

Becoming Travesti:
A Partial History of Ontoformation
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ABSTRACT

"Becoming Travesti: A Partial History of Ontoformation" explores the discursive production of the figure of travesti, defined broadly as male-assigned technologies of feminization, as it circulates within public discourse in Mexico. In other words, through ontoformation this project highlights the historical and sociopolitical associations that congeal, through repetition, to give an identitarian category *-travesti-* a sense of essence. In order to do so, this project analyzes articles within the mainstream Mexican press, ranging from the colonial period to the present. The first phase of this project involved the compilation and analysis of all twenty-first century articles mentioning travesti in the three newspapers with the widest circulation in Mexico in order to determine the primary constitutive elements of the contemporary figure of travesti. The second phase, in turn, involved a historical exploration of these constitutive elements by way of analyzing mainstream news sources dating back to the colonial period. As such, this project explores the work performed by ontoformative narratives that congeal to give the identitarian category of travesti a sense of essence. Among the narratives explored are the detravestification of homosexuality and continued homosexualization of travesti, the criminality of travesti, the spectacularization of travesti, the disposability of travesti, and the affective registers mobilized by and through travesti. Moreover, this project explores the consolidation of the contemporary figure of travesti in relationship to other identitarian categories of sexual and gendered non-normativity in Mexico, such as the homosexual, the transsexual and the transgénero (transgender), suggesting that travesti has been instrumental in the historical production and sanitization of these categories.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

On June 13, 2002, *El Universal* reported that "a *travesti* was completely stripped of his [sic] clothing by several young men after expressing their joy over Mexico classifying for the next round of the World Cup."¹ The wording in Spanish leaves open to question whose joy was being expressed: arguably, it is the young men's and not the victim of their assault's.² However, any possibility of the *travesti* experiencing anything other than joy at this violation is rendered impossible through the last sentence of the reportage, which assures the readers that "the festivities are joyful but with no incidents to lament."³ Not only is the assault casually described as part of the "excesses of a joyful celebration," but the person arrested for the assault was the *travesti* herself.⁴

¹ Alejandro Cárdenas, "Remiten a travesti al MP por exhibición en el Angel," *El Universal* (Mexico City), June 13, 2002. "Un travesti que exhibía sus atributos en los festejos que se realizan en el Angel de la Independencia fue despojado completamente de su vestimenta por varios jóvenes después de expresar su alegría por la clasificación de México a la siguiente eliminatoria de la Copa del Mundo." All translations, unless otherwise specified, are mine.

² Although possessive pronouns in Spanish are not gender differentiated, the article consistently uses masculinizing pronouns to refer to the person it identifies as a *travesti*. Because some *travestis* prefer masculinizing pronouns, others prefer feminizing pronouns, and others prefer neither or both, I will use gender neutralizing pronouns in my writing (they/them/theirs) but will leave the articles' pronouns untouched in order to emphasize the frequency with which articles use masculinizing pronouns to refer to *travestis*. Arguably, this is because reporters do not ask for preferred pronouns and, instead, assign them as they see fit, a practice that is quite common outside of *cuir* social circles in Mexico.

³ Ibid. "[...] hasta el momento, el festejo se desarrolla con algarabía pero sin incidentes que lamentar."

⁴ Ibid. "[...] desmanes en la manifestación de júbilo."

Adding insult to injury, a follow-up reportage the next day confirmed that the first person arrested at this celebration was a shirtless *travesti* "vainly showing off his [sic] breast surgery."⁵ The article continues, describing a "morbid and happy" crowd "curiously touching and ultimately undressing him [sic] [...] 'Strip!' is the war cry and, suddenly, over 20 people descend on their prey, surrounding and beating him [sic]. The police rescues him [sic], as they do all the women who will be groped over the course of the celebration."⁶

I describe this incident not because it is a particularly gruesome example of the normalization of violence against trans* people (and, particularly, against *travestis*) in Mexico but because I believe that it is a fairly ordinary encapsulation of and response to the contemporary figure of the *travesti* as it has been developed within the public imaginary in Mexico. Although *travesti*, or male assigned technologies of feminization, has only existed in Mexico as a named figure for less than half a century, earlier versions of the figure have nonetheless left behind historical traces that can be examined in order to better understand how *travesti* becomes, among other things, a figure deserving of violence.

In what follows, I explore the ways in which *travesti* has circulated within the academic imaginary in order to position my research within a scholarly trajectory that, as I will argue, is in the process of shifting from ontology to ontoformation. I locate my

⁵ Alberto Cuenca, "Abusos al ritmo de Cielito lindo," *El Universal* (Mexico City), June 14, 2002. "[...] el primero ha sido un travesti despojado de la blusa, que se ufana vanidoso en enseñar la operación del pecho [...]"

⁶ Ibid. "Que se encuere' es el grito de guerra, y de inmediato más de 20 caen sobre su presa, lo rodean, le pegan. La policía lo rescata, así como a todas las mujeres que en el transcurso de la mañana serán acosadas."

research within this shift insofar as my interest in *travesti* is an interest in the historical processes that have molded the figure of *travesti* into what it has become and which still determines what it can be. Furthermore, I sketch out the methodologies and methods involved in engaging in the project of tracking the figure of the *travesti* as it has been developed by public discourse. This project uses mainstream newspaper articles as its primary units of analysis in an effort to track how the figure of *travesti* has developed within the public imaginary in Mexico (City) over the course of several hundred years. While I take male-assigned technologies of feminization as a starting point in my search for the figure, my research uncovers several other constitutive elements of the figure, such as homosexualization, criminality, spectacularization, disposability and particular affective registers.

1.2. Literature Review: from Ontology to Ontoformation

In the last decade of the twentieth century, academic accounts of *travesti*, relatively sparse and largely anthropological in nature, focused primarily on *travesti* as lived experience. The majority of these inquiries take as their starting point nosological understandings of transvestism and use ethnography to particularize what is ultimately understood as a transhistorical and transcultural phenomenon. Perhaps the best-known and one of the earliest Spanish-language ethnographic accounts of *travesti*, Don Kulick's monograph explores the quotidian lives to *travesti* sex workers in urban Brazil.⁷

⁷ There exist two book-length works of ethnography on Brazilian *travestis* prior to Kulick's, Hélio Silva's 1993 *Travesti* and Neuza Maria de Oliveira's 1994 *Damas de paus: O jogo aberto dos travestis no espelho da mulher*, but both of these works exist only in their original Portuguese and the language barrier is such that I am unable to understand them.

Although the author reduces *travesti* to "transgendered prostitutes" in the introductory paragraph of his book, he nonetheless goes on to portray Brazilian *travestis* as significantly more complex than his first paragraph might suggest.⁸ For Kulick, what renders Brazilian *travestis* unique is "the specific combination of female physical attributes and male homosexual subjectivity."

Annick Prieur's 1998 anthropological exploration of *travestismo* in urban Mexico is among the first (and remains among only a few) in-depth explorations of what she variously refers to as *vestida/jota* culture in Mexico. Although Prieur uses a number of designations to refer to her subjects of study, usually following their lead, she nonetheless doesn't quite differentiate between the categorizations and, for the most part, avoids concise definitions, opting instead for thick description.⁹ Rather than *travesti*, Prieur primarily uses the vernacularized *vestida* which, on its own, means "dressed" (the word is feminized) but which likely derives from *travestida*, a feminized and more dynamic way of speaking *travesti*. *Travesti*, as I will show, has not always been anchored to identity. However, because in the late 20th century *travesti* came to be used primarily as a noun, a subject, it now names something one *is* rather than something that they *do*. *(Tra)vestida*, however, is quite commonly used as both subject and predicate and can therefore be both something one *is* as well as something one *does*.

Although her ethnographic description is far richer than her definitional efforts, Prieur establishes *vestidas* as a sub-category of *homosexuales*, or "male[s] who [have] a

⁸ Don Kulick, *Travesti: Sex, Gender, and Culture among Brazilian Transgendered Prostitutes*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998).

⁹ Annick Prieur, *Mema's House, Mexico City: On Transvestites, Queens, and Machos* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 30-40.

clear erotic preference for [their] own sex" which is not uncommon for ethnographic accounts of *travestismo* both in Mexico and, more broadly, in Latin America.¹⁰ She describes them as "a cultural[ly] specific category of biological men who have kept their sexual organs while they dress like women, often modify their bodies to look more like women, prefer female nouns and pronouns to speak about themselves, and have sex with men, preferably in the receptive role (though many of them may also enjoy the insertor role)." Indeed, and but for his conception of coercion, Prieur echoes Lumsden who imagines Mexican *vestidas* as "homosexuals who have accepted the popular equation between homosexuality and passivity and femininity. Even if their dresses and appearance are consciously feminine, their behavior is due more to social pressure than to a psychological necessity."¹¹ There exists little academic controversy surrounding the use of *vestida* to refer to *travestis* who engage in homosexual practices and subcultures.

In *Travestidos al desnudo*, set in the western state of Colima, González Pérez chooses to accent the "í" in *travesti* to refer to his objects of study (gay *travestis*) insofar as he identifies *travesti* as referring to drag performers and *vestida* as referring to "all other travestis who don't get up on stage to imitate singers."¹² Interestingly, what he ends up with, *travestí*, is the past participle of the verb *travestir* ("cross-dress") which he nonetheless uses as a noun. As is necessary for the emergence of his object of study, González Pérez engages more directly than Prieur or Lumsden with medicalized

¹⁰ Ibid., 25.

¹¹ Ian Lumsden, *Homosexualidad, sociedad y estado en México* (Mexico City: Solediciones, 1991), 35.

¹² César O. González Pérez, *Travestidos al desnudo: homosexualidad, identidades y luchas territoriales en Colima* (Ciudad de México: Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 2003), 160.

taxonomies of gender deviance, separating *travesti* from the organic relationship with homosexuality that it enjoys in earlier accounts, such as Prieur's and Lumsden's, and relocating it to the realm of gender identity. Indeed, González Pérez imagines *travestismo* as an umbrella term encompassing a wide variety of cross-dressings differentiated by their intensity and separate from sexual orientation.¹³ For the author, what differentiates "transsexualism," "transgenderism," and "transvestism" is the intensity of the individual's desire to modify their body in order to approximate feminization.¹⁴ Juan Pablo Proal's inquiry into gender non-normative lives in Mexico City approaches *travesti* in a similar manner: for him, transvestism is a phenomenon altogether separate and separable from sexual orientation. Indeed, in his discussion of heterotransvestism, Proal establishes three criteria for transvestism: first, "that the individual wear the clothing of the opposite sex in order to experience *temporary* membership in the opposite sex"; second, "that there exist no sexual motivation for cross-dressing"; and thirdly, "that the individual have no desire to *permanently* transform into the opposite sex."¹⁵

The paradigmatic shift evident in early twenty-first century anthropological scholarship, such as González Pérez's and Proal's, in which *travesti* is no longer explored through the lens of homosexuality but rather as a function of gender identity, is important insofar as it points to the embeddedness of the technologies of compartmentalization necessary for the success of the sex-gender-desire model that is currently the structuring

¹³ Ibid., 12.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Juan Pablo Proal, *Vivir en el cuerpo equivocado* (Monterrey: Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, 2013), 77. Italics mine.

force for rights-based discourse on sexual diversity. In other words, the reorganization of *travesti* within anthropological discourse is dependent on, reproduces, and is indicative of the permeation of the sex-gender-desire model, whose point of departure is the ontological distinction between the sexed body, social gender and sexuality.¹⁶ Although, as Vek Lewis rightly points out, "[m]ore than right or wrong, the historical separation of 'gender' and 'sexuality' is merely a variant that became hegemonic," those who approach *travesti* from this vantage point tend to reduce it, as González Pérez and Proal do, to its gendered and gendering attributes attempting, however unsuccessfully, to divorce it from the homosexual ascriptions it emerged with and continues to be seeped in.¹⁷

However ontologically reductive, anthropological scholarship on *travesti* in Latin America has been overwhelmingly conscious of contemporary *travesti*'s geopolitical and cultural specificities. Although it often summons corollaries in the form of various practices of cross-dressing in temporal and geopolitical elsewhere, it nonetheless tends to emphasize the phenomenon's cultural specificities.¹⁸ Though few are as bold as Schifter as to affirm that "the phenomenon is as old as civilization itself," they all

¹⁶ David Valentine, *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 4.

¹⁷ Vek Lewis, *Crossing Sex and Gender in Latin America* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 229.

¹⁸ For examples, see Lumsden, *Homosexualidad, sociedad y estado en México*; Ian Lumsden, *Machos, Maricones, and Gays: Cuba and Homosexuality* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996); Prieur, *Mema's House*; Don Kulick, *Travesti: Sex, Gender, and Culture among Brazilian Transgendered Prostitutes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Jacobo Schifter, *From Toads to Queens: Transvestism in a Latin American Setting* (New York: The Hawthorn Press, 1999); César González Pérez, *Travestidos al desnudo: Homosexualidad, identidades y luchas territoriales en Colima (México)*. Mexico City: Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 2003);

nonetheless engage in the work of lending specificity to what is ultimately viewed as universal practice.¹⁹ To the extent that this is true, anthropological scholarship on *travesti* in Latin America has vigorously participated in the task of crafting *travesti* interiority: *travesti* is interior to particular subjects even as this interiority shapes its exterior surface. In these studies, it is ultimately particular *individuals* who inhabit and are inhabited by *travesti* through self-identification. Until relatively recently, however, little emphasis has been placed on *what*, rather than *who*, inhabits *travesti* and how it comes to do so.

The turn of the twenty-first century marked a disciplinary shift in the academic study of *travesti*: the (late-twentieth century) "explosion in the depiction of 'trans' subjects and acts in contemporary cultural production" was accompanied by a corresponding increase in inquiries into *travesti* from the perspective of literary and cultural studies.²⁰ Devoted to exploring literary and cultural representations of *travesti* rather than *travesti* as lived experience (though, of course, the two are indissoluble), this body of work has primarily given itself over to the task of exploring literary and filmic representations of *travesti*.²¹

Owing in no small part to the Latin American relationship between academia and politics, the inquiries spawned by cultural studies were rapidly politicized by making the link between representation and materiality explicit.²² These overtly politicized inquiries

¹⁹ Schifter, *From Toads to Queens*, 5.

²⁰ Lewis, *Crossing Sex and Gender in Latin America*, 1.

²¹ For examples, see Anke Birkenmaier, "Travestismo latinoamericano: Sor Juana y Sarduy," *Ciberletras* 7 (2002);

²² For examples, see Vek Lewis, "Of Lady-Killers and 'Men Dressed as Women': Soap Opera, Scapegoats, and the Mexico City Police Department," *PORTAL* 5, no. 1 (2008);

into representation are, as Vek Lewis explains in *Crossing Sex and Gender in Latin America*, "not interested in representation for representation's sake [but] rather [...] acutely concerned with how representations potentially impact on, refer to, and dialogue with social realities that are often, perhaps implicitly, viewed as merely outside, and therefore somehow extraneous to, the text."²³

Made possible by these politicized representational inquiries, and focused on the juridical circumstances of trans* people in Argentina, Cabral and Viturro, for instance, come to describe *travestis* as "those persons who, having been assigned the masculine gender at birth, identify themselves in different versions of femininity, and who may or may not surgically or hormonally modify their bodies. The term *travesti* possesses a particular political specificity, in that it unites a generalized condition of social vulnerability, an association with sexual work, the exclusion of basic rights, and the recognition of the same as a political identity."²⁴ The shift from the first to the second sentence of this quote is representative of the paradigmatic shift in academic explorations of *travesti*: the shift from ontology to ontoformation. Put differently, whereas late-twentieth century (largely anthropological) studies of *travesti* took (and accepted) as their starting point the uncontested *travesti* as an ontologically stable category of analysis, the

Lewis, *Crossing Sex and Gender*; Leticia Sabsay, "La representación mediática de la identidad travesti de la identidad en el contexto de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires," in *Identidades, sujetos y subjetividades*, ed. Leonor Arfuch, 171-192 (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2002);

²³ Lewis, *Crossing Sex and Gender*, 7

²⁴ Mauro Cabral (A.I. Grinspan) and Paula Viturro, "(Trans)Sexual Citizenship in Contemporary Argentina," in *Transgender Rights*, eds. Paisley Currah, Richard M. Juang and Shannon Price Minter (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 270.

cultural studies shift of the early twenty-first century began to challenge this ontological stability by exploring how *travesti* comes to inhabit a variety of associations. I use ontoformation rather than ontology in order to emphasize the historical and sociopolitical constructedness of identitarian categories that come to *seem* ontologically stable but are, in fact, the result of long processes of ontologization (i.e. histories of association that, through repetition, are produced as organic relationships).

My journey both begins at this juncture and seeks to expand it. In other words, I'm less interested in the ontological specificities of *travesti* and more interested in the work performed by the ontoformative narratives that congeal to give this identitarian category a sense of essence. At the same time, my interest in ontoformation is a political one: I desire to accompany *travesti* not for the voyeuristic pleasure of doing so but in order to better apprehend the political possibilities and limitations that both shape and are shaped by their representations in public discourse. Importantly and because this project seeks to explore the creation and evolution of a figure by and within public discourse, it does not (perhaps lamentably) center the voices of those inhabiting *travesti* but rather the voices of those crafting *travesti* interiority for and through a national imaginary that, for the most part and however inaccurately, fancies itself separable from and unsullied by *travestismo*.

If the impetus behind Kulick's seminal ethnography was to rectify public discourse regarding *travesti* insofar as it had "everything to do with the idea of *travestis* and nothing at all to do with the real lives of actual *travestis*," I seek to do the opposite, starting with the assumption that the "idea of *travestis*" has everything to do with the lives of (and possibilities opened to) "actual *travestis*." I seek to explore the figure, the

idea, produced by public discourse: how does this figure circulate through time and space? What spaces does it open and what spaces are opened to it by virtue of the particularities of its circulation? How is it taken up, by whom, and for what purposes?

The body of work on *travesti* and *travestismo* offers great insights into the attributions that have come to constitute the contemporary figure of *travesti*. Birkenmaier describes the figure of the *travesti* produced by the Cuban writer Severo Sarduy as that of the hypertelic woman, an exaggerated apotheosis of femininity.²⁵ Hypertelia (both hetero- and homotransvestic), a characteristic of the baroque, "refers to all excess, to every mechanism that exceeds its own limits, to every artefact that overwhelms its own function, to movement that goes beyond its own objective, to the project that overcomes its own ends ceasing thus to be a project and transforming itself into a push, an inertia, an obstinacy. It is, ultimately, another word for the monster."²⁶ If the *travesti* is, indeed, a hypertelic figure, excess becomes the figure's defining feature: "even if this was his objective, the [hetero]*travesti* will ultimately neither clone nor replicate a woman in order to supplant her; his femininity will exceed the feminine."²⁷ Hypertelia is, simultaneously, that which betrays the (hetero)*travesti*: "to hide the male, erase him, to draw on top of his

²⁵ Anke Birkenmaier, "Travestismo latinoamericano: Sor Juana y Sarduy," *Ciberletras* 7 (2002), n.p.

²⁶ Martín Gómez Chans, "Soy una mujer normal," *H Enciclopedia* (Uruguay), n.p. "Refiere a todo exceso, a todo aquel organismo que rebasa sus propios límites, a todo aquel artefacto que desborda su propia función, a aquél movimiento que va más allá de su propio objetivo, al proyecto que supera su propia finalidad. Es, a fin de cuentas, otra palabra para el *monstruo*."

²⁷ *Ibid.*, "El travesti, finalmente, aunque ese fuera su objetivo, no va a clonar o a replicar a una mujer para suplantarla: su femeneidad va a superar lo femenino."

body the body of a woman, to hypertrophy femininity until it becomes perfectly unbelievable, grotesque, or even aggressive."²⁸

Working within the context of Argentinian political activism, Sabsay, for instance, notes that "*travesti* identity has become associated with excess, scandal, [and] a lack of limits in expressive forms"²⁹ as well as with sex work³⁰ and exteriority³¹. Also in the Argentinian context, and as mentioned in the earlier quote, Cabral and Viturro point to *travesti*'s association with sex work, sociopolitical vulnerability, scandal, perversion, and criminality.³² Within the Mexican context, Vek Lewis explores the the mediatic suturing of deception and criminality to the figure of the *travesti* through popular media³³ and establishes a number of additional *travesti* attributions in his monograph *Crossing Sex and Gender in Latin America*, among which are, "doubleness, superficiality, frivolity, and dangerousness."³⁴ Working within the context of Puebla, Mexico, Carreras Sendra explores the criminality, abnormality, and disposability attached to *vestida* sex workers.³⁵

²⁸ Ibid. "Ocultar al macho, borrarlo, dibujar encima de su cuerpo un cuerpo de mujer, hipertrofiar la femeneidad hasta volverla perfectamente inverosímil, grotesca, o incluso agresiva [...]"

²⁹ Sabsay, "La representación mediática de la identidad travesti," 185.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 176.

³² Cabral and Viturro, "(Trans)Sexual Citizenship in Contemporary Argentina," 267-270.

³³ Lewis, "Of Of Lady-Killers and 'Men Dressed as Women'," 24.

³⁴ Lewis, *Crossing Sex and Gender*, 2.

³⁵ Natatxa Carreras Senda, "Sexoservidores-homosexuales-vestidas en la ciudad de Puebla," in *Sujetos Neoliberales en México*, ed. Ricardo Francisco Macip (Puebla, México: BUAP, 2009), 30-45.

With the sole exception of exteriority (as I will show, the national interiority of *travesti* is the site of important discursive mechanisms), the contemporary figure of the Mexican *travesti* as produced by public discourse certainly seems to be constituted by its hypertelic associations: superficiality, deception, excess, grotesqueness, scandal, aggression, criminality, perversion, and disposability, among others. Although, as mentioned, my work emerges from the careful inferences of studies that theorize *travesti* as figure, I nonetheless digress from them in terms of my site of analysis: instead of exploring the figure of *travesti* in literary productions, I look to public discourse, via newspapers, in order to trace the historical circulations of *travesti*.

1.3. Methodology

This dissertation was initially imagined as a wholly different project: it was meant to explore Mexican homonationalism(s) -the ways in which particular forms of queer life are folded into the national imaginary- more broadly. However, over the course of my inquiry into homonationalism, I became haunted by the specter of *travesti*, a figure frequently hailed by LGBTTTTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, *travesti*, transexual, transgender, and intersex) discourse, though typically only nominally so. I find Sarah Ahmed's affective conceptualization of the archive as a "contact zone" particularly helpful in coming to terms with how the project emerged and developed. "An effect of multiple forms of contact, including institutional forms of contact (with libraries, books, web sites), as well as everyday forms of contact (with friends, families, others)," Ahmed reminds us, "[s]ome forms of contact are presented and authorised through writing (and listed in the references), whilst other forms of contact will be missing, will be erased,

even though they may leave their trace."³⁶ My interest in *travesti* developed as a result of both authorized and unauthorized forms of contact: it is as much the result of interactions with that which can be listed in the references as with that which cannot be listed among them.

The sensation of being haunted by *travesti* began when I saw, for the first time, a trans-awareness project, launched by Mexico City's Commission for the Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination (COPRED), as I rode the Mexico City subway. Although COPRED included *travesti* as a category of importance within its informational posters (posters that explained the campaign's *raison d'etre*), it nonetheless failed to include *travesti* within the campaign itself, exclusively privileging, instead, trans (*transexual* and *transgénero*) personhood. In a sense, through the statistical expropriation of *travesti* death (and violence), *travesti* did the work of buttressing a trans citizenship that not only did not include *travesti* but which depended on its exclusion. The spectralization of *travesti* became, to me, increasingly obvious in both Mexican LGBTTTTI popular discourse and scholarship: within these "progressive" imaginaries, *travesti* is generally reduced to either a state preceding *transgénero/transexual* or to a primitive way of performing *transgénero/transexual*. Such is the spectralization of *travestismo* that Roshell, the owner of the longest-running *travesti* club in Mexico, described it as "a gender on the verge of extinction."³⁷ Indeed, when I asked informants for contact

³⁶ Sarah Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 14.

³⁷ Roshell Terranova, interview by a de la maza p rez tamayo, August 18, 2016, interview 32, transcript. "A veces pienso que el travesti es un g nero en peligro de extinci n."

information for (non-trans-identified) *travestis* involved in the LGBTTTTI movement, none came to their minds. "There is almost no presence of *travestis* who identify as such at meetings," explained a conversational partner who is deeply involved in TTT organizing in Mexico City.³⁸

Importantly, the spectralization of *travesti* is reproduced and reinforced by what little Mexican scholarship on *travesti* exists. In one of only two existing academic monographs on Mexican *travesti*, Annick Prieur, for instance, foretells the demise of *travesti* through the modernization of identitarian categories.³⁹ For the author, *travesti*, a symbol of pre-modern homosexuality insofar as it reproduces heteronormative models of masculine-feminine eroto-affective pairings, is doomed to wane as the modern (virile) homosexual gains ground.⁴⁰ For González Pérez, on the other hand, *travestismo* is at risk of disappearance through *transexualismo*, insofar as he positions the latter as the former's logical conclusion.⁴¹ These epitaphs, however, ring premature insofar as the figure of *travesti* continues to function discursively as the constitutive outside of sexual and gender nonconformities that seek recognition, via rights, by the State and, as such, is (at least temporarily) indispensable.

If the premature spectralization of *travesti* was what initially invited me to take a closer look at the figure, a first look was sufficient to conclude that despite the frequency

³⁸ Lía García, Facebook message to author, August 6, 2016. "[C]asi no hay presencia travesti como tal, que se asuma así en las reuniones [...]"

³⁹ Annick Prieur, *Mema's House, Mexico City: On Transvestites, Queens, and Machos* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 269-270.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ César O. González Pérez, *Travestidos al desnudo: homosexualidad, identidades y luchas territoriales en Colima* (Ciudad de México: Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 2003), 155-156.

with which it is summoned within the Mexican imaginary (and, as a result, its robustness as a figure within the popular imaginary), *travesti* remains deeply undertheorized as a discursive figure. Such is the figure's robustness that it is quite consistently identifiable even when left unnamed, as is the case, for instance, with La Manuela of *El Lugar Sin Límites* (both the novel and the film). Such is its definitional slipperiness, on the other hand, that out of ten texts on *travesti*, you are likely to get ten different definitions of *travesti*. Upon encountering such a(n often contradictory) definitional breadth, my initial question was not "who is a *travesti*?" but, rather "what holds *travesti*, as a figure, together?" As I will explain in the subsections that follow, this question, in turn, leads to the question of ontoformation, or how *essences* come to be.

My interest in ontoformation is, at its core, an historiographic project. It is an attempt to privilege not totalizing, statist history but, rather, "the small voice of history" by "interrupting the telling in the dominant version, breaking up its storyline, and making a mess of its plot."⁴² In what follows, I describe the assumptions, strategies, and technologies implicated in engaging such a project. I begin with "the who" and make my way to "the how," in an effort to lay out these assumptions, strategies and technologies. In doing so, I hope to lay bare the work involved in sketching out a partial history of what would, in the late twentieth-century, be baptized as the *travesti*.

1.3.1. *The Who*

⁴² Ranajit Guha, "The Small Voice of History," in *Subaltern Studies IX: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, eds. Shahid Amin and Dipesh Chakrabarty, 1-12, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 12.

Although the subject of inquiry might seem self-evident (the *travesti*), tracking the figure of the *travesti* within the public imaginary in Mexico is a colossal task, owing in no small part to its historical and geopolitical specificities, its variations through time, its definitional slipperiness, and archival imperfections. To seek out the "*travesti*," as such, in nineteenth-century Mexico would be to encounter the widely praised practice of operatic cross-dressing or the elite, French-inspired masquerade balls so popular at the time, rather than the contemporary *travesti* (which is not to say that these iterations of *travesti* are irrelevant to explorations of contemporary *travesti*). For this reason, I began this project by systematically analyzing the contemporary *travesti* as it is produced by public discourse: I looked to the twenty-first-century archives (1999-2015) of the three newspapers with the greatest circulation in Mexico -*El Universal*, *El Reforma* and *La Jornada*- and indexed every article that mentioned the word "*travesti*."

After analyzing the primary constitutive elements of the contemporary *travesti*, I was able to track the figure of the *travesti* prior to its baptism by looking for words such as "*sodomita*," (sodomite), "*sodomético*," (ibid.), "*pederasta*," (pederast), "*invertido*" (invert), "*afeminado*," (effete) "*maricón*," (fag), "*anfíbio*" ("amphibian") and phrases such as "dressed as a woman," ("*vestido de mujer*") "dressed as women," ("*vestidos de mujeres*") "disguised as a woman" ("*disfrazado de mujer*"), etc, in newspapers going back to the eighteenth century as well as in archival materials dating back to the sixteenth century. What I found was a beautifully descriptive history of the present: I found that the whole of the articles sketched out the conditions of possibility for the emergence of the named *travesti* in the late 1970's.

1.3.2. *The What*

As suggested above, this project explores not the lived reality of *travestismo* but the figure of *travesti* as historically produced by public discourse (which, I argue, deeply impacts *travesti* materiality). In other words, my primary research question is simple: "what holds (the contemporary figure of) *travesti* together within the public imaginary?" What makes *travesti* a recognizable figure even when left unnamed? The "what?" of this project, then, is *travesti* ontoformation: what are the processes through which *travesti* becomes a coherent and self-contained figure? I define *travesti* broadly, as male-assigned technologies of feminization, insofar as this allows me to avoid what I perceive as unnecessary and counter-productive confrontations between *travesti* and other identitarian categories such as man, woman, homosexual, transgender, and transexual. Individual *travestis* may, in fact, associate with none, one, or several of these categories simultaneously. The figure of *travesti*, as I have come to find, however, is often placed in greater proximity to some rather than other categories at different points in time and in different geopolitical sites. The primary purpose of this project is precisely to gain a better understanding of *travesti*'s proximities and associations *beyond* male-assigned feminization. In other words, in looking to *travesti*'s processes of ontoformation, I seek to suss out *travesti*'s additional constitutive elements (as well as the ways and moments in which they have come to be associated with *travesti*).

1.3.3. *The Why*

The majority of scholarly works on *travesti* treat the identitarian category as an anachronistic figure: it exists in the present without a past and often with an uncertain and

unsteady future. By rendering the figure ahistorical, these works aid in the production of *travesti* ontology as fixed and timeless. The end result of this is that *travesti*'s different associations are often positioned as reflecting certain underlying truths. For instance, in the case of criminality, the association is often explained away as existing because *travestis* engage in criminal and criminal-adjacent behaviors. Bluntly put: I refuse such essentializing explanations. Tracking the figure of the *travesti* through its various temporal circulations, then, allows for the constitutive elements of the contemporary *travesti* to emerge as associations and proximities, as processes of ontoformation, rather than as fixed and timeless. As mentioned earlier in this Introduction, my interest in ontoformation is not merely voyeuristic: I seek out the processes through which *travesti* comes to be in order to better understand its political dimensions, the discursive sites it is allowed to access and those from which it is disallowed.

1.3.4. *The Where*

As mentioned above, the first phase of this project involved compiling information regarding the *travesti* in the twenty-first century in order to establish the constitutive elements of the contemporary figure of the *travesti*. In order to do so, I systematically indexed every instance of the word "travesti" published in the three newspapers with the largest circulation in Mexico: *El Reforma*, *El Universal*, and *La Jornada*. The second phase of the project, as I will describe in greater depth in the sections that follow, involved tracing the histories of these elements and associations. In order to do so, I used additional newspapers (*El Siglo Diez y Nueve*, *El Demócrata*, *El Popular*, *El País*, *El Contemporáneo*, *El Nacional*, etc.) and other archival sources going

back to the colonial period (via the National General Archive). Although they often claim to be national sources, most of the sources used in both phases, however, were/are produced in Mexico City and, as such, are deeply metrocentric/metronormative⁴³, not only foregrounding events that took place in the nation's capital or other large cities across the Republic but also depicting an urban/rural divide that privileges the civilizational imperative of the former.

Indeed, the *travesti* is largely imagined as an urban figure unable to be incorporated by rurality (except in the case of the Zapotec muxes, who are often likened to *travestis*). Oftentimes the only accounts of *travesti* rurality published by newspapers involve violence and death. Importantly, however, the metronormativity of news sources that imagine themselves to be "national" but are, in fact, produced in Mexico City, extends to the point of provincializing all spaces outside of Mexico City (it is not uncommon, for instance, for spaces outside of Mexico City to be referred to as "province" ("*provincia*") or "the interior of the Republic" ("*el interior de la República*")). Such is the self-assigned progressive exceptionalism of Mexico City that it has given itself the title of "the city of rights" ("*la ciudad de los derechos*").⁴⁴ Given this, it is important to resist the imagined placelessness of sources published in Mexico City - a universalizing narrative made possible by a metronormativity that extends beyond the

⁴³ Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*, (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 36. Metronormativity, a term coined by Halberstam in 2005, refers to the "conflation of 'urban' and 'visible' in many normalizing narratives of gay/lesbian subjectivities."

⁴⁴ For examples, see Aram Barra, "La Ciudad de México, una posibilidad de reforzar los derechos humanos," *Mexican Times* (Mexico City), Jan. 28, 2016; and Jesús Ortega Martínez, "La ciudad de los derechos y libertades," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), Apr. 19, 2016;

queer. As such, it is particularly important to delineate Mexico City as a primary site of analysis. Thus, and despite the imagined national character of most of my sources, my research is situated in Mexico City, although several generalizations can be cautiously made to other urban spaces in the Republic.

1.3.5. *The When*

This project is Foucauldian in the sense of its approach to history: rather than select a particular historical period for investigation, I employed a problem-based approach.⁴⁵ I began by sketching out the constitutive elements of twenty-first century *travesti* and continued by tracking their historical circulations. To be sure, there are several "when's" in this project: historical moments that emerge as particularly relevant to the figure of the *travesti*. Among these moments, for instance, are the 1871 decriminalization of private, consensual, adult sodomy, the 1901 discursive explosion that rebranded the sodomite into the *afeminado*, and the emergence of the named *travesti* in the late 1970's. However, other historical moments and events, though perhaps less obvious, are just as relevant to the crafting of the figure of the *travesti*, such as the rise of Positivist Criminology in the late nineteenth-century, the production of "zones of tolerance" in the early twentieth-century, and the rise of *transgénero* in the twenty-first century. Insofar as it is meant to be a partial history of the present, this project spans an exorbitant temporal range (from the colonial period to the present).

1.3.6. *The How*

⁴⁵ Gavin Kendall and Gary Wickham, *Using Foucault's Methods*, (London: SAGE Publications, 1999), 22.

The organizing logic structuring the present line(s) of inquiry borrows from a postpositivist realist perspective that a) views identities as simultaneously constructed and real, as well as mediated through both cognitive and social processes; b) asserts that knowledge produced in the context of oppression should be afforded epistemic privilege; and c) claims that individual and collective agency should be a part of discussions of identity.⁴⁶ In other words, this research project begins with the assumption that discursive (socio-politico-temporal) processes simultaneously result in and are constituted by the (national) subjectivities they (re)produce and that these subjectivities are fecund sites of analysis through which macro-level processes are (re)articulated, (re)appropriated and resisted.

This project draws from the Foucauldian method of archaeology, as described by Kendall and Wickham in their monograph *Using Foucault's Methods*, insofar as the method attempts, at the very least:

- 1 to chart the relation between the sayable and the visible;
- 2 to analyze the relationship between one statement and other statements;
- 3 to formulate rules for the repeatability of statements (or, if you like, the use of statements);
- 4 to analyse the positions which are established between subjects [...] in regard to statements;
- 5 to describe 'surfaces of emergence' - places within which objects are designated and acted upon;
- 6 to describe 'institutions', which acquire authority and provide limits within which discursive objects may act or exist;

⁴⁶ Satya P. Mohanty, "Introduction: Reclaiming Identity," in *Reclaiming Identity: Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism*, eds. Paula Moya and Michael Hames-Garcia (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 58.

7 to describe 'forms of specification', which refer to the ways in which discursive objects are targeted. A 'form of specification' is a system for understanding a particular phenomenon with the aim of relating it to other phenomena.⁴⁷

I approach archaeology through the lens of *rasquachismo*, a working-class ethos in which “the irreverent and spontaneous are employed to make the most from the least.”⁴⁸ According to the proto-*jotería* scholar Tomás Ybarra Frausto, “one is never *rasquache*, it is always someone else, someone of a lower status, who is judged to be outside the demarcators of approved taste and decorum.”⁴⁹ Inhabiting a *rasquache* sensibility, Maylei Blackwell develops the notion of retrofitted memory, a scavenger methodology of sorts, in order to excavate Chicana subjectivities from a historical archive that would subsume them under the masculinized frame of the Chicano movement and the Anglo-centric banner of white feminism.⁵⁰ Retrofitted memory, which she describes as “a form of countermemory” that draws “from both discarded and suppressed forms of knowledge [creating] new forms of consciousness customized to embodied material realities, political visions and creative desires for societal transformation,” seems particularly well-suited as a postpositivist realist technology to the extent that it considers the material, discursive and cognitive components of subject

⁴⁷ Ibid., 26.

⁴⁸ Amalia Mesa-Bains, “Domesticana: The Sensibility of Chicana Rasquache,” *Aztlán* 24, no. 2 (1999): 157.

⁴⁹ Tomás Ybarra Frausto, “Rasquachismo: A Chicano sensibility,” in *Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation, 1965-1985*, eds. Richard Griswold del Castillo et al. (Los Angeles: Wright Gallery, UCLA, 1991), 155.

⁵⁰ Maylei Blackwell, *¡Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2011).

formation and, due to its *rasquache* lineage, is particularly attentive to those inhabiting spaces of precarity and resistance.⁵¹

1.3.6.1. Phase one

As suggested in the previous sections, this project can be broken down into two primary phases. The first of these, meant to suss out the primary constitutive elements of the contemporary figure of *travesti*, involved the systematic indexing of all twenty-first century articles mentioning *travesti* in the three newspapers with the largest circulation in Mexico: *El Universal*, *El Reforma* and *La Jornada*. These newspapers are all Mexico City-based and represent leftist (*La Jornada*), rightist (*El Reforma*) and centrist (*El Universal*) political leanings. I categorized these articles according to how *travesti* was evoked within the narratives in order to gain a better understanding of how *travesti* is shaped within print (newspaper) culture.

The journalistic cross-overs and hybridizations of late-twentieth- and twenty-first-century representations of *travesti* make classifying articles according to genre a complicated affair. For instance, in the chapters that follow, I will suggest that there exists a pattern sustained from 1999 to 2009, in *El Universal*, wherein the majority of articles published that contain the word "*travesti*" can be categorized as "*espectáculos*." This, however, is significantly more complicated than it seems and is partially a function of the broad and shifting nature of what can be (and is) categorized as "*espectáculos*". A journalistic section that best (or at least most often) translates into "entertainment" insofar as it features artistic/leisure objects of mass consumption, including movies, plays, and

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

celebrity gossip, *espectáculos* literally translates to "spectacles" which is, as I will suggest, a far more suitable translation for the purpose of understanding the circulation of *travesti*.

Although scandals involving celebrities are often subsumed under the rubric of *espectáculos* by the newspapers themselves, this is not always the case. For instance, if a scandal involves a famous athlete (as they often do), the article(s) might appear in the Sports section, the Culture section, the Entertainment section, and/or the Opinion section. It is for this reason that I re-categorized the articles primarily according to the affective responses they might be said to elicit. In other words, my category of *espectáculos* includes two types of spectacles: the first refers to spectacles of mass consumption that can be described as "the stage and the screen" (*travesti* as a theatrical method, role or show) and the second refers to the scandals produced through the association of the figure of *travesti* with public figures. Although the latter could often be described as a *nota roja*, I did not categorize it as such because the focus is on the public figure's shame (and shaming) rather than the *travesti* haunting them.

Under *nota roja*, I categorized three types of articles: 1) those that emphasize the *travesti*'s criminality, 2) those that emphasize the *travesti* as a "deserving" victim (in other words, not explicitly criminalized but sufficiently proximal to criminality so as to deserve the violence received), and 3) those that explicitly characterize the *travesti* as both criminal and victim. There was certainly quite a bit of hesitation with some of the articles which were categorized under *espectáculos*, under both sub-categories, as they could have easily been subsumed under *nota roja*. The decisive factor was affective:

articles subsumed under *espectáculos* were imbued with a sense of distance (whether because the *travesti* discussed is fictional or because the celebrity of the public figure who was highlighted produces a sense of distance) whereas those assigned the category of *nota roja* speak of people rendered ordinary through anonymity which, in turn, allows the articles to be narrated with the anticipatory anxiety of what *could be* a proximal threat.

A third category that I created was "Art and Academia." Though most of these were printed in the Culture section, once again an important factor for inclusion into this category was affective: all articles narrated *travesti* in a relatively unthreatening way through either fictionalization or the distance of academic language. These articles primarily referred to artifacts that might be described as "high culture" and are therefore not necessarily objects of popular consumption. This is not to say that *travesti* is necessarily represented in non-stereotypical ways. As with the overlap between *espectáculos* and *nota roja*, several of the residents of the third category could migrate to other categories with relative ease.

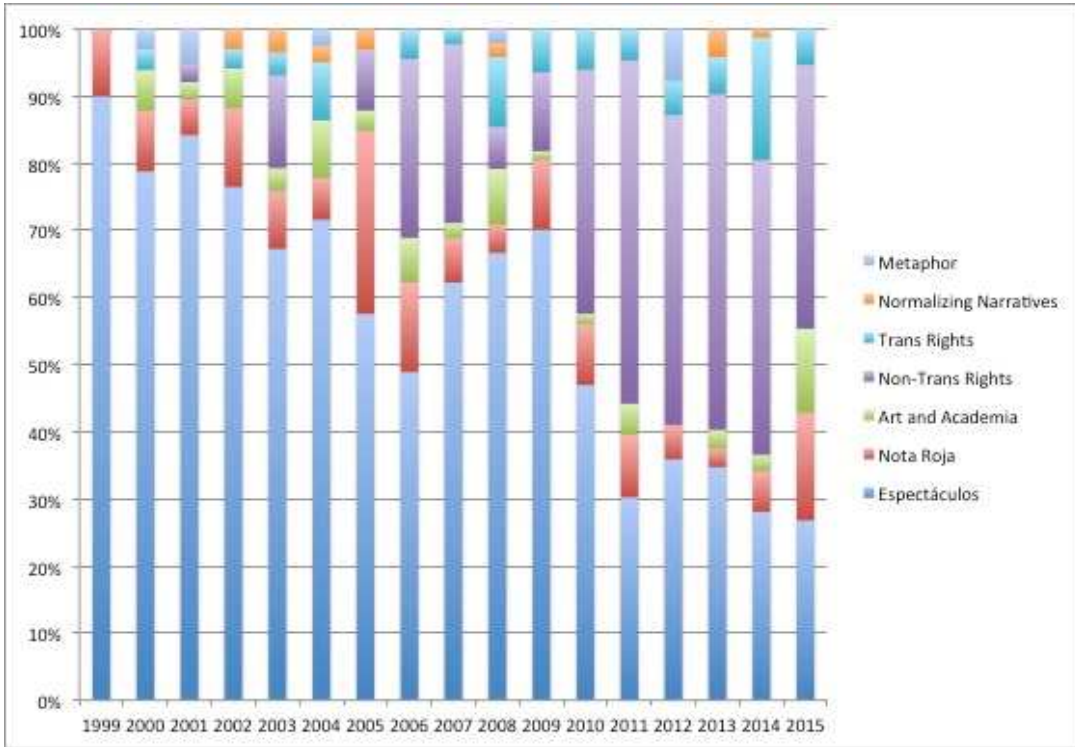
The fourth and fifth categories become particularly relevant for the discussion of the ways in which *transexual* and *transgénero* become mobilized and will be discussed in greater depth in the following chapter. However, they are also quite significant for the circulation of *travesti*, particularly after 2009. The fourth category, "Non-Trans Rights", includes discourses of human rights that are not trans- or *travesti*-specific and which are, most often, focused on non-*travesti* and non-trans LGB people. In other words, these are mainly articles in which *travesti*, *transexual*, and *transgénero* are mentioned only as a

spelling-out of the monolithic acronym LGBTTTI, usually in the interest of providing a semblance of community support for gay and lesbian political projects, such as same-sex marriage. The fifth category, "Trans Rights," is closely related to the fourth but includes discourses in which trans people are the focus of the rights-based discourse, usually as political actors. In the case of *travestis*, this is rarely the case.

The next-to-last category is "Normalizing Vignettes", in which a *travesti*, though named, is presented as neither criminal, miserable, nor scandalous (or at least not by virtue of inhabiting *travesti*). The focus of these articles is not on *travestismo* itself and the *travestis* that surface do so only in reference to the topic. Finally, the category of "Metaphor for Deception" describes those articles that use *travesti* not within the context of sexual or gendered deviance but as a synonym for deception. Figure 1.1 sketches out the breakdown of these categories for articles published in *El Universal*, the newspaper with the greatest circulation in Mexico.

These categorizations became the foundation of what I came to identify as the constitutive elements of the contemporary figure of *travesti* as it is produced by public discourse and provided a starting point for tracking the historical circulations of *travesti*. For instance, given the frequency with which *travesti* appeared in proximity to criminal or criminal-adjacent activities, I decided to track this history of criminality in order to understand how it becomes constitutive of the contemporary figure of the *travesti*. Similarly, given *travesti's* frequent association with spectacle, as suggested by the number of articles mentioning *travesti* that could be categorized under the rubric of *espectáculos*, I decided to explore *travesti's* history of spectacularization.

Figure 1
 "Travesti" in *El Universal* by Category



1.3.6.2. Phase two

Once I had achieved a relative understanding of the inner workings of the contemporary figure of the *travesti*, I submerged myself in the pre-twenty-first-century archives in an effort to find historical traces of the *travesti*. I would quickly come to find that *travesti*, as a named figure, was a product of the late twentieth-century and, as such, tracking its historical circulations would necessitate an inquiry into proximal figures, such as the *sodomita/sodomético* (sodomite), the *pederasta* (pederast), the *invertido* (invert), the *anfíbio* (amphibian), the *maricón* (fag), the *afeminado* (effete), the *homosexual*, etc. For this reason, and availing myself of Mexico's National Autonomous University's digitized newspaper archive, I compiled newspaper articles that discussed male-assigned technologies of feminization using a broad range of epithets and phrases (including "dressed as a woman," (*vestido de mujer*) "dressed as women," (*vestidos de mujeres*) and "disguised as a woman" (*disfrazado de mujer*)). Much to my grateful surprise, I found scores of newspaper articles discussing male-assigned technologies of feminization dating back to the eighteenth century.

After transcribing them⁵², I proceeded to analyze their contents in a process not entirely unlike that engaged in the first section. Importantly, however, rather than assigning each article to a category, I coded individual phrases or sentences (as well as entire articles) according to their discursive function. For instance, words, phrases,

⁵² Though digitized, most articles in UNAM's digital archive are restricted to the archive itself. Although it is possible to print the articles or have them sent via e-mail, for a small fee. However, given the amount of data I gathered, the combined cost of printing them or having them e-mailed was prohibitive. It is for this reason, as well as for ease of examination, that I decided to transcribe the articles.

sentences, and articles that were meant to convey disgust were coded accordingly.

Similarly, words, phrases, sentences, and articles that discussed the criminality of male-assigned technologies of feminization were coded under the node "criminality." Perhaps unsurprisingly, discursive patterns quickly emerged and often reflected several of the categories that had emerged in the first phase of the project.

The second phase of this project also involved gathering data from temporal sites underrepresented in UNAM's newspaper archive. For instance, for information prior to the eighteenth century, I availed myself of the documents safeguarded in the Nation's General Archive (*Archivo General de la Nación*). In particular, I looked up sodomy cases archived in various sections, including Inquisition, Criminal, Jesuit, Justice, Colonial, and Supreme Court. Similarly, in order to gather data from the 1960's onward (of which UNAM's digital archives have quite little), I looked to the *Centro Académico de la Memoria de Nuestra América* (Academic Center for the Memory of Our America) compiled by Mexico City's Autonomous University. Specifically, I examined the contents of their *Fondo I: Identidad, diversidad, disidencia y derechos sexuales (1936-2011)*, a compilation of documents (including newspaper articles) regarding "identity, diversity, disidence, and sexual rights" from 1936 to 2011 . As I did with the data gathered from UNAM's digital archives, I transcribed these documents and coded them according to their discursive function.

1.4. Chapter Overview

Chapter two, "The Homosexualization of *Travesti*," describes the emergence of the figure of *travesti* prior to the availability of the word. I describe the ways in which the

protean figure congeals as it circulates from the colonial sodomite, to the Porfirian *afeminado*, to the post-revolutionary homosexual and how it finally breaks away from the homosexual in the late twentieth-century (though without becoming dehomosexualized), ultimately working its way into an uneasy attachment to trans. In this chapter, my intent is to show the mobility of *travesti* as a condition of possibility for the homosexual rights-bearing subject to emerge through a politics of identity and respectability dependent on its detachment from the perverse topographies of *travesti*.

Chapter three, "The Criminality of *Travesti*" explores vice as one of *travesti*'s constitutive elements. Flowing from suggestions made in the previous chapter, this chapter aims to both historicize and make evident the criminality that has become and remains sutured to *travesti* primarily through its metonymic associations with sex work, drug use and social dis/ease, sexual exploitation, and deception. As such, in this chapter, I argue that rather than a consequence of lived experiences, the criminality of *travesti* is the effect of a rather long history of imagined (and quite forcibly produced) proximities to vice. Furthermore, I suggest that the sustained production of these proximities has yielded rather serendipitous effects, namely the rehabilitation and respectabilization, by comparison, of particular non-*travesti* sexual and gendered non-normativities.

Chapter four, "The Spectacularization of *Travesti*," seeks to nuance the claim often made by scholars of Mexican homoeroticisms, that the stage has historically been the only safe haven available to male-assigned feminizations in Mexico. As such, the chapter explores four different relationships between *travesti* and spectacularization: *travesti* as method, *travesti* as role, *travesti* as show, and *travesti* as scandal. This chapter

argues that spectacularization rather than simply rendering *travestismo* acceptable, depends on and reinforces cis- and heteronormativity, (re)producing *travesti* as Other.

Chapter five, "The Disposability of *Travesti*" explores the discursive production of *travesti* death. Importantly, I argue that as trans (*transgénero* and *transexual*) lives are increasingly folded into national life, a new form of death emerges, trans death, grievable insofar as their lives are produced as political existences. *Travesti* death, however, continues to depend on and reinforce the figure of *travesti* as existing in the margins of the body public, as a figure unincorporable by the national imaginary. By exploring mainstream accounts of *travesti*, *transgénero* and *transexual* spectacularized death, I seek to gain a better understanding of the deathworlds accessible to each and how these deathworlds are produced, both in life and through death.

Chapter six, "The Affective Registers of *Travesti*," begins with the premise that "what sticks 'shows us' where the object has travelled through what it has gathered onto its surface, gatherings that become a part of the object, and call into question its integrity as an object."⁵³ I follow the affective circulations of what would emerge as *travesti* in the mid-to-late twentieth century in order to explore how the figure comes to be, as a structure of feeling. My primary contention is that the ontoformative narratives that congeal to furnish *travesti* with a sense of essence establish the parameters for the affective registers that the category is allowed to access and mobilize. I will suggest that this figure (and, concomitantly, the identity that it signals and constructs) acquires its (il)legibility primarily as a structure of feeling. Ultimately, I contend that it is these

⁵³ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 91.

interconnected structures of feeling that regulate not only *travesti's*, but also *transgénero's*, and *transexual's* seemingly incompatible but co-constituted ability to access particular discursive frameworks. I focus first and foremost on *travesti*, arguing that it has come to operate as an affective repository for that which diverges from nationally profitable affectations, most recently by way of anxiety, providing a space of abjection so that the respectable transnormative subject may emerge, sufficiently rehabilitated, as a rights-bearing subject. This space of abjection served a similar purpose in the rehabilitative production of the contemporary homosexual. It is only through the preservation of what is abjected, as a constitutive outside, that the anxious affective specter of the of *travesti* can continue the work of legitimating that which it shores up.

1.5. Conclusion

The account with which I began this chapter presents the *travesti* as an affective prop for national happiness. Indeed, the account presents the *travesti's* body as an object that may be used at will in the expression of national joy but which may simultaneously, and paradoxically, neither itself partake in such joy nor express any affect other than joy. Objectified and ultimately used for a greater purpose (i.e. the expression of a national cohesion brought about by a shared orientation to a national pastime), the assault is so unthinkable in the midst of national elation that the *travesti herself* is arrested for instigating it, making it clear that any opposition to the fulfillment of processes of national bonding will not only not be mourned but will be disappeared (both through the act of warehousing through incarceration and through a journalistic retrospective that assures us that nothing happened, even as it tells us that it did). The figure of the killjoy

vanishes long before it is given an opportunity to emerge. Indeed, it should not surprise us that the second article to report the assault describes it as a casualty of war insofar as it is enacted by a mob-turned-army, with "strip!" as their "war cry." Grieving an act produced as honorably perpetrated for and by the nation would, after all, distract from the ultimate objective: national cohesion through shared performances of happiness.

The terms dictating the public imagination's inability to register violence against the *travesti* were established long before clothes were ripped from a body that would shortly thereafter be maimed. Long though the journey may have been, by 2002 *travesti* itself was the only alibi necessary to simultaneously authorize and conceal such violence. How did *travesti* come to legitimate violence? Where, when and how did it become a metonym for disposability? In what follows, I accompany the figure of the *travesti* as it travels through time. I do not begin this journey in the unspecified temporal region of "since time immemorial," as those who biologize *travesti* do, but seek glimpses of the figure, rather than the phenomenon, where there are glimpses to be found. Although a word is not necessarily *itself* a figure, it is not uncommon for words -and for some more than others- to "stick because they become attached *through* particular affects."⁵⁴ It is precisely this assumption that underlies what follows and precedes it: the figure I seek is not one defined by particular practices or individual feelings but, rather, by a series of affective registers that have come to stick to a particular sign.

In the chapters that follow, I trace the histories of several of contemporary *travesti*'s constitutive elements -including homosexualization, criminality,

⁵⁴ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 60.

spectacularization, disposability, and particular affective registers- in order to come to an understanding of the contemporary figure of the *travesti* as a figure constituted by long histories of ontoformation (via different associations), rather than as an identitarian category reflecting underlying (naturalized and naturalizing) truths. Although the two are deeply interrelated, to track the history of *travesti* as figure produced by public discourse, rather than an identitarian category, better allows for ontological destabilization and deconstruction which, in turn, allows for an exploration of processes of ontoformation.

2. THE HOMOSEXUALIZATION OF *TRAVESTI*

2.1. Introduction

"Too often, in Latin America, the gay and the transvestite are synonymous," writes Sifuentes-Jáuregui, echoing an anxious lament all too common within contemporary discourses of Mexican homosexuality.⁵⁵ Although an oversimplification, considering that within contemporary Mexican jargon gay (particularly) and *travesti* have been constructed as two distinct entities each made possible by a multitude of contradictory elements since at least the late 1970's, Sifuentes-Jáuregui's reflection regarding the feminization associated with Mexican homosexuality is useful as a starting point.

Historiographers of Mexican homoeroticisms and homosexualities have produced a relatively portly corpus of scholarship exploring the relationship between effeminacy and what would, in the early twentieth century, emerge as modern Mexican homosexuality. In 2017, however, it perhaps makes more sense to speak of the *detravestification* of homosexuality than it does to speak of the homosexualization of *travesti*, insofar as the *travesti* emerges as a figure indissoluble from the homosexual by way of the sodomite and, later, the *afeminado*. However, if *travesti* has resisted (or been resisted by) the normativizing allure of trans even as it has been abjected from the bosom of the homosexuality that produced and nurtured it, an exploration of their co-constitutive history seems not only useful but necessary.

⁵⁵ Ben Sifuentes-Jáuregui, *Transvestism, Masculinity, and Latin American Literature: Genders Share Flesh*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 10.

As mentioned briefly in the introduction, the *detravestification* of homosexuality and the attempted but wildly unsuccessful dehomosexualization of *travesti* rely on and reinforce the analytic technologies of compartmentalization on which modern sexuality studies depend. Insofar as they attempt to rewrite legible sexual and gendered identities onto the palimpsest of historical practices difficult to index under the sex-gender-desire model, these processes can be thought of as technologies of modernization. Indeed, as I will argue, one of the great victories of contemporary homosexuality has been its sanitization through its differentiation and distancing from the perversities of *travesti*.

In what follows, I track a variety of popular and popularized figures imagined as precursors to the contemporary homosexual and the *travesti* in an effort to both show how and under what conditions male-assigned technologies of feminization and homoerotic practices have been historically associated with one another. Similarly, I explore their historical divergences, focusing primarily on the conceptual fragmentation that occurred both as a precursor to, and a result of, the emergence of the gay citizen-subject.

2.2. Colonial *Travesti*

"From the moment that Columbus and Cortés began to document their perceived differences of Indios," writes Garza Carvajal, "the presence of sodomites, of the transvestite in the Indias, signals a 'category crisis that caused the colonial officials to experience cultural anxiety.'"⁵⁶ In *Butterflies will Burn*, Garza Carvajal explores the criminalization of sodomy as a technology of colonization within the territories claimed

⁵⁶ Federico Garza Carvajal, *Butterflies will Burn: Prosecuting Sodomites in Early Modern Spain and Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 181.

in the name of Spain in the sixteenth century. Although the author's discussion of sodomy in Mexico focuses on the mid-seventeenth century prosecution of sodomites, he nonetheless argues that male-male sodomy, *el pecado nefando* ("the nefarious sin"), among the indigenous peoples of the Americas was located by colonizers and colonial apologists as existing within a community of vices specific to Indianness that included anthropophagy, inebriation, and the diabolic, among others, the combatting of which together were used as a civilizational alibi for conquest.⁵⁷

The legacy of *el crimen contra natura* ("the crime against nature") followed the Spanish on their journey across the Atlantic and served an important purpose throughout the colonial enterprise. Although Mexican historiographers have typically claimed that sodomy was primarily regulated by ecclesiastical authorities and the Inquisition⁵⁸, Tortorici argues that the Holy Office did, in fact, *not* have jurisdiction over the *pecado nefando* or the other sins against nature insofar as Ferdinand the Catholic had placed sodomy under the regulation of secular authorities from 1509.⁵⁹ The Mexican Inquisition, however, was allowed jurisdiction over sodomy cases only when they involved heresy or heretical propositions.⁶⁰

Armed with often contradictory juridical apparatuses such as *Las Siete Partidas del Rey Don Alfonso el Sabio*, the *Leyes de Toro*, the *Novísima Recopilación de las Leyes*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 132.

⁵⁸ For examples, see Palafox Menegazzi, "Sodomía y masculinidad en la ciudad de México," 292-293; and Bracamonte Allain, "Los nefandos placeres de la carne," 398.

⁵⁹ Zeb Tortorici, "Against Nature: Sodomy and Homosexuality in Colonial Latin America," *History Compass* 10, no. 2 (2012), 167.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

de España, and the *Recopilación de Leyes de las Indias*, sodomy was "irregularly, sporadically, and unequally prosecuted as much as it was reluctantly tolerated or sometimes conveniently ignored by ecclesiastical and secular colonial authorities" in colonial Mexico.⁶¹ Although the earliest recorded sodomy trial in Mexico occurred in 1530,⁶² historiographic work on colonial sodomy prosecutions has focused largely on the 1657-1658 mass investigation into sodomites in Mexico City.⁶³

Interestingly, Garza Carvajal notes that, in the year-long inquiry into 123 sodomites that lasted from 1657-1658 in Mexico City and which resulted in the imprisonment of nineteen, the sentencing of fifteen, and the death of fourteen, "colonial authorities confronted a new and endemic cultural phenomenon -- 'effeminate sodomites' or 'men who walked, talked, and dressed as women'", a phenomenon unremarked in Spanish sodomy trials at the time.⁶⁴ Exploring the same case study, de los Reyes Heredia notes not only that "most of the colonial subjects who received the worst punishments for committing sodomy, were those who challenged gender roles, performed as women changing their male names to female names, wore women's clothes, and adopted what we

⁶¹ Zeb Tortorici, "Contra Natura: Sin, Crime, and 'Unnatural' Sexuality in Colonial Mexico, 1530-1821," (doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2010), 32.

⁶² Zeb Tortorici, "Contra Natura", 4.

⁶³ For examples, see Serge Gruzinski, "Las cenizas del deseo: Homosexuales novohispanos a mediados del siglo XVII," in *De la santidad a la perversión. O de porqué no se cumplía la ley de Dios en la sociedad novohispana*, ed. Sergio Ortega, 255-281. (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1985); José Guillermo de los Reyes Heredia, "Sodomy and Society: Sexuality, Gender, Race, and Class in Colonial Mexico," (doctoral dissertation, The University of Pennsylvania, 2004); and Bracamonte Alláin, "Los nefandos placeres de la carne."

⁶⁴ de los Reyes Heredia, "Sodomy and Society", 9.

perceived as effeminate stylistics"⁶⁵ but advances the argument that sodomy in colonial Mexico was far from being a static concept referencing only a sexual act but, rather, an "element that promoted a shared sexual and gendered identity."⁶⁶ Indeed, "in some cases, there is no discussion of sodomy as a sexual act. Rather, sodomy is understood as a behavior. The sodomites are described [as] men who perform as women in all their activities."⁶⁷ Although he cautions against claiming that a sodomitical (and much less homosexual) identity existed prior to the twentieth century in Mexico as such, de los Reyes Heredia nonetheless convincingly argues that the foundation for what would become such an identity was laid prior to the nineteenth century and that this construction enmeshed not only a sexual act but a performance of a feminine identity.⁶⁸ Tortorici, on the other hand, concedes that *amujeramiento* (becoming womanly) and *afeminamiento* (effeminacy) frequently accompanied sodomy accusations but argues that these were not equivalents of "sodomite" in colonial Mexican courts, which required a greater burden of proof in order to issue sodomy sentences.⁶⁹

Although not often highlighted, it's interesting to note how often the colonial sodomite was placed in proximity to sex work via feminization. For instance, de los Reyes Heredia notes that while

the chewing of *tzictli* (Náhuatl for gum; chicle in Spanish) was an activity performed by both men and

⁶⁵ Ibid., 9-10.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 148.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 32, 149.

⁶⁹ Zeb Tortorici, "Contra Natura," 144-145.

women to clean their teeth and prevent bad breath; men, for the most part, had to do so in secret; this is because it was considered as an activity closely related to women, even though both sexes often participated. *The only two groups who chewed gum in public were prostitutes and sodomites.* Consequently, every person who publicly performed this inappropriate act was categorized either as a prostitute, in the case of women, or as a sodomite in the case of men.⁷⁰

De los Reyes Heredia also recounts that "[t]he troublesome subjects ["male subjects assuming the traditional roles of women"] dressed as women and acted as women, particularly playing the role of famous prostitutes which included adopting the names of these well-known women [...]. *In addition to their identification with prostitutes, these men were deviant in their adoption of a public female identity.*"⁷¹

Similarly, Tortorici describes urban sodomitical subcultures as "characterized by cross-dressing, the adoption of female names and personae, prostitution among older men and adolescents and parties where *putos* converged over *pulque* and other alcoholic beverages."⁷² I return to the association between *travesti*, sex work, and vice in the next chapter.

Effeminacy, however, was not the only element sutured to sodomy by the seventeenth century. As Tortorici, Garza Carvajal, and de los Reyes Heredia note, class and race played prominent roles in the criminalization of sodomy. Indeed, in the 1657-1658 Mexican cases, "colonial officials had interrogated individuals who belonged solely

⁷⁰ de los Reyes Heredia, "Sodomy and Society", 144-145. Italics added for emphasis.

⁷¹ Ibid., 151.

⁷² ⁷² Zeb Tortorici, "Contra Natura," 139.

to the laboring classes of the metropolis -identified primarily as *mestizos*, *negros*, *mulatos* and physically deformed Spaniards."⁷³ In the seventeenth century, archival records indicate that, in addition to the fourteen people put to death in 1658, four male-assigned Purépechas from Michoacán were executed in 1604, "two *negros* [...] were garroted and subsequently burned in 1651 in Mexico City, and two *mulatos* were sentenced to be burned in Puebla in 1690 and 1691 [...] [i]n addition to these men, it is likely that three others found guilty of sodomy, Agustín de Avalos (mulato), Juan Quessar (indigenous), and Bernardino de Pinedo (indigenous), sometime prior to 1651 [...] were also executed for their crimes."⁷⁴ Although punishments decreased in severity after 1691, with death and torture being replaced by imprisonment, forced labor, and public corporal punishment, the racial and class composition of those sentenced for engaging in the *crimen contra natura* remained similarly marked by and overrepresentative of racialized poor and working class male-assigned people.⁷⁵

2.3. Post-Independence *Travesti*

Palafox Menegazzi identifies the first fifty years after independence (1821-1870) as a period governed by an increasingly secularized juridical medley. This juridical pluralism, she notes, was largely the effect of the 1822 *Reglamento Provisional Político del Imperio Mexicano*, which stipulated that all "orders and decrees previously

⁷³ Garza Carvajal, *Butterflies will Burn*, 178.

⁷⁴ Tortorici, "Contra Natura," 79.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 81.

promulgated in the Imperial territory until February 24, 1821, will continue to be in effect so long as they do not conflict with present regulations."⁷⁶

Palafox Menegazzi argues that this juridical pluralism was the reason for the disparity in sentences issued in sodomy cases at the time,⁷⁷ though Tortorici claims that disparity in sentencing had been a defining characteristic of the criminalization of sodomy since early colonial times.⁷⁸ Although death and castration had fallen out of favor as punishments for sodomy well before 1821, with imprisonment and forced labor substituting them, Palafox Menegazzi argues that the juridical vacuum produced by competing regulations opened a space of possibility for successfully circumventing what might have been, at an earlier time, certain punishment.⁷⁹

In public discourse, *afeminamiento* (effeminacy) and *afeminados* (effeminates) during this period were not exclusively linked to homoeroticism (though homoeroticism certainly continued to be associated with *afeminamiento*⁸⁰) but, rather, was launched primarily against those seen as menaces to the newly-developing nation-state, including enemy combatants, foreigners, national critics, and those perceived as unproductive. This fourth category primarily included male-assigned members of the elite (mainly capitalists) whose consumption patterns were deemed frivolous/hedonistic. Though certainly meant to be emasculating, *afeminado* was nonetheless not suggestive of

⁷⁶ *Reglamento Provisional Político del Imperio Mexicano*, art. 2, §1.

⁷⁷ Alejandra Palafox Menegazzi, "Sodomía y masculinidad en la ciudad de México (1821-1870)," *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 72, no. 1 (2015): 2.

⁷⁸ Tortorici, "Contra Natura," 32.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 297, 302.

⁸⁰ Tortorici, "Contra Natura," 146.

homoeroticism in early post-independence Mexico (the reverse association (i.e. homoeroticism as *afeminamiento*) as suggested above, however, had been firmly in place since colonial times).

2.4. Porfirian *Travesti*

Many homoerotic practices were formally decriminalized in Mexico with the incorporation of the Napoleonic Code into the Mexican Penal Code of 1871, which no longer recognized "sodomy" as an explicit offense (except in the case of homoerotic practices involving minors).⁸¹ Mexican historiographer and essayist Carlos Monsiváis described this expurgation as “the hatred that dares not write the name of what it hates.”⁸² The elision of juridical allusions to sexual deviance inaugurated by the Napoleonic Code, according to Monsiváis, signaled not a progressive deregulation of fields of sexuality but, rather, a logic of concealment that sought to render sexual deviance nonexistent through silence.⁸³

Whatever its driving logic, the official decriminalization of sodomy did little to decriminalize the sodomite. Indeed, "for late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth century Mexican criminologists, sexual deviance of any kind was unnatural, antisocial, and linked

⁸¹ Robert McKee Irwin, Edward J. McCaughan, and Michelle Rocio Nasser, "Introduction: Sexuality and Social Control in Mexico, 1901," in *The Famous 41: Sexuality and Social Control in Mexico, 1901*, eds. Robert McKee Irwin, Edward J. McCaughan and Michelle Rocio Nasser, 1-20, (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 3.

⁸² Carlos Monsiváis, “El mundo soslayado (Donde se mezclan la confesión y la proclama),” preface to *La estatua de sal*, by Salvador Novo, 11-41 (México: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1998), 19.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 17. According to Monsiváis, prostitution was the only topic to survive the Napoleonic expurgation.

to innate criminality; criminals constituted an identifiable class with distinct traits that included atavistic homosexual tendencies."⁸⁴ Furthermore, judicial sanctions were not uncommonly meted out by making recourse to a purposefully vague legal provision establishing "crimes against the order of families, public moralities or good habits."⁸⁵ This quasilegal disciplining of sexual non-normativities serves as the backdrop for the making of the modern homosexual.

In 1901, the apocryphal yet oft-told birth story of Mexican homosexuality goes, the Mexico City police conducted an extralegal raid of a private party that resulted in the capture of 42 male-assigned attendees, half of whom were dressed in attire reserved for women at the time, and the subsequent arrest of 41 of them.⁸⁶ The 42nd attendee is widely rumored to have been then-dictator Porfirio Diaz's son-in-law, though this was never publically confirmed or denied.⁸⁷ Many of those apprehended in *El Baile de los 41*, dubbed "*maricones*", "*jotitos*" and "*lagartijos*" by a variety of newspapers, were made to sweep the streets leading to the train station and a substantial portion of those arrested were summarily (and illegally) sentenced to conscription in the armed forces.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Rob Buffington, "Los Jotos: Contested Visions of Homosexuality in Modern Mexico," in *Sex and Sexuality in Latin America*, eds. Daniel Balderston and Donna J. Guy (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 118.

⁸⁵ Carlos Monsiváis, "The 41 and the Gran Redada," in *The Famous 41: Sexuality and Social Control in Mexico, c. 1901*, eds. Robert McKee Irwin, Edward J. McCaughan and Michelle Rocio Nasser (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 155.

⁸⁶ Carlos Monsiváis, *Que se abra esa puerta: Crónicas y ensayos sobre la diversidad sexual* (México: Editorial Paidós, 2010), 88.

⁸⁷ Porfirio Miguel Hernandez Cabrera, "Los cuarenta y uno, cien años después," *La Jornada Semanal*, 353 (2001): n.p.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 83.

El Baile de los 41 is regularly lionized as the birthplace of Mexican homosexuality not because it was the first or last of its kind or because of the state-sanctioned (if only barely and creatively legal) punishment that accompanied it, but because of the discursive explosion that it detonated.⁸⁹ Indeed, raids of a similar nature were fairly commonplace at the time and the public humiliation of sweeping the streets leading to the train that would exile someone from their city of residence was not an uncommon punishment for men who participated in behaviors construed as homoerotic.⁹⁰

The singularity of *El Baile de los 41* was that it both managed to hold the attention of news sources for upwards of two weeks and its effects reverberated far into the years that followed. Indeed, the number 41 continues to resonate strongly within Mexican popular culture as the "gay" number. So much so, that rather than declare themselves to be 41, men typically identify their age as "40+1." So much so, that prior to the constitutional amendment of the non-discrimination clause that included sexual "preference" as a protected category, government offices, army divisions, regiments and battalions, payrolls, houses, hotel or hospital rooms, vehicles, and police badges refused to use the number.⁹¹

In what follows, I discuss three conditions propitiated, if not produced, by *El Baile de los 41* that, I believe, would become important conditions of possibility for the

⁸⁹ Robert McKee Irwin, Edward J. McCaughan, and Michelle Rocio Nasser, "Introduction: Sexuality and Social Control in Mexico, 1901," in *The Famous 41: Sexuality and Social Control in Mexico, 1901*, eds. Robert McKee Irwin, Edward J. McCaughan and Michelle Rocio Nasser (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 3.

⁹⁰ Monsiváis, *Que se abra esa puerta*, 55.

⁹¹ Hernandez Cabrera, "Los cuarenta y uno, cien años después," n.p.

emergence and mobility of both the contemporary homosexual and the *travesti*. The first of these is the emergence of the proto-homosexual subject as always already encapsulated within *mestizo* universality and, thus, national modernity. The second, also a bridge to modernity, is the emergence of the proto-homosexual as a subject inhabiting class privilege, however derisively. The third is the suturing of homoeroticism to feminization and the enhanced feminization of homoeroticism.

2.4.1. *The racialization of homosexuality.*

The stories we tell tell stories about us. Embedded, often as frames or props, in the dominant narratives that Mexican homosexuality tells itself about its genesis and trajectory are important metanarratives about the conditions of possibility for its triumphant emergence. For instance, the stories canonize those captured and sentenced, without due process, to patriotic rehabilitation after the raid of the *Baile de los 41*.⁹² However, it is rarely mentioned (and, to my knowledge, has never been interrogated) that those forcefully conscripted to the armed service were sent to Yucatán to fight or otherwise provide support for the tail-end of the *Guerra de Castas* (Caste War) in the region, a genocide sanctioned by the official state doctrine of *colonización*.⁹³ Indeed, a

⁹² I emphasize the illegality of both the raid *and* the punishment because, in accordance with Article 787 of the 1871 Penal Code, the conditions to legitimate a lawful raid were not present (i.e. the *Baile* was neither in a public place nor was it in a private place visible to the public) and because the Governor of the Federal District dictated the punishment without a trial. In fact, most of those apprehended both at *El Baile de los 41* and *el Baile de Coyuya* successfully appealed their sentences.

⁹³ Joshua Lund, *The Mestizo State: Reading Race in Modern Mexico* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 166. According to Lund, "[g]uerra de castas, or caste war, is a term used in Mexico to describe rural violence that is easily racialized, in other words, made intelligible through reduction to a typically misleading binary struggle between Indians and non-Indians." Though couched in racialized terms and popular prior

similar punishment was meted out to those captured under similar circumstances and at a similar event in Coyuya a few months after *El Baile de los 41*.⁹⁴

In an attempt to assuage its readers' outrage over the prospect of "*maricones*" emasculating the army's respectable virility, *El Popular* assured its readers that "[t]he bums, petty thieves, and effeminates who have been sent to Yucatán have not been consigned to army battalions engaged in the campaign against the Maya Indians but, rather, have been assigned to public works in the settlements wrested from civilization's *common enemies*".⁹⁵ Although several of those conscripted never actually made it to Yucatán, thwarted either by death or confinement in the Ulúa prison in Veracruz, the newspapers nevertheless tended to emphasize and celebrate their forcible enlistment in the national armed forces.⁹⁶ That the emergent homosexual arises always already as a potential agent of the civilizational imperative of *mestizaje* speaks to the invention of a species that, contrary to the transgressive exceptionalism of the homosexual imaginary,

to the twentieth century but untenable today, Lund contends that the racialization of these genocides is but an aestheticization of the battle to control legitimate claims to land ownership. *Colonización*, in turn, was a rigorously national project of consolidation initiated during the Porfiriato that explicitly sought to prevent the further annexation of northern Mexican territories by the U.S. as well as to enhance the development of unproductive land (by capitalist standards) through the recruitment of immigrants and non-indigenous nationals for settlement in rural areas.

⁹⁴ "El baile de la Coyuya: "La bigotona" y "La de los claveles dobles" deportados a Yucatán," *El Popular* (Mexico City), Feb. 12, 1902.

⁹⁵ Carlos Monsiváis, "The 41 and the Gran Redada," in *The Famous 41: Sexuality and Social Control in Mexico, 1901*, eds. Robert McKee Irwin, Edward J. McCaughan and Michelle Rocio Nasser (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 152. Translation in original text, emphasis added. "[l]os vagos, rateros, y afeminados que han sido enviados a Yucatán, no han sido consignados a los batallones del Ejército que operan en la campaña contra los indígenas mayas, sino a las obras públicas en las poblaciones conquistadas al enemigo común de la civilización"

⁹⁶ "Otra vez los 41," *El Popular* (Mexico City), Mar. 28, 1902.

was never at irreconcilable odds with a state that co-authors and instrumentalizes its production. It is here, in the crux of racial complicity, I believe, where the national interiority of *travesti* rests.

2.4.2. *The aspirational class of homosexuality.*

Another of many interesting and transcendental products of the afterlife of *El Baile de los 41* was that the discursive explosion it detonated served to unconditionally (re)suture homoeroticism to effeminacy. During the Porfiriato but prior to that fateful night in 1901, elite masculinities were granted some leeway in terms of acceptable degrees and types of effeminacy (though not without eliciting their fair share of critique, particularly in the years preceding the revolution). Indeed, prior to *El Baile de los 41*, "*lagartijo*" was used primarily in reference to the "elegant middle- to upper-class male" who, while feminized by his unproductive use of capital, was nonetheless not associated with homoerotic practices.⁹⁷ *Lagartijos*, literally lizards, "received their name because they spent the day in the sun [...] represented social artificiality and pretentiousness."⁹⁸ Similarly, "*maricón*" was hurled with relative frequency and without homoerotic connotations at the perceived non-productivity of elite masculinities, particularly when contrasted with the ethics and aesthetics of the working-class labor.⁹⁹ A few days after the raid, however, *Diario del Hogar* published the following:

⁹⁷ Víctor M. Macías-González, "The *Lagartijo* at *The High Life*: Masculine Consumption, Race, Nation, and Homosexuality in Porfirian Mexico," in *The Famous 41: Sexuality and Social Control in Mexico, 1901*, eds. Robert McKee Irwin, Edward J. McCaughan and Michelle Rocio Nasser (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 227-228.

⁹⁸ Sifuentes-Jáuregui, *Transvestism, Masculinity, and Latin American Literature*, 28.

⁹⁹ For an example, see "Eslabonazos: no se consiguen criados" *El Agricultor Mexicano* (Mexico City), Aug. 1, 1901.

Today is a sad, sad Monday... Our favorite avenue, Plateros street, was deserted.. Where were, pray tell, our outstanding *lagartijos*? What mysterious avalanche swept them away and made them disappear so suddenly? Who will hound and harry the ladies if not for those dandies who fill their ears with boorish phrases? ¡They were carousing!... ¡They had gone to the ball!¹⁰⁰

Lest their readers miss the meaning of such an association, the newspaper goes on to explain that "the police had stormed a clandestine ball organized by men escaped from Gomorrah" and to mockingly insist that the dandies of Plateros street were enthusiastic participants of "*el baile nefando*" ("the nefarious ball," a play on the term "the nefarious sin" which was used to refer to the figure of sodomy in colonial times).¹⁰¹ So explicitly class-saturated is the *Baile's* aftermath that there are those who suggest that the detention of the *Baile's* attendees was but an excuse to highlight the bourgeois excesses of the Porfiriato and to try the depraved elite in the court of public opinion.¹⁰² If this is indeed the case, the jury may have found against the bourgeoisie but sentenced the proletariat:

¹⁰⁰ "A vuelo de pájaro," *Diario del Hogar* (Mexico City), Nov. 24, 1901. "'Triste, muy triste amaneció el lunes... Nuestra avenida predilecta, la calle de Plateros, estaba desierta... ¿En dónde estaban, justo cielo, nuestros buenos lagartijos? ¿Qué misteriosa avalancha barrería con ellos y los hizo desaparecer tan de improviso? ¿A qué santo se encomendarían las damas que á diario se veían asediadas é umportunadas por aquellos gomosos que vertían en sus oídos frases de carretero? ¡Estaban enfandangados!... ¡Habían ido al baile!'"

¹⁰¹ Ibid., "La policía había sorprendido un baile clandestino, organizado por Pepitos escapados de Gomorra [...]"

¹⁰² León Guillermo Gutiérrez, "Homosexualidad en México a finales del siglo XIX," *Signos Literarios*, no. 19 (2014), 86.

those most viciously punished for their participation in *El Baile de los 41* were also those without substantial ties to the aristocracy.

Following the raid at the Coyuya which took place roughly four months after *El Baile de Los 41*, *El Popular* both reminded its readers about the presence of "dandies" ("gomosos") at these balls and simultaneously updated them regarding the sentences (or lack thereof) of those apprehended at *El Baile de los 41*:

As you may remember, there were also several dandies well-known on the boulevard [among the ball's attendees] and one of them, in addition to others who had no one to speak on their behalves, were consigned as ranchers to the armed forces operating against the Maya indians in Yucatán.¹⁰³

El Popular goes on to specify that although Esteban Pérez, the sole dandy held to conscription, was indeed sent off to the Yucatán peninsula, he had requested and been granted a writ of protection from the Governor's unconstitutional ruling but, because the writ was granted belatedly, Pérez was already en route to Yucatán and unreachable. Found stationed in the *Bahía de la Ascención* in Yucatán, Pérez's return to Mexico City was commanded and executed.

Thus, while the emergent and newly homoeroticized *afeminado* is produced as affluent in public discourse and castigated through ridicule, his very affluence acts as apologia for his depravity by providing a buffer from the consequences of criminalization. On the other hand, the working-class *afeminado* is simultaneously

¹⁰³ "Otra vez los 41," *El Popular* (Mexico City), Mar. 28, 1902. "[S]egún se recordará, también se hallaban varios gomosos, muy conocidos en el boulevard y uno de ellos, acompañado de otros varios, que no tuvieron quienes hablaran por ellos, fueron consignados en calidad de rancheros a las fuerzas que operan en Yucatán contra los indios mayas."

rendered both discursively invisible and materially criminal. This is a pattern that precedes the *Baile* and persists today.

2.4.3. *The feminization of homosexuality.*

Another important pattern evident in the aftermath of *El Baile de los 41* is produced by the disproportionate focus, via both mockery and vitriol, on the technologies of feminization engaged in by the *Baile's* attendees. Although there were reported to have been approximately the same number of attendees dressed in attire reserved for women (19) as those who dressed in attire reserved for men (22), the former bore the brunt of the mediatic spectacularization almost to the effect of expunging the presence of the latter. Furthermore, it was these technologies of feminization that garnered the most violent affective responses. Susana Vargas claims that "the press equated homosexuality with male effeminacy. The nineteen *maricones* were the only criminalized and penalized [...]." ¹⁰⁴

Finding the news sufficiently repugnant so as to refuse the *Baile's* attendees the benefit of their class privilege (by identifying them as "poorly mannered individuals" and by refuting "the fantastical versions" that highlighted that "capitalists and other well-to-do people belonging to distinguished families" had been in attendance), *La Voz de México* declared that:

Forty-something men were ambushed mid-orgy,
half of them dressed in women's clothing and

¹⁰⁴Susana Vargas Cervantes, "Saliendo del clóset en México, ¿queer, gay o maricón?" in *La memoria y el deseo. Estudios gay y queer en México*, eds. Rodrigo Parrini and Alejandro Brito (México: PUEG UNAM, 2014), 168.

showing off feminine adornments. How disgusting!
The news of such an event produces such nausea!¹⁰⁵

The article's anxious nausea is soothed by the reassurance that "these repugnant men" ("*los repugnantes*") had been forcibly and quickly disrobed and were given the "coarse but honorable" attire worn by recruits. "With tears in their eyes, they were stripped of all their clothing. Some begged to be allowed to at least keep their fine silk underwear but the Captain refused this request, telling them that in there they were the same as everyone else," the article continues.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, in most accounts of the event, there exists a cruel and cathartic pleasure derived from the act of expropriating the *Baile's* attendees of their feminizing clothing. Feminized clothing becomes metonymic of the *crimen contra natura* (crime against nature); its removal signals expiation.

Although the non-homoeroticized *afeminado* (a metonym for coward, weakling, unproductive and vain) did by no means disappear after *El Baile de los 41*, the homoeroticized and criminalized *afeminado* popularized by *El Baile de los 41* became a recurring figure in the public imaginary long past the end of the revolution. These narratives tend to refer to gatherings of *afeminados* (usually *bailes*) and tend to feature and celebrate state surveillance and the capture and punishment of attendees. Similarly, these narratives tend to place congregations of *afeminados* in proximity to the consumption of alcohol, the corruption of young boys, and the production of scandal.

¹⁰⁵ "Los sucesos de actualidad," *La Voz de México* (Mexico City), Nov. 24, 1901. "Cuarenta y tantos varones fueron sorprendidos en plena orgía, vestidos la mitad de ellos con trajes de mujer y ostentando atavíos femeninles [sic]. ¡Qué asco! ¡Qué nauseas produce la noticia de un suceso de expresado género!"

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, "Con las lágrimas en los ojos, fueron despojándose de todas sus prendas, suplicando algunos, que se les dejase siquiera sus ropas interiores [sic] de fina seda, á lo cual se opuso el Capitán, pues les dijo que allí eran iguales á lo demás."

Particularly interesting to note is that these narratives produce the homoeroticized *afeminado* not as a singular individual but always as part of a threatening collective. Whether referring to *Bailes* or other "scandalous" affairs, the *afeminado* is never one, but many. *El Contemporáneo*, for instance, warns that

No Sunday goes by [in the Alameda] without the scandalous presence of two or three groups of *afeminados* who, with their repugnant movements, their ridiculous hairdos, and their high-pitched voices, meander, drawing everyone's attention and making them laugh carelessly, as though it were a spectacle that deeply wounds human dignity. These degenerates direct their malice-filled looks at passers-by, use nicknames to refer to the wretches whom they know, and establish irritating and shocking conversations with everyone.¹⁰⁷

El Contemporáneo, as do most other narratives between 1901 and 1920, calls for the "immediate, energetic, and implacable" police suppression of *afeminados*, claiming that their mere presence in public spaces is an attempt on morality, dignity, and honor. Though none captured the public's imagination quite so vigorously as the *Baile de los 41*, raids on similar gatherings continued to be popularized in the media throughout the revolutionary period.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ "Súplica á la policía," *El Contemporáneo* (Mexico City), July 21, 1903. "No hay domingo que no se advierta entre la concurrencia que pasea por la calzada interior de las dos vías transitadas en la Alameda de esta ciudad la escandalosa presencia de dos ó tres grupos de *afeminados* que con sus movimientos repugnantes, y la ridícula afectación de sus peinados y voces atipladas vagan llamando la atención de todo el mundo que ríe con descuido y como cosa corriente de un espectáculo que lastima hondamente la dignidad humana. Estos degenerados dirigen miradas llenas de malicia á los transeuntes, les hablan por sus apodos á los desgraciados que con ellos tienen conocimiento, y establecen una constante charla con todo mundo que irrita ó indigna."

¹⁰⁸ For examples, see "Siete individuos disfrazados de mujer," *El Diario* (Mexico City), June 7, 1910; "Maricones del consabido baile," *El Dictamen* (Mexico City), May 22,

2.5. Post-revolutionary *Travesti*

The socio-political upheaval of the Revolution that began in 1910 (characterized by the idealized notions of the second modernity, such as democratization, secularization, and internationalization) paved the way for the popularization of positivist discourse during the peri- and post-Revolutionary period, loosely circumscribed from the early to mid-20th century.¹⁰⁹ This shift in the organizing narratives of coloniality gradually prompted a different engagement with non-normative sexual embodiments, particularly through medico-juridical technologies aimed at the punitive regeneration of deviant bodies.¹¹⁰

There exists relatively little scholarship that focuses on the development of homosexuality in post-revolutionary Mexico and most of this work focuses on *Los Contemporáneos*, a group of literary artists and their magazine, which was attentive to "homophilic --that is to say, not homophobic-- works produced in Europe at the time."¹¹¹

1915; "Siete aprehensiones más de hombres afeminados," *El Pueblo* (Mexico City), Dec. 29, 1916; "Fueron silbados los afeminados," *El Pueblo* (Mexico City), Feb. 3, 1917; "Baile de afeminados aprehendido," *El Informador* (Mexico City), Feb. 18, 1919.

¹⁰⁹ Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Secularism and Religion in the Modern/Colonial World-System: From Secular Postcoloniality to Postsecular Transmodernity," in *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*, eds. Mabel Moraña, Enrique Dussel, and Carlos A. Jáuregui (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 365-366. Coloniality of power scholars identify the first modernity as an epoch inaugurated by the colonization of the Americas and characterized by Christianity as the organizing narrative defining imperial purpose and shaping colonial relationships. Conversely, the structuring force of the second modernity (from 1789 onward) is secular liberalism.

¹¹⁰ Stephen Sherrard Cook, "Containing a Contagion: Crime and Homosexuality in Post-Revolutionary Mexico City," (master's thesis, University of California San Diego, 2008), 28-29.

¹¹¹ Héctor Domínguez-Ruvacalba, "From Fags to Gays: The Political Adaptations and Cultural Translations in the Mexican Gay Liberation Movement," in *Mexico Reading the*

Specifically, most explorations of post-revolutionary homosexuality in Mexico use the works of Salvador Novo and Xavier Villaurrutia to explore the development of homosexuality during this period. Though richly descriptive, this work nonetheless obviates a 30 year period (between el *Baile de los 41* and the time in which *Los Contemporáneos* begin their work) about which little is known. Similarly, given their class positions, the sole focus on Villaurrutia's and (particularly) Novo's work has resulted in distorted images of how homosexualization operated within the bulk of the Mexican population.

In an attempt to both account for the 30-year gap in historiography and to explore the development of the conditions of possibility for the emergence of what would become a politicized sexual identity in the 1970's, McManus explores the ways in which the biopolitical frameworks centered on race and admixture contributed to the proliferation of institutionalized homophobia through the pathologization and continued criminality of homosexuality and claims that it is precisely this institutionalized homophobia that would serve as a major force in the co-construction of homosexual identities.¹¹²

Although "homosexuality" was coined by Western sexologists and physicians in the mid-nineteenth century¹¹³, the word (and its corresponding pathologization) did not seize the public imaginary in Mexico until the 1920's. According to McManus, race and admixture had become a central concern for Mexican intellectuals by the 1920's,

United States, eds. Linda Egan and Mark K. Long, 116-134, (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University, 2009), 117.

¹¹² Fabrizzio McManus, "Homosexuality, Homophobia, and Biomedical Sciences in Twentieth Century Mexico," *Sexuality and Culture* 18 (2014), 239.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 237.

underpinning social engineering projects meant to "improve" the racial qualities of Mexicans and supported by the creation of scientific institutions specifically designed for this purpose.¹¹⁴ Although homosexuality was "not yet a concern per se for the Mexican State, which tended to interpret it as an instance of degeneration and, therefore, saw it as one among many possible maladies that might affect the country," the 1920's and 30's saw the biologization and pathologization of homosexuality.

"It is currently well known," writes A.R. Ochoa for *El Amigo de la Juventud* in 1921, "that the primary, or better yet only, cause of homosexuality is a congenital disturbance of the endocrine function of the generating glands."¹¹⁵ However, Ochoa differentiates between "homosexuals by endocrine disturbance" and those driven to homosexual practices by necessity, arguing that the latter can (and should) be relieved of their "deviant sexual inclinations" by being granted contact with women. The 1930's saw an explosion of biomedical and social scientific work dedicated to homosexuality and, particularly, the relationship between homosexuality and criminality. Carlos Roumagnac, a Mexican criminologist, had studied the sexual practices of male-assigned people incarcerated in Belem Prison (including homoerotic practices) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and had concluded, among other things, that sexual deviance was naturally associated with criminal deviance.¹¹⁶ Drawing from social and biomedical

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 245.

¹¹⁵ A.R. Ochoa, "Problemas de educación," *El Amigo de la Juventud* (Mexico City), July 1, 1921. "Es bien sabido en la actualidad que la causa primordial, mejor dicho, única de homosexualidad es una perturbación ingénita de las funciones endócrinas de las glándulas generadoras."

¹¹⁶ Carlos Roumagnac, *Los Criminales en México* (Mexico: Tipografía El Fenix, 1904).

studies of homosexuality, both in Mexico and (particularly) in Europe, Mexican criminologists in the 1930's reached conclusions not unlike Roumagnac's and Ochoa's: homosexuality was considered a pathology that put the individual at particular risk for criminalized or criminal-adjacent behaviors.¹¹⁷

Although the criminality of homosexuality (through its association with vice and degeneracy) was by no means a new concept, positivist support for this association only served to strengthen it. While the 1930's, 40's, and 50's saw a decrease in the sentencing (though not necessarily the apprehension) of *afeminados* for immoral and scandalous behavior, there emerged a trend, within public discourse, of placing the homosexual in proximity to criminalized behaviors including drug use, pederasty, robbery and murder.¹¹⁸ Although both the sciences and the press recognized the existence of

¹¹⁷ For examples, see Rafael Matos Escobedo, "Sexo y penal," *Criminalia* (Mexico City), Nov. 1, 1933; "El problema sexual del hombre en la penitenciaría," *Criminalia* (Mexico City) Apr. 1, 1934; Alfonso Millan, "Carácter antisocial de los homosexuales," *Criminalia* (Mexico City), Dec. 1, 1934; Susana Solano, "El homosexualismo y el estado peligroso," *Criminalia* (Mexico City), June 1, 1935; "Clínica del Estado Peligroso" *Criminalia* (Mexico City), May 1, 1937

¹¹⁸ For examples, see "Juan Zamora lesionó a una hetaira," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), May 26, 1932; "Desfalcado con seis mil pesos fue detenido por la Policía Armando Ojeda García," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Oct. 21, 1939; "Un enigma fue aclarado. Hombre de paja en el 'Crimen del Baúl,'" *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Nov. 9, 1939; "Murió asesinada en forma misteriosa, conocida persona de Mazatlán," *El Informador* (Guadalajara) Mar. 15, 1945; "En su celda se ahorcó con un cinturón un reo," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Aug. 10, 1945; "Con inaudito descaro narra el matador de Juan Ruiz la forma en que le dió muerte. El asqueroso criminal fue capturado en un rancho cercano a esta ciudad," *El Porvenir* (Monterrey), Oct. 23, 1947; "Víctor Marcos Handall, absuelto," *El Porvenir* (Monterrey), July 26, 1949; "Durante 2 años logró evadir a la justicia. Al fin fue aprehendido un degenerado que asesinó arteramente a un joven," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Oct. 18, 1952; "Gobernación aclara unas deportaciones," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Jan. 3, 1953; "No hubo castigo ninguno para los asaltantes de una damita," *El Informador* (Guadalajara), Sept. 16, 1954; "Confesaron sus crímenes los asesinos de choferes," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Oct. 16, 1955; Esteban Salazar Chapela, "La

masculinized homosexuals and, indeed, on occasion declared them to be even more dangerous than feminized homosexuals, both institutions nonetheless by-and-large reproduced the homosexual as intrinsically feminized.

In addition to reproducing the criminality and pathology associated with homosexuality, the mid-1950's also gave way to discussions of homosexuality in/and art. In particular, newspapers began to publish stories regarding homosexual characters in literature and theater as well as engaging in discussions of (mainly non-Mexican) homosexual artists. For instance, an article on Proust published by *El Nacional* in 1945 defended his "sexual anomalies" by claiming that he a) didn't glorify homosexuality and, rather, considered it a disease, and b) was not wholly homosexual insofar as he was "a solitary and cerebral being. If he [was] enthusiastic about other beings, men or women, it is because of everything that surrounds them and because of the poetic contents of their personalities rather than because of a purely carnal desire."¹¹⁹ By 1959, on the other hand, *Sucesos para todos* had published a several-page display titled "Famous homosexuals," which, although it reiterated homosexuality as a disease, included in its list people such as Michelangelo, Leonardo Da Vinci, William Shakespeare and a host of "soldiers, artists, and statesmen who practiced the third sex."¹²⁰ Indeed, the article modifies the dominant position on homosexual criminality by establishing that, although homosexuals

prostitución y otras hierbas," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Oct. 1, 1957; "Se acelera reciente homicidio," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Feb. 7, 1958.

¹¹⁹ Eva Frejaville, "Biografía y análisis de Marcel Proust," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), June 17, 1945. "[...] es un ser solitario y cerebral. Si se entusiasma por otros seres, hombres o mujeres es más bien por todo lo que les rodea y por el contenido poético de su personalidad que por un deseo puramente carnal."

¹²⁰ "Homosexuales célebres," *Sucesos para todos* (Mexico City), Mar. 17, 1959.

are "always a danger to the young and the helpless, particularly children," most are, statistically speaking, innocuous.¹²¹

The internationalization of homosexuality in the mid-twentieth century, at once a result and catalyst of the homophile movement spearheaded by *Los Contemporáneos*, allowed for some degree of respectability to remain attached to "discreet gays."¹²² Much of the historiography regarding mid-twentieth century notions of homosexuality relies on information provided by members of *Los Contemporáneos* (or their protégés), all of whom had access to a cosmopolitanism facilitated by class privilege and many of whom had ties to government institutions.¹²³ As such, and with few exceptions, mid-twentieth century Mexican historiography on homosexuality tends to emphasize a homosexuality as lived and described by *Los Contemporáneos* (and their pupils): adjacent to modernity via Euro-American cosmopolitanism, and, as such, relatively independent from the ideological constraints and juridical regulations of the Mexican state. Situating the work of *Los Contemporáneos* within the context of the intense institutionalization of the post-revolutionary period, however, McManus understands this "first generation of openly homosexual men in Mexico" as instrumental in the consolidation of the term "homosexuality" in a medicalized, rather than politicized, sense.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Víctor M. Macías-González, "The Transnational Homophile Movement and the Development of Domesticity in Mexico City's Homosexual Community, 1930-70," *Gender & History* 26, no. 3 (2014), 519.

¹²³ McManus, "Homosexuality, Homophobia, and Biomedical Sciences," 241.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 247.

In the mid-twentieth century, because the state "tolerated homosexuals who embraced a proper, bourgeois gay identity [...], [m]iddle- and upper-class gays eager to safeguard their careers and reputations retreated to private homes, and abandoned homosexual night spots to cross-dressing, working-class *afeminado queers*," further increasing the division between respectable and criminal degenerates and reiterating earlier associations between male-assigned technologies of feminization and poverty.¹²⁵

2.6. Becoming *Travesti*

Travesti, as a named subject, seeps into the public imaginary slowly and non-linearly, trying on a variety of designations before settling into *travesti*. As chronicled above, the feminization of male-assigned bodies imagined as homoerotic has circulated under various guises and describing various embodiments and practices (often, but not always, linking receptive anal sex to feminization): *sodomita*, *puto*, *joto*, *maricón*, *afeminado*, *invertido*, *homosexual*, etc.

Travesti, the word, had been in circulation in Mexico since the nineteenth century, though the term was initially used to describe the operatic cross-dressing of female-assigned performers. It would later be used to refer to the theatrical method of cross-dressing in general. Simultaneously, *travesti* was frequently summoned in the mid-nineteenth century in reference to French-inspired masquerade balls (though this connotation was significantly more short-lived than *travesti* as theatrical method). In both instances, *travesti* was used as a noun to refer either to a costume or to the act of wearing a costume, but never to refer to the people wearing the costume. In other words, *travesti*

¹²⁵ Víctor M. Macías-González, "The Transnational Homophile Movement," 521-522.

was used to either signal an object or a temporary behavior, but never to identify a subject.

Despite public discourse's somewhat feeble mid-twentieth century attempt to publicize and popularize positivist terms such as Havelock Ellis' "*eonismo/eonista*" or Hirschfeld's "*transvestismo/transvestista*," in order to distinguish (though without completely divorcing) the erotic from the sartorial, the former had almost no success whereas the latter had only limited success, particularly in the late 1960's and 70's.¹²⁶ Although Kulick asserts that "*travesti* derives from the verb *transvestir*, or cross-dress," which seems to be the preferred genealogy for scholars of *travesti*, within the Mexican context, it is unclear whether *travesti* becomes the preferred term because of its association with theatrical/ludic cross-dressing, as a variation on Hirschfeld's "*transvestismo/transvestista*," or as a variation on the word "*travestida/o*" (which, interestingly, was not infrequently used in the nineteenth and twentieth century to signal deceit: someone or something who pretended to be something other than what or who they were).

As mentioned in the introduction, *travesti* is, within academic and local discourses, frequently used to hail *travestis* who perform on stage (whether or not they engage in *travestismo* off stage) whereas *vestida* is typically reserved for those who engage in non-theatrical *travestismo*. Public discourse makes no such distinction. As

¹²⁶ For examples, see "¿Puede la ciencia cambiar de sexo?" *Sucesos para todos* (Mexico City), Dec. 4, 1945; "Se puede cambiar de sexo," *Impacto* (Mexico City), Aug. 27, 1955; Joseph G. Sorel, "Los transvestidos," *Sucesos para todos* (Mexico City), Nov. 09, 1968; Rodney Pinder, "Jurisprudencia Británica no acepta el cambio de sexo por intervención quirúrgica," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Feb. 3, 1970.

such, and while it is difficult to assert with any sort of certainty, it seems as though the three genealogies suggested above exert intersectional influence on the late-twentieth century identitarian adoption/resignification of both *travesti* and *vestida*: because the earliest iterations of contemporary *travesti* (i.e. *travesti* as subject) in public discourse seem to be mid-twentieth century narratives that center *travesti* as role through *travesti* as method (i.e. an actor *plays a travesti* by *engaging in travesti*), a trend that will last well into the twenty-first century, I am inclined to consider the performatic origin of *travesti* as the most plausible of the three, particularly as it regards the widespread dominance of the identitarian term "*travesti*". However, and although *travesti* and *vestida* are often deployed as synonyms within public narratives, the latter's ties to "*travestida/o*" (especially considering its ties to deception) seems equally plausible.

Finally, it is important to mention that theories regarding the term's pathologizing emergence via "*transvestismo/transvestista*" wield(ed) considerable influence in crafting the figure, in no small part because of the semantic likeness of the words. It is both important and interesting to note, however, that the attempted dehomosexualization of *transvestismo* (by emphasizing that, more often than not, *transvestistas* had wives and "normal" families) never quite took. For instance, in 1964 *Sucesos para todos* refused the suggestion that *transvestismo* was not necessarily linked to homosexuality in the following way:

Ernest Havemann claims that 'there are many effeminate men who are not homosexuals at all and the Institute for Sexual Investigation has determined that some men who like to wear women's clothes are married, happy, and have a perfectly normal sexual life,' [...] Transvestism, which makes a

human being wear clothes belonging to the opposite sex, is considered a sick impulse, whether because it reveals impotence or authentic deviance. It is a symptom of bisexuality and, more often than not, homosexuality. You tell me if the marital bliss that Havemann talks about can blossom after that or that it's not an obstacle to perfectly normal sexual activity.¹²⁷

Such is the amalgamation of origins, that until at least the mid-1980's, the usage of "*travesti/travestista*," "*trasvesti*," and "*transvesti/transvestista*" (as well as their corollaries, "*travestismo*," "*trasvestismo*," and "*transvestismo*") was fairly commonplace, with all three variations often appearing in the same text. Similarly and although the term(s) -*travesti*, *trasvesti*, and *transvesti/transvestista*- had been available and used since at least the mid-1940's to refer to male-assigned people who engaged in technologies of feminization, *travesti* was and continues to be used interchangeably with other pejorative terms specific to effeminate homosexuals, such as *mujercito*, *vestida*, *loca* and *jota*, as well as with terms denoting (always feminized but not necessarily effeminate) homosexuality, such as *lilo*, *maricón*, *puto*, and *joto*, as well as a qualified homosexual. For instance, in 1959, *Sucesos para todos* described the "full or positive homo" as one who "tends to imitate all things feminine; secretly, he will dress as a woman, as well as

¹²⁷ Pablo Ríos, "Los anormales," *Sucesos para todos* (Mexico City), Nov. 6, 1964. "Informa Ernest Havemann: 'Hay muchos hombres afeminados que no son homosexuales en absoluto, y el Instituto de Investigación Sexual determinó que algunos hombres dados a vestir ropa de mujer son casados, felices, y llevan una vida sexual perfectamente normal' [...] El transvestismo, que hace a un ser humano vestir ropas del sexo opuesto, está considerado como un impulso enfermizo, ya sea porque revele impotencia o una auténtica desviación. Es síntoma de bisexualidad y, más a menudo, de homosexualidad. Diga usted si tras de ello puede aflorar la felicidad matrimonial que canta mister Havemann o si no es estorbo de una actividad sexual llevada a la perfección de la normalidad."

wear make-up and even imitating the feminine voice. He has his own language, rites and customs."¹²⁸ The road to *travesti* as the dominant category to refer to male-assigned people who engage in technologies of feminization remains relatively bumpy until the late 1980's.

Whatever its genealogy, *travestis* begin to organize as a specific subset of political and politicized subjects, under the aegis of homosexuality and alongside non-*travesti* homosexuals, from at least the late 1960's and 1970's. Although the politicized homosexual, who, according to the historiographic canon of Mexican homosexuality, emerges in the late 1960's and 1970's is comparatively well documented, little attention has been paid to both the development of *travesti* as a political identity and its role in the production of the homosexual (and gay) politicized and political subject.

2.7. The Detravestification of Homosexuality

The earliest conspicuous articulation of the current iteration of mainstream (identitarian) lesbian and gay organizing is most commonly traced to 1978, when the first openly homosexual contingent marched in solidarity with leftist organizations in support of the Cuban Revolution¹²⁹ and in commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Tlatelolco Massacre.¹³⁰ Galvanized by the 1971 firing of a Sears employee in Mexico

¹²⁸ "Homosexuales célebres," *Sucesos para todos* (Mexico City), Mar. 17, 1959. "Un homo completo o positivo, tiende a imitar todo lo femenino; en secreto vestirá como mujer, así como el maquillaje y basta imitando la voz femenina. Tiene su propio lenguaje, ritos y costumbres."

¹²⁹ María de Jesús González Pérez, "Marcha del orgullo por la diversidad sexual. Manifestación colectiva que desafía las políticas del cuerpo," *El Cotidiano* 20, no. 131 (2005): 92.

¹³⁰ Porfirio Miguel Hernández Cabrera, "La construcción de la identidad gay en un grupo gay de jóvenes de la Ciudad de México: algunos ejes de análisis para el estudio

City on the basis of sexual orientation and nurtured under the auspices of the student movement of the late 1960's, the *Frente de Liberación Homosexual* (Homosexual Liberation Movement) was founded in 1971 by Nancy Cárdenas (who would later become the first lesbian to issue a public "coming out" statement).¹³¹ The *Frente de Liberación Homosexual* initially operated as a consciousness-raising group and dedicated itself to the task of concretizing and collectivizing a homosexual identity.¹³² In 1975, however, Nancy Cárdenas and Carlos Monsiváis --both founding members of the FLH and prominent scholar-activists-- issued a manifesto titled "*Contra la práctica del ciudadano como botín policiaco*" ("Against the Abuse of the Citizen through Police Extortion"), a manifesto against arbitrary police brutality from a politicized homosexual standpoint.

The liberationist politics of the *Frente de Liberación Homosexual* provided the conditions of possibility for and to a large degree dictated the political platforms of the hypervisible projects that would publically emerge at the 1978 march against state repression: the *Frente Homosexual de Acción Revolucionaria* (Homosexual Front for Revolutionary Action or FHAR), and the *Grupo Lambda de Liberación Homosexual*

etnográfico," *Desacatos* 6 (2001): 65. The Tlatelolco Massacre, commonly denominated the Night of Tlatelolco, refers to the 1968 student-led and -attended political protest that culminated in the deployment of the military and the consequent extrajudicial assassination of approximately 200 protestors and the arrest of over 2000 attendees, as well as the forced disappearance of an unknown number of political prisoners.

¹³¹ Jordi Diez, "La trayectoria política del movimiento Lésbico-Gay en México," *Estudios Sociológicos* 29, no. 86 (2011): 693. (All translations, unless otherwise noted, are the author's.)

¹³² *Ibid.*, 694.

(Lambda Group for Homosexual Liberation).¹³³ Although the organization *Oikabeth* (a word adapted from the Maya phrase "*olling iskan katuntat bebeth thot*" or "movement of warrior women who open the way and scatter flowers") is regularly mentioned as one of the three groups that emerged under the auspices of the *Frente de Liberación Homosexual*, it claims a slightly different genealogy insofar as it became constituted within the trajectory of the feminist movement, to serve as the socialist arm of the group *Lesbos* (the first recorded lesbian group, instituted in 1977).¹³⁴ The organizations' political platforms, far from unitary, nonetheless dovetailed well with the democratic, socialist and feminist agendas of 1960's and 70's social movements. Their relatively successful reception at two political demonstrations in 1978 gave way to a yearly *Marcha de Orgullo Homosexual*¹³⁵ (Homosexual Pride March), established the following June in transnational solidarity with the Stonewall riots of 1969.¹³⁶

Although the Homosexual Liberation Movement (*Movimiento de Liberación Homosexual*), typically circumscribed from 1968 to 1984, is relatively well documented,

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 695.

¹³⁴ Norma Mongrovejo, "Sexual Preference, the Ugly Ducking of Feminist Demands: The Lesbian Movement in Mexico," in *Female Desires: Same-Sex Relations and Transgender Practices Across Cultures*, eds. Evelyn Blackwood and Saskia Wieringa (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 312; María de Jesús González Pérez, "Marcha del orgullo por la diversidad sexual," *El Cotidiano* 20, no. 131 (2005): 92.

¹³⁵ The first march, organized by FHAR in 1979, was termed the *Marcha por la Dignidad Homosexual* (March for Homosexual Dignity).

¹³⁶ Carlos Monsiváis, "Ortodoxia y heterodoxia en las Alcobas: Hacia una Crónica de Costumbres y Creencias Sexuales en México," *debate feminista* 11 (1995): 204.

the role of *travesti* within and as a result of this movement has yet to be scrutinized.¹³⁷

While several scholars have pointed out that it is during this time that "virility impregnates the representation of homosexuals," no work has been produced on the displaced effeminacies and feminizations (that had come to be attached to male-assigned homoeroticisms) in the aftermath of homosexual virilization or on their role in the successful masculinization of homosexuality.¹³⁸ That *travesti* has remained largely unremarked within gay and lesbian historiography is perhaps a testament to the success of the project of homosexual *detravestification* of the last two decades of the twentieth century. In what follows, I explore the ways in which *travesti* circulated within the public imaginary in the last third of the twentieth century, paying particular attention to the co-authorship engaged in by a Homosexual Liberation Movement that both claimed *travesti* as its protectorate and distanced itself from it through a variety of mechanisms.

Out of the three political groups that emerged in 1978, FHAR was the only one that recognized the presence and particular vulnerability of *travestis* from its inception, though this recognition was not necessarily legitimization. FHAR, a socialist organization, included a *travesti* collective within its ranks, though this subgroup was largely silent.¹³⁹ Among FHAR's earliest and most successful projects was the work of shifting public discourse on homosexuality. FHAR began sending letters to major news sources shortly

¹³⁷ Sofía Argüello Pazmiño, "Un fantasma ha salido del closet. Los procesos de politización de las identidades sexuales en Ecuador y México, 1968-2010," (doctoral dissertation, El Colegio de México, 2013), 60-61.

¹³⁸ Antoine Rodríguez, "El miedo a lo femenino. Estereotipos acerca del homosexual en los discursos institucionales mexicanos, finales del siglo XIX, principios del XX," *Amerika* 4, (2011), n.p.

¹³⁹ "Ojo Travestis," *FHAR Informa* (Mexico City), Sept. 24, 1979.

after its inception, repudiating the representation of homosexuals and homosexuality within and outside of these publications.

According to an internal communication, FHAR's first two undertakings included letters to the newspaper *Uno más Uno* and the magazine *Proceso*, respectively condemning the play *El Galpón* for its "denigration of the homosexual by presenting him as a reactionary being by nature" and the movie *El lugar sin límites* for presenting a "deformed and sexist image of the homosexual."¹⁴⁰ While, in the former, FHAR primarily dedicates itself to denouncing theatrical use of the homosexual to "illustrate the vices of the human genre" (including "the vices of the bourgeoisie")¹⁴¹, the latter, rather than focusing on Cobo's "deformed and sexist" representation of *la Manuela*, focuses on rebuking the actor's comments in an interview published by *Proceso* which, according to FHAR, "buttress the mystifying distinction between homosexual and '*marica*' [fag] [and] attacks his brothers-in-condition because they (we) are '*mere jotos*' [fags] or '*travestistas putos*' [faggot cross-dressers]." ¹⁴²

It is interesting that FHAR publically declared its solidarity with '*mere jotos*' or '*travestistas putos*' ("faggot cross-dressers"), all the while referring to Cobo's character in *El lugar sin límites* as a "deformed and sexist image of the homosexual" (*La Manuela*

¹⁴⁰ Frente Homosexual de Acción Revolucionaria, "Boletín interno no. 1," (Internal communications, Mexico City, 1978). "[...] se denigra al homosexual al presentarlo como un ser reaccionario por naturaleza [...]", "[...] una imagen deformada y sexista del homosexual [...]"

¹⁴¹ Angeles Mastretta, "Por la dignidad de los homosexuales," O (Mexico City), June 6, 1978.

¹⁴² Frente Homosexual de Acción Revolucionaria, Juan Jacobo Hernández, and Fernando Esquivel, "Palabras de lector," *Proceso* (Mexico City), July 24, 1978.

is, after all, one of the most celebrated representations of *travesti* in Latin America, though neither the novel nor the film name her a *travesti*). These inconsistencies in FHAR's discourse, wherein solidarity and distance are either closely or simultaneously expressed and enacted, are legion.

A similar contradiction occurs in 1979, when an invitation to a press conference issued jointly by FHAR and Lambda included, as its second talking point, "a public repudiation of the police repression of homosexuals, and particularly *travestis*, which has recently worsened." Reports of this press conference tended to repudiate *travesti* by establishing the movement's reservations *vis-a-vis* male-assigned technologies of feminization.¹⁴³ For instance, *Revista de Revistas* reported that "[the 'gay' leaders] reassured us that their work is not the work of proselytism or the affiliation of '*locas*' [a feminized version 'crazies' often used to refer to feminized or effeminate male-assigned people] but the work of human integration against endemic sexism."¹⁴⁴ The same article reported that although Juan Jacobo Hernández, founder and facilitator of FHAR, "severely condemned the prostitution of homosexuals, their commercialization and degradation, he nonetheless justified people like '*Xóchitl*' or '*Samanta*' who do this

¹⁴³ Frente Homosexual de Acción Revolucionaria & Grupo Lambda de Liberación Homosexual, "Boletín de prensa," (Press release, Mexico City, 1979). "[...] denuncia pública contra la represión policíaca contra homosexuales, especialmente los travestis, recrudecida últimamente."

¹⁴⁴ José Antonio Ruiz Estrada, "Los Homosexuales Exigen Respeto a sus Derechos y a sus Libertades," *Revista de Revistas* (Mexico City), June 10, 1979. "[los dirigentes 'gay'] advirtieron que no se trata de actos de proselitismo ni de afiliación de '*locas*' sino de integración humana contra el sexismo implantado."

because 'there is no alternative and, if heterosexuals ('normal' people) have fun, we have a right to have fun too.'¹⁴⁵

Indeed, in an interview (re)published a few days later, Juan Jacobo Hernández expressed his solidarity with "comrades who perform the part of the '*maricón*', pejoratively speaking, the extremely effeminate who plays the role of a woman and who goes against his health by taking hormones so that his breasts will grow, as well as the transsexuals and the *travestistas*," insofar as "they are all made vulnerable by the system, so much so that *they seek to return to heterosexuality through a false door*."¹⁴⁶ A variation of this phrase appeared in an interview by the same author, almost a year earlier in a different publication.¹⁴⁷ Discussing the 1978 march organized in commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the student movement -the 'coming-out' march, as it were- the article reassured its readers that "contrary to what has been published by some newspapers, [...] the homosexual protestors wore no feminine garments, no wigs, no make-up; on the contrary, they were very serious and limited themselves to handing out

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. "[...] aunque condenó severamente la prostitución de los homosexuales, su comercialización y degradación, justificó a personas como 'Xóchitl' o 'Samanta' que se dedican a ello, 'porque no hay otra salida y si los heterosexuales (gente 'normal') se divierten, también tenemos derecho a hacerlo.'"

¹⁴⁶ Leticia Singer, "Los Homosexuales," *Siempre!* (Mexico City), June 13, 1979. Italics added for emphasis. "[...] compañeros que siguen el patrón del '*maricón*' hablando peyorativamente, del afeminado en extremo que sigue el patrón de la mujer y que atentan contra su salud tomando hormonas para que les crezcan los senos, también están los transexuales y los travestistas; todos ellos son muy vulnerados por el sistema, tanto que buscan el regreso a la heterosexualidad por la puerta falsa."

¹⁴⁷ Leticia Singer, "Habla el Frente Homosexual de Acción Revolucionaria," *Interviú* (Mexico City), Aug. 19, 1978.

flyers in which they expressed their solidarity with the struggle of the oppressed."¹⁴⁸

After he has declared his solidarity with his friends, who are "kind of transexual," Hernández nonetheless once more goes on to enact rhetorical distance by claiming that "they, the *travestistas*, are protected by the police and by Xóchitl, a perfectly organized homosexual who manages many homosexual comrades."¹⁴⁹ Hernández then goes on to describe the world of Xóchitl, of "*travestistas*," as a criminal underworld prospering on the backs of exploited homosexual comrades. I speak more to both the criminality of *travesti* and the scapegoating of Xóchitl (perhaps Mexico's most famous, and certainly most infamous, *travesti* before Francis) in the next chapter but wish to point out that FHAR's fraught relationship with gender non-conforming male-assigned people seemed to stem from both a) their perceived criminality (via their association with vice) and b) their perceived frivolity and artificiality (incompatible with the worker's movement).

"One of [FHAR's] preoccupations," Hernández asserts, "is to inform our comrades that they have another option, a healthy option, for organizing, for finding their place in society *without being exploited and without assuming every cliché dictated from the outside: that the homosexual must be effeminate, wear a wig, wear make-up, refer to one another femininely, and have a high-pitched voice*. On the contrary, FHAR struggles to reorient our comrades who *use travestismo as a way into the system*. We believe that

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., "En contra de lo publicado por algunos diarios, INTERVIU [...] puede afirmar que los homosexuales manifestantes no portaban ninguna prenda femenina, ni pelucas ni maquillaje; por el contrario, muy seriecitos se limitaron a repartir volantes en los que hacían manifiesta su adhesión a la lucha de los oprimidos."

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., "que son medio transexuales," "Ellos, los travestistas, son protegidos por la policía y por Xóchitl, un homosexual perfectamente organizado y que maneja a muchísimos compañeros homosexuales"

this form must be used as a form of subversion, not unlike what women did when they went ahead and wore pants."¹⁵⁰ It is in this way in which FHAR's ambivalent relationship with *travesti*, often but not always through the words of its leader Juan Jacobo Hernández,¹⁵¹ declares the *travesti* its protectorate while simultaneously drawing on and reproducing dominant tropes attached to (and scapegoating) *travesti*, and distancing the "conscious homosexual" from what has now been produced as its antithesis. If the *travesti* is frivolous, the conscious homosexual is serious. If the *travesti* reproduces "deformed and sexist" images, the conscious homosexual is feminist. If the *travesti* is criminal, the conscious homosexual is respectable. If the *travesti* buttresses heteropatriarchy, the conscious homosexual undermines it.

Such is the *travesti's* complicity with heteropatriarchy, in FHAR's imaginary, that the organization repeatedly advanced the notion that a primary enemy of the conscious homosexual's movement was the comparatively unaware homosexual, himself a

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. Italics added for emphasis. "[...] una de nuestras preocupaciones es informar a los compañeros que tienen otra opción, una opción sana de organizarse, de encontrar su lugar en la sociedad sin necesidad de ser explotados ni de asumir todos los clichés que se dictan desde fuera: que el homosexual debe ser amanerado, ponerse peluca, maquillarse, hablar en femenino y tener voz de pito. Contra eso, el FHAR trata de luchar para reorientar a los compañeros que utilizan el travestismo como forma de ingreso al sistema. Nosotros pensamos que esa forma debe ser usada como forma de subversión, como ustedes las mujeres lo hicieron cuando se lanzaron a usar pantalones."

¹⁵¹ For examples of FHAR's rhetorical distancing from *travesti* by other members, see "Se vinculan los homosexuales con los Partidos de Izquierda," *El Sol de México* (Mexico City), Oct. 5, 1978. "[Armando Sariñana G.] denied that [FHAR's] political protests are executed wearing feminine clothes and added that they do not participate as couples because they are not politically driven by exhibitionism but by a repression which begins with remarks that we are '*mariconcitos*' [little faggots]." "[Armando Sariñana G.] negó que sus manifestaciones políticas las hagan ataviados con ropas femeninas y agregó que no andan en parejas porque no es un afán de exhibicionismo el que nos lanza a la política sino la represión que empieza con los señalamientos de que somos '*mariconcitos*.'"

production advanced by the "macho," who reproduced "[...] the idea that the homosexual must be a *mariquita* [little faggot], in other words, a *mujercito* [a masculinized version of 'little woman' and a common pejorative way of referring to *travestis*] [...]."¹⁵² Such is the *travesti's* complicity with heteropatriarchy in FHAR's imaginary that they are responsabilized for originating the stereotypes that FHAR entrusts itself to dispel. Such is the *travesti's* complicity with heteropatriarchy in FHAR's imaginary that FHAR positions itself as "against *travestismo* not just because, but because in our estimation, it is a false way out of the problem represented by the heterosexual relationship."¹⁵³

The masculinization of the homosexual, necessary to advance an internationalist vision of legible homosexuality based only on "sexual orientation," was not an unintended consequence of the Homosexual Liberation Movement but, rather, its cornerstone and a primary condition of possibility for its success. Although there existed *travesti* collectives within the MLH, such as the *Mariposas Rojas* and *Mariposas Negras* collectives within FHAR¹⁵⁴, the *Frente Homosexual de Acción Revolucionaria's* counter-information campaign was nonetheless quite consistently and vocally critical of *travesti*, even as it recognized *travesti's* vulnerability to state repression, and forcefully advanced a very specific image of the respectable (masculinized) socialist revolutionary.

The respectability attached to the masculinization of homosexuality did not go unremarked or unproblematized. Regarding the former, a journalist for *Alerta!* observed

¹⁵² Fernando Pineda, "El Gay Power Totonaca," *Personas* (Mexico City), Sept. 4, 1978.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, "Nosotros no estamos en contra del travestismo porque sí, sino porque a nuestro juicio se trata de una salida falsa al problema de la relación heterosexual."

¹⁵⁴ Argüello Pazmiño, "Un fantasma ha salido del closet," 79.

that "nuanced with profound seriousness, those belonging to 'the third sex'¹⁵⁵ emerge onto the public scene, no longer as a group of *travestistas* or exquisitely dressed homosexuals, but with the character of a legitimately-founded organization."¹⁵⁶ Regarding the latter, one of FHAR's representatives recognized that "outside of Mexico City, *travesti* comrades are the most visible of the homosexuals; some [within FHAR] think that they are the ones who denigrate the movement. There are still many contradictions within FHAR [...]."¹⁵⁷

Although, by late 1980, FHAR's public discourse regarding gender non-normativity had become significantly less critical of *travesti*, these internal contradictions would ultimately contribute to the dissolution of FHAR in late 1981.¹⁵⁸ FHAR's attempt to reimagine the revolutionary potential of *travesti* was short lived and relatively unsuccessful. Importantly, the (partial) distinction between the homosexual and the *travesti* had, by 1980, already been established: although the homosexual was no longer *de facto* thought of as a *travesti*, *travesti* remained homosexualized.

¹⁵⁵ Along with '*lilos*,' '*maricones*,' '*mujercitos*' and '*jotos*,' '*el tercer sexo*' ('the third sex') was a fairly commonplace way in which news sources referred to homosexuals in the late 1970's and the late 1980's. Although these news sources commonly (and derisively) imagined male-assigned homosexuals to engage in technologies of feminization and female-assigned homosexuals to engage in technologies of masculinization, these terms were nonetheless not exclusively used to name those who engaged in such technologies.

¹⁵⁶ Raúl Parodi, "Protesta de Homosexuales," *Alerta!* (Mexico City), May 24, 1980. "Con matiz de una profunda seriedad, los 'del tercer sexo' surgen en el panorama público, pero ya no como un grupito de travestistas u homosexuales primorosamente vestidos, sino con el carácter de un organismo legítimamente fundado [...]"

¹⁵⁷ "El Frente Homosexual se declara contra la represión," *Oposición* (Mexico City), July 13, 1980.

¹⁵⁸ For an example, see Aída Reboredo, "La inmadurez en sus análisis, desventaja para los grupos de liberación homosexual: J. Ramón Enríquez," *Unomásuno* (Mexico City), June 27, 1981.

Interestingly, as *travesti* recedes from FHAR's crosshairs as one of the struggle's primary enemies, a new enemy appears on the horizon: the closet or, more specifically, the closeted homosexual. The struggle for homosexual visibility becomes one of personal unveiling. As coming out comes to be lauded as an act of honesty, the closeted homosexual becomes a "hypocrite."¹⁵⁹ Congratulating FHAR's participation in the third Gay Pride March in Mexico City, *La Voz* wrote "the '*machitos*' probados fight for their sexual rights and do so fiercely. They do not do this lying low like those who really deserve the series of adjectives bestowed upon FHAR."¹⁶⁰ The hypervisibility of *travesti* comes to represent the antithesis of the stealthy hypocrisy of the closeted homosexual. Whereas, two years prior, FHAR had considered the *travesti* to be the very portrayal of the unconscious homosexual, lack of consciousness had, by 1980, been transferred to the closeted homosexual.

FHAR's counter-information campaign, successful though it was, was nonetheless not the only avenue for the masculinization (and, more specifically, the *detravestification*) of the homosexual. The Lambda Group -a socialist organization often described as reformist by FHAR- participated in the masculinization of homosexuality largely through silence. Such was the absence of *travesti* within the organization's public and private discourse that, in 1983, Lambda recognized its invisibilization of *travesti*,

¹⁵⁹ Mario Abad Schoster, "Que el FHAR Tiene más Correligionarios en la Capital que los Partidos de Oposición," *El Gráfico* (Mexico City), Apr. 8, 1981.

¹⁶⁰ Enrique Ruiz García, "Espacio Político," *La Voz* (México City), July 8, 1981. "Los '*machitos*' probados luchan y fuerte por sus derechos sexuales. No lo hacen a escondidas como los que en realidad merecen la serie de adjetivos que les endilgan a los del FHAR." "Macho probado," literally "proven men," is a way of referring to masculine men who have participated in homoerotic encounters and who are so masculine that their masculinity is not marred by the encounter.

admitting that the organization had little impact on and among *travestis* "not only because of their absence within the Group but because we have not reached out to them in our projects" and, indeed, explained that the organization could not "formulate a discourse or a liberationist project for this sector" insofar as they did not even "have a definition for *transvestismo*."¹⁶¹ The document, which goes on to establish the necessity of a discussion regarding the political soundness of including *travesti* within the organization, summarizes several popular positions vis-a-vis *travesti* within the movement. Among these positions, which resemble caveats rather than descriptions, the document warns that,

-Some might say that *transvestistas* constitute the vanguard of the movement because the scandal produced by their presence unsettles the social structure. Extremists might even risk the proposition of *transvestism* as an alternative, making it seem like middle class prudishness not to cross-dress immediately.

-Others emphasize the denigration, repudiating *vestidas* for 'tarnishing' homosexuals' public image and issue a call to separate ourselves from 'them' [feminized version of 'them'] in order to save the movement.

-In between these two extremes, it's also been suggested that *travestis* have internalized the denigrating image created to repress us, reproducing it.

-Another view point holds that *vestidas* attack women with their attitude, since they represent the woman-object created by sexism.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ Grupo Lambda de Liberación Homosexual, "Trabajo al exterior," (Internal communication, Mexico City, 1983).

¹⁶² Ibid. "-Uno de ellos diría que los transvestistas constituyen la vanguardia del movimiento pues el escándalo de su presencia conmueve la estructura social. En un extremo, arriesgarían incluso la proposición del transvestismo como alternativa, presentándolo como una mojigatería clasemediera no travestirse de inmediato.

Homosexuality in Mexico was not merely masculinized in the late 1970's and early 1980's, when the homosexual emerges as a political and politicized subject. This virilization required a displacement of the male-assigned femininities with which homosexuality had come to be identified. Indeed, Argüello Pazmiño mentions as a primary axis of the MLH (both within and outside of it), the struggle for the "differentiation between [virilized activists] and feminized homosexual masculinities."¹⁶³ Simultaneously, discourses of equality, which become part and parcel of the late 1970's campaigns of counter-information engaged in by FHAR and Lambda, imagined a particular *type* of equality. Insofar as these organizations imagined "equal" treatment and rights as treatment and rights comparable to those afforded to proper (heterosexual) citizens, the newly virilized homosexual citizen-subject emerges as precisely a subject worthy of treatment comparable to that afforded to respectable (heteronormative) subjects. *Travesti* becomes quite forcibly severed from (what would become the basis of, and in order to produce,) the homosexual citizen-subject, representing not only feminizations displaced but also criminality, perversity, scandal, and lack of "seriousness." Although FHAR made an attempt to reclaim the subversive potential of *travesti* within its political platform, the organization dissolved before this campaign was

-Otro mas pone el acento en la denigración, renegando de las vestidas por 'manchar' la imagen pública de los homosexuales y hace llamados a deslindarnos de 'ellas' para salvar al movimiento.

-Entre estos extremos, se plantea también que los travestis han interiorizado la imagen denigrante creada para reprimarnos, reproduciéndola.

-Otra opinión señala que las vestidas agreden con su actitud a las mujeres, pues representan la mujer-objeto creada por el sexismo."

¹⁶³ Argüello Pazmiño, "Un fantasma ha salido del closet," 67.

successfully enacted. Perhaps ironically, one of FHAR's attempts to reclaim *travesti*, a drag ball, was used as fodder by Luis González de Alba's famous "*Las Preciosas Ridículas*" a repudiation of *travestismo* not dissimilar to FHAR's early condemnations. In this piece, González de Alba uses FHAR's drag ball to critique what he sees as a practice engaged by "large sectors of homosexuals," claiming that insofar as the practice is anti-feminist, it is backwards.¹⁶⁴ González de Alba's repudiation includes a dispensation for "the *travestido* who suffers the mockery and blows from its barrio," calling them a "poor example and a poor goal" for the "vanguard" to follow. In this way, González de Alba reproduces FHAR's early strategy of claiming some sort of paternalistic solidarity with *travesti* while simultaneously condemning *travestismo*.

Successful though these hypervisible political projects were, they were nonetheless not solely responsible for the *detravestification* of homosexuality and were, instead, part of a general trend. Indeed, the internationalization of homosexuality, a project inaugurated though not quite actualized in post-revolutionary Mexico, played an important role in the late twentieth century virilization of the male-assigned homosexual and its concomitant displacement of male-assigned effeminacies and feminizations.¹⁶⁵

This internationalization at once functioned as and through racialization and class-based differentiation, and was aided by the advent of "gay" within contemporary homosexual discourse. "Gay," after all, "is different than being not only a *joto* or a *maricón* [fag] but a homosexual, a term with medical and juridical connotations. The

¹⁶⁴ Luis González de Alba, "Las preciosas ridículas," *Uno más uno* (México City), May 21, 1981.

¹⁶⁵ Rodríguez, "El miedo a lo femenino," n.p.

word gay introduces elements of modernity and tolerance, links one to an international community, disengages with centuries of hatred and prejudice, and hints at the easy adaptation of the North American sexual revolution."¹⁶⁶ As suggested in the previous phrase, the internationalization of homosexuality was of a particular type: it pledged allegiance to the virilized Anglo-European gay as it enacted distance from the Third World *maricón* (fag).

In the late 1970's and early 1980's the Third World *maricón*, an image of a racialized and poor or working class homosexual, retained the feminizations once assigned to all homosexuals whereas the virilized Anglo-European gay became a figure accessible only to those with sufficient socio-economic capital to access the cosmopolitanism implied by "gay". This internationalization was an important point of contention for the Homosexual Liberation Movement and would contribute to its dissolution (and shift to a rights-based framework) in the mid-1980's.

The 1980's saw the beginning of neoliberal austerity programs as well as a duality of moralizing politics that denounced governmental corruption while fostering a resurgence of sexual repression.¹⁶⁷ This resumption of state repression of non-normative sexualities was aggravated by the advent of HIV/AIDS, which surfaced in the mid-1980's and disproportionately affected males increasingly designated "homosexual" by virtue of their homoerotic relationships.¹⁶⁸ The organizations that had formed in the 1970's found

¹⁶⁶ Monsiváis, *Que se abra esa puerta*, 256.

¹⁶⁷ Lucinda Grinnell, "Intolerable Subjects: Moralizing Politics, Economic Austerity, and Lesbian and Gay Activism in Mexico City, 1982-1985," *Radical History Review*, 112 (2012): 90.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 93.

themselves depleted amidst an economic crisis, a particularly repressive political climate, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, irreconcilable political differences internal to the movement, and relative lack of "theoretical support" by way of the artistic and intellectual communities.¹⁶⁹ The call for transnational LGB solidarity impelled by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, a proposal noticeably lacking a critique of neoliberal austerity programs, produced a fractioning away of radical anti-capitalist LGBT organizations such as *Oikabeth*, The Marxist-Leninist Seminary of Lesbians, and *Guerrilla Gay*.¹⁷⁰ The *Frente Homosexual de Acción Revolucionaria* found itself at odds with the staunch feminist politics of *Oikabeth* and gradually disintegrated, giving way to the *Colectivo Sol* (whose sole purpose was to gather and disseminate information regarding HIV/AIDS).¹⁷¹ Similarly, the economic fallout of austerity measures rendered the privileging of individual visibility --popularized as a tactic of resistance in the late 1970's, via exhortations to "come out"-- sufficiently burdensome as to become unsustainable. In other words, the increasing economic instability of the middle class rendered precarious the financial independence necessary for individuals to claim non-normative sexual identities publically.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ Porfirio Miguel Hernández Cabrera, "El Movimiento Lésbico, Gay, Bisexual y Transgenérico y la construcción social de la identidad gay en la Ciudad de México," in *Memorias de la II Semana Cultural de la Diversidad Sexual*, eds. Edith Yesenia Peña Sánchez, Francisco Ortiz Pedraza, and Lilia Hernández Albarrán (México: INAH, 2008), 291.

¹⁷⁰ Grinell, "Intolerable Subjects," 98.

¹⁷¹ Diez, "La trayectoria política del movimiento Lésbico-Gay en México," 702.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 700.

During the sixth Homosexual Pride March, in June of 1984, *Colectivo Sol* disseminated a flyer titled "Euthanize the *lilo* [homosexual] movement ¡now!"¹⁷³ announcing that death had come to the Homosexual Liberation Movement by way of assimilationism.¹⁷⁴ Specifically, "Euthanize the *lilo* movement, now!" railed against the domestication of the movement by the "assimilated *joto*" who was mockingly described as "decent, with social, economic and cultural prerogatives, decent, snobby."¹⁷⁵ Indeed, *Colectivo Sol* begrudged assimilationist factions the sanitization of a movement whose radical edge rested on "indecency, irreverence, the vulgarity and the poor manners of the *vestidas*, the vindication of pleasure, rude language, our bodies, the joy of living a different life in which eroticism plays a very important part [...]"¹⁷⁶ According to *Colectivo Sol's* pamphlet, the sanitizing *detravestification* of homosexuality initiated (though not exclusively) by the group's predecessor in 1978 had, by 1984, become institutionalized as the most visible faction of the incipient rights-based movement.

2.8. The (Continued) Homosexualization of *Travesti*

As suggested earlier, the public *detravestification* of homosexuality engaged in by the Homosexual Liberation Movement in the late 1970's and early 1980's did not dehomosexualize the *travesti*. The scapegoating of *travesti* worked to produce the

¹⁷³ Argüello Pazmiño, "Un fantasma ha salido del closet," 61. "Eutanasia al movimiento lilo. ¡Pero ya!"

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 64.

¹⁷⁵ Qtd. in Argüello Pazmiño, "Un fantasma ha salido del closet," 66. "[...] joto asimilado, decente, con prerrogativas sociales, económicas y culturales, decente, fresa [...]"

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., "[...] la indecencia, la irreverencia, la vulgaridad y los malos modos de las vestidas, la reivindicación del gozo, del lenguaje grosero, de nuestros cuerpos, la alegría de vivir una vida distinta, en la que el erotismo juega un papel importantísimo [...]"

homosexual as a proper political subject; the subject that would become the center of the civil rights-based organizations that would emerge in the mid-1980's and 1990's, a subject of "'decency,' 'good manners,' 'hard working' (with a stable job, a good salary, and a tax payer to top it off), and even 'Guadalupan'."¹⁷⁷ However, the scapegoating of *travesti*, a figure seething with indecency and produced as incompatible with respectability, by homosexuality did not extinguish the figure's association *with* homosexuality. In other words, while the homosexual was no longer (necessarily) *travesti*, the *travesti* remained a homosexual.

Although medicalized discourses of *travestismo* have, since the mid-twentieth century, offered the proposition that cross-dressing does not necessarily a homosexual make, these propositions have gone largely unincorporated by the figure of *travesti*.¹⁷⁸ The mid-1980's incorporation of HIV/AIDS into the homosexual imaginary, through the *sidificación* (AIDSification) of both homosexual discourse and heteronormative discourse on homosexuality, served to buttress the relationship between *travesti* and homosexuality.¹⁷⁹ I speak more to the relationship between *travesti* and dis/ease in the

¹⁷⁷ Argüello Pazmiño, "Un fantasma ha salido del closet," 66. In this instance, "Guadalupan" refers to a devotee of the virgin of Guadalupe, which is to say a person who engages with Catholic religiosity.

¹⁷⁸ For examples, see Pablo Ríos, "Los anormales," *Sucesos para todos* (Mexico City), Nov. 6, 1964; Fidel de la Garza, "Las homosexualidades," *El Porvenir* (Monterrey), Dec. 18, 1983; "Vestidos de mujeres, empresarios se divierten en club," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Sept. 12, 2003.

¹⁷⁹ For an example, see "Condenan grupos que persiguen a homosexuales," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), May 6, 1987. Although the article describes governmental condemnation of the persecution of homosexuals in preventing the proliferation of HIV/AIDS, it nonetheless links homosexuality and "dance shows or *travesti* shows" to the proliferation of HIV/AIDS.

next chapter but wish at this point to make note of the importance of HIV/AIDS in buttressing *travesti*'s ongoing association with homosexuality. In particular, the HIV/AIDS crisis (which emerged during and was shaped by a period of 'moral renovation' by the government) was, in the mid-1980's, used as an excuse to both increase the *razzias* (raids) of known homosexual spaces (particularly outside of Mexico City and, particularly, of spaces featuring *travesti* shows) and to further criminalize *travesti* sex work.

In Chiapas, for instance, HIV/AIDS "prevention" measures, instituted as a result of a perceived "invasion" of homosexuals (and, with them, HIV/AIDS), lead to the temporary closure of homosexual nightclubs by requiring them to be issued "health cards," a requirement that was extended to "*travesti* groups" as well.¹⁸⁰ In Coahuila, homosexual nightclubs, *travesti* shows, and "men dressed as women" on public thoroughfares were similarly penalized, purportedly to curb the propagation of HIV/AIDS.¹⁸¹ Interestingly, *El Siglo de Torreón* laments that Social Prevention was unable to proceed against homosexuals "except in the cases in which they see one of these people walking through the streets dressed in women's clothes."¹⁸² Most states in

¹⁸⁰ "Alarma invasión de homosexuales en Villa Flores," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Mar. 4, 1987.

¹⁸¹ For examples, see "Prevención Social multó a un cine por aumentar entradas," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Apr. 11, 1986; "Clausuraron definitivamente el centro nocturno El Lugar," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Jan. 10, 1988; "Multan a centros nocturnos que presenten función de travestis," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Mar. 6, 1988; "Realizará redadas de homosexuales Prevención Social," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Sept. 1, 1989.

¹⁸² "Grave el problema debido a la prostitución de 'homosexuales,'" *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Oct. 21, 1987.

the Republic instituted bans on *travesti* in the late 1980's, either by banning shows, by closing nightclubs, or by criminalizing "men dressed as women." I return to the criminalization and criminality of *travesti* in the following chapter. However, it is interesting to note that although the HIV/AIDS pandemic lead to increased assaults, both physical and structural, on *travesti/s*, it is also during the late 1980's when *travesti* shows (sanitized via their circumscription to heterosexual venues) become popularized *outside* of the homosexual community. Indeed, it is in the late 1980's that Francis, perhaps the most famous stage-based *travesti*, achieves national popularity.

As suggested by the criminalization of *travesti*, one of the ways in which *travesti* maintains its association with homosexuality -in addition to its position as a vector for HIV/AIDS- is through the trope of *travesti* as a "homosexual man dressed as a woman." This trope presents the *travesti* as a "homosexual plus". Because, by the mid-1980's, it is no longer assumed that a homosexual is necessarily a *travesti*, it becomes necessary to specify feminization by referring to *travesti* as a "homosexual (man) dressed as a woman." Importantly, and in keeping with the criminalization of *travesti*, this feminization (enacted both by referring to the person's perceived sex and their choice of clothing, as well as by the juxtaposition between their masculine-sounding names and their feminized nicknames) is particularly common in journalistic articles detailing crimes (particularly within the Third World).¹⁸³ Articles praising homosexuals (often

¹⁸³ For examples, see "Terminó mal fiesta de homosexuales," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón Feb. 28, 1979; "Redada de homosexuales y prostitutas en G.P." *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Dec. 10, 1979; "Detuvieron a diez homosexuales ayer," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Sept. 3, 1989; "Tres homosexuales detenidos por robar a 'parroquianos,'" Oct. 15, 1989; "Otro robo cometido por homosexuales," Oct. 26, 1989;

referred to as "gays," particularly in the Global North) or otherwise positioning homosexuals in proximity to modernity tend to omit such references to feminization.¹⁸⁴

In public discourse, "*travesti*" (rather than "*travestista*," "*trasvesti*," "*trasvestista*," "*transvesti*," "*transvestista*" or the more pejorative "*mujercito*," "*jota*," "*loca*") really settles into the figure it names in the latter half of the 1980's, particularly though its spectacularization (via both *travesti* shows and filmic and theatrical *travesti*). Importantly, while "*vestida*" remains perhaps the most common vernacular way of referring to those who engage in off-stage *travestismo*, within public discourse (and, particularly, within news sources that imagine themselves to be respectable) "*travesti*" becomes a catch-all term to refer to both on- and off-stage male-assigned technologies of feminization. The widespread use of "*travesti*" to name homoeroticized male-assigned technologies of feminization by no means replaces the "homosexual man dressed as a woman" trope. Most often, however, the trope of the "homosexual man dressed as a woman" (used both as a stand-alone phrase as well as in conjunction with "*travesti*") is used in articles describing violence and criminality but (almost) never to refer to the more sanitized filmic and theatrical cross-dressings and female impersonations.

"Homosexual vestido de mujer vendía pastillas tóxicas a los viciosos," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Mar. 31, 1989; "Detienen a homosexual por carterista" *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Mar. 19, 1990

¹⁸⁴ For examples, see William Scoby, "Protestan los homosexuales de EU contra iniciativa que los perjudica," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Aug. 3, 1978; "Ingresan homosexuales a la policía de San Francisco," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón) Nov. 14, 1979; "Marcha para defender las libertades de homosexuales," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), July 1, 1985; "No hubo problemas el 'Día de los homosexuales' en Disney," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), June 6, 1994.

The gay movement of the late 1980's and 1990's gave way to the LGBT movement in the early years of the twenty-first century. If the former used civil rights as its primary political platform (using, as a starting point, the 1992 Constitutional reform that declared the country a pluricultural entity), the latter shifted its discourse to human rights (owing in no small part to the 2001 reform that included "preferences" in the anti-discrimination clause of the first article of the Constitution). The term "LGBT" (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transsexual) became popularized around 2004 and would not, until 2010, be replaced in popularity by "LGBTTTT" (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, *travesti*, and intersex). Terminology matters: the schism between *travesti* and gay, brought about through the sanitization and internationalization of the homosexual movement, in a way produced the gay civil rights movement (a movement that privileged the plight of the cisgender and newly virilized homosexual male). The fractioning off of *travesti* required by the virilization of homosexuality in turn lead *travesti* to be sutured to the gendered topographies of trans(sexual), which emerged as a distinct (and somewhat homogeneous) entity with the LGBT movement. *Travesti*, however, proved illegible through the solely gendered lens of transsexuality. In other words, it proved too (trans)gendered for homosexuality and too homosexual for transsexual. As such, and following the political evolution of what would become the TTT (transsexual, transgender and *travesti*) community, it broke (or was forcefully fractioned) away from the single and singularizing T. I explore *travesti*'s relationship to/with trans(sexual/gender) in the final two chapters of this project but wish, at this moment, to suggest that if *travesti* has been unable to find a suitable home within LGBT

it is both a) because it is not accommodated by the compartmentalizations of the sex-gender-desire model currently in vogue and b) because it aids in the respectabilization of those identitarian terrains that *are* accommodated by it.

2.9. Conclusion

I began this chapter and concluded the previous section by suggesting that *travesti* is an ill-fitting figure within the sex-gender-desire model. Similarly, I've suggested that *travesti*'s unsuitability (both within the sex-gender-desire model and within a politics of respectability) operates as capital for sexual and gendered identities more easily legible through the tripartite lens of sex-gender-desire. David Valentine's critique of the supremacy of the sex-gender-desire model is particularly useful here. Valentine points out that "transgender identification," made possible by the distinction between the sexed body, social gender and sexuality, is understood "to be explicitly and fundamentally different in origin and being from homosexual identification, a distinction referred to in the social sciences as *ontological*."¹⁸⁵ Observing that most of his subjects "occupy the categories of both transgender and homosexual as equivalent categories of personhood," Valentine argues that the distinction between the sexed body, social gender and sexuality (or sex-gender-desire) is neither self-evident nor naturally explanatory but, rather, the three *become* categories through and with complicated histories and politics.¹⁸⁶

In this chapter, I have (hopefully) shown how identitarian *travesti* has been produced in a way not dissimilar to Valentine's Fiona, who "makes no ontological

¹⁸⁵ David Valentine, *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 4.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 4, 15.

distinction between her 'gendered' life as a woman and her 'sexual' desire as gay."¹⁸⁷ Here and throughout the project, however, I argue that the production of *travesti* as "an outmoded view of gendered and sexual identity"¹⁸⁸ since late 1970's Mexico is not a mere byproduct of the sex-gender-desire framework but, rather, that its multiple and forcible exiles (first from homosexual, then from gay, and ultimately from trans) have been instrumental in the rise to supremacy of the sex-gender-desire within Mexican politics. As it refers to homosexuality, the fractioning off of the feminized *travesti* allows the virilized homosexual to emerge in its stead, claiming sexuality rather than gender as its single-issue politic. This virilized homosexual is then, in the late 1980's and 1990's, able to wedge sexuality (desire) within the (electoral) political terrain, effectively displacing *travesti* into the realm of gender. What happens to *travesti* in the aftermath of its gendering will be explored in the final chapters. However, it is important to mention that the unwieldy permanence of *travesti* within distinct categories of sex, gender, or desire is, rather than a reflection of its outmodedness or regressiveness, simply (or perhaps not-so-simply) indicative of an alternative way of imagining the relationship between sex, gender, *and* desire.

Furthermore, the stubborn (and primitivized) existence of *travesti* aids in the production of distinct, single-issue sexual and gendered ontologies as comparatively modern and legible. As such, *travesti* does not exist wholly outside of the sex-gender-desire model but is, rather, quite skillfully used to legitimate the distinctions as ontological. If *travesti* is produced as criminal, homosexuality (and trans) is produced as

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 4.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 5.

respectable (as I will argue in the third chapter). If *travesti* is produced as scandalous, homosexuality (and trans) is produced as normal (as I will argue in the fourth chapter). If *travesti* is produced as disposable, homosexuality (and trans) is produced as necessary (as I will argue in the fifth chapter). If *travesti* is produced as dead or dying, homosexuality (and trans) is produced as timeless (as I will argue in the sixth chapter). As a frame of reference, *travesti* is indispensable to the sexual and gendered identities legible to and interpellated by the Mexican State.

3. THE CRIMINALITY OF *TRAVESTI*

3.1. Introduction

In 1895, famed turn of the century journalist and writer Heriberto Frías wrote a fifteen-part series of columns -the first five titled "*Desde Belem*" ("From Belem") and the last ten titled "*Realidades de la Cárcel*" ("Realities of Jail")- for *El Demócrata*, which were based on his incarceration the previous year and which offered a glimpse into life in Belem Jail (Mexico City's primary penal institution at the time).¹⁸⁹ His tenth installment (or fifth segment of *Realidades de la cárcel*) focused on Juan González, an inmate nicknamed "*La Turca*" (a grammatically feminized version of "the Turk"), whom Frías described as having "the horrible face of a perverse Indian disfigured by knife-slash scars."¹⁹⁰ Frías' account of *La Turca* is emblematic of the relationship between the (then still protean) figure of *travesti* and criminality, insofar as it puts into words several of the constitutive elements necessary for the association to emerge.

Though it does not translate well, it is important to note that Frías avoids the grammatical masculinization of *La Turca* until *after* he reminds the reader that the feminized person he has just described is "... [...] a fifty year-old man!"¹⁹¹ Indeed the only grammatical masculinization of *La Turca* in the first few paragraphs of the article is italicized for emphasis in the original. The technique employed by Frías, in which he

¹⁸⁹ Christopher Conway, "Entre tarántulas y dementes: Heriberto Frías, reo-narración y la Cárcel de Belem," *The Colorado Review of Hispanic Studies* 4, (2006), 253.

¹⁹⁰ Heriberto Frías, "Realidades de la Cárcel. V. La Turca," *El Demócrata* (Mexico City), May 30, 1895. "[...] su rostro horrible de indígena perverso cruzado por cicatrices de cuchilladas [...]"

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, "... era un hombre de cincuenta años!"

seductively invites the reader to imagine a sexualized femininity only to surprise him (I masculinize the reader because readers of *El Demócrata* in the late nineteenth century were certainly imagined to be cisgender men) with a male body. The technique of *uncovering* the *travesti* is a popular one, as suggested in the previous chapter and as further explored in the fifth chapter.

To be sure, Frías *begins* the account by explaining that the "feminine nickname" belongs to a "man" (an "*elderly* man" so fatefully masculinized that he is unable to access successful feminization through youth). However, I suggest that the moment of uncovering of *La Turca* occurs when the author reminds the reader that the languorous flirtations of *La Turca* are in fact the flirtations of "... [...] a fifty year-old man!" The ellipsis acts as a pause for effect before the revelation; the exclamation point as a dramatic closing to the built-up tension. What follows is an eight-paragraph repudiation of the "effeminate men" incarcerated in Belem. Frías describes these inmates as "[p]erverse and depraved beings submerged in the depths of irritating ignorance." "[T]hey are fierce and perpetrate terrible acts of vengeance on whomever insults or looks down on them," and, he continues, "[t]heir manly faces contrast disgustingly with their mannerisms and mellifluous voices."¹⁹² Furthermore (and recalling sixteenth and seventeenth century descriptions of sodomites), Frías describes these perverse beings as having "high-pitched voices," the "intonation of finicky and jumpy women," and "nervous mannerisms," as well as "dress[ing] as approximately as possible to women,"

¹⁹² Ibid., "Séres perversos y depravados, hundidos en el fondo de irritante ignorancia, son feroces y perpetran venganzas terribles contra quienes los insultan ó desprecian. Sus rostros hombrunos contrastan de una manera repugnante con sus ademanes y voces melífluas."

and using "prostitutes' *aliases* such as *la diabla*, *la china*, *la pancha*, etc."¹⁹³ Even their solidarity with one another is, to Frías, evidence of their queerness ("raro"): "[t]hey have great affection among themselves, perhaps because of their common disgrace, and aid each other in queer camaraderie."¹⁹⁴

As proof of their particularly vicious nature, Frías explains that *La Turca* found themselves in Mexico City after having fled from Guadalajara, where they were wanted for murdering a(n arguably female-assigned) sex worker in a "drunken night filled with jealousy." González was captured in the capital after stabbing one of their enemies to death, despite the latter having offered the former an olive branch in the shape "vat of *pulque*," which González had gladly accepted (and drunk). Frías recounts that González's "feminine habits were accentuated" by incarceration, "like a disgusting invasion made even more disgusting by his age which made his curls gray and his bandit face wrinkled."¹⁹⁵ Indeed, Frías describes *La Turca* as "jealous and irritable in his monstrous affects toward other inmates," and legitimates his claim by insisting that when *La Turca* "got drunk, sipping hard liquor from clandestinely smuggled pouches, he assaulted

¹⁹³ Ibid., "Tienen la voz tipluda y dan á sus frases una entonación de mujer melindrosa o asustadiza; afectan contorsionas nerviosas - ¡oh! muchos las tienen por naturaleza- visten la más aproximadamente que les es posible conforme á trajes femeninos; llevan alias de prostitutas como: la diabla, la china, la pancha, etc.. y se dedican á planchar, lavar, tejer, bordar y guisar."

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. "Entre sí tiénense un gran afecto, tal vez de común desgracia, y se auxilian con raro compañerismo."

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., "[...] sus costumbres femeninas se acentuaron más y más como una especie de repugnante invasión, tanto más repugnante cuanto que ya la edad blanqueaba sus cabellos *chinos* y arrugaba su rostro de bandolero."

everyone and slashed more than one face with his fearsome knife."¹⁹⁶ Frías concludes his account by reassuring his readers that although *La Turca's* initial sentence (death) had been officially commuted to 20-year imprisonment, their original sentence was nonetheless informally carried out when their blood-thirst led to them being transferred to the San Juan de Ulúa penitentiary in Veracruz "where he has probably died."¹⁹⁷

La Turca's criminality, real or imagined, is emblematic of its time: while private acts of homoeroticism between consenting adults were decriminalized in 1871, homoeroticism and its most reliable indicator (male-assigned technologies of feminization) became metonymic/indicative of criminality, as/through vice, during the thirty-four year period known as the Porfiriato (1876-1910). In other words, the official decriminalization of sodomy did little to attenuate the criminality of the sodomite/*afeminado/pederasta* of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, insofar as acts of homoeroticism (including its visible markers) remained sutured to vice and, as such, proximal to both criminalization and criminality.

In this chapter, I explore *travesti's* 'delinquent essence' not as an ontological project but as a process of ontoformation. In other words, I refuse essentializing explanations of *travesti* criminality (i.e. *travesti* as associated with criminality because *travestis* engage in criminalized behaviors, for whatever reason) and, rather, entertain the proposition that *travesti* criminality has come to be (re)produced through a phantasmic concatenation of associations with vice, to a particular(ly productive) effect. As such, I

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., "Celoso é iracundo, en sus monstruosos afectos hacia otros presos, cuando se emborrachaba, sorbiendo el aguardiente de las *tripas* introducidas clandestinamente, agredía á todos y á más de uno le cruzó la cara con su temible navaja."

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

contend that, rather than a consequence of lived experiences, the criminality of *travesti* is the effect of a rather long history of imagined (and quite forcibly produced) proximities to vice. Furthermore, I suggest that the sustained production of these proximities has yielded rather serendipitous effects, namely the rehabilitation and respectabilization, by comparison, of particular non-*travesti* sexual and gendered non-normativities.

In order to advance these claims, I inquire into several of contemporary *travesti*'s most consistent sites of proximity to criminality: sex work, pederasty and human trafficking, drug use and social dis/ease, and deception. The associations I've chosen to explore are neither exhaustive (other associations between criminality and male-assigned, homoeroticized technologies of feminization exist and yet others, such as anthropophagy and indigeneity, have existed but have since diminished in strength) nor mutually exclusive, but rather exist within a community of vice wherein proximity to a particular vice precipitates associations with others.

Similarly, I focus on two primary historical shifts. The first of these refers to the shift from criminalization to criminality that followed the official decriminalization of private, consensual adult sodomy in 1871 (a shift that was not quite concretized until after the revolution). I argue that the formal (and partial) decriminalization of the *sodomita/pederasta/afeminado* did little to attenuate its criminality: the decriminalization of the *pecado nefando/crimen contra natura* (nefarious sin/crime against nature) and, especially, its most visible and reliable indicators (i.e. male-assigned effeminacies and feminizations) remained both a) vaguely criminalized by Title 6, Chapter 2, of the 1871 Penal Code, which established "*ultrajes á la moral pública, ó á las buenas costumbres,*"

("assaults on public morality or good habits,") and b) a criminal-adjacent vice. Though certainly not immediate, this shift would produce homoeroticisms as a proxy to crime rather than as criminal in and of themselves.

The second shift that I concern myself with is the sanitization of the respectable, virilized homosexual in the late 1970's and early 1980's. I contend that the sanitization of the homosexual depended on the displacement of criminality onto the emergent and highly visible *travesti*. This shift is important insofar as it allowed for the figure of *travesti* to emerge in proximity (and remain proximal) to crime through vice. In other words, I contend that the respectabilization of the homosexual within the public imaginary, a process that began in the late 1970's and which was impelled by the internationalization of homosexuality as a political identity, depended on and helped to further ensconce the criminality of *travesti*. As such, I suggest that the criminality of *travesti* and the respectability of virilized homosexuality are perpendicular rather than parallel processes insofar as the second depended on the first for its fulfillment.

3.2. Criminalization, Criminality, and Vice

As suggested in the previous chapter, historical iterations of what would congeal into the figure of the *travesti* in the late twentieth century have been quite consistently placed in various proximities to criminality. The colonial and briefly post-independence sodomite, particularly those who engaged in technologies of feminization, was a formally criminalized entity. At the same time, the racialized colonial and post-independence sodomite was placed in proximity to a host of other criminalized behaviors and criminal-

adjacent vices, such as anthropophagy, inebriation, and the diabolical.¹⁹⁸ Similarly, and as noted by de los Reyes Heredia, the feminization of the colonial and post-independence sodomite was not uncommonly placed in proximity to female-assigned sex work, for instance through the chewing of gum (according to de los Reyes Heredia, "[t]he only two groups who chewed gum in public were prostitutes and sodomites,"¹⁹⁹) or the adoption, by sodomites, of famous sex workers' names.²⁰⁰

The absence of sodomy as an explicit offense in the Penal Code of 1871 can be (and is often) read as the decriminalization of the sodomite. Famed Mexican historiographer and essayist Carlos Monsiváis described this expurgation as "the hatred that dares not write the name of what it hates."²⁰¹ Indeed, in 1885, *El Foro* described the elision similarly, claiming that "pederasty, the Greek word referring to copulation between two people of the same sex or by misusing a vessel," had been omitted from the Penal Code "doubtlessly because [the commission that reformed the Penal Code] didn't want the nascent youth to read such a classification, so that they might have no idea of matters they are to forever ignore."²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ Federico Garza Carvajal, *Butterflies will Burn: Prosecuting Sodomites in Early Modern Spain and Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 132.

¹⁹⁹ José Guillermo de los Reyes Heredia, "Sodomy and Society: Sexuality, Gender, Race, and Class in Colonial Mexico," (doctoral dissertation, The University of Pennsylvania, 2004), 144-145.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 151.

²⁰¹ Carlos Monsiváis, "El mundo soslayado (Donde se mezclan la confesión y la proclama)," preface to *La estatua de sal*, by Salvador Novo, 11-41 (México: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1998), 19.

²⁰² "Jurisprudencia criminal," *El Foro* (Mexico City), Jan. 10, 1885. "[...] aunque el referido Código en la clasificación de los delitos, no da á entender de una manera literal el hecho tan asqueroso, sí lo comprende su sentido jurídico sin necesidad de decir

It is important to mention that Article 787 of the 1871 Penal Code prescribed arrest and a fine of 25 to 500 pesos to whomever "assaulted public morality or good habits by executing an obscene action in a public space, regardless of whether witnesses exist or not, or in a private space visible to the public." The same amendment defined obscenity as "any action that is classified by public perception as against decency." Article 788 assigned second-class aggravation if the act was committed in the presence of people younger than 14 years of age. Similarly, and although sodomy was not *necessarily* punishable in the 1871 Penal Code, sodomy's proximity to vice both imbued it with a criminal essence and criminalized it. Indeed, in the 1871 Penal Code, proximity to vice itself was criminalized by Article 840, which prescribed arrest and a fine to any who "publically defends a vice or a felony both severe and legal, or makes an apologia for them or their authors."²⁰³ These amendments were used quite frequently in order to arrest and (with different degrees of success) imprison those perceived to engage in sodomy *after* the "decriminalization" of sodomy.²⁰⁴ The most visible of these were male-assigned people who engaged in technologies of feminization.

pederastía, palabra griega que significa el concúbiteo entre dos personas de un mismo sexo ó vaso indebido, la comisión encargada de reformar el Código Penal, al clasificar los delitos, quiso sin duda que al dar lectura á dicha clasificación, no se encontrase tal delito para que la juventud naciente, no tuviera idea de lo que debía ignorar siempre."

²⁰³ "El que públicamente defienda un vicio ó un delito grave como lícito, ó haga la apología de ellos ó de sus autores; será castigado con arresto mayor y multa de segunda clase."

²⁰⁴ Although it makes little sense to speak of the criminalization of male-assigned technologies of feminization in the past tense, insofar as legislation criminalizing *travestis* on the basis of their clothing still exist in many areas in the country or have only recently been struck down, I speak in the past tense because, in Mexico City, the provisions criminalizing "assaults on public morality and good habits" were removed from the city's Penal Code in 1917.

Visibility was so important that despite the juridical modernization engaged by Mexico by decriminalizing "acts that involve great offenses to morality but do not perturb public tranquility [such as] simple trespassing, statutory rape, pederasty and bestiality," as well as drunkenness and prostitution²⁰⁵, these acts were nonetheless punishable when "they offend[ed] decency, when they cause[d] scandal, or when they involve[d] violence."²⁰⁶ The widespread decriminalization of private acts responded to "modern science" (including utilitarian jurisprudence) dictating that punishing "acts detrimental only to those executing them [was] not only impotent to curtail evil but [was] noxious and produced a greater sum of evils than it seek[ed] to avoid."²⁰⁷ For this reason, *El Foro* proposed that its readers "attack evil, but through indirect means," such as through education and by inculcating values and moral direction, as well as by "anathemizing immoral acts and those who execute them by making them know that they are not worthy of sharing in the sum of wellbeing obtained through social community, as honorable and moral men do."²⁰⁸ In this sense, once illicit behaviors became semi-licit vices.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁵ "Juegos Prohibidos," *El Foro* (Mexico City), Sept. 08, 1877.

²⁰⁶ J. Pallares, "El poder judicial ó tratado completo de organización, competencia y procedimientos de los tribunales," *El Foro* (Mexico City), Jan. 30, 1875. "Fijada esta base, había que hacer lo que se ha hecho en los Códigos modernos, esto es: desechar del catálogo de los delitos todos aquellos actos que, aunque envuelven una muy grave ofensa á la moral, no perturban el reposo público. Por esta razón no se consulta en el proyecto pena alguna contra el simple allanamiento ilícito, el estrupro, la pederastía, ni contra la bestialidad; sino cuando ofenden el pudor, cuando causan escándalo, ó se ejecutan por medio de la violencia."

²⁰⁷ "Juegos Prohibidos," *El Foro* (Mexico City), Sept. 08, 1877.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, "[...] anatemizamos los actos inmorales y á los que los ejecutan, haciéndoles conocer que son indignos de compartir, como hombres honrados y morales, la suma de bienestar que se obtiene por medio de la comunidad social [...]"

Although the Penal Code of 1871 codified a punishment significantly less severe than punishments meted out under Spanish colonial law, it is important to mention that the severity of punishments for sodomy decreased long before its elision as an explicit offense. Indeed, by 1838, *El Cosmopolita* praised the phasing out of the death penalty for "the forger, the arsonist and the sodomite" even though such "indulgence[s] were not sanctioned by the law" and were, instead, the result of judges' "private opinions."²¹⁰ The vagueness of the 1871 Penal Code allowed for even greater judicial discretion than was already being exercised *vis-a-vis* the sodomite. In this sense, the decriminalization of the sodomite was gradual: the discretionary nature of its criminalization, whether the act was explicitly or implicitly criminalized, makes it impossible to determine with any sort of certainty when, or even whether, the sodomite was decriminalized.

Chronological exactitud notwithstanding, it is possible to understand the criminal status of the *sodomita/pederasta/afeminado/homosexual* as moving from one of primary criminalization to one of primary criminality. In other words, in a relatively short period of time, male-assigned homoeroticisms (and male-assigned feminization as its most reliable indicator) gradually went from being a formally criminalized practice to being understood as a criminal-adjacent characteristic.

²⁰⁹ "La ciencia aplicada y la ciencia pura," *El Diario del Hogar* (Mexico City), Oct. 27, 1886. For instance, recognizing their decriminalization, *El Diario del Hogar* refers to unmarried cohabitation, polygyny, increasing divorce rates, infant exposure, and pederasty as "vices contra natura" (vices against nature).

²¹⁰ "México, Junio 20 de 1838. Pena de muerte," *El Cosmopolita* (Mexico City), June 30, 1838. "De ahí se deduce, que si con el falsario, el sodomita y otros, se usa una indulgencia *que no viene de la ley*, depende esto sin disputa *de la opinión privada* del juez, y ella misma arrastra al patíbulo al homicida [...]"

While, in 1860, *La Sociedad* described pederasty as a "public crime" (a crime against the public order) not unlike abduction and rape, bigamy, procuring sex workers, cohabitation, carrying prohibited weapons, arson and forgery,²¹¹ after 1871, sodomy gradually became understood as a licit or criminal-adjacent vice, rather than a strictly criminalized activity, and was placed in proximity to other sexual vices (both criminalized and licit) such as prostitution, incest, adultery, onanism, bestiality, and the corruption of youth.²¹² Similarly, sodomy was placed in proximity to non-sexual criminalized behaviors, often through prison, such as murder, treason, arson, and robbery, which were also described as (illicit) vices.²¹³

The 1880's saw an important shift in the production of Mexico City's criminal underworld: a wave of highly publicized crimes, official efforts to compile statistical information on crime and criminality, and a vigorous program undertaken to prosecute petty theft and drunkenness produced the impression that the "the city was drowning in criminality."²¹⁴ This perceived overabundance of criminality and the anxiety it elicited in

²¹¹ "Bibliografía," *La Sociedad* (Mexico City), Apr. 25, 1860.

²¹² For examples, see "Voto de gracias á los Illmos. Sres. Arzobispos de México, Michoacán y Guadalajara," *El Amigo de la Verdad* (Mexico City), Apr. 30, 1887; "Destellos doctrinales y de controversia," *El Faro* (Mexico City), Feb. 1, 1889;

²¹³ For examples, see "Pedro versus el Papa," *El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado* (Mexico City), May 1, 1889; "Los vicios y los crímenes de los Papas," *La Patria* (Mexico City), Feb. 6, 1892; "El Papado," *La Patria* (Mexico City), May 4, 1892; "Arrestos," *La Patria* (Mexico City), Apr. 7, 1893; "De la Iglesia Católica, Apostólica y Romana," *El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado* (Mexico City), Nov. 1, 1893; "Un memorandum del Padre D. Felipe Castañón," *La Patria* (Mexico City), Feb. 28, 1894; "Los vicarios de Dios," *El Diario del Hogar* (Mexico City), Mar. 25, 1896; "Romanticismos políticos," *La Patria* (Mexico City), Feb. 25, 1905.

²¹⁴ James Alex Garza, *The Imagined Underworld: Sex, Crime, and Vice in Porfirian Mexico City* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 3.

the upper- and middle-classes were both a result of and a motivation for positivist measures instated to combat what was perceived and produced as a pandemic of criminality. If Frías' accounts of inmates at Belem Jail read quite similarly to the positivist portraits produced by famed criminologist Carlos Roumagnac a decade later, it is in no small part because both authors engaged in the very positivist technologies that produced the criminal underworld (and its imagined solutions) in the Porfiriato.

Drawing from the Positivist School of Criminology and seeking rehabilitationist prison reform, Carlos Roumagnac's *Los Criminales de México: Ensayo de Psicología Criminal*, published in 1904, is perhaps the most carefully examined manuscript regarding the criminality of Porfirian *pederastas/invertidos*. In this monograph, Roumagnac explores and establishes certain vices and characteristics as "predisposing to or deterministic of criminality"²¹⁵: alcoholism²¹⁶, lack of education²¹⁷, race, temperament, age, sex, weather conditions, suggestion, and contagion²¹⁸. In addition to these, Roumagnac explored and emphasized inmates' "sexual inversions and perversions" as vices both undergirding more repugnant and dishonorable crimes and as practices brought about by the conditions of prison life.²¹⁹

Indeed, while Roumagnac's seminal study offers nary a portrait of a self-proclaimed (feminized or effeminate) *pederasta*, the criminologist nonetheless described

²¹⁵ Carlos Roumagnac, *Los Criminales de México: Ensayo de Psicología Criminal* (Mexico: Tipografía El Fenix, 1904), 59.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 47.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 40-46.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 76.

known *pederastas* as "sexual degenerates who paraded in front of all other inmates, without blushing or shame, and on the contrary, boasting feminized voices and mannerisms, giving one another womanly nicknames and often carrying rag dolls in their arms (or pretending to carry them), alluding to their recent births."²²⁰ It is interesting, if not uncommon, that Roumagnac referred to the collectivity of *pederastas* in such feminizing terms whereas his in-depth profiles included no such feminized inmates but, rather, only virilized inmates who, for the most part, forcefully denied any involvement in consensual (particularly receptive) homoeroticisms. Roumagnac's production of pederasty as either situational (in the case of inmates who, when given the choice, would choose to engage in sexual interactions with female-assigned women) or innate (in the case of the *pederastas* he describes) was quite in keeping with the Positivist School of Criminology which believed that "environment more than inherent condition predisposed men to crime and pederasty" and nonetheless held that "'moral insanity' and 'moral disease' were just as apt to cause deviance."²²¹

According to Carreras Sendas, throughout the nineteenth and until the mid-twentieth century, homoeroticisms were associated not only with antisocial and unnatural behaviors, but were closely linked to delinquency. "Most results of studies conducted with convicts in prisons during those centuries," Carreras Sendas notes, "associated the

²²⁰ Ibid., 59. "Y era de verse entonces el desfile de esos degenerados sexuales, que pasaban delante de los demás detenidos, sin rubor ni vergüenza, haciendo, por el contrario, alarde de voces y modales afeminados, prodigándose apodosos mujeriles, y muchas veces cargando en brazos muñecos de trapo o fingiendo cargarlos, y haciendo alusiones a sus partos recientes."

²²¹ Martin Nesvig, "The Lure of the Perverse: Moral Negotiation of Pederasty in Porfirian Mexico," *Mexican Studies* 16, no. 1 (2000), 5.

inmates' homosexuality with their delinquent 'essence.'"²²² Indeed, in his study of criminality and citizenship, Rob Buffington notes that during this criminological period, "criminals constituted an identifiable class with distinct traits that included atavistic homosexual tendencies."²²³ To speak of "homosexual(s)/ity" when referring to the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century makes little sense since, as discussed in the previous chapter, the conceptual/identitarian category of homosexuality was not yet available (and would not become widely available until the late 1920's and 1930's). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the *sodomita* becomes (primarily within positivist criminology) the *pederasta*, a figure given to ruthless homoeroticism regardless of age (though the one never completely replaces the other). I discuss the pederasty associated with *travesti* in greater depth in the sections that follow but wish, at this point, only to point out the shift in discourse. Both sodomy and pederasty were deeply linked to vice *as vices* and, as such, associated with social/moral dis/ease and public health.²²⁴

During the Porfiriato, the criminality of the *pederasta/sodomita/afeminado* was enhanced by the biopolitical shift to a language of public health and positivist criminology. *Sodomitas/pederastas/afeminados* became a collectivized vector of social, moral, and physiological disease, both within public narratives as well as within academic discourse. For instance, Cesar Lombroso's work on positivist criminology was

²²² Natatxa Carreras Sendra, "Sexoservidores-homosexuales-vestidas en la ciudad de Puebla," in *Sujetos neoliberales en México*, ed. Ricardo Francisco Macip Ríos, 17-50 (Puebla, México: BUAP, 2009), 32.

²²³ Robert M. Buffington, *Criminal and Citizen in Modern Mexico*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 130.

²²⁴ For examples, see "La ciencia aplicada," *El Diario del Hogar* (Mexico City), Oct. 27, 1886; "Saludable acuerdo," *El Diario del Hogar* (Mexico City), Mar. 14, 1890.

shared in *El Foro* as early as 1895 and, in it, Lombroso praised the possibilities inaugurated by positivist criminology to aid in the prosecution of pederasty, "where evidence tends to be scant."²²⁵

Furthermore, the Porfirian regime's motto of "order and progress" dovetailed nicely with the positivist approach to social disease and disorder, emphasizing the problematic existence of "*vagos*" ("bums"), among which were included those involved in "pederasty, seduction and exploitation of *momentáneas* [sex workers], the corruption of youths through game and drink."²²⁶ As mentioned in the previous chapter, idleness and perceived lack of productivity is precisely what linked the class-privileged but not homoeroticized *afeminado* to what would emerge as the homoeroticized *afeminado* after *El Baile de los 41*. During the Porfiriato, homoeroticism began to be regulated through the emergence of public health as a government responsibility. As González Pérez notes, "the most tangible regulations regarding sexuality are materialized through laws and regulations concerning order and public health."²²⁷

It was under the rubric of public health that vices -such as *afeminamiento* (and, with it, homoeroticisms), sex work, intoxicating substances (particularly *pulque*), and other sexual non-normativities- came to be juridically determined and spatially grouped (through "zones of tolerance") as a category of closely related vices. Indeed, the creation

²²⁵ Cesar Lombroso, "Defensa de la escuela criminal positiva," *El Foro* (Mexico City), Dec. 15, 1895.

²²⁶ "Saludable acuerdo," *El Diario del Hogar* (Mexico City), Mar. 14, 1890.

²²⁷ González Pérez, *Travestidos al Desnudo*, 39.

of "zones of tolerance" further ensconced the association between vices, both geographically and within the public imaginary.

The Penal Code of 1931 regulated vice in a manner not unlike its 1871 predecessor, with Article 200 dictating three-to-four month imprisonment and a fine of five-to-50 pesos for whomever "executed or had someone execute obscene exhibitions in a public place" and, also like its predecessor, with Article 209 penalizing apologia for crimes and vices with three days to six months of prison and a five-to-50 peso fine. Interestingly, Article 200 was amended in 1940 in order to include "incitement to prostitution" within the Article as well as within the Chapter (by altering the title to "Crimes against public morality or good habits and incitement to prostitution").²²⁸ Indeed, Article 200 would discretionally criminalize "public" acts of homoeroticism until its reform in 2007, when "crimes against public morality," gave way to "a new criminal figure: the sale of pornographic materials to people under the age of 18."²²⁹

Discretionary criminalization notwithstanding, by the end of the Revolution the decriminalization of sodomy became increasingly concrete. In other words, it became increasingly difficult to uphold juridical punishments meted out to nascent homosexuals on the basis of (consensual, adult) homoeroticism alone. This is not to say, of course, that

²²⁸ "Decreto que reforma el Código Penal," *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Feb. 14, 1940. "Ultrajes a la moral pública o las buenas costumbres e incitación a la prostitución." The chapter title would be changed once more, in 1966, to "Crimes against public morality" but Article 200 would continue to criminalize "scandalous incitement to prostitution" until 2007.

²²⁹ "Decreto por el que se reforman, adicionan y derogan diversas disposiciones del Código Penal Federal, del Código Federal de Procedimientos Penales y de la Ley Federal contra la Delincuencia Organizada, en materia de explotación sexual infantil," *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Mar. 27, 2007.

sodomy was no longer punished: exile to the Islas Mariás (Mexico's primary penal colony) was relatively common until at least the late-1930's.²³⁰ However, evidence suggests that *amparos* (writs of protection) were both relatively successful and commonplace in cases involving the criminalization of homoeroticisms since the early twentieth century. Indeed, and as mentioned in the previous chapter, most of those conscripted to the armed services after the raids on *el Baile de los 41* and *el Baile de la Coyuya* had their sentences either reduced or rescinded on appeal. *El Popular*, for instance, recounts that those captured at *El Baile de la Coyuya* appealed their sentences arguing that their "constitutional rights were violated insofar as, having committed no crime warranting corporal punishment, they have been unjustly detained in Prison and will be deported to a deathly place, which is equivalent to the death penalty [...]."²³¹

While homoeroticisms remained vaguely criminalized after the revolution, it was the criminality (rather than the criminalization) of homosexuals that was exalted within the public imaginary, through proximity to crime. In other words, and owing in no small part to scientific criminology, homoeroticism

²³⁰ For examples, see "La 'Marion Chambers' y la 'Tubau' en la carcel," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), May 29, 1929; "La pena de relegación," *El Nacional Revolucionario* (Mexico City), Nov. 1, 1930; "El Rapto de un afeminado," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Aug. 3, 1932; "Una redada de 'invertidos'" *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Mar. 23, 1934; "Ocho Relegados se fugaron de las Islas Mariás," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Jan. 16, 1939.

²³¹ "El baile de la Coyuya," *El Popular* (Mexico City), Feb. 12, 1902. "fundan su escrito de amparo los referidos en que se ha violado en ellos una garantía constitucional, pues no habiendo cometido ningún delito que amerite pena corporal, se les ha detenido injustamente en la Cárcel y se pretende deportarlos á un lugar mortífero, en donde de seguro perderán la vida, equivaliendo por lo tanto, el castigo de la autoridad á la pena de muerte por un delito [...] Piden su excarcelación, toda vez que no han sido declarados formalmente presos por ningún delito [...]"

(*pederastia/sodomía/homosexual(ismo/idad)*) became a reliable indicator of criminal tendencies rather than necessarily criminal in and of itself. The criminality of homoeroticism (with male-assigned feminization as its most reliable indicator) was increasingly taken up as a subject of study and validated through positivist scholarship. Studies not unlike Frías' 25 years prior or Roumagnac's 15 years prior, emphasizing the relationship between non-normative sexualities and criminalized behaviors, became quite commonplace in post-revolutionary Mexico.

Although Porfirian and post-revolutionary criminologists shared "concerns about the public order and capitalist economic development," according to Buffington, the primary difference between the two was that the latter "stressed the redemptive possibilities of the new regime and thus doubly condemned congenital (probably unredeemable) states like homosexuality."²³² Indeed, post-revolutionary positivist criminology both endorsed and provided support for congenital theories of homosexuality. For instance, Alfonso Millán's 1934 article, "The Antisocial Character of Homosexuals," began with the premise that homosexuals in Mexico could not be a product of their environment insofar as homosexuals were "regarded among [Mexicans] with revulsion and disgust" and, since the hostile environment could not produce homosexuality, it must therefore be congenital.²³³ This assumption allowed Millán (and others) to produce the homosexual as a species with common characteristics, such as a

²³² Robert M. Buffington, *Criminal and Citizen in Modern Mexico*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 137.

²³³ Alfonso Millán, "El carácter antisocial de los homosexuales" *Criminalia*, no. 4 (1934), 51.

particular personality and psychology, overdetermined by inconsistent chronological, biological and psycho-sexual stages.²³⁴

Interestingly, it is during the mid-1930's when licit and illicit activities previously grouped together through vice come together once more under the criminological rubric of "dangerous states" ("*estados peligrosos*"), which included sex work, homosexuality, drug use, alcohol use, and vagrancy, among others.²³⁵ According to criminologist Susana Solano, homosexuality could be described as "perilousness without crime" ("*peligrosidad sin delito*"), insofar as homosexuals do not "contribute to the reproduction of the species," because homosexuality could be contagious, and because of the psychopathological manifestations associated with homosexuality.²³⁶ Like Millán, Solano established homosexuality as a pathological state that rendered dangerous whoever suffered from it. Interestingly, Solano offered as proof of homosexuality's dangerousness its ubiquity within prisons, reformatories, and psychiatric hospitals, as well as its proximity to prostitution.²³⁷ As mentioned by Buffington, "[b]y 1935 the links between criminal and sexual deviance had been 'proven.'"²³⁸

Newspapers in post-revolutionary Mexico followed suit, both in producing homoeroticism as an indicator of criminality as well as in promulgating homosexuality's

²³⁴ Ibid., 2.

²³⁵ Susana Solano, "Algunas formas crónicas del estado peligroso," *Criminalia* (1937): 270-275.

²³⁶ Susana Solano, "El homosexualismo y el estado peligroso," *Criminalia* (1935): 137-139.

²³⁷ Ibid., 138.

²³⁸ Buffington, *Criminal and Citizen in Modern Mexico*, 135.

physiological origins. For instance, Ignacio Mendoza, writing for *Acción Social*, lamented the relative laxity in punishments meted out to opportunistic *sodomitas/pederastas*, compared to colonial sanctions, but recognized that the "androgynous being is an error of nature and we must consider him a disgraced being, worthier of compassion than contempt because he is not to blame for coming into the world with such a misfortune."²³⁹ Instead, Mendoza proposes that collective contempt (via the "powerful medium of public ridicule") be redirected at those who "by their punishable vices become degenerated until the point of abdicating their manly dignity."²⁴⁰ Although Mendoza's diatribe differentiates between innate and opportunistic homoeroticisms and, like positivist criminology, ascribes greater danger to the latter, it is important to mention that public discourse in post-revolutionary Mexico, for the most part, does not. Indeed, most journalistic mentions of *afeminados/pederastas/invertidos/homosexuales* in post-revolutionary Mexico craft a figure not unlike Mendoza's "androgynous being": a figure that *is*, rather than a figure that *does*.

Many of the articles discussing *afeminados/pederastas/invertidos/homosexuales* during the post-revolutionary period emphasized the figure's criminality by positioning it in proximity to crime, primarily by means of a) narrating raids on (and punishment for)

²³⁹ Ignacio Mendoza, "Al margen de la reciente batida contra los afeminados," *Acción Social* (Toluca), Aug. 1, 1931. "Un ser andrógino en este mundo, es un error de la naturaleza y debemos considerarlo como un ser desgraciado, más digno de compasión que de desprecio porque él no tuvo culpa de venir al mundo con esa desgracia [...]"

²⁴⁰ Ibid., "[...] pero sí merece todo el desprecio de la sociedad aquel que por sus punibles vicios llega a degenerarse hasta el grado de abdicar de su dignidad de hombre, título el máspreciado [...]"

private parties with attendees dressed in attire reserved for women²⁴¹, b) recounting acts of violence perpetrated in prison by *afeminados/pederastas/invertidos/homosexuales*²⁴², and c) reporting crimes and vices, other than homoeroticism, committed by *afeminados/pederastas/invertidos/homosexuales*²⁴³. While the first of these was instrumental in buttressing homosexual criminalization (and, to a lesser extent, criminality), the latter two were particularly crucial in crafting homosexual criminality, insofar as they place the homosexual (*as* homosexual) in direct proximity to crime and vice, both licit and illicit.

²⁴¹ For examples, see "Lo que pasa en la ciudad de México," *El Dictamen* (Mexico City), Mar. 22, 1915; "Siete aprehensiones más de hombres afeminados," *El Pueblo* (Mexico City), Dec. 19, 1916; "Sorprendió la policía un baile de afeminados que imitaban a la Paulowa, a Tórtola, etc.," *El Informador* (Guadalajara), Feb. 18, 1919; "Una reprise del baile de los 41," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), Dec. 22, 1921; "Trece afeminados fueron detenidos en la colonia 'Roma'," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Nov. 4, 1926; "Una redada de 'invertidos,'" *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Mar. 23, 1934; "Redada de afeminados que llevará a cabo la Policía," *El Porvenir* (Monterrey), Aug. 17, 1935; "Invertidos aprehendidos," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Dec. 8, 1937; "Bajo la sanción de los códigos," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Feb 1, 1941.

²⁴² For examples, see "La 'Marion Chambers' y la 'Tubau' en la carcel," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), May 29, 1929; "Una riña de invertidos," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Apr. 27, 1938; Efraín Huerta, "Hombres sin mujer," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), June 25, 1938; "Esos pederastas," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Nov. 11, 1938; "Bajo la sanción de los códigos," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Sept. 8, 1939; "Intentó suicidarse en la peni pero le fallo el 'porrazo'" *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Sept. 18, 1940; "En su celda se ahorcó con el cinturón un reo," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Aug. 10, 1945.

²⁴³ For examples, see "Afeminado convertido en rufián," *El Demócrata* (Mexico City), Apr. 26, 1925; "Feo delito de un tío contra su sobrino," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Nov. 5, 1931; "El Rapto de un afeminado," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Aug. 3, 1932; "El Sacristán de Cristo Rey. Antonio de Jesús Sanchez es el Autor del Robo de General Anaya," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), May 20, 1934; "Un afeminado le dió una mordida que se le infectó," *El Porvenir* (Monterrey), Feb. 13, 1934; "Herido en la cara," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Apr. 22, 1938; "Fue capturado ya el autor del crimen del callejón de Canarias. Tragedia pasional entre invertidos." *El Nacional* (Mexico City), May 10, 1939.

In the mid-1900's, accounts of raids on "*centros de vicio*" (sites of vice) came close to replacing narratives of raids on private parties.²⁴⁴ These sites of vice were overwhelmingly located in zones of tolerance (or red zones) meant to geographically cordon off vice from other, respectable, zones in various cities. The criminality of homosexuals, overwhelmingly feminized, came to be associated with drug use, robbery and passion-based assaults (including murder). Although there was not much recognition of male-assigned sex work, homoeroticisms and prostitution were quite commonly linked together via geographical proximity in the 1950's and '60s.

Interestingly, the 1960's give way to an internationalization of homosexuality both through scholarship (particularly studies that claimed homosexuality as global phenomenon) and through art (particularly the performing arts and literature) and, exclusively within these discourses, homosexuality came to be discussed as something other than (necessarily) criminal.²⁴⁵ Discourse on national homosexualities, however,

²⁴⁴ For examples, see "Campaña en contra de los invertidos," *El Porvenir* (Monterrey), June 8, 1943; "Drama de homosexuales en la zona de tolerancia," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Aug. 3, 1947; "Tétricos antros de vicio y prostitución clausurados por el departamento del D.F.," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Jan. 25, 1950; "Invasión de cantinas en Tuxtepec," *El Dictámen* (Veracruz), Nov. 25, 1952; "Hizo una redada de homosexuales la policía el sábado," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), June 16, 1953; "El Señor General Miguel Molinar S., Inspector General de Policía, vela por la seguridad y tranquilidad de la sociedad capitalina," *La Crítica* (Mexico City), Apr. 1, 1954; "San Pedro," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Jul. 31, 1956; "Homosexuales presos por hacer escándalo," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Jan. 15, 1957; "Redada en Garibaldi; hubo 113 detenidos," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Nov. 27, 1962.

²⁴⁵ Discussions of foreign (particularly first world) homoeroticisms were not exclusively positive. Indeed, in the 1950's, articles discussing U.S. homosexuals/*afeminados* as spies or traitors were not uncommon. For examples, see "Desmiente al Senador McCarthy," *El Informador* (Guadalajara), Mar. 15, 1950; "Arroja más lodo sobre los funcionarios del Departamento de Estado el Senador McCarthy," *El Porvenir* (Monterrey), Apr. 26, 1950;

remained closely tied to criminality until the 1980's. Considering *afeminamiento/homosexual(ismo/idad)*'s robust history of criminality and proximity to vice, it is not surprising that, by 1981, the claim could be made that "[h]omosexuals are involved in 95 percent -at least- of murders and nocturnal muggings committed in [Mexico] [C]ity."²⁴⁶ The article is reflective both of the criminality historically associated with homosexuality as well as of the criminality that would, as suggested in the previous chapter, be transferred from the homosexual onto the *travesti* in the late 1970's and early 1980's. Indeed, the article goes on to equivocate between *homosexuales* and *travestistas*, using "the capture of two *travestistas*, who intended to mug two church-goers" as legitimation for the Secret Service's investigation into "the world of error." As suggested in the previous chapter, the late 1970's and early 1980s was a pivotal moment in the production of *travesti*: *travesti* both emerged as identity and became differentiated from non-*travesti* homosexuality. I contend that it was during this emergence-via-differentiation that the history of criminality associated with homosexuality became transferred onto the *travesti*.

It is the *travesti*, rather than the virilized homosexual, who comes to be associated with (and scapegoated for) the criminal and criminal-adjacent behaviors previously ascribed to the relatively undifferentiated *sodomita/pederasta/afeminado/homosexual*. Discussed at greater length in the sections that follow, these behaviors (all considered vices, though their criminalization varied from geotemporal location to geotemporal

"Eliminaron a cuatro empleados Yanquis nada gratos" *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Mar. 28, 1951.

²⁴⁶ Francisco Reynoso Torres, "Investigará la policía al 'mundo del error'," *Diario de la Mañana* (Mexico city), June 23, 1981.

location) include sex work, drug use and social dis/ease, pederasty and human trafficking, and deception.

3.3. *Travesti* and Sex Work

The figure of *travesti* is inseparable from sex work in the public imaginary. The association is so endemic that the glossary of a 2003 three-part reportage on sex work in Mexico City would come to define *travesti* as "a homosexual who practices prostitution, for which he dresses as a woman."²⁴⁷ A similar obsession with *travesti* sex work exists in academia: although there exists a relative absence of *travesti* within academic literature on sex work, the body of work on *travesti* disproportionately highlights sex work. The strength of the association is such that there exists a metonymic slide: to speak *travesti* is to suggest prostitution. Indeed, Don Kulick's famous ethnography of Brazilian *travestis* begins with the definitional premise that *travestis* are "transgendered prostitutes."²⁴⁸

The association between *travesti* and sex work is sufficiently strong so as to transcend borders. Though few academics are as bold as Kulick as to define *travestis* as "transgender prostitutes," most works on *travesti* either focus on *travesti* sex workers or recognize the close association between *travesti* and sex work. Speaking to the Argentinian context, Leticia Sabsay, for instance, recognizes that *travesti* identity and "the business of desire are completely different things" yet legitimizes this association claiming that it is neither "arbitrary nor random" but rather the result of limited survival

²⁴⁷ Jose Luis Flores, "Prostitución, ¿quién se queda con las ganancias?" *El Universal* (Mexico City), Oct. 21, 2003.

²⁴⁸ Don Kulick, *Travesti: Sex, Gender, and Culture among Brazilian Transgendered Prostitutes*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 1.

opportunities available to *travestis*.²⁴⁹ This is perhaps the most common trope suturing sex work to *travesti*.

In addition to sharing the thesis that the relationship between *travesti* and sex work exists because most *travestis* engage in sex work, Liguori and Aggleton partially legitimate the association between *travesti* and sex work by claiming that, unlike *travestis*, cisgender women who perform street-based sex work "neither dress nor behave in such attention-mongering and scandalous ways."²⁵⁰ In other words and regardless of minor variations, explanations for the metonymic slide are often essentialist in nature: *the association is because travestis are*. Whether *travestis* perform sex work or how many of them do so is outside of the scope of this conversation: some no doubt do and some do not, some did but no longer do, some have yet to, and some never will. The size of the kernel of truth underlying a stereotype is rarely of much consequence in its propagation.²⁵¹

Liguori and Aggleton's claim that *travesti* sex workers are particularly visible because they engage in scandalous behaviors is not an uncommon position. Proal, for instance, shares this argument claiming that, on Tlalpan Avenue (an important site for sex work in Mexico City), "trans sex workers and natural women exist side by side.

²⁴⁹ Sabsay, "La representación mediática de la identidad travesti," 185.

²⁵⁰ Liguori and Aggleton, "Aspectos del comercio sexual," 161.

²⁵¹ César O. González Pérez, *Travestidos al desnudo: homosexualidad, identidades y luchas territoriales en Colima* (Ciudad de México: Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 2003), 73. González Pérez notes, for instance, that the majority of the *travestis* he encountered throughout his field research were not sex work enthusiasts and recounts that one of his research participants, a *travesti* by the name of Jennifer, declared that they would rather go work at the lime harvest than engage in sex work.

However, the former are more scandalous. Trans people with attractive bodies fashioned after some model's mold don't hesitate to open their jackets and show their nipples at almost any hour."²⁵² This thesis, however, neglects the role that economies of attention play in the hypervisibilization of *travesti* sex workers. Indeed, the production of *travesti* sex workers as more "attention-mongering and scandalous" than their cisgender counterparts relies on 1) the establishment of a barometer for proper feminized behavior, and 2) the conviction of *travesti* as an inauthentic copy of the original it seeks -and fails- to imitate. That *travesti* sex workers are particularly visible as such is a function not of their self-fashioning (their attention-mongering ways, as it were) but of the spectator's gaze which produces *travesti* as artifice and excess. I speak more to excess and artificiality as constitutive elements of *travesti* in the chapters that follow but wish at this moment to point out the flaws with explanatory models that seek to justify the association between *travesti* and sex work as a reflection of truth. More narrowly, I wish to explore *whose* truth (and interests) is reproduced as reflection through the persistent association between sex work and the figure of the *travesti*. If to name *travesti* is to suggest sex work, what work does this association do? I argue that the association between *travesti* and sex work, partially a function of the former's association with perversity and vice and the latter's association with social disorder (and vice), does the work of buttressing criminality as one of *travesti*'s constitutive elements.

Although, citing a personal conversation with the Mexican historiographer Carlos Monsiváis, Liguori and Aggleton suggest that "the phenomenon linking transvestism with

²⁵² Juan Pablo Proal, *Vivir en el cuerpo equivocado* (Monterrey: Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, 2013), 61.

sex work became evident in Mexico City from the late sixties," evidence suggests that the feminization of those assigned male at birth has been linked to sex work since at least the colonial period, a connection reinforced through proximity to degeneracy and vice.²⁵³ De los Reyes Heredia notes of the early colonial period, for instance, that while

the chewing of *tzictli* (nahuatl for gum; *chicle* in Spanish) was an activity performed by both men and women to clean their teeth and prevent bad breath; men, for the most part, had to do so in secret; this is because it was considered as an activity closely related to women, even though both sexes often participated. *The only two groups who chewed gum in public were prostitutes and sodomites.* Consequently, every person who publicly performed this inappropriate act was categorized either as a prostitute, in the case of women, or as a sodomite in the case of men.²⁵⁴

The association between *afeminamiento* and chewing gum persisted long after independence. Indeed, in 1923, for instance, V. Salado Alvarez noted that caretakers used to scare small boy-children out of chewing gum by branding them *afeminados* and by "scaring [them] by saying that [their] pants would fall off if [they] chewed the insipid gum."²⁵⁵ Although the association between *afeminamiento* and chewing of gum may not have survived long enough to become an attribute associated with *travesti*, other, perhaps more pernicious, associations have certainly persisted.

²⁵³ Ana Luisa Liguori and Peter Aggleton, "Aspectos del comercio sexual masculino en la ciudad de México," *Debate Feminista*, 18 (1998), 159.

²⁵⁴ José Guillermo de los Reyes Heredia, "Sodomy and Society: Sexuality, Gender, Race, and Class in Colonial Mexico," (doctoral dissertation, The University of Pennsylvania, 2004), 144-145.

²⁵⁵ V. Salado Alvarez, "Los K. K. K.," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Aug. 16, 1923.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the sodomite was a figure criminalized by various (and contradictory) juridical apparatuses such as *Las Siete Partidas del Rey Don Alfonso el Sabio*, the *Leyes de Toro*, the *Novísima Recopilación de las Leyes de España*, and the *Recopilación de Leyes de las Indias*.²⁵⁶ Furthermore, the sodomite was frequently linked to male-assigned technologies of feminization and these feminizations/effeminacies not infrequently resulted in enhanced punishments.²⁵⁷ What is particularly interesting (and relevant to the present section) is that these feminizations were often thought of as proximal to *particular* femininities. In other words, male-assigned technologies of feminization, within the colonial period, were described as proximal to (and even mimicking) femininities associated with sex work. For instance, de los Reyes Heredia recounts that "[t]he troublesome subjects ["male subjects assuming the traditional roles of women"] dressed as women and acted as women, *particularly playing the role of famous prostitutes* which included adopting the names of these well-known women [...]. *In addition to their identification with prostitutes, these men were deviant in their adoption of a public female identity.*"²⁵⁸

The capacious nature of sodomy, as a sin-cum-crime describing non-reproductive sexual acts, also linked the sodomite who engaged in adult human male-adult human

²⁵⁶ Zeb Tortorici, "Contra Natura: Sin, Crime, and 'Unnatural' Sexuality in Colonial Mexico, 1530-1821," (doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2010), 4.

²⁵⁷ de los Reyes-Heredia, "Sodomy and Society," 9-10.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 151. Emphasis added.

male anal sex to other perverse sexual acts, such as bestiality, adultery, and pederasty.²⁵⁹

Indeed, the relationship between what we now name homosexuality and pederasty was so inextricable that, until the late twentieth century, they were one and the same (i.e. *pederasta* was used to describe males who engaged in anal sex with other males, irrespective of age or consent). I return to the uses of pederasty in the next section.

The 34-year period known as the Porfiriato (1876-1910) reproduced the association between *sodomitas/afeminados/invertidos* in ways not unlike the associations produced during the colonial period. However, in addition to the imagined proximity of taking on the names of sex workers (a practice made public by newspaper articles such as Frías', in which he claimed that "[effeminate men in Belem Jail] take on prostitutes' aliases, such as *la diabla* ["the she-devil"], *la china* [the Chinese woman], *la Pancha* [a feminized nickname or shortened name], etc. [...]"²⁶⁰), the Porfiriato developed an additional link between *afeminados/pederastas/invertidos* and sex work (and sexual licentiousness) through the rubric of public health.

Zones of tolerance, sites where sex work was legally permissible, were a byproduct of the regulation of sex work that began in the nineteenth century and aided in

²⁵⁹ For an example, see "México," *La Gazeta de México* (Mexico City), June 27, 1786. Although *La Gazeta* differentiates between bestiality and male-male sodomy, it nonetheless places the two in proximity to each other as criminalized behaviors. Recounting the crimes committed by those sentenced and put to death by fire by the *Real Tribunal de la Acordada*, *La Gazeta* includes "two because they are Sodomites and the third for incurring in the crime of bestiality." Interestingly, the "Sodomites" *are* (nouns, subjects, essences) whereas the person who incurred in the crime of bestiality merely *does* (an act but not necessarily an essence). Also, see "¡Escandalosísimo atentado!," *El Monitor Republicano* (Mexico City), Nov. 23, 1870. The article mentions that the section reserved for sodomites in Belem Jail is the same as that reserved for "those accused of the crime of bestiality."

²⁶⁰ Frías, "Realidades de la Cárcel," n.p.

the geographical and imaginary proximities of vices.²⁶¹ Indeed, it was not uncommon to speak of *afeminados* as operating within these zones, both socially and economically. These clusters of vice and vicious criminality would be instrumental to the imagined proximities between vices, to which *afeminamiento*/homosexuality belonged until its fragmentation from *travestismo*. Tellingly, Mexico's primary "gayborhood", *La Zona Rosa* (the Pink Zone) was given the moniker insofar as it was considered (prior to its gentrification in the late 80's) a "pink, almost red" zone.

It was not uncommon for *sodomitas/afeminados/invertidos/homosexuales* to be placed in proximity to sex work through sanitation ordinances. For instance, recounting the news of *El Baile de los 41*, *El Correo Español* praised the hard-handedness of Mexican authorities in "making the aesthetes sweep the street and, even better, sending them to Yucatán to be faced with the Mayas."²⁶² In contrast, the newspaper lamented Cádiz's moderate tradition of only forcing these types of individuals to register with the Hygiene Department, issuing them documents "not unlike those issued to whores."²⁶³ The article defines "aesthetes" as "effeminate individuals who give loose women a run for their money."²⁶⁴

Likewise, *El Diario del Hogar* reports that,

²⁶¹ Patricia Uribe-Zúñiga, Griselda Hernández-Tepchín, Carlos del Río Chiriboga, and Victor Ortiz, "Prostitución y SIDA en la Ciudad de México," *Salud Pública de México* 37, no. 6 (1995), 594.

²⁶² Argus, "Los estetas," *El Correo Español* (Mexico City), Nov. 27, 1901. "Ha gustado mucho eso de que los estetas barrieran la calle y más aún el enviarlos á Yucatán á que se entiendan con los mayas."

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, "[...] los proveyó de documentos iguales á los que se expiden á las rameras."

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, "[...] empezó á llamarse *estetas* á estos individuos afeminados que hacen la competencia á las mujeres perdidas."

We've noticed that, despite District ordinances, women of questionable morals circulate day and night through main streets, causing a natural scandal and disgust among honorable families who are forced to mingle with such people. Besides this, a veritable plague of effeminates has hijacked our avenues, making the Alameda and the city square their headquarters. Sanitation agents would do well to stop by these places; they would find an infinity of these disgusting degenerates who, with their well-ironed shirts, crimson ascots, high-heeled shoes, crimson belts, and white hats, swaying and wearing make-up, make evident what they are.²⁶⁵

Also evident in these narratives is the trope of sexual degeneracy as a contagion, a social dis/ease, indicative of underlying social ills ranging from feminism ("as feminism advances we see, feeling its emetic effects, how the race of the forty-one grows and expands, quietly, and forms a social sediment not unlike that of the old sewage pipes")²⁶⁶ to idleness ("many of them [*Baile de los 41* attendees] -horrifying detail- are not even degenerate beings driven by an irresistible impulse to prostitution but, rather, mere bums, lowlifes who, anxious with pleasure and disgusted by work, find it easier to yield to the infamous caresses of a corrupt older man in order to dress in luxurious clothes and to

²⁶⁵ "Otra plaga," *El Diario del Hogar* (Mexico City), Oct. 2, 1901. "Se ha hecho notar que, no obstante lo dispuesto por el gobierno del Distrito, las mujeres de mal vivir transitan tanto de día como de noche por las calles céntricas, causando el natural escándalo y disgusto entre las familias honradas que tienen que codearse con tales gentes. Además de esto, una verdadera plaga de afeminados ha asaltado nuestras avenidas, habiendo sentado sus reales en la Alameda y en el Zócalo, y para convencerse de ello tan sólo bastaría que algún agente de sanidad recorriera estos sitios y encontraría una infinidad de estos asquerosos degenerados que, con camisa planchada, mascada carmesí al cuello, zapatos con tacón de palo, faja carmesí al cuello y sombrero jarano, muy meneadores y muy pintados, dan á conocer desde luego lo que son."

²⁶⁶ "Cabos sueltos," *El Popular* (Mexico City), July 28, 1902. "A medida que avanza el feminismo vemos, sintiendo los efectos de un vomitivo, que la raza de los cuarenta y uno crece y se ensancha, á las callanditas, y forma un sedimento social como el de las viejas atarjeas."

wander from party to party in daily idleness, than to take any tool in their hands and earn their keep through labor.").²⁶⁷ I return to contagion and social dis/ease as a constitutive element of *travesti* in the following section but wish to point out the interconstitutive nature of vices and criminalities.

Such was the strength of the association between sex work and male-assigned *afeminamiento* during the Porfiriato that, as Carlos Roumagnac noted, within prisons, a grammatically masculinized version of words used to refer to sex workers was used to refer to *afeminados* ("*lumnia*", "*lunia*", and "*congria*" for female-assigned sex workers and "*lumnio*," "*lunio*," and "*congrio*" for *afeminados*).²⁶⁸ The strength of the association, however, rarely resulted in *afeminados* being discussed *as* sex workers and, although anecdotes of commercial sex between *afeminados* and clients certainly exist, the notion of *afeminados* participating in transactional sex was a risible proposition. For instance, in 1907, *El Popular* published an article describing "a degenerate who would've been better off if he hadn't been born, insofar as he is unhappy with the sex that nature bestowed upon him," who "wore women's clothes and went to a brothel [...] in order to keep the women there company."²⁶⁹ Although *El Popular* refused to acknowledge that Aristeo

²⁶⁷ "Los sucesos de actualidad," *La Voz de México* (Mexico City), Nov. 24, 1901. "Muchos de ellos -detalle espantoso- ni siquiera son seres degenerados á quienes un impulso irresistible arrastra á la prostitución, sino, simplemente vagos, canallas que ansiosos de placeres repugnando el trabajo encuentran más hacedero ceder á las caricias infames de un senil corrompido para lucir trajes ricos y vagar de fiesta en fiesta en cotidiana ociosidad, que coger en sus manos la herramienta de un oficio cualquiera, y ganarse el pan con el trabajo."

²⁶⁸ Carlos Roumagnac, "Jerga o caló de los delincuentes en México," *Criminalía* (Mexico City), Jan. 1, 1937.

²⁶⁹ "Escándalo en un prostíbulo. Un 'él' disfrazado de 'ella'," *El Popular* (Mexico City), Aug. 12, 1907. "[...] un degenerado á quien más le valiera no haber nacido, supuesto que

Ortega, the "*degenerado*" in question, might have been at the brothel in order to perform sex work, it nonetheless narrates the community's outrage at Ortega's presence (and all-but lynching), as well as their forcible arrest and incarceration. If *El Popular's* article is any indication, *afeminados* were placed in proximity, both physically and within narratives, to sex work through vice; however, the metonymic slide had not yet been developed in the Porfiriato.

So sedimented was the proximity between the *afeminado* and sex work by end of the revolution, that the chapter used to criminalize public acts of homoeroticism (most often *afeminamiento*) was, in the 1931 Penal Code, the same chapter used to penalize "incitement to prostitution". Indeed, "citing public health reasons, prostitution had been regulated and supervised since the 1860's. [...] During the 1930's, prostitution was de-regulated and law began to punish pimping --considered a practice of male exploitation over working-class women."²⁷⁰ Both public acts of homoeroticisms and sex work, as vices, came to be regulated under the auspices of public health and morality. Agents of *Sanidad* (public health) were not infrequently called upon to detain both sex workers and nascent homosexuals in the 1930's, and until (at least) the 1990's, particularly though not exclusively in/through raids ("*razzias*") of establishments perceived to nurture vice ("*centros de vicio*").²⁷¹

está inconforme con el sexo que á la naturaleza plugo concederle." "[...] ponerse unas ropas de mujer y presentarse en una casa de asignación de la calle de Manzanares, con objeto de hacer compañía á las mujeres que se encontraban en aquel sitio."

²⁷⁰ Pablo Piccato, "A Historical Perspective on Crime in Twentieth-Century Mexico City," *Project on Reforming the Administration of Justice in Mexico* (2003), 10.

²⁷¹ For examples, see "Quejas contra un centro de vicio," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), May 27, 1932; "Una redada de 'invertidos'" *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Mar. 23, 1934;

The relationship between sex work and the sodomite/*afeminado*/homosexual remains largely a matter of proximity-through-vice until *travesti* becomes available as a conceptual category and comes to fully inhabit it. It is in this sense that Liguori and Aggleton's claim that *travesti* and sex work become associated in the 1960's rings true: it is not that *travesti* and sex work were ever wholly independent figures, but *travesti* became *metonymic* of sex work in the mid-to-late-twentieth century, once the former became available as a conceptual category.

To say that *travesti* becomes available as a conceptual category in the 1960's is not to suggest that it becomes a dominant category at the time. Indeed, and as mentioned in the previous chapter, the dominance of *travesti* is not consolidated until the 1980's. However, *travesti* becomes available as a figure with a variety of names, including "*travesti/travestista*" "*trasvesti/trasvestista*," "*transvesti/transvestista*," "*transformista*," "*mujercito*," and "*vestida*," among others. However, its differentiation from virilized homosexuals renders it a category unto itself and, as such, available to inhabit the new relationship to sex work.

Although it is relatively scant, there exists evidence that *travesti* sex work was not only emerging but thriving in the 1960's. For instance, in 1963, *El Siglo de Torreón* published an article about an *afeminado* who was assaulted by two female-assigned sex workers at a brothel in the *zona de tolerancia*, purportedly out of "jealousy."²⁷² Similarly, *El Nacional* recognized, in 1966, the relative frequency with which "male individuals

"El buen resultado de la razzia contra afeminados," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Sept. 19, 1934; "Las quejas de unos vecinos," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Mar. 7, 1935; "Saludable campaña," *El Informador* (Guadalajara), Sept. 10, 1937.

²⁷² "Lo golpearon dos mujeres," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Feb. 9, 1963

dressed as women" assaulted virilized men, after seducing them, in zones of vice.

However, the scandal press, or *nota roja*, was significantly more explicit than mainstream news sources in crafting this relationship between *travesti* and sex work.

Although voluntary, freelance sex work is not officially criminalized in Mexico City, it is nonetheless imbued with criminality through a variety of mechanisms within the public imaginary in Mexico. Many of these mechanisms are not unlike those associated with *travesti*, and include drug use, disease, social disorder, scandal, human trafficking, and robbery, among a host of others. The criminality associated with sex work, both cis and trans, is a particularly useful site of engagement for those seeking profit at the expense of sex workers and is particularly evident in gentrification endeavors.

Indeed, it is not uncommon for sex workers to be relocated to "zones of tolerance" during processes of gentrification. For instance, an article published in *El Reforma* in 1994 relays the complaints of residents in Colonia Hipódromo (a neighborhood little more than a decade into its gentrification process) regarding sex workers.²⁷³ Although the article speaks about sex workers assigned both male and female at birth, it nonetheless emphasizes the unruly behavior of male-assigned sex workers who "provoke violence and reproachable acts, such as sexual relations in taxis and on the public thoroughfare; nudity and offensive language, robbing clients, and attacks on the neighbors."²⁷⁴

²⁷³ Rosa María Méndez. "Demandan reubicar a 'trabajadores del sexo'," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Oct. 31, 1994.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

The gentrification of the *Zona Rosa*, Mexico City's premiere "gayborhood," after the 1985 earthquake is particularly telling of the profitability of rendering *travesti* criminal. To be sure, the *Zona Rosa* emerged, in the mid-1900's, as part of the southern and eastern flight of middle-class homosexuals from more popular homosocial spaces located in the Historical Center (Centro Histórico).²⁷⁵ However, by the 1980's, the *Zona Rosa* had become associated with the lower and working class populations historically linked to homoeroticisms through *zonas de tolerancia* and *centros de vicio*: sex workers, drug users and homoeroticized, effeminate/feminized male-assigned people. The 1985 earthquake, which decimated the *Zona Rosa*, also significantly lowered the prices of real estate in the neighborhood. Taking advantage of the business opportunity, the renovation of the neighborhood was planned and executed, and included the removal of undesirable people (i.e. people incompatible with the newly respectabilized virile homosexual population). Boivin, for instance, mentions that González de Alba, a famed homosexual journalist, "took advantage of the decrease in real estate prices [and] opened El Taller, with the firm intention of providing a new image of the homosexual. On the one hand, he refused to participate in police and political corruption and, on the other, just as in his *cantina, El Vaquero* [The Cowboy], he refused access to women and *travestis* and made his clients wear cowboy pants and sleeveless shirts, disseminating an aesthetics of leather and muscle."²⁷⁶ Indeed, the gentrification of the *Zona Rosa* depended on its respectabilization. According to Boivin, this moral and spatial renovation did not make

²⁷⁵ Renaud René Boivin, "De la ambigüedad del clóset a la cultura del gueto gay: género y homosexualidad en París, Madrid y México," *La Ventana*, no. 34 (2011), 164.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 175-176

gays more visible, but, rather, "more acceptable on account of their discreetness and apparent economic power."²⁷⁷

3.4. Drug Use and (Social) Dis/Ease

In her exploration of narratives of sex work and sex workers in Mexico City in the second half of the nineteenth century, Carmen Nuñez Becerra convincingly argues that the stigmatization of sex work has always been accompanied and buttressed by other vices, such as alcoholism.²⁷⁸ *Travesti* criminality, in which sex work figures prominently, is no exception. As mentioned briefly in the previous section, a second mechanism through which the criminality of both sex work and *travesti* (as well as *travesti* sex work) is buttressed is the association of *travesti* with drug use and (social) dis/ease.

For instance, one of only nine articles mentioning *travesti* published by *El Universal* in 1999 (the only one not discussing *travesti* as filmic role) was a reportage on the drug trade in Los Cabos, Baja California. The article, as is to be expected, recites tired tropes about drug use among the poor and working class: drug dealers as lazy (Pancho, a cocaine dealer "doesn't even need to leave his house" in order to work), drug use as out of control despite the nation's best attempts to curtail (i.e. militarize) it ("the delegation was militarized three years ago [...] and, since then, the drug commerce is out of control"), drug use as antisocial behavior ("[poverty] generates antisocial behaviors such as drug consumption"), geospatial chaos ("dusty streets" and "social and urban neglect

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 177

²⁷⁸ Carmen Nuñez Becerra, "El juez, la prostituta y sus clientes: discursos y representaciones sobre las prostitutas y la prostitución en la ciudad de México, en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX," (master's thesis, Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1996).

[including] a deficient sewer system, poorly paved and lit streets, and poorly built homes"), culture of poverty alibis ("there is a rootlessness among the inhabitants and a lack of options to occupy their time in a healthy manner, in addition to which it is a prime site for people to come, first and foremost, for a good time... there is no system of values... it is a permissive society; that is why prostitution, alcoholism, and drug addiction have been magnified"), and the breakdown of the heteronormative nuclear family ("80% of family conflicts, the municipal DIF estimates, are related to drug consumption [...]") among a host of others.²⁷⁹

Residing in (and adding further color to) the scene of apocalyptic paranoia that the article describes is, unsurprisingly, sexual deviance. The author describes a brothel where "women and *travestis* intermingle in a milieu of porn videos, pathetic stripteases, cocaine, and dense and foul-smelling air."²⁸⁰ He equivocates, as is often the case, between describing these sex workers as "*travestis*", "*homosexuales*", and "gays" and omits any further mention of female-assigned sex workers. He focuses quite a bit of attention on Denise ("a tall, thin, and somewhat haggard *travesti*"), for whom he uses masculinizing pronouns, granting them the only vignette of the article: a short conversation in which drugs and exploitative sex work play a prominent role ("look, friend, pay my exit fee, which is 200 pesos and I won't charge anything for leaving with you but you're going to treat me well, yeah? If you want a gram [of cocaine], it's going to

²⁷⁹ Marco Lara Klahr, "Reina la cocaína en Los Cabos," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Oct. 19, 1999.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

be 400 pesos and you have to tip the server. You also have to pay for my beers and buy me a gram").²⁸¹

A narrative highlighting the (unsuccessful) civilizing mission of the State, as eulogies of the war on drugs tend to be, the article thrives on the production of anxiety: the stage it sets is dark and full of terrors. Every paragraph is peppered with words such as "*oscureciendo*" (getting dark), "*recóndito*" (remote), "*vertiginoso*" (vertiginous), "*problemas sociales*" (social problems), "*crecimiento caótico*" (chaotic growth), "*conductas antisociales*" (antisocial conducts) and speaking of drug deals in poorly lit spaces and candy vendors selling drugs in school zones; the article is meant to elicit anxiety. *Travesti* is both produced as sign and signifier of social dis/ease, an anxiety-producing figure symbolizing and cautioning against the dangers associated with drug use and life outside the rule of law.

Drug use and (social) dis/ease likewise figure prominently within scholarly accounts of *travesti*. In particular (and unsurprisingly, perhaps, given their chronology), HIV/AIDS is an important metanarrative within ethnographic accounts of *travesti*. Interestingly, discussions of HIV/AIDS are, more often than not, juxtaposed with narratives of drug use, independently of whether said drug use is intravenous (and therefore a risk factor). Kulick, for instance, describes as factors for premature death "violence, drug abuse, health problems caused by the silicone they inject into their

²⁸¹ Ibid. "Mira, manito: págame mi 'salida', que son 200 pesos, y yo no te cobro nada por ir contigo, pero me vas a tratar bien, ¿eh? Si quieres una 'grapa', pues te sale en 400 pesos y le das su propina al mesero. Aparte, pues me pagas mis cervezas y una 'grapa' para mí."

bodies, or, increasingly, AIDS."²⁸² Similarly, Prieur establishes a link between HIV, drug use, and *travesti* by way of "health problems."²⁸³

3.4.1. *Travesti and Drug Use*

As suggested in the previous section, the association between *travesti*, drug use and (social) dis/ease developed long before the turn of the twenty-first-century. During the colonial period and the Porfiriato, for instance, *pulque* and other alcoholic beverages (considered vices) figured prominently in narratives describing the criminalized acts engaged in by *sodomitas/afeminados/invertidos*.²⁸⁴ Tortorici mentions, for instance, that an important site of homoeroticism, in addition to individual homes and *temascales*, were *pulquerías* (taverns primarily selling *pulque*, a fermented alcoholic beverage).²⁸⁵ Indeed, according to a 1682 letter by Joseph Vidal de Figueroa, many indigenous men in the taverns of Mexico City "in order to satisfy their sordid appetite [...] dress in the clothes of women at night, and they sleep among the clients in a drunken state and provoke among them the vile act [sodomy]."²⁸⁶ Furthermore, most accounts of colonial sodomy involved *pulque*.²⁸⁷

²⁸² Kulick, *Travesti*, 7.

²⁸³ Prieur, *Mema's House*, 95.

²⁸⁴ For examples, see "Los siete sabios y el pulque," *La Patria* (Mexico City), Sept. 24, 1893; "Bañados con pulque," *El Contemporáneo* (México City), May 23, 1903; "Un hecho repugnante," *La Patria* (Mexico City), June 16, 1904; "Asesinada en forma misteriosa conocida persona de Mazatlán," *El Informador* (Guadalajara), Mar. 15, 1945.

²⁸⁵ Tortorici, "Contra Natura," 72.

²⁸⁶ qtd. in Tortorici, "Contra Natura," 83.

²⁸⁷ Tortorici, "Contra Natura," 47, 50, 72, 86, and 106.

The relationship between alcohol, homoeroticism, and social disorder -a deeply classed and racialized affair- was thus established (at least among the elites) in the colonial period and strengthened within the public imaginary during the Porfiriato. Indeed, it was during the last quarter of the nineteenth century that "regulations regarding the location of popular drinking places [became] particularly stringent," purportedly in the interest of producing and maintaining some semblance of order.²⁸⁸ Although, as mentioned by Toner, the quarantining of disorder into particular sites was often more imagined than real, the production of zones of tolerance would be crucial to the sustaining of *afeminado* criminality.²⁸⁹ For instance, although middle- and upper-class *cafés* and working class *pulquerías* served similar social purposes, within the public imaginary the latter functioned as a receptacle for social disorder.²⁹⁰ Tales of homoeroticisms (and their violences) were most often to be found in and nurtured by the latter. This is the case, for instance, with Frías' *La Turca* and their *pulque*-driven violences, as well as with other scandals attributed to the social disorder fostered by *pulque* and *pulquerías*.²⁹¹

Other intoxicating substances began to figure in these narratives after the revolution. For instance, in 1911, an article spurning Chinese immigration cited, as some

²⁸⁸ Debrah Toner, "Everything in its Right Place? Drinking Places and Social Spaces in Mexico City, c. 1790-1900," *Social History of Alcohol and Drugs* 25, (2011), 28.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁹¹ "Bañados con pulque," *El Contemporáneo* (Mexico City), May 23, 1903. For example, in 1903 *El Contemporáneo* made note of a scandal involving a *pulquero afeminado* who, after being harassed by some clients, responded with epithets and by splashing pulque on the harassers.

of its reasons, the belief that Chinese migrants both profited from existent vices and brought new ones with them, such as "opium and sodomy."²⁹² More commonly, however, marihuana became the post-revolutionary drug associated with *afeminados*²⁹³, as suggested by *El Informador's* description of the *afeminado* Juan Casillas, an inmate, "who [was] a complete degenerate" caught while "giving in to the repugnant vice of aspirating the enervating smoke of marihuana."²⁹⁴ It is interesting that the author would choose to describe smoking marihuana as a "repugnant vice," considering that the same phrase was overwhelmingly used to describe *el pecado nefando/el crimen contra natura*.

Tales of drug use followed the *pederasta/afeminado/homosexual* into zones of tolerance, *centros de vicio*, and sites of punishment, where vices were relegated to and clustered. For instance, relegation to the Islas Marías (a penal colony) in post-revolutionary Mexico was the prescribed punishment for whomever, in addition to failing to demonstrate gainful employment, was considered to have a poor history (which

²⁹² "La inmigración china para el fomento de la agricultura perjudicará a México" *El Tiempo* (Mexico City), Apr. 10, 1911.

²⁹³ For examples, see "Afeminado y marihuano fue aprehendido," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Nov. 5, 1932; "Como se vende la marihuana en esta ciudad. Un afeminado dueño de casa de asignación es quien presta protección al vicio," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), May 27, 1934; "Fue capturado ya el autor del crimen del callejón de Canarias. Tragedia pasional entre invertidos." *El Nacional* (Mexico City), May 10, 1939; "Ayer," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Feb. 6, 1940; Miguel R. De la Selva, "La sociedad a merced del hampa," *Sucesos para todos* (Mexico City), Feb. 24, 1942; "Un homosexual vicioso, preso," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Feb. 11, 1958.

²⁹⁴ "Un afeminado remitido a la penitenciaría," *El Informador* (Guadalajara), Oct. 6, 1919. "Juan Castillas, quien fué sorprendido por la policía en momentos en que se entregaba al repugnante vicio de aspirar el humo enervante de la marihuana, y quien además es un degenerado completo, ha sido remitido a la Penitenciaría del Estado."

included drug trafficking, incitement to prostitution and pederasty, among others).²⁹⁵ Furthermore, the shift in raids on private parties to *razzias* on public establishments (*centros de vicio*) produced a more mixed influx of *maleantes* (ne'er-do-wells), further solidifying the grouping of drug/alcohol users and traffickers, sex workers, and *pederastas/afeminados/homosexuales*.²⁹⁶ Finally, and similarly, arrests within zones of tolerance, both for specifically criminalized activities (such as assault and drug use) as well as more vaguely criminalized ones (such as public scandal stemming from sex work, homoeroticism, and male-assigned feminizations), produced an amalgamation of arrestees not unlike that produced in raids on *centros de vicio* (perhaps unsurprisingly, as many *centros de vicio* were located within zones of tolerance).²⁹⁷

The mid-1900's saw a strengthening of the relationships fostered by *zonas de tolerancia* and *centros de vicio* (i.e. between sex workers, homosexuals and drug users). *Zonas de tolerancia* and *centros de vicio* continued to be identified as important zones of drug and sex commerce.²⁹⁸ However, the explicit use of "vice" as a connecting rubric

²⁹⁵ "La pena de relegación," *El Nacional Revolucionario* (Mexico City), Nov. 1, 1930.

²⁹⁶ For an example, see "Homosexuales presos por hacer escándalo," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Jan. 15, 1957.

²⁹⁷ For examples, see "Seis afeminados que irán pronto a las Islas Mariás," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), July 21, 1934; "Escándalo de homosexuales," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Mar. 15, 1957.

²⁹⁸ For examples, see "Tétricos antros de vicio y prostitución clausurados por el departamento del D.F.," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Jan. 25, 1950; "A primera hora," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), July 28, 1950; "Lista negra de cines no aptos para menores," *El Nacional*, Oct. 22, 1952; "Invasión de cantinas en Tuxtepec," *El Dictámen* (Veracruz), Nov. 25, 1952; "Riña entre una mujer y un sujeto," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Nov. 8, 1956; "Homosexuales presos por hacer escándalo," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Jan. 15, 1957; "Escándalo de homosexuales," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Mar. 15, 1957;

decreased in the 1950's. No longer explicitly linked to vice, the relationship between sex work, homoeroticism, and drug use would come to be regarded as an organic relationship (i.e. a relationship stemming from truth rather than historically facilitated through vice).

Importantly, the *travesti* emerges as always already a figure in proximity to drug use and drug trafficking. This is particularly evident in early discussions of silicone and hormone trafficking, which quite resemble (and parallel) discussions of illicit drug trafficking, and center *travesti* as the culprit (both as user and trafficker). In 1978, for instance, *El Universal* denounced, in one fell swoop, "the illicit trafficking of prescriptions to acquire silicones and estrogen" as well as the existence of "bars for homosexuals." What is interesting is that these crimes are imputed to two "fake women," male-assigned individuals "dressed as women, wearing short skirts and low necklines," and detained for robberies and muggings.²⁹⁹

Whereas alcoholic beverages (particularly *pulque*) were produced as substances undergirding criminality in the early 1900's, this discourse shifted in the last quarter of the century: although alcohol was still considered an instigator of social disorder, towards the 1980's, alcohol was simultaneously used to condemn homoeroticized "men dressed as women" insofar as drunken or adolescent (but heterosexual) men were seen as being

"Aprehensión de traficantes de mariguana" *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Apr. 19, 1957; "Un homosexual vicioso, preso," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Feb. 11, 1958.

²⁹⁹ "Denuncian el tráfico de silicones y los centros para homosexuales," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Sept. 4, 1978.

duped into engaging in sexual relationships with *travestis*. For instance, in 1989, *El Siglo de Torreón* condemned *cantinas* in the *zona de tolerancia* "where only homosexuals dressed as women attend, because church-goers (adolescent or drunk) are tricked and could become carriers of the most serious disease of our time."³⁰⁰ In Torreón (as in many other places in the Republic), for instance, the perceived *naiveté* of drunken but virile men (coupled with social anxiety over HIV/AIDS) lead to the closure of establishments catering to "homosexuals dressed as women" as well as to the criminalization of *travestismo*.³⁰¹

3.4.2. *Travesti and Dis/ease*

A second concern of importance that emerged during the Porfiriato, related to homoeroticism, was the transmission of venereal disease, particularly (though certainly not exclusively) within the prison. Roumagnac, for instance, noted that an important reason for the segregation of *invertidos* in Belem Jail was to "impede the propagation of venereal and syphilitic diseases with which individuals who had not made use of a

³⁰⁰ For an example, see "La zona de tolerancia se ha convertido en nido de homosexuales," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Aug. 31, 1989. "Hay cantinas en la zona de tolerancia en las que únicamente acuden homosexuales vestidos de mujer, por lo que los parroquianos (adolescentes o ebrios) son engañados y pudieran convertirse en portadores de la enfermedad más grave de nuestros tiempos."

³⁰¹ For examples, see "Se hará permanente la campaña en contra de los homosexuales," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Dec. 15, 1987; "Prevención Social de Torreón no ejerce control sanitario de homosexuales y son propensos a contraer," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), June 21, 1987; "La zona de tolerancia se ha convertido en nido de homosexuales," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Aug. 31, 1989; "Continúa latente problema de los homosexuales en el sector 4," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Nov. 23, 1989.

woman for many years were infected."³⁰² He confirmed the association between venereal disease and *pederastía* in his 1906 manuscript, *Crímenes Sexuales y Pasionales: Estudio de Psicología Morbosa*, claiming that the majority of the individuals captured in a raid in April of 1906 "presented syphilitic manifestations over the course of a year."³⁰³ The association between *pederastía/afeminamiento* and venereal disease was sufficiently strong that the presence of the latter was often considered evidence of the former. As an example, *El Foro* reported the rape of twelve-year-old José Cruz Gonzalez by Eulogio Sánchez, citing venereal diseases as evidence of the latter's "propensity for pederasty."³⁰⁴

Syphilis became an increasingly alarming concern during the post-revolutionary period. Indeed, Mexico's representative to the 1926 Pan American Sanitary Congress in Washington, D.C., "singled out [the disease] as the number one problem confronting the revolutionary government."³⁰⁵ According to post-revolutionary *higienistas*, "the rapid spread of syphilis among the capital's population reflected the promiscuity and decadence

³⁰² Roumagnac, *Los Criminales de México*, 76. "Este aislamiento -que en parte sólo pequeñísima evitaba el mal- si se efectuaba exclusivamente para prevenir los delitos, sino también para impedir la propagación de enfermedades venéreas y sifilíticas con que se encontraban contagiados individuos que, sin embargo, no habían hecho uso de mujer desde muchos años antes [...]"

³⁰³ Carlos Roumagnac, *Crímenes Sexuales y Pasionales: Estudio de Psicología Morbosa*, (México: Librería de la Viuda de Ch. Bouret, 1906), 152.

³⁰⁴ "Jurisprudencia criminal," *El Foro* (Mexico City), Apr. 15, 1884. It is important to note that newspapers at the time made no nominal distinction between pederasty involving two consenting adults and pederasty involving an adult and a young person, though the latter was certainly considered a more atrocious crime.

³⁰⁵ Katherine Bliss, "The Science of Redemption: Syphilis, Sexual Promiscuity, and Reformism in Revolutionary Mexico City," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 79, no. 1 (1999), 1.

of the Mexican people" as well their poverty.³⁰⁶ Such was the association between syphilis and vice, that, in order to better understand the relationship between youth, sexuality, and social class, "the capital's city councilors set up a special commission to explore Mexico City's *pulquerías*, cabarets, and dance halls, where lewd dancing predominated and sexual affairs were initiated."³⁰⁷ Although sex workers bore the brunt of measures intended to reduce the propagation of syphilis, evidence suggests that the sexual promiscuity attached to (and other vices seen as undergirding the spread of) syphilis also included male-assigned-male-assigned anal sex. Indeed, anal indicators of the disease were used to signal "homosexual violence."³⁰⁸

Although the mid-1900's saw a lull in discourse that associated homoeroticisms with venereal disease, the association was revived and strengthened in the mid-1980's with the advent of HIV/AIDS. Indeed, the HIV/AIDS pandemic of the mid- to late-1980's provided a site for a renewed association between *travesti*, drug use, (social) dis/ease, and sex work.

3.4.3. *Travesti and HIV/AIDS*

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 6, 9. According to Bliss, the relationship between syphilis and the working class was largely the result of "ignorance of symptoms, a failure to utilize prophylactic measures, and a refusal to seek appropriate medical attention."

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 13.

³⁰⁸ For an example, see Fernando Latapi, "Sífilis adquirida en el niño," *La Gaceta Médica de México* 72, no. 6 (1942): 555-564.

Although the first cases of HIV/AIDS in Mexico were reported in 1983,³⁰⁹ social anxieties began to be lit and fanned in the mid- to late-1980's. While *all* homosexuals were implicated in the pandemic, *travestis* were particularly hard hit by social anxieties surrounding HIV/AIDS. Importantly, the association between HIV/AIDS and *travesti* served to reaffirm the relationship between *travesti*, sex work, and drug use.³¹⁰ I suggest that the strength with which these renewed associations took hold was partially due to the availability of their historical proximity through vice.

Despite the demands made by the Homosexual Liberation Movement in the late 1970's and early 1980's regarding the cessation of *razzias* of homosexual establishments, the late-1980's saw an increase in these raids, with HIV/AIDS prevention being cited as their *raison d'etre*. Indeed, in 1989, *El Nacional* recalled early century debates regarding the criminalization of syphilis by proposing that the transmission of AIDS and other STI's be penalized as a sexual crime.³¹¹ This criminalization took hold in several penal codes throughout the Republic.

The visibility of *travesti* made it a target particularly vulnerable to public anxiety over HIV/AIDS. *Travesti* visibility led to its criminalization by local and state sartorial

³⁰⁹ Carlos J. Conde-Glez, Ernesto Claderón, Luis Juárez-Figueroa, and Mauricio Hernández Ávila, "Historical account of venereal diseases in Mexico," *Genitourin Med* 69, (1993), 465.

³¹⁰ For examples, see "'Aumentaron a 40 mil 845 los casos de SIDA en EU," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Sept. 1, 1987; "Murieron 3 de 6 personas con SIDA, en Sonora," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Feb. 18, 1988; "¿Qué tan grave es el SIDA en México?" *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Feb, 19, 1988; "México ocupa 3er lugar en casos de SIDA en América," *El Informador* (Guadalajara), Dec. 1, 1991.

³¹¹ Edmundo Domínguez Aragonés, "Se debe penalizar el contagio del Sida," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Feb. 22, 1989.

ordinances forbidding "men dressing like women."³¹² As mentioned earlier, these ordinances not only criminalized *travestis* but also lead to the closure of a number of spaces of (*travesti* and non-*travesti*) homosexual sociality, such as bars and nightclubs, insofar as these spaces could be closed by the State if male-assigned people engaged in *travestismo* were apprehended in them.

As mentioned above, the rise of HIV/AIDS in the late 1980's also renewed the relationship between *travesti* and sex work. Importantly, it was during the late 1980's, and within the context of HIV/AIDS, that there was an explosion of mainstream news sources that produced a new association between the two: one that recognized the participation of *travesti* within sex work, rather than its mere proximity.³¹³ Although the aforementioned association between *travesti* and sex work had been available since the 1960's, as affirmed by Monsiváis, the association became strengthened within mainstream news sources with the advent of HIV/AIDS. Within the public imaginary, *travesti* came to signify sex work, an association which, in turn, signified disease.

Importantly, the vulnerability of *travesti* sex workers to HIV/AIDS was, more often than not, produced as a symbol of social disorder/dis/ease. For instance, in the first installment of a three-part reportage on HIV/AIDS, titled "*Aterroriza sólo a homosexuales instruidos*" ("It only terrifies learned homosexuals") published by the magazine *Progreso* in 1987, centered on sex work as a vector for the virus and partially

³¹² For an example, see "Clausuran antro de vicio en donde escandalizaban veinte 'hombres'," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), June 2, 1995.

³¹³ "Continúa latente problema de los homosexuales en el sector 4," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Nov. 23, 1989. *El Siglo de Torreón*, for instance, insisted that five of every six sex workers were "men dressed as women."

blamed the willing ignorance of sex workers for its rapid propagation.³¹⁴ Among these sex workers, Hinojosa features Milly, a *travesti* sex worker who "neither suffers nor limits himself on account of AIDS, [...] neither using nor asking to use condoms."³¹⁵ Milly, established already as a willful vector of disease, is portrayed as particularly dangerous insofar as their clients are primarily married men. Although Hinojosa portrays female-assigned sex workers as significantly more willing to alter their sexual practices in order to avoid transmission ("they avoid anal penetration and oral sex and use condoms"), the two *travesti* sex workers featured in the article, Milly and Carlos N. are portrayed as caring not whether transmission occurs. Indeed, Carlos N. is quoted as saying that they are "not scared of AIDS because the people scared of it are the people with it." Thus, *travestis* are portrayed not only as vectors of the disease but as willing participants in the social and sexual anarchy represented by the pandemic.

The ease with which HIV/AIDS discourse attached itself to *travesti* and the ways in which the pandemic was used to legitimate the criminalization of *travestis* and *travestismo* drew on a long history of associations between male-assigned technologies of feminization, drug use, and (social) dis/ease. Because HIV/AIDS (discourse) entered a world in which the relationships it would exploit were already existent and thriving, it is unsurprising that the associations took on such strength: after all, male-assigned technologies of feminization had existed for centuries within the very community of vices that HIV/AIDS discourse would exploit.

³¹⁴ Oscar Hinojosa, "El amor en los tiempos del Sida," *Proceso* (Mexico City), Aug. 8, 1987.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*

3.5. Sexual Exploitation: Human Trafficking and Pederasty

A third mechanism through which criminality becomes sutured to *travesti* (often but not exclusively through sex work) is the association between *travesti* and sexual exploitation, particularly human trafficking and pederasty. From "La Tosca" to "La Romana," *travesti* sex traffickers and violent sex workers populate the pages of *notas rojas* and *boletines policiaicos* that emphasize the heightened aggression/cruelty of *travesti* sex workers and, particularly, their participation in the sex trafficking of young and old alike.³¹⁶ Although sexual exploitation by *travestis* figures relatively prominently within public discourse, this association is not often reproduced by contemporary scholarship, unlike the associations between *travesti* and sex work, between *travesti* and drug use and (social) dis/ease, and between *travesti* and deception. Sexual exploitation is so embedded within the public imaginary, however, that respected sex trade journalist Lydia Cacho would affirm, in 2010, that "the *travesti* who controls the street on Tlalpan and the gay adolescent in Cancún who was coaxed into drugs and later into being a *chichifo* [male-assigned, masculinized sex worker] in order to pay for them," are not the same thing: the latter is deserving of protection while the former should be subject to criminalization.³¹⁷

The relationship between *travesti* and sexual exploitation long precedes the emergence of *travesti* as a named figure. In particular, and as suggested above, the

³¹⁶ Silvia Otero, "Denuncian a explotador de sexoservidores," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Feb. 24, 2000. For instance, "La Romana" was said to not only manage a *travesti*-led sex ring that forced "men to prostitute themselves" but also "accepted underage boys so that they could prostitute themselves, without restriction, just like adults."

³¹⁷ Lydia Cacho, "Sexo, ética y dinero," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Oct. 7, 2010.

pederasta was an important historical stepping stone in the production of *travesti* sexual exploitation of youth. Although the *sodomita* and the homoeroticized *afeminado* were quite commonly described as engaging in violent sexual behaviors with young people, the figure of the *pederasta* was particularly evocative of criminalized non-consensual sexual exchanges (and would go on to exclusively describe sexual assaults on underage people). Just as often, *pederastía/afeminamiento/sodomía* was linked to the corruption of youth through non-productivity (via idleness and vice). For instance, in 1890 *El Diario del Hogar* published an article that declared that *vividores* (parasites) most often spent their time engaging in "pederasty, courting and exploiting *momentáneas* [sex workers], and corrupting young men through game and in *cantinas*."³¹⁸

Tales of vicious sexual attacks on young (boy) children by *pederastas/sodomitas/afeminados* accompanied the wave of criminality produced by mass media in the 1880's, a trend that did not subside until recently.³¹⁹ Such is the story, for instance, of Enrique Tanchotle, a "man-woman" ("*hombre-mujer*") so intractably feminized that even after their father "gave him a blow with a machete on the leg, the *pederasta* told him that even if he killed him, he would not abdicate his [inclinations]."³²⁰

³¹⁸ "Saludable acuerdo," *El Diario del Hogar* (Mexico City), Mar. 14, 1890.

³¹⁹ For examples, see "Jurisprudencia criminal," *El Foro* (Mexico City), Apr. 15, 1884; "Tribunal Superior de Tamaulipas," *El Foro* (Mexico City), Jan. 10, 1885; "Vida y hechos de un hombre-mujer" *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* (Mexico City), June 10, 1895; "Repugnante delito," *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* (Mexico City), July 27, 1895; "El pederasta de Chiapas, denunciante," *El Demócrata* (Mexico City), July 28, 1895; "Feo delito de un tío contra su sobrino," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Nov. 5, 1931.

³²⁰ "Vida y hechos de un hombre-mujer," *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* (Mexico City), June 10, 1895. "Un día su padre, indignado por tales inclinaciones, le dió un machetazo en la pierna, y el pederasta le dijo que aunque lo matara no habría de abdicar de ellas."

According to *El Siglo Diez y Nueve*, Tanchotle arrived in Veracruz with their ears pierced and dressed as a woman at the age of 7 and would later join the circus, as a *señora* (woman), performing equestrian activities. Leaving the circus after the death of their (male) lover, Tanchotle would eventually partner with *Josefina* ("a man named José") whom they would stab out of jealousy.³²¹ Tanchotle, however, was, in 1895, in jail awaiting trial for the attempted rape of a young boy³²², his homoerotic past an indicator of his depravity.

Interestingly, the Catholic Church played an important role in the crafting of pederasty as a behavior involving male-assigned people irrespective of age. Importantly, several battles against the Catholic Church were waged during the Porfiriato (as well as during and after the revolution), in an effort to craft a national identity that privileged loyalty to the nation-state. Indeed, *pederastía* and *pederasta*, as well as *sodomita* (though not *afeminado* or *afeminamiento*) have been, since the late nineteenth century, words commonly attributed to priests and other members of the Church who sexually assaulted young boys.³²³ The public condemnations against members of the Catholic Church,

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² "Repugnante delito," *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* (Mexico City), July 27, 1895.

³²³ For examples, see "Sodoma y Gomorra en Puebla," *El Telégrafo* (Mexico City), Oct. 26, 1881; "Refutación al Mons Segur," *El Faro* (Mexico City), Feb. 1, 1889; "La inocencia del cura de Teacalco," *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* (Mexico City), Jan. 8, 1892; "Los vicios y los crímenes de los Papas," *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* (Mexico City), Feb. 2, 1892; "El Papado," *La Patria* (Mexico City), May 4, 1892; "Anuario de la Inmoralidad Clerical," *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* (Mexico City), June 13, 1893; "Literatura y crimen," *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* (Mexico City), Aug. 9, 1893; "Hechos notables de la Iglesia Católica, Apostólica, Romana," *El Abogado Cristiano Ilustrado* (Mexico City), Nov. 1, 1893; "Un Memorandum del Padre D. Felipe Castañón," *La Patria* (Mexico City), Feb. 28, 1894.

which range from murder, to corruption, to onanism, to sodomy, and to pederasty, among others, can be partially understood through the lens of a nation which was fighting to disaffect loyalties already promised to the church.

Such was the perceived relationship between homoeroticized *afeminados* and the sexual exploitation of young boys, during the Porfiriato, that not only was the famous *Baile de los 41* said to have had in attendance a young boy who was auctioned off³²⁴, but *La Voz de México* insisted that among the *Baile*'s attendees "there figured old men perverted by the pleasurable abuse of young men, barely pubescent, gnawed and deadened in their youth by the disgusting poison of the most terrible libertines."³²⁵ News of intercepted *Bailes* throughout the Porfiriato tended to emphasize the presence of young men at these events.³²⁶ Indeed, in 1902 *El Contemporáneo* urged the government to "[b]e tough with that filthy stain on the people," claiming that the *afeminados* in Mexico City

"'La Patria' y 'El Noticioso': La Difamación en la prensa," *La Patria* (Mexico City), Jan. 3, 1895; "El Papa Bonifacio VIII," *El Diario del Hogar* (Mexico City), Jan. 8, 1896; "Boletín del 'Diario del Hogar'," *El Diario del Hogar* (Mexico City), July 5, 1901; "Los santos sacerdotes," *El Faro* (Mexico City), Aug. 1, 1913; "Los brillantes coroneles y los brillantes de los coroneles," *El Pueblo* (Mexico City), June 6, 1915.

³²⁴ "El Baile de los 41. El bautizo de un rorro y la rifa de un pepito," *El Popular* (Mexico City), Nov. 24, 1901.

³²⁵ "Los sucesos de actualidad," *La Voz de México* (Mexico City), Nov. 24, 1901. "[...] entre los aprehendidos [en *El Baile de los 41*] figuran viejos pervertidos por el abuso del deleite y jóvenes, púberes apenas, roídos y muertos en plena juventud para la ponzoña asquerosa de la más terrible de las crápulas"

³²⁶ "Siete individuos disfrazados de mujer," *El Diario* (Mexico City), June 7, 1910. For example, in 1910, after a raid on a party where several male-assigned people were caught dressed in attire reserved for women, *El Diario* reported that "what is even more repugnant is that the houses of [male-assigned people dressed as women] are visited by young men of good social standing, who accompany these scandalous people in their escapades." "[...] lo que es más repugnante todavía es que las casas de estos individuos son visitadas por algunos jóvenes de la buena sociedad, quienes acompañan en sus correrías á los escandalosos."

were "highly damaging insofar as their poor instincts lead them to dedicate themselves without scruples of any kind to perverting minors, as in the case we mentioned in our previous edition, in which one of these repugnant individuals had hidden a young man who was later found [...]"³²⁷

Positivist criminology reinforced the relationship between (what would emerge as) homosexuality and other sexual perversions, including sexual assault on young people. For instance, an article published by Dr. Alfonso Quiroz insisted that *pederastas*, "in order to form subjects apt for pederasty, those called '*mujerados*' [womanly], [young men] are made to ride horses without saddles for hours and hours, which produces testicular atrophy and, consequently, mammary hypertrophy and adiposity."³²⁸ Turn-of-the-century criminology also reinforced the relationship between the homoerotically inclined and the sexual exploitation of female-assigned sex workers. Indeed, in the works of Carlos Roumagnac, the sexual perversities that provided a fecund breeding ground for criminality included exploitative sexual exchanges with both male- and female-assigned people.³²⁹

³²⁷ "Terrible plaga," *El Contemporáneo* (Mexico City), Oct. 12, 1902. "Estos individuos son perjudiciales en alto grado, pues que con los malos instintos que poseen, se dedican sin escrúpulo de ninguna naturaleza, á pervertir menores, como en el caso que señalamos en nuestro número anterior, en que uno de estos repugnantes individuos había ocultado á un joven á quien después de muchas pesquisas se logró encontrar [...] Duro con esos inmundos borrones del pueblo."

³²⁸ Alfonso Quiroz, "Una historia clínica," *Criminalia* (Mexico City), Aug. 1, 1935. "[...] a fin de formar sujetos aptos para la pederastía, a los que llaman '*mujerados*', les hacen correr horas y horas sobre caballos en pelo, lo cual produce una atrofia del testículo, que da por resultado, la hipertrofia de las mamas y ediposidad."

³²⁹ Carlos Roumagnac, *Los Criminales de México*.

The geosocial proximity between sex work and *afeminamiento*, via both *zonas de tolerancia* and *centros de vicio*, provided an interminable stream of scandalizing accounts ready to be reaped by news sources and consumed by their readers. For instance, in 1907, *La Opinión* told the tale of Sixto Barragán's drunken assault on a pharmacist. Barragán is described as "an individual whom Nature should not have conceded the honor of being a man insofar as he has proven, with his behavior, that he is incapable of wearing pants," who worked at a nearby brothel (and whose release was demanded by female-assigned sex workers).³³⁰ Similarly, in 1907 *El Popular* told the tale of Aristeo Ortega, who was almost lynched by attending a brothel dressed in attire reserved for women in order to "keep the women there company."³³¹

After the revolution, and given the attempted moral renovation of the new regime, *afeminados* no longer merely toiled at brothels but, rather, exploited them. This is the case, for instance, of Juan Marentes, an *afeminado* who "lived off of the exploitation of brothels,"³³² and of Eduardo Ríos and Basilio Domínguez, two "individuals without scruples, *afeminados* and thieves, as well as acolytes of human traffickers and overseers of drug distribution."³³³ Indeed, the exploitation of sex workers by *pederastas/afeminados/sodomitas* included the sex trafficking of underage people, as is

³³⁰ "Un afeminado agresor y ebrio," *La Opinión* (Veracruz), Oct. 28, 1907.

³³¹ "Escándalo en un prostíbulo. Un 'él' disfrazado de 'ella'" *El Popular* (Mexico City), Aug. 12, 1907. "[...] con objeto de hacer compañía á las mujeres que se encontraban en aquel sitio."

³³² "Se negó el amparo a un traficante del vicio," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), July 25, 1934. "uno de los sujetos que viven de la explotación de casas de asignación"

³³³ "Afeminados castigados en Gomez Palacio," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Oct. 12, 1936. "Eduardo Ríos y Basilio Domínguez, individuos sin escrúpulos, afeminados y ladrones, ayudantes de las tratantes de blancas y encargados de distribuir drogas [...]"

suggested, for instance, by an article published by *El Porvenir* in 1935 which details the many crimes of *afeminados*, among which they include "dressing as women" and "prostituting underage people."³³⁴

Such was the fear of pederasty (imagined as sexual opportunism irrespective of age or consent) that, in the mid-1900's, *El Nacional* published a list of movie theaters that they recommended young people steer clear of, on account of the large numbers of homosexuals who attended them and "committed all sorts of excesses with underage people watching movies."³³⁵ Indeed, the mid-1900's saw an increased anxiety about what was perceived to be an "invasion" of homosexuals, and one of the primary anxieties exploited was the fear that these criminal-adjacent homosexuals would (and were) corrupt(ing) youthful masculinities.³³⁶

Considering the history of association between *afeminamiento* and sexual exploitation, it is unsurprising that the earliest *travesti* icon, Xóchitl, emerges in the late 1970's amidst condemnations of sexual exploitation.³³⁷ Indeed, one of the the crimes most consistently imputed to Xóchitl was the forceful prostitution of young homosexual men as well as the production of a criminal underworld spearheaded by *travestistas*

³³⁴ "Hizose la denuncia de otro degenerado de la peor ralea," *El Porvenir* (Monterrey), Sept. 4, 1935.

³³⁵ "Lista negra de cines no aptos para menores," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Oct. 22, 1952.

³³⁶ For an example, see Jose Alberto Casillas, "Con la complicidad de leyes benévolas, prolifera el homosexualismo," *Impacto* (Mexico City), Mar. 6, 1974.

³³⁷ Ernesto Lara, "Una 'maffia' controla a los homosexuales," *Avance* (Mexico City), June 21, 1979.

prospering on the backs of exploited homosexual comrades.³³⁸ The fantasy of a *travesti*-led "mafia," attributed to Xóchitl in the '70's and '80's, is an element that persists until today and which perhaps found its origin in early twentieth-century fears regarding *afeminado* collectivities, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Fantasies of *travesti* traffickers and pederasts remain quite healthy at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries. Although the decriminalization of virilized homosexuality in the 1980's and 1990's was quite successful, the cautionary tales once associated with all *pederastas/afeminados/homosexuales* come to be transferred onto *travestis*. As such, it is unsurprising the ease with which one can come upon tales of *travesti* sexual exploitation, wherein *travestis* figure prominently despite often being a part of largely non-*travesti* criminal enterprises. Such is the case of "*La Romana*," a *travesti* apprehended in 2000, who "forced men to prostitute themselves [...]."³³⁹ Indeed, although at least five other people were arrested with *La Romana*, all mediatic attention was focused on the *travesti*. Similarly, in 2003, *El Universal* warned of a couple of male-assigned individuals attempting to abduct young children in the subway. What is relevant to the present discussion is that only one of the two is described: the one "dressed as a woman."³⁴⁰ Again, in 2009, *La Tosca* is captured for their participation in the exploitation of young people. Although 15 people were arrested and charged for the sex trafficking

³³⁸ Leticia Singer, "Habla el Frente Homosexual de Acción Revolucionaria," *Interviu* (Mexico City), Aug. 19, 1978.

³³⁹ Silvia Otero, "Denuncian a explotador de sexoservidores," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Feb. 24, 2000.

³⁴⁰ Icela Lagunas, "Rescata la SSP a niño de 9 años," *El Universal* (Mexico City), July 14, 2003.

ring, *La Tosca's* condition as a *travesti* captured the headlines, almost to the point of the mediatic expunging of the 14 people arrested alongside *La Tosca*.³⁴¹ Indeed, *El Universal* only mentions *La Tosca* and another possible *travesti* suspect, *La Wini*.³⁴² The dog-whistle politics involved in the criminality always already assumed of the *travesti* has been a historical feat of proportions only matched by its produced and perceived organicity and has, to a large extent, depended on the deception attached to *travestismo*, which I discuss in the following section.

3.6. Deception

As suggested in the previous sections, a fourth mechanism through which criminality becomes sutured to *travesti*, deeply connected to artificiality as a constitutive element of *travesti*, is deception. Indeed, narratives of *travesti* deception have remained relatively constant since revolutionary times. The underlying logic of *travesti* deception resides in rigid understandings of sex and gender, which posit a natural and binary concordance between the two. Julia Serano, for instance, explores the representational trope of the "deceptive transsexual," a figure not entirely dissimilar to the deceptive *travesti*, claiming that they are frequently "positioned as 'fake' women, and their 'secret' trans status is revealed in a dramatic moment of 'truth'."³⁴³ In contrast, she identifies the "pathetic transsexual" as "barely resembl[ing] women at all" and, as such, as unable to

³⁴¹ "Cae red de trata de personas," *Proceso* (Mexico City), Dec. 29, 2009.

³⁴² "Cae presunto líder de red de explotación de menores," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Nov. 18, 2009.

³⁴³ Julia Serano, *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity*, (Berkeley, CA, 2007), 37.

"change the fact that she is really and truly a man."³⁴⁴ *Travesti* deceivers in a sense occupy a liminal space between both the deceptive and the pathetic transsexuals developed by Serano insofar as they are produced, more often than not, as simultaneously *not* passing as women yet they must nonetheless be uncovered as male-assigned for cis- and heteronormative order to be restored.

Frías' rendition of *La Turca* quite exemplifies this space (as well as evidences the space as hetero- and cis-normatively produced). Indeed, it is clear that the author of "*Realidades de la Cárcel*" never quite intends for *La Turca* to pass as a woman, insofar as he begins his account by explaining that the "feminine nickname belonged to a man, an almost elderly man, but what a man! what an old man!"³⁴⁵ Not unlike the representational trope of the "pathetic transsexual," *La Turca* is too repugnant, too horribly and perversely indigenious, and too old to be successfully feminized. However, their mannerisms and accoutrements are sufficiently feminized that Frías feels compelled to remind his readers that *La Turca* "...is a fifty year old man!"³⁴⁶ Thus, although *La Turca* is too male to be read as female, they must nonetheless be *uncovered* as the former, not unlike Serano's "deceptive transsexual," so that the cis- and heteronormative order may be restored through "truth."

The trope of *travesti* as deceiver (though perhaps not necessarily criminally so) is quite commonly reproduced within scholarship on *travesti*. For instance, the first few

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 39.

³⁴⁵ ³⁴⁵ Heriberto Frías, "Realidades de la Cárcel. V. La Turca," *El Demócrata* (Mexico City), May 30, 1895. "Este apodo femenino era el de un hombre, casi un anciano, ¡pero qué hombre, qué anciano!"

³⁴⁶ Ibid., "... era un hombre de cincuenta años!"

pages of Kulick's monograph are dedicated to describing Banana's lengthy "preparations", which include tweezing, hair, makeup, and tucking in her penis and scrotum. Banana's "preparations" read more like a process of temporary transformation: she gets her "face on"³⁴⁷ and puts her "*buceta* [cunt] in place."³⁴⁸ The sensationalization of these preparations reduces Banana's appearance "to mere illusion, and her secret (her maleness) becomes the real identity."³⁴⁹ Prieur's study reproduces this trend, particularly when she discusses *vestidas'* sexual organs: indeed, after explaining that "penis and testicles must be kept hidden between the legs with tight-fitting briefs or even adhesive tape to keep things in place," she explains that "the testicles may then be fashioned around it [the penis] like sex lips, producing a sight to perplex any gynecologist --it looks like none of the sexes discovered so far in the history of mankind."³⁵⁰ So concerned is Prieur with the "illusion," that she is able to assert that "[a] naked transvestite is inconceivable --it is the dress that makes a person a transvestite."³⁵¹ Perhaps contradictorily, the author nonetheless establishes that the strength of the illusion is such that "[s]ome *vestidas* may be taken to be women even when undressed."³⁵² Indeed, Prieur reproduces the trope of *travesti* deception to the point of claiming that "*vestidas* may

³⁴⁷ Kulick, *Travesti*, 2.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁴⁹ Serano, *Whipping Girl*, 37.

³⁵⁰ Prieur, *Mema's House*, 152.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 152.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 163.

actually be able to fool men during the sexual act," particularly if the "man cooperates a bit in the fraud."³⁵³

It is clear that the *travesti* is produced as an artificial being who comes to be through varying degrees of deception. In addition to producing the *travesti* as mere illusion (whose underlying "truth" is maleness), these deceptions have simultaneously produced criminality as a constitutive element of *travesti*. So embedded is *travesti* deception within the public imaginary that, in 2002, several cities in Baja California proposed jail-time for people engaging in public *travestismo* (a juridical provision that has existed in various states and cities at different times).³⁵⁴ How, then, has *travesti* deception circulated historically? In other words, how does *travesti* come to be associated with deception? Furthermore, how does this deception come to be associated with, and productive of, criminality?

Narratives of non-homoeroticized "men dressed as women" for the purpose of avoiding identification and capture by the State for criminalized behaviors were not uncommon, particularly during and after the revolution.³⁵⁵ Although these narratives

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Julieta Martínez González, "Proyectan encarcelar a los travestis en BC," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Oct. 21, 2002.

³⁵⁵ For examples, see "Defensa de Huanímaro," *Diario del Imperio* (Mexico City), Oct. 2, 1866; "Horadación y robo en una Comisaría," *El País* (Mexico City), June 22, 1906; "Serios disturbios en Cuencamé," *El País* (Mexico City), Feb. 23, 1911; "Ladrón disfrazado," *El Diario* (Mexico City), Dec. 30, 1911; "Los cabecillas huyeron vestidos de mujeres," *El Imparcial* (Mexico City), Apr. 20, 1911; "Se maneó con la enagua," *Nueva Era* (Mexico City), May 11, 1912; "El diputado Olivera se fugó disfrazado de mujer," *El País* (Mexico City), Dec. 15, 1912; "Los extranjeros están muy satisfechos," *El Imparcial* (Mexico City), June 17, 1913; "Hombres vestidos de mujer," *El Informador* (Guadalajara), Oct. 1, 1920; "Hombres disfrazados de mujeres cometen atracos en Viesca," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Oct. 11, 1924; "Fue descubierta en C. Guzmán

certainly include the feminizing element of cowardice (they are ushered into feminized clothing for fear of being apprehended), the feminization within these narratives nonetheless differs significantly from tales of homoeroticized "men dressed as women." In the case of the former, their attire is seen as a tool for, or an effect of, their criminality (merely opportunistic) whereas the feminized attire of the latter is perceived as an indication, or even source, of the perversity of their criminality. Furthermore, although male-assigned cross-dressing was criminalized (however vaguely) from the late-nineteenth century until recently, non-homoeroticized "men dressed as women," either for the purpose of avoiding identification and capture or for *carnaval* or other costumed festivities³⁵⁶, were not charged with the crime of public scandal. Homoeroticized "men dressed as women," however, were not only arrested, but charged and sentenced for a behavior discretionally criminalized.³⁵⁷

Although their criminalization was vaguely codified in the 1871 Penal Code (and reiterated in the Penal Code of 1931), the criminality of homoeroticized "men dressed as women" seems to have been buttressed by the criminalized behaviors of non-homoeroticized "men dressed as women." The case of Ignacio Hernández is particularly

una bien organizada banda de ladrones vestidos de mujer," *El Informador* (Guadalajara), Mar. 18, 1930; "Los bandidos en G. Palacio," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Dec. 8, 1936.

³⁵⁶ For examples, see "España," *El Correo de San Luis* (San Luis Potosí), Apr. 3, 1887; "La semana en Europa," *El Tiempo* (Mexico City), Apr. 4, 1889;

³⁵⁷ For examples, see "Afeminado," *El Popular* (Mexico City), Dec. 8, 1898; "Los cuarenta y un bailarines," *La Patria* (Mexico City), Nov. 22, 1901; "El baile de la Coyuya," *El Popular* (Mexico City), Feb. 7, 1902; "¿Otro baile como el de los famosos 41?," *El Popular* (Mexico City), July 2, 1902; "Escándalo en un prostíbulo. Un 'él' disfrazado de 'ella'" *El Popular* (Mexico City), Aug. 12, 1907; "Ahora son siete y no 41. Baile de mari-machos." *El Universo* (Mexico City), Aug. 30, 1908.

telling. In 1922, *El Universal* told the tale of a passer-by who raised the alarm of a police officer, on account of the contrast between their feminized attire and other masculinized characteristics, such as their large feet and "other masculine facial features."³⁵⁸ The police officer approached the person in question, purportedly because he was worried that the person in question might be a *ratero* (thief). According to *El Universal*, what the officer found was "not a thief but an individual who frequently enjoys strolling through the streets dressed as a woman."³⁵⁹ Despite not finding evidence of wrong-doing other than their attire, Hernández, the person detained, was jailed for 30 days and assigned to forced labor. Similarly, in 1920, *El Informador* warned its readers of "two men dressed as women cautiously penetrating popular streets, as though engaging in espionage [...] it is believed that we are dealing with thieves preparing for a robbery or criminals planning to assassinate someone."³⁶⁰ Although *El Informador* never published confirmatory information regarding the reasons for their suspects' choice of attire, the article nonetheless reproduces cross-dressing as a criminally-adjacent behavior.

The dangerousness of "men dressed as women" (homoeroticized and not) seems to stem from a fear of deception in which the *travesti* is already seen as engaged in, by masking their "true" selves. Because the deception is seen as already having been engaged in, it matters little whether additional criminalized behaviors accompany (what

³⁵⁸ "Hombre vestido de mujer en las calles," *El Universal* (Mexico City), May 21, 1922.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, n.p. "[...] no es un ratero, sino un individuo que gusta con frecuencia pasearse por las calles vestido de mujer."

³⁶⁰ "Hombres vestidos de mujer," *El Informador* (Guadalajara), Oct. 1, 1920. "[...] se ha visto a dos hombres vestidos de mujer, que con toda clase de precauciones penetran en las calles céntricas, en actitud de espionaje [...] se cree que se trata de cacos que preparan algún robo, o de criminales que pretenden asesinar a alguna persona."

is perceived as) cross-dressing. However, the trend of assuming that (what is perceived as) male-assigned cross-dressing is likely to be accompanied by criminalized behaviors, such as robbery and brutality, (a trend preceding and partially constituting *travesti*) is reinforced by articles that reproduce this coupling. Whether the *travestismo* is homoeroticized or not matters little to accounts that position male-assigned technologies of feminization as a tool for perpetrating violences and other criminalized behaviors. From fraud³⁶¹, to beatings³⁶², to murders³⁶³, to (especially) robberies³⁶⁴, examples of these accounts are tremendously widespread, particularly during and after the revolution. The decriminalization of *travestismo*, *de facto* or *de jure*, seems to be accompanied by an increase in narratives of *travestismo* as a *tool* for criminality.

Importantly, when *travesti* becomes available as a conceptual category, the trope of the man dressed as a woman in order to commit misdeeds receives a name. The trope,

³⁶¹ For examples, see "26 años usó faldas un tipo extraño," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), June 1, 1948; "San Pedro," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Jul. 31, 1956; "Un individuo en traje de mujer," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Aug. 6, 1957

³⁶² For an example, see "Un profesor fue golpeado brutalmente," *El Informador* (Guadalajara), Dec. 23, 1934

³⁶³ For an example see "Los extranjeros están muy satisfechos," *El Imparcial* (Mexico City), June 17, 1913;

³⁶⁴ For examples, see "Ladrón disfrazado," *El País* (Mexico City), Dec. 30, 1911; "Se maneó con la enagua," *Nueva Era* (Mexico City), May 11, 1912; "Un hombre vestido de mujer asaltaba en la vía pública," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Sept. 25, 1917; "Hombres disfrazados de mujeres cometen atracos en Viesca," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Oct. 11, 1924; "Fue descubierta en C. Guzmán una bien organizada banda de ladrones vestidos de mujer," *El Informador* (Guadalajara), Mar. 18, 1930; "Un profesor fue golpeado brutalmente," *El Informador* (Guadalajara), Dec. 23, 1934; "Los bandidos en G. Palacio," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Dec. 8, 1936; "Cometió un robo vestido como mujer," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), May 29, 1957; "Se visten de mujer para cometer robos," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Jan. 25, 1963; "Hallan un cadáver de supuesta mujer," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Aug. 12, 1966.

however, experiences a small but significant shift in the 1960's: although *travestis* are produced as engaging in a variety of criminalized behaviors, their homoeroticized *travestismo* becomes not only a way of eluding justice but also an aid in their ruse, via seduction. For instance, in a discussion of a feminized male-assigned body discovered dead through blunt-force trauma, the article mentions that "individuals dressed as women perpetrate robberies among the night-owls, whom they attract with their feminine wiles and, when they have them in a dark alley, they take out a weapon to rob them."³⁶⁵ Similarly, in 1981, *El Diario de la Mañana* reported that "[two *travestistas*] surprised night-owls and invited them to spend the night with them. In the hotels, they showed them their weapons or beat them in order to strip them of their money and other items of value."³⁶⁶

In addition to detailed narratives of physical feminizations and sexual trickery, the tropes of seduction met with violence and of violence perpetrated under the facade of femininity are perhaps the most common narratives of deception accompanying *travesti* today.³⁶⁷ Although currently *travestismo* is itself rarely explicitly criminalized in the

³⁶⁵ "Hallan un cadáver de supuesta mujer," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Aug. 12, 1966. "[...] individuos vestidos de mujer perpetran asaltos entre los noctámbulos, a quienes atraen con su 'palmito' femenino y cuando los tienen en una calleja oscura, sacan un arma para asaltarlos."

³⁶⁶ Francisco Reynoso Torres, "Investigará la policía al 'mundo del error'," *Diario de la Mañana* (Mexico City), June 23, 1981. "[Dos travestistas] sorprendían a noctámbulos y los invitaban a pasar la noche con ellos. En los hoteles les mostraban sus armas o los golpeaban para despojarlos de todo su dinero y valores."

³⁶⁷ For examples of seduction met with violence, see Julieta Martínez, "Amagan gays con evidenciar a sus clientes," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Oct. 29, 2002; Icela Lagunas, "Remiten a 35 en operativo contra sexoservicio," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Aug. 12, 2004; "Travesti 'seduce' y asalta," *El Porvenir* (Monterrey), Feb. 21, 2005; Claudia Bolaños, "Travesti describe robos con gotas," *El Universal* (Mexico City), June 6, 2009.

Republic (and attempts at its criminalization are usually struck down with relative swiftness), the criminality of *travesti* depends on and is upheld by accounts implicating *travestismo* in criminalized activities. Indeed, accounts of non-homoeroticized "men dressed as women" to evade capture (and, particularly, to escape capture) continue to be legion.³⁶⁸ Similarly, accounts of homoeroticized "men dressed as women" (at least) during their criminal undertakings are quite common.³⁶⁹ These accounts buttress the

For examples of violence perpetrated under the facade of femininity, see Mario Torres, "Detienen a 'travesti' asaltante," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Feb. 14, 2000; Alejandro Jord, "Detienen a travesti ladrón en el Centro," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Apr. 9, 2003; Icela Lagunas, "Esconden en niños droga para vender," *El Universal* (Mexico City), June 2, 2003; Alejandro Baltazar, "Disparan en la Condesa contra travesti," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Apr. 6, 2004; Icela Lagunas and Alejandro Baltazar, "Caen pelucas en operativo," *El Universal* (Mexico City), June 4, 2004; "Detienen a travesti asaltante," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Jan. 11, 2007; Luis Brito, "Cae travesti con tarjetas clonadas," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Dec. 12, 2007;

"Deja travesti delincuente como prueba seno falso," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Sept. 4, 2008;

³⁶⁸ For examples, see "Se evade un preso del penal de Atlacomulco," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Dec. 28, 1999; "Intentó escapar del Reno vestido de mujer," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Apr. 25, 2000; "Cárcel a 10 custodios del Reclusorio Sur," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Jan. 15, 2000; "Dan dos años de cárcel a un custodio," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Jan. 9., 2000; "Dictan auto de formal prisión a 10 custodios de reclusorio," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Dec. 16, 2001; "Se escapa traficante de prisión colombiana," *El Universal* (Mexico City), May 4, 2001; Juan Manuel Barrera Aguirre, "Hay consumo de drogas en los penales, admiten autoridades," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Jan. 13, 2001; "Detienen a sacerdote guatemalteco vestido de mujer," *El Universal* (Mexico City), July 7, 2002; Icela Lagunas, "Ladrones de vehículos desatan balacera; uno resulta lesionado," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Oct. 6, 2005; "Intenta reo fugarse disfrazado de mujer de un penal en Hidalgo," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Mar 10, 2008; "Realiza ataque suicida hombre vestido de mujer en Irak," Jan. 8, 2008; Fernando Martínez, "Hombre vestido de mujer abusaba de pasajeras del Metro," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Apr. 21, 2009.

³⁶⁹ For examples, see Icela Lagunas, "Lo robaron dos homosexuales," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Feb. 10, 1988; "Cae banda que asaltaba en el metro," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), May 16, 1989; "Por 'divertirse' con dos homosexuales le robaron más de medio millón de ps.," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Oct. 26, 1989; "Esconden en

criminality of *travesti* insofar as the trope of *travesti* as "a man dressed as a woman" in order to engage in (at the very least) criminal-adjacent activities, such as sex work, remains the dominant trope.

In 2005, fantasies of *travesti* criminality culminated in the production of a serial killer of elderly women, *El/La Mataviejitas* (the little old lady killer, first masculinized, then feminized), imagined for some time to be *travesti*. Indeed, the much publicized case of *El/La Mataviejitas* constituted the first time that the Mexican police organized a search for a designated serial killer.³⁷⁰ Lewis brilliantly explores the "fear-driven crosshatching of fiction and real life events in the scandalized public imagination" by tracing the connections between the contemporary fictionalized serial killer in the telenovela *La Madrastra* and the search for the *Mataviejitas*, making evident the impact of representations on materiality.³⁷¹ *La Mataviejitas* was caught in early 2006 and, as it turns out, was revealed to be a cisgender woman; however, public discourse prior to this revelation exposed public anxieties over imagined *travesti* deception and evidenced the ease and strength with which *travesti* criminality can be summoned.

niños droga para vender," *El Universal* (Mexico City), June 2, 2003; Raúl García Araujo, "Deja operativo a taxis dos sujetos detenidos," *El Universal* (Mexico City), June 14, 2003; Rubelio Fernández, "Mataviejitas, una mente brillante: Bátiz," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Oct. 10, 2005; "Que travesti se hace rico con falso Niño," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Sept. 19, 2007; Juan Manuel Barrera, "Capturan a hombre vestido de mujer con bebé," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Feb. 2, 2010.

³⁷⁰ Susana Vargas Cervantes, "El/La Mataviejitas: Killing Genders in Mexico City," (Master's thesis, McGill University, 2008), 29.

³⁷¹ Vek Lewis, "Of Lady-killers and 'Men Dressed as Women': Soap Opera, Scapegoats and the Mexico City Police Department," *PORTAL* 5, no. 1 (2008), 1.

According to Susana Vargas, police reliance on U.S. serial killer profiles (wherein men constitute an "absent presence"), which led the police to believe that the *Mataviejitas* must be a "man with homosexual preferences [and] resentment towards [a] feminine figure," coupled with witness-based physical profiles, which described the *Mataviejitas* as a "man, dressed as a woman, or a robust woman" led the police to believe that the author of several dozen murders of elderly woman was a *travesti*.³⁷² Indeed, according to Vargas, "the application was justified because, in a homophobic culture like Mexico, transvestites are already criminalized."³⁷³ In fact, as reviewed above, criminality has been sutured to *travesti* through a variety of mechanisms, including the deception engaged in by the *travesti* iteration of the *Mataviejitas*. As discussed by both Lewis and Vargas Cervantes, the fantasy of a *travesti Mataviejitas* -whether impelled by cultural representations, such as the contemporary *travesti* serial killer in *La Madrastra*, as suggested by Lewis, or by less fictional though equally fictionalized *travesti* serial killers, such as the *Monstre de Montmartre*, as suggested by Vargas Cervantes- resulted in the criminalization of *travestis* in Mexico City, as street-based *travesti* sex workers were harassed and rounded up by the police and forcibly finger-printed and registered before being allowed to leave, pending a 1,200 peso fine for prostitution.³⁷⁴ The ease with which the public consumed (and recalled) stories of a *travesti* serial killer of one of the most vulnerabilized populations points to an ease of association between criminality and *travesti*, via deception.

³⁷² Ibid., 43-44.

³⁷³ Ibid., 45.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 46.

3.7. Conclusion: LGBT Carceral Politics

In this chapter, I have attempted to show how historical circulations of crime and criminality have come to stick to the figure of *travesti* as one of its constitutive elements, even after the behavior's supposed decriminalization. I refuse explanatory mechanisms that would suture criminality to *travesti* ontology (i.e. *travestis* are perceived as criminal because they are particularly likely to engage in criminalized behaviors) and, instead, explore historical circulations of *travesti* criminality in order to explore how *travesti* comes to be associated with criminal and criminal-adjacent behaviors. In particular, I look to discourses of licit and illicit vice in order to explore histories of proximity between vice and what would emerge as *travesti* in the mid- to late-twentieth century. As such, I argue that *travesti* criminality is largely a consequence of these histories of geosocial, political, and affective proximity rather than of *travesti* participation in criminalized activities.

Throughout this chapter, I've suggested that the history of *travesti* can be thought of as a history that has moved from criminalization to criminality and that this history, and *travesti*'s forceful differentiation from the virilized homosexual in the last few decades of the twentieth-century, has resulted in the scapegoating of *travesti* for the benefit of non-*travesti* sexual non-normativities. If *travesti* can be produced as that which must be contained, non-*travesti* homosexuality can emerge as respectable by comparison.

Together, the four mechanisms described throughout the chapter (no doubt in addition to others) work to buttress the criminality of *travesti*, to the extent that even when *travestis* are positioned as victims, they are nonetheless produced as deserving

victims whose death is a harbinger of the dangers of engaging in criminalized (or criminalized-adjacent) activities. I explore the disposability of *travesti* in the fifth chapter but wish to point out that the criminality with which *travesti* has been imbued has effects that surpass the mere criminalization of *travesti* presence, and that extend to killings perceived as justified.

In the chapters that follow, I explore other ontoformative processes surrounding *travesti* -such as the spectacularization of *travesti*, the artificiality of *travesti*, the excesses of *travesti*, the disposability of *travesti*, and the spectralization of *travesti*- all of which interact with, and otherwise depend on, the criminality of *travesti* for their actualization. It is in this sense that I consider criminality one of *travesti*'s most significant constitutive elements: to a large degree, the figure's criminality dictates its ability to access particular discursive and affective registers (or not) and its ability to imagine particular futures (or not).

4. THE SPECTACULARIZATION OF *TRAVESTI*

4.1. Introduction

Although scant, scholarly work analyzing public discourse on *travesti* in Mexico has primarily focused on the *nota roja*.³⁷⁵ However, most journalistic accounts involving *travesti* in mainstream news sources, particularly in the late-twentieth and twenty-first century, are (or can be) categorized under the rubric of *espectáculos*, which literally translates as "spectacles." Although the more accurate translation is "entertainment," "spectacles," in the sense of the many seeing the few, is, in many ways, a more honest translation when it comes to journalistic accounts of *travesti*.

As noted by Vek Lewis, "there has been an explosion in the depiction of 'trans' subjects and acts in contemporary cultural production, particularly in television and print media."³⁷⁶ In the context of Mexico, I would argue that the theater and film have likewise been two important loci of visibility for cultural representations of *travesti* since at least the 1970's. Indeed, it can be argued that the beginnings of the contemporary spectacularization of *travesti* take place on stage, through both plays with *travesti* characters (most often supporting characters) and through the *travesti* show. Whatever the medium, the spectacularization of *travesti* has figured prominently within the public

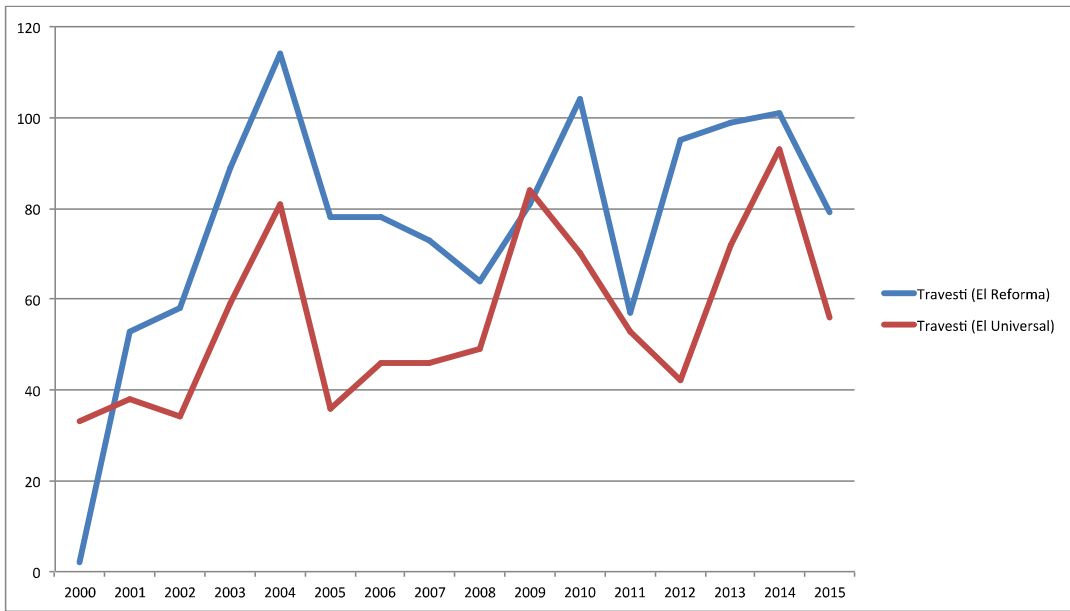
³⁷⁵ José Luis Arraiga Ornelas, "La nota roja: 'Colombianización' o 'mexicanización' periodística," *Sala de Prensa 2*. The *nota roja* is a journalistic genre akin to what is known in the Anglophone world as the popular or tabloid press. Arraiga Ornelas defines the *nota roja* as "the informative genre through which events (or their consequences) are recounted and in which some form of violence -human or not- is narrated that breaks up the social and, often, legal fabric. It includes narrations of criminal acts, catastrophes, accidents or scandals [and] its most identifiable elements are shocking headlines, exaggerated and melodramatic narrations, among others."

³⁷⁶ Vek Lewis, *Crossing Sex and Gender in Latin America*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 1.

imaginary: for instance, from the 1970's and until 2011, at least half of all articles mentioning *travesti* within *El Universal's* archive can be categorized under the rubric of *espectáculos*. The spectacularization of *travesti* is such that the first two (of three) "spikes" in *El Universal's* and *El Reforma's* twenty-first century *travesti* archives can be attributed to it (see Figure 2). More specifically, the first surge can be attributed primarily to the emergence of *travesti* as role whereas the second can be attributed primarily to *travesti* as scandal. The third, as I will discuss in this project's last chapter, can be attributed to deeply problematic renderings of *travesti* as a political identity.

Figure 2

Frequency of "travesti" in *El Universal* and *El Reforma* In the Twenty-First Century



What I am calling the spectacularization of *travesti* refers to a hypervisibility of the figure of *travesti*, from which consumers of the figure are shielded through a distance afforded by either fictionalization or celebrity. Although cultural representations of *travesti* often (but not always) form the basis of this spectacularization, this chapter does not analyze cultural representations themselves but rather the ways in which these representations circulate within public discourse. In other words, this chapter seeks to nuance the axiomatic claim advanced by scholars of *travesti* and Mexican homoeroticisms, that the stage has historically been the only safe haven available to male-assigned feminizations in Mexico. A widely echoed assertion, González Pérez, for instance, notes that "the greatest acceptance of the *travestí* is when he/she is part of a show [*espectáculo*], perhaps because the initiative of displaying the *travestí* within this rubric emerged from, and was supported by, the heterosexual sphere, such that this type of *travestismo* became a custom or, rather, was 'normalized'."³⁷⁷ González Pérez further argues that "outside of [the context of the show], the *travestí* is stigmatized for his/her feminine likeness, his/her sexuality, or his/her possible prostitution -as though one needed to be *travestí* in order to be a prostitute."³⁷⁸ Such is the importance of the stage to *travesti* becomings that scholarship on Mexican *travestismo* often offers a stage-based

³⁷⁷ César O. González Pérez, *Travestidos al desnudo: homosexualidad, identidades y luchas territoriales en Colima* (Ciudad de México: Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 2003), 91. "la mayor aceptación hacia el travestí es cuando forma parte de un espectáculo, quizá debido a que la iniciativa de mostrar el travestí en este rubro surgió en y fue apoyada por las esferas heterosexuales; de tal manera que este tipo de travestismo se hizo una costumbre o mejor dicho, se 'normalizó'."

³⁷⁸ Ibid. "Alejado de este contexto el travestí es estigmatizado por su imagen femenina, su sexualidad o su posible prostitución -como si para ser prostituto se requiriera ser travestí."

differentiation between the *vestida* and the *travesti*: the *travesti* is imagined as a male-assigned person who engages in cross-dressing for theatrical purposes, whereas the *vestida* is described as a homoeroticized male-assigned person who engages in technologies of feminization in their everyday lives.³⁷⁹ Mainstream news sources, however, pay little attention to this distinction: *travesti* is used just as easily to describe a dramaturgical method, a role, a behavior, and/or an identity.

In what follows, I explore *travesti*'s hypervisibility by inquiring into four of the most common ways in which *travesti* has been rendered spectacle: *travesti* as method, *travesti* as role, *travesti* as show, and *travesti* as scandal. As such, and throughout the following four sections, my aim is to nuance and historicize the claim that the distance of the stage has provided a relatively safe space for *travesti* (and other homosexualizations). In order to do this, I explore what I consider the four primary vehicles for *travesti* spectacularization and attempt to historicize them in an effort to better understand them. I conclude that the spectacularization of *travesti*, rather than simply rendering *travestismo* acceptable, depends on and reinforces cis- and heteronormativity, (re)producing *travesti* as Other.

4.2. *Travesti* as Method

During the late 1880's, "*travesti*" was used with relative frequency, and carefully restrained controversy, to refer to theatrical cross-dressing within the opera.³⁸⁰ In 1881,

³⁷⁹ César O. González Pérez, *Travestidos al desnudo*, 131.

³⁸⁰ For examples, see "Conversación dominical," *La Patria* (Mexico City), July 18, 1880; "Diversiones," *La Voz de México* (Mexico City), Feb. 17, 1881; "Teatros," *El Monitor Republicano* (Mexico City), Feb. 17, 1881; "Beneficio," *La Patria*, (Mexico City) Feb. 18, 1881;

several newspapers announced a special *travesti* performance of "Giroflé-Girofla" in which "men will perform the feminine roles and vice-versa for the women."³⁸¹ This production, however, seems to have been an isolated event and what was in fact more common in late nineteenth-century Mexico was for a particular subject to engage in operatic cross-dressing: female-assigned people.³⁸² Though "*travesti*" was primarily used within this context to describe actresses who performed masculine roles, it was nonetheless not exclusively so. Indeed, *travesti* was used to describe the trans-racial costumery of Mme. Nordica when she performed the role of Sélika in "L'Africaine":

From the hat to the bodice, the dress and the feet, the jewels shine; the gold, the silver and the tiger skins [...] the work of Worth, the great Parisian fashionista, is evident even in the smallest detail of the rich *travesti*. Her arrogant figure was not eclipsed by the dark color that she had to stain her face or by the black and loose hair of the savage she played wonderfully.³⁸³

The politics of blackface aside, it is interesting to note that whether in gendered or racial *travesti*, the actresses' beauty was always highlighted. Mme. Nordica's figure was "not eclipsed" by the savagery she performed. Ms. Moriones was "so beautiful in her

³⁸¹ "Beneficio," *La Patria* (Mexico City), Feb. 18, 1881.

³⁸² For examples, see "Charla de los domingos," *El Monitor Republicano* (Mexico City), Dec. 17, 1882; "Charla de los domingos," *El Monitor Republicano* (Mexico City), Oct. 7, 1883; "Ecos teatrales," *La Patria* (Mexico City), May 6, 1886; "Crónicas de la Opera: La Africana," *El Tiempo* (Mexico City), Jan. 26, 1890; "Charla de los Domingos," *El Monitor Republicano* (Mexico City), Nov. 23, 1890; "Impresiones tristes y alegres," *La Patria Ilustrada* (Mexico City), Jan. 12, 1891.

³⁸³ "Crónicas de la Opera: La Africana," *El Tiempo* (Mexico City), Jan. 26, 1890. "Desde el tocado hasta el corpiño, la falta y los piés, brilla la pedrería; el oro, la plata y las pieles de tigre [...] y hasta en el más pequeño detalle de cada uno de sus ricos *travesti* se adivina la obra de Worth, el gran modisto parisienze. Su arrogante figura no la deslucía el color moreno que tuvo que dar a su tez ni la negra y suelta cabellera del tipo salvaje que interpretó á maravillas."

Boccaccio *travesti*.³⁸⁴ Cármen Ruiz, "in her Artagnan '*travesti*' was so beautiful [...]. She wore the masculine costume with grace and looked very beautiful as a fisherman."³⁸⁵

Hortensia "characterized Maffio Orsini exquisitely and sings the most joyful notes in the partiture. *Travesti* suits the beautiful Hortensia wonderfully and her contralto voice sounds delicious with Verdi's notes."³⁸⁶ And Mrs. Goyuzueta de D'Alessio was "charming performing the *travesti* of Bavolet."³⁸⁷

Arguably, the threat associated with cross-dressing or with otherwise masculinized women (i.e. by race) was neutralized by highlighting their indisguisable - indeed, unclipsable- feminine qualities (a racialized femininity), which serve to enhance their performance. Highly conditional on the accentuation of their unwavering and exceptional connection to their rightful gender, via beauty, the uncontroversial permissiveness with which operatic cross-dressing is eulogized is reminiscent of González Pérez's claim that contemporary *travestismo* in Mexico is (more) socially sanctioned when restricted to the stage for the purpose of entertainment.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁴ "Charla de los domingos," *El Monitor Republicano* (Mexico City), Oct. 7, 1883. "[...] tan guapa en el travesti de Boccaccio [...]"

³⁸⁵ "Ecos teatrales" *La Patria* (Mexico City), May 6, 1886. "Cármen Ruiz en el "travestí" de Artagnan estaba muy guapa[...]. Llevó con donaire el traje masculino y se veía muy bella con el de pescadora."

³⁸⁶ "Charla de los Domingos," *El Monitor Republicano* (Mexico City), Nov. 23, 1890. "[...] ha caracterizado de una manera primorosa á Maffio Orsini, que canta las notas más alegres de la partitura. El *travesti* sienta á maravilla á la hermosa Hortensia, y si voz de contralto resuena deliciosa con las notas de Verdi."

³⁸⁷ "Impresiones tristes y alegres," *La Patria Ilustrada* (Mexico City), Jan. 12, 1891. "[...] estuvo encantadora haciendo el travesti de Bavolet [...]"

³⁸⁸ César González Pérez, *Travestidos al desnudo: Homosexualidad, identidades y luchas territoriales en Colima, México* (Mexico City: Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 2003), 91.

Starting in the last decade of the nineteenth century, *transformistas* (actors -and, to a lesser extent, actresses- who performed a number of roles within the same show, often but not always including feminized roles) were similarly highly praised for their theatrical endeavors.³⁸⁹ *El Mundo Ilustrado*, for instance, noted that the famed Italian *transformista*, David de Mésmeris could in the span of a few minutes play "the melancholic and sweet girl, the imperious and demanding matron, the faded old man, [and] the impetuous young man."³⁹⁰ Reviews of these *transformistas'* shows, however, rarely dwelled on their feminized representations except to either praise their realism or condemn their artificiality. For instance, comparing Mésmeris to perhaps the most well-known Italian *transformista* at the time, Leopoldo Frégoli, *La Patria* claimed that "Mésmeris, when he sings, has a very bad voice which becomes intolerable and ridiculous when he imitates a woman's voice."³⁹¹ Frégoli, on the other hand, "is always applauded when he imitates a woman's voice."³⁹² Performance critiques aside, *transformistas* were largely uncontroversial figures in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and their cross-gendered *transformismo* served as an indicator of their thespian prowess.

³⁸⁹ For examples, see "En Arbeu el imitador de Frégoli," *El Mundo* (Mexico City), Jan. 30, 1897; "Dominicales," *El Universal* (Mexico City), June 13, 1897; "Noticias varias," *La Voz de México* (Mexico City), Sept. 26, 1897; "Mesmeris," *El Comercio de Morelia* (Mexico City), Oct. 7, 1897; "Mesmeris," *El Tiempo* (Mexico City), July 3, 1898; "Espectáculos," *El Imparcial* (Mexico City), July 6, 1898; "La semana," *El Mundo Ilustrado* (Mexico City), July 24, 1898; "El hombre de las cinco mil caras," *La Patria* (Mexico City), Nov. 16, 1902.

³⁹⁰ "La semana," *El Mundo Ilustrado* (Mexico City), July 24, 1898.

³⁹¹ "El transformista Mésmeris," *La Patria* (Mexico City), July 28, 1898,

³⁹² *Ibid.*

It is important to note, however, that although the theater provided something of a safe-haven for gender crossings, homoeroticized *transformistas* were not welcomed within the theatrical world. For instance, in 1908, *El Tiempo* denounced the debut of Lanzzeta, deemed a "*repugnante*" ("repugnant") who "deserves to be deported to Yucatan rather than to be announced as a skillfull *transformista*."³⁹³ The word used to describe Lanzzeta (*repugnante*) was perhaps the most common insult hurled at *afeminados* at the time and the punishment that *El Tiempo* suggests was perhaps the most popular punishment meted out to *afeminados* in the early twentieth century. This, in addition to Lanzzeta's show being condemned in an article whose primary purpose was to denounce the immorality of a female dancer perceived as sexually licentious, given homoeroticism's proximity to female-assigned sexual licentiousness, allows us to assume that Lanzzeta was condemned because of his perceived homoeroticism and, as such, not welcome within the world of *transformismo*. Indeed, *El Tiempo* confirms that Lanzzeta's "repugnance" is in no small measure determined by his relationship with femininity: "[t]his man is highly repugnant; he imitates famous women from the theater, among them dancers, [...] forcing his masculine attitudes and movements to imitate postures and manners exclusive to women."³⁹⁴ I return to Lanzzeta in the section discussing female impersonators but wish at this point to suggest that the conditions of possibility under which *transformismo* was accepted/acceptable involved a distance from feminization enacted through heteronormativity.

³⁹³ "Los escándalos en la Academia Metropolitana," *El Tiempo* (Mexico City), Aug. 12, 1908.

³⁹⁴ "Repugnante espectáculo," *El Tiempo* (Mexico City), Aug. 20, 1908.

Although *El Baile de los 41*, in 1901, homoeroticized the "man dressed as a woman," *travesti* and gendered *transformismo* as dramaturgical methods continued well into the twenty-first century with relatively little controversy. Although female-assigned actresses engaging in theatrical *travesti* were understood, unambiguously, to be doing so solely in the interest of their craft and to be particularly feminine for doing so³⁹⁵, the mid-to-late-twentieth century was not as trusting of male-assigned people doing the same. Indeed, in the mid-to-late-twentieth century, male-assigned people engaging in theatrical cross-dressing often explicitly justified their undertakings (or had their undertakings justified) by claiming that they were not homosexual but rather committed artists.³⁹⁶

Interestingly, when distance from homoeroticism was/is properly enacted, theatrical *travestismo* aids in the virilization of the male-assigned actor.³⁹⁷ This is the case, for instance, with Dustin Hoffman's performance in *Tootsie*, which was described in newspapers as an actor engaging in *travesti* in order to play an actor engaging in *travesti*. Hoffman's gender(ed)/sexuality is, both within the film as well as outside of it,

³⁹⁵ Alejandro Casona, "La Doncella-Galán," *El Porvenir* (Monterrey), Oct. 18, 1958. In 1958, for instance, *El Porvenir* published an article praising female-assigned *travesti*, claiming that "maybe the *travestí* adds to women one more charm, in the same way that their small sins do." ["Tal vez el travestí añade a la mujer un encanto más como suelen añadirse todos sus pecados pequeños "]

³⁹⁶ For examples, see Sixto Martínez, "El papel principal de Bernarda Alba representado por un actor en España," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Sept. 26, 1976; Emilio Morales Valentón, "El tormento de ser... ¡¿mujer?!" *El Univeral* (Mexico City), July 6, 2000; Juan Solís, "Las mexicanas, 'sólo una cara bonita'" *El Univeral* (Mexico City), Nov. 12, 2000. ""

³⁹⁷ For examples, see "Noticiero de cine," *El Informador* (Guadalajara), Aug. 21, 1982; "Sergio Klainer tiene éxito en su actuación como travestista," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Aug. 19, 1985; Emilio Morales Valentón, "El tormento de ser... ¡¿mujer?!" *El Univeral* (Mexico City), July 6, 2000.

Ramón Vallejo, "Con fuego en la piel," *El Informador* (Guadalajara), Feb. 12, 1996;

questioned only briefly before his hetero- and cisnormativity is reaffirmed via accolades of his commitment as an actor.³⁹⁸

Importantly, after the homoeroticized *travesti* emerges as a named figure in the mid- to late-twentieth century, it becomes an example of failed feminization which "serious" actors, engaging in *travesti* exclusively in the interest of their craft, must steer clear of. In 1977, for instance, an article printed by *El Nacional* described the abbé François Timoléon de Choisy as "not a '*travesti*' but a sophisticated connoisseur of the sex whom he copied."³⁹⁹ Similarly in an interview conducted in the year 2000 with the cast of *Orquesta de señoritas*, a play with an all-male cast playing women, actor Javier Yerandi is quoted as saying: "[t]his play doesn't let you *jotear* [act like a fag]; from the moment that we get on stage, we are women and we have to understand that. We are not *travesti*, *maricón* [faggot] or anything like that, we are women!"⁴⁰⁰ Thus, *travesti* is reproduced as artificiality, as failed feminization, by those seeking realistic portrayals of femininity.

While the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries welcomed *travesti* as theatrical method (with a greater incursion of male-assigned actors engaging in theatrical

³⁹⁸ For examples, see "¿Dustin en Vestido?" *El Informador* (Guadalajara), Mar. 18, 1982; Oswaldo Andersen-Mundt, "El perfeccionamiento maniático de un actor," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), June 4, 1983

³⁹⁹ "Deja la Virtud la Academia Francesa y Habla de la Obra de... ¡Casanova!" *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Dec. 17, 1977. "[...] pues el embajador no era un "travesti" sino un fino conocedor del sexo que copiaba."

⁴⁰⁰ Emilio Morales Valentón, "El tormento de ser... ¡¿mujer?!" *El Univeral* (Mexico City), July 6, 2000. "Esta obra no te permite jotear; aquí desde el momento en que subimos al escenario somos mujeres y lo tenemos que entender. No somos travesti, maricón ni nada por el estilo, ¡somos mujeres!"

cross-dressing in the mid-twentieth century⁴⁰¹), the mid- to late-twentieth century saw its transformation into a role. In other words, by the late 20th century *travesti* had become a sufficiently coherent and seductive character so as to merit fairly consistent filmic, theatrical, and literary representations. If it no longer merely referred to theatrical cross-dressing, what had *travesti* become?

4.3. *Travesti* as Role

The emergence of *travesti* as a role, or actors playing *travestis* (often by engaging in *travesti*), was not necessarily dependent on the emergence of *travesti* as an identitarian category. As suggested in this project's third chapter, the non-linear emergence of the figure of *travesti* long precedes its baptism. For instance, one of the most celebrated (and studied) literary and filmic representations of *travesti*, Donoso's/Ripstein's (1966/1978) *la Manuela* is never designated a *travesti* in the novel or the film but is, rather, referred to as a *maricón* and a *loca*. *La Manuela*, however, is quite commonly described as a *travesti* both within scholarship⁴⁰² and in popular discourse.⁴⁰³ That *la Manuela* is legible as a

⁴⁰¹ For examples on male-assigned incursion into theatrical cross-dressing, see "Marivaux," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Dec. 8, 1963; Sixto Martínez, "El Papel Principal de Bernarda Alba Representado por un Actor en España," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Sept. 26, 1976; "Notas y pasos rítmicos," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Sept. 10, 1978; "Gina Romand Interpretará a don Juan Tenorio," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Oct. 10, 1979; Emilio Morales Valentón, "El tormento de ser... ¡¿mujer?!" *El Universal* (Mexico City), July 6, 2000.

⁴⁰² For examples, see Yolanda Mercader Martínez, "La construcción de la identidad homosexual masculina en el cine Mexicano," *Anuario de Investigación 2005*, (2006); Beatriz Zaplana Bebia, "La Manuela: escritura y travestismo en *El lugar sin límites*," in *Escribir con el cuerpo*, eds. Beatriz Ferrús and Nuria Calafell, 145-150, (Barcelona: Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, 2008); Ben Sifuentes-Jáuregui, "El Retorno de la Manuela: travestismo/identificación/lo abyecto en *Loco Afán de Lemebel*," *Inti* 1, no. 69 (2009); Miriam Pino, "Modernidad, cultura de latifundio y cultura minoritaria en *El lugar sin límites*(1966) de José Donoso," *Amérique Latine Histoire & Mémoire*, no. 28 (2014).

travesti points to the figure's consistency prior to its popularization as "*travesti*". Indeed, it is not surprising that Donoso's/Ripstein's la Manuela is read as a *travesti*: she is, after all, placed in proximity to the objects that most commonly signal *travesti*, such as male-assigned technologies of feminization, homoeroticism, sex work, excess, and violence.

There exists a relative consistency of objects placed in proximity (and often attributed) to *travesti* as role, such that certain roles are recognized by public discourse as *travesti* even when the designation is not explicit, as in the case of la Manuela and a host of others. Specifically, *travesti* as role is generally produced in proximity to scandal, via homoeroticism, violence, criminality, sex work, drug use, and disease. For instance, the 1979 Mexican film, *Hilario Cortés, El rey del talón* was described in newspapers as featuring Alfonso Zayas "interpreting a *travesti* who makes a living by catching drunken men unaware and robbing them."⁴⁰⁴ Such is the relationship between *travesti*, homoeroticism, and sex work, that despite the film centering on Hilario Cortés's heterosexual affairs with his cellmates in a prison for female-assigned people, the Mexican Institute of Cinematography's website describes the protagonist as a "*homosexual travestido* [cross-dressed homosexual] imprisoned for practicing prostitution."⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰³ For examples, see Carlos Meráz, "'Calambres' no está 'olvidado'," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Apr. 4, 1994; Luis Vázquez, "Homenajean a Ripstein en Francia," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Apr. 5, 1994.

⁴⁰⁴ Oswaldo Andersen-Mundt, "Cine," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), June 2, 1980. " Zayas interpreta a un travesti que se dedica a sorprender y a robar borrachitos."

⁴⁰⁵ "Hilario Cortés, El rey del talón," *Instituto Mexicano de Cinematografía*, Oct. 24, 2016, <http://www.imcine.gob.mx/cine-mexicano/pelicula3010>.

Within public discourse, *travesti* as scandal both precedes (and at times overshadows) *travesti* as role as well as constitutes it. Indeed, *travesti* as a role is born in and through scandal: it is, it seems, the anxious thrill of scandal at a safe distance that sells *travesti* as role in the first place. The spectator need not fear "the *travesti* who commands a fourth-rate brothel in a fifth-rate town"⁴⁰⁶ of *El lugar sin límites*, Marlon Brando's "suspicious taste for *travestismo*"⁴⁰⁷ in *The Missouri Breaks*, the "perverse *travesti* serial killer"⁴⁰⁸ of *Silence of the Lambs*, the "AIDS-riddled/drug-addicted *travesti*"⁴⁰⁹ of *Todo sobre mi madre*, the "*travesti* criminal"⁴¹⁰ of *Puños Rosas*, the "evil *travesti* murderer"⁴¹¹ in *La Madrastra*, or the "incredibly macho, sociopathic, [and] epileptic"⁴¹² *travesti* assassin of *Por los viejos tiempos* (to name a few), because the object they might fear is separated from them by fiction. Instead, the spectator's free-floating anxiety can attach itself to *travesti* as role, generating the very character and its allure though anxiety. Indeed, in 1985, the writer of the play *La hora de las locas*

⁴⁰⁶ Ernesto Diez Martínez, "Cine en Televisión," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Jun. 24, 2005.

⁴⁰⁷ "Duelo de gigantes," *Proceso* (Mexico City), March 12, 1977. "[...] un sospechoso gusto por el travestismo [...]"

⁴⁰⁸ César Ahumada Reyes, "Videopata/Aumentan temas sobre SIDA en el cine," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Dec. 20, 1993. "[...] pervertido multihomicida travesti [...]"

⁴⁰⁹ "'Invaden' las reinas latinas a Hollywood," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Dec. 26, 2000; "La España posfranquista, el mundo de Almodóvar," *El Universal* (Mexico City), May 23, 2000. "[...] travesti sidoso [...]" and "[...] travesti drogadicto [...]" respectively.

⁴¹⁰ Rafael Aviña, "Un gancho directo al hígado," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Feb. 11, 2005. "[...] un travesti criminal [...]"

⁴¹¹ F. Bartolomé, "Templo Mayor," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Jul. 25, 2005. "[...] la maldad del asesino travesti [...]"

⁴¹² Silvia Isabel Gámez, "Crean sicario travesti," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), June 14, 2009. "[...] macho hasta el delirio, sociópata, epiléptico y aficionado al travestismo [...]"

admitted to writing in a *travesti* as the third character because "people would not be interested in the same issues being presented by a laborer. You have to look for a gimmick to attract an audience, which, in this case, is the *travesti*."⁴¹³

Such is the commercial success of the *travesti* "gimmick", that the 2004 increase in the circulation of the word "*travesti*" can be attributed primarily to the release of Almodóvar's *La mala educación* (*The Bad Education*) and, particularly, to Gael García Bernal's performance in this film (in which the actor engages in *travesti* in order to play an actor engaging in homoeroticized *travesti*). The film, however, did not simply increase the presence of *travesti* within the public imaginary but was simultaneously accompanied by a qualitative shift in discourse: as García Bernal's performance garnered more and more international recognition, *travesti* began what would ultimately be an unsuccessful rehabilitation campaign.

Indeed, prior to the release of the film, there is a distinct sense of scandalous mockery of the effeminate -reminiscent of the humorous derision with which Carrier notes effeminacy in males is discussed within public discourse- that accompanies articles about García Bernal's role in it: "Gael García was seen walking through the streets of Madrid dressed as a *travesti*,"⁴¹⁴ "Gael dressed up as a woman to go to the club,"⁴¹⁵ and

⁴¹³ "El teatro no sólo debe ser comercial: Pablo Salinas," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Aug. 22, 1985. "Pero si hubiera presentado esa problemática con un obrero en tercer personaje, a la gente no le interesaría. Hay que buscar un poco el anzuelo para atraer un público. Que en este caso viene siendo el *travesti*."

⁴¹⁴ Juan Manuel Navarro, "Gael... ¿travesti?" *El Universal* (Mexico City), Jun. 24, 2003.

⁴¹⁵ "Gael García se vistió de mujer para ir a discoteca," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Aug. 24, 2003.

"Gael García steals men's attention"⁴¹⁶ are but three examples among many. After the film's successful release in September of 2004, however, rumors quickly began to circulate regarding the film's -and García Bernal's- potential to win international awards (which it/he did).⁴¹⁷ This marked a turning point for discussions of *travesti*: not only did García Bernal become a national hero (with the restored virility that the figure entails) but there emerged the suspicion that *travestis* might become articulated to the nation. Indeed, the day after its release in Mexico, *El Universal* published an article discussing the trans community's struggle to be represented as something other than one-dimensional characters and praising García Bernal's performance in *La mala educación*, claiming that the film "opened up a new level of discussion about the representation of transgender within film."⁴¹⁸ A few days after that, and using *La mala educación* as a springboard, the same newspaper published an article attempting to normalize *travesti* by describing it as a temporary "behavior that can be observed in people of any sexual orientation," and that is, in fact, a behavior that "honors women."⁴¹⁹

Interestingly, the attempted rehabilitation brought about by the collective euphoria unleashed by the international acclaim of a Mexican actor managed to detach itself

⁴¹⁶ "Gael García robó la atención de los hombres," *El Universal* (Mexico City), July 31, 2004.

⁴¹⁷ For examples, see "Será estrella de Cannes," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), May 8, 2004; "Vislumbran a Oscar en su carrera," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Sept. 28, 2004;

⁴¹⁸ Miguel González, "Trans-grediendo las normas," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Sept. 17, 2004. "[...] abre un nuevo nivel de discusión sobre la imagen del transgénero en el cine" In an earlier sentence, the author includes *travesti* and *transexual* within *transgénero*, or transgender.

⁴¹⁹ Patricia Kelly, "El placer de transformarse," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Sept. 22, 2004.

rhetorically if not temporally from the event that authorized it in the first place. Almost as if anticipating this shift and preparing the stage for a longitudinal comparison, *El Universal* published two articles discussing the same case almost exactly one year apart. The first, published on September 6, 2003, prior to the release of *La mala educación*, detailed the adoption of a child by a *travesti* in Costa Rica.⁴²⁰ The second article was published on September 26, 2004, after the release of *La mala educación*, and described the same adoption.⁴²¹ Although only a year separated the two articles, the ways in which *travesti* is produced and evoked are overwhelmingly different. The most glaring of these differences is the site from which this story unfolds: the 2003 article interprets the situation from the vantage point of the Catholic Church (via the former archbishop) whereas the 2004 article features the liberal State (via state actors and citizens). These articles are worth reproducing at length. The article published on September 6, 2003 reads as follows:

The child has been under the protection of the *travesti* since he was three months old, when his mother abandoned him and [the *travesti*] took charge. The National Infancy Board (PANI), the State institution charged with the protection of minors in Costa Rica, gave a 10 year old child up for adoption to a *travesti* who has been caring for him since he was three months old. The minister of Childhood and Adolescence, Rosalía Gil, affirmed that "there is no reason to" take the child from the *travesti*, whose last name is Mairena, who lives in a city northeast of San José. This is the conclusion reached by PANI after this institution's public servants observed the minor, who even attends a private school, for six months "and were unable to detect anything

⁴²⁰ "Dan niño en adopción a travesti en Costa Rica," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Sept. 6, 2003.

⁴²¹ "Otorga jueza a travesti la custodia de un niño," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Sept. 26, 2004.

strange." The child has been under the protection of Mairena since he was three months old, when his mother abandoned him and the *travesti* took charge of the baby. San José's former archbishop, Román Arrieta, however, considered PANI's decision to be "immoral" and reminded them that the Catholic Church has been clear in its rejection of these types of adoptions. "The integration of children into same-sex unions through adoption means that they will be subject to violences of different kinds," and means "introducing them into an environment that does not favor their development," said Arrieta to *Diario Extra* in the Costa Rican capital. He believes that these types of adoption are counterproductive and do not aid in the physical, mental, psychological, and social development of the minor. The child was given up for adoption out of convenience on his behalf and because of the strong bond between him and the *travesti*, even though these types of adoptions are prohibited in Costa Rica, as are same-sex marriages, according to PANI. Last June, a gay lawyer presented an appeal to the Constitutional court against the Family Code, which prohibits same-sex marriages, claiming that it is limiting rights enshrined in the Political Constitution.⁴²²

⁴²² "Dan niño en adopción a travesti en Costa Rica," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Sept. 6, 2003. "El niño está bajo protección del travesti desde que tenía tres meses de edad, cuando la madre lo abandonó y éste se hizo cargo. El Patronato Nacional de la Infancia (PANI), institución estatal encargada de la protección de los menores de edad en Costa Rica, dio un niño de 10 años en adopción a un travesti que lo cuida desde que tenía tres meses. La ministra de la Niñez y la Adolescencia, Rosalía Gil, afirmó que 'no existe razón para' quitarle el niño al travesti, de apellido Mairena, quien vive en una localidad del noroeste de San José. A esta conclusión llegó el PANI luego de que funcionarios de esta institución estuvieron observando al menor, que incluso asiste a un colegio privado, durante seis meses, 'y no lograron detectar nada extraño.' El niño está bajo la protección de Mairena desde que tenía tres meses de edad, cuando la madre lo abandonó y el travesti se hizo cargo del bebé. El ex arzobispo de San José Román Arrieta, sin embargo, consideró 'inmoral' la decisión del PANI y recordó que la Iglesia Católica ha sido muy clara en el rechazo a este tipo de adopciones. 'La integración de niños en uniones homosexuales a través de adopciones significa someterlos de hecho a violencias de distintos órdenes' y es 'introducirllos en un ambiente que no favorece su pleno desarrollo', dijo Arrieta a 'Diario Extra', de la capital costarricense. Consideró que este tipo de adopciones resultan contraproducentes y en nada ayudan al desarrollo físico, mental, psicológico y social del menor. El niño fue dado en adopción por la conveniencia de éste y por el estrecho vínculo que existe entre él y el travesti, aunque en Costa Rica están prohibido este tipo de adopciones, lo mismo que los matrimonios entre homosexuales,

The article published on September 26, 2004, however, reports the event in the following way:

Gerardo Mairena has cared for for the ten year-old minor since he was a baby, after he was abandoned by his parents. In an unprecedented ruling, a judge granted the Costa Rican *travesti*, Gerardo Mairena, custody of a ten year-old boy whom he had cared for since he was a baby, after having been abandoned by his biological parents, a judicial source informed us this Wednesday. "In that home, the child found the love and protection denied to him by his parents," asserted Milagro Rojas, the Childhood and Adolescence judge in San José. The story of Mairena and his "son," who is currently enrolled in the fifth grade, began when the baby was four months old and had been abandoned by his mother, who was engaged in prostitution and gave the baby to the *travesti*. The father never took responsibility for the child. Four years later, the mother returned to claim her son, so the case was proffered to the judicial authorities, which designated Mairena the child's temporary guardian while the judicial process unfolded. Mairena ceased laboring as a sex worker and set up a small grocery store with which he has been able to support the child while dressing as a woman. The judge said that after her deliberation, she decided to declare the child as abandoned and to grant custody to the *travesti* and not the biological mother after an interview with the minor. "I feel good with Mariena. We are good friends and I like living with him. I would not like to live elsewhere," said the child to the judge. Judge Rojas considered that the child's declaration was crucial "insofar as the principles that regulate the protection of minors dictate that we listen to what they have to say." The president of the National Infancy Board (PANI), Rosalía Gil, said that the state entity agrees with the *travesti* taking charge of the minor since "this case is an example of how important it is to protect a child and to analyze each situation individually," she affirmed. "The mother has the option to appeal but I

según el PANI. Un abogado gay presentó en junio pasado un recurso ante la Sala Constitucional contra un artículo del Código de Familia que prohíbe los matrimonios entre homosexuales por considerar que se les está limitando derechos consagrados por la Constitución Política."

don't think she will. This is a triumph but it is also a commitment and an obligation that I am acquiring," declared Mairena after being notified of the decision.⁴²³

Although the state is obviously present in both articles. insofar as they discuss a judicial process, the first article uses the passive voice to the effect of minimizing the reproductive labor engaged in by Mairena (i.e. "the child *has been under* the protection") whereas the second emphasizes the heroic labor of love engaged in by Mairena (i.e. "Gerardo Mairena has cared for the ten year-old minor since he was a baby, after he was abandoned by his parents.") Furthermore, the 2003 article mentions Mairena's name only

⁴²³ "Otorga jueza a travesti la custodia de un niño," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Sept. 26, 2004. "Gerardo Mairena cuida al menor de diez años desde que era bebé, tras ser abandonado por sus padres. En un fallo sin precedente, una jueza otorgó al travesti costarricense Gerardo Mairena la custodia de un niño de diez años a quien ha cuidado desde que era un bebé tras ser abandonado por sus padres biológicos, informó este miércoles una fuente judicial. 'En ese hogar el niño encontró el amor y la protección que le negaron sus progenitores,' aseguró en su fallo la jueza de Niñez y Adolescencia de San José, Milagro rojas. La historia de Mairena y su 'hijo', quien actualmente cursa el quinto grado de primaria, comenzó cuando el bebé tenía cuatro meses de edad y fue abandonado por su madre, quien se dedicaba a la prostitución y entregó el menor al travesti para que se lo cuidara. El padre nunca se hizo responsable del niño. Cuatro años después, la madre regresó para reclamar a su hijo, por lo que el caso fue elevado a las autoridades judiciales, las cuales designaron a Mairena como depositario temporal del niño mientras se desarrollaba el proceso judicial. Mairena dejó de desempeñarse como trabajador del sexo y fundó una pequeña tienda de abarrotes con la que ha podido mantener al niño, en tanto mantiene su vestimenta de mujer. La jueza dijo que tras las deliberaciones decidió declarar al menor en estado de abandono y dejar la custodia al travesti y no a la madre biológica tras una entrevista con el menor. 'Yo me siento bien con Mairena, me llevo bien como amigos, me gusta vivir con él y a mí no me gustaría vivir en ningún otro lado,' declaró el niño a la magistrada. La jueza Rojas calificó como 'vital' la declaración del menor 'porque los principios que rigen la protección integral de las personas menores de edad piden escuchar lo que ellos dicen'. La presidenta del Patronato Nacional de la Infancia (PANI), Rosalía Gil, dijo que la entidad estatal está de acuerdo con que el travesti se haga cargo del menor pues 'este asunto es un ejemplo importante que es proteger a un niño y analizar cada situación de manera particular', afirmó. 'La madre tiene la opción de apelar pero no creo que lo haga. Esto es un triunfo, pero también ahora es un compromiso y un deber que estoy adquiriendo,' declaró Mairena a la prensa tras conocer el fallo."

once, choosing to refer to them instead as "the *travesti*" whereas the first thing mentioned in the second article is Mairena's full name, followed by tales of their reproductive labor. Indeed, the first article gives the impression that the adoption is something unfortunate that is happening to the child whereas the second article emphasizes the adoption as a positive process. The very titles are indicative of this shift: the title of the 2003 article reads "Child is Given Up for Adoption to *Travesti* in Costa Rica" whereas the title from the 2004 article reads "Judge Grants *Travesti* Custody of a Child." In the first title, the child is "given up"; he lacks. In the second, custody is granted, given; he has.

Furthermore, at least half of the 2003 article is dedicated to expounding the opinions of the Catholic Church on same-sex marriage and same-sex adoption, even though all evidence points to Mairena being a single parent. The 2004 article, on the other hand, doesn't mention the Catholic Church at all, focusing instead on the opinions of the judge assigned to the case as well as Mairena's and the child's. Interestingly, while the perversity of Mairena is a given in the 2003 article (same-sex marriage and adoption are always already against the teachings of the Catholic Church), the 2004 article attempts to exonerate Mairena of the perversions associated with their condition as a *travesti* by explicating that Mairena is no longer engaged in sex work and is now, almost as an effect of the exculpatory powers of responsible parenthood, a small business owner.

While *La mala educación* briefly increased the visibility of *travesti*, the discursive shift that accompanied this surge nonetheless never quite came to fruition, at least in terms of the rehabilitation of *travesti*. Although the 2004 article describing the adoption of a child by a *travesti* in Costa Rica seemed as though it might signal a shift from the

criminalization of *travesti* to *travesti* as a rights-bearing subject, this discursive shift was stunted and the political sanitization was transferred to *transexual* and later to *transgénero*, as the last chapter of this dissertation will describe in greater depth.

4.4. *Travesti* as Show

Closely related though irreducible to *travesti* as role, *travesti* as method, and *travesti* as identity is the figure of the female impersonator. The female impersonator engages in *travesti* in order to play the role of *travesti* on stage but, unlike *travesti* as role or method, *travesti* follows the female impersonator off stage. Indeed, in the public imaginary, the female impersonator never fully divests from *travesti*. Francis, arguably Mexico's most well known and celebrated female impersonator, is a prime example of this. Although there exist interviews in which Francis openly and forcefully detaches himself from *travesti* as identity –identifying, instead, as a gay man-, he is nonetheless first and foremost recognized as a *travesti* both onstage and off.⁴²⁴ Perhaps the result of an association by repetition (they quite consistently, if not exclusively, perform *travesti*) buttressed by a number of metonymic slides (for instance, their offstage personas as well as their onstage material are typically associated with homosexuality), *travesti* sticks to the female impersonator with a degree of intensity not contained by the role but rendered unthreatening through the “circumscribed and limited space” offered by theater and art.⁴²⁵ The female impersonator tends to perform some, but by no means all, of the constitutive elements of *travesti*, the most salient of which is excess.

⁴²⁴ "La vida en rosa," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Oct. 20, 2004.

⁴²⁵ Gastón A. Alzate, “La masculinidad desde el escenario: Francis y el teatro de revista mexicano,” *Revista Logos* no. 17 (2010), 25.

The *travesti* show emerges within public discourse in the late-1970's, reaching the pinnacle of mainstream popularity in the mid-1980's, shortly before a decline associated with the HIV/AIDS pandemic that repositioned the *travesti* as an indecent figure. A clear example of this resides in *El Porvenir's* discussions of *travesti* shows: in 1983, the newspaper mentioned the *travesti* group, Schakkira, whose production they recommended, claiming that the group had "suddenly become famous and [that their show] was 'apt for all' rather than just the marginalized."⁴²⁶ In 1986, however, the same newspaper, discussing the same troupe, also recommended their show but homosexualized it with the play on words "*sida, perdón, si da usted con ese lugar en la zona rosa,*" which positioned the word *SIDA* (AIDS) in proximity to a show doubly homosexualized by reminding the reader that it took place in the city's Pink Zone.⁴²⁷ Starting in 1978 and prior to their decline in 1986, however, the *travesti* show proved to be quite popular (though certainly not uncontroversially so) among mainstream audiences, so much so that it was imagined to be a "new" genre in the 1970's despite evidence suggesting that *travesti* shows have been staple of queer venues since long before *travesti* emerged as identity.⁴²⁸ Indeed, Francis, who would remain the most popular female impersonator until his death in 2007, rose to fame through his participation in *Les Femmes*, a popular *travesti* troupe in the late 1970's and '80's.

⁴²⁶ "Espectáculos" *El Porvenir* (Monterrey), Jan. 20, 1984. "[...] de pronto se volvieron muy famosos y 'aptos para todos' y no sólo los marginados."

⁴²⁷ "Espectáculos," *El Porvenir* (Monterrey), Feb. 28, 1986

⁴²⁸ "Los travestistas ladrones de personalidad," *Avance* (Mexico City), Sept. 9, 1978. In this article, the producer Victor Amezcua suggests that the "*travesti* show in Mexico is new, an emerging genre, although it is old in Europe and the United States."

The popularization of the *travesti* show was an important vehicle for the spectacularization of *travesti* insofar as it provided a space for *travestismo* to be safely consumed by non-*travestis*. Indeed, and although Alzate suggests that Francis' was the first *travesti* show that catered to a heterosexual audience⁴²⁹, evidence suggests that there were several *travesti* troupes successfully doing so prior to the emergence of Francis' solo shows.⁴³⁰ What Francis' productions alone seem to have done, however, was to successfully circumvent the stigma and subsequent ghettoization brought about by HIV/AIDS.

4.5. *Travesti* as Scandal

Although the production of *travesti* as spectacle would continue to reign supreme until 2011, 2009-2010 saw a shift in the hypervisibility of *travesti*: while the frequency with which "*travesti*" was mentioned in both *El Universal* and *El Reforma* reached its second peak during this time, the increase in circulation was not impelled primarily by *travesti* as role, as with the previous surge, but, rather, by *travesti* as scandal. More specifically this surge in the circulation of "*travesti*" was driven by the scandals unleashed in September of 2009 and 2010, respectively linking a well-known reality TV star and members of the official Mexican soccer team to sexual encounters with *travestis*. To be sure, there is much overlap between *travesti* as role and *travesti* as scandal: *travesti* as role typically draws from *travesti* as scandal in order to make *travesti* a subject of

⁴²⁹ Alzate, "La masculinidad desde el escenario," 14.

⁴³⁰ For examples, see "Armando Manzanero promete impulsar a unos homosexuales," *Avance* (Mexico City) July 26, 1978; "Los travestistas ladrones de personalidad," *Avance* (Mexico City), Sept. 9, 1978; "En el teatro no hay hombres ni mujeres," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), May 13, 1983.

interest, and *travesti* as scandal is no doubt fueled by the representational follies of *travesti* as role.

Scandal, "[a] two-edged sword," writes Ben Sifuentes-Jáuregui, "implicates and tears apart the reputation and status of a subject or subjects, and it also threatens the moral code of the communal space where the event takes place."⁴³¹ I suggest that at the same time and particularly in the case of scandal involving *travesti*, the threat suggested by scandal allows for the community to shore up its borders by emphasizing that that which does not belong in/to the community has been successfully exposed and ousted. "Scandal/ous", as a performative utterance (i.e. "That's scandalous!"), simultaneously names and produces that which cannot be incorporated by the imagined community but which resides within it. As such, *travesti* has been historically produced through scandal as an abject threat both within and in need of expelling. *Travesti* as scandal involves proximity to that which is threatened and a distance enacted to remove the perceived threat. In what follows, I suggest that *travesti* has been historically produced as scandal both averted and always already impending within the public imaginary.

As suggested by Thompson, in order for narratives surrounding an event to constitute the cultural genre of scandal they must meet, at a minimum, the following five criteria: 1) the event must involve a "transgression of certain values, norms or moral codes," 2), it must contain an element of secrecy, 3) there must be disapproval of the actions that brought about the event, 4) public denouncement of the actions must accompany the disapproval, and 5) the actions must damage the reputation of the

⁴³¹ Ben Sifuentes-Jáuregui, *Transvestism, Masculinity and Latin American Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 18.

individual(s) involved.⁴³² Although Schudson, speaking to the context of sex scandals, adds the element of sexual misbehavior to this list, he nonetheless nuances the addition by claiming that "the scandalous act rarely involves anything exotic," and that "of all the elements of a sex scandal, the scandalous act itself may be the least important."⁴³³

Echoing Schudson, Gamson argues that "sex scandal stories, far from being lessons about individual sexual transgression, morph into *institutional morality tales*."⁴³⁴ By all measures, it is clear that *El Baile de los 41* constituted a mass-produced sex scandal. Indeed, and although male-assigned technologies of feminization had been (unevenly) read as eliciting scandal since colonial times⁴³⁵, given the unprecedented attention it was granted (which emphasized the presence of male-assigned technologies of feminization), *El Baile* can be considered Mexico's first mass-produced *travesti* sex scandal.

Speaking to the context of Brazilian *travesti* sex workers, Kulick and Klein contend that micro-political "travesti scandals raise a specter of ontological similarity between the travesti and her client."⁴³⁶ The authors suggest that the effectiveness of (the threat of) scandal, conceptualized as abjection cast outward in order to ensnare a

⁴³² John B. Thompson, *Political Scandal: Power and Visibility in the Media Age*, (Oxford: Polity Press, 2000), 13-14.

⁴³³ Michael Schudson, "Sex Scandals," in *Our National Passion: 200 Years of Sex in America*, eds. Sally Banes, Sheldon Frank, and Tom Horwitz, (Chicago: Follett Publishing, 1976), 51.

⁴³⁴ Joshua Gamson, "Normal Sins: Sex Scandal Narratives as Institutional Morality Tales," *Social Problems* 48, no. 2 (2001), 188.

⁴³⁵ Zeb Tortorici, "Contra Natura: Sin, Crime, and 'Unnatural' Sexuality in Colonial Mexico, 1530-1821," (doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2010), 141-142.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, 320.

particular client in order to obtain more money than initially agreed upon, rests on the "misrecognition" of *travesti*. In other words, the authors argue that "if travesti identity remains fuzzy, it becomes possible to suggest that the identity (or at least key dimensions of it) is not specific to travestis but is instead shared by others who do not self-identify as travestis."⁴³⁷ I contend that a similar definitional ambiguity (and ability to extend abjection) undergirds mass-produced *travesti* scandals in Mexico.

Importantly, mass-produced *travesti* scandals in Mexico have historically involved two primary iterations: the first of these is the *travesti* sex scandal and the second is what we might term the *travesti* gender scandal. *Travesti* gender scandals center on the claim that a feminized, female-passing person (often but not always female-assigned) is a *travesti*. This has been the case, for instance, with claims made about singers Donna Summer⁴³⁸ and Amanda Lear⁴³⁹, about actress Carrie Fisher⁴⁴⁰, about Miss France, Elodie Gossuin⁴⁴¹, and about Denisse, a Mexican reality TV star⁴⁴², to name just a few. Evidence suggests that *travesti* gender scandals (as well as *travesti* sex scandals) long precede the emergence of *travesti* as a named figure. For instance, in 1883, *La*

⁴³⁷ Don Kulick and Charles Klein, "Scandalous Acts: The Politics of Shame Among Brazilian *Travesti* Prostitutes," in *Gay Shame*, eds. David M. Halperin and Valerie Traub, 312-338, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 319.

⁴³⁸ "Dudaron de su feminidad, que es erótica y sensual," *Impacto* (Mexico City), June 15, 1977.

⁴³⁹ "Cautivó la cantante de sexo incierto," *Avance* (Mexico City), June 30, 1979.

⁴⁴⁰ "Quisieron afectar a la Princesa Lea con rumores de que era hombre," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Mar. 22, 1989.

⁴⁴¹ "Causan risa a Miss Francia rumores de que es hombre," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Apr. 27, 2001.

⁴⁴² "Invaden Big Brother vientos de discordia," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Mar. 21, 2002.

Patria entertained its readers with the story of a young female-assigned person who was misrecognized by a police officer as a "man dressed as a woman" and jailed for this misrecognition.⁴⁴³ The story was also printed by *El Tiempo* and *El Monitor Republicano*, an attention that is arguably indicative of the interest piqued by early *travesti* gender scandals.⁴⁴⁴

Travesti sex scandals, on the other hand, involve, at their most basic level, a sexualized proximity between *travesti* and an otherwise masculinized male-assigned public figure. Within early *travesti* sex scandals, the public figures were often well-known (i.e. elite) members of civil society, as in the case of *El Baile de los 41* and a host of other raided events of a similar nature. Within contemporary *travesti* sex scandals, the public figure typically placed in proximity to *travesti* is a virilized celebrity (such as an athlete or a model/actor). Importantly, the presence of *travesti* is itself often sufficient to suggest sexualized proximity. This is the case not only with *El Baile de los 41* (in which male-assigned technologies of feminization and homosociality came to stand in for sexual depravity) but also, for instance, with the 2010 *travesti* sex scandal involving the national soccer team, a scandal that was initially launched on the sole basis of a leaked photograph in which a person read as a *travesti* appeared in proximity to two soccer players.

To be sure, some *travesti* scandals involve a combination of both sex and gender scandals, as did the case of Brazilian model Roberta Close in the 1980's, which both "outed" Close as a *travesti* and placed her in sexualized proximity to the homosexualized

⁴⁴³ "Caso original," *La Patria* (Mexico City), July 31, 1883.

⁴⁴⁴ "Cuidado con las equivocaciones!" *El Tiempo*, July 31, 1883.

masses. "Brunette by the name of Luiz causes sensation," read the sensationalist headline in *El Porvenir*.⁴⁴⁵ "The feminine image in greatest demand by Brazilian men is a.. man!" taunted *El Nacional*.⁴⁴⁶

"We are not surprised by this catharsis," wrote *El Correo Español* regarding the press' interest in reporting on the aftermath of *El Baile de los 41*, "given the lack of entertaining issues and elements, most newspapers break the Mexican monotony by competing for scandal."⁴⁴⁷ That the aftermath of the raid on what had, until three in the morning, been a private party on *Calle de la Paz* captured the attention of newspapers for upwards of a month, however, is indicative not of a lull in entertainment but of the profitability of (sex) scandals.⁴⁴⁸ Interestingly, the scandalizing narratives published in the aftermath of *El Baile de los 41* share several components with contemporary sex scandals involving *travesti* (though one could argue, as this section certainly does, that *travesti* always already signals scandal insofar as scandal has come to be sutured to its ontology). Among these shared elements are 1) the hypersexualization of *travesti* 2) proximity to and distance from homosexualization, and 3) the trope of the deceptive *travesti*.

4.5.1. *The Hypersexualization of Travesti*

⁴⁴⁵ "Causa sensación morena de nombre Luiz" *El Porvenir* (Monterrey), June 13, 1984.

⁴⁴⁶ "La imagen femenina más solicitada por los brasileños, es un ¡hombre!" *El Nacional* (Mexico City), July 19, 1984.

⁴⁴⁷ "Los estetas," *El Correo Español* (Mexico City), Nov. 27, 1901. "No nos sorprende este desahogo. A falta de asuntos y de elementos de amenidad, la mayor parte de estos periódicos rompen la monotonía mejicana rivalizando en el escándalo."

⁴⁴⁸ Justin Dean Bengry, "The Pink Pound: Commerce and Homosexuality in Britain, 1900-1967," (doctoral dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2010), 110.

More often than not, *travesti* sex scandals are built on a sex act that did not come to pass. Indeed, and perhaps paradoxically, one of the most glaring differences between *travesti* and non-*travesti* sex scandals within contemporary mainstream news sources is sex: the sex act is usually unambiguously present in the latter and heavily contested, if not absent, in the former. Indeed, and perhaps contradictorily, the sex act is often present in *travesti* sex scandals reported by mainstream news sources through its absence: the presence of *travesti* always already suggests the promise of sex, regardless of whether the/a sex act itself is confirmed. To be sure, the *nota roja*, or scandal press, is significantly more forthcoming than non-sensationalist news sources in terms of making explicit the connection between *travesti* and sex. Mainstream news sources, however, often rely on the metonymic slide between sex work and *travesti* in order to put the 'sex' in the *travesti* 'sex scandal'. The elision by mainstream news sources of the sex act that gives way to the sex scandal is consistent with what scholars of scandal have observed: news sources that imagine themselves to be non-sensationalist tend to focus on the institutional morality tale told by sex scandals rather than on the sex act itself. According to Gamson, this is because "the institutional frame solves quite a few problems for mainstream media organizations -especially their simultaneous need for both sensationalism and legitimacy- and serves reporters' interests in getting their story prominent placement as 'hard' rather than 'soft' news."⁴⁴⁹

Indeed, in the very sexless sex scandal of *El Baile de los 41*, homoeroticism is quite forcefully suggested solely on the basis of the presence of male-assigned

⁴⁴⁹ Gamson, "Normal Sins," 198.

technologies of feminization and the homosociality of male-assigned people dancing together. From this homosocial and feminized space, a number of perversities are assumed, among them pederasty, transactional sex, and homoeroticism. Indeed, *La Voz de México* makes precisely such leaps while simultaneously decentering the sex deduced from the homosociality and the feminizations of *El Baile*, by suggesting that these behaviors are indicative of more significant social decay brought on by class-privileged liberalism (and going so far as to stake the claim that although the punishment may have been illegal "the illegality has been expressly approved by society, who finds the punishment 'soft' in relationship to the crime that originated it").⁴⁵⁰ Similarly, *El País* rails against the depravities signaled by *El Baile de los 41*, both taking these depravities as its starting point and downplaying them by highlighting, instead, the liberalism-turned-libertinage that allowed them to emerge in the first place.⁴⁵¹

The pattern of "respectable" news sources decentering the sex act that gives rise to a sex scandal (by centering instead on institutional morality tales) while simultaneously taking the sex act as their starting point is a pattern that holds in contemporary *travesti* sex scandals. This is the case, for instance, with the 2010 scandal linking the national soccer team to "fourteen sex workers and... a *travesti*."⁴⁵² Despite its participation in propagating the scandal, *El Universal* chastised those who focused on "evidencing Carlos

⁴⁵⁰ "Los sucesos de actualidad," *La Voz de México* (Mexico City), Nov. 24, 1901. "Podrá ser ilegal, pero esa ilegalidad ha sido expresamente aprobada por la sociedad, que aún encuentra suave la pena en relación con el delito que la origina."

⁴⁵¹ "El baile nefando," *El País* (Mexico City), Nov. 22, 1901.

⁴⁵² "Reventón hace eco," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Sept. 20, 2010.

Salcido's sexual preferences" rather than "criticizing the national selection players' lack of discipline."⁴⁵³

Importantly, however, the sex act in *travesti* sex scandals is typically not only brushed aside by the institutional morality tale but is often altogether nonexistent. Indeed, whereas the sex in non-*travesti* sex scandals typically involve a sex that was consummated (and which is seen to exist, therefore, in an unchangeable past), within Mexican discussions of *travesti* sex scandals, the sex most often involves a sort of conditional and foiled future subjunctive: sex didn't happen but it could/would/might have. The narrative of the virile sexual agent *almost* having been being duped by the deceptive *travesti*, a common trope within *travesti* sex scandals, allows for enough proximity to homoeroticism and perversity to constitute playfully homophobic fodder, and sufficient distance to prevent the hero's permanent loss of virility.

Within contemporary *travesti* sex scandals, the sexlessness of *travesti* sex scandals is evident in Mexican mainstream media accounts of the mid-2008 scandal involving Brazilian soccer player Ronaldo. Although Brazilian media appear to have been convinced that Ronaldo engaged in sex with three *travesti* sex workers⁴⁵⁴, mainstream Mexican media portrayed the sex scandal as defined by sexlessness. Indeed, according to mainstream Mexican news sources, Ronaldo's *travesti* sex scandal never

⁴⁵³ "Las burlas homófobas se desatan en Internet," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Oct. 2, 2010.

⁴⁵⁴ Don Kulick, "Soccer, Sex and Scandal in Brazil," *Anthropology Now* 1, no. 3 (2009), 36. According to Kulick, "[a] piquant detail about the evening that occupied the Brazilian public at some length was the fact that no matter what activities occurred in the motel room, it seems indisputable that Ronaldo remained there with at least two of the travestis for a total of between 3 to 5 hours."

actually included sex, as the promise of it was (according to Ronaldo) foiled once the soccer player realized that the three women he had hired were, in fact, *travestis*.⁴⁵⁵ According to Andreia, one of the *travestis* involved in the scandal, the sex was foiled because the soccer player was irritated at her inability to procure drugs for him and refused to pay her for her services.⁴⁵⁶ Whatever the case, and despite unanimous confirmation within Mexican mainstream media regarding the absence of sex, the event was nonetheless billed as a sex scandal by virtue of Ronaldo's proximity to *travesti* sex workers. Ronaldo's defense, not unlike Salcido's two years later, hinged on the claim that he did not know that the sex workers he had hired were *travestis* and that he distanced himself from them the moment he was privy to this information.

4.5.2. Proximity to and Distance from Homosexualization

In mid-2008, famed Brazilian soccer player, Ronaldo, ended up in a police station with three *travesti* sex workers, one of whom, he claimed, was attempting to extort him. Andreia, billed in Mexico as Ronaldo's extortioner, claimed that the soccer player refused to pay for her services after she had returned empty-handed from a trip to a favela made in order to procure drugs requested by Ronaldo.⁴⁵⁷ Ronaldo, instead, claimed that he did not know that the sex workers he had picked up were *travestis* and insisted that he had decided to cut short the evening after becoming aware of this fact (and after having paid

⁴⁵⁵ For examples, see "Queda frustrada una noche de sexo de Ronaldo con travestis," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Apr. 28, 2008; "Se mete Ronaldo en lío de 'faldas'" *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Apr. 28, 2008; "Travestis eximen a Ronaldo: 'no tuvimos relaciones ni consumimos drogas', afirman," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), May 6, 2008.

⁴⁵⁶ "Se mete Ronaldo en lío de 'faldas'" *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Apr. 28, 2008.

⁴⁵⁷ "Se mete Ronaldo en lío de 'faldas'" *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Apr. 28, 2008.

them their initially agreed-upon fee).⁴⁵⁸ The soccer player claimed that Andreia had demanded an exorbitant sum in order to keep quiet about his "mistake."

Kulick contends that although misrecognition, as claimed by Ronaldo, was improbable and that although Ronaldo's end of the story was implausible, his forceful denial of having engaged in sexual contact with *travestis* (and the skepticism with which this denial was met) was likely the symptom of "an old sexual system being eclipsed by a new one [in which] sexual practice is no longer separable from sexual identity."⁴⁵⁹ A fear of homosexualization through proximity to *travesti* is, according to Kulick, why "the time-tested response to [people wondering why a heterosexual man would seek out sex with a *travesti*] is for men to deny that they had any idea that the person they picked up for sex was a *travesti*."⁴⁶⁰

Ronaldo's *travesti* sex scandal doubtlessly circulated differently in Mexico than it did in Brazil (particularly in terms of mainstream media tilting in Ronaldo's favor, a point to which I will return). However, and despite the mainstream media's absolution of Ronaldo, his proximity to Andreia opened him up to homophobic ridicule, despite his

⁴⁵⁸ For examples, see "Queda frustrada una noche de sexo de Ronaldo con travestis," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Apr. 28, 2008; "Se mete Ronaldo en lío de 'faldas'" *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Apr. 28, 2008; "Travestis eximen a Ronaldo: 'no tuvimos relaciones ni consumimos drogas', afirman," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), May 6, 2008.

⁴⁵⁹ Don Kulick, "Soccer, Sex and Scandal in Brazil," *Anthropology Now* 1, no. 3 (2009), 40.

⁴⁶⁰ Don Kulick, "Soccer, Sex and Scandal in Brazil," *Anthropology Now* 1, no. 3 (2009), 39. Indeed, according to Kulick, and considering that clients of *travesti* sex workers overwhelmingly consider themselves to be heterosexual, the most effective denial of sex with *travestis* would've been for Ronaldo to declare himself gay.

claims to being "completely heterosexual."⁴⁶¹ The strength of the association was such, in fact, that when Andreia died a year after the scandal, she remained linked to Ronaldo as not only a *travesti*, but as "his" *travesti*.⁴⁶²

The claim not to have known of a proximal other's *travestismo* as well as the claim to have responded to knowledge of *travestismo* by enacting distance (a distance *from* homosexuality) is similarly evident in the 2008 and 2010 *travesti* sex scandals respectively involving reality television star Poncho de Nigris, and Mexican soccer player Carlos Salcido.⁴⁶³ In response to scandals linking both of these celebrities to (different) feminized people read as *travestis*, both not only claimed that they did not know of the persons' sex-gender configuration but that any photographic evidence suggesting proximity was the result, not of any substantial proximity, but of the transient proximities of stardom (i.e. that both women had approached them for pictures). "You take thousands of pictures. It's logical that when you're at a gathering, at a party, you can't refuse pictures to people requesting them. You do it on the street, anywhere, and you never imagine that the person is of another sex, for lack of a better word," explained Salcido, regarding the

⁴⁶¹ "Travestis eximen a Ronaldo: 'no tuvimos relaciones ni consumimos drogas,' afirman," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), May 6, 2008.

⁴⁶² "Fallece travesti 'de' Ronaldo," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Jul. 10, 2009.

⁴⁶³ "Poncho de Nigris despide a Yanixán por *gay*," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Jul. 9, 2009. Interestingly and perhaps ironically, de Nigris' *travesti* sex scandal happened on the heels of a *travesti* sex scandal involving Yanixán, a fellow member of *Piel Caliente*, an erotic dance troupe. De Nigris promptly fired Yanixán, claiming that the latter had "left *Piel Caliente* because he's a *maricón* [faggot] and because he goes around kissing *travestis*."

travesti sex scandal that began with a picture of him and model Yamile.⁴⁶⁴ Similarly, de Nigris claimed not to know Denisse, and assured the press that any photographic evidence to the contrary was doubtlessly the result of Denisse being "a fan with whom he took a picture at some point in his life."⁴⁶⁵ Ultimately, and not unlike Ronaldo, neither de Nigris nor Salcido managed to fully wrest themselves from homophobic innuendo but managed to suffuse their respective scandals with sufficient doubt so as to emerge from them able to be rehabilitated.

Although homosexuality was not yet available as a conceptual category at the time of *El Baile de los 41*, one can speak of a proto-homosexualization by proximity not entirely unlike that produced in contemporary *travesti* sex scandals. Indicative of this is a well-known anecdote that tells the story of a thief enrolled in the same Battalion as twelve attendees of *El Baile de los 41*. During roll call, the story goes, the thief felt compelled to yell out "I'm here, Captain, but I want the record to state that I've been consigned because I'm a thief, not one of those," eliciting the laughter of those present.⁴⁶⁶ Another instance of the fear of misrecognition-through-proximity in the aftermath of *El Baile de los 41* is evidenced in *El Popular's* suggestion that "among those apprehended by the police at the ball on the fourth street of La Paz, there were some individuals who

⁴⁶⁴ "No hubo prostitutas," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Sept. 14, 2010. "Uno se ha tomado miles de fotos. Lógico que cuando estás en un convivio, en una fiesta, te tomas fotos y no te puedes negar. Lo haces en la calle, lo haces en cualquier lado y nunca te imaginas que la persona es de otro sexo, por no decir otra cosa."

⁴⁶⁵ "Acusan a De Nigris de haber matado a transexual," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Oct. 12, 2009.

⁴⁶⁶ "El baile de solo hombres," *El País* (Mexico City), Nov. 23, 1901. "Presente mi Capitán, pero hago constar que yo voy consignado por ratero, pero no soy de esos."

were the victims of a true prank since, in the early hours of Sunday, invitations to the ball at the aforementioned house, signed by a Mrs. Vinchi, were handed out in several *cantinas*. As is natural, there were some who assumed that this ball was like any other and who arrived only to be met with a prank they must deeply regret."⁴⁶⁷ *El Popular* assures its readers that their 'severe' comments are not meant for those fooled into attending *El Baile* but rather for those who "having lost all shame, have descended to the point of dressing as women and dancing with other shameless men [...]"⁴⁶⁸ Those who do not know that they are about to engage in "homoeroticism" and, for whatever reason, stop short of doing so are those whose virile reputations are able to be rehabilitated, like Ronaldo's, like de Nigris', like Salcido's. Those who know and nonetheless (would) do are irredeemably shameless.

4.5.3. *The Deceptive Travesti*

On September 7, 2010, the national soccer team held a post-game party at a hotel in Monterrey. Days later, newspapers broke the story that present at the party had been "14 prostitutes and... a *travesti* ." ⁴⁶⁹ At the time that the scandal erupted, the only

⁴⁶⁷ "El baile de los cuarenta y uno," *El Popular* (Mexico City), Nov. 24, 1901. "[...] entre muchos de los aprehendidos por la policía en el baile de la 4a calle de la Paz, había algunos individuos que fueron víctimas de un verdadero chasco pues que, en las primeras horas de la noche del domingo se repartieron en varias cantinas unas tarjetas firmadas por una Sra. Vinchi en las que se invitaba á un baile en la casa citada esa misma noche. Como era natural, hubo algunos que supusieron se trataba de uno de tantos bailes que se dan en ciertas casas y acudieron para llevarse el gran chasco que ahora deben lamentar hondamente."

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.* "[...] los comentarios severos que hacemos y hemos hecho van dirigidos á aquellos que perdiendo toda vergüenza han descendido hasta vestirse de mujer y bailar con otros tantos desvergonzados [...]"

⁴⁶⁹ "Reventón hace eco," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Sept. 20, 2010.

evidence of sexual activity was the fact that a person read as a *travesti*⁴⁷⁰ shared space with several soccer players in a leaked photograph.⁴⁷¹ Although model, Yamile, would go on to claim that she shared a few kisses with, and performed oral sex on soccer player Carlos Salcido, the sex scandal exploded days before her revelation and prior to any allegations of sex other than those suggested by the mere photographic presence of a *travesti*. So tainting was Yamile's presence that Salcido explained away pictures of himself with the model by claiming that they were taken elsewhere and, particularly, with no knowledge of Yamile's sex/gender configuration.

The hypersexualization of Yamile, necessary to insinuate sexual contact even when none had been claimed, was at least partially the result of the metonymic slide that exists between *travesti* and sex work: within the public imaginary, it was assumed that Yamile was a sex worker because she was "outed" as a *travesti*. Importantly, the fourteen (arguably cisgender) sex workers who were initially part of the scandal quickly receded from public discourse, which instead highlighted the presence of Yamile at the party (and her relationship to Salcido). Yamile's claims to have performed oral sex on Salcido (claims denied by the soccer player) did not surface until two weeks after the event had taken place and seem to have had little impact on what had already been deemed a sex scandal. By the time that Yamile's sexual allegations surfaced in an interview with

⁴⁷⁰ According to an interview by *TVNotas*, Yamile identifies as a woman, not as a *travesti*.

⁴⁷¹ For examples, see José María Garrido, "No hubo prostitutas," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Sept. 14, 2010; "Habla Salcido sobre la fiesta del Tri," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Sept. 14, 2010; "Hacen eco por fiesta en Inglaterra," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Sept. 17, 2010; "En Inglaterra, 'descubren' fiestón," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Sept. 18, 2010; "Reviven en Inglaterra festejo de los seleccionados en Monterrey," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), Sept. 18, 2010; "Reventón hace eco," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Sept. 20, 2010.

TVNotas, the press, mainstream and otherwise, had already established that a sex scandal had taken place. Importantly, and even though she contradicted Salcido's claims that there existed no contact between the soccer player and herself, Yamile nonetheless endorsed Salcido's assertions that he did not know about the model's "situation."⁴⁷²

"I want to emphasize that he never --never ever-- knew about my situation. It never crossed his mind that I am this type of girl," swore Yamile after the scandal erupted.⁴⁷³ As mentioned in the previous chapter, deception is an important mechanism through which criminality comes to be sutured to *travesti*: many a statute criminalizing *travesti* has been written and enforced under the pretense that cisgender, heterosexualized men (particularly vulnerable men) are at risk of being seduced by the artificial-but-nonetheless-believable feminine wiles of *travesti*. Indeed, during the aftermath of *El Baile de los 41*, the attendees were simultaneously ridiculed for not passing as women (as is the case with most caricatures of the event, which depict attendees as mustached men dressed as women) and feared because they did (and did so with premeditation). Indeed, for instance, *La Patria* noted that the person in charge of intake had serious difficulties

⁴⁷² "Entrevista al travesti que sedujo a Carlos Salcido," *TVNotas*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=04_4fd9c6Fw

⁴⁷³ "Segunda parte de entrevista al travesti que sedujo a Carlos Salcido," *TVNotas*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJ0-Umq5LoM>. "Quiero recalcar que en ningún momento - en ningún, ningún momento- él supo de mi situación. A él ni por aquí le pasa -pasaba- que yo fuera una niña así."

doing so since the attendees were so flawlessly feminized.⁴⁷⁴ Such was their commitment to deception, that "most of them changed their names upon being apprehended."⁴⁷⁵

Similarly, the unraveling of the deception engaged by male-assigned feminizations was highlighted in narratives recounting the pleasures of unmasking those they perceived as excessively feminized: "with tears in their eyes, they were stripped of all their clothes; some begged to be allowed to at least keep their fine silk undergarments, to which the Captain was opposed, since he reminded them that, there, they were all equal to everyone else. They weren't even allowed to keep their socks and they all began to cry when they tried on the shoes that would replace the pretty patent leather ladies' shoes."⁴⁷⁶ There appears to be a cathartic pleasure in revealing the 'truth' underlying a perceived deception, just in time to preempt a threat. I return to the sadistic pleasure of undressing the *travesti* in the following chapter.

Although contemporary *travesti* sex scandals no longer tend to explicitly criminalize deception, they nonetheless overwhelmingly reproduce the stereotype of the deceptive *travesti* in an effort to safeguard a threatened (heterosexualized) virility:

Yamile failed to inform Salcido about her "situation," and Ronaldo was placed in

⁴⁷⁴ "Baile clandestino," *La Patria* (Mexico City), Nov. 20, 1901. "El encargado de registrar é identificar á los tales, tuvo sérias dificultades para cumplir con su encargo, porque, *ellos*, debajo de las faldillas, no llevaban ni un calzoncillo sucio."

⁴⁷⁵ "El baile escandaloso," *El Imparcial* (Mexico City), Nov. 23, 1901. "La mayor parte, cambiaron de nombre al ser aprehendidos [...]"

⁴⁷⁶ "El baile de solo hombres," *El País* (Mexico City), Nov. 23, 1901. "Con las lágrimas en los ojos, fueron despojándose de todas sus prendas, suplicando algunos, que se les dejase siquiera sus ropas interiores de fina seda, a lo cual se opuso el Capitán, pues les dijo que allí eran iguales a los demás. Ni los calcetines les permitió y todos comenzaron a llorar cuando se calzaron los zapatos que iban a reemplazar a los monos choclos de glase pasia y charol."

proximity to *travesti* through misrecognition. Although both men are able to rescue a virility threatened by the stealthy homoeroticism of the deceptive *travesti*, the *travesti* is reproduced, through scandal, as preying on vulnerable masculinities (in these cases, vulnerabilized in part by blameless heteroaspirational desire).

4.6. Conclusion: From Spectacle to Political Identity

As suggested throughout this chapter, the spectacularization of *travesti* is significantly more complex than insinuated by assertions that posit the stage as a safe space for *travestismo*. Indeed, many of the violences perpetrated against *travesti* are perpetuated and legitimated by a spectacularization suffused with stereotypes and proximity to abjection. The workings of the four mechanisms of spectacularization explored throughout the chapter -- *travesti* as method, role, show, and scandal-- suggest that the "acceptance" of public representations of *travestismo* is dependent on whether or not it buttresses the current sex/gender order: *travesti* as method is reliant on the successful underlying performance of cis- and heteronormativity; *travesti* as role functions particularly well when *travestismo* is used as gimmick, as a prop for the development of cis- and heteronormativity; *travesti* as show is successful only when catering to and accomodating a heternormative audience; and *travesti* as scandal tends to buttress the limits of acceptable sexual and gendered behavior.

Finally, it is important to note that, while the spectacularization of *travesti* remains an important dimension within public discourse on *travesti*, there seems to be a significant trend emerging regarding the distribution of *travesti* within public discourse in Mexico: as *travesti* is incorporated into LGBTTTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transexual,

transgender, *travesti*, intersex) human rights discourses, the percentage of articles published within the rubric of *espectáculos* decreases (see Figure 1). In *El Universal*, 2010 marked the moment when articles categorizable under the rubric of *espectáculos* was less than 50%; for *El Reforma* this shift came slightly later, in 2012. At the same time, as LGBTTTTI human rights discourses increase, mentions of *travesti* not only decrease in percentage (replaced initially by *transexual* and later by *trangénero*) but also in specificity. In other words, when *travesti* is "picked up" by human rights discourse, it is primarily to give the impression of a unified LGBTTTT (and less often I) front in the service of preponderantly gay and lesbian projects such as same-sex marriage.

5. THE DISPOSABILITY OF *TRAVESTI(S)*

5.1. Introduction

On April 11, 2016, the body of a violently murdered male-assigned person wearing clothes normatively associated with women was found on the side of a freeway in the state of San Luis Potosí.⁴⁷⁷ Not an uncommon occurrence in a country that has, for years, boasted of its position as the country with the second highest rate of homo- and transphobic "hate crimes" (albeit usually accompanied by highly ritualistic public performances of national shame),⁴⁷⁸ -a nation that produces upwards of 56 murdered bodies per day⁴⁷⁹- what was particularly interesting about the aftermath of the brutal murder in San Luis Potosí was the brief consideration (and swift refusal) to categorize it as a femicide. Tellingly, *La Jornada de San Luis* paraphrased the CEEAV's (Executive State Commission for Victim Support) refusal in the following way:

[Gloria Serrato Sánchez from the Executive State Commission for Victim Support] explained that currently [in San Luis Potosí], [the Penal Code] only mentions, as it relates to femicides, that [a femicide] transpires when the victim of the privation of life is a person of the female sex; so, in order to categorize an event as a femicide, it would have to have involved a transgender person but, apparently, in this case it was *just a travesti*. She

⁴⁷⁷ Gabriel Ramos, "Tiran entre el monte a travesti ultimado a golpes," *Pulso* (San Luis Potosí), Apr. 12, 2016.

⁴⁷⁸ For examples, see "México, segundo lugar mundial en crímenes de odio: ONG; la homofobia predomina entre mexicanos: Enadis," *Sin Embargo* (Mexico City), May 17, 2014; Sara Pantoja, "México, segundo lugar mundial en crímenes por homofobia," *Proceso* (Mexico City), May 11, 2015; Emiliano Balerini Casal, "México: el segundo país más homofóbico del mundo," *Etcétera* (Mexico City), May 17, 2016.

⁴⁷⁹ Manuel Ureste, "Violencia en México bate récord en abril: 56 víctimas de asesinato cada 24 horas," *Animal Político* (Mexico City), May 23, 2016.

explained that there are many people who, although they have male genitals, their sexual preferences or even their acquired and performed gendered condition is feminine, so they would be excluded from the protection offered by the figure of femicide, which is why, in this case, one could only aspire to have it categorized as a hate homicide.⁴⁸⁰

Interestingly, San Luis Potosí's Penal Code does not include the hate crime statute that the public official offered as an alternative to categorizing the murder as a femicide. Furthermore, and although the Penal Code was amended some five months after the murder in order to better reflect the Federal Penal Code's definition of femicide, replacing "people of the female sex" with "women" as the victims of juridically legible femicides in the state, there exists no jurisprudence establishing who (and when one) is juridically legible as either a woman or a female person (at any legislative level in the country). Although it might be argued that the amendment served to debiologize femaleness by relying, instead, on (juridically sanctioned) cultural indicators of womanhood (as the argument often goes), it is important to bear in mind that a) San Luis Potosí's Civil Code does not yet offer its citizens the possibility of engaging changes in gender markers and,

⁴⁸⁰ Samuel Estrada, ""No se podría calificar como feminicidio asesinato de travesti", señala CEEAV," *La Jornada San Luis* (San Luis Potosí), Apr. 13, 2016. Emphasis mine. "[Gloria Serrato Sánchez de la Comisión Ejecutiva Estatal de Atención a Víctimas (CEEAV)] [e]xpuso que actualmente [en San Luis Potosí] sólo se menciona que, en el caso de los feminicidios, se configura cuando la privación de la vida fue en contra de una persona del sexo femenino, entonces para que pudiera considerarse en cierto momento como tal, tendría que haber sido una persona transgénero, pero al parecer en este caso *sólo era travesti*. Detalló que hay muchas personas que aunque cuentan con genitales masculinos sus preferencias sexuales o incluso su condición propia de género adquirida y ejercida es femenina, entonces se les estaría excluyendo de la protección que implica la figura del feminicidio, por lo que en este caso sólo se podría aspirar a que se calificara como un homicidio por odio."

as such, the amendment is of little use to woman-identified transpeople, and b) that even if it did, *travestis* do not (necessarily) identify as women.

What I find particularly interesting about the abovementioned quote, however, is that it puts into words the differential distribution of queer grievability (and, concomitantly, killability) operational in Mexico: the death of the person found viciously murdered was somehow less grievable, less legible as an atrocity, insofar as they were "just a *travesti*." Although I argue that death and disposability are important constitutive elements of the figure of *travesti*, I do not believe that *travesti* death is socially valueless. On the contrary: I believe that great value is extracted and accrued from representations of *travesti* death and argue that, while *travesti* lifeworlds may indeed be produced as disposable/fungible through overkill, the production of *travesti* disposability is anything but. Indeed, I argue that *travesti* becomes the killable, the ungrievable, so that the homo- and transnormative may not only demand life, but have that life fostered both by the State and in the public imaginary.

In what follows, I explore the ways in which *travesti* lives and deaths are discursively produced by mainstream news sources in Mexico. I argue that as trans (*transgénero* and *transexual*) lives are increasingly folded into national life, a new form of death emerges, trans death, grievable insofar as their lives are produced as political existences. *Travesti* death, however, continues to depend on and reinforce the figure of *travesti* as existing in the margins of the body public, as a figure unincorporable by the national imaginary. By exploring mainstream accounts of *travesti*, *transgénero* and *transexual* spectacularized death, I seek to gain a better understanding of the deathworlds

accessible to each and how these deathworlds are produced, both in life and through death.

5.2. *Travesti* (Bare) Life

As suggested in Chapter 3 and explored in greater depth in the chapter that follows, an important difference between the figures of *travesti* and *transexual/transgénero*, produced by public discourse, is that the latter are imagined as (would-be) rights-bearing political subjects whereas the former is produced as existing beyond the juridical pale. Although *travesti* lifeworlds are often sites of great social, affective, cultural, intellectual, and political wealth, the figure of the *travesti* is nonetheless produced in the public imaginary as devoid of the trappings of neoliberal normalcy required to make a life seem worth living and a death worth mourning. In what follows, I explore the ways in which *travesti*, *transexual*, and *transgénero* lifeworlds are constructed within public discourse in order to provide a better understanding of how the dismissal of *travesti* death, suggested by the abovementioned phrase "just a *travesti*," comes to be.

Although *transexual* and *transgénero* share different genealogies within the public imaginary in Mexico, both figures ultimately find themselves as would-be subjects worthy of state recognition by the twenty-first century. In the case of *transexual*, its medicalized origins allow the figure a certain scientific legitimacy associated with the biologization of transness. In other words, the pathologization of *transexual*, with its ties to not only the neurological but the physiological, allow it access from relatively early on to the language of institutional belonging through scientific validation. These medico-

juridical discourses, which both position and understand the *transsexual* in relationship to legible (binary) genderings (and which further naturalize the very idea of binary sex/gender), produce the *transsexual* as a legitimately gendered being. This legitimacy finds a particularly strong grip within the public imaginary in the early years of the twenty-first century but its foundations are evident since at least the mid-twentieth century. For instance, an article published by *Sucesos para todos* in 1945, titled "Can Science Change the Sexes?," assures its readers that the "sexual transformations" that have so captured the public's imagination have their origin in -and, indeed, are "determined" by- "internal gland secretions."⁴⁸¹ Although the article refers to "the unique enthusiasm for one sex to dress as the other" as "*eonismo*," following Havelock Ellis, and "*transvertidos*," following Hirschfeld, the discourse of biologization of certain sexual perversions (a theory primarily popularized in the Spanish-speaking world by Marañón) would come to stick to and legitimate, in the late twentieth-century, the *transsexual* body and not the *travesti*. Indeed, although the *transsexual* is quite consistently paired with the *travesti* in the last three decades of the twentieth century, it nonetheless breaks away from this association in the early twenty-first century, becoming associated with -and adding legitimacy to- the *transgénero*.

Transgénero, on the other hand, makes its first appearances in the public imaginary in the early twenty-first century, always already as a political entity, as a (would-be) subject of rights. Importantly, the *transgénero* somewhat manages to skirt the pathologization associated with the *transsexual* while simultaneously being

⁴⁸¹ Bautista Morelli, "¿Puede la ciencia cambiar los sexos?" *Sucesos para todos* (Mexico City), Dec. 4, 1945.

undergirded/legitimated by the very biologizing discourses of sex and gender in which *transsexual* was forged decades earlier. To be sure, the figure of the *transgénero* initially emerges as a nonspecific catch-all for gender non-normativity during the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) movement of the first decade of the twenty-first-century, in which the term is evoked to refer to an imagined political community made up by sexual and gendered nonnormativities, usually in the interest of furthering decidedly non-trans (i.e. gay and lesbian) political projects, such as same-sex marriage and adoption.

Transgénero, however, experiences not only "booms" late in the first decade of the twenty-first century as well as in the second decade of the twenty-first century (see Figure 3), following a paradigmatic shift in organizing that resulted in the acronym LGBTTTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, *transgénero*, *transsexual*, *travesti*, intersex) starting in 2009 (see Figure 4), but also achieved greater specificity through the dissemination of trans-specific political projects, such as the legalization of name and gender changes in Mexico City. The nominal presence and purposeful nonspecificity of *transgénero*, which served as a prop for gay and lesbian political development in the early years of the twenty-first-century, it seems, was transferred to the now-named *travesti* in the trans (TTT) movement of the second decade of the twenty-first century.

Figure 3

Travesti, Transexual and Transgénero in El Universal

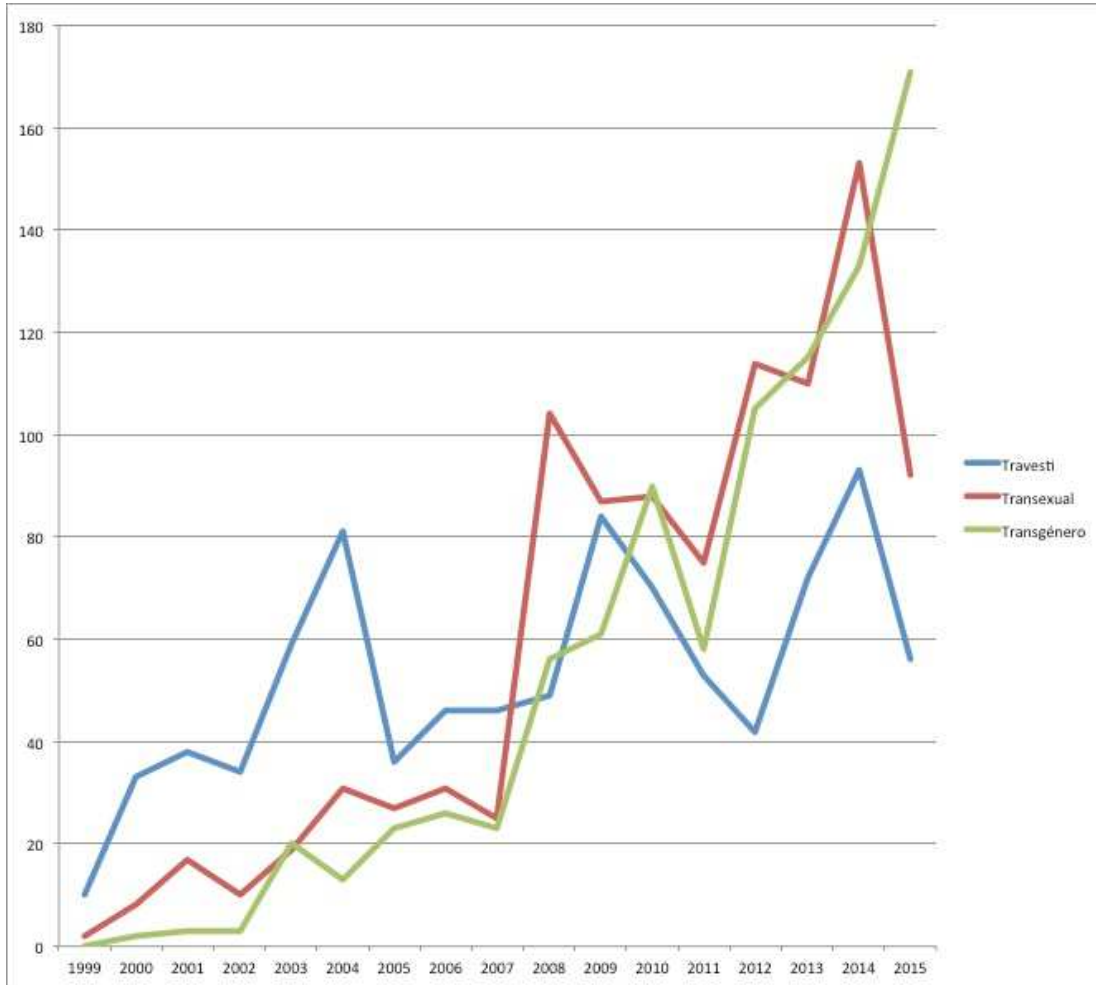
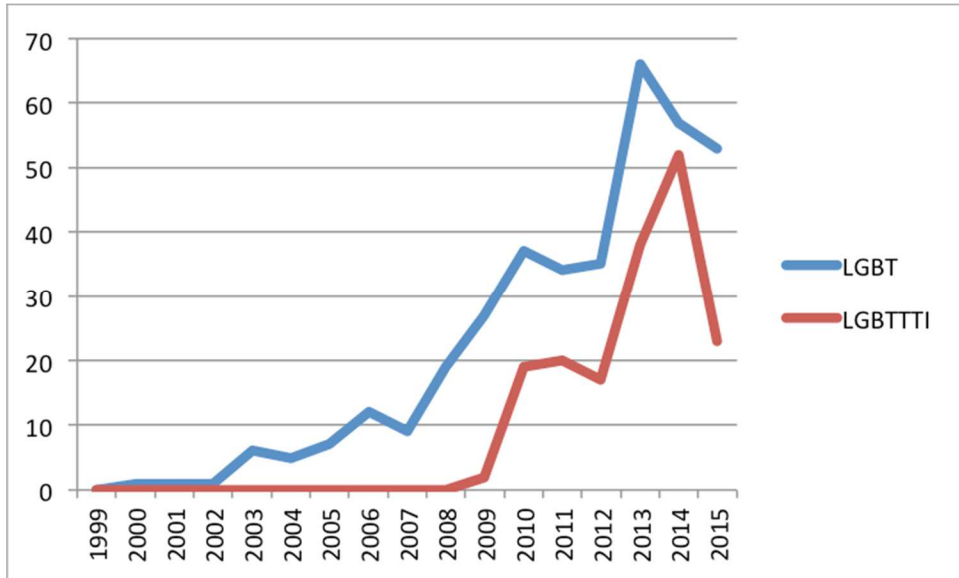


Figure 4

LGBT and LGBTTTI in *El Universal*



The differences in representation are gargantuan: *transgénero* is most often invoked within the internationalist context of civil, political, and human rights, legitimated by the medicalization of *transexual*, though the latter continues to maintain a tenuous relationship with *travesti* primarily via scandal. In life (and, relatively recently, after death), *transgénero/transexual* is produced as being progressively folded into national life: there exist *transgénero/transexual* politicians⁴⁸², activists⁴⁸³, beauty queens and models⁴⁸⁴, artists⁴⁸⁵, teachers⁴⁸⁶, students⁴⁸⁷, athletes⁴⁸⁸, etc. Importantly, these narrated

⁴⁸² For examples, see Alejandro Almazón and Jonathán Torres, "México Posible, el partido boutique," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Jun. 27, 2003; Juan Carlos Cortés S., "Ni populismo ni oportunismo: Amaranta, primer candidato transgénero," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Apr. 29, 2003; Rocío Sánchez, "Histórico que transexual ocupe cargo en el gobierno," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), Feb. 8, 2006; Octavio Vélez, "Transgénero zapoteco busca una diputación," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), Feb. 24, 2009; Emmanuel Rincón, "Abogada transexual aspira a cargo popular en México," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), Jun. 1, 2011; Dinorath Mota López, "Convergencia presenta candidata transgénero," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Jun. 8, 2011; "Atentado contra aspirante transgénero en Hidalgo," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), Jun. 18, 2012; Patricia Briseño, "Encabeza transgénero oficina de diversidad sexual en Oaxaca," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), May 16, 2014; "Transexual llega a la Casa Blanca," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), Jul. 19, 2015; Kenya Ramírez, "Mujer transexual busca jefatura delegacional de la Cuauhtémoc," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), Jan. 11, 2015; "Transexual ocupa por primera vez un cargo gubernamental en Argentina," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), Jan. 26, 2016; "Rubí, la primera regidora transgénero en Guanajuato," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), Mar. 11, 2016; "Primera diputada transgénero juramenta en Congreso Venezolano," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), Jan. 14, 2016;

⁴⁸³ For examples, see Sergio Javier Jiménez, "Se manifiesta pareja transgénero en Los Pinos," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Jul. 29, 2008; "Italiana transexual es detenida durante unas horas por protestar en estadio de Sochi," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), Feb. 17, 2014; Blanca Juárez, "Activistas trans piden seguridad para trabajadoras sexuales," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), Oct. 7, 2016; Josefina Quintero, "Mujeres transexuales exigen alto a la violencia en su contra," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), Oct. 20, 2016.

⁴⁸⁴ For examples, see "Triunfa modelo transgénero en desfile de modas en Río," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Jan. 17, 2009; "La modelo transexual Lea T causa revuelo en pasarela en Sao Paulo," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), Jan. 31, 2011; "Transexual compite en concurso de belleza femenino," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), Jan. 30, 2012; "Transexual podrá concursar en Miss Universo Canadá," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), Apr. 5, 2012;

scenes of inclusion often take place outside of Mexico, particularly in the First World, and, as such, are not necessarily a reflection of the state of *actual* inclusion of Mexican *transexual/transgénero*. However, the celebration with which these scenes are narrated speaks to a discursive inclusion: inclusion abroad is celebrated in anticipation (and, indeed, aspiration) of inclusion at home.

As mentioned in the previous chapters, *travesti*, on the other hand, is invoked most often in the service of establishing/unveiling the existence of a perverse criminal (and criminal-adjacent) underworld saturated with anxious excess, risk, and instability.

"Caroline Cossey, la primera transexual en 'Playboy'," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), Jul. 26, 2015; "Bailarina de ballet árabe cristiana, primera 'Miss Trans' de Israel," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), May 27, 2016.

⁴⁸⁵ For examples, see Carlos Bonfil, "Strella," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), Oct. 18, 2009; "El cineasta Larry Wachowski hace público su cambio de sexo; ahora se llama Lana," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), Sept. 11, 2012; "Premios Emmy nominan a la primera actriz transgénero," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), Jul. 10, 2014; "Cinta sobre cantante de ópera transexual gana el Guerrero de la Prensa," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), Mar. 22, 2015; "Muere Holly Woodlawn, musa transexual de Andy Warhol," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), Dec. 8, 2015; Laverne Cox, la primera 'trans' en el Madame Tussauds," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), Jun. 10, 2015; "Lilly Wachowski aparece tras su cambio de sexo," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), Apr. 3, 2016.

⁴⁸⁶ For examples, see "Maestro transexual causa polémica en Bélgica," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Apr. 13, 2010; "Argentina tiene primera maestra transexual de primaria," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Aug. 28, 2012; Juan G. Partida, "No quieren a docente transexual en Jalisco," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), Jan. 31, 2015; Adriana Luna, "ONG apoya a docente transgénero," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), Jan. 31, 2015;

⁴⁸⁷ For examples, see "Reconocen derecho de menor transexual a usar baño de niñas," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), Jun. 24, 2013; "Alumnos van en falda a escuela en apoyo a amiga transgénero discriminada," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), Sept. 15, 2014; "Mujeres transexuales podrán ingresar a universidad femenina," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), May 3, 2015; Cristina Pérez-Stadelmann, "Niños transexuales luchan por su identidad," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Apr. 29, 2016.

⁴⁸⁸ For examples, see "Debuta transexual chilena," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), Apr. 22, 2009; "La luchadora transexual Fox derriba tabúes," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), May 27, 2013;

Indeed, the only two instances of discussions on *travesti*-specific rights in *El Universal's* twenty-first century archive revolve around the 2002 criminalization, in the state of Baja California, of male-assigned people wearing clothes reserved for women in public spaces⁴⁸⁹ and the 2005 police harassment of *travestis* brought about by the search for the serial killer baptized *El/La Mataviejitas*⁴⁹⁰. That *travesti* lives have historically been produced as inhabiting (and contributing to) unlawful spaces and zones of social abandonment, as I suggest in the preceding chapters, makes *travesti* death not only ungrievable within a public imaginary that fancies itself a bastion of liberal democracy but, rather, a death that comforts, that brings relief to, a body politic threatened by the criminality of *travesti* existence.

5.3. *Travesti* Death

Agnes Torres Hernández was brutally murdered on Saturday, March 10th, 2012.⁴⁹¹ Her maimed body was discovered the following Monday in a ravine in Atlixco, Puebla, tortured to death. Although the circumstances surrounding her death -marked by the violence of overkill so often directed at queers⁴⁹²- were practically indistinguishable from the innumerable transfeminine deaths that preceded it, the memorialization that followed Torres' murder marked a significant discursive shift in trans/*travesti* death.

⁴⁸⁹ For an example see Julieta Martínez González, "Proyectan encarcelar a los travestis en BC," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Oct. 21, 2002.

⁴⁹⁰ "Travestis protestan contra acoso por caso mataviejitas," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Oct. 28, 2005.

⁴⁹¹ Xóchitl Rangel, "PGJ-Puebla indaga homicidio de activista Agnes," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Mar. 12, 2012.

⁴⁹² Eric Stanley, "Near Life, Queer Death: Overkill and Ontological Capture," *Social Text* 107, no. 2 (2011).

Specifically, Torres' death was mourned as an injustice incompatible with life in a liberal democracy. The grievability of her death, unprecedented, was accompanied by a celebration of her life, as a college graduate involved in human rights activism.⁴⁹³ Indeed, Torres' murder was not only *not* offered the journalistic treatment typically afforded *travesti* death but rather was offered treatment resembling the mourning reserved for gay death⁴⁹⁴: grammatical genderings (in this case feminization) were respected, her promissory trajectory was highlighted, and her right to life (a life imagined equal under the law) was emphatically asserted. In a sense, the circulation of the brutality visited upon Torres created a new affective space that might be termed trans death: a form of death made grievable, not despite its association with gender nonconformity but because of the victim's legibility as a rights-bearing subject in pursuit of the good life. Although the emergence of trans death might seem indicative of the public's ability and willingness to grieve gender nonconforming death in general, I would argue that the grievability of trans death is contingent on the sustained ungrievability of *travesti* death. Indeed, I argue that *travesti* death serves as a receptacle for deaths that may/must not be mourned and lives that may/must not be celebrated. *Travesti* death, in this sense, operates as trans death's Other, as its constitutive outside.

⁴⁹³ Xóchitl Rangel, "Asesinan a activista transexual en Puebla," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Mar. 12, 2012.

⁴⁹⁴ For examples of the politicization of gay death, see Patricia Velázquez Yebra, "Dedican semana cultural a víctimas de la homofobia," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Jun. 12, 2001; Alberto González, "Exigen esclarecer crimen homofóbico," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Feb. 10, 2005; Margarita Vega and Erika López, "Ve Ssa en la homofobia un reto de salud pública," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), May 18, 2005; Fernando del Collado, "Violencia contra homosexuales," *El Universal* (Mexico City), May. 17, 2007; Héctor Briseño, "Demandan en Guerrero dar celeridad a pesquisas sobre asesinato de activistas gays," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), May 10, 2011;

In what follows, I argue that just as there exists a differential distribution of the imagined trappings of "the good life" contingent on one's proximity to *travesti*, *transexual* and *transgénero* (and simultaneously determining one's proximity to *travesti*, *transexual*, and *transgénero*), so too are the affective registers of death allocated on the basis of one's gendered legibility. I do not suggest that one's identification as a *travesti*, *transexual* or *transgénero* necessarily impacts the permissible circulation of death narratives but, rather, that the circulation of death narratives (re)makes one a *travesti*, a *transexual* or a *transgénero* (often regardless of identification in life). In other words, I argue that the circulation of death (and of lives after death) aids in the (re)production of the figures of *travesti*, *transexual* and *transgénero*.⁴⁹⁵

The topography of *travesti* death is populated by a number of constitutive elements. Among these are posthumous bare life, deservingness, masculinization, and overkill. Trans death, on the contrary, is marked first and foremost by the presence of a rights-bearing subject: someone who engaged in ways legible through the lens of neoliberalism with the nation-state; someone who mattered sufficiently so as to deserve posthumous mobilizations on behalf of both the State and its body politic. In what follows, I explore both *travesti* and trans death in an effort to better understand the

⁴⁹⁵ "CIDH condena crimen de adolescente gay en México," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Jun. 22, 2012. Indeed, one could argue that the attribute *gay* similarly contributes to the social and political grievability of particular deaths, as is the case with the 2012 murder of a person who was denominated a "gay adolescent" (and *not* a *travesti*, despite the body being found wearing only "women's shoes and a necklace") and, as such, their death was grieved insofar as the person was supposed to be doubly protected by the State, both as an adolescent and as a gay person.

differential distribution of grievability in a State that imagines itself a liberal democracy and, as such, professes allegiance to equality.

5.3.1. *Bare Life in Death*

On November 7, 2016, the newspaper *Excelsior* published an article on trans/*travesti* death. The first half of the article discusses the death of a 50 year-old "man dressed as a woman," identified as a *travesti* in the title.⁴⁹⁶ Little else is mentioned about them, other than the fact that they appeared to have been murdered as the result of a hit-and-run. In contrast, the second half of the article is dedicated to eulogizing the life and death of Alessa Flores, a "transgender woman and activist" murdered a month before the article was written.⁴⁹⁷ The article recounts Flores' work as a prominent trans activist and politicizes her death by holding accountable both the ultra-conservative movement, the National Front for the Family (*Frente Nacional por la Familia*), as well as the State's failed "gender alerts" (*alertas de género*). It is unclear why the author decided to juxtapose the two, although it was likely in an effort to contribute to the hyperawareness of trans/*travesti* death that occurred in the country in October and November of 2016, following the publicized murders of almost a dozen trans people and *travestis* in a relatively short period of time.⁴⁹⁸

Whatever the reason for the juxtaposition, *Excelsior's* article is useful insofar as it offers a condensed contrast of trans and *travesti* lives after death: the former is grieved as

⁴⁹⁶ Ricardo Vitela, "Asesinan a travesti en la delegación Miguel Hidalgo," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), Nov. 7, 2016.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁸ Horacio Jiménez, "México, primer lugar en crímenes homofóbicos: MC," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Nov. 11, 2016.

a life cut short by premature death whereas the latter is produced as a life that was not only stripped of political existence, a bare life, but always a death-in-waiting, a near life⁴⁹⁹. Echoing Aizura (who in turn echoes Fred Moten echoing Franz Fanon), *travesti* lifeworlds cannot be reduced to bare or near life; indeed, they are "zones of alternative being, where people have already figured out ways to live - struggling to preserve the forms of live that we have made under duress, almost as it were impossibly, and that we continue to make every day."⁵⁰⁰ However, within public discourse, it is not the vitality of these lifespaces that is emphasized (or even mentioned) but, rather, either a) their proximity to death through risk, and b) a life stripped down to the biological. For instance, more often than not, the only details shared about the subjects of *travesti* death are sexual and gendered markers (including sex assigned at birth, birth names, and (failed) technologies of feminization) and criminal status. As I argue in the section that follows, *travesti* death is, after all, partially ungrievable insofar as it is a deserving death, a death in the service of the body politic's welfare.

If, as Giorgio Agamben suggests, "[t]he fundamental categorial pair of Western politics is not that of friend/enemy but that of bare life/political existence, *zoe*/*bios*, exclusion/inclusion," the discursive reduction of *travesti* to bare life (both prior to and after death) and the recent discursive promotion of *trans*(*género*/*sexual*) to political existence is a dichotomy worth examining insofar as it may shed light on the differential

⁴⁹⁹ Eric Stanley, "Near Life, Queer Death,"

⁵⁰⁰ Qtd. in Aren Z. Aizura "Trans feminine value, racialized others and the limits of necropolitics," in *Queer Necropolitics*, eds. Jin Haritaworn, Adi Kuntsman, and Silvia Posocco, 129-148 (New York: Routledge, 2014), 143.

distribution of grievability.⁵⁰¹ Importantly, and as mentioned above, mainstream media accounts of *travesti* death tend to focus on the dead body itself, the *cadáver* (corpse), and not the life that once animated it.⁵⁰² The two exceptions to this (which is to say, the two signs of a life beyond the biological) are discussions of the *travesti*'s gendering (via clothing) and allusions to their criminality.

The first of these (i.e. discussions of the *travesti*'s clothing) both animates the body by highlighting the *travesti*'s gendered investments and simultaneously aids in negating the corpse's subject position, insofar as the body's sole tie to the State mentioned in accounts of *travesti* death is determined by their juridical masculinization (a masculinization established both by the diagnosis represented by "man dressed as a woman" as well as by the "outing" of the *travesti*'s name assigned at birth). The focus on the body's feminizing accoutrements contradicts and nullifies this juridical masculinization, the *travesti* body's first (and, in these accounts, often only) interpellation by the State. In this sense, the *travesti* corpse is produced as a political non-entity. For instance, in a *travesti* murder reported by *El Reforma* in 2007, the narrative, which begins with the discovery of "the corpse of a man dressed as a woman," concludes by asserting that "the corpse remains unidentified even though he had on him documents in the name

⁵⁰¹ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995), 12.

⁵⁰² For examples, see Alejandro Baltazar, "Hallan cadáver de travesti en colonia Tlaxpana," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Jul. 5, 2004; Luis Brito, "Hallan cadáver en una bolsa en el Centro," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Jan. 28, 2004; César Díaz, "Hallan a travesti apuñalado," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Dec. 11, 2007; Arturo Sierra and Gerardo Olvera, "Estrangulan a travesti en Tlalpan," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Jun. 25, 2008; Gerardo Olvera, "Hallan cadáver de travesti en Ecatepec," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Jul. 31, 2008; Gerardo Olvera, "Hallan a travesti muerto en hotel," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Oct. 13, 2016.

of Victoria Quiroga Bello."⁵⁰³ Identified first and foremost as a "man dressed as a woman," Victoria cannot access juridical recognition in death and as such must remain unidentified, unrecognizable, unknowable, ungrievable.

The second sign of a life prior to death, criminality, further positions the dead *travesti* as a figure incompatible with juridical life. *Travesti* proximity to criminality positions *travesti* life as near life, as death-in-waiting. Despite the fact that in a necropolitical regime such as Mexico's all that is necessary for premature death is existence, the narcopolitical imaginary⁵⁰⁴ nonetheless positions criminality in proximity to violent death. In other words, proximity to criminality is imagined as proximity to death. Although accounts of *travesti* criminality (both posthumous and in life) could be weaved into narratives celebrating survival in the face of (and, concomitantly resistance to) neoliberal emaciation (i.e. a celebration of zones of alternative being), criminality and proximity to risk are almost without exception imagined as justifications for death.

5.3.2. *Deserving Death*

As mentioned earlier, those murdered under the sign of *travesti* are typically produced as deserving victims of choices of their own making through criminality. To this effect, criminalized behavior and endeavors otherwise produced as risky are accentuated in the unsentimental eulogies of *travesti* death, giving the impression that death was a logical (and warranted) consequence of proximity to criminality or risk. The

⁵⁰³ César Díaz, "Hallan a travesti apuñalado," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Dec. 11, 2007. "El cadáver se mantiene en calidad de desconocido, aunque llevaba consigo documentos con el nombre de Victoria Quiroga Bello."

⁵⁰⁴ What I mean by narcopolitical imaginary, in this context, is the often (and sometimes forcefully) reproduced trope that if someone is the subject of violence in Mexico, it is surely because they were somehow involved in or adjacent to the drug trade.

deservingness of *travesti* death is so widespread that evidence suggests that *travestis* themselves have internalized and often reproduce these narratives. For instance, journalist Victor Ronquillo quotes Shalimar, a *travesti* in Chiapas, as saying:

I think that we're all guilty [of the recent wave of murders against *travestis*], both the government and ourselves. We could work doing something else [other than sex work], for example there are those of us who have an education. Truthfully, people who have an education and nonetheless go out into the streets to prostitute themselves and risk getting killed are stupid. It's wrong for us to prostitute ourselves on Central Avenue. It looks ugly. I'm a *travesti* and I don't prostitute myself on the street.⁵⁰⁵

Specifically, the criminal or criminal-adjacent behaviors most often placed in proximity to (and legitimating) *travesti* death, as suggested above, are several of the elements discussed in Chapter 3: sex work⁵⁰⁶, drug use/trafficking⁵⁰⁷, and deception.

⁵⁰⁵ Victor Ronquillo, *La muerte se viste de rosa. Chiapas: La cacería de los travestis*, (Mexico City: Ediciones Roca, 1994), 21. "La verdad, yo creo que todos somos culpables, tanto el gobierno como nosotros. Podríamos trabajar en otra cosa, por ejemplo hay quiénes tienen estudios. La verdad, qué tonta es aquella persona que teniendo estudios sale a la calle a prostituirse y se arriesga a que la maten. Está mal que nos prostituyamos en la Avenida Central. Se ve muy feo. Yo soy travesti y no me prostituyo en la calle."

⁵⁰⁶ For examples, see Jesús Padilla, "Matan a travesti, le desfiguran el rostro," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Sept. 25, 2004; Alejandro Baltazar, "Hallan cadáver de travesti en colonia Tlaxpana," *El Universal* (Mexico City), July 5, 2004; Yáscara López, "Descartan crimen de odio contra travesti," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), May 23, 2010; Filiberto Cruz Monroy, "Muere mujer baleada en la Colonia del Valle; su pareja es sospechoso," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), July 5, 2012; Filiberto Cruz Monroy, "Descuartizado encontrado en Benito Juárez era travesti," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), June 8, 2012.

⁵⁰⁷ For examples, see "Veracruz: tiran otros 14 cuerpos," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Sept. 23, 2011; "Matan a 12 en Durango; sicarios acuden a un hospital y ejecutan a un herido" *La Jornada* (Mexico City), Aug. 18, 2011; "Reportan asesinato de cuatro personas en Guerrero," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Feb. 23, 2012; Pedro Tonantzin, "Hombres vestidos de mujer mueren en accidente carretero," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), Aug. 4, 2012; "Pelean 2 bandas en Huajicori, Nayarit: 5 muertos," *La Jornada* (Mexico

Although it's still too early to identify a pattern with any sort of certainty, a budding discursive trend nonetheless seems to be emerging in which those posthumously produced as *transexual/transgénero* sex workers (typically in addition to activists) are eulogized with the term *trabajadoras sexuales* ("sex workers"), a term that positions the laboring subject as a subject of rights insofar as it recognizes their participation within the national economy.⁵⁰⁸ *Travesti* sex workers, on the other hand, are typically described as either *sexoservidores/as*⁵⁰⁹ ("sex servants", either grammatically feminized or

City), Feb. 12, 2012; "Balean y matan a dos hombres en Ecatepec," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Nov. 16, 2014.

⁵⁰⁸ For examples, see "Trabajadoras sexuales exigen no lucrar con ellas," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Aug. 7, 2008; Blanca Juárez, "Colocan altar en Insurgentes en memoria de joven 'trans' asesinada ayer," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), Oct. 14, 2016; "Asesinan a Alessa Flores, mujer transgénero y activista," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), Oct. 14, 2016; Eduardo Hernández, "Matan en menos de un mes a otra transexual; protestan," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Oct. 15, 2016; Antonio Nieto, "Murió en la búsqueda del sueño de ser mujer," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Oct. 18, 2016; "Llama CEAV a respetar derechos de personas transgénero," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), Oct. 23, 2016; Astrid Rivera, "Transgéneros denuncian impunidad en asesinatos," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Nov. 14, 2016;

⁵⁰⁹ For examples, see José Luis Flores, "Tlalpan: escaparate del sexoservicio," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Oct. 22, 2003; "Denuncian inseguridad por sexoservicio en Buenavista," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Jul. 31, 2006; Arturo Sierra and Gerardo Olvera, "Hallan a travesti encajuelado," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Jun. 26, 2008; Claudia Bolaños, "Prostitución vence al ombudsman," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Aug. 19, 2009; Claudia Bolaños, "Travesti describe robos con gotas," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Jul. 6, 2009; Juan Pablo Reyes, "Ahora se ofrece amor en los andenes del Metro," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), May 1, 2011; Filiberto Cruz Monroy, "Muere mujer baleada en la Colonia del Valle; su pareja es sospechoso," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), July 5, 2012; Antonio Nieto, "Mata a travesti porque tomaba su ropa," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Sept. 22, 2012; Filiberto Cruz Monroy, "Descuartizado encontrado en Benito Juárez era travesti," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), June 8, 2012; Ricardo Moya, "Balean a travesti en la Cuauhtémoc," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Sept. 30, 2016.

masculinized) or less often *prostitutos/as*⁵¹⁰ ("prostitutes", either grammatically feminized or, more often, masculinized), two terms laden with moralisms and which do not recognize or legitimate the corresponding activities as labor.

Produced as willfully engaging in at-risk activities, *travestis* are, in the public imaginary, at least partially to blame for their own violent deaths. Indeed, Aizura notes that "by displacing risk onto the individual, circumstance is cast as a question of rational choice: in making the 'irrational choice' to continue sex work, grey market hormone treatment, body modification, etc., trans sex workers can be represented as willfully engineering their own deaths."⁵¹¹ Such is the strength of the attribution of blame, that *travesti* death is more often than not produced as a murder lacking a murderer: not only are killers rarely found by the police, but headlines often impute the murder to either an object or the *travesti* themselves. Indeed, Kulick notes that, within the context of Brazil, "reports of violence against travestis are often either without agents [...] or the agentive, subject position of the sentence is filled with an instrument - a knife, or a gun, or a blow - not a person."⁵¹² Within the context of Mexican mainstream media, the subject position is often filled with an instrument or with the *travesti* herself.

The *travesti* is to blame, the story goes, because they did not tell their amorous other (most often a would-be client or lover) of their sexual configuration. This story is

⁵¹⁰ For examples, see Joaquín Hurtado, "La tierra prometida," *Letra S* (Mexico City), Feb. 7, 2008; Claudia Bolaños, "Prostitución vence al ombudsman," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Aug. 19, 2009; Gabriela Rivera, "La prostitución incomoda a los vecinos en la Benito Juárez," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), Apr. 11, 2011.

⁵¹¹ Aizura, "Trans feminine value, racialized others and the limits of necropolitics," 140.

⁵¹² Don Kulick, "Causing a Commotion: Public Scandal as Resistance among Brazilian Transgendered Prostitutes," *Anthropology Today* 12, no. 6 (1996), 4.

often told in 4 words: "*hombre vestido de mujer*," a man dressed as a woman. The "man dressed as a woman," as an epitaph, acts a variation of the 'gay panic' defense: the *travesti* deceiver can be killed with an impunity buttressed by the *travesti*'s liability for their own death. For instance, Ronquillo quotes La Goga, a *travesti* from Chiapas, as asserting that "it's important to realize that most of the murdered homosexuals are people who prostitute themselves. There are men who feel hurt over being tricked and they take their revenge."⁵¹³

Indeed, I would posit that the "man dressed as a woman" has become a shorthand (through repetition) for what, in earlier times, had to be spelled out (and sometimes still is, as in the case of a murderer who "beat [a travesti] and strangled him after realizing that he was a man"⁵¹⁴). For instance, in 1979, *El Porvenir* told the story of a Danish seaman who, "feeling swindled because the supposed prostitute standing in front of him was a *travesti* [,] strangled the false beauty."⁵¹⁵ Similarly, in 1966 *El Nacional* reported the death of a person whose "clothes, it was discovered, were the only feminine about him insofar as the body was male." With the "man dressed as a woman" alibi insufficiently developed at the time, *El Nacional* proceeded to surmise that the person had been murdered either because they "might have belonged to a group of delinquents

⁵¹³ Ronquillo, *La muerte viste de rosa*, 19. "[...] también es necesario darse cuenta de que la mayor parte de los homosexuales asesinados son personas que se prostituyen. Hay hombres que se sienten heridos por ser engañados y entonces se vengan."

⁵¹⁴ "PGJDF atrapa al presunto homicida de un travesti ," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Oct. 6, 2013.

⁵¹⁵ "Estafa sexual," *El Porvenir* (Monterrey), Oct. 16, 1979. "Sintiéndose estafado, porque la supuesta prostituta que tenía delante era, en realidad un travestí, un marino danés montó en cólera y estranguló a la falsa bella"

[who dressed as women in order to mug night owls by attracting them with their feminine appearance]" or as the result of a "crime between homosexuals."⁵¹⁶

As mentioned in Chapter 3, *travestismo* has been criminalized at different times and in different localities precisely *because* of something akin to gay panic: the fear that vulnerable or otherwise naive men might fall prey to *travesti* seductions unaware of the "masculine truth" hiding behind a feminized exterior. Although mainstream news sources are hesitant to spell out the *travesti* panic narrative (in contrast to the willingness of the scandal press), the narrative has been rehearsed so often and for so long, that to posthumously declare one a "man dressed as a woman" in the twenty-first century is to offer an alibi for their death.

5.3.3. *Overkill*

Overkill, defined by Eric Stanley as naming "the technologies necessary to do away with what is already gone," is perhaps the most widely recognized characteristic of *travesti* death.⁵¹⁷ For instance, Liguori and Aggleton establish that the murder of *travesti* sex workers "has a very different character than homicides traditionally perpetrated against [cisgender] women: face-to-face, a single man kills a [female assigned] sex worker. Murders of *travestis* are generally perpetrated by a number of individuals against

⁵¹⁶ "Hallan un cadáver de supuesta mujer," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Aug. 12, 1966. "[...] individuos vestidos de mujer perpetran asaltos entre los noctámbulos, a quienes atraen con su 'palmito' femenino y cuando los tienen en una calleja oscura, sacan un arma para asaltarlos. Es posible que la víctima haya pertenecido a este grupo de delincuentes, o bien que se trate de un crimen entre homosexuales [...]"

⁵¹⁷ Stanley, "Near Life, Queer Death," 9.

a single [*travesti*] and are indescribably brutal."⁵¹⁸ Journalistic accounts of *travesti* death certainly support this assertion: for instance, it is not uncommon for *travestis* to be beaten and/or stabbed both *to* death and *long after* the moment of biological death. For Stanley, queer overkill signals a desire on behalf of the murderer(s) to "push [the victim] backward out of time, out of History, and into that which comes before."⁵¹⁹

The discursive reproduction of *travesti* overkill certainly seems to fulfill the desire outlined by Stanley. After all, overkill, as a forensic countermeasure, tends to ensure that the victims of these brutal murders will remain unidentified and, as such, shoved into an anonymity that dovetails smoothly with the posthumous production of *travesti* life as bare life, as a life stripped down to the biological (with the biological being reduced to maleness). This is the case, for instance, with the decapitated body found in Chihuahua in 2010, which "was initially thought to be a woman's but turned out to be a[n unidentified] man's."⁵²⁰ The inability to identify a body met with overkill guarantees that it will be discursively pushed backward into anonymity, out of (juridical) History as it were, and into "that which comes before" the original act of juridical

⁵¹⁸ Ana Luisa Liguori and Peter Aggleton, "Aspectos del comercio sexual masculino en la ciudad de México," *Debate Feminista*, 18 (1998), 152-153. "[El asesinato de travestis dedicados a la prostitución] tiene un signo muy diferente de los homicidios que se han cometido tradicionalmente contra mujeres: cara a cara, un solo hombre mata a una trabajadora sexual. Los asesinatos de travestis han sido en general perpetrados por varios individuos contra uno solo y son de una brutalidad indescriptible."

⁵¹⁹ Stanley, "Near Life, Queer Death," 9.

⁵²⁰ "Reporta Chihuahua 15 asesinatos," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Apr. 3, 2010. "Aunque en un principio se mencionó que [la cabeza decapitada] se trataba de una mujer, finalmente resultó ser un hombre, aunque no se ha determinado su identidad [...]" Interestingly, though unsurprisingly, of the 15 murders described by the article, the only body murdered with sufficient rage so as to be dismembered (and among only a few to remain unidentified) belonged to a *travesti*

interpellation. Indeed, discursive repercussions of overkill push the *travesti* backward into that which is produced as coming before political existence: the "biological fact" of (a masculinized) maleness.

Travesti overkill, as a discursive mechanism (i.e. the narration by news sources of the spectacular(ized) violence visited upon the *travesti*), aids in the production of *travesti* life not only as bare life but as a death-in-waiting, as a near life. The spectacularization of *travesti* death, through journalistic representations of overkill, creates the impression that *travesti* lives are lives lived oriented toward death via a hyperawareness of impending violence. "They said that turning tricks [as a *travesti*] on Central Avenue was suicide,"⁵²¹ remembers Victor Ronquillo in his book on the string of *travesti* murders that took place in Chiapas in 1991-1993. "I turn 35 this year; I'm going to have a big party because I wasn't supposed to make it to 35. We all die before turning 35,"⁵²² celebrates Amanda, a *travesti* whom I interviewed early in my research process.

5.3.4. *Gay Gain*

The "man dressed as a woman" trope functions not only to negate *travesti* (juridical) existence and as apologia for *travesti* killability but also works to conceal *travesti* death under the rubric of homosexual death. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the emergence of *travesti* is inextricably bound to the history of homosexuality until at least the late 1970's and, even when the homosexual is *detravestified* in the late 1970's, the

⁵²¹ Victor Ronquillo, *La muerte se viste de rosa*, 63. "[...] decían que fichar en la Avenida Central era un suicidio."

⁵²² Amanda Pérez, interview by a de la maza Pérez Tamayo, November 23, 2015, interview 17, transcript. "Cumpló 35 este año. Voy a hacer un fiestón porque se supone que no debería llegar a los 35. Siempre nos morimos antes de los 35."

travesti remains a homosexualized figure at this time. While historically, the homosexualization of the figure of the *travesti* makes sense, this homosexualization often buttresses a sanitizing masculinization of *travesti*, pitting gender against sexuality and further compartmentalizing the two (as is evident, for instance, in the CEEAV's refusal to categorize *travesti* death as femicide). If *travesti* life is a testament to liminal spaces of gender and sexuality (wherein one can occupy several seemingly oppositional categories simultaneously or shift between them at will), the technologies used to render *travesti* death legible, to varying degrees of success, negate the liminality of *travesti* life.

The posthumous masculinization of *travesti* occurs in four primary ways: 1) through the "man dressed as a woman" trope, 2) through the circulation and legitimization of names assigned at birth (over and against chosen names)⁵²³, 3) through grammatical masculinizations, and 4) through masculinizing homosexualization. All of these elements are present, for instance, in the obituary of a *travesti* viciously murdered (and disfigured) in Mexico City in 2004.⁵²⁴ The first five words of the article are used to designate them "a man dressed as a woman" and the former categorization is given precedence over the latter through the grammatical masculinizations that follow. As is often the case with identified *travesti* bodies, the article furnishes its readers with their name assigned at birth (and although the article positions them in proximity to sex work, going so far as to identify several of their co-workers, it nonetheless never mentions their

⁵²³ Importantly, whenever articles do mention chosen names (most often when the name assigned at birth is unavailable), they tend to put them in quotation marks, signaling falsity.

⁵²⁴ Jesús Padilla, "Matan travesti, le desfiguran el rostro," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Sept. 26, 2004.

chosen name). Indeed, the article further masculinizes the *travesti* by naming them a homosexual. As such, *he* (grammatical masculinization) is not only a *man* (dressed as a woman), identified by his family with his masculine name, but a *homosexual man* (indeed, even *his* coworkers are described as *sexoservidores* (a masculinized form of "sex servants"). The feminizations suggested by their *travestismo* (reduced to the word "*travesti*" and the qualification "dressed as a woman") are dismissed under the overdetermined (and forcefully produced) sign of masculinity.

That *travesti* deaths are reconfigured as homosexual lives has important repercussions for *travesti* existence. Indeed, Snorton and Haritaworn identify this posthumous, sanitizing gay-washing as "a larger project of reincorporating transgender bodies of color under a more legible sign; [...] as a spectacularized gay male."⁵²⁵ Importantly, and in contrast to what Snorton and Haritaworn observe, individual *travesti* eulogies rarely, if ever, involve any indication of a family life (beyond disclosures of names assigned at birth) or calls for justice. However, they are employed at an epidemiological level as indicators of homophobic violence: specifically, they have been taken up, since 1998, by the Citizens' Commission against Homophobic Hate Crimes (*Comisión Ciudadana contra Crímenes de Odio por Homofobia*), a project of *LetraeSe*, in an effort to aid in the juridicization of "homophobic hate crimes."⁵²⁶ Importantly, and although their website claims to "present a report of homicides committed against gay

⁵²⁵ C. Riley Snorton and Jin Haritaworn, "Trans Necropolitics: A Transnational Reflection on Violence, Death, and the Trans of Color Afterlife," in *The Transgender Studies Reader 2*, eds. Susan Stryker and Aren Z. Aizura, 66-76, (New York: Routledge, 2013), 70.

⁵²⁶ "Informe Crímenes de Odio por Homofobia," *Letra S*, <http://www.letraese.org.mx/proyectos/proyecto-1-2/>

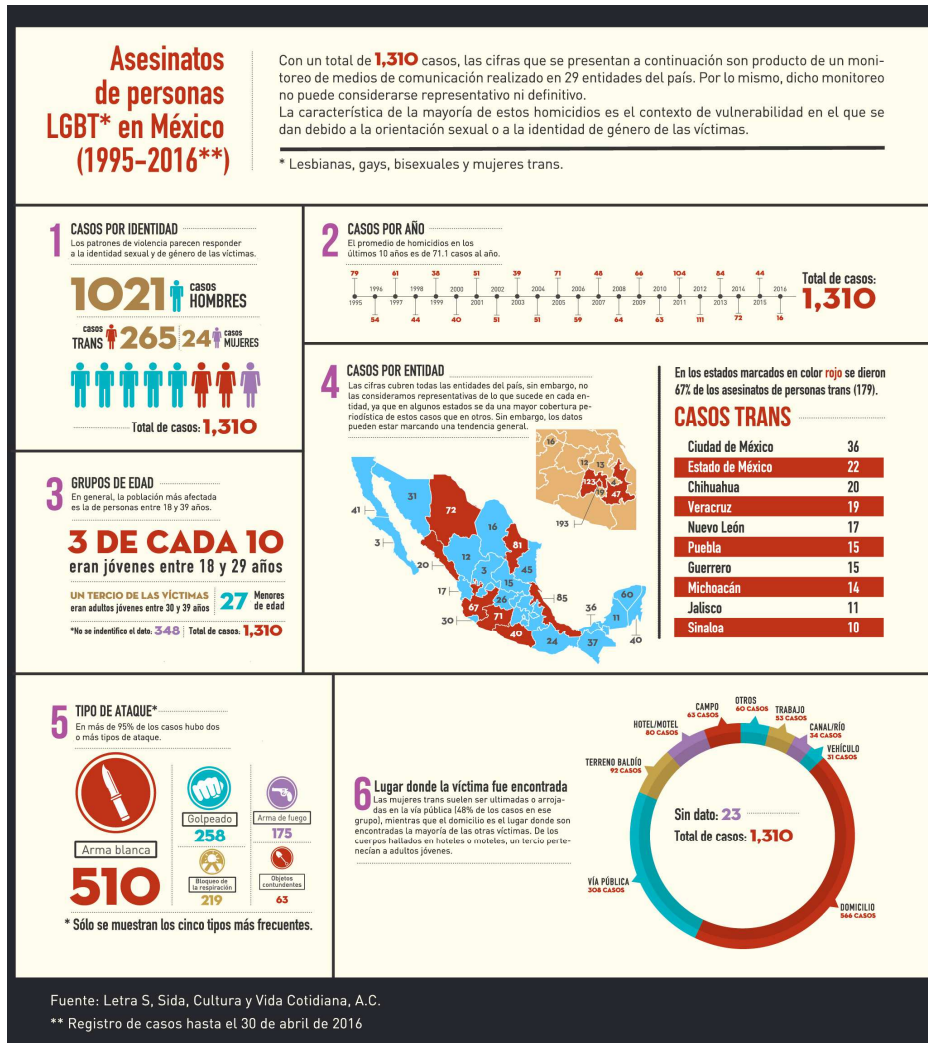
men, lesbian women, bisexual persons, *travestis*, *transexuales*, and *transgénero*,"⁵²⁷ the aggregated data published by the Citizens' Commission against Homophobic Hate Crimes only includes as identitarian categories "men," "trans," and "women." It is unclear what category those eulogized as "men dressed as women" are subsumed under, particularly considering that the organization reduces the T in LGBT to "trans women."⁵²⁸ For their most recent publication, see Figure 5.

⁵²⁷ Ibid.

⁵²⁸ Ibid.

Figure 5

Data Published by the Citizens' Commission against Homophobic Hate Crimes in 2016



Importantly, the Citizens' Commission against Homophobic Hate Crimes' reductive conceptualization of violence against sexual and gender non-conforming people as "homophobia" has had important repercussions for the representation of trans and *travesti* death (as well as lesbian death). For instance, within public discourse, such deaths are not only typically concealed under the rubric "homophobia"⁵²⁹ rather than "transphobia"⁵³⁰ (or "lesbophobia"), but *travesti* death tends particularly to be subsumed under the statistical rubric of homosexual death. This is worrisome not because *travestis* are not homosexuals (indeed, many of them identify as such) but because it elides the particularities of *travesti* life and death.

5.4. Conclusion

In early June, 2012, the dismembered body of a "man who was a *travesti*" was found in several neighborhoods of the Benito Juárez municipality in Mexico City.⁵³¹ In addition to identifying them with their birth name, *Excelsior* made sure to mention that the person who had been murdered engaged in "sex service" (*sexoservicio*) and "had been

⁵²⁹ For examples, see Ricardo H. Andonaegui, "Por homofobia, 20 muertos en 2 años," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Jun. 12, 2000; "Piden poner freno a la homofobia," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Feb. 1, 2001; Ricardo Zamora, "Repunta DF en asesinatos de homosexuales," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Feb. 1, 2006; Gustavo Castillo García, "En el país son asesinados cada año alrededor de 100 homosexuales: ONG," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), Feb. 2, 2006; Mariana Norandy and Alejandro Cruz, "'Archivados', 80% de los crímenes de odio en la ciudad de México: CDHDF," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), May 17, 2009;

⁵³⁰ *Transfobia* remains a relatively underused term within public discourse. For instance, in El Universal's twenty-first-century archive, it first appears in 2007 and reaches a peak in both 2013 and 2016. In 2013, however, the term primarily appears as a category subsumed under the wider term, *homofobia* whereas in 2016, it becomes more closely associated with trans death and violence.

⁵³¹ Filiberto Cruz Monroy, "Descuartizado encontrado en Benito Juárez era travesti," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), June 8, 2012.

incarcerated [...] for robbery in 2008."⁵³² Other than routinely mentioning that a criminal investigation had been opened, no other calls for justice were made. Three months earlier, on the other hand, the body of Agnes Torres Hernández was found in the neighboring state of Puebla. Her murder, unlike the murder of the abovementioned *travesti*, sparked public outrage and political mobilization. Indeed, her murder was repudiated by Mexico City's Human Rights Commission, the Human Rights Commission of the Legislative Assembly, and the Interamerican Human Rights Commission, and universalized not only as symptomatic of the injustices perpetrated against the LGBTTTI community but of injustice and impunity in general.⁵³³ The unprecedented pressure applied by a body politic outraged by Torres Hernandez's murder resulted in the inconceivably rare apprehension and adjudication of four suspects less than a week after her body was found. Such was the sustained widespread outrage over her death that Congress in Puebla approved a hate crime bill named after her.⁵³⁴

As *transgénero/transsexual* become, increasingly, the subjects of rights, their lives gradually come to be understood as understandable (as relatable). The increasing grievability of their deaths is both a reflection of their (increasing) personhood and a contributing factor to the very production that personhood. *Travesti* death, on the other hand, frames (and reproduces) a life not only not folded into the national imaginary, but a life imagined as incompatible with it. Indeed, *travesti* death, a deserved death, is a space

⁵³² Ibid. "Además, en 2008 estuvo preso en el Reclusorio Preventivo Sur por el delito de robo."

⁵³³ "Exigen castigar asesinato de activista," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Mar. 12, 2012.

⁵³⁴ Francisco Rivas, "Piden a Puebla resolver crímenes de odio," *El Reforma* (Mexico City), Nov. 5, 2013.

of ungrievability because *travesti* life is not produced as a life worth fostering. While *travesti* lives may be considered fungible and, as such, deservingly disposable, *travesti* death has productive value insofar as the *travesti* can be (and is often) sanitized through homosexual masculinization (and, sometimes, transgender feminization). In death, the value of the "man dressed as women" can ultimately (and quite forcefully) be of service to the sexual and gendered nonconforming lives increasingly fostered by the homonational State by quite literally providing bodies for the statistical machinery that provides the justification for bolstering institutions designed to foster certain queer lives (though certainly not *travesti* lives).

6. THE AFFECTIVE REGISTERS OF *TRAVESTI*

6.1. Introduction

In February of 2014, Mexico City's Council to Prevent and Eliminate Discrimination, (hereafter COPRED) launched a campaign titled *Transformando la CDMX* (**T**ransforming Mexico City). Widely disseminated throughout the metropolitan area, the campaign consisted of four different images of trans-identified people, two men and two women, each with a short blurb of the person describing themselves and each culminating with the assertion that the person is "like you, a part of this city and... happy" ("[...] *como tú, soy parte de esta ciudad y... soy feliz*").

What does it mean to *be* a happy citizen? How is the promise of happiness, a condition of possibility for aspirational citizenship, distributed and what ideological work does it do? Sara Ahmed contends that the promise of happiness operates as an orienting device that directs one toward certain objects and away from others while simultaneously generating objects through proximity.⁵³⁵ Indeed, Ahmed suggests that happiness scripts function as straightening devices: "ways of aligning bodies with what is already lined up."⁵³⁶ Further, "the points that accumulate as lines can be performatives: a point on a line can be a demand to stay *in* line. To deviate from the line is to be threatened with unhappiness."⁵³⁷ Insofar as economies of happiness involve "reciprocal forms of aspiration [...] and also forms of coercion that are exercised and concealed by the very language of reciprocity, [...] one person's happiness can be made conditional not only on

⁵³⁵ Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, 91

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*

another person's happiness but on that person's willingness to be made happy by the same things."⁵³⁸ Indeed, Ahmed argues that "what is unequally distributed is the feeling that you have what *should* make you happy, a distribution of the promise of a feeling, or the feeling of a promise, rather than the distribution of happiness, as such."⁵³⁹

While the emphatic claiming of a happiness normally denied queer and trans* existence through its perceived failure to successfully approximate happiness-causing objects might seem non-performative in its excess, particularly in the country with the second highest incidence of trans- and homophobic violence, the campaign nonetheless positions the subject it produces in proximity to the normative trappings of happiness. Indeed, Austin describes as "happy," performative speech acts that bring about the effects of what they name.⁵⁴⁰ According to Austin, in order for a speech act to be successfully performative, 1) "there must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect [and] that procedure [must] include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances"⁵⁴¹; and 2) "the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked."⁵⁴² Conversely, Mel Chen describes failed performatives as

⁵³⁸ Ibid.

⁵³⁹ Ibid., 51

⁵⁴⁰ J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 45.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., 14.

⁵⁴² Ibid., 15.

affectively excessive in their inappropriateness and makes the claim that, for the failed performative to work efficiently and effectively, its excess must be "sloughed off."⁵⁴³

The paradox produced through the performative utterance of happiness-claiming by unconventional persons in inappropriate circumstances might thus seem a failed performative were it not for the labor of reorientation performed by the campaign in order to slough off its perceived excesses. Indeed, COPRED redistributes the promise of happiness by placing particular trans modalities (specifically *transexual* and *transgénero*) in proximity to normative neoliberal life trajectories; trajectories marked by a proximity to objects that naturalize and valorize certain lived experiences over others. Such objects include a) Tomás' aspiration to reproduce a privatized and privatizing inter-generational and dual parent network of eroto-affectivity, composed of self-regulating and financially viable individuals able to subsidize lives subject to structural adjustment regimes (see Figure 6); b) Marck's desire to ascend to cosmopolitan mobility as a responsible self-investing and self-managing post-Fordist citizen able to compete in global knowledge markets (see Figure 7); c) the racialized libidinal economy of Victoria's satisfaction with a freedom indelibly framed by necropolitical and state violences (see Figure 8); d) Norma's affective revalorization of the nuclear family as an institution sharply distinguished and disconnected from the public world of work and production (see Figure 9); e) the biologization, compartmentalization, and individualization of fields of sexuality that render trans intelligible always and only through the registers of the medico-juridical complex; and f) the privatization of trans* precarity and vulnerability that conceals state-

⁵⁴³ Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012) 95.

sponsored and state-sanctioned violence. The objects that COPRED's campaign places in proximity of the would-be trans subject are legion. It is my contention, however, that if COPRED successfully negotiates and resolves the apparent contradictions that allow a particular trans citizen-subject to emerge triumphant, through the production and circulation of transnormativity, it is because the happy trans citizen-subject was never at irreconcilable odds with the state, contrary to the transgressive exceptionalism often embedded in narratives of non-normative fields of sexuality.

This chapter begins with the premise that "what sticks 'shows us' where the object has travelled through what it has gathered onto its surface, gatherings that become a part of the object, and call into question its integrity as an object."⁵⁴⁴ I follow the affective circulations of what would emerge as *travesti* in the mid-to-late twentieth century in order to explore how the figure comes to be, as a structure of feeling. My primary contention is that the ontoformative narratives that congeal to furnish *travesti* with a sense of essence establish the parameters for the affective registers that the category is allowed to access and mobilize. I will suggest that this figure (and, concomitantly, the identity that it signals and constructs) acquires its (il)legibility primarily as a structure of feeling.

Raymond Williams describes structures of feelings as operating in the "most delicate and least tangible part of our activities."⁵⁴⁵ Kinds of feelings and thinking that are both social and material, "but each in an embryonic phase before it can become fully

⁵⁴⁴ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 91.

⁵⁴⁵ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977)

articulate and defined exchange," structures of feeling are "changes of presence" that, while emergent or pre-emergent, "do not have to await definition, classification, or rationalization before they exert palpable pressures and set effective limits on experience and on action."⁵⁴⁶ Indeed, structures of feelings contain the "affective elements of consciousness and relationships; not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelating continuity."⁵⁴⁷ Williams explains that but for its relationship to the past, experience might adequately describe these structures; however, he emphasizes that the social experiences described by structures of feeling are in process, so much that they are often not recognized as social but as "private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating" despite their connecting characteristics and hierarchies and are not readily recognizable until they have been "formalized, classified, and in many cases built into institutions and formations."⁵⁴⁸

Ultimately, I contend that it is these interconnected structures of feeling that regulate not only *travesti*'s, but also *transgénero*'s, and *transsexual*'s seemingly incompatible but co-constituted ability to access particular discursive frameworks. I focus first and foremost on *travesti*, arguing that it has come to operate as an affective repository for that which diverges from nationally profitable affectations, most recently by way of anxiety, providing a space of abjection so that the respectable transnormative subject may emerge, sufficiently rehabilitated, as a rights-bearing subject. This space of abjection served a similar purpose in the rehabilitative production of the contemporary

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., 131-132.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., 132.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

homosexual. It is only through the preservation of what is abjected, as a constitutive outside, that the anxious affective specter of *travesti* can continue the work of legitimating that which it shores up.

Figure 6

Tomás.

The poster reads: "My name is Tomás and I am a trans man. She is Ambar and she's my partner. We are very excited about our relationship. We have many plans: paying off our house and having kids. I, like you, am a part of this city and... I am happy."

Me llamo Tomás
y soy un hombre **trans**
Transgénero • Transexual

Ella es Ambar
y es mi pareja.
Estamos
muy ilusionados con
nuestra relación.
Tenemos
muchos planes:
terminar de pagar
nuestra casa y
tener hijos.

**Yo, como tú,
soy parte de
esta ciudad y...**

**SOY
feliz**

Más información
sobre las personas TRANS
en: www.copred.df.gob.mx
Idea original: Laura Victoria Martes.

df.gob.mx copred.df.gob.mx

CDMX
CIUDAD DE MÉXICO

**Transformando la
CDMX**

Figure 7

Marck.

The poster reads: "I am Marck and I am a trans man. I am studying my last semester of computer engineering. I like team work and helping out my classmates. I am going to become the best engineer and I will travel the world. I, like you, am a part of this city and... I am happy."

Me llamo Marck
y soy un hombre

trans
Transgénero • Transexual

Estudio el último semestre de ingeniería informática.
Me gusta trabajar en equipo y ayudar a mis compañeros.
Voy a ser el mejor ingeniero y viajaré por el mundo.

Yo, como tú, soy parte de esta ciudad y...

soy feliz

Más información sobre las personas TRANS en: www.copred.df.gob.mx
Idea original: Laura Victoria Martes.

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Figure 8

Victoria.

The poster reads: "My name is Victoria and I am a trans woman. I am a visual artist and I have a radio show. I feel fulfilled to be able to freely share information, culture, and to express what I think and feel. I, like you, am a part of this city and... I am happy."



Figure 9

Norma.

The poster reads: "My name is Norma and I am a trans woman. This is my family. We talk, hang out, love each other, and respect each other. My family is an enormous satisfaction in my life and I do everything I can to live up to my responsibilities. I, like you, am a part of this city and... I am happy."

Me llamo Norma
y soy una mujer

trans
Transgénero • Transexual

Esta es mi familia,
nosotros platicamos,
convivimos, nos
queremos y nos
respetamos.

Mi familia
es una enorme
satisfacción en mi vida
y hago todo lo posible
por cumplir mis
responsabilidades.

Yo, como tú,
soy parte de
esta ciudad y...

**SOY
feliz**

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6.2. An Affective History of *Travesti*

The history of *travesti* is an affective history: it is a history filled to the brim with, and structured through, feeling(s). It is a history in which affect has been produced and mobilized in a variety of manners and to various effects. Indeed, the named figure of *travesti* emerges in the mid-to-late-twentieth century amidst particular and historically overdetermined affective registers. As such, *travesti* is what Sara Ahmed refers to as a sticky sign: a sign that is sticky "as an effect of a history of articulation, which allows the sign to accumulate value ... To use a sticky sign is to evoke other words, which have become intrinsic to the sign through past forms of association. ... The association between words that generates meanings is concealed: it is this concealment of such associations that allows such signs to accumulate value."⁵⁴⁹

In what follows, I identify three primary affects that have come to be so strongly associated with *travesti* so as to aid in molding the figure by determining its permissible circulations. Firstly, I argue that disgust becomes the colonial and briefly post-independence *sodomita*'s primary affective register largely as a result of the figure's perverse racializations. As such, disgust both becomes a way of marking that which is unincorporable within the body politic and expelling it. Further, disgust, as a shared affect, binds the imagined community together in response to the threat represented by the racialized *sodomita*. Secondly, I explore the affective and discursive shifts that occur in the aftermath of *El Baile de los 41* in order to explore how shame comes to be mobilized with respect to the *afeminado*. I argue that the racial "promotion" awarded the

⁵⁴⁹ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 92.

newly homoeroticized *afeminado* (vis-a-vis its racialized sodomitical precursor) leads to the national inclusion, however marginal, of the homoeroticized *afeminado*. The rehabilitationist politics of shame and shaming fashion the homoeroticized *afeminado* into a figure that, unlike its predecessor, *could* be compatible with the body politic given proper displays of shame. Finally, I argue that anxiety comes to replace shame as the core affect mobilized by the emergent homosexual through an increased intensity in the circulation of (non-homoeroticized) homosexual criminality. Indeed, I argue that the atavistic criminality attached to the homosexual by twentieth-century positivist criminology finds its way into mainstream news sources by the 1940's, fashioning the anxiety-producing figure that would eventually, in the late 1970's, become the modern deployment of *travesti*.

6.2.1. *Disgust and the Racialization of Travesti*

Cotita de la Encarnación was one of the fourteen *sodomitas* strangled to death and burned in Mexico City in 1658, following the largest sodomy trial to date (involving 123 male-assigned people). Cotita, the catalyst of this event, was described by Martín de Guijo as "a mulatto who wore Indian clothing"⁵⁵⁰ and by authorities as engaging in forms of feminization such as "cinch[ing] his waist and wear[ing] a kerchief common among women."⁵⁵¹ Indeed, the vast majority of those indicted for sodomy in 1658 (and in the trials that preceded and followed) were racialized Others, either belonging to the *castas*

⁵⁵⁰Gregorio Martín de Guijo, *Diario de Sucesos Virreinales, 1648-1664*, ed. Manuel Romero de Terreros, (Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa, 1953), 105.

⁵⁵¹ Zeb Tortorici, "Contra Natura: Sin, Crime, and 'Unnatural' Sexuality in Colonial Mexico, 1530-1821," (doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2010), 142.

or identified as indigenous and Black people.⁵⁵² As suggested in Chapter 3, the reracialization of the *sodomita* within the public imaginary did not begin until after 1901, when the class privilege of those apprehended in *El Baile de los 41* and their bellicose juxtaposition with the indigenous Maya of the Yucatán peninsula rebranded the *afeminado* as a figure racially compatible with the body politic (i.e. upper-class *mestizxs*).

The racialization of the *sodomita* from the colonial period to early in the twentieth century neatly coincides with the primary affective register mobilized, at this time, in regard to the *sodomita*: disgust. Indeed, in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Sara Ahmed opens her chapter on the performativity of disgust with a scene narrated by Darwin wherein the "naked savage" is "already seen as dirt, as the carrier of dirt, which contaminates the food that has been touched."⁵⁵³ For Ahmed, the work of disgust is movement; it operates through proximities and distances: it "brings the body perilously close to an object only then to pull away from the object in the registering of the proximity as an offence."⁵⁵⁴ As a performative (i.e. a speech act that generates that which it names), expressions of disgust generate not only the subject that names and the object named but also the community that witnesses the speech act (and which, arguably, shares in the disgust attributed to the object).

⁵⁵² José Guillermo de los Reyes Heredia, "Sodomy and Society: Sexuality, Gender, Race, and Class in Colonial Mexico," (doctoral dissertation, The University of Pennsylvania, 2004), 199-204.

⁵⁵³ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 82.

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 85.

The *sodomita* becomes an object of disgust at least partially through its proximity to racialized Otherness. After all, if "*repugnante*" ("repugnant") was the word most commonly used to describe *el pecado/crimen nefando* and the *sodomita*, as I argue, it was also a word regularly associated both with those perversely racialized and with their vices.⁵⁵⁵ From inebriation/intoxication⁵⁵⁶, to indigence⁵⁵⁷, to gambling⁵⁵⁸, and certainly to sodomy⁵⁵⁹, it is not uncommon to find the word "*vicio*" (vice), qualified as "*repugnante*" ("repugnant") or "*asqueroso*" ("disgusting"), describing activities engaged in by the racialized popular masses. Existing within this -often geoproximal- racialized community of vices, the *sodomita*, who was seen as often crossing lines into vices beyond sodomy, could not but be "repugnant." As Sara Ahmed mentions, "an object can become

⁵⁵⁵ For examples regarding the repugnancy of vices associated with those perversely racialized, see "Parte histórica," *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* (Mexico City), Apr. 12, 1842; "Variedades," *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* (Mexico City), Nov. 14, 1844; "Estados fronterizos," *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* (Mexico City), Jul. 19, 1852; "El sur de Jalisco," *La Sociedad* (Mexico City), Aug. 12, 1866;

⁵⁵⁶ For examples, see "Vagos," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Apr. 12, 1849; "Sábado, domingo y lunes," *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* (Mexico City), Jan. 2, 1871; "Los Chibchas antes de la conquista española," *Revista Latino-Americana* (Mexico City), June 30, 1896; "Estudios de Toponimia salvadoreña," *El Diario del Hogar* (Mexico City), Oct. 13, 1897; "Un horrendo crimen ha consternado a la sociedad de Gomez Palacio," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Mar. 3, 1922.

⁵⁵⁷ For an example, see "Mejoras materiales," *El Universal* (Mexico City), June 5, 1854.

⁵⁵⁸ For an example, see "Casas de juego," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Nov. 25, 1854.

⁵⁵⁹ For examples, see "Sodoma y Gomorra en Puebla," *El Telégrafo* (Mexico City), Oct. 26, 1881; "Jurisprudencia criminal," *El Foro* (Mexico City), Jan. 10, 1885; "La ciencia aplicada y la ciencia pura," *El Diario del Hogar* (Mexico City), Oct. 27, 1886; "Interior," *La Patria* (Mexico City), Nov. 19, 1887; "Noticias del reporter," *La Patria* (Mexico City), June 29, 1890; "Los dos fanatismos," *La Patria* (Mexico City), June 23, 1893; "Belén por dentro," *El Relámpago* (Mexico City), Dec. 4, 1894.

disgusting because it resembles another object that is disgusting. Hence, disgust can move between objects through the recognition of likeness."⁵⁶⁰

Importantly, as it relates to the movements of disgust, the feelings mobilized by words like "*repugnante*" and "*asqueroso*" were often cited as reasons to cut short (to move away from) conversations on sodomy (and sodomitical signifiers such as male-assigned effeminacies and feminizations) only after having been exposed to their proximity. For instance, in 1877, *El Foro* refused to describe the crimes of "pederasty and the rape of a corpse," claiming that "they are both so immoral that the pen resists describing them and reason resists explaining them."⁵⁶¹ Similarly, in 1887, *La Patria* referred to "individuals who should belong to the masculine sex but who have become so effeminate, or prostituted themselves to such a degree that it is shameful to categorize them as men" as "repugnant and immoral beyond contemplation."⁵⁶² To be sure, the article goes on to contemplate such individuals, carefully and almost seductively describing their feminizations, before cutting the conversation short by urging the reader to "leave such repugnant issues alone."⁵⁶³ As such, news articles that told the tale of repugnant *sodomitas* offer the very proximity from which they (and, arguably, their

⁵⁶⁰ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 87-88.

⁵⁶¹ "Cuadro estadístico de los heridos que ingresaron á la Cárcel de Ciudad en el mes de agosto," *El Foro* (Mexico City), Sept. 27, 1877. "los dos son de tal manera inmorales, que la pluma se resiste á relatarlos y la razón á explicarlos."

⁵⁶² "Interior," *La Patria* (Mexico City), Nov. 19, 1887. "[...] individuos que debían pertenecer al sexo masculino, pero que se han afeminado o prostituido á tal grado, que causa vergüenza clasificarlos como hombres [...]" "exhibición repugnante é inmoral sobre toda ponderación."

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.* "Más dejemos asuntos tan repugnantes."

readers) will soon thereafter recoil. Disgust, in this sense, both renders the outside thinkable, imaginable, and establishes it as the outside.

According to Ahmed disgust engenders the very border objects necessary for borders to not only be threatened but to exist in the first place.⁵⁶⁴ In this sense, disgust produces sodomy (and its associated feminizations) as scandal, as that which threatens the status quo sufficiently to deserve criminalization. The *sodomita*, often referred to as an *anfíbio* (amphibian), is produced as a border object threatening the integrity of that which is not it through scandal. So threatening is the feminized figure of the *sodomita* that newspapers would, in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, describe sodomitical subcultures as "a plague" of "disgusting degenerates" about which something (i.e. incarceration or exile) ought to be done.⁵⁶⁵ The anxiety over being overrun/overwhelmed by sodomites would intensify in the latter decades of the twentieth century, ultimately engendering the contemporary figure of *travesti* as an anxiety-producing figure.

Importantly, disgust comes to be so closely associated with sodomy that expressions of disgust (as well as descriptions of feminization) often stand in for a sodomitical act typically absent. Indeed, if after 1871 what was relevant for criminalization was public scandal rather than sodomy itself, expressions of disgust came to symbolize scandal itself. This is the case, for instance, in a call to the police printed in *El Contemporáneo* in 1903 which decried "the scandalous presence of two or three groups of *afeminados* who, with their repugnant movements and the ridiculous

⁵⁶⁴ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 86.

⁵⁶⁵ "Otra Plaga," *El Diario del Hogar* (Mexico City), Oct. 2, 1901. "asquerosos degenerados." See also, "Terrible plaga," *El Contemporáneo* (Mexico City), Oct. 12, 1902.

affectations of their hair-do's and shrill voices, wander around seizing the attention of all [...]”⁵⁶⁶ Importantly, however, by 1903 the *sodomita* had given way within public discourse to the homoeroticized *afeminado*, whose primary affectation, as suggested by the previous quote (i.e. "ridiculous affectations") was no longer disgust but, rather, shame.

6.2.2. Shame and the National Inclusion of Travesti

Through its associations with unproductivity⁵⁶⁷ and cowardice⁵⁶⁸, the *afeminado* was a figure read through shame long before its homoeroticization in 1901.⁵⁶⁹ As such, and considering that affective mobilizations do not involve free movement, but rather

⁵⁶⁶ "Súplica á la policía," *El Contemporáneo* (Mexico City), Jul. 21, 1903. "[...] la escandalosa presencia de dos ó tres grupos de afeminados que con sus movimientos repugnantes, y la ridícula afectación de sus peinados y voces atipladas vagan llamando la atención de todo el mundo [...]"

⁵⁶⁷ For examples of *afeminamiento* as unproductivity, see "Conversaciones de Focion, sobre la relación de la moral con la política," *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* (Mexico City), Dec. 17, 1841; "Parte literaria," *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* (Mexico City), Nov. 28, 1844; "Viages y costumbres," *El Monitor Constitucional* (Mexico City), Jan. 17, 1846; "El 'Franco Mexicano'," *La Razón de México* (Mexico City), Dec. 7. 1864.

⁵⁶⁸ For examples of *afeminamiento* as cowardice, see "Proclama el General en Gefe de Ejército del Norte, a las tropas de su mando," *El Mosquito Mexicano* (Mexico City), Nov. 25, 1838; "De la guerra de Tejas," *Diario del Gobierno de la República Mexicana* (Mexico City), Dec. 10, 1842; "Interior," *El Monitor Republicano* (Mexico City), Jun. 14, 1846; "Costumbres," *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* (Mexico City), May 18, 1851; "Guerra de los bárbaros en los estados fronterizos," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Jul. 9, 1852;

⁵⁶⁹ "Parte oficial," *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* (Mexico City), Feb. 13, 1863. Importantly, *afeminamiento* was at least partially homoeroticized (and criminalized) prior to 1901, as suggested by newspapers recounting the arrest of *afeminados*. For instance, in 1863, *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* announced that several people had been incarcerated in the public jail, among them "a young man for having absconded from his father's house, two men because they are bums, to men and two women for drunkenness, a man because he is an *afeminado* [...]." This account and several others such as this suggest that *afeminamiento* was suggestive of homoeroticisms since before 1901, however, the primary usage of *afeminado/afeminamiento* prior to 1901 remained related to cowardice and unproductivity.

stick, cling, to that which is near them, it is not surprising that the homoeroticized *afeminado* emerges and becomes sculpted through both shame and disgust.⁵⁷⁰ If in 1868 *El Monitor Republicano* was able to assert that "a man dressed as a woman is something more than ridiculous, he's repugnant,"⁵⁷¹ starting in 1901, the shame of ridiculousness begins to emerge as an important affective register of the homoeroticized *afeminado* (though it does not become the primary affect until the 1930's). To be sure, shame was occasionally deployed with regard to the *sodomita* prior to 1901 and disgust would extend from the *sodomita* in order to attach itself to the *afeminado* after 1901. However, the *primary* affective discourse attached to the homoeroticized *afeminado*, emerging through disgust and ridicule in 1901, was shame: the homoeroticized *afeminado* (particularly, though by no means exclusively, those engaging in physical technologies of feminization) was simultaneously accused of being shameless (*sinvergüenza*) and shameful (*vergonzoso*) as well as shamed (primarily) through ridicule.

The affective aftermath of *El Baile de los 41* is particularly interesting insofar as it cultivated several shifts. Among these, as discussed in the third chapter of this project, was the racialization of the *sodomita*: not only was the very word "*afeminado*" (overwhelmingly used to describe those arrested at the party) a word reserved for the class- (and therefore racially) privileged, imagined to be feminized by their distance from manual labor and their unproductive (i.e. leisurely) use of capital, but they were further offered the benefits of race privilege by being distinguished from the indigenous people

⁵⁷⁰ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 87.

⁵⁷¹ "Revista de Paris," *El Monitor Republicano* (Mexico City), Feb. 29, 1868. "Un hombre vestido de mujer es algo más que ridículo, es repugnante."

they were sent to (aid to) kill as punishment for their feminizations. Interestingly, the event was initially primarily billed as "repugnant." So much so, in fact, that *El Universal* guaranteed that the sight of these "ajembrados" ("feminized") "turned the stomach" of the police officer sent to surveil the event.⁵⁷² However, starting on November 20th, 1901, the press began to report that those arrested at *El Baile* were predominantly upper-class men from the ranks of the "pollos de Plateros"⁵⁷³ (previously non-homoeroticized *afeminados* who socialized on Plateros Boulevard), discourse began to shift from disgust to ridicule (not displacing the former but accompanying it). *La Patria* was particularly transparent about the relationship between class (and, concomitantly race) privilege and shame: "what is shameful and highly irritating is that, among those apprehended, there are many whom we have seen on Plateros Boulevard and are sons of good families."⁵⁷⁴ Such was the reliance on the trope of the decadent *afeminado* that several newspapers insisted that they would be sent to Yucatán in order to perform "hard labor," implying that their sexual deviance could be traced to their class privilege.⁵⁷⁵

A second shift discussed in the third chapter of this dissertation, the emphasis on technologies of feminization, bore the brunt of the ridiculization. Indeed, several were the newspapers that explicitly told tales of how those dressed in attire reserved for women at the time were ridiculed as part of their punishment. For instance, *El País* gleefully

⁵⁷² "Baile de afeminados," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Nov. 19, 1901.

⁵⁷³ "Un baile clandestino sorprendido," *El Popular* (Mexico City), Nov. 20, 1901.

⁵⁷⁴ "Los cuarenta y un bailarines," *La Patria* (Mexico City), Nov. 22, 1901. "Lo vergonzoso y altamente irritante es que entre los aprehendidos hay muchos que han figurado en el boulevard de Plateros y son hijos de buenas familias."

⁵⁷⁵ For example, see "Rumbo a Yucatán," *La Voz de México* (Mexico City), Nov. 23, 1901.

reported that "[b]ecause many of [those arrested at *El Baile de los 41*] still wore 'curls' on their foreheads as well as parts of the feminine attire they were surprised in by the police, the soldiers cruelly made fun of them."⁵⁷⁶ *El País* reported several other anecdotes meant to ridicule those employing technologies of feminization, such as a thief's fear of being misrecognized as a "*perjumado*" (perfumed person) and the forceful stripping of and re-dressing of those dressed in attire reserved for women (the latter, *El País* referred to as an "amusing scene").⁵⁷⁷ After *El Baile de la Coyuya*, which was raided a few months after *El Baile de los 41*, the script of ridiculization and shame was already sufficiently established so that the newspapers did not wait for confirmation that those apprehended were upper-class citizens but, rather, assumed so and proceeded to award them the treatment developed some three months earlier. "The people whistle at them and stone them" as a result of their "sizeable shamelessness," noted *El Popular*.⁵⁷⁸ Interestingly, although those apprehended after *El Baile de la Coyuya* did not belong to the upper classes, their feminizations nonetheless aided in them being positioned as members of a more acceptable class (and race). For instance, *El Popular* described one of those apprehended,

⁵⁷⁶ "El Baile Nefando," *El País* (Mexico City), Nov. 22, 1901. "Como muchos llevaban aún los 'chinos' sobre la frente y parte de los atavíos femeniles con que los sorprendió la policía, los soldados se burlaron cruelmente de ellos."

⁵⁷⁷ "Baile de solo hombres," *El País* (Mexico City), Nov. 23, 1901. "una escena muy chusca"

⁵⁷⁸ "Otro baile igual al de los 41," *El Popular* (Mexico City), Feb. 5, 1902. "El pueblo les silva y apedrea," "tamaña desvergüenza"

Margarita, as "dark-skinned as charcoal; but she does her own make-up and ends up white as a daisy."⁵⁷⁹

The ridiculization of male-assigned people engaging in technologies of feminization both after *El Baile de los 41* and following other raided events of a similar nature, together with the reracialization and renewed class condition of the now-homoeroticized *afeminado*, opened up a space for shame to enter a conversation previously dominated (and frequently cut short) by disgust. However, and owing perhaps to the notion that "[t]he conventional way of distinguishing shame from guilt is that shame attaches to and sharpens the sense of what one is, whereas guilt attaches to what one does,"⁵⁸⁰ shame becomes the primary affective register of feminized homoeroticisms in the 1930's (around the time that the "homosexual" emerges within public discourse). Ignacio Mendoza's diatribe against the homoeroticized *afeminado* in 1931 is particularly illustrative of the ways in which shame (both the noun and the verb) were deployed in the 1930's with regard to *afeminamiento*. Although Mendoza mourns the decriminalization of sodomy, he nonetheless reminds his readers that they have shame at their disposal, "an extremely powerful medium to render [pederasts] spectacle, to place them on the pillory of ridicule."⁵⁸¹ Indeed, Mendoza believes that shaming is a particularly important method

⁵⁷⁹ "El baile de los maricones," *El Popular* (Mexico City), Feb. 6, 1902. "Es prieta como un carbón; pero se pinta sola y queda blanca como una margarita."

⁵⁸⁰ Eve Kosofsky Sedwick, "Shame, Theatricality, and Queer Performativity: Henry James's *The Art of the Novel*," in *Gay Shame*, eds. David M. Halperin and Valerie Traub, 49-62, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2009), 51.

⁵⁸¹ Ignacio Mendoza, "Al margen de la reciente batida contra los afeminados," *Acción Social* (Toluca), Aug. 1, 1931. "[...] la sociedad dispone de un medio poderosísimo para poner a la espectación, en la picota del ridículo a los pederastas [...]"

when it comes to people who "because the position that they hold in the stratum of society is deemed high, they are called upon to edify the masses with examples of high morality."⁵⁸² To be sure, Mendoza proposes the shaming of *pederastas* he identifies as engaging in the "shameful vice" out of hedonism rather than an "error of nature." However, he nonetheless positions the *pederasta* as the "shame of the human species." Although long (if partially) decriminalized, the once "repugnant vice" becomes the "shameful crime/vice."⁵⁸³

Importantly, the *pederasta/afeminado/homosexual* is produced as being simultaneously shameless and shameful. According to *El Siglo de Torreón* in 1934, for instance, "shamelessness has made [the *afeminados*] sink to their lowest passions"⁵⁸⁴: the *absence* of shame *produces* a state of shame. The cycle of shame, in which shamelessness leads to shamefulness through shaming, produces the *degenerado* as part, however marginal, of the body politic. There exists not the recoiling, the expelling, of disgust but, rather, a rehabilitationist impetus to make a subject deemed capable of feeling shame willing to do so. To be sure, the public shaming of the homosexual (and particularly of those engaging in technologies of feminization) is a time-honored tradition that persists to date. However, the 1940's saw a shift in discourse: as the (criminal) scandal produced by

⁵⁸² Ibid., "[...] máximo cuando a los que se han considerado responsables, son personas que por la posición que ocupan en esa clase de la sociedad que le llaman alta, son los llamados a edificar a las masas con ejemplos de alta moralidad. "

⁵⁸³ "Feo delito de un tío contra su sobrino," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Nov. 5, 1931. "vergonzoso delito"

⁵⁸⁴ "Seis afeminados que irán pronto a las Islas Mariás," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), July 21, 1934. "[...] la desvergüenza, que los ha hecho llegar a las más bajas pasiones [...]"

raided *bailes de afeminados* decreased both in quantity and intensity, the homosexual became the source of a criminality extending beyond his/their sociality/sexuality. Indeed, the homosexual became the perilous and adept criminal imagined by the social sciences since at least the Porfiriato.

6.2.3. *Anxiety and the Criminality of Travesti*

Rachman notes that anxiety is one of the most "prominent and pervasive emotions" which involves "the interplay of vigilance, attention, perception, reasoning, and memory," cognitive operations that often take place at a non-conscious level.⁵⁸⁵ He defines anxiety as "the tense, unsettling anticipation of a threatening but vague event; a feeling of uneasy suspense."⁵⁸⁶ Noting that while fear and anxiety have been primarily differentiated on the basis of the presence or absence of a specific object of fear, Sara Ahmed suggests that fear is "linked to the 'passing by' of the object, even if the absence of the object in fear creates a different impression from the impression it creates in anxiety."⁵⁸⁷ Indeed, while anticipation has historically been thought to be the temporal domain of anxiety, Ahmed suggests that fear also involves an "anticipation of hurt or injury [and therefore] projects us from the present into a future."⁵⁸⁸ Refusing the characterization of anxiety as "being nowhere at all," in terms of its (non)relationship to specific objects, Ahmed instead describes anxiety "as an approach to objects rather than,

⁵⁸⁵ Stanley Rachman, *Anxiety* (New York: Psychology Press Ltd., 2004), 2.

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 3

⁵⁸⁷ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 65.

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

as with fear, being produced by an object's approach."⁵⁸⁹ For Ahmed, it is thus movement that differentiates between fear and anxiety, and it is through movement that "anxiety becomes attached to particular objects, which come to life not as the cause of anxiety, but as an effect of its travels."⁵⁹⁰

It is in this sense that I propose the figure of *travesti* as an anxious object: an object produced by affective histories of association bound together by anxiety. In other words, I propose that *travesti* has become constituted, since at least the 1940's, through a series of anxiety-producing metonymic slides that have congealed together to produce a threatening figure saturated with anxiety. In the 1940's, newspapers began to place the homosexual in more consistent proximity to non-homoerotic criminality.⁵⁹¹ As mentioned in Chapter 4, post-revolutionary criminologists continued the work of Porfirian criminologists by condemning (perhaps even more harshly) homosexuality insofar as it was considered a "dangerous state"⁵⁹² ("*estado peligroso*"), a state that positioned the homosexual perilously proximal to criminalized behaviors (and, as such, at greater risk of engaging in criminalized activities). Newspapers in the 1940's followed suit by consistently highlighting homoeroticisms (including technologies of feminization) within

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid., 66.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁹¹ Although scholars of homosexuality often trace the decriminalization of sodomy to 1871, as mentioned in the previous chapters, this decriminalization was both discretionary gradual.

⁵⁹² Susana Solano, "Algunas formas crónicas del estado peligroso," *Criminalia* (1937): 270-275.

accounts detailing criminalized endeavors.⁵⁹³ Zones of tolerance played a particularly important role in buttressing the criminality of the nascent homosexual within the public imaginary insofar as it placed the homosexual in greater proximity to other semi-licit and illicit vices. Indeed, homosexuals (and their spaces of sociality) were often driven into zones of tolerance by public health initiatives seeking to contain the immorality of homoeroticisms within zones of social abandonment.

The 1950's were particularly brutal with regard to the crafting of homosexual criminality. In particular, it is a time in which the homosexual with atavistic criminal tendencies imagined by Positivist Criminology since the Porfiriato comes to life: within the public imaginary, the homosexual became associated with exploitative sex⁵⁹⁴, drugs⁵⁹⁵, robbery⁵⁹⁶, and murder.⁵⁹⁷ Imagined to be a constant element of the criminal

⁵⁹³ For examples, see "Más diligencias hechas en el caso del estrangulador," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Sept. 20, 1942; Miguel R. De la Selva, "La sociedad a merced del hampa," *Sucesos para todos* (Mexico City), Feb. 24, 1942; "Campaña en contra de los invertidos," *El Porvenir* (Monterrey), June 8, 1943; "Artista Frances es detenido en EEUU por reciente crimen" *El Nacional* (Mexico City), June 15, 1947; "Drama de homosexuales en la zona de tolerancia," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Aug. 3, 1947; Helia D'Acosta, "María Félix," *Jueves de Excelsior* (Mexico City), Apr. 29, 1948; "Identidad del que fue hecho pedazos y arrojado en partes al Gran Canal," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Dec. 18, 1949.

⁵⁹⁴ For examples, see "Tétricos antros de vicio y prostitución clausurados por el departamento del D.F.," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Jan. 25, 1950; "A primera hora," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), July 28, 1950; "Lista negra de cines no aptos para menores," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Oct. 22, 1952.

⁵⁹⁵ For examples, see "Tétricos antros de vicio y prostitución clausurados por el departamento del D.F.," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Jan. 25, 1950; "Un traficante de enervantes preso en Lerdo," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Jan. 14, 1958; "Un homosexual vicioso, preso," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Feb. 11, 1958.

⁵⁹⁶ For examples, see "Dos homosexuales robaron dinero a un vecino de 'Gregorio García.' El caso sucedió antenoche en la Zona Roja," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), June 13, 1950; "Rateros homosexuales," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), June 13, 1950;

underworld, the homosexual (at this point still indistinguishable from the feminized male-assigned person) produces a generalized anxiety, a sense of unsafety. The words used to describe homosexuals and their spaces of sociality are particularly telling of the emergence of the homosexual as an anxiety-producing figure: "tétrico"⁵⁹⁸ (dismal), "brutalidad"⁵⁹⁹ (brutality), "pululan"⁶⁰⁰ (teeming), "peligroso"⁶⁰¹ (dangerous), "alarmante"⁶⁰² (alarming) are but a few examples of how anxiety becomes sutured to the figure of the homosexual (and its most visible representative, the male-assigned person who engages in technologies of feminization). The 1960's and early 1970's continues the production of the dangerous homosexual looming in the night with a slight shift: in the

"Cuatro individuos convictos y confesos de un robo de alambre," *El Porvenir* (Monterrey), Jan. 12, 1952; "Acusado de robo un homosexual," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Feb. 1, 1957; "Cometió un robo vestido como mujer," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), May 29, 1957; "Individuos anormales aprehendidos por robo," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Jan. 6, 1958.

⁵⁹⁷ For examples, see "Ramón García asesinado en una retirada cañada. Al parecer se trata de un crimen entre homosexuales," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Jan. 7, 1950; "Dictámen sobre los descuartizadores del tintorero urbano Maldonado, cuyo crimen conmocionó a todo el país," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Mar. 15, 1951; "Durante 2 años logró evadir a la justicia," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Oct. 18, 1952; "Tres homosexuales atacaron a un chofer," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Mar. 3, 1953; "Confesaron si crímenes los asesinos de choferes," *El Nacional*, Oct. 16, 1955; "Riña entre una mujer y un sujeto," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Nov. 8, 1956; "Un homosexual lesionó a un noctámbulo," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Nov. 14, 1958.

⁵⁹⁸ "Tétricos antros de vicio y prostitución clausurados por el departamento del D.F.," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Jan. 25, 1950

⁵⁹⁹ "A primera hora," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Jul. 28, 1950.

⁶⁰⁰ "Rateros homosexuales," *El Siglo de Torreón* (Torreón), Jun. 13, 1950.

⁶⁰¹ "Dictámen sobre los descuartizadores del tintorero urbano Maldonado, cuyo crimen conmocionó a todo el país," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Mar. 15, 1951

⁶⁰² "Lista negra de cines no aptos para menores," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Oct. 22, 1952.

mid-1960's accounts of the "proliferation" of homosexuality begin to emerge as a result of Western attempts at normalizing homosexuality (via its pervasiveness).⁶⁰³ Although accounts of the omnipresence of homosexuality would, in the late 1970's, be used in the service of manufacturing homosexual respectability, they initially aided in enhancing the object-dependent anxiety produced by homosexual criminality. As suggested in Chapter 3, it is precisely starting in the late 1970's that homosexual respectability politics anointed the *travesti* as its constitutive outside. In other words, the *travesti* was singled out by non-*travesti* homosexuals as the source of homosexual criminality (and, concomitantly, danger). The strategy was successful: by the 1980's, criminality had been transferred onto the newly reconstituted figure of the *travesti*.

Travesti has yet to rid itself of its association with criminality. If, in 1978, Xóchitl and her band of *travestis* were accused of sexually exploiting young, non-*travesti* homosexuals⁶⁰⁴, the twenty-first-century has also had no difficulties reproducing the stereotype of the *travesti* sex trafficker⁶⁰⁵. If, in 1981, *El Diario de la Mañana* could carelessly assert that *travestis* lurked behind 95% of the nighttime murders and muggings

⁶⁰³ For an example, see "El homosexualismo en E.U., aumentó," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), Apr. 18, 1966.

⁶⁰⁴ "Una 'maffia' controla a los homosexuales," *Avance* (Mexico City), Jun. 21, 1979.

⁶⁰⁵ For examples, see Silvia Otero, "Denuncian a explotador de sexoservidores," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Feb. 24, 2000; "Relacionan a travesti con trata de menores," *El Gráfico* (Mexico City), Nov. 19, 2009; "Cae presunto líder de red de explotación de menores," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Nov. 18, 2009; "Claudia Bolaños, "Consignan a banda por lenocinio," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Mar. 5, 2010; Lydia Cacho, "Sexo, ética y dinero," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Oct. 7, 2010; "Rescatan en Chihuahua a 11 niños secuestrados por travesti," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), Jul. 31, 2015.

committed in the city,⁶⁰⁶ contemporary news sources continue to overestimate and overrepresent *travesti* criminality by emphasizing the participation of *travestis* in criminalized activities, such as interpersonal violence and robbery⁶⁰⁷. Importantly, the criminality sutured to *travesti* makes it a figure incompatible with life in a (neo)liberal democracy insofar as, as suggested in the previous chapter, *travesti* lives are not only not produced as proximal to the trappings of neoliberal normalcy but are imagined as threatening those very spaces. *Travesti* criminality is anxiety-producing insofar as it represents a civil, political, and embodied threat, only partially containable through incarceration and death, to a body politic that imagines itself beholden to and represented by the laws of the land.

6.3. The Spectralization of *Travesti*

COPRED's campaign, availing itself as it does of the affective registers of modernity and couching them in the language of diversity, serves as a site through which the unitary nation comes into a more capacious coherence through shared core affects, while maintaining its foundational limits. That transnormativity comes to operate as a register of national inclusion through its constitutive association with modernity speaks to the regulatory function of economies of happiness. The extension of national and nation-

⁶⁰⁶ Francisco Reynoso Torres, "Investigaré la Policía al 'Mundo del Error'," *Diario de la Mañana* (Mexico City), Jun. 23, 1981.

⁶⁰⁷ For examples, see Mario Torres, "Detienen a travesti asaltante," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Feb. 14, 2000; Alejandro Jordó, "Detienen a travesti ladrón en el Centro," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Apr. 9, 2003; Alejandro Baltazar, "Disparan en la Condesa contra travesti," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Apr. 6, 2004; Icela Lagunas and Alejandro Baltazar, "Caen pelucas en operativo," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Jun. 4, 2004; "Deja travesti delincuente como prueba seno falso," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Sept. 4, 2008; Claudia Bolaños, "Travesti describe robo con gotas," *El Universal* (Mexico City), Jul. 6, 2009.

making affectations, such as happiness scripts, to bodies that might have otherwise been imagined to be unhappiness-causes requires libidinal investment on the part of the would-be significant Other in dominant economies of happiness. In other words, the ascendant trans subject must not only desire to submit to regimes of neoliberal rehabilitation but must *derive* happiness from their proximity to markers of intelligibility by depositing their hope for happiness in the right places.

Insofar as investments in and by happiness involve regulatory orientations toward objects that circulate as social goods, "to share or have a share in such objects is to share an orientation towards those objects being good."⁶⁰⁸ Access to the promise of national happiness operates as currency that accrues to particular bodies on the basis of their proximity to the affective registers of modernity and that simultaneously divests, through extraction, from those illegible to the modern nation-state. As such, the production of significant Others through the vitalization of transnormative life is a project firmly embedded within the extractive relations of valorization of coloniality. The success of COPRED's campaign lies precisely in its ability to produce a subject desirable to and compatible with the foundational logics of the *mestizo* state. By aligning the aspirations of the transnormative subject with core national affectations, COPRED successfully produces a subject able to be regulated by and profitable to the state, as well as bodies and affectations illegible to and through the registers of liberal constitutionalism but from which value can nonetheless be extracted, if not in life then through the distribution of death.

⁶⁰⁸ Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*, 44.

Travesti finds itself unavailable to reproduce happiness scripts like the ones formulated by COPRED not only because it is a figure sticky with anxiety (as well as with historical traces of disgust and shame) but also because it has thus far been unable to access the trappings of modernity. Indeed, *travesti* is often primitivized to the point of spectralization by a trans discourse unable to read *travesti* into the either/or politics of compartmentalization that structure the dominant way of understanding sex/gender/desire. "I sometimes think that *travesti* is a gender on the verge of extinction," contemplates Roshell, the owner of the longest-running *travesti* club in Mexico City.⁶⁰⁹ When I ask her why, she explains that young trans people now "jump" directly into transness without first going through *travestismo*. Importantly, one of the trappings of transness identified by Roshell is asserting one's right to have rights.⁶¹⁰ Roshell's view of *travesti* as space of temporary in-betweenness (in-between the legitimate categories of cisgender and transgender) is a notion reproduced not only in mainstream discourse but also within academic discourse. *Travesti*, the story goes, is replaced by the more internally consistent categories of *transgénero* and *transexual* as technologies of feminization (both embodied and internal) become more widely accessible. For instance, González Pérez suggests *travestismo* as a stepping-stone to transexualism by suggesting that "on the road to complete *travestismo*, some never arrive, some arrive and desist, and

⁶⁰⁹ Roshell Terranova, interview by a de la maza p rez tamayo, August 18, 2016, interview 32, transcript. "A veces pienso que el travesti es un g nero en peligro de extinci n."

⁶¹⁰ Ibid., " No, no, no, ahorita la gente joven son de "ya tengo derechos.""

some, even more bold, arrive and jump into transexualism."⁶¹¹ Similarly, Annick Prieur primitivizes *travestismo* by positioning it (via *jota-mayate* relationships) as a pre-modern practice likely to wane in popularity: "I do believe that the existing form of homosexuality in Neza (*travestismo*) as described in this book, is threatened, and probably will be less frequent in the years to come."⁶¹² Whereas the primary threat to *travestismo* for González Pérez is *transexualismo*, for Prieur, it is the virilization of homosexuality represented by gayness, and for Roshell it is the emergence of *transgénero*. How, then, could *travesti* possibly ascend to modern happiness when its death-via-primitivization is continually foretold?

Travesti is a figure far more valuable to LGBT respectability politics than is often recognized. As it did with the would-be virile homosexual of the late 1970's, *travesti* provides the space of abjection necessary for transnormativity to emerge. *Travesti*, illegible through the compartmentalizing cypher of sex/gender/desire, becomes a space for the uncomfortable and the unincorporable: criminality, excess, illegibility, death. *Travesti* becomes a receptacle for the anxieties produced by that which cannot ascend to respectability in the late 1970's and continues to serve as precisely such a space in trans' ascension to a national inclusion that can only be successful through the politics of respectability and responsible citizenship.

6.4. Conclusion

⁶¹¹ César O. González Pérez, *Travestidos al desnudo: homosexualidad, identidades y luchas territoriales en Colima* (Ciudad de México: Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 2003), 155-156.

⁶¹² Annick Prieur, *Mema's House, Mexico City: On Transvestites, Queens, and Machos* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 269-270.

The campaign disseminated by COPRED was initially imagined and proposed by its intellectual author, Laura Victoria Martes, with a slight yet potent variation. Instead of valiantly claiming that trans folks *are* happy citizens (citizens successfully made happy through proximity to that which *should* make one happy as well as to that which makes one a proper citizen), Martes submitted a more humble proposition: that trans folks *want to be* happy, regardless of their inclusion within city life, and are kept from that happiness by those already read as happy (see Figure 10). To be sure, the original proposal involved a plea to be recognized as an equal ("I, like you, just want to be happy"). However, Martes' version of the campaign also identified the normalized (non-trans) Other, the legitimate possessor of happiness, as a source of *unhappiness*, as standing in the way of trans happiness. To be sure, Martes positioned herself in proximity to the same trappings of neoliberal normalcy that were reproduced in the final version of the campaign. However, the message in the original campaign suggested perhaps a bolder claim: that no matter how much one approximates happiness-causing objects, happiness remains inaccessible so long as it is guarded and allocated by those already presumed to be happy. Throughout this chapter, I have hopefully suggested that the figure of *travesti* emerges historically through a series of affective mobilizations that have at least partially determined how (and where) *travesti* is able to circulate. From the disgust attached to the colonial and post-independence *sodomita*, to the shame attached to the early twentieth-century *afeminado*, to the anxiety attached to the *homosexual-cum-travesti*, *travesti* emerges in the late 1970's a figure seeped in affect. Importantly, it is *travesti's* association with anxiety what would allow the virile homosexual to emerge as a respectable citizen-

subject, insofar as the former would take on the latter's (both's) association with crime and criminality. Interestingly if unsurprisingly, the twenty-first-century would once more be privy to a similar shift, in which trans (*transexual* and *transgénero*) makes an attempt to become respectable identitarian spaces at the expense of *travesti*. Because *transexual* and *transgénero* can only ascend to citizenship through proximity to neoliberal life trajectories (via transnormativity), *travesti* is once more called upon to function as the constitutive outside, a space containing that which cannot ascend to happiness.

Figure 10

Victoria Original.

The poster reads: "My name is Victoria and I am a trans woman. I like everything related to communication. Being able to share information and culture and to be able to express what I think and feel with freedom. As well as opening up spaces for others to do the same, which is one of my greatest satisfactions in life. Being fulfilled is a legitimate aspiration because I, like you, just want to be happy. Please don't impede me."



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