

General Editor's Introduction

It's Our Anniversary

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My father used to play “Tony! Toni! Toné!” the night before his anniversary. The date changed several times throughout my life, but he always managed to remember the anniversary eve and treat it like an event. If you don't know the song, it starts by planning the future:

Tomorrow will come, and girl, I can't wait
It's our anniversary, our anniversary
The first thing I'll do is run straight to you
It's our anniversary, our anniversary

Building off that signature early 1990s synth line, the background echoes *anniversary* as a reminder of the subject. My father liked to sing both parts and then make a joke about how he was going to start “Kenny! Keni! Kené!” It was always charming, but also confusing to see how many people he could share such a tender moment with. Eventually I learned the harmony—*do you know what today is?*—so that I could play along. We were conspiring, in a way, to make a moment happen amid the ongoing volatility of his romances.

As *TSQ* wraps up its tenth volume, I have found myself reflecting on my long-term relationship with the journal, and through that several memories have been flashing my way. Like this memory that I continue to return to, the journal has had several tender moments, punctuated by some anxiety-inducing headaches, and has been situated in a lot of oppressive terrain that comes to matter in how it operates. The overwhelming feeling, though, is one of gratitude and excitement for how much can change in one decade. As one of the first people to work for the journal, I look back with long memory. And, as the sole member of the original band, having outlasted my own mentors' editorial tenure, I find myself also thinking forward to tomorrow and, *I can't wait*. It's our anniversary.

The Arizona School

In 2010 I left my lifelong home of California for New Jersey. I'd never been prior to my arrival at Rutgers University. Indeed, I hadn't traveled much at all, and so arriving in the middle of the night to the sticky East Coast always holds my memory. Arriving in New Jersey also meant that I was about to begin my long-awaited gender transition.

I'd gone to Rutgers, and I immediately felt electric. I found graduate school to be an erotic and exciting space. My first year impressed on me the importance of theoretical precision and slow thinking in the generous company of others. I still return to my notes from Elizabeth Grosz's seminars where I felt captivated by the mastery of her lectures that made careful, nuanced, and creative connections between philosophy and feminism. Grosz's influence on my own intellectual trajectory is a sensed one. As I began to transition, I thought through the ways that Grosz foreclosed transgender life in Darwinian selection processes and wondered why these theories were incompatible. At the same time, her masterful weaving of feminist theory with the philosophies of Lacan, Spinoza, Deleuze, Nietzsche, Bergson, and Irigaray was blowing my mind. That same year, in a seminar with Jasbir Puar, she asked that we take seriously the provocations of Gayatri Spivak's seminal essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" We spent an entire semester working through the essay's demands—pulling other work in touch with the politics of virality and affect that were buzzing in the discourse. Puar's demand for a philosophy that attended to the body and the body's capacities set the groundwork for so much of my writing since and had a great impact on how I would come to think about the transing of study. Working through the essay provided a backdrop for Drucilla Cornell's seminar on Derrida, where we worked through deconstruction to the drumbeats of Occupy Wallstreet. We held seminars inside the protest as we sweated through Derrida's embodied philosophy in a memory that leaves me longing for Cornell's brilliant insights on today's political sphere. It was a vibrant moment, with a robust intellectual and political flavor, and in that environment, I began asking better questions and I learned how to translate my ideas to the page, with the help of many.

Though I am among those in touch with my transness from my earliest memories, it took a minute to let that manifest outwardly. Living in an anti-trans world will do that to you. And so, that I'd begun this new phase of pleasurable, embodied feminist study was a profound turn in my life. In that moment, I found myself craving somebody to think transness with. As I set my site on my next location, I attended a CLAGS lecture where I became hyperfocused on the vision Susan Stryker was laying out for a robust field of trans study. I applied to the University of Arizona looking to follow that vision, and, following our first phone conversation, I knew where I needed to be, and I got ready to go.

But before I could get to Tucson, I was brutally attacked at a nightclub in New Brunswick, New Jersey. It was the kind of attack that does not lack mystery, as the slurs and targets clarified the intent. My own memory fails from there, until the traumatic hospital stay, which plays out in my psychedelic dreams as a kind of transmonstrous becoming. The attack choreographed with other memories of gendered and racialized violence I'd endured all my life, but in an intellectual way, presented a problem of *study* that took at least a decade to shake out. With the help of several lovers, friends, and colleagues, I moved to Tucson shortly after the attack. As I felt the scorch of my first Arizona August, the staples in my head had a lingering phantom effect, as my sense of self had been fundamentally altered psychically and physically. On arrival, I was desperate to think through transness, and at the same time, I felt a deep sense of alienation from my trans body, which left me with a paradoxical relationship to both study and self.

Ready or not, I began my work as *TSQ*'s managing editor in our first year of publication. On the eve of our inaugural submission, I was sitting on my partner's couch incredibly frustrated by all the mistakes I kept uncovering. Stacks of papers, several spreadsheets, and a slurry of emails had my stomach in knots. The first issue of *TSQ* featured eighty-six keywords for trans studies and was produced alongside a logistically difficult Kickstarter campaign. Of those eighty-six submissions, there were so many people that I'd been admiring, and the foggy reality of my newly shaken brain still stands out as one of the most challenging moments in "getting it right."

The first issue of *TSQ* was spearheaded by our founding coeditors, Susan Stryker and Paisley Currah, who had been revving the *TSQ* engine since 2009. With the first double issue, their vision would actualize the largest collection of authors thinking in trans studies in a single journal, and the magnitude of that was not lost on me. Ultimately, I made several mistakes that culminated in a lot of shame, shame that swirled with the general fear that my capacities had been fundamentally changed following the assault. That is a sticky kind of feeling that lingers, like gum on the bottom of your shoe, and never really goes away (more on that later).

The journal's first years were animated by the trans studies cluster hire at the University of Arizona. The excitement and challenges of this moment have been documented in Susan Stryker's "Institutionalizing Trans* Studies at the University of Arizona," but here, I wish to offer that despite those trials, it was an absolutely thrilling process to engage in, and it changed the material relations of the University of Arizona, at one point boasting Susan Stryker, Francisco Galarte, Eva Hayward, Eric Plemons, Max Strassfeld, and, later, Z Nicolazzo. Their presence drew attention to the university and to *TSQ* as they served as issue editors, peer reviewers, and editorial board members. Their influence was

undeniable at the graduate level. But faculty hired through the initiative were overseeing a disproportionate number of graduate students, a testament both to their own brilliance and to the desire graduate students across disciplines have for trans theorizing. Ultimately, the Arizona School of trans studies shaped how many people have come to think about the intersection of transness, race, sexuality, and politics within and beyond the university and set the pace for several hires in the field over the last decade.

That *TSQ* began in such thick excitement has meant that the journal has continued to push boundaries, both in form and content.

An Apology in Context

It is impossible to account for the unpaid hours I have offered *TSQ*, often troubleshooting the inevitable mistakes we have made along the way. The move from managing editor to general editor has taught me a lot about the work of journals, in general—from logistics to long stories—and specific to *TSQ*, it means enduring the hardship of transphobia alongside the exploitation of our intellectual labor.¹ Earlier, I mentioned the sticky way shame can overwhelm, make vulnerable, and incapacitate. My promotion to general editor aligned with my arrival at my first tenure-track job at California State University, Long Beach, and though I still had moments of uncertainty, I felt like I'd finally moved forward from the assault and found myself ready to think in new arrangements with new colleagues. While my time there was largely positive, it came to a screeching halt as institutional anti-Blackness and transphobia found their way to my desk, as has been the case for so many of my colleagues and friends across the field. And, as I am sure others will know, that incident reactivated so many other painful moments of violence and voiding. This series of events amid the pandemic fundamentally changed my personal and professional trajectories. It was a time of overwhelming grief, and in that moment, I turned my attention away from *TSQ*.

Because I'd overcommitted myself to the journal for many years, this had a detrimental effect on production. As a result, we have made a lot of errors over the last two years; handling articles in a timely manner, responding to emails, and other small tasks that add up quickly. I hope readers will take my acknowledgment with the sincerity that it carries; however, I also hope it is easily recognized as a structural problem. As an all-trans of color editorial team, we are exploited in most professional arenas, particularly as attention to these questions and presumptive demand for the flesh of trans bodies has increased. Executive, general, special-section, and guest editors are volunteers. It is an enormous amount of time, intellectual generosity, and responsibility, with little institutional support. And it also means entertaining cruelty: from flippant social media discourse to angry emails to rape and death threats. Simultaneously banal and profound, a key

observation I have of the work done here emerges in the ways that transmisogyny functions to both exceptionalize and demonize the transwomen that have offered their unpaid labor to *TSQ*. In fact, I find it challenging to think of any woman that has not endured harassment during and because of her work here. It's notable that this takes the form of targeting femininity, but it is not to the exclusion of the rest of us. We have lost editors to harassment, we have lost issues to conflict, and we have struggled to keep a steady team *and* prioritize the leadership of trans people of color. And it is hard—I am sure it has been for you, as I know it is for me—to sit with, recognize, and muscle through the levels of this widespread harassment, violence, and voiding. But, we do, right?

My embodied experience impresses on me the capacity of trans to upend. I know its deep joy, the pleasure of knowing otherwise, of becoming molecularly imperceptible, and I know that others know it because when we gather, the vibe is undeniable. It is not without interpersonal disagreement, nor absent of philosophical difference. We can keep disagreeing and still, I hope, find ways to team up. From its origin, *TSQ* has tried to be a space wherein emergent ideas can be put into conversation and inspire a greater shift in the assemblage; new ways of thinking that might lead to new ways of being that are better in line with the intellectual, political, and personal shape of trans to come.

The Shape of Trans to Come

This first version of this issue started with a lot of enthusiasm from our editorial team. As we visualized the anniversary issue, we were especially enthused to catch our field thinking in new arrangements. There was a lot of discussion about how to bring new thinking to page. We mused on how we might offer provocations in place of formal argument. And we put in good work to try and bring that vision to life. But, amid the immense difficulties of the onset of COVID-19, this vision became harder to realize, and we were forced to delay this issue a full volume. As other issues fell apart, piecemeal, and whole cloth, we found ourselves giving away bits and pieces of the anniversary issue to fill the gaps elsewhere. That has been the general theme at *TSQ*, I think, because we are a unique journal. We produce a lot of work in the face of exceptional personal and political adversity. We pivot when we need to, and we have worked over the years to produce something worth talking about. This issue is no exception, and we are thrilled to present it as a partial reflection of the exciting and eclectic thinking that makes trans studies so exciting. Bolstering seventeen essays, two visual features, a roundtable, six book reviews, and nearly fifty images, the issue speaks to a wide range of perspectives and offers several lines of flight for us to launch our next era.

Our issue theme—the shape of trans yet to come—references free-jazz pioneer Ornette Coleman's 1959 album *The Shape of Jazz to Come*. Following her

viewing of Shirley Clark's *Ornette: Made in America* (1985), Susan Stryker animated a story that appears near the end of the film in our editorial meeting. Off camera, Clark invites Coleman to "tell us the castration story," a task that he first blushes at but ultimately obliges. Coleman remarks on the way that playing music from a young age put him out of joint with the desires of others. Never able to parse if people were attracted to him or to his musical talent, Coleman ultimately seeks a doctor to castrate him. In imagining castration, Coleman moves toward an abstract body, prying open a gap between the (sexed) body and the understanding of oneself as, say, a man. Ultimately, Coleman opts for circumcision in lieu of castration, but is disappointed by the symbolic reach, suggesting that to really accomplish this form of becoming, circumcision was simply not enough. What Coleman seems to long for—something central to trans life—is a way to ground his own sense of self apart from the prescribed normative functions of his body. To reshape, rethink, to free up the body makes available the speculative gesture "yet to come."

Readers will find this notion—the shape of trans yet to come—remarked on throughout this issue. It takes visual representation on our cover. Readers might remember that the first issue of *TSQ* featured the iconic selfie of Chelsea Manning. On this cover, we are thrilled to welcome the work of Heather Dewey-Hagborg, with Kelly Sharron's annotation on the bio-hacked exhibition *Probably Chelsea* that considers themes that index the last ten years of trans studies and returns Manning to the cover. It sets the stage for the first section, "Open Trans Forms," and a claim from Marquis Bey: *all my friends are trans (or will be soon)*. Bey wants to deemphasize the experiential as the privileged mode of subjectivity, proffering instead that we take a relational understanding of transness. In so doing, Bey brings an important conversation back to *TSQ* that has been staged from the beginning but finds its thrust in volume four's "Issue of Blackness." Victor Ultra Omni and Laura Alexandra Harris continue this work in the form of an intergenerational, elliptical dialogue that captures the space-time contingencies of Black vernacular. They remind us of the ways that Black, queer, and feminist grammars index political life, locating the relationality between subjects as a point of possibility. Dylan McCarthy Blackston examines these questions through sites of gestation, birth, and rebirth through a powerful auto-ethnography that traces trans forward through the political, aesthetic, and contingent capacities of the body as it traverses complex political landscapes.

Thus far, relationality has governed the question of what shape trans might take. Ciara Cremin makes use of Marcuse's "Great Refusal," placing femininity in the realm of refusal rather than domination. In so doing, she shifts questions of experiential alliance to one of class struggle. Cremin's Marxist framework lends structure to Lillian Wolf's careful exploration of Juliana Huxtable's (2019) exhibition *Interfertility Industrial Complex: Snatch the Calf Back*, with specific attention

to the hybridized figure of cow-woman. Here Wolf offers a refresh to the thinking about complexity of relationality brought about by pleasure within exploitative sociopolitical structures. In “Waking to Dream” transfeminist historian Jamey Jesperson tells the life story of Saylesh Wesley in seven parts, exploring different points of inflection that offer both a history and political horizon. So too, do Claudia Sofia Garriga-López and Juliana Martínez in “Transfeminist Latinx America,” which forms transfeminism as a material praxis capable of world making. The world making they envision is partially drawn out in the work by *isola tong* and Molly Jae Vaughn. *tong* offers transcestral listening as a methodological approach, reflecting on their ongoing project, *Transcestral Gathering*, and the not-yet that is to come. Vaughn’s intricate and stylized self-portraiture intensifies the emotional and psychic processes that graft on to the sculpting and shaping of our bodies. And some of the themes I have reflected on in the introduction are elaborated through the multiauthored roundtable that took place at the 2022 National Women’s Studies annual meeting in Minneapolis. The roundtable offers us a robust snapshot of the field, with prescriptive ways forward that center the epistemologies and thought of trans women and femme scholars of color.

Kicking off our feature section is Joan Lubin and Jeanne Vaccaro’s essay—“The Sexological Floorplan”—which offers a brilliant exposition of the social history of sexology through the lives of four women, each uniquely positioned within emergent attempts to institutionalize sexual knowledge. Continuing to move through the science of trans historiography, Sid Hansen’s essay “Beyond Autopoiesis” puts Jules Gill-Peterson, C. Riley Snorton, and Sylvia Wynter into conversation to illuminate new routes for trans histories and trans sciences. Jeremy Chow’s essay offers a serious, yet whimsical, exploration of transness in games, paying special attention to the board game *Wingspan*, and a social media phenomenon, *Bowsette*, based on Nintendo’s video game *Super Mario Bros*. In “Scarred Flesh and the X of Law” Chris Hall works through the concept of the X for trans studies, as theorized by Marquis Bey. Working through interwoven connections of gender, race, law, and crime, Hall offers this analysis through Howard Hawks’s 1932 film *Scarface* in a way that makes space for other ways of being that resist mandates of the biopolitical state. These other ways of being are stimulated by Travis M. Foster’s essay, “White Supremacist Submission,” which revisits Theodore Winthrop’s popular novel, *Cecil Dreeme* (1861) to ask how white desires for sexual submission to nonwhite men operate within the mandates of white supremacy. Foster offers a theory of bottoming that helps illuminate the plasticity of whiteness in imagined scenes of sexual submission.

Many of our feature articles observe something about the modern sex/gender system, and this is reapproached in Adin Walker’s “Lulu ‘Works the Trapeze,’” which offers a historical analysis of two nineteenth-century aerialists:

Lulu, a cross-gender performer who went on to become a prolific photographer, and Zazel, the first performer to be shot from a cannon. Walker works to nuance a history, so often relegated purely to questions of performance. In “Unsettling the Conversation on Trans Rights” Leon Laidlaw and Natasha Stirrett intervene to argue that our current use of gender and rights framework are problematically captured within the reproduction of settler logics. In so doing, they argue, we miss opportunities of collective anti-colonial connections. In the final feature essay, “The Failure of Cis Feminism,” Jordan J. Tudisco offers a diagnosis of the proliferation of TERF (trans-exclusionary radical feminist) discourse as it has become commonplace within intellectual space, specifically universities and colleges.

Our gratitude to Cael Keegan for stewarding the Arts and Culture section for the past two volumes. This issue features Annie Sansonetti’s essay “Girl Talk and Hold Music: Applied Theatre for Feminine Boys and Trans Girls” and offers “girlfriend performance” as an intervention to the narrative of friendship in queer and trans feminine childhood through Wu Tsang’s *Girl Talk* (2015). And our thanks to LaVelle Ridley who has served as our associate book review editor throughout the completion of her dissertation. In that time, she has cultivated an incredible range of reviews of the great work being done in the field. Book reviews are published in every issue of *TSQ*, so this is an enormous amount of labor, and we are in her debt. Please join us in congratulating her and check out her recently published dissertation, “Desiring Bodies, Imagining Selves: Black Trans* Narratives and the Erotics of Imagination” and forthcoming work. For the anniversary issue, she has curated a wonderful lineup, including Cassius Adair’s review of Ana Valens’s *Tumblr Porn*, Marian Phillips’s review of Hil Malatino’s *Side Affects: On Being Trans and Feeling Bad*, Hannah Ayres’s review of Adam Nathaniel Furman and Joshua Mardell’s (eds.) *Queer Spaces: An Atlas of LGBTQIA+ Places and Stories*, el friedman’s review of Paisley Currah’s *Sex Is as Sex Does: Governing Transgender Identity*, Kimberly Soriano’s review of Marquis Bey’s *Cistem Failure: Essays on Blackness and Cisgender*, and Eriqie Zhang on Precarity Lab’s *Technoprecarious*.

With Love

As we speculate on what is to come, *TSQ* will undergo several changes to the editorial team. With the generous support of Duke University Press, the University of Kansas, and the University of New Mexico, we have been able to begin planning what the next volumes can bring. We are thrilled to welcome two new general editors: Dylan McCarthy Blackston and Ciara Cremin. We also welcome a new Arts & Culture editor, Jeanne Vaccaro. Finally, welcome to our new managing editor, Arlowe Clementine, and interns Hazel Zaman and Jas Riley. On behalf of the editorial team, I wish to welcome these new folks and offer gratitude

to our team at Duke, our editorial board, peer reviewers, subscribers, and readers. And it would be impossible to imagine celebrating *TSQ* without appreciation for Susan Stryker and Paisley Currah, who in their divergent and complementary ways brought something special into being. Our work as intellectuals is not limited to academic production, but in the world of it, this journal has accomplished the great feat of doing something unique, fresh, and at times mind-blowing.

It has been a real honor to be a part of *TSQ*. I am enormously proud of what we have done here. So much has been activated; let's take this anniversary as an opportunity to kick it more often, talk sweeter, and build the house we want, big enough for anyone ready to rock with us. Thanks for writing. Thanks for reading. Thanks for being.

Abraham B. Weil is assistant professor of gender and women's studies at the University of Kansas and the general coeditor of *TSQ*.

Note

1. While Duke University Press has been a great champion of our work, I've learned a lot about the ways that academic presses operate under the same pressures as other academic faculty.