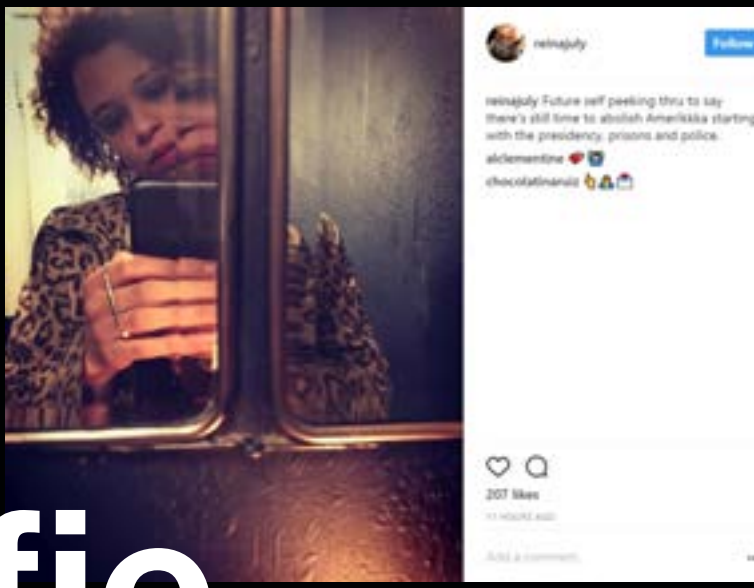

Selfie Aesthetics

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Seeing Trans Feminist Futures
in Self-Representational Art

Nicole Erin Morse

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Contents

In a pool of water we could find or lose ourselves. Our reflections look back at us. And beneath the reflective surface are the dark and unknowable depths of the water. In the myth of Narcissus, the young man does not recognize himself and, as a result, wastes away by the pool desperately in love with this being he found in the waters. Today, this myth seems to be inescapably present, referenced in countless conversations about selfies—these ubiquitous and ephemeral digital self-portraits.

Yet in some ways it's surprising that this myth has become such a prominent allegory for selfie culture, since there are in fact stark distinctions between Narcissus and selfie creators.[1] Narcissus doesn't recognize his own image, discovered by chance, while selfie creators knowingly craft self-representation. The myth describes a closed loop between Narcissus and his reflection, unaware that they are being observed by the helpless Echo. This solipsistic circuit between self and image seems to exclude all others. By contrast, selfies are often created to be shared. The problem isn't just that the Narcissus myth doesn't accurately capture how selfies connect creators and viewers; because the myth links selfies to narcissism, it also metonymically connects selfies with negative conceptions of effeminacy, queerness, and femininity. I suggest that the myth of Narcissus beside the pool falls short of describing, allegorically, the context, situation, and social relations at the heart of selfie production and selfie viewership. Rather than shoring up and preserving an agential, autonomous, and even narcissistic self, I argue selfies can make us vulnerable to others and impose ethical demands on us.

To better understand what selfies can say, as well as how their meanings are constructed through collaborations between creators and viewers, I suggest that we begin by turning to a different story about a reflection seen by chance. Recall how Frankenstein's monster encounters their image in the pool of water near the woods by the cottage they have begun to see as their desired community. Unlike Narcissus, the monster is self-aware, quickly rec-

ognizing that this image is their own reflection. They muse upon this image and what it means for their interactions with others. For the monster, this moment of self-recognition is also the beginning of a project of self-fashioning, as they consider what they must do to counteract the fear that they worry they will inspire in others. In this case, what matters is not just the monster's relation to themself, but, crucially, how they will be looked at and seen by others. The monster tells us: "I had admired the perfect forms of my cottagers—their grace, beauty, and delicate complexions; but how was I terrified when I viewed myself in a transparent pool! At first I started back, unable to believe that it was indeed I who was reflected in the mirror; and when I became fully convinced that I was in reality the monster that I am, I was filled with the bitterest sensations of despondence and mortification."[2] For the monster, this encounter with reflection isn't a closed loop, cut off from society, self-knowledge, and the flow of time. Instead, it is a devastating instant of intense self-awareness and comparison of self to other, an experience that inspires their efforts to master human language in the hopes of connecting with others, despite their frightening appearance. As readers, we are invited to sympathize with the monster's tragic fate. However, we are never explicitly asked to imagine any outcome in which those others might be asked—or might become able—to see the monster with compassion and solidarity.

I don't think either of these tales captures what I want to know about selfies, but they do encapsulate how selfies are frequently understood. Narrated through the Narcissus myth, self-imaging is implicitly punished with death, and even outside of this particular mythicization, selfies are routinely dismissed and stigmatized as frivolous, dangerous, and abhorrent. Meanwhile, *Frankenstein* explores how self-imaging is connected to self-knowledge, but the encounter is charged with pain because of the potential and actual attitudes of others. Despite the empirical popularity of selfies, which suggests that many people love taking and looking at selfies, cultural attitudes toward selfies are fraught with judgment and anxiety.[3] When I have shared that I am writing a book about selfies, many people tell me that they simply don't take selfies because they can't handle their own negative judgments of their appearance. For those who do take selfies, there's often social pressure to express embarrassment and deny pleasure, especially in the face of negative comments from others. Meanwhile, some people claim proudly that they don't take selfies and then show me their camera rolls to prove it—but their phones are full of images of themselves (and often their children) that they captured with front-facing smartphone cameras. Somehow these private

family portraits don't quite feel like selfies to them, perhaps because selfies are assumed to be solitary and starkly exhibitionist. Even more emphatically, many people are insistent that they are annoyed, and even disgusted, by encountering selfies taken by others. In these anecdotal accounts, seeing others' selfies is almost more disturbing than taking selfies. Selfies—and people's responses to them—are profoundly shaped by the fact that selfies are associated with narcissism and, by extension, with effeminacy and femininity.[4]

The stories we tell about selfies reinforce that there is something feminized, embarrassing, and even repulsive about the entire process of taking, sharing, and seeing selfies. Pro-selfie responses to the dominant discourse, however, often preserve the Narcissus myth while simply refusing the negative connotations associated with narcissism. For example, the media scholar Greg Goldberg draws on queer negativity to suggest that selfie narcissism offers an opportunity to interrogate and reject queerphobia.[5] Meanwhile, feminist selfie scholarship has tended to focus on selfies by young, cisgender white women, frequently arguing that these selfie creators perform critical political work through embracing narcissism. This reversal isn't fully satisfying to me, however. For one, it sidesteps the very real problems of narcissism as a psychological disorder, involving "an impaired ability to recognize the feelings and needs of others and pathological personality traits like antagonism, grandiosity and attention seeking."[6] More important, it pretends that the issue is whether narcissism is good or bad and, as a result, avoids examining the larger context in which people with power wield the charge of selfie narcissism against those with less power, especially those who are feminized (e.g., young people, women, and queer and trans people). As Katrin Tiidenberg argues, the "moral panic" about selfie narcissism is actually a strategic response by privileged groups "worried about the stability of their privilege."[7] Ultimately, what feminist selfie scholars seem to value isn't narcissism per se but, rather, self-esteem or self-love.[8] And it isn't just cis women who find self-love in selfies; many trans women have told me that the practice of taking selfies is a critical part of their experience of becoming who they want to be and coming to love the person they see.

However, a narrative of self-empowerment is neither the beginning nor the end of the story, because when selfies are shared, they are addressed to audiences. In the Narcissus myth and in Shelley's *Frankenstein*, we get glimpses of these audiences—the lovelorn nymph Echo, for example, or the community that Frankenstein's monster wanted to join. Strikingly, however, when the Narcissus myth is used to understand selfies, Echo is never discussed, although she is there as a silent witness, beside the pool. And as I

mentioned earlier, my alternative mythmaking through *Frankenstein* captures only the tragedy that those around the monster will never see beyond the surface. Selfies, however, are not just self-contained images; like photographs, they are also networks of social relations.[9] As such, selfies pose questions to their viewers about how we are going to participate in this encounter with others, with the image, and with technology. These questions have particular urgency for feminists, since selfies seem to provoke cultural fears and anxieties about femininized forms of self-authorship. I approach these questions as a trans feminist, which I use to describe a political orientation that commits me to work toward gender liberation in dialogue with an ethics of self-transformation.[10]

As viewers of selfies, our commitments shape what we see in selfies. Ultimately, neither Narcissus by the pool nor the monster's direct testimony from Mary Shelley's nineteenth-century novel can offer a trans feminist account of what self-representation demands of and offers to viewers. Therefore, I turn to a twentieth-century text: Susan Stryker's performance piece and manifesto "My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage." Stryker is a transgender historian and a member of the direct-action group Transgender Nation. When she first performed this piece, she had just participated in a protest of medical and psychiatric gatekeeping, the kind of gatekeeping that prevents all but the most conventionally attractive heterosexual trans women from transitioning. As she describes it, she stood onstage in ripped jeans and a black lace bodysuit, with "a six-inch long marlin hook dangling around my neck on a length of heavy stainless steel chain."[11] With her leather jacket emblazoned with messages from "dyke" to "fuck your transphobia," Stryker self-consciously constructed an image that was as far as possible from what medical gatekeepers would consider acceptable transgender femininity.[12] This is how her monologue begins:

> The transsexual body is an unnatural body. It is the product of medical science. It is a technological construction. It is flesh torn apart and sewn together again in a shape other than that in which it was born. In these circumstances, I find a deep affinity between myself as a transsexual woman and the monster in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Like the monster, I am too often perceived as less than fully human due to the means of my embodiment; like the monster's as well, my exclusion from human community fuels a deep and abiding rage in me that I, like the monster, direct against the conditions in which I must struggle to exist.[13]

Stryker notes that she is not the only person to see transgender people as analogous to Frankenstein's monster; nor is she the first person to identify the natural-and-unnatural binary as one that trans people (among others) destabilize. Cisgender scholars such as Mary Daly and Janice Raymond have also described trans people—especially trans women—as scientifically and technologically constructed monstrosities. The difference is that Daly and Raymond compare trans women to Frankenstein's monster to dehumanize them, while Stryker reclaims monstrosity. Like the monster, Stryker is profoundly aware that others recoil from her because they fear what they consider unnatural, but she has moved beyond the terror of that first encounter with her reflection—with the image of how (some) others see her. Describing the vitriol some cisgender lesbians direct toward trans women, Stryker says: "When such beings as these tell me I war with nature, I find no more reason to mourn my opposition to them—or to the order they claim to represent—than Frankenstein's monster felt in its enmity to the human race. I do not fall from the grace of their company—I roar gleefully away from it like a Harley-straddling, dildo-packing leatherdyke from hell."[14]

Stryker's determination to embrace "unnatural" ways of being and becoming provides a model for rethinking selfies beyond the usual criticisms that they are artificial, superficial, narcissistic, and fake and therefore harmful. There is an echo here of Donna Haraway's famous "A Cyborg Manifesto."[15] Like Haraway, Stryker doesn't suggest that we must replace technophobia with optimistic technological determinism; instead, she calls us to attend to technological *facilitation*. Just as Stryker's performance, costume, and vivid self-description alienate her critics while they solicit identification and desire from those who would align themselves with her, selfies are tools that can forge relations of many kinds. Photographs of our faces don't simply replace "natural" ways of interacting with a technologically determined posthumanism. Instead, they are among many technics that can be used as tools for being, becoming, and relating. Crucially, they depend on viewers, audiences, and addressees.

By focusing on how we see selfies I am not simply suggesting that looking at selfies strengthens our relationships to others and is therefore a purely positive experience. Quite the contrary. In Emmanuel Levinas's ethics of the face-to-face encounter, the intersubjective relation is far more complex: "The other impacts me unlike any worldly object or force."[16] Images, too, as Hagi Kenaan argues, are not mere objects to be read but, rather, exceed a relationality based on subject and object. In Kenaan's words, the "image's face [is] the mark, the trace—apropos Levinas—of the uncontainable."[17] The face is not

just there to be read, to connect us to others, and to reassure us that we are not alone. It carries with it an ethical demand.

If as images selfies can convey a mark of alterity, a trace of the uncontainable, and an ethical demand, then I contend that every account of selfies that imagines them through the scene of Narcissus beside the pool falls far short of understanding their true potential. Simultaneously, every account of selfies that describes them as a purely positive tool of self-empowerment is also inevitably lacking. Neither of these stories about selfies grapples with the fact that selfies express *and create* complicated relationships to the self and to others; furthermore, neither of these stories helps us understand what it means that selfies are designed to be shared and seen—which makes us vulnerable to the eyes, assessments, manipulations, and solidarity of others. Instead, the true possibilities of selfies become clear only when we examine them through the story of the reflection in the pool seen by Frankenstein's monster—by reading Frankenstein's monster through Stryker's monologue. This reveals an alternative mythology for selfies in which self-representation produces the self as relational, resistant, fragmented, and collectively created. In this story about self-representation, the audience not only participates in constructing meaning through interpreting the text. We are also asked to examine our commitments and understand what these commitments mean about ourselves. By doing so, we can start to understand images not only as conveying *what once was* but also as encounters with liberatory futures. Through reading signs hinting at *what could be* out of something that exists right here, we can start to imagine the path from where we are to what we want to bring forth. As Tina M. Campt defines it, these encounters with the futurity of images involve bringing into being "that which is not, but must be" by "living in the future *now*."[18]

Toward the end of "My Words to Victor Frankenstein," Stryker creates her own poetic account of monstrous self-transformation through her evocative description of moving through water—perhaps the water of the pool in which the monster finds their reflection. The poem explores how drowning in deep waters can serve as a metaphor for Stryker's experiences of being at "war with nature." She describes struggling to swim toward the surface, finding that each time she thinks she is breaking through the waves she finds yet more water. She writes:

> This water annihilates me. I cannot be, and yet—an excruciating impossibility—I am.
> I will do anything not to be here.

I will swim forever.
I will die for eternity.
I will learn to breathe water.
I will become the water.
If I cannot change my situation I will change myself.[19]

Reading transition as movement through water offers new ways of understanding the mythic origin scene of self-imaging. Instead of Narcissus's frozen isolation before his own static reflected image, movement through water attunes us to the ripple effects that expand outward from reflection. Amid capitalist seizure of natural resources and anthropogenic climate change, water connotes the politics of exploitation, materiality, and embodiment. As the After Globalism Writing Group describes, water "stands as the symbol and vehicle for inequality, vulnerability, racism, labor, land-based relationality, and capitalist infrastructure."[20] Simultaneously, however, "Water is both common and in the commons, inside and outside of us—in the rain and the clouds, in the rivers and the seas. Water is the great mediator and equalizer, around which cities grow and nations often form their borders, but it is also where empires crumble and pleasure domes collapse. Water levels."[21] If movement through water is a metaphor for self-transformation, then gender transition must be understood as a powerful force that has the potential to break through barriers, undermine empire, propel cultural transformation, and support human and nonhuman flourishing. In Dora Silva Santana's work, water is a metaphor for the embodied materiality of trans experience, particularly her experience as a Black trans woman from Brazil.[22] According to Santana, movement across water recalls the transatlantic crossing of the Middle Passage and represents the material labor of "resisting systematic oppression through embodied knowledge."[23]

Stryker's performance piece allegorizes transition as movement through water to offer a metaphorical mirror as she invites her audience to understand this experience as a reflection of their own—to see themselves with Stryker as reflections of the monster. Gesturing toward the nineteenth-century novel, Stryker writes that, "by using the dark, watery images of Romanticism . . . I employ the same literary techniques Mary Shelley used to elicit sympathy for her scientist's creation."[24] Like the monster, Stryker *and all those allied with her* refuse the laws of nature that would confine us, "for we have done the hard work of constituting ourselves on our own terms, against the natural order." She concludes with a benediction and an invitation that functions as a manifesto:

> Though we forego the privilege of naturalness, we are not deterred, for we ally ourselves instead with the chaos and blackness from which Nature itself spills forth.
>
> If this is your path, as it is mine, let me offer whatever solace you may find in this monstrous benediction: May you discover the enlivening power of darkness within yourself. May it nourish your rage. May your rage inform your actions, and your actions transform you as you struggle to transform your world.[25]

From Narcissus to Shelley's novel to Stryker's performance piece, the figure beside the pool is never isolated. Instead, the scene of self-recognition/representation is deeply implicated in complicated, painful, and powerful encounters with others. Plunging into the waters described in Stryker's version of Frankenstein's monster, I want to tell a story of selfies that strays far from how they are popularly understood. Like Stryker reclaiming monstrosity, selfies embrace the unpredictable, unnatural, and technological construction of the self. Selfies emerge from a relay of reflections produced by cameras, computers, social media platforms, and creative collaboration with others through online networks. Here, the reflection in the pool is not limited to the surface but extends downward into the digital depths in a mise en abyme of images, data, code, creators, and—of course—the viewers to whom these images address themselves: those of us who see selfies.

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Introduction

Selfies are usually assumed to make a simple and individualistic claim: "I am." Sometimes, if the background or location of a selfie is sufficiently interesting, the message might expand to "I am here." In both cases, selfie creators are the ones imagined as speaking—they are the ones saying "I am" or "I am here." However, they don't speak in isolation. In this book, I am interested in how selfies interpellate *viewers*, and in how viewers might respond to selfies. As the trans cinema studies scholar Eliza Steinbock writes, building on Paul Frosh's research, selfies express an intersubjective, mutual act of recognition: "I see you showing me you."[1] This phrase doesn't only track a relation taking place in time; in this formulation, the first-person singular pronoun is spoken not by the selfie creator but, instead, by the selfie viewer. *Selfie Aesthetics: Seeing Trans Feminist Futures in Self-Representational Art* follows this move away from understanding selfies as symbols of narcissism to pay close attention to how selfie viewers can read the formal structures of specific images. By doing so, I argue that formal strategies common within selfies and self-representational art—what I call "selfie aesthetics"—provide a foundation for politically committed interpretations that contribute to our ability to imagine and work toward trans feminist futures.

Through formal analysis, *Selfie Aesthetics* reads work by trans feminine artists and activists to interrogate key insights of queer theory, expand our understanding of self-representation, and construct collective and collaborative modes of being. Analyzing the formal strategies used by trans feminine creators in digital self-representational art challenges a set of intersecting beliefs that can interfere with our ability to see the political force of their work. These beliefs include the assumption that femininized cultural production is frivolous, the idea that transgender existence emblematizes postmodern fluidity, and the conviction that ephemeral digital images are unbound to materiality. Against these fantasies of immateriality, I argue that selfie aesthetics are formal strategies that invite us into collaborative spectatorial encounters

with self-representational art and that these spectatorial relationships have political potentiality. These formal strategies include the visual rhetoric of doubling, the seriality of selfies, their openness to collaborative improvisation, and their nonlinear temporalities.

In this book, I use close reading to demonstrate the transformative possibilities of careful acts of viewing. These possibilities aren't limited to formal analysis; indeed, ethnographic selfie research points to these possibilities in selfie viewership, as when one of Katrin Tiidenberg's research subjects describes how engaging with selfies "alters what they [selfie viewers] consider beautiful," providing ways of seeing that challenge dominant ideas of beauty.[2] But *Selfie Aesthetics* is not a qualitative study of what selfie viewers are currently doing and experiencing. Instead, it's a call to dwell with images that viewers typically only glance at, in passing, amid the endless scroll of social media timelines and newsfeeds. Inspired by Ariella Azoulay's politicized call to "watch" images and Tina M. Campt's method of "listening" to images, I propose that "seeing" selfies can be a practice of closely reading these ephemeral images for the futures they might make possible.[3]

To be blunt, I love looking at selfies. (I like taking them, too, but I see far more selfies in my social media feeds each day than I could ever take.) In the trans and queer digital spaces I inhabit, selfies often function as gifts, and seeing selfies is a privilege and a pleasure. At the same time, the social relations made possible by selfies exceed just this experience of joy or delight. I first became interested in studying selfies when I noticed how the trans activist Zinnia Jones used them: not only did she have a recognizable aesthetic, which allowed her to use selfies creatively to explore multiple facets of her identity, but she also used selfies strategically to fight back against the persistent transmisogynistic online harassment she faced, harassment that was explicitly intended to shame her for taking selfies. I wasn't the only one noticing this—many of Jones's online followers were seeing these resistant, critical, and liberatory possibilities in her selfies. At the same time, many others refused to see Jones's selfies as anything other than a manifestation of their worst prejudices against trans women. Jones isn't alone in negotiating this dichotomy. Trans women and trans feminine people often describe how their selfies increase their risk of online harassment and other forms of violence. A significant portion of this harassment is clearly an expression of what Julia Serano has called "femmephobia," or hatred of femininity and those who are feminine.[4] Yet at the same time, selfies connect trans women and trans feminine people to community support and to expressions of love and solidarity, as in the digital spaces I described. What changes isn't the image itself, its con-

tent, or its denotation. The image itself doesn't entirely control how it is interpreted; the viewer—and their biases, fears, allegiances, and commitments—is critical to producing the image's meaning.

Like much of visual culture, selfies are polysemic and ambivalent, and they make meaning within the affordances, social relations, and technologies of photographic mass media. As Azoulay writes in *The Civil Contract of Photography*, photography offers an opportunity that comes with responsibility: "To see more than they could alone, individuals had to align themselves with other individuals who would agree to share their visual field with one another."[5] Each image is more than just an image; as a node within networks of social relations, it offers the opportunity to examine ourselves and our commitments and to align ourselves with others. Who am I when I look at selfies? I am a white genderqueer Jewish person, scholar, and organizer who believes that my liberation is bound up with trans and Black liberation. I am also a person who loves close analysis because creators, images, and viewers can collaborate to make meaning through the practice and method of looking closely. From this position, I turn to trans feminist theory and trans of color critique to understand how I—and how people with similar commitments—can look at selfies differently to see trans feminist futures in self-representational art.

Like all feminisms, trans feminism has many definitions, but there are several specific advantages that trans feminism offers selfie viewers in negotiating the ambivalent and nuanced relationship among selfies, narcissism, femininity, and femmephobia. Trans feminism counters the tendency within some feminist communities to entirely reject femininity, and at the same time, trans feminism challenges the social and legal pressures that demand that trans women embrace a form of hyperfemininity to be legible as women.[6] Trans feminism explicitly prioritizes knowledge production by trans people, turning attention away from the expert analyzing trans people to the forms of knowledge trans people themselves produce—including selfies and other forms of self-representational art.[7] Trans feminism centers trans women and trans feminine people (without excluding trans masculine people, trans men, nonbinary and genderqueer people, or cisgender people) to grapple with the compromised choices that are required of both transgender and cisgender people as we navigate systemic oppressions and structural inequalities that are founded on femmephobia. Talia Mae Bettcher writes that trans feminism offers "an account of trans oppression out of which the category woman can rise as a resistant option," one that "opens up clear possibilities for understanding the intersections of trans, intersex, and sexist op-

pressions."[8] In "The Transfeminist Manifesto," Emi Koyama provides a capacious definition of trans feminism that emphasizes solidarity, writing that trans feminism is a movement for trans women and those who "consider their alliance with trans women to be essential for their own liberation."[9] In Koyama's work, trans women's liberation is tied to disability justice, sex workers' rights, and anticolonial prison-abolition politics.[10] Following elders of the trans liberation movement such as Miss Major Griffin-Gracy, Jian Neo Chen writes that the term *trans* "describe[s] and bring[s] together those who share experiences and (otherwise undocumented) histories of devaluation by—and resistance against—gender policing, racism, and enforced poverty."[11] *Trans* crosses over and connects, building alliances. Understood in a trans feminist context, selfie aesthetics are shaped by the connection between creators and audiences, a connection constructed through images *and* how those images are read, interpreted, and seen.

It should already be becoming clear that *selfie* means much more than "an image of the self, captured with a digital camera." Etymologically, the term itself first appeared in the late 1990s, when selfies emerged alongside the development and proliferation of camera phones.[12] As Tiidenberg notes, the diminutive "-ie" carries negative, feminized connotations in US and British English, but the term likely first arose in Australia, where the "-ie" ending implies "something endearingly self-aware of its own mundaneness."[13] By the time *selfie* was declared Oxford Dictionaries' 2013 Word of the Year, the neologism had become ubiquitous, even though it is applied widely—and inconsistently—to a variety of images, not all of which are even recognizable as self-portraits.[14] According to Katie Warfield, "The selfie is a mirror, and a camera, and a stage or billboard all at once."[15] As a result of her wide-ranging selfie research, Tiidenberg describes selfies as "expressive acts; photographic objects; cultural practices; gestures; means for communicating and understanding ourselves; tools for reclaiming our sexuality, experiencing our bodies or performing particular versions of ourselves; addictive practices that lead to, or amplify psychopathy; tools for gaining visibility," and more.[16] As relational aesthetic practices, selfies tend to involve networked interactivity, extending from consumption-based "liking" to more participatory practices of selfie exchange, modification, and recirculation—but they can also be stored privately to be shared with no one, unless a privacy breach exposes them.[17] "Selfie" is also used to describe images from well before the advent of digital photography, particularly images that show people taking photographs of themselves; it is used to describe images that are not self-representational (e.g., French fries tagged #selfie on Instagram); it is used

to describe images that include multiple people (even though some refer to such images as "usies" and "groupies," these terms have not really caught on); and, finally, it is frequently used to describe images that are clearly *not* produced by the subject of the photograph but that still seem to capture the subject's authorship or agency.[18]

Selfies are varied, diverse, dispersed, and ubiquitous, but the very fact that so many different representational practices are called "selfies" suggests that there are aesthetic similarities or properties that unite these images—commonalities that viewers recognize. As I argue, these commonalities include doubling, seriality, improvisation, and nonlinear time, all of which constitute selfie aesthetics. While these four strategies are exemplified within the work I examine here, I contend that they can be used to understand selfies and self-representational art more broadly, including work by creators who are not trans feminine. The approach outlined here can and should be used to engage with self-representational works by a wide range of trans and queer people, as well as straight, cisgender people. After all, allies and accomplices can and should take up trans feminist politics.[19] Nonetheless, I have chosen to focus on work by trans feminine creators who are themselves committed to politics that are explicitly or implicitly trans feminist. I believe that it is critical to center trans women and trans feminine people to understand the varied perspectives they offer on their material conditions—that is, if we are going to learn to see trans feminist futures through their art. Of course, trans feminine identity doesn't automatically produce trans feminist politics. I have thus selected the artists and creators featured in this book because of the particular ways they use digital self-representation; their distinct experiences and perspectives; and the aesthetic, political, and theoretical richness of their work.

This introduction opened with Steinbock's claim that selfies articulate an intersubjective encounter: "I see you showing me you." Intersubjectivity is prominent within selfie scholarship, and "What do selfies say?" has been a central question, perhaps most notably in "What Does the Selfie Say? Investigating a Global Phenomenon," Theresa M. Senft and Nancy K. Baym's introduction to the *International Journal of Communication*'s 2015 special issue on selfies. Framing selfies this way assumes that selfies are addressed to audiences—that selfies are not just about selves, but also about selfie viewers. Opening with a section titled "Against Pathology," Senft and Baym write that, far from narcissistic isolation, selfies are concerned with "the transmission of human feeling in the form of a relationship."[20] Crucially, this relationality is not necessarily positive; nor does it determine how viewers engage with

selfies. If selfies are relational, then what selfies say depends, in part, on who understands themselves to be addressed by a particular selfie and how they interpret its message. We bring our own perspectives, histories, and desires to intersubjective encounters. By accepting the address and participating in a communicative situation, the audience contributes to its meaning. How we engage with selfies is the larger question of this book, and to explore it, it's necessary to examine broader questions of how self-representation invites and structures relationships between selves and others.

Intersubjectivity

Self-representation has always been about more than just self-assertion. I find a particularly compelling account of how self-representation articulates reciprocal intersubjectivity in *At Least You Know You Exist* (2011). This self-representational film about trans feminist solidarity was made by the trans multimedia artist Zackary Drucker in collaboration with New York City's longtime drag pageant organizer and performer Flawless Sabrina. Working in photography, video, television, and performance art, Drucker creates self-representational work that explores doubling and intergenerational mirroring, and her work with trans icons such as Flawless Sabrina, Holly Woodlawn, and Vaginal Davis documents and explores trans feminine history. Drucker and Flawless Sabrina's experimental film opens with flashes of pink, orange, and red as the colorful fluidity of an overexposed tail of the reel of film is framed by the soft, rounded corners of the 4:3 frame. Then the whir of the projector halts with a click, the rounded edges disappear, and the screen expands to 16:9 as it displays the bright yellow letters of the digital title card, with its second-person address affirming the fact of the addressee's being: *At Least You Know You Exist*. In the film that follows, the two filmmakers explore their relationship through an imperfect digital transfer of a 16 mm original. Because the frame rates of the 16 mm original and the digital transfer differ, Drucker and Flawless Sabrina are trailed by a ghostly halo of their own reflected light, producing an auratic image that speaks to the role of history in self-knowledge—a self-knowledge that is inseparable from the encounter with the face of the other. In a pivotal sequence, the camera advances progressively closer to Flawless Sabrina, cutting from a wide shot to a medium shot and, finally, to a close-up, as Drucker describes their first encounter in voiceover. She says: "I was eighteen when I met you on the other side of my camera." Mediated by the camera they turn on each other, they reflect each other across generations and across time. In the final sequences they appear

Figure I.1 *At Least You Know You Exist*, directed by Zackary Drucker and Flawless Sabrina, 2011. Screen grab by the author.

on-screen together, doubling each other. As Drucker leans her head against Flawless Sabrina's (figure I.1), the audio track fills with the sound of a loudly ticking clock that abruptly stops. Then Drucker speaks the final line of the film in voice-over. "Because of you," she says, "I know that I exist." In Drucker's voice-over, identity is intersubjective rather than individualistic, as her language shifts fluidly from second-person to first-person pronouns—from "at least you know you exist" to "because of you, I know that I exist."

Such linguistic play connects Drucker and Flawless Sabrina's film to a longer tradition of using formal strategies to produce intersubjective encounters within self-representational art. This tradition is strikingly evident in photographic and literary collaborations by the surrealist artists Claude Cahun (Lucy Renee Mathilde Schwob [1894–1954]) and Marcel Moore (Suzanne Alberte Malherbe [1892–1972]). Photographs by these two queer lovers are often described as a kind of precursor to selfies, making their body of work a rich prehistory for my project. In the semiautobiographical text *Les jeux uraniens* (1914–15), Cahun describes a scene of magical mirror substitution in which her reflection dissolves into the image of her lover and artistic partner,

Moore. "You come up behind me," Cahun writes, addressing the reader and, presumably, Moore in the second-person pronoun. "You lean over my shoulder, suddenly, the cloud of your breath condenses on the tarnished glass, and when the round cloud has evaporated, your image has replaced mine."[21] About fifteen years later, Cahun and Moore continued exploring representation as a kind of boundary-blurring exchange. In *Aveux non avenus* (1930), they move from first-person plural to first-person singular, writing: "Sweet, nevertheless . . . the moment when our two heads leaned together over a photograph (ah! How our hair would meld indistinguishably.) Portrait of one or the other, our two narcissisms drowning there it was the impossible realized in a magic mirror. The exchange, the superimposition, the fusion of desires. . . . Postscriptum: At present I exist otherwise."[22]

Self and other coincide not only in Cahun and Moore's play with pronouns, but also in the way their language evokes formal visual effects such as eye-line matches and superimposition—formal strategies that they employ in their photography. Throughout their body of work, Cahun and Moore document their collaborative partnership through double exposures, superimposition, and reversals (compositions shot first with one artist and then the other as the subject). In one of their best-known photographic collaborations, Cahun looks into the lens of the camera while she is simultaneously doubled in the mirror (figure I.2). The mirror reflects Cahun, but the two images of Cahun are distinct; Cahun's eyes at once draw us into the image and turn our attention to the unseen off frame right. What the image doesn't tell us explicitly is that her look into the lens is directed not only toward the camera and the eventual viewer, but also almost certainly toward the photographer: Moore. In Cahun and Moore's work, photography is not simply a record of a collaboration. It is a technology that makes possible an intersubjective experience—the experience of looking at oneself and another simultaneously.[23] The two artists continue exploring intersubjectivity in Cahun's *Vues et visions* (1914), which is illustrated by Moore and features the following dedication: "'To Marcel Moore' I dedicate this puerile prose to you so that the entire book will belong to you and this way your designs may redeem my text in our eyes."[24] As the two artists become one, and as the balance between "you" and "me" is resolved into "we," the dedication ends by invoking the look—*our eyes*. In their photography, an exchange of looks is captured by the camera; as viewers, we are then invited to share that look, so that "our eyes" means the looks of Cahun, Moore, *and* their audiences.

Understanding Cahun and Moore's work as "self-portraiture" makes it more available as a prehistory of selfies, but it also poses several problems

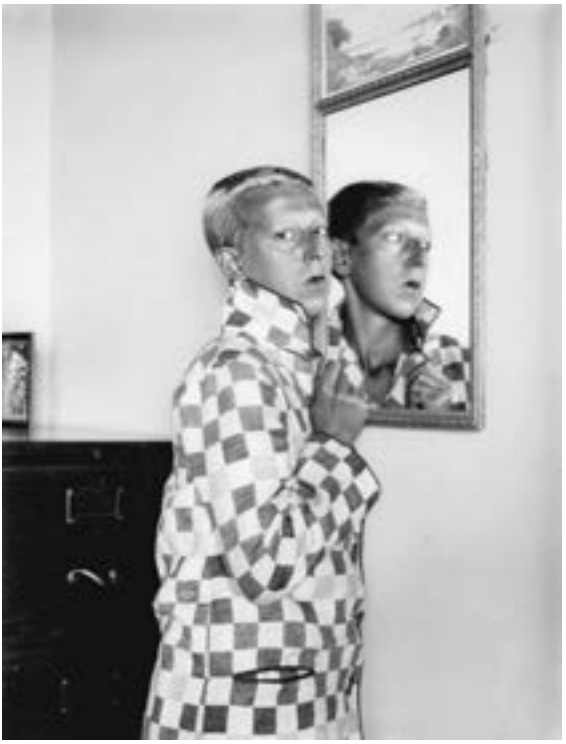

Figure I.2 *Self-Portrait*, by Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore, ca. 1928. Used with permission of New Jersey Heritage Trust.

that can be used productively to explore self-portraiture's intersubjectivity. As Tirza True Latimer argues, perhaps the photographs of Cahun—almost all of which have been posthumously titled "Self-Portrait"—should, in fact, be understood not as self-portraits but as collaborative performances instead, since they were created with Moore. Through close analysis, Latimer identifies what she describes as formal "statements of or about Moore's participation in the creative process within the work itself."[25] Undoubtedly, calling Cahun and Moore's work "self-portraiture" reinforces the idea that the individual artistic genius must be identified as the single origin of art, and its persistence in discourse about Cahun and Moore's work also undoubtedly elides or denies their queer relationship.[26] Nonetheless, referring to these images as "self-portraiture" does open up alternative ways of understanding selfhood and self-representation. Instead of asking whether their work is in fact self-portraiture, I want to ask *what is made possible* by describing their collaborative photography *as self-portraits*. If Cahun and Moore's work is self-portraiture, then the selves that emerge from their photography are social, relational, intersubjective, and collaborative.

In fact, such collaborative, relational selves are consistent with a tradition in art historical criticism that contends that intersubjectivity rather than individuality is central to self-portraiture. For Michael Fried, self-portraiture is shaped by the "right-angle dispositif," a recurring pose in which the artist seems to look back over the right shoulder toward the viewer. In this pose, the artist's hand often disappears from view because it wasn't reflected in the mirror that made the self-portrait possible.[27] Though Fried focuses on the production process, Joseph Leo Koerner writes that this hand we can't see implicitly intrudes into the space we occupy.[28] Koerner doesn't ask whether the disappearing hand that held the paintbrush might be metaphorically painting the viewer, but other scholarship suggests such an interpretation. For James Hall, the look back transforms self-portraits into mirror reflections, conflating the positions of the viewer and the artist before the image.[29] According to Anthony Bond, the look back means that we lock eyes with the artist, repeating the exchange of looks that created the painting. We are not only connected to the artist through the look back; formal strategies make our space contiguous with the space of the painting, including unfinished lower edges, elements that seem to spill outside of the painting plane, or scenes staged to produce a space or a character for us to inhabit.[30] Like Bond, T. J. Clark says that the viewer's position is that of both the artist and the mirror.[31] Elsewhere, Koerner concurs that we are placed either in the position of the painter or the painter's reflection.[32]

Here, "self-portraiture" is fundamentally characterized by the triangulated look exchanged among the viewer, the artist, and the painting/mirror, a look that is dispersed across decades and even centuries. Of course, formal analysis of self-portraits often identifies compositional strategies that assert individual authorship; however, as I detail here, scholars have been as interested in how reception produces intimate intersubjective bonds between the artist/subject and the viewer. Many of these theories don't grapple with gender, even as they explore the possibilities of seeing ourselves as mirrors of others; as John Berger pointed out in *Ways of Seeing*, misogyny has long transformed formal strategies such as mirroring, reflection, and other modes of doubling into evidence of female narcissism, giving male spectators a sense of stable subjecthood in relation to representations of women.[33] Yet ultimately, self-portraiture scholarship actually describes ways of looking that challenge—and even undo—the presumptively male spectator's secure position as a subject in relation to an object, producing intersubjective relationships through form. As contemporary iterations of self-portraiture, selfies similarly construct the self through engagement with others, and formal

analysis reveals how these relationships are represented and produced.[34] Selfies aren't limited to the reflexive relationship to the self, a solipsistic encounter that excludes all others. Instead, selfies—and the mirror reflections they stage—foster relationships between self and other through their very form.

Form

I turn to formal analysis for multiple reasons. First, the method of formal analysis directly challenges the assertion that most selfies aren't worth studying closely because they aren't "art," and it excavates the formal richness that is available within ordinary selfies. Second, it prioritizes the material, the tactile, and the specific, elements that all too frequently are elided in theories about both digital media and trans identity. Taken together, formal analysis of selfies by trans women and trans feminine people explores how ephemeral media can document—and work to transform—the material conditions that trans feminine people face, providing a foundation to build from the present to a trans feminist future.

By blurring the boundary between artistic selfies and vernacular selfies, *Selfie Aesthetics* rejects gatekeeping structures that try to legitimate certain artistic practices by distinguishing them from feminized cultural work. There's a strong suggestion of anxiety in some of these gatekeeping efforts. For example, the #artselfie project collects only selfies taken near classical artworks; the creator of the Museum of Selfies notes the "emptiness" of selfies while hoping that the project will offer "a deeper way in"; and an exhibition of selfies in London was organized around the principle that artistic intention is required if selfies are to be considered art.[35] These efforts seem to be shaped by a commitment to maintain the power of individual artistic genius, a tradition that has a distinctly patriarchal flavor, yet feminist artists and critics also at times have tried to differentiate between artistic selfies and vernacular selfies. In addition to Cahun and Moore, the feminist photographers Cindy Sherman and Nan Goldin have been described as artists who "made taking selfies an art form before the word even existed."[36] For Sherman, selfies are a natural extension of her long-standing work in self-performance, and her Instagram account has been received as one of the few instances in which selfies achieve the status of art.[37] Audrey Wollen and Melanie Bonajo explore selfies as art by rejecting those qualities of selfies that are strongly associated with their vernacular use, such as their polished self-presentation and positivity, creating what Bonajo calls "anti-selfies."[38] In *Selfie Aesthetics*, I move deliberately between amateur selfies and works that are more readily recognizable as art

precisely because juxtaposing these practices demonstrates the theoretical, political, and aesthetic contributions of ordinary and accessible media.

Formal analysis allows us to better understand how form shapes the experience of seeing our own or another's face in a selfie—this phenomenological encounter with the image. However, it is rare for individual selfies to be studied using formal analysis. Because selfies are often analyzed in bulk, scholars tend to identify general patterns in composition rather than looking closely at individual images.[39] Understandably, scholars in sociology, anthropology, and psychology tend to focus on the social context, value, and impact of selfies; similarly, the overwhelming number of selfies may lead scholars in media and communication studies to use quantitative and qualitative methods that emphasize behaviors, trends, and demographics.[40] Yet perhaps this is not just about the uncountable quantity of selfies. Studies of amateur photography—including photo booth self-portraits—are dominated by the general rather than the particular, reinforcing the divide between vernacular creative practices and artistic representation.[41] Often, the pose is the only significant area of aesthetic investigation, and Matthew Bellinger and Paul Frosh suggest that selfies are defined less by technology than by pose and gesture, arguing that viewers receive images as selfies when the pose is sufficiently deliberate.[42] However, the same could be said of self-portraiture more broadly, since the look back plays such a significant role in producing self-representational art's intersubjective address. Nonetheless, self-portraiture is readily understood as deserving close formal analysis, and I argue that the same logic applies to ephemeral digital self-representation.

Because of its attention to form, *Selfie Aesthetics* grounds its central theoretical issues in the material realities of trans and queer lives. This isn't a naïve essentialism or rigid identity politics; following the feminist philosopher Sara Ahmed, I contend that the experience of conducting formal analysis invites us to understand self-constitution as formed, assembled, constructed, *and* "felt as inherent and bodily or even as essential."[43] By contrast, in queer theory and in critiques of postmodernism, "trans" is repeatedly disconnected from the actual experiences of transgender people and instead is constructed as merely a metaphor for fluidity, flexibility, and change.[44] Although this trend has been criticized for decades, it persists relentlessly, a kind of zombie version of queer theory that will not disappear. According to V Varun Chaudhry, some scholars within queer theory keep positioning transness as "a kind of *ultimate* queer," with the result that queer theory "continues to invoke transness as a category of potentiality, expansiveness, and diversity," neglecting trans people's "often-precarious realities . . . through theoretical

emphasis on transgender in name and idea alone."[45] As a result, trans people are forever figures of other people's fantasies about queerness—and postmodern existence more generally. These fantasies include the late capitalist investment in trans identity as a site of flexibility, the "transnormative" positioning of white trans masculine bodies as promising access to an "exceptional futurity," and the demand that transgender people continuously make manifest the possibility of gender fluidity.[46] As the trans critic Andrea Long Chu writes, the result is an "intellectual move in which the trans person, just through the act of existing, becomes a kind of living incubator for other people's theories of gender."[47] It's not only cisgender people who approach trans studies this way, and it is also troubling when trans scholars neglect the material needs of trans people in favor of abstraction. The trans scholar Jack Halberstam writes that "trans*" (with an asterisk) is not about trans people, their experiences, and the material conditions that impact their lives, but instead about a "politics of transitivity."[48] This approach is a kind of trans exceptionalism (or spectacularization) that appears to center trans people while neglecting their actual political demands.

The asterisk means many things.[49] However, it often signals that an author is taking this kind of approach to their subject, one where "trans" as a concept is abstracted from trans people's actual experiences and then opposed to identity politics, which is assumed to be rigid and conservative. At the heart of this book is the belief that this is a reductive understanding of both identity and politics. As Mari Ruti writes, "identity" is too readily imagined as stable and fixed, whereas in fact it is always "an open-ended process of becoming."[50] While all trans people are affected when "trans" is thus abstracted, trans women and trans feminine people tend to be particularly spectacularized as figures who are asked to represent or embody identity's fluidity.[51] Given this, I avoid the asterisk in this book except when quoting others, because I am interested in the material political demands that trans people are making through media production.

Of course, queer theory and trans studies don't just diverge; they also intersect. These intersections produce provocative discussions that can help to trace the importance of aesthetic form in understanding materiality. For example, recent work in trans media studies envisions cinema itself as "trans*" because it is a "medium-in-flux," or describes cinema as a trans technology because "transgender and cinematic aesthetics alike operate through the bodily practice and technological principle of disjunction."[52] There's a strange kind of trans exceptionalism (and medium-specific technological determinism) in these theories; after all, many media explore disjunction, and trans

people are not the only subjects who are "sutured" together—metaphorically or literally. Such projects seem to further entrench the association between trans experience and fantastic, free-floating fluidity, or they risk reducing trans experience to surgical intervention. At the same time, these analogies between trans existence and the cinematic *can* remain rooted in the material reality of visual, aural, and even tactile experiences of spectatorship. Although Eliza Steinbock's *Shimmering Images: Trans Cinema, Embodiment, and the Aesthetics of Change* is in many ways an example of trans exceptionalism in that it reads "trans" *as* change, the work emphasizes how spectators collaborate in meaning making. As the trans cinema studies scholar Cáel M. Keegan suggests, following work by the field's founder, Susan Stryker, digitality and transsexuality are linked *not* by some complete escape from embodiment, materiality, or referentiality but, instead, through how they allow us to phenomenologically explore alternative modes of being.[53] While I have reservations about the idea that there is an ontologically unique connection between trans existence and cinematic form, I believe that one of the critical insights of Steinbock's and Keegan's work is their discussion of spectatorship and cinema's ability to teach us how to see and feel differently. In these accounts, focusing on spectators isn't just a relativistic celebration of subjectivity. Their phenomenological approach to film form elaborates how the potential effects produced by films emerge from an "experience of reception" that is technologically and formally facilitated rather than determined.[54]

Just as "trans" can be asked to represent all kinds of change, digital media are frequently imagined as endlessly modifiable and hence unbound to specific, material referents. This conception of digitality shaped discussions of "the death of film" at the beginning of the twenty-first century, exemplified by the film theorist D. N. Rodowick's medium-specific argument that the digital image is uniquely characterized by the infinite separability of its elements. As a result, the kinds of control the digital image appears to make possible are similarly, seemingly infinite.[55] Of course, this fantasy of control is deeply precarious, as the media theorist Neta Alexander demonstrates in her analysis of buffering, digital glitches, and other "noise." Rather than the "efficiency, immediacy, and flow" that digitality promises, these ordinary moments of delay and boredom actually compel us to confront the material supports that make digital images possible.[56] Our actual encounters with selfies show that their digitality does not wholly sever them from referential reality; after all, the realism we experience in our encounters with aesthetic objects is less ontological or technological than it is an effect—and one that long

predates the digital.[57] As the film theorist Miriam Bratu Hansen writes in her introduction to Siegfried Kracauer's classic *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*, our experience of photographic realism is constructed and interpreted rather than inherent.[58] When I see a friend's selfie, I may be well aware that the color temperature has been altered by a filter or that it has been edited in other ways, but that does not prevent me from feeling that the image captures my friend's existence in a particular place and time.

Trans femininity and digital images thus have an important commonality: both are frequently taken up as figures that produce meanings that are mobilized for other ends. On the one hand, there is the "trans feminine allegory" that Emma Heaney traces through sexology, psychoanalysis, literary modernism, and queer theory. This allegory interrogates trans femininity to reveal something about cisgender identity.[59] On the other hand, there is the way digital image making has been taken up as a sign of the end of art's relationship to reality to assert something about the postmodern condition. Politically, of course, these two phenomena have dramatically different stakes. At the same time, they are connected by the anxieties they provoke, since referential meaning and sexual difference have long been understood as deeply intertwined. This is an antifeminist, essentialist position that is too often presented as materialist philosophy, with castration anxiety as the ultimate source of meaning.[60]

By contrast, trans theories and practices of embodiment offer alternatives that are grounded in the materiality of those bodily modifications that trans people may actually experience. These modifications include, but aren't limited to, medical procedures; they also encompass technologies of language, imagination, and representation. As C. Jacob Hale describes, trans-affirming leatherdyke communities can construct ways of relating to bodies, organs, and form that defy binary essentialism.[61] Within certain witnessing relationships, what Hale calls a "culture of two," it becomes possible for one person to "resignify" the cultural, sexual, and phenomenological meaning of their embodiment through the collaboration of another.[62] When his "recoded" embodiment is legible to a witnessing play partner, Hale writes, he is "able to disrupt the dominant cultural meanings of [his] genitals and to reconfigure those meanings."[63] In this reading, bodily form is not a fixed foundation from which meaning arises but, instead, a space of cultural, personal, and collaborative work that depends on *being seen*. Selfie viewers, I argue, can participate in similar collaborations when we act as witnesses to another's exploration of embodiment through image and form. Through closely reading selfies by

trans feminist creators, I show how formal analysis values the materiality of both digital media and trans lives, and I argue that dwelling on form is far from apolitical, because form attunes us to the materiality of experience.

Seeing Selfies

Although this book focuses on the visual aspects of selfies, studying selfies can involve attending to their metadata, the flows of networks through which they move, and the dystopian surveillance society to which they contribute. Such projects are crucial, not only if we are to understand selfies, but also if we are to grapple with how visibility, representation, and surveillance are implicated in transmisogyny, racism, and other systemic violence. Selfies have been described as producing a hypervisibility that increases surveillance, as a tool that facilitates state surveillance through compelling people to relinquish any investment in privacy rights, and as a disciplining practice of self-surveillance.[64] In response, artists and theorists have refused to participate in representation. The artist Zach Blas has responded to a surveillant society by investing in anonymity, while the theorist Hito Steyerl explores the politics of "withdrawal from representation" and the aesthetics of "how not to be seen."[65] Since facial recognition technology is based on normative assumptions about personal appearance, drag queens have found that their selfies are sometimes automatically tagged as the faces of their friends, collaborators, and competitors, making algorithmic tagging itself into a technology that produces opacity rather than visibility.[66]

There are compelling arguments in favor of withdrawal from representation. Yet trans people have long been required by doctors and by the law to live "stealth" lives after transition, concealing their pasts to the point of erasing many of their life experiences entirely.[67] As a result, anonymity, withdrawal from representation, and disappearance can be complicit with this long, troubling history. Moreover, surveillance is not only a form of power that represses; like all biopower, it is also productive. As the media scholars Gary Kafer and Daniel Grinberg note in their introduction to a special issue of *Surveillance and Society* on queer surveillance, "Queerness is produced within surveillant processes as its very condition of possibility," since it operates against norms that can be recognized, tracked, and categorized as such.[68] Finally, even Blas's and Steyerl's antirepresentational work is dependent on form and invites us not simply to reject representation but to interrogate it.

Looking at selfies turns our attention to the texture of the experiences that images produce. This is why the subtitle of *Selfie Aesthetics* emphasizes

the act of *seeing* self-representational art. Selfies are *images*, and we encounter them that way: we read them as images, and we attend to the shapes and forms of their surfaces. They are media objects that solicit our attention and engage our emotions, perception, and curiosity. Moreover, through their formal experimentation, selfies do not necessarily produce an uncomplicated visibility. In chapter 3, I discuss how improvisation and seriality allow selfie creators to interrogate the racialized binary of hypervisibility and obscurity. In these selfie series, I argue, form allows for iterative political work. Through selfies, key issues within the academy (a politics of refusal, an analysis of racialized precarity, and a challenge to racialized hypervisibility) emerge and are elaborated within the sphere of popular culture. In this way, I argue that selfies can contribute to an "undercommons" of resistant knowledge production and circulation, depending in part on how they are created—and how they are read.[69]

Given how they circulate online, selfies pose specific research challenges. On a basic level, selfies are what Steyerl calls "poor images," and they can move as freely as they do because of their small file size and low resolution.[70] For example, selfies that are taken and edited within Instagram are restricted in their dimensions, with images from before 2018 limited to approximately 640 by 640 pixels. Sometimes a larger original is available, but as the artist Vivek Shraya told me, she regards those files as rough drafts, since they haven't been edited and filtered through the platform's software.[71] Many of the selfies I study are difficult, if not impossible, to reproduce in a printed publication. Created to circulate on social media platforms, selfies not only resist being transplanted into print media; they also disappear. This isn't a problem unique to studying selfies; rather, it is a persistent tension between new media objects that circulate online and the academic practice of fixing, preserving, and studying our objects in print. Throughout my research, broken links, deleted selfies, and public accounts-turned-private have altered both the images I can access and the images that I believe I can ethically study. In this book, I do not analyze any images that were never public, but I do discuss images that were once public and were subsequently deleted or made private. Sometimes these images have moved back and forth multiple times between being publicly and privately available. If an image is no longer publicly available, I work from my own archive of downloaded images and screenshots, and I limit my work to close analysis and description unless I have received permission to reproduce the image here. For all selfies in this volume, I reproduce images only with permission from the creator, and only when the image is of sufficiently high resolution to make print reproduction possible.

Selfie technology is constantly changing. As a result, any account of selfies that is too deeply tied to specific platforms and apparatuses risks becoming quickly obsolete. Yet attending to the platforms, networks, and technology that make selfies possible is necessary, even as I focus on certain images and the experience of encountering them. Technological advancements seem to expand what is possible for selfie creators, yet improved technology also produces the loss of certain approaches to self-representation. An advertisement for the Google Pixel 3 from 2018 offers a case in point.[72] In the ad, people repeatedly attempt and fail to take group selfies, stymied by lenses that are not wide enough to capture a large group of people even when the smartphone is held out at arms' length. Ultimately, the ad demonstrates how the Pixel 3 smartphone's wide-angle lens appears to guarantee that it is now possible to take a group selfie that fully captures everyone present. It seems that this is a narrative of technological success, yet I find myself drawn to the earlier failures and how they fragment the groups gathered together. In these images, limbs and faces are only partially within the frame, producing an image of the group that is composed of pieces of its members. Even in the "successful" selfie, the one that does not fragment bodies by cutting them off at the edge of the screen, self and other are still sutured together, for spectatorship positions the viewer as a cocreator of the image's meaning. A haunting absence and anticipated presence, the viewer is always part of the image. In self-representational art, we are not only interpellated into the image but invited to join the collaborative and collective selves that are constructed through the interaction of viewer, creator, and image.

As Shraya says, "A good selfie is one where you know where to look."[73] Although Shraya is describing the look of the figure within the image, I borrow her phrase to propose that the quality and value of a selfie depends in part on whether the viewer knows where—and how—to look. Instead of skimming quickly past selfies in the endless scroll of social media, the tools of close analysis can reveal theoretical insights within ephemeral media that might help us to forge trans feminist futures. The work I examine in this book represents a present that dominant culture attempts to erase—or to recapture as merely visibility with the goal of inclusion in the status quo. However, these images are concerned with radically different potentialities, and through their form they anticipate, vision, and manifest such futures. Close reading allows us to see what might otherwise disappear amid the proliferation of ephemeral media. In *Selfie Aesthetics*, I demonstrate how viewers can build on the formal elements within ephemeral, vernacular images—formal strategies that creators may be using intentionally or unintentionally—to

produce interpretations that honor and extend the visions, politics, and commitments of the creators. This is what "seeing trans feminist futures in self-representational art" means to me.

This book is far from an exhaustive account of self-representational art by trans women and trans feminine people, and there are many other artists whose work can and should be examined through close analysis in relation to selfie aesthetics. Nor, as I've been insisting, are selfie aesthetics traceable only in work by trans artists. Nonetheless, the work I address here exemplifies how meaning emerges out of the formal strategies of selfie aesthetics: doubling, seriality, improvisation, nonlinear temporalities. Linked together and working independently, the creators I study are frequently in dialogue with one another, and their audiences often overlap, though they also have distinct positions within the art world, activism, and trans cultural production. As a result, the aesthetic, political, and theoretical insights within their work have to be considered in relation to one another—as well as in connection to many other creators I could not include here. From the multimedia artist Zackary Drucker to the musician and writer Vivek Shraya, the filmmaker and activist Tourmaline, the scholar Che Gossett, the activist and educator Zinnia Jones, the vlogger Natalie Wynn, the performer Shea Couleé, and the designer Alok Vaid-Menon, the selfies and self-representational art I discuss exist along a spectrum from clearly vernacular to explicitly gallery-based work, revealing continuities, intersections, and dialogue between popular culture and art world self-representation. In addition, these works include both still- and moving-image media, encompassing those digital self-portraits most easily recognizable as selfies, as well as works that are influenced by or explore the themes that constitute selfie aesthetics.

Selfie Aesthetics is organized around its main thematic conceits; as a result, although certain creators are central to individual chapters, others are featured in several chapters. Taken together, their work reveals political, theoretical, and aesthetic possibilities of selfies. While these possibilities are not realized by every selfie, their work demonstrates the potential of what selfies might—and, in fact, often—do, in collaboration with selfie viewers. In chapter 1, I explore how the visual rhetoric of doubling structures selfie production and reception. Through formal strategies—including shadows, reflections, and multiple figures—selfies represent selves as multiple and relational. This doubling is not restricted to the realm of representation alone; it also exists in the spectatorial encounter. Generating proliferating reflections that evoke the mise en abyme, selfies and self-portraits by Drucker, Shraya, and Tourmaline demand that we reconsider how spectatorial experience has

been analogized to the Lacanian "mirror stage." Queering the mirror stage through doubling, their work shows selfhood to be relational and messy as they demonstrate the labor and formal strategies that construct images of selves as separate, bounded, and intertwined. Exploring fluidity through the shifting positions and proliferating reflections of the mise en abyme, these digital images do not merely celebrate digitality as an opening to flux and transformation. Doubling in selfie aesthetics also resists queer theory's demand that "trans" stand in for formless, unfixed flexibility, for it makes transformation a possibility and an effect that must be mediated and constructed.

Chapters 2 and 3 explore how selfie creators use improvisation and serial form to negotiate the pressures, promises, and perils of visibility, particularly in dialogue with gender performativity theory. When selfies are understood as political, their political utility is typically confined to creating visibility for causes or for underrepresented groups. However, selfie seriality can also be ambivalent toward visibility politics. Rather than a binary choice between visibility and invisibility, selfie seriality produces improvisational encounters that shift and transform over time. By constructing or identifying series of selfies, selfie creators and their audiences generate new ways of engaging with queer theories of performative resistance. In chapter 2, I demonstrate how Tracy McMullen's concept of the "improvisative" can help explore how selfie seriality reimagines iterative self-constitution.[74] Using the case study of Zinnia Jones's selfies, I show how selfies can become a technology of self-constitution that facilitates improvisational, unpredictable, and collective creation of digital selves. Here, iterability is not a site of transmission between the active creator and the passive audience but, instead, becomes the basis for contestations among multiple cocreators. Then, in chapter 3, I show how Alok Vaid-Menon suggests that authentic visibility is an impossible demand of trans femmes of color while Che Gossett uses selfie seriality to visualize resistant knowledge production among trans of color scholars and artists. As audiences actively construct selfie series through reading connections among disparate images, it becomes evident that the performativity of identity is far more complicated than a relationship between an individual actor and hegemonic norms that are either reproduced or resisted. Instead, the iterative improvisatives that constitute digital selfhood include the active engagement of audiences reading coherence into proliferating and diverse selfie series.

The final two chapters draw on doubling, seriality, and improvisation to explore selfie temporality in relationship to "queer time." Theories of queer time have celebrated nonlinearity in response to the way power works with

and on temporal experience. As Elizabeth Freeman writes, "Far from being a set of empty containers—minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, years, decades, periods—into which our experience gets poured, time is actively constructed by the powerful."[75] However, queer temporality loses its critical political charge when it is reduced to nonlinearity and when we assume that nonreproductive time is inherently resistant. In chapter 4, I show how digital self-representation produces the potential for nonlinear temporalities and argue that these nonlinear temporalities are not automatically or transparently queer. Instead, they are antinormative and resistant as the result of creators' material labor. Exploring how liberatory temporalities build from the past to imagine trans feminist futures, chapter 5 examines how selfie aesthetics produce alternative histories and what Allyson Nadia Field calls "speculative archives."[76] In these chapters, I look at how anxieties about postmodernism shape our understandings of both trans people and historical archives, and I explore what digital self-representation by trans people can contribute to this discourse. Using digital tools to revise, reimagine, and renarrate personal and collective histories, creators such as Shea Couleé, Vivek Shraya, and Natalie Wynn show how selfie aesthetics open up alternative temporalities and transformative futures.

These futures can be trans feminist possibilities if we see them that way. In *At Least You Know You Exist*, Zackary Drucker and Flawless Sabrina explore how a film camera produces and transforms their intersubjective encounter as they continue to build a relationship that began with a photograph. Going far beyond being visible, this encounter is about seeing and being seen.[77] You know you exist, they suggest, because you see the other and you are seen by the other; because of how we look at each other, we know that we exist. As the film strip seems to chatter, blur, and break, and as their voices alternate in a call-and-response monologue for two speakers, the film inhabits the past as it documents the present and gestures toward the future—a future that is made possible by the connections and collaborations between generations of trans feminine artists. Watching the film, spectators participate in this relationship, our existence affirmed because we see the film—just as our act of seeing implicates us as witnesses to the lives that we see.

Notes

Prologue

1. For example, Joan Acocella's review of Lunbeck, *The Americanization of Narcissism* (which, in turn, is a book-length response to Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*), opens with an extended discussion of selfies, emphasizing the strength of the popular association between selfies and narcissism: Acocella, "Selfie." In *Selfie*, Will Storr presents a distorted view of how selfies typically function, highlighting only a single case of a young selfie creator who is pathologically isolated. While he acknowledges the exceptionality of his case, Storr's overriding investment in Laschian cultural critique prompts him to consider such an "outlier" a better model through which to understand selfies than a more typical case: Storr, *Selfie*, 295. Ilan Stavans's *I Love My Selfie* not only positions selfies as a symptom of cultural narcissism but also seems torn between two contradictory threads: understanding selfies as purely a contemporary concern and, alternatively, positioning selfies as a transhistorical phenomenon, such that every instance of self-representation becomes "a selfie." See Morse, "Review of Ilan Stavans' 'I Love My Selfie.'"

2. Shelley, *Frankenstein*, chap. 12, para. 13.

3. Tiidenberg, *Selfies*, 6.

4. There are promising signs of a shift toward more nuanced accounts of selfies, from Eckel et al., *Exploring the Selfie*, a recent anthology that examines selfies as images and as practices, to Tiidenberg's *Selfies*, the first monograph to approach selfies as something more than a symptom of cultural narcissism. Anne Burns analyzes how discourse about selfies is used to discipline and police the social behavior of young women, highlighting how distaste for selfies is linked to misogyny (Burns, "Self[ie]-Discipline").

5. Goldberg, "Through the Looking Glass."

6. Tiidenberg, *Selfies*, 79.

7. Tiidenberg, *Selfies*, 87.

8. See, e.g., Ehlin, "The Subversive Selfie"; Murray, "Notes to Self"; Nicholson, "Tumblr Femme"; Pham, "I Click and Post and Breathe, Waiting for Others to See What I See"; Tiidenberg, "Bringing Sexy Back."

9. Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, 127.

10. Heyes, "Feminist Solidarity after Queer Theory."

11. Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein," 238.

12. She also rejects the role that queer theory often foists on trans people, in which trans people embody gender-nonconformity and thus make cisgender gay and lesbian sexualities legible as "same sex" desire: Stryker, "More Words about 'My Words to Victor Frankenstein,'" 40.

13. Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein," 238.

14. Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein," 239.

15. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women*, 149–81.

16. Bergo, "Emmanuel Levinas."

17. Kenaan, "Facing Images," 157.

18. Campt, *Listening to Images*, 17.

19. Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein," 247.

20. After Globalism Writing Group, "Water as Protagonist," 15.

21. After Globalism Writing Group, "Water as Protagonist," 16.

22. Santana, "Transitionings and Returnings," 181–90.

23. Santana, "Transitionings and Returnings," 183.

24. Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein," 250.

25. Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein," 251.

Introduction

1. Steinbock, "Catties and T-selfies," 175.

2. Tiidenberg, *Selfies*, 95.

3. Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*; Campt, *Listening to Images*.

4. Serano, *Whipping Girl*.

5. Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, 113.

6. Serano, "Reclaiming Femininity," 170; Koyama, "The Transfeminist Manifesto," 246.

7. Enke, *Transfeminist Perspectives in and beyond Transgender and Gender Studies*, 8–9.

8. Bettcher, "Intersexuality, Transsexuality, Transgender," 419–20.

9. Koyama, "The Transfeminist Manifesto," 245.

10. Heaney, *The New Woman*, 276–77.

11. Chen, *Trans Exploits*, 5.

12. According to Nicholas Mirzoeff, selfies existed prior to 2010 but were particularly enabled by the front-facing camera on the iPhone 4. As a result, Mirzoeff asserts that a set of normative aesthetic values attach to selfies. "A set visual vocabulary for the standard selfie has emerged. A selfie looks better taken from above with the subject looking up at the camera. The picture usually concentrates on the face, with the risk of making a duck face, which involves a prominent pout of the lips": Mirzoeff, *How to See the World*, 63.

13. Tiidenberg, *Selfies*, 106.

14. Senft and Baym, "What Does the Selfie Say?" 1588; Bellinger, "Bae Caught Me Tweetin'."

15. Warfield, "Making Selfies/Making Self."

16. Tiidenberg, *Selfies*, 7.

17. While Nicolas Bourriaud's theory of relational aesthetics offers some useful frameworks for analyzing selfies, his emphasis on exhibition prioritizes a kind of institutional art practice that is unable to fully account for selfies as vernacular works: see Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*.

18. Bellinger, "Bae Caught Me Tweetin.'"

19. As Emma Heaney argues, although trans feminism can be embraced by anyone, it is a political praxis that "grows out of the collective experience of trans women and feminine gender-nonconforming people": Heaney, *The New Woman*, xiv.

20. Senft and Baym, "What Does the Selfie Say?," 1589.

21. Quoted in Shaw, *Reading Claude Cahun's Disavowals*, 44.

22. Quoted in Shaw, *Reading Claude Cahun's Disavowals*, 1.

23. As Jordy Jones writes about this photograph and its reversal, "Cahun sometimes took photographs of Moore that mirrored the photographs that Moore took of her. Here, both women make eye contact through the dual self-visualizing technologies of the mirror and the camera. Cahun looks towards the camera, away from the mirror, and makes eye contact through the lens. Moore looks towards the mirror, away from the camera, and makes eye contact through the reflection. Both ultimately make 'eye contact' with the viewer. But before they make contact with us they initially connect with each other. Cahun at the mirror photographed by Moore followed Moore at the mirror photographed by Cahun. Or vice versa. In either case, this was a case of lovers at play, and the position of the viewer in relation to the subject is that of the love object. Neither is technically a self-portrait, but both are self-representative": Jones, "The Ambiguous I," 90–91.

24. Quoted in Downie, *Don't Kiss Me*, 59–60.

25. Latimer, "Acting Out," 56.

26. In discussing her own work with collaborators, Cindy Sherman notes that, even though other people served as her assistants and at times contributed their own ideas and suggestions to her photographic practice, she considers the works her own creations because she subsequently cropped the images carefully: *Cindy Sherman*, 15. See also Solomon-Godeau, "The Equivocal 'I,'" 117.

27. Fried, *The Moment of Caravaggio*, 18.

28. Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art*, 142.

29. Hall, *The Self-Portrait*, 9.

30. Bond, *Self Portrait*, 12.

31. Clark, "The Look of Self-Portraiture,"110.

32. Koerner, "Self-Portraiture Direct and Oblique," 67.

33. Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 51.

34. Bond, *Self Portrait*, 12.

35. See, e.g., "Let Us See You See You," *Discover: The DIS Blog*, December 3, 2012, http://dismagazine.com/blog/38139/let-us-see-you-see-you; *DIS Magazine*, *#artselfie*; Jeff Landa, "A Museum Dedicated to the History and Art of 'Selfies' Is Coming to Glendale," *Los Angeles Times*, December 8, 2017, http://www.latimes.com/socal/glendale-news-press/news/tn-gnp-me-selfie-museum-20171207-story.html; Abigail

Jones, "The Selfie as Art? One Gallery Thinks So," *Newsweek*, October 17, 2013, http://www.newsweek.com/selfie-art-one-gallery-thinks-so-445.

36. "Cindy Sherman: Clowning Around and Socialite Selfies—in Pictures," *The Guardian*, May 30, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2016/may/30/cindy-sherman-clowning-around-and-socialite-selfies-in-pictures. Similar statements appear throughout popular criticism about Sherman, Cahun, and Goldin.

37. Sherman herself does not like selfies and has expressed that she disagrees with the persistent association between her work and selfies: see Andrew Russeth, "Facetime with Cindy Sherman: The Artist on Her 'Selfie' Project for *W*, and What's behind Her Celebrated Instagram," *W Magazine*, November 6, 2017, https://www.wmagazine.com/story/cindy-sherman-instagram-selfie. Noah Becker writes that while Instagram is usually a "dumping ground," Sherman's work turns it into an "exhibition space": Noah Becker, "How Cindy Sherman's Instagram Selfies Are Changing the Face of Photography," *The Guardian*, August 9, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2017/aug/09/cindy-sherman-instagram-selfies-filtering-life.

38. See Benjamin Barron, "Richard Prince, Audrey Wollen, and the Sad Girl Theory," *i-D*, November 12, 2014, https://i-d.vice.com/en_us/article/richard-prince-audrey-wollen-and-the-sad-girl-theory; Capricious, "Anti-selfies and Bondage Furniture," *Dazed*, August 1, 2014, http://www.dazeddigital.com/photography/article/21087/1/anti-selfies-and-bondage-furniture.

39. For example, Lev Manovich's SelfieCity.net explores compositional trends across hundreds of selfies, while Aaron Hess uses individual images as illustrations of broader categories or subgenres of selfies: see Hess, "The Selfie Assemblage."

40. See, e.g., Bruno et al., "'Selfies' Reveal Systematic Deviations from Known Principles of Photographic Composition"; Chua and Chang, "Follow Me and Like My Beautiful Selfies"; Döring et al., "How Gender-Stereotypical Are Selfies?"; Lobinger and Brantner, "In the Eye of the Beholder"; Nemer and Freeman, "Empowering the Marginalized"; Wang et al., "Let Me Take a Selfie."

41. Bourdieu, *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art*, 77–94. Two key texts examine the history of the photo booth and the artistic use of the medium. Although both volumes capture a wide breadth of the diverse possibilities of photo booth photography, both assume that artistic uses of photo booth imagery require artistic intention: Goranin, *American Photobooth*; Pellicer, *Photobooth*.

42. Julia Hirsch identifies trends in the gendering of the direct look in family portraits, demonstrating the importance of pose, gesture, and directionality of the gaze to self-presentation within vernacular portraiture: Hirsch, *Family Photographs*. As Roland Barthes discusses the affective charge of a photograph of his mother as a child, he also pays close attention to the work of the pose, both in our relationship to the photographs we witness and in our relationship to ourselves as photographic subjects: Barthes, *Camera Lucida*. By contrast, Catherine Zuromskis's work on analog snapshots includes other formal techniques in her analysis of analog photography: Zuromskis, *Snapshot Photography*. See also Bellinger, "Bae Caught Me Tweetin'," 1809; Frosh, "The Gestural Image."

43. Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 80.

44. Despite repeated critiques over the years, this abstraction remains "persistent": Benavente and Gill-Peterson, "The Promise of Trans Critique," 25.

45. Chaudhry, "Centering the 'Evil Twin,'" 47.

46. Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 18–19; Puar, *The Right to Main*, 46; Serano, *Whipping Girl*, 195–212.

47. Chu and Drager, "After Trans Studies," 110.

48. Halberstam, *TRANS**, xiii. As Lauren Herold pointed out to me, Halberstam appears to borrow this term from Snorton, *Black on Both Sides*, without crediting Snorton and without engaging with Snorton's examination of how transitivity provides a grammar for Black trans experience.

49. Tompkins, "Asterisk."

50. Ruti, *The Ethics of Opting Out*, 32.

51. Benavente and Gill-Peterson, "The Promise of Trans Critique," 24.

52. Keegan et al., "Cinematic/Trans*/Bodies Now (and Then, and to Come)," 1; Steinbock, *Shimmering Images*, 6.

53. Keegan, *Lana and Lilly Wachowski*, 1–4.

54. Baron, *The Archive Effect*, 7–9.

55. Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film*, 169.

56. Alexander, "Rage against the Machine," 3.

57. Barthes, *The Rustle of Language*, 148.

58. Hansen, "Introduction," xxxv.

59. Heaney, *The New Woman*.

60. See, e.g., Slavoj Žižek, "The Sexual Is Political," Philosophical Salon, August 1, 2016, https://thephilosophicalsalon.com/the-sexual-is-political.

61. I thank Cassiopeia Mulholland, who introduced me to this text.

62. Hale, "Leatherdyke Boys and Their Daddies," 229.

63. Hale, "Leatherdyke Boys and Their Daddies," 230.

64. Kuntsman, *Selfie Citizenship*, 109–60; Giroux, "Selfie Culture in the Age of Corporate and State Surveillance." While these accounts of the surveillant power of selfies are not incorrect, they err in describing this surveillance as a contemporary phenomenon that is coincident with "selfie culture" and selfies themselves. Decades before the selfie was invented, for instance, Susan Sontag described photography as a practice of "self-surveillance": quoted in Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, 48. See also Bay-Cheng, "'When This You See,'" 49.

65. See, e.g., Zach Blas, "Escaping the Face: Biometric Facial Recognition and the Facial Weaponization Suite," *Media-N*, 2013, http://median.newmediacaucus.org/caa-conference-edition-2013/escaping-the-face-biometric-facial-recognition-and-the-facial-weaponization-suite; Steyerl, *The Wretched of the Screen*, 160–75; Hito Steyerl, dir., *How Not to Be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File*, 2013, https://www.artforum.com/video/hito-steyerl-how-not-to-be-seen-a-fucking-didactic-educational-mov-file-2013-41651.

66. Kornstein, "Under Her Eye."

67. Serano, *Whipping Girl*, 120.

68. Kafer and Grinberg, "Editorial," 595.

69. Moten and Harney, *A Poetics of the Undercommons*.

70. Steyerl, *The Wretched of the Screen*, 31–45.

71. Vivek Shraya, personal communication, October 7, 2018.

72. Google, "Google Pixel 3: Group Selfie Cam," YouTube video, October 9, 2018, https://youtu.be/gJtJFEH1Cis. I thank Noemi Marin for pointing out this advertisement to me.

73. Morse, "The Transfeminine Futurity in Knowing Where to Look."

74. McMullen, "The Improvisative," 123.

75. Freeman, "The Queer Temporalities of *Queer Temporalities*," 93.

76. Field, "The Archive of Absence."

77. Morse and Herold, "Beyond the Gaze."

1. Doubling

1. Intentionally or not, the video's title evokes the pseudonymous lover(s) and object(s) of longing, desire, and loss from Roland Barthes's *A Lover's Discourse*, a figure (or figures) never named but instead masked beneath the capital letter *X*.

2. As Amanda du Preez writes, selfies function as doppelgängers because "the selfie stands in the tradition of doubling, imitation, twinning, cloning, alter egos, mirroring, masks, and shadows": du Preez, "When Selfies Turn into Online Doppelgängers," 6.

3. Drucker and Ernst, *Relationship*, 96–97.

4. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*; Bazin, *What Is Cinema? I*, 9–16; Prosser, *Light in the Dark Room*.

5. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 77.

6. van Dijck, "Digital Photography"; Gunning, "What's the Point of an Index?"

7. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 115.

8. du Preez, "When Selfies Turn into Online Doppelgängers."

9. Thanks to Jane Caputi for this reminder in a book release event hosted by the Center for Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Florida Atlantic University held on Zoom on September 2, 2020.

10. Stiles, "Kicking Holes in the Darkness"; Meredith Talusan, "This Former Couple Documented Their Gender Transitions in Gorgeous Photos," Buzzfeed.com, July 16, 2016, https://www.buzzfeed.com/meredithtalusan/before-breaking-up-this-trans-couple-took-gorgeous-photos-of. Drucker herself states that it is possible that the work is in dialogue with the mirror stage, but only, of course, because she had read the article in the course of her education: Zackary Drucker, personal communication, University of Chicago, May 8, 2015.

11. Keegan, *Lana and Lilly Wachowski*, 35.

12. Lavery, "Trans Realism, Psychoanalytic Practice, and the Rhetoric of Technique," 723, 725–26.

13. Sullivan and Murray, *Somatechnics*, 3.

14. Stryker and Sullivan, "King's Member, Queen's Body," 50.

15. Danielle Owens-Reid, "Girl, It's Your Time: Trans Artist Vivek Shraya on Finding Freedom and Wholeness," *Autostraddle*, May 19, 2016, https://www.autostraddle