

# General Editor's Introduction

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The publication of this special issue, “Trans Studies en las Américas,” marks the start of my tenure as general coeditor of *TSQ*. It is an honor to replace Paisley Currah as general coeditor and to work alongside my colleague Susan Stryker to further cultivate the originality, innovation, irreverence, and disruption that marks the scholarship published within the only interdisciplinary journal for trans cultural studies. As the only trans scholar of color who is a part of the Transgender Studies Research Cluster at the University of Arizona, I felt it was especially pressing to accept the invitation from Susan and Paisley to transition from my role as fashion editor and editorial board member to general coeditor. My own scholarship finds its home in trans studies, Latina/o/x studies, and Chicana/o/x studies, so serving as the overseeing general coeditor for this issue felt especially serendipitous. As noted by Cole Rizki in the special issue introduction, this issue of *TSQ* was born out of a series of panels at International Trans Studies\*: An International Transdisciplinary Conference on Gender, Embodiment, and Sexuality at the University of Arizona in 2016. The transhemispheric reach of the issue, with its record number of submissions, spanning three languages, is an indicator that further publication opportunities are necessary for trans and Latin/x American and Caribbean studies scholarship. This issue is only the beginning, as the question of the *x* in Latina/o and Latin American studies continues to take shape.

The editors of this issue propose the term *Latin/x America* to account for the incoherence and “entanglements of ‘US’ and ‘Latin America’ as geopolitical categories.” Perhaps most important, noted by Rizki in the special issue introduction, is the institutional precarity of trans studies in the Global South. While in the Global North trans studies’ institutionalization has resulted in the creation of faculty cluster hires, individual faculty positions, and research positions, many do not emphasize scholarship focused on Latinx or Latin America. By the same token, it is rare for Latinx and Latin American studies positions to emphasize scholarship focused on trans studies. The slash used by the coeditors of this

volume to split *Latin/x* is a cut that implores us to consider why trans studies in *las Américas*? The essays, archival materials, narratives, and cultural productions in this issue overwhelmingly let us know why and how trans studies in a Latin/x American context is timely and urgent. The overwhelming response to the call for papers for this issue also announces that this platform is not enough.

In a special issue of the journal of the American Studies Association, *American Quarterly*, titled “Las Américas Quarterly,” its coeditors, Macarena Gómez-Barris and Licia Fiol-Matta (2014: 504), describe the *x* as “a turn away from the dichotomous, toward a void, an unknown, a wrestling with plurality, vectors of multi-intentionality, and the transitional meanings of what has yet to be seen.” This *TSQ* special issue, “Trans Studies en las Américas,” cuts through the void, confronts the unknown, and highlights the plurality and *transitional* meanings gestured to by Gómez-Barris and Fiol-Matta. The special issue editors raise the stakes by introducing a “*travesti*-trans analytic” mode of inquiry marked by the potentiality of bringing “existing Latin/x American subjectivities, activist strategies, and theories . . . into conversation with US-oriented trans studies.” This analytic highlights how *trans*- (embodiment, mobility, sexuality, corporeality, politics, lexicons) informs site-specific micropolitical networks of social resistance in *las Américas* that “unyieldingly reappropriate and intervene in the advocacy slogans of ‘woman,’ ‘identity,’ ‘liberty’ or ‘equality,’ in other words, to disseminate ‘living revolutions’” (Valencia 2018: 263, quoting Preciado 2009: 59).<sup>1</sup> Inspired in part by Félix Guattari’s writings on molecular politics, Paul Preciado’s “living revolutions” focuses on the flows, becomings, transitions between phases, and intensities of a molecular order.

A focus on the molecular order allows us to see “trans-“ and “Latin/x America” as categories that index “the impasse of pure verticality and that of mere horizontality,” for example, to consider the verticality implied in global “north” and “south” and the horizontality within the “across” of the prefixial *trans*- (Guattari 1984: 18). Thus, a way to confront this impasse is a turn to Guattari’s transversality as a dimension that requires “maximum communication among different levels and, above all, in different meanings” (18). The result might then be realized as *travesti*-trans, a mode of intervention and transformation that “enable[s] us to conceive of alliances and systems of transversality” (Guattari and Rolnik 2007: 265). In the book *Molecular Revolution in Brazil*, Guattari and Suely Rolnik (2007: 261) assert that revolution “is the whole range of possibilities of specific practices of change in the way of life, with their creative potential, that constitutes what I call molecular revolution, which is a condition for any social transformation.” The context for this statement is an atmosphere of the reactivation of public life amid the first direct elections after nearly two decades of military dictatorship in Brazil in 1982. They describe this period as one of “productivity, proliferation, creation, utterly fabulous revolutions” (9). From this

viewpoint Guattari and Rolnik observe a “multiple people, a people of mutants, a people of potentialities that appears and disappears,” a silent molecular revolution propelled by the force of “what was happening in the politics of desire, of subjectivity, of relationship with the other” (9). The vitality, potentiality, becoming that mark that moment resonate contemporarily in the affective charge present in the various modes through which “living revolutions” intervene within discourse from the various scales of life and the multiple locales represented in this special issue.

In 2018, nearly thirty-six years after Guattari’s observations on molecular revolution and amid the current swerve of the right we are seeing the ascension of Trump in the United States, Brexit in Europe, and most recently, the election of Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil. Of most resonance is the threat that Bolsonaro’s election could mean a return to a military dictatorship and threaten the rights of women, LGBT folks, and people of color (Londoño and Darlington 2018). As Guattari and Rolnik teach us in *Molecular Revolution in Brazil* (2007: 9), a micropolitical change independent of the state’s direction provides the opportunity to examine the degree to which theoretical and strategic issues formulated by the “multiple people, people of mutants, people of potentialities” may give way to new movements. This is to say, if revolution is a “certain moment of *transformation* . . . a moment of irreversibility in a process” (259), then the whole range of *travesti-trans* interventions being made across *las Américas* that teem with creativity, refusal, and vitality in the face of precarity are anything but utopian or idealistic; they set the stage for myriad forms of social transformation.

“Trans Studies en las Américas,” then, implores us to consider, and with urgency, what sorts of micropolitical alliances and embodied forms of resistance might be possible between US-oriented trans studies and Latin/x American *travesti-trans* forms of knowledge production.

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### Note

1. “Reapropiación e intervención irreductibles a los slogans de defensa de la ‘mujer,’ la ‘identidad,’ la ‘libertad,’ o la ‘igualdad,’ es decir, poner en común ‘revoluciones vivas.’”

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