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„Die Transvestiten haben das Wort“: the politics of gender variation, sexual distinction and morality in the transvestite magazine *Das 3. Geschlecht*

Zusammenfassung

„Die Transvestiten haben das Wort“: die Politik der Geschlechtervariation, sexuellen Unterscheidung und Moral in der Transvestitenzeitschrift *Das 3. Geschlecht*

Dieser Beitrag beschäftigt sich mit der in der Zeit der Weimarer Republik von Friedrich Radszuweit herausgegebenen Zeitschrift *Das 3. Geschlecht* (1930–1932) und untersucht die affektiven und politischen Dimensionen der dargestellten öffentlichen Transvestitenkultur. Seinerzeit entstanden neben schwulen und lesbischen Kollektiven auch transvestitische Gegenöffentlichkeiten, die durch queere Berichterstattung und urbane Netzwerke gefördert und durch politische Akzeptanz gemäßigt wurden. Wie *Das 3. Geschlecht* zeigt, reagierten einige Transvestiten auf die neue Öffentlichkeit mit Zurückhaltung, Abschirmung und Verschwiegenheit, statt mit öffentlichem Widerstand oder Sichtbarkeit als trans*. Ich versuche, diese Tendenz zu Genderkonservatismus, Heterosexismus und bürgerlichen Konventionen aufbauend auf Laurent Berlants Konzept der *intimen Öffentlichkeit* zu beleuchten. Mein Schwerpunkt liegt dabei auf normativen und ‚generischen‘ Vermittlungen der Erfahrung von Transvestitismus und der Frage, wie die Bedingungen für ein Leben als Transvestit in einer Zeit gestaltet werden konnten, als Normen für trans* Personen noch im Entstehen begriffen und umstritten waren. Dabei erweisen sich Wunschvorstellungen geschlechtlicher und sexueller Normalität und Zugehörigkeit zur bürgerlichen Gesellschaft als bedeutsamer als oppositionelle oder emanzipatorische Politik.

Schlüsselwörter
Transgender-Geschichte, Transvestismus, Intime Öffentlichkeiten, Sexualpolitik, Weimarer Republik, Transgender-Identitäten

Summary

This article analyzes the Weimar-era transvestite magazine *Das 3. Geschlecht* (1930–1932), originally published by Friedrich Radszuweit, and assesses the affective and political qualities of the transvestite public culture that it organized. Scholars have shown how transvestite counter publics emerged in Germany alongside gay and lesbian collectives, spurred by the development of a queer press and urban social networks and tempered by a politics of respectability. As *Das 3. Geschlecht* shows, certain transvestites responded to the new publicity around transvestism by turning to modesty, privacy and inconspicuousness, not necessarily to public resistance or visibility as trans*. My argument explains this tendency toward gender conservatism, heterosexism, and middle-class conventions like domesticity and decency by emphasizing how this space operates as an *intimate public*, building on the concept by Laurent Berlant. Focusing on normative and ‘generic’ mediations of the experience of transvestism, I explore how the magazine’s public sought to shape the conditions for living as a transvestite in Weimar society, when the norms for trans personhood were still being conceived and disputed. Aspirational fantasies of gender and sexual normalcy and seamless belonging in middle-class society prove more significant to these mediations than oppositional or emancipatory politics.

Keywords
transgender history, transvestism, intimate publics, sexual politics, Weimar Germany, transgender identities

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1 Introduction

By the mid-1920s in Germany, a model for understanding transgender feeling developed with the category of 'transvestism' around social practices of crossdressing and cross-gender identification. This category emerged out of sexological and medical discourses on abnormal sexual behavior and coincided with the ongoing movements for homosexual emancipation and sexual reform of the pre- and interwar periods (Beachy 2010; Herrn 2005; Sutton 2012, 2015; Tobin 2015; Whisnant 2016). Starting from Magnus Hirschfeld's study on the "erotic drive to crossdress" (Hirschfeld 1910, translation H. R.[1]) titled *Die Transvestiten*, the category was heavily influenced by the contemporary notion of a *third sex* as well as Hirschfeld's theory of sexual intermediaries (*sexuelle Zwischenstufen*). Hirschfeld (1904, 1910, 1918) sought to explain gender and sexual variation as a phenomenon of natural multiplicity and admixture of ideal masculine and feminine traits (Dose 2014; Hill 2005; Mancini 2010). After the formation of the Weimar Republic, new sociopolitical transformations, such as the relaxation of state censorship laws, loosening attitudes around sex and pleasure, and shifts in traditional gender relations allowed for the emergence of more visible public cultures for gender and sexual minorities (Herzog 2011). These developments included the flourishing of a queer press and an increase in the number of political organizations and venues targeting queer publics, particularly in urban areas like Berlin (Beachy 2014: 164, 189ff.; Lybeck 2014). As Sutton has argued, the new political culture of 'transvestite' identity in the Weimar period and the efforts to articulate a form of "transvestite citizenship" (Sutton 2012: 337) point to the formation of a distinct counter public sphere in which trans identity was bound up with an oppositional and subordinate relationship with dominant culture.[2] Similarly, Lybeck highlights the significant role of print periodicals like *Garçonne* and *Die Freundin* that were aimed at women readers interested in topics of homosexuality and transvestism, arguing that these texts and their readers constituted a distinct "print public sphere" that allowed for "solitary identity work while also fostering imagined social connection and a presence in public" (Lybeck 2014: 161). Marhoefer (2015) has shown how a 'limited' public sphere around lesbian and transvestite identities developed through shared reading practices and their extension into social venues and political groups like the Deutscher Freundschaftsverband (DFV), emphasizing the impact of media and state censorship in shaping lesbian subcultures. These authors note that pushes for emancipation were circumscribed by a bourgeois political culture of respectability that tended away from radicalism, encouraging "restraint" by "maintaining a low profile" in public (Marhoefer 2015: 8, 64) and "conforming to dominant standards of appearance, behavior, and morality" (Sutton 2012: 341).

Building on these arguments, I address the material printed in five issues of the transvestite magazine *Das 3. Geschlecht* by the publisher and activist Friedrich Radszuweit

1 In this article, some original German-language quotations have been translated into English by the author. These translations are not further identified in the following.

2 My use of 'trans' is meant to stand in for a broad range of historical and contemporary phenomena of gender variation, not all of which are identical to modern notions of 'transgender'. I want to highlight the continuity between contemporary understandings of transgender and historical practices and feelings of gender incongruence, while marking the difference between these categories and our own. On the trans* asterisk as a wildcard, see Halberstam (2018: Ch. 1).

from May 1930 to May 1932, which included short fiction, reportage, scientific articles, opinion columns, photography and advertising. Publications targeting an explicitly transvestite audience emerged in the mid-1920s as inserts and special columns in other periodicals. The supplement "Der Transvestit", later "Die Welt der Transvestiten", appeared in the lesbian magazine *Die Freundin* after 1924, and "Der Transvestit" as a column in *Liebende Frauen* from 1927 (Schader 2004, 2018). Of the queer periodicals from the period (Beachy lists at least 28), *Das 3. Geschlecht* is the only one that exclusively addresses the topic of transvestism and accompanied Radszuweit and other leaders' efforts to organize transvestites within the paradigm of the homosexual emancipation movement and its organizations like the Bund für Menschenrecht (BfM) (Herrn 2016: 235ff.). Radszuweit's press published the most prominent examples from the period like *Die Freundin*. These magazines were meant to serve as democratic extensions of their political groups, providing a forum where readers could respond to and influence the organization's positions in addition to their "identification models" (Vendrell 2020: 39) and norms of behavior. Radszuweit qua businessperson was aware of the new potential for consumer culture to market to sexual minorities, and he sought to capitalize on this new public of trans readers as a form of "pink money" (Vendrell 2020: 44ff.).

I argue that the circulation of *Das 3. Geschlecht* among transvestite, queer and other readers interested in the social issues of transvestism represents the formation of an *intimate public* which served the affective and moral purposes of norm-setting and distinction for a certain class of transvestites, in the sense of elaborating the specific feelings, desires and practices attached to living as the 'other sex,' and distinguishing themselves from other 'abnormal' types through their sexual character, propriety and class attitudes. While it is tempting to assume that this discrete trans subculture formed with an emancipatory and transformative politics, this Weimar transvestite public and its aims bear a significant impulse toward non-visibility, discretion, and gender and sexual conservatism, especially rooted in the private sphere and circumscribed by domestic institutions like marriage and the family. The historical emergence and mediation of trans feeling in the Weimar era was accompanied counterintuitively by reassertions of the primacy of heterosexuality, conventional gender relations and their moral codes. This calls us to qualify the 'political' nature of transvestism and challenges the idea (or wish) that trans publics would necessarily emerge through revolutionary transformations of gender and sexuality. This highlights a divergence between historical forms of trans feeling and modern desires to glimpse trans resistance in the past. I would argue that the contemporary desire to seek out this resistance traffics in the same political promises that trans intimate publics offer, namely that I encounter in these historical publics people who are trans like me, who have felt the same feelings of gender unease and suffering that I have experienced, and that they lived and *survived* these conditions like I hope to.[3]

An *intimate public,* a concept developed by Laurent Berlant in *The Female Complaint* (2008), describes an affective and aesthetic space of sentimental attachment, identification, and recognition organized around a shared identity and its related genres,

3 I make this argument in light of the resurgence of pop-culture and academic interest in trans politics in the Weimar era, seen for instance in Joey Soloway's *Transparent* series. These developments invite reflection on our wishful attachments to historical subjects and the political expectations we place on them (see, e.g., Love 2007: Ch. 2).

which are assumed to be common to the historical experiences of its members. Berlant defines a public as a "space of mediation in which the personal is refracted through the general", a reciprocal framework for "identification among strangers that promises a certain experience of belonging and provides a complex of consolation, confirmation, discipline and discussion about how to live as an *x*" in the world (Berlant 2008: viii). It also represents a "culture of circulation" that "operates when a market opens up to a bloc of consumers, claiming to circulate texts and things that express those people's particular core interests and desires" (Berlant 2008: 5). An intimate public generates a sense that it "expresses what is common among them, a subjective likeness that seems to emanate from their history and their ongoing attachments and actions" (Berlant 2008: 5). Genres that circulate in these publics, as in the case of femininity and "women's culture" for Berlant, form a "structure of conventional expectation" that "provide certain kinds of affective intensities and assurances" (Berlant 2008: 4), imparting the characteristic feeling that "you are not alone (in your struggles, desires, pleasures)" (Berlant 2008: ix). In the periodicals that published sections explicitly for transvestites, transvestism circulates as this generic point of personal attachment and aspiration, shaped by common experiences of gender incongruence and the desires to live as an accepted member of the 'opposite' sex, to find one's place within an already-existing "structure of conventional expectation" (Berlant 2008: 4) and broker the terms for living as a trans person in this system. An intimate public assures its members that their experiences in the world are not theirs alone and allows them to experience their personal story as something social, even if "one's singular relation to that belonging is extremely limited, episodic, ambivalent, rejecting, or mediated by random encounters with relevantly marked texts" (Berlant 2008: x).

While Radszuweit expressed emancipatory aims in his editorials in *Das 3. Geschlecht*, the text articulates practices and feelings that are "juxtapolitical" as Berlant put it, adjacent to or removed from politics 'proper'. Intimate publics often express ambivalence toward dominant politics and instead flourish "in *proximity* to the political" (Berlant 2008: x, emphasis in original). In the case of the Weimar transvestite public, this ambivalence is captured in the desire expressed by some transvestites in the magazine to simply live inconspicuously and work domestically in their preferred gender, not to stand out *as* transvestites or politicize themselves as such. This points to the culture of respectability that conditions Weimar trans publics and calls into question the propriety of living trans publicly. It highlights the fraught and stigmatized nature of the category, expressed in the urge to *not* appear in public and not stand out or be conspicuous *as* a transvestite, while still pushing for social tolerance and acceptance as a 'normal' person. As Sutton shows, "demands for legal and social recognition were formulated on the condition that the subjects themselves disappear from public view" (Sutton 2012: 343; cf. Herrn 2016: 245). Publics serve their promise to express commonality and recognition among strangers by binding them in their negotiation and recognition of shared norms. For Berlant, they are vital for the "ordinary survival" of the subordinated populations that they mediate and should not merely be assessed in their "convertibility to politics" or as symptomatic of "unrealized revolution" (Berlant 2008: 24f.). The counterposed tendencies of the political and "juxtapolitical" that emerge within the text of *Das 3. Geschlecht* give evidence to the survival strategies at work in the emerging

transvestite public of the Weimar period, where the "negotiation of the process of survival" outside of the "idiom of politics" (e.g., in the idiom of bourgeois privacy and respectability) is a condition for that public's flourishing (Berlant 2008: 24). These ambivalences should not be viewed as the public's "failure to be politics" (Berlant 2008: 25) and instead points to an optimistic, even utopian drive in the turn to "normativity itself" (Berlant 2008: 5) in the bargaining with power and in the aspirational attachments and disavowals that frame one's sense of being-in-common in the world as a 'transvestite'.

2 The political work of transvestism

The material in *Das 3. Geschlecht* represents perspectives across multiple categories of identity, from the working and middle classes, gender and sexual minorities, as well as non-trans outsiders and experts, brought into conversation on the problems, values and proclivities of transvestites. Transvestism and the social roles ascribed to those who desired to live as another gender became a public project for negotiation and rearticulation as a tolerated social phenomenon in Weimar Germany. The mobilization of these various interests around transvestism might appear to contemporary readers as promisingly queer, in that they suggest forms of affinity and solidarity across stable boundaries of gender, sexuality and class, although this solidarity remains primarily virtual and imagined. This queer potential appears in the open exchange of feelings, political desires and disciplinary norms around gender variance, even by non-transvestites, who share in the communal, mediating function of the intimate public and take part in the belonging it transmits, even in disciplinary interventions.

An editorial from the publisher from July 1931, titled "Zum Kampf der Transvestiten", speaks to the circulation of feeling in this public, highlighting the affective qualities of *Das 3. Geschlecht,* as well as the political visions of the editor, which the audience of the magazine failed to uphold. Radszuweit admonishes his transvestite readership for neglecting to fulfill their "duty" to the movement for emancipation and states his editorial intention that the magazine should capture the "Seelen-" and "Empfindungsleben" of transvestites, not simply their voracious appetite for clothing and detailed accounts of dressing habits (Radszuweit 2016 [1931]: n. p.).[4] The economically-minded Radszuweit laments that attempts to organize transvestites within his political organization (the BfM) had not proven successful, and criticizes them for their reticence to financially contribute to the BfM or pay the 1-Mark cover charge of the publication, quipping that transvestites have not realized that "when one desires rights, one must also fulfill duties" (Radszuweit 2016 [1931]: n. p.). He criticizes the apolitical nature of the group that he is fighting for, contrasting their efforts with the stronger organizational will of homosexuals in the BfM. His text disdains how "naive" some transvestites are for expecting to be respected publicly and have the work of enlightenment done for them, calling out specifically those who buy a single issue and share it among friends rather than purchase

4 Herrn's 2016 reprint of *Das 3. Geschlecht* does not feature continuous pagination throughout the volume, but instead includes facsimiles of each issue with their original pagination. An inclusive page range for cited articles within their respective issue, as well as the month and year of publication, can be found at the end of the reference list.

their own copy (Radszuweit 2016 [1931]: n. p.). Radszuweit suggests that one cannot yet speak of transvestite social recognition due to their disengagement with the cause and the lack of public effort to bring about change: "Bis jetzt kann man von einem Kampf der Transvestiten um ihre Anerkennung nicht reden, denn ist ja noch nichts getan worden, um die Öffentlichkeit aufzurütteln" (Radszuweit 2016 [1931]: n. p.).

Radszuweit's frustrations illustrate the gulf between emancipatory-minded organizers and the subjects addressed by their sexual politics, who demonstrated an ambivalence and even outright resistance to identifying and organizing publicly as transvestites (Herrn 2016: 243ff.). The tenuousness of this not-yet-political community and the stigma of belonging to it underscore the "juxtapolitical" structure of an intimate public, not just in the work of emotional solidarity among readers, but also framed by their failure to become political and take collective action. Instead, they demonstrate a tendency to pass from sight and seek personal obscurity in privacy, or rather "on behalf of privacy" (Berlant 2008: 22). Radszuweit's economic expectations show that the trans public was conditioned by the circulatory networks and profit incentives of consumer culture, since he extended business models to the realm of democratic politics and tried to capitalize on new markets of queer consumers, a novel, albeit contentious use of his resources in publishing (Vendrell 2020: 44ff.).

One contribution titled "Gedanken einer heterosexuellen Frau über die Transvestiten" (Dietrich 2016 [1930]) illustrates how the category of transvestism became a public matter of concern that called for boundary-making and rule-setting that spanned the interests of other discreet identity categories and social worlds. The identity work in this article centers on shared conventions of femininity, and its author tries to encourage behavioral norms that (MtF) transvestites should follow if they hope to be accepted as women, criticizing those who do not fully adopt all aspects of womanhood. The author expresses pity for transvestites, who are often "recht unbeholfene Menschen" who have been doomed by an "inscrutable nature" to never truly understand "how to live life" (Dietrich 2016 [1930]: n. p.). Acknowledging the inborn, unobjectionable nature of transvestism, she tells of an "awkward" friend who was otherwise a "fully realized woman". She calls out "his" singular fixation on clothing and feminine accoutrements, noting that he pays absolutely no attention to the state of his home or the maintenance of his domestic space: "Trotzdem er alleinstehend war, vernachlässigte er seine Wirtschaft vollkommen, und sein Äußeres stand in grellen Kontrast zu seinem Heim. Einer wirklichen Frau würde man es nie verzeihen, wenn ihre Wohnung sich in einen solchen Zustand befände" (Dietrich 2016 [1930]: n. p.).

The final claim that a "real woman" would never be forgiven for such egregious neglect of her private space is a condemning statement of her friend's gender failure, vanity and inability to live up to a primary norm of bourgeois femininity. It also indexes how that norm applies to all women generically, including the author herself. For the transvestites, failure to meet this norm compromises their social legibility and belonging as women: "der Uneingeweihte [sah] ja nur immer den Mann und diesem verzeiht man es schon, wenn er die Wirtschaft nicht so in Ordnung hält" (Dietrich 2016 [1930]: n. p.). Berthe Dietrich issues an assertion that serves as a maxim for gender tolerance: "Wenn schon Frau, dann auch ganz" (Dietrich 2016 [1930]: n. p.). As Berlant suggests, contending with what a public establishes as normative (in this case, both for women and

transvestites) is itself a way to take part "in the promise of belonging that it represents" by determining "whose experience it can absorb" and whose it should renounce (Berlant 2008: ix).

These exclusions resonate with the article "Transvestiten-Ehe", whose author emphasizes that clothes alone do not make a woman and that transvestites must also take on "ihre ganze Arbeit" (Grete 2016 [1930]: n. p.). Asserting a "Hausfrauenpflicht", the transvestite author offers a categorical distinction: "ein Transvestit ohne den Drang auch Hausarbeit zu leisten, ist eben kein solcher" (Grete 2016 [1930]: n. p.). Clearing any middle-ground for ambiguity or admixture, these texts assert a gender imperative to perform the binary norms that dictate the social roles for women and men entirely, not selectively. Gendered expectations of women's labor were key to many transvestites' desires for recognition, and it is precisely their conventionality and normative character that promises gender belonging and fulfillment. The "housewife duty" recapitulates bourgeois demands on women rather than offering an emancipatory appeal to transform or escape them, and her claim that all women are happy to perform domesticity and preside over the home suggests a limited conception of women's agency that appears naïve from a feminist vantage point. Such commentary on domesticity circulates at a key moment in the modernization of gender relations, where the social bonds between women, the domestic sphere and practices of reproduction were becoming more tenuous following World War I. The Weimar concept of womanhood, as scholars like Atina Grossmann have shown, occupied a pivotal space on the boundary of public and domestic spheres, both embodying the "crisis of modernity" and seeming to offer "a bastion of stability in a rapidly changing world" (Grossmann 1995: 5). Weimar transvestite publics are similarly marked by a contradiction between the desire for domestic normalcy and the demands of public recognition as a marginal political community worthy of rights.

3 Morality and gender expression

The sense of gender scrutiny that the opinion pieces convey is echoed in articles that capture what public life felt like for transvestites trying to live in their desired genders, reflecting the pressure to 'pass' inconspicuously and conform to gender expectations. Many contend with matters of gendered aesthetics and manners, not necessarily with the morality of transvestism, using class-based concepts like decency (*Anstand*) that qualify transvestites' entrance into public life as a matter of taste. An opinion from one transvestite, ominously titled "Menschen sehen dich an", depicts a culture of surveillance of the behavior of gender-variant people, writing, "man fühlt es, man wird kritisiert und scharf beobachtet" (Schröder 2016 [1931]: n. p.). Her text critiques transvestites who do not blend in seamlessly with cisgender men and women and offers advice for passing, covering troublesome points that could draw unwanted attention. The author recounts reading another woman's appearance on the train and clocking her as trans in a moment of realization of her 'real' sex. Men's rings, loud nose-blowing, and heavy perfume gave it away: "Ja, sie ist ein 'Er'" (Schröder 2016 [1931]: n. p.).

The author reports that journalists, scientists, artists and criminalists are all keenly interested in observing the lifestyle of transvestites, as are heterosexuals looking for a

spectacle. Answering this sense of persistent observation with an appeal to dress decently (or only go out at night or stay home if unable to do so), a Grete M. suggests that lengthy descriptions of "dressing scenes" in the magazine would serve a prurient interest, e.g., "der Wunsch, auf ungeahnte Orgien stoßen zu können" (M., Grete 2016 [1932]: 33). Disavowing that these interests have anything to do with transvestism as an identity, Grete compares accounts of dressing to "tasteless revelations from the marital bedroom", and adds that in European cities, the ability of transvestites to pass seamlessly and tastefully has become a lost art, claiming, "nur ein verschwindend kleiner Teil wirklich dezent, unauffällig und ästhetisch wirkt" (M., Grete 2016 [1932]: 33).

Elsewhere, this push for decency under increased public attention is paired with a warning to transvestites: "Lerne dich selbst erkennen!" as the article's subtitle implores, before you identify too hastily with transvestism ("Der Transvestit über sich selbst" 2016 [1931]: 20). The author, an MtF transvestite, shares a cautionary tale of a friend who wished to live as a woman. Armed with information "über männliche und weibliche Hormonwirkung und über Kastration", she decided to undergo a medical procedure in order to fulfill the desire, "alle äußeren männlichen Merkmale zu beseitigen" ("Der Transvestit über sich selbst" 2016 [1931]: n. p.).[5] The case warns against irreversible medical interventions, especially if the source of gender desire could have a sexual basis or lead to "Vernichtung des bedeutsamen äußeren männlichen Zeichens" ("Der Transvestit über sich selbst" 2016 [1931]: n. p.). The text warns against "irrational" identification with transvestism and for humility in the pursuit of one's desires, arguing that one must place realistic limits on the urge to live another gender. The author ultimately reaffirms her more modest approach to womanhood, which involves no "unnatural" strategies: "Ich werde mich bescheiden mit dem, was auf natürlichem Wege erreicht werden kann" ("Der Transvestit über sich selbst" 2016 [1931]: n. p.).

Such negotiations around practices of transvestism point to the need for measured self-reflection in the face of publicity around a new category whose promise seems dubious or deceptive, showing that a network of scientific and popular information (about hormonal treatments emerging in sexology and medicine, for instance) was already in active circulation at the time. This impression of the "Auffälligkeit" of European transvestites and the risk of immodesty suggests a reactionary response to the newfound visibility of trans people in everyday life. These disciplinary 'correctives' mediate the terms for trans participation in public and represent one means, even for outsiders, to take part in the commonalities that the intimate public transmits.

4 Fantasies of recognition and seamless passing

The class-based norms of gender performance in the Weimar period come to light in different ways in fictional contributions to *Das 3. Geschlecht*. Like the non-fiction articles, priority is placed on unostentatious passing and conformity with the conventions of masculine and feminine behavior. In terms of form, these texts feature a light, trivial style with uncomplicated narratives that offer imaginative responses to normativi-

5 See Herrn (2016: 278f., 2005: 167–218), on the development of surgical interventions during this period.

ty and envision modes of personal belonging and transformation that navigate *within* the restrictiveness of social conventions, particularly in working life and middle-class society. Successfully dressing as the desired gender is figured as a kind of escape from monotony, in some cases imagined with exotic qualities and often achieved through narratives of travel (cf. Karsten 2016 [1932]; M., Emmy 2016 [1932]). In these cases, fantasies of unproblematic transvestism bolster their navigation of everyday life, where trans desires may not be realizable. In the first issue, a short "transvestite story" titled "Die andere Seite" (Ruth 2016 [1930]: n. p.) conveys this sense of fantastical transformation and flight to an intimate space beyond the limits of 'decent' society. The story tells of the married couple Olga and Helmuth, serving as "Regierungsrat", linking them to the bureaucratic structure of the government and its duties. Focalized through Olga's perspective, the story opens in their domestic space, as Olga learns that Helmuth will attend a party at his friend's atelier. Olga's demeanor changes, and the reader learns that the extravagant parties often feature crossdressing and gender play. The demands of public appearances and social status are immediately posed in conflict with this premise, as Olga warns that they are expected to attend a party hosted by his superior Consul Feidt two days after. Helmuth ensures that they will be back in time, hoping for, "wie immer, nur einen Abend, ein paar Stunden" (Ruth 2016 [1930]: n. p.).

Images of Rolf's atelier, "jenes köstliche und schwelgerische Heim" occupy Olga's mind, and the affairs take on an exotic, mystical character, as she recalls the last party "Rose von Jericho" filled with Orientalist attire and decor: "von matten, bunten Schleiern abgedämpfte Lichter, Blumenranken von Krone zu Krone, Palmen, Düfte und süße Klänge – und Menschen darunter in bizarrer und kostbarer Gewandung" (Ruth 2016 [1930]: n. p.).[6] The narrative frames Olga's tolerance for Helmuth's positioning "auf der anderen Seite" as a gesture of love that protects him from the public scorn that could arise if his predilection were disclosed to everyday acquaintances: "damit niemand von jenen, die unverständig oder auch böse waren, ihm wehtun konnte" (Ruth 2016 [1930]: n. p.). At these sumptuous parties, liminal spaces of intimacy and freedom, Olga witnesses how Helmuth is "relieved from the spell of masculinity" (Ruth 2016 [1930]: n. p.). Nevertheless, both Olga and Helmuth must return to the normal world of work and civic society. Helmuth returns to bureaucratic duties refreshed and even more productive and capable: "der Mensch, der dann stolz und energisch in sein Amt ging, […] der tüchtige, fähige Beamte, der mit kaum vierzig Jahren bereits Regierungsrat war, der glich in nichts jenem Geschöpf 'von der anderen Seite'" (Ruth 2016 [1930]: n. p.).

Helmuth's mystical gender crossing poses little threat to their 'normal' life and productivity, except where it threatens to reveal itself. Helmuth, overly lubricated by wine, slips into an effeminate posture at the Consul's dinner and reveals that they had been on "the other side," before Olga stops and interjects: "Du bist nicht drüben – du bist hier, Helmuth!" (Ruth 2016 [1930]: n. p.). Helmuth's gender desire is a private secret for the couple, who use it to motivate their performance of normative social demands, while maintenance of the secret becomes a labor of Olga's love. It is only on her confidences, conveyed in the focalization, that the reader is presented with a narrative of Helmuth's trans desire. The story ends with their secret safe, with Olga ad-

6 On the Orientalist quality of gender fantasies in relation to the middle-class "cult of domesticity" and transgressive practices like cross-dressing, see McClintock (1995: 132–180).

miring Helmuth before his superior as "der ernste, korrekte Herr Regierungsrat" (Ruth 2016 [1930]: n. p.). Rather than a critical rejection of gender relations and the values of bourgeois society, the story closes in their plaintive reaffirmation, as gender play is sequestered within intimate fantasies and re-channeled into efficiency at work, into an upright 'normal' social image. This resolution satisfies the fantasy of 'heterosexual' transvestites in the magazine who express desire to find a wife who can accommodate their inclinations without the threat of social ruin (Schröder, G. E. 2016 [1931]; K. 2016 [1931]; Grahlotto/Petras/Held 2016 [1932]). It illustrates how participation in the intimate public, even concealing *the* characteristic tendency it mediates, can aid in the seamless navigation and experience of social worlds on a personal register where that tendency can be felt privately.

Other fictional texts in the magazine frame the class-based demand to be a productive, upstanding member of society *despite* one's gender difference in a less compliant tone. The difficult economic realities of the late-Weimar era made gender crossing an appealing option for working-class FtM people who face restrictions on women's labor and social roles, which limit the range of work and means of survival available to them in their assigned sex. In "Willa und Fried" (Killmer 2016 [1930]) the bourgeois values that dictate women's domestic responsibilities and limit their labor outside the home pose an impediment to the title couple's sustenance. The masculine role desired by Willa is posed as a solution to these normative limitations, which would not only satisfy Willa's desire to live as a man, but also relieve the couple's economic hardship. Labeled as a "Humoreske" the story's genre is significant for both its light-hearted quality with minimal conflict and the liberatory, fanciful fulfillment of gender desire it generates in its resolution. The story opens with Willa playfully chiding Fried for not allowing her to work when their financial situation is so dire: "Ich wüßte nicht, wie ich dazu käme, zu lächeln, wo die Gelder so knapp sind und dich dein Spießertum und deine Kleinlichkeit abhält, mich irgendwie mitverdienen zu lassen" (Killmer 2016 [1930]: n. p.). Fried's "Spießertum", his parochialism and conformity with bourgeois values, limits Willa's ability to earn money outside the home, even while, as Willa points out, "other women" are entering the workforce.

The secret of Willa's smile that opens the story is actually crossdressing, since Willa has collected a set of Fried's clothing that can be secretly worn when he is away. During a business trip of Fried's, Willa is thrilled at the opportunity to dress in masculine clothing and go out in public, performing small jobs for extra money and enjoying the experience of masculine address by strangers, all passing seamlessly with no suspicion at Willa's performance. Suspecting a secret affair, Fried returns from the trip early and discovers Willa not with a secret partner, but rather dressed as a man. Imploringly, Willa explains: "das erstemal als ich mal deine Kleider angezogen, da war ich so glücklich, da fühlte ich mich so stark, so frei, Fried" (Killmer (2016 [1930]: n. p.). Instead of rejecting Willa, Fried shows understanding and expresses a desire to stay together, proclaiming, "Ich werde dich von jetzt ab 'Will' nennen, 'Will' mein Kamerad" (Killmer (2016 [1930]) as the story abruptly ends. This swift resolution without conflict agrees with the story's humoresque form and revolves around a farcical scene of recognition unchained from social limitations, including the queer implication of a dawning homosexuality that the couple has achieved. The story concludes with Fried's unquestioned acceptance of the

relationship with his new "comrade" and no mention of the economic conditions that served as the opening premise. Will's gender performance is the turning device that resolves the light plot of the humoresque form and binds Will and Fried in a new relation. In contrast to the previous example, the wistful tone at the close of "Die andere Seite" is absent from "Willa und Fried" inviting not only a distinction in genre, but also in the affective modes of narrating FtM and MtF experiences in this period and the different conditions and possibilities for their expression. Regardless, both stories frame transvestism as a bolstering phenomenon that allows for more seamless movement through an unequal social world structured by restrictive gender norms.

5 Sexual distinction and the transvestite public

Debates in *Das 3. Geschlecht*, like those above on moral decency, show how the discourse on transvestism, even *among* transvestites, revolved around the sexual character of gender-variant individuals. Distinctions between heterosexuality and homosexuality and the relational dynamics of masochism and sadism occupy the most space in these conversations. The distinction between "true" transvestism as an immutable spiritual condition vs. crossdressing as an erotic activity is another point of contestation. Such differences are apparent in the dismissive category of "Auchtransvestiten" which designates the 'indecent' transvestites who express sexual interest in crossdressing or participate in practices like sex work. Gerda Schröder, for instance, admonishes her "Artgenossen" to avoid any association with undesirables, "damit man euch nicht mit diesen verwechselt" (Schröder, Gerda E. 2016 [1931]: n. p.). Most contributors to the magazine insist on their "normal sexuality" and distance themselves from any implication of sexual perversion or homosexuality, and with few exceptions, the articles speak of heterosexual relationships and marriage as the aspirational norm.

From a contemporary perspective, despite the insistence of many transvestites on sexual normalcy and heterosexuality (i.e., male-female sexual coupling), the queer potential of the trans relationships cannot be fully dispelled. For instance, the possibility of viewing the relations of MtF individuals with their wives as a form of lesbianism rather than heterosexuality (similar to modern-day 'transbians') is a token of our contemporary politics. This queer potential does not seem conceptually thinkable for the contributors to the magazine (outside the 'comradeship' of Will and Fried), showing the pertinence of anatomical sex for definitions of sexuality at the time and the secondary quality of gender expression. Thus, a relationship like E. S., an MtF transvestite, with her FtM partner satisfies heterosexual norms based on the couples' birth sex, not because of their respective gender expressions (which would swap their roles in the masculine-feminine dyad) (M./W. S./E. S. 2016 [1931]: n. p.).

Question of masochism are more contentious and actively debated in the publication than heterosexuality as the majority position. The discussions include scientific articles on masochism and transvestism, historical studies, and reader surveys and responses that variously deny or confirm the association of transvestic practices with masochistic desires. Affecting MtF transvestites in particular, the assumed linkage of femininity and masochism had been developing since early contributions to sexology, where feminine

passivity was seen to extend from a natural, physiological order of gender.[7] In Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopatia Sexualis,* women's "voluntary subjection to the opposite sex" is treated as a physiological and sociohistorical fact, where "ideas of subjection" form "the harmonies which determine the tone-quality of feminine feeling" (Krafft-Ebing 1922 [1886]: 195f.). The sexual researcher Iwan Bloch made important contributions to the systemization of sadomasochism in sexology and theorized a complementary difference in "masculine and feminine nature" that drives the opposed tendences of activity and passivity, or as Bloch describes, "die der stürmisch begerenden Aktivität des Mannes entgegengesetzte ruhige Passivität des Weibes" (Bloch 1907: 625). 'Contrary sexual feeling' and 'gender inversion' were also closely associated with masochistic impulses; for instance, Albert Moll describes a case of a male patient who wished to become a woman and expressed a concomitant desire to be abused by men (Moll 1893: 172f.). Freud famously denoted the first of three types of masochism as "feminine masochism", because it placed its subject in a "feminine situation" of domination and subjection, involving fantasies of "being castrated, or copulated with, or giving birth to a baby" designating an abnormal "perversion" only in male patients (Freud 1924: 162).

Radszuweit and the other editors ("die Redaktion") refuse a categorical link between masochism and the desire to crossdress, excluding in particular "heterosexuelle Transvestiten, d. h. solche, die vollständig normal empfinden und nur ihren Umgang mit dem weiblichen Geschlecht pflegen" (Radszuweit et al. 2016 [1931]: n. p.). These 'normal'-feeling transvestites, they presume, would show no response to masochistic practices. To the editors' surprise, homosexual transvestites also openly disputed their association with masochism. These comments illustrate the stigmatization of homosexuality and femininity in males and give evidence to the continued conflation of homosexual desire with gender inversion, misconstrued as the spiritual entanglement of sexual instinct and gender disposition. This is not assumed in the case of the 'heterosexual' transvestites, for whom the practice of crossdressing is more easily severed from the behavioral influence of sexuality and does not threaten their achievement of 'normal sexual feeling' nor does it warrant an investigation into the etiology or health effects of their masochism, unlike the 'homosexual' transvestites. This underscores the point that sadism and masochism were treated as pathological primarily when they upset the 'natural order' of gender and its sexual complementarity, which the 'heterosexual' transvestites appear to uphold in their successful relationships with women.

Foregrounding reader responses alongside scientific work on masochism, the editors hoped to inaugurate a public discussion and incite transvestites to speak on the matter of their sexuality. Introducing their responses in the fourth issue (July 1931), Radszuweit proclaims that "Die Transvestiten haben das Wort" on the matter, calling out a recent scientific article that recapitulated the link between transvestism and illness (Radszuweit 2016 [1931]: n. p.). Contributions both affirm and dispute such scientific knowledge on transvestism and perversion. Emilie, for example, addresses Krafft-Ebing's definition of masochism and mentions her marriage to a woman who permits her to live

7 See Moore (2009), for an overview of the gendered framing of sadomasochism around the turn of the 20th century. Along with scholars like Silverman (1992), Moore shows how reversals of 'natural order' e.g., in masochistic men, are viewed as perversions of sexual instinct, despite being widespread and perceived as a persistent threat to normalcy.

as her preferred gender, suggesting that sexual subjugation had never occurred to her (M./W. S./E. S. 2016 [1931]: n. p.). Emilie disputes the assumption that living as a woman and performing domestic work for her wife should be viewed as a form of submission at all. Conversely, W. S. identifies as a masochist but not a transvestite, and likewise refuses the association, claiming that some masochists simply show "transvestic leanings" in practice without really being "true" transvestites (M./W. S./E. S. 2016 [1931]: n. p.). In contrast to Emilie, the pleasure W. S. feels in being debased (*erniedrigt*) is specifically derived from being made to dress and feel *as* a woman, assuming it must represent a form of debasement for a male to do so. These remarks illustrate how experiences of subjection and stigmatization are linked to the power of gender and sexual norms, which structure the personal identifications, disavowals, and sexual pleasures that are bound up in the debates on transvestism.

In conclusion, the intimate public of *Das 3. Geschlecht* presents a contradictory mix of affective alignments, renunciations, and prescriptions that signal the development of a shared public culture in transvestism, but not necessarily one rooted in emancipatory attitudes, direct political agency, or an oppositional stance to gender conventions. The magazine offered interested readers, trans or not, with a space for intimation, life narrative, and aspiration around trans desires and practices in the Weimar period, when they were beginning to attain publicity beyond scientific and medical contexts. Disciplinary interventions and debates about trans personhood and morality form a core political activity in this public, mediated through a generic identity being actively reworked. That this intimate public of transvestites suddenly 'had the floor' (or more literally, 'had the word' for themselves) is not self-evidently liberatory or transformative for gender relations, nor did it herald their full emergence into the realm of politics like Radszuweit had hoped.

The contributions to the magazine show a distinct desire for inconspicuous navigation of mainstream lifeworlds, not for public visibility and identification as transvestites. They demonstrate strong attachments to privacy and the safety of domestic institutions, where a fulfillment of their desires (and perceived obligations) feels less awkward, less risky and more possible. As conditions for living a 'normal' life, gender and sexual conventions promise stability and dignity against the perceived threat and suffering of an atypical disposition. Despite the ambivalences around transvestism as an identity, the public of the magazine did venture into political work of mutual recognition, generating emotional solidarity and belonging in a shared predicament and establishing conventions that allowed people to navigate the scrutiny of novel degrees of popular visibility. As Berlant argued, the relation of these publics to the realm of politics is markedly ambivalent, posing both opportunity and threat, where normativity and stable conventions represent unique promises of inclusion and recognition. The uneasy movement of transvestism into the public light of Weimar sexual politics is marked by this sense of possibility, risk and moral urgency, and its subjects sometimes prefer to sidestep the light or hold fast to what is familiar in gender, rather than radically transform the dominant modes in which it is attributed, felt and lived.

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