Introduction

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Our title, "Transgender Studies and Feminism: Theory, Politics, and Gendered Realities," reflects the vision and values that shape this special issue of *Hypatia*. Our goal is to view trans studies and feminism together in dialogue. This means that we have staked a political claim at the outset. In particular, this special issue proceeds from a position nicely articulated by Naomi Scheman that trans lives are lived, hence livable (1996, 132). It recognizes the existence of the oppression of trans people. And it sees that there are grounds for non-trans and trans feminist solidarity (Heyes 2003). In this way, the special issue is situated at the intersections of trans and feminist studies. However, we also recognize that this positioning remains complex and fraught. It is worth taking time to survey the lay of the land to see where things stand, where they have been, and where they might go.

Where We Are

Transgender studies arose in the early 1990s in close connection to queer theory. It can be best characterized as the coming-to-voice of (some) trans people who have long been the researched objects of sexology, psychiatry, psychoanalysis, and (non-trans) feminist theory. Sandy Stone's pioneering "The *Empire* Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto" (1991) sought to move beyond such scholarship by writing from the subject-position of a (post) transsexual. By recognizing trans people as flesh and blood human beings with access to experiences of "transness" and transphobic oppression as its starting point, trans studies aims to open up a way of theorizing "trans"—for trans and non-trans people alike—that ideally resists, rather than reinforces, mechanisms of transphobia. The publication of *The Transgender Studies Reader* in 2006 is evidence of the remarkable growth of trans studies—its "coming of age."

Another related area of scholarship is also flourishing—this time in feminism. The publication of this special issue occurs within the context of a handful of new collections that aim to be at once feminist and transcentered. Krista Scott-Dixon's *Trans/Forming Feminisms: Trans/Feminist Voices Speak Out* (2006) was the first of such publications, followed by *Trans-*, a special issue of *Women's Studies Quarterly* (2008), edited by Paisley Currah, Lisa Jean Moore,

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and Susan Stryker. This summer also sees the publication of *You've Changed: Sex-Reassignment and Personal Identity* (2009), edited by Laurie Shrage. It seems fair to say that this issue of *Hypatia* belongs to a phase in feminist and trans studies that can perhaps be best characterized by the word "interaction."

Where We Have Been

Trans studies at its inception was bound up with the tensions between (non-trans) feminist outlooks and trans lives. In fact, trans studies began to emerge in response to some (non-trans) feminists' unfriendly theorizing about trans people, in particular, the work of Janice Raymond.

One of the earliest examples of non-trans feminist hostility was the expulsion of Beth Elliot from the Daughters of Bilitis and the subsequent controversy that ensued over her participation in 1973 in the West Coast Lesbian Feminist Conference in Los Angeles. There, Robin Morgan charged that Elliot was "an opportunist, an infiltrator, and a destroyer—with the mentality of a rapist" (Morgan 1977).[1] This theme of "violation" also recurs in Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology* (1978, 71), and finds full articulation in Janice Raymond's *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male*:

> All transsexuals rape women's bodies by reducing the real female form to an artifact, appropriating this body for themselves. However, the transsexually constructed lesbian-feminist violates women's sexuality and spirit, as well. Rape, although it is usually done by force, can also be accomplished by deception. (Raymond 1979, 104)

Central to Raymond's work is the invalidation of trans self-identifications, justified through appeal to karyotype and history of social experience as belonging to a particular sex (Raymond 1979, 4, 11). For Raymond, the medical treatment of transsexuality flows from a sexist culture that aims to preserve sexist gender roles (xviii, 69). Transsexual women (i.e., "men") who either take up such traditional roles or refuse them on feminist grounds are, no matter what they do, part of the problem (77–79, 101–6). FTMs (i.e., "women") are viewed by Raymond as mere tokens who have been denied empowerment as women-identified-women in order to prop up patriarchal claims that transsexuality is a universal phenomenon (xxiii, 27–28, 140).

It is important to recognize, however, that even around the time of the publication of *The Transsexual Empire*, other voices were speaking out (ultimately, it seems, beneath the din, see Stryker 2008, 108–9). Sandy Stone, an openly transsexual woman and an engineer who had been working at the all-woman recording company, Olivia Records, was explicitly targeted by Raymond (Raymond 1979, 102–3) in a heated controversy over her presence there.

However, in 1977, when an open letter to Olivia protesting Sandy Stone's employment was published in *Sister: A West Coast Feminist Newspaper,* Olivia Records replied:

> Because Sandy decided to give up completely and permanently her male identity and live as a woman and lesbian, she is now faced with the same kind of oppression that other women and lesbians face. She must also cope with the ostracism that all of society imposes on a transsexual. In evaluating whom we will trust as a close ally, we take a person's history into consideration, but our focus as political lesbians is on what her actions are *now*. (Women of Olivia Records 1977, 6)

Furthermore, trans feminist women themselves wrote against the hostility. For example, within a year of *Empire's* publication, Carol Riddell offered a powerful trans feminist critique of Raymond's views with the pamphlet "Divided Sisterhood: A Critical Review of Janice Raymond's *The Transsexual Empire*."[2] By far the most influential response, however, was Sandy Stone's landmark "The *Empire* Strikes Back," which arrived later on the scene in 1991, after Stone went to study under Donna Haraway at UC Santa Cruz.

Stone's article flows from several diverse sources indicative of what seems to have been a rather *queer* feminist moment. The (post) transsexual manifesto would not have been possible were it not for Haraway's own *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1991), Gloria Anzaldúa's theory of the mestiza (1987), and Judith Butler's early queer feminism (1990). Some of the key ideas that have taken hold include the notion that trans oppression may be explained in terms of the gender binary and the notion that the categories "man" and "woman" are both socially constructed and oppressive. In this way, queer feminism seemed to offer a helping hand in the articulation of a new theoretical and political stance.

The tensions between queer and traditional feminist approaches nonetheless remained. Certainly there is a way in which some queer theoretical approaches place into jeopardy the foundations of a traditional feminism that purports to take *women* as its starting point.[3] Importantly, tensions between trans and queer studies exist as well. From the outset, various trans scholars have raised serious worries about the erasure of the experiences of trans people for whom the term "queer" and its entire theoretical/political presumptions seem inapplicable.

Recall, for example, that Butler's early work was partly motivated by the desire to answer concerns that queer enactments (as in a butch–femme relationship) merely replicated traditional patriarchal norms. Such a view presupposed a heterosexual bias that remained oblivious to the way in which gender was reworked in queer contexts. For her, queer gender performance, far from replicating patriarchal norms, could subvert such norms by exposing their

non-natural, imitative character (1990, 174–80). Yet this account seems to leave the charges of gender replication entirely applicable to those trans people who see themselves as "real" men and women. Thus, no theoretical space is afforded for an account of oppression/resistance that may be at work even in the case of trans people who have been dismissed as gender conservative. The work of Jay Prosser (1998), Viviane Namaste (2000), and Henry Rubin (2003) have all in their own ways raised worries about the subsumption of trans into a largely queer paradigm, and indeed, about the transgender paradigm itself that has seemed to underwrite trans studies as such.

Toward the Future: Trans and Feminism

It seems fair to say, then, that feminist, queer, and trans points of theoretical and political departure have been, while overlapping and interconnected, nonetheless distinct.[4] This provides the possibility of trans feminist interplay that does not need to centralize a queer theoretical starting point.[5] Three ways of imagining trans feminist interplay come to mind. The first two proceed from the intersections of transphobia and sexism, and the third proceeds by viewing feminist and trans starting points as distinct.

First, many trans women are well acquainted with the mechanisms of sexism and sexual violence to which they may fall prey, precisely because trans women are recognized *as women*. Likewise, there are ways in which sexism and transphobia can be blended so as not to be separable. For example, many trans women may find that they are stereotypically represented as sexually available whores precisely because they are seen as *trans women*. A trans feminist stance in this sense would involve taking the oppression of trans women as its starting point. Emi Koyama endorses such a view in her definition of "transfeminism" as "primarily a movement by and for trans women who view their liberation to be intrinsically linked to the liberation of all women and beyond" (2003, 244). Such a stance may involve drawing on a kind of analogy with, for example, women of color. Although the very drawing of analogies risks separating trans and race in dangerous ways, it is also suggestive once trans women of color are themselves centralized. Koyama writes:

> In the "women's communities," transsexual existence is particularly threatening to white middle-class lesbian-feminists because it exposes not only the unreliableness of the body as a source of their identities and politics, but also the fallacy of women's universal experiences and oppressions. These valid criticisms against feminist identity politics have been made by women of color and working class women all along. . . . (2006, 704)

Second, a broader trans feminism may be needed to avoid marginalizations that follow from assuming trans women alone as the starting point. Many FTMs have experienced sexist oppression and violence both before transition and also after (when taken to be "really a woman"). Moreover, much FTM activism has been to some degree shaped by lessons learned in lesbian and/or feminist community organizing.[6] And "trans" does not necessarily flag a "crossing" from one gender to the other. Consider, for example, Halberstam's notion of transgender butch that troubles this idea of "crossing" (1998). People who were assigned female at birth and who either self-identify as women (or who refuse traditional categories altogether), who embrace masculinity, or who self-identify as transgender are also obviously vulnerable to sexist oppression and violence.

Finally, beyond an approach that proceeds from the intersections of sexist and trans oppression, the fraught history between feminist and trans studies/politics suggests the value in viewing the two as distinct (see, e.g., Scott-Dixon 2006, 15–16). Where are the tensions? Does trans politics promote feminist politics and vice versa? In what ways can one illuminate the other? In what ways does one obscure the other? In other words, beyond the challenge of thinking through the possible intersections of sexist and transphobic oppression is the challenge of understanding what it is for two modalities of oppression/resistance both to lay claim to gender in distinct and possibly conflicting ways.

Toward the Future: Whose Theory? Whose Politics?

Of course, the challenges are far more complex. Trans studies as it has emerged in white, anglo contexts has only now barely begun to grapple with its own specificity in a way that echoes the history of white, anglo feminism's struggling with the interwoven nature of gender, sexuality, race, language, class, and disability.[7] Moreover, trans studies as it has emerged in the United States has been criticized for its obliviousness to its nation-centeredness (see Namaste 2005).

Thus, the very dialogue between feminism and trans studies threatens to be highly dangerous. Indeed, the danger may prove to be something that can at best be minimized rather than avoided: insofar as both trans studies and feminism inevitably place some priority on gender, it seems that such endeavors may inherently marginalize other forms of oppression. This suggests that the perspectives offered can be only partial at best. More optimistically, it may suggest that a far broader dialogue is necessary—one that exceeds feminism and trans studies as such and undertakes a more inclusive vision of the racism, sexism, heterosexism, and transphobia inherent in a modern, colonial, and capitalist system.

These issues underscore similar concerns about the nature of an academic, and in this case a highly theoretical, approach. In the academic context, too, there are concerns about who gets access to a voice (and why) as well as about the political agendas of those who have been granted a voice. There are worries about a failure of theoretical applicability to lived experiences, as well as the practical worry about the dissemination and material accessibility of academic work. Such considerations require that we ask ourselves the most serious of questions: "What do we *think* we are doing, what are we *actuall*y doing, and *why* are we doing it?"

It is also worth remembering, however, that academia *is* a part of "the real world." Openly trans academics continue to put their own self-identities on the line in the face of possible hostile invalidation in print.[8] Transphobic "scientific" accounts of trans people persist (e.g., Bailey 2003). Consequently, it is worth restating that this special issue itself takes a political stance. Given how oppression and resistance are rendered difficult to fathom, the sheer work of understanding can sometimes be a political intervention. The essays that follow all in their own ways offer such interventions. Together they constitute a rich tapestry of deep and provocative investigations that promise to move trans feminist dialogue into uncharted directions, toward fresh understandings.

The Essays

The first two essays directly address the fraught relationship between theory and the everyday concerns of trans people. In "Undoing Theory," Viviane Namaste offers a trenchant critique of Anglo-American feminist theory over the past two decades. Focusing on Butler's recent work, Namaste argues that abstracting gender from its broader socioeconomic context (and in particular, labor) ignores the pressing issues that confront transsexual women, particularly those engaged in prostitution. She proposes core principles with epistemological and political import that she believes must shape feminist research.

In "Public Health, Private Parts," Krista Scott-Dixon addresses the need for a rich interplay between theory and practice by advocating a specific trans feminist approach, namely, that of feminist public health. Her approach is an integrated set of theories, tools, and strategies grounded in a tradition of political economy, social justice, and equity studies, with an anti-oppression orientation. Drawing on a Canadian anti-racist and social/materialist starting point, Scott-Dixon points to the value of a focus on public health as a way to connect theory to lived experiences to avoid the insularity of some gender theory.

The next two essays delve into the deep relations between oppression and self in ways that centralize the intersectional nature of gender. In "Resisting

Definition: Gendering through Interaction and Relational Selfhood," Alexis Shotwell and Trevor Sangrey provide theoretical insight into non-trans feminist hostility toward trans people. They argue that trans folk impact the gender identities of non-trans people. They elucidate this relational aspect of selfhood by focusing specifically on allegiances to liberal-individualistic conceptions of self, the use of trans people to stand in as devices for theoretical explorations of gender, and the elision of the intersectional nature of gender.

In "A New Hope," C. Riley Snorton replies to Stone's "The *Empire* Strikes Back" by shedding new light on the important theme of transsexual passing. Snorton calls into question Stone's injunction to transsexuals to forego passing by illuminating passing's "psychic dimension." Understanding passing in terms of psychic affirmation and disavowal is important, Snorton argues, in order to provide a more hopeful way to understand gendered and racialized transsexual bodies. This is particularly so when the transsexual bodies in question are "non-op" and the passing in question (taken as a movement from an oppressed group to a dominant group) is not something that can be consistently secured or even secured at all.

The next two essays examine gender-based oppression from a theoretical vantage point and follow the theories into the concrete regulation of gender. Miqqi Alicia Gilbert's "Defeating Bigenderism: Changing Gender Assumptions in the Twenty-first Century" provides a theoretical analysis of "bigenderism." For Gilbert, bigenderism mandates that two genders align with two sexes. While basic bigenderism maintains this division at the level of sex, strict bigenderism mobilizes this division socially to penalize individuals who fail to live up to the social ideal. Gilbert presents three models that successively move away from bigenderism; she defends the most radical of the three.

Paisley Currah and Lisa Jean Moore's essay, "'We Won't Know Who You Are': Contesting Sex Designations on New York City Birth Certificates," examines the concrete regulation of sex through birth certificates in New York between 1965 and 2006 through the lens of Harold Garfinkel's notion of the "natural attitude" about sex. In particular, Currah and Moore discuss changes in legal, medical, and common-sense justifications around the requirements for sex designation from an emphasis on the concept of fraud to the concept of permanence.

Riki Lane continues the theme of rejecting binaries in "Trans as Bodily Becoming: Rethinking the Biological as Diversity not Dichotomy." Lane draws on a reappraisal of scientific understandings of sex/gender in order to shift feminist and trans discussion away from a false dichotomy between authentic/real and constructed/mutable. This has the advantage of avoiding an unfortunate contrast between "subversive transgender" and "conservative transsexual." Recent biology and neurology, Lane argues, offer a picture that is conducive to trans and feminist projects and ought not be ignored or dismissed.

Our final two essays examine the role of image and representation as possible vehicles for trans, queer, and feminist resistance and understanding. In "Cross-dressing and Gender (Tres)Passing," Roshanak Kheshti examines post-1990s New Iranian cinema, providing detailed analyses of the films *Baran* and *Dokhtaraneh Khorshid*. Cross-dressing and passing figures are deployed in what Kheshti calls "the transgender move," which covertly opens up space for queer and trans resistance both inside and outside Iran.

Cathryn Bailey's exploration of the Buddhist bodhisattva, Kuan Yin, in "Embracing the Icon," offers an example of ways in which a traditional religious icon can be used for contemporary trans and feminist political purposes. Because Kuan Yin embraces both genders and neither, some trans people find a source of identification in Kuan Yin. At the same time the figure of Kuan Yin highlights theoretical/practical possibilities: a way to avoid debates over essentialism, to shatter the dichotomy between universal and particular, to emphasize justice in the lives in real concrete people, and to square with the challenge that the very existence of trans people poses for feminism.

Notes

We, Talia Bettcher and Ann Garry, have been friends engaging in trans/non-trans feminist dialogue since the 1990s. We are colleagues in the philosophy department and in the Center for the Study of Genders and Sexualities at California State University, Los Angeles. Talia: working with Ann and other non-trans feminist women such as Laurie Shrage and Sandra Harding has, over time, given me a simple insight into non-trans/trans feminist solidarity—namely the value of open-minded, reality-based, and get-down-to-business feminist friendship. Ann: I completely share Talia's "simple insight" and would have it no other way! I am very grateful for the opportunity to appreciate Talia's window on trans studies and on feminist issues, both trans and non-trans.

We would like to thank two editorial staffs of *Hypatia* for their great work. Hilde Lindeman first encouraged us to propose this special issue; she and the Michigan State University staff, including Lisa Campo-Engelstein, Managing Editor, were efficient and cooperative work partners. When Alison Wylie and Lori Gruen became *Hypatia* editors, they took over our issue midstream; they, Gwynne Taraska, Managing Editor, and Sharyn Clough, Book Review Editor, ensured a smooth transition. They all continue *Hypatia*'s editorial tradition of excellence, flexibility, and good judgment.

1. For further details on the Beth Elliot controversy, see Meyerowitz (2002, 259–60) and Stryker (2008, 102–5).

2. See Meyerowitz (2002, 261) for discussion of the 1975 article "The Transsexual/Lesbian Misunderstanding."

3. For a discussion of these issues, see Heyes (2000, 38–42).

4. For further discussion of the distinction between queer and trans theoretical starting points, see Prosser (1997) and Stryker (2004).

5. Hale (2008) points out that the salience of overlaps with feminism, queer studies, ethnic studies, critical race theory, and post-colonial theory will be driven by local usefulness.

6. For a more comprehensive discussion of such issues, see Hale (1998).

7. For discussions of this, see Roen (2001), Morgan and Towle (2002), and Koyama (2006).

8. See, for example, Sheila Jeffreys's gender-invalidating references to Patrick Califia, Jacob Hale, and Susan Stryker (Jeffreys 2003).

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