
Camp TV
Trans Gender Queer
Sitcom History
QUINLAN MILLER

CONSOLE-ING PASSIONS

Television and Cultural Power

Edited by Lynn Spigel

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for ERICA

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Introduction. Trans Gender Queer

NEW TERMS FOR TV HISTORY

Sitcoms of the 1950s and 1960s are littered with queer gender, gender involving stigma and negotiations of nonconformity. Yet the prevalent common sense, outside of camp sitcom fandom, has been that there isn't much to discuss in terms of queer sitcom history until the 1990s, when gay characters—white gay characters—become regularized, mainly in quality sitcoms directed at upscale markets, without any comparable influx of trans characters.[1] Transgender representation in particular is widely believed missing from mass media until recently and considered by some impossible prior to the emergence of the term *transgender*. Against this common sense, I argue that queer trans cultural production, namely genderqueer representation, was not at all absent and instead actually characterizes the pre-1970s output of the TV industry. Homogenous white middle-class families presumed cis, in other words thought antithetical to "trans," constitute the primary image associated with situation comedies. Gender-conforming families and suburban neighborhood ensembles occupy cultural memory as the overwhelm-

ing norm in the 1950s, but many series without a central married couple and kids were regularly pitched, piloted, and programmed.[2] Both these series and those that do provide a nuclear family and recurring domestic scene include queer gender.[3] In the context of ridicule, queer gender emerged as a staple, a category of consumer product that is reliable by way of repeated reinvention, especially through sitcoms. Taking stock of the consistency of queer gender and the variety of ways in which queer gender manifested in sitcoms on the perceived cis side of 1950s television representation complicates ideas about trans difference and its queer possibilities in the past, as well as ideas about television, and what is possibly at play in TV production, understood as the production of television culture and TV texts. Archival objects preserving a record of texts, including episodes, personalities, brands, ensembles, stories, and ephemera, are a valuable source of queer gender expression transmitting trans history on a displaced wavelength.[4]

Sitcom history is not a history of progress toward positive representation. Sitcoms were a prime Hollywood export in the 1950s and 1960s, inseparable from US imperialism, sexism, and status quo race discrimination.[5] Yet the roots of situation comedy camp are within black "dandyism," minstrel shows, mixed blackface performance, and other traditions emphasizing the overlap of Jewish and African Americans, or rather these and other diasporas commonly excluded from dominant conceptions of "American"-ness.[6] I focus on the 1950s and 1960s in order to invert and redirect the notion that queer representation came later—and that trans representation comes way later, with both appearing only long after programming is established as resolutely heterotransphobic. Queer gender production is as constant as the over-the-top obsession with binary male-female segregation in sitcoms. No matter how insulting, jokes at the expense of gender nonconformity and gender nonconforming characters are a part of trans history. Furthermore, being relegated to the butt of the joke is far from the whole story.

I focus on the 1950s and 1960s and on the commercial art form of the sitcom in order, additionally, to depart from the notion of subversive TV content covertly "worked into" programs transmitted across "thin" air. This "thin air" rhetoric erroneously suggests that minority representations are encoded while dominant representations just are.[7] The mindset that this metaphor represents, and the metaphor of queer makers and readers smuggling LGBTQ+ content into, or alternatively poaching LGBTQ+ content from, a mainstream, implies that the wavelengths across which television feeds traveled were suffocating. These ways of thinking legitimize the epistemology

of the closet, and the presumption of straight identity and cis gendering in cultural meaning as well as in people. The general idea about this period is that at the time you would have had to work hard to sneak minority and especially queer content "into" broadcasts. This idea, however, is simply naturalized heterosexuality, a taken-for-granted confidence that new media technology starts out straight, and in this case persists as straight for at least the first two decades of commercial TV, in spite of abundant evidence to the contrary. As this book will demonstrate, the thing that is believed to be missing is already there, in the form of queer gender—a form of camp that, as Jack Halberstam argues, "profoundly disturb[s] the order of relations between the authentic and the inauthentic, the original and the mimic, the real and the constructed."[8] By virtue of television, in particular, camp was a part of popular culture in advance of the late-1960s, before the time that scholars have, so far, expected it.[9] Camp was ubiquitous in the 1950s during the solidification of a volatile system of Hollywood studio production both synonymous and in tension with white middle-class family privilege, a production culture and infrastructure linked to what was initially a primarily East Coast phenomenon grown locally in and gradually rerouted to LA. Camp was the status quo in the industry and social context of Hollywood TV, which developed over the course of the 1950s and 1960s. Counter to commonsense assumptions about queer representation as among the first material to be censored, spikes in sitcom camp during the period correspond with the imposition of stricter limits on explicit representation.[10] The possibility of pseudonymous script submission and the practice of dispersed series conception, writing, and revision in the sitcom business makes TV in the period of particular interest for trans scholars of popular culture, whose subjects of interest (whether trans or not) may change names, use pennames, adopt nongiven names for their poetic/commercial resonance, and have given names that evoke self-invention in how they look and sound. *Camp TV* theorizes and historicizes forms of expression such as naming as *trans gender queer*, and as a resource for people in the present invested in mobility among multiple genderqueer positions. This term *trans gender queer* is a placeholder for the genderqueer within pop culture products assumed to be exclusively cis.[11]

The concept "trans gender queer" refers to the possibility of reading gender cues that are more specific than male and female, masculine and feminine. This is a possibility that existed (even though the term genderqueer did not) in the 1950s and 1960s, for example, people classified as "women" who

at that time produced, through performance and embodiment, effeminacy, the principal queer gender this book relates, understood as a stylized nonhegemonic antimasculinism, or, in other words, feminine and masculine "of center" at once. [12] *Trans gender queer*, which positions *gender* as a multiplicitous switch point between *trans* and *queer*, accounts for prototrans subject positions and for nonbinary orientation missed and misidentified because of the conventions surrounding categories such as "women." The phrase signals affinities among the contemporary terms transgender, genderqueer, and queer, and among those three labels and lethal vestigial categories such as "spinster." These overlaps signify "homoerratically," in an eccentric space, in other words beyond straight-gay, female-male, and trans-cis binaries.[13] In the ephemeral TV broadcasts of the 1950s and 1960s, producers signaled some of the ways in which *male* and *female* were insufficient for conveying the depth and surface details of personality, self-conception, and attraction. Situation comedy made in the 1950s and 1960s, and the materials that remain documenting its making in the context of reshuffling identity norms, show that, in the early years of incorporating radio, film, literature, comics, game shows, and vaudeville and stand-up comedy for commercial TV formats, much of the medium's cultural power came from trans gender queer camp, in situational humor about social norms and taste distinctions and in seemingly throwaway punch lines and bit performances.

According to Judith Butler, gender in the context of cis-heterosexism *is* situation comedy, a kind of real-life system of typecasting. Butler's *Gender Trouble* notes that subcultural identification of dominant white gender norms as absurd generates knowledge-power as the foundation of minority perception: "Heterosexuality offers normative sexual positions that are intrinsically impossible to embody, and the persistent failure to identify fully and without incoherence with these positions reveals heterosexuality itself not only as a compulsory law, but as an inevitable comedy. Indeed, I would offer this insight into heterosexuality as both a compulsory system and an intrinsic comedy, a constant parody of itself, as an alternative gay/lesbian perspective."[14] This also describes the daily practice at the site of production of what Chris Straayer calls "a queer viewpoint," a perspective that "raise[s] questions and propose[s] strategies that reveal subtexts and subversive readings in a more complex system than the patriarchal heterosexual system assumes."[15] Gender is, as Mark Booth also indicates, a site of camp production. Camp transforms perception: "In the extent of its commitment . . . parody informs the camp person's whole personality, throwing an ironical

light not only on the abstract concept of the sexual stereotype, but also on the parodist."[16] Concurrent parody of gender norms and self-parody (genre parody) characterizes the ironically "more complex system" in sitcoms of the 1950s and 1960s. This programming displays a "guest-star system" that parodies the star system of classic Hollywood cinema, meaning that in terms of casting and characterization, queer representation, generally in the form of queer gender (intersecting with constructions of ethnicity, nationality, and language) was metamarginalized.[17] In the 1950s, many popular entertainment precedents contributed to TV's instantiation of hierarchies of respectability and value by advertising the "intrinsic impossibility" of white gender norms."[18] The guest-star system evident in sitcoms in this period provides evidence of the industry production of camp as part of that process rather than as purely a response to a preestablished normalcy.

The guest-star system that positions the incisive absurdity of sitcoms as evidence of queer knowledge is a system of signification that highlights character actors, people considered supporting players who are, within and against the grain of the system, a central attraction, performers such as Richard Deacon, Kaye Ballard, Charles Nelson Reilly. Actors of this stripe are marked as eccentric (a productive euphemism for queer spatial maneuvers vis-à-vis the centrifugal force of norms), through a structured matrix of hierarchies in role.[19] Directors often cast Deacon, for example, as characters "of some importance—a doctor, lawyer or state department official—who suffer foot-in-mouth disease."[20] I am concerned with issues encompassed within this system of typecasting character actors into idiosyncratic roles, that is, with actors who are from a camp point of view the stars of network television. According to TV scholar Jeremy Butler, "Most of the time, we do not concern ourselves with the work the actor used to create the performance. Indeed, the television program erases the marks of that work by emphasizing the character as a 'real' human being rather than a constructed collection of character and performance signs."[21] Butler refers to dominant modes of reading; the work of acting is historically the audience's starting point in the context of camp.[22] Character comedians draw attention to sitcom performance as work even as TV naturalizes these performers as their characters and the characters as real friends to viewers. Camp actors, especially character actors, are historically publicized for eccentricities in their own private lives. These eccentricities often relay an askew relation to marriage and involve a realm of associations that play with and against gender expectations. In one indicative case, a reporter remarks that Deacon lives alone on "a steep, slightly winding

street in Beverly Hills . . . except for [a] pet schnauzer. (It's [identified reductively as] a female but Deacon calls her 'Fred.')"[23]

Ingrained publicity patterns, part of casting and performance tropes manifest onscreen and off, render the character actors of television comedy consistently and iconically eccentric. The example of Kaye Ballard, a talented camp performer as an unruly Italian, illustrates how a typecast actor's career may be marked by queer gender across many venues, in this case musical theater, cabaret, clubs, summer stock, burlesque, off-Broadway, vaudeville, and, in the broadest sense, street theater, or everyday behavior from red carpet shoots to Internet presence.[24] Ballard began working in television in the early 1950s and scored a series role in the 1960s opposite Eve Arden in the Desilu-produced *Mothers-in-Law*, one of many series set in Southern California, this one self-reflexively featuring a TV writer as one of a set of husbands.[25] *The Mothers-in-Law* is camp TV. Many deem it worthless, or if not worthless too painful to watch. Yet countless viewers have absorbed some subset of the repetitive queer gender in the around 1,232 minutes of the series, as it originally aired, during rebroadcasts, and beginning in 2010 on commercial DVD. Ballard also appeared in TV specials, anthology programs, comedy variety hours, as a guest on and guest-host of talk shows, and in single-episode sitcom roles.

In the *Patty Duke Show* episode "The Perfect Teenager" (March 4, 1964), for example, Ballard, as Selby of Selby's School for Models, makes a parade of strict white gender norms for an audience of young people. Ballard-as-Selby represents the modeling and advertising industries and, broadly, the social phenomenon of "schools . . . designed to instill self-confidence," or upward mobility by way of aestheticized and sculpted gender norms. Ballard's short haircut with stylized sideburns, and bolero jacket featuring suitifying contrast pockets are examples of the queer gender the guest-star system of sitcoms ingrains in TV, creating comedy through contradiction. The costuming and accessories showcase a typical sitcom irony, that gender nonconforming characters (such as Phil Leeds's Mr. Pell, "the famous commercial photographer" who twice visits Selby's classes in the episode) dictate *and* undermine "male" and "female" as natural conditions.[26] Ballard's accent as Selby morphs for comic effect, taking up normative, ostensibly impressive English to intone, "The world judges you in how you move, talk, and look."[27] In this case this expert in coaching the most prized forms of femininity unmistakably deviates from those characteristics, and is shown to be in control of the behavior, as if it is a choice to be different to be funny—within both

FIGURES INTRO.1 – INTRO.2. Kaye Ballard in the *Patty Duke Show* episode "The Perfect Teenager," March 4, 1964.

the story world and in the context of its construction—as when Ballard's Selby abruptly trades effusive French for a skeptical Brooklyn accent. In general, Ballard was coded and self-coded as non-white-normative and transgressive, as an energetic, over-the-top white ethnic type within a harshly but incompletely segregated racial landscape.

These signifiers at play in Ballard's camp persona and in performances in programs from *Mel Tormé* (1951) to *Hollywood Squares* (1967–75) may seem to have nothing to do with trans representation as defined in terms of personal identity. However, as I will show, such character actors are powerful conduits of trans gender queer content, aesthetics, and affect. Not everyone's self-identified sexuality category stems from a strict quantification of gender of object choice, the conventional means of calculating social role. Queer gender for genderqueer trans people can entail nonbinary modes of attraction as well as self-conception. This is a link between queer and trans discourses more commonly manifest in trashy sitcoms and classic TV than in contemporary quality subscription programming. In a 2017 episode of the half-hour episodic series *Transparent* titled "They Is on the Way," the brilliantly blundering Sarah Pfefferman character (Amy Landecker) declares that someone (a sibling) isn't trans but rather is genderqueer, nonbinary, in dialogue painfully implying—without riposte—that nonbinary and genderqueer people are not trans.[28] I have written *Camp TV* to insist on the opposite: to argue, by way of ridiculed sitcom characters, for the continued value of recognizing nonbinary and genderqueer expression as trans. A cultural legacy excessive of the increasingly narrowing conceptions of trans representation in dominant discourse has a widespread history in television, long before digital programming such as *Transparent* and the spate of sexual minority characters in the 1990s conventionally understood to anticipate queer TV. Pre-1970s situation comedy is considered not to have lesbian or gay representation, but there is no dearth of lesbian/gay representation. There is an excess of queer trans signification, the queer gender of which signifies as all of the above at once. The camp and queer insight here aligns with but exceeds the knowledge of producers: sitcoms are constructed texts.

Sitcom Characterization as Camp Drag

The queer and trans history intertwined in sitcom history foregrounds white typologies of social difference, such as secretary-playboy dynamics at once emblematic of white patriarchal ideologies and indicative of camp. Industry

processes rather than any one person or set of queer workers produced the queer trans camp within dominant discourse.[29] To explain this dynamic, I address the art within the typecasting of performers such as Rose Marie, Ann B. Davis, and Nancy Kulp. Kulp, Davis, and Rose Marie are TV icons, camp icons, and icons of camp performance in 1950s and 1960s sitcoms. Rose Marie is Sal, Sally Rogers, a comedy writer character in the acclaimed 1960s series *The Dick Van Dyke Show* who works on the staff of the TV-variety-show-within-the-sitcom *Alan Brady*, and by virtue of serving as the typist of the writing team is often recalled as a secretary.[30] The *Dick Van Dyke* episodes "The Pen Is Mightier Than the Mouth" (February 19, 1964) and "Dear Sally Rogers" (February 23, 1966), among others, showcase Sal's talent. In these two programs, Rogers, who is usually positioned behind the scenes, appears in the spotlight of the late night talk show *Stevie Parsons*. As is consistently the case, Rose Marie's performances as Sal showcase modes of embodiment such as finessed limp wrist action symbolic of the shared affects and affectations of gay/lesbian and queer/trans social formations.[31] Across many series, Rose Marie is an explicit signal of traditions of industry camp and queer gender production, as a character actor, and, more specifically, as a character actor conducive to ironic coupling scenarios due to typecasting as an industry insider. Rose Marie's Sal in *Dick Van Dyke* and Rose Marie's many appearances outside of *Dick Van Dyke* mediated the marginalization of previous comedy production modes, through characterizations speaking to the continuation of early sound film, vaudeville, and various stage tropes and traditions in the simultaneously consolidated and dispersed forms of situation comedy.

Ann B. Davis, best known as middle-square housekeeper Alice Nelson on *The Brady Bunch*,[32] and Nancy Kulp, who is typically memorialized as the self-satisfied and superior assistant Jane Hathaway on *The Beverly Hillbillies*,[33] appeared in structurally similar positions, as did many character actors. Together, these three performers alone spent a combined 140 years as actors transcending stereotype, in other words inventively escaping that pigeonhole of phobic projections that is the stock persona of the "man-hungry old maid," a stark lesbian type desexualized, vilified as sexually aggressive, and often portrayed as lacking self-awareness despite quick-witted intelligence. "Secretary" is a telling code, one enmeshed with common stock roles and conventionally defined, through cis sexualized insult, as secondary. These actors and others who played to the type appeared in pairs with gay playboy counterparts, where "gay" refers ambiguously to a light, humorous, camp sensibility and to gender and sexual nonconformity. Instances of Kulp, Davis,

FIGURES INTRO.3 – INTRO.6. Rose Marie in the *Dick Van Dyke Show* episodes "The Pen Is Mightier Than the Mouth," February 19, 1964, and "Dear Sally Rogers," February 23, 1966.

Rose Marie, and other performers, such as Eve Arden, Imogene Coca, and Mary Grace Canfield, in versions of the recurring stock role, whether secretaries specifically or some other version of "career woman," and the rote but idiosyncratically passionate attraction they perform, constitute the core of the camp TV archive I assemble for this study.[34] As the compendium of typing involved in camp TV demonstrates through the workings of stigma converging in sitcoms, unmarried characters and other characters through which producers constructed queer meaning sustained "opposite-sex" interest (a misnomer in that there are no fixed binary opposites) as a signifier of nonstraightness with respect to white norms. This is a trans pattern.

The sitcom is a standardized format, a category of industrial production, designed to optimize advertising profits and investment returns through long- and short-term audience investment. Sitcom production involves freelance writers, writing teams, staff writers, consultants, rewriters, sponsor and ad agency representatives, network censors, story editors, executives, actors, talent agents, directors, and others. The material records of the process of producing sitcoms combined with the often instructive camp content of sitcom programming reveals in a formal way what Matthew Tinkcom calls "the specificity of how subjects come to have consciousness of the conditions of their labor" in specific historical moments.[35] The sitcom is, as Jane Feuer writes, "the most basic program format known to the medium" of TV and an integral component of what Raymond Williams described as TV "flow."[36] The role of sitcoms in the arrangement of TV content is indicative of what Mimi White calls television's "dispersed mechanisms of continuity," and emblematic of characterization and casting across TV genres.[37] Sitcoms foreground, as part of the pleasure, "clear narrative patterns" for continually inflecting, rather than developing, characters, through static and sometimes temporarily inverting characterization.[38] The guest-star system standardizes this contextually absurd formal element. As Gilbert Seldes writes, in an analysis of episodic scripting and casting practices, "Each new guest is supposed to be utterly ignorant of the qualities of the star-comedian, and by their astonishment, the familiar tricks are lifted to a level of freshness, the audience willingly sharing the delight of the guest."[39]

The many forms and ordinariness of drag in 1950s and 1960s sitcoms are tied to comedians' willingness to take on stigma within this structure. Character actors in particular attract perspectives that consider ridicule survivable. They inspire points of view that are queer in affirming the appeal

of stigma. An episode of *The Bill Dana Show* preserved at the UCLA Film and Television Archive that originally aired December 6, 1964, includes the most conventional understanding of drag in narrative fiction: one-off guest characters scripted as men who change into clothing designated as women's and are then perceived as women by other characters. In this series Don Adams (*Get Smart*) is a hotel detective, and Bill Dana plays a character Dana would later decry as racist, bellhop José Jiménez.[40] This Theodore J. Flicker–directed episode, based on a script written by Dick Chevillat (*Green Acres*) and Ray Singer (*The Lucy Show*) titled "We'll Get You for This," features a plot about two older white criminals identified as men attempting a heist of the hotel in middle-class white women's clothing. The punch line is notable for its gender neutral address: "Not only are you mean, nasty robber persons, but I hate your dress." The phrase "robber persons" is a trans gender queer construction in that it makes space for recognition of nonbinary orientations to meaning. "Robber persons," here a witty, comedic phrase, is applicable regardless of gender identification and assignment. This is an example of writers inventing gender neutral terms for humorous effect, and not entirely at the expense of the gender nonconforming. With or without the drag costuming, this type of moment showcasing the performance of dialogue indicates camp strategies of wordplay.[41] Studio television productions display significant queer trans dimensions by virtue of such investment in creative language.

Other forms of drag range from impersonating someone of the same gender to taking a stage name. In show business in general, and especially in Hollywood studio sitcom production, names that may or may not be second (taken, as opposed to given) names are a denaturalizing default, especially in cases of second- and third-generation Hollywood workers. One touchstone in this respect is George Burns, who claimed to change names more than anyone in the business, beginning sometime after fourth grade, with one inspired by advertising on trucks on the streets of the Lower East Side of New York City.[42] I use the poetic and referential value of names to reproduce the queer character of the television texts I resurrect. I spotlight a range but only a sliver of performers with intriguing and compelling camp TV credits. I lay out this network in order to establish the continuity of queer television textuality and the texture of the broader social scene from which these sitcoms construct trans meaning. I track this constellation of type and typing to pursue trans representation in abundance.

In reconstituting this history as a history of queer production, I seek to rescript expectations about what television crews, casts, and writers were capable of producing in their own time period. Their presentation of nonconformity through a combination of dispersed authorship, dispersed continuity, the guest-star system, and the norm of episodic eccentricity brings queer and trans representation into being together in the same moment, over and over again in the "ethereal" past and present, in print culture and the remains of aired and unaired material.[43] Sitcoms adapted drag performance as banal, everyday sitcom content, in the tropes of crossed wires and missed connections that Lynne Joyrich and Ron Becker spotlight in work on the simultaneously regulatory and queer work at play in sitcom form. Sitcom camp was amalgamated from vaudeville, film, theater, and radio conventions during the transition in broadcasting from radio to TV comedy.[44] In accordance with advertising, sponsorship, and branding demands, the sitcom production context established formulaic deviance in character actors' personas over time as well as in corresponding conventions of casting, acting, costuming, framing, direction, set decoration, sound editing, and other aesthetic concerns especially prominent in studio production. In *Writing for Television*, Seldes describes television comedy as "a highly formalized, almost mechanized product."[45]

Camp as a mode of production constituted these formulas. In the corpus of TV comedy, camp draws attention to the context of Hollywood racism. Sitcoms are camp because they emphasize the industry conventions that establish who is marginal rather than central, in terms of hierarchies articulated both through the language of programming genres and in the narration of the history of the medium of television as a history of television programming. Comedy about commercial pressure to sanitize, standardize, and profit from social variance illuminates, along with the reliable appearance of queer gender in supporting, extra, and star characters, sitcom production as a Hollywood specialty of standardizing whiteness as the dominant norm.[46] This process of race-class-gender construction circulated as part of the discourse of programming from the time of television's initial mass marketing well into the liberation and civil rights era, during which time television broadcasts became somewhat accessible across the United States and its borders, in some places ubiquitous. The relevant literature, as Guillermo Avila-Saavedra states, suggests that in venues other than television such as vaude-

ville, stand-up, and comedy variety performance, comedians are free from "the rigidity of a sitcom character."[47] However, the supposed constraints of stasis create ironic possibilities for variety within the repetitious predictability of sitcoms, in specialized recursive forms. Sitcoms of the 1950s and 1960s are saturated with sexual representation and yet perceived as prudish. This is the artistry: that's "the camp," a critically queer payoff of exploitation, available to viewers (and self-defined nonviewers) in the historical period.

Hollywood TV at midcentury was a next phase in the simulation of heterosexuality. This corpus is replete with queer codes, or connotative signs of gender and sexual minority status. Straight gender relations consistent with white norms became an increasing priority for the television networks as the 1950s progressed. Relatedly, the importance of prepackaged advertising grew in its significance for global markets. As a result, the orientation toward white femininity and white masculinity further intensified. The initial period, featuring product endorsements performed live, was mixed and mostly unrecorded. With homogenization came wacky white-centric diversification, but much of what aired has been lost and forgotten. Despite scarcity, archives preserve evidence of queer coding and with it inventive ways of rejecting racist norms of perception, identity, and attraction enacted through binary gender.

The specific historical detail of midcentury US sitcoms is especially useful for understanding the workings of queer gender. Sitcoms are not usually recognized as camp productions, but they are important to look at in terms of camp, because they demonstrate how and why nonbinary and genderqueer constructions not only are trans but also are crucial to understanding the significance of trans oppression within systems of structuring inequality. Sitcoms are camp even before they age, due to their studio-produced efficiency aesthetics, their hyperreal content, and the calculated, self-evident white-centrism of the TV schedules. *Camp TV* shows that television's camp value is as immediate and powerful as its racism and gender policing, precisely because camp is so intertwined with both the perpetual whitening of TV comedy in the 1950s and 1960s and also simultaneously the multiply minoritized energies that constitute queer representation. I argue that there is queer representation in the sitcoms of the period. Further, in this queer representation, there is also transgender representation.

The operations of whiteness evident at the site of queer gender are instructive. Looking at sitcom texts and their production contexts while examining the simultaneity and correspondence of trans and queer representation

demonstrates how camp became ingrained in media production through the popularization of television. Camp is smack dab in the ambiguous overlap of trans (genderfluid, transsexual, genderqueer) and gay (asexual, aromantic, lesbian, bi, pan, poly) identity—in other words, in the crossover space of the highly heterogeneous categories used to conceive of gender and sexual minority status. Camp is the experience of being both, of embodying supposed contradictions. I use my analysis of the material history of situation comedy in archives to shift camp's detection more equitably, away from the notion of white cis homos behind the scenes as the epitome of queer production. My account of the racializing binaries that proliferate this dominant image of queer Hollywood producers as white and not trans retools a set of prominent limiting presumptions: (1) that camp found its way to television only recently; (2) that camp consists of drag, defined as cross-dressing, understood as swapping hair and makeup; (3) that camp is sexist, homophobic, and transphobic; and (4) that queer representation is primarily about sexuality, whereas trans representation is primarily about gender.[48] In redacting these clichés, I show how the camp of 1950s and 1960s sitcoms is queer and trans as opposed to queer because it is trans. I question why censorship is presumed to eradicate this representation, and I hope to convince you of how abundant queer gender is in US sitcoms and popular culture. I show how queer gender complicates the idea that transgender history is a minority history not included in general television archives.

My focus on the production process sidesteps the general preoccupation with gender stereotypes as conservative and constraining. Genderqueer sexual expression, camp, and queer gender are examples of *trans gender queer* representation because they reference multiple queer gender representations in ways that move, or create imaginative space through language for the possibility of movement, across queer gender positions and expressions. This formulation *trans gender queer* guards against the kind of simplistic thinking that might, for example, in appraising some queer textual feature, consider naming elements of signification lesbian or gay but not both; transgender or genderqueer but not both; queer or trans but not both. In a time before the popularization of the term transgender and before the emergence of the word genderqueer, there was trans gender queer representation. Queer gender in sitcom production of the past is genderqueer camp and queer trans representation, in advance of its historical solidification in dominant discourse. Now, the term genderqueer and the notion of what it can entail is increasingly rendered distinct from the category of trans and what that con-

cept is perceived to encompass. I articulate genderqueer culture as trans by analyzing queer gender in US sitcom history. Analyzing queer gender in the context of television history is a project of queer temporality encouraging TV texts to speak across time toward future transformation.

Television Archives, Unbinarized

The stakes involved in perceiving camp TV are high, in that perceiving this sitcom camp can mean reconceiving of gender. In the United States, television emerged as a linchpin of social cohesion during the decades following World War II, when it began to color daily life and recalibrate the experience of color. Television programming was the new media of the 1950s and 1960s and a major force in social relations and the reconfiguration of the techniques and terms of white cis privilege. Power relations shifted with the introduction of TV sets to the consumer market and the attendant proliferation of broadcast stations across the 1950s, which all transpired as the medicalization of categories for gender and sexual nonconformity continued, principally through scientific racism and class hierarchizing. While further instituting hetero norms, the shifts in TV created more space for queer signification within the representational system of the dominant culture, space for the representation of what Judith Butler describes as "desiring subjects who either fall outside the heterosexual norm, or operate within it . . . in 'perverse' or illegitimate ways."[49] Butler writes of subjects, but objects, including the intangible objects of television studies, also operate within and outside of norms, with productively perverse and "illegitimate" discourses such as slang as standby genre elements.

To document and analyze queer gender, I avoid classifying media makers, especially character actors, as female or male, rejecting the binary formulated categories of actors and actresses, queer men and queer women, and comedians and comediennes, male and female comedians. An approach that segregates by gender (or, worse, a naturalized "sex" status) is inadequate for understanding how producers animate live-action eccentrics through writing, casting, performance, and collaborative character typing. The beginning of regional television infrastructure coincides with the experimental stardom of Gorgeous George, a wrestler in a tutu whom historians recognize as achieving an indisputably queer fame by performing camp in the context of matches, through self-conscious parody of widely recognized stereotypes. So who comes between Gorgeous George and Charles Nelson Reilly? Who

else is there besides Milton Berle and Liberace? Who else in addition to Eve Arden, Mary Wickes, Sheila Kuehl, and Kathleen Freeman? Beyond Judy Garland, and Agnes Moorehead's Endora? On top of Raymond Burr and Tab Hunter? More "manic" than Danny Kaye and Jerry Lewis?[50] In the construction of sitcom texts, scripts call for many actors and characters assigned to different gender categories to produce a lot of divergent, flamboyant, overlapping styles and eccentricities, which involve connotations of taste, race, ethnicity, appropriation, sexuality, class, and ability. The combination of these signifiers produces queer gender.

My analysis of this queer gender production process in *Camp TV* draws on additional names, centering the uncredited, to inaugurate a new reality, in which sitcoms revamp binary gender along queer lines, creating queer gender as part of the format. In this discursive space, there is no need to classify the people who made sitcoms as men or women. Any comedian may be untransitioned, in which case classifying them according to convention is wrong. Instead of appraising the historical record using an idea of the truth of "sex," which contradicts the self-assignment of trans people, I read sitcom production with genderqueer sensory perception keyed to both the material record and the ephemerality of performance in the production of prerecorded weekly US comedy series. Situation comedy of the 1950s and 1960s is not typically considered camp, yet these shows are camp and operate in the manner of camp in helping us "grasp a reality . . . totally separate from what is taught," thereby allowing us to "literally create a new reality."[51] Camp, as Michael Bronski writes in *Culture Clash*, is a way to "criticize social mores and structures while shielding [yourself] from retribution," which is what Michael Warner argues queer counterpublics do, and which was broadly necessary during the Cold War lavender scare.[52]

Bronski argues that you can create a new reality through camp, so why not do so with the history of sitcoms, the ultimate platform of complacency, the media technology definitive of the duped masses? According to Andrew Ross, camp is the "highly individualistic interpretation of role-playing within what is often a very restricted repertoire of stock characters. There is little room to maneuver, but the art lies in the virtuoso skill of maneuvering."[53] This applies to television in terms of consumers, producers, producer-consumers, and consumer-producers. As Julie D. O'Reilly, in *Bewitched Again*, explains, "As antithetical as it may sound to some, television makes me think, even television programming that is considered 'bad,' 'mindless,' or 'forgettable.' . . . Television programming makes me think long after I have

turned off the set or closed the browser window. The thing television makes me think most about? How gender is depicted within its fictional realms."[54] Doty, whose writing advocates celebrating queer pleasure as a way of learning social justice, explains, "If television didn't exactly make me queer or a feminist, it provided an almost daily feeding and provoking of what became the queer and the feminist in me."[55]

The autobiographical writings of two well-known trans activists, Jamison Green and Leslie Feinberg, concur: fluff TV is fodder for critical self-production in terms of gender. In the 2004 book *Becoming a Visible Man*, Green describes NBC's 1955 broadcast of *Peter Pan*—starring Mary Martin as Pan—in Fred Coe's *Producers' Showcase* as "one of those lucid moments" that countered everything he was otherwise experiencing in being denied self-identification as a boy and continually discredited as a girl even though many other people also perceived him as he perceived himself, as a boy. "I clearly remember thinking," he says, "during Peter's first scene in the bedroom as he tries to retrieve his shadow, 'If she can be a boy, then so can I.'"[56] Seeing this show one time rendered maleness accessible to him on terms he considered his own, which was exactly what he needed to become the man he wanted to be and eventually become legible in general on cisgender terms. The world insisted he be a girl, but television supported his trans subjectivity, as well as a sense of parody as camp play evident in his desire to not just be a boy but to be a "much better boy" than Martin.[57] Trans experiences of programming are part of television history. This is less a fact to be proven with conventional historical evidence than an axiom along the lines of one of Eve Sedgwick's: "People are different from each other."[58]

On the flip side of Green's exhilarating self-recognition is the pain and punishment in forging queer gender that everyday life and TV viewing often involves, principally for some because of the use of studio or canned laughter (edited laugh tracks) constructing a butt of the joke and positioning gender-variant characters as subhuman outliers. By many accounts, the ridicule of queer gender resonates traumatically, as a stinging betrayal. In a 1996 manifesto of note titled *Transgender Warriors*, Feinberg recalls the impact of hir parents' periodic enjoyment of the drag routines Milton Berle performed throughout the 1950s. Feinberg writes, "[I] cringed as my folks guffawed when 'Uncle Miltie' . . . donned a dress," because "it hit too close to home. I longed to wear the boys' clothing I saw in the Sears catalog," but "boys were expected to wear 'men's' clothes, and girls were not."[59] For Feinberg, as for Green, time in front of the set is prominent within a lifelong

process of opposing gender oppression. The pain is part of it, but it can't be the whole focus, especially if you take the actual lived existence of trans people (such as myself as a researcher formed by these texts in my own childhood) into account. Anecdotal evidence confirms that the medium was doing more than inflicting harm in circulating compensatory escapist entertainment in the 1950s and 1960s. The same critical consciousness that Green achieved through light TV fare came to Mary Ellen Cohane, a feminine cis folklorist, through the same broadcasts that stung Feinberg, inflaming self-conception. As a kid, Berle's performances informed Cohane's choice to butch up appearances to gain access to a neighborhood scene dominated by boys.[60] The *Texaco Star Theater* or *Buick-Berle Show* performances that stung Feinberg actually alleviated, in Cohane, a kind of gender dysphoria. For Cohane, Berle's facility with makeup and manners marked as feminine rejected the misogyny of the playground culture that curtailed Cohane's participation based on expressed femininity. Cohane wanted to wear dresses like Berle did, but also wanted equal access to a sexist social sphere, and Cohane saw Berle as a sign of future gender freedom and fortified femininity. Fans applauded Berle for the markers of femininity—dark lipstick, lush shimmery fabrics—to which Cohane was drawn.

In the context of the cissexist violence of the time (and of today), camp TV is an ironic resource. Many people commonly perceive the very appearance of queer gender in pop culture as a weapon that harms and polices. The context of the appearance of queer gender is conditioned by sexism, homophobia, and transphobia, and by intersecting ableism, racism, and classism. Moments of televisual rejection can be distinctly raw because the medium purports to be universal while obviously excluding. However, even in the context of this—yes, ultimately unfunny—cis-hetero "comic" othering, television is about a unique cultivation, for corporate profit, of intimacy, immediacy, and routine. Sitcoms in particular are familiar. Their racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia are predictable. The brutal rejection is a tradeoff: easy to ignore if you are attracted to gender and sexual deviance; possible to diminish through attention to the detail of the simultaneous queer trans camp comedy. The "invert" stigma that the dominant medico-juridical discourse assigns to "ugly" "females" and "emasculated" "men" has appeared inventively, deployed ironically, in devalued popular genres.[61] Alongside pulp novels, physique culture, Hollywood film, and pornography, fuzzy TV broadcasts transmitted the "stimulating aether of the unnamed," within what Sedgwick describes as the "stigma-impregnated space of refused recognition."[62]

My aim with the project is to express the possibility of attraction to queer gender (in terms of erotics and embodiment), using archives to open up contemporary discourse beyond antitrans logics of perception and sexual assignment. The classification of characters and performers as female or male is compulsory within academic discourse and popular mores at present. However, this practice actually prevents recognition of queer gender, and it is not a necessary part of cultural history or textual analysis. The parody of camp produces queer gender, queer gender I attempt to maintain by minimizing the commonly gendered pronouns "he"/"him"/"his" and "she"/"her"/"hers." I avoid these in my study even though conventions instituting their ubiquity and, in particular, normative patterns of relying on these words in close analysis and academic argumentation, by alternating between subjects' names and these pronouns, may make my diction seem off to some readers. Pronouns are a site at which the discourse of binary gender excludes. The rhetoric of only two possible categories for performers (male and female, comedienne and comedian) does a constant disservice to nonbinary-identified people. This discourse enacts violence material and symbolic—even when it is facilitating the legibility of lesbian, gay, and bi identities. Camp offers a better system of gendering for a better feminism.

Overview of the Book

In the chapters that follow, I reconceive of sitcom history on the basis of the imaginative evidence that sitcoms and sitcom records provide of queer gender. *Camp TV* presents sitcom art spurred on by reorganization after *Red Channels: The Report of Communist Influence in Radio and Television* (1950), a publication listing the Hollywood Writers Mobilization as subversive and the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League as defunct.[63] The rhetorical force of *Red Channels* had residual effects through the 1960s and its slant continues to contribute to a Cold War climate of xenophobic fear. In this context, camp TV is inventive and interrogated the workings of cis privilege in its own period. Yes, the emphasis in the industry on socially sanctioned heterosexual gender roles reinforced the idea of stable gender assignment, through a notion of sex perceptible on the body. At the same time, looks, size, movement, and differences of appearance, behavior, and taste became the substance of situation comedy. Increasingly, especially across the 1960s, sitcoms addressed discrimination in an oblique manner, through surreal civil rights analogies that articulated witches as women as queers as monsters as people of color.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the period of the emergence of commercial television, networks and agencies perfected tactics for profit. The system commodified broadcast and leisure time, providing free programming to viewers by selling them, as audiences in the abstract, to advertisers. Making television schedules and TV programming involved multiple traditions of showbiz insight into popular entertainment but also the type of demographics research that constructs mass markets. Situation comedy programming is emblematic of this commercialized sphere.

Sitcoms present "charged" humor, a transmedia phenomenon linking stand-up performance to social justice,[64] as familiar, in the context of ad-driven programming flow. In TV, prerecorded advertisements and sponsor messages organize sitcoms and, overall, the medium's self-reflexive address. Broadcast episodes are built around product placements, while patterned juxtapositions and sensory repetition feed the habituated rhythms of everyday life. Anna McCarthy highlights programs (such as sitcoms) as "supplemental necessities in the TV production sector."[65] McCarthy explains that, "in purely revenue-based terms," the "business purpose" of shows is "to secure an audience for the advertisements that appear within and between them." The charged content of sitcoms is notable in light of the ways in which "overinvolvement and excess are often defined as the normative goals of commercials [and] advertising researchers' perceptions of [advertising's] effects are . . . based in a notion of mimicry."[66]

Sitcom writing and repurposing is crucial to the success of this system. Sitcom writing is an exclusive craft, and yet the rules of the art have been evident on the surface, in the repetition of sets, character typing, and situations of a broadly interchangeable sort, providing plot structure for joke after joke and performance play.[67] As Feuer states, "The situation has always been a simple and repeatable frame on which to hang all manner of gags, one-liners, warm moments, physical comedy and ideological conflicts. In fact, one could say that it has been the *ideological flexibility* of the sitcom that has accounted for its longevity."[68] In addition to characters and settings that continue from week to week, episodes of 1950s and 1960s sitcoms featured, as indicative of their conventions, witty wordplay performed by mugging actors, presented in medium- and long-shot combinations, with a laugh track mixed from recordings of coached in-studio audiences. Writers and actors were instrumental but disposable in legitimizing standardized ad breaks, audio-visual branding, and promotional rhetoric depicting television viewing as a way of life. *Camp TV* is a rendering of queer critical insight and antitransphobic

camp from this disparaged body of work,[69] largely the result of the playful expertise through which freelance and contract laborers deliver camp as if it were normal, in incredibly crafted hypersurreal situation comedy.

The industrial apparatus of sitcom production and television textuality is still largely in place from the 1950s and 1960s. Studio-oriented sitcom production procedures continue to generate queer gender like clockwork in episodic comedy fare, through the norms of casting, scripting, shooting, editing, and scheduling half-hour comedies, and these elements continue to characterize web series and the comedy content circulating across digital distribution platforms. The networks claimed to censor sexual perversion, homosexuality, and deviance from all formats in the 1950s and 1960s. Sitcoms especially were expected to affirm wholesome values. Yet sitcoms were camp upon release; they are not only camp in retrospect, when an additional datedness sets their repetitive patterns in relief. Sitcoms debut as camp, and then much of that camp passes by most audiences, today and likely into the future. Some sitcom camp admittedly registers consciously with only a rare subset of viewers, those who can identify Elinor Donahue in an episode of *The Golden Girls* as Betty from *Father Knows Best*, for example. Dialogue, performance, costuming, and casting call up other roles, past and contemporaneous, as "Easter eggs," or hidden caches of instructive camp sensibility, whether these associations are deliberate, overdetermined, or specialty-fan based. Synthesizing the historical details of these referential connections as intertextual buoys for trans gender queer meaning making changes conceptions of US programming made in the 1950s and 1960s.

The first chapter explains how sitcoms—a category of standardized filmed studio productions formatted for commercial advertising segments—emerged in the aftermath of *Red Channels*, as the power of the TV networks (NBC, CBS, ABC, and for a time DuMont) increased relative to the influence of sponsors in the industry. Initially, during the era of live TV broadcasts, sponsors would finance shows and use them to promote products. Later, when the use of telefilm became more common, the networks sold short advertising segments to multiple advertisers, moving toward standardized commercial breaks. Changes in funding and formats, namely the delineation of situation comedy from comedy variety, dispersed authorship in sitcoms. The use of pilots, initial test episodes, and a weekly in-season production schedule meant that new episodes in each season could be written, rehearsed, staged, filmed, and edited in four or five days, at the same time as recently finished episodes were airing. This system solidified first after the

crackdown on and reform of scandalous Jewish and other complexly appropriative ethnic comedy in the early 1950s. It then intensified following the quiz show scandals of 1958, which prompted the industry to promise the public more respectable, family-friendly TV fare. As the industry and many workers migrated west to Hollywood, and live broadcast productions were replaced by filmed and taped telecasts, schedulers sanitized programming of sexual, gender, and racial diversity while relying on a nonethnic-ethnic model of success in mostly segregated sitcoms. A screwy star system of character actors in guest appearances played off of conventional celebrity, facilitating the perpetuation of planned obsolescence and social inequality while occasioning queer gender and camp, all as a result of different industry entities vying for control over content and for influence with program producers, like Hollywood studios.

Chapter 2 narrates sitcom history within a trans gender queer frame, using archival research to explain the dispersed system of authorship, personnel relations, market research, talent management, and publicity strategy that Hollywood sitcoms involve. Across the 1950s, prime time comedy programs, initially broadcast live and associated for the most part with New York City, were increasingly made by studios in Hollywood, a home of industrialized film and media operations that has, as has New York, historically cultivated queer culture and collaboration as it constitutes and exports vicious hierarchy. Middle-class norms defined as white increasingly steered TV programming through the image of the audience. Early stars of the small screen that were at odds with ideals of pure whiteness faced program cancellation as audiences grew, and as the networks reshuffled shows in terms of day and time placement to optimize advertising profits and brand identity. With the move to the West Coast, television studio production processes meshed with a local system of racist stardom with global reach, in the form of radio, film, and music industry infrastructure. To draw out the dimensions of this, I focus on Bob Cummings, an icon of white-defined desire and identification.

Chapter 3 explains how Hollywood studio production proliferated queer gender through the mundane everyday process of creating comic distinctions set against social norms. Queer gender is expressed in moments and objects such as a look or a lilt, a scarf or a sweater. Queer gender corresponds to a discursive system inventively unhinged from ideas about "born" sex, binarized sex organs, sex practices, and secondary sex characteristics, "biological" gender, and other rhetorical instruments of racism, cissexism, ableism, eugenics,

and genocide. The multiple meanings produced with and through queer gender signifiers in movement, costuming, and my principal concern here, dialogue, link up with a dominant system of signification in which the vast majority of people somehow consume, without recognizing, the queerness of gender. Using material records from archives, I question the rote presumptions about queer invisibility in network TV before the 1970s.

My argument about invisibility and the possibilities of supposed invisibility—possibilities I evoke through the stylistic use of pronouns and names in genderqueer combination—sets up an analysis in chapter 4 of a 1968 series I call *Girl*, which I discuss as if the property were still in process. The starting point for queer trans fan labor with *Girl* is that the series is not well known and is generally derided when it is discussed. The project is to trans feminize the text in concert with queer labor onscreen and off, while counteracting the medium's white-centrism, formulaic ethnic-nonethnic orientalism, and colorblind casting, a system of casting actors and writing characters within a white/other framework deflecting attention to ethnic specificity.[70] My research into *Girl* and the connection between a queer subset of transgender practice today and the comedy production of the TV industry in the 1950s and 1960s articulates the problems of recounting the history of sitcoms as if this history were straight (not queer). I use the convergence of sitcom wit and queer trans critique to counter the intertwined limited tendency to assume that television history is all cis. By contrast, the queer discourse of network TV very apparently, on the surface, participates in the production of trans culture, through comedy about attraction, dating, devotion, sex, and marriage; standard sitcom narrative formulas of character doubling, mistaken identity, makeovers, and miscommunication; and considerations of power relations and subject-object positions in commercial art production.

The concept "trans gender queer" refers to the possibility of reading gender cues that are more specific than male and female, masculine and feminine. This is a possibility that not only existed in the 1950s and 1960s but became rudimentary in the appreciation of TV comedy. Television is, as many scholars have long argued, about intimacy and immediacy, affect and affiliation, as something the medium uniquely cultivates, through routinized viewing. The camp TV archive of queer gender records nuance in a system retrospectively perceived as absolute in its relation to, in terms of its representativity of, heterosexism. Today, this archive enables a vision, or retranscription, of pop culture far beyond the scope of what television is supposed to entail. It demands a sense of history as more variegated than commonly

understood in the present. The material and methods transmit the potential to attune to the heterogeneity of nonconformity. To model this research mode, *Camp TV* explores the process of recognizing within archives gender dynamics more complex than expected. The book advocates for interpretation of queer gender as a way to register its historically specific appeal in violently dehumanizing hostile contexts.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1 R. Becker, *Gay TV and Straight America*, 3. For scholarship considering series prior to the 1990s, see Wlodarz, "'We're Not All So Obvious'"; and Villarejo, *Ethereal Queer*.

2 Leibman, *Living Room Lectures*, 8. Leibman lists *The Bob Cummings Show*, *The Phil Silvers Show*, and *The Gale Storm Show* as examples.

3 For a discussion of "queer gender" in binary terms see Villarejo, *Ethereal Queer*, 61–65.

4 On "gawking at the gawkers," surviving scorn, and valuing queer trans work history as critical praxis, see Clare, "Gawking, Gaping, Staring" (259–60). This analysis "flirts" back, as in Clare's account, as a project of queer temporality (Freeman, "Introduction"). It gravitates "backward," discarding narratives of progress toward "modern Homosexuality" (Ferguson, "Sissies at the Picnic," 193–95). I follow a trail of presumed ugliness and undesirability preserving of trans history through the network system of "economic and institutional consensus" with sponsors and advertisers; "a 'success-versus-failure' model of gay television obscures more than it reveals" (McCarthy, "Ellen," 596).

5 Torres, *Living Color*, 1–2; Spigel, *Welcome to the Dreamhouse*; Schwoch, *Global TV*.

6 On the overlap and antiracist feminist methods, see Brettschneider, "Critical Attention to Race." On the black dandy and these popular entertainment traditions, see M. Miller, *Slaves to Fashion*, 6, 101; Glick, "Harlem's Queer Dandy"; Wojcik, "Mae West's Maids," 288–89; Chude-Sokei, *The Last "Darky,"* 98–99, 200–203; Mizejewski, *Ziegfeld Girl*, 105–7; Stark, *Men in Blackface*, 71; Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise*, 103–5; Lott, *Love and Theft*, 159–66; Toll, *Blacking Up*, 76–77, 122–24, 139–45, 273–74; and Snorton, *Black on Both Sides*, 4. A full consideration of the specificity of this debt that US sitcoms, and the dominant media matrix of consumer culture overall, owe to queer and trans of color culture—here by way of the complex appropriations involved in a long view of intermingling production cultures—is regrettably beyond

the scope of this study. Villarejo identifies Eve Arden as a TV dandy (*Ethereal Queer*, 63), and the connection is evident also in the blackface performances, in particular Harry von Zell's rendition of Eddie Cantor's signature trans gender queer number "If You Knew Susie," in the *Burns and Allen* episode "A Night of Vaudeville," April 9, 1956, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3uJH_SJPt4.

7 Hall, "Encoding, Decoding."

8 Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 45.

9 See Kodat, "Making Camp."

10 Hal Humphrey writes in 1967 that Steve Allen's ten-year-old comment in *Bigger Than a Breadbox*, on the increased scrutiny comedians were facing, remains relevant: "The comedians who continue to function despite the trend are subject to increasingly heavy attacks from critics, audiences, rating services, and from the vaguely defined spirit of the times." Hal Humphrey, "Good TV Comedy in Short Supply," *Toledo Blade*, August 22, 1967. On censorship in this period, see Litvak, *The Un-Americans*.

11 I use "trans gender queer" and "genderqueer" as historicized critical terms, meaning I am assessing queer positionality in relation to the discursive system of gender, sexuality, class, and race in operation at the time. At the same time, as Stryker, Currah, and Moore explain in "Trans-, Trans, or Transgender," "Territorializing and deterritorializing 'trans-' and its suffixes . . . as well as the movements between temporalizing and spatializing them, is an improvisational, creative, and essentially poetic practice through which radically new possibilities for being in the world can start to emerge" (14). It is in keeping with this practice that I use "genderqueer" and "trans gender queer" to counter the conviction in camp studies as articulated by Katrin Horn that "a critique in mainstream culture will inevitably be less radical in terms of gender variance and intersectionality than its articulation in less commercially oriented discourses and media might be" (*Women, Camp, and Popular Culture*, 5).

12 In *Having a Good Cry*, Robyn Warhol explains effeminacy as a nonbinary gender enterprise produced in tandem with a binary gender system (9).

13 Salamon, *Assuming a Body*, 71.

14 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 155. All gender is queer gender in trans gender queer camp. You never know how others are reading you or who you are for sure. Max Wolf Valerio, an author who describes trans experience as one of "uncovering and displaying nature's hidden cacophony, its subtext of sabotage and dissolution," explains, "You never know whom you are talking to. You never know what you will do someday, what you are capable of" (*The Testosterone Files*, 2).

15 Straayer, *Deviant Eyes, Deviant Bodies*, 2.

16 Booth, "*Campe-toi!*," 69.

17 Gilbert Seldes, *Writing for Television*, 179. Hainley's chapter on Paul Lynde in "How to Proceed in Everything I Can Think Of" (47–85) explores this "guest-star system." See P. White, *Uninvited*; Roof, *All about Thelma and Eve*; and McCarthy, "Ellen."

18 Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 155.

19 Character actors, commonly defined as those who may be widely familiar based on appearance and performance but whose names circulate only among aficionados, are not stars in the classic Hollywood sense of conventional beauty or popular name recognition. See Wojcik, "Typecasting"; Leff, "Becoming Clifton Webb." These sources, especially Wojcik's attention to theater traditions, indicate the broad accounting of classification my research has entailed. On my terms, even Clifton Webb, who stuck to features, was a camp TV producer, in the moment of appearing on *The Ed Sullivan Show* in 1954. On eccentricity and character acting, see Ruth and Paul Henning, interview by David Marc, September 9, 1996, Steven H. Scheuer, *Television History Interviews*, Box 22: 20–22, Syracuse University. See also *The Life of Reilly*, by Barry Polterman, Frank Anderson, and Charles Nelson Reilly, *Civilian Pictures* (2007) and *I Knew It Was You: Rediscovering John Cazele*, by Richard Shepard, Oscillscope (2010). Thanks to Chris Finley for the Cazele reference.

20 Jack Major, "Richard Deacon: He Played the Cards He Was Dealt and Came Out a Winner," *Akron Beacon Journal*, September 6, 1964 (accessed May 14, 2018), http://major-smolinski.com/NAMES/DEACON.html.

21 Jeremy Butler, *Television*, 70.

22 See Tartaglia, "Perfect Queer Appositeness"; and McDonald, *Cruising the Movies* ("When Louise Beavers Awakens Jean Harlow," 222–23).

23 Major, "Richard Deacon."

24 Promoting the release of *How I Lost 10 Pounds in 53 Years*, Ballard recounts growing up as a "very strange child" obsessed with movie stars: "No matter what I was doing I was impersonating whoever I saw on the screen." A YouTube video advertisement and comedy routine includes Ballard's performance of a younger Ballard washing dishes as Bette-Davis-dubbed-in-Italian. Moschroi, "The Unbelievable Kaye Ballard," September 10, 2009, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PwU6-wmAv0M.

25 Another of Ballard's recurring roles indicative of imbrication in industrial camp production is Angie Pallucci (*The Doris Day Show*, CBS, 1968–73).

26 Elements of camp characterization include hair and makeup, décor, costuming, and performance, specifically brash eye shadow, faux sideburns, and a sculpted crop cut uncommon for men and women at the time; wall hangings signifying femme production, iconic cosmopolitan taste, and the authority connoted by specialized degrees on display; ornate earrings and a half-sleeve black-on-white jacket paired with its inverse—white pearls contrasting with a black shirt; all in the context of Ballard's expressive posture, projected confidence, and steeled expression. These elements combine with vocal delivery and other aspects of acting and intertextuality to constitute queer gender. The eponymous Patty Duke participates in camp performance, coproducing queer gender and pointing up the irony involved in norms and the establishment of norms.

27 On parody and the importance of parody in 1950s TV, see Thompson, *Parody*

and Taste. On mimicry as "an *ironic* compromise," see Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 122.

28 *Transparent*, "They Is on the Way." Written by Bridget Bedard. Amazon. September 21, 2017.

29 See Griffin's multiplatform study *Tinker Belles and Evil Queens* (143), a discussion of studio authorship in the context of camp, fantasy, animation, drag, realism, and "fabulously false femininity" and masculinity (72).

30 See Rose Marie, *Hold the Roses*; and Rose Marie, "'Dick Van Dyke' Star Rose Marie: What Happened When I Publicly Shamed My Sexual Harasser," *Hollywood Reporter*, December 7, 2017, (accessed May 14, 2018), https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/dick-van-dyke-star-rose-marie-what-happened-i-publicly-shamed-my-harasser-guest-column-1063597.

31 Each of the *Stevie Parsons* episodes frames Sal's television appearances through the eyes of Rob and Laura, who witness Sal's everyday desperate-to-marry antics momentarily reach an audience beyond friends by way of the fictionalized broadcasts—which resemble Rose Marie's stints on celebrity game shows, talk shows, and in other venues. These episodes exemplify the mise en abyme structure of sitcom textuality as a whole, articulated through repetitive casting and intertext-intensive characterization. A stage kiss Sal stands triumphantly in the midst of at sign-off—an overplayed performance of sexual assertion reversing conventional gender norms—indicates not only Rose Marie's self-branding within typecasting but also some of Nancy Kulp's roles and parts in countless series suited to still other camp sitcom actors' malleable recurring personas, where what may seem like excessive heterosexuality and sexism works as trans gender queer representation.

32 See Q. Miller, "*Bob Cummings Show*"; and Miller and Rand, "Hot for TV."

33 See P. White, *Uninvited*, 173–74.

34 On Arden, see P. White, *Uninvited*; Roof, *All about Thelma and Eve*; and Villarejo, *Ethereal Queer*.

35 Tinkcom, *Working Like a Homosexual*, 24.

36 Feuer, "Genre Study and Television," 146; R. Williams, *Television*, 77.

37 M. White, "Crossing Wavelengths," 51.

38 Spigel and Curtin, *The Revolution Wasn't Televised*, 4. Sconce, "What If?," 94, 101.

39 Seldes, *Writing for Television*, 180.

40 The "astonishing variety of jobs" Dana's character performed "served to emphasize . . . otherness and social irrelevance" in trans gender queer fashion (Avila-Saavedra, "Ethnic Otherness," 276).

41 See Villarejo, *Ethereal Queer*, on the type of sitcom exchange that "remakes desire into identification" (62–63).

42 Zsa Zsa Gershick, "Estate of Entertainer George Burns Gives 1M to School of Theater," September 22, 1997, news.usc.edu.

43 Villarejo, *Ethereal Queer*, 8.

44 Vaudeville overlaps with blackface minstrelsy and informs these histories,

which structure segregation in public performance and consist of the routine white appropriation of black art, specifically queer and trans of color cultural production and performance. See M. Miller, *Slaves to Fashion*, 310n17. On the freak show, another influence, as opportunity amid exploitation, see Clare, "Gawking, Gaping, Staring," 257.

45 Seldes, *Writing for Television*, 177.

46 Bratten shows that the success of Dinah Shore, a white popular singer and variety show host who did comedy in the 1950s and 1960s, entailed the manipulation of markers of nonwhiteness and whiteness, and the diminishment of Jewish history ("Nothin' Could Be Finah"). In *Dance and the Hollywood Latina*, Priscilla Peña Ovalle details such reracialization as a dynamic of casting and characterizing "in-betweenness" through the "careful manipulation—and simultaneous semiotic representation—of whiteness and nonwhiteness" (20). On whiteness as "a fiction created by elites who wished to protect their own class position of extreme wealth," see Bashi Treitler, *Ethnic Project*, 54.

47 Avila-Saavedra, "Ethnic Otherness," 274.

48 The presumptions involved in this line of thinking understand gender only in terms of assigned sex. Queer gender eludes coercive assignment, at birth and after, through what Roderick Ferguson calls "terrains of the imagination . . . that offer what official narratives withhold." Ferguson, "Sissies at the Picnic," 194.

49 Judith Butler, "Politics, Power and Ethics," 9.

50 For Tab Hunter and *The Tab Hunter Show*, see Tab Hunter, *Tab Hunter Confidential*. On Kaye, see Bayless, "Danny Kaye"; and Cohan, "Manic Bodies of Danny Kaye," 22. Halberstam's *In a Queer Time and Place* and several essays in *Enfant Terrible!* speak to queer gender in the work of Jerry Lewis, a prominent postwar TV comedian. In a review raving about the pairing of Ezio Pinza with Martha Raye in an episode of *All-Star Revue*, "a rare streak of genius" on KNBH, Walter Ames used trans gender queer comedy referencing Lewis's queer gender to explain what made the episode, and specifically the "combo" of Raye and Pinza, "one of the funniest shows to come out of this series," writing, "On first thought viewers will probably want to label Martha a 'female Jerry Lewis.' But Martha has been giving out with this type of comedy for many years. So I guess we'll have to call Jerry a 'female Martha Raye.' I'm only kidding, Jerry." Walter Ames, "Keighley Urges Host Emcees for Dramatic TV Shows; SC-Cal Films on KTTV," *Los Angeles Times*, October 23, 1951, 22.

51 Bronski, *Culture Clash*, 43.

52 Bronski, *Culture Clash*, 43; D. Johnson, *Lavender Scare*.

53 Ross, *No Respect*, 162.

54 O'Reilly, in *Bewitched Again*, ix.

55 Doty, "I Love Shari."

56 Green, *Becoming a Visible Man*, 11–12.

57 Green, *Becoming a Visible Man*, 11–12.

58 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 22.
59 Feinberg, *Transgender Warriors*, 4.
60 Mary Ellen Cohane, personal conversation with the author, October 14, 2009, Five Colleges Women's Studies Research Center.
61 Nealon, *Foundlings*; Villarejo, *Lesbian Rule*.
62 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 63. Again, see P. White, *Uninvited*, 173–74.
63 *Red Channels*, 183–84.
64 Krefting, *All Joking Aside*, 24–25.
65 *Television Genre Book*, "Advertising," 94.
66 *Television Genre Book*, "Advertising," 94.
67 For a camp accounting of sitcom tropes, see Jacobs and Jones, *Beaver Papers*.
68 *Television Genre Book*, "Situation Comedy, Part 2," 69–70.
69 My framework brings together work in feminist queer of color media criticism, such as Eve Tuck and C. Ree's "Glossary of Haunting" and Celine Parreñas Shimizu's *The Hypersexuality of Race*. See also Nash, *Black Body in Ecstasy*; and Miller-Young, *Taste for Brown Sugar*.
70 The adjective "ethnic-nonethnic" is a reversal of "nonethnic ethnic," a phrase I take from Phil Rosenthal's *You're Lucky You're Funny* (85) and also reproduce, in reference to network mandates for sitcom success, as "nonethnic-ethnic." This is a way of speaking of inside-outsider dynamics, in a context where "race's eroticism is often linked to its hyperbolic absurdity, and . . . racial fictions can be . . . comical even as they are also painful" (Nash, 127).

1. SITCOM HISTORY

1 *The Martha Raye Show*, NBC, September 28, 1954, written and directed by Ed Simmons and Norman Lear, UCLA Film and Television Archive.
2 Alvey, "Independents," 141, 145.
3 Scott, "From Blackface to *Beulah*."
4 *Yoo-Hoo, Mrs. Goldberg*, by Aviva Kempner and Judith Herbert, Ciesla Foundation (2009).
5 Lipsitz, *Time Passages*, chapter 3; Spigel, *Make Room for TV*, 147. Joy Elizabeth Hayes, building on Michelle Hilmes's research, shows that a similar and related assimilation cycle had played out already in radio as program production moved to Hollywood (99).
6 Gilbert had previously starred alongside Phillip Reed in the five-minutes, five-nights-a-week, single-camera, split-screen sitcom titled *Ruthie on the Telephone*, written by Goodman Ace, CBS, August–November, 1949.
7 *My Friend Irma*, January 29, 1952, CBS, UCLA Film and Television Archive.
8 On the ideological construction of supposed firsts, see McCarthy, "Ellen."
9 I adopt the term "nonethnic-ethnic" from Rosenthal's *You're Lucky You're Funny*, a memoir including an explanation of how, in the case of *Everybody Loves Raymond*, a 1996–2005 sitcom, Italian identity and Jewish identity that