

General Editor's Introduction

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The number of submissions to *TSQ* steadily increases each year—a sign that the field of trans studies continues to grow. As Paisley Currah and Susan Stryker (2018: 2) note in their introduction to *TSQ* 5, no. 1, trans studies scholarship has developed in myriad directions that fall outside the scope of the three themed issues each year, necessitating the creation of open-call, nonthemed issues in addition to the three themed issues each year. *TSQ* 7, no. 1, is the third such issue, and it features content that engages key topics and debates that continue to move the field forward. However, as Andrea Long Chu and Emmett Harsin Drager point out in “After Trans Studies” (2019), those of us in the field can sometimes be a bit too nice to each other, fail to invite disagreement, and rarely challenge key theoretical concepts and metaphors that are foundational to the field. They question the political optimism of a trans studies that has been grounded in the liberatory figure of the posttransexual and instead ask those of us working in the field to write with what they describe as “bitter optimism,” grounded in the “disappointment of finding out the world is too small for all our desires,” especially our political aspirations (106). In many ways, the articles in this general issue grapple with topics, objects, concepts, and narratives that confront the bitter disappointments gestured to by Chu and Drager, and that in other ways expand the concept of “world” itself to better accommodate trans desires, life, and politics.

S. Brook Corfman’s article, “Melting Muscles: Cassils’s *Tiresias* at the Intersection of Affect and Gendered Embodiment,” takes as its point of departure the work of trans multimedia and performance artist Cassils (whose work was featured on the cover of *TSQ* 6, no. 1). Corfman explores the manner in which Cassils uses heat to explore the link between embodied feeling and gendered expectations without resorting to biological determinism. In an innovative contribution to affect theory, Corfman proposes a critical framework for understanding the body’s distribution of thermal energy as an avenue for resisting

dominant and reductive discourses of the relationship between gender and biology, and for understanding how bodily forms and processes are simultaneously shaped by but exceed cultural expectations.

In “‘She of the Pants and No Voice’: Jack Bee Garland’s Disability Drag,” Cameron Awkward-Rich offers a recuperative reading of the life of Jack Bee Garland, the subject of influential trans community-based historian and advocate Lou Sullivan’s 1990 biography, *From Female to Male: The Life of Jack Bee Garland*, who lived around the turn of the last century in northern California. Interpreting Garland not as a gay trans man (as Sullivan did) but as a person who publicly lived a nonbinary life, Awkward-Rich argues that Garland successfully navigated gender, labor, race, and authority in part through the performance of a “crippled transmasculinity” that allowed them to maneuver around physical and epistemic boundaries imposed on female-assigned gender-nonconforming people. The article asks us to question the fraught relationship between *trans* and *disability* that structures the field of transgender studies, and suggests how Garland’s use of the “disability con” as a technology of self scrambles codes of gender, race, and class in ways that create compelling new models of agency and authority.

“Transgender as a Humanitarian Category: The Case of Syrian Queer and Gender-Variant Refugees in Turkey,” by Fadi Saleh, offers a timely contribution to international debates about immigration, asylum, and the refugee crisis. It investigates the material consequences of the categories “transgender” and “transsexual” for Syrians in Syria as well as in diaspora, both before and after the uprising of 2011. Saleh’s work, which shifts the focus away from Western and North American frames of reference, exemplifies the kind of scholarship TSQ aspires to publish with increasing frequency. Saleh’s ethnographic fieldwork with queer and gender-variant Syrians in Istanbul demonstrates that for these individuals (and arguable for other queer and gender-variant refugees), “transgender” is first and foremost a category that facilitates aid and that functions as a mechanism of “humanitarian government.” In consequence, transgender begins to assume a kind of analytical and ideological fixity in such contexts despite the almost infinite malleability of the term in popular, community-based, and academic usage. At a time when the crisis at the US-Mexico border dominates North American discussions of border crossing, Saleh offers an important alternative point of entry for understanding gender-variant and queer refugeeness, migration, asylum policies, and immigration politics.

For those who concur with Drager that the project of “incessantly trying to prove that we are no longer the medicalized transsexual” is “the very place where trans studies has lived and will die” (Chu and Drager 2019: 107), Tobias B. D. Wiggins’s essay, “A Perverse Solution to Misplaced Distress: Trans Subjects and Clinical Disavowal,” helps move us away from that familiar locus. It investigates

how the medical uses of gendered suffering have evolved over time, in concert with public understandings of gender variance. By tracing the nosological history of gender in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)*, as well as through discussion of filmmaker Chase Joynt's *Resisterectomy* (2012), Wiggins demonstrates how cisgender clinicians, in their attempts to taxonomize gender, reveal much about their own psychic lives. In doing so, Wiggins joins and extends conversations begun in *TSQ* 4, nos. 3–4, our special issue on transpsychoanalytics, by critiquing transgender medicalization through his own deployment of psychoanalytic theories of perversion.

In “Epic Stone Butch: Transmasculinity in the Work of Willa Cather,” K. Allison Hammer reinterprets famed midwestern US author Willa Cather through the lens of trans studies. Hammer plumbs Cather's published writings and archival materials to document Cather's early gender transgressions and to demonstrate how the author's travels, experience of the “closing of the frontier,” and interest in World War I shaped a doubly nostalgic longing for a kind of masculinity that was both personally unavailable to Cather as a female-assigned person of her time and place and simultaneously passing out of historical existence for everyone. Hammer discusses “transmaculine authorial pleasure” and the expression of a “transmasculine *jouissance*” in Cather's work to argue that the transmasculine figure of the stone butch offered “women” writers like Cather a “gendered home” from which to write.

In our “Arts & Culture” section, we are pleased to present “The *I* in Trans Genre,” an interview with British author, journalist, and filmmaker Juliet Jacques, conducted and transcribed by Chiara Pellegrini. Focusing specifically on Jacques's *Trans: A Memoir* as a text that purposely subverts the genre of the trans memoir, the conversation opens up to a more general discussion of Jacques's practice of producing work that spans different media and genres. We also present in this section a review by Cyle Metzger of artist Chris Vargas's exhibition, *Consciousness Razing: The Stonewall Re-Memorialization Project*, which calls attention to the erasure of transgender people, specifically transgender women of color, from public and LGBTQ community discourse in the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Stonewall riots in 2019. In our “Translation” section, we feature Nick Mayhew's translation of an excerpt from *Xenia the Servant of God, or Andrey Fyodorovich the Holy Fool* by Dmitry Bulgakovsky. The issue concludes with a robust “Book Reviews” section, which includes reviews by Cassius Adair (of *Cuz: Or the Life and Times of Michael A.* by Danielle Allen), Sayan Bhattacharya (of *Unruly Visions: The Aesthetic Practices of Queer Diaspora* by Gayatri Gopinath), Emmanuel David (of *Mobile Subjects: Transnational Imaginaries of Gender Reassignment* by Aren Z. Aizura), and Gloria Wekker (of *Ezili's Mirrors: Imagining Black Queer Genders* by Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley).

Finally, the cover of this issue features a photo by Marisa Caichiolo of Dorian Wood, a nonbinary artist of color who glorifies the “sanctity and irreverence of intimacy” through the use of their “beautiful fat brown body” and booming voice (Gonsalves 2019). The photo documents Wood’s 2019 performance as part of “DIVERSEartLA” in Los Angeles of *Nodriissx/Narcissx*, during which Wood sat for four hours in a chair in the center of a darkened room, wearing a garment with a slit that exposed their left breast (LA Art Show 2019). Attendees were invited to suckle on the breast for as long as they wanted, while Wood vocalized to a four-channel soundscape composed entirely of their own voice.

References

- Chu, Andrea Long, and Emmett Harsin Drager. 2019. “After Trans Studies.” *TSQ* 6, no. 1: 103–16.
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