In 1995, I found myself standing in line for my turn at the microphone in the Proshansky Auditorium of the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. I was attending a conference called "Lesbian and Gay History," organized by the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies (CLAGS). I had just attended a panel discussion on "Gender and the Homosexual Role," moderated by Randolph Trumbach, whose speakers consisted of Will Roscoe, Martha Vicinus, George Chauncey, Ramon Gutierrez, Elizabeth Kennedy, and Martin Manalansan. I had heard a great many interesting things about fairies and hermaphroditas (as two-spirit Native Americans were still being called), Corn Mothers and molly-houses, passionate female friendships, butch-femme dyads, and the Southeast Asian gay diaspora, but I was nevertheless standing in line to register a protest. Each of the panelists was an intellectual star in his or her own right, but they were not, I thought, taken collectively, a very gender-diverse lot. From my perspective, with a recently claimed transgender identity, they all looked pretty much the same: like nontransgender people. A new wave of transgender scholarship, part of a broader queer intellectual movement was, by that point in time, already a few years old. Why were there no transgender speakers on the panel? Why was the entire discussion of "gender diversity" subsumed within a discussion of sexual desire—as if the only reason to express gender was to signal the mode of one's attractions and availabilities to potential sex partners?

As I stood in line, trying to marshal my thoughts and feelings into what I hoped would come across as an articulate and eloquent critique of gay historiography rather than a petulant complaint that nobody had asked me to be on that panel, a middle-aged white man on the other side of the auditorium reached the front of the other queue for the other microphone and began to speak. He had a serious issue he wanted to raise with the panelists, about a disturbing new trend he was beginning to observe. "Transsexuals," he said, had started claiming that they were part of this new queer politics, which had to be stopped, of course, because everybody knew that transsexuals were profoundly psychopathological individuals who mutilated their bodies and believed in oppressive gender stereotypes and held reactionary political views, and they had been trying for years to infiltrate the gay and lesbian movement to destroy it and this was only the latest sick plot to...

It was an all-too-familiar diatribe—a line of thinking about transsexuality that passed at that time for a progressive point of view among many on the cultural left. At some point, in a fog of righteous anger, I leaned into the microphone on my side of the room and, interrupting, said, "I'm not sick." The man across the auditorium stopped talking, and looked at me. I said, "I'm transsexual, and I'm not..."
sick. And I’m not going to listen to you say that about me, or people like me, any more." We locked eyes with each other for a few seconds, from opposite sides of the auditorium filled with a couple of hundred gay and lesbian scholars and activists (and a handful of trans people), until the man suddenly turned and huffed out of the room. I then proceeded to make what I still hoped was an urgent and articulate critique of gay historiography. The man I interrupted, it turned out, was Jim Fouratt, a veteran of the 1969 gay rights riots at the Stonewall Inn, a founding member of the Gay Liberation Front, and a fixture on the fading New Left fringe of New York progressive politics. I now look back on that exchange as one of the few iconic moments in my public life—a representative of the transgender activitists stared down a representative of the old gay liberation vanguard, who abandoned the field of queer scholarship to a new interpretation of gender diversity. Sweet.¹

Ten years later, in 2005, I found myself once again in the Proshansky Auditorium, for another CLAGS conference. This time I called it "Trans Politics, Social Change, and Justice."² The room was filled with a couple of hundred transgender activists and academics, and a smattering of nontransgender gay, lesbian, bisexual, and straight people. CLAGS itself was no longer being run by its founder, the emeritus gay historian Martin Duberman, but by transgender legal studies scholar Pasley Cutrath. I was there to show Screaming Queers, my recently completed public television documentary on the 1966 Compton's Cafeteria riot, a transgender revolt that took place in San Francisco three years before Stonewall.³ Rather than struggling merely to speak and be heard during the closing plenary session, transgender voices engaged in a lively, sometimes acrimonious, debate. In the middle of a heated verbal exchange between radicals and centrists, a middle-aged white man patiently worked his way up the speaker’s queue to the microphone. It was Jim Fouratt, of course. He complained that a new transgender hegemony was marginalizing and erasing the experiences of people like himself, that a revisionist history of sexual liberation and civil rights movement was rewriting the past in an Orwellian fashion, and—he would no doubt have continued with a further list of similar grievances had not numerous members of the audience shouted for him to sit down and shut up. He paused for a moment, gave up his struggle to be heard, and left the auditorium in a huff. Sad.

Those two moments in the Proshansky auditorium are, for me personally, bookends for a phase in the development of the field of transgender studies—a phase that Stephen Whittle and I have attempted, in a necessarily partial fashion that will unavoidably invite criticism, to document in 'The Transgender Studies Reader.' What began with the efforts of emerging and marginally situated scholars and activists such as ourselves to be taken seriously on our own terms, and not pathologized and cis-missed, has helped foster a sea-change in the academic study of gender, sex, sexuality, identity, desire, and embodiment. Histories have in fact been rewritten; the relationships with prior gay, lesbian, and feminist scholarship have been addressed; new modes of gendered subjectivity have emerged, and new discourses and lines of critical inquiry have been launched. Academic attention to transgender issues has shifted over the span of those ten years from the field of abnormal psychology, which imagined transgender phenomena as expressions of mental illness, and from the field of literary criticism, which was fascinated with representations of cross-dressing that it fancied to be merely symbolic, into fields that concern themselves with the day-to-day workings of the material world. 'Transgender' moved from the clinics to the streets over the course of that decade, and from representation to reality.⁴ Perhaps the most surprising aspect of the whole transgender thing back in the 1990s was the startling rapidity with which the term itself took root, and was applied to (if not always welcomed by) the sociocultural and critical-intellectual formations that were caught up in, or suddenly crystallized by, its wake.⁵ Given the struggles that have attended the advent of "transgender" as a descriptive term for a heterogeneous class of phenomena, merely to use the word is to take up a polemical and political position. In the end, we took the easy way out and pragmatically acknowledged that the term...
rarefied population of transgender individuals, or with an eclectic collection of esoteric transgender practices, represents a significant and ongoing critical engagement with some of the most trenchant issues in contemporary humanities, social science, and biomedical research.

A LITTLE BACKGROUND

The word "transgender" itself, which seems to have been coined in the 1980s, took on its current meaning in 1992 after appearing in the title of a small but influential pamphlet by Leslie Feinberg, *Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come.* First usage of the term "transgender" is generally attributed to Virginia Prince, a Southern California advocate for freedom of gender expression. Prince used the term to refer to individuals like herself whose personal identities she considered to fall somewhere on a spectrum between "transvestite" (a term coined in 1910 by Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld) and "transsexual" (a term popularized in the 1950s by Dr. Harry Benjamin). If a transvestite was somebody who episodically changed into the clothes of the so-called "other sex," and a transsexual was somebody who permanently changed genitals in order to claim membership in a gender other than the one assigned at birth, then a transgender was somebody who permanently changed social gender through the public presentation of self, without recourse to genital transformation.

In Feinberg's usage, transgender came to mean something else entirely—an adjective rather than a noun. Feinberg called for a political alliance between all individuals who were marginalized or oppressed due to their difference from social norms of gendered embodiment, and who should therefore band together in a struggle for social, political, and economic justice. Transgender, in this sense, was a "pangender" umbrella term for an imagined community encompassing transsexuals, drag queens, butches, hermaphrodites, cross-dressers, masculine women, effeminate men, sissies, tomboys, and anybody else willing to be interoperaed by the term, who felt compelled to answer the call to mobilization. In the wake of Feinberg's pamphlet, a movement did indeed take shape under that rubric; it has gradually won new civil and human rights for transgender people, and has influenced the tenor of public debate on transgender issues for more than a decade.

Feinberg's call to arms for a transgender liberation movement followed close on the heels of another watershed publication that laid an important cornerstone for transgender studies, Sandy Stone's 1991 *posttranssexual manifesto.* Stone wrote against a line of thought in second-wave feminism, common since the early 1970s and articulated most vehemently by feminist ethicist Janice Raymond, which considered transsexuality to be a form of false consciousness. Transsexuals, in this view, failed to properly analyze the social sources of gender oppression. Rather than working to create equality by overthrowing the gender system itself, they internalized outmoded masculine or feminine stereotypes and did harm to their bodies in order to appear as the men and women they considered themselves to be, but that others did not. In this view, transsexuals were the visible symptoms of a disturbed gender system. By altering the surface appearance of their bodies, such feminists contended, transsexuals alienated themselves from their own lived history, and placed themselves in an inauthentic position that misrepresented their "true selves" to others. Stone called upon transsexuals to critically refigure the notion of authenticity by abandoning the practice of passing as nontranssexual (and therefore "real") men and women, much as gays and lesbians a generation earlier had been called to come out of their self-protective but ultimately suffocating closets. Stone sought to combat the anti-transsexual moralism embedded in certain strands of feminist thought by soliciting a new corpus of intellectual and creative work capable of analyzing and communicating to others the concrete realities of "changing sex." To a significant degree, Feinberg's "transgender" came to name the ensemble of critical practices called for by Stone's *posttranssexual manifesto.*
In 1975, a network of local support group leaders loosely affiliated themselves with the U.S. activist group TAO (Transsexual Action Organization). TAO-UK was a short-lived group devoted to anti-sexiism, anti-racism, and peace campaigns that also specifically sought the right of self-determined medical treatment for transsexual people. These early activists became the core of Press for Change in 1992, whose signal victory has been passage of the national Gender Recognition Act in 2004—an accomplishment without parallel in the United States. Partly as a result of Press for Change's efficacy in leveraging the mechanism of institutional power, and partly as a result of profoundly different healthcare delivery systems, transgender academic work in the UK tended from the outset to be more policy-oriented, and more focused on medical and legal issues, than work originating in the United States, which has tended to be more concerned with queer and feminist identity politics. The differences between two such closely related bodies of scholarship highlights the need for careful attention to national contexts, not only when attempting to understand transgender phenomena themselves, but also when trying to understand how transgender phenomena have been interpreted and represented.

The 1994 Queer Studies Conference at the University of Iowa fostered the first truly international network of emerging transgender scholars, and resulted in the formation of the still extant trans-academic listserv. The First International Conference on Cross-Dressing, Sex, and Gender, held in 1995 at California State University at Northridge, represented another benchmark in the development of the transgender studies field. For the first time at a professional meeting, an older generation of (primarily nontransgender) academic specialists who studied transgender phenomena was confronted by a significant number of academically trained specialists who also happened to be transgender people themselves. Transgender attendees angrily protested conference policies that marginalized and stigmatized transgender participants, such as asking transgender people to use separate toilet facilities from the other attendees, or scheduling presentations by transgender scholars exclusively in the "community track" rather than the "professional track."

The situation improved dramatically within a few short years. The astonishingly rapid rise of the term "transgender" seems to have increased exponentially around 1995 (fueling in part by the simultaneous, and even more astonishing, expansion of the World Wide Web). By the late 1990s a number of transgender studies special issues of peer-reviewed academic journals had appeared, as well as transgender-themed anthologies from academic publishers. Even the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association, the old-guard professional organization for medical and psychotherapeutic service-providers to gender-questioning people, capitulated to the new nomenclature by naming its in-house publication the International Journal of Transgenderism. Increasingly, courses in transgender studies were taught at universities across North America and Europe, and transgender scholarship and cultural production were integrated into sexuality and gender studies curricula, as well as within general courses in such disciplines as sociology, psychology, anthropology, and law. Graduate students begin writing theses and dissertations on transgender topics—more than 300 to date. The new interdisciplinary field gained coverage in the U.S. Chronicle of Higher Education and, in the UK, the Guardian's Higher Education supplement. By the end of the last century, transgender studies could make a fair claim to being an established discipline, though one with relatively scant institutional support.

This is the body of intellectual work that The Transgender Studies Reader seeks to sample and contextualize. It is intended to provide a convenient introduction to the field as it has developed over the past decade, an overview of some of the earlier work that informed this scholarship, and a jumping-off point for more sophisticated analyses in the next generation of inquiry.

BROADER CONTEXTS

The emergence of transgender studies has closely paralleled the rise of queer studies, with which it has enjoyed a close and sometimes vexed relationship. One influential interpretation of queer studies' appearance in the United States in the late 1980s and early 1990s is that the AIDS crisis necessitated a profound rethinking of the relationship between sexuality, identity, and the public sphere. Countering the homophobic characterization of AIDS as a "gay disease" required a postindustrial sexual politics that simultaneously acknowledged the specificity of various bodies and sexualities (such as gay men), while also fostering strategic political alliances between other, sometimes overlapping, constituencies similarly affected by the epidemic (initially African refugees in Europe, Haitians in the United States, hemophiliacs, and injection drug users). This new "queer" politics, based on an array of opposition to "heteronormative" social oppression rather than a set of protections for specific kinds of minorities that were vulnerable to discrimination, radically transformed the homosocial rights movement in Europe and America. The queer movement allowed transgender people to make compelling claims that they, too, had political grievances against an oppressive heteronormative regime. Transgender studies initially took shape in that political and intellectual ferment.

Neither feminism nor queer studies, at whose intersection transgender studies first emerged in the academy, were quite up to the task of making sense of the lived complexity of contemporary gender at the close of the last century. First-wave African-American feminist Sojourner Truth's famous question, "Ain't I a Woman?", should serve as a powerful reminder that fighting for representation within the term "woman" has been at least as much a part of the feminist tradition as has asserting the value of womanhood and fighting for social equality between women and men. "Woman" typically has been mobilized in ways that advance the specific class, racial, national, religious, and ideological agendas of some feminists at the expense of other women; the fight over transgender inclusion within feminism is not significantly different, in many respects, from other fights involving working-class women, women of color, lesbian women, disabled women, women who produce or consume pornography, and women who practice consensual sadomasochism. Just as in these other struggles, grappling with transgender issues requires that some feminists re-examine, or perhaps examine for the first time, some of the exclusionary assumptions they embed within the fundamental conceptual underpinnings of feminism. Transgender phenomena challenge the unifying potential of the category "woman," and call for new analyses, new strategies and practices, for combating discrimination and injustice based on gender inequality.

Like recent feminism and feminist scholarship, queer politics and queer studies also remain invested, to a significant extent, in an underlying conceptual framework that is problematized by transgender phenomena. "Sexual object choice," the very concept used to distinguish "hetero" from "homosexual" sexuality, loses coherence to the precise extent that the "sex" of the "object" is called into question, particularly in relation to the object's "gender." Queer studies, though putatively antimoroverenerative, sometimes fails to acknowledge that same-sex object choice is not the only way to differ from heterosexual cultural norms, that transgender phenomena can also be antimorphenerative, or that transgender phenomena constitute an axis of difference that cannot be subsumed to an object-choice model of antimorphoregenerativitv. As a result, queer studies sometimes perpetuates what might be called "homonormativity," that is, a privileging of homosexual ways of differing from heterosexual norms, and an antipathy (or at least an unhinging blindness) toward other modes of queer difference. Transgender studies is in many ways more attuned to questions of embodiment and identity than to those of desire and sexuality, and is also to other efforts to insist upon the salience of cross-cutting issues such as race, class, age, disability, and nationality within identity-based movements and communities.
Transgender phenomena involve queer studies, and gay and lesbian communities, to take another look at the many ways bodies, identities, and desires can be interwoven.

Transgender studies emerged in the early 1990s not just in conjunction with certain intellectual trends within feminism and queer theory, but also in response to broader historical circumstances. The disintegration of the Soviet Union, the end of the cold war, the rise of the United States as a unipolar superpower, the development of the European Union as the first multi-national state, and the elaboration of new global forms of capital during these years precipitated a pervasive, deeply motivated, critical reexamination of various conceptual binaries. Sex/gender systems, like other cultural constructs, deformed and reformed in tandem with new material circumstances.12 The popular film and stage production Hedwig and the Angry Inch—the story of a male East German who undergoes a (botched) genital conversion surgery in order to become the wife of an American soldier, and later regrets the decision—explores precisely this shift in post–Cold War possibilities for gendered embodiment.23

If a frame as totalizing as "East/West" at least momentarily lost its explanatory purchase in a chaotic post-9/11 world that seemed increasingly structured by diasporic movements and transnational flows, how likely was it at that time that the equally hegemonic construction "woman/man" would remain uninterrogated? Transgender studies stepped into the breach of that ruptured binary to re-conceptualize gender for the New World Order. The new field approached gender not as a system for correlating two supposedly natural, stable, and incomparable biological sexes (male and female) with two normative, fixed, and equally incomparable social categories (man and woman). Rather, it called into question that entire epistemological framework, and conceived of gender as yet another global system within which a great many diverse and specific forms of human being were produced, emnished, and modified along multiple axes of signification. In a world seemingly bent on becoming one, transgender studies grappled with the imperative of counting past two, when enumerating the significant forms of gendered personhood.

Furthermore, throughout the 1990s, the impending calendrical event of the year 2000 helped link critical attention to the collapse of familiar binaries with a sense of epochal change and the perceived advent of a new historical era. During the most recent fin-de-siècle, transgender phenomena were widely considered the bellwethers (for better or worse) of an emergent "postmodern" condition. Rita Felski suggests that the up-tick in attention to transgender issues at the close of the last century was an expression of "premillennial tension," she contends that ends of centuries serve as provocations to cultural moments in which to articulate myths of death and rebirth, decline and renewal, and she argues that in our own historical epoch these concerns have been writ large across proliferating representations of transgender bodies.24 "Transgender" became an overdetermined construct, like "cyborg," through which contemporary culture imagined a future filled with new possibilities for being human, or becoming posthuman.25 Transgender studies emerged at this historic juncture as one practice for collectively thinking our way into the brave new world of the twenty-first century, with all its threats and promises of unimaginable transformation through new forms of biomedical and communicational technologies.

POSTMODERNITY

Transgender phenomena may be "postmodern" to the extent that they are imagined to point beyond contemporary modernity, but transgender critical theory is technically postmodern, in one narrow use of that term, to the extent that it takes aim at the modernist epistemology that treat gender merely as a social, linguistic, or subjective representation of an objectively knowable material sex. Epistemological concerns lie at the heart of transgender critique, and motivate a great deal of the transgender struggle for social justice. Transgender phenomena, in short, point the way to a different understanding of how bodies mean, how representation works, and what counts as legitimate knowledge. These philosophical issues have material consequences for the quality of transgender lives.

In the modern base-and-superstructure epistemological paradigm, sex is considered the stable referential anchor that supports, and is made known by, the signs of gender that reflect it. This is a specific instance of what cultural critic Frederic Jameson called a "mirror theory of knowledge," in which representation consists of the reproduction for subjectivity of an objectivity assumed to lay outside it.26 The epistemological assertion that the material world is reflected in the "mirror of representation" is "modern," in a long historical sense, to the extent that it gained force along with the rise of scientific materialism in societies of Western European origin since the end of the fifteenth century. "Mirror" is what ultimately matters in this modern European worldview; it lies at the root of knowledge, and is the fundamental source of the meaning (re)invented in it through the derivative and secondary practices of human cognition and perception.

In this seemingly commonsensical view, the materiality of anatomical sex is represented socially by a gender role, and subjectively as a gender identity: a (biological) male is a (social) man who (subjectively) identifies himself as such; a woman is similarly, and circularly a female who considers herself to be one. The relationship between bodily sex, gender role, and subjective gender identity are imagined to be strictly, mechanically, mimetic—a real thing and its reflections. Gender is simply what we call bodily sex; when we see it in the mirror of representation—when questions asked, none needed.27 Transgender phenomena call into question both the stability of the material referent "sex" and the relationship o’ that unstable category to the linguistic, social, and psychical categories of "gender." As the ambiguous bodies of the physically intersexed demonstrate in the most palpable sense imaginable, "sex," "any sex," is a category "which is not one." Rather, what we typically call the sex of the body, which we imagine to be a uniform quality that uniquely characterizes each and every individual whole body is shown to consist of numerous parts—chromosomal sex, anatomical sex, reproductive sex, morphological sex—that can, and do, form a variety of viable bodily aggregations that number far more than two. The "wholeness" of the body and "sameness" of its sex are themselves revealed to be socially constructed.

Likewise, the contrary subjective identities of transsexuals, the surgical practices of transvestites, and the gender inversion of butches and queers all work to confound simplistic notions of material determinism, and mirror-style representational practices, in relation to questions of gender. Sex, it turns out, is not the foundation of gender in the same way that an apple is the foundation of a reflection of red fruit in the mirror; "sex" is a mash-up, a story we mix about how the body means, which parts matter most, and how they register in our consciousness or field of vision. "Sex" is purpose-built to serve as a foundation, and occupies a space excavated for it by an epistemological construction project.28

Mirror-style representation encodes a moral drama. It can be true or false, accurate or error-filled. Deliberate misrepresentation of the relationship between representation/gender and referent/sex is fraught with consequences—sometimes with ostensibly comical consequences, as is the case with the innumerable cross-dressing faces that litter the landscape of pop culture, and sometimes with far more tragic results. Transgender people who problematize the assumed correlation of a particular biological sex with a particular social gender are often considered to make false representations of an underlying material truth, through the willful distortion of surface appearance. Their gender presentation is seen as a lie rather than as an expression of a deep, essential truth; they are "bad" by definition.29

For the supposed epistemological sin of perpetrating falsehoods that ensure innocent and unsuspecting others, the atypically gendered must sometimes to pay with their lives. Hillary Swank won an Academy Award in 1999 for portraying Brandon, a murdered transgender youth whose story, told in the true-crime drama Boys Don't Cry, has become emblematic of the chronic underrecognition in
our society of deadly anti-transgender violence.\textsuperscript{11} Those who commit violence against transgender people routinely seek to excuse their own behavior by claiming they have been unjustly deceived by a mismatch between the other’s gender and genitals.\textsuperscript{4} State and society do similar violence to transgender people by using genital status, rather than public gender or subjective gender identity, as the fundamental criterion for determining how they will place individuals in prisons, residential substance abuse treatment program, rape crisis centers, or homeless shelters. One important task of transgender studies is to articulate and disseminate new epistemological frameworks, and new representational practices, within which variations in the sex/gender relationship can be understood as morally neutral and representationally true, and through which anti-transgender violence can be linked to other systemic forms of violence such as poverty and racism. This intellectual work is intimately connected to, and deeply motivated by, sociopolitical efforts to stem the tide of anti-transgender violence, and save transgender lives.

\textbf{PERFORMATIVITY}

The model of linguistic “performativity,” whose general applicability to the field of gender has been popularized most notably by the work of Judith Butler, has been tremendously influential within transgender studies precisely because it offers a non- or postreferential epistemological framework that can be useful for promoting transgender social justice agendas.\textsuperscript{5} The notion of performativity, which is derived from speech act theory and owes an intellectual debt to the philosophical/linguistic work of J. L. Austin in \textit{How to Do Things With Words}, is sometimes confused with the notion of performance, but this is something else entirely.\textsuperscript{12} Butler in particular, especially in her early work in \textit{Gender Trouble and Bodies That Matter}, has been criticized in some transgender scholarship and community discourse for suggesting that gender is a “mere” performance, on the model of drag, and therefore somehow not “real.”\textsuperscript{13} She is criticized, somewhat misguidedly, for supposedly believing that gender can be changed or rescripted at will, put on or taken off like a costume, according to one’s pleasure or whim. At stake in these critical engagements is the self-understanding of many transgender people, who consider their sense of gendered self not to be subject to their instrumental will, not disposable, not a form of play. Rather, they see their gendered sense of self as ontologically inescapable and inalienable—and to suggest otherwise to them is to risk a profound misrecognition of their personhood, of their specific mode of being.

Speech act theory holds that language is not just, as the structuralists would have it, an abstract system of negative differences; rather, language is always accompanied by and through particular \textit{speech acts}, the intent of which is communicative. Speech is social. It necessarily involves specific speakers and audiences, and can never be entirely divorced from extralinguistic contexts. A performative is one type of speech act. In contrast to a constative speech act—which involves the transmission of information about a condition or state of affairs, with which its correspondence is demonstrably true or false (e.g., “The apple is red”)—a performative “constates” nothing. It is a form of utterance that does not describe or report, and thus cannot be true or false. It is, or is part of, the doing of the action itself. Examples of performative speech acts would include vowing (“I do”), marrying (“I now pronounce you man and wife”), or being bar-mitzvahed (“Today I am a man”). To say that gender is a performative act is to say that it does not need a material referent to be meaningful, is directed at others in an attempt to communicate, is not subject to falsification or verification, and is accomplished by “doing” something rather than “being” something. A woman, performatively speaking, is one who says she is and who then does what woman means. The biologically sexed body guarantees nothing; it is necessarily there, a ground for the act of speaking, but it has no deterministic relationship to performative gender.

\textbf{To conceptualize gender as a performative act raises a larger question about social and political strategies. For Jean-François Lyotard, writing in \textit{The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge}, all acts of communication are inscribed within the field of agonistics (from the Greek agon, “to joust”). Jouster may be play, or it may be combat, but it necessarily involves taking up positions relative to one another, as well as some form of exchange, and some rules of engagement. Speech acts, in this model, are the smallest agonistic units, and they take place within different types of “language games,” each with its own particular rules of enunciation, each as different from one another as a game of poker is from a game of chess. “The model of the ‘language game,’ like the model of the performative speech act, is useful for understanding in a formal way what was at stake in the emergence of transgender studies in the 1990s. Each language game has specific players, or ‘posts’—for example, a sender, an addressee, and a referent—each assigned a part according to the type of speech act taking place. The constative speech act, “The apple is red,” for example, is uttered by a sender who assumes a position of knowing the information; an addressee receives the utterance and is in a position to give or withhold agreement to the utterance. The referent—that about which the utterance pertains (in this case, the apple)—is not, in this game, in a position to make statements about itself. A performative utterance plays by a different set of rules. It is “not subject to discussion or verification on the part of the addressee, who is immediately placed within the new context created by the utterance.”\textsuperscript{14} Provided, of course, that the speaker is authorized, through a variety of extralinguistic circumstances, to occupy the position of performative utterer. The “I do” of the marriage vow has no performative face unless the right person addresses it to the proper other. Who gets to say “I do” to whom is completely determined by social and political forces (and as such it is subject to change over time).

The emergence of transgender studies in the 1990s was one such moment of change, when sociopolitical activism, coupled with broad and seemingly unrelated shifts in material conditions, worked in concert to create the possibility of new performative utterances, unprecedented things to say, unexpected language games, and a heteroglossic outpouring of gender positions from which to speak. Previously, people who occupied transgender positions were compelled to be referents in the language games of other senders and addressees—they were the object of medical knowledge delivered to the asylum keeper, the subject of police reports presented to the judge; they were the dirty little outcasts of feminist and gay liberation discourses whose speakers claimed for the affecting of the liberal state. The psychotherapist whiskered them into the surgeon’s ear, while the lawyer nodded in approval. Only rarely did we speak to others on our own behalf—in the pages of infrequently published autobiographies, or from the shadows of the freak show tents. This is not to suggest that transgender people did not carry on lively exchanges among themselves; indeed, there is a vast body of transgender community-based critical and cultural work that is scarcely visible to the broader society. It is rather to acknowledge that few other than transgender people themselves, and their self-appointed minions, took part in these marginalized conversations.

Then something happened in the early 1990s, though it’s hard to say exactly what that something was. Causality is always a fraught concept. A calendar started rolling over; a world order collapsed; a pandemic virus changed the way we thought about sexuality and identity and the public sphere; an existing world was invested with new meaning to mobilize a movement, and it all crashed together on a cultural landscape fractured by an epistemic rift. Amidst the wreckage, transgender people seized the moment to produce knowledge of transgender phenomena in a postmodern fashion. We fought our way into speaking positions, claimed our voice with a vengeance, said who we were, and erupted into discourse. Transgender studies is one record of the conversation that ensued.
(DESUBJUGATED KNOWLEDGES)

A useful terminological distinction can be made between "the study of transgender phenomena" and "transgender studies" that neatly captures the rupture between modern and postmodern epistemic contexts for understanding transgender phenomena, the different types of language games that pertain to each context, and the different critical practices that characterize each project. The study of transgender phenomena, as noted below, is a long-standing, on-going project in cultures of European origin. Transgender studies, on the other hand, is the relatively new critical project that has taken shape in the past decade or so. It is intimately related to emergent "postmodern conditions" for the production of knowledge, and is an innovative methodologically as it is epistemologically.

Transgender studies considers the embodied experience of the speaking subject, who claims constative knowledge of the referent topic, to be a proper—indeed essential—component of the analysis of transgender phenomena; experiential knowledge is as legitimate as other, supposedly more "objective" forms of knowledge, and is in fact necessary for understanding the political dynamics of the situation being analyzed. This is not the same as claiming that subjective knowledge of "being transgender" is somehow more valuable than knowledge of transgender phenomena gained from a position of exteriority, but is rather an assertion that no voice in the dialog should have the privilege of masking the particularities and specificities of its own speaking position, through which it may claim a false universality or authority.

This critical attention to questions of embodiment and positionality aligns transgender studies with a growing body of interdisciplinary academic research in the humanities and social sciences. Transgender studies helps demonstrate the extent to which, among the body as a culturally intelligible construct, and hence, the techniques with which bodies are transformed and positioned, are in fact inextricably incorporated. It helps correct an all-too-common critical failure to recognize "the body" not as one (already constituted) object of knowledge among others, but rather as the contingent ground of all our knowledge, and of all our knowing. By addressing how researchers often fail to appreciate the ways in which their own contingent knowledges and practices impact on the formation and transformation of the bodies of others, transgender studies makes a valuable contribution towards analyzing and interpreting the unique situation of embodied human consciousness.

Methodologically, transgender studies exemplifies what Michel Foucault once called "the inscription of subjugated knowledge." By "subjegated knowledge," Foucault meant two different types of knowledge: First, he meant "historical contents that have been masked or buried in functional coherences or formal systematizations." He elaborated:

To put this in concrete terms, it was certainly not a semiotics of life in the asylum or a sociology of delinquency that made an effective critique of the asylum or the prison possible; it was really the appearance of historical contents. Quite simply because historical contents alone allow us to see the dividing lines and confrontations and struggles that functional arrangements or systematic organizations are designed to mask. Subjugated knowledge are then blocks of historical knowledge that were present in the functional and systematic ensembles, but which were masked, and the critique was able to reveal their existence by using the tools of scholarship.

Transgender studies draws upon just this sort historical content—descriptive materials buried in ethnographies of non-European gender systems, the transcripts of legal proceedings hidden in some obscure publication of case law, or the files of psychiatric patients—which must be excavated from the archives with the traditional tools of scholarship, and recontextualized within current academic debates. Recovering this kind of knowledge, and knowing where to look in the first place, requires, in Foucault's words, "meticulous, precise, technical expertise." It is the technical ability of its practitioners to make use of these scholarly tools, and to be conversant in academic discourse, that makes "transgender studies" a part of academe, and not just part of a "transgender community"—through the field's relationship to that community is crucial for its intellectual vitality.

Foucault's other kind of subjegated knowledge, "which speaks to the politics of community involvement, is also central to the methodology of transgender studies. What Foucault describes as 'a whole series of knowledges that have been disqualified as nonconceptual knowledges, as insufficiently elaborated knowledges, naive knowledges, hierarchically inferior knowledges, knowledges that are below the required level of erudition or scientificity,' is precisely the kind of knowledge that transgender people, whether academically trained or not, have of their own embodied experience, and of their relationships to the discourses and institutions that act upon and through them. Such knowledge may be articulated from direct experience, or it may be witnessed and represented by others in an ethical fashion. In either case, Foucault contends, the reappearance "from below" of "these singular local knowledges" like the knowledge of the psychiatrist or the delinquent, which have been "left to lie fallow, or even kept at the margins," is absolutely essential to contemporary critical inquiry.

While it might at first seem paradoxical to yoke together in a single term two such seemingly disparate forms of knowledge—"the specialized domain of scholarship" and "the knowledges that have been disqualified by the hierarchies of erudition and science"—it is precisely this genealogical coupling that, for Foucault, gives discursive critique its essential vigor. Both erudite scholarship and delegitimated "knowing" recapture, for use in the present, a historical knowledge of particular structurations of power. One offers a "meticulous rediscovery of struggles," while the other preserves "the raw memory of fights." Transgender studies, through desubjugating previously marginalized forms of knowledge about gendered subjectivity and sexual embodiment, promises just such a radical critical intervention.

RENAVATION

Foucault's vast philosophical-historical research project helps support the claim that attending to what we would now call transgender phenomena has been a preoccupation of Western culture since Greek and Roman antiquity. The regulation of homosexuality, hermaphroditism, gender inversion, and other forms of 'social monotony' have figured prominently in the development of 'regimes of normalization' whose latter-day descendents in the modern period remain decidedly active and robust.

Transgender studies reenacts this considerable intellectual heritage. It calls active to "transgender effects," those deconstructive moments when foreground and background seem to shift and reverse, and the spectacle of an unexpected gender phenomena illuminates the production of gender normativity in a startling new way. In doing so, the field begins to tell new stories about things many of us thought we already knew.

Since at least the nineteenth century in Europe and the United States, transgender phenomena have haunted the social order in ways that have spurred the development of sexology, psychiatry, endocrinology, and other medical-scientific fields involved in social regulatory practices. The clinical bibliography specifically related to transgender phenomena runs to many thousands of publications, and continues to grow even now, but it can be traced back to figures like Richard von Krafft-Ebbing, the great Victorian taxonomist of social deviance. Early entries in this bibliography include Karl von Westphal, who wrote of 'contrary sexual feelings' as well as Max Marczuk's "drive for sexual transformation," Magnus Hirschfeld's "sexual intermediaries," and Havelock Ellis's "neutists." By the time we get to Freud, his disciples, and his detractors in the early twentieth century, we are on familiar
ground with contemporary concepts in psychology and psychiatry. By the middle of the last century, a specialized medical literature on gender dysphoria coalesced around the work of Harry Benjamin and his colleagues Robert Stoller, Richard Green, and John Money, which culminated in 1980 in the codification of a newly-defined clinical entity, "gender identity disorder," as an official psychopathology recognized by the American Psychiatric Association. Transgender studies is now in a position to treat this immense body of clinical work as its archive. Parallel to the clinical archive is an immense, centuries-old ethnography, equally ripe for empirical research that documents European perspectives on cultures encountered around the world through exploration, trade, conquest, and colonization. This literature, along with its explication within the social science disciplines, demonstrates a perpetual European fascination—and more than a little Eurocentric universe—with the many ways that relationships between bodily sex, subjective gender identity, social gender roles, sexual behaviors, and kinship status have been configured in different times and places. The mysterious mujeres rados and morghfites who populate the earliest accounts of European exploitation of the Americas are not simply—or perhaps even actually—vanished or suppressed members of "third genders" eradicated by genocidal European practices; they are, just as importantly, categories of deviant personhood constructed by a European imaginary and invested with the magical power to condense and contain, and thereby delimit, a more systemic European failure to grasp the radical cultural otherness in its totality. For half a millennium now, Eurocentric culture has been treated to a parade of gender exotics, culled from native cultures around the world: India hijras, pojarionsmatsu, Thai kathoys, Brazilian travestis, Arabian saris, Native American berdaches—and on and on. "Transgenders," at home and abroad, are the latest specimens added to the menagerie. The conflation of many types of gender variance into the single shorthand term "transgender," particularly when this collapse into a single genre of personhood crosses the boundaries that divide the West from the rest of the world, holds both peril and promise. It is far too easy to assimilate non-Western configurations of personhood into Western constructs of sexuality and gender, in a manner that recaptures the power structures of colonialism. "Transgender" is, without a doubt, a category of first World origin that is currently being exported for Third World consumption. Recently, however, engagements between a "transgender theory" that circulates globally with Eurocentric privilege, and various non-European, colonized, and diasporic communities whose members configure gender in ways that are marginalized within Eurocentric contexts, have begun to produce entirely new genres of analysis. Such encounters mark the geo-spatial, discursive, and cultural boundaries of transgender studies, as that field has been developed within Anglophone America and Europe, but also point toward the field's untapped potential.

In developing our criteria for inclusion in this reader, Stephen Whittle and I decided to highlight some important earlier works in scientific sexology and feminism, and then to focus on works in English that explicitly engage with the term "transgender" (whether positively or negatively). We offer key texts drawn the "queer gender" debates, work that highlights the recent attention to female-bodied masculinities, work that explores the formation of a sense of self as well as the "border wars" of gender identity politics, and work that explores ethics, morality, and embodiment. We resisted attempting as "around the world in eighty genders" global survey of gender-diverse practices and identities. This was done in part because we felt we could not do justice to the global scope of transgender phenomena and in part because a number of such anthologies attempting precisely this already exist. One unfortunate consequence of our decision was the exclusion of many important bodies of work done with a regional focus, such as Don Kulick's and Annick Prieur's studies of male-bodied gender diversity in Mexico City and Brazil, Mauro Cabral's intensely poetic interdisciplinary work in Argentina, and a great deal of work on Southeast Asian genders. We concentrated instead on work that explores how "transgender" has circulated globally, and on how race, class, and location have complicated the dissemination of that term.

Even given our editorial choices, which admittedly limited the range of cultural and ethnic diversity of work included in this reader, we were struck by the overwhelming (and generally unmarked) whiteness of practitioners in the academic field of transgender studies. This is due, no doubt, to the many forms of discrimination that keep many people of color from working in the relatively privileged environment of academe, but also to the uneven distribution and reception of the term "transgender" across different racial, ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic communities. We both feel, however, that the analytical framework for understanding gender diversity that has emerged from transgender studies—albeit though it is—instrumentalized by the relative lack of contributions from people of color, and is therefore ultimately inadequate for representing the complex interplay between race, ethnicity, and transgender phenomena. That discussion is one that we hope to see developed more productively and more extensively in the years ahead.

In conclusion, we simply note that transgender phenomena haunt the entire project of European culture. They are simultaneously everywhere and everywhere. Their multiple and contradictory statuses of visibility and absence, of presence and absence, are intimately related to the operations of social power that create norms, impart consequence to difference, and construct the space of a dominant culture. A transgender studies more attuned to differences of race, location, and class, as well as to differences within gender, would provide a better view into the making of this world we all inhabit, and enable a powerful critical recontextualizing of contemporary (post)modernity in all its complexity.

NOTES


17. Thanks to Stephen Whible for substantive contributions to my understanding of the active roots of UK-based transgen-
dy studies; see Stephen Whible, "Tissue Links of Friendships, the Basketball and Politics: 1970s Trans-Atlantic Influences


20. No definitive text of Trill’s 1835 speech is extant; see Catherine Tribe, Sojourner Truth: Slave, Prophet, Legend (New


22. On third terms and the deprecation of binaries, see MaryJane Cameron, Vested Interests: Class, Dressing, and Categorical Ambiguity (New York: Routledge, 1992).


27. On the "ontononatural" relationship between gender and body, see the discussion of "the natural attitude" in Harold Garfinkel, "Paring and the Managed Achievement of an 'Interested Person,'" in Studies in Ethnomethodol-
agy (Glenwood City, Min: Prentice Hall, 1967), 186-195.


29. For a range of feminist poststructuralist, antifeminist accounts of the gender/sex relationship, see, in particular reference to the question of postmodernity, see Judith Butler and Joan Scott, eds., Feminism Theories the Political (New York: Routledge, 1992).


37. Lepard, Postmodernism, p. 9.


39. The concept was "Sonatextics" was formulated in conversation with Nikias sulphur, Joseph Puglise, and other members of the Department of Critical and Cultural Studies, Macquarie University; see http://www.scs.mq.edu.au/ sonatextics.

40. Foucault, Michel Foucault, Society Must Be Defended. Lectures at the College de France, 1975-76 (New York: Picador, 2003), 17, 8.

41. Michel Foucault, abnormal (New York: Picador, 2003), 1-29.

42. For a similar strategy, see by Prems, "Transsexuals and the Transsexuals: Inversion and the Emergence of Trans-