clear through planning and writing the empirical chapters, that I could not do justice to participants' contributions or explore the specificities of the spaces identified in sufficient detail, if I were to include all three themes. I decided that participants contribution to *Navigating gender-segregated spaces* and *Creating spaces of belonging* spoke to one another with most resonance, as well as working well as individual chapters. For this reason, I have yet to work with the *Encountering institutional spaces* contributions specifically, and look forward to developing this research in the future. I would like to note however, that working with participants on this research theme has certainly been valuable in contributing to my thinking and analysis of this research as a whole, all be it in less tangible ways.

Language

Acknowledging the importance of language, I refer to participants (not subjects), who I consider this research to be collaborative with (Choi 2013; Hale 2009 [1997]; Mason 2002:38,62-5; Hoggart et al. 2002; Maxwell 2009:243). In recruiting and interacting with participants I approached and defined 'trans' as including women, men and non-binary people with trans identities and/or histories. This language and framing was intended to avoid assumptions regarding participants' relationships to trans, and to make space for those who consider transness to be in their past – men and women who see themselves as having a trans history rather seeing themselves *as* trans – and non-binary people who do not consider themselves as trans, but may understand themselves as part of trans communities. Within this frame, there is therefore intentional scope for participants to have complex, even somewhat ambivalent relationships with trans. As it happened, all participants described themselves as trans in interviews and/or specified this on consent forms.

Following Hale (1997), I remained sensitive to theory-practice translations regarding particular terms, such as performativity, which is not a familiar term or concept to all, and can offend people who interpret it as implying gender inauthenticity (Whittle 2006). Where participants brought up theoretical concepts such as performativity, then I followed their lead in the discussion that ensued. Similarly, I avoided using terms such as 'passing' in reference to being perceived socially as male or female,

since this implies a ‘passing’ as something that you are not. However, when participants used this term, which is common in trans communities, I followed their lead as appropriate. Overall, my main concern here was enabling participants to lead conversations and to determine the kinds of language used, especially where terms can be inaccessible and potentially offensive.

Recruitment

Partner organisations – *Gendered Intelligence, Scottish Transgender Alliance and Wipe Out Transphobia* – assisted in promoting research participation via their networks. I also recruited participants using my personal Twitter account, via three tweets that generated a significant number of retweets, following which interested people emailed or sent direct messaged to express interest. My third Tweet highlighted that I was particularly interested in hearing from trans people of colour, who were under-represented in the participant group at the time. One participant was already a friend at the time of participation and expressed an interest in participating in person. I had planned to recruit via university mailing lists and LGBTQ+ spaces (using posters with removable tabs) and by contacting LGBTQ+ and trans groups and organisations across Britain, including LGTBQ+ and trans groups working with communities who are under-represented in research. As it happened, and because my intended participant group was 10-15 people, I found 12 participants that were sufficiently varied in relation to age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, and faith (see Figure 2.2) and thus decided that further recruitment was not warranted. During recruitment, the project website - https://genderdiversityuk.wordpress.com - acted as a platform for communicating information about the project and signposting to trans community groups and resources.

Name	Gender	Sexuality	Age	Ethnicity	Nationality	Faith/ religion	Any additional information you would like to highlight
Alix	Female/ Trans woman/ queer	Lesbian/ gay/ queer	49	White	Irish	Raised catholic	
Anuka	Agender/ nonbinary	Bi	24	West Asian	Georgian/ German		
Avery	Non-binary	Bisexual	26	White	British		
Carrie	Trans woman	Queer	45	White	British	None	
Chryssy	Trans woman	Queer	50s	White	British/ Scottish		
Josi	Trans woman		60s	White	British		
Kai	Trans man		20s	White	British		
Kay*	Non-binary	Panromantic Asexual	22	Mixed - White and Chinese	British	N/A	
Layla*	Trans woman	Queer	26	Middle East/North Africa (Arab)	Egyptian/ Palestinian	None	Palestinian refugee in Egypt for 20 years before getting Egyptian citizenship. Brought up in a religious Muslim family, moved to the UK in 2017.
Morgan	Non-binary	Undecided	45	White/Caucasian	British	Atheist	
Orion*	Trans man		20s	White	British		
Ryan	Trans Man	Queer	22	White	Scottish		

Figure 2.2 Participants demographic information. Entries in black are as reported on consent forms; entries in grey are completed from information gleaned through the interviews. * signifies where a pseudonym has been chosen.

METHODS

Participatory research

A collaborative ethos is central to this project and to the ways in which the insights, ethics and politics of trans studies, including Hale's rules (2009[1997]), are translated into a participatory research practice that integrated photography, narrative writing and in-depth, semi-structured interviews. In designing this approach, I drew inspiration from participatory action researchers (McIntyre 2008; Palibroda et al. 2009), understanding that in collaborating with participants, we might co-produce knowledge with the potential to change social norms, political and public policy in ways that benefit participants and their communities. As an anti-elitist research practice that recognises the operations of power within everyday lives and, additionally, the value of counter-hegemonic knowledge and centering otherwise marginalised voices, participatory research complements the trans studies ethos informing this project (McKintyre 2008; Palibroda et al. 2009). However, unlike much participatory action research, in this research participants did not directly participate in the writing, coding or analyses of the thesis. Integral to the participatory approach of this research is the use of participant photography and narrative writing/speaking tasks, with prompts based on the three research themes that participants were invited to respond to, which in this thesis I describe as narratives, since they describe aspects of participants' lives. The visual and written narratives then formed a basis for subsequent in-depth interviews. That is, I asked questions and initiated conversations in response to their narratives, the intention being that participants collaborate in setting the agenda for their own interviews. During interviews I discussed my interpretations of participants' photographic and written narratives, and comments made during our conversations. This enabled me to ensure that my interpretations resonated with the intentions of their contributions, in an effort to avoid accidental misrepresentation. The following sub-sections explore my chosen methods in greater detail.

Visual and textual narratives

My approach to this research is partially informed by my own experiences of participating in gender and sexuality-related research using participant photography, narrative writing and focus groups. I took part in this project as a means of experiencing how it felt to be involved in participatory research, although

experiences of participation inevitably differ. I found participation to re-affirm my existing sense that researchers must recognise the emotional labour required and time pressures experienced by participants and appreciate the need for personal disclosure to be on one's own terms and without pressure or expectation. That said, the experience of being a participant and the opportunity to reflect on my life and relationships to gender and sexuality, which often included intimate and emotionally sensitive topics, I found to be personally valuable. Similar sentiments have been related back to me by participants in this research. Pragmatically, this experience illuminated the benefit of providing participants with clear instructions and prompts to stimulate thinking around particular themes. Accordingly, in response to each theme I asked for two images with captions and one narrative of up to 500 words and I provided a short paragraph of text intended to prompt participants' emerging thought processes (Appendix 2 and 3). In practice, participants' responses differed, with some contributing more or fewer narratives and images than requested, and we worked together with whatever they had produced.

Using participant photography as a visual research methodology, participants' photographs and captions, in combination with written narratives, allowed participants to guide the interviews' trajectory, and enter our interview having already identified and reflected upon the principal discussion topics (Latham 2003). As participants' visual and verbal narratives enter public and academic realms, they will operate socially as visual and textual documents that are interpreted by the viewer (Rose 2012). As such, representation is a salient concern.

Akin to other forms of representation, the relationship between photography and the production and reification of the 'other' and oppressive social norms has been historically problematic (Davidmann 2014 639; Said 1989; Berger 1972). With limited exceptions, over the last century in Britain and North America, mainstream representations of trans people, especially within mass media have bought into sensational tropes that pathologise and exoticise trans peoples' identities and lives (Davidmann 2014: 638-9; Gamson 1998; Irving, 2007; TMW 2011). As previously discussed, trans studies have highlighted how misrepresentation, pathologisation, othering and sensationalism are historically embedded issues, evident across numerous fields, including feminism, queer studies, media, and medical and legal

institutions. Since the mid-twentieth century, autobiographical narratives and memoirs by trans people have, to a varying extent, served to counter and complicate historical and ongoing misrepresentations in literature, in mainstream and independent media and in academia (Prosser 1998; Stryker 2008; Doan 2010; Lester 2014a; 2017; Jacques 2012; Morris 1974; Jorgensen 1967; Al-khadi 2019).

Writing about her research practice of collaborative photography with trans people and their intimate partners, Sara Davidmann (2014) observed that while interviews are generally considered to be 'given', photographs are perceived as 'taken'. 'Taken' of a subject *and* 'taken' *from* the subject, in the sense that the image is "stolen" (Davidmann 2014: 639; Back, 2004). Davidmann negotiates this by attending to power dynamics between, behind, and in front of, the camera lens, through a collaborative practice in which participants control which images are used and much of the image content. Following scholars such as Les Back (2004), Davidmann understands photography as an interactive social process and negotiates her positionality accordingly through collaboration.

This project differs by employing a participatory approach in which participants represent themselves by producing visual and written narratives. But like Davidmann's work, the research process is collaborative and constitutes an interactive social process. I see the process of research-participant collaboration as a kind of 'call and response', where I invite participants to respond to thematic tasks, and the content of the visual and written narratives depends on *what* participants choose to represent and *how* they wish to represent them, to which I respond in interviews via questions and initiating discussion relating to a participant's image or text. Ensuring that participants possess agency over the *what* and *how* of representation is a crucial means through which I have sought to balance power-relations between us.

Participants' captions are not considered to offer 'neutral' or 'objective' information regarding the image they accompany (Sontag 2004). Captions are necessarily subjective and intended to shape viewers' interpretations. In this case, captions and written narratives are understood as balancing and complementing visual narratives with less ocular-centric engagements with participants' experiences. In this way, the

research echoes Alison Rooke's (2010: 30) discussion of participatory art practice as enabling a focus on relationships between 'materiality and representational practices, social and political recognition, [and] the specificity of trans experience'. Accordingly, I understand participatory visual art practice, in combination with written and verbal narratives, to hold the potential to enable trans peoples' experiences to become more culturally legible in ways that open new spaces of possibility and understanding (Hines 2010; Sanger 2010; Davidmann 2014).

My approach involves asking participants themselves to produce images and to create written captions and verbal (written or spoken) narratives. The intention with this method is to allow for creativity, flexibility and accessibility in ways that participants prefer to express themselves, whilst maintaining consistency across participants' contributions. Thus, for those with a preference for writing, narratives and captions enable text-based self-expression, as the photography tasks will do for those who feel less comfortable expressing themselves in words. The option to write or record verbal narratives was offered with the intention of accommodating participants who prefer vocal self-expression and/or find writing inaccessible.

Concerning the publicly accessible website and zine, producing these media is informed by the potential for what participants visual and textual narratives might *do* when situated publicly, and in the spirit of reciprocity with the communities whose lives I research, and individuals and partner organisations who have generously contributed to this research. As images and texts working in combination, these representations are potentially (and hopefully) valuable in asking audiences to 'bear witness' to the lived experiences of trans people and realities of gender diversity (Rose 2014: 33; Holiday 2007:61; Johnson 2011). The images produced hold the potential to disrupt cis-heteronormative knowledge regimes, which include aesthetic norms, by making trans peoples' lives across social, spatial and geographical contexts, more visible, legible and intelligible (Butler 2004; Sontag 2004:19). These narratives will likely be most disruptive when engaged with by cis audiences, although they are certainly also relevant to trans individuals and communities. This may be particularly the case where there is a lack of acceptance for non-binary trans people amongst trans men and women (Willoughby 2017; Fox 2017).

When designing this research, I have carefully considered how using participant photography and narrative writing in combination with semi-structured in-depth interviews potentially contributes to knowledge within and beyond trans studies.As Davidmann argues (2014: 638), by accessing and exploring social lives, photographers offer possibilities beyond the authority of textual representation. Extending this, I am interested in how visual and textual narratives might correspond, with the potential to offer multifaceted and nuanced representations of the embodied, lived experiences of participants, individually and collectively.

Within the research process, especially the practice and analysis components, the images function within a more social scientific (rather than visual culture) mode as a participatory visual research method. Visual methods are particularly adept at conveying the sensory, emotional and affective textures of participants' subjective experiences and the spaces in which they are situated (Latham 2003; Pink 2007). Furthermore, collaborations involving participant-generated visual material are especially useful in exploring tacit and taken-for-granted aspects of participants' lives (Rose 2014; Latham 2003; Holliday 2007). Indeed, interviews-with-images can stimulate discussions on registers that are more emotional and affective and can go some way to describing the 'ineffable' (ibid.; Bagnoli 2009: 548). This made visual methods particularly appropriate for this research, given its focus upon the sensory, emotional and affective dynamics of participants' lived experiences.

A further way that participatory visual and textual narrative methods correspond with the theoretical and ethical approach of this project is that they establish participants' positions as experts in an active storytelling role (Fenge et al. 2010: 324). This expert status extends into interviews, with participants explaining their narrative in greater detail and through the analysis process. Although, as critics have highlighted, this approach does not remove power relations or lesson their complexity, it can nonetheless contribute to re-balancing participant-researcher power-relations (Joanou, 2009; Johnson, 2011; Packard, 2008; Rose 2014). In the analysis of this project, I am interested in considering how these methods work together, including how the visual and textual narratives related to and shaped one another. For example, how the visual, spatial or embodied dimensions of photography speak to the textual narratives, and how the visual, textual and verbal narrative contributed

during interviews speak together.

There are occasions where I engage with images published in newspapers and fashion media, as well as those contributed by participants, in a more visual cultures mode that consider the social meanings, practices and norms embedded within and communicated through images as visual representations (Rose 2014). That is to say, that I analyse particular images, thinking through the implication of their composition and content, considering the meanings invested by the people and spaces depicted, and the context of their production and publication.

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews

I understand interviews to be contextual social interactions, shaped by researchers and participants who co-produce understandings, meanings and knowledges. Negotiating my positionality has been integral to the entire research process, which demanded continual reflexivity and flexibility. Accordingly, during interviews I have exercised critical subjectivity, by seeking to recognise and respond to inter-subjective dynamics (Mason 2002:65-6, 24; O'Neill et al. 2005: 86; Maxwell 2009: 214-5, 225; Hoggart et al. 2002: 24). In addition to interviewing participants, depending upon the content of participants' visual and verbal narratives, I approached one contributor, Edward Lord, for an interview, which is included in Chapter 4 concerning the Kenwood Ladies' Pond.

Participants took part in two interviews, which followed Task One and Two. The first interview focused on the themes *Creating spaces of belonging* and *Navigating gender-segregated spaces.* In the second interview, the theme *Encountering institutional spaces* was discussed and I invited participants to reflect upon the research and raise anything they would like to add. Interviews were in-depth and semi-structured and I employed a 'narrative approach' to interviews, using unscripted, open-ended questions that responded to participants' narratives and embraced relevant conversational meanderings (Hines 2009: 92; Hollway and Jefferson 2000). Insofar as possible and appropriate, participants led conversations and determined their trajectory. Of course, how this unfolded varied between participants, some of whom were more talkative and wished to expand upon subjects and stories more than others. Thus, while some interviews lasted 40 minutes, others

lasted around 3 hours. No questions regarding foreseeably invasive or sensitive topics were asked, though some participants chose to discuss topics such as their preferences and feelings about transition related medical interventions.

Orienting interviews around participants' images, captions and narratives was designed to foster collaborative interpretations of this material, thus ensuring a faithful representation of participants' intentions, perspectives and experiences. I invited participants to choose where interviews took place and encouraged them to consider where they would feel comfortable speaking with me. I also suggested that if there was a space that related to their visual or textual narratives it would be interesting to meet there, so long as they felt comfortable. Some interviews took place in bars, cafes, pubs, and restaurants, and others in participants' homes, and one interview took place via Facebook messenger, at the request of the participant. Although interviewing via Facebook messenger deviated from my research design, I did not want to exclude a participant who was keen to take part, due to anxieties about speaking with me in-person, telephone or online video. I would note however, that in-person interviews, and the kinds of storytelling and rich description that this method is suited to, were more effective in producing knowledge about, and enabling close engagements with, participants' lives.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has highlighted how the theories and critiques analysed in Chapter 1 have informed a participatory methodology that is sensitive to the wider context and politics of knowledge in which this research is embedded, and the existing research upon which this thesis is built. In doing so, I have focused upon key aspects of the research design and methods, the rationale underpinning them, and this developed my approach to questions of representation, knowledge production and inter-subjective researcher-participant relations. In the empirical chapters that follow, extracts from participants' contributions are visually foregrounded, as well as being integrated within and informing the analysis of the experiences they depict and describe.

3. GENDER DIVERSITY AND PUBLIC (IN)CONVENIENCES

The battle for general acceptance in gendered public spaces is one of the most difficult that we have to achieve. It's a never-ending daily grind ... It's a struggle to educate even well-meaning non-trans people about things we think we have already communicated. And the issue of safety in public spaces is apparently, still very much up for discussion.

- Chryssy

I just want to go to the gym, enjoy swimming once more and use the bathroom without fearing harassment and abuse, and without being compared to a pedophile or a rapist.

- Owl Fisher (2019)

Histories of Western public toilets illuminate how social norms concerning sexgender, sexuality, race, class, and bodily abilities have fused with anxieties and ideals about health and hygiene, to shape the socio-material construction of these most private of public spaces (Gershenson and Penner 2009; Penner 2013; Kogan 2007; Cavanagh 2010; Bacran 2010; Browne 2004; Cooper and Oldenziel 1999). The opening words of this chapter belong to Chryssy, a white, trans woman in her 50s, who is describing frictions that she encounters as she moves through the socio-material fabric of London which can feel, and be, hostile to peoplewho demand understandings of gender more complex than a binary rigidly bound tosex assigned at birth. As Chryssy notes, trans people are consistently implicated within discussions of public safety, particularly in the British press, in which public toilets have become a contested site (Thorn 2016; Roche 2016[b]; Bovens and Marcoci 2017; Vine 2018). This chapter considers how public toilets have been mobilised in British news media as symbolic and contested sites within wider discussions about trans people's lives, and how this affects and is negotiated by trans people, g their access to public toilets and thus, participation in public life.

This chapter considers how public toilets have been mobilised as symbolic sites within the Trans Debate in the British news media, as discussed in the literature review. I follow sociologist Sheila Cavanagh (2010) in contending that when people are denied access to public spaces, the premise upon which access is granted and denied must be interrogated. Accordingly, I critically analyse the cis-heteronormative architectural, social, and moral conventions invested in public toilets, why public toilets have become symbolic and contested sites, and the implication for trans peoples' capacity to participate in public life. I am not interested in arguing against discourses that espouse transphobic tropes and cis-heteronormative epistemologies that prevail within the Trans Debate. There is a lack of evidence for claims that trans women using women's toilets, and people of all genders using gender-neutral toilets, threaten the safety of cis women and children (Sharpe 2020). However, I am interested in the social resonance of these claims, and the apparent potency of public toilets as a site in which to locate a politics of fear at the centre of the Trans Debate. The affective force of the Trans Debate in mediating access to public toilets became evident through working with participants whose experiences reveal the limits of sexgender-segregated toilets, and the inclusive possibilities of gender-neutral bathrooms.

The chapter structure is designed with the intention of presenting an in-depth analysis of the social and material landscape that trans people must navigate when using public toilets before drawing upon participants' contributions to consider the lived realities of trans people who must negotiate this terrain. I shall contextualise British press reporting concerning trans people and public toilets before illustrating the ways in which sensationalist transphobic tropes are frequently deployed in the media by analysing a specific article published in the *The Sunday Times,* by Andrew Gilligan (2018[a]). This analysis is then extended by drawing on thinking by sociologists Imogen Tyler (2013) and Sheila Cavanagh (2010), cultural anthropologist Robert Phillips (2014) and queer, feminist, and critical race theorist Sara Ahmed (2004) in order to consider the function of ideals linking sexgender purity, abjection, and fear to public toilets and to panics concerning trans people's uses of them. I argue that cis-heteronormative media discourses, imaginaries, architectural and design conventions and epistemologies precede everybody's access to public toilets, but navigating these conditions has specific implications, and

demands particular kinds of embodied, emotional labour from trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming people.

The remainder of the chapter develop this discussion by shifting focus to the insights offered by the experiences and knowledge of participants of various genders and gender expressions. This includes looking at the impact of press upon how they approach and feel using public toilets. Morgan, a non-binary person who lives in what she describes as 'female mode' in some contexts, and 'male mode' in others, gives insights into what it means to access public toilets as someone whose life *superficially* resembles a maligned figuration of a trans woman, but in reality differs greatly, and unsettles the presumed symbiosis between legitimacy and permanence. Josi's contribution highlights the limits of the *Equality Act 2010* in practice, by exemplifying the concessions demanded of trans people and the related sense of not wanting to 'cause a fuss' when asked to use an 'inappropriate' toilet. Josi also highlights the disciplinary function of sexgender norms in shaping the embodied practice through which she negotiates public toilets. Collectively, Morgan and Josi's experiences speak to the impact of how genitalia have been invoked in transphobic discourses and behaviours toward trans-feminine people. The next section considers contributions by Layla, Anuka, Avery, and Orion whose narratives, speaking from different gendered positions, collectively highlight the significance of context, embodiment, and emotional labour. Here, the evidence illustrates key spatial and temporal contextual dynamics in how trans peoples' lives are negotiated in relation to the cisnormative discourses espoused in the British Press. This experiential knowledge, I argue, offers productive insights for considering the design and function of public toilets in society. Finally, I build on participant's discussions of the value of gender-neutral toilets, and my analyses of abjections, to analyse a specific toilet in an LGBTQ+ venue in London. In exploring this alternative to segregation, I consider the function of gender-neutral toilets in showing care and solidarity between venue operators and customers, and in this context between customers themselves.

PUBLIC TOILETS: A VERY BRIEF HISTORY

Considered the most private of public spaces, sexgender-segregated public toilets as we know them today are the product of Victorian moral anxieties regarding public

health and hygiene, which have shaped the evolution of social norms concerning sexgender, sexuality, race, class, and bodily abilities through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Gershenson and Penner 2009; Penner 2013; Kogan 2007; Cavanagh 2010; Bacran 2010; Browne 2004; Cooper and Oldenziel 1999). Since the nineteenth century, situating dimorphic sex as a biological and categorical 'fact' has become naturalised and foundational in the construction of sexgender segregation as a public health and safety issue (Cavanagh 2010; Overall 2007; Fausto-Sterling 2019). Public toilets emerged in Western Europe during the early-to-mid nineteenth century, and in the United States from the 1870s. Enabled by advances in sanitary infrastructure, and designed according to epidemiological concerns for public health and hygiene, public toilets became a common feature of industrialised urban modernity (Kogan 2010; Portuondo 2018; Cavanaugh 2010; Gershenson and Penner 2009). In Britain, 1852 saw the first flushing public 'ladies' toilets with the first permanent public toilets for women and men opening in 1893 (Overall 2007: 88; Cavanagh 2010). The historic absence of public toilets for women is rooted in the moral and Enlightenment logic of the Victorian 'separate spheres' ideology, i.e. that women properly belonged in the private, domestic sphere – maintaining the home and family, as well as their modesty and virtue. In contrast, men were cast as the appropriate breadwinners and custodians of public life (McDowell 2003). As women's public presence increased during the nineteenth century, segregating public toilet facilitates according to sexgender reflected and produced the weaving of the 'separate spheres' ideology into the fabric of public space (Portuondo 2018; Kogan 2010). Public toilets have also been segregated explicitly and implicitly along – sometimes multiple – vectors of difference including race, class, and bodily ability since the nineteenth century with sexgender-segregation premised upon the assumed primacy of heterosexuality *and* binary sex (Gershenson and Penner 2009).

Public toilets have become symbolic and contested sites, socio-materially saturated in cis-heteronormative ideals about sexgender, sexuality, and bodily form and function, and have been analysed from varied academic perspectives. For example, by architecture scholars and human geographers (Penner and Gershensen 2009; Andersson and Campkin 2009; Browne 2013), sociologists (Cavanaugh 2010), historians Houlbrook 2005), legal scholars (Kogan 2010; Portuondo 2018), and in disability studies (Slater et al. 2016; Slater and Jones 2020). As Cooper and

Oldenziel (1999:8) argue, public bathrooms emerge as a space of 'discipline' in Foucauldian terms, and 'an unintentional cultural strategy for preserving existing social categories and maintaining our most "cherished classifications"' (Cooper and Oldenziel 1999: 8). Accordingly, sexgender-segregated public bathrooms emerge as a form of disciplinary architecture that operates to the detriment of many trans, non-binary, and/or gender non-conforming people, whose participation in public life is impeded by experiences of, and anxieties about, sexgender-policing in public toilets.

Cisnormativity and The City

In the run-up, duration, and aftermath of the UK government's 2018 public consultation on reforming the *Gender Recognition Act 2004* into a de-medicalised process of statutory self-declaration, press coverage increasingly focused upon 'self-identification'. Trans women's use of public toilets has been at the forefront of media articles discussing *Gender Recognition Act 2004* reform, despite being of little relevance since it is the *Equality Act 2010* that legally protects trans women and men's access to spaces and services appropriate to their 'acquired gender' except in very restricted circumstances (*Equality Act 2010*; Sharpe 2020).

Running concurrently to the *Gender Recognition Act 2004* public consultation, on 25 July 2018, The City of London Corporation launched a public survey intended to inform an 'over-arching policy on trans issues covering employment and service provision' (Smart Consult 2019). Days later, Andrew Gilligan published an article in the *Sunday Times* entitled 'Ladies loos at City landmarks may open to trans women', which was subsequently removed for inaccuracies following an *Independent Press Standards Organisation* judgement (IPSO 2019). The article visually and textually deployed the urban fabric in combination with trans-misogynist tropes in order to position trans women as a public theat. The image in Figure 3.1, which shows elements of the photograph used by Gilligan, was captioned 'The City of London proposes opening women's facilities to anyone who 'self-identifies as a woman or girl'.

≡ MENU

THE SUNDAY TIMES
SUNDAY JULY 29 2018

Ladies' loos at City landmarks may open to trans women

Andrew Gilligan

July 29 2018, 12:01am, The Sunday Times

The City of London proposes opening women's facilities to anyone who 'self-identifies' as a woman or girl

Figure 3.1 Screenshot from the Sunday Times, 29 July 2018

There are a number of reasons for selecting this article, this journalist, and *The Times* for analysis here. Over the last decade, research found *The Times* to be Britain's most trusted national news source, and to have the highest circulation of a British broadsheet newspaper (BBC 2014; RIDN and UoO 2018; Mayhew 2018) which demonstrates the publication's significant reach, and potential impact, despite the introduction of a paywall in 2010. Gilligan is certainly not the only journalist at *The Times* and *Sunday Times* to situate trans people as threatening cis women and British society (Allardyce and Shipman 2017; Turner 2017; 2018; 2019; Murray 2017; Lewis 2017). Janice Turner's (2017) article 'Children sacrificed to appease trans lobby' targeted and misgendered trans femme artist Travis Alabanza. This is part of a sustained set of articles – including 'Slip on a frock chaps, and be a top 100 women' (Turner 2018) – that have situated trans people, particularly trans women, as dubious, fraudulent, and as threatening the cis women women's spaces (Turner

2017; 2018; 2019). Upon receiving a British Journalism Award for Comment Journalism, Turner stated that 'When you write about really difficult and *toxic subjects* it really helps to have your newspaper behind you*'* (Persio 2018 *[emphasis added]).* As Persio suggests, it was interpreted by Turner's supporters and detractors alike that Turner's 'toxic subjects' were trans people. Turner's award's speech, as well as the large volume of anti-trans journalism at *The Times* suggest editorial backing for producing content that fuels the Trans Debate.

The article analysed below is one out of a series of transphobic articles written by Andrew Gilligan that rely on common trans-misogynist tropes, and connects these with specific urban imaginaries through images and references (Gilligan 2018 [a][b][c][d]). Figure 3.1, and the quotation below, capture the tone of Gilligan's (2018[a]) article:

> 'Women's lavatories at Tower Bridge, The Old Bailey, the Museum of London and dozens of other places could be opened to people who identify as transgender in themost radical move yet to promote their rights.
> The move would mean a woman who was born a man and still has male genitalia could use the facilities because she now identified as a woman.'

Gilligan situates 'Women and girls', tacitly cis, as vulnerable and threatened by potentially sharing 'Ladies loos' with trans women, who are 'people who identify as transgender' or someone who 'now identified as a woman' (Gilligan 2018[a]). Thus, Gilligan effectively excludes trans women from *being* 'proper' women and users of women's toilets though they may *identify* as women or transgender; trans women could be '*anyone* who identifies as a woman or girl' (Gilligan: 2018[a] [added emphasis]). The words *opening* and *anyone* in the image caption (Figure 3.1) infer a lack of control and order, with 'self-identifying' in scare quotes, implying scepticism. Trans men and non-binary people are absent; it is trans women who readers 'should' hold in suspicion. Anybody with *any body* – a 'woman who was born a man and still had male genitalia' (Gilligan 2018[a]) – could be lurking beneath the surface. The image depicts public toilets that signpost, and materially form, a sexgender binary, with the facilities located underground which holds connotations of danger and uncertainty (Cavanagh 2010: 134-5). Public toilets are spaces within which

vulnerability and shame concerning nudity and bodily eliminations are shrouded in euphemisms, and counteracted by imaginaries of social order, certainty, and purity, often materialised through segregation (Barcan 2010; Cavanagh 2010). Following Gilligan's logic, gender self-identification exposes (cis) women to social disorder and uncertainty which are embodied by a misrepresentative figuration of trans women, barely differentiated from cis men, with potentially sinister intentions.

The City of London's forthcoming policy is presented as 'radical' (Gilligan 2018[a]), fuelling moral panic about a perceived, uncontrolled surge in trans rights, a recurring theme in Gilligan's writing (Gilligan [a][b][c][d]). There are parallels here with discourses surrounding Section 28 of the *Local Government Act 1988*, and the moral panic around the 'promotion of homosexuality' and the HIV/AIDS crisis of the 1980s. Rhetorics such as Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's 1987 Conservative Party Conference speech, in which she lamented that, instead of respect of traditional moral values, children were being taught that they had 'the inalienable right to be gay', are case in point (Thatcher 1987). As are approaches to policing homosexuality through the harassment of gay nightlife venues, which, as Johan Andersson shows, were underpinned by the logic that by preventing young people from 'coming in touch with (contagious) homosexual material, they would not be contaminated with homosexuality or HIV/AIDS (2008: 107). Thus, attempting to prevent embodied and epistemic encounters with queer possibilities served as a tactic for containing the 'spread of homosexuality' and gay rights. Gilligan is not alone in professing a need for containment concerning trans peoples' rights and identities. Terms like 'Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria' (Littman 2019), and their production and dissemination by UK-based groups, including *Transgender Trend,* have weaponised pseudo-scientific language as a means of locating transness as a form of social contagion, and mental illness. Through this logic, it is young people who are situated as especially vulnerable coming into contact with trans possibilities, or 'trans ideology' in Littman's terms (Ashley 2020; 4thWaveNow 2016). Here, notions of contagion, and a radical legislative change located trans people and rights as an emergent and potentially sudden future threat to the social order. This obscures trans peoples' collective and individual histories and present realities as people living their lives in ordinary ways, people whose movements through, and uses of, shared societies and spaces are protected by equalities law, and by no means threaten social safety, but whose

personal safety is threatened by transphobic and cis-heteronormative beliefs and behaviours.

In the context of the Trans Debate, positioning trans women's use of women's toilets as a 'shock of the new' (CN Lester 2017), as Gilligan does (2018[a]) denies trans women a history that carries evidence of harmlessly using public toilets in Britain for decades. It also disregards the *Equality Act 2010* which, by 2018, had protected trans women's right to access women's toilets for 8 years. Colloquial discourse – 'ladies loos'– and historic London landmarks that symbolise white, affluent, Britishness and tradition, whilst aligning trans women as ominous, coalesce in the service of locating trans women as a threat to British society. Therein, (cis) women and girls are situated as always already vulnerable subjects, more deserving of protection (Schilt and Westbrook 2015:29), and as gendered citizens to whom women's toilets 'properly' belong. Concern for trans and gender non-conforming people's safety and comfort is absent. These silences speak volumes.

With links with the right-wing think-tank *Policy Exchange,* and having held advisory roles for Boris Johnson (as Mayor of London, and as Prime Minster), Gilligan is no stranger to public policy (Policy Exchange 2021; Shapps 2020). It seems unlikely thathe lacks the political and legislative literacy to research *Equality Act 2010,* and understand the protection it confers to trans women and their access to public toilets (as outlined in the introduction to this thesis). Thus, it appears fair to read Gilligan's article as intending to evoke a trans-misogynistic 'politics of fear' by reproducing distance between bodies that are socially interpreted as different through the repetition of stereotypes that serve to fix them as 'Other', and specifically trans women as threatening, and not belonging in women's spaces (Ahmed 2004: 63-64).

SEXGENDER PURITY, ABJECTION, AND CIS-HETERONORMATIVE IMAGINARIES

As discussed above, the histories of Western public toilets are histories of how hierarchical social norms have fused with moral anxieties and ideals about health and hygiene (Penner and Gershenson 2009; Penner 2013; Kogan 2007; Cavanagh 2010; Bacran 2010; Browne 2004; Cooper and Oldenziel. 1999). As spaces with

abject potential, values associated with hygiene, purity, and social order have, through the 20th century, become invested in the popular imaginaries, embodied practices and social codes, and the materiality, design and aesthetics of public toilets (Spencer et. al. 1985; Kogan 2007; Overall 2007; Cavanagh 2010; Penner 2013). *Abjection* literally means 'to cast out' which stems from a fear of the ambiguous, that which eludes and disrupts the certainty of social systems and orders, and the anxieties concerning the maintenance of established onto-epistemological positions, rules and borders, 'separating subject from objects and self from other' (Phillips 2014: 20). In her influential analysis of abjection, feminist philosopher Julia Kristeva states that:

> It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite (1982: 4).

Thus, abjection is realised spatially through the cleansing practices that follow an impulse to eject polluting bodies that register as out-of-place and disturb 'identity, system, order' (ibid.). Or, in the case of segregated public toilets, it is materialised as a systemic spatial order according to identity vis-à-vis race, sexgender, disability and status. Writing on toilets, gender, and disgust, Judith Plaskow contends that 'it is an irony that nonetheless makes perfect sense that those defined as shit are often precisely the people denied adequate toilet access; the socially abject are excluded from toilets as abject space' (2016: 753). As Plaskow (ibid..) argues, 'disgust provides the passion that helps maintain social orderings.' Indeed, emotion and affect are central to constructing, responding to, and sustaining the abjection of bodies, objects, and spaces. In *Anatomy of Disgust,* William Miller argues that the processes of perception are at the core of disgust (1997:36), thus situating disgust as always relational, historically specific, culturally constructed, and potentially constitutive of spatial imaginaries. Engaging in Miller's thought, geographer David Sibley argues that negatively-charged emotions – such as disgust – shape spatial organisation since they provide a key to understanding distancing from others, the erection of barriers, and dehumanisation (2008: 70). Considered in relation to public toilets, especially those with designated users, the management of abjection and disgust emerge as influential upon their design and spatial ordering, and the social codes that structure interactions and practices within them: distancing between

cubicles and urinals; barriers separating the expulsion of piss, shit, and vomit; the management of menstruation; the imbibing of drugs. Through processes of social classification, and spatial designation, these practices involve policing which humans belong. Who is deserving of crossing the threshold? Whose mere bodily presence is disgusting?

As a sociologist whose research is oriented around social stigma, Imogene Tyler argues that, through abjection, borders become objects which a subject can manage (Tyler 2013: 28). Matter is transformed and objectified so as to render it a threat, rather than 'being a menace in and of itself' (Tyler 2013: 28). Extending this, Tyler argues that making a body, object, or space matter, including through abjection, seeks to force specific kinds of legibility and knowability that can enact a form of violence (Tyler 2013: 37). Gender and cultural studies scholar Ruther Barcan's comments that those whose existence threatens the established 'gender/sexual (and sometimes racial) order may themselves come to be imagined as a form of cultural waste' (2005:10). Considering minoritized and subjugated people whose bodies, feelings, needs, and value are rendered disposable by the dominant cis-hetero-patriarchal, ableist order that privileges whiteness and wealth, we might also look to Mary Douglas's (1966: 44) concept of dirt as 'matter out of place.' The spatiality of this is productive in analysing dirt's placement and displacement, as Ben Campkin contends (Campkin 2013[a]). Applied to public toilets, if 'dirt is disorder' as Douglas suggests (1966:2), and elimination, cleaning, and hygiene constitute a 're-ordering of our environment, making it conform to an idea' (ibid.:3), designating and sustaining segregation in public toilets emerges as a normative socio-material cleansing.

Indeed, in *Queering Bathrooms*, Cavanagh (2010: 137) argues that ideals concerning public bathrooms and sexgender purity form part of hygienic imaginaries. Integral to these imaginaries are people who have been devalued and situated as troublesome, disorderly, impure, and socially abject according to the sexual and sexgender logics and norms of Western modernity (ibid.; Butler 1999; Kristeva 1982; Schilt and Westbrook 2015; Phillips 2014). Segregating bodies by gender, and policing the choices of toilet users, can be seen as an attempt to reify borders between man/male/masculine and woman/female/feminine which, in turn, maintain a fiction of cis-heteronormative sexgender purity, and a moral regime that renders

sexgender impurity ‘profane’ (Cavanagh 2010:135). Indeed, architect and critic Joel Sanders contends that ‘through the erection of partitions that divide space, architecture colludes in creating and upholding prevailing social hierarchies and distinctions’ (1996:17). Through repetition of use and design, sexgender-segregated toilets have spatialised and given material form to cis-heteronormative assumptions and associations with morality, public health, and safety (Cavanagh 2010; Overall 2007; Fausto-Sterling 2019; Stalled 2020). In this way, by becoming a social institution and design convention, cis-heteronormative hygiene imaginaries and aesthetics have become naturalised (Cavanagh 2010; Overall 2007; Fausto-Sterling 2019; Stalled 2020). That is to say that toilet design and provision is not a neutral and passive reflector of social realities in material form: the socio-materiality of toilet design and provision actively privileges and reproduces cis-heteronormativity as natural, and in the process, obfuscates the reality of sexgender and sexual diversity.

To further illustrate the inadequacy of sexgender binary norms, it is not only trans women’s bodies who are policed in women’s toilets, gender-nonconforming cis women are similarly scrutinised and, at times, ejected from women’s toilets. Kath Browne demonstrates this clearly in her research on the ‘Bathroom Problem’ involving masculine-presenting lesbians (Browne 2013). Furthermore, political scientist, and gender and sexuality studies scholar Heath Fogg Davis’s analysis of discrimination in toilets explores racialised dimensions within the sexgender-policing of female masculinities. Fogg Davis bases their analysis upon the experiences of Khadijah Farmer, an African American lesbian who won a legal settlement for being discriminated against in a restaurant after being ejected from a women’s bathroom (with her party subsequently being asked to leave the restaurant they were dining in after a New York Pride Parade) (Fogg Davis 2016; Lee 2007). Khadijah Farmer’s lawsuit was filed by the *Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund* on the basis of sexual stereotyping, and specifically on the grounds that the restaurant had discriminated against Farmer because her gender presentation did not comply with sexgender norms (Fogg Davis 2016). This speaks to ways in which sexgender policing in women’s bathrooms is not only an issue for trans women, but also cis women with masculine-coded gender expressions, or whose gender registers as ambiguous socially.

As an architectural typology with abject and anxiety-inducing potential, public toilets are a potent site in which to spatialise a transphobic politics of fear, and have been designated as a key battleground in the Trans Debate. Moral panic discourses common to the Trans Debate seek to reproduce and reinforce a specific form of legibility and knowability upon trans women as socially ‘toxic subjects’, to borrow Janice Turner’s words (in Persio 2018). This is typified in Gilligan’s (2018[a]) article in which trans women, their bodies and access to women’s toilets are *made to matter* through figurations of trans women as ‘matter out of place’ (Douglas 1966). In situating them as fakes, and as enablers of ‘violent’ men and abject ‘sexual predators’, this view ostensibly justifies treating trans women like dirt: as a (potentially) polluting presence that (threatened to) defiles the integrity of space and the sexgender norms that reinforce its foundations. The social resonance of this account relies not upon evidence, but on transphobic ‘histories of articulation’ (Ahmed 2004: 92). That is, on the on-going impact of the stigmatizing legacies of media depictions of sexual and gender non-conforming people as sexual predators that threaten society, and especially cis women and children through the 20th century (Schilt and Westbrook 2015; LAGNA 2021; Houlbrook 2005; 2007; Phipps 2019).

Barcan’s (2005) thinking on cultural waste resonates strongly with the Trans Debate where trans people’s safe participation in public life, which requires access to public toilets, is treated as disposable. Moral panic and sexgender-policing serve intentions to cleanse the space of women’s toilets of (perceived) polluting (trans) bodies, and reinforce hygienic imaginaries. As demonstrated above, this is exemplified in articles like Gilligan’s (2018[a]) that shows little or no concern for trans people’s needs and realities. If trans describes ‘a movement across socially imposed boundaries from an unchosen starting place’, as Susan Stryker suggests (2008:1), efforts to exclude trans people from sexgender-segregated toilets can be read as forms of gatekeeping of the embodied, social, and spatial boundaries that contour the dominant social order. To trouble these borders through ambiguity is to threaten the security and comfort where it is reliant upon the upholding of a cis-heteronormative binary. This is echoed by Dara Blumenthal who notes that public toilets are sites in which identities are tested through experiences of ‘fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment’ (2014: 1), as well as spaces where we ‘confirm, and check the status of our gender

identities' (ibid.). Accordingly, those whose transness and/or gender non-conformity complicate that status can become imagined *less* as members of a human community who is deserving of being taken into account in the provision of toilet facilities, and more as a public inconvenience themselves, by being out-of-place**.** Thus, articulating disgust, and seeking to eject a trans person, operates relationally, punishing a perceived contravention of the 'proper' socio-spatial order, while shoring up one's position within it, and restoring sexgender purity.

COMPLICATING CIS-HETERONORMATIVE IMAGINARIES WITH TRANS LIVED REALITIES

The first half of this chapter has engaged with the media-influenced, cis-heteronormative imaginaries and social milieu enshrouding trans people's everyday lives and access to public toilets. While trans women have been a focus of social anxieties concerning women's toilets, the following section develops this analysis through the knowledge contributed by my research participants of various genders. This evidence makes it abundantly clear that trans people's experiences of, and relationships to, using public toilets differs significantly from abstract transphobic and cis-heteronormative imaginaries. Participants' narratives demonstrate how their negotiation of public toilets is shaped by, and responds to, these expectations and imaginaries.

In media representations, trans moral panic discourses have tended to disproportionately target trans women (Turner 2019; Gilligan 2018[a]; Lewis 2018[a][c]; 2019; Thorn 2016). Conjured as the most monstrous figuration and perilous eventuality of trans women using women's toilets, is the idea that a man might flippantly or fraudulently claim that he is a woman, and maybe even wear women's clothes as a means of gaining access to women's private space. Thus, temporariness is invoked as 'proof' of gender inauthenticity, a rationale for ridicule, and a spectre of misused identity claims as a means of gaining spatial access. For this reason, I begin by exploring Morgan's experiences as a white, non-binary person, who describes herself as living as a trans woman in some contexts, and as a cis man in others. For Morgan, her non-binary gender is one that moves between roles, and in ways that are not fixed according to context. Morgan makes reference

to being ‘a woman on Wednesdays’, a figure and phrase that has been instrumentalised to delegitimise, and ridicule trans-feminine people who do not,or cannot, live publicly as trans women all of the time. The inference here is that gendered legitimacy requires living and expressing your gender in the same way, across all times and spaces. When we met for our interview in her hometown of Dundee, Morgan mentioned that she is gradually spending more time in ‘female mode’, to use her term. In Image 3.1 and the narrative below, Morgan represents her experiences of using women’s toilets:

> One of my biggest concerns is … if a girl who knows both sides of me sees me enter 'her' public toilet space in female mode … “So, you're only a woman on Wednesdays, huh?” How do I explain that I'm under more threat in a male toilet (whilst in that mode) than she is from me, at any time? If I use a male bathroom in female mode, other males may feel awkward. I would too, knowing they'll not take me seriously about being viewed or accepted as female, or else assume that I'm just doing an elaborate 'drag' routine, exhibiting art student eccentricity, jumping on what some perceive as a current 'trend' for identifying as trans, or just being a bit 'pervy'.
>
> 'She' only went out to LGBT+ venues where bathroom use wasn't an issue – and in the early days, only in other cities, where nobody else knew me anyway … Gradually coming out has turned the simple task of emptying a bladder, into a potentially tense experience, prickling with the possibility of confrontation, humiliation and worse, over the increasing likelihood of being identified as my cis self whilst en femme … Has the recent biased and somewhat hysterical reporting of non-existent “trans agendas”, and inflated coverage of radical trans-exclusionism, begun to sow seeds of doubts in the minds of others as well as myself?

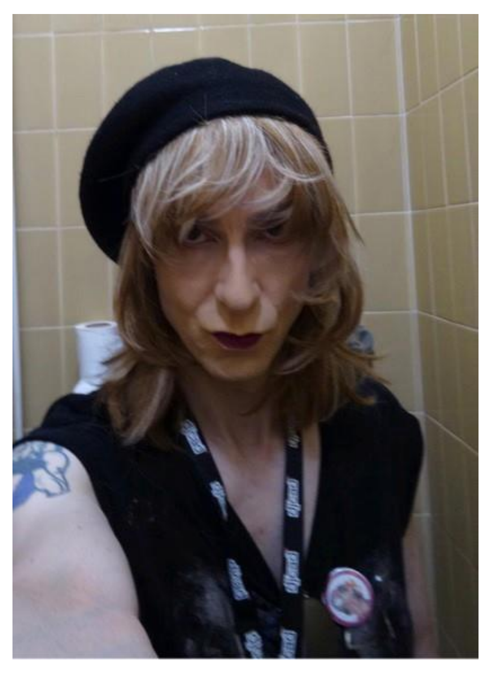


Image 3.1 I walked into this space as a male, feeling very comfortable, and by the time I took this snapshot, I no longer felt I was in the ‘right place’. It’s the gents’ toilet at my local art school, which I used as a changing/make up space prior to a public engagement

For Morgan, as her and his lives increasingly spatially overlap, the spectre of being read through the logic of trans-misogynistic tropes weighs upon her. She implicates the press as complicit in reproducing tropes that situate trans-feminine people as fraudulent, superficial, sexually predatory, and potentially harmful (Turner 2018; Lewis 2017; Gilligan 2018[b]). Although Morgan has not had negative experiences in public toilets, the affective force of ‘trans-exclusionism’ and ‘hysterical reporting’ induce doubt in herself and others. This is not to be confused with her exploration of her ‘ever-shifting non-binary sense of self’ which does not equate to doubting who she is. Morgan’s life has included *him* and *her* for years, though to be herself in the daylight of Dundee, outside the safety of LGBTQ+ spaces, is uncharted territory.

Exploring this involves navigating how to re-balance her life, and expand her knowledge of where it feels safe to be herself. In Image 3.1, Morgan’s image depicts her in the cubical of a men’s bathroom, where having assumed ‘female mode’– in her words – she ceases to belong, and feel safe, thus revealing the porosity and contingency of belonging and safety in sexgender-segregated spaces. ‘There’s no way a guy can walk into a girl's toilet’, Morgan tells me, and she’d rather use the men’s bathroom to change at the expense of her sense of safety and comfort as she exits the cubical. As Morgan notes, it is trans women that more commonly experience anxiety and harassment from cis women in women’s toilets than vice-

versa (Crawford 2020; Bachmann and Gooch 2017: 10). In 2020, the *Transphobic Hate Crime Report* by LGBT+ anti-violence charity Galop reported that almost two thirds of respondents felt 'unable to use public toilets due to transphobia', and 16 per cent of respondents cited experiencing a transphobic incident in a public toilet during the last year (Bradley 2020: 11). Knowing how they may be received, trans women routinely modify their behaviour, or avoid women's toilets entirely (Lees 2016; Hasenbush et. al. 2019; Bender-Baird 2016; Bachmann and Gooch 2017: 10). In a 2017 survey by Stonewall and YouGov, 48 per cent of trans respondents reported not feeling comfortable using public toilets (Bachmann and Gooch 2017: 10).

Transphobic representations of trans women exacerbate a sense of the latent potential for harassment that is intensified in public toilets and mediates how trans people navigate and experience these spaces. Morgan connects her anxieties about being confronted and humiliated to the phrase 'a woman on Wednesdays', referencing a media storm that erupted in May 2018 (Elgot 2018; Cowburn 2018; Fisher 2018; Lewis 2018; Kirkup 2018[b]). Following the Labour Party's National Executive Committee re-affirmation of trans women's inclusion on all women shortlists, David Lewis, a cis man, was suspended from the party after declaring plans to stand as Women's Officer in his constituency in an effort to 'demonstrate' what he perceived to be the repercussions of gender self- declaration (Kirkup 2018[b]). 'My womanness is expressed by my saying "I self identify as a woman" now and again on Wednesdays', Lewis stated in an interview by political magazine The Spectator (Kirkup 2018[b]). Morgan's concerns, partially shaped by this incident, and the media furore it provoked, connect with a dominant logic that consistency and permanence equate with legitimacy. This logic spreads beyond the pages of newspapers and magazines, and is apparent in legislation, public policy and consultations. The Gender Recognition Act 2004 was a hard-won, landmark piece of legislation that expanded the legal boundaries of manhood and womanhood (Hines 2009; Burns 2013; 2014). Applicants must intend to 'live in the acquired gender until death', and prove they have lived consistently in their 'acquired gender' for two years (Gender Recognition Act 2004). Maintaining an alignment between binary gender, legitimacy, and permanence through the Gender Recognition Act 2004 offers security against notions that a person might flippantly change gender. Similarly, the City of London Corporation Survey of 2018 noted that accessing spaces and

services should ‘relate to the gender with which the service user consistently identifies now’ (Smart Consult 2019: 33). I interpret the function of ‘consistently’ as intending to reassure concerned parties about trans peoples’ presence in gendered spaces. If trans people’s gender and its presentation are consistent, the threat of encountering gender uncertainty in toilets is minimised. This equation may serve trans men and women whose gender expression always meets cis-heteronormative expectations. Yet, it is difficult to envisage a scenario aside from gender-neutral bathrooms that would accommodate the needs of Morgan and other trans and gender non-conforming people whose genders are not socially legible across all, or any, contexts.

Morgan’s account resonates with those of other trans women, including participants in this research, who have documented their experiences using women’s toilets (Doan 2010; Roche 2016[b]). Another participant, Josi, a London-based, white, transwoman in her 60s describes instances of accommodating others at her own expense when visiting a club to help a friend who was performing. There, Josi was told by a manager that a cis woman had complained about her using the women’s toilet, and she was asked to use the disabled toilet which was in a very visible position in the room. Aware of her rights, but not wanting to risk the repercussions of a defiant stance, especially as her friendwas working, she agreed:

> Whereas I could have just walked in, used the ladies, checked my lippy, whatever, come out again. This was almost like saying ‘hey everybody, the tranny’s going for a pee.’
>
> I don’t know if they’re ashamed or fearful. Or don’t see it as their responsibility so they’ll say “it’s your premises, you’re responsible if I raise it with you, you need to put it right.” I don’t’ think they’re ashamed ... I think some people don’t like confrontation of any kind

As articulated above, Josi’s interpretation of the perspective of a complaining person – that management is responsible to maintain order by excludingher – provides evidence relevant to the above discussion of cis-heteronormativity in relation to purity, and abjection, in which trans people are figured as an impurity to be rectified

through spatial exclusion. In this case, sexgender-policing is mediated by management, who accept the role of sustaining cisnormative sexgender purity, at the expense of Josi's legal rights and personal comfort. With this anecdote, Josi demonstrates the limitations of the *Equality Act 2010* in practice, including the pivotal role of those managing spaces in the implementation of equalities legislation. Those managing space may well not have knowledge of the Act 2010, and the dynamics of commercial space are such that clients' discrimination can be deferred through management in the form of complaint, thus responsibility for resolving a situation is adjourned. Without support from staff who are knowledgeableabout trans people's rights under the *Equality Act 2010*, a trans person can all too easily be put in the position of being the one who is 'causing a fuss', or 'being objectionable' by claiming their rights, and failing to acquiesce. In this scenario, the prejudices of the other customer are privileged, while Josi's feelings and rights are devalued, in part for her friend's benefit. The pivotal role of those managing space in mediating the access and implementing the provisions of *Equality Act 2010* becomes starkly apparent in this scenario.

In another conversation during our interview, Josi recounted a story about the first time she used the women's toilet alone, when she was taken shopping by a friend, also a trans woman – an extract from which features above. Here, Josi echoes concerns expressed by Morgan about social scrutiny, and describes how sheadapts her toilet choreography to context-specific cis-heteronormative expectations:

> She said, 'oh you can go on your own'... it was to give me the confidence that nothing was going to happen, you'll be alright. She didn't abandon me, she knew where I was but I didn't need to be her shadow to be safe ... She said 'remember, feet face front. The last thing anybody wanted to see is a pair of feet facing there, underneath the door.' And now every single time I go to the loo I hear her voice.

In public toilets, embodied performative practices, movements, and etiquette follow sequences that are choreographed according to cis-heteronormative codes. If disobeyed, they carry queer connotations, and may arise suspicion of a person being out of place. Especially in a busy public toilet, users perform a specific kind of dance,

in which eye-contact, proximity, stance, sound, speed of movement, for example, are orchestrated according to certain sexgendered and sexual conventions. In Ellis et al. (2014: 361), trans men discussed their discomfort that urinating standing up is considered a signifier of manhood in the West, a concept which reflects sexgendered meaning in the embodied codes performed in public toilets. During the earlier parts of their transitions, trans men particularly report feeling vulnerable about the need to pee sitting down, and worry that they will be 'discovered' because other bathroom users can see beneath the cubical door, and find that their feet 'are not facing the "right" way' (ibid..). Correspondingly, the researchers found that is it common for trans men who are early in their transition to avoid using public toilet altogether (ibid..). The concerns of Josi and the men from the study by Ellis et al. (2014) highlight how toilet choreography is gendered and also disciplined by levels of privacy enabled by toilet design.

Cis-heteronormative toilet choreographies are multi-sensory, and include gendered acoustic regimes that operate within public toilets, as analysed in detail by Sheila Cavanagh in *Queer Bathrooms* (2010). Petra L. Doan (2010: 648)describes how her toilet choreography in women's toilets synchronise with her knowledge of the expectations contained in these spaces, and other women's perceptions of her.

> There are places in which I never raise my voice above a whisper, such as public restrooms… I am not shy, just careful. I recognize that my gender performance is simultaneously modulated by the observers of my gender as well as the spaces in which we interact.

In an article by Meredith Tulusan (2015) published in *Buzzfeed*, a trans woman called Zoe Dolan also articulates aconcern for gendered acoustics:

> After transition but prior to surgery, bathrooms were an exercise in identity: I took care to aim just right so that my pee hitting the water in the toilet bowl would sound like any other woman's. This reminder of what was wrong with my body was excruciating.

Writing on trans and gender non-conforming people's experiences of 'peeing under surveillance', Bender-Baird (2016: 985) makes a Foucauldian argument that

sexgender-segregated public toilets operate as technologies of disciplinary power. This power is integral to the biologically essentialist dividing and classifying of humans according binary sexgender, and forbids all possibilities that exist outside of a cisnormative system (ibid.). Consequently, trans and gender non-conforming people negotiate the more stringent policing of sexgender and bodies in sexgender-segregated public toilets by engaging in situational docility. Drawing form Michel Foucault's thinking on docile bodies, sociologist Kyla Bender-Baird uses situational docility to describe the adjustments made to one's body to be socially legible as a woman or a man at a glance – what Halberstam describes the 'cardinal rule of gender' (1998[b]: 23; Bender-Baird 2016: 985-4). These techniques of docility, are necessitated by some situations more than others, and enable trans and gender non-conforming people to blend in, and, thus, lessen the extent to which social norms are unsettled by their embodied presences (Bender-Baird 2016).

Through the lens of cisnormative imaginaries, trans women are often trans-misogynistically envisaged as threatening to harass or assault others, or to expose their genitalia, and take up space with an aggressiveness usually attributed to, and exhibited by, cis men. This contrasts starkly with the realities of trans women who commonly behave in ways intended to ameliorate anxieties of cis women, often at the expense of their own safety and comfort. There is epistemic violence inherent in the attempts to carve divisions between trans women and cis women, and in imagining trans peoples' equal access to spaces and services as oppositional to feminism and (cis) women's equality. Indeed, divisive, transphobic logics obfuscate the quotidian practices common to how *all* women use women's bathrooms to urinate, defecate, do their hair and make-up, change clothes, and avoid perceived and actual threats posed by cis men (Worthen 2016; Tee and Hegarty 2006). These epistemic divisions that cut across womanhood, ensure that using public toilets mundanely remains a privilege, and impede solidarity-building and unity against cis-hetero-patriarchal oppressions.

In Bender-Baird's (2016) Foucauldian analysis of the disciplinary power of sexgender-segregated toilets, she argues that trans people seeking to embody cisnormative expectations in public toilets might be read as disciplinary, bio-political practices of self-surveillance. For example, signalling one's belonging in a women's

toilet, could entail presenting more femininely, and/or making feminine-coded aspects of one's body more visible – breast, waist, accessories, purse, make up. Collectively, Morgan, Josi, Zoe and Petra L Doan's narratives, along with research by Ellis et al. (2014), illuminate the multi-sensory and embodied dimensions of sexgender-policing through surveillance, and self-disciplinary responses to the sexgendered codes of public toilets. Although not necessarily straightforwardly, in this way, the comfort *and safety* of trans and/or gender non-conforming persons and other users are intimately linked. Indeed, the anecdotes above describe how negotiating public toilets as a trans person frequently entails bodily practices intended to ameliorate the anxieties of cis people, sometimes at the expense of one's own sense of safety and comfort. Following Bender-Baird (2016), this might be described as situational docility in action, in which trans and non-binary people knowingly and intentionally embody and express gender in a way that is least likely to disrupt the expectations of fellow users, and what is considered adhering to gendered toilet codes.

CISTEMIC VIOLENCE AND VULNERABILITIES

Following Nigel Patel (2017), I use the term 'cistemic' in this sub-title to denote the systematic power that 'oppresses, subjugates, and marginalises transgender people', including the structure and convention of sexgender segregation in public toilets, which 'creates problems for those who are viewed as being at odds with a cistem characterised by a sex-gender binary' (2017: 51). Writing on trans people of colour's experiences using public toilets in South Africa, Patel locates these cistems as integral to the violence inflicted through colonialism and apartheid, and their on-going social and spatial legacies. In the context of this thesis, I have framed this section around cistemic violence and vulnerability to consider the persistent reduction of gender diversity to genitalia within the Trans Debate and other anti-trans discourses. Grounded in reductive and rigid binary onto-epistemologies that have become naturalised as common sense, the realities and ordinariness of sexgender diversity as embodied by trans, intersex *and* cis people is erased in ways that enact cistemic violence.

Genitalia are commonly at the crux of transphobic media discourses and related cis-

heteronormative imaginaries of trans people and public toilets, and therefore affect trans people's anxieties about using toilets and the gendered forms of choreography they employ. This is evident in Morgan and Josi's narratives, as well as Zoe Dolan's narrative (in Talusan 2015) and Ellis et al. (2014: 361). Situated according to the essentialist and reductive lens of binary sex, penises and the attendant logic that trans women are 'male bodied' (as per Gilligan 2018[a]), have featured centrally in discourses of women's toilets as a means of denying the authenticity of trans womanhood. As Sally Hines (2017) and Allison Phipps (2016) have highlighted, trans-exclusionary feminist discourses commonly figure trans women as sexual predators by virtue of them possibly having, or having been born with, a penis. In light of this trend, in Britain and the US, Schilt and Westbrook have argued that the 'gender panic' about trans women's use of public toilets might be more accurately described as 'penis panic' (Schilt and Westbrook 2015).

Writing on the mobilisation of #NoUnexpectedPenises across social media, Hines (2017) notes the hashtag first appeared on Twitter in 2014 amid debate about trans women's access to women's toilets, and other women's spaces and services. The hashtag was used 2,046 times in three days both by feminists opposing and aligning themselves with the journalist and trans-exclusionary feminist Sarah Ditam, who had argued that it is necessary to '[exclude] penised individuals from some women-only spaces' (in Hines 2017: 7). Through an act of biological determinism, Ditam conflates sexgender with genitalia, which reduces trans women to a penis (which they may, or may not have). In doing so, Ditam also reduced cis women to a vagina – a concept historically associated with an oppressive patriarchal view. In doing so, she draws upon an established cistemic logic that aligns trans women with cis men, and locates people who have, or may have, a penis as always already threatening to women.

#NoUnexpectedPenises became a social media channel in which cis women posted experiences of sexual harassment and assault in public spaces, including public toilets, swimming pools, and streets. As Hines (2017) and Phipps (2019; 2016) observe, conflating trans women's presence in women's spaces with violence against cis women depends upon cisnormative insinuations that trans women have penises, an organ that is masculine-coded and associated with cis manhood, and biologically essentialist maleness (Phipps 2019; 2016; Hines 2017; Schilt and

Westbrook 2015). Indeed, 'manhood' is a common euphemism for 'penis'. As Phipps (2016: 311) notes:

> The penis is the key object here, 'stuck' to trans women through an invasive and violent obsession with their surgical status, but also imagined as a separate entity which is itself responsible for sexual violence rather than being,as Serano reminds us, merely someone's genital organ (2013: 31).

Situating penises as a weapon has a precedent within strands of radical feminism of the 1970s and 1980s, the legacies of which remain strong (Phipps 2019; Williams 2020; Javaid 2018). As Schilt and Westbrook argue, through the logic of penis panic, the possibility that a trans woman may have a penis classifies them as a potential sexual predator who threatens (cis) women and children, who are always already 'vulnerable subjects', and, thus, more deserving of protection (2015: 29; see also Earles 2019). This logic relies upon a separation between sex and gender, in which sex – maleness – is situated as immutably aligned with men/manhood/masculinity, therefore denying trans women a possibility of femaleness or 'authentic' womanhood, and 'appropriate' femininity (Hines 2017). This rationale is reflected in the phrase 'Women = Adult human female' espoused by high-profile transphobic campaigner Kellie-Jay Keen-Minshull, a.k.a. Posie Parker (BBC 2018). Such reasoning erases the realities of sexual and gender diversity and the very existence of intersex people (Fauto-Sterling 2019), and precludes trans women from shedding their associations with maleness and male violence against women.

In a sense, 'the penis' as weapon is afforded greater agency and subjectivity than the trans women who it *may* be attached to, and whose actions actually determine its use. Trans women, objectified through anti-trans discourses, are denied the agency and capacity to know their own gender, or control their bodies and desires. Rather, trans women are fixed as an imposter, a male-bodied person, who therefore is a potential predator with malevolent intent. Cis women and children are positioned as vulnerable and passive victims through discourses that actively situate trans women as perpetrators and enablers of male-coded violence against 'real' women and children. Deploying violence against women in this way triggers emotions to great effect and affect, capitalising, Phipps argues, upon rape experiences as a means of

putting the argument beyond dispute, with dissenters risking (and being) labelled as denying or politicising rape (2016; 2019). As demonstrated by participants in this research, as well as Doan (2010) and Dolan (Talusan 2015), these circumstances can compel trans people to prove that they are non-threatening and 'normal' in order to justify their presence (and protect their own safety) in sexgender-segregated public toilets, and in public life.

When figured through #NoUnexpectedPenises, and allied discourses that cast scrutiny on sexgender non-conforming bodies, trans women are situated as suspicious, threatening cis women's safety, and disrupting the expected, 'natural' sexgendered order. Applying Sara Ahmed's (2004: 79) work on the politics of emotion, Phipps (2019: 9) contends that the adjective 'unexpected' illustrates 'how bodies that threatened to 'pass' can be fetishized more intensely as objects of fear.' There are specific temporal and spatial dynamics at play in this invocation of social anxieties around the unexpected and the uncertain. The public toilet is, thus, situated as the site of future unexpected exposure to a penis; the past and present lack of evidence for trans women exposing their genitalia to fellow women's toilet users is obscured by this future orientation (Sharpe 2020). Effectively, it does not matter that this does not happen, because it *could* happen, thus, the mere presence of a penis increases potential exposure. As potentially abject spaces that are intimately associated with vulnerability, shame, the exposure of genitals, and regimes of sexgender purity, women's public toilets are an ideal site in which to evoke a trans-misogynist politics of fear.

BRICK WALLS, BORDERS, AND CONTEXTUAL CALCULATIONS

Public reporting, debate, and anxieties have tended to focus upon white trans women – as a figure of social anxiety – and on public toilets as a generalisable type of space. As all users of public toilets will know from experiences, these spaces – sexgender-segregated and gender-neutral – differ vastly in their condition, social dynamics, and contexts. These factors shape how users of all genders experience, and negotiate these spaces, with specific implications for trans people, shaped by personal circumstances, and anxieties.
Highlighting the significance of context in how her migration status, ethnicity, and

gender intersect in relation to her experience of using public toilets, Layla, a London-based, Palestinian trans woman with Egyptian citizenship, identified airports as especially challenging (See also Image 3.2):

> Having to present in a legible gender form to match documents makes the experience of mobility in general complicated; if one is presenting in a certain way to have more mobility, how mobile are they really if due to that they cannot access gendered facilities in airports because of fear.

Image 3.2 Layla’s caption: Airports: The Gendering of Control

Writing on ‘Identity in Transit’, Paul B. Preciado describes navigating airports and the ‘terror at having exceeded the limit of social intelligibility’ (2020: 172) in contexts where legible parameters of legally and socially sanctioned sexgender order constrict in accordance with disciplinary techniques of identity authentication. For Preciado, writing at a moment where he is awaiting the review of legal recognition of his male identity by a Spanish judge, he is in transition and in transit, conditions that conspire to produce context-specific demands. This necessitates that he ‘deny what queer deconstruction has taught [him] and reassert the apparatus of social gender production’ that constructs us as subjects (Preciado 2020: 172). Trying to evidence why he does not look like his passport, he wields a letter from his lawyer explaining that the male sex was ‘wrongly assigned at birth’, and his identity is male (2020: 172). In this moment, in response to this specific context of the airport, Preciado seeks binary legibility, to be granted passage across national borders by locating himself as a ‘subject of a system of semiotic assemblage that gives meaning to life’ (2020: 174). Useful here is the thinking of Gayle Salamon (2010) and Hil Malatino (2013) on sexual synecdoche, the common practice of inferring the ‘truth entire’ (Salamon (2010: 193) of a person’s sex from a letter – an M *or* F – intended to index it. Such practices, common to birth certificates, passports, visas, identity cards, diverse licences, medical records and so on, form the lynchpin of binary understandings of sex and corresponding gender expectations (Malatino 2013). In airports, sexual synecdoche forms part of the institutional apparatus that determines ‘good’ and ‘bad’ traveller, whose border crossing will be more or less smooth and comfortable, according to their capacity to meet the strictures of identity – as named, sexed, and pictured on a passport – and, by extension, the bodily contours expected by the frisking hands and body scans of security staff tasked with enforcing order. For Layla, the disciplinarity of airports and border crossings are encountered and must be handled differently to Preciado. As a Palestinian trans woman, who is a migrant living in the UK and a citizen of Egypt, abiding by visa restrictions, a lawyer’s letter locating her as F, not the M printed on her passport, could prove dangerous.

These particularities of Layla’s identity, status, and circumstances extend throughout the airport, and intensify in specific spaces, including public toilets. While public toilets are generally difficult, as a migrant who is not ‘out’ to her family in Egypt (which does not legally recognise trans people), public toilets are implicated in how

Layla's mobility is restricted in special ways. Governing coherence between identity, embodiment, and official documentation, airports force Layla to express enough masculine and androgynous signifiers to match her passport, at the expense of her comfort. Layla's friends have been jailed because they felt unwilling and/or unable to similarly compromise. For her, using airport toilets has resulted in 'weird looks' in women's toilets and being shouted at in the men's toilets. Layla's experiences highlight how wider socio-spatial contexts extend through public toilets, and are shaped by intersecting aspects of a person's identities and social status, and their moving between legal, geographical, and socio-cultural contexts. The control and ordering of bodies that is integral to the operation of an airport are gendered in ways that impact on her particularly acutely due to her circumstances.

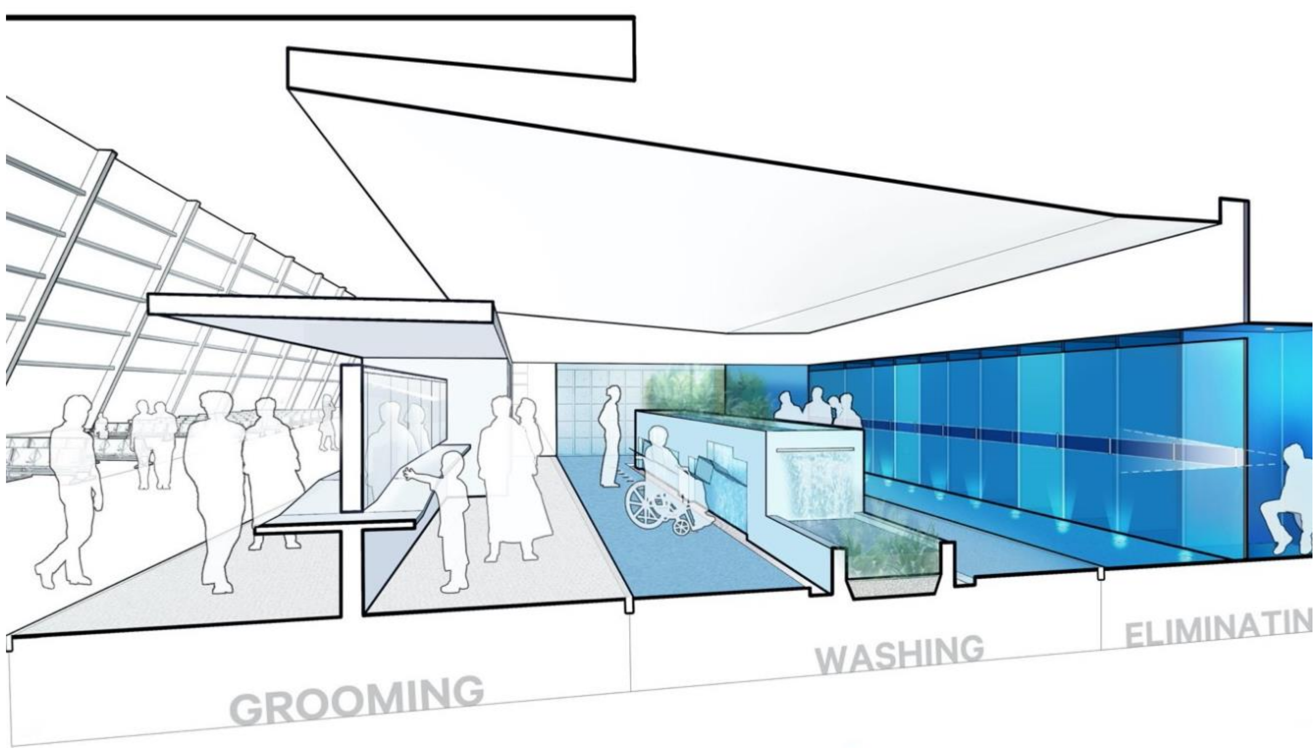


Figure 3.2 Stalled! Airport design prototype (2020[b])

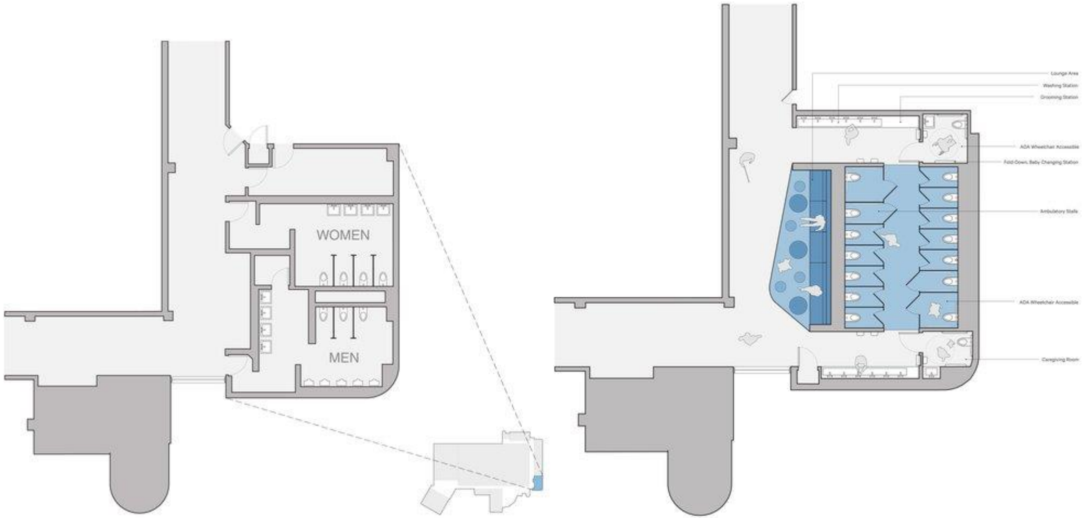


Figure 3.3 Retrofit - before and after (Stalled 2021)

Established in 2015 *Stalled!* (2020[a]) is a collaboration between trans studies scholar and activist Susan Stryker, architect and critic Joel Sanders, and legal scholar Terry Kogan, that emerged in response to moral panic concerning trans people's access to public toilets in the USA. Seeking to facilitate access to 'safe, sustainable and inclusive public restrooms for everyone regardless of age, gender, race, religion and disability' as a social justice issue, *Stalled!* includes producing prototype designs and guidelines. Describing their rationale in choosing the airport for their prototype, *Stalled!* (2020[b]) stated that it was because they are high-volume, mixed-use public spaces, with a diverse constituency, and must, therefore, be accessible to a 'wide range of embodied subjects' with varied physical, cultural, and medical needs. Stalled!'s Airport Prototype (Figure 3.2) shows a multi-user design combining ambulatory and more spacious caregiving cubicles to accommodate users with varied needs, including parents and those who require assistance. Floor-to-ceiling doors offer visual and acoustic privacy in the 'elimination zone', which connects with the semi-open design of the distinct washing and grooming areas, both of which have multi-level counters and sinks to accommodate different users. Each 'activity zone' is coded using floor texture and colour to assist the visually impaired and sign-language users, for whom blue is a complementary background colour. Although public toilet design cannot alleviate the disciplinary force of airport security and documentation, an accessible multi-user design that is divided only according to activity (Figure 3.2) does offer potential to lessen the intensity of sexgender-policing and discomfort within airport toilets, and make toilets

more accessible in general.

Working within a different context, Figure 3.3 shows a floor plan of a Stalled! retrofit project, created in collaboration with Gallaudet University, an American school for the deaf. The project involves converting sexgender-segregated toilets into multi-user facilities that - like the airport prototype - incorporate caregiving and wheelchair accessible rooms. Akin to the airport design, cubicles offer visual and acoustic privacy, while the semi-open design of the washing and grooming spaces allows for a form of social visibility and public surveillance intended to enable greater safety from potential physical and verbal abuse. These newbuild and retrofitted multi-user facilitates accommodate the needs of a gender diverse public, as well as parents, care-givers and people disabled by conventional sexgender-segregated toilet design. Both Stalled! designs discussed (Figure 3.2 and 3.3) envisage and materialise possibilities for inclusive designs with the potential alleviate the issues and anxieties around gender-policing articulated by participants throughout this chapter.

Anuka, a London-based, agender, west Asian, Georgian/German person in their 20s describes their ejection from public toilets and relates this to theirand their friends' lives. Underlining the implications of embodying gender ambiguity,whilst seeking to move through public spaces more generally, Anuka describes the consuming and stressful nature of living at the nexus of intersecting oppressions:

> I got thrown out of both the men's and women's toilets … I often feel like I'm crashing against these walls. And I realise it's happening to most people I know, especially queer people of colour. And it's really just so time consuming and stressful.

Echoing Layla, Anuka expresses exasperation at the policing of their sexgender in public toilets. Exhausted by the emotional labour demanded by sexgender policing, Anuka, highlights the persistence and violence enacted upon queer and trans peopleby the boundaries of binary sexgender, and how this is often amplified for people of colour. In referring to crashing against walls, Anuka marks the violence present in the physical ejection from men and women's toilets, as well as the onto-epistemic violence inflicted by one's existence clashing with a dominant socio-spatial order thatprivileges whiteness, cis-ness, and heterosexuality. Racialised,

classed, and sexgendered histories and hierarchies are formed in brick and mortar, plaster and paint; these brick walls are constructed upon the foundations of binary sexgender.

As Sara Ahmed observes in her thinking on brick walls as a metaphor, Anuka is 'pointing to a quality of feeling'; a 'visceral encounter' with an institutional barrier (Ahmed 2017: 136). Institutional histories materialise and harden to become concrete divides that are obstacles only for *some* bodies. There is a strong resonance here between Ahmed's thinking on the hardening of race and gender over time into institutionalised, systemic hierarchies, and the forging of brick walls that minoritized people come up against, and Anuka's feeling of crashing against walls, and the emotional and temporal toll taken by these encounters. Redeploying Ahmed's (2017) thinking on brick walls, under the guidance of Anuka's experiences, we can think of the walls that separate toilets by sexgender as *producing* obstacles for people who confound cis-heteronormative expectations.

Orion, a white, trans man in his 20s who lives nearChester, also emphasised the significance of context in how he navigates public toilets:

> If I go in the mens [sic] I get looks and if I go in the womens [sic] I get looks too… This was at Chester Zoo during the daytime so I chose to use my preferred male toilets ... if I did face questioning it was unlikely to involve verbal abuse or violence. As a general rule, if it is night-time or I am in a bar/pub I use the womens [sic]… This is not ideal but I worry about violence and abuse... my friend experienced corrective rape a few years back and it just feels too horrendous to comprehend.

> The relief I feel when I walk up to the toilets and see a gender-neutral sign is overwhelming … The comfort these places bring me is palpable.

Image 3.3 Orion's captions: Pick a side (left), Thank the sweet Lord (right)

Orion articulates the weight of anxiety he carries, especially concerning the intersecting transphobia and misogyny manifesting in the potential threat for sexual violence intended to put trans men in their ('women's') place (Koyama 2003). He feels overwhelming relief upon seeing gender-neutral toilet signs although he says, 'the more I pass... the less scared I am of going in the men's.

Avery is a white, non-binary person in their twenties who lives in Scotland. When in public, seeing gendered toilet signs (Image 3.4) means Avery has 'potential outcomes to weigh':

> I hate public bathrooms. Having an underlying medical condition that can force you to use the bathroom adds to this hatred. Bathrooms get talked about a lot and I grit my teeth and bare it and try to avoid them if it can be helped … I really hate needing to go to the bathroom in pubs and restaurants because there feels more of a potential that there could be somebody who is uninhibited.

Image 3.4 Avery’s caption: This is a source of exceptional anxiety for many and I wish I were not one of those people. Every time I see this, I have potential outcomes to weigh. I don’t know anyone that likes having to navigate these spaces but it almost feels like the awkwardness about these spaces make people reluctant to address the problems that exist in them.

In their written narrative and interview Avery expands on this, describing how their choice of bathroom depends upon their gender expression thatday, going ‘with the option where I feel like I’ll get less hassle.’ They feel threatenedin the men’s, though they have never experienced ‘direct active threats’, and ‘really hates’ using toilets in pubs and restaurants where they could encounter someone ‘uninhibited’. In our interview, Avery described how being non-binary and femme, with an invisible physical disability that requires frequent access to toilets, amplifies the anxiety they experience about accessing these spaces. They draw on examplessuch as being denied access to accessible bathrooms at train stations, and fearing harassment in women’s or men’s toilets which do not offer the kind of privacy that ispreferable for their condition. Consequently, access to public spaces is diminished, at times to the point of deciding to stay home to avoid needing to use public toilets.

Avery and Orion highlight how contexts shape the decision-making demanded by sexgender-segregated toilets, illustrating how bodily, social, spatial, and temporal dynamics enmesh, shaping how they feel and negotiate single-sexgender public toilets. Key factors include time of day, who is present, whether overt sexgender-policing is likely due to drug and alcohol consumption, and how their gender embodiment affects their own and other users' sense of comfort and vulnerability. In this way, evidence from Orion and Avery speaks to Petra Doan’s reflection that, although her sense of her own gender does not shift through social encounters, her perceived gender is continually, and simultaneously, mediated by observers and the spaces in which interactions occur (Doan 2010). Consequently, neither Avery nor

Orion consistently use the men's or women's toilet, and have a strong preference for gender-neutral facilities, partly due to anxiety about the *potential* for experiencing violence from cis men. Whilst women's bathrooms can be felt as the least-worse option, they are also proven to be contentious and often unsafe, gender-neutral toilets diminish the potential for sexgender-policing.

The emotional weight and affective intensity of cis-heteronormativity present in Avery and Orion's contributions is apparent. Avery expresses hatred of using men's toilets and toilets in spaces where alcohol is consumed, and Orion highlights the palpable comfort felt upon discovering a gender-neutral bathroom. These experiences uncover the phenomenological dynamics of how emotion and affect are felt and circulated through the body, including calculations and anxieties about *potential* transphobic abuse, and *despite* Avery and Orion never having directly experienced physically violent transphobia. As spaces historically invested with cis-heteronormative expectations, and that contain an unpredictable potential for sexgender-policing, sexgender-segregated public toilets demand constant calculations. Morgan, Avery, and Orion's statements reveal how mundanely accessing public toilets constitutes a privilege. Accordingly, the affective force of cis-heteronormativity, which might be considered as amongst the most powerful and widespread forms of violence, intensifies in sex-gender segregated public toilets.

The profound significance of public toilets in the lives of trans and non-binary people demonstrates the imperative that affect, emotion, and sense of self are taken seriously as sources of knowledge that can productively guide the design and provision of toilet facilities so as to ensure greater accessibility. Projects like *Stalled!,* which I discussed previously, demonstrate the productive potential of architects, planners, and policy-makers working to make the built environment serve diversely gendered populations.

AESTHETICS AND ALTERNATIVES

Due to associations with cleanliness and hygiene, Sheila Cavanagh argues, purity tends to be signified by white or light pastel colouring that symbolises a virginal and pristine toilet space (2010: 139). Indeed, trans people's access to toilets has become

embroiled in existing cisnormative associations with (im)purity and (im)morality, and their attending aesthetic regimes. The white or light pastel colour schemes that construct hygiene imaginaries (Cavanagh 2010: 139) are apparent in discourses arguing for *and* against gender-neutral bathrooms in the British press. In November 2017, Mayor of London Sadiq Khan's encouragement of gender-neutral toilets in his London Plan (GLA 2017[a][b]) provoked a flurry of media responses (Figure 3.4). Across the press emerged representations of toilet facilitates in darker colours emerged across the press, as shown in Figure 3.4 (Morley 2017; Crerar 2017; Fuller 2017), distinguishing gender-neutral toilets from the white/light purity aesthetic common in sexgender-segregated public toilets since the Modernist era (Cavanagh 2010: 140; Forty 1986). The politics of aesthetics within these representations illuminate an often-overlooked visual dimension of how sexgender purity regimes tacitly operate within public toilets in British culture.

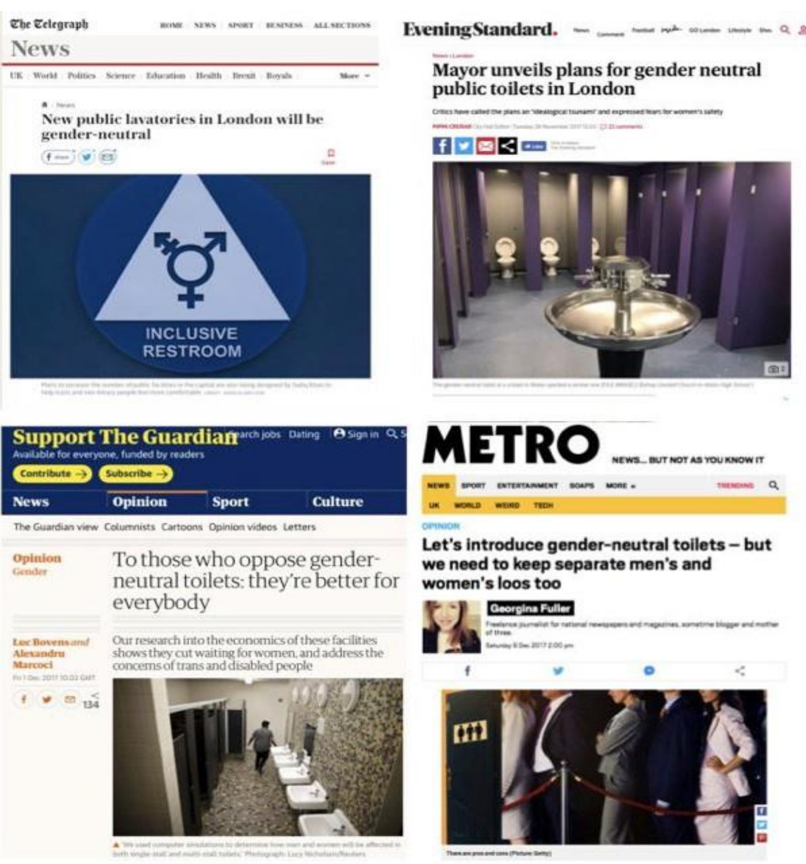


Figure 3.4 Collection of screenshots from articles on gender-neutral toilets. Top left: Morley 2017; top-right Crerar 2017; bottom left: Boven and Alexandru 2017; bottom-right: Fuller 2017

Beyond sensationalist media coverage, it is worth examining the actual everyday spaces that actively welcome people of all genders, and manifest this attitude in the provision of gender-neutral toilets. LGBTQ+ spaces can offer productive sites in which to locate alternative possibilities since, as venues and events, they operate – in their ideal forms – as counterpublics in which the cis-heteronormative status is suspended, and re-organised around gender and sexual plurality and non-conformity (see Michael Warner [2005] on counterpublics which are considered further in Chapter 6). For example, The Apple Tree pub in London opened in 2018 amid intense public debate about trans people, and the venue described itself as 'proud to be non-conformist', and offering 'a home to the LGBTQ+ communities' (The Apple Tree 2020). Here, cis-heteronormativity is countered through the socio-materiality of the toilet spaces, with signs plainly depicting the bathroom fittings, such as the presence of urinals and/or cubicles. In one of the toilets, the cubicles are painted with blackboard paint, with users invited to write and draw on the walls in a spectrum of coloured chalk, with the resulting rainbow motif showing identification with the rainbow, a symbol of LGBTQ+ community and pride (Figure 3.5). The surfaces are consistently inscribed with messages intended for fellow customers and the management, as well as speaking to the wider Trans Debate, with images and text celebrating, affirming, and showing solidarity with trans and non-binary people. Rather than a hygiene aesthetic (Andersson 2008) – offering light-coloured, shiny, wipe-clear surfaces, upon which graffiti may register as petty vandalism upon an implicitly neutral surface – users are offered a matt, black surface upon which colourful inscription, and anti-normative comments and sketches of the 'right' kind for this context are encouraged.

Figure 3.5 Images of The Apple Tree toilet, taken between 2018 and 2020 by Lo Marshall.

Embracing abjection has been a tactical tool with which to disrupt established systems of power from a position of liminality where 'meaning collapses' (Kristeva 1982: 2), by challenging the social norms that constituted those systems (Phillips 2014: 20-21). An example of this is the reclamation of 'queer' during the late 1980s and 1990s in the USA and the UK. The term was reappropriated as a positively-charged word, signalling an anti-essentialist, post-identitarian politics and ethos, which embraces sexual and gender non-conformity, and challenges a cis-hetero-patriarchal social order (Halberstam 2011; Halperin 2003). This approach evidently informs Susan Stryker's influential *Words to Victor Frankenstein* (1994; 2019). In this performance text, Stryker riffs on a scene from Mary Shelley's novel to articulate her rage at dehumanising figurations of trans people as monstrous, and to 'stage a transsexual retort to the devaluation of trans lives through the attribution of unnaturalness and artificiality' (Stryker 2019[a]: 39). For Stryker performing her transgender rage by 'embracing and identify[ing] with the figure of Frankenstein's monster, [and] claiming the transformative power of a return from abjection' (Stryker 2004: 213), on stage and in text, is a vastly different context to the pragmatic and ordinary realities of trans women using, or seeking to use, a public toilet without being harassed. While we might *queerly* reclaim and play with negative characterisations of us on our own terms, as Styrker (1994) did, or embrace our queer failures to meet oppressive cis-heteronormative standards (Halberstam 2011), the everyday social and media landscape navigated by variously trans, queer, and gender non-conforming people remains an intensely hostile environment for many. Discussing the British press, Stryker writes that 'in incomprehension or hostility, they fantasise the worst of us' (2019[b]: 28). Indeed, articles like Andrew Gilligan's (2018[a]) can be interpreted as transphobic fantasies dressed up as reality which sustain social stigma attached to trans women. Such stigmatization functions as a form of governance that 'legitimi[s]es the reproduction and entrenchment of inequalities and injustices' (Tyler 2013: 213).

Following Stryker, I read the aesthetic practices of graffiti that are encouraged and performed in the toilets of The Apple Tree pub as a part of a constellation of practices that form a queer and trans politics of reclaiming, and returning from abjection. Here, the abject potential of the toilet space is managed by the operators who invite participation from their clientele whose graffiti works to affirm trans

identities which have been rendered abject, and offer a return from this, to a space of embracing their transness, including genders that trouble boundaries, and are able to reside in uncertainty. For example, the comments I observed included: ‘Not sure if I’m a boy or a girl’, and responses of ‘me too’, ‘we love you anyway’, ‘as long as you’re happy’ (Figure 3.4). Many have chosen to inscribe support and solidarity with trans and non-binary people through on-wall interactions with unknown authors, declaring love, linking gender with happiness, drawing pride flags, writing affirmative statements, sharing and responding to problems, uncertainties, and questions, and leaving messages for the venue operators. In inscribing solidarity, love, and support for trans and non-binary people, a trans-affirming territory is established, and the unacceptability of transphobia is signalled. In my experience of using the toilets at The Apple Tree I feel uplifted and heartened by the queer and trans affirmations that envelope toilet-users. There is a joyfulness and solitarily in this colourful chalky handwriting that feels healing and hopeful. These photos (Figure 3.5) were not taken specifically for this project, they were taken for posterity, with no goal beyond a sense of needing to archive and carry the hopefulness of that space, and those words, with me as I move through a world that can feel so hostile and treat queer and trans people and communities with such cruelty. In this way, it is clear that these spaces that materialise hopeful alternatives do not stand alone; these spaces and their affects are always relational and resonate beyond the sites they inhabit.

Toilet graffiti practices as a form of communication, affirmation, and territory-marking among gay men echo here. Wall-writing in men’s/boy’s toilets at high schools and colleges, that operate as means of communicating about gay meeting places, and sources of information for men who are gay, bisexual or have sex with men comes to mind. Or cottages with ‘(homo)sexualised graffiti’ that simultaneously serves as a signifier of previous queer sex, and the promise of more to come (Mowlabocus 2008: 434; Leap 1996:75). Writing on the subversion of oppressive symbols and spaces through queer erotization, media and communications scholar Sharif Mowlabocus contends:

> The public toilet is one such symbol of oppression. Contained within its walls is a history of queer desire, covert negotiation, fear and entrapment. The cracked tiles and filthy porcelain, the scuffed concrete and the written on walls all remain signifiers of pre-liberation homosexuality (2008:434).

If sexgender-segregated public toilets are socio-materially constructed upon an assumption of a heterosexual society that erases, devalues, stigmatises, and renders queer people, bodies and sex abject, then to eroticise and sexualise men's toilets can constitute a powerful form of resistance and reclamation.

LGBTQ+ spaces matter precisely because of their suspension of sexual and sexgendered norms. Gender-neutral toilets, or segregated toilets that are used in gender-flexible ways, are crucial to this function for trans and gender non-conforming clientele. I suggest that The Apple Tree's toilets operate as a sanctioned iteration of queer and trans subversions of public toilet spaces that are most commonly built and managed according to cis-heteronormative social, moral, and aesthetic regimes. Speaking from personal experience of regularly visiting The Apple Tree since 2018, I have not seen any negative or discriminatory wall writing or drawing in the toilets. However, I have read a sign temporarily posted by the owners, requesting that customers bear in mind that children (accompanied by adults) use the space during the daytime, and that markings that the management considers inappropriate will be removed. This also points to the emergent and unstable nature of graffiti, and the reality that part of sustaining the toilets as an affirming, kind, and welcoming space for all users entails monitoring and potential censorship by the staff who impose appropriate limits, albeit broadly and loosely defined.

These toilets exist always in relation to the gaze of sensationalist media coverage and transphobia within British society. At The Apple Tree, this becomes evident in the bathroom walls through graffiti like 'TRANS RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS', and 'NON BINARY IS VALID' (Figure 3.4) that I read as affirming trans toilet users *and* speaking back to transphobic voices within the Trans Debate, as highlighted above. While this is not perhaps a widely 'replicable' model, this specific site does evidence possibilities for reclamation of abject spaces and identities, and perhaps, goes some way to alleviating the hostile impact of the Trans Debate and sexgender-policing elsewhere through the message of solidarity, support, and care from the pub to its customers, and between customers themselves.

In a way, The Apple Tree, and similar toilets that welcome all genders, might be seen as 'flipping the script' around these spaces and transness. Similarly, English

scholar, Lucas Crawford's 'Five Reasons I Won't Share Washrooms with Cisgender People' amusingly and acerbically flips the script on the 'question of "danger" in public washrooms' (2020). 'Trans people have been pissing and shitting all over spatial categories, long before the current news cycle would have people believe', writes Crawford (2020), whose five reasons are: 1) cisgender people commenting on other peoples' bodies and policing gender in toilets; 2) cisgender peoples' lack of hygiene and the mess left behind in toilets, and the cleaning up of 'heteronormative filth' that often depends upon the under-paid labour of women of colour; 3) cisgender peoples' insufficient training in public intimacy and sex; 4) cisgender people assaulting each other in public toilets; and 5) cisgender peoples' substandard toilet wall graffiti. Produced for a special issue on 'othering' by the *Journal of Architectural Education*, this article was accepted by the guest editors, and was then rejected by the executive editor unless it was toned down, which Crawford declined to do. In response to being deemed out of order, Crawford's article was published on the website PLATFORM, an open online 'venue for exchanging new ideas about… buildings, spaces, and landscapes. Crawford exercises a playful seriousness and creative approach incorporating images and a 'clickbate' title, more common to digital journalism, thus breaking with academic convention. Akin to toilets such as the ones in The Apple Tree, but in its own way, Crawford's (2020) piece carves out a space of discursive and spatial reclamation. Echoing the participants featured in this chapter, Crawford (ibid.) holds a mirror up to the dominant social and spatial order, reflecting the absurdity and violence of cis-heteronormative justifications of sexgender-segregated bathrooms, and the resulting exclusion and harassment of trans and gender non-conforming people.

CONCLUSION

Despite gender diverse realities, cis-heteronormative binary expectations continue to contour dominant perceptions of British society, and the British press is complicit in maintaining the grasp of cis-heteronormativity to the detriment of trans and gender non-conforming people, and their access to public life. This chapter has examined how and why public toilets have become situated as a 'battleground' in the Trans Debate in the British mainstream media in the 2010s, the implications of this for trans people's experiences and participation in public life, and the complexities of trans

people's negotiations in public toilets which are overlooked and obscured in the Trans Debate. I have highlighted the disciplinary and stigmatising function of social and spatial abjections, sexgender purity, and 'penis panic' in producing the women's toilets as an emotive and ideal space in which to locate a transphobic politics of fear. Whilst this politics of fear operates in the realms of the cis-heteronormative imaginary, and lacks evidence, correlations between trans people, especially women, and violence have very real effects and affects, forcing trans people into defending themselves from being labelled as threatening. Consequently, complex negotiations and calculations are demanded from trans people, masking shared experiences and needs, and diminishing potential coalitions between all groups oppressed by cis-hetero-patriarchy. Sexgender-segregated public toilets demand compromises and conformity from those whose existence complicates the foundations upon which they are built. Understanding the social context in which trans lives are lived demands engagement with how cisnormative imaginaries obfuscate the mundane realities that trans women use women's bathrooms to urinate, defecate, do their hair and make-up, change their clothes, and avoid perceived and actual threats posed by cis men (Worthen 2016; Tee and Hegarty 2006). There is a commonality amongst women here. People who are implicated in designing and managing the socio-material dimensions of public toilets are complicit in perpetuating the integration of exclusionary gender within the built environment, as are journalists and media platforms sensationalising trans people's use of, and access to, public toilets.

Public toilets are commonly considered and framed in general terms within the Trans Debate which disproportionately targets trans women. The experiences of participants show the value and insights offered by a more context-specific approach that includes the often-overlooked experiences of trans men, non-binary people, and trans women who are variously people of colour, have physical disabilities, and are migrants from specific nations. Furthermore, the significance of time of day, socio-spatial context, the potential inebriation of fellow users upon toilet choice, and choreographies embodied to negotiate toilets, is clear. Furthermore, there is an evident imperative to take seriously and address the affective omnipresence of potential sexgender-policing in segregated toilets and the emotional violence inflicted by instances of sexgender policing.

4. INSTRUMENTALISING IMAGINARIES IN THE TRANSDEABTE: A DEEP DIVE INTO THE KENWOOD LADIES' BATHING POND

> It feels, these days, that even the mallards and moorhens seem to police gender with the beady gaze of their Jesuitical authority. External protestors disrupting a recent Kenwood Ladies' Pond Association meeting about allowing transwomen swimmers to continue using the Ladies' Pond (as they long have) wore the WOMEN ONLY sign from the pond gate around their necks, a grotesque invocation of slave auctions only feet from where Belle and the Earl of Mansfield fought for emancipation. It gives me reservations about the pond as a community; it gives me, literally, a sinking feeling.
>
> - So Mayer (2019

As discussed in Chapter 3, contestations concerning trans women's access to women's spaces and services have tended to be oriented around specific types of everyday spaces, particularly public toilets. Yet, during 2018 and 2019, the Kenwood Ladies' Bathing Pond, a site of urban nature on north London's Hampstead Heath, was thrust into the midst of debates about gender self-identification. Again, trans women's access to women's spaces was placed under particularly intense public scrutiny. Highgate Men's and Kenwood Ladies' Ponds on Hampstead Heath are the UK's only sexgender-segregated outdoor swimming spaces that are open and life-guarded year-round. These exclusive, gendered designations are foundational to the celebration of the Ladies' Pond as a sanctuary for women (White 2020). In this chapter, I explore how and why this anomalous space has been heavily, but temporarily, embroiled and instrumentalised in the Trans Debate in Britain, especially in the news media. In doing so, I consider how the voices of trans people regarding the Ladies' Pond complicate these debates, and reveal complexities concerning what this space symbolically stands for, as well as the limitations of equalities legislation when it comes to enabling accessibility in gendered spaces.

Hampstead Heath is an area of grass and ancient woodlands in a largely affluent area of North London. As a well-known and long-established cruising ground,

Hampstead Heath is, for many, a queer site and Highgate Men's Pond and Kenwood Ladies' Pond are popular among gay men and lesbians, respectively (Johnson 2013; Parker c.1985; Rosenfeld 2017). Yet, these queer presences have rarely featured in mainstream narratives about the Ladies' Pond, nor have trans women – until recently – been a feature of the Pond's published history. This changed with a *Daily Mail* article by Sanchez Manning (2017) which was followed by a flurry of media attention and anti-trans protests staged by the campaign group #ManFriday (2018). This furor precipitated the launch of a public survey on a Gender Identity Policy by the City of London Corporation who manages Hampstead Heath. As noted in Chapter 3, the survey was intended to inform the development of an overarching Gender Identity Policy in line with the Corporation's duties under the *Equality Act 2010*. Against the backdrop of debates about self-identification in response to GRA reform, the Corporation's survey effectively became a referendum on trans women's use of the Ladies' Pond which, then, operated as a symbolic proxy for women's spaces throughout Britain.

I approach the Trans Debate as a genre of public discussion through which transphobia has been legitimized and solidified to become a knowable and widely accepted reference point and topic in British society. Here, I am specifically interested in how the Ladies' Pond has been instrumentalised, what the repercussions of this are, what the experiences of trans people disclose about the Pond, and about the Trans Debate it is embedded within. I draw from journalistic writing published in the British news media which I analyse against visual, textual, and verbal narratives by trans and non-binary people. This includes perspectives from Chryssy and Layla, who responded to the research theme 'navigating gender-segregated spaces' with writing and images of the Hampstead Ponds. We explored these further through one-to-one in-depth, semi-structured interviews.

Imaginaries are the crux of the arguments developed in this chapter, due to the ways in which the Ladies' Pond landscape, and the ideas and values invested in it, were instrumentalised through the Trans Debate. As urbanist Edward Soja suggests, imaginaries are 'the interpretative grids through which we think about, experience, evaluate, and decide to act in the places, spaces, and communities in which we live' (Soja, 2000: 324). Urban studies scholars Christoph Lindner and Miriam Meissner

argue that urban imaginaries meaningfully interconnect ‘structures and signs, minds and bodies, facts and subjectivities, actualities and virtualities, economies and ecologies of urban social space’ (2018: 6). Thus, according to them, urban imaginaries enmesh the spatial, political, and aesthetic dimensions of a site with material, conceptual, and experiential dynamics, as well as embodied practices and relations. Imaginaries have a temporal dimension: they are historically embedded, often future-oriented, always in transition, and frequently in tension with competing visions. As imaginaries are constituted by normative ideas about gender, sexuality, class, race, and bodily ability, this raises questions about who participates in the production, maintenance, and transformation of imaginaries though representational forms, embodied practices, and social relations. In the following, I consider how imaginaries form and inform perspectives about trans women’s access to the Ladies’ Pond, and why these have become so salient and impactful through the Trans Debate.

Furthermore, I contend that instrumentalising spatial imaginaries in the Trans Debate in ways that shift between sites – from toilets, to the Ladies’ Pond, to changing rooms (see Chapter 5), back to toilets again – gives the illusion of progress to what is actually a stalled and flawed debate. In her contribution to ‘Public Dialogue on the American Dream’ (a lecture series for Black Studies Centre at Portland State University in 1975), Toni Morrison argued that it is important to know:

> the very serious function of racism, which is distraction. It keeps you from doingyour work. It keeps you explaining over and over again, your reason for being. Somebody says you have no language and so you spend 20 years proving thatyou do. Somebody says your head isn’t shaped properly so you have scientistsworking on the fact that it is. Somebody says that you have no art so you dredge that up. Somebody says that you have no kingdoms and so you dredgethat up. There will always be one more thing[.]

Morrison’s argument here specifically addresses the strategic function of distraction in maintaining de-humanising, racist hierarchies and systems of oppression toward black people, and people of colour, in North America and elsewhere. While race and gender intersect (Crenshaw 1989), they are certainly not interchangeable.

Nonetheless, there is a resonance between Morrison's contention, and the dynamics at play within the Trans Debate and its persistent fixation upon safety in women's spaces, most often women's toilets, and gender-neutral bathrooms. In the absence of evidence to support transphobic 'concerns', the Trans Debate is largely stalled, but shifting context gives an impression of progression. As highlighted in the introduction, trans writers are increasingly gaining platforms in the mainstream British press in which they communicate their experiences, counter misrepresentations, and highlight how those misrepresentations hinder their lives. For example, Owl Fisher writing on their difficulties using swimming pools as a trans person due to fearing harassment and abuse, and being compared to a rapist or pedophile (Fisher 2019). In producing this work, writers are performing the labour of explaining trans people's existence, seeking to dampen the social resonance of transphobic stigma, and lay a safer path to our use of public spaces and services. While debates as a format tend to operate under the guise of neutrality, balance, and fairness, it is clear that violence is enacted through the TransDebate *and* as a function of this stasis. A stasis that constrains what will come into view, and serves as a distraction which ensures that trans people are kept explaining, over and over again, their reason for being. 'There will always be one more thing', Toni Morrison's (1975) words remind us, and for a time that thing was the Kenwood Ladies' Bathing Pond.

In this chapter, I am concerned with how racialised and classed ideals concerning Britishness and sexgender purity, as well as inclusivity, diversity, and equality, infuse competing urban imaginaries embedded in the Ladies' Pond. I first explore how visual and textual discourses about the Pond reify existing imaginaries invested in this site, and serve to disguise the particularity of these prevailing idea(l)s. Such discourses form the foundations for how urban imaginaries have been weaponised to situate trans women as 'threatening' a sanctuary that 'properly' belongs to women who are culturally affiliated, white, middle-upper class, and cis. These claims persist despite there being no evidence of the central imagined threat – men pretending to be women in order to gain access – or of threatening behaviour by trans women. This analysis is developed by engaging with contributions from research participants Chryssy and Layla which offer insights into how exclusions operate in relation to women's spaces.

I have drawn more extensively from Chryssy's contribution which, due to her participation in an event held by the *Kenwood Ladies' Pond Association* (KPLA), relates more directly to dynamics around division and solidarity in how this site has become entangled in the Trans Debate. As part of this discussion, I bring Judith Butler (2004) and Sara Ahmed (2016) into conversation with Chryssy in order to consider the operation of transphobia within the Trans Debate, and what it means to negotiate if, and how, to participate in debates. The final section links this discussion to the *City of London Corporation*'s public survey, and draws from interview material with Edward Lord, the Chair of the *City of London Corporation* Establishment Committee which is responsible for workplace and inclusion matters. In this, I highlight the centrality of the Pond to the *Corporation's* 'Gender Identity Policy' and survey, and suggest how the logics of division and solidarity are reflected in the survey results and surrounding discourses.

IMAGINING KENWOOD LADIES' BATHING POND

To understand how a specific freshwater bathing pond become entangled within contemporary media debates and public policy requires examining the social, media, and political contexts – both contemporary and historical – in which the Ladies' Pond is embedded. British women's struggles for, and attainment of, increasing participation in public life during the early twentieth century included a push for unsegregated public bathing (Horwood 2000). In a socially conservative move, that resisted this socio-political trajectory, the London County Council established Kenwood Ladies' Bathing Pond and Highgate Men's Pond in 1926. Today, this relic of early-twentieth century conservative gender values has been re-imagined as a liberating site that enables women to gather away from the presence and gaze of men. *At the Pond: Swimming at the Hampstead Ladies' Pond,* edited by playwright and critic Ava Wong Davies and novelist Margaret Drabble (2019), opens by describing the site as 'one of the most magical places in London'. 'It's sequestered location and abundant wildlife', they continue, 'make it a peaceful wilderness in an otherwise urban landscape' (Wong Davies and Drabble 2019). The authors note that 'it's also a place with a strong literary heritage', and contend that '[g]oing to the Pond can be a rite of passage'. Deborah Moggach's contribution to *At the Pond*, which was partially published in The Guardian, highlights her near half-century relationship

with the site, which she describes as: ‘a much-loved institution…a place of wildness and freedom, a beautiful sanctuary, and that’s very precious. One day, when they’re older, I hope to take my granddaughters there’ (Moggach et al. 2019). Here, Moggach’s describes a strong and valued sense of shared ownership, rite of passage, and inheritance across generations of women who swim at the Pond.

Over a decade ago, journalist Michelle Hanson wrote in *The Guardian* (2004) celebrating the ‘women's camaraderie’ and ‘heavenly lack of men’. Meanwhile, in an ‘ode to Hampstead Ladies’ Pond’, published in London’s Evening Standard, Dolly Alderton (2016) described that ‘it feels as if you have taken a Narnia-like step out of the city and into a tranquil idyll…a pocket of urban escapism that is entirely unique’. Writing for the *Financial Times*, the novelist Esther Freud (2013) situated going to the Pond as being:

> about taking your place among your own sex – every shape and size, all classes, all ages from eight to 90, from across London, across the country. Even from abroad. The meadow is entirely private – topless sunbathing has been allowed since 1976, and once you lie back on your towel all you can see are trees and sky.

London + Add to myFT

Esther Freud on Hampstead Heath’s Ladies’ Pond

Above the birdsong, the only sound is the hum of chat and the occasional scream of someone new braving the cold

Esther Freud JULY 12, 2013

Figure 4.1 Screenshot from The Financial Times

These excerpts reflect common narratives describing the Ladies’ Pond (Earl 2019; Freud 2019; Neill 2018; Mayer 2019). Romantic odes collectively reproduce an imaginary of the Pond as a magical, unique, lush, and idyllic haven with historical

legacies, enduring value and cultural credentials, together with a social dynamic that enables community building, and bodily liberation. As the quotes show, a strong sense of equality and inclusivity is expressed through these narratives, celebrating the spatial co-habitation and sharing between women of all ages, classes, and corporeality. Historical continuity, heritage, familial ties, 'rites of passage', and traditions – such as the New Year's Day Swim (Banks 2018) – are common lenses through which bathing at the Pond becomes refracted as a near sacred act. Access to this site is governed by virtue of womanhood. While the value of, and access to, the Ladies' Pond, initially appears generalizable to all women, a closer look at the demographic characteristics amongst women who use and publish writing on the Pond reveals particularities that largely go unmarked. That is, the dominance of white, middle-upper class, cis, non-disabled, heterosexual women. Most obviously, perhaps, this is reflected within the site's name, 'ladies', being an implicitly racialized and classed term, with cis-heteronormative undercurrents, that also gestures towards the Pond's historic status.

Hampstead is commonly framed, and widely imagined, as a picturesque and idyllic north London village (Visit London 2020; Hampstead Village 2020). It is one of the UK's 'most sought after (and affluent)' postcodes according to Mark Flint (2020) of *Essential Living,* a London-based property developer. On the Hampstead Village website, the promotion of the London suburb incorporates the Heath and its Ponds along with cultural capital embodied by certain residents, and the wholesome activities on offer:

> the original urban village with quaint alleyways and perfectly preserved Georgian buildings. Long favoured by academics, artists and those in the media…With two National Trust properties…and the Freud Museum, you can soak up the culture too before a long ramble on the Heath's stunning meadows and woodland and even dip into the swimming ponds and climb for the city views from Parliament Hill (Hampstead Village 2020).

The Freud Museum, which is located in the home of psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, is foundational to this sustained connection with Freud and his descendants and Hampstead. Indeed, the Jewish Museum London has offered a 'The Freuds in Hampstead Walking Tour' (Jewish Museum 2019). As the great-granddaughter of

Sigmund Freud, and daughter of painter Lucian Freud, Esther Freud is closely connected with Hampstead in popular imaginaries, albeit somewhat inadvertently through her family name. She has also consolidated this connection through her published writing on the Ladies' Pond (2013; 2019). In a 2013 piece for the *Financial Times*, Esther Freud's writing about the Pond is coupled with dreamy, soft-focused images. Together, these textual and visual representations articulate a sense of tranquillity, spaciousness, seclusion, and lush green nature that is associated with the British pastoral imaginary, which is both gendered and aligned with whiteness, while being invested in a specifically Hampstead place-identity, which Freud embodies through her family's connection (see Figure 4.1). These romantic aesthetic and textual discourses privilege middle-class, white Britishness and are commonly invoked to represent the Ladies' Pond. I interpret imaginaries of this exceptional site of spacious lush green, urban nature, and the peace, pleasure, escapism, and orderly safety it fosters as operating, albeit subtly, in relation to an oppositional counterpart. Specifically, the hetero-male gaze and patriarchal dominance manifest in man-made, public spaces and the sprawling, grey intensity and disorderliness of the inner city. Valorising verdant imaginaries of the Ladies' Pond above grey inner-city imaginaries similarly privilege cis-heteronormative, middle-class, whiteness as justification for resisting (perceived) change at the Pond by prohibiting trans women.

Related sexgendered, sexual, racialised, and classed ideals fuse with historical associations with purity that extend through spatial imaginaries embedded in the Ladies' Pond. In nineteenth– and twentieth-century Europe and North America, bodily cleanliness became solidified as a marker of middle-class status and civility, and public bathing was understood by sanitary reformers as a means of cleansing the social fabric (Forty 1986). These notions grounded a connection between bodily cleanliness, purity, and good moral character, and an imperative to civilize the urban poor and colonized populations (Masquelier 2005; Sheard 2000). Today, these associations endure within imaginaries of 'inner city' spaces and are commonly invested in the idea of 'sink estates' and the working-class communities who have historically lived in them. At the forefront of these imaginaries of inner-city 'sink estates' are racialised, classed, sexualized, and sexgendered social anxieties concerning black and south Asian people – especially young men – and associations within dirt, high-density building, criminality, moral degeneration, disorder, and

poverty (Campkin 2013[a][b]; Romyn 2019; Perera 2019; Rhodes and Brown 2018; Gilroy 1987; Tyler 2013). These oversimplified and stigmatizing, normative imaginaries do not represent the complex lived realities of urban spaces, and the communities that they are attached to. Yet, they are far from benign. Inner city imaginaries have been instrumentalised in London to justify regeneration projects that are described by critics as *social cleansing* (Perera 2019; Minton 2013). Elsewhere, romantic imaginaries of the urban pastoral were central to the work of artists whose presences and practices contributed to the gentrification of Hoxton in London's East End (Harris 2012). These reductive binaries have served to be powerful drivers of urban change that are open to manipulation as shown in the case of the Ladies' Pond. Imaginaries invoking urban and pastoral associations are often bound up within processes of urban change in which pastorals emphasise virtue in some social types, and locate threats in others.

Within the Trans Debate, these imaginaries have been mobilized and refracted through a cisnormative prism of sexgender purity. The logics of Western modernity through which sexgender non-conforming people and racialised Others have been historically devalued and situated as troublesome, disorderly, impure, and abject, are integral to this (Cavanagh 2010). The resonance of the Ladies' Pond appears to relate to gendered associations with purity, similar to those affecting public toilets (as discussed in Chapter 3). Yet, the Pond does not share the abject associations of public toilets as a space of bodily elimination. Rather, representations of the Pond tend to burst with romantic connotations linking escapism, nature, historical continuity, and womanhood. In this way, shifting away from a focus on women's toilets, the Ladies' Pond is a perfect site in which to temporarily relocate arguments that trans women are unnatural, and malevolent. As a counterpoint to the abject potential already invested in public toilets, at the Ladies' Pond, trans women's presence can be situated as threatening to taint the Pond's purity, transgressing the sexgendered boundaries to cause the abjection of disorder, thereby, desecrating the legacy of this historic and treasured (cis) women's space. At the Pond, rather than the everyday spaces of public toilets, trans women supposedly threaten an extraordinary site, potentially ruining a rare treasure, preserved for and inherited by (cis) women. Framed around a unique entity that is perceived to be being taken

away, trans people's equality, particularly trans women's access to spaces and services, is again divided from, and pitted against cis women's interests.

The depth of equality, diversity, and inclusivity

A commonality across certain narratives, as previously established, is a sense that the Ladies' Pond operates as an equaliser and liberator amongst women with a diversity of backgrounds and bodies (Freud 2013). Yet, these spatial imaginaries and representations of the Pond have tended to be tacitly racialised, classed, and gendered, and are significantly reflected in the demographics of swimmers. For those seeking the exclusion of trans women based upon a denial of authentic/real womanhood, trans inclusivity threatens the existing social relations at the Pond and its positioning as a rare haven away from the male/man gaze. Conversely, those supporting trans women's use of the Pond have argued that trans inclusion is fundamental in maintaining this already diverse and inclusive dynamic (O'Neill 2018; Topping 2018). Social dynamics relating to diversity, inclusivity, and equality at the Pond are more complex than they appear on the surface of narratives surrounding it, including in the context of the Trans Debate. The corporeal freedoms granted by the Pond, and which are celebrated by writers like Freud (2013), emerge as unevenly distributed when looking at narratives provided by women who are members of social minority groups in Britain. The attempt to escape from a patriarchal male gaze does not expunge the site from the operation of transphobia, homophobia, classism and racism, and the privileging of cis, heterosexual, middle-upper-class, white women.

The recognition of complexities and contingencies relating to senses of inclusivity, diversity, and equality, and the embodied presences, absences, and experiences of members of social minority groups have tended to be published within subcultural and grassroots media, rather than feature in the mainstream. In an article entitled 'Hampstead Ladies' Pond Is the Best Place in the World' published in *Vice,* Lauren O'Neill (2018) celebrates the Pond as offering the 'promise of both space and peace, outside of the glare of objectification.' O'Neill is supportive of trans women's inclusion in the space, arguing that only a small minority of pond users object, and

also highlights racial dynamics at the Pond, quoting a pond user called Ava who says:

> As a woman of colour I sometimes do feel a little uncomfortable, because it is super white, and I have other friends who avoid it for that reason. It's a shame,though, because it feels like it should be this really amazing oasis for everyone(in O'Neill (2018).

O'Neill and Ava articulate the contingency of inclusivity at the pond in relation to race and gender, noting the affective force of context-specific norms that circulate within the space, emanating in part from the identities visibly embodied by the majority of pond users. They also contrast realities against the imaginary of the Pond as an oasis for *all* women. Accessing the Pond as a social minority demands negotiating an affective, and emotional geography marked by discomfort. Yet, O'Neill and Ava hold on to the sentiment that the Pond *should* be a valuable haven away from the patriarchal, 'the male gaze [and] the containment of everyday life' (O'Neill 2018) for women, including trans women. Here, an approach to womanhood that embraces plurality is central to the Pond's meaning, value, and status as 'the best place in the world' (O'Neill 2018).

Similarly, queerness has not consistently featured in mainstream narratives about the Ladies' Pond, and nor did trans women before 2018. More marginal publications, especially those written by, and for, members of LGBTQ+ communities, tell different stories. For instance, a 2009 article in *The Most Cake* (a London-centric LGBTQ+ online magazine for women) highlights the presence of gay men and lesbians at the Ponds, as well as particular age and class dynamics:

> The Men's pond is flaming gay, the Ladies' Pond is a more subtle mix: of well-to-do local dowager taking their constitutional dips, arty-verging-on-hippie lesbians and, well, straight women who just like ponds.

The Men's Pond and certain areas of the Hampstead Heath are widely known, and historically established, as cruising grounds used by gay men (LUX 2017; Rosenfeld 2017; Johnson 2013). Lesbian public histories of the Heath appear more concentrated within the boundaries of the Ladies' Pond, and not without tension. In an article in *Capital Gay* magazine, Jan Parker (c.1985) writes that:

Lots of local Hampstead “ladies” go there as do lesbians from all over London.The only bother I’ve heard of has been from the lifeguard who has been reputed to tick off women for kissing publicly. She used to be known for her walkabouts with the familiar cry of “Tops on ladies, Tops on.” However, another sign now says that it’s OK to sunbathe topless … so perhaps “standards” are relaxing.

Parker’s references to the lifeguard’s policing of bodies and behaviours according to a conservative, heteronormative politics, highlight the shifting limits of inclusivity and acceptability. The Pond’s foliage provides material enclosure that maintains privacy from the spectre and actuality of a heterosexual male gaze and presence. At times, during the 1970s and 1980s, lesbians have been welcomed as long as their bodily expression did not transgress the limits of heteronormative acceptability. News of this policing of queer desire and intimacies between women, circulated amongst lesbian communities (Parker c.1985). Against the backdrop of gay men and lesbians becoming more visible within British society, the containment of queer practices at the Pond resonates with other responses to the ‘gay panic’ of the 1980s, and the corresponding legislation restricting public knowledge and expressions of queer sex, sexualities, and kinship (e.g. Clause 28 *Local Government Act 1988*). More recently, in February 2018, an article in *The Guardian* by Alexandra Topping quoted a cis woman who regularly uses the Pond comparing the panic around trans women to ‘the gay panic in the 80s’ (in Topping 2018). The *Gender Recognition Act 2004*, its potential reform, the *Equality Act 2010*, and the *City of London Corporation*’s ‘Gender Identity Policy’ all reflect a markedly different legislative climate to the 1980s. Nonetheless, a ‘trans panic’ concerning the Ladies’ Pond – and women’s spaces more broadly – has emerged, reconfiguring fault lines contoured by cis-heteronormativity, with policing shifting from embodied practices, to bodies themselves. As writer, educator, and activist So Mayer (in Moggach et al. 2019) notes, ‘[i]t feels, these days, that even the mallards and moorhens seem to police gender.’ The policing of exposed breasts and women kissing in the 1970s and 1980s has shifted into the social policing of trans and queer femininities. There is historic precedent for such in the policing, vilifying, and stigmatising of sexual and sexgender non-conformity, especially concerning trans women and feminine men

through the twenty-first century (LAGNA 1953; 1958; Cook 2014, Houlbrook 2005; 2007).

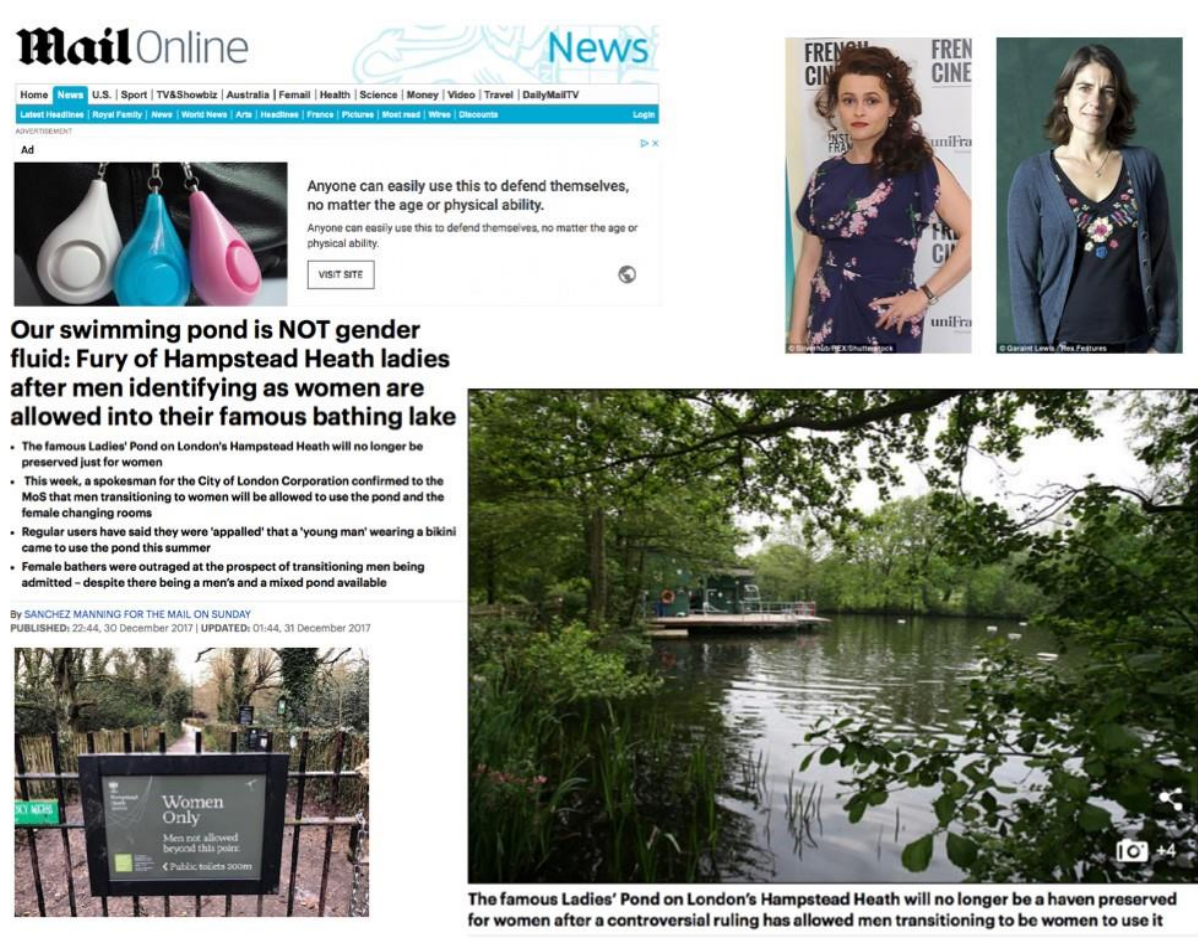
The aforementioned writing and reflections by O'Neill (2018), Ava (ibid.), Parker (c.1985), and So Mayer (2019) speak from their perspectives as racialised, gender, and sexual minorities, pointing towards the appeal, limitations, and contingency of the Ladies' Pond as a site in which a symbolic association with inclusivity, equality, and diversity permeates the social reality and *raison d'être* of the space. Competing ideas about the meaning of inclusivity are at the heart of debates about trans women's presence at the Ladies' Ponds. On one hand, a vision of inclusivity that encompasses trans women within the rubric of womanhood has been framed as fundamental for the meaning and value of the Ladies' Pond among women (KLPA in Topping 2018). To exclude trans women – and to legitimise and introduce sexgender-policing into the space – would undermine the Pond's value and meaning. On the other hand, for those seeking to exclude trans women, they are seen as threatening the Pond's inclusivity as an escape for (cis) women from the 'male' gaze, a notion based upon a denial of authentic womanhood and seeing trans women's inclusion as operating in the service of malevolent men (Manning 2017, Bindel in Petter 2018).

A SENSATIONAL MEDIA STORM

Published in the *Mail on Sunday* on the eve of the 2018 New Year's Day Swim, an article by Sanchez Manning (2017) plunged the Ladies' Pond into the middle of the Trans Debate, sparking conversations amongst Pond-users (Banks 2018), and interest from the press (Petter 2018; Petkar 2018; Lay 2018; Boyle 2018). The effects of Manning's article rippled across 2018 and 2019, gave rise to anti-trans protests, and resulted in a closed meeting of the Kenwood Ladies' Pond Association (KLPA), the *City of London Corporation*'*s* public survey, and the launch of the 'Gender Identity Policy' – all of which were widely reported in the London and national press. Feeding into this have been individuals posting and organizing on social media, particularly Twitter, and the online platform *Mumsnet* which has been described by a former employee as 'safe space for cis women to openly attack the trans community' (Woodhead 2018; Livingston 2018; Lothian-McLean 2019).

Figure 4.2 shows extracts from Manning's inflammatory article which was published on the newspaper's website. This includes references to Esther Freud and actor Helena Bonham-Carter whose ancestry includes aristocrats and numerous members of parliament. The lead image is a photograph taken from a perspective that suggests the presence of a lurking voyeur, a figure who is culturally coded as a cis man, and a threatening sexual predator. Juxtaposed with this, we find an image of the 'Women Only' signs, located upon the gated entrance to the Pond. Finally, and presumably the result of algorithm-generated advertising, the online article is garlanded by an advertisement for personal alarms, more commonly known as 'rape alarms.' Manning (2017) misgenders trans women as 'men transitioning to be women', 'transitioning men', and 'men identifying as women' whilst stating that the 'famous Ladies' Pond will no longer be preserved just for women.' The title 'Our Pond is not Gender Fluid' is a trivializing wordplay that frames trans women's gender as capricious in contrast to cis women whose gendered sense of self has remained constant throughout their lives. This rationale links gendered legitimacy with the immutability of birth-assigned sex to deny trans women's womanhood and histories of using the Pond, and to position them as a *new* threat to the historic sanctity of a site that belongs to, and is the inheritance of, cis women. Quotations used by Manning were recycled across the British press, especially the comments of Margaret Roberts, who was introduced as a pond-user for 32 years, and is quoted by Manning as stating, 'I and many others are threatened by having to have essentially "cross dressers" come to the pond' (Manning 2017). This single quote was circulated widely, including in daily nationals such as *The Times*, *The Sun, The Independent*, and *The Mirror***,** and in London papers including *Evening Standard*, and *The Ham & High* (Lay 2018; Baker 2017; Petter 2018; Halle 2017; Richards 2017; Banks 2018*)*. Another widely used quotation was from Julie Bindel, anoted feminist activist, who is well-known for publicly arguing that trans people and their rights, especially trans women, threaten women's rights, safety, and spaces (Bindel 2019; 2004; 2015). Bindel was cited as a long-time pond-user, arguing that mothers bring their self-conscious daughters to the Pond, and '[t[he last thing they want is to look behind them and see a male-bodied person pretending to be a woman in order to gawp at them' (Petter 2018; Richards 2017; Baker 2017; Lay 2018). The sensational appeal of this news story depended on historically embedded and socially resonant transphobic tropes, and specifically the belief that trans womenare variously

fraudulent, threatening, and/or enabling ‘male’ predators who are likely to violate both vulnerable (cis) women and girls, and the spaces they occupy (Raymond 1979; Jeffreys 1997). To bolster this, journalists knowingly brandished celebrity pond-users including Helena Bonham-Carter and Esther Freud (Manning 2017; Baker 2017; Lay 2018; Petter 2018), both pictured wearing blue outfits with floral motifs which emphasise their embodiment of the Ponds’ natural and social ecology. These figures are well-known as privileged white, cis, heterosexual, middle-upper class women with inherited wealth and status. As symbols of the cultural establishment, they are firmly positioned within London and Britain’s wealthy elite. These famous and celebrated women personify the imaginaries embedded at thesite which trans women ostensibly threaten.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Our swimming pond is NOT gender fluid: Fury of Hampstead Heath ladies after men identifying as women are allowed into their famous bathing lake

- The famous Ladies' Pond on London's Hampstead Heath will no longer be preserved just for women
- This week, a spokesman for the City of London Corporation confirmed to the MoS that men transitioning to women will be allowed to use the pond and the female changing rooms
- Regular users have said they were 'appalled' that a 'young man' wearing a bikini came to use the pond this summer
- Female bathers were outraged at the prospect of transitioning men being admitted – despite there being a men's and a mixed pond available

By SANCHEZ MANNING FOR THE MAIL ON SUNDAY
PUBLISHED: 22:44, 30 December 2017 | UPDATED: 01:44, 31 December 2017

The famous Ladies' Pond on London's Hampstead Heath will no longer be a haven preserved for women after a controversial ruling has allowed men transitioning to be women to use it

Figure 4.2 Collage of screenshots taken from the Mail Online

Trans activist CN Lester has observed tendencies to situate trans people as "the shock of the new", an act of historical erasure that serves to justify sensationalising the present (2017) (see chapter 3). This temporal tactic is reflected in misrepresentations by journalists that trans women were *suddenly* visiting the Ladies' Pond *en masse*, and behaving in a threatening manner. In contrast, Julie Bindel and Margaret Roberts are cited as having decades-long relationships with the Pond, echoing narratives by Esther Freud (2013) and the novelist and screenwriter Deborah Moggach (Moggach et al. 2019). Whilst trans women have tended to be positioned as a shocking and *impending* threat, cis women have been situated as long-time pond-users. Following this logic, trans women are less deserving users than cis women to whom the pond is situated as having historically – and thus properly – belonged. Trans women are denied authentic womanhood and/or histories of swimming at the Pond which justifies depiction of their 'future' presence as shocking, newsworthy, and threatening. Through this zero-sum logic, trans women figure as tainting – and effectively stealing – the site from 'proper' women

Such a framing of trans women is clearly a fiction: both trans women *and* non-binary people have used the Ladies' Pond 'for years' (Mayer in Moggach et al. 2019). This was rarely recognized in reporting of the Trans Debate surrounding use of the Pond. A *Guardian* article entitled 'Debate over inclusion of trans women in women-only space intensifies" by Alexandra Topping (2018) is a rare exception. Noting the role of Sanchez Manning's (2017) article in creating 'unease' among swimmers, Topping's (2018) article features an anonymous trans woman who has used the Ladies' Pond for several years, and feels comfortable there and grateful for the 'wonderful space'.

> As a trans woman, that women-only space has been of huge benefit to me, it's been a comfortable space to not worry about the danger of men around me and be able to relax more than I could do in a mixed swimming space ... All of the sense of safety people talk about, they are equally there and equally important to the trans women users.

This anonymous woman counters trans-exclusionary narratives by locating herself *within* popular narratives invested in the Pond and by highlighting her sharedsense of comfort, relaxation, and safety due to the women-only dynamic. Akin to Mayer, she undoes the notion that trans women are not *already* Pond-users, and the

corresponding idea that a new ‘Gender Identity Policy’ would initiate change in this regard. Furthermore, she affirms her shared womanhood, experiences, and feelings. Choosing anonymity, she illuminates – what appears to be – the newly contentious nature of her presence. She negotiates making trans women’s existing presence visible while defending herself from potentially negative repercussions of her identity being known to the press (Pridd 2013; Kale 2016; TMW 2011; Gupta 2020). Topping also cites a supportive KPLA statement, which contends that:

Although it is tempting to assume someone’s gender simply by their appearance, it’s important to try to avoid doing so and to be aware of the needsof genuinely transgender women. The diverse community of women and girls– including transgender women–at the Ladies’ Pond contributes to its unique andvery precious quality (in Topping 2018

> Although it is tempting to assume someone’s gender simply by their appearance, it’s important to try to avoid doing so and to be aware of the needsof genuinely transgender women. The diverse community of women and girls– including transgender women–at the Ladies’ Pond contributes to its unique andvery precious quality (in Topping 2018).

The anonymous woman’s testimony and the KLPA statement reflect the fact that the Ladies’ Pond *already* offers a valued space away from men and a hetero-male gaze for *all* women *including* trans women. Whilst the KLPA explicitly locate trans women within the ‘inclusive environment for all women’ (ibid.) that the Association seeks to create, there is a defensiveness within the phrase ‘genuinely transgender women’ (ibid.). I read 'genuinely’ as being intended to alleviate concerns about predatory cis men ‘identifying as women’ (Manning 2017). The caveat ‘genuinely’ reflects the impact of the Pond becoming instrumentalised in the Trans Debate upon the specific vocabulary and emphases of the KLPA in clarifying, and subtly defending, their trans-inclusive stance.

So Mayer’s essay for *At The Pond* (2019) entitled ‘Ah! to fleet / Never fleets more’ - part of which opens this chapter and was published in *The Guardian* (Moggach et al. 2019) - gives an account of their decades-long relationship with the space. By interweaving romantic prose celebrating abundant plant and animal life, citing Hampstead Heath’s literary heritage and locating social and personal histories within

the Pond and its surrounds, Mayer both echoes and counters established narratives previously analysed in this chapter. As the excepts below demonstrate, Mayer articulates how their non-binary identity shapes their relationship to the Pond including the impact of increasing sexgender-policing and recent transphobic protests. They are writing with humour and affection about their long relationship with the site, while describing their growingconcerns which, they note, have contributed to their decision to no longer use the Ladies' Pond. Mayer pointedly locates trans and non-binary swimmers within the Pond's nature, its material, social, and historic ecosystem. There is no way of knowing how long trans women and non-binary people have been using the Ladies'Pond, and this does not appear to have been considered an issue until recently.

Speaking from their experience, however, Mayer (2019) illuminates the long presence of trans and non-binary swimmers. In doing so, they illuminate the reality that the Ladies' Pond has been, and is still, used by non-binary people who are socially interpreted as women. This reveals the ambiguity of gender categories, and related disconnections between identification and interpretation (Doan 2010). For me personally, I have swum at the Ladies' Pond previously, during a time when I considered myself to be a woman and embodied relatively socially conventional white, cis, middle-class femininity – I fit right in! These days, knowing myself better as a non-binary person, I feel out of place in women's spaces, and avoid them where possible, especially where there is a threat – perceived or actual - of gender-policing and the weight of gendered assumption feels too heavy. If I do not need to put myself through that – as I do with toilets or changing rooms - I choose not to. Similarly, So Mayer's (2019) relationship with their body, discomfort with swimwear, and the assumption that they are a woman by virtue of their presence have contributed to a jarring sense of unease. The weight of a biologically essentialist sex/gender binary, which has increasingly saturated the space following protests and media coverage, has become too much to bear:

> The ponds were for summer, for those who knew how to negotiate the Heath's unmarked paths and the ponds' unwritten rules… Just before the legion of cis male Romantic poets walked the Heath, a defining presence walked there. Dido Elizabeth Belle, who lived at Kenwood House from 1765 to 1795, was the daughter of an enslaved African woman in the British West

> Indies and a British naval officer.
>
> When we look, or leap, into the frondy gymslip-green cold-as-is-good-for-you water of the Ladies' Pond, we move through the tangles of history … we step out of the water shedding Dido Belle's skin cells, torn in her attempt to conform to her society's narrow expectations.
>
> It feels, these days, that even the mallards and moorhens seem to police gender with the beady gaze of their Jesuitical authority. External protestors disrupting a recent Kenwood Ladies' Pond Association meeting about allowing transwomen swimmers to continue using the Ladies' Pond (as they long have) wore the WOMEN ONLY sign from the pond gate around their necks, a grotesque invocation of slave auctions only feet from where Belle and the Earl of Mansfield fought for emancipation. It gives me reservations about the pond as a community; it gives me, literally, a sinking feeling.
>
> … there are many trans and non-binary people who swim, and have swum, in the Ladies' Pond. Their molecules and their courage are already coursing through the water like minerals, feeding the daffodils that grow in such abundance around Kenwood House in spring.

Mayer connects their distaste with the invocation of a 'slave auction' by anti-trans protesters – wearing 'Women Only' signs around their necks – with the life and legacy of Dido Elizabeth Belle. By writing Belle into the history and ecosystem of the Heath and the Pond, they puncture the whiteness of dominant imaginaries invested in these spaces. Mayer's words pull at common threads that extend through racial and gender minorities shared, sometimes intersecting, struggle under the weight of narrow social expectations. Countering a sense of cis, white, women's 'ownership' of the Ladies' Pond – which has prevailed in representations of the Pond before and during its role in the Trans Debate – trans women and non-binary swimmers are located as neither newcomers or outsiders, but as already constituting the Ponds natural, biological, historical, and social landscape. Mayer (2019) echoes work within academia and film on queer ecologies in London including geographer Matthew Gandy's (2012) research on cruising in Stoke Newington's Abney Park, and queer

filmmaker Liz Rosenfeld's (2017) work on cruising at Hampstead Heath entitled *FUCK TREE*. Beyond London, we might look to Darren J Patrick's (2014) queer urban ecology of the High Line in New York. Such research and cultural production reclaims nature and ecologies for sexual and gender minorities whose presence and belonging in nature has often been erased, denied, and stigmatized through discourses and imaginaries that privilege whiteness, and cis-heteronormativity under the guise of neutrality and romanticism. As discussed, this tendency is evident in established imaginaries of the Ladies' Pond, and in the ways these have been instrumentalised in the Trans Debate. Accordingly, So Mayer (2019) makes a significant intervention by stylistically co-opting the romantic prose, and, at times, gushing sentiment, common to writing on the Ladies' Pond while queering ecologies of the site by inscribing trans and non-binary swimmers as integral to its social, natural, and historical flow and formation.

The actuality of non-binary people and trans women's unobtrusive and uncontested use of the Pond before it *became* an issue through the Trans Debate highlights the influence of the recent journalistic attention. Mayer's narrative shows that while the Ladies' Pond may provide a sanctuary from a hetero-male gaze, the recent publicity and protest has forced trans and non-binary users to negotiate cisnormative sexgender-policing – something that has subsequently deterred some swimmers. Even before the Pond was thrown into the Trans Debate, some trans women and non-binary people avoided the Ladies' Pond, and swimming more generally (O'Toole 2015; Fisher 2019; Hartley 2017[b]). Chryssy, a research participant who is a white, British, trans woman in her 50s, contrasted the Ladies' Pond with the Trans and Gender non-conforming Swimming group (TAGS) that she co-founded in 2014. Chryssy describes why she co-created TAGS:

> [Creating TAGS was a] conscious decision to pick something that we felt like we couldn't do. Trans and sexgender nonconforming people often have great difficulty accessing public changing spaces and in particular swimming spaces due to the amount of body on public show … People have regularly said to us that they hadn't felt safe swimming for, in some cases, more than ten years. Others have described the discomfort and abuse in changing rooms and pools. It spoke to me as a previously frequent swimmer.

Image 4.1 Layla’s caption: Hampstead Heath: Bathing Suits, the Body and Visibility

In her contribution to this research, Layla – a Palestinian, trans woman in her 20s who lives in London – discussed visiting Hampstead Heath with friends. Layla articulated her experience at the Mixed Pond at the Heath, where she chose not to swim, and her anxieties about the potential of using the Ladies’ Pond:

> I have this heightened visibility in a very gendered situation ... If, like, some people want to just use the gender-separated swimming pond it wouldn’t feel as comfortable … I’d feel more people are still kind of questioning my place there … [S]ome people didn’t swim and I just stayed with them … [It’s] because of my own internal things that are not worked through enough, that are enforced by a lot of other societal aspects as well.

In her written narrative and interview Layla expressed the vulnerability she feels due to personal and social anxieties around swimming as an activity in which bodily

contours are visible, and one's sexgender can be intensely scrutinized. She was concerned that social expectations, potential questioning, and possible judgments from other pond-users would have intensified existing personal anxietiesregarding her sexgendered relationship with her body. As such, Layla chose not to swim with her friends at the Hampstead Mixed Pond, and highlighted that had her friends wished to use the Ladies' Pond, her discomfort would have intensified. Correspondingly, I interpret Layla's photograph (Image 4.1) as being framed by an ethics of looking that is informed by her experiences of finding social visibility especially vulnerable. By choosing not to photograph people, nobody is subjected to scrutiny and visibility, which she highlights in her narrative and our interviews as contributing to her anxieties about swimming at the Ponds. Although Layla does not reference media discourses directly, they do shape the social milieu, contoured by sexgender-policing, that the Ladies' Pond brings into sharp relief. For her, this is enough to self-exclude. Informed by my discussions with Layla about her difficulties in feeling a sense of belonging, I suspect that, had she accessed the Ladies' Pond, she may well have also felt discomfort as a woman of colour in a predominantly white space. However, sexgender is foregrounded in her decision-making, and works to prevent her accessing the site at all.

Through the experiences and perspectives of Chryssy, Layla, So Mayer, and an anonymous trans woman (Topping 2018), nuanced traces that have been obscured by reductive media reporting come into view. The Ladies' Pond emerges as a complex site, and trans women and non-binary people's relationships to it are understood as multiple, and sometimes conflicting. These narratives speak of existing relationships to the Pond as well as self-exclusion and anxieties attached to it. Reasons for avoiding the Pond – and swimming generally – combine personal, emotional, affective, bodily, social, spatial, and temporal dynamics that are mediated by sexgender norms. The voices of Mayer and the anonymous woman (in Topping 2018) re-inscribe trans women and non-binary people as belonging within the site, expressing a shared sense of the Pond's value amongst pond-users, as well as a sadness at the loss of its potential due to recent hostility. In this way, prevailing discourses depicting trans women as encroaching upon, and disrupting, the space are countered and shown to have exclusionary impacts on trans and non-binary users.

DIVISION AND SOLIDARITY IN THE TRANS DEBATE

In this section I engage closely with the insights offered by Chryssy's contribution on the Ladies' Pond, which are drawn from her experiences at a Kenwood Ladies' Pond Association (KLPA) meeting in February 2018. Chryssy's voice is put in dialogue with aspects of Judith Butler's (2004) and Sara Ahmed's (2016) thinking on transphobia in order to analyse dynamics of division and solidarity in relation to the Pond, and a wider context of the Trans Debate.

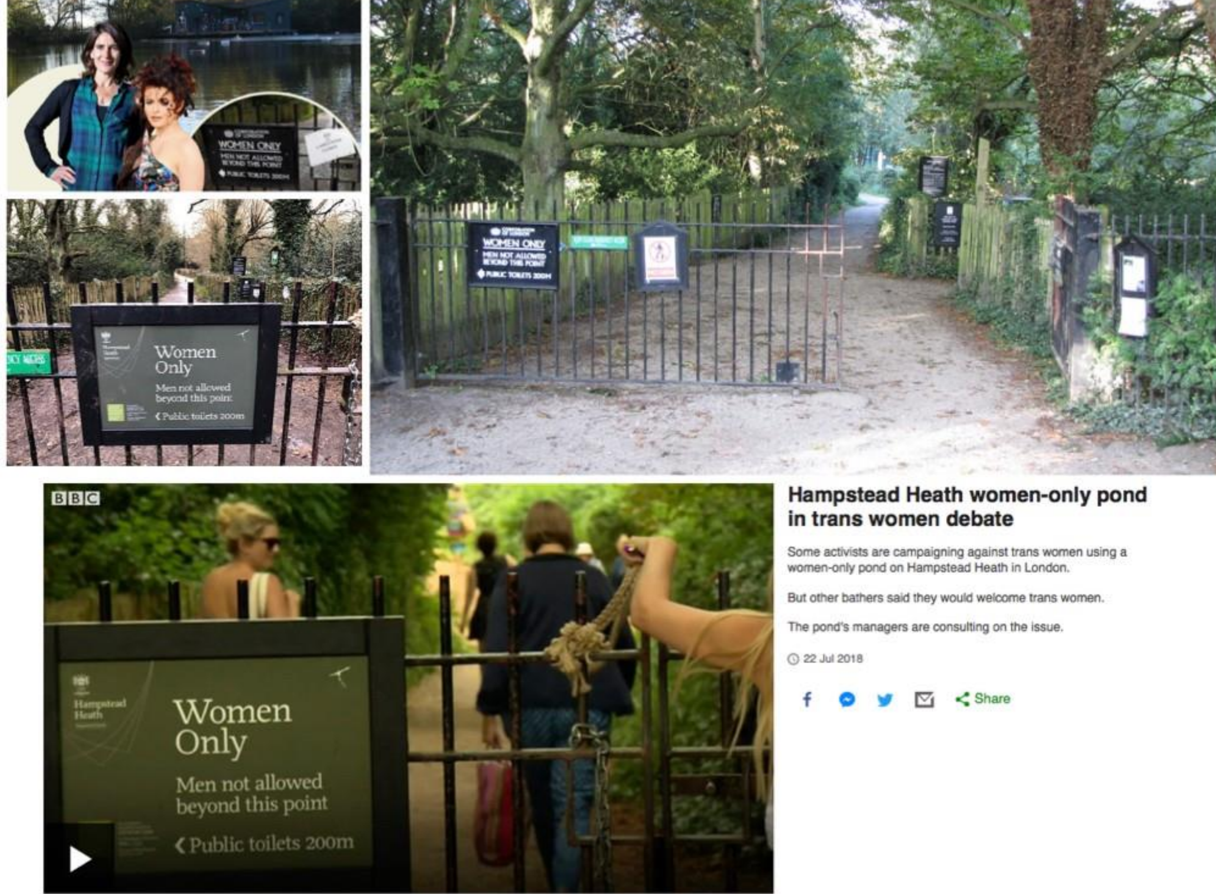

Figure 4.3 Collated screenshot from newspaper articles showing the 'Women Only' signs. Clockwise from top left: Image of Esther Freud, Helena Bonham-Carter with 'Women Only' sign and pond water in the background published in The Times (Lay 2018); Top right: Image submitted by Chryssy.

Images of the 'Women Only' sign on a closed gate (Figure 4.3) have become a visual trope reflecting ways that debates on the validity of trans womanhood have become spatialised at the Ladies' Pond. Prevailing media depictions of the sign have

tended to show a closed gate or close-ups against metal railings without a clearly depicted forward path – suggesting gatekeeping and exclusion. In her contribution to this research, Chryssy described speaking at a KLPA meeting in February 2018, and submitted an image showing the 'Women Only' sign (top right in Figure 4.3). Her caption reads 'contesting the new exclusion discourse'. I interpret Chryssy's image as part of her contestation: by submitting an image that shows the 'Women Only' sign with an open gate and clear forward path, she communicates a sense of accessibility and openness to all women. Similarly, some articles that have taken more of a debate format – articulating arguments for, and against, trans women's inclusion – have shown the sign and fence with women opening and closing the gate, and walking along the path (Andersson 2019; BBC News 2018; 2019). With the symbolic 'Women Only' sign and the gate becoming a visual trope – that is variously mobilised according to a range of intentions and positions – it is not only text that is doing the talking when it comes to media representations of the Pond.

Responding to 'unease amongst some members', the KLPA convened a closed meeting of the membership in February 2018 which was widely reported in the press (Topping 2018: Boyle 2018; Petkar 2018). The speakers included Chryssy, a lawyer who discussed the *Equality Act 2010*, and Kiri Tunks of *A Women's Place*, a group that campaigns against trans women's access to women's spaces and legal recognition of gender based on self-declaration. The following excepts articulate Chryssy experience in her own words:

> I just wanted to say "here we are, this isn't threatening… we just need safe spaces and you can offer us a safe space, and we are you, and you are us… every woman's experience of their life is different, let's look at the commonalities not the differences"...
>
> I understand also that it's a very emotional thing and if you've never been challenged about maleness and femaleness before, and you've been brought up as a feminist, and your whole identity is built into that, then that must be very challenging…
>
> I've never given a presentation before that I've broken down in the middle of

> … and the room was gently supportive. Women just called out, 'go', ‘carry on’, 'go on, be strong" … that was really encouraging. And then twice in the week after that happened I was touched on the shoulder or elbow by strangers … [who] said, 'you won’t know me but I was at the meeting and I thought your message was very strong.' So it was a positive thing to do...

> [O]n the night we turned up and … they'd brought pickets with them, anti-trans pickets....There were leaflets that started to filter into the room….I was like, 'my goodness, that raises the stakes doesn't it?’ But I'd also organized that I would speak last … [and] the women, who were very, very different women to most of the women that I know and experience in my life, couldn't have been kinder and more supportive, so that was very settling...

> The organizers were very proactive about trying to make sure nothing inappropriate was said in the room … we had this presentation from Kiri Tunks [whose] argument was that this will just allow people to pretend to be trans to come and be predatory... And I sat there listening to this really disingenuous and dishonest presentation … Over years you build up some resilience but I stuck with my original presentation, which was really straightforward and direct and simple, because I was talking to a room, full of women, many of whom would have never knowingly met a trans person.

Chryssy describes Tunks as mobilising the common and un-evidenced argument that trans women’s inclusion would lead to male predators accessing women’s space. An attempt to carve a dividing line that positioned trans women’s inclusion as oppositional to cis women’s safety. The implication, here, was that *all* trans women should be viewed with suspicion, which then justifies sexgender-policing as a means of protection. Having completed a PhD that examined the implications and limitations of the *Equality Act 2010* for trans people, Chryssy had the knowledge to make a legal argument. She could also have chosen to defensively respond point-by-point to Tunks’ talk, but – refusing to allow Tunks to dictate the content of her talk – Chryssy pursued her original plan. Against unfounded transphobic allegations, she highlighted verifiable realities that trans and non-binary people experience high and rising levels of abuse (Bachmann and Gooch 2017; Home Office 2019). Calling for

solidarity across different experiences of womanhood, rather than division and exclusion, Chryssy argued that the Pond offers a potential space of safety for all women. Judging by the supportive reactions and positive comments from the audience at the meeting, it appears that her talk was broadly well-received.

Chryssy's approach echoes an ethos of trans studies that lived experience is a legitimate site of knowledge that should be listened to, and learned from (Stryker 1994; Doan 2010). Sharing lived experiences has become a vital tactic amongst trans and non-binary people engaging with the Trans Debate as a means of fostering social legibility and understanding against the violence of transphobic misrepresentations (Fisher 2019; Roche 2016[a][b]; 2018). In our interview, Chryssy and I discussed the power of sharing lived experiences, showing vulnerability, highlighting commonalities across differences, and calling for solidarity in the de-humanizing face of transphobia. Nonetheless, Chryssy was clear that the importance and impact of communicating lived experiences should not obscure what she described as 'the indelible, un-wash-away-able lack of evidence of [trans-exclusionary feminist] arguments'. While lacking supporting evidence, the apparent power of transphobic narratives – as reflected in the persistent support for these in the British press and social media – seems to lay in the emotive weight carried by histories of stigmatizing representations of trans women, and other sexual and gender non-conforming minorities, as deviant sexual predators.

Judith Butler (2004: 35) argues policing practices are enacted upon trans, non-binary, and sexgender nonconforming people by scrutinizing, punishing, and seeking to arbitrate sexgendered authenticity. A spectrum of sexgender-policing practices – staring, verbal abuse, physical violence, to name a few – emerge from a desire to maintain cis-heteronormativity as natural and necessary to the extent that no*body* can oppose it and remain fully human (Butler 2004: 35). Accordingly, policing of the boundaries around womanhood and women's spaces is integral to trans-exclusion.

At the KLPA meeting, Chryssy challenged these divisive arguments by embodying her womanhood and speaking from her perspective as a trans woman who creates swimming spaces for trans and sex/gender non-conforming people. She called for solidarity and empathy across difference – for a recognition of *shared* humanity, and

the value of women's spaces to all women. That Chryssy experienced an unexpected swell of emotion is unsurprising given the content of Tunks' talk, together with the transphobic flyers that were circulated through the room, the anti-trans protesters at the gates, and the recent crescendo of media coverage. Following Butler (2004), this might be understood to be a very human response to the cumulative and violent effect and affects of transphobia and sexgender-policing, especially upon a woman with a personal history of being excluded from swimming due to her transness.

Akin to Judith Butler, by framing transphobia as a rebuttal system and using the metaphor of hammering, Sara Ahmed illuminates the violent impulse inherent within debating trans people's existence. 'Dialogue is not possible' Ahmed argues, 'when some people exercise arguments as weapons by treating others as evidence to be rebutted' (2016: 31). Repeated demands that trans people prove their legitimacy can, indeed, be experienced as a hammering, which persistently chips away at trans existence (Ahmed 2016: 22). An article in *The Guardian* by Australian writer Alex Gallagher (2019), in which she speaks from her perspective, resonates with Ahmed's contention.

> There's a strange dissonance inherent in being a living, breathing, three-dimensional trans person at a time when the concept of your existence is framed as an abstract topic for debate – one you're forced to reluctantly show up for, despite never agreeing to.

Spatially locating trans-exclusionary arguments in sites like the Ladies' Pond and public toilets gives an illusion of groundedness to groundless claims and inferences about trans women. Chryssy, Gallagher, Butler, and Ahmed all illuminate the cumulative violence inherent in repeatedly having one's multi-dimensional existence reduced to a matter for 'objective' deliberation. A coercive dimension of the Trans Debate is rooted in the imposition of an obligation for trans people to defend both themselves, and their communities. This defensive position can compel trans people to *prove* their humanity and legitimacy, and demonstrate that they are worthy of social and legal equality and recognition – the alternative being that transphobic voices go unopposed. Rarely are trans people able to determine *what* aspects of

trans people's lives (if any) are subject to debate, and *how,* nor is a trans person likely to instigate a debate on the validity of their existence. From the legal process of gender recognition and access to healthcare, to everyday social interactions, there are multiple demands for trans people to give evidence and defend their gendered authenticity, and these entwine at multiple scales (Sharpe et al. 2018; Sharpe 2012; Norman et al. 2018; Pearce 2018; Drescher et al. 2012; Lane 2008; Robles et al. 2016; Doan 2010; Lees 2018; 2016; Lester 2014; Al-Khadi 2018). As Chryssy observed in our interview, some trans people refuse to engage with debates, with participation being seen as validating the premise that trans lives are debatable. Similarly, Ahmed proposes that refusing to participate might be a 'key tactic for survival', and the only means of exerting agency over a situation in which one feels worn down by the 'relentless questioning of [their] being' (Ahmed 2016: 31).

The Trans Debate must be understood in relation to longer histories of public debate and policing of the validity, morality, and supposed social threat posed by sexual and gender minorities in the British Press, and by governing bodies. The *Sexual Offences Act 1967* decriminalised consensual homosexual acts between *two men,* age 21 or above, in *private*. Thus, legislators sought to maintain the privileging of heterosexuality in the public realm, and uphold the primacy of coupledom in sexual intercourse. Demonstrating the morality at the heart of this legislation and related debate, the *Act* (1967) passed following a 'conscience vote' enabling MPs to vote according to their personal standpoint rather than follow a political party line. Lord Arrran is recorded in Hansard during the passing of the Bill (1967) as asking that homosexual men 'show their thanks by comporting themselves quietly and with dignity'. He continued to argue that:

> This is no occasion for jubilation … Any form of ostentatious behaviour; now orin the future, any form of public flaunting, would be utterly distasteful … let me remind them that no amount of legislation will prevent homosexuals from beingthe subject of dislike and derision, or at best of pity … That is their burden for all time, and they must shoulder it like men–for men they are (Arran in Hansard1967).

Thus, Arran's call extends the premise of the Bill, asserting that expressions of gratitude should take the form of gay men keeping their queerness spatially,

somatically, sonically discrete. The words ‘jubilation’ and ‘flaunting’, gesturing to tropes of effeminacy and theatricality associated men who desire men (Cook 2003:12) are invoked to caution them, alongside an appeal to ‘man up’, and shoulder *their* burden of being pitied, disliked, and derided. The social anxieties and corresponding stigma relating to non-normative expressions of femininities, by cis gay men in this context, are clear in Arran’s statement. These illuminate ways the *Act* (1967) served to police the sexuality and gender expressions of gay men seeking to maintain the dominance, ‘appropriateness’, and ‘superiority’ of cis-heteronormativity in public life.

In this vein, we can look to discourses on the rights and lives of gay men and lesbians in the 1980s vis-à-vis Section 28 of the *Local Government Act 1988* (Thatcher 1987). Before consigning the debates about lesbian, bisexual, and gay peoples’ lives and morality to the past, we cannot overlook a 2019 debate about the ‘morality’ of LGBTQ+ education in schools on the BBC’s Newsnight (Waterson 2019). Public debating and sigmatising those minoritised according to sexual and sexgender norms as immoral, inappropriate and/or potential predators has significant precedent and on-going presence. The spatial dynamics of the Trans Debate, as manifested within public discussion concerning the Ladies’ Pond, exist within a web of broader histories of socio-political attempts to restrict public knowledge and encounters with bodies, practices, and desires that are seen as queer.

The premise that trans peoples’ genders, bodies, and participation in the spaces of public life are debatable is entangled within the logics of established social anxieties and attempts to socio-spatially contain sexual and sexgender non-normativity -— especially queer and trans femininities. The legislative landscape in Britain has shifted significantly in the last two decades in terms of legal protections (*Equality Act 2010*), recognition (*Gender Recognition Act 2004*), rights (*The Marriage [Same-Sex Couples] Act 2013)*, and the repeal of Section 28 of the *Local Government Act 1988* in 2003. Nonetheless, the Trans Debate might productively be understood as a re-orientation of social anxieties born of a growing social acceptance of (assimilating) gays, lesbians, bisexual people, and an increasing visibility of trans people in the media and public life.

The Ladies' Pond may have been thrust centre-stage in the Trans Debate, but the scene had already been set, and the historic script was translated for a contemporary audience. The epistemic violence enacted upon trans people through the Trans Debate is routinely perpetuated through uncritical repetition. This is all too easily done, it seems, due to the assumed neutrality of debate as a fair and rational format, and the enduring force of historically established anxieties and abjection toward trans people (Topping 2018; Lay 2018; Baker 2017; Petter 2018; Halle 2017; Richards 2017; Banks 2018). Indeed, while the KPLA have supported trans inclusion, the meeting that Chryssy participated in served to further reify the wider Trans Debate that has played out in the media over the last decade by providing a platform for anti-trans commentary (Fae 2018; Belcher 2018).

In the quotation below from Chryssy's interview she describes how she negotiated with the KLPA prior to themeeting which illuminates the significance of the context, and complicates participation/non-participation as being exclusive options:

> There are [trans] people that feel that we shouldn't have to do this and that any questioning is transphobic … Some people question because they don't understand, because they're reading things in the media that trouble them and we need to find the strength to address those questions … For from being predators, trans women (which is where the Woman's Place speaker's focus was) are actually scared about being in public spaces. The irony that [Tunk's] organisation's hostility would only increase this seemed totally lost on someone whose transphobia is ideological and therefore not open to persuasion.
>
> … I hadn't heard of Kiri Tunks before, so I did a bit of research and I rang the [organiser] … and said I'm really concerned about this … and she said 'No, no, no, I'm sure she's ok, I'm sure she's fine, we've had a conversation.' I was well, 'I'll take your assurances but I need some assurance in return. I need you to tell me that she won't misgender me and she won't dead name me and it will be respectful.'

Chryssy describes battling for acceptance in gendered public space as a 'never-

ending daily grind', and she acknowledges the emotional labour that engaging with debates demands while suggesting that participation can be productive and necessary in certain contexts. She entered the KLPA meeting having secured assurances from supportive organisers. Clarifying her terms for engaging (and disengaging) served as a form of self-protection – albeit limited. It was the KLPA membership who Chryssy understood as her audience, not Tunks whose position she saw as unchangeable. Chryssy described the membership as 'very, very middle class', and very different to the women she encounters in her daily life. Yet, she saw potential for solidarity, and an openness to change since she understood their concerns as likely informed by transphobic misrepresentations in the press.

Chryssy's narrative speaks to prevailing dynamics that form and inform in the Trans Debate. On one side, people are practicing a transphobic logic that deploys difference as a dividing line and a basis for exclusion that justifies the positioning of trans women as opposing, and outside of, womanhood (Bindel 2015; Boyle 2018; Petkar 2018). On the other side, there are those who understand womanhood as encompassing various embodied experiences, and practices of solidarity across difference, and tending to argue against the debating of trans identities (Figure 4.6). From the Ladies' Pond, to adverts in *Metro* newspaper (Braidwood 2018), the pavements of Pride marches (Ashenden and Duffy 2019), to submissions to public consultations (HM Government 2018; Smart Consult 2019), these dynamics have been reproduced time and again. These opposing positions are not exhaustive, and questions of knowledge and experience are fundamental. As Chryssy and others note (Gallagher 2019), because many people have never *knowingly* met a trans person, trans people may seem knowable only through media (mis)representations. For Chryssy, the KLPA meeting offered an opportunity to engage with women whom she is otherwise unlikely to encounter, in a context in which she possessed the agency to negotiate terms that mitigated – but not eliminated – the potential effects of transphobic hammering.

SURVEYING SOLIDARITY

The Ladies' Pond featured centrally in media reporting and social media content about the July 2018 launch of a Gender Identity Survey by the *City of London Corporation* which would go on to inform a 'Gender Identity Policy' for all sites managed by the *Corporation*. Seeking a more comprehensive understanding of the role of the Ladies' Pond in shaping the survey and policy, I interviewed Edward (Ed) Lord, an elected member of the *City of London Corporation* and Chair of the Establishment Committee, which is responsible for inclusion policies. Ed is queer and non-binary, which they say informs and motivates their inclusion-related work within the *Corporation*. They stated that '[Hampstead] Heath had been *explicit* for about three years in saying "yes, of course trans people are welcome to come to the pond in the gender in which they identify."' But in early 2018, the Chair of the Hampstead Heath management committee approached Ed expressing concerns about the pressure that the press reporting and protests were causing. This was a policy issue, the Chair contended, that her committee and staff were dealing with in relative isolation. Ed agreed, as did the Corporation's Chief Executive, the Director of Communications, and the Establishment Committee; it was decided that a central policy was needed to cover what had already become practice.

Ed framed this as 'catching up work' that effectively clarified the *Corporation's* adherence to the *Equality Act 2010,* which would be unlawful to contravene by excluding trans people. Yet, within the Establishment Committee, there was a strong view that the policy ought to be informed by service users and stakeholders. A public survey was decided upon, a move which follows a trend of governing bodies using public consultations, reviews, and inquiries to inform public policy concerning trans people (WEC 2016; HM Government 2018; Scottish Government 2019; HM Government 2020). In light of the influence of media reporting and publicity-seeking protests in creating the impetus for the policy, alongside Ed's consultation of the Director of Communications as an initial move, I read the public survey as being significantly motivated by concerns for public relations.

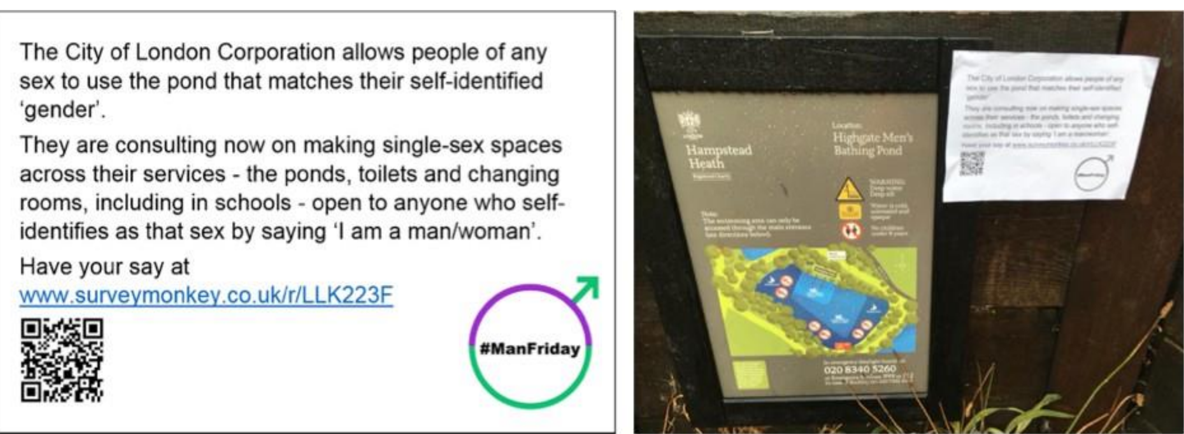

Figure 4.4 #ManFriday flyer at the Men's Pond, a site of their protests (#ManFriday 2018).

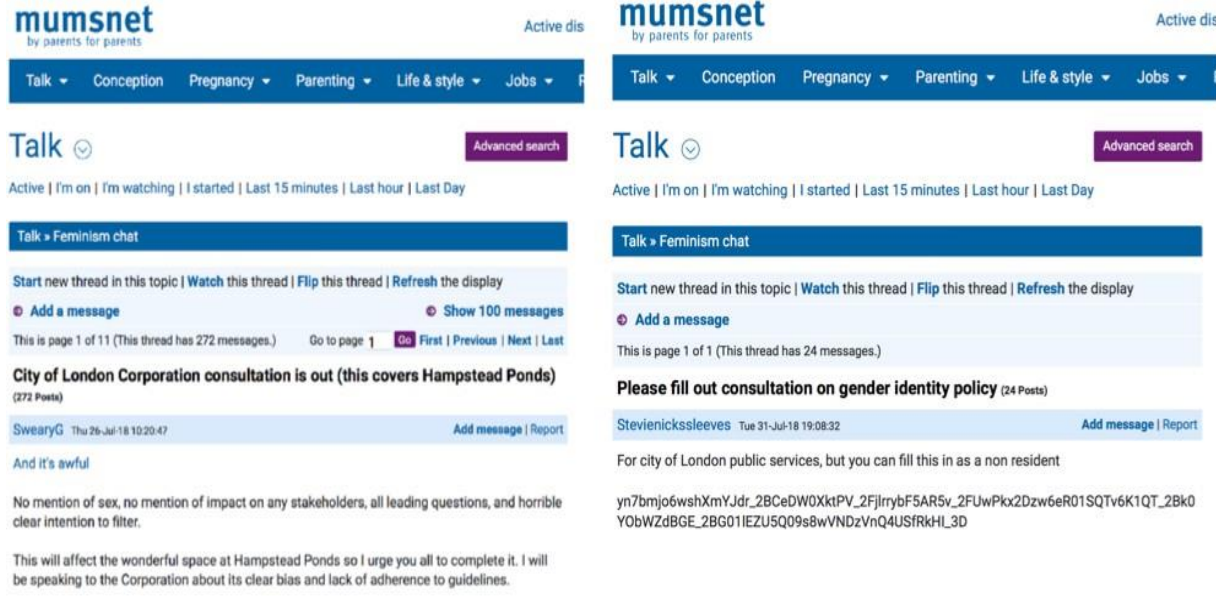

Figure 4.5 Mumsnet screenshots

he Trans Debate has repeatedly spilled into public consultations, which have fuelled further debating, organizing, and protesting. Division and solidarity dynamicsthat are oriented around public consultations and policies have intrinsically shaped how the Trans Debate has unfolded, and continues to unfold. Although the survey and *Gender Identity Policy* apply to all spaces and services managed by the *Corporation*, the Ladies' Pond was specifically mobilised in narratives rallying for participation in the survey. Individuals and groups mobilized online and in strategic spaces in attempts to galvanize participation. The online forum *Mumsnet* became a key space of mobilization, with one thread resulting in 272 messages (Figure 4.5) and other threads facilitating the organizing of protests at Hampstead Heath under the mantel

of #ManFriday (Figure 4.4). Amongst these trans-exclusionary individualsand groups, the *Corporation*'s survey tended to be framed as biased, exposing (cis) women and their spaces to men with sinister intentions, and neglecting provisions regarding sex discrimination in the *Equality Act 2010*. For those supporting trans women's inclusion at the Ladies' Pond, Twitter became a key platform. As Figure 4.6 shows, single tweets and re-tweets supporting trans inclusion circulated hundreds of times from posts - often by well-known – cis women making arguments for solidarity, and against sexgender policing.

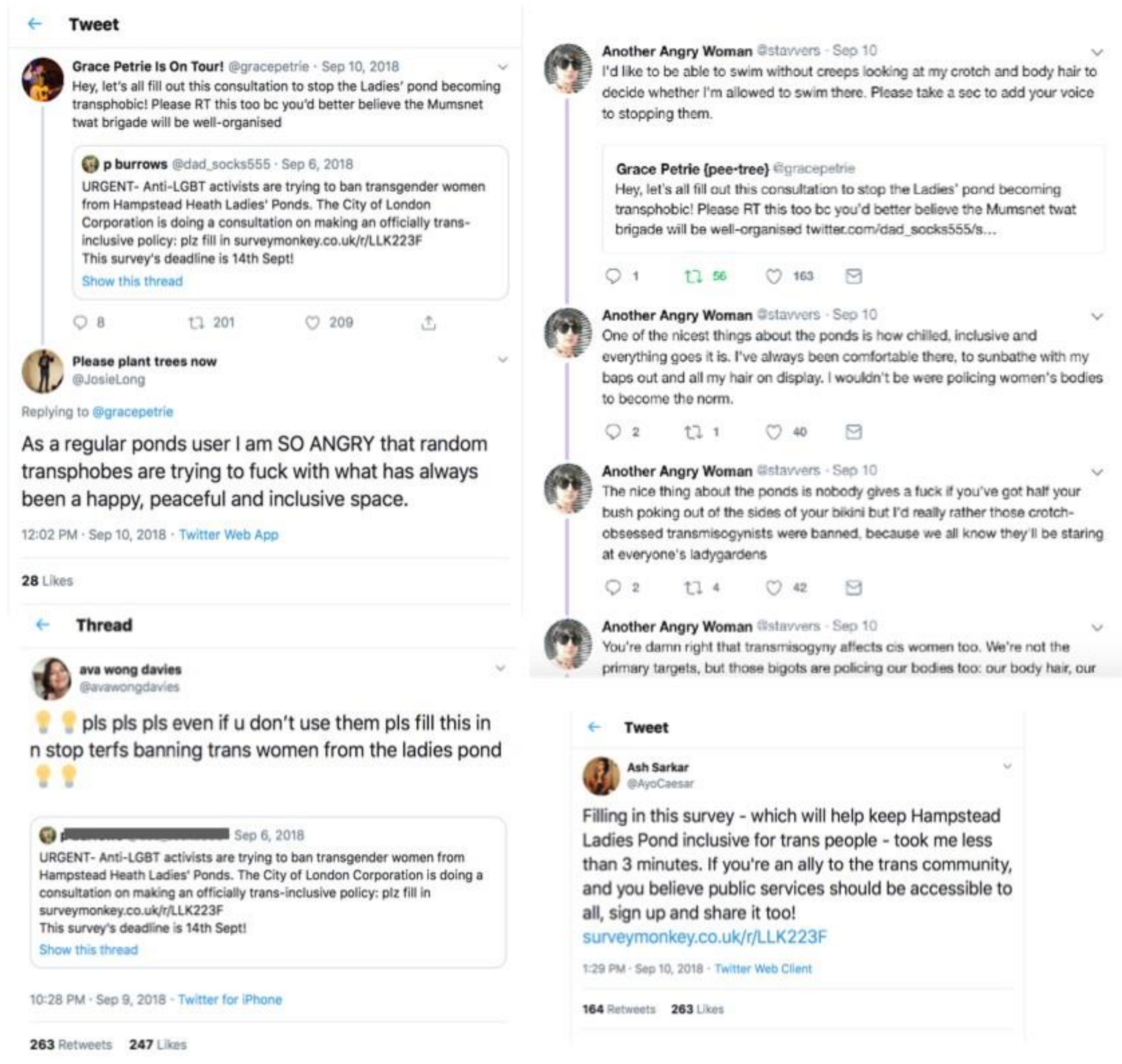

Figure 4.6 Screenshots of Twitter posts by cis women advocating for trans inclusion at the Pond including musician Grace Petrie, comedian Josie Long, co-editor of At The Pond Ava Wong Davis, journalist Ash Sarkar, and feminist blogger Zoe Stavri

The survey received 21,191 complete responses, and a further 18,459 incomplete responses that were deemed invalid by Smart Consult who analysed the data (Smart Consult 2019). The highest proportion of responses were from white, British, cis women aged between 18 and 54, who were not regular service users. The largest stakeholder group was ‘interested participants’ (34 per cent) with other significant stakeholder groups being Services Users (18 per cent), and city residents and workers (22 per cent), though the latter was flagged as implausible (Smart Consult 2019: 9). In response to question A3, ‘Do you identify as trans?’, 79 per cent responded ‘No’, 12 per cent answered ‘Yes’, with 8 per cent ‘prefer[ring] not to say’, and 1 per cent not stating.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Neither/ not sure
A person may come to feel their gender is different to that assigned at birth	65%	16%	4%	9%	6%
Someone who consistently identifies with a different gender should be accepted by society in that gender	64%	10%	6%	11%	9%
A person who consistently identifies with a gender should be able to access services commonly provided to that gender	61%	7%	8%	18%	6%
Where access to facilities is restricted this should relate to the gender with which the service user consistently identifies now	60%	7%	6%	22%	5%

Figure 4.7 Extract from City of London Corporation Gender Identity Policy survey results (SmartConsult 2019)

Division and solidarity dynamics are also reflected in the results of questions regarding gender and services. There was majority support for the validity of trans peoples’ identities and their access to gender specific spaces and services, and responses were consistently polarized between ‘Strongly Agree’ and ‘Strongly Disagree’ (Figure 4.7). This could be interpreted as partially reflecting the rallying that occurred around the survey resulting in people holding the strongest views choosing to participate (Figure 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6). Figure 4.7 shows a progressive reduction in agreement and growing disagreement as questions become more spatialized. 81 per cent of respondents agree or strongly agree that a ‘person may feel their gender as different to that assigned at birth’. In comparison, only 67 per

cent strongly agreed or agreed that '[w]here access to facilitates is restricted, this should relate to the gender with which the service user consistently identifies (Figure 4.7). This pattern shows increased reticence as the possibility of encountering trans people becomes likelier. Given the tone and target of discourse around the survey and the Trans Debate, as well as survey respondents' demographic profiles, it seems fair to deduce that these respondents were likely ciswomen, with concerns about sharing space with trans women, and that these responses were (mis)informed by transphobic campaigns and media representations.

The simultaneous operation of the GRA reform consultation and co-existing contestations across differing spaces and geographical contexts in England may have inflated respondents' numbers. Nonetheless, I read the survey as effectively functioning as a referendum on trans women's use of women's spaces and services with the Ladies' Pond operating as a symbolic proxy. The 'Gender Identity Policy' launch in May 2019 saw another flurry of reporting around the Pond including a *Times* article in which Janice Turner (2019) targeted Ed for their role in policy-making, and their non-binary identity. Employing a zero-sum logic, Turner contended that trans inclusion is a matter of bias rather than equality, and that it occurs at the expense of – and against the wishes of – (cis) women. This is disavowed by the survey's respondents demographics and results, and perhaps gestures to the public relations motive of undertaking the survey. That is to say that, in the current context, implementing a policy regarding gender diversity without public consultations would likely have been reported as autocratic, and doing so appears to grant a mandate. Nonetheless, journalists broadly reported on the survey results with the usual mix of views for and against, and the policy framed as trans women's gaining 'full' or 'formalized' access as if the *Equality Act 2010* is somehow informal or partial (Coleman 2019; Marsh 2019; Swerling 2019; Andersson 2019; Cuffe 2019). At the time of writing, #ManFriday has disbanded, and the instrumentalising of the Ladies' Pond has abated. Indeed, searching 'Kenwood Ladies' Pond', as I edit this chapter, a Google search responds with an article published in *The Telegraph* on 8 November 2020 by Jim White who is reporting on a newly compiled photography and document archive. The customary refrains arise – a 'hidden haven,' 'a sanctuary', 'a refuge' – noting the Pond's historic significance and enduring value, its popularity

among different women, the camaraderie and comfort felt by swimmers, but there is no mention of trans women (White 2020). The spatial imaginaries and shifting geographies of transphobic anxiety and moral panic have moved on from the Ladies' Pond, but little has changed in terms of the tone and structure of the Trans Debate which continues to adversely shape the lives of trans people.

CONCLUSION

During 2018, and parts of 2019, the Hampstead Heath Ladies' Bathing Pond was embroiled within the Trans Debate in Britain in a way that evokes the adage of a 'perfect storm'. That is, an unusual constellation of elements that coalesced with extraordinarily powerful consequences. The Ladies' Pond functioned as something of a counterpart to public toilets within the wider context of the Trans Debate, which involved much conjecture about implications of self-identification, and a reformed GRA for cis women and girls and women's space. Unlike public toilets, the Pond is not cast with abject spatial and bodily associations, and related vulnerabilities and anxieties. As a women's space that is imbued with an idealised linking of nature, purity, and sexgender, it resonates with a similar kind of intensity that maintains the potential to mark trans women as threatening, unnatural, and abject others.

Although the Pond and the imaginaries invested in its social and material landscape are uniquely situated – via visual and textual discourses trading on a social currency of scarcity, whiteness, cis-ness, wealth and cultural capital – this site occupies greater space than its physical location. Furthermore, although commonly romanticized as a 'haven', suggesting a sense of detachment, the Pond is deeply embedded within a knotty web of historic, social, cultural, economic, and geographical relations which are heavily (yet often tacitly) racialised, gendered, and classed. These relations and dynamics have had significant implications for how, and why, the Pond has proven to be so resonant within the Trans Debate, for both those in favour of and against trans women's use of the space. That said, the realities of cis *and* trans women and non-binary peoples' relationships with and experiences of the Ladies' Pond are plural and complex in ways that are obscured by the dualistic and adversarial, often epistemologically violent, premises of the

Trans Debate.

The black-and-white binary structures of sexgender, and masculine/feminine expectations of gender embodiment and expression, start to dissolve once they come into contact with gender diverse realities of which trans women and non-binary people are a part. Through the experiences of writers like So Mayer, we know that trans women and non-binary people have swum here in recent history. Cis-heteronormative gender expectations are policed with increasing intensity, and the affective potential of this scrutiny is sufficient for trans women and non-binary people to self-exclude, as Layla and So Mayer attest. The emotional and affective force of potential sexgender-policing in this women's space is a significant way that the Pond occupies space beyond its material boundaries, a territorial overflow amplified by anti-trans protests and press coverage.

The meaning of the Ladies' Pond as a liberating space of inclusion and equality amongst women has been central to the dispute concerning trans inclusion. By denying trans women's realities, and/or situating them as enabling cis-male predators, trans women's access to, and use, of the Pond is located as threatening the diverse social dynamics. An ideal that, despite being often celebrated, is only partially realised according to the experiences of Chryssy, So Mayer (2019), and Ava (in Topping 2018). For those arguing in support of trans women's use of the Pond, to exclude trans women, and to legitimise the sexgender-policing of all Pond-users, would undo this treasured feature of the Pond's existence, its *raison d'être* as a freeing, body-positive space for all women, away from the scrutiny of the male gaze. Chryssy's call for solidarity across different experiences of womanhood speaks to this line of thought, and is also articulated by the cis women in Figure 4.6.

The construction of the Pond as a battleground in the Trans Debate is evident across news and social media discourses, including *Mumsnet's* thread and anti-trans protests, as well as the KLPA event Chryssy participated in, and the *City of London Corporation* survey. Reading Judith Butler's (2004) and Sara Ahmed's (2016) thinking on transphobia and sexgender-policing through Chryssy's experiences and the Trans Debate highlights violence intrinsic to having one's gendered validity and

reality denied, scrutinized, abstracted, and misrepresented. Nonetheless, as testimony from Chryssy suggests, where there is potential for mitigating, but not eradicating, this violence through negotiation, participating in debate can be productive in certain contexts. Chryssy's voice is vital in challenging the black-and-white, adversarial, and all-consuming oppositional for/against thinking that is common to the Trans Debate, including outright refusals to engage with it. In discussing her experiences, Chryssy raises the role of knowledge (including inter-personal knowing), and the potential impact of *engaging in specific contexts* while also recognizing the epistemic violence inherent to the Trans Debate and the emotional labour and impact of participating, even when one is able to exert agency over one's terms. Her approach to participation highlights key onto-epistemological dynamics regarding division and solidarity that extend through the Trans Debate, as well as the limit of these dynamics. Indeed, Chryssy's argument that there is a need to engage with, and educate, women who have never knowingly met a trans person – particularly concerning the lack of evidence for trans-exclusionary arguments despite the social resonance these claims appear to hold – is reflected in the *City of London Corporation's* gender identity survey results.

Examining the centrality of the Ladies' Pond to the *City of London Corporation* survey and policy, as well as the general tone and content of debate, reveals the limits of equalities legislation and evidence in the face of sensationalised media coverage. In the case of the Pond, the continued resonance of transphobic tropes, especially when bolstered by a potent spatial imaginary that is amenable to being instrumentalised, is abundantly clear. Protection for trans people within the *Equality Act 2010*, as outlined in the introduction, and the lack of evidence for transphobic claims appear to amount to relatively little in terms of muting the resonance of transphobic arguments, or diminishing the willingness of news publications and journalists to give platforms to those purporting them. This arguably speaks to the on-going influence of established stigmatising narratives that have long situated trans people – trans women particularly – as fraudulent and deviant threats to British society. The fiction of maintaining sexgender purity at the pond is persuasive only as long as cis-heteronormativity dominates British society, and trans women are maintained as monstrous figures to be feared. Perhaps this is where the 'success' of trans-exclusionary arguments lies. Squashing the complexity of sexgender,

particularly where it relates to trans women's lives, and maintaining an atmosphere of fear, in which the potential for sexgender-policing serves to induce anxieties around safety and comfort that is sufficient for many to self-exclude from women's spaces. A further impact might be read in the emerging persistence of forms of public consultation by governing entities on matters concerning trans inclusion. In the case of the Corporation survey there was no question or intention of excluding trans people from services, it was more of a matter of gaging opinion and considering how inclusion might operate partly because of the *Equality Act 2010*, as well as Ed's own non-binary gender and influence over the co-designing of questions. The mandate granted to the *Corporation* through the survey result is no-doubt useful in further legitimising their pre-existing trans-inclusive position, and future implementation of a specific 'Gender Identity Policy'. Yet, that, even in these circumstances, a public consultation was deemed appropriate, seems to reflect just how widespread and acceptable the logic of publicly debating and deliberating trans peoples' lives and existence has become. As Toni Morrison (1975) reminds us concerning race and racism, 'there will always be one more thing'.

5. FASHIONING GENDER AND GENDERING FASHION:NON-BINARY NEGOTIATIONS OF FASHION RETAIL

> Shopping itself is often a stressful and anxious experience – if we are truly at a transgender 'tipping point' as the fashion media insists, this greater acceptance of 'fashion without limits' has yet to trickle down to the high street shopping experience.
>
> - Shon Faye (2016)

Fashion has an established position at the vanguard of challenging cis-heteronormative style conventions. For instance, influences on the blending and bending of masculinities and femininities via the medium and meaning of the tuxedo can be traced from Grace Jones's 1981 album cover for *Nightclubbing by* Jean-Paul Goude, to Helmut Newton's 1975 'Le Smoking' Yves Saint Laurent shoot for *French Vogue,* to Marlene Dietrich's performance in *Morocco* (1930), and music hall male impersonator Vesta Tilley (Brown, Barnes and Bell 1900s). Continuing this constellation of gender-bending and blending we might look to Billy Porters' red carpet tuxedo gown, designed by Christian, a playful engagement with Western archetypes of feminine and masculine formal wear, which Porter notes intentionally challenges expectations imposed upon queer, black men (in Allaire 2019). If we turn our attention to fashion catwalks and photo shoots, trans and gender-non-conforming models such as Casey Legler and Andreja Pejic are increasingly present, with the tuxedo featuring as a motif (Rosen Guy 2017; Okwodu 2016: Faye 2016).

Shon Faye's words above are borrowed from a 2016 article published in *Dazed,* a digital and print publication that situates itself as celebrating boundary pushing and individuality (Dazed 2020). In her article, Faye (2016) brings her experiences as a trans woman, together with other trans femmes, to show how the exclusivity, gender boundary-pushing possibilities and spaces of fashion haut couture, rarely reach the more cis-heteronormative domain of fashion's prêt-à-porter:the ordinary spaces of high street retail and the quotidian circumstances negotiated by trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming people. It is these everyday spaces

and styles, and how access to fashion is negotiated by people with non-binary genders, that I explore in this chapter. More specifically, contributions from participants Avery, Anuka and Kay speak to symbioses between the fashioning of gender and gendering of fashion in the lives of people of non-binary genders. These illuminate how affective intensities are amplified and along with requirements for emotional labour, that enforce the disciplinary operations of gendered spatial and garment design, and attendant social relations.

As Figure 5.1 shows, 'the tuxedo' has been reconfigured by designers, photographers, models, and wearers in ways that subvert the conventions regarding to whom and in what form this sartorial style properly belongs. 'The tuxedo', and its counterpart 'the gown' – as worn by Jonathan Van Ness, for example (Grier 2019) – are arguably the ideal fashion objects through which to challenge queer gendered conventions. Their seamless cultural intelligibility translates into a polished, legible gender-bending aesthetic. Tuxedos and gowns are extraordinary garments, created for and worn in extraordinary situations. What about ordinary garments and everyday contexts, and those whose bodies and gender expressions fall through the cracks of social recognition? Following fashion historian Jo Paoletti, despite fashion's frivolous associations, I understand our capacity to access and wear clothes as being 'bound up with the most serious business we do as humans: expressing ourselves as we understand ourselves' (Paoletti 2015: 13; Kodžoman 2019).

Amongst the twelve participants in this research, through participatory photography and narrative writing Kay, Anuka, and Avery each identified fashion retail as sexgender-segregated spaces that are significant in their lives. The men who participated did not bring up the topic of clothing or shopping, and where this was discussed with women, it arose through our interview conversations. Furthermore, there appears to be a gap in academic literature in considering non-binary people's experiences of fashion settings and relationships to style, although this is less the case in journalistic writing (Wylie 2018; Faye 2016; Talusan 2017). Accordingly, this chapter follows three people whose genders are trans and non-binary and whose existence demands recognition of a constellation of possibilities for non-binary genders, and of gender diversity more broadly. Avery, Anuka, and Kay's narratives demonstrate how the fashioning of gender and gendering of fashion are indelibly

related. They bring into sharp relief the disciplinary function of sexgender-segregated spatial design and sexgender-policing through social relations, which includes the emotional labour and affective weight that is imposed upon those who must navigates socio-spatial orders that render them outliers. As part of this chapter, I engage with archival material and use examples from newspaper reports to show how, despite legislative change, there are significant continuities to media reporting concerning trans and queer femininities and masculinities, and the devaluing of femininities.

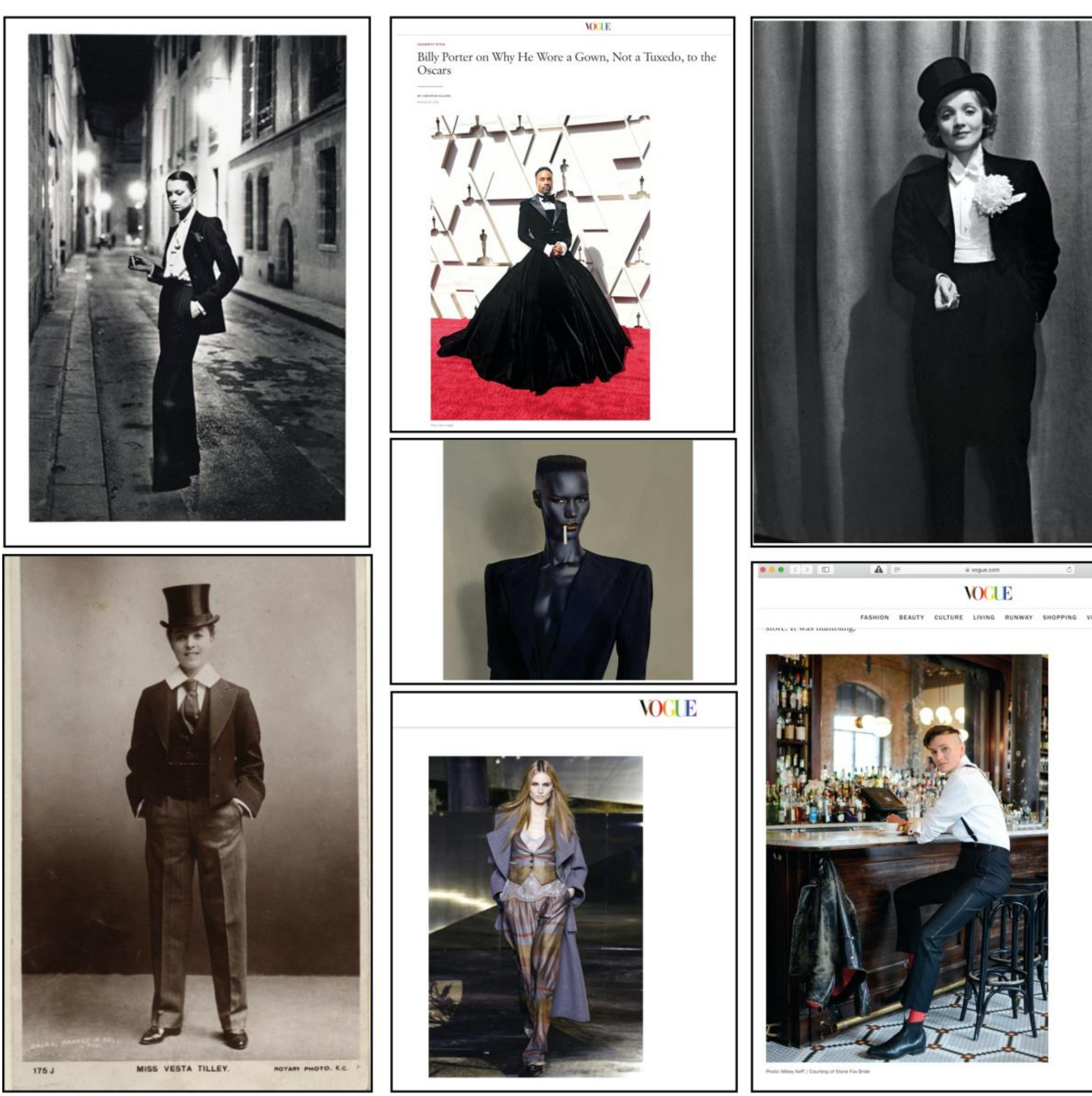

Figure 5.1 (from top left) Le Smoking by Helmut Newton (Lagerfeld and Newton 2007), top-centre Billy Porter (Allaire 2019), top right - Marlene Dietrich (Alfred Eisenstaedt/Getty 1930); Centre - Grace Jones (Berning Sawa 2018); Bottom left - Vesta Tilley (Brown, Barnes &Bell 1900s); Bottom-centre - Andreja Pejic (Okwodu 2016); Bottom-right - Casey Legler (Rosen Guy 2017)

In 2014, 67.9% of respondents to a survey of 889 UK-based trans, non-binary and gender variant people reported having to ‘pass’ as cis to be accepted on multiple occasions (Ellis et al. 2014: 355-6).[2] Avoiding clothing shops was reported by 29.8% of respondents, which rose to 56% among non-binary people and those who marked their gender as ‘other’. This compares to 40% of trans men, and 22.5% of trans woman (Ellis et al. 2014: 356), indicating particular difficulties experienced by non-binary people, which is echoed at a smaller scale in this project. The research suggests that respondents’ situational avoidance is linked to perceptions of vulnerability to harassment, ‘potentially exposing a genital incongruence compared to what an observer would expect to see’ and lacking confidence, specifically ‘not yet feeling happy with the body that they have and therefore being more aware how others perceive them’ (Ellis et al. 2014: 362). As Ellis et all (20140) demonstrate, surveys are adept at producing quantitative data that indicating overarching trends, that, when broken down by gender, show statistically significant associations between gender and social situations.[3] For instance, Ellis et al. (2014) consider situational avoidance of bounded contexts – public toilets, clothing shops, gyms and public transport – and aggregate findings according to categories such as ‘transition status’, an approach that that has enabled an analysis of the situated operations and negotiations of transphobia and cis-heteronormativity (Ellis et al. 2014). Nonetheless, surveys lack the capacity to capture fine-grain complexities within and variations between respondents’ experiences; how these connect with wider social relations, or how they may be context sensitive. This is a research gap that I seek to redress in this chapter. I am interested in how situational avoidance differs between people and contexts, how it is mitigated by careful negotiations that create more amenable conditions for accessing fashion, and how this is shaped by wider circumstances that extend through and beyond clothes shops.

I begin by introducing Sara Ahmed’s thinking on wiggle room (Ahmed 2014[b]) and wilfulness (Ahmed 2014[a]), which is generative in thinking through the corporeality

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[2] Separating these 889 people according to gender this translated to: trans women (39.9%), transmen (24.8%), non-binary people (7.9 %) and those with variable or fluid gender, no gender or uncertainly about their gender (24.2%) (Ellis et al. (2014).

and spatiality of fashion and gender. Next, I consider Kay's navigations of the profound affective weight of cis-heteronormative expectations enforced upon them in men and women's clothing sections, and the narrow limits of white, androgynous, non-binary figurations. Drawing upon Jose Esteban Muñoz's thinking of disidentification (1999) I argue that rather than what could be read as passive assimilation, Kay's gender expression and approach to navigating clothes shops must be understood as context sensitive, and simultaneously working with and against gendered norms to breathe life into non-binary possibilities beyond white androgyny. The following section engages with Anuka's discussion of how their gender and ethnicity are commonly (mis)read, and the fragile balance of oppression and privilege that they carry with them across contexts. Anuka opens up a discussion of how femininities are differently perceived and policed according to cis-heteronormative assumptions about the bodies that express them, and to whom femininities properly belong. Drawing upon archival material, and scholarly thinking on femme and femininities (Serano 2007; Hoskin 2019) I contextualise contemporary experiences identified by Anuka within longer histories of policing disorderly femininities. I argue for the necessity to understand gender *and* sexgender-policing as being constituted by an array of multi-directional, onto-epistemological practices with roots in cis-heteronormativity. The final section considers Avery's experience of personal shopping, a joyful experience that also demands the emotional labour of educating people. I examine the continual calculations that they make in order to access feminine clothing and mitigate the vulnerability and judgement they feel in women's departments, including how perceptions and experiences of different cities factor into their decision-making.

WILFUL WIGGLING

In a blog entitled 'Wiggle Room', Ahmed 2014[b] writes:

> I have been thinking of social categories as rooms, as giving residence to bodies. Some social categories might be experienced as roomier than others...A gender assignment can be a room, and not all of us feel at home in the rooms we have been given.

Perhaps it is my disposition as a geographer who tends toward assemblage thinking that draws me towards wiggle room, as a conceptual lens that is attentive to the

spatiality of relations between social dynamics, embodiment, movements, emotions and affects, and the contingencies of sexgender categories. Ahmed's thinking on wiggle room, which developed from *Wilful Subjects* (Ahmed 2014[a]) and features briefly in *Living a Feminist Life* (2017), invokes a common phrase referring to the opportunity one has to do something different in a given context so as to accommodate what is needed (Cambridge Dictionary 2020). Through the prism of wiggle room, gender emerges as embodied, spatial, in process, and operating in relation to social norms that shape mobility and movement. That is, 'gendering operates through how bodies take up space', Ahmed (2014[b]) argues, invoking Iris Marion Young's (1980) feminist phenomenology and thus highlighting how gender takes shape and is spatialised, in part through context specific, fine-grained everyday embodied expressions and social interactions.

Agency and intention are central to Ahmed's recuperation of wilfulness from its problematic and disobedient connotations, reorienting wilfulness to denote possibility:

> I think of wiggling as *corporeal wilfulness*. If some have to be wilful just to be, some have to wiggle to create room. When a world does not accommodate how you are, when you appear wrong in some way … you have to be less accommodating if you are to persist in being who you are being (Ahmed 2014[b]).

Thus, Ahmed connects making 'room to deviate' with a refusal to be 'fully determined from without' (2014[a]: 192). Within this frame, one is situated in relation to, but not fully determined by social norms, and wiggling constitutes the opening up space for possibilities: a social choreography fuelled by intention and agency, albeit limited. Temporalities are integral to the creation of wiggle room in which one operates in a present that is shaped by social categories and attitudes that are historically (in)formed, while intervening in their reproduction, to produce roomier futures. For instance, futures that are roomy enough to consolidate trans women and men's social acceptance, within the parameters of manhood and womanhood, through multi-scalar processes and legislation (*Gender Recognition Act 2004; Equality Act 2010*) to embody the reality of their everyday existence (Davis 2009). Although non-binary is a social category that encompasses myriad possibilities for gender, it is less

widely acknowledged, not legally recognised in Britain, and rarely, if ever, territorialised through spatial ordering, leaving non-binary people adrift and forced to navigate men's and women's spaces.

Wiggle room offers a productive lens for thinking through ways that intention, agency, mobility and corporeality shape non-binary peoples' negotiations of gender in fashion retail spaces. Bringing Ahmed's thinking together with Kay, Anuka and Avery's contributions, I consider the roominess of gendered social categories, including non-binary, as well as the roominess of gendered space. Specifically, I'm interested in the kind of 'wiggling' that participants enact as they navigate fashion retail spaces, and in turn, how non-binary people's negotiation of the cis-heteronormativity materialised in fashion retail spaces might extend Ahmed's thinking.

SUBTLE SUBVERSIONS AND THE WEIGHT OF EXPECTATION

With the increasing visibility in Britain and the US over the last decade, the grip of binary gender upon fashion design and retail appears to be incrementally loosening. From *Selfridges* 'Agender' campaign (Selfridges & Co 2015), to a rise in gender-neutral clothing ranges by *Levi's, H&M* and *Zara* (Wylie 2018), 'genderless' and 'gender-neutral' fashion have become increasingly prominent. Such initiatives better reflect the gender diverse realities of the public, while also likely having a public relations motive in terms of positioning brands at the vanguard of progressive societal and cultural shifts. Writing in *Dazed,* Jamie Wylie (2018) – who was 'born female, identifies as gender-neutral and wear[s] menswear' – argues that although fashion's emerging embrace of gender fluidity is promising, 'the conversation lacks depth and nuance' (ibid.). This perspective resonates with the experience of Kay, a non-binary person in their early twenties who describes their sexuality as 'panromantic asexual' and their ethnicity as 'mixed - white and Chinese'. A striking aspect of Kay's written, verbal and visual contributions are the co-existence of social invisibility with the heavy affective and emotional weight of social assumptions being projected upon them, and the careful negotiation required to alleviate their discomfort with the gendering of clothing, and the implications for how this is spatialised:

Fashion is something that I enjoy partaking in, but the public spaces of clothing stores is always segregated. I mainly shop effeminate clothing and find it difficult to buy clothes from the "men's" section. When I want to buy clothes from the men's section, I often do a sweepstake [sic] of the kind of clothes the shop sells and then will buy the item online. I am aware of how cis-passing I look and feel I am able to shop in "women's" sections without another look, so I tend to shop in these sections if I am clothes shopping in person.

I do like more feminine clothing because I think it looks nicer, so I don't actually mind that much shopping in that section … it's being read [as a woman] that I find uncomfortable … I also don't like a lot of men's clothing I just want to go there to see if there's something different … I can't wear anything off the shoulder because I feel I can't wear binders or sports bras underneath them … I think because I have a problem with gendered clothing in general, I also know that I present femininely … so I have a problem with [the idea that] ... androgyny is what non-binary is.

Image 5.1 Kay's caption – 'Gendered clothing sections of the "men's clothing" section isolated from the 'women's clothing' section'.

Image 5.1 situates Kay – the photographer – just beyond the threshold of a clearly signposted men's section, with strappy, heeled sandals sitting on shelves to the left signalling the photographer is located in the women's section. Publicly, their embodied position is close enough to examine the situation, a moment of private contemplation, perhaps a reticence, before publicly committing to traversing the discursively and architecturally demarcated gender frontier. In our interview Kay describes always shopping alone in the Men's section, avoiding busy times, as Image 5.1 attests. This enables them to feel more comfortable browsing the men's section to touch and size-up garments of interest, before buying them online. This cautious, multi-stage and time-consuming practice, which takes place across physical and virtual space, enables Kay to lessen the assumption-laden social interactions, creating more amenable conditions for them to access clothing that suits their gender expression. These tactics do not entirely lift the weight of social assumptions that Kay feels, which is shaped by their perception of how their gender and sexuality, and thus their embodied presence in men's and women's spaces, tend to socially register.

Kay is an asexual and panromantic, non-binary person, who is small in stature, with long hair, who often wears make-up and tends towards feminine style, which sometimes includes garments designed for men. Consequently, Kay registers socially as belonging to a cis-heteronormative socio-spatial order (or, in their words, they are 'cis passing'). Susan Stryker describes passing in relation to gender and race, as being typically used pejoratively to describe a person successfully presenting themself as 'belonging to an identity group to which one does not properly belong' (2019: 33). The policing gaze and pejorative inflection attached to 'passing' is enduring. Although commonly used by trans people, the term is often considered problematic when used in relation to transness, due the implication of falsity and the impossibility of 'proper' belonging as men and women. Phrases like 'passing privilege' in relation to gender refers to advantages experienced by trans people whose transness does not socially register. To 'pass' is spatial as well as social in how it confers the privilege of mobility (Sheller 2018). As Pfeffer notes, a capacity to 'pass' grants a reprieve from the stigma, sexgender-policing, and potentially dangerous consequences of ambiguous gender expression, as well as enabling

access to particular social and material resources, albeit often ‘tenuous, context specific and revocable’ (Pfeffer 2014:11; Gill-Peterson 2019). As we see in Kay’s contribution, ‘passing’ is also used to recognise the privilege of a trans person having the capacity to move through their social worlds without harassment. Privilege, however, does not guarantee comfort. Kay does not mind shopping in women’s sections ‘that much’ but is uncomfortable being read as a woman. In the men’s section, they know they may be perceived as belonging by heterosexual proxy – shopping for a husband or boyfriend – and are uneasy with such assumptions and feel that since they fit a men’s extra small, sizing up makes it clear they are looking for themself. Both ‘women’s’ and ‘men’s’ section scenarios make them feel ‘very uncomfortable’ in the sense of feeling out of place; ontologically dislocated, and unable to escape the unwanted social imposition of sexgendered assumptions. Kay sometimes shops in the kid’s section, which they say feels ‘weird’ but that other people will not read them as shopping for themself there, which alleviates some discomfort. Either way, the weight of social assumption clearly impresses heavily upon Kay. In order to fulfil the enjoyment that they find in fashion, Kay’s negotiation of the cis-heteronormative social expectations that are spatialised in clothing shops is driven by a quiet determination and follows a carefully calculated choreography.

In the words of C. Riley Snorton, as it is conventionally understood, passing is a ‘practice of moving from an oppressed group to a dominant group… from black to white, female to male, transgender to cisgender’ (2009:79), and is more complicated than often acknowledged. As Hil Malatino notes, passing can be a ‘fragile art’ that depends upon many variables, including environmental factors; ‘flood lights are transphobic’ they wryly suggest (Malatino 2020: 32). Although one’s gender expression often reflects a person’s gender i.e., a trans woman being read as the woman she is and thus being perceived as intended, passing is also a survival tactic, finding safety by avoiding gender scrutiny in public (Ellis et al. 2014; Couch et al. 2007; Speer and Green 2007). Being recognised as the gender you are according to cis norms is not achievable or desirable for all, which can cause emotional distress and anxiety and social isolation (Ainsworth and Spiegel 2020; Ellis et al. 2014). A tactic commonly employed by trans people when navigating public space is to avoid attention by minimising social interactions, yet to be a beneficiary of civil inattention tends to require fitting normative social expectations (Ellis et al. 2014). Kay’s

experience departs from this somewhat, in the sense that, they are ‘cis passing’ but as a non-binary person who socially registers as a cis woman, their gender is not accurately perceived, unless they have disclosed it, which they scarcely do. Thus, inhabiting spaces in which belonging is indelibly attached to being a man or woman, remains uncomfortable to varying degrees. Social interactions that to Kay feel loaded with sexgender scrutiny and assumptions are uncomfortable in general, but their disquiet is heightened in sexgender-segregated spaces. The relevance of ‘cis passing’ to Kay’s experience – and indeed my own – expands the meaning of passing beyond it’s more commonly understood meaning, where a trans woman or man is assumed to be a cis woman or man (respectively). Through this practice of creating linguistic wiggle room, Kay and others – make room for themselves within the parameters and meaning of the established trans lexicon, with concepts such as passing expanding to include trans people who pass as their birth assigned sex.

Writing on post-war histories of unisex fashion in the West, Jo Paoletti (2015) argues that the clear and persistent gendered ordering of spaces and garments, reflects a historic and stubborn cultural insistence on reducing gender to binary choices. Kay describes having a ‘problem with gendered clothing in general’, which is reflected in their description of navigating men’s and women’s spaces in fashion retail and which resonates with an article published in *Dazed* by Jamie Wylie (2018), who describes a similar predicament. In writing on ‘what fashion needs to understand about being gender neutral’ Wylie notes that even when seeking to access garments designated as gender-neutral, they – a non-binary person – must locate themselves physically or digitally in a men’s or women’s department. Thus, even with the increasing availability of ‘gender-neutral’ fashion, to access this non-binary people must often inhabit territories designated for men and women, categories spatialised in rooms that are saturated in sexgendered and sexual assumptions, which then designate a person with a gender to which they may not feel a sense of belonging. If we think of social categories as rooms that give ‘residence to bodies’ as Ahmed (2014[b]) suggests, Kay’s contribution can be understood as describing ways in which they wiggle wilfully, albeit subtly, to quietly subvert spaces in which they are not fully accommodated, but able to temporarily reside in. How roomy is fashion retail to non-binary and gender non-conforming people and ‘gender-neutral fashion’ while spaces and garments remain gendered? Despite the recent turn toward ‘gender-neutral’

fashion, it remains clear that fashion retail – online and in person, continues to function as disciplinary architecture that operates, as a technology of bodily, sexgender and sexuality production and normalisation (Preciado 2012: 132). The affective register of this disciplinary regime is particularly apparent within the kinds of discomfort that Kay experiences due to the weight of social expectation and misconception.

A preference for disclosing their gender in only specific social contexts, and a general aversion to attention and questioning, shapes Kay's relationship to gender expression and clothes shopping. Kay is 'out' as non-binary to certain friends in online platforms, and some friends from university, which is in a different Yorkshire city to where they currently live with their family. They have spoken to their sister about being asexual and panromantic but have not disclosed being non-binary to any other family members. When asked why they have made the decision not to disclose their gender and sexuality to their family, Kay described being uncomfortable with potential questions and attention, and of feeling culturally illegible. They also noted feeling concerned by off-hand comments their family have made:

> I guess I just don't like the questions that might come up afterwards. Like 'why?' 'Cause I don't like the attention …I'd rather just be there and then not talk to them about it.... And I feel like because I've got a Chinese background as well, so it's kind of, I think culturally it's more of a you're one thing or another, and trans issues aren't a big thing. And, like a lot of my family, they don't joke about, but you know, those little comments that are like 'so and so is… [pause].'

Following the pause, I seek to clarify Kay's insinuation, asking, '[do you mean] comments that they don't know actually cut a bit deep?' 'Yeah,' Kay responded. When I asked how they describe their gender, when they choose to do so, Kay says, 'I usually open with I, use they/them pronouns and then if they push for a gender then I'll kind of say non-binary.' This preference for informing *certain* people how to refer to them, and avoiding gendering themself unless asked specifically, in which

case they use non-binary – a social category that they find roomy enough to accommodate them (Ahmed 20014[b]) – further explains the ways that Kay relates to and engages with fashion. There are *multiple* assumptions at play that shape Kay's experiences of discomfort and social ineffability: that they are a cis woman shopping for themself; a cis woman shopping for a male partner; that non-binary people are white and have an androgynous and masculine-centred style (if assigned female at birth [often shortened to AFAB]). Gendered assumptions are woven within the sartorial, as well as the social and spatial, fabric, which shapes how Kay dresses. They use the example of not being able to wear 'off the shoulder' garments, a specifically feminine-coded style, since this would show their binder, thus making their transness visible and potentially subject to scrutiny. Trans-masculine and feminine people of various genders described finding clothing that fits their gender presentations, but not their body, due to garments being designed according to cisnormative corporeal ideals (Wylie 2018; Faye 2016). Kay's discomfort seems oriented around having any gender expectations – womanhood, and non-binary, androgyny, transness– imposed upon them. Kay appears most comfortable in the absence of gendered assumptions, making sexgender-segregation especially challenging.

Betsy Lucal's auto-ethnographic writing on their experiences as a masculine 'female bodied' person (1999) speaks to Kay's discomfort. 'Gender is pervasive in our society' Lucal observes, 'I cannot choose not to participate in it. Even if I try not to do gender, other people will do it for me' (1999). Broadening the binary epistemology that underpins Lucal's (1999) earlier work, her more recent writing (Windsor and Lucal 2019) show a more expansive understanding of gender. Here Lucal highlighted the lack of an existing identity label that fits them, observing that others appear far more concerned about her gender than she is (Windsor and Lucal 2019). Regarding the *doing* of gender, I am also reminded of Petra L. Doan's (2010) auto-ethnographic writing on her experiences moving through a busy shopping mall on Saturday afternoon, as a trans woman navigating a pseudo-public space early in her transitions. Like Kay, Doan highlights how palpably she felt her gender being repeatedly co-constructed as she moved through the shopping mall, noting that misalignments between her gender and social perceptions of it, did not shift her sense of self (Doan 2010). The language of participation, or doing gender and

having gender done to you, highlights how agency is limited for those whose gender embodiment rattles the cage of cis-heteronormativity, whether we seek recognition and legibility, or to slip through the cracks of recognition and evade the grasp of gender being done to us.

Trans studies and architecture scholar Lucas Crawford (2010: 515-16) argues, 'architecture is not a neutral entity upon which gender is applied, architectural forms and gendered bodies mutually reinforce each other's feigned timelessness and stability'. The location of gendered garments partially constitutes how gender is spatialised in fashion retail, which in turn forces people to locate themselves in relation to these spatial organisations. This disciplinary schema is often uncomfortable for non-binary people, who are onto-epistemologically displaced by this socio-spatial order. That gender will always be done for or *to* us, brings the concept of gender-neutral fashion into question. Fashion and style are mediums through which gender can be crossed, queered, and even fucked, but can gender be neutral (Serano 2007; Butler 1991; Kumbier 2008)? The increasing social visibility of trans and non-binary people has seen a rise of gender-neutral clothing lines. Ellis et al. (2014) note that embodying fashionable androgyny is a tactic some trans people use to navigate shopping spaces. Yet, as Kay identifies, there is a tendency to conflate non-binary with androgyny and imaginaries of gender-neutrality that have racial, corporeal, and masculine biases, as demonstrated in Figure 5.2. While non-binary is roomy enough for them, the extent to which non-binary as a social category has become increasingly socially legible, pushes Kay to the margins. Discussing the preference for feminine style, they say 'I have a problem with non-binary that says androgyny is what non-binary is and it's not that.'

Dominant figurations of non-binary people which have tended to be personified by white, thin, women or trans-masculine persons, with (relatively) flat chest contours, slim hips, and wearing masculine-coded garments, with perhaps some feminine flourishes, are historically embedded. Kay describes posting a selfie on social media with #NonBinaryIsntWhite – a hashtag that circulated around social media platforms in 2018 – joining collective responses by non-binary people of colour to conflations

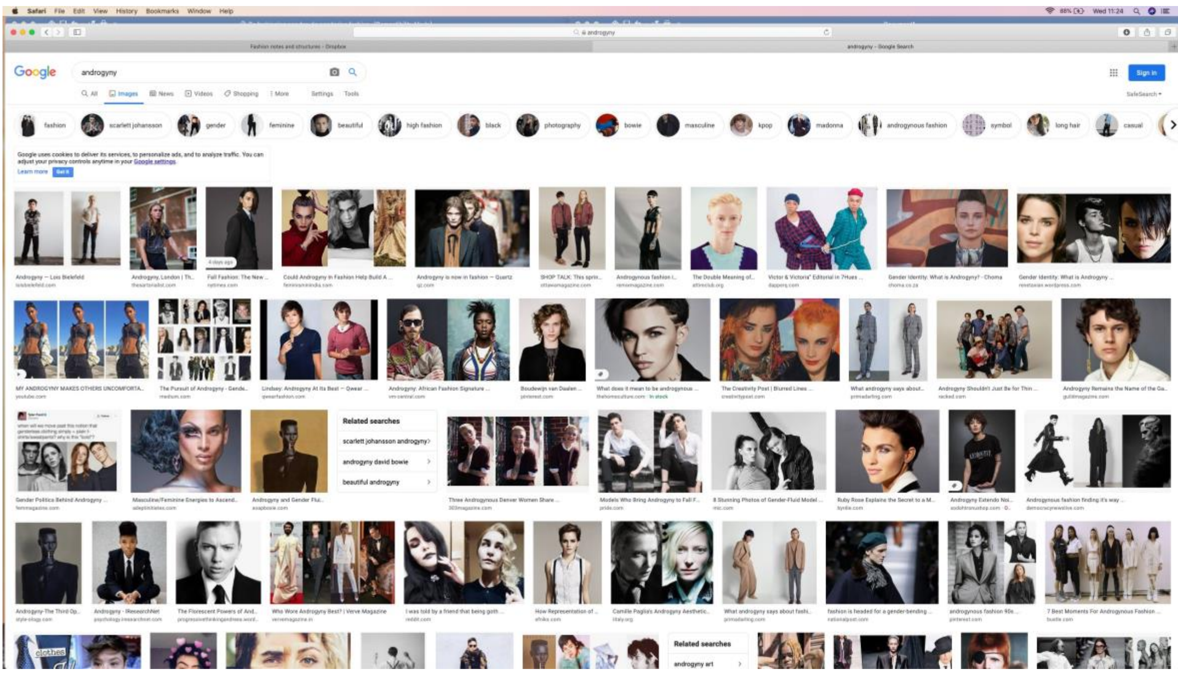


Figure 5.2 ‘Androgyny’ Google Image Search Screenshot, 2020

between non-binary genders and white, masculine-oriented androgyny (Alabanza 2018[a]; Sin 2018; Olufemi 2020; Vaid-Menon 2015). I read this hashtag as a collective refusal to be fully ‘determined from without’ that is practiced with intention and agency – albeit limited or mediated – that produces ‘room to deviate’ within non-binary as a legible social category (Ahmed 2014[a]: 192). Over recent years in fashion retail, archetypal androgyny has been perpetuated under the guise of fashion lines designated as gender-neutral and genderless (Wylie 2018). Rather than being inclusive or meaningfully pushing the boundaries of gender expression, Wylie contends that centring masculinity in gender-neutral fashion ‘excludes and insults’ non-binary, trans and gender non-conforming individuals by creating and selling gender-neutral lines that are ‘literally just menswear’ (Wylie 2018). In doing so, Wylie (2018) aptly argues that this form of branding and design signals equality, while actually being an ‘indication of ambient cultural misogyny’, in which femininity is devalued and masculinities privileged to the point of being situated and accepted as neutral.

The politics of misogyny and the devaluing and policing of femininities in Western societies broadly, and in relation to trans, queer and lesbian people, bodies and identities specifically, has been comprehensively explored within trans studies, queer

studies and femme studies (Serano 2007; Stryker 2019; Hoskin 2019; Volcano and Dahl 2008; Munt and Smith 1997; Dawson 2018; Jennings 2007). Trans femininities are most legible and knowable when embodied by trans women, cross dressers and femme non-binary people who were birth-assigned male. In part this familiarity has been produced through the stigmatising, policing and punishment of trans-femininity and male femininities (Stryker 2019; Serano 2007). Non-binary and trans people who are birth-assigned female and wear feminine clothing, make up and long hair, are rarely acknowledged and are rendered ineffable in many contexts, as Kay's narratives attests. In the words of the non-binary artist and performer Victoria Sin (2018: 25) 'Femininity doesn't belong to women and it doesn't belong to men either.' Perspectives such as Kay's, that are informed by experiences of transness that are more liminal and less visible than many, starkly illuminate the inadequacies of assuming that gender and its expression neatly align within either masculine *or* feminine architypes. That is, femininities and masculinities in plural and overlapping forms belong to people of all genders and sexualities, in spite of the disciplinary function of sexgendered norms.

When it comes to 'passing', questions of assimilation, trans/cis/hetero/homo-normativities (Johnson 2016; Ruin 2016; Malatino 2019; Weiringa 2014; Duggan 2006) and 'good'/'bad' sexual and gendered subjectivities and citizenship (Hines 2007; Richardson 2000; 2004; Bell and Binnie 2000) have often followed. As discussed in the literature review, assimilation/transgression has emerged as part of an ensemble of dichotomies that arise from tensions between queer, trans and feminist thinking concerning trans peoples' identities (Browne et al. 2010). Although Kay 'passes' and often prefers not to disclose their gender, their experiences and relationship to their gender complicate the narrative and epistemologies through which trans people have tended to be understood and understand themselves. Although Kay does not identify as queer, their relationships to and negotiations around their gender resonate with José Esteban Muñoz's thinking in *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (1999). Departing from much of the queer and trans studies of the time, Muñoz foregrounded race and ethnicity alongside sexuality and gender in his analysis. This approach is increasingly shared by scholars including Jules Gill-Peterson (2019), C Riley Snorton (2017), Jin Haritaworn (2008) and Jasbir Puar (2017), and is relevant to Kay as a

trans person of colour. In *Disidentification, Muñoz* examined practices, performances and processes enacted by queer people of colour to offer an alternative mode that neither simply assimilates with, nor opposes, dominant culture (Muñoz 1999), by tacitly and simultaneously working with and against this inescapable sphere, and thus breathing new life into it.

Muñoz's rejection of lowest common denominator stereotyping – men are like this, women are like that – recognises ways that minority subjects continually operate simultaneously and alternately with and against normative conditions of racialised, sexual and gendered (im)possibility. In doing so, Muñoz attends to temporality, mobility, context specificity and relations between people, objects, spaces and socio-cultural norms, as well as emphasising the arduousness of emotional labour demanded by people with multiple minority identities. Munoz (1999: location 858) contends that 'Disidentification is about recycling and rethinking encoded meaning', and that processes of disidentification 'scramble and reconstruct' encoded messages, while exposing the universalising and exclusionary manoeuvres of dominant cultural norms. 'Cracking open the code of the majority', [disidentification] uses this code as the material from which to assemble a politics and 'positionality that has been rendered unthinkable by the dominant culture', Munoz argues (1999: location 867).

As a non-binary person, Kay breathes new life into the possibilities for embodiment and gender expression that are commonly attached to cis women, subtly breaking the bonds and reconstructing the codes upon which cis-heteronormativity and transnormativity are built. In doing so, Kay recircuits the binary gendered codes invested in clothing garments, and expands onto-epistemologies through which non-binary has become increasingly recognisable as a social category over the last decade. Kay's relationship to femininity also chimes with scholarship on femme, which variously questions the 'naturalness' of association between femininity and cis and heterosexual womanhood, by exploring possibilities beyond this (McCann 2018; Hoskin 2019; Serano 2007; Dahl 2015). Kay's gender embodiment disentangles the knotty threads that link femininity with womanhood (and gay men), and non-binary with masculine and white. This resonates with Hannah McCann's work on femme assemblages, in which she argues for rethinking femininities as bridging identities –

cis, trans, queer, lesbian, heterosexual, men, women, non-binary and so on – rather than belonging to particular bodies and identities, without eliminating differences nor relying upon distinct identity boundaries (McCann 2018: 290).

In light of Muñoz's thinking on disidentifications, when considering Kay's experience in relation to wiggle room and wilfulness (Ahmed 2014[a][b]), it becomes clear that wilfully creating wiggle room for oneself, does not necessarily entail an intention to be socially legible or visible (although one may seek to make themselves legible as I explore with Avery later in this chapter). Indeed, in particular contexts, such as fashion retail or with their family, creating space or amenable conditions might cause liminality under the guise of ostensible legibility, where discomfort at misrecognition and a desire to elude the imposition of social norms co-exist, alongside a secure sense of oneself. In doing so, Kay unsettles assumptions that often accompany the celebratory discourses on trans visibility that social visibility equates straightforwardly to the possession of power and agency and the course of progress. Indeed, these assumptions of the unequivocal value and desirability of trans visibility have been problematised elsewhere by trans and non-binary people, especially trans and non-binary people of colour (Gossett et al. 2017; Vaid-Menon 2015; Gill-Peterson 2019). More specifically, these critiques reveal the ways that trans visibility entails complex negotiations that are context sensitive, and shaped by identity and background. In turn, this highlights the necessity of embracing complexity, which may register as a contradiction, within trans peoples' lives, rather than seek unified and smooth narratives of 'the trans experience.'

DISORDERLY AND DIFFERENTIAL FEMININITIES

Anuka, a London-based participant who describes themself as agender and non-binary, and their ethnicity as West Asian, Georgian and German, submitted Image 5.2 in which they have photographed themself in a men's changing room. Embodying an androgynous aesthetic, they appear 'white passing' – their words – with a slim figure, short hair, masculine-coded clothing, perhaps with the exception of platform shoes. Anuka's accompanying narrative describes being thrown out of men and women's changing rooms and toilets and expresses their present frustration with the lack of recognition for their transness now that they have longer hair. Accordingly, I interpret this image as communicating their corporeal wilfulness,

taking up space, to create wiggle room for themself within a binary socio-spatial order. An action that is partially enabled by the changing room's emptiness, which lessens the potential for sexgender-policing.

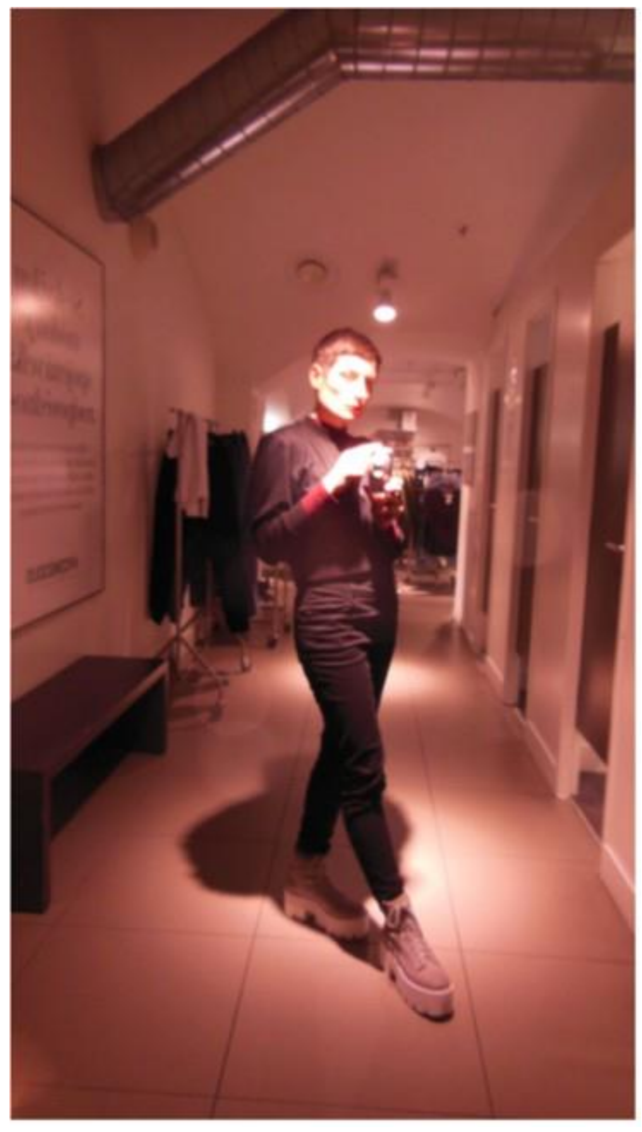


Image 5.2 Anuka's caption: 'This is a photo of me a few years back in a mens [sic] changing room'.

The cut and colour of garments carry gendered meanings (Kodžoman 2019; Jas 2020), in Image 5.2 the black ensemble worn by Anuka denotes masculinity. Supporting this, writing on colour, fashion and their non-binary gender, Ynda Jas (2020) describes how colourful clothing is integral to expressing their trans-femininity and queerness, thus moving through contexts where to feel safety meant toning down the colour of their outfit. Like Anuka, there are contexts where Jas feels safer, expressing themself and taking up space, with fashion being intimately linked to

personal safety and ease of mobility through public spaces (Jas 2020). Thus, gendering garments emerge as operating through multiple registers – including form and colour – and is 'a key ingredient in policing bodies and reinforcing normative understandings of gender and expression' (Jas 2020). For me personally, I tend to move through the world a as person who socially registers as a queer cis woman, and it is my visible queerness and presumed woman-ness that links to the obstacles to safety and unincumbered mobility that I face, in the form of anxieties about and instances of sexist, misogynistic and homophobic harassment. Even when I'm at my most masc presenting - with short hair and wearing a sports bra to balance comfort with the chest compression required to fit my darkly coloured 'men's' button up shirt – my hourglass figure, which is heavy socially coded as personifying womanhood, denies me the capacity to slip quietly and ambiguously between the registers of man and woman in the ways that I so wish I could. And among more masc aspects of my gender expressions, there are femme flourishes - detached from womanhood - that are important to my sense of self. Fashion is integral to how I express my transness and queerness, my femme and masc-ness, but my self-expression is not often met with social recognition, outside of queer and trans spaces and circles of friends. When reflecting on my safe passage through public space, I often find myself (depressingly) wishing that, if I am going to be harassed and stared at in public - anticipating and experiencing which is my lived reality - I would rather it be for who I am, not who I am not. At least then there would be some recognition entangled within the cis-heteronormative quagmire.

These experiences coalesce with and diverge from with Anuka, whose negotiations of social categories, with a focus upon emotional, embodied, and social dynamics pertaining to intersecting aspects of the identities they inhabit, and their misinterpretation. Anuka describes a feeling that they are 'crashing against these walls', that they share with friends who are also queer and trans people of colour, a comment which Idiscussed in Chapter 3 in relation to Ahmed's (2017) thinking on Brick Walls. This metaphor also resounds with Ahmed's ruminations on social categories as rooms.

Indeed, Anuka is partially referring to the onto-epistemological homelessness (Malatino 2013) of being thrown out of men and women's public toilets and changing rooms as an agender, trans person who must navigate spaces that are structured

by, and served to, reproduce the binary gender categories that exclude them. There is also a strong sense that the walls against which they are crashing are also the normative social perimeters of gendered *and* racial recognition within the public spaces that they navigate in London and continental Europe.

> I'm afab and agender. I'm leaning and breaking down into this grind along ways of looking/ seeing. I used to be bald for five years and it would throw people off. People who were in on my gender would kinda nod and be like, yeah, that makes sense. Now I've grown out my hair and people are like, are you STILL trans? LOL you know I'm still in here?

The visceral language of 'crashing' and 'grind' points to Anuka's life being punctuated by jarring incidences and a persistent friction as they proceed against the grain of normative expectations and at times slip through the cracks of social recognition. In the narrative below Anuka alludes to their transness being more socially legible when they have short hair, and their embodiment therefore better fits the androgynous aesthetic expected of non-binary, people who were birth-assigned female. Thus, Anuka – who now has long hair – and Kay share experiences, in the illegibility of their gender expression. Discussing the importance of femme to them, Anuka emphases the importance of being understood in 'full story' rather than essentialised, individualised fragments:

> This femme feels important … I'm West Asian. I'm used to beautiful representations of long-haired women. Yeah it's also patriarchal but it goes beyond that, there's histories of colonisation there … I also go back home and when my hair is short it's fucking difficult to walk around… I do absolutely understand wanting to feel safe, needing to look a certain way. If I had more money, if I didn't have to go to work every day, if I was white — maybe I would shave my head again and wear wigs in between… I absolutely have the privilege of light-skin and walking around London — yeah a lotta the time people are wary, probably for racist reasons. But they'll give me the benefit (of white- passing) doubt. On the continent it's really different. They're peering through magnifying glasses tryna trace your ancestral lineage just with that intense glare. And they're masculinising you in the process. You're hairy and ugly and bad. And then when they can't place your gender either, shiiit [sic]

that's some extra terrestrial stuff going on.

The 'full story' that Anuka alludes to incorporates cis-hetero- patriarchal cultures that are differently geographically situated in Tiblisi, Georgia, andcontinental Europe and London, which result in them experiencing various forms of gendered and racialized scrutiny and privilege. The Georgian feminine beauty standards have migrated with Anuka, shaping what it means to them to be femme, thus detaching their femininity – insofar as possible– from cis-hetero-patriarchal meanings, desires and expectations. Thus, to be femme is to willfully create wiggle room (Ahmed 2014) that accommodates their transness, in ways that depart from white, masculine-centered androgyny; a social position that they have the capacity toembody legibly so long as their ethnicity is inadvertently erased in the process of perception. For Anuka, femme and masculinity co-exist, not as opposition or in tension, but as flexible aspects of their gender expression that shift in balance at different moments and in context sensitive ways. Presenting as femme is partially a prosaic response to their material and emotional needs. They need to be employed, and thus look employable, and having previously worked with senior colleagues whoare openly transphobic, are cautious about disclosing their transness at work. They are also concerned for their safety and seek to avoid gendered and racialised harassment in public. As sociologist Rhea Hoskins has argued regarding femmephobia, passing can give a reprieve from the potential stigma and danger attached to ambiguous and non-normative gender expressions, and grant access tosocial and material resources (Hoskin 2019, Pfeffer 2014: 11).

Discussing how harassment shapes their life, Anuka reflects: 'I walk around and I'm like oh my god, like I'm about to be harassed and then it doesn't happen… you question your reality' and highlight past experiences of gendered harassment contouring their emotional and embodied geographies. When fused with a more social milieu that feels the affective-charge of cis-hetero-patriarchal and racist norms, and occasionally amplified by sexgender segregation, public and pseudo-public spaces one can feel loaded with the potential for harassment. 'It's the potential of something happening [that] really, really fucks with your head', they say, noting the emotional labour imposed upon them, with uncertainty heightening their sense of

vulnerability. For Anuka, femme gender expression enables them a level of accessing greater safety, comfort, predictability and employability through the impression of social legibility. Their femme aesthetic allows people to assume they are a cis woman, while meaning something different to them. That said, Anuka prefers more flexibility in their gender expression, but this is constrained by their circumstances. Akin to Kay, to reduce this assimilation would be reductive. Like Muñoz's disidentificatory subject (1999) and Ahmed's wiggle room, Anuka wilfully and knowingly negotiates their life and makes space for themself in context sensitive ways, shaped by multiple cultures and locations, which work with and against dominant norms.

As an umbrella category that describes what a person *is not*, non-binary holds as much possibility for who a person *is.* The experiences of non-binary and gender non-conforming trans-feminine people can differ according to the ways that their bodies, gender and its expression are responded to socially. By situating trans as describing a movement across a socially imposed boundary from an unchosen starting place (Stryker 2008:1), Stryker astutely encompasses trans and non-binary peoples' trajectory as constitutive of their experiences. The varied corporealities and directions of travel encompassed by non-binary people are made to matter by the differences in how gender is socially received. For instance, people have travelled various paths to gather nebulously under the non-binary umbrella. Thus, scholars researching femme identities and femmephobia such as Rhea Hoskins (2019) and Hannah McCann (2018) argue that we must attend to the direction of sexgender-policing as it occurs between and within identities – trans, cis, non-binary, women, man, gay, lesbian, for example – not simply to focus upon binary transgression. Anuka articulates this strongly and is quick to situate their positionality:

> I am AFAB [assigned female at birth] so I'm treated in a certain way where people are not gonna be absolutely horrible to me about going in a changing-room; …they're gonna act more like, oh like you're such a child, like get out of here you woman … I don't get the same kind of aggression …that we've been seeing in the media in the last few weeks and like the stuff that happened to Travis Alabanza, which is like unbelievably public and just horrible. … you go in a changing-room and you're alone and you look at yourself. But for some reason it's a public debate.

> When my partner dresses in women's clothes, it's a massive, massive deal. … One time we were walking on the street and they were wearing a knitted waistcoat and floral leggings or something and all these people started honking at us … they just stopped wearing those clothes immediately. That potential is what's in their mind every single day and I can tell. An order came in the post last week and they were like 'oh I got this on the ASOS women's site' and it was like 'oh my god they haven't decided to do this in like three years,' it felt like such a big deal. … They didn't go to a shop and try anything on; it came in the post, no-one had to know that it was happening … it was all like confined to the house.

Anuka is emphatic about the privileges they experience, albeit somewhat inadvertently, and is alert to how their partner's life differs as a non-binary, trans person of colour, who is not white passing, who was assigned male at birth, and who does not always feel able to express their femininity in public due to past and potential harassment. Accessing feminine clothes is carefully guarded from public view and enabled by online shopping. Anuka describes being responded to in men's changing rooms as a 'silly woman' who is 'out of place', and contrasts this with the ridicule that their partner has experienced while dressed femininely in public spaces, that are *ostensibly* ungendered. Anuka referenced Travis Alabanza, a trans femme, person of colour, with a high profile in queer and trans cultures. Around the time of our interview in 2017, Alabanza was refused entry to a changing room in the women's department of Topshop, against existing company policy (Frazer-Carroll 2018; Brinkhurst-Cuff 2017). After tweeting about this, Alabanza was targeted by intense transphobic media coverage, including Janice Turner's column in *The Times* entitled 'Children sacrificed to appease trans lobby' in which they were misgendered throughout (Turner 2017). With Anuka being positioned as a 'silly woman', their partner as 'ridiculous', and Alabanza as endangering women and children, different repercussions emerge, shaped by embodiment and context, and constituting part of a constellation of interconnected cis-hetero-patriarchal disciplinary practices.

Feminist, trans and femme scholarship comprehensively analyses the cis-hetero-patriarchal logics and practices through which femininity is devalued and derided as ridiculous, deceptive, irrational, artificial, weak, performative and inferior. Herein,

femininity is only acceptable when embodied by cis women, who are the 'correct' object of male desire, and hierarchically positioned according to factors such as physique, sexgender, race, sexuality, class and ability (Hoskin 2019; McCann 2018; Serano 2007). The devaluing of femininities is more complicated than the upholding of gendered binaries in which male/men/masculine and female/women/feminine correlations remain intact. Betsy Lucal (Windsor and Lucal 2019) contends that she has not paid a professional penalty in her academic career as a 'female-bodied person doing masculinity', because in a 'world where femaleness and femininity are dismissed and derided, [she] benefit[s] from the patriarchal dividend' of being taken seriously, listened to, and assumed worthy of attention. Writing on the 'scapegoating of femininity' Julia Serano's (2007) examines transmisogyny, arguing that she is 'not dismissed for merely failing to live up to binary gender norms, but for expressing [her] own femaleness and femininity (Serano 2007: 236).

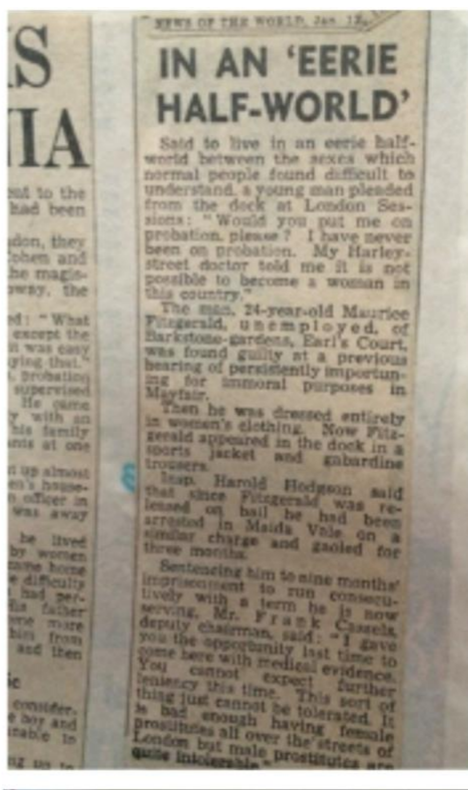
Transmisogyny describes forms of oppression that occur where the 'tradition sexism' that views masculinity as 'strong and natural' compared to 'weak and artificial' femininity, coalesces with a transphobia that frames trans women as fraudulent and a danger to society (Serano 2007). Consequently, men, trans women – and I would add non-binary people – who appear effeminate and/or embrace femininity, lose status, respect and acceptability within western societies – patterns of prejudice that are also present within lesbian, gay and bisexual communities, as well as in heteronormative mainstream society (Hoskin 2019; Taywaditep 2001), lesbian communities (Blair and Hoskin 2015, 2016), and trans people's experiences (Blair and Hoskin 2018). Ideals relating to which 'kind' of people and practices are acceptable in which 'kinds' of spaces operate across the public-private continuum, and are heavily implicated in and shaped by context, meaning that, to be gender non-conforming on the stage or screen, is very different from being gender non-conforming in the street (Alabanza 2018[b]; Dawson 2018). As discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, current practices of stigmatising and ridiculing trans femininities through the media, politics and social interactions, build upon and are legitimised by historic state-sanctioned practices of criminalising, sexualising and moralising gender non-conformity, and situating sexual and gendered 'Others' as fraudulent, and threatening to vulnerable women and children, and threatening to public order (Gallagher 2019; Schilt and Westbrook 2015).

Race is highly salient when considering whose lives are most devalued and deemed least worthy of safety and care, as Anuka highlights in describing their partner's experience of street harassment as a trans-feminine person of colour. Indeed, for black trans women particularly, living at the intersections of transmisogynoir – transphobia, misogyny and anti-black racism – can be deadly (Krell 2017). Writing and speaking by trans-feminine people of colour about the harassment they receive in public offer accounts of the violence inflicted by the silence of bystanders who do not intervene or show care after an incident, as if by disobeying the cis-heteronormative order a person makes themselves underserving of empathy, care and concern (Al-Khadi 2018; Alabanza 2017[a][b]). Writing on their personal experiences as a white, non-binary femme who lives in a gentrified area of East London and is commonly interpreted as a 'tall man dressing colourfully and effeminately' Ynda Jas (2020) argues that 'it's much easier for me to "get away with it' and have my aesthetics passed off as White, "hipster" behaviour'. Although, Jas does experience street harassment through which their femininity is belittled, their mobility through and presence in public space is least aggressively policed than people who do not, or cannot, embody this privileged hipster aesthetic.

Writing in the context of late-twentieth and early-twenty-first century North America, Julia Serano (2007: 284-6) observed the extension of this logic concerning crossdressers, analysing how any man expressing femininity drastically loses respect and status in society, and becomes situated as socially dangerous and deserving of scrutiny and disdain, having challenged oppositional gender norms and traditional sexism. Highlighting the significance of gendered sartorial norms in the policing of femininity, Serano (2007: 285) identifies the disparity between 'acceptable and unacceptable cross-gender expression between the sexes', with cross-dressing being an occasional practice, rather than a more everyday aspect of gender expression. Although a binary premise underpins much of Serano's discussion of trans men and women, cross-dressing and sex in *Whipping Girl* (2007), her analysis of transmisogyny and the stigmatising of non-normative femininities is instructive. As non-binary identities have become more legible within and beyond trans communities, since 2007, Serano's thinking has become more encompassing of gender diversity (Serano 2019).

Contemporary transmisogyny has legacies in the historical devaluing and stigmatising of non-normative femininities, and the kinds of admiration read into non-normative masculinities, in certain circumstances. In nineteenth and twentieth century Britain, state policing and legislation criminalising gender non-conformity was highly sexualised, and the policing of sexuality highly gendered. Correspondingly, much archival material depicting the lives of sexual and gender non-conforming people in the nineteenth- and early-mid-twentieth century comprises legal documentation, police records, political discourse and related media reporting (Stryker 2008; Mckenna 2013). Often, where material could be understood as documenting gay and trans histories, the latter has been absorbed under the category of the former. This is evident in 'Lesbian and Gay News Archive', housed at London's *Bishopsgate Institute*, where the images in Figure 5.3 are located, and elsewhere (McKenna 2014; Marcus 1992). The first 1958 article (Figure 5.3, top-left) describes the sentencing of 24-year old Maurice Fitzgerald to nine months imprisonment for 'persistently importuning for immoral purposes in Mayfair', a neighbourhood associated at the time with men who have sex with men, and sex workers oriented toward this clientele (Cook 2014: 36; Houlbook 2003; 2005; 2007). Highlighting the lack of medical evidence for Fitzgerald's femininity, they are described as living in an '"eerie half-world" between sexes'. 'This sort of thing just cannot be tolerated' Deputy Chairman Cassels stated, continuing '[it] is bad enough having female prostitutes all over the streets of London but male prostitutes are quote intolerable' (Cassels in Figure 5.3). Thus, the journalist and Cassels stigmatise Fitzgerald as living an unstable, morally dubious and sexually deviant life, that cannot be medically 'justified', and in which they debase themself to the level of female sex worker. A similar positioning of people assigned male at birth expressing femininity serving as a being a betrayal of manhood and masculine/male superiority is evident in the article 'Husband Dressed as a Women' (Figure 5.3, top-right). This 1953 report from the *News of the World*, describes divorce proceedings in Plymouth, which details the 'cruel' actions of Fred Mellor - the husband in question - upon their 'typically respectable' wife Mollie. Fred's feminine gender expression is framed as disreputable, damaging the sanctity of heterosexual marriage, and the health of the wife.

Contrastingly, in 1951, the 'The Fantastic Story of Terry Brown' was published in the now defunct tabloid *News of the World*, (Figure 5.3). Although Brown's chosen name is used, they are gendered she/her pronouns and titled 'Miss' throughout, persistently locating Brown as a woman dressing as man, thus potentially obfuscating their gender identity. Unlike Fitzgerald and Mellor, Brown is celebrated, albeit sensationally as a 'fantastical' oddity. Rather than being deviant and deceptive, threatening morality or tainting the sanctity of heterosexual institutions, Brown is granted authority of medical diagnosis and family acceptance and humanised through being interviewed for the article. Brown is described as having 'hated every stitch of feminine clothing' and their masculinity is figured admiringly by the reporter, with descriptions of 'square capable hands', a 'stubborn streak of independence', with preferences for smoking a 'man-sized pipe.' Backed by the authority of medical approval and by living as a man and meeting heteronormative codes and bodily expectations Brown is depicted as elevating their social status in this article. That said, as Jen Manion's research on female husbands between 1746 and the early twentieth century shows, female-assigned people who 'chose to trans gender and live as men' (2020: 3) in UK and US towns and cities, did so at risk of violence and punishment. There is undoubtable class and racial privilege at play in the case of Terry Brown, which is starkly apparent if we consider people such as Paul Downing, a Black farm labourer from Kent who was arrested in 1905 while chasing buses and looking for their wife, committed to a City of London Asylum and 'discovered' to be a 'woman' legally. This case attracted much press attention (Bressey 2011; Historic England 2020). Nonetheless, in contrast to reporting on Terry Brown, by embodying femininity Fitzgerald and Mellor are situated as intolerably lowering themselves to the level of females and disobeying heteronormative moral codes and institutions (See Figure 5.3)



IN AN 'EERIE HALF-WORLD'

Said to live in an eerie half-world between the sexes which normal people found difficult to understand, a young man pleaded from the dock at London Sessions: "Would you put me on probation, please? I have never been on probation. My Harley-street doctor told me it is not possible to become a woman in this country."

The man, 24-year-old Maurice Fitzgerald, unemployed, of Barkstone-gardens, Earl's Court, was found guilty at a previous hearing of persistently importuning for immoral purposes in Mayfair.

Then he was dressed entirely in women's clothing. Now Fitzgerald appeared in the dock in a sports jacket and gabardine trousers.

Insp. Harold Hodgson said that since Fitzgerald was released on bail he had been arrested in Maida Vale on a similar charge and gaoled for three months.

Sentencing him to nine months' imprisonment to run consecutively with a term he is now serving, Mr. Frank Cassels, deputy chairman, said: "I gave you the opportunity last time to come here with medical evidence. You cannot expect further leniency this time. This sort of thing just cannot be tolerated. It is bad enough having female prostitutes all over the streets of London but male prostitutes are quite intolerable." [illegible]

NEWS OF THE WORLD, Feb. 1, 1953

Husband Dressed As A Woman

TO a 33-year-old wife whom he called "typically respectable, brought up in rather narrow provincial circles and easily shocked," Mr. Commissioner T. H. Blanco White granted a decree in the Divorce Court.

She was not a woman of the world, he said. Her husband's behaviour in dressing up as a woman had been damaging to her health.

The wife, Mollie Mellor, of Peverell Park-road, Plymouth, brought her petition on the ground of cruelty. Her husband, Fred Mellor, aged 38 …

THE FANTASTIC STORY OF TERRY BROWN

Doctor Advises Her to Dress As a Man

"News of the World" Reporter

DRESSED quietly in a man's dark suit and belted overcoat, her black hair brushed back, and smoking a man-sized pipe, a young woman strolled into the "News of the World" office yesterday with a fantastic story.

said: "These were not meant for pen-pushing."

"I joined the W.R.A.F." she went on. "I told them I was much older than I was and could drive any sort of vehicle. When I was put on transport duties I was getting more into my element.

"I drove cars and heavy lorries and things generally were becoming easier for me. There were awkward moments when R.A.F. boys tried to make dates with me, but I laughed them off.

"After four years in the W.R.A.F. I was discharged as unfit and thrown back into civilian life.

AN OPERATION

"Life seemed to become an even bigger problem, but I got a number of jobs driving cars and other vehicles. All the time, however, there was this psychological upheaval going on inside me, and just over a year ago I went to see a London doctor.

"I told him the whole story. About four months ago I went into a nursing home to have an operation which may change my whole life.

"Already, changes have manifested themselves, both mentally and physically. As you know, I was told to dress in a man's clothes and, at first, people in shops sometimes called me 'madam,' while others looked back at me in the streets and I could see them wondering: 'Is it a man or woman?'

"Since the operation my voice has deepened and I now shave three times a week.

"Every day there is a growing change in my outlook in every way.

"Until the next operation I shall live quietly and hope that all will turn out well. At the moment I am staying with a family who under-

HATED GIRL'S CLOTHES

TERRY—with pipe.

FRUIT FARMER FOUND NOT GUILTY

WHY HE GAVE "MEDICALS"

MUSIC TEACHER IS FOUND NOT GUILTY

SELF-DEFENCE PLEA AFTER A DEATH

MANSLAUGHTER VERDICT

Figure 5.3 Archival images: Top-left: NEWS OF THE WORLD (1958[a]), top-right: 'NEWS OF THE WORLD (1953), bottom-left - Paul Downing c.1905 in Bressey 2011; Bottom-right -NEWS OF THE WORLD (1958[b])

Tracing histories of gender and sexuality through this archival material demonstrates that, despite legislative change, there are significant continuities in social relations and media reporting where trans and queer femininities and masculinities are concerned. For example, the privileging of masculinity in Terry Brown's story echoes in Betsy Lucal's reflection of her masculine privilege (Windsor and Lucal 2019). Indeed, while trans-masculine people and masculine women certainly do experience transphobia and gender-based oppression, trans-feminine people experience disproportionate levels of harassment, violence and media attention. Following Ahmed, I read this as highlighting the greater wiggle room experienced (and created) by women, non-binary and trans-masculine people in their gender expression, compared to the restrictive room for manoeuvre trans-feminine people, and effeminate men, experience. This asymmetry was precipitated in no small part by middle and upper-class white women who mobilised their social privilege through rational dress and associated feminist movements seeking greater mobility and access to the male/masculine dominated spaces of public life (*Rational Dress Society's Gazette* 1889; Jungnickel 2015). Efforts to discipline sexgender and sexual non-conformity have tended to uphold cis-hetero-patriarchal dominance of the public sphere, and containment of queerness, women and femininity in private, restricting the mobility of those who fear harassment in public (Hoskin 2019a; Tetreault 2001). That said, it is clear from feminist, queer and trans studies, as well as urban studies, that gendered realities of public and private spaces are messier and more varied, existing more as a public-private continuum – that includes pseudo-public space, for example – and in which boundaries between public and private are frequently blurred (Doan 2010, Young 1997; Marshall 2017).

Strategies to spatially contain sexgender and sexual disorder are evident in a landmark legislative change that is commonly celebrated as a liberatory moment. By decriminalising consenting homosexual acts between *two men,* age 21 or above, in *private, The Sexual Offences Act 1967* protected public life as a heterosexual domain and maintained the primacy of coupledom in private. As discussed in Chapter 4, The *Act* was passed following a 'Conscience vote', demonstrating the centrality of morality to this legislation. This moralising was apparent in Lord Arrran's, words, analysed previously in Chapter 4, during the Bill's passing (Hansard 1967). To refresh our minds of Arran's statement, he asked that homosexual men 'show

their thanks by comporting themselves quietly and with dignity', adding that:

> This is no occasion for jubilation … Any form of ostentatious behaviour; now orin the future, any form of public flaunting, would be utterly distasteful … let me remind them that no amount of legislation will prevent homosexuals from being the subject of dislike and derision, or at best of pity … That is their burden forall time, and they must shoulder it like men–for men they are (in Hansard 1967).

Arran's request for quiet, manly gratitude, that gay men keep their queerness spatially, somatically, sonically away from the public sphere, evidences a moralising and attitude toward gay men and femininity. Gayness is a burden to be pitied, disliked and derided, thus partial decriminalisation does not warrant 'jubilation' and 'flaunting'; the 'ostentatious' effeminate theatricality often pejoratively associated with men who desire men should be kept behind closed doors, in private abodes (Cook 2003:12). Thus, moral anxieties concerning the supposed threat and disruptive potential of disorderly femininities to British society extend through legislative and discursive attempts to maintain the dominance, 'appropriateness' and 'superiority' of cis-hetero-patriarchal conventions in public life.

The gendering of clothing as belonging to men and women is complicit in the ways that bodies are policed and (de)valued and is a naturalised practice that perpetuates the policing of gender non-conforming bodies in public. It is imperative to apprehend and situate personal experiences within longer histories and broader practices through which femininities are punished, stigmatised, ridiculed and de-valued with various levels of intensity depending upon a person's (presumed) sex/gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity, among other factors. As Hoskins (2019) and Serano (2007) highlight, femininities are not the source of oppression and should not be scapegoated as such. Rather such oppressions are rooted, regulated and spatialised through the complex and continual socio-political and cultural dominance of the imperialist, white supremacist, cis-hetero-patriarchy, to borrow and extend bell hooks' phrase (1981; 1984). As is clear in this chapter, analyses of the gendered operations of power must incorporate people whose sexgender and gender expression do not correspond with cis and trans man/male/masculine and

woman/female/feminine binaries or bonds. Furthermore, analyses by Hoskin (2019) and McCann (2018) on the direction of travel taken by sexgender-policing and the devaluation of femininities highlights the necessity of considering the intersectional operation of oppressions.

MAKING SPACE FOR NON-BINARY FEMININITIES

The array of sexgender-policing practices that punish, stigmatise and exclude trans-feminine people extends through the clothing shops. Practices such as excluding and ejecting trans-feminine people from changing rooms in women's departments (Brinkhurst-Cuff 2017; Parsons 2019) limit access to feminine clothing, restricting the potential for exploring, expression and trying on clothes. Yet, trans-feminine people who register socially as gender non-conforming often opt for the privacy afforded by internet shopping, thus avoiding the public scrutiny that comes with shopping in person (Faye 2016). Avery, who is a white, non-binary, trans-feminine person in their 20s, highlighted the function of signage in symbolising the wider cis-heteronormative spatial organisation of clothing shops and related assumptions imposed upon them regarding where they belong.

Image 5.3 Avery's caption: 'Every time I pass one of these signs in a shop, it feels like a reminder of where people expect me to go and where they think I belong and don't belong. I resent these signs and the ideas behind them sometimes'.

Avery describes being ‘made to feel the most self-conscious’ in the women’s section and wishes to ‘reliably purchase things online and avoid the experience of shopping in public’, while wanting to ‘not be made to feel like an intruder’ when shopping in person. A tension between a path of least resistance to asense of deserving access to feminine fashion that is crucial to their gender expression, which is produced by the socio-spatial and material gendering of fashionand fashion spaces, that is disciplined through social interactions. Although these desires may appear contradictory, I interpret them as co-existing in tension, a tension that is produced by the socio-spatial and material gendering of fashion andfashion spaces, that is disciplined through social interactions.

> When I am on my way to browsing the ‘women’s section’ I am asked if I am buying something for my wife or girlfriend when I am buying something for me. Shop Assistants asking ‘Can I help you, *SIR*?’ I don’t understand whether they are trying to bolster a perceived masculinity or that they want to let me know of what gender they think I am. Other shoppers have looked at me with the most judgemental glares while I am trying to shop for a bra or underwear [so] I can’t even go in there without presenting the most femme I can to try and justify my presence.

Avery has a strong sense of deserving access to feminine fashion that is crucial to their gender expression, but is frequently made to feel like an impostor due to being socially perceived as a man, which they try to mitigate through amplifying their femininity. Online shopping offers paths of least resistance by removing disciplinary social interactions, yet it is challenging since feminine clothes are rarely designed to fit the bodily comportment of trans femmes, which makes trying on garments important (Faye 2016). Their non-belonging is communicated to Avery in an array of mutually reinforcing ways, from signage and spatial designation, to the fit of garments, interactions with staff and the gaze of fellow shoppers. That their presence appears conditionally acceptable insofar as they are ‘put in place’ by being ‘sir’d’ or seen as a man shopping for a heterosexual partner, constitutes part of this disciplinary web. This resonates with broader patterns observed by researchers examining consumer vulnerability (Baker, Gentry and Rittenburg 2005; Mckeage et al. (2018). For example, Mckeage et al. (2018) argue that personal, social and structural factors shape experiences of vulnerability in marketplaces amongst

‘gender variant consumers’, with the ‘marketplace’ perpetuating ideas that legitimatise treating ‘transgender individuals as second-class citizens’ (ibid.: 83). Illuminating the fine-grained operations of sexgender-policing within this context, Avery highlights increased affective intensity of judgement directed toward them in the ‘women’s’ underwear section. This crescendo in social judgment speaks to the myopic cisnormative corporeal and sartorial association between breast, vulvas, bras and underwear, and womanhood, that is amplified by transphobic tropes that pathologies trans-feminine people as sexual fetishists (Serano 2007). Avery’s narratives echoing personal testimonies by trans femmes (Faye 2016) and research findings by McKeage (2018:81) demonstrate that gender non-conforming people are often subjected to ill treatment from retail workers, including misgendering, ridicule, and staring. From this perspective, the capacity to shop in fashion retail spaces, and access changing rooms without issue, discomfort or judgment is shown to be a privilege. For genderqueer consumers, Mckeage et al. argue (2018:81-2) that beyond widespread recognition and acceptance of non-binary identities, the attending systemic breakdown of binary sexgender and related structural discriminations, comfortably negotiating fashion retail spaces will remain rare and unpredictable.

In an attempt to temporarily resolve their predicament Avery arranged an appointment with a personal shopper in a well-known British department store in Oxford, where they were joined by their partner and partner’s mother. Avery enthuses about their personal shopping experiences, describing it as ‘amazing’ and something they would recommend to other trans-feminine people.
This service enabled them to browse, try on and buy feminine clothing while negating the publicness of the shop floor, infused with uncertainty, questions, judgement, that makes them feel like an intruder. To make and attend a personal shopping appointment is to be understood as purposeful and unmistakably in the right place. Having an appointment with a specific staff member translates to them being understood as in the right place. Their presence is purposeful. Being accompanied by their partner and partner’s mother ensured that there was a support system in *place* were there any issues, which helped alleviate their nerves and bolster the sense of accountability and control, especially before building trust with the staff. Although Avery shows agency and intention in how they approached

personal shopping, and enjoyed their experience and felt supported by family, it is clear that certain concessions and labour were demanded of them. They suppress their feelings to give non-defensive responses to -albeit well-intentioned - intimate and insensitively framed queries by carefully modelling more respectful and less gendered language. In doing so, they consciously expand the staff members' repertoire of gendered knowledge and experiences, which hitherto extended to working with men who cross-dress and drag queens. Describing this, Avery expresses a strong sense of duty to non-binary people who the staff might encounter; attending to their own need whilst subtly delivering a trans awareness training.

> Once we were in the room with the personal shopper, I still was feeling nervous, but I was glad to be out of the public space. It was, ok I'm in a room where this person is providing a service and if they do anything wrong they're putting themselves on the line here so I feel like as a customer that I've at least got the leverage … They ask[ed] questions that are potentially inappropriate but I'm like 'ok give them a bit of slack, they're trying and they're working with what they know.'
>
> 'cause I felt comfortable enough to talk to them, I answered some more of their intimate questions and they learnt something out of it
>
> … [The personal shopper] was saying, 'I've helped a number of people that want to wear women's clothes but they identify as a man and they're married to a woman and they do this in secret' or 'they say that they're drag queens, they want help finding stuff'. So it's like 'ok, well you have a number of different experiences of people, well here's a new one. I'm a non-binary person.'
>
> … ask if I want to buy a bra, don't ask if I have tits yet ... I can lead them with my response how they should ask the question, like 'no I don't have breast of my own to create a shape' … [I was] trying to educate but without getting frustrated with it or trying not to throw back the attempt at being understanding as 'you insulted me.' 'Cause that's just going to put them on the defensive, it just doesn't work.

I interpret Avery's experience of personal shopping to be a practice creating wiggle room. The personal shopping space was a room that did not accommodate them when they entered but was made roomier through their encounter with the personal shopper. Ahmed (2014[b]) notes that:

> some have to be wilful just to be, some have to wiggle to create room. When a world does not accommodate how you are… you have to be less accommodating if you are to persist in being who you are being.

There is clear wilfulness in Avery's intention to produce a space in which they belonged without flattening their identity, and making non-binary people legible in the process, albeit a process demanding the emotional and educational labour. By using a personal shopping service, Avery is like Kay in taking steps to lessen their social visibility to other shoppers but differs in their desire to be legible to the personal shopper and in their willingness to answer questions in order to achieve this. For Avery, whose embodiment and gender expression is such that they are often interpreted as out of place when shopping for feminine clothes, their circumstances perhaps demand a more conspicuous approach. There is also a measure of personality shaping this, although Avery does not always have the energy or confidence to feel comfortable in being outspoken and answering questions, and the support provided by Avery's family was an important aspect of their experiences, which not all trans people have access to. Furthermore, although their personal shopping appointment was free, it required the financial means to meet the tacit expectations of purchasing clothing. This is not to undermine that joy and positivity that Avery experienced, but to recognise that this approach is not equally accessible or preferable to everyone in a similar position to Avery who seeks to make wiggle room for themselves and other trans femmes.

Ahmed's (2014[b]) contention that we 'create more wiggle room the more we open agap between inheritance and reproduction' speaks of temporalities and the potentialimpacts of Avery's encounter. By creating a space for themselves as a non-binary person, they intervened in the re-production of their onto-epistemological exclusion. While this intervention is small, this is an experience that Avery carries with them and feels bolstered by it and it is likely that there will be further personal shopper's engagements with gender non-conforming people.

While remaining realistic about Avery's impact, it is fair to read the outcome of this encounter as extending beyond the room in which it took place in unknown ways. This supports Lise Nelson's (1999)argument for situating Butler's performativity (as discussed in my literature review) and thinking through how people *do* identities in context specific ways, as a means to account for how social change happens, including through micro-scale interactions. In this case, Avery describes a piecemeal opening up of a person's understanding of gender and the hold of sexgender binaries loosening in the process. Nonetheless, cis-heteronormativity continues to permeate the wider social, material and spatial fabric of fashion retail spaces. These exclusionary conditionsremain overwhelmingly intact.

In our interview Avery described how calculations concerning locations, scale and accountability shaped their decision-making. Avery's personal shopping experience happened in a department store in Oxford, where they lived at the time, but they have since moved to St Andrews in Scotland. Avery reflects upon their current circumstances, articulating interrelations between their sense of vulnerability and the potential for inclusive experiences, and accountability if they experience exclusionarybehaviour from staff. Their perception that corporate shops have more likelihood to have trans inclusion policies and training for staff give Avery an enhanced sense of safety. Regarding safety, they also contrast the uncomfortable sense of hypervisibility that they have experienced in Dundee – a city nearby their current home - with London, Edinburgh and Oxford, cities with more diverse populations – LGBTQ+ folks, people of colour, migrants, LGBTQ+ migrants who are people of colour, for example – where experience and perception suggest that city dwellers willbe unperturbed by people who embody the realities of gender diversity. Thus, Avery may feel more confident than positive (or at least blasé) attitudes toward difference will extend from public space into the pseudo-public spaces of fashion retail. In research by Mckeage et al. (2018: 82) trans participants identified a preference for large retail stores as it was easier to avoid interaction with staff. These kinds of calculations operate as a means of self-preservation, attempting to mitigate vulnerability in the face of uncertainty and potential transphobia and the well- intentioned but nonetheless cis-heteronormative. That said, some of the time it is 'luck of the draw', Avery says. For example, a company policy of trans inclusion in changing rooms, does not always filter through to the

shop floor, as Avery and other trans people have found out at their expense (Brinkhurst-Cuff 2017; Parsons 2019). Although these calculations are a constant and exhausting feature of Avery's everyday life, so is the reality that these equations do not always add up:

> There is [the same department store] in Dundee but I don't trust it to be the same experience that I had before. I don't want to pre-judge the people in there but I almost feel like the other experiences I've had of people that live and work in Dundee, I feel prejudice… that hyper visibility I feel still feel in some places… it definitely depends on where the shops are, that changes how vulnerable I feel.
>
> …I think a more established department stores or bigger stores where there's more of a corporate background … there's a certain amount of training and awareness. And you have a boutique … and I may be the first openly trans and presenting as trans person that they come across and they have no reference to how to behave. I have had better experiences from independent people that are just polite and inclusive .... and then go to another [bigger] shop and be treated with suspicion and disdain … it's like, 'but your business promotes being trans inclusive and yet you're going to tell me that I can't go on the women's changing room and try on dresses.'
>
> I might have a random, unexpectedly crappy experience in a really inclusive place…. in certain metropolitan diverse places, which give me a sense of, 'I feel generally safe here', and I'll probably read the experience overall more positively [sic] … Like Edinburgh, Oxford, some parts of London.
>
> Edinburgh, I think it's one of those places where it's so busy … if I'm more visibly queer presenting or not, interactions don't feel like they significantly change … I would never want to go into a shop [in town or city] that I know I just generally feel uncomfortable in.
>
> … I feel a bit sad for not living in Oxford ... There were enough big shops, there were enough diverse people that I could go in there and feel ok talking to people and say "well I had this experience of this and I know you're capable of providing it."

Avery's ruminations on location resonate with Kath Weston's (1995) influential

analysis of the ‘Great Gay Migration.’ Weston drew upon Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* (1983) to examine how gay imaginaries comprised of an ideal of freedom and finding the gay community contributed toward large-scale movement of gays and lesbians to the Bay Area, and a handful of other cosmopolitan American cities during the 1970s and 1980s. In her analysis, Weston highlights the mutually reinforcing function of gay urban imaginaries, in how the material conditions and socio-economic opportunities found in the Bay Area during this period produced spaces and social dynamics that were more welcoming to, and thus further attracted, gay men and lesbians. Through such processes, Weston argues, emerges the production, consolidation and privileging of gay subjects as urban dwellers, and urban regions as creating a home for gay people.

Weston’s analysis does not consider trans people, who certainly lived in the Bay Area during this period, and contributed toward queer, trans, lesbian and gay movements, communities, and spaces (Stryker 2006; Williams 2016). Nonetheless, Weston’s analysis describes similar logics and experiences to those articulated by Avery. There is a symbiosis between imaginaries and the affective, emotional and embodied geographies of navigation in a city, as well as the persistent instability experienced when expectation of safety are punctured by instances of abuse and exclusion. Or in Weston’s words, ‘Homelands can be easier to desire from a distance than once you arrive on their figurative shores’ (Weston 1995: 275). Akin to Weston, Avery highlights specific cities as feeling more comfortable, rather than making oversimplified urban/rural dichotomies, which Weston also complicates and, in doing so demonstrates the value of an onto-epistemological situated approached to research.

In my previous research (Marshall 2014) and research with LGBTQ+ people in Brighton by Kath Brown and Jason Lim (2010), trans men (one in each study) reported finding social interactions more challenging in cities where people were more familiar with and accepting of gender and sexual diversity. In my research, Tanner, a white, trans man in his late teens and early in his transition (at the time), reflected that;

> People in London are more open to queerness...sometimes that leads to more problematic interactions, whereas in Bradford, people only know the gender

> binary, and if I fit enough of their expectations of a man...that's how they interact with me.

Echoing Tanner, a questionnaire respondent in Browne and Lim (2010) noted that inBrighton they are often mistaken for 'another butch lesbian', with people seeming to make a well-intentioned point of calling him 'miss' or 'madam' (Browne and Lim 2010: 622). '[They] want me to know, that I know, that they know I'm 'female' the respondent notes (ibid.). Contrastingly, the man describes that in Bristol, their home city:

> I pass pretty much all the time, everyone assumes I'm male. So sometimes it's good to have narrow minded people around that only believe in two genders! (ibid.: 263).

That said, Browne's (2013) research shows that butch lesbians, including those living in Brighton are also commonly misgendered. These experiences complicate assumptions that social interactions of gender non-conforming people are necessarily more affirming in cities with established LGBTQ+ communities. These narratives by trans men, non-binary people and masculine-presenting women signal how differences in the dominance of cis-heteronormativity between cities correspond with how affirming trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming people find social-interactions to be. Both Avery and Tanner emphasised the disciplinary function of gendered language in retail spaces such as clothes shops, where sir/madam/miss or ladies/gentlemen are commonly used to respectfully address customers. These expressions of hospitality can feel paradoxically and distinctly inhospitable where gendered language is misdirected, even where well-intended. The persistence of these forms of address and their inseparability from politeness, deference and good service, reflects the profound extent to which cis-heteronormativity saturates the language, practices and understanding of proper social etiquette.

Browne and Lim's (2010: 623) contention that place matters, in how 'the gendered reading of a body is affected by geographically specific norms regulating the recognition of gender performativities' is supported by Avery and Tanner's experiences together with the trans man in their research. Extending this to considerAvery's experiences shows that the chances of being accurately gendered by strangers appears slim given the persistent social ineffability of non-binary

people in most contexts. Gender (mis)recognitions illuminate contours constituting prevailing social knowability and intelligibility as discussed in detail by Butler (2004), which mayvary between cities and contexts and communities within cities. That gendered epistemologies are differently situated benefits some trans people and gender non-conforming people more than others and remain unpredictable despite our best calculations. For those whose gender 'eludes capture' (Susan Stryker 2014: 40) within the prevailing sexgender apparatus, binary pronouns serve as attempts to 'pindown' a person's gender and restore the integrity of a binary order, that includes trans women and men. A person's sense of self and gender may not shift through these encounters (Doan 2010), but these encounters may shift future social expectations and spatial negotiations. As Avery's experience of personal shopping suggest, small-scale, everyday social inter-actions are crucial contexts from which these shifts unfold.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has explored the fashioning of gender and gendering of fashion as a symbiosis that, from the vantage of the lived experiences of Kay, Anuka and Avery, is shown to be prone to tension, and is permeated by the social, material and spatial operation of cis-heteronormativity and transphobia. The fashioning of oneself emerges as crucial to the expression and interpretation of a person's gender in Avery, Kay and Anuka's narratives, who respectively and collectively speak to the disciplinary function of gendering fashion garments, which is spatialised through men's and women's departments and changing rooms, reinforced through signage and social interactions with customers and staff. The gendering of fashion, of course, implicates everyday experiences in public.

While far from a comprehensive theory, Sara Ahmed's thinking on wiggle room (2014[b]) has proven a productive prism through which to refract participants' insights and analyse the resulting spectrum of non-binary possibilities that are obscured by the myopic understandings of gender – cis, trans, non-binary otherwise - that filter through fashion. In doing so, I have extended Ahmed's thinking to consider how social categories are spatialised, and what this demands of those who negotiate obstacles in the form of educational, corporeal, and intellectual labours in order to navigate and make room for oneself in contexts in which one is rendered

outof place by the gendered spatial order. Gender, sexuality and race, as well as geographical location, are heavily implicatedin determining the social legibility, acceptability and stigma applied to certain identities, bodies, styles and spaces. Although fashion is integral to expressions of diverse gender possibilities, at the level of fashion retail and mainstream cultural representation, participants reveal fashion's embrace of gender diversity as narrowlyoriented toward white, slim, non-disabled bodies with masculine-centred androgyny,a figuration that has become attached to non-binary-ness, and often designed and marketed as gender-neutral. This positioning of masculinity as neutral manifests longer and broader histories of naturalising and privileging masculinity. In other words, there is nothing neutral about how 'gender-neutral style' is predominantly currently configured.

Social perceptions and investments in which bodies masculinities and femininities 'belong' to, and illegibility in the form of not 'passing', and 'passing' as a cis and/or white, were shown as salient and raised questions around the supposed desirability of social legibility. Occupying a liminal position, under the guise of 'passing', can be necessary for survival and socio-spatial mobility, while demanding the emotional labour of managing an unease with one's gender being assumed incorrectly (Gill-Peterson 2019; Scheller 2018). Attending to differing experiences between cities and countries highlights plural imaginaries, expectations and experiences within and between geographical contexts. These plural geographies point to ways that trans people's experiences of recognition and conform are in process and relationally shaped by the prevailing contours of social recognition as ontologically situated within a specific context and location. In short, social norms concerning sexuality and sexgender are variously geographically situated. To be read socially as an 'unproblematic' man or woman in a way that result in one's gender being socially authenticated, requires embodying prevailing embodied (cisnormative) expectations (Butler 2004; 1999[1990]; Davis 2009). Yet for Avery, and other non-binary people, including Kay and Anuka, issues arise when one's gender embodiment, to borrow from Susan Stryker (2014:40), 'exceeds or eludes capture' within the prevailing sexgender apparatus.

Given the near ubiquity of gendering fashion garments, even those marked as 'gender-neutral', and the meanings that garments signify once adorned by particular

bodies, it is unsurprising that non-binary peoples are heavily impacted by the prevailing social designations ordering whom femininities and masculinities 'properly' belong to. For instance, social responses to the femininity expressed by Kay, Anuka and Avery differed according to their assumed birth-assigned sexgender, and the spaces that they inhabited. That is, the extent to which a person's body and/or femininity is considered disorderly and/or out of place can create a specific predicament for non-binary people, given their tenuous social legibility and the attending paucity of spaces that accommodated them, especially in contexts such as fashion retail.

Where does this binary confinement and spatial containment leave us? Although we are somewhat linguistically and epistemically bound by and to a normative masculine/feminine binary, the ontological possibilities for gender, femininities and masculinities are plural, not mutually exclusive, and do not belong to any body, regardless of how gender non-conformity has been and continues to be punished and policed. The multiplicity of gender is lived, restrained, and disciplined and negotiated by each of us, including non-binary people who are unlikely to socially register as non-binary in most circumstances, whether or not their gender expression challenges cis-heteronormative expectations. Muñoz's thinking on disidentifications is adept in its understanding that gendered spatial and social negotiations entail working with and against, and sometimes intersecting, systems of oppression in ways that may be more or less evident. In living their ordinary lives and variously expressing their gender through fashion and style, everyday non-binary people breathe life into, and make space for, myriad possibilities for non-binary that interweave within the rich tapestry that is gender.

6. MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME: NEGOTIATING IDENTITY AND DOMESTIC BELONGING

'Whose identity are we referring to when we talk of a place called home and the supports it may provide of stability, oneness and security?' asked feminist geographer Doreen Massey (1994; 167) in her influential essay collection *Space, Place, Gender.* In this book, and subsequently (2005), Massey developed geographical thinking on the co-production of space, place and gendered social relations across and between scales and regions. Through Massey's analyses, spaces emerge as always hybrid, provisional, in process and contested. While Massey's engagements with gendered social relations did not interrogate the man/woman binary, or consider trans people, her relational approach to spatial thinking has deep resonance when extended to considering ways that trans peoples' relationships with, and experiences of, home are gendered. In this chapter, I explore relationships between gender, home and belonging through the experiences of trans people with different genders and domestic arrangements. I seek to redress the relative paucity of research concerning trans peoples' domesticities, in contrast to the extensive research on home in feminist, queer and sexuality studies research on home. When responding to the research theme 'creating spaces of belonging' a number of participants discussed the value of domestic belongings, the co-production and contingencies of belonging, making home with cohabitants and the home's embeddedness in wider socio-spatial relations.

Home - as a typology of space - has been extensively researched from a number of disciplinary perspectives. In this chapter I have not had engaged as extensively with the breadth of research on home, as would have been feasible is this were a PhD with a single spatial focus on home. For example, research on material culture of home (Money 2007; Ariztia 2012; Lipman 2018) is an important area of study that I have not had the scope to engage with. In prioritising participants' lives, this chapter engages most closely with research from feminist, sexualities, queer and trans studies that, in their attention to gender and sexualities resonate most closely with this research. I am influenced by Sara Ahmed's recognition that 'it is easier to criticize home from the position of having a secure one' (Ahmed 1999: 335) and Iris Marion Young's stance that while recognising insightful analyses of feminist critics,

rather than rejecthome as a privileged and oppressive site, feminists must make a claim to at least four normative values of home, which should be minimally accessible to all (1997: 161). To recap from the discussion of Young (1997) in the literature review, alongside her universalist call, Young emphasises the significance of interconnections, identities and context specificities. These normative values are: 1) a place of *safety* where one can ‘retreat from the dangers and hassles of collective life’ (Young 1997: 161); 2) *individuation*, meaning the ‘extension of the person's body, the space that he or she’ takes up, and performs the basic activities of life (ibid. 162); 3) the *privacy* to enable a person to have ‘autonomy over admission to a space and its contents’ (ibid.); 4) *preservation*, the value of home as a ‘site on the construction and reconstruction of one’s self’ and centrality of ‘safeguarding the meaningful things in which one sees the stories of one's self embodied’ (Young 1997: 163-4). Rather than a nostalgic elsewhere, preservation entails future-facing forms of remembrance, which affirms the pain and joy that ‘brought us here’ (1997:154). Crucially, Young maintains the necessity to ‘criticize a global society that is unable or unwilling to extend those values to all’ (ibid.). I share Young’s commitment to these four normative values and in this chapter investigate their resonances with specificities of trans peoples’ lives that were highlighted by participants. For example, the specific importance of privacy in the lives of trans peoples, who in public must negotiate social inter-actions, public spaces, and whose family relations are predominantly constructed upon cis-hetero-patriarchal norms and expectations. Informed by participants’ domestic lives, I offer a trans feminist value of *ordinariness*, the capacity for a domestic belonging and relations in which one’s self is unremarkable and embraced. Ordinariness as a normative value is not analogous to sameness or social normality, it is context sensitive and does not preclude being loved and celebrated for our individual differences. We can experience ordinariness on our own terms, facilitated by bespoke household and community rules and codes, which suspend social norms that render trans peoples as extraordinary, as object of curiosity, as social sensational, as worthy of debate. The value of ordinariness connects with the ideal function of home for trans people as spaces of recuperation from cis-heteropatriarchal norms and is easily overlooked as where gendered social relations and expectations *within* and outside the home are taken for granted.

Researchers have also analysed relationships between sexuality, gender and domesticities, critiquing ideals, experiences, relationships and spaces through which

heteronormativity is commonly naturalised and disciplined within the family home, and considering the domestic lives of gay, lesbian, bisexual and queer people, who have tended to be cis (Jones 2016; Pilkey et al. 2015; Pilkey 2013; Gorman-Murray 2007[a]; 2008[a][b]; Ahmed 2006; Johnson and Valentine 1995; Scicluna 2015; Elwood 2000). Echoing wider absences within queer studies, feminism and sexualities studies, the domestic lives of trans people have received scant attention, with exceptions including Choi (2013), Doan (2010), Pfeffer and LaRossa (2010), Pfeffer (2012), Felsenthal (2009), Marshall (2017) and Andrucki and Kaplan (2018). Within this relatively small body of research various living situations negotiated by trans men and women have been analysed, yet there is an absence of engagement with non-binary people, which this chapter partially re-dresses. Topics examined include sexgender-policing inside and outside the home (Choi 2013; Marshall 2017), household labour division between cis women and trans men (Pfeffer 2012, Pfeffer and LaRossa 2010), living alone as a trans woman (Doan 2010) and trans man (Marshall 2017), shared housing among trans people (Felsenthal 2009) and home-making and queer temporalities materialised through objects in transmasculine homes in the US (Andrucki and Kaplan 2018). LGBTQ+ people, and particularly trans people, disproportionately experience homelessness and housing discrimination.[1] Although none of the participants in this research discussed experiencing homelessness, it is evident that safe and secure homes for trans people are often made inaccessible by dominance of cis-heteronormativity and prevalence of transphobia.

In this chapter I follow geographer Sarah Wight's (2015) weak theory approach to belonging as (in)forming 'practices of knowing, being and making sense of the world'(Wright 2014: 404). Indeed, participants' narratives strongly echo Wright's suggestion that belonging is co-constituted by a 'messy, complex, human and more-than-human assemblages of things, people, beings, processes and affects' (Wright 2014: 402). Wright's description of belonging as an ambiguous concept, practice, emotional attachment and texture of feeling with 'everyday resonance' (2015: 404)

[1] Surveys by Britain largest LGBTQ+ charity *Stonewall* and public opinion researchers *YouGov* with LGBTQ+ people in Britain show that 18 percent of LGBTQ+ people, and 25 percent of trans people experience homelessness during their lives. *In comparison, recent research by housing and homelessness charity Shelter suggests that one in 201 people were recorded as homeless in Britain inofficial data (Shelter 2018).* It is impossible to gather precise data due to the complexity of homelessness.

ismirrored in participants situating belonging in their home, which for many people ideally constitutes an emotional, social and material anchor to which everyday life is secured, albeit not without constraint or contention. Thus, belonging is epistemological and ontological, an emergent and 'more-than-human-geography' that tends to be closely associated with seeking and feeling a sense of security. Accordingly, there are strong correspondences between belonging, identity and home with the concept of ontological security, defined by sociologist Anthony Gidden's (Giddens 1984: 375; Saunders 1989; Johnson and Valentine 1995) as confidence 'that the natural and social worlds are as they appear to be, including the basic existential parameters of self and social identity'. That said, given the inextricable inter-locking of knowing and being when it comes to identity, which is particularly apparent in many trans peoples' experiences as well as cis-heteronormative sexgender-policing practices (Butler 2004), I contend that onto-epistemological security is a more apt term. This chapter develops this research through close readings of participant's narratives that consider ways in which, through periods of continuity and flux, belonging, home and identity are always co-constituted in relation to people, places, processes and things, and across multiple scales.

This chapter is structured according to domestic arrangements. The first section considers Chryssy's experiences renting and house-sharing in London. It explores the disciplinary operations of the socio-material fabric in suburban and inner London, the value of creating and sustaining domestic belongings that enable self-exploration and expression, through practices like 'house rules', and the compromises demanded by living under the conditions of neoliberal contemporary London. As part of this discussion, I briefly highlight parallels with online and offline LGBTQ+ spaces where house rules foster belonging and feeling at home. Next, I consider the domesticities of Alix and Orion, both of whom lived with partners as they began transitioning, but whose lives and relationships have taken different paths, and tell contrasting stories of domestic belonging, and its absence. Alix's contribution orbits around her relationship with her wife, highlighting the value of the domestic belonging they produce and protect together in their home, which has enabled her to become more herself, and escape the weight of gendered expectations that she feels elsewhere and previously in her life. In contrast, Orion traces how renegotiating his gender and sexuality connects with a shift in his domestic, romantic and family

life, resulting in the temporary suspension of having a home, finding belonging in a friend's domestic life, and later adapting to living alone. The final section considers how Kay and Carrie have negotiated co-habiting with their families as an adult living with siblings and parents, and a parent living with children and a partner respectively. This demonstrates the necessity of considering shared homes as containing specific spatial designations and temporal dynamics, as well as inter-personal relations, which have enabling and disabling implications for trans people who are not able to express their gender at all times and spaces in their home. In Kay's narrative, online queer counterpublics that are accessed in their bedroom, are shown to be key sites of belonging. Collectively, identity, belonging and home emerge as indelibly, yet complexly, entwined and in process. Herein, home operates variously as a site, a feeling, an attachment and an ideal, which is imbued with contradictory meanings and contingent experiences of belonging that are sensitive to public/private dynamics and geographically and historically embedded social, material, cultural, economic and political conditions.

FINDING A HOME TO FLOURISH IN

This section centres on Chryssy's narratives about belonging and home, which enhance the very limited literature on trans-affirming domesticities within shared housing, with notable exceptions being Kim Felsenthal's (2009) research on Transy House and Max Andrucki and Dana Kaplan's (2018) research on transmasculine home-making. Through my engagement with Chryssy's experiences and narrative, Imake an original contribution to research by analysing resonances between Chryssy's domestic practices, such as particular house rules, and the profound entanglement of her experiences of home within shifting personal, social, economic,material, architectural, technological, migratory and urban dynamics. Herein, the personal value of living in London, is considered in balance with the compromises and precarity imposed by decades of neoliberal urban governance. Linked to these multi-local, trans-national, trans-continental migrations, how Chryssy has negotiatedher sexgender across her lifetime neither follows a normative, linear narrative of transition, nor a facile transition/de-transition/retransition trajectory. To contextualisethe quotation below, a key reason for moving to and from the UK is that Chryssy worked asan English teacher in countries including the United Arab Emirates and Libya where she was unable to fully explore and embody her trans-femininity and queerness:

> When I came back to the UK in 2002 one of my main aims was to work out what to do about my sex/gendered self. After looking around available accommodation I realised quickly that accepting spaces were at a premium. So I decided that the only thing I could do was to rent a flat and get people to live with me. Then the rules were my rules, and the rules were simple – unquestioned acceptance of people's sexgender self-understanding and self-expression, within boundaries of mutual respect and paying the bills.
>
> There were relatively minor difficulties - finding the 'right' people and the neighbours realising they had a queer colony on their doorsteps. But I had a genuine sense of security and community in the home. I had had enough money at the time to fund the start-up of the flat, and the time to choose a suitable flat. And given the privilege that accorded us, a number of people 'found themselves' in the environment we created there. It was the place in which I flourished as a trans person (for the second time in my life) and it really was a privilege to have such a safe space in which to nurture myself and develop my life.
>
> And we had landlords who didn't interfere, and who didn't seem likely to ask us to leave. We didn't have the security of a permanent tenancy but it felt like we could be there for as long as we wanted. It was the mid-, shading into the late-noughties and London feels now like a very different place…

Before moving to Battersea, south-west London in 2004 (Image 6.1) Chryssy moved to London's suburbs, intending to 'work out what to do about [her] sex/gendered self'. Architecturally, the design of her flats made Chryssy feel over-looked, heightening the surveillant potential for sexgender-policing. For example, the front door opened onto an area shared by five flats, which compounded anxieties about leaving the house. Socially, the neighbourhood was 'a settled environment, people live there for a long time' and were familiar with one another. As a newcomer and a visibly sexgender non-conforming person, Chryssy felt conspicuous, self-conscious, and panoptically surveyed around her neighbourhood. This was amplified by heavy, often slow-moving traffic that heightened the potential for harassment. Vulnerability to public harassment is a major and well-founded concern among trans people, especially people who socially register as gender non-conforming (Bachmann and Gooch 2017; Whittle et al. 2007; Marshall 2017; Alabanza 2017). These factors coalesced to produce an environment that felt unsafe, vulnerable and not conducive to the identity work she intended to engage in. Indeed, as Hil Malatino's (2020)

thinking on Trans Care reminds us, gender is work; gender is a laborious process, and ‘we labo[u]r under conditions we don’t choose’, in which gendered selfhood and recognition is sustained by a ‘web of forces that we don’t control’ (2020: 39). Thus, the agency that we exert in determining our lives and selfhood, are always part of far broader assemblages into which, to borrow Malatino’s words, ‘our flesh – and its possibilities – are grafted’ (2020: 42). Exerting the agency she possessed within the ‘web of forces’ that conditioned her life and labour at the time, Chryssy sought the relative anonymity offered by living in inner London. The flat and funeral parlour below were owned by the Co-op, who Chryssy describes as the best landpeople she’s ever had. So long as she paid the rent on time, the Co-op did not visit or contact her unless something needed fixing. The flat’s location was chosen intentionally. The front door was not shared and opened on to a street where people – largely unfamiliar with one another – moved through, rather than dwelled in. Being on a corner and above a shop also limited interactions with neighbours, and the ebb and flow of people and traffic felt less surveillant than the suburbs. The neighbourhood felt ‘nice and anonymous’ Chryssy says, which afforded her the degree of privacy and anonymity that met her needs at the time.

Image 6.1 Cryssy’s caption: Flat South West London 2004 – 2007; right: maisonette East London 2017 – present.

The geographer Andrew Gorman-Murray (2012) has analysed practices of ‘domestic publicity’ by gay men in Australia, which involved disclosing their sexuality to

neighbours with the intention of creating affirmative socio-spatial relations. For Chryssy and her house mates, they did not explicitly disclose their queerness to neighbours, there were initial issues with harassment from certain neighbours who were disgruntled about what Chryssy described as the 'queer colony on their doorstep', knowledge of which was ascertained by interpreting the visible queerness and transness embodied by Chryssy and her flat-mates. As Carrie, another participant, highlights at the end of this chapter, experiences of and concern about potential abuse from neighbours are common among people who are visible or known to be queer and/or trans (Marshall 2017; Choi 2013). This speaks to hierarchies of acceptable sexual and sexgendered difference within social attitudes, of good gays and bad queers and visibly trans people as sexual and gendered citizens and extends existing research on geographies of sexual citizenship (Richardson 2000; 2004; Bell 2000; Oswin 2008).

Chryssy's current home, a flat in a housing estate in Canning Town, East London (Image 6.1) resembles the socio-material circumstances of the suburban living she moved away from earlier in her transition between 2002 and 2004. When entering and exiting her home she is overlooked by fellow residents and there is a shared security gate to access her maisonette. Neighbours routinely greet each other, with 'Hello, how are you doing?' And after she'd been there a while, 'how are you finding it?' But, at this point in her life shared residential spaces, neighbourly familiarity and community interactions feel less threatening. There is a resonance here with Alix – explored in below – concerning her initial disquiet living in rural Essex and correspondingly yearning for London's anonymity, and her eventual ease living in the same place.

In Chryssy's contribution, domestic geographies emerge as processual, changeable, and always textured by temporal, spatial, material, social and spatial fabric of one's home and neighbourhood, as well as an evolving relationship to personal identity and publicness. This disrupts the normative arithmetic that geographically-based community and neighbourly familiarity equal an unequivocally positive social force. Important here is how the uneven disciplinary affects and effects of urban and architectural design upon the mundane social relations and public lives of people who embody difference and vulnerability. For Chryssy, the impact of these

disciplinary forces crescendo at particular moments, rather than operate at a constant level. The importance of attending to the meaningfulness and value of the ordinary in the everyday lives of people who are often denied ordinariness, and figure as spectacular and sensational vis-à-vis the cis-heteronormativity that saturates public life, is supported in research by Andrucki and Kaplan (2018) on transmasculine homemaking.

In 2004, finding a queer and trans affirming home was a priority for Chryssy. Having saved the rental start-up cost, Chryssy bought herself the time and agency to find the right people. Accordingly, the flat became a space of safety and belonging, where a number of people 'found themselves' and Chryssy 'flourish[ed] as a trans person' for the second time in her life. Actualising this domestic vision proved challenging. 'Trans people we're just not out that much in the world' she says, noting that many considered meeting publicly as a group, to foster social and support networks, to be 'too dangerous'. That said, more circumscribed meetings and communication have long existed in London, including the Way Out Club, a 'transgender night club' established in 1993 that centres on trans women and cross-dressers (Way Out 2020). Also the trans-masculine support group FTM London, which began in 1997, meets at the Gay's the Word bookshop, and the *TV/TS London Newsletter*, that operated during the 1990s, circulated advice and listed trans' friendly venues (TV/TS 1995). These intra-community social infrastructures were not housing-oriented, though they likely did informally facilitate some peoples' housing needs. There was a letting agency called Outlet, Chryssy says, which was financially 'out of [her] reach', and 'really for rich gay bankers', whose attitudes were not necessarily trans affirming and would likely conflict with her queer politics. In this way, plurality within LGBTQ+ communities, from identities and values, to politics and economic inequalities, among other vectors of difference, emerges as relevant domestically, as well as across the wider public-private spatial continuum. Chryssy encountered specific barriers making a home for herself in a cis-heteronormative social world and cisnormative gay networks, that were particular to her social position as a queer, trans person. A position that demanded additional layers of resources – time, labour and finance – in seeking domestic belonging in shared housing. That said, the limits and operations of social infrastructures have shifted over time, including those oriented around shared housing, and are increasingly

mediated through online platforms, such as the 'Homes for Queers London and surrounding' Facebook group (2020).

House rules

House rules featured in Chryssy and Alix's narratives as a means of protecting and sustaining their domestic belonging. In our interview, Avery also spoke of house rules implemented by them and their partner; with the exceptionof the letting agents who misgender them, but whose access they cannot control, anyone who carelessly or intentionally misgenders Avery in their home is not invited back. For Chryssy, 'unquestioned acceptance of people's sexgender self- understanding and self-expression, within boundaries of mutual respect and paying the bills' were foundational to creating conditions in which she and a number of housemates flourished in their queer and trans identities. Alix describes home as 'theone place where the rules are our own'. To be invited to her home, which few peopleare, she does not have to know you well, but she does 'have to be superbly comfortable with you [and] … comfortable that you will be comfortable with [her]'.
Chryssy and Alix's narratives show the importance of feeling ownership and processing control, which can be leveraged as a means of protecting the value of home, including safety, privacy, individuation and preservation. Ownership, as I use it here, is not proprietorship but rather refers to processing the agency to determine entry and exit, and terms of conduct within a home. A person can 'own a room', without being the proprietor. Thus, ownership in this sense, is contingent, sometimes unstable and always shaped by one's legal position as an occupant, and related access to capital, with rents serving – to varied degrees – to limit agency over the implementation of house rules. Nonetheless, house rules that foster and sustain domestic socialities that affirm the transness and queerness of residents emerge from Chryssy, Avery and Alix's contribution as vital practices through which they have forged and sustained domestic belonging.

Academic literature on home by feminist, queer and trans scholars has extensively dismantled notions of distinct and bounded public/private spaces (Duncan 1996; Fincher 2004; Doan 2010). I read house rules as boundary-making practices, enacted as a means of managing the porosity of public/private. That is, where the valued privacy of home and where trans and queer affirming rules of engagement

can structure social interactions and foster recuperation from the cis-heteronormativity that saturates social integrations in public and can burst the bubble of trans and queer affirming domesticities. For instance, via telephone conversations, postal deliveries and doorstep conversation, a gaze through windows, and invited and uninvited visitors. While acknowledging the value of privacy, it is vital to recognise the porosity of public/private socio-material boundaries, and the socio-economic conditions that contour them.

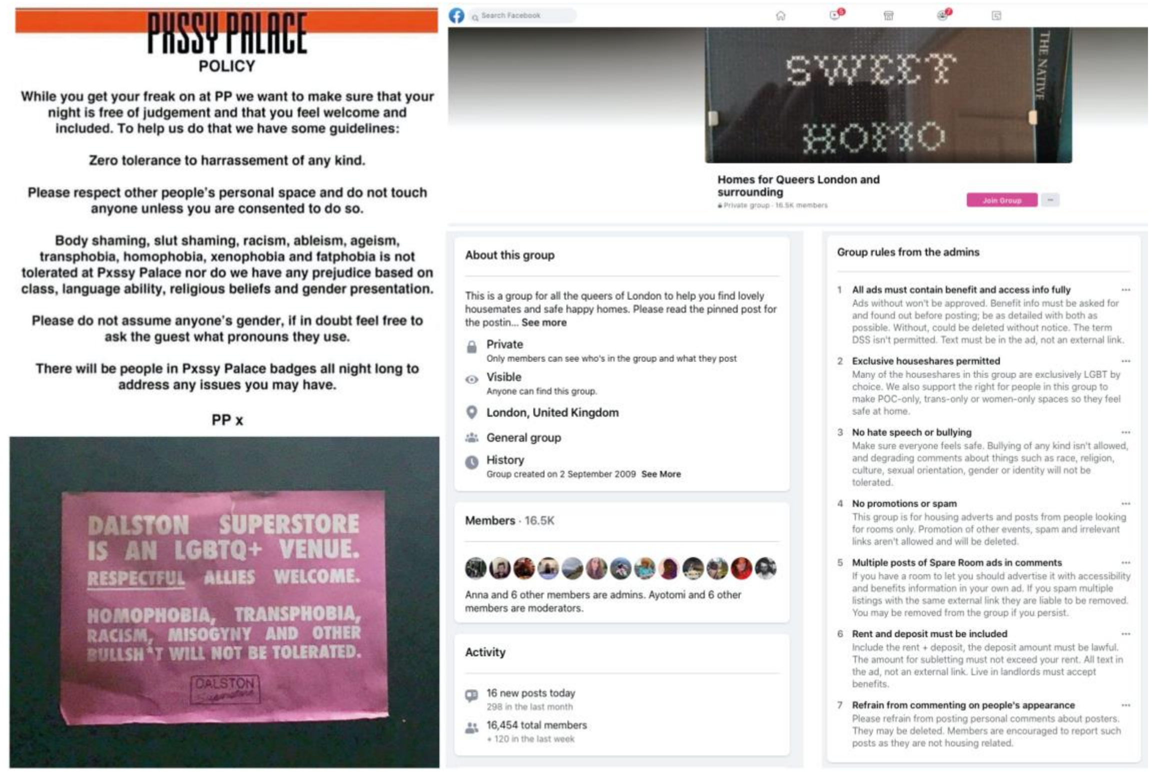


Figure 6.1 Collated screenshots of 'house rules' in LGBTQ+ online and in-person spaces

These domestic boundary-making practices via ‘house rules’ highlight parallels between with LGBTQ+ spaces online and offline, which are considered a home and spaces of belonging for many LGBTQ+ people, including Ryan and Morgan in this research project (Bryant 2015; Campkin and Marshall 2016; 2017). Morgan, for example, describes Sparkle weekend in Manchester, as a ‘homecoming’, echoing homecoming narratives within queer migration literature, albeit ephemerally (Image 6.5). Concerning ‘house rules’, the ‘Homes for Queers London and surrounding’ Facebook group is moderated according to anti-oppressive rules, for example, banning ‘degrading comments about things such as race, religion, culture, sexual orientation,gender or identity’. Defined house rules are common in LGBTQ+ spaces in London, as shown in Figure 6.1 the bar and club Dalston Superstore, and

clubnight oriented around queer, trans and intersex people of colour, Pxssy Palace. Across these spaces where queer and trans people feel and find home, house rules are variously implemented with the *intention* of producing a space in which the dehumanising gendered, sexual and racial prejudices that circulate in and affectively charge public life can be suspended and resisted. There are, then clear parallels with the homeplaces that hooks (1990) wrote of as a safe and affirming space produced by Black women, whose resistance to white supremacy partially took the form of sustaining homes that fostered healing, and the care and dignity denied in public life.

In Battersea, house rules contributed to Chryssy and her housemates' co-production of, what Kim Felsenthal borrowing from Arjun Apprendurai (1995) has coined as a 'transcape'

> trans-dominated space where trans culture and identity is played out safely and freely without fear of transphobic violence. The transcape is a trans-specific landscape that users appropriate and control, where they are empowered to make their own trans-normative rules for behaviours and gender expression. Additionally, occupants have opportunities to manipulate the physical environment to exhibit and fortify their trans identities. A transcape that successfully builds and synthesises the socio-spatial environments to strengthen and protect trans identity can then become a site of resistance, which challenges the gender norms and values of mainstream society (Felsenthal 2009: 258).

Adjoining 'trans' and 'scape' here, Felsenthal denotes the entwined and immersive social, material, sensory and spatial qualities of the domesticities produced within trans-dominant homes. While transcape as an epistemic frame is productive, careful attention must be paid to the ways in which transcapes are situated within a given context. Felsenthal's thinking is informed by research with residents of 'Transy House', in Brooklyn, which operated between1995 and 2008, and was founded and sustained by two trans women, Rusty Mae Moore, who owned the house, and her partner Chelsea Goodwin. Transy House was inspired by STAR House, a short-lived home in a mob-owned East Village apartment that was created by Street Transvestites Action Revolutionaries (STAR) Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson

as a refuge for trans youth who were otherwise homeless or unsafely housed during the 1970s (Stryker 2008: 86). Embedded within New York's black and Latino 'house' culture and queer kindship formations, house mothers Johnson and Rivera would 'hustle' to pay rent, while the children 'found' food (ibid.). As Stryker (ibid.) notes, STAR House operated only for a couple of years, but has inspired projects in other cities (Parsons 2020; Outside Project 2020). Indeed, Transy House is one such legacy, providing mutual support, respite and recuperation for trans and gender non-conforming people who were unable to access housing and homeless shelters (Figure 6.2; NYCLGBT Historic Sites Project 2017; Felsenthal 2009; France 2017). Legacies of the solidarity, support and queer kinships that shaped STAR and manifested in STAR House, are channelled through Transy House, where Sylvia Rivera resided for a time. Rivera is affectionately referred to as 'Queer Mother' by residents and she is memorialised through the displays of newspaper clippings and photos (Felsenthal 2009).

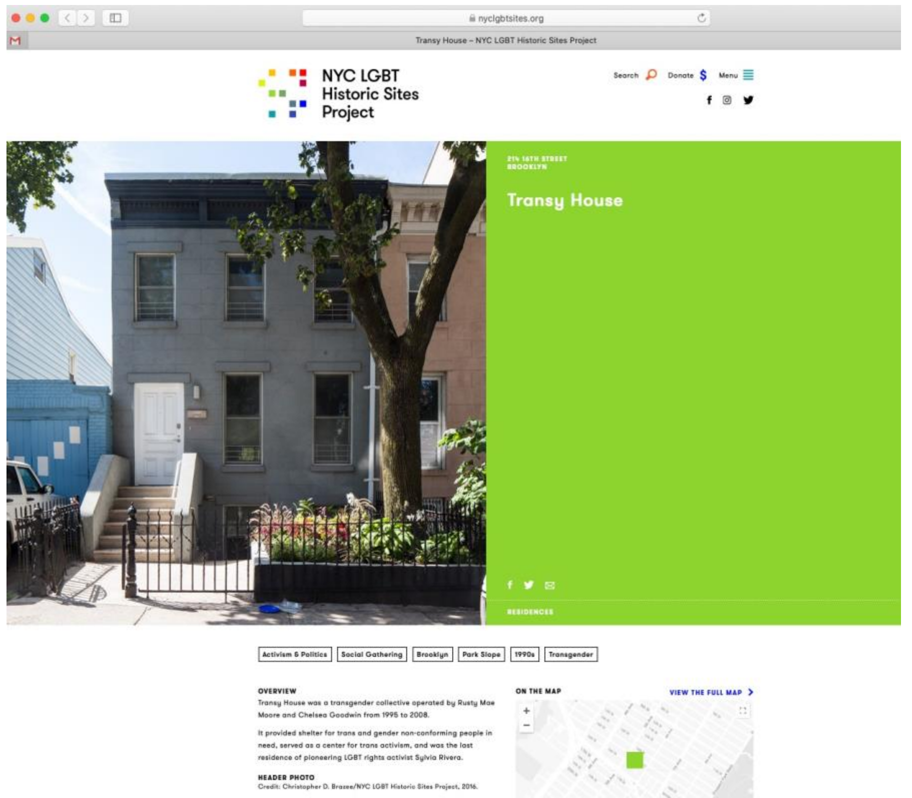


Figure 6.2 Screenshot from the 'Transy House' page on the NYC Historic Sites Project website

Speaking with Felsenthal (2009:256-7), Moore commented, '[i]t's such a unique thing to have a trans person own a house. No one can discriminate against us, nobody

can throw us out'. This security endowed by ownership emerges as particularly significant in light of a 2007 UK-based survey by Press for Change, which indicated that 1 in 4 trans people, compared to 1 in 2 of the general population, rent private housing, which is characterised by poorer quality and upkeep, and with less security of tenure (Whittle et al. 2007). Furthermore, a survey by Stonewall and YouGov suggests 1 in 4 trans people were discriminated against when looking for a home to rent or buy (Bachmann and Gooch 2018). Though these data offers overarching patterns that usefully signal the impact transphobia and cis-heteronormativity have upon the housing security of trans people, who are not equipped to engaging with particularities and complexities integral to these experiences and circumstances. For Moore, property ownership was key to the security of their tenure, and sustaining the transcape they created, which therefore depended financially upon the two women's respective jobs. That said, proprietorship is not entirely secure, for instance, an inability to fulfil mortgage and bill payments due to employment discrimination, which is not uncommon, would compromise housing security (Crosslands 2018). For Chryssy, the transcape she created in Battersea depended upon each housemate's contribution to rent and bills, and this came to an end in 2007 due to the landlord's decision to sell.

The price of precarity

Forced to leave the Battersea flat in 2007 when Co-op sold its housing stock, taking advantage of ballooning property prices in London before the 2008 economic crisis, Chryssy decided to work overseas again. She returned to London in 2010, to 'a very changed situation'. Chryssy connects her quality of life, employment and housing possibilities available to her with the sustained cis- heteronormativity and the intensifying dominance of neoliberalism socially, economically and politically in Britain, including urban governance. In these hostile conditions, having a liveable life as a trans women, including the capacity to have a home and feel a domestic belonging has come at the expense of precarity. Since the1980s in the UK and US, neoliberalism has been increasingly pursued and enforced in multitudinous forms and across manifold scales, from individual behaviour to international financial institutions (Stiglitz 2001; Chang 2002). In London, consequences of neoliberal governance saturate the form and function of the urban landscape, including chronic homelessness, rising rents and the growing

unaffordability of home ownership, decreased council housing, intensifying and spreading gentrification, or state *and* private-led regenerations projects and the attending involuntary displacement of established communities against their will (Glass 1964; Watt and Minton 2016; Edwards 2016). While similar patterns concerning the growing unaffordability of housing ownership and rent are evident across the UK, and especially in cities, it is particularly intense in London (Guibourg and Calver 2018). As Chryssy identifies, London's housing crisis is widely considered to be grounded in what Beswick et al. (2016: 321) describe as a 'neo-liberal urban project to recommodify and financialise housing and land in a global city'.

> I was going into full time education and needed to find cheap accommodation. While abroad I had come across an article about guardianships – living cheaply in non-traditional or condemned properties - I moved into a condemned property on a North London estate. We lasted four months in that flat. Then seven in the next one. Then three and a half years in the following one. And I'm still doing it.
>
> The accommodation is substandard – poorly heated, badly decorated, sometimes no real cooking equipment and certainly no white goods. There is no security – it's a permanent 28 days' notice scheme.
>
> So my experience in this respect exemplifies how queer time – in this case my need to keep shifting employment in order to manage my sexgender issues thus denying me a traditional settled career - and neoliberal privatisation of public housing stock and deregulation of tenants' rights, have left me firmly in a queer place. These circumstances have combined to ensure that my experience of living safely and openly as a trans person, even in London, is heavily impacted by the various precarities that also impact many other poorer, variously marginalised and simply younger communities heavily. My transfemininity and queerness, while in some senses far more liveable than they were in the late 1970s, are liveable only at a price – the price of precarity. I have been creating spaces of belonging now for over fifteen years. But they have become more difficult to source and thereafter to sustain.

Chryssy is certainty not alone in being disadvantaged by neoliberal governance, yet her existence and identity as a trans person in a cis-heteronormative and transphobic society are inseparable here. As The Care Collective – a London-based group of academics concerned with multiple crises of care – convincingly show in

The Care Manifesto, 'neoliberalism is uncaring by design' (Chatzidakis et al. 2020: 10). The 'ideal' neoliberal subject, the unit upon which the ideologic is built, is the white, (cis)male-coded, rational, asset maximising, self-sufficient, self-interested 'homo economicus' (ibid.). The 'banality of carelessness' (Chatzidakis et al. 2020: 6), that circulates through the operations of neoliberalism, sustains the supremacy of economic value and 'homo economicus' above all other forms of (social, cultural, heritage) value and identity. Consequently, LGBTQ+ people's access to and capacity to create and experience belonging in homes, as well as community-oriented and commercial spaces, has been depleted in London (Campkin and Marshall 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019). London has cascaded into a housing crisis over the last decades, and the detrimental impact of neoliberal urban governance is evident across people and communities who are, in Chryssy's words 'variously marginalised' by the dominant social order due to gender, sexuality, race, class, faith and disability, amongst other issues and vectors of difference. This is evidenced in urban research on the racialised operation and impacts of regeneration and gentrification imaginaries, practice and processes (see also Lees 2016; Rhodes and Brown 2018; Campkin 2013[a][b]; Butler 2003; Watt and Minton 2016). Thus, although London's social landscape is preferable to many trans people, the price can be living in barely affordable, often substandard housing, with little control over length of tenure.

Chryssy connects her transfemininity and queerness with her unstable employment and career prospects, and attendant housing circumstances at different moments, from living abroad as an English teacher, to the Battersea flat, and becoming a property guardian. The latter, providing more affordable accommodation than private renting during her post-graduate studies, contributed toward Chryssy's capacity to re-orient her employment towards LGBTQ+ communities and organisations. She now works in a LGBTQ+ charity and continues to live as a property guardian due to the high living cost in London. Correspondingly, Chryssy locates herself, and the way that her sexgender has contoured her life, as exemplifying queer time. That is, her life has unfolded in ways that are asynchronous with the chrononormative temporalities that constitute a 'proper' cis-heteronormative life (Dinshaw et al. 2007; Freeman 2010; Halberstam 2005). Indeed, it is not uncommon for trans peoples' lives, including domesticities, to be shape by queer time (Andrucki and Kaplan

2018). As a teacher of English abroad, the possibility and actuality of transphobic discrimination has denied her the potential of a sustained career and demanded changes of location and profession. Her life neither conforms to cisnormative expectations of continuity of one's sexgender from birth-assignation until death, nor can it be characterised by transnormative notions of a single, seamless and linear path of social and medical transition.

As Chryssy illuminates, negotiating her sexgender and her career have been interconnected. Finding employment and working in environments free from transphobia and cisnormativity in its abundant forms can prove challenging. In a 2018 study by UK-based Crossland Employment Solicitors 1 in 3 employers reported being 'less likely' to hire a transgender person (Crossland 2020). Results varied across sectors, with 47 percent of retail, 45 percent of IT, 34 percent of manufacturing businesses reported being unlikely to employ a trans person. In the Stonewall 'Trans Report', 12 percent of trans respondents reported being physically attacked by colleagues or customers in the previous year, and half of trans and non-binary respondents stated having hidden or disguised that they are LGBTQ+ at work due to fear of discrimination (Bachmann and Gooch 2018: 11). These findings chime with UK Government Equalities Offices *National LGBT Survey* (2018: 21), and research by trans studies scholars in Britain, whose findings show repercussions of employment discrimination upon wellbeing and housing security (Monro 2003: 344, 444; Whittle et al. 2007: 37). Underpinning Crossland's (2018) statistics are inaccurate assumptions that an employer would know a person to be trans at interview, and the rationale behind respondents' answers is not explicitly stated, leaving causation open to interpretation. Given the politics of fear imposed upon trans people, as analysed throughout this thesis, I understand Crossland's findings to reflect generalised transphobia within British society, and a perpetuation of longer histories containing stigmatised gender and sexual non-normativity away from public view. These disparities are echoed in sociologist Sally Hines' (2010) findings that trans peoples' experiences and expectations of transphobia and acceptance of gender diversity differ across employment sectors. In my research, similar calculations to those discussed by Hines (2010) are evident, with moments of professional change proving instrumental in facilitating transitions at work in some sectors. Alix moved company within the tech sector, to work at the London office of a

large corporation, which she knew to be supportive of trans staff. Josi, having worked as an officer and detective for the Metropolitan Police for decades, waited until she became an internal trainer before transitioning at work. She thus shielded herself from potential transphobia in public, with supportive colleagues affirming her and the institutional structure offering accountability should transphobia arise. Collectively these studies and participants' experiences signal how workplaces, employment sectors and finding jobs, demand that trans people tactically negotiate transphobic discrimination, in ways that include calculated considerations regarding the public and private aspects of job roles. This is pertinent since, as Chryssy articulates, one's capacity to access housing, and create homes in which belonging is possible, are commonly inseparable from personal financial and employment circumstances, and wider political economic governance that socio-materially condition the urban fabric.

CO-HABITING COUPLEDOM AND FINDING HOME

The family home is an intimate geography in which cis-heteronormativity is most often naturalised and enforced, and it is widely acknowledged that lesbian, gay, bi and queer adults have re-invented affirming alternatives that variously re-imagine and queer domestic kinships and living configurations (Pilkey 2013; Pilkey et al. 2015; Gorman-Murray 2007; Ahmed 2006). In this section, I consider domestic geographies of gender and sexuality from the perspective of trans adults who live, or have lived, with a partner. In doing so, I consider ways in which gender and sexuality can co-constitute challenges to, and conditions for, feeling belonged at home.

Image 6.2 Alix's Image and captions

> [Home] is where I am loved by my chosen family … We built a life together … Two women living in the countryside with cat(s), growing vegetables, tending a garden and one of us making jam, candles and other crafts. It sounds to some like a bucolic idyll, to me to sound like home. A small intimate space where we can be just us.
>
> I can be anyone I want to be. But all I want to be is me … Acceptance Is the wrong word. Here my identity, myself is embraced with love.
>
> Home is a place I can bring happiness to someone else just by being happy…

On the run

In the quotation above, Alix locates home as her wife Anne and the domestic space they have created together, which she describes as 'real and current and vital'. Engagingwith previous ways that Alix has negotiated identity and domesticity offers a fuller picture of her present relationship to home, as a lesbian, trans woman living with herwife in rural Essex. Speaking about this Alix reflects that 'to be melodramatic about itI was running from myself, which makes for a very exhausting life'.

Alix felt 'super uncomfortable' being 'physically present as a child and young adult in Dublin, within a Catholic family and social world. During childhood, she prayed daily to 'wake up in the morning and be a girl' and rejected sports, which required being in her body, and seen as a boy. She made a decision that, 'if this was the shape I was going to occupy in life, I wanted to be the best geek I could be'. Following an academic path became a coping mechanism, an attempted Cartesian separation, intended to carve a place in which she was defined primarily by her mind, rather than her body. As our phenomenological experiences of being a human in the worlds teach us, mind and body are intimately entangled (Ahmed 2006; Salamon 2010). Although this tactic alleviated the dissonances Alix felt at the time, it felt neither sustainable nor desirable in the longer term. Transitioning was not a definite aspiration at the time, she says but 'it did it occur to [her] that it might happen'.

In her early 20s, Alix was living an 'ideal life that [she] didn't want' and felt suffocated by the cis-heteronormative relationship, family and social expectations surrounding

her in Dublin. Following an instinct to 'run', she migrated to upstate New York with nothing but her wallet and a bag, to pursue a PhD in Physics. To be in a new place where nobody knew 'felt like an exhalation'. 'I had absolutely no concept of how to be me, so I just started doing stuff'. She bought a snowboard and made a circle of female friends, through which she became an honorary member of a sorority which, although she did not speak about her gender, felt like a 'massive hug'. 'I don't think they would have understood' she says, it was 1990s America and 'not all [universities] are like Berkeley', she says, invoking a university that is invested with imaginaries of socially liberal and radical possibilities for sexual and gender non-confirming people and communities (Weston 1995; Stryker 2008). Thus, Alix highlighted the differently situated social parameters of acceptable and knowable sexuality and gender across contexts and scales.

The lack of 'home-making' items that migrated with her, indicates her intention to start afresh. To get to know and reinvent herself having interrupted her trajectory along a cis-heteronormative life course, lessened the weighty social expectations from friends, family and acquaintances. There is resonance here with my work in Marshall (2017) and in Felsenthal (2009) in which an absence of homemaking was shown to be bound to discomfort, with a reluctance and difficulty in anchoring oneself domestically during struggles with emotional and mental health, and periods of onto-epistemological insecurity and flux. This offers an alternative vantage to Young's (1997) thinking on home as a socio-material anchor for identity, by extending this across sites, scales and social positions, to highlighting that homemaking may not be preferable where identity is complicated and belonging in one's social world feels uncertain. In contrast to Dublin, Alix describes her life in New York state in more embodied terms; from physically snowboarding, to feeling emotionally 'hugged' by female friendships, the metaphorical exhalation of a fresh start and exhaustion of running from herself. Thus, the Cartesian dividing line that she had previously tried to walk, appears to blur beneath her feet as she comes better to know and be herself, albeit without disclosing or expressing her transness. Nonetheless, this period of time can be understood as consisting of a longer quest for identity and belonging.

Alix's migration from Dublin, to New York state, and then to London, and Essex, complicates dominant accounts and assumptions concerning queer, gay and lesbian

and trans migration within academic scholarship and popular imaginaries. Queer, gay and lesbian migratory trajectories have often been conceived as homecomings, with a point of origin located as a place where feeling at home is foreclosed by the heteronormativity that structures social and familial relations. Research across Social Science and Humanities disciplines have recognised migratory trends from rural towns to cosmopolitan cities with established LGBTQ+ communities. In doing so, scholars have complicated the ideas about singular migratory trajectories, reductive ideals about coming out and finding community, and the positioning of queer, gay and lesbian people as urban subjects (Fortier 2001; Gorman-Murray 2007; Weston 1995; Wimark 2019; Binnie 2004). This work has focused solely on the sexuality of cisgender lesbians, gays and queers, a tendency which prevails across queer studies. While some trans migratory narratives echo the 'queer pilgrimage to the city' (Crawford 2008: 127), another dominant trajectory and imaginary of trans migration has orientated around trans women's journey abroad for surgery 'to become a woman' before returning home 'complete' (Aizura 2012). Such narratives are typified by Jan Morris' *Conundrum* and Christine Jorgensen's *A personal Autobiography* (1967), which influence enduring ideals on transition as something that happens away from public view (Aizura 2012; Prosser 1999; Crawford 2008). There are key resonances and dissonances with Alix's experiences of migration and these dominant narratives of LGBTQ+ migration, with her life course better accounted for by approaches that allow for flexibility and progression.

Theorising the geographies of queer quests for identity, Larry Knopp (2004: 129) argues that since '[q]ueers are actively engaged in processes of personal reinvention that intrinsically entail examinations of ourselves and our surroundings', we are acutely attuned to contingencies between identity and places and the potential for emotional and ontological security found through movement, as well as being spatially embedded. Indeed, in her analysis of home in queer migration narratives, sociologist Anne-Marie Fortier (2001) highlights the necessity to attend to multiple movements, locale and site of attachments in which identities have been embedded through material, ontological – and I would add epistemological – processes. Engaging with Knopp (2004) and Fortier (2001), geographer Andrew Gorman-Murray (2007) persuasively advocated a rethinking of queer migration through the body to elicit 'the diverse, multi-directional and highly individualistic movements which

appear to often underpin personal quests for queer identity' (2007: 114). Indeed, movement and embeddedness are a formative aspect of Alix's quest for identity, which has progressed in ways that were formative without always involving 'coming out' and transition, and involved moves between villages, towns, cities and countries. Herein, attending to how Alix has made sense of, practiced, suppressed and explored her embodied self, and related to other people across contexts, illuminates nuances in how relationships between home and belonging are in process, contingent and often, but not always, entwined. To feel at home somewhere is to belong, yet one can have a home and feel that belonging there is partial, elusive and unattainable.

At present, Alix's home is oriented around her wife and their house, garden and cat(s) in a way that, akin to my own relationship to home and domestic belonging, resonates strongly with Iris Marion Young's (1997) contention that the normative values of home should not be obscured through a narrow focus upon the oppressive potential and realities of domestic relations and circumstance. Alix and her wife Anne's relationship is situated at the heart of her sense of home, the 'bucolic idyll' that they have co-constructed and actively sustained together as their relationship has evolved. In this way, Alix's narratives resonate with Young's contention that homes provide 'material anchor for a sense of agency and a shifting and fluid identity' (1997: 159). Yet, anchoring herself in this has not been without a struggle and has demanded the capacity and flexibility for change. Alix says that when they got together, she essentially made Anne an 'emotional offer based on thestandard male-female thing' before taking that and throwing 'everything up on the air'. Before getting married in 2006 Alix told Anne about her gender:

> [T]his thing was in my head … and most days it would come up screaming at me …I didn't know where I was going, I had strong suspicions and I think Anne had strong suspicions too, but they were unarticulated.

She's 'delighted' that their relationship has endured what Alix describes as her having put their relationship 'through the wringer' due to her transition. 'Anne has stood behind me, and at times she has pushed me forward', although never 'too hard'. 'We can pick this up and move it somewhere else' Alix tells me, 'but at this

moment in time [their home] is the physical representation of our relationship together'. It is apparent in Alix's narrative that her sense of belonging, and home is a socio-material anchor is co-constructed and carefully negotiated through intimate communications and home-making practices that enable their relationship to evolve with Alix's identity and how she lives her gender. For Alix, her most significant emotional investment is in their relationship, which is spatialised to create their domestic home, and possible to re-locate.

At the time of our interview, Alix and Anne commute from their home in a rural Essex village to work in London. They moved into their current house in 2010, while Alix was nascently exploring her gender, which combined with domestically anchoring herself to an area where her transness would be especially conspicuous, she felt particularly daunted. She initially hated living there and felt tempted to 'run away' and hide in London but she 'didn't want to do that'. This was a moment of reckoning with herself that she had hitherto outpaced and wished to confront. Her pull towards London resonates with imaginaries of LGBTQ+ individuals as 'properly' urban subjects, due to the anonymity, diverse demographic populations and proximity of LGBTQ+ communities afforded by cosmopolitan cities (Weston 1995; Fortier 2001). Following her narratives, I understand anchoring herself in rural Essex with Anne, while spending much of her time in London, as a balance that afforded Alix the emotional and ontological strength to traverse uncharted gendered territory, as a trans women who lives and belongs as both a rural and urban subject.

Overtime, Alix and Anne have re-oriented their relationship around being two women who have co-created an affirming home. Describing the home they built together she highlights crafts, gardening and cooking, which might be considered typical home-making practices. Yet, practices of care and intimacy, of being fully oneself and embracing each other's identities with love, and bringing each other joy, are situated as practices through which their home is made and felt. This chimes with Young's (1997) thinking on individuation as a key value of home. That is, the value of having a home in which one's identity can be materially anchored through home-making practices and that operates as an extension of a person's body, in which they 'perform the activities of life, with basic routine and security' (1997: 162). For Alix, the making of home as a shared and intimate endeavour, with her capacity to be

herself and be fully embraced as herself form the foundations of her sense of belonging and onto-epistemological security. Accordingly, Alix reveals the emotional, affective, embodied and relational threads that interweave to form the fabric of domestic belonging, from which her gender and sexuality cannot be disentangled. There is also a sense of co-production and progression, and thus an interdependency in their everyday practices of making and sustaining a home in which Alix and Anne belong together, which has required their relationship to evolve with Alix's transition. This highlights ways in which belonging, home and identity, while sometimes experienced as secure, stable and unchanging, are always in process and under construction, as Sarah Wright (2014) and Doreen Massey (1994; 2005) have argued.

Writing on interconnections between oneself, the body, home, domesticity and belonging, Orna Blumen, Tovi Fenster and Chen Misgav (2013: 7) propose that 'the body is where one's sense of self dwells, develops and is negotiated; it is the prime site where the meaning of "feeling at home" is sensed and comprehended'. Despite framing their article around 'gendered diversity', there is a marked and peculiar absence of engagement with trans people, identities and scholarship. Nonetheless, this argument echoes trans scholars such as Jay Prosser who have theorised trans persons' bodies as home, with transition positioned accordingly as a homecoming (Prosser 1998). Among trans people the domestic home has commonly served as a space in which access to privacy means that gender could be explored and expressed more freely than feels possible in public. As Petra L. Doan (2010) shows domestic geographies of gender expression may entail progression within a home. For her, expressing and exploring her femininity and womanhood through clothes and makeup began as occasional instances, and in her bedroom with closed curtains, but evolved to become a quotidian feature of her domestic life that included open curtains and answering doors. These kind of dynamics were highlighted by Alix, as well as Chryssy, Morgan and Carrie, as discussed later. For Alix, home was the space where she was able to express her femininity privately, but in Anne's company, as a way of building confidence, developing her sense of style, and feeling more at home in her embodied self. For Alix now, who has a stronger sense of who she is as a person and in her social world, home is where, she says, 'all sorts of identity and who I am and stuff go away'. That is, social expectations and anxieties

concerning her gender and how she is perceived can be left at the front door, with her home offering a space of recuperation that is unencumbered by feelings of being judged according to cis-heteronormative standards that do not accommodate her. That is not to say, of course, that Alix's identity ceases to be present, but that she is able to be herself and feel seen and loved in her fullness, without her identity being something that she is consciously thinking of or vigilant about.

Accordingly, I suggest that Alix's narratives about her home confer a strong sense of ontological security in a way that complicates and highlights the cis-heteronormative assumption of Anthony Gidden's definition. Alix's displays a confidence that – in Gidden's words - 'the natural and social world are as they appear to be' (1984: 375), and she navigates her life through a world that is dominated by cis-heteronormative sexgender expectations and understands the contingencies of her acceptance within these parameters across differing contexts. I would contest the natural *and* social binary separations here, given the blurry boundaries and of co-constitution of associated sex/gender, nature/culture, mind/body, male/female dualisms that gender studies, feminism, queer thinking and phenomenology, and indeed geographers have insightfully problematised (Ahmed 2006; Butler 1993; Fausto Sterling 2019; Lorimer 2005). Regarding Gidden's definition (1985: 375) that confidence extends to 'the basic existential parameters of self and social identity', Alix demonstrates the necessity of allowing for degrees of differentiation between domestic and wider-social worlds, without demarking a solid or impermeable boundary. Her feeling of ontological security at home is constituted by being seen and loved for who she is in the fullness of her existence, which enables the relaxing of parameters that structure the social identity, to which she is bound, and that supports her sense of self while carrying the vulnerabilities involved in being a trans women in public. Thus, I contend that ontological security at home can exist within a more complex nexus concerning personal and social identity, the natural and social, that may be immediately visible to those whose social identity and selfhood align with onto-epistemologies (in)forming the dominant social and natural order of things.

Boundary making

The need for nuance concerning ontological security in the home is further demonstrated by Alix's discussion of the importance of privacy and boundary making practices that protect her domestic belonging:

> We all, like Eleanor Rigby keep the face we present to the world in a jar by the door. We put on our face to face the world but at home all the social expectations fade away. It is the one place where we can be ourselves.
>
> Home is always the one place where the rules are our own.
>
> I am writing this from the waiting room of the Gender Identity Clinic. In this place of emotional discomfort my thoughts turn to home to find peace.

Rooted in the moral geographies of Victorian 'separate spheres' ideologies, distinctions between the men's productive labour and domination of public life and the private, domestic realm of women's reproductive labour, have been subjected to much critique (Bondi and Rose 2003; Driver, 1988; Mackenzie, 1988; Valverde, 1991; Walkowitz, 1992; Wolch & DeVerteuil, 2001; Malone, 2002; Bondi & Domosh, 1998). Yet, there are productive resonances within strands of feminist thinking on gender and home and trans peoples' domestic experiences. Iris Marion Young (1997) suggests that some feminists have questioned the value of privacy, due to associations with the de-politicised private sphere of women's historic and ongoing oppression and exclusion from public life (Young 1997: 162). Yet, privacy refers to the 'autonomy and control a person has to allow or not allow access to her person, information about her, and the things that are meaningfully associated with her person' (ibid.). Thus, there is a necessity to recognise the value of privacy in fostering domestic belonging and affirmation. This has been starkly evidenced regarding people for whom home provides a space of respite from and resistance to social oppression and marginalisation (hooks 1990). As Alix exemplifies, the home can similarly constitute a space of recuperation from and strength in the face of prejudiced social relations and expectations within public life, that are infused cis-heteronormativity and the uncertain possibility of transphobia.

As personal, familial and social shifts emerge with particular intensity during transition, questions and anxieties commonly arise for trans people around what

these changes mean for their current and future romantic and sexual relationships (Diamond 2011; Malatino 2020: 49). For trans people who are in co-habiting relationships, this can affect a person's capacity to feel belonging at home, and within a relationship. Because Alix and Anne's relationship has evolved with transition, she is able to invest it with a sense of belonging and home. Another participant called Kai, a white, trans man, similarly identified his relationship with his husband as being where he feels most belonging. Yet, this is not always possible or desirable, as Carrie and Orion's experiences attest. I shall consider Carrie's contribution later in this chapter, and in the following text consider the insight offered by Orion's contribution concerning the important recognition to his ability to feel belonging in his domestic life.

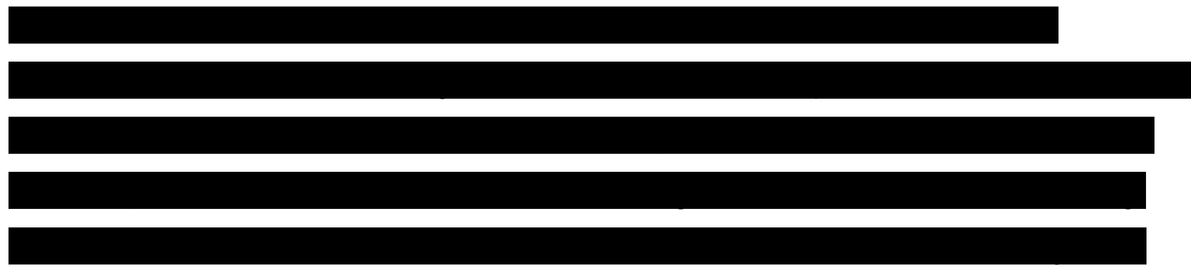
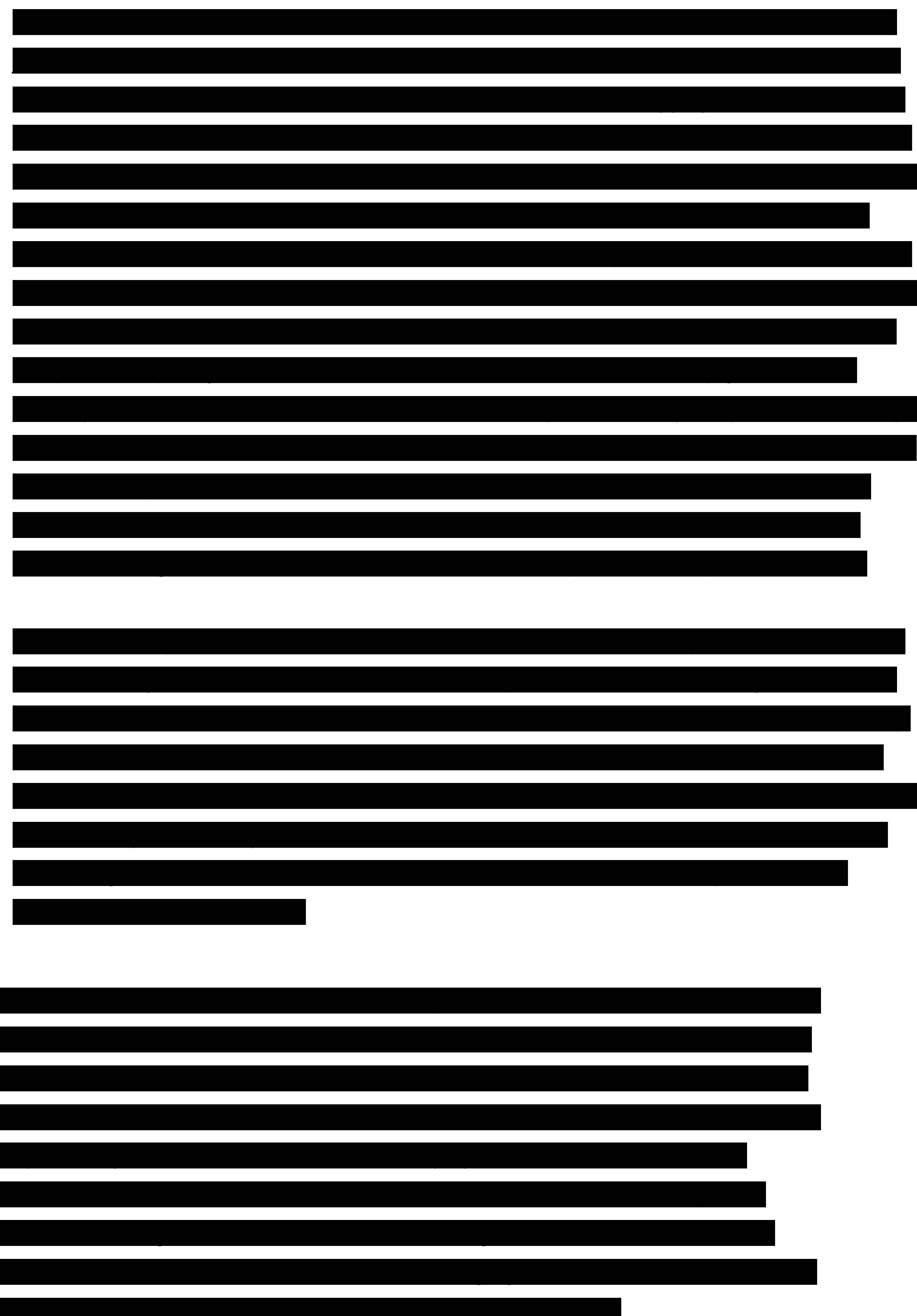


Image 6.3 Orion's image, no caption



Integral to this, were home-making practices such as cooking and eating, as well as intimate conversations and bodily interactions, all of which were enacted in conditions of domestic privacy and offered a space of recuperation from shame, anxiety, judgement and dysphoria. In this way, Orion's narrative supports with bell hook's (1990) thinking on homeplace, and the value of privacy identified by Iris Marion Young (1997), which Alix demonstrated, to hold significance for trans people for whom domestic privacy enables distance and healing from the cis-heteronormativity that structures much of public and familial life.

Echoing Alix who describes the importance of feeling herself being embraced by her partner and in their home, rather than just acceptance, Orion explained a need to be actively wanted as himself, rather than his partner be 'okay' or 'unbothered' by his transition:

> 'I renegotiated who I was and she wouldn't let me change… she was very adamant that she was okay with my transition… it wasn't that I needed it not to bother her; I needed her to actively want me as my new self – and I never felt that she did. We hated the world together and I stopped hating it when I came out and she didn't … while I wanted to kind of go off and be in it, she found that very problematic and very difficult and became quite controlling … I think she was scared at the rate at which I was changing … and felt like that was leaving her behind.

In Orion's words I am reminded of Young's framing of home as an anchor for identity, an anchor that can ideally support a sense of agency and allow for change (1997: 159). As he came to know himself as a man, Orion felt decreasingly able to anchor himself in a space and marriage that had been his home, and where he had come to feel misaligned as his ex-partner's lesbian identity remained unchanged. Categories of sexual orientation do not always align neatly with gender – as is the case for Alix and Anne – nor do sexualities and sexual embodiment carry stable or undisputed meanings (Pfeffer 2008; 2012; Schilt and Elroi 2014; Chester et al. 2017; Bettcher 2014; Edelman and Zimmerman 2014; Joslin-Roher and Wheeler 2009; Brown 2009). Yet, for Orion this precipitated an unease and feeling of unrecognition that he was unable to resolve. He describes his home with his former wife as a kind

of fortress that they had constructed to protect them from a world that they had hated together. Yet, as Orion increasingly found a happier and more fitting place for himself in the world beyond their home, cracks emerged in the foundations of their relationship and home.

Instituting change

A further circumstance shaping Orion's life during this period is his parent break-up, with his mother leaving his father to be in a relationship with a woman. Orion describes what his mother's decision to break heteronormative values, asmanifest in the institution of marriage, meant to him.

> [My mum's] expectations held me captive before … [she] came out and that kind of gave me the thumbs up …our whole life had just been the image of perfection … you know middle-class house, middle-class family, two cars, two kids, looked perfectly functional; so she smashed the mirror and I just like took a piss on it.

Orion describes his family as having reflected a - tacitly white - Western, middle class, nuclear family formation, an 'ideal' that he semi-jovially portrays his mother as breaking and desecrating. The narrative of sacrilege jovially refers to the morality invested in producing and maintaining cis-heteronormative familial institutions, such as marriage. The family has, and to a lesser extent continues to be, a primary site of cis-heteronormativity discipline, which as Orion signals, can extend into adulthood, through continued family relationships and expectations. Having pursued a relationship and marriage – embarked upon between two people who understood themselves as women at the time – Orion had departed from heteronormativity with his parents' support, which perhaps reflects growing social acceptance of gay, lesbian and bisexual people and relationships (Kelley 2019). Yet, coming to know and be himself as a trans man appears to be beyond the parameter of understanding and full acceptance for his family at the time of our interview. That is, having a family member who is lesbian, bisexual, gay, queer and/or in a relationship with someone of the same sexgender, does not necessarily translate in to accepting trans people within that family unit. These divergences are evident at differing scales within the wider LGBTQ+ communities, and as analysed elsewhere in this thesis, have played out in the Trans Debate. Orion's words speak of normative ideals that equate

successful marriages with permanence and overcoming 'problems' that might serve to lead to a break-up. Thus, for Orion's mother to come out and leave her 'failed' marriage, enabled Orion to feel able to follow a similar path, with gender and sexuality constituting a breaking point in each case respectively. This starkly illuminates the disciplinary force of marriage as a socio-legal institution in re-producing and sustaining a social order, which same-sex marriages do not negate.

Orion's queer onion

For Orion, it is evident that his capacity to forge belonging, and feel at home at multiple scales are contingent upon the presence of recognition and space for his gender – from himself, as well family and friends, lovers and partners. This became acutely apparent during our interview when he explains the epistemologies through which Orion understood his gender,:

> [I]t's about the idea of a core self… [S]ociology and all that kind of stuff… it's all post-modern, like post-structuralist, like everything's nothing….they enabled me to run away from myself I think… I was depressed… depression and post-structuralism fit very nicely together.
>
> It's like an onion where you keep peeling it and eventually you peel the layers off and there is no onion anymore; you don't get to the middle of the onion, you just have no onion and lots of shit everywhere and you're crying … I would have absolutely argued that gender is a construction – absolutely, it's all bullshit, la-la-la-la-la – and yet here I am desperately wanting to be one and not the other.
>
> I think my transition has enabled me to really become myself … [the world is] as much my home as it is anybody who makes me feel like it's not … that truth is like powerful and empowering to me.

I interpret Orion as describing living tensions between queer thinking and trans scholars, and activists that are highlighted in the literature review of this thesis. While the post-structuralist epistemologies underpinning queer thinking that he encountered studying sociology at university resonated with him intellectually, they simultaneously exacerbated his sense of ontological homelessness in the world. Having deconstructed his identity and the social world around him, Orion felt unable

to put himself back together and dismiss feelings about being a man, which amplified his depression. There are resonances here with legal scholar and trans equality campaigner Stephen Whittle's contentions that '[i]t is all very well having no theoretical place within the current gendered world, but that is not the daily lived experience' (2006:xii). Orion's onion analogy also chimes with Eve Kosofsky Sedgewick's thinking in *Touching Feeling,* in which she is concerned with what knowledge *does*, including the effect and affect of what she called 'paranoid' thinking, that she connects within deconstructive analyses that unpick oppressive power structures, but lead to a dead-end (Browne and Browne 2011). Or what Orion describes as having peeled away the layer of an onion until there is 'no onion and lots of shit everywhere and you're crying'. Sedgewick (2003) advocates a 'reparative' mode of 'weak' thinking with an openness to the promise of alternative and hopeful possibilities and alleviating social problems (Browne and Browne 2011: 123). For Orion, the promise of a secure sense of self as a man, made possible through his transness, has offered an alternative reparative mode, without dismissing the constructed-ness of gender. Transition has enabled him to make the word his home, to understand the constructed-ness of gender, whilst feeling anchored to a 'core self' – his words – that is reflected in his lived reality as a man who is trans. Through this shift, Orion has moved from feeling ontologically homeless, to claiming and experiencing feeling ontologically at home in the social world and in himself. This speaks to the importance of recognition to Orion, from his family, friends, lovers and partners, which as discussed, is vital for his ability to feeling belonging.

New house

At the time of our interview, Orion had recently moved into his own home and was living alone for the first time, which he describes as a 'massive change':

> I was lying in bed … feeling sad and alone, and I was just like 'I want to go home', and then I was like 'I don't know where home is' … So I got myself one.
>
> [Living alone is] good in a way … I've got my drawing stuff around and I've got my maps and my incense and my crystals and all my other weird shit that my wife definitely wouldn't have let me have. And I'm like 'you're living the dream boyo – look at this'.

Although Orion had temporary access to his Dad's and Michelle's homes during this period of flux, and he felt belonging with Michelle's family, Orion felt he arrived at a place of longing for his own home in which to settle and anchor himself. He describes multi-sensory home-making practices such as decorating walls, lighting incense sticks, arranging objects, all of which embed his identity and produced a sense of domestic belonging that was partially about claiming space for himself, in a way that was not previously possible. Here Orion echoes the production of affirming trans domesticities home-making through affectively charged objects, as described in Andrucki and Kaplan's (2018) research. Yet, Orion's ongoing struggles with depression have moved with him and are exacerbated by solo living, which is partially due to the absence of affirmation of his identity and existence. Consequently, his home can feel 'hollow', he says, as if he does not exist. '[T]hat's the work I need to do' he reflects, 'reminding myself that I exist regardless of whether anyone sees me or not – or how they see me'.

The close relationship between home, belonging, and identity is a common thread that weaves through Orion's narratives and manifests differently across social, spatial and temporal contexts and between scales. In his new domestic scenario of solo living, and with a strong sense of his identity as a man, home emerges as site of tension in which conflicting emotions of emptiness and fulfilment co-exist. This echoes my previous research with trans men, in which one participant's home was described as feeling like a protective 'castle' in which he felt affirmed, and a 'cell' in which he felt trapped and isolated (Marshall 2017). The experiences of these men highlight the necessity that home is not only acknowledged as a site of complex and conflicting emotions, but that these emotional geographies are conditioned by cis-heteronormativity that circulates without respect across public/private boundaries. Accordingly, belonging and home emerge as valuable and contingent, in ways that are imbricated with processes and personal experiences of knowing and being oneself that cannot be insulated from social norms, relations and institutions that structure these popular imaginaries of home and family .

A ROOM ON ONE'S OWN

Virginia Woolf famously argued for the value of a room of one's own, if a woman is to write. In his research with gay men and lesbians living with partners, Andrew Gorman Murray (2006:161) highlighted the practice and value of having '"room of one's own" provided the conditions for sustaining a sense of self within the relationship'. In this final section, the value of a room of one's own within the context of family living, is expressed and exemplified by Carrie and Kay, who highlighted the significance of temporal and spatial dynamics in how they have negotiated identity and belonging within their family homes. The salient domestic dynamics *within* homes are similarly evident in shared housing contexts, where demarcations between personal and communal spaces manifest through home-making practices that enable residents to anchor belonging and identities through colour and décor, scents, lighting and meaningful objects and images (Felthensal 2009; Andrucki and Kaplan 2018). Queer and trans kinship relations undoubtably operate and order shared homes, a well-known example being the 'houses' in Black and Latinx Ballroom communities (Arnold and Bailey 2009). Beyond co-habiting couples, in which one member is trans (Choi 2013; Pfeffer 2008; 2010; Andrucki and Kaplan 2018), I have encountered little research on how transness is negotiated in the domesticities of co-habiting families with children. Notable exceptions include (Hines 2006; Pfeffer 2012; Whitley 2013), initiatives like Trans Pregnancy (2020), and films such as *A Deal with The Universe* (Barker 2018) and *Seahorse* (Finlay 2019*),* which offer rich accounts and analyses of trans men and non-binary peoples' experiences of conception, pregnancy and nascent parenthood and interactions with the reproductive healthcare services. However, specificities concerning how belonging and trans identity are negotiated within the domestic family home have not been the focus of these projects and research. In the following I address this lacuna through the contributions of Kay, who lives with their parents and two siblings, with the grandparents next door, and Carrie, who before her marriage ended, lived with her wife and two children.

Coded homemaking and counterpublics

Kay, who is in their twenties, identified their bedroom in their family home, in a Yorkshire city where they lived while attending university close by, as a space of

belonging. They have spoken with their sister about being asexual and panromantic but had not disclosed their gender to any family members, due to an aversion to being questioned, and concerns that transness and non-binary-ness is beyond the scope of their Chinese families' understanding, in which '[culturally] you're one thing or another'. Kay submitted the narrative below, with an image of their bed, showing a laptop decorated with stickers depicting illustrated characters, and stuffed animals in grey, pinks and blues and whites. The wall is a dusky, light blue, and the bed clothes are white, grey and pink, patterned with butterflies and flowers. This image was accompanied by the caption 'My bed/bedroom as being a place to access the virtual online space'. To protect their anonymity Kay has asked that I do not show this image.

> As a person who has questioned their gender and fully identified as non-binary for five years, I am still closeted as a non-binary person to family. I often create my own spaces where I can feel I belong as a non-binary person. One of the main spaces I have created a sense of belonging is in my bedroom. Though I am not out to my family, my bedroom is the space where the pressures of gender are absent and it is a space for myself. It is also the place where I am able to connect to the virtual online space. My only connection to an LGBTQ+ and a trans community is through online interactions and engagements. I am able to state my preferred pronouns and I have control and selection of how my gender can be presented. It is also a removal of having my physical body as always have to fit into a gender I was assigned at birth. Being able to access the online space is one of my comforts and space of belonging because of the ease and control I have with engaging with LGBTQ+ communities. I have made online friends too which has helped a lot in gaining a space of belonging and being able to comfortable in sharing life stories.

In our interview, Kay describes common codes amongst their family, such as bedroom doors being generally left ajar, with a closed door signalling a request for undisturbed privacy. Other objects and representations are knowingly invested in divergent meanings. Specifically, images and objects depicting characters from 'geek culture' are – or Kay interprets as – trans but their family perceives as 'just some characters on the walls'. Similarly, I read the feminine-coded décor as

extending a feminine aspect of their gender expression as a non-binary person within their space. Yet, viewed through Kay's family's cis-heteronormative lens, these decorative choices likely reflect an assumed cis-womanhood. Thus, responding to their domestic circumstances Kay uses the same aesthetics to signal different personal and social meanings. This tactical move enables their access to privacy, individualisation, preservation and safety (Young 1997) since while their bedroom is in the view of their family, their gender remains beyond their cis-heteronormative gaze. In their research with trans-masculine people on their object-based homemaking, Andricki and Kaplan (2018) highlighted instances in which the gendered meaning of decorative objects assumed by visitors as different from those invested in it by the owner, who put it on domestic display as a practice of preservation, to borrow from Young (1997).

Describing family relationships and domestic belonging, Kay says; 'I'm relaxed in one way, like it's my home', they say, but 'there's also that I'm not telling them something, so that's not a relaxed feeling'. Although Kay does feel at home and, up to a point, comfortable within their family, feeling unable to fully be, and be known as themselves produces an affective and emotional tension. An onto-epistemological disjuncture with a resulting sense of unease. Consequently, the importance of accessing privacy in their bedroom is amplified, as this becomes a material space that facilities participation and belonging in online trans and LGBTQ+ communities.

Echoing Iris Marion Young (1997), Kay speaks of the value of privacy, and extends this to show the fine-gained spatial operation of privacy *within* the home. Privacy in Kay's bedroom enables a circumvention of the cis-heteronormativity that operates within their family home, by accessing trans and LGBTQ+ counter-publics –to re-orient Michael Warner's queer thinking (2002) and the feminist analyses of Nancy Fraser (1992) and Rita Felski (1989). According to Michael Warner, counterpublics are (2002: 86-7):

> structured by different dispositions or protocols… making different assumptions about what can be said or what goes without saying … Within a gay or queer counterpublic … the presumptive heterosexuality that constitutes the closet for individuals in ordinary speech is suspended. But this circulatory space, freed from heteronormative speech protocols, is itself marked by that

very suspension.

Like Felski (1989) and Fraser (1992), Warner (2002) does not explicitly include trans people who participate in gay and queer counterpublics. His framing remains salient concerning wider LGBTQ+ communities. For trans people especially, trans counterpublics have become, what Andre Cavalcante describes as, 'architectures of organized care and concern, that facilitate transgender identity work and everyday survival' (2016:109). Indeed, these infrastructures of care that operate through platforms such as Tumblr, have been life-affirming and life-saving for trans people due to the global reach of intra-community information sharing, advice and emotional support (Jenzen 2017; Dame 2016; Cavalcante 2016; Shapiro 2004; Cannon et al. 2017). Responding to the cis-heteronormative dominance of mainstream online publics, trans counterpublics have assembled though platforms such as Tumblr, Facebook, You Tube and Twitter (Jenzen 2017; Lucero 2017; Jackson et al. 2018). Intra-community relations are not necessarily harmonious within counterpublics, nor are experiences always entirely positive or untouched by prejudice (Cavelcante 2019; 2016). Twitter might be understood as hosting counterpublics with leaky boundaries and varied temporalities, that operate via retweets, comments, likes, and hashtags such as #BlackTwitter, #TransTwitter and #GirlsLikeUs (Jackson et al. 2018; Graham and Smith 2016). Within this evolving constellation, some counterpublics have specifically intersectional orientations, such as #NonBinaryIsntWhite, which Kay participated in during its peak in July 2018. Jenzen (2017) describes Tumblr, a microblogging and social networking platform, as a salient example of a counterpublic that trans youth have expressed strong preferences for due to its visual orientation and users' capacity to connect with trans communities and make friends. Features that Kay described as important Belonging in online trans and LGBTQ+ counterpublics should be understood as existing in relation to, rather than as distinct from, complex assemblages of things, people, spaces, infrastructures, knowledge and affects that condition access. Combined with privacy in their domestic home, control is an integral ingredient of Kay's capacity to feel comfort and belonging within LGBTQ+ and trans online counterpublics. Exercising control here depended upon the suspension of the cis-heteronormative that operates beyond the privacy afforded by their bedroom door. In everyday and family interactions and relations, Kay manages the social aspect of

their identity by exercising control of selective disclosure, and most frequently non-disclosure. Contrastingly, the social suspension of cis-heteronormativity, and alternative etiquette structures trans and increasingly LGBTQ+ counterpublics, afford participants with a sense and expectation of control, safety and respect. Integral to this is an ethos of care and consent concerning names, pronouns and identity, that confer control to participants over how they identify themselves, and emotional security that their identities and expression will not be challenged, excessively questioned or assumed. Kay's relief at the 'removal of having [their] physical body as always having to fit into a gender I was assigned at birth' and associated 'pressures of gender' also connects with control and consent. The phenomenological experience of participation in online counterpublics is not disembodied – their corporeality is integral to sitting or lying on their bed, and using their computer, locating themself in bedroom, with a closed door to provide domestic privacy. Yet, online platforms offer the capacity for self-representation and social interaction in which the embodiment is divested of social meaning. That is, gendered recognition is mediated by upon willingly disclosed information that does not depend upon corporeality.

Hil Malatino's (2020) theorizing of trans care assemblages offer insights into the generosity imbued in *care*ful social recognition. For those who 'lack the privilege of having an uncomplicated "I"… Recognition comes to us in the form of a gift'. Thus, recognition that accords with a person's identity emerges as an act of care. As Malatino (2020) contends, gender is a 'labo[u]rious process' that we *all* engage in 'under conditions that we didn't choose, conditions that many of us want to destroy' and are largely interdependent upon a constellation of forces beyond our control. Structured by expectations of recognition and exchange that prioritize consent, self-determination and control, trans counterpublics encompass the condition for belonging and recuperation from the labourious, carelessness – sometimes unknowingly – imposed through cis-hetero-normativity. As Chatzidakis et al. (2020) contend in their *Care Manifesto*, alternative forms of caring kinship that extend beyond and circumvent the nuclear family, have been, and continue to be vital, within communities of people who have been historically marginalized, disadvantaged and oppressed by the capitalist, cis-hetero-patriarchal, racist and

ablest norms that structure mainstream Western societies.

As evidenced by Kay's contribution, the socio-material and spatial domestic conditions that shape participation in virtual counterpublics, while oft overlooked, are salient when seeking to understand the role of care, consent and control in fostering experiences of belonging. People who rely upon public libraries for internet access, and/or with limited data allowances on mobile devices, and/or have tenuous access to domestic privacy, for example, do not share Kay's ability to close a bedroom door and spend a sustained amount of uninterrupted time online. Thus, LGBTQ+ counterpublics emerge as valuable sites of belonging and care, that are widely but not equally accessible. Since the geographies of internet-based LBGTQ+ and trans counterpublics extend beyond online spaces there is a necessity to analyse ontologically situated inter-relations between virtual and material space. In other words, belonging to online trans and LGBTQ+ counterpublics can be understood as existing in relation to, rather than as distinct from complex assemblages of things, people, spaces, etiquettes, technologies, infrastructures, knowledges, emotions and affects that condition access to them.

Foreclosing and realising trans possibilities

Writing from a parental perspective, Carrie discusses relationships between identity, belonging and domesticity across different contexts, the family home she grew up in, her home with her wife and children, the flat where she currently lives alone, and sometimes with her children and – depicted below – her brother's home, where she briefly housesat. In what might register as an unremarkable mobile phone snapshot, Carrie is capturing a moment that she describes as a 'big deal', which is evident in Image 6.4, and the extracts from her interview and written narrative:

> My marriage was over but I didn't find somewhere to stay until July 2017 so when my brother needed a house-sitter for a week in June I jumped at it. The weather was good and I spent most of the time presenting female, without worrying about being seen by anybody: I didn't know anyone locally so I didn't care what they thought. That was quite refreshing.

I would go out … and buy skirts and things in shops where nobody knew me. There is no danger of bumping into a school-run mum or one of my pub friends or any of that … And you cannot give a shit if you answer the door to the postman and you're wearing a skirt and not jeans because you wouldn't see that person again.

Image 6.4 Carrie's caption: I was house-sitting for my brother in June as my marriage collapsed and realised I didn't care if the neighbours saw me in a skirt.

Social and geographical distance in the Glasgow district where her wife and children lived, alleviated Carrie's concerns about safety and judgement and enabled her to present female (her words) within the entirety of her brother's home, the garden in the potential view of neighbours, and around the local areas.

Correspondingly, Image 6.4 draws the viewer's gaze to feminine-code aspects of her embodiment; her pink, blue and white patterned skirt, hairless legs, and bare feet, with pink flip-flops bathed in sunlight. Together with her seated position, with legs rested upon a table, the image strongly articulates corporeal belonging and contentment. The ordinariness of this image itself suggesting paradoxically that this is an extraordinary moment; why else is it worthy of capture and contemplation in this project. Indeed, it is precisely the value of everyday self-expression that Carrie's experiences of home highlights. A fuller picture emerged during our interview, as Carrie described containing her trans-femininity to her home, and social, spatial and temporal compartmentalising her gender-expression within it, in an effort to uphold the cis-heteronormativity domesticity of family life. Tracing how Carrie's geographies of belonging intersect with identity and domesticity tells a story of movement and process; migrating from her hometown to Glasgow, moving between districts, her evolving sense of self, the careful maintenance of continuities and adaptations to change that have been explored and instated across a continuum of public-private spaces.

Carrie expressed her femininity in privacy and secrecy since she was young and living with her parents and brother in a small steelwork town in Ayrshire, Scotland. Echoing many LGBTQ+ people, the dominance of cis-heteronormativity within family, social and cultural life meant that she lacked 'awesome trans people with mad skills… like Juno Dawson and Ayla Holden' to look to as role models, who mighthave enabled her to feel possible. 'I had Les Dawson in his grandmother's dress' shesays, signalling the capacity for characters like Dawson's 'Ada' all too easily consolidating transphobic tropes by comedically trading on being a 'man in a dress' –hairy arms and legs, a 5'oclock shadow and deep voice – that intentionally or not, have fuelled the ridicule and stigmatising of trans women. The spectre and potentially violent repercussions of being seen as 'a builder in a dress' has stuck withCarrie she told me, which she considers partially as her own internalised transphobia. She needed

to see people for whom transfemininity was more than an on-stage persona and incongruous butt of the joke. Encountering Eddie Izzard enabled her to feel, ‘maybe there's room for someone like me’; an air of possibility that had been suffocated by bullying during her teens and 20s ‘for being a freak’ she says. Age 13, Carrie was discovered at a friend’s house trying on a skirt in the familybathroom, a decade of harassment ensued, via phoning her home, verbal street harassment and trying to run her over in cars. Recently, two of these men were corresponding on Facebook, writing that they were going to find her home and ‘beat the shit out of [her] in front of my wife’. Thus, her home and the family it houses became implicated in threats to punish Carrie’s otherness. Unsurprisingly, since visibility has, in her experience, translated into vulnerability and violence, targeted transphobic harassment long impeded Carrie’s capacity to be herself more publicly.

Carrie moved to Glasgow, following a common pattern of LGBTQ+ migration, as discussed previously. In Glasgow, she continued to domestically contain her transfemininity. Through her 20s Carrie stopped dating due to worries that, in her words, ‘clearly they're going to find out I'm trans and they're going to discover I'm a monster’. At 29 Carrie met the woman who would become her wife, she told her that she cross-dressed on their second date, thinking that ‘if this was the iceberg that was going to sink us then we may as well hit it now’. In this analogy, her public life as a ‘cis man’ constitutes this visible tip of the iceberg, with her domestic life as someone who finds joy, wellbeing and feels herself wearing ‘women’s’ clothing being situated as existing beneath the surface, with the potential to destabilise anything that collides with it. The disciplinary effects of living in a cis-heteronormative society with targeted transphobic harassment, and historic figuration and abjection of trans women and crossdressers as ‘freaks, ‘monsters, ‘men in dresses’ are profoundly evident. Carries life course, language and decision use domestic privacy as a shield (Stryker 1994; Weaver 2013; Gressgård 2010; Bettcher 2017). Carrie and her then wife had fun with her crossdressing at home, but this changed as she came to know herself as a trans women. That was quite a fundamental difference, Carrie says, ‘it wasn't women's clothes anymore, it was *my* clothes. It’s my shoes, it’s my make-up, it’s my boots, it’s my wig’. A realisation and shift that came to destabilise their relationship.

Carrie describes wearing feminine clothes as being a 'safety valve' from very early in her life and the shift in her sense of self, from cross-dresser to trans woman unfolded within her home. In her mid-20s Carrie became a freelance journalist; 'Working from home is brilliant if you're trans' she says, 'you can totally wear what you want'. During emotionally difficult times she could spend the day 'wearing a Jersey skirt or whatever', which enabled her to feel 'so much more able to handle everything'. With the birth of her daughter and son, aged 10 and 4 respectively (at the time of interview), the rhythms of her domestic life progressively changed around nursery, school, her wife's work schedule. Carrie had ever-shrinking time and space to herself, and privacy was crucial to expressing her femininity, which was not shared with her children at the time. With diminishing access to the 'safety valve' of gendered self-expression she felt depressed and like a 'clenched fist', she says, which was a 'horrible, horrible feeling'. As Carrie's office became her son's nursery, her workspace moved to the garden shed, which could not accommodate her clothes and where she felt unsafe risking neighbours seeing her coming in and out of the house dressed femininely. Following Iris Marion Young (1997), I read Carrie's diminishing capacity for accessing the trans feminist values of privacy and individuation as being disciplined by the possible consequences of her neighbours potentially transphobic, and likely cis-heteronormative, attitudes upon her and her family's safety. Carrie's wife was also unconformable with her feminine gender expression becoming public knowledge; 'your husband's wearing a dress to the supermarket, that's a big ask for anyone' she says. Informed by her wife's feelings, and a history of receiving transphobic harassment, it is unsurprising that domestically containing and compartmentalising her feminine gender expression and keeping up cis-heteronormative appearances to her children, neighbours and friends, became a practiced protection.

In this research, approaches to negotiating gender embodiment, expression and belonging in the home differed according to the meanings and anxieties imbued in transness, and the implications of a person's transness for the public, private and family lives. Like Kay, Carrie highlights the salience of privacy from others living *within* the family home, and the social, spatial and temporal compartmenting this can demand, especially where non-disclosure is sought. Differences in Carrie and Kay's experiences partially link their positions in the family. For Carrie, a parent with a

growing family, and the demands of availability that requires, her capacity to express her gender relied upon privacy in her workday and workspace. For Kay, an adult living with their parents, they were afforded more consistent temporal and spatial privacy in their bedroom, without the childcare demands. For Morgan, living alone is an essential enabling factor in her ability to being in ‘female mode’ as an ordinary, albeit constrained, part of everyday life. Around the time of our interview Morgan was in re-orienting the gendered balance of her life, toward being herself in public, in Dundee and during daylight hours. Apart from occasional weekends away – as described in Image 6.5 - until recently, ‘female mode’ (Morgan’s words) was contained to her home on the outskirts of Dundee, where she has few neighbours. While close to her parents, Morgan had no plans to discuss her transness with them. Alix described building confidence dressing femininely only when her wife was home, to avoid feeling like she had a ‘dirty little secret’, chimes with Carrie’s reference to being a ‘monster’ and a ‘freak’. Contrastingly, for Carrie, maintaining distance between her transness and family life – spatially, temporally, socially, epistemically – alleviated the crescendo of pressure and tension that accumulated through the suppression of herself, in the service of maintaining cis-heteronormative family life. Nonetheless, both women speak of the social and sexualised stigma attached to transfemininity, and ways across a public-private continuum of spaces, including the domestic home. Thus, while privacy and individuation within the home merge as valuable and vital to trans peoples’ self-expression and capacity to feel belonging, as Young (1997) attests, they emerge as contingent upon the potency of cis-heteronormativity affective intensities that circulate through familial and social relations within and around the home. Consequently, domestic circumstances that are conducive to the ordinary embodiment and expression of transness emerge as privileged, and crucial to wellbeing.

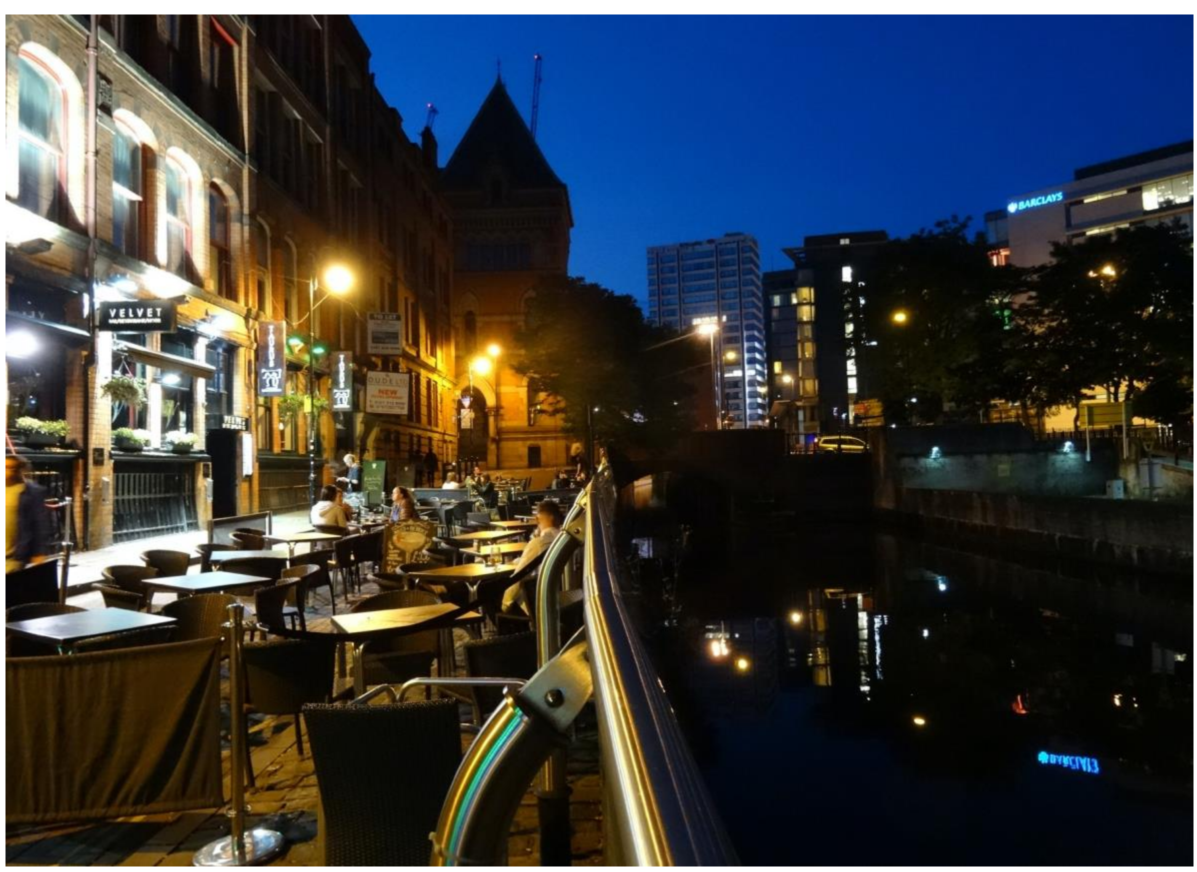


Image 6.5 Morgan's caption: Caption: Canal Street, Manchester, in the eve of ‘Sparkle in the Park’ (the annual national transgender celebration held in July). I’ve been to four of the last five events since 2014 and every time it feels like a homecoming, a pilgrimage and a summer holiday rolled into one.

Life in technicolour

During the months that we collaborated, reorientation in Carrie’s life was unfolding apace. Since our introductory conversation, she had changed her name to Carrie, and was expressing her transfemininity in public with increasing regularity, through various combinations of clothing, wigs, make up, painted nails. For our interview, Carrie chose to meet in her local pub in Glasgow’s West End, which she describes here:

> [The West End is the] Bohemian bit of town where all the students are and all the media is … you’re not really going to get trouble here. It’s not like a Rangers game on a Saturday afternoon when everyone’s geared up. People have just got their own shit to deal with, they couldn’t care less.

Carrie's movements through public space are often calculated, avoiding time and spaces dominated by the kind of cis-hetero-patriarchal masculinity and potential for violent outbreaks commonly associated with drunken football fans. Nonetheless, there is a stark swell in her sense of agency to live her transness more publicly, which to a significant extent, has been propelled by her changed living arrangements and location, since her concerns were in no small part motivated by protecting her family and their home. Re-establishing her home has enabled reinvention and the accumulation of new experiential knowledge acquired by being herself in public, which has included overcoming her anxieties about being treated as a 'monster' or 'freak' finding that most people are either accepting or 'couldn't care less'. Indeed, having recently moved home around the corner, Carrie has become a regular in the pub where we meet, where regardless of her gender presentation she has always felt safe and welcomed by the bar staff, owners, and clientele.

As a consequence of being able to be herself as part of her everyday life, Carrie feels happier, calmer and more optimistic about her future and tells me that her former wife recently described her as having 'gone into technicolour'. With moving home, her life has shifted from the muted, dark monochrome of feeling 'really, really miserable', to feeling vibrant and having a new lease of life, unbound from constraints upon her gender that made her 'really, really miserable'. As is common for people who transition as parents (Hines 2006), her kids were introduced to Carrie gradually, and know that 'daddy sometimes wears a dress' and has painted nails. They split time between Carrie's home and her former partner's home. Here Carrie describes coming to know herself and live her transness more publicly.;

> When you're out as trans, it's the very opposite of disease, it is the cure … you know if you're trying to sleep and some bastard's car alarms going off … and then finally, finally the fucking thing stops. The world has never been so quiet… All of the sudden everything is ok, world is fine. That for me is what presenting female did.

The car alarm is one of many analogies that Carrie invokes to describe her experience of her gender; an obstructive iceberg, the shrill squeal of an

alarm that you cannot turn off, carrying around a bag of rocks that she has finally put down, a clenched fist unfurled by expressing her gender, a build-up of pressure that is relieved by the release of a safety value. Similarly, Alix describes her transness as 'screaming' at her most days, before deciding to transition. In these descriptions, textures of the emotional and affective experiences of suppressing their gender and suspending embodied comfort and belonging in their selves and homes become apparent. Furthermore, it is evident that the respective relief, calm and improved quality of life found in being able to domestically anchor themselves, extends into their lives beyond the home.

Translocations

Finally, how migration features in Carrie's narrative, complicates and extends academic thinking on queer, gay and lesbian, and trans migrations, outlined earlier in this chapter. Akin to Alix, having moved to Glasgow, Carrie's relationship to her identity unfolded in a slow, more piecemeal and domestically oriented way than accounted for in dominant 'queer pilgrimage' narratives and is not characterised by transitionary sojourns, as trans travel narratives have often framed trans migration (Aizura 2012; Crawford 2006). It was over a decade before she came to know and be herself and live publicly as a trans woman and not until 2017 that she began engaging with LGBTQ communities and events, such as Glasgow Pride (Image 6.6). In this way, Carrie's experiences resonate with Andrew Gorman-Murray's (2007) contention that centring embodiment elicits the diverse, multi-directional and highly individualistic movements which appear to often underpin personal quests for queer identity (2007: 114). Indeed, house-sitting and moving to Glasgow's West End were crucial and more immediately change-inducing in enabling her to re-establish herself in a home where she could anchor her identity, surrounded by a locale where she feels safe. Therefore removing herself from her previous domestic space and social life, while keeping her children and certain friends in reach. Thus, rather than a clean break, an isolated dis- or re- location, I describe Carries migrations as translocational. Her new home and life is neither unaffected by nor fully detached from her past experiences. Borrowing from Stryker's (2008: 1) framing of

transgender[5], the *trans* in *trans*locational here marks the significance of the space between dis-and re- location, and her movement through them, which connects relational aspects of this migratory trajectory. Following Gorman-Murray (2007: 117), I suggest that attending to embodiment within translocational movements between suburbs within cities, shows that migratory trajectories over a range of distances can be equally integral to queer *and* trans people embarking on identity quests. This imbrication of temporalities, spatialities, mobilities and multiple localities within Carrie's process of sensing, understanding and expressing herself, speaks to the productiveness of these approaches concerning trans people's experience of migration, identity, belonging and home.

Image 6.6 Carrie's Caption: Me having done the scariest thing imaginable: crossing Glasgow as a man in a skirt. I'm about to join the Pride Glasgow event.

[5] In *Transgender History,* Susan Stryker positions transgender as describing 'a movement across a social imposed boundary from an unchosen starting place' (2008:1).

CONCLUSION

Considering home through the lives of trans people pulls at the threads of the social and material fabric of neighbourhoods, requiring us to consider the warp and weft of interweaving forces that shape how their domestic lives unfold, how identities are negotiated, how belonging is created, maintained and secured. In this chapter, I have analysed the nexus of home, domestic belonging and identity in participants' lives. Structured according to domestic living arrangements, common values, specific conditions, and vital practices have been refracted through the prism of participants' experiences. Connecting these with research and theorising on home in feminism, sexualities studies, queer theory and trans studies, I have sought to engage with and extend existing literature**.** Chryssy's experiences of shared housing in London, illustrate the interconnectedness of her personal transfemininity, queerness, migratory paths, and employment, financial and housing circumstances, with a complex web of social, material, technological, political-economic, urban dynamics and design. In doing so, the disciplinary potential of residential architecture and neighbourhood design, and the nature of social dynamics within particular urban and suburban locales, is apparent. As are shifting intensities in how acutely this is felt according to a person's relationship to their gender, its expression and embodiment, social interactions and moving through public space, and a particular time in their lives. Indeed, Alix and Chryssy show that a person's relationship to the same locale, or similar neighbourhood, the social dynamics that entail familiarity and conversion, can change over time and according to an accumulation of personal experiences and a sense of security in oneself. Thus, we can recognise ways that the disciplinary potential and operation of specific socio-material conditions are mediated by identity and shape a person's capacity to feel at home, and appreciate the value of understanding domestic belonging within a complex web of forces. We must refuse the facile allure of fixing contexts and locations as flatly hostile to trans and gender non-conforming people or marking trans people as 'properly' urban subjects.

Contemplating home lends itself to spatial thinking. Yet it is clear that temporalities – from everyday rhythms of domestic life, to queer temporalities that may contour the unfolding of trans people's life courses – are crucial in shaping how participants have negotiated inter-relations between identity, belonging and home in the immediate

day-to-day, the accumulative impacts of past experiences, and the shifting relationship with one's self and surroundings. Relatedly, attending to the migratory trajectories and circulation of people and cultural expectations, across multiple scales, offers a rich analysis of how domestic belonging and identities are negotiated within the home, in context sensitive ways. In this way, homes, and spaces within the home, emerge as always hybrid, provisional, in process and sometimes contested, in ways that unfold in relation to one's identity. Accordingly, stability, oneness and security, including ontological security, that Massey (1994: 167) points to as a commonly sought out quality of domestic life, arose through participants' experiences as often elusive and partial, as well as valued and actively protected. Here, practices such as home-making, boundary making and house rules, which through participants anchor their identities in – sometimes coded – ways that foster belonging, emerge as significant. In various ways, these practices serve as a means of navigating, and exerting agency over, and feeling security in relations to public private dynamics among residents and visitors *within* the home, whilst managing the porosity of boundaries that mark the interior and exterior of home. These negotiations, often in the service of producing and sustaining the domestic privacy required by a person in a moment, are ontologically situated, co-constituted in relation to identity and open to change.

Assemblages of human, object, technological, infrastructural, sensory, social, affective, spatial emotional and *embodied* inter-relations and processes are integral to participants' experiences and practices of anchoring identities and negotiating domestic belonging. Relationships to and between one's sense of self, embodiment and gender expression emerged as central to capacities to feel belonging at home – within domestic spaces, neighbourhood, cities, cyberspace and beyond (Blumen et al. 2013). While Blumen et al. (2014) make this argument more generally, it is salient in this context that it is common that a trans person's home is a primary geography in which we are able to explore gender in private but quotidian ways (Doan 2010). As participants show, the embodied and emotional dimensions of domestic geographies coalesce, and one's capacity of feel at home, may be highly contingent upon circumstance within and beyond the front door, and within the homes itself. For those whose ability to be and feel themselves is limited domestically, domestic belonging may become fragmented in ways that specific times and spaces within the home

take on heightened significance. As such, the capacity to be oneself in one's domestic life in everyday ways that can feel ordinary rather than exceptional, fleeting and insufficient emerges as a normative trans feminist value of home. Engaging closely with participants' experiences of home as I have in this chapter, while perhaps a little unruly in places, as lives tend to be, has been productive in providing a rich account of the ways in which a persons' transness shaped the ways in which domestic belongings are experienced, created, pursued, lost and found, and the specific ways in which homes are valued and valuable.

7. CONCLUSION

Early in my first conversations with some of the trans women participating in this research, they invited me to 'ask them anything'. There is a generosity to, and agency in, this invitation, and a kindness in its intention that I appreciate and do not wish to diminish. I *hope* that each 'ask me anything' was informed by having read about my research and feeling a sense of trust and care in my presence – that the offers were a measured practice of opening oneself up to questioning in response to feeling safe. Yet, these invitations also registered with me a practice of retaining agency while becoming an object of scrutiny or fascination, of laying oneself bare to show one's humanity, of trying to seem less threatening, while becoming more legible. I perceived 'ask me anything' as a response to the de-humanising treatment and vilification of trans people, especially trans women and trans-feminine people, historically and today. Of course, other participants interacted in more guarded ways, most likely for reasons similarly linked to social stigmas directed toward trans people and the intrusive questions often asked. In response to an 'ask me anything' I would thank them for their trust and generosity and explain that at the heart of this research was an ethos that I would follow their lead, as they responded to the research themes. I communicated that I would be comfortable talking about intimate and emotionally sensitive matters, and talking about medical transition, but I would never raise these topics. These parameters were discussed with all participants, but the 'ask me anything' moments affirmed my decision to integrate the ethos of prioritising trans peoples' knowledge and experiences through a participatory research methodology, and the value of this approach in the present context that trans lives are lived in Britain.

This thesis has investigated gender diversity in Britain through the lives of 12 trans people whose identities and experiences differ and coalesce across various demographic axes and geographical circumstances. Working between queer, trans and urban studies, I have sought to draw upon the strengths of each field, while responding to shortfalls and absences, and situating these in dialogue with participants' narratives. Informed by trans studies scholarship, the participants' visual, textual and verbal narratives have been prioritised in an analysis of varied experiences and implications of navigating cis-heteronormative social worlds as a

trans person. The research findings contribute to trans studies broadly, particularly where there are shared cultural, material and linguistic ideas and influences across Western and anglophone contexts. More specifically, participants' narratives and related research findings include specificities that are particular to Britain, where the Trans Debate is especially virulent. Within the UK, there is a rich trans-disciplinary body of trans studies research (Hines 2006, 2009; 2010; Hines 2020; Pearce 2018; Pearce et al. 2019; White 2014; Gupta 2019; Sharpe 2012; 2020; Barker and Iantaffi 2019). This thesis contributes to this UK-based scholarship by adding to the relatively small body of spatially oriented work by geographers (Lim and Browne 2009; Brown and Lim 2010). In doing so, it makes an original contribution to understanding the how disciplinary productions and functions of cis-heteronormativity and transphobia, affect and are navigated by trans people, in the spaces they use, move through, and reject, in their everyday lives across Britain.

To conclude this thesis, I shall begin by bringing my research questions together with key findings and contributions to knowledge, as well as highlighting implications and recommendations that are pertinent within and outside academia. The next section reflects upon the research ethos and methodology, before closing by identifying potentially productive future areas of research.

This research set out to understand the implications of prioritising trans people's narratives and attributing authority to their self-knowledge for understanding gender diversity in Britain**.** Urban studies has an extensive body of theoretical and empirical research exploring everyday experiences and spatial practices, urban imaginaries, and inequalities, dislocation and dispossession produced through regeneration, redevelopment, and gentrification-driven urban change (de Certeau 1984, Lefebvre 1991[1974]; Minton and Watt 2016; Campkin 2013[a][b]; Roy 2011; 2016; Linder and Meissner 2018; Nuttall and Mbembe 2008). Assemblage thinking and non-representational theories, as styles of thought, are valuable in their open ethos and their attentiveness to the messy intermingling of social, affective, emotional, spatial, temporal, material, political, economic, and representational – amongst other – forces that co-constitute urban life. However, gendered aspects of urban life have been frequently overlooked in urban studies paradigms, such as the 'Right to the City' (Beebeejaun 2016). Where gender has been considered within urban studies

research, trans people have tended to be referenced only in passing, or neglected entirely, with relatively few exceptions (Doan 2007; 2010; Namaste 1996; Lim and Browne 2009; Browne and Lim 2010; Nash 2010). This thesis has evidenced resonances between the prioritising of trans peoples' personal narratives and assemblage thinking. In particular, personal narratives, in conjunction with other forms of evidence, facilitate analyses that are attuned to the, often unruly, interconnectedness of how subjects, objects, imaginaries, ideas, affects, emotions, practices, politics, spaces, cultures, materialities and temporalities inter-relate and coalesce in the fabric of everyday lives as they unfold.

An ethos of recognising peoples' capacities to be the expert on their own gender, offers an ethical and more generative path to collaboratively explore and better understand the more fine-grained textures of a person's everyday lived realities. This enables us to abandon questions of gendered authenticity that have pre-occupied trans-exclusionary feminist and media discourses, while attending to their social repercussions. Using a methodology that integrated participatory photography and narrative writing with semi-structured interviews was integral in facilitating close engagements with the aspects of participants' lived experiences that they chose to disclose in response to the research themes.

Personal narratives have guided an analysis of how cis-heteronormativity conditions affect the social, spatial, temporal, and material aspects of everyday life, with context-sensitive implications for trans people that demand emotionally and affectively weighty forms of labour, calculation and practice. This has offered a lens into how various aspects of participants' identities and circumstances coalesce in ways that can make inhabiting or navigating certain spaces more or less intensely challenging. For example, in Chapter 3, the evidence presented show how gender and gender expression shape experiences of using toilets – a specific typology of space – in ways that differ according to various circumstances including: spatial context; time of day; the social dynamics and states of inebriation of fellow users; disability access need; and migration status and citizenship documentation. In Chapter 4, a close focus upon the involvement of a participant in an event linked to the Trans Debate at the Ladies' Pond evidences the nuanced affective and emotional aspects of her experience, the context specificity of deciding to participate

and negotiate terms for contributing. Chapter 5 explores different experiences and practices enacted by non-binary participants when navigating fashion retail spaces of different types and across varied locations. This evidence problematised the privileging of skinny, white bodies and masculine-coded aesthetics within so-called gender-neutral fashion and style. Furthermore, findings highlight the particular and subtle, often invisible, calculations, anxieties and layers of labour demanded by non-binary people seeking to navigate fashion retail in ways that enable them to realise their desired gender expression. Beyond sexgender-segregation, in Chapter 6 participants' narratives offer a lens into a range of practices and experiences of creating, sustaining and seeking homes in which they can feel belonging. This evidences how shifting and elusive feelings of domestic belonging can be, as well as the value of ontological security at home.

A further consequence of prioritising trans people's narratives and attributing authority to self-knowledge, is that the participants' narratives showed the necessity to understand how the discourses that constitute the Trans Debate matter beyond being a discursive, abstract battle of ideas. Trans Debate discourses extend and operate through socio relations and interactions and affect trans peoples' lives across a spectrum of public, pseudo public and private spaces. Thus, a very serious function of the Trans Debate is the affective production and circulation of anxieties about the threat of potential sexgender-policing and other forms of abuse, even when these have not been personally experienced. The Trans Debate, and the transphobic politics of fear that it perpetuates, shapes the emotional geographies of trans peoples' lives through an affective force that carries the potential for sexgender-policing. A circulation of an omnipresent sense of anticipation, demands the labour of frequent calculation, and often the prioritising of cis peoples' comfort at the expense of one's own. There is an important and contrasting parallel in the function of potentiality and experience through the Trans Debate. The crucial difference being that trans peoples' anxieties about sexgender-policing and other forms of transphobic abuse are based in personal experience or tangible incidents experienced by other trans peoples. In contrast, fears of trans people are substantiated by histories of articulation and on-going repetition through the Trans Debate that rely upon an absence of experience. This includes a lack of having knowingly encountered trans peoples in their everyday life and thus learning

otherwise through experience. As evidence in this thesis, transphobic arguments are bolstered by being situated within specific spaces, which serves to give an illusion of groundedness, to groundless claims and inferences.

This thesis also asked how binary logics that operate in gender, queer and urban studies are complicated and contested through participants' lived experiences. By privileging trans peoples' narratives and knowledge, binary logics and their dividing lines emerge as informing and forming social and spatial norms that in practice are facile and untenable, relational and overlapping rather than oppositional. Furthermore, the boundaries contain and maintain binaries, which though they appear natural and impermeable, are shown to be constructed, sustained, and often porous and untenable. Although the inadequacies of binary onto-epistemologies are widely acknowledged, this research contributes a specific focus upon how various binaries that function through socio-spatial norms are unsettled, problematised and complicated through aspects of trans peoples' existence and experiences.

Male/female, man/woman binaries and attending masculine/feminine expectations that constitute cis-heteronormativity are expanded and exploded by the situated ways in which trans and gender non-confirming people know, embody and practice their genders. This is evidenced across the empirical chapters in this thesis, which in turn problematises research concerning sexgender that does not account for the plurality of situated ontological realities of how people embody, express and experience genders and related epistemological categories. All humans are engaged in onto-epistemological ways of doing gender and having it done to you, of knowing oneself and being known and knowable, of being and becoming, that integrate and include, but *are not limited to*, trans, woman, masculine, non-binary, cis, feminine, man, agender and genderqueer.

The inadequacies of these sexgender binaries, and the instability of assumed alignments between them, are evident from a brief glance at the group of participants. This is, of course, enhanced and fleshed out by participant's narratives, which evidence the insufficiencies of, and the violence linked to, sexgender binaries, across the empirical chapters individually and collectively. People with non-binary identities more obviously and immediately contest and complicate the binary

sexgender schema. Chapter 5 in particular explores different experiences and relationships to masculinities, femininities and ideas of gender neutrality in fashion and style. Chapter 3, which focuses upon public toilets and the experiences of participants who are men, women and non-binary, also strongly demonstrates that social categories must be understood as encompassing intersections and pluralities, as well as tenuously accommodating those who elude capture and shift between modes of gender presentation. The parameters of man and woman, which have long included trans men and women – albeit often precariously and provisionally – have expanded as the increased social visibility and legibility has made it more possible for trans men and women to live their lives as the person that they know themselves to be. The newer term 'non-binary' gives a name to genders that are beyond, in-between and both man and woman, although gender diversity is not new. People with non-binary identities breathe life into and consolidate sexgender realities and social possibilities that exist beyond and between rigid, oppositional cis-heteronormative binaries. While cis-heteronormativity is complicated and contested by the existence and identities of trans women, men and non-binary people, trans lives are always negotiated through and in relation to this dominant sexgender order. For example, even in the production of transcapes and counter-publics, the sense of belonging in one's home, or in community spaces, is relational. Their value is comprised and contingent upon the suspension of cis-heteronormativity, which has the capacity to leak through those porous social and spatial boundaries.

Post-structuralist queer thinking is enormously valuable in deconstructing and de-stabilising sexgender and sexualities, and exposing the disciplinary operations of power concerning identities, social norms and expectations, and the built environment (Preciado 2012; Butler 1993; 1999[1991]; 2004). Yet, queer thinking has tended to privilege sexuality, and where trans people are concerned, theorised trans subjectivities as fluid and transgressive, while neglecting trans peoples' concerns and how trans peoples' lives and identities are experienced (Namaste 1994; 1999; 2000; Stryker 2004; 2008; Stryker and Whittle 2006). Elsewhere, particularly within trans-exclusionary feminisms, 'sex' (what I would locate as sexgender) has been understood and stable, unchanging, with trans women and men figured as re-producing and acquiescing to oppressive patriarchal hegemonic sexgender norms. The following discusses how the evidence presented in this

research problematises hegemony/transgression and stability/fluidity binaries.

Understandings of a simple opposition between hegemony/transgression are complicated through participants' narratives. Crucially, whether one's transness socially registers is not always a choice, and moving through or existing in certain contexts may demand compromise and acquiescence to sexgender norms in the service of safety and ease of movement. For example, this is strongly evidenced in Chapter 3, where participants frequently reported compromising on personal comfort, and sometimes safety, when choosing which toilet to use, in order to appease fellow users and move through public and pseudo-public spaces with less potential sexgender-policing. At the Ladies' Pond, in writings by non-binary swimmers, the welcome felt by some trans women and situational avoidance of those who are anxious about sexgender-policing complicate hegemony/transgression boundaries, even as transphobic campaigners sought to enforce a cisnormative hegemony. In Chapter 6, differing experiences across lifetimes, and different neighbourhood 'types' and socio-material dynamics, as well as household social expectations and rules, were shown to demand compromises in gender expression and the disclosure of one's identity. Thus, one might occupy social and familial positions and kinship relations that appear to meet hegemonic sexgender norms in certain domestic times and spaces and which do not align with a personal identity that contravenes cis-heteronormativity.

Chapter 5 similarly showed co-existences and disconnects between social perceptions of conforming to hegemonic sexgender norms while being a non-binary person navigating fashion retail. This is particularly apparent in participants' experiences of being assumed to and made to feel as if they belonged to or were an imposer in men's or women's departments and changing rooms. These experiences included embodying transness and transgressing cis norms as a non-binary person, while registering socially as a cis woman. These forms of social illegibility and misrecognition are common realities for non-binary people in Britain that show how the oversimplification inherent in the oppositional conformity/transgression binary obscures more complex and gender diverse realities. Furthermore, navigating these circumstances conditioned by hegemonic sexgender binaries demands spatial and social negotiations that work with and against, sometimes intersecting, systems of

oppression in ways that may be more or less socially visible. While non-binary people's genders may not register socially as such, or appear transgressive, the legible possibilities for gender are enhanced as the expansiveness encompassed by non-binary becomes more socially knowable.

This research stresses the necessity to comprehend the relations and tension between stability and fluidity in relation to personal identities and socio-spatial interactions. Correspondingly, the evidence presented demonstrates an imperative to allow for the gendered aspect of a person's identity to settle, shift, exist in flux, elude clarity, lack the right words, as well as feel stable in a sustained way, and always in response to the circumstances in which their lives are embedded. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 individually and collectively expose the limits of spatialising binary sexgender through material design and social convention, and the inadequacy of equating gendered legitimacy and stability upon permanence or immutability. While perhaps more immediate and obvious for some people than others, relational dynamics and tensions between stability and fluidity across the course of participants' lives, and the socio-spatial contexts navigated in the past and present moments, demand more nuanced understandings than stability and fluidity, in isolation or opposition, can account for. For example, non-binary for some may manifest as an 'in-between' of gendered social co-ordinates that are relatively consistent, and gendered expression may change across temporal and social contexts. For others, non-binary can mean having a secure sense of having plural gendered selves, *and* fluidity in switching between 'modes', the balance of which is context sensitive and open to renegotiation. In all cases, these dynamics relating to fluidity and stability shape and are shaped by socio-spatial relations. Chapter 6 in particular demonstrates how as people move temporally and spatially across and between cities, counties and continents, they experience changes to their sense and expression of self, ranging from the slow and piecemeal to the big and rapid. This includes the ways in which perceptions of one's gender possibilities and futures come to feel and be variously realised, unattainable, unexpected, shifting or otherwise. To account for gender – cis or trans – as either stable or fluid, is to overlook the ways in which ontologically situated people *do* gender, in relation to the social contexts in our lives as they unfold.

Since spatial binaries are also complicated in this thesis I shall briefly reflect upon public/private and urban/rural dichotomies. Examining porous boundaries, relational inter-actions, and the varied and shifting nature of spatial formations across a continuum of public to private, this research contributed to an extensive body of work within feminist, gender, queer and urban studies. Trans studies scholars have also taken a spatial focus in their research, highlighting differing social dynamics across contexts, including work environments, shopping malls, and home (Doan 2007; 2010; Hines 2010; Choi 2013; Crawford 2020; Andrucki and Kaplan 2018; Felsenthal 2009). In this thesis, I have complemented and extended this work, with participants' voices complicating public/private binaries and boundaries in ways that relate to their gender, and how they negotiate their lives as trans people. Participants' experiences and practices highlight the entanglement, permeability and relationality of forms of publicness and privacy: from negotiating sexgender-policing in public toilets – the most public of private spaces – in Chapter 3, to the function of domestic privacy in enabling participation in online counter-publics in Chapter 6.

As a binary opposition, rural/urban binary opposition is shown by the flow and mobility of participants lives to misleadingly fix people in place and negate the trans-locational aspects of everyday lives and over the courses of a lifetime. This reductive tendency was included my own initial – and perhaps misguided – attempt to focus this research upon British cities, in an effort to narrow the scope. In Chapter 4, we saw how the relationships between gendered and racialised inner-city and pastoral imaginaries coalesce in the Trans Debate around who properly belongs at the Ladies' Pond. Chapter 6 showed that a number of participants live much of their past and present lives in cities, while residing in and moving between homes that are in rural towns and villages, city suburbs, or inner-city areas. These movements also include: migrations between continents, countries, cities and city districts; movement from and between rural towns and villages; as well as differing relationships to context sensitive social dynamics, which were shaped by gender. Engaging closely with participants at times required the research to attend to how past experiences and mobilities have shaped peoples' present lives. Thus, to attempt to contain geographies of trans peoples' experiences within an urban/rural binary distorts the multiplicity of contexts, spatialities, temporalities and mobilities that constitutes lives that are shaped by transness and navigations of cis-heteronormativity.

With the third research question, this research sought to understand what the everyday lived experiences of trans people living in Britain elucidates about the spatialising of sexgender and creation of gender through socio-spatial relations. While prioritising trans peoples' narratives and knowledge has offered valuable insight into the everyday experiences of trans people, putting these in dialogue with assemblage thinking, post-structuralism and phenomenology has facilitated an analysis that is sensitive to the complexities, textures and contours of participants' lives. The myriad realities of gender diversity intermingle, complicate, resist, and are simultaneously disciplined by the dominance of a binary cis-heteronormative order. As Chapter 6 demonstrates, participants' experiences of creating domestic belonging entails complex interconnections of personal gender and its expression and embodiment, sexuality and queerness, migratory paths, and employment financial and housing circumstances, with familial and community relations, and a web of wider social, material, technological, political-economic, geographical, and urban dynamics and processes. Across the empirical chapters more broadly, participants' lived experiences evidence the significance of dynamics, practices and processes, assemblages that are co-constituted by often messy interactions between personal identities, socio-cultural norms, moral investments, affective forces, embodied and emotional experiences, as well as being mediated by material forms, representational discourses and technological infrastructures, and shaped by economic, legislative, governmental and political structures, practices and policies. This points to how gender identities, norms and expectations become spatialised and co-produce socio-spatial relation that texture everyday life and operate through relational assemblages. Furthermore, this finding signals the imperative of taking seriously these constellations of constituent parts and relations between them in shaping trans peoples' lives as they negotiate a cascade of cis-heteronormativity.

Temporalities – from everyday rhythms of domestic life, to queer temporalities that may contour the unfolding of trans people's life courses – are crucial in shaping participants' experiences. This signals the value of understandings of gender that appreciate the accumulative affects of experiences, have an openness to change, and do not hinge legitimacy upon permanence or disclosure. It shows how making sense of one's gendered self is shaped by a web of forces, and access to

possibilities. That is not to say however, that a person's sense of gender is not stable or secure, nor that stability and security must translate into consistency across temporal or spatial contexts. Elsewhere, within the Trans Debate temporalities have emerged as integral to ways in which transphobic writers and trans-exclusionary feminists have denied histories of gender diversity. Specifically, the tactical invocation of newness to the participation of trans people in public life generally and sexgender-segregated spaces specifically, in the service of producing moral panic by locating trans people as an impending threat.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 evidenced how the types of space and specific sites, and their attendant imaginaries, have been evocatively instrumentalised in the Trans Debate as a means of producing transphobic politics of fear. In the news and social media, these spaces have functioned individually and collectively to sustain circumstances in which trans people's – especially women and feminine people's – access to sexgender-segregated spaces and services is positioned as controversial and potentially threatening to (cis) women and children who are always figured as already vulnerable. Participants' narratives show how the Trans Debate textures trans peoples' everyday experiences and escalate anxieties about sexgender-policing. The affects and effects of this can intensify in spaces designated for men or women where sexgender expectations are more acute and thus sexgender-policing practices are felt to be more likely. The affective forces generated by these spatial arrangements frequently produce anxieties and demand compromises and calculations concerning safety, comfort and health, which can necessitate acquiescence to context-specific, embodied and multi-sensory sexgender norms. Thus, spatialising binary sexgender through segregation and designation simultaneously reflects and re-produces the dominance and disciplinary function of cis-heteronormativity, at the expense of trans and gender-nonconforming people.

A key finding and original contribution made by this analysis concerns how spaces and imaginaries are implicated and instrumentalised in the Trans Debate. The accumulative attrition of locating the same unfounded claims that trans people are threatening, cause controversy and make unreasonable demands that disadvantage cis women, gives an *impression* of received wisdom and evolving discussion that legitimises a flawed, harmful and stalled debate. As Chapter 4 shows, the Pond and

the imaginaries invested in its social and material landscape are uniquely situated, but via visual and textual discourses that trade on a social currency of scarcity, whiteness, cis-ness, wealth, and cultural capital, this site occupies greater space than the physical location it inhabits. The Ladies' Pond was instrumentalised in ways that sustain the Trans Debate without the site itself being geographically proximate to or even used by the *vast* majority of people in Britain. Use or proximity did not matter because trans women are made to matter in the way the Ladies' Pond was made symbolic. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 respectively and collectively demonstrate how evocative architypes of space and imaginaries invested in them, and which are built upon the foundations of cis-heteronormative ideals of sexgender purity, feature emblematically in the Trans Debate. Herein, shifting between different spaces as the site of controversy in which the same transphobic arguments are located serves as a self-legitimising force that, in turn, sustains the Trans Debate. Women's toilets, the Ladies' Pond, gender-neutral toilets, changing rooms, women's toilets… Recycling spaces fuel a cycle of controversy and debate.

These findings profoundly implicate journalists, news editors and media platforms in the violence enacted by sustaining the Trans Debate, the affects of which circulate far beyond abstract discussion, or harmless debate. There are damaging repercussions of persisting with a debate format, which serves to relinquish journalistic and editorial responsibility when platforming transphobic discourses that sustain cisnormative and transphobic attitudes, actions, and affects; and which profoundly encumber the lives of trans people. Furthermore, by forcing trans people and organisations into defensive positions this lessens the capacity for the complexity, richness, joyfulness and ordinariness of diverse gender and trans possibilities, and diminishes the ways in which they are lived and embraced within trans and queer communities to become knowable to the wider public. Indeed, as emerged in this research, an enduring but seemingly diminishing ignorance of, and illegibility of trans peoples' lives and identities amongst the general public contributed toward the reverberations of transphobic and especially transmisogynist claims and the instrumentalising of public spaces in the service of those claims.

Furthermore, those that contribute to the urban design and planning processes are shown to be complicit in reproducing sexgender norms that serve to justify

sexgender-policing and thereby impede trans peoples' participation and comfort in public life. The value of an understanding of the disciplinary function of the built environment where trans and gender non-conforming people are concerned is perhaps particularly pertinent for new-build projects, but also those who are retro-fitting through refurbishment. While there is no panacea to eliminate the oppressiveness of cis-heteronormative social relations and spatial arrangements, design approaches that critically respond to the disciplinary function of the built environment can and do profoundly diminish boundaries and anxieties that are present in trans peoples' everyday lives.

Reflections on research ethos, methodology and recommendations

The scope of this research has been intentionally closely engaged with participants' experiences, sometimes individually and at other times by drawing out comparisons with fellow participants, and relating these to wider issues, phenomena, and conversations. In doing so, I have sought to complement the more quantitively oriented, survey-based research that highlights larger-scale patterns and perspectives (Ellis et al. 2014; Whittle et al. 2007; Bradley 2020; Bachmann and Gooch 2018). The group of 12 people that I have worked with was varied in participants' relationships to, and experiences of, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, age, culture, faith background, class, disability, and migration status, as well as their geographical location, and family, occupational and housing circumstances. Foregrounding and closely engaging with participant experiences has enabled the richness and multi-dimensional complexities of their lives, illuminating commonalities and differences across the four types of space examined. Nonetheless, there are always limitations and these are important of acknowledge. Working with a small group of participants offers a limited number of perspectives, and I have sought to balance this in part my drawing upon further writing by trans people for academic and popular audiences. I also recognise that due to the self-selecting nature of participation in this research, the participants are mostly – but not exclusively - university educated and middle-class, which reflects my own position. I understand this familiarity with, and value invested in the potential of academic research to have positive impacts upon trans people's lives, to be linked to experiences of university education, as well as shared commitments to furthering trans equality. Furthermore,

prioritising close engagements with a small group of 12 people, it was not feasible to engage with the breadth of participants' contributions. I chose to focus upon negotiating threetypes of sexgender-segregated spaces and home as a space of belonging, with the intention that chapters were complementary and pertinent to trans *and* urban studies. Since trans women, and non-binary people emerged in this study as encountering more acute challenges in negotiating sexgender-segregated spaces, and in having had their identities, intentions and integrity dissected, demonised and delegitimised through the Trans Debate, my analysis has focussed more profoundly upon these experiences. As highlighted previously, like all research, this doctoral project has involved a balancing act in managing the overarching scope of the research, with how this is broken down into distinct but complementary chapters. Opting to structure this thesis with a spatial focus, that examines four types of spaces, has presented certain challenges and limitations, including the extent to which I have had the scope to engage with space-specific academic literature.

Some of the participants' images and written narratives that are not included in this thesis will feature in the zine and on the project website, where the report will also be hosted and freely available. I also look forward to continuing to work with participants' contributions. As part of these continued engagements, I shall engage more deeply with the contributions of trans men, who have featured less prominently in this thesis and explore all participant contributions responding to the theme 'encountering institutional spaces'. Concerning future research there is a need for more extensive, closely engaged research on the everyday lives of people who are trans and/or non-binary but tend to be perceived and interacted with socially as some whose gender aligns with their birth-assigned sex. Through this research and my collaborations with participants, and in my own life and wider social network, the relative commonality of having to negotiate this liminal social position that flickers at the edges of gendered visibility and knowability has become increasingly apparent. If we are to understand the subtleties and complexity of gender diversity as it is lived and negotiated, then this must include richer understandings of those who live gender non-conforming lives across a spectrum of visibilities, and of the privileges and disadvantages of one's transness being routinely unknown or unseen.

A further implication of the ethos and methodology of this research is that, in practice, the photography, textural narrative and interviews that make up the participants' contributions can substantially differ in volume. While interview conversations flowed and meandered with some participants, others were more circumspect and concise; some participants contributed more images and wrote longer narratives than suggested, other narratives were briefer and delved into less personal story telling. From my perspective as a researcher, there were no right or wrong ways to respond, and I did not push participants who exercised more brevity to contribute more than they were willing or felt comfortable to do. Of course, more detailed narratives of participants' experiences enabled closer engagement with the texture of their lives. While the volume of contribution varied across participants, and was not reducible to gender, yet the more extensive narratives tended to come – though not entirely – from the women and non-binary participants. This has contributed toward the orientation of the research in terms of whose narratives feature in more extended ways. In working across the range of participants' contributions I have sought to balance my engagements and bring together participants' experiences, across their resonances and dissonances, and the knowledge of all participants has informed my thinking.

In closing, I contend that research concerning gender and sexualities – across a range of disciplines and fields, including but not limited to urban studies, gender studies, and queer studies – must engage more meaningfully with trans peoples' identities, experiences and lives, and in ways that are informed by trans peoples' knowledges and trans studies scholarship. This is not only an ethical issue of erasure and the devaluing of trans peoples' knowledge, but an issue of intellectual limitation and inaccuracy concerning the onto-epistemological realities of gender diversity. That is not to say that all research concerning gender must focus on trans people, but where gendered categories – men and women, gay men, lesbian women, bisexual people, for example – are under consideration, amongst other facets of identity and circumstance, then trans people are members of those groups who should not be overlooked if we are to understand the nuances and plurality of gendered identities, expressions, embodiments and experiences. Concerning trans studies, there are implications in the value of attending to the function of gendered

spaces and spatial imaginaries in shaping the lives of trans people across various geographies. This has emerged as especially salient concerning how space and imaginaries have been powerfully instrumentalised through transphobic discourses, as well as in galvanising support around trans inclusion.

This research has investigated gender diversity by exploring how cis-heteronormativity is woven through socio-material fabric of life in Britain from the varied perspectives of trans people. With a spatial focus, I have critically analysed how the multifaceted operations and manifestations of cis-heteronormativity – from the obvious to the often overlooked – are negotiated through embodied practices that incorporate varied tactics and layers of labour. By pulling apart the cis-heteronormative social-spatial order and attending to spaces, practice and ways of relating that forge belonging, care, joy, resistance and solidarity, I hope to contribute toward the collective project of building upon our gender diverse past and present to construct more expansive and equitable futures.

> *The process of writing this PhD has demanded that I develop practices of self-preservation, that I will continue to use in my life as a trans person living in Britain, and working in higher education. My commitment to doing justice to participants' generosity, insightfulness and labour, as well as the care of friends and family have kept me afloat when the weight of transphobic hostility and mis-information in the British press, society, and political and legislative institutions has felt especially heavy. I have built boundaries as a survival tactic for being a person who is inside my own research; in an enviably flawed effort to deflect the violence of transphobia away from my personal life I try to only engage with transphobic and 'trans debate' material in dedicated working hours. In this way, academia offered a kind of shield, albeit one that is flimsier and more porous that I would like.*
>
> *I recently returned to being a youth worker with young trans people on a four-day camp organised by Gendered Intelligence. This space – inhabited only by trans youth workers and young people – is saturated with joy and kindness. Of course, traumas and struggles do follow us into this space, and are met*

with care and compassion. While at camp in August 2021, in the back of my mind I knew that, in parallel time and space, my university and union were intensifying as a 'battleground', this time under the guise of a campaign led by trans-exclusionary feminist against Stonewall. Through emails, motions and meetings, which I felt compelled to be a part of - to fight for myself and other trans folx - my energy and attention sucked away from this brief reprieve in what feels to me like tiny trans utopia.

Toni Morrison was right, 'there will always be another thing' and those 'things' serve as distractions that sap our reserves, demand our labour and deny ourselves and our communities the time and care that we deserve.

I am really fucking tired but I am energised

I know the beautiful potential of gender diversity socialities, built upon kindness and respect, I feel their possibilities and see them flourishing.

So despite the distractions and distortions, despite my exasperation, and against my better judgement, I remain hopeful…

8. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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9. APPENDICIES

APPENDIX 1 CONSENT FORM

MAKING SENSE OF GENDER

CONSENT FORM ONE

L. Marshall, postgraduate researcher, Department of Geography, UCL |

Contact: ███ | ███ | Supervision: Dr Ben Campkin and Prof. Ann Varley | UCL Ethics Committee project ID: 7855/001
Project partners:

This is the second part of a two-stage consent process. It allows you to make changes to your initial consent and specify any requests now that you have produced your images, captions and narratives and taken part in two interviews.

All data will be handled in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the options selected on your consent forms.

PARTICIPANT STATEMENT

As a participant, I understand that:

1) I may withdraw from parts of the project (e.g. the website or zine) or the whole project at anytime. To do so I should notify the researcher ☐

a) I cannot opt out of/withdraw material that I had previously consented to and has already been published/submitted for publication ☐

2) I own the copyright for the photographs, captions and narratives that I produce and grant Laura Marshall, the researcher, permission to use them:

a) On the *Making Sense of Gender* website and other websites that may be produce in relation to this project, *by the researcher* ☐

b) In published and unpublished academic work including a PhD thesis, presentations,journal articles and books ☐

c) In a zine/pamphlet that will be available as a PDF (online) and as a hard copy ☐

d) In exhibition material, such as, printed photographs, captions and narratives ☐

Please note: At the end you the project you will complete a second consent form in whichyou may specify images, captions and narratives that you choose not to make public.

3) Unless requested otherwise, a pseudonym will anonymise my identity ☐

2) In the PhD thesis and other academic work I would like to be referred to as

……………………………………./by the pseudonym………………….…….

and using the pronoun(s):……………

b) In the public parts of this project (e.g. website, zine) I would like to be referred to as

……………………………………./by the pseudonym………………….…….

and using the pronoun(s):……………

4) Do you consent to partner organisations using anonymised selected quotes from yourinterviews, narratives or captions in their training materials? Yes / No
Please specify any conditions:
………
………

I have read and understood the information above and consent to participating in thisresearch ☐

Requests/comments

………

………

………

Participant:

Name:……………………………………………. Signed:………………………………………..

Date: ………………………………

Personal information:

Age: ··················

Ethnicity: ···

Nationality: ··

Sexuality:···

Gender:···...

Faith/religion:···...

Any additional information you would like to highlight that is relevant to your identity and background:···
···..
···
···

APPENDIX 2 TASK ONE

Exploring gender diversity through the lived experiences of people with trans identities and histories in Britain.

Laura Marshall, postgraduate research student, Department of Geography, UCL **Tel**: ██████
Email: ██████████ **UCL Research Ethics Committee Project ID**: 7855/001
Supervision: Prof. Ann Varley, Dr Ben Campkin

You are invited to respond to two themes (1) Creating spaces of belonging; **(2) Navigating gender-segregated spaces.** There is a brief introduction to each theme below. This aims to give you some ideas to begin with. **Please respond in the way that feels most comfortable and relevant to you.**
The rationale for this approach is to explore multiple aspects of your life in relation to a theme, ratherthan asking for a single experience and way of representing this, which could risk producing quite aone-dimensional impression of your life.

1) Please create 2 images (with captions) and one narrative in response to the theme 'Creatingspaces of belonging'
E.g. home, LGBTQI+ community spaces, peer support groups, religious/faith spaces.

Feeling 'out of place' is familiar to most people at some point in their lives, but especially to those whose identities and experiences somehow challenge or complicate dominant social norms. This makes spaces where one feels 'in place' all the more vital and highlights the necessity of recognisingthe value of experiencing belonging as individuals and communities.

2) Please create 2 images (with captions) and one narrative in response to the theme'Navigating gender-segregated spaces'
E.g. public bathrooms, changing rooms, hairdressers, religious spaces, shops, public spaces

Whatever your gender identity, negotiating gendered spaces involve navigating social norms and political regulations that have implications regarding gender expression and embodiment. This theme explores how people with trans identities and histories respond to the norms and regulations that most affect them.

IMAGES: Theses could be of a particular space, or object that represents a space (perhaps if you don't have access or it's inappropriate to take photos in particular space). They could include something else; feel free to use your imagination. The image may or may not feature you in it; this is up to you entirely. There are a few examples above to help you begin thinking, but it can be anywherethat is or has been significant to you in relation to the theme.

CAPTIONS: These don't need to be long, the idea is to briefly explain the significance of the image.If you decide to use this image and caption in the zine or website, the caption will contextualise the image for viewer. Also, the image and caption will help to structure our interview, so it's useful for meto have some insight into the photograph before we discuss it.

NARRATIVES: These should be up to about 500 words; this is a loose upper limit, they can be shorter. Narratives can be written or spoken (whichever you prefer). You may use the narrative as a way of taking about a space that you have photographed in more detail or exploring that space in adifferent way.

Alternatively, your narrative could address a different space that relate to the theme.

If you have any questions or concerns please get in touch: [redacted]

APPENDIX 3 TASK TWO

Exploring gender diversity through the lived experiences of people with trans identities and histories.

Laura Marshall, postgraduate researcher, Department of Geography, UCL **Tel**: [redacted]

Email: [redacted] **UCL Research Ethics Committee Project ID**: 7855/001

You are invited to respond to the third theme, *Encountering institutional spaces*. There is a brief introduction to this theme below to help promo your thinking around the theme. **Please respond in the ways that feel most comfortable and relevant to you.** The aim of this approach is to explore multiple aspects of your life in relation to a theme, rather than asking for a single experience and way of representing this.

3) Please create 2 images (with captions) and one narrative in response to the theme 'Encountering institutional spaces'

Examples: Hospitals, Gender Recognition Certificates, educational institutions, passports, courts.

Knowledge informing institutional policies and practices is commonly considered to be objective and often based on very rigid and normative ways of thinking, including about gender. While institutional recognition can be affirming for some, it can be excluding to others whose identities, views, cultures, experiences and/or bodies do not correspond with institutional expectations. With this theme, I hope to explore participants experiences of accessing, inhabiting and relating to institutions. This could include conflicting or ambivalent feelings about institutional encounters and norms that may co-exist in complex ways.

IMAGES: Theses could be of a particular space, or object that represents a space (perhaps you don'thave access or it's inappropriate to take photos in particular space), feel free to use your imaginationand artistic licence. You may or may not choose feature in the image, it's up to you entirely.

CAPTIONS: These don't need to be long, the idea is to briefly explain the significance of the image. If you decide to use this image and caption in the zine or website, the caption will give context to readers.

NARRATIVES: These should be up to 500 words, but they can be shorter. Narratives can be written or spoken (whichever you prefer). You may use the narrative to talk about a space that you have photographed in more detail or exploring the same space in a different way. Alternatively, your narrativemight address a different space that relate to the theme.

If you have any questions or concerns please get in touch: [redacted]

Project partners: