

TRANSGENDER STUDIES 2.0

New
Directions
in the Field

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TRANSGENDER PHENOMENA

A *transgender phenomenon* is anything that disrupts or denaturalizes the normative linkages we assume to exist between:

- Biological sex
- Sex-role socialization
- Subjectively experienced or self-perceived gender/identity
- expression of stereotypical gender behavior and appearance
- kinship status
- reproductive function or capacity

Whatever we see that brings the unnaturalness of this assemblage into visibility is a *transgender phenomenon*.

TRANSGENDER PHENOMENA

Transgender phenomena seem fascinating to us with eurocentric modernity because they call into question a fundamental assumption or belief about the nature of reality: namely, that men and women are opposite, mutually exclusive categories of being whose differences are rooted in unchangeable material facts.

TRANSGENDER PHENOMENA

And yet, we see all around us an actually existing world populated by beings who seem to contradict this assumption and challenge the dominant metaphysical or ontological beliefs about what is real, or what is actually possible.

We can't divorce the question of these beings' existence from questions of technology, from questions of history, or questions of cultural difference.

TRANSGENDER PHENOMENA

What does it mean to take seriously the idea that the gender binary is ideological, historical, socially constructed, or technologically produced, rather than being natural?

This is the question at the heart of transgender studies.

“STUDIES OF TRANSGENDERISM” VS. TRANSGENDER STUDIES

Attention to *transgender phenomena* has a long history in the West:

- Anomalous or “Monstrous” Births
- Hermaphroditism/Intersex
- Sartorial Regulation
- Body Modification Practices
- Sex-based divisions of labor
- Control of reproduction
- Prostitution
- Same-sex erotics and sexual activity
- Violations and variations of kinship status
- Fascination with cultural differences in *assemblage* of personhood
- Religious/sacred roles for persons with “transgender” attributes

STUDIES OF “TRANSGENDERISM” VS. TRANSGENDER STUDIES

- Legal and Moral Regulation of “transgender phenomena” are quite ancient and persistent.
- By the late 19th century, these “traditional” interests in transgender phenomena are joined by a sexological science that increasingly becomes a powerful new apparatus of social regulation, linked to the production of bodily norms.

STUDIES OF “TRANSGENDERISM” VS. TRANSGENDER STUDIES

- Within this context, the “study of transgenderism” is always an exercise in the study of deviance from the standpoint of a normativity that does not have to declare itself.

STUDIES OF “TRANSGENDERISM” VS. TRANSGENDER STUDIES

- It represents a particular kind of “language game,” or discourse, where a sender utters a statement to an addressee about an object of knowledge, and the addressee is in a position to grant or withhold judgment, or to issue a dialogic response.
- For example: the scientist (sender) tells the public (addressee) that the transsexual (object of discourse) is sick.
- In this discursive arrangement, the object of knowledge is not in a speaking position.

STUDIES OF “TRANSGENDERISM” VS. TRANSGENDER STUDIES

- “Transgender Studies” represents a new discursive arrangement, emerging circa 1990-95, that allows for ex-centric critiques of normativity, non-hierarchizing accounts of difference, and new speakers of different language games.
- For example: the transsexual saying to the public that the scientist’s attribution of pathology to transgender phenomena can be situated within a discursive history of the juridical and biomedical management difference according to hierarchies of health and sickness.

STUDIES OF “TRANSGENDERISM” VS. TRANSGENDER STUDIES

- This requires not merely a dialogical reply, but an entirely different mode of utterance: the performative

STUDIES OF “TRANSGENDERISM” VS. TRANSGENDER STUDIES

- The performative is a kind of speech act that accomplishes its action in the event of utterance: “*I do.*”
- It resituates the locus of authority by creating a new context within which the utterance is experienced.
- But it must be efficacious and felicitous in order to have performative force.

STUDIES OF “TRANSGENDERISM” VS. TRANSGENDER STUDIES

- Transgender Studies begins with performatively authorized transgender speaking and subject positions, in dialog with other voices.

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- The tricky question: what produces the efficaciousness of transgender performativity, circa 1990-1995?

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Judith Butler

Gender Trouble
(1990)

The application performativity to the concept of gender

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The End of the Cold War, 1989-1992

Binarisms of many sorts no longer resonant in a unipolar geopolitical context

The historicity of “gender” as a Cold War Era concept begins to become apparent

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Millennialism and Techno-futurist Fantasy

The cyborg body appears as Y2K approaches

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AIDS and Emergence of Queer Politics

A decade into the AIDS crisis, activism and critique intensify in the context of globalization, neoliberal economic restructuring, corporate capitalism, and U.S. imperialism and military adventurism

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Transgender

An Old term Acquires a New Meaning
in an Uneven Fashion

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Early Problematics within Transgender Studies

Activism, Identity Politics, and Entering Discourse

Transgender Self-Representation and Autoethnography

Critiques of and Resistance to Medico-Juridical Model

Critiques of Gay and Feminist Liberation Discourses

Engagement with Queer Cultural, Political, & Social Formations

Poststructuralist Accounts of Embodied Subjectivity

Recovery of “Subjugated” Knowledges

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Some Key Texts

Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*

Sandy Stone, "Posttranssexual Manifesto"

Leslie Feinberg, "Transgender Liberation"

Kate Bornstein, *Gender Outlaws*

Rikki Anne Wilchins, *Read My Lips*

Susan Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein"

Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*

Viviane Namaste, *Invisible Lives*

Jay Prosser, *Second Skins*

Henry Rubin, *Self-Made Men*

David Valentine, *Imagining Transgender*

Currah, *et al. Transgender Rights*

The Transgender Studies Reader

TRANSGENDER STUDIES 2.0

Limitations of “Transgender”

Implicit Whiteness

U.S.-centricity

Anglophone Bias

Global Politics of Terminological Adoption

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New Circumstances

Generational Change

Securitization And “War on Terror” Post 9/11

Deepening Ecological and Economic Crises

Homonormative and Transnormative Citizenship

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Emerging Themes

Radical Political-Economic Critique
Biopolitics, Health, and Citizenship
Posthumanist Boundary Questions/STS
Local, National, and Area Studies
Migration, Diaspora, and Travel
New Media and Cultural Production
Affect
Disability Studies

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Eric Stanley, *Captive Genders*
Dean Spade, *Normal Life*

Beatriz Preciado, *Testo Junkie*

Women's Studies Quarterly, *Trans-*
Feminist Studies, *Race and Transgender Studies*

Trystan Cotten, *Transgender Migrations*
Anne Enke, *Transgender Feminism*

Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Sex and Change in Iran*
Howard Chiang, *Transgender China*

Transgender Studies Reader, Volume 2
TSQ: The Transgender Studies Quarterly

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- Continuing relation to feminism, queer studies
- Entry into and critiques of academic disciplines
- Local, regional, and national histories/ethnographies
- Histories/ethnographies of categories
- Boundary questions: animal/(post)human/technology
- Biotechnologies
- Health regulation and neoliberalism
- Biopolitics
- Cultural production of trans people
- Social Justice Struggle/Critique of neo-liberalism
- Transgender normativities
- Movement