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Special Issue: **Transgender Studies and Feminism: Theory, Politics, and Gendered Realities**

Guest edited by Talia Bettcher and Ann Garry

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Introduction

TALIA BETTCHER AND ANN GARRY

Undoing Theory: *The Transgender Question* and the Epistemic Violence of Anglo-American Feminist Theory

VIVIANE NAMASTE

For nearly twenty years, Anglo-American feminist theory has posed its own epistemological questions by looking at the lives and bodies of transsexuals and transvestites. This paper examines the impact of such scholarship on improving the everyday lives of the people central to such feminist argumentation. Drawing on indigenous scholarship and activism, I conclude with a consideration of some central principles necessary to engage in feminist research and theory—to involve marginal people in the production of knowledge and to transform the knowledge-production process itself.

Public Health, Private Parts: A Feminist Public Health Approach to Trans Issues

KRISTA SCOTT-DIXON

This paper identifies and examines the possible contributions that emerging fields of study, particularly feminist public health, can make to enhancing and expanding trans/feminist theory and practice. A feminist public-health approach that is rooted in a tradition of political economy, social justice and equity studies, and an anti-oppression orientation, provides one of the most comprehensive “toolboxes” of perspectives, theoretical frameworks, methods, practices, processes, and strategies for trans-oriented scholars and activists.

Resisting Definition: Gendering through Interaction and Relational Selfhood

ALEXIS SHOTWELL AND TREVOR SANGREY

This paper argues that trans and genderqueer people affect the gender formation and identity of non-trans people. We explore three instances of this relationship between trans and non-trans genders: an allegiance to inadequate liberal-individualist models of selfhood; tropes through which trans people are made to stand as theoretical objects with which to think about gender broadly; and a narrow focus on gender and evasion of an intersectional understanding of gender formation.

“A New Hope”: The Psychic Life of Passing

C. RILEY SNORTON

In an examination of the psychological aspect of passing, this essay challenges Sandy Stone’s conceptualization and subsequent request for transsexuals to forego the act. Employing an auto-ethnographical approach, this essay contends that considering the “psychic” dimensions of passing requires different, and more hopeful, articulations about transsexual bodies, such that gendered and racialized transsexual bodies are produced not simply in terms of social reading and physical embodiment, but also through psychic affirmation and disavowal.

Defeating Bigenderism: Changing Gender Assumptions in the 21st Century

MIQQI ALICIA GILBERT

Bigenderism maintains there are only two genders, which correspond with the two sexes, male and female. Basic bigenderism requires that legal documents and public institutions designate a single invariant gender (that is, sex). Strict bigenderism applies these categories in a social context that stigmatizes “imperfect” men and women who do not reach ideals set by the bigenderist schema. I discuss these concepts and their implications, present three models that successively weaken bigenderist assumptions, and argue for the most radical of the three.

“We Won’t Know Who You Are”: Contesting Sex Designations on New York City Birth Certificates

PAISLEY CURRAH AND LISA JEAN MOORE

This article examines shifts in the legal, medical, and common-sense logics governing the designation of sex on birth certificates issued by the City of New York between 1965 and 2006. In the initial iteration, the stabilization of legal sex categories was organized around the notion of “fraud”; in the most recent iteration, “permanence” became the measure of authenticity. We frame these legal constructions of sex with theories about the “natural attitude” toward gender.

Trans as Bodily Becoming: Rethinking the Biological as Diversity Not Dichotomy

RIKI LANE

Feminist and trans theory challenges “the” binary sex/gender system, but can create a new binary opposition of subversive transgender versus conservative transsexual. This paper aims to shift debate concerning bodies as authentic/real versus constructed/mutable, arguing that such debate establishes a false dichotomy that may be overcome by reappraising scientific understandings of sex/gender. Much recent biology and neurology stresses nonlinearity, contingency, self-organization, and open-endedness. Engaging with this research offers ways around apparently interminable theoretical impasses.

Cross-dressing and Gender (Tres)Passing: The Transgender Move as a Site of Agential Potential in the New Iranian Cinema

ROSHANAK KHESHTI

This article traces the historical becoming of the contemporary super-saturation of images of queer and transgendered Iran through the narrative and tropic devices introduced by filmmakers in the past twenty years. I argue that the censorship code enforced by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance is partly responsible for the formation of what has come to be a ubiquitous figure in the New Iranian cinema: the “cross-dressing” or “passing” figure. By performing close readings of Baran and Dokhtaraneh Khorshid—two films that are exemplary of a sub-genre organized around the “cross-dressing” or “passing” figure—I identify a “transgender move”: a temporary space of political and agential potential that many spectators—both domestic and diasporic—seek in the post 1990s New Iranian cinema.

Embracing the Icon: The Feminist Potential of the Trans Bodhisattva, Kuan Yin

CATHRYN BAILEY

I explore how the Buddhist icon Kuan Yin is emerging as a point of identification for trans people and has the potential to resolve a tension within feminism. As a figure that escapes the dichotomy of male and female, Kuan Yin explodes the dichotomy between universal and particular in a way that captures the pragmatist and feminist emphasis on doing justice to concrete, particular lives without becoming stuck in an essentialist quagmire.

BOOK REVIEWS

NANCY ARDEN MCHUGH

In-Between Bodies: Sexual Difference, Race, and Sexuality by Mary Bloodsworth-Lugo

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Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity by Julia Serano

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Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach and Its Implementation

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