Beneath The Frock and Beyond the Original Plumbing: A Visual Rhetorical Analysis of Transgender Magazines

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BENEATH THE FROCK AND BEYOND THE ORIGINAL PLUMBING:
A VISUAL RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF TRANSGENDER MAGAZINES

by

Dayna Arcurio

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Abstract

This thesis studies the rhetoric, visual rhetoric, and visual semiotic potential of the transgender and transsexual community by engaging with its signature rhetorical texts: its print and digital magazines. Designating the transgender/transsexual magazines, *Original Plumbing* and *Frock Magazine* as my primary texts for study, I provide three critical lenses through which to view the written and visual expression of the transgender community. The heart of this research seeks to understand how the transgender/transsexual community creates meaning by examining three aspects of its magazines: 1) the trans-rhetorical expression through articles and interviews; 2) each magazine’s aesthetic design through the lens of visual rhetoric; and 3) the visual semiotic potential of its trans-photographic imagery. Foundationally, my study includes a rhetorical examination of both the FTM (female-to-male) and MTF (male-to-female) subidentities beneath the umbrella term “transgender.” Analyzing both gendered cultures of the transgender/transsexual community allows for a more balanced approach to initiating and formatively understanding the rhetorical and visual communication created by this community.

In Chapter One, “A Rhetorical Analysis of Subjective Experiences in Transgender Magazines,” I examine the transgender experience as written in articles and interviews within *Original Plumbing* and *Frock* magazines. This chapter identifies transgender rhetoric/narrative within the context of the subjective experiences of transgender/transsexual individuals, as addressed to the audience of each magazine. What is transgender rhetoric and how does it function in this magazine or journalistic medium? This chapter explores existing works within writing studies and LGBT discourses such as Jay Prosser’s *Second Skins*, Jonathan Alexander’s “Transgender Rhetorics: (Re) Composing Narratives of the Gendered Body,” Mollie Blackburn’s
“Exploring Literacy Performances,” among other rhetorical scholars such as James Berlin and how trans-language and identity are shaped in a social constructivist context.


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Montclair, NJ
2013
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Introduction

"Every new community, every transformed community, potentially represents a new literacy. All participation in new communities...makes available to us new identities as individuals and new forms of humanity as members of communities.”

—J.L. Lemke, “Metamedia Literacy"

Magazines are our visual guides to a particular culture, inviting our senses to engage with words, images, and textures. Imagine the feel of a refined satin gloss paper at the touch of your fingertips as you turn a page or eye-wander through the cyber-layout of a digital magazine. Every visual you see is part of a rhetorical and aesthetic strategy—every size, color, style, text, and font tells a visual tale. These collective aesthetics define what the magazine is and whom it represents as its readership. While mainstream audiences enjoy a variety of subscriptions to *Vogue, Cosmopolitan, GQ, Men’s Health*, and more, the transgender community has only two known and established magazines: *Original Plumbing* and *Frock Magazine*. These transgender magazines target many of the identities associated with the term, “transgender,” and share their lifestyles, cultures, and experiences with this primary audience. Beyond the transgender community, however, these magazines are hardly familiar to a mainstream audience. They are especially unknown to an academic audience within the field of rhetorical and visual rhetorical studies. What is the significance of linking transgender magazines with visual rhetoric? Visual rhetoric is concerned with studying visual imagery, observing symbolism, and understanding how meaning is created. Currently in the field of rhetorical studies, the transgender aspect of LGBTQ communication is underdeveloped; there is little scholarship in visual rhetoric that details or discusses how the transgender community creates meaning through various forms of magazine media, or specifically, transgender magazines. By “including …trans texts and identities [it] is one way to disrupt even those spaces that have normalized the hetero/homo
binary…” (Alexander 277). My study seeks not only inclusion for transgender texts for scholarly consideration, but to “challenge the academic mindset that assumes the centrality of White, middle-class, male, heterosexual values and desires” (qtd. in Alexander 277).

This study reflects my scholarly interest in rhetorical, visual rhetorical, and visual semiotic theory that aims at the written, aesthetic, and photographic content found in trans-specific magazines. While my interest in transgender media has grown, I realize there is more trans-specific discourse to establish and develop within the field of visual rhetoric. Thus far, in writing studies and LGBTQ discourse, Mollie Blackburn’s 2003 article “Exploring Literacy Performance and Power Dynamics at The Loft” focuses on queer youth. While the focus of the article is on power dynamics, only one trans-individual, Mary, represents the transgender aspect of the LGBTQ community. Published two years later, Jonathan Alexander’s essay, “Transgender Rhetorics,” focuses on how transgender theory inspires pedagogical methods, which enhances feminist approaches to composition practices. While this work discusses the (re)composition of gendered body narratives, it surveys only student writing to see how transgender theories may extend or expand for students and instructors alike. Then there is the work of Kate O’Riordan et al. in *Queer Online*, in which a collective body of scholarship from the likes of Will Banks, Jonathan Alexander, Blake Scott, and Heidi McKee establish a more comprehensive work on the intersection of writing studies and queer theory. Despite the work that has been done on trans issues in writing studies, there remains undeveloped areas of research, particularly a rhetorical analysis on the subjective in trans-related writings and journalistic expression that is addressed in this study.

On the visual rhetoric front, there exists a rich history of analysis in the field such as Anne F. Wysocki’s and Dennis Lynch’s *Compose, Design, Advocate*, Carolyn Handa’s
sourcebook *Visual Rhetoric in a Digital World*, Lisa Nakamura’s *Digitizing Race: Visual Cultures of the Internet*, and Lester Faigley’s *Picturing Texts*. What these works collectively emphasize is the verbal, the visual, the digital, the gendered, the ethnic, and the cultural aspects within the field. All of these approaches inform my study, yet it also turns toward understanding how the trans community creates meaning. Specifically, how the transgender culture rhetorically and visually represents itself in trans-specific magazines. Therefore, the overarching goal of this study is to fill in a gap in the literature of visual rhetoric concerning transgender visual culture and representation. Since the 1970s, the study of rhetoric expanded to “include subjects which have not traditionally fallen within the critic’s purview; the non-discursive as well as the discursive, the nonverbal as well as the verbal” (qtd. in Foss 141). Rhetorical perspective may now “be applied to any human act, process, product, or artifact” and “may formulate, sustain, or modify attention, perceptions, attitudes, or behaviors” (qtd. in Foss 141). Despite this visual expansion and liberation, the transgender culture is under-represented in the field of rhetoric and composition—it is not privy to their “human act(s), process(es), product(s), or artifact(s).” My study uses a rhetorical analysis as a lens in order to learn more about how the transgender community makes meaning and self-represents as well as applies a visual rhetorical perspective to the aesthetics of their magazine layouts, and a visual semiotic lens by which to study ‘body language’ in trans-magazine photography.

One of the primary reasons why studying visual imagery continues to flourish is because of the ubiquity of visual images and their impact on our contemporary culture (Foss 142). My vision for this research is to begin an academic discourse regarding the transgender aesthetic by posing the following research questions: How is transgender culture visually represented in both print and digital trans-specific magazines? What might we learn about the transgender
experience from interviews and articles that serve as their rhetorical narrative? How does the culture visually characterize masculinity or femininity through aesthetics? How might we read this trans-media/medium within the context of the rhetorical triangle, where the text is the magazine, the author(s) is/are transgendered authors, and the trans-or non-trans readership respond as the audience? Is there a sense of performativity of normative masculine and femininity identities within these transgendered magazines and their two-dimensional spaces?

As briefly mentioned, the subject of my study is the transgender community but I must address some boundaries with respect to who is represented in my research. “Transgender” is a term that encompasses not just transgendered individuals, but many sub-identities as well: transsexuals, transvestites, cross dressers, intersex, and so forth. Due to the scope and length of this study, I primarily focus on the transgender and transsexual identities under this term. Briefly, for clarification, there is a difference between transgenders and transsexuals. Transgendered individuals are those who identify with a gender other than their biological sex; transsexuals, on the other hand, identify with a gender other than their biological sex, yet seek medicinal (hormones) and surgical (SRS: Sexual Reassignment Surgery) means to achieve mind-body congruence. This distinction is important within the context of who is represented in this study: FTM (female-to-male) and MTF (male-to-female) transgenders/transsexuals.

_original_plumbing_ is a trans male (or FTM) quarterly print magazine, serving the transgender and transsexual male audience. The magazine is founded by writers, artists, activists, and FTM trans men, Amos Mac and Rocco Kayiatos. This magazine’s target audience is other FTMs, and focuses on the social and cultural issues within this demographic. My focus on the transgender experience and aesthetics comes from the magazine issues specifically dealing with education, family, and entertainment. _Frock_, on the other hand, is a trans-female quarterly (or
MTF) digital magazine, for the transgender female audience, created by The Gender Society. *Frock*'s demographic encompasses the wide array of identities discussed above, which makes it important to acknowledge all identities included in its readership, but also distinguish those this study formally addresses. I analyze *Frock*'s transgender experiences and aesthetics from magazine issues focusing on trans-media arts (film, radio, television), trans-men and trans-women issues, and fall fashion.

Now that it is clear whom I represent in this scholarship, it is equally paramount to discuss what aspects of both magazines my study addresses. Though I am unable to study all angles of these print and digital magazines, here are the three primary aspects I cover: 1) the transgender rhetorical/narrative voice in interviews and articles; 2) the aesthetics or trans-aesthetics of each magazine, which includes color, typography, size, layout, textures, and other visual and graphic design principles; and 3) the transgender form/body represented in each magazine’s photographic imagery. It is important that this study equally and respectfully cover both trans-spectrums of FTM and MTF, and their rhetorical and visual representations.

Another important issue confronting my study is the small number of trans-specific magazines available for analysis. Therefore, I observe and detail the rhetorical and visual phenomena of the transgender community in the trans magazines available, *Original Plumbing* and *Frock*. With respect to *Original Plumbing*, I analyze issues #6, 8 & 9 from 2011 that cover education, family, and entertainment. Further information about the magazine is found at originalplumbing.com. To balance the study, by showing the MTF perspective, I analyze *Frock Magazine* spanning issues #16, 17 & 18 from 2012 that cover trans-media arts (film, radio, television, music), trans-men and trans-women issues, and fall fashion. Further information about the magazine is found at frockmagazine.com.
Research ethics is an important aspect of my study, especially concerning the transgender community in which it represents. Despite Original Plumbing’s and Frock’s recognizable presence in the trans community, these magazines are unknown to a mainstream or cisgendered (non-transgendered) audience. While I do not self-identify as transgendered or transsexual, I consider this work an allied voice for the community. Indeed, there is the issue of speaking for a community that I am not a part of; I am aware of the potential conflicts of speaking on behalf of a group or imposing my research “gaze” upon them. None of what my study produces is meant to harm or psychologically impact the transgender community of writers or readers. Rather, it is to further validate and support their efforts to discuss and represent their human experiences. While each trans-voice and depiction in these magazines is a testament to their cause and collective media identity, it is my intent to neither judge nor condemn such identities, sexualities, or lifestyles. Instead, I hope this study transcends that of just an academic study; rather, I hope it brings more awareness to the ongoing social, cultural, political, and personal struggles met by transgendered individuals. Let us not simply honor the community during one calendar day every November, in Transgender Remembrance Day, but seek greater understanding and sensitivity to our brothers and sisters who are transgender and transsexual. Their thoughts, writing and voices are just as valuable and worthy of study in this body of work and across many more academic disciplines.
Chapter One: A Rhetorical Analysis of Subjective Experiences in Transgender Magazines

The field of rhetoric and composition explores literacies and the compositional practices of individuals and communities. Over the years, the field has expanded its scope to investigate LGBTQ discourse. Of this group discourse, the transgender aspect remains the most underexplored. One decade removed from Mollie Blackburn’s 2003 article, “Exploring Literacy Performances,” in which only one transgender figure, Mary, was mentioned, considerable developments in trans-discourse have emerged and changed. What I quantify as “considerable” relates to the growth of transgender culture, voices, bodies, and literacy within the burgeoning community. What is beginning to occur is a movement of scholarly attention to transgender literacy and communication, such as exploring the composition of self in writing practices in Jonathan Alexander’s 2005 article, “Transgender Rhetorics: (Re)Composing Narratives of the Gendered Body.” This chapter adds to this trajectory begun by scholars such as Blackburn and Alexander, and others, as it studies the rhetorical, visual rhetorical, and visual semiotic potential of the discourses of the transgender community, and its varied ways of making meaning and self-representation through language, aesthetics, and photographic imagery. Together, my thesis and this first chapter begin with a rhetorical analysis of *Original Plumbing*, a print transgender quarterly magazine serving the FTM (or female-to-male) community, as well as *Frock Magazine*, a digital transgender quarterly magazine for the MTF (or male-to-female) community. As alluded to in the Introduction, I chose these magazines as primary texts for rhetorical study because of their creation by transgendered men and women for communication with their community. By including both *Original Plumbing* and *Frock*, I am able to analyze both FTM and MTF culture, as represented by the content in both magazines. The goal of this chapter is to focus on the subjective experiences and rhetoric of transgender men and women, as seen in the various articles and interviews in *OP’s* eighth issue from 2011 focusing on trans-family, while I
also explore the personal and social issues of trans men and women in *Frock*'s sixteenth issue from 2012.

Beginning with the concept of subjective rhetoric, as discussed in W. Ross Winterowd's book, *The English Department*, James Berlin's characterization of this type of rhetoric is predicated on "the conviction that reality is a personal and private construct" (4). Winterowd discusses Berlin's view of this rhetoric as, "For the expressionist, truth is always discovered within, through an internal glimpse, an examination of the private inner world. In this view the material world is only lifeless matter" (qtd. in Winterowd 4). While transgender/transsexual (known here on as TG/TS) rhetoric provides that internal glimpse of the subjective experience, the material world is also a part of the community's literacy. For instance, their words describe a material body they hope to engender. In *Assuming a Body*, Gayle Salamon discusses materiality regarding transgender subjects as, "to insist on the livability of one's own embodiment, particularly when that embodiment is culturally abstract or socially despised...It is to strive to create and transform lived meanings of those materialities" (42). The articles and interviews in these particular issues of *OP* and *Frock* are the textual resources used in identifying what transgender rhetoric is, according to the repeated trope of being "trapped in the wrong body," and other commonalities among language and trans-experience.

In *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality*, Jay Prosser notes that the trans-narrative is not just a postoperative tale, it is a rhetorical exchange between body and identity and narrative. The trans-narrative and explanation of self, for the TG/TS man or woman, continues throughout transition—it begins but does not end even after SRS (Sexual Reassignment Surgery), for example. Thus, Prosser's notion of this rhetorical exchange suggests an ongoing narrative of expression from one trans individual to another. In fact, Prosser
contends, “transsexuality is always narrative work, a transformation of the body that requires the remolding of the life into a particular narrative shape” (4). In addition to narrative, “transsexuality consists in the entering into [of] lengthy, formalized, and normally substantive transition: a correlate set of corporeal, psychic, and social changes” (Prosser 4). Do these personal accounts serve as narratives that allow transgendered, as well as cisgendered (that is, non-transgendered) audiences, to relate or understand the identities and experiences of these trans-voices? Given this question investigated below, David Valentine’s research in *Imagining Transgender* reminds us that “despite [transgender studies] heterogeneity and diversity, there is a unifying center, the very reason for the constitution of the field in the first place: the idea that here is a group of people who can be understood through the category transgender” (166). I present this chapter in a manner that treats trans men and women, along with their subjective accounts, with respect and dignity. The genesis of this approach is modeled in part on the philosophy of Canadian sociologist, Dorothy Smith, who “proposes that we develop ways of knowing and ways of doing research that begin from the perspective of the lived experience of the person under investigation…marginalized groups are the *subjects* rather than the objects of knowledge” (qtd. in Namaste 46). While I do not identify as transgender or transsexual, I feel it is important to view this research, and the subjective experiences of trans men and women from a humane point of view, deserving of fairness and respect.

**Rhetorical Analysis of Trans-Subjective Experiences in *Original Plumbing***

Beyond the front cover of *Original Plumbing*’s “Family Matters” issue, Carole, mother of Amos Mac—co-founder of the trans magazine—expresses her compassion for her transgender son and others like him: “Imagine knowing something wasn’t quite right with yourself, with your [gender] ‘assignment,’ and not being able to articulate these feelings” (*OP* 5). Not only is this a
poignant statement about having a potentially “lost” voice within oneself, but also finding that—should there be a voice—it would be in the social minority or virtually “silenced” beyond the trans community. From the expression of TG/TS subjective experiences, we learn, as field, the power of the pen and the will to forge a new literacy for others in the trans community or perhaps beyond it. Writing allows TG/TS to express their subjective experiences related to identity and transition. It allows the trans community to glean insight into shared experiences, formulate a sense of community through writing, and inform a cisgendered community about what life is like for trans individuals. In Changing Sex, Bernice L. Hausman, discusses the role of transsexual writing which, “may not be representative of the experiences of many (or even most) transsexual objects, [but] they are indicative of the establishment of an official discourse (or set of discourses)” (142). Reading about subjective experiences of trans individuals allows new literacies to emerge, as we also learn something about how the trans community makes meaning. Within emerging literacies, we also see a more vulnerable and effected side to a silenced community who is often misunderstood, misrepresented, or under-represented among the majority. The written discourse of trans men and women also provides “[gendered] work [that] is about writing, about looking at gender through the critical work of writing about gender, and about understanding writing, particularly narrative of self, as not just the ‘recovery’ of self but the construction of self” (Literacy 148). As observers of this community, we see beyond the academic analysis of this trans community bound by similar experiences of identity and transition and human connection—it’s about family: TG/TS families. In chapter three, I formally discuss photography and the TG/TS form, but I feel it is important to foreshadow that discussion with a question by Carole, Amos’s mother: “What do we do with the old photographs? Now I have such a huge collection of photographs of my handsome, beautiful son” (OP 5). When we
look at family photos, we see our loved ones and we see ourselves. We change over time by age, embedded in the plasma or pixels of a photograph. But for the family members of trans men and women there is a familiar yet different face peering back through these artifacts, as physical changes begin shaping the individual’s body through hormone therapy and surgery. Transition has its own type of recording the history of a face and form, one that shows physical progression akin to changing sex and gender over time. This chapter goes beyond mere surface portraits; rather, it looks at the intimate portraits of rhetorical expression, through interviews and articles, many of which are authored from a trans perspective.

In this fall 2011 issue, many interviews and articles detail and describe the TG/TS experience with FTMs coming out as transgender to their cisgendered families, becoming trans dads to adopted children, identifying trans-brothers as “chosen family,” and even becoming a pregnant father. The lead interview, “Beyond the Pregnant Man,” features Thomas Beatie, one of the few recognized FTMs, gaining worldwide recognition as a pregnant trans man. Prior to this OP interview, Thomas, and his wife Nancy, conducted a seminar in Stockholm during 2011 Pride Week. The topics they discussed included having biological children, the adversity they received from the LGBT community, as well as the medical establishment, and their personal hopes for a happy ending. The theme of Pride Week was openness, and in that vein, Beatie expresses his personal goals: “I’m proud to show the world the beautiful children I’ve created…I want to show [the children] everything, different countries, different cultures, thoughts and philosophies, and all sides of humanity” (“Beyond” Interview 11). The “mission” Beatie discusses is reminiscent of “the pervasiveness of the journey trope in transsexual writings, of this convention that draws attention to the self-conscious formality of the story” (Prosser 117). This journey trope when applied to transsexuals highlights the new communities that emerge—not
only his/her self-expression, but the desire to create and sustain a familial community, be it trans- or cisgendered. Following Beatie’s 2008 article, “Labor of Love: Is Society Ready for this Pregnant Husband?” in the LGBT magazine *The Advocate*—and alongside a photograph of his very pregnant FTM form—he received both national media attention and society's backlash: letters of support along with hate mail and death threats. For many trans men and women, at the celebrity level of Beatie or not, openness of self and identity quickly becomes infamy and social anomaly.

The first question posed to Beatie in this *OP* interview is if he felt a part of a specific community. While Beatie once felt aligned with the LGBT community, after “The ‘pregnant man’ thing happened...I feel completely excluded, and it’s really ironic because before we are used to the heterosexual society and the public at large discriminating against us and now its been the reverse” (“Beyond” *Interview* 11). Beatie’s candor is refreshing, as he admits to being aware of existing pockets of prejudice in heteronormative culture. His biggest surprise is in the minority aligned LGBT community and the splintering of support. He demonstrates the severity of the shift from support to prejudice by further noting, “It’s like heterosexual, religious, conservative, Republican people are saying, ‘I support you,’ and meanwhile the GLBT community, especially in America, are like...I get e-mails that say ‘I fucking hate you, I want you to die” (“Beyond” *Interview* 11). As Beatie expresses his surprise, the rhetoric of extreme and insidious hate rears its head, reminding those who read the article that despite social and cultural progress, hate continues to thrive. Beatie’s candid rhetoric also indirectly alludes to the oft-mentioned and known tension between the LGB community and its transgender counterpart. As noted in Susan Stryker’s book, *Transgender History,*
Transgender issues, which call our attention to otherwise invisible complexities of the gender system's operation, have come to be seen as cutting-edge concerns for some gays, lesbians, and feminists. Sociologically, transgender communities have been coming into closer and closer alignment with sexual minority communities. This is due in part to the AIDS/HIV epidemic that began in the 1980s and in part to the queer movement in the 1990s, which worked to break down divisions between sexual identity communities. (26)

Beatie's motive for talking openly about his situation is not an anomalous event in recorded transgender history; in fact, "social justice issues developed in the U.S. in the decade after World War I" (Stryker 7). The root of change began in response to the municipal ordinances passed by a number of cities in the U.S., making it "illegal for a man or woman to appear in public 'in a dress not belonging to his or her sex'" (Stryker 31). Nevertheless, homosexuality and gender variance were, at one time, less contentious than now, as "Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, homosexual desire and gender variance were often closely associated" (Stryker 34). Despite Beatie's rhetorical efforts at transgender activism, "to understand the historical conditions...we thus have to take into account race, culture, sexuality, and sexism, and we have to develop an understanding of the ways that U.S. society has fostered conditions of inequality and injustice for people who aren't white, male, heterosexual, and middle class" (Stryker 36). This also frames a rhetorical context as to why this study in particular is of significance. Repeatedly, the transgender voice and rhetorical expression has been misunderstood or under-represented, from not only the cisgendered community and its perpetuation of societal inequality, but among the LGB community as well.
Of his journey as an FTM, pregnant or otherwise, Beatie reveals what his life was like before infamy: “I went from being a lesbian and the ‘tweener thing and getting all those weird looks and then transitioning—everybody rejects you, including your gay and lesbian and bisexual friends” (“Beyond” Interview 12). What Beatie’s language reveals is a rhetoric of psychological and emotional metamorphosis—the different identities and sexualities that he engendered during a span of his life. While as individuals we embody different styles, tastes, and perceptions as cisgendered individuals, it is not nearly the same as finding one’s identity as TG/TS individuals and achieving that identity through biological transition, name change, and a re-socialization and re-assimilation in a culture not as accepting of the trans identity. This process, or journey of identity, I liken to Prosser’s coinage of the term “‘body narrative’ [which] is intended to reflect…the ways in which body and narrative work together in the production of transsexual subjectivity” (105). Beatie’s shared experience conveys a spectrum of identities, some of which did not remain a part of him, until he found the form he truly knew himself to be: a transgendered man. In fact, as in Beatie’s retelling of his experience with a mutable identity, “journeys, like narratives, have points of departure and destination, beginnings and ends; writing allows the transsexual to make connections, to trace ‘how I got here’” (Prosser 116-7). Beatie’s identity also influenced his sexuality, as he once identified as a lesbian, shifted to the realm of androgyny, and then transitioned into an FTM with a wife and three children—actively living a normative life. For Beatie, perhaps, the narrative he shares during the interview is “a kind of second skin: the story the transsexual must weave around the body in order that this body may be ‘read’” (Prosser 101). Interestingly, it is Beatie’s rhetoric that I draw attention to, as I study his subjective experience, yet the narrative is also his physical body—the body is the narrative, so to speak. Because of his physical transition, the body in transsexuality becomes the narrative—it is
part of the physical and rhetorical journey that shapes the identity of trans individuals. Beatie’s rhetoric also reveals an isolating human experience—the price of transitioning, for him, and many others, is “being rejected” by society, queer communities, family and friends. Beatie also briefly alludes to another form of social outcasting in which he encountered “all those weird looks and then transitioning.” His words are formed by a psychological memory, recognizing that he was identified physically as “other.” Unspoken words, nonverbal communication/body language convey how others perceive a form that does not visibly appear male or female. When the lines of identity and gender are blurred, for most cisgendered individuals, visual perception is too. For those of us who expect a visual exemplification of the male and female binary, any deviation might confuse or distort normative perception. In fact, “Gender is not the same as sex....Gender is generally considered to be cultural, and sex, biological....No one is born a woman or a man—rather, as the saying goes, ‘one becomes one’ through a complex process of socialization” (Stryker 11).

Though Beatie is one of this generation’s known transgender figures, his predecessor and trans-counterpart was Christine Jorgensen, who also “made international headlines with news of her successful genital transformation surgery in Copenhagen” (Stryker 47). Despite the more progressive cultural views of today, “in a year when hydrogen bombs were being tested in the Pacific, war was raging in Korea, England crowned a new queen, and Jonas Salk invented the polio vaccine, Jorgensen was the most written-about topic in the media” (Stryker 47, emphasis mine). In 1952, Jorgensen was, after all, the first transgender person to garner such attention, which mirrors Beatie’s instant trans-celebrity by way of American media. Like transgender faces and names of this era, such as Beatie, Chaz Bono, Lana Wachowski, Kate Bornstein, Calpernia Addams, and others, Jorgensen’s fame brought an enormous amount of awareness to trans issues
and later helped shape identity politics for future decades. Charting the trans-media waters, it puts the efforts of modern trans magazines, discussed in this thesis, *OP* and *Frock*, into trans-historical context, as Virginia Prince, a noted transgender advocate of equal rights launched *Transvestia* magazine in 1960, the first and longest-tenured, “trans-oriented periodical in the United States” (Stryker 53). Like *OP* and *Frock*, *Transvestia* “focused on social commentary, educational outreach, self-help advice, and autobiographical vignettes drawn from [Prince’s] own life and the lives of her readers” (Stryker 54). In the tradition of educating others about trans culture, this chapter and body of work focuses on modern transgender commentary and experiences, because, as Beatie notes: “barriers are crashing down, because stigma is dissolving….And people are getting it, because it’s not just a national thing, people all over the world are talking about [the trans experience]” (“Beyond” Interview 12). Given the brief historical account of trans persons and periodicals outlined here, more barriers in academia need to be broken down. Namely by continuing the academic trajectory of other rhetorical scholars in the field who are slowly implementing transgender perspectives through writing into their classrooms, such as Jonathan Alexander in his article, “Transgender Rhetorics: (Re) Composing Narratives of the Gendered Body.”

Beyond Thomas Beatie, and other trans-celeb portraits, are the transgender individuals closest to home—quiet, transgender homes in the city and suburbs across the socioeconomic spectrum. In *OP’s* next interview, “We Got Sol,” we meet Ky and Sol: Ky is a thirty-eight-year-old welder and FTM dad to his adopted and cisgendered daughter, Sol. Here, Ky discusses his feelings about being a parent, family, and the repulsion of being pregnant in a trans-male body: “I always saw myself becoming a parent….I never wanted to be pregnant and had always wanted to adopt a baby” (“We Got Sol” Interview 15). Ky’s language, thoughts, feelings, and desires are
not out of the normative realm. What separates Ky from a cisgendered audience is his trans-male identity and feminine reproductive parts: "I was actually kind of repulsed by the concept of labor, but also I imagined I'd feel super trapped in my body if I was pregnant, sort of claustrophobic" ("We Got Sol" Interview 15). The phrase "trapped in my body" is a recurrent trope in transgender expression, as many TG/TS men and women describe or reference their psychological and physical experiences. This described experience prior to transition is linked with body dysphoria\(^1\) inherent in preoperative transgender bodies. The rhetorical phrase "trapped in my body (or in the wrong body)," is often associated with a trans man’s or woman’s mental, emotional, and physical experience with body dysphoria. There is also a contentious view regarding this familiar rhetorical trope. As Prosser explains in Second Skins, "transsexual subjects frequently articulate their bodily alienation as a discomfort within their skin or bodily encasing: being trapped in the wrong body is figured as being in the wrong, or an extra, or a second skin, and transsexuality is expression as the desire to shed or step out of the skin" (68).

While I rhetorically study the trope, "trapped in the wrong body" here, the medical establishment takes an opposing view to this pervasive trope: "being trapped in the wrong body has become the crux of an authenticating transsexual ‘rhetoric’: language, narratives, and figures that the subject deploys to obtain access to hormones and surgery" (Prosser 69). For the medical establishment, the trans individual merely "deploy" this common trope through rhetoric in order to obtain treatment. The underlying assumption is that the “rhetoric” of the trans community is “convenient,” or a false means of persuasion to obtain treatment. While this seems derogatory, it raises the question of the familiar trope as an often-quoted phrase that permits transgendered individuals access to hormone therapy and SRS. But who officially says when a feeling of being

\(^1\) Gender dysphoria is defined as, “feelings of unhappiness or distress about the incongruence between the gender-signifying parts of one’s body, one’s gender identity, and one’s social gender” (Stryker 13). See Stryker, especially chapter 1, for broader discussion on gender dysphoria and related terms.
“trapped” within one’s body is merely a tactic of rhetorical deployment and when it ceases to be a real phenomenon?

Based on my research, the origin of transsexuality “entered the cultural lexicon first as a form of extreme (body) transvestism, with the body’s skin as the ‘clothing’ that the subject needed to change” (Prosser 69). Thus, the lexicon emerged before the repeated trope because of the recurrent feelings expressed by transsexuals who subjectively felt that the only way to align their skin, if you will, was to escape from being “trapped in the wrong body” and pursue the necessary medical means for mind-body congruence. Prosser, an FTM transsexual explains, “[we] continue to deploy the image of wrong embodiment because being trapped in the wrong body is simply what transsexuality feels like” (69). This particular trope is not only subjective, but trans-inclusive—it is a rhetoric shared by those experiencing the same mental, physical, and emotional crises in which the body is misaligned with the mind. Body dysphoria is a term identified as a common physical and mental state of being for TG/TS individuals, but the essence of the rhetorical term relates directly to a lived and felt phenomenon.

As Ky describes his potential experience with giving birth to a child through the feminine biological reproductive system associated with his trans-male form, feelings of entrapment surface. Rhetorically, Ky describes his experience as an internal battle between the mind of a man and the feminine biological form with reproductive capability, which is both disparate and dysphoric. Analyzing Ky’s description of his feelings of pregnancy, “trapped” and “claustrophobic” are terms that emerge as vivid and subjective, internal emotions that describe a physical sensation. This also raises the issue that even though Ky is projecting the experience of pregnancy, instead of being pregnant, these feelings are inherently linked to his transgender identity and the body dysphoria so many trans men and women express on a daily basis,
typically before SRS is performed, which can be a period longer than 9 months. Considering this interview follows Beatie's, an FTM who actually gave birth to his children, it remains unclear—at least from this interview—if at any point during his own pregnancy he experienced gender dysphoria. As an experience, it seems, gender dysphoria can influence or affect each transgender man or woman differently whether it comes on during pregnancy or not.

Beyond the projection of pregnancy and dysphoria, Ky discusses the adopting of Sol, and recalls, “I was to meet [the] birth mother and she said something that has stuck with me to this day and I think reflects the kind of anxiety many trans male/butch women may feel in situations like these. She said, ‘No young African-American woman is going to give her baby to a woman who looks like a man!’ She told me to ‘femme it up.’ So...I ‘femmed-it-up,’ which was a very dishonest thing to do” (“We Got Sol” Interview 15). Ky later refers to this as his being “dressed in female drag.” Breaking down Ky’s commentary further, the purported “anxiety” that many trans men feel is associated with passing. Briefly, passing is a trans-related term that refers to a trans individual’s ability to appear as a normative male or female, instead of, for example, looking gender-ambiguous or like a biological woman, or butch lesbian, if one’s identity is as a trans man. Overall, passing is a part of gender comportments, which pertain to body movements and mannerisms—if these functions align or “pass” with the individual’s visible gender—and clothing as well. In chapter three, I focus on the TG/TS body and discuss more fully gender comportment and socialization, in the context of trans re-socialization of self at stages during

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² Passing is “the ability to be perceived and identified as a non-transgender person. The ability to pass as non-trans is seen directly related to economic and social privilege. Aspects of passing for trans persons include facial features, height, weight, body morphology, surgical status, hand and foot size, hair, body and facial hair, and so forth. In this regard, the trans communities are very heterogeneous, with some members passing very easily as non-trans people and others being seen routinely as trans people” (Mallon 10-11).

³ Gender comportments refer to how “We perform our social gender...bodily actions such as how we use our voices, cross our legs, hold our heads, wear our clothes, dance around the room, throw a ball, walk in high heels. These are things that each of us learns to do during the course of our lives by watching and mirroring others with whom we identify” (Stryker 12).
physical transition, and the notion of subscribing to hyper-masculinity or femininity. Returning to the notion of gender identity, as in Ky’s case, he gave into it and subscribed to a non-transgender role in order to secure the adoption. However, the “flouncy blouse and...dangly earrings” ("We Got Sol" Interview 15) he wore lends itself to the notion of his transgendered self “performing” a feminine or hyper-feminine example of what normative feminine identity is or might be. This is an example of the complexity of gender, as discussed by Leslie Feinberg, “[j]ust as most of us grew up with the concepts of woman and man, the terms feminine and masculine are the only two tools most people have to talk about the complexities of gender expression” (qtd. in Alexander, “Transgender Rhetorics” 54). In other words, Ky is arguably “performing” a role, albeit temporarily, to conform to an established idea of normative femininity.

In terms of his identity as a trans-parent, Ky reveals how he and Sol interact and how his daughter identifies him: “I’m not particular about being called ‘dad’ or ‘he’ (at least for now), so I’ve never really attempted to persuade Sol to call me male names...she’ll say things like ‘good boy, mom mom!’ If I do something she likes, or she’ll call me ‘the handsome mama’” ("We Got Sol" Interview 16). Collectively, Ky’s words give a glimpse into the potential of what it is like to be a trans-parent for other FTMs. It also presents a rhetorical occasion for cisgendered audiences to glean the experiences of interaction between a trans-parent and his child. Both the child and trans-parent must make rhetorical choices as to how to shape his or her child’s language—how to, in effect, label and identify his/her father: 1) as a transgender parent, or perhaps as a transgender stealthparent, and 2) establish a convention of naming with which the child can address the parent, when he/she is in a social setting or situation. This rhetorical shaping of

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4 Stealth refers to “living fully and completely in your true gender but never, ever admitting to be transgender” (Herman 19). See Herman, chapter 5 for more insight on stealth and the discussion of a “second” closet.
language for trans families can be understood in the context of social constructivist theory, which is also relative to James Berlin mentioned earlier in light of subjective rhetoric. In Theresa Enos’s book, *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition*, many scholars, like Berlin, embraced “constructivism,” and its central idea that “there is no one ‘real world’ preexisting independently of human cognition and language. The ‘world’ is actually a product of human symbolic activity” (220). A simple name or term of endearment, like “handsome mama,” identifies and shapes a private and personal rhetoric between trans-parent and child, but also might impact the child’s ability to reconcile his parent’s identity as he or she grows up or interacts in rhetorical settings outside the home. This is also relevant in relation to constructivism’s production and creation of a world, in or outside the home, that centers around language and identity. And, as Janet Emig argues, “as a symbolic, transformative activity of creating text-worlds’ writing participates centrally in human ‘world-making’” (qtd. in Enos 220). While the concentration here is on writing and expression—also outlined in this chapter—the verbal rhetoric becomes the focus. Certainly, this merely scratches the surface of the potential for forming and shaping language—the dynamics of this rhetorical interaction—between trans-parent and child(ren).

Shifting to another trans-family dynamic framed in *OP’s* “Family Profiles” spread, Sylvan Oswald is the transgendered son of cisgendered parents, Mike and Dianna. Sylvan reflects on telling his parents about his gender identity: “I’ve been out as queer since I was fourteen, and coming out again was just as hard” (“Family” Interview 21). Observing the implied meaning within Sylvan’s language, it points to two underlying dynamics: 1) Sylvan has come out twice—once as queer and this time as transgender—and alludes to the difficulty of both experiences, and 2) his identity as “other” or variant before coming out a second time as transgender. Despite its historically derogatory reference to homosexuals, the term “queer,” in
the early 1990s, began to shift into a more positive term for the community. As discussed in Stryker’s book, “‘queer’ is usually associated with sexuality, but from the beginning a vocal minority insisted on the importance of transgender and gender-variant practices for queer politics” (20). As a result, many began referring to themselves as “genderqueers.” At fourteen, Sylvan began identifying and contextualizing his identity and gender experience as, “[others] who want to live in a gender other than the one assigned to them at birth sometimes use ‘genderqueer’ to mean the kinds of people who resist gender norms without ‘changing sex,’ but this is not always the case” (Stryker 21). Sylvan came out as a trans man, using his writing to frame the impending conversation with his parents: “I’ve been writing plays in which women play men on stage for about ten years—but it was only recently that I realized I was working that through for myself” (“Family” Interview 21). Beside the interview-text is a colored photograph of the family together: Sylvan in the center, flanked on either side by his Dad, Mike, and Mother, Dianna. The family appears visually united, as father and trans son engage in reciprocal poses with arms around each other. The pathos of the photograph conveys this implied unity, acceptance, and togetherness as all three smile; Sylvan looks confidently back at the camera, as Mike in profile “approvingly” looks at Sylvan. Dianna also grins looking off in the direction beyond the camera. The close proximity of their bodies suggests a shared and intimate space before the camera. The visual image of purported closeness, family, and unity resides next to the bold title, “Sylvan Oswald and His Parents, Dianna and Mike.”

As family dynamics vary, from single trans moms or dads, to transgendered and cisgendered partners, or a pregnant trans man, the concept of a “chosen family” becomes relevant. For many trans men and women, family or friends is something hoped for—along with

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5 Those who use this term “refer[s] to those kinds of people who want to live in a gender other than the one assigned to them at birth” or “resist gender norms without ‘changing sex,’ but this is not always the case” (Stryker 21).
acceptance, understanding, patience, and love. Other trans men and women become “chosen” transgendered brothers and sisters as part of their own sub-community within the overall transgender alliance. For trans men, Enzi and Jay, each is a “chosen brother.” For Jay, “Enzi is [his] brother from another mother” (“Family” Interview 31) and confesses, “we came into each others’ [sic] lives just before some really big shifts in both our lives took place—surgeries, break-ups, acts of racism, etc., and that really intensified the bond that was already forming” (OP 31). Despite Minnesota, home to Jay and Enzi, having a vast transgender community, Jay raises the issue of race: “[It’s] a predominantly white state—there aren’t a lot of out, queer, trans-masculine folks of color. [Enzi] is someone else in this small community that I could share thoughts and experiences with that I really couldn’t share with anyone else” (“Family” Interview 31). Compounding the issue of race with a trans identity, can turn a trans individual into an even bigger racial or social target. Jay’s reference to race also creates a space for this particular issue—and its relationship to trans identity—to enter this discourse. Normative society seems to give less thought to the social, racial, or ethnic tiers within the transgender identity and community. Nevertheless, community is a key word in Jay’s interviews—not necessarily the vast one that Minnesota engenders state- or city-wide—but the intimate community shared by “chosen” family, “chosen” transgendered brothers. Discussing chosen versus blood relative ties, Jay admits, “Those dynamics are very different and hard to compare. For me, I’m not all that close to a lot of my blood relatives. Part of that is because of my trans identity….I spend most of my holidays with my chosen family” (“Family” Interview 31). Beside the text, “Enzi and Jay, Chosen Family,” is a photograph of both transgender “brothers” positioned back to back, heads turned towards the camera, with arms folded in front of their chests. Their eyes and smiles
visually greet the camera—the proximity of their bodies suggests a “male” (rugged arms crossed, yet backs touching) intimacy, a bond of friendship and brotherly love.

**Rhetorical Analysis of Trans-Subjective Experiences in *Frock Magazine***

Shifting to *Frock Magazine*, it conveys the MTF perspective through written articles and interviews. By analyzing both magazines, we garner a balanced approach to understanding the FTM (female-to-male) perspective, and now the MTF or (male-to-female) perspective of transgenderism/transsexuality. In *Frock*’s sixteenth issue, it identifies trans male and female personal and social issues that deal with subjective experiences before and during the lifelong process of transition. While the focus of the magazine is typically on the MTF transgender experience, it also caters to the sub-identities beneath that umbrella term. And, unlike many other issues, this one engages with transgender experiences across the spectrum from MTFs to FTM.

Beginning with the article, “The Cement Woman,” Rajee Narinesingh, LGBT activist, chronicles her life as a transgender woman. Prefacing the details of her personal life and trans experience, Rajee admits, “As transgender people, I am sure that most of us understand the urgency to look the way we want to look. In other words [sic] match your outside with the way you feel inside” (*Frock* 16). Regarding the surface of the body, the way it looks, Prosser contends “the image of wrong embodiment describes most effectively the experience of pre-transition (dis)embodiment: the feeling of a sexed body dysphoria profoundly and subjectively experienced” (69).

Rhetorically, Rajee begins with a relatable message: one both aligning and uniting her with other “transgender people.” However, the way she begins her article, “As transgender people,” her audience is clearly open to transgender women as well as men, even transgender children and teens reading the magazine. Rajee concurs with the general transgender need for mind-body congruence, since, “as a transgender woman this was something I certainly struggled with. From
about the age of four I felt that something was different about me. Four was the age when the
kids in my neighborhood started to call me names. You know, faggot, sissy, it, etc...and once I
started school the kids were relentless” (Frock 16). According to Jonathan Alexander, “how we
understand ourselves...our ‘personal’ identities...is socially inflected by labels that, on one hand,
stigmatizes certain behavior and, on the other hand, reify others...Homophobic taunts, for
example, show how language use intervenes in the composing of socially acceptable identities”
(“Transgender Rhetorics” 52). Thus, when one’s interests, actions, or mannerisms are labeled in
a particular way, gay or trans, the labels force one to reexamine how he or she narrates his
“story”—to himself and others. Rajee further reflects on her formative years, and the obscurity of
identity and sexuality, as “For the longest time, I just thought I was an effeminate gay male and it
was not until my twenties that I started to connect the dots” (Frock 16). Rajee’s feelings fit
within the context of Prosser’s discussion on the subjective descriptions of one’s sensation of
being trapped in the wrong body.

As with other interviews in OP, for instance, sexuality and gay and lesbian identities
were, at one time or another, a part of the emerging process of identity for some trans men and
women. Certainly, this is not always the case for them, but for Rajee in particular, her
transgender identity emerged from youthful obscurity and innate sense of difference. This article
also provides a glimpse into a transgender childhood, as Rajee shares with a presupposed and
predominantly transgender (MTF) audience, his trans-childhood: “I could remember as a little
boy playing in my room using my basketball to simulate pregnancy. I would actually pretend to
give birth too” (Frock 16). For some transgender men and women, discussing their biological
sex, identities, or even birth name—sometimes referred to as one’s “boy” or “girl” name—can be
difficult, traumatic, or is an entirely unapproachable subject. Following the work of neurologist,
Dr. Oliver Sacks, “feeling one’s body as one’s own, [his] work on severe body image disturbances demonstrates that it is a core component of subjectivity, perhaps its basis” (Prosser 78). For Rajee, she clearly and candidly illustrates her childhood as a boy—the only childhood she ever experienced, that precluded the rearing, socialization, or trappings of a little girl—and later transgender woman. To simulate pregnancy and birth, as her language reveals, psychologically connects one’s mind to his/her body. Rajee recognized his future reproductive capabilities as a boy, yet identified with feminine reproduction. In boy form, Rajee consciously took a basketball—a toy representative of normative, male rearing culture—and simulated a part of feminine sexuality and reproduction.

Moreover, the age with which Rajee recalls the simulation of birth and pregnancy, predates his own biological onset of puberty or first sexual intimacy. During his teenage years, Rajee admits, “in my sexual fantasies as a teenager I realized that I was always a woman. I had breasts and a vagina” (Frock 16). According to Dr. Sack’s neurological research, “the sentient feeling of disembodiment [known as ‘bodily agnosia’] (a-gnos: the unknown here; the body as unknown, that which in our everyday life we take for granted as the base for perception and knowledge) interfaces with basic bodily functions” (Prosser 78). His work also extends into the presence of missing or non-existent body parts that an individual subjectively notes are there or should be there as a result of feeling displaced in the current form. Again, this is consistent with Rajee’s feelings—in boy form—of being a “woman” and feeling that on some mental level, his body was feminine. Her claims of “missing” her non-existent breasts and vagina are part of the rhetorical expression of feeling “ghosted” aspects of the “correct” body that were not biologically there. Realizing she was transgendered, her transition was gradual, noting, “I always say you don’t go to bed realizing you’re trans and wake-up the next morning as the gender you
feel comfortable in" (Frock 16). This sentiment harkens back to the notion and experience of body dysphoria. Her gradual process of transition occurred over an obscure spectrum, as she lived androgynous for a time: “I started to grow my hair long and wear makeup and unisex clothing, although this caused an uproar socially. People always want to be able to label and when they can’t, they seem to get very uncomfortable” (Frock 16).

Although Frock’s target audience is transgender women, this issue features an article highlighting a new trans-project in Texas called, “Transcending Men.” In this article, Kennedy Page, a trans man and Texas native, along with fellow business partner and FTM, Tye West, launched this new initiative. The goal of this project is to help other FTMs like them in all facets of transition. Page discusses the project, admitting, “It’s tough being a member of any minority group. Humans can be such cruel creatures as those of us who are transgendered know only too well” (“Transcending” Interview 39). Regarding his own youth and formative years, Kennedy reveals, “I think I was about four years old when I realized that something was wrong. You know as a kid when you play those games with female and male roles, I was always the male role. That’s who I was on the inside. I actually just looked at my body at 12 years old and I didn’t like my reflection in the mirror—everything seemed so wrong” (“Transcending” Interview 39). Like Rajee’s discourse on her formative childhood, Kennedy too grappled with the feeling that something about him was “off.” What is particularly striking is the tender age at which this “otherness” or discovery of uncertainty about the self and identity emerges—typically at four years of age or older. More prevalent is the body or dysphoric rhetoric from trans men and women before or around the time of puberty. As Kennedy reflects, he looked at his body and did not “like [his] reflection in the mirror.” For many transgender men and women, body dysphoria, image, and identity are connected, especially before transition occurs. Some avoid mirrors or
other reflective surfaces that bear a likeness of their image—that biological self that “seems[s] so wrong.” Mirrors also function metaphorically for trans individuals, as in Jan Morris’s autobiography, *Conundrum*, where she stages her gender surgery in the final act. This act by Morris is the most iconic and legendary mirror scene in trans autobiographies. In relation to Kennedy’s issues with mirrors, it is in fact “a trope of transsexual representation, the split of the mirror captures the definitive splitting of the transsexual subject, freezes it, frames it, schematically in narrative” (Prosser 100). Biological nudity is another major concern, as the disassociation and mind-body discord can be so strong, many trans men and women find that their personal hygiene suffers as a result of the discordant experience with seeing their naked bodies during daily bathing rituals.

For Kennedy, and other transgender men growing up in the South or in religious homes, part of “being raised always going to church and with my father being a pastor, I ignored a lot of different feelings I had on the inside so I went through life as a girl that I did not want to be” (“Transcending” Interview 40). Following high school, Kennedy entered the Army mentally as a transgender man yet did not pursue transition at the time. Still, he recalls of the experience, “The military was my stability and allowed me to transition. Within four months of starting testosterone I had a double bilateral mastectomy” (“Transcending” Interview 40). Since top surgery, Kennedy and Tye launched Transcending Men, Inc. to assist other FTMs in transitioning. One important aspect is helping trans men assimilate with cisgendered society, as Kennedy notes, “More often than not, individuals in the trans way of life, feel alienated and excluded from the common idea of acceptance in society. Due to this exclusion, many trans males fight a weary battle of depression and feelings of loneliness” (“Transcending” Interview 41-2). Depression affects trans individuals, prompting suicidal thoughts, and sometimes resulting
in trans suicides. The creators of OP, Amos Mac and Rocco Kayiatos, launched the campaign, “Talk about It,” via YouTube in 2012, to discuss and help counter this real-life struggle for so many transgender individuals. Although this chapter and thesis cover only trans magazines, this campaign is accessible online, which produces an additional angle to the transgender experience/rhetoric through the lens of depression.

In the end, it is important to remember, “transsexual and transgender narratives alike produce not the revelation of the fictionality of gender categories but the sobering realization of their ongoing foundational power” (Prosser 11). For transsexual autobiographies, and I argue the articles and interviews analyzed here, it is like “the literary act of self-reflection, the textual product of the ‘I’ reflects on itself…entwined in complex ways, narrative and bodily form conducting each other” (Prosser 100-1). It is also worth noting that “transsexuality reveals the extent to which embodiment forms an essential base to subjectivity; but it also reveals that [sometimes] embodiment is as much about feelings one inhabits as the flesh itself” (Prosser 7). What is ostensible in these publications, and the articles and interviews analyzed within them, are the patterns of rhetoric and experiences. Though OP offers the trans male perspective, and Frock the trans female perspective, it is the rhetoric of shared experiences through the common trope of being “trapped in the wrong body” and subsequent expression of body dysphoria that does not divide or dismiss these shared experiences. Rather, it unites them within the transgender milieu, which confirms and validates the mind-body experiences shared by both male and female transgenders/transsexuals. In the next chapter, I explore these magazines further and how meaning is rhetorically shaped by both trans men and women, in the context of visual rhetoric.
Chapter Two: Contextualizing Transgender Magazines within the Theory of Visual Rhetoric and Defining the Transgender Aesthetic: A Visual Rhetorical Analysis

This chapter initiates a fundamental discourse concerning transgender magazine culture by interfacing with Sonja K. Foss’s article, “Theory of Visual Rhetoric,” and her criteria for inclusion of visual artifacts. In the preceding chapter, my focus was on rhetorically analyzing the subjective experiences and nature of TG/TS (transgender and transsexual) communication in both articles and interviews. Beginning with a rhetorical analysis, it not only serves to help shape an audience’s understanding of transgenderism and transsexuality in a historical context, but establishes a subjective awareness on the part of these transgendered individuals. Here, I take this discussion one-step further and implement another theoretical and rhetorical angle with which to view transgender expression and communication through *Original Plumbing* and *Frock* magazines. This exploration of Foss’s theory of visual rhetoric on behalf of these trans publications functions in two ways: 1) it contextualizes transgender magazines into the theory of visual rhetoric’s three markers for inclusion, according to critic Sonja K. Foss—*symbolic action*, *human intervention*, and *presence of audience*; and 2) it provides a visual rhetorical analysis of *Original Plumbing*—a print transgender magazine for the FTM (female-to-male) audience—and *Frock*, a digital transgender magazine for the MTF (male-to-female) audience. Due to the length of this chapter, and subsequent study, I define and address visual rhetoric’s three markers for inclusion, but primarily focus on *human intervention*. Briefly, human intervention “involve[s] the conscious decision to communicate as well as [make] conscious choices about the strategies to employ areas such as color, form, media, and size” (Foss 144). My argument is that there are aesthetic elements of masculinity and femininity at work in *Original Plumbing*.

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6 The term “symbolic action” is linked to the work of rhetorician Kenneth Burke, and is included in critic Sonja K. Foss’s essay “Theory of Visual Rhetoric” used in this paper. For further background, see Burke: *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method.*
Plumbing's and Frock Magazine's layout. In order to detail and discuss these aesthetic elements, I apply a visual rhetorical analysis to these magazines—closely analyzing their respective colors, textures, sizes, typographies, and other aesthetic properties. The overarching goal of this chapter, and its broader study, is to fill a research gap by situating transgender magazines into the theory and field of visual rhetoric, thus designating it a visual artifact for study in future scholarship. The importance of this study is also measured by the field’s growing need and “concern with the intertwined issues of [visual and technological] space and identity” (Alexander 274). This study encourages those in the field of visual rhetoric to engage with more trans-related media, which will lend more of a “voice” to the transgender community within LGBTQ discourse as a whole.

In section one, “Contextualizing Transgender Magazines within Foss’s ‘Theory of Visual Rhetoric,’” I define all three markers from Foss’s essays on the theory of visual. I discuss the theory of symbolic action, established by Kenneth Burke, in order to explain how transgender magazines operate according to this marker. The objective of this section is to situate transgender magazines into each of these three markers, thus designating them as artifacts of visual rhetoric. Once I establish the situating of these magazines into the markers, I explore all three markers, but primarily focus on the human intervention marker and discuss the aesthetic aspects of Original Plumbing and Frock by performing a visual analysis on each magazine.

In section two, “Defining the Masculine Aesthetic: A Visual Rhetorical Analysis of Original Plumbing,” I argue that masculine aesthetics are found in Original Plumbing magazine.

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7 In Rhetorical Delivery as Technological Discourse, Ben McCorkle resurrects and redefines Delivery for the purposes of (re)integration within a twenty-first century context. McCorkle discusses these aspects of visual design, as I do, and refers to them as the “moving parts” akin to a rhetorical process, especially in the more visual context of this chapter: “the array of typefaces, color palettes, graphics…and other multimodal content used to help convey a given message to its intended audience” (1). For further study, see McCorkle’s section on “Body/Identity.”
and its trans-education issue. Since this transgender magazine caters to an FTM (female-to-male) audience, its overall design visually represents a masculine aesthetic as a text and for its target trans-male audience. Based on the principles of human intervention, I perform a close visual rhetorical analysis on the issue’s entire layout, particularly emphasizing where examples of masculine aesthetics are in the magazine such as its size, color, typography, textures, etc.

Drawing on the work of Anne F. Wysocki and Dennis Lynch ("Visual Modes of Communication"), Roland Barthes ("Rhetoric of the Image"), Richard Buchanan ("Rhetoric, Humanism, and Design"), and John Trimbur ("Delivering the Message: Typography and the Materiality of Writing") these sources support and challenge my own original visual analysis, as a graphic designer and student of visual rhetoric.

In section three, “Defining the Feminine Aesthetic: A Visual Rhetorical Analysis of Frock Magazine,” I argue that feminine aesthetics appear in Frock Magazine and its fall fashion issue. Since this transgender magazine caters to an MTF (male-to-female) audience, its design visually represents a feminine aesthetic as a text for its target trans-female audience. Based on the principles of human intervention, once again I perform a close visual rhetorical analysis on the issue’s entire layout, particularly emphasizing examples of feminine esthetics in the magazine’s size, color, typography, textures, etc. Drawing on similar scholarly texts from section two, I also integrate the work of visual and Art History scholar, Barbara Stafford (Good Looking: Essays on the Virtue of Images and Visual Analogy).

**Contextualizing Transgender Magazines within Foss’s “Theory of Visual Rhetoric”**

Since the 1970s, the field of visual rhetoric expanded to “include subjects which have not traditionally fallen within the critic’s purview; the non-discursive as well as the discursive, the nonverbal as well as the verbal” (qtd. in Foss 141). Rhetorical perspective may now “be applied
to any human act, process, product, or artifact” and “may formulate, sustain, or modify attention, perceptions, attitudes, or behaviors” (qtd. in Foss 141). Despite this expansion of theory, and some of the more recent scholarship in the last eight to ten years, by Mollie Blackburn and Jonathan Alexander, the transgender aspect of LGBTQ discourse in the field of rhetorical studies needs further development, as it is not entirely privy to transgender “human act[s], process[es], product[s], or artifact[s].” As referenced and discussed in chapter one, Blackburn’s and Alexander’s scholarship focuses more on literacy and power dynamics, as well as attempting to integrate transgender voices in the classroom. While these are admirable and invaluable contributions made by both critics, it does not reference or discuss the subjective experiences of transgender students or individuals, or discusses how meaning is created through visual rhetoric and expression. Therefore, the goal of this study is to establish a foundation for transgender/transsexual magazine media in rhetorical studies. I aim to contextualize this community and its visual and aesthetic magazine culture within the theory of visual rhetoric. In critic Sonja K. Foss’s essay, “Theory of Visual Rhetoric,” she asserts that there are three markers of visual rhetoric in which an image “must be symbolic, involve human intervention, and be presented to an audience for the purpose of communication with that audience” (Foss 141, emphasis mine).

These markers are part of visual rhetoric’s continuing evolution, and

As a result of nascent efforts to explore visual phenomena rhetorically, the term visual rhetoric now has two meanings in the discipline of rhetoric. It is used to mean both a visual object or artifact and a perspective on the study of visual data. In the first sense, visual rhetoric is a product individuals create as they use visual symbols for the purpose
of communicating. In the second, it is a perspective scholars apply that focuses on the symbolic processes by which images perform communication. (Foss 143)

Addressing the first marker, symbolic action, “visual rhetoric, like all communication, is a system of signs....To qualify as visual rhetoric, an image must go beyond serving as a sign” (Foss 144). Symbolic action, though linked with other theorists and scholars in the field, is discussed in Kenneth Burke’s essay, “Language as Symbolic Action.” According to Burke, “symbolicity included not only talk but also other human symbol systems, and he encouraged analysis of symbols in all of their forms, including mathematics, music, sculpture, painting...” (Foss 141). Nevertheless, transgenderism and transsexuality represent a unique duality of the self and language by what I refer to as a rhetorical and visual “metamorphosis”: the transgendered/transsexual individual uses language to discuss his or her physiological and biological transition, while the trans-body is a visual example of the transitioned self. This blend of rhetorical narrative as bodily expression with the transitioned self allows me to study both speech and imagery. In fact, studying speech and imagery unites the goals of rhetoric past and present. It also provides a rhetorical and visual occasion to study transgender expression from its own point of view. One of the primary reasons why I chose these transgender magazines is to study not simply a visual artifact of rhetorical expression, but to engage with rhetorical expression from the TG/TS perspective and community. While my research on transgender rhetoric and visual rhetoric depicts a fluid and evolving parallel between language and the visual, Kenneth Burke’s does not. Nevertheless, “People act; things move. We can have body without

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8 My contextualization of transgender magazines and their representations of transgender aesthetics of masculinity and femininity, along with the trans-body, counters Burke’s “insist[ance] on an absolute distinction between [the
mind (language); but no mind without body” (*UC Press E-Books Collection* 139). Thus, “all symbolic action originates in a body and must carry traces of that body in whatever form it is preserved—say, in a printed text” (139). Douglas Ehninger further carved out the rhetorical study of images, as “he defined rhetoric as the ways in which humans may influence each other’s thinking and behavior through the strategic use of symbols and suggested as appropriate subject matter the rhetorical study of art” (Foss 141).

According to Foss, “a sign communicates when it is connected to another object, as the changing of the leaves in autumn is connected to a change in temperature or a stop sign is connected to the act of stopping a car while driving” (144). Given Foss’s breakdown of sign and its connection to an object, how can transgender magazines be contextualized in the symbolic action marker? The subject, representation, and culture of *Original Plumbing* and *Frock* inherently deal with transgenderism/transsexuality. Though transgender is an umbrella term, I primarily focus on the transgender and transsexual identities found in these magazines. For clarification of these two identities, transgendered individuals identify with a gender other than their biological sex; transsexuals, on the other hand, are similar yet seek sexual reassignment surgery to achieve mind-body congruence. This distinction is also important with respect to identifying the transgender bodies that dominate the pages of *Original Plumbing* and *Frock Magazine*. However, in chapter three of this thesis, I analyze the transgender body through a visual social semiotic lens; this chapter is limited to a discussion of the visual aesthetics and graphic design principles of the magazines.

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9 For more information, see Nicholas M. Teich *Transgender 101: A Simple Guide to a Complex Issue*.

10 The differentiation between transgenders and transsexuals is paraphrased here for the purpose of brevity. This paraphrasing and condensing of identities comes from my own study of both spectrums of transgenderism. For more information, see Nicholas M. Teich *Transgender 101: A Simple Guide to a Complex Issue*. 

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Collectively, the transgendered bodies found in *Original Plumbing* and *Frock* signify the potential for language, the body, and transgender identity to connect. Beyond the connection between the body and language, the body itself is a form of visual or aesthetic communication. Incidentally, transgender bodies are physiologically unique, as they have physically traversed their biological sex, into that of the opposite biological sex, through hormone therapy and sexual reassignment surgery, for example. Still, if we subscribe to Foss's simple breakdown of sign and symbolism, what of the transgender body constitutes sign and symbol? What distinguishes the transgendered body in these magazines apart from language? I believe sign and symbol work together to designate transgender identity. For example, the dominant visual in *Original Plumbing* is the FTM body and its postoperative scars on the bare chests of trans-men depicted in the magazine's photographic images. These visible and enduring physical scars are markers on the body that symbolize (or symbolize, in part) the transgender/transsexual form. These scars "communicate," in a sense, that this visual form is in fact TG/TS. Now, the audience who interprets these scars as symbolic and representative of the transsexual body is primarily the TG/TS audience. The experience of trans-identification and symbolism is likely complex and perhaps highly subjective; an identification of the trans-form may depend on who the viewing audience is. Undoubtedly, this facet of contextualizing TG/TS bodies, and subsequent magazines—where the identities and bodies are so dominant—needs further expansion under the symbolic action aspect of visual rhetoric.

Given Foss's further explication of how images function or how to evaluate them, these FTM scars might fall under the "nature of the image," in which it is "essential to an application of rhetorical perspective [to] distinguish features of the visual image. Description of the nature of the visual rhetoric involves attention to two components—presented elements and suggested
elements” (“Theory” 146). Among the pages of Frock is the MTF form in which the body and its
gestures and poses “perform” femininity in two-dimensional space, yet the body is not visibly
conveying scars. Feminine poses and gestures function as perhaps signs that symbolically link to
normative or stereotypical feminine stances of non-transgendered females. In essence, I believe
the images of the transgender form are symbolic of their TG/TS identities. If we apply this type
of explication of the presented and suggested visual elements, then the scars or gestures and
postures of transgender bodies in these magazines become communicative elements, which can
also be “concepts, ideas, themes, and allusions that a view is likely to infer from the presented
elements” (“Theory” 146). This need for further insight and expansion is echoed by Foss as she
notes, “Relatively few studies have been done in which a rhetorical perspective has been applied
to visual imagery, and it has been applied to such widely diverse and dispersed rhetorical
dimensions, ranging from metaphor to ambiguity to argumentation, that identification of key
constructs has not yet been undertaken” (“Theory” 145). Certainly, reading the scars as a sign
representative of the trans identity is one example of how visual rhetoric would come to
understand sign and symbolism within a transgender context as it “focuses on the symbolic
processes by which images perform communication” (Foss 143, emphasis mine). This marker
and the complex relationship between sign and symbolism and the TG/TS body I discuss further
in the next chapter, regarding ‘body language’ and the transgender body through a visual
semiotic lens.

Typically presented as third marker, I discuss presence of audience as a precursor to
human intervention because they work in conjunction, and this third marker addresses audience
before our discussion of the intent to create for a specific audience begins. Briefly, presence of
audience is defined as part of “visual rhetoric [because] it implies an audience is concerned with
the appeal either to a real or an ideal audience. Visual elements are arranged and modified by a rhetor not simply for self-expression...but also for communication with an audience” (Foss 144, emphasis mine). Therefore, “visual rhetoric as artifacts...is the purposive production or argument of colors, forms, and other elements to communicate with an audience...as a tangible artistic product [and] can be achieved by viewers and studied by scholars as a communicative message” (Foss 145). In the context of audience, Original Plumbing serves the trans-male demographic, in which all of its magazine issues deal with FTM culture and represent issues central to the FTM/trans-male identity and lifestyle. Thus, all of the magazines’ articles, interviews, design aesthetics/layout, and trans-photography is heavily FTM-identified—the trans-male creators reach their audience through self-identification. Aristotle’s rhetorical triangle might be a useful way to understand how author, text, and audience combine to help contextualize OP as visual rhetoric. The basis of Aristotle’s rhetorical triangle explores the dynamic interaction between the author, his/her production of the text, and the text’s effect on the (intended) audience. Arguably, Amos Mac and Rocco Kayiatos, creators of OP, are the authors—embodying a particular ethos (or credibility) in identifying as trans-men, which leads to a certain self-identity in the text they produce for their trans-male audience. Their experience as transgendered FTMs creates an opportunity for a trans-male magazine in Original Plumbing—it establishes context for an audience in other trans-men like them. In terms of the text itself, OP is visually designed with masculine aesthetics for the purpose of connection with other transgender men, which provides a logos or knowledge of the transgendered self, by the transgendered self, and primarily for transgendered audiences, yet it is not exclusive to cisgendered audiences as well; in fact, the magazine includes cisgendered female models, celebrities, and comedians who are allies of the trans community. Finally, the issue of pathos and the rhetorical triangle: how OP
intends to psychologically or emotionally appeal to the trans-audience. One might think a clear example is the text, or trans-magazine, connecting emotionally with the audience through the shared experiences of transition. For example, the magazine contains interviews and articles on transgendered life, exploring all issues and matters of the body and a transgender man’s personal and physical journey through transition. Photographic imagery is also present within the magazine, conveying certain pathos with respect to the transitioned body/form that is the ultimate visual ideal for much of the magazine’s audience in other FTM communities. Within the context of the rhetorical triangle, these dynamics show how the transgender community—through the creation of print and digital trans-magazines, like *OP* and *Frock*—create and establish meaning and communication amongst themselves and cisgendered audiences and allies. The same is said for *Frock Magazine*, only the trans-connection of audience is through a more feminine means of aesthetic communication with their (intended) trans-female audience. This notion of communication and the self can be thought of in the context of John Trimbur’s essay, “Delivering the Message: Typography and the Materiality of Writing,” where “products embody the intentions and purposes of their makers” (252). Trimbur believes, as I do, that design is inherently determined by the choices human beings make regarding processes, subject matter, and the purpose of the design—this is the essential nature of humanism and design.

The second marker of visual rhetoric, and focus of this discussion, is *human intervention*. The creation of “visual rhetoric involves human action of some kind. Humans are involved in the generation of visual rhetoric when they engage in the process of image creation” (Foss 144). This process also involves “the conscious decision to communicate as well as make conscious choices about the strategies to employ in areas such as color, form, media, and size” (Foss 144). As previously mentioned, this marker combines with presence of audience, as visual rhetoric not
only requires human effort/action in the creation of art, but “in the process of interpretation” (Foss 144). In the proceeding sections, I explore human intervention and place special emphasis on visually analyzing the aesthetic layouts of both *Original Plumbing* and *Frock*. Of these layouts, I argue aesthetic elements of masculinity are present in *OP* as well as femininity in *Frock*, by the use of their colors, textures, fonts, and other visual and design imagery. By exploring masculinity and femininity, through such aesthetic elements, it links image creation to the (intended) audience for interpretation.

**Defining the Masculine Aesthetic: A Visual Rhetorical Analysis of *Original Plumbing***

As discussed, the human intervention marker that assists in designating imagery visual rhetoric focuses on purposeful decisions to communicate—the conscious choices made in selecting colors, sizes, textures, fonts, and other forms of media. It is not only the production of aesthetic media, such as transgender magazines, that is important, but also how the audience interprets the visual text. In “Visual Modes of Communication,” Anne F. Wysocki and Dennis Lynch address the importance of “reading” and critically analyzing visual texts as, “If we don’t learn to analyze and understand the complexities of visual texts, …then it can seem as though we just perceive visual texts naturally and easily…we won’t read text made by people who arrange elements of their texts in order to achieve specific purposes” (*Compose, Design* 264-5). Not only is this a fundamental concept that brings further awareness to any kind of visual or rhetorical expression, but it is especially important to note the finer aesthetic details among the pages of *Original Plumbing*. As Wysocki laments, audiences should read visual texts with an understanding that there is purposeful design in the aesthetic elements on a page, for example. While this is standard in the commercial world of art and visual design and communication for mainstream audiences, once again transgender visual expression and aesthetics are not part of
this conversation in visual rhetoric. Considering I feature the 2011 education issue of *Original Plumbing* within this study, which focuses on education and the trans experience, what aesthetic elements convey these themes? How might we visually read this transgendered text and seek its visual rhetorical purpose? It begins with noting the trans education topic and theme of this issue and how it is aesthetically conveyed through its use of not only masculine colors, but how education is interpreted as a word and experienced through colors, fonts, and other graphic elements among the magazine pages.

Beginning with *Original Plumbing*’s cover of this trans-education issue, the OP logo sits prominently in the upper left corner. The aesthetic look of the logo conveys a masculine presence or “identity” by its prominent, bold, all capital lettering. The logo is a serif font, meaning at the base of each letter, are visual accents or what is known as “feet.” Serif fonts depict a more formal or stately visual presence as opposed to its sans serif counterpart, which is relaxed and without “feet.” Some of these initial visual aesthetics are part of the art of making meaning in visual communication and rhetoric—these aspects tell a visual tale by applying the appropriate design aesthetics to a logo or brand identity, in this case *Original Plumbing.*
There is also a pathos to typography, “In different visual compositions...type will evoke more obvious emotion and feeling....The curves and straight lines of letters can be arranged to suggest bodies or abstract shapes” (Wysocki & Lynch 279). According to John Trimbur, “Typography enables us to see writing in material terms as letterforms, printed pages, posters, and computer screens....Typography links writing to delivery—the fifth canon of rhetoric” (263). The OP logo is designed in a stenciled font, in black and white, which visually creates a positive and negative space effect: the letter “O” is outlined in black, the letter “P” is in solid black. Still, the visual effect of stenciled lettering adds to the dominant presence of the magazine’s name—think lettering on crates at a construction site. Stenciled fonts have a history in more modernist context, as they are part novelty and part grunge style, which conveys, “a quick, hard-edged garage aesthetic” (Wysocki & Lynch 283). This stenciled magazine logo is designed with purpose: to associate the visual lettering with masculine objects, places, and, of course, gender. As discussed in Trimbur’s essay, “The emphasis in typography has shifted ‘from the individual
letter to the overall series of characters,’ exchanging the ‘fixed identity of the letter to the
relational system of the font’” (qtd. in Handa, Visual Rhetoric). This combination of bold
lettering, stenciled typography, and all capitals both demands and “commands” visual authority.

Below “OP” is the magazine name spelled out as subtext; but how it appears is of visual
importance. “Original Plumbing” remains written in all capital letters, in a black, bold font, but
the subtext is in sans serif format. There are two important points to make regarding this visual
phenomenon: 1) the stenciled logo “OP” and its drop-head text “Original Plumbing” visually
balance one another—one is a serif font and the other is not. Boldness and masculinity is still
conveyed, but in different ways; and 2) “OP” can be completely detached from its subtext and
remain a masculine logo through brand recognition. In other words, “OP” visually represents the
magazine, in spite of any missing subtext that spells out its formal name. Incidentally, these are
not the only instances of text on the front cover perpetuating the visual theme of masculinity or
issue topic. In Roland Barthes’s visual analysis of a Panzani advertisement, he remarks, “Today,
at the level of mass communications, it appears that the linguistic message is indeed present in
every image: as title, caption....Which shows we are still a civilization of writing, writing and
speech continue to be the full terms of the informational structure” (155). The word
“SCHOOLED” is positioned horizontally across the half-figure of the trans-man on the cover.
Not only is this word consistent with characteristic boldness like other text on the cover, but its
design “speaks” to the actual theme of the issue: trans-education. Along with its bold lettering,
“Schooled” appears adorned in white ink, which gives the visual impression of being vertically
“colored” in with white chalk.

Beneath the starkness of “Schooled” is a trans-male in front of a blackboard (or
greenboard, in this case) with a yellow, number two pencil horizontally embedded between his
lips and several clenched in his hand. Although I analyze trans-gesture and pose through a visual semiotic lens in the proceeding chapter, his visual presence is juxtaposed with the aesthetic logo and lettering which serves as an example of a trans-magazine cover. Typically, transgendered faces and bodies occupy the covers of these magazines, surrounded by masculine or feminine aesthetics that convey the identity and purpose of the magazine for its intended audience. As Wysocki and Lynch explain, “As [one] design[s], and produce[s] visual communications, think of audiences as people with beliefs, values, and opinions you want not to alienate but to engage” (*Compose, Design* 267). Incidentally, the greenboard behind him may convey a simple backdrop that fits the “schooled” theme; however, since its color is green it can also be visually “read” as a cold color,¹¹ which is consistently associated with masculinity. Flipping the 5 1/2 x 8” magazine over, its size relates to human intervention as well. This diminutive magazine easily rolls up in one motion and can fit comfortably and casually into the back pocket of a trans-man’s jeans. A portable man’s “Bible” he carries that is simple, small, flexible, and is without much decoration. In the best sense, it epitomizes masculine simplicity and accessibility.

The back cover is dressed in pure black with one centered picture presented for the reader’s “gaze”: this square-shaped photograph functions like a window into the back of a classroom. The reader looks on at the backs of three trans-men who represent the stereotypical male student: the band “geek” clad in school-band attire, the “rebel” in a black, leather motorcycle jacket, and the “jock” in his varsity letterman jacket with a *Playboy* magazine in his hand. These masculine stereotypes, associated with normative or cisgendered men (or non-

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¹¹ Cold colors or coloring, in the visual arts, depict colors such as blue, green, purple, and gray tones. Unlike their warm color counterparts, such as reds, yellows, and oranges, cold colors are associated with masculinity and natural tones. Warmer colors are associated with femininity and brighter and visually inviting tones. This knowledge is my own, as a graphic designer. For further info on this topic, see Rick Sutherland *Graphic Designer’s Color Handbook*. 
transgendered men), are essentially "performed"\textsuperscript{12} within the magazine's two-dimensional space. As discussed in Judith Butler's essay, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," "through language, gesture, and all manner of symbolic social sign" ("Performative Acts" 270) social reality or appearance appears continually reinvented or performed. This "performance" is in the almost costume-like clothing these trans-men wear in the photograph and are aesthetically associated with the stereotypical male band geek, rebel, and jock. According to critic Richard Buchanan "There is a deep reflexive relation between human character and the character of the human-made: character influences the formation of products and products influence the format of the character in individuals, institutions, and society" (233). Within the magazine is a two-page spread where we see the same trans-school boys. Much like the symmetrical design of the cover, in which all text and the photographic images are vertical—the eye led by the visual aesthetics from top to bottom—this two-page spread is in the same consistent format. This spread features many all-American schoolboy stereotypes, as previously mentioned. Each page features a white background with a symmetrical layout in which the trans-man's name is at the top, vertically followed by his age, a borderless picture of him "performing" his schoolboy identity, and three school-related questions about his identity prior to transition.

Beginning at the top of this two-page spread, the names of these trans-men are in black with a cursive font. This cursive style font conveys the theme of "school" and penmanship: each curve of a name like Tuck or Scott has upward pointing arrows, and some downward arrows, signifying the direction of the cursive and number of strokes to "write" the name. Anchoring the name and text is a thin blue line, reminiscent of penmanship paper distributed for student practice in early grades. As detailed in Trimbur's discussion of narrative and letterforms,

\textsuperscript{12} "Performed" references the term Judith Butler refers to in her work, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." See Sue-Ellen Case's \textit{Performing Feminisms}. 
"current typographical designers...‘combine an anti-heroic amalgam of Modernist geometry and grade-school penmanship to recall the naïve yet normative scenario of learning how to write’—an exercise that results ‘not only from external technologies but from the disciplinary socialization of the individual’” (qtd. in Trimbur 267). Still, the blue line reads as a design aesthetic by reintroducing the notion of cold coloring: the blue as a cold, masculine color and its gendered binary “code” of blue for boys. The other font styles on the page—the age and questions—are in black as consistent with the entire issue, but also in a sans serif style. Again, san serif fonts convey a more relaxed and casual style of text, in which case there is no other formal design element within this two-page spread. And, with respect to the informal and rather personal questions being asked and answered on the page, a sans serif font is aesthetically appropriate.

In another two-page spread, similar in aesthetic style, the background is again white with horizontal penmanship lines running across both ends of the yoked pages. Between the aesthetic penmanship lines are personal accounts of growing up transgendered in a small town, with a small student body. As opposed to actual penmanship, an American Typewriter font is used: the visual feel is more personal—typing and journaling on a typewriter to oneself. Below these lines, however, are hand-drawn images that tie into this masculine aesthetic. The “doodles” give the impression that these are pages of lined penmanship or notebook paper—illustrations from boredom, perhaps. In fact, the doodles themselves seem interesting in that they depict animals and monsters—typical aesthetics drawn from a masculine mind: a one-eyed Cyclops, blank-eyed creatures, and an illustrated “nickname” or slur in the form of a chicken with human legs. These illustrations evoke action, for example, in the depiction of a propeller atop a hat on a monster or

13 A visual example of American Typewriter font: American Typewriter
an arrow in the back of a sketched Cyclops with the bold, written letters: “GAH HH!” These images convey a sense of artistry with implied motion and boyish imagination: a flying pear bearing its angry teeth. Beyond the two-page spreads are various advertisements mostly found at the beginning and end of the issue. Because *Original Plumbing* is a trans-male magazine, ads reveal a lot about the readership and their placement and accessibility. Products specific to the trans-male such as anatomic prosthetics, trans-night clubs and bars, trans-bands, and other shops that serve the community, in addition to a call for papers on trans-literary fiction are available. Among such ads are pornographic advertisements and names of erotic boutiques that are masculine such as the Tool Shed. Overall, *OP’s* aesthetics portray masculinity for its trans-male audience, and appear alongside the trans-rhetoric of articles and interviews in the magazine.

**Defining the Feminine Aesthetic: A Visual Rhetorical Analysis of *Frock Magazine***

Picture soft, round curves with bold dramatic flair and a form blanketed in hot pink: it’s not a woman, it’s *Frock Magazine’s* logo. Indeed, this visual graces the cover of the fall fashion issue of *Frock* from 2012, displayed in the pixeled landscape of a digital layout. Let’s begin this visual analysis with the cover: a layer of black background with the name “frock” centered close to the top of the page.
Unlike the *OP* logo, *Frock*’s logo is in lowercase lettering—it commands visual attention but through subtler aesthetic means: its font appears rounded, curving softly as it spells the magazine’s name in hot pink with white accents streaming elegantly down from a top left angle.

With respect to their trans-feminine or cisgendered audience, “how people understand and respond to colors thus depends on the contexts in which they see the color” (Wysocki & Lynch 278). Not only does the color pink in normative culture and perceptions link to females, it also represents *Frock Magazine*’s visual “face” or brand identity. Beneath the lettering appears a black drop shadow effect for prominence—it gives the visual impression of “popping” off the page in three-dimensional form. Beneath “frock” is drop-head text reading, “Your Quarterly TG Lifestyle Magazine” in a crisp, white font. “Frock” and its drop-head text are bold and convey information along with an aesthetic image, in just the opposite manner of *OP* and its subtext: its title is sans serif, yet its subtext is a serif font for aesthetic balance.
Raining down in a soft, white mist beneath these titles is a spotlight, casting its illuminating beam on a trans woman sitting in a red chair. Incidentally, the red leather chair draws the eye to this trans-feminine form sitting somewhat slouched. Against the red leather is her golden, shimmery pencil skirt, black heels, and sheer leopard print blouse. Her blonde hair falling about her shoulders in a shimmery contrast to the muted beam of light cascading over her and producing a sensual shadow just behind her. With her centered positioning on the cover, an image and more text hovers level with her head and just below her ankles, guiding the eye to and from her draped form. The image placed far left of her on the cover is a rounded pink circle with several triangular points positioned around the perimeter of the circle—think the Mattel™ label on a Barbie™ box: a blonde and pink image. Somehow, this cover appears reminiscent of a doll or iconic American blonde known to a majority of little girls and women; audience interpretation is part of aesthetic association. What we see, perhaps, is a quintessential blonde trans-“bombshell,” which is not an image saved for this issue; it is the type of aesthetic image, colors, and even poses seen on many of Frock’s covers. For other audience members, or trans readers of Frock, this interpretation may vary. According to Barbara Stafford, “While it is true that the interpretation of a work of art [or in this case visual magazine aesthetic] will change over time and place...the fact remains that there seems to be a general ongoing struggle to fit one’s evolving conceptual systems to the unstable elements of a wider environment” (Visual Analogy 145). Below the trans woman’s heels is more text, aligned right conveying the issue’s features in white lettering with hot pink stroke or external outlining of each letter. This implied alignment of visual imagery on the cover functions as logos or knowledge of arranging (magazine) layouts: “An audience can look and easily see what element you want them to see first, which second, and which third....You can have more than three to four [design] elements, but use the strategies
for repetition and proximity to make different elements look closely related” (Compose, Design 286).

With the click of a mouse button, this digital transgender magazine most closely resembles in form, size, and layout a popular women’s print magazine: Cosmopolitan. Whether or not this was an intentional aesthetic or rhetorical choice on the part of the creators of Frock, the magazine resembles one of the most iconic female publications in magazine journalism. This resemblance between Frock and Cosmo aligns them as resources for advice and entertainment for women across the gendered spectrum. Frock’s aesthetic similarity to Cosmo also makes it part of a commercial text easily recognized. This similarity between both magazines takes the “otherness” or “obscurity” away from Frock as simply a transgender magazine, while also allowing for the inclusion of trans and cisgendered women. Despite its digital pages, Frock appears a standard 11 x 17” size with a back cover as a catalogue order form for clothing and other products for a spectrum of identities within its intended audience. While the back cover’s catalogue layout is standard, there are consistent themes of Frock’s visual aesthetics that continue throughout much of the issue: the combination of black, white, and hot pink accents and lettering. Inside the magazine is Frock’s Contents page laid out as a two-page spread with a white background. Here is the image of a hot pink swirlly, feminine design in the corner and top angles on nearly every subsequent digital page. Attached to these feminine, pink swirls are dainty flowered accents. Every visual from the masthead to some text is in either hot pink or black. This Contents page and the several advertisements embedded between articles resemble in formatting and style, many of the attributes of Cosmo magazine. As opposed to Original Plumbing’s more nondescript expression of the issue’s contents, Frock’s Contents page provides an overview of the issue: Editor’s page, interviews with trans-celebrities, “Frock Chicks” feature
in which different trans-ladies share personal experiences, trans human rights, and a book review. There is even a trans-variation of a crossword puzzle in “Frockword” and a variation on horoscopes known now as “GenderScopes.” Ostensibly, *Frock*’s features and layout conform to the trans-feminine community and form part of its overall expression.

What creates aesthetic flair and drama among the vibrant pages of this digital magazine are the placement of pictures bordering each page. Each picture appears designed with a white border and a drop shadow beneath it, which gives the visual impression of a Polaroid picture. The vibrancy of the hot pink borders and colorful photographs express richness and invite the eye in a way that the more masculine layout of *OP* does not. Observing the magazine’s hot pink accents, throughout its two-page spreads of trans-celebrities, there is a visual interplay between the pinks on the page and the clothing worn by the trans-celeb in the photograph. Colors on the pages appear coordinated with the clothing of each featured trans-lady. Outfits worn in these photographs offset the hot pink gradients, as purple tones, bold, shimmery textures and prints stimulate and dazzle the eye. Although I cover gesture and pose in the next chapter, colors, clothing, and trans-lady poses work together to enhance *Frock*’s visual appeal. As opposed to the frequent use of black and white in *Original Plumbing*’s layout, *Frock* uses bold color as backgrounds along with centered pictures; in fact, the text in this magazine conforms to the shape and structure of the trans-body.

In *Frock*’s “Suddenly Fem™” fall fashion two-page spread, appear more hints at a feminine aesthetic: the perpetual use of script typography. Recall that every font conveys a particular image and tale: certain styles of script typography do the same. In fact, as noted by John Trimbur, “Typography…calls attention to how the look of the page communicates meaning by treating text as a visual element that can be combined with images and other nonverbal forms
to produce a unit of discourse” (267). In this spread, the font use is of an elegant style, with rounded and flowing curves, which appeals to a more feminine sensibility. Scripted fonts or “faces look as though they were hand-drawn with a pen....They can therefore give a feeling of relaxed elegance to a page—a playfulness” (Compose, Design 283). “Suddenly Fem™” is written in a soft, white color with curved underlining beneath it as a visual anchor for the text. The colors of this curve recall a spectrum of gender, as a gradient of colors spread across the length of the curve from pink to blue. Incidentally, this spectrum of pink to blue coloring may also signify the journey of the trans-woman, as she prevails from her “blue” boy gender to her present “pink” trans-feminine form. This is one example of a subtle allusion to gender and even sexuality as a spectrum, in which transgenders and transsexuals perceive gender to be. Regarding the pink and blue colors in this gradient and its relationship to gender or gendered spectrum, Wysocki and Lynch suggest “[when] analyzing or choosing colors for communication, keep in mind that [our culture has] associations with different colors because of our experiences with both the natural world and our cultural worlds” (Compose, Design 278). This notion of culture reflects the existing binary of male and female—blue and pink—that transgender and cisgender audiences are aware of and shape, to some extent, their “reading” of a particular color and the context in which it is used. Before the endpoint of this curve is a ball of white light, illuminating and shining, which brings to mind performance, Broadway, and a spotlight (recall the one on the front cover as well). Throughout this spread, gray backgrounds provide contrast for the collection’s clothing—mostly black, a variation of gray. Positioned head-level to the models is “Babe Collection” written in a subtler pink color and scripted once again for feminine appeal. On each piece of photographed jewelry, the same ball of light provides accent, even on the models themselves. Not only is beauty at the forefront of these page designs, but emphasis as well:
specifically, emphasis on the trans-feminine form, her curves, and her poses as a catalogue model. A close analysis of the form reveals where the text on the page is located: text begins at the head of the trans-model, then found at her waist accenting hips, and then along the curves of her legs. There is an invisible vertical line leading the eye to various points of the trans-form: head, shoulders, waist, and calves.

Prior to this analysis, I discussed advertisements in OP’s visual analysis, as an integral part of “reading” the magazines audience—providing aesthetic accents as well. Advertisements between the digital pages of Frock are arguably for a more trans-feminine or cisgendered audience. For example, advertisements for makeovers and professional photography appear inserted; trans-vacation spots are highlighted as well as hair and clothing accessories. In other words, based on the advertisements alone in Original Plumbing and Frock, it is evident that a more trans-masculine magazine focuses on sexual advertisements. Frock, as a trans-feminine magazine, advertises indulgent escapes to locales for vacation and sensual products to adorn oneself, all typically associated with the feminine sensibility. Ostensibly, given the various aesthetic elements and advertisements in both magazines, the role of identity and gender become a part of the conversation. My focus on the human intervention aspect of the theory of visual rhetoric illuminates the possibilities of transgender visual expression. What we garner from studying these aesthetic expressions is how the FTM (female-to-male) and MTF (male-to-female) perspectives design with masculine or feminine fonts, colors, etc. Changing one’s biological sex is not the only manner in which to convey gender; it is constructed and reinforced through aesthetics as well. In the next chapter, I continue building on this visual awareness within the trans context, as I analyze the visual semiotic potential of TG/TS body language through the magazines’ photographic imagery.

Continuing with the theme of visual analysis of Original Plumbing and Frock Magazine, this chapter visually examines the various gestures, poses, and ‘body language’ seen in the entertainment issue of OP and the trans-media and music issue of Frock. Since the TG/TS body is such a highly dominant and visible feature of both magazines, I use a visual social semiotic lens to investigate the masculine and feminine potential found among these pages. By exploring visual depictions of transgendered bodies, through photographic imagery, I explore the notion of gesture and posture as performances of normative masculine and feminine identity. As discussed in Judith Butler’s essay, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution,” it is “through language, gesture, and all manner of symbolic social sign” (270) that social reality or appearance is continually reinvented or performed. This “performance” appears in the many masculine poses and gestures in OP, from close-up shots of the trans-masculine face to nearly full-form nudity. “Performance” is also visually present in Frock, which mimics normative femininity through trans-feminine gestures and poses. Another aspect to consider, as I analyze Frock in this manner, is its digital medium, which also changes the dynamic with which audiences interpret the body in (digital) two-dimensional space. In Rhetorical Delivery as Technological Discourse, Ben McCorkle addresses Delivery14 in a classical as well as more modern context for twenty-first century audiences as it applies to the body and identity. McCorkle discusses Delivery in relation to the body by characterizing it as “The moving parts of the rhetorical process: the raised arm, the clenched fist, the shifting countenance” (1). Whereas classical rhetoric conceptualizes Delivery as bodily gesture, modern rhetoric equates it with design and implied movement. In the

14 McCorkle defines Delivery within a historical context as, “The vast majority of the Western rhetorical tradition has conceived of, thought of, and written about delivery as those facets of oratorical performance pertaining to bodily movements, vocal inflection, dress, and the like” (13). For more information, see Ben McCorkle Rhetorical Delivery as Technological Discourse: A Cross-Historical Study.
context of *Frock*, its digital framework and Delivery, “[amidst] our more recent proliferation of electronic and digital writing technologies, current rhetorical theory, …treats Delivery as the collective elements peculiar to a particular medium of expression or as the extra-textual features of a given text, be it spoken, bound in print [like *OP*]…or floating in cyberspace [as indicated by *Frock’s* digital presence]” (McCorkle 14-5). One might also conceive of Delivery as expanded by the scholarship of James E. Porter in “Recovering Delivery for Digital Rhetoric and Human-Computer Interaction,” as he definitionally compounds the terms ‘digital’ and Delivery and arrives at a more modern term in *digital delivery*. Relative to the gesture, posture, and ‘body language’ I analyze in both *OP* and *Frock*, Porter’s essay provides a relevant section on “Body/Identity,” which concerns bodily form and subsequent online representations such as “gestures, voice, dress, and image, and questions of identity and performance and online representations of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity” (2). Much as I do, Porter discusses the body as a text and its “performance” of identity as connected to one’s ethos; in fact, Porter argues, “using the body as itself a ‘text,’ [is] a delivery mechanism for a persuasive point” (8). Thus, observing *Frock* in its digital medium, audiences see the body and its performative nature in cyberspace, as opposed to the print medium of *Original Plumbing*. Porter’s scholarship reminds us that even in digital/virtual space, “the body does not disappear….It is certainly constructed differently, but it is there in all its non-virtual manifestations: gender, race, sexual preference, social class, age, etc.” (18) and I argue TG/TS identity.

15 James E. Porter revives Delivery, which in classical rhetoric referred to aspects of performance akin to the oral and even bodily aspects of a particular speech. For a more modern rhetorical purpose and audience, Porter revives and expands upon Delivery for the twenty-first century, as the mode previously declined in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Porter’s definition of “digital delivery” is another term for electronic publishing; he also includes the issues of economic and politics of publishing here, as these issues are now linked to copyright, authorship, fair use, remixing digital context, and more. See James E. Porter “Recovering Delivery for Digital Rhetoric and Human-Computer Interaction.”
Through a visual social semiotic analysis, I discuss the semiotic potential of these trans identities and bodies to be read in both print and digital forms. This chapter offers another way in which, as an audience, we can delve into another aspect of how the FTM and MTF communities create meaning through their photographic images. Beginning with Theo van Leeuwen’s scholarship on social semiotics, he contends, “As soon as we establish that a given type of physical activity or a given type of material artifact constitutes a semiotic resource, it becomes possible to describe its semiotic potential, its potential for making meaning…” (4). Thus, constituting the trans-photographic imagery of *OP* and *Frock* as a semiotic resource, this semiotic potential lends itself to the implied movements and gestures captured by the camera through space and time. Van Leeuwen provides examples of physical or implied movements for semiotic potential, one being “Swaying hips [that] have a potential for meaning something like ‘loosening up’ or ‘letting go’…but whether that ‘letting go’ will be used to convey sensuality or slovenliness depends on who ‘lets go’… [and] other aspects of physical behavior, style of dress, etc.” (4). Semiotic potential and the who, what, where, when, and even style of dress becomes more germane to this study, as not only is partial nudity found among the pages of *OP*, in addition to masculine dress, but also in *Frock*, where trans-feminine models seductively pose in short skirts, fishnet stockings, and high heels.

In *Introducing Social Semiotics*, van Leeuwen stresses how “Studying the semiotic potential of a given semiotic resource is [also] studying how that resource has been, is, and can be used for purposes of communication” (5). Considering TG/TS representation and the community’s ways of creating meaning are largely under-investigated, we might observe such meaning through a heteronormative lens in order to find any heteronormative similarity of gesture, posture, and body language. Is the intent to communicate, through gesture and/or its
semiotic potential, something that changes with gender alteration? This question is not meant to imply that TG/TS bodies are incapable of their own unique communication through gesture, posture, and body language, but there may be actions or performances of identity that “become” normatively masculine or feminine—even hyper-masculine or feminine. Whether or not an individual transitioned, we have all encountered established heteronormative gender roles and gender identities—constructed by normative society—and been socialized accordingly. Are those roles and identities then the basis of new constructions of identity or existing ones that transgendered individuals visually portray among these print or digital pages?

Nonetheless, the medium in which I investigate semiotic potential of gesture, posture, and body language derives in part from the works of Roland Barthes. In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes states that “Photography transform[s] subject into object” and in which “a photograph can be the object of three practices (or of three emotions, or of three intentions): to do, to undergo, to look. The *Operator* is the Photographer. The *Spectator* is ourselves, all of us who glance through collections of photographs—in magazines...And the person or thing photographed is the target” (9, 13). In the following sections, I explore the dynamics of trans photography in these magazines, embodying the role of not only *Spectator*, but visual social semiotician to unravel the potential for trans-communication through body language.

**Visual Social Semiotic Potential of Masculine ‘Body Language’ in *Original Plumbing***

Beginning with the front and back covers of *Original Plumbing*’s 2012 issue, entertainment, trans-masculinity, and sensuality visibly appear. As seen below the *OP* logo is the cropped face of a trans man.
In Courtney Bailey’s analysis of the “Faces of History” in her study of the front covers of *TIME* magazine, she discusses the use of the close-up as “The tension between authenticity and artificiality [that] shows up in the formal and aesthetic characteristics of the cover, especially through the use of close-ups to the face” (36). What is representative of entertainment, trans-masculinity, and sensuality are the distinct visual elements that work together to imply a certain motion. Shimmering behind the face of known trans man, Wyatt Riot, is silver confetti—square fragments of glitter illuminating the background in white, metallic, and even purple tones. Incidentally, this coating of shimmery glitter continues on the back page of the issue as well. The glitter is associated with celebration, a visual spectacle or attraction as well as entertainment. Despite its purpose as a trans male quarterly magazine, *OP* appeals to trans men of all different sexual orientations—sex and gender are illuminated in this issue, particularly from this front cover. In the foreground, Wyatt Riot, with his head tilted, an eye slanted and level with the readers’ eyes represents not only the face of *OP* for this issue, but the face of a trans male in general. Trans-male identity, as with all of *OP*’s issues, features prominently on covers and throughout its pages. The more sensual and suggestive aspects of the cover are read from Riot’s
gesture and pose. His fingers hold the thin shaft of a cherry stem—the cherry, as is his mouth and right cheek—is sprinkled with a sugary glitter, reminiscent of the inedible shimmery squares of the silver confetti in the background. Whereas this gesture—with the cherry's roundedness and symbolic allusion to virginity—is typically associated with cisgendered women and seductiveness, sexuality comes to the forefront of the audiences' minds. In *Picturing Texts*, Lester Faigley discusses association in the context of images as, “[Photographs] often portray stereotypes because even though they may capture one person or a single moment, they live on as people in moments of time...” (237). Thus, Riot is depicted as seductively tasting the cherry, which is a gesture usually seen in posters and photographs of not only queer or gender variant bodies, but heteronormative females. The cherry perched upon his bottom lip draws direct attention to Riot's mouth—a purposeful and visual emphasis on the oral. What this gesture perhaps signifies is the allure and sensual suggestiveness of trans body language. No matter if it is a transgender or cisgender audience viewing this cover, the intent to frame Riot in this pose is to perform a kind of sensuality on the cover. I believe it is the universal nature of sensuality that is first seen in this pose, despite any ambiguity with respect to Riot and his identity.

Just beyond the front cover is an advertisement for a company serving the FTM community: The Tool Shed. Not only does the brand name of the company fit with the centrally identified theme of FTM masculinity, but the gesture in the overall ad does as well. Below the advertisement’s text, “Get the right tool for the job,” a rather creative double-entendre, the so-called “tools” are listed. These “tools” relate to the trans-male identity, such as chest binders for breast reduction as well as DVDs, books, and anatomical male prosthetics. Below this is a simple and rather universal gesture: a flexed right arm forming a bicep muscle. Like the cover, the body as a whole appears cropped, so instead we see merely the more “masculine” flex of an arm. What
makes this arm "masculine" is not just its gesture, but its relationship to the physical characteristics of the arm such as the thick, curly forearm hair, lack of long fingernails of a feminine kind—which is a normative expectation—and a casual foreman's shirt bunched up to the deltid. Appearing graphically annexed directly in the photographed space of the bicep is the logo of The Tool Shed: the silhouette of a grinding mechanism. The mechanism visually reads as a symbol of masculinity in this advertisement, linking it to the trans male identity for perhaps further validation of its masculine culture.

Between the pages of this issue are a series of two-page spreads, highlighting TG/TS icons or contemporary entertainers, ranging from filmmakers to musicians. Beginning with this issue's emphasis on trans entertainers is 1990's punk rock musician now filmmaker, Silas Howard. His pose is masculine, as he sits knees apart, a palm on his leg, shoulders wide and leaning forward. Directly behind him is a blue background, a traditionally cold masculine color to enhance his rugged male pose. Once again, as with the two preceding examples of FTM gesture and pose, Howard's seated body is cropped at the tops of his thighs. Perhaps there is a pattern of proportion and perspective: all of the trans men are photographed in a partial manner, with emphasis on the neck and face, biceps, shoulders and arms.
Within the context of positioning and self/identity, Brett Lunceford discusses silence and communication: "While conscious, people use their bodies to portray a desired presentation of self. Movement, proximity, and other nonverbal behavior communicate volumes about the individual" (6). Considering Lunceford’s claims, the body “portrays” or communicates a presentation as seen not only by Howard’s masculine pose, but by his clothing as well. His legs are about shoulder width apart—a standard, normative masculine pose—as he is dressed like a 1950’s greaser with sleeves rolled up. What Howard embodies in this photograph is normative masculinity, as seen with the majority of trans men in *Original Plumbing*.

Exploring other FTM trans men and their respective poses in this issue, I move to the next two-page spread, featuring musical artist Black Cracker—representative of FTM diversity among the trans community. Standing in the foreground of the photograph, against the background of a black iron-barred door, Cracker is cropped at the torso. Clad in a neutral cream and beige blazer, peach shell below it, and a medium-thick rope gold chain around his neck, Cracker’s stare appears direct and almost daring to the audience. A black baseball cap cocked to the right side of his head with a centered trophy between two green olive leaf crests. In his right
hand is melting mint ice cream in a vanilla cone—a metaphor for the smooth, creamy written words that once rang out as poetry and are now sung as his musical rap lyrics. The cone he holds about six inches from his lips is in the shape of a microphone. Turning the page, a full horizontal spread features Black Cracker on the ground as seen here:

His right elbow uplifts him, as he looks off in the direction of the left of the page. His left palm on the inside of his blazer, holding his chest and right pectoral—the hand covering a presumed gun wound. The line of his body leads the eye to the right of the page to a pull quote in white block text: “The best part of being solo is that I can be myself.” His facial expression “performs” a kind of emotion—one of surprise, shock, and pain—the whites of his eyes wide and exposed, his mouth partially open with eyebrows raised. Apart from noting his facial expression and body language, his hand gestures also convey a particular pathos within the photograph. Discussing hand gesture and language further, Winfried Nöth explains how they “contain a comprehensive dictionary of illustrative and emblematic gestures (e.g., for ‘threatening,’ ‘despair,’ ‘imploring,’ etc.) which indicate a high degree of codification in oratorical gesticulation” (397). Note in addition to text, Black Cracker’s hand and expression function together to convey a certain pathos of woundedness, isolation, or being solo as the text indicates, as hand gesture and expression “characterize gestures...similar to linguistic signs” (Nöth 395). In this photograph,
and others similar in this issue, is the implied action and motion of the trans body and the figure that performs it within the magazine's two-dimensional space. As discussed by Nöth, “The human body is acting at all times....The semioticity of the human body in a given situation depends on several pragmatic factors” (395), as well as racial or cultural differences with respect to meaning and physical or implied movements or gestures.

Arguably, the most obvious display of the FTM body *Original Plumbing* has done to date is a series of spreads highlighting the musical talent of the all-Jewish trans male punk band, Schmekel.\(^\text{16}\) Four trans male bodies stand boldly in near full-frontal nudity with the exception of covering their lower genital regions.

What unites this notion of masculinity, trans identity, and sensuality is the naked body itself—audiences are visual spectators to these trans forms in such an abundance. Studying nakedness

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\(^\text{16}\) As indicated in the interview section of the spread, the band's name is Yiddish for “small penis.” The group's name and identity combine to highlight the biological male being, despite their being transgender/transsexual men.
and rhetoric, Brett Lunceford claims, “Like all things rhetorical, the nude body functions in many different ways depending on who wields it... the unclothed body can be seen as erotic, dangerous, pathetic, disgusting, amusing, or simply naked, depending on who is naked, when, where, and why that display of nudity is taking place” (Naked x). The audience—transgendered or cisgendered—applies a “gaze” on these bodies and their protective or censored gestures. Regarding this concept of a “gaze” and the transgender form, Judith Halberstam explores the concept of a “transgender gaze” in trans films such as Boys Don’t Cry, Southern Comfort, and The Crying Game in her book, In a Queer Time and Place. However, while the cinematic gaze allows audiences to follow the transgender subject throughout the film, photographic images present something of a different challenge. Despite Halberstam’s discussion of cinema, she turns to the representations of trans bodies in photography and contemporary art, contending, “While there are some fascinating areas of overlap and dialogue between cinematic modes of representation...‘still’ images actually offer different logics of gender flexibility and dynamism” (105). Thus, as among the pages of OP as “in painting, sculpture, Web Art, and [other forms of] photography, we find new formulations of the transgender look and different applications of this look to an understanding of the meaning of gendered embodiment in late postmodernism” (Halberstam 105). Each of the four trans male members of the band stand side by side, feet shoulder width apart—their eyes gazing directly back at the audience. This proximity of trans bodies and the repeated stances is what Lester Faigley explains as a technique as, “using similar color backgrounds, or even poses...photographs challenge us to think about the way ‘types’ of people are stereotyped, and in particular about how photographers exoticize people whom they see as ‘different’” (270). So, what is the challenge or significance of these bodies holding a kosher pickle, Challah bread, and so forth? This visual spread signifies a celebration of the
diversity of the human body, as not only is the holding of a kosher pickle representative of heteronormative and biological masculinity, but the liminal characteristics that make the TG/TS body its own as seen in the bare postoperative scars on the trans male chests. There is also a profound sense of voyeurism in this two-dimensional space, as not only is the human body on visual display, but this uniquely transgendered form. What identifies a trans male body—although its subject varies from one trans individual to the next—from a cisgendered body are the bare, postoperative scars on FTM chests. These scars are indications of chest surgery, or a form of mastectomy. What further distinguishes an FTM body from that of a non-transgendered body, for example, is the added presence of male hormones—the sparse, yet growing chest hair, and other physiological developments such as facial hair and male pattern baldness that are byproducts of injected testosterone.

While the trans body is mostly on display, note how there remains a photographic double standard as seen in normative male or female photography. For example, while three out of the four FTMs had top surgery—visibly bare and scarred chests—one has not. This trans male band member conceals the nipples of his feminine breasts horizontally with a set of drum sticks. Thus, the only trans member to conceal his nipples is the form that has feminine breasts still associated with the transgender body. Extending the groundwork of Judith Halberstam and the transgender gaze in cinema, Raena Lynn Quinlivan analyzes the work of Nan Goldin, photographer of queer and transgender bodies, arguing that “by visualizing the process of women-in-the-making...the transgendered gaze [can go] even further by employing what can only be called a becoming-gaze” (Corporeality 37). Quinlivan further discusses this notion, citing the photographed bodies in Goldin’s The Other Side, a photographic montage of gender variant bodies in two-dimensional space: “Goldin invites her audiences to approach her works with a becoming-gaze, a gaze which
may very well reconfigure the becoming and knowing of audience members’ bodies” (Corporeality 37). I apply this notion of a becoming-gaze to the FTM body that has not fully transitioned—it stands naked and in contrast to the other transitioned FTM bodies. This becoming-body, through the becoming-gaze, helps us to discern his pre-op and pre-testosterone form by the lack of accompanying facial hair, chest or torso hair, lack of body fat redistribution (hence the naturally rounded hips still visible), and breasts still associated with his form. This contrast between a partial feminine transgender form, and the transsexual bodies of the FTMs, presents something of a visual conundrum. Whereas some trans bodies are further along in the transition process, this particular trans body is clearly liminal, exhibiting an ambiguous visual threshold between the male and female body. Discussing the ambiguity of the trans body, Halberstam claims, “the transgender body is not reducible to the transsexual body, and it retains the marks of its own ambiguity and ambivalence. If the transsexual body has been deliberately reorganized in order to invite certain gazes and shut down others, the transgender body performs self as gesture not as will, as possibility not as probability, as a relation—a wink, a handshake and as an effect of deliberate misrecognition” (Queer Time 97). Therefore, according to Halberstam, audiences read this transgender form as becoming-body and any subsequent gestures he makes as possibility and relation only because he has not fully transitioned to a transsexual form. What audiences glean from this observance of a liminal or becoming-body is how to observe a form—like the trans body—beyond the masculine or feminine body perpetuated as the “norm.”

Nonetheless, of these trans male forms their poses and gestures become the center of attention, as they hold specific articles of food or wine—inherently linked to their Jewish faith and band name. There is an artful and strategic placement of these food articles: a bottle of wine,
Challah bread, a pastry, and kosher pickle. All of these trans men conceal the lower portion of their bodies with one of these items. The phallic imagery in this two-page spread aesthetically derives from the pickle and wine bottle, as each trans man holds these articles to not only conceal their lower feminine (or surgically annexed male) genitalia, but use them to “perform” masculinity with a non-biological phallic shape. The food articles themselves imply and “perform” masculinity, as one trans man holds the pickle in place of a penis, and the neck of the wine bottle is held upright like an erect phallic form. The FTM male holding the Jewish bread highlights its rather vertical shape and width, consistent with the other images seen in the spread, the pickle, and the wine bottle as visual representations of phallic images. Interestingly, out of these four TG/TS individuals, the preoperative trans man, covering his breasts with the horizontal drum sticks, also holds a Hamantaschen\(^\text{17}\) pastry. The shape and positioning of the pastry conceals his female genitalia, \textit{and} ironically represents its likeness as well. Whereas we view this trans man as a liminal or becoming body, he identifies as male; so while he identifies as a man internally, his external body that the audience sees still retains female characteristics. His holding the triangular Hamantaschen implicates society’s normative view of what a feminine body is—the triangular pastry is symbolic in shape of the vagina. Even though his form is currently female in the photograph, and he emphasizes the female nature of that body with this pastry, sex and gender continue to be antithetical notions. In other words, this trans man \textit{is} male, despite what his body shows to himself and the world at large. What we visually see as an audience may not be how an individual perceives him/herself within a photograph or beyond it. Thus, visual perception is merely half of an individual’s identity and may not represent his or her true self. I think this speaks to the common trope—as discussed in my first chapter—of being “trapped in the wrong body.”

\(^\text{17}\) Hamantaschen is a triangular-shaped traditionally associated with Purim, the Jewish holiday.
In the next spread, these same TG/TS men are photographed in motion, or implied motion, as all four of them are in the camera shot—three standing around one prostrate trans man on the floor:

This idea of implied motion derives from Starkey Duncan's definition of kinesics, as outlined in Winfried Nöth's chapter, in which "gestures and other body movements, facial expression, eye movement and posture' [are] modalities of kinesic behavior" (qtd. in Nöth 393). While the lower regions of these trans men are concealed by these food articles, the trans man holding the wine bottle stands at the right side of the page, tilting the bottle sideways over with one hand at the base of the bottle—almost cupping it in his palm—with the other hand is on the shaft of the bottle. This posture or gesture symbolically represents male ejaculation, as he stands directly above the prostrate trans man who, with an open mouth, receives the poured wine. Collectively, this captured moment in the photograph links transgendered bodies, masculinity, sexuality, and the "performance" of a sexual act. The prostrate FTM man lies on his back on the floor, receiving the flow of the descending wine in his mouth—arguably, a submissive posture, while...
the trans man positioned above him provides the wine or “ejaculate.” This also signifies the potential to be read as a display or implied engagement in homoeroticism or perhaps trans-homoeroticism. In the final spread of the Schmeckel layout, all four trans men are lying prostrate on the floor. Once again, the trans bodies are in full view as they are now lying amidst matzos spread between their bodies and on their lower bodies, again covering their genitals. The perspective of this camera shot is from the top, allowing the audience’s “gaze” to be directed at these horizontal and exposed bodies in clear view.

In this issue’s “Harvie on Harvey” spread, trans masculinity appears again personified or “performed” in a normative context. The first visual the audience sees is the backdrop of a mansion with FTM man Ian Harvie standing side by side with a golden lion statue. The expression of the lion is fierce, bearing its fangs and standing solidified in a golden defensive posture with its paws in front of its frame.

This positioning of both the FTM and the lion is reminiscent of a master-beast relationship, or signifies the tamer versus the tamed. Harvie’s robe visually represents the leopard spots—
connoting a similarity to the lion—as they share familiar marks and are part of the same species: the masculine lion meets the masculine FTM. Harvie’s trans body towers over the golden lion, signifying as well a dominant and submissive relationship. Observable is a partial bare chest and legs, as Harvie’s trans body may be naked beneath, which again recalls themes of the wild, bareness, and the nakedness seen throughout this issue. Incidentally, his leopard terrycloth robe lined with a black rounded lapel and cuffed sleeves at the wrist reminds the audience of Hugh Heffner—the most iconic normative male associated with mansions, sex, and his trademark robe jacket. According to Faigley, “Preconceived notions about race, gender, beauty, and other things affect not only how we react to others but also how we see them [as] we accumulate a visual vocabulary….This visual vocabulary contributes to our view of the world—it affects how we see and understand the world” (324). From his profile, standing upright, right knee bent Harvie towers over all objects in the foreground of the photograph. Using photographic perspective, the FTM body appears larger and more commanding in a visual sense in the center of the page. With his head tilted to the left, looking down at the camera or audience, Harvie’s expression seems cool and fixed. The lion perhaps symbolizes with its carved expression the inner and feral beast in the man—this brand of masculinity, the FTM trans man. From Harvie’s head, an invisible vertical line leads the eye to his hand: a thick, masculine hand, palm opened against the robe with his thumb hooked on the belt of it enclosed in front. Casually, coolly he stands with his knee bent, a posture that is “commanding” and in control beside the golden carved beast.

This interview spread features another FTM in Harvey Katz. Photographed on an old wooden Bench, Harvey sits with his legs crossed wearing old-fashioned knee socks and white retro style loafers. Ostensibly, the socks and shoes are the only articles of clothing he wears in the photograph. Though his seated posture and exposed legs give a casual pathos to the
photograph, his trans body is covered—that is his lap and torso up to his face—by the opened Sports section of a newspaper. Once again, Faigley’s discussion of perception and culture are relevant, as the Sports section is typically associated with male-news. “Reading” the Sports section aligns trans man, Harvey, with other normative, biological men or this is suggested by the presence of this particular section of the newspaper in the photograph.

Peering above the opened paper, Katz gives a curious look at the audience. Despite his (implied) nakedness partly concealed by the newspaper, attention is focused on the trans body and the “performed” posture, pose, or normative masculine identity in the photograph. Epitomizing the normative male, Katz sits with the Sports page spread. Despite his seated posture, the idea of Katz in a public park with his naked body denotes a kind of fetish or flasher-like sense—a male fetish for exposure or the lewd male figure in the local park. In a smaller image, Katz is horizontally sprawled on the bench—his hand comfortably palming his head, while the other rests on his waist. From this position, his leg appears kicked up and out in the air. Once again, his body and its nakedness, though blanketed and censored by the newspaper, is the central focus of the photograph. The theme of nudity, or implied nudity, of the trans body is prevalent
throughout these images, and Harvey’s photograph further confirms this. While in one sense, Harvey’s body language in the photograph can be interpreted as an indictment of normative culture with the normative male and the Sports section-reading manly man, it also illustrates how masculinity can be “performed” by another form—that of a trans man. I suppose this harkens back to a general question, which is what does it mean to be masculine or feminine? The presence of these TG/TS forms illustrates how non-normative forms replicate normative gendered forms and actions.

The next two-page spread features FTM musician Geo Wyeth in a full-color spread, cropped at the torso and lying back on a wooden floor surrounded by musical amps and wires. Despite the simple reclined posture of his body, Wyeth’s form appears relaxed as both palms meet on his abdomen.

As with previous shots in this issue, the hands and face are the focus and here is no exception. Beginning with his head, Wyeth’s unkempt mane resembles the freeform black and brown wires on the wooden floorboards beneath him. From his smiling or grimacing expression it appears as though he is connected to wire amps, as musical vibration pounds against his eardrums. His
visible expression and somewhat ambiguous pathos, leads the eye down to his hands. On his splayed fingers, on each of his four knuckles are individual capitalized letters, designed in a serif font for masculine boldness, as the collective visual spells "A MAN." The significance of photographing Wyeth’s hands, seeped with this gender confirmation in tattoo ink, illustrates both his trans-male identity, while symbolically representing the diversity of malehood. Objectively, perhaps, it raises the question: does tattooing one’s gender into his/her flesh validate it any more than being biologically male or female? Following this spread is another, highlighting the musical talent of trans performer, Rae Spoon. Here are two borderless photographs: the top is of a cropped Rae Spoon, seated in a full suit and buttoned shirt holding his electric guitar.

Emphasis returns to the face and frame of Spoon. Below this image is a photograph of his right hand, guitar pick between his thumb and index finger, holding it to the strings of the guitar. The significance of the visual page is pointing out the continuation of the face and hand pattern throughout this issue. Given all of the cropped FTM figures and emphases on face and hands, what is the significance, if any? As indicated in *Picturing Texts*, Faigley asserts, “All images are in some sense constructed, given that the photographer chose to take certain pictures and not others” (323). Perhaps beyond looking beneath the clothes to identify as male in a photograph or
in real life (or non-two-dimensional space), the face and hands help identify trans men. Hands also imply action, as it seems to be the most photographed aspect in this issue and in other transgender issues of *Original Plumbing*.

**Visual Social Semiotic Potential of Feminine ‘Body Language’ in *Frock Magazine***

*Frock*’s eighteenth issue focuses on trans-media and rock ‘n’ roll or its own brand of glam rockers, music, and feminine sex appeal. Below *Frock*’s signature hot pink logo on the cover stands Rachael Valenti, guitarist for the trans rock band, The Nasty Habits.

As she stands on stage, her feminine posture and stance is concentrated on the guitar, below her line of vision. With her hip angled—jutting out—her right leg becomes a prominent visual aesthetic, adorned in a hot pink lattice pattern typical of fishnet stockings to draw the audience’s attention. In fact, an invisible line of attention begins at the base of the cover, with Valenti’s black leather boots and their vertical metal buckles that allow the line of vision to begin. Based on the arrangement of the layout, the audiences’ eyes are encouraged to move up the black
leather and buckles to her knee, then up along her outer thigh. From her thigh to her skirted hip, her leg becomes the focal point of the cover and photograph. Moving upward, from her hip is the body of the guitar, the line ends at her face and we see her entire form. Although Valenti’s pose is practical and functional, as she holds and plays a guitar, it also conveys some feminine sex appeal. For example, the upward position/perspective of the camera at the time of the shot focuses on her trans-feminine form, specifically the emphasis on her right leg. Whereas her leg is angled and the eye is led to her skirt, the shot allows some propriety considering its upward angle. While not much is revealed, this view accentuates her lower body as her natural glamour and “chick” rock sex appeal flourishes on the cover.

Just inside the issue are two advertisements for transgender feminine prosthetics, wigs lingerie, and other cosmetic accessories. The one advertisement is for the Aphrodite Divine Collection, a company specializing in the creation of realistic breastforms. Apart from the advertisement’s aesthetic feminine appeal, with its scripted font style and use of the warm color red, there is a feminine form at the bottom of the page—a cisgendered (non-transgendered) female.
The significance of using a biological female in the advertisement is likely intentional for marketing purposes, as not only can cisgendered customers shop at Aphrodite, but her presence conveys fem-normative authenticity. Transgender women want to achieve a natural cisgendered appearance, so seeing a cisgendered model reinforces the brand and the MTF customer's desire to be that "natural" or biological woman. More germane to this section, however, is the pose of the cisgendered model within the context of this trans magazine. Discussing the becoming-body gaze in the Original Plumbing section above, the issue of the gaze returns once again with *Frock*. Since this magazine features trans- and cisgendered feminine bodies, the issue of the male gaze looms. Within a gendered and social context, Laura Mulvey discusses voyeurism and the male gaze relative to gender power asymmetry. In her book, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, Mulvey examines the female body\(^{18}\) and how it is depicted in film in connection with cultural perceptions: "But often certain attitudes are anchored in society and can hardly be changed. One

\(^{18}\) For more information on the male gaze, see Laura Mulvey *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, particularly Section II: "Woman as Image, Man as Bearer of the Look."
example is the determination which individual role men and women are likely to play as members of a society and how their image appears in every culture” (3). In essence, Mulvey characterizes male stance or positioning as “active,” while female stance or positioning embodies a more “passive” role (4). Though Mulvey discusses the male gaze in the context of cinema, with respect to the positioning of these trans- and cisgendered female bodies, it is possible to apply the same logic to Frock and other print or digital magazines. Below the ad copy is the image of the model lying down in the shot. Her body appears intentionally curved to focus on three visual elements in the foreground: her alluring face/eyes, a red rose, and her breasts. Blurred, is the rest of her horizontal form, as if to suggest distance and visually fix the audience’s attention on these three main elements. This interplay between spatial distancing, between foreground and background, visually alludes to what Mulvey views as feminine exhibitionism, which holds that “women tend to exhibitionism, they are the object that men look at” (3). While Mulvey believes the author of a work transfers both passive and active terms to an audience, the author of a digital text—like Frock—represents the same dynamic but within two-dimensional, digital space.

The model’s form and posture captivate the audience’s attention, as her eyes look directly back at the viewer. The audience’s attention is once again aesthetically shepherded to her eyes, first, and then the red rose she is holding, near her lips. Perhaps the significance of the red rose in full bloom is a metaphor for a woman’s body, as a rose also transitions from a bud to a full flower much in the way a transgendered female transcends the male aspects of her nature to the blossom of a transitioned feminine form. Incidentally, this is not the only instance of the color red on the page, as it is the rose, the scripted name of the collection, and accented on the red and black lace bra worn by the model in the ad. As she lies at the base of the page, and on a white, bearskin rug, her positioning conveys a certain sensual allure. The aesthetic warmth of the color
red dressing the text, the word “breastforms” among the ad copy, the red rose, and the red satin of her lace bra—the unifying color symbolizes passion, romance, and intimacy. The model’s body is exposed, her skin, that is, and visually inviting to the audience. Since her head is closest in the foreground, it allows the eye to look directly beyond to her breasts visually above her head according to the perspective of the shot. Considering the ad is for cisgendered and transgendered women alike, natural or realistic breastforms become the other focus. The ad sets the tone for visual intimacy and attention to the feminine body, be it biological or transgendered.

On the next page is another advertisement for the same products, yet sold from a different company, The Breastform Store. In a full length, vertical ad the company advertises its products with ad copy against a soft pink background, along with the text “Transform Yourself” juxtaposed with a vertical female model. As this biologically female model hugs a long white and sheer curtain, her form is visible through sheer light pink lace lingerie. Posture and gesture exude feminine sex appeal and focus on the body as a whole, or in part. In this ad, catering to the MTF audience, specifically, it’s all about attaining the feminine form—acquiring the feminine prosthetics or accessories to enhance a trans woman’s feminine identity. Posture and gesture teach us not just about selling to a particular audience, the way this ad does to its trans demographic, but touches on an issue of transgender socialization as well. Of these advertisements, they are the only two visual instances in which cisgendered women are represented in Frock. Based on reading their visual ‘body language,’ what do these feminine ideals say to transgender females? Once socialized as men, MTFs pursue transition through hormone therapy and sexual reassignment surgery, oftentimes, to engender the feminine form they know themselves to be. Though transition is largely a physical process, what about socialization? By visually analyzing ads such as these, we draw certain ideas about its
readership: 1) the audiences observe cisgendered women as well as transgender women during their transitions; 2) they are susceptible to the same visual and brand marketing tactics of advertising as cisgendered females; and 3) the notion of body image and femininity is of importance to them.

In both advertisements, featuring cisgendered models, they represent to some degree the biological “ideal” of a woman. Thus, seeing the form and posture of these biological females also contains a social “code” for the eroticized female—an advertised version that is sensual and alluring in popular culture. In the ad for The Breastform Store, the posture of the cisgendered model is vertically seductive with her right arm bent at the elbow and her palm against her hair. Her body faces the sheer, white curtain, pressing her breasts and hips into it, with her left arm extending downward, which draws the line of vision to her legs, exposed, as on the front cover. Once again, the legs become the subjects of focus—as this model’s left leg is bent at the knee with the arch of her foot curved upward—a pose and gesture that flaunts the feminine body and embodies a posture associated with feminine sex symbols. As her arm is up, it accentuates her breasts; her leg bent upward accentuates the shapeliness of her legs as well as her derriere.

Returning to the issue of socialization and the feminine ideal, transgenders/transsexuals are exposed to hyperfemininity. That is, depictions of women, especially of the visual kind, as seen in magazines or advertisements. This also suggests that the normative depictions of biological women set unrealistic expectations for transgendered women as well.

Among the pages of Frock’s issue, apart from the rock and glam, media becomes the focus as well as human rights. In the summer of 2012, the DC Office of Human Rights created a new campaign on behalf of its transgender population, seeking to normalize members of the trans community for the cisgendered population. Because this campaign is featured in this issue,
as part of the transgender community’s spreading of awareness, it also fits into this discussion of visuals and transgender ‘body language’. Each of the five ads features a transgender man or woman juxtaposed with text that reads, “I’m a transgender woman and I’m part of DC,” for example. What is worth noting is how the campaign uses the visual and visible identity of the trans individual alongside a social label. This campaign not only puts a face to the cause, but a masculine and feminine image that is apparent in each ad’s transgender males and females. As with gesture and pose in this issue, the ads draw attention to differences in masculine and feminine pose, gesture, and two-dimensional body language. Of the five ads, there are three masculine forms and two feminine forms. In the ads featuring transgender men, apart from their masculine clothing, their poses are ironically all the same. Each trans man stands upright in the ads with both hands in his pockets. The posture is straight up and down with no other gesture or implied motion of the body. The transgender women, on the other hand, are more expressive in their gestures. In one ad, a transgender woman faces the camera, unlike the positioning of the trans men who appear turned toward the camera without squared shoulders. As she faces the camera, her right arm bent at the elbow as her palm comfortably rests at the side of her waist. With her left arm bent, her left hand touches her upper chest. Not only is there implied motion in the stance, but her hands are used for expression—fluid, feminine expression. According to Nöth, there is “semiotic potential of the human body from hand and arm gestures to posture and body movements” (392), as we apply this to the placement of this trans-woman’s hand and arm gestures. There is also a sense of glamour within the ad, as she smiles, her hair blowing in an implied wind in combination with her hip and trendy clothing. In the other female ad below, this trans woman is cropped at the knee, showing a near full length upper body—a smile, hair
blowing with her arms in front of her body. Her pose is conservative, as her arms are straight and parallel with her hips, her palms over her skirt and resting against the front of her thighs.

Compared to the trans men, whose hands are hidden in their pockets, the trans woman’s hands are in view and add to the expressiveness of her figure, gesture, pose, and ‘body language’. In accordance with the feminine hand gestures of these two trans-feminine examples in the DC ad, Nöth defines gesture as, “…in the narrower sense [it] is a bodily communication that varies considerably with respect to gesture and kinesics” (392, emphasis mine). Subscribing to George Herbert Mead’s term, Nöth further addresses “gesture in this broad sense [is] a key concept of his theory of symbolic action to describe communicative acts of humans” (392, emphasis mine).

Featured, too, in this issue of Frock is a more culturally diverse angle to transgenderism, as a series of two-page spreads depict famous Bosnian transgender entertainer, Kalimero. As with the front cover, the emphasis of this issue is on entertainment, music, and media. These Frock trans women are on visual display—their body language in two-dimensional space “performs” femininity, exemplified by their many poses and gestures. The first page of the series features Kalimero seated on a yellow motorbike in a street shrouded by a black background.
Sitting on the seat, her hands grip the steering handles right and left, as the bike remains stationary. Arguably, the form of her body assumes the same position as any rider, male or female. However, paying close attention to the way she positions her shoulders and upper body, reveals some subtle feminine clues. As she looks off into the distance, the camera angle is off to the left side of her, as she straddles the motorbike. Below her evasive stare are her shoulders, upright yet her right arm and shoulder is in towards her body, giving the appearance of shoulder-attitude—a kind of flirtatious posture for the lens. As Courtney Bailey suggests, “bodies are neither static, natural objects nor infinitely malleable blank slates. Instead they are dynamic sites of performance, albeit performances that must be culturally delimited if they are to be recognizable, influential, and contestable” (12). Whereas a masculine driver of the motorbike would have shoulders wider apart, while gripping the steering handles, Kalimero hugs her shoulders in toward her body, which ultimately leads the eye to the outline of her breasts.

On the proceeding page, Kalimero stands at nearly full length between two upward shooting streams of fountain water. The backdrop of city lights at night and the fountain water in the foreground spread across the yoked digital pages. Kalimero’s posture and pose exhibits feminine desire by its sensual, model-esque stance.
Although her trans body is upright, it is slightly curved to the left—her left hip slightly raised higher than her right. Her pose appears diagonal, as indicated by the positioning of her arms, legs, and pelvis. Meanwhile, her left arm is at her side, slightly behind her left hip, leaving the front of her body rather “open” for view. This upright position of her right arm gives the impression of a sensual and sultry pose—a model pose as she stands in a short one-piece dress and red strappy heels. According to Quinlivan’s assessment of Nan Goldin’s photographic subjects of transvestites and transgenders, “the subject is biologically a man or a woman, but his or her positioning within the montage of the artwork…disturbs viewers’ immediate ability to categorize secondary sex characteristics” (Corporeality 40-1). Despite the audience recognizing some of Kalimero’s more masculine bone structure, they also see her dressed in feminine clothing, makeup, and with long hair. What may disturb or distort the audience’s initial perception of Kalimero is the ambiguity of her gender. There is also a feminine expressiveness in her pose, as her arms and legs—one extended the other straight—conveys a fluid and open gesture. Incidentally, the fluidity of the water spouting upwards, as it is captured stationary in the photograph, aesthetically mirrors Kalimero’s own fluid expression of her body, as her arms, pelvis, and legs “express” femininity. As addressed in Bailey’s scholarship, “visual rhetoric takes up the connection between emotion and the visual. [Robert] Hariman and [John Louis] Lucaites, for instance, discuss how emotional display in iconic photographs can be seen as a form of dissent…scholars connect both emotional performance and the visual to the body” (10-1). What makes this pose “recognizable” or recognizably feminine is its embedded nature in the social conscience of readers/views. Either cisgendered or transgendered—female models in magazines and designer ads pose in this manner—these normative feminine stances reappear in Frock, and specifically this two-page spread. In other words, we associate femininity with the postures,
gestures, and stances visually linked to cisgendered women in our culture. As Bailey contends, “...iconic photographs place emotions into public spaces through their portrayal of emotionally expressive bodies” (11). In fact, “Just as bodies are shaped by particular cultural practices and judgments, they also shape how we see and interpret the world—and what judgments we make about it” (Bailey 12-3). Like non-transgender magazines depicting or expressing femininity through gesture and pose, we see the same or similar “performativity” of masculinity and femininity in both transgender magazines.

Turning the page, Kalimero continues posing or “modeling” with the motorbike. Similarly, Kalimero stands in front of it, spreading her arms across its width in a sensual, yet almost defensive posture. While she is not on the motorbike, or riding it, she models herself against it—against a masculine symbol of speed and sport, yet she is the ultimate trans feminine figure serving as contrast. Some hints of added sex appeal in the photograph, as her shoulders are bare, along with her crossed legs. The audience sees the entire length and curve of her leg across her body and the bike behind her—sex and the transgender feminine form compete for the attention of perhaps the audience of transgender males or females alike.
Conclusion:

This study, particularly the visual analyses presented in the latter chapters, is like a journey—an aesthetic journey for the mind’s eye—as it sees or cultivates the images I presented throughout this work. But the focus of the rhetorical and visual analyses presented here is not for mere indulgent pleasure, it is about exploring the transgender community’s way of making aesthetic meaning through different theoretical lenses. Among the recycled stock pages of *Original Plumbing* and digital pages of *Frock Magazine*, are the rhetorical and visual expressions of a community traversing the gendered binary. If only for one issue of each magazine, we observe their culture, representation, and aesthetics and learn how transgendered individuals express their creativity, their aesthetic voices, and their bodies through visual and photographic imagery. For the field of rhetorical studies, and especially visual rhetoric, studying how communities of all kinds create meaning is paramount to understanding something about them. It’s an invitation to engagement with a culture beyond our society’s rigid walls of gender. From these visual analyses, we see that despite transitioning from female to male, or vice versa, there are aspects of masculinity and femininity—reminiscent of normative, non-transgender depictions—at work in trans-specific magazines. Without written or aesthetic inquiry into these magazines, we are a rhetorical field of studies devoid of any such engagement with or knowledge of how the transgender/transsexual community represents their culture through the aesthetic renderings that are these transgender magazines. It is my belief, as argued by J.L. Lemke, “[That] every new community, every transformed community, potentially represents a new literacy. All participation in new communities...makes available to us new identities as individuals and new forms of humanity as members of communities” (“Metamedia Literacy” 76). As more social and cultural awareness is opening up to the transgender/transsexual community, may this...
phenomenon continue and inspire further academic scholarship. Thus, beneath the *Frock* and beyond the *Original Plumbing*, transgendered and transsexual men and women aesthetically design and color their magazines with their own unique identities.
Bibliography


