



For a Tranarchist Feminism: Transition as Care and Struggle

SCOTT BRANSON

Oberlin College

Transgender Contagion

I am writing this essay from a place of dissatisfaction with anarchist discourse, from a place of frustration with trans discourse, from a place of frustration with feminist discourse. I am writing as a trans anarchist feminist, to try to bring feminist lessons to anarchism, to try to reframe important feminist ideas as anarchist in spirit, and to invoke the experience and possibilities of transition as an anarchafeminist practice. I want to take risks in my demands and conclusions, risks of failure, risks of being wrong, in order to make action possible that changes the world here and now, not only in an imagined future. I will build on work in all of these fields, but I will read while taking sides, I will read impiously, as means that equal the ends I envision—along with all of the people I am in conversation with—for collective liberation. In this light, I will succumb to the seductions of past ideas of gay liberation and of woman’s liberation, while trying to avoid any naiveté or idealization, because I think our desires for their enthusiasm is right, even if their movements failed. I don’t subscribe to a supposedly grown-up, hard-headed analysis that traps us in our circumstances, or theorizes reform or assimilation as the only avenues. We have to be daring in our claims and not make them in the language of philosophy, economics, materialism, politics, which suffocates our desires that we can discover in our everyday practices. To this end, I am understanding feminism as a movement to root out all naturalized hierarchies, anarchism as a demand to end the social order, and transness (or transition) as the possibility of change, of altering our conditions.

We are eight years past the official, so-called, “transgender tipping point,” which marked a different representation of trans people in the media—symbolized by Laverne Cox, a Black trans woman appearing on the cover of *TIME* magazine. If this tipping point of representation or visibility raised hopes for more inclusion, possibilities of assimilation (particularly for white people living up to colonial standards), and a boon for a rightsbased reformist trans movement on the model of the gay rights movement post-liberation era, those hopes coexisted with continual, even rising violence against



Black trans women. That is, the spectacle of trans inclusion and visibility celebrated in the “trans tipping point” was mirrored by this spectacular violence as part of mundane reality. So what does that mean? In the spirit of hate crime legislation, the violence against Black trans women could be dismissed as individualized, phobic response—for the most part not explicitly state-sponsored. Some might still hold out hope that the state could further protect this special group with enhanced punishment for targeted violence. Though of course the criminalization of racialized trans women did continue apace, and there are examples of people like CeCe MacDonald, who was incarcerated for self-defense against anti-trans attacks. Thus, the appeal to the state more often causes harm rather than any good.

Indeed, this last near-decade has also seen an ever-increasing campaign of state-based violence against trans people, from the notorious bathroom bills (HB2 in North Carolina, which combined anti-trans legislation with anti-worker policies) to the most recent sweep of legislation across the United States that criminalizes trans health care, parents of trans kids, discussion of queerness in schools, trans participation in sports, drag shows, and more. While I could make arguments for why I think this current trend is consolidating a (Christian) fascist right, I will focus instead on making an argument that transness indeed is a threat to today’s society – but in a good way, a disruption of the norms that help reproduce the violence of the current social order. Though I don’t imagine that all trans people must pose this threat in the same way, or even explicitly take it up, I do think that trans anarchist feminists—tranarchist-feminists—can look to the ways that we live in transition as a form of care and struggle against this world and in creation of a different world. Some trans people want to just live and be left alone. And yet that still gets seen as a threat in itself. To become anarchist transfeminists, we embody this threat to the state, to capital, to all forms of hierarchy, and through trans care and mutual aid enact other worlds that counter the mundane violence of anti-transness.

In *Atmospheres of Violence*, Eric A. Stanley tracks the persistence of violent trans antagonism alongside the seeming progress narrative of gay and then trans inclusion. Stanley’s fundamental argument, which they name anarchist, is that “racialized antitrans/queer violence is not antagonistic to the democratic state; it is among its foundations—a minor claim that demands the end of the world” (2021: 114). This parallel rise of representation and violence is not a paradox—it does important work of holding out the carrot of a good life, while beating us with the stick of mundane violence as the best we can hope for. Inclusion always replays hierarchies of race, wrought through the legacies of chattel slavery and (settler) colonialism; ultimately inclusion further strengthens the system we want to destroy by giving it the alibi of “diversity.” Widening the circle of inclusion will still cast others out to disposable life or death worlds. We must demand the end of the world, as Stanley writes, because this is a world



of racial domination played through gender hierarchy and economic exploitation. In an anarchist approach to transition, we can argue that our desires help enact the end of this world, as we aim them away from inclusion and towards community self-defense and care.

Visibility and representation might be a trap, as Stanley suggests, and many others agree. Yet with the tipping point past, there has been more sharing of information and resources that has allowed for more people to understand their own needs and desires for transition. The reactionary take on this (relatively minor) increase in trans people—an old reactionary play in the form of fomenting moral panic—is to consider transness a contagion.¹ The recent legislative and policy attacks on trans life in the United States has focused on access to affirming health care, specifically for young people who (might) want to transition. Along with the attack against teachers/education, drag story hours, and other ways that queer life is shown to be non-threatening, the idea has spread that adults are “grooming” children to become transgender/transsexual (an echo of past phobias of turning kids gay). The term “grooming” comes from the language around abuse, here childhood sexual abuse, a form of manipulation that creates a victim who might not even realize they are being abused. As usual, the specter of queers as child abusers comes in to cover over the fact that the cis-hetero (fundamentalist Christian) family is a much more common site of such abuse.

Noah Zazanis flips this grooming claim on its head in the essay “Social Reproduction and Social Cognition,” pointing to “the many social influences dedicated to grooming children for cisgenderism.” Zazanis reminds us that “the structure of gender under capitalism is formed through violence *in all cases*,” drawing the conclusion that “in cases of cisgender identification [...] this coercion has been most effective” (2021: 43). In other words, gender itself is a disciplinary tool, developed within the context of colonialism, racial capitalism, and the state. Still, there are few ideas I’d like to pull from this claim that cisgender identification results from “the most effective coercion.” In a way, we might relate to it with the feeling that cisgender people are actually ineffectual transsexuals, or people who don’t have the ability to come out. This kind of logic has also been connected to different conceptions of sexuality: i.e., gender/sexuality exists on a spectrum, which therefore means that no one really exists at the poles of the binary straight/gay, man/woman. And yet, we still have a specific group of people who do transition and who do have gay sex, and who ostensibly do this openly among some people.

¹ It’s not coincidental that this happens during an ongoing pandemic with millions of deaths attributable to states and corporations. But the idea of queerness as a social contagion, or plague, has a history both in phobic attacks and in queer reclamation.



In *Epistemology of the Closet*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick describes this dilemma as “an incoherence of definition” (1990: 11), which

holds the minoritizing view that there is a distinct population of persons who ‘really are’ gay; at the same time, it holds the universalizing views that sexual desire is an unpredictably powerful solvent of stable identities; that apparently heterosexual persons and object choices are strongly marked by same-sex influences and desires, and vice versa for apparently homosexual ones; and that at least male heterosexual identity and modern masculinist culture may require for their maintenance the scapegoating crystallization of a same-sex male desire that is widespread and in the first place internal. (1990: 85)

I use this lengthy excerpt since already within this definitional incoherence, Sedgwick outlines the inherent failures of a certain gay liberation and gay rights movement. The universalizing tendency, perhaps, aligns with the early iterations of gay liberation such as Guy Hocquenghem’s in *Homosexual Desire*, which sees desire itself as potentially disruptive of capitalism and the state, along with cis-hetero-patriarchy, specifically in the ways that it transcends individual identity—in fact, in Hocquenghem’s work the imperialist, capitalist state can be seen as a reaction formation to the inner threat of homosexuality, just as Sedgwick says. Meanwhile, the minoritizing tendency aligns with the narrowing of liberation into the gay rights movement, employing a strategic essentialism to win some favors from the state, which potentially recognizes the deal of inclusion that spells exclusion for others. But Sedgwick’s final point about the way that modern Western society is formed through this convulsion of masculinist sexuality and gender around the internal threat of same sex desire (and we can perhaps add in there feminization) is where we must take aim. Even many liberationist tendencies, as Guy Hocquenghem unpacks in *Gay Liberation After May ’68*, remained stuck within leftist pieties that would not foment a deep uprooting of the state and capitalism along with its gender/sexual social trappings like the family, ultimately forgoing an anarchist possibility. That is, even leftists get stuck in state logics or reformist approaches (Maoism or Marxist-Leninism, socialism, an inability to do away with liberalism). The failure of gay rights is clear enough; the failure of gay liberation perhaps remains to be understood—and I would claim that this failure comes from an insufficient anarchism (more precisely, an insufficient trans anarchist feminism). That many of the early writings of gay liberation have found resonance today with queer anarchists and anti-state communists demonstrates that we might be able to complete the thinking sketched out there. This thinking demands, to go back to Stanley again, an end of the world.

The failure of gay liberation prepared the failure of gay rights, and in this process the splintering included a further definitional fold, where middle class gay men—deploying precisely the ‘strategic essentialism’ referred to above, aimed at maximizing their own chance at recognition—removed trans femmes from the broader term, then in



use, “homosexuality.” The identity formations underpinning a rights-based movement then repeat themselves. In a recent essay, “We Are All Nonbinary: A Brief History of Accidents,” Kadji Amin traces the way binary identity positions, whether gay/straight or trans/cis, get defined from the perspective of the non-norm/deviant position, and thus end up idealizing the fixed norm despite near-universal fluid lived experience. Amin’s argument demonstrates another version of Sedgwick’s definitional incoherence, where there is a universal misalignment with binary sexual and gender norms, but only a minority who claim the terms of deviancy like gayness or transness.

Amin builds on this retroactive definition to point to another limitation of the horizon of trans politics that gets trapped in individual identity. To rehearse Amin’s analysis: heterosexuality is defined retrospectively after the legal/medical/psychiatric definition of homosexuality; cisgender gets defined after the fact of transgender. These definitions don’t change the fact that say, many self-identified straight men have had or do have sex with other men. Heterosexuality actually doesn’t describe “an exclusive, normal, and healthy sexual orientation to the opposite sex” but rather makes a claim of aspiration to “an idealized normality” (Amin 2022: 110-11). The shift in the definition of ‘transgender’ that Amin notes historically has a different effect. Transness gets defined as a category outside of homosexuality as an effect of splits within the gay liberation movement—but it was also a tactic for trans people to gain access to hormones and surgery. In the (neo)liberal tradition, the strategic redefinition of transness ends up creating an identity category to make political claims. Trans people are no longer, as Amin importantly states it “people who desire transition,” a category that understands transness through a relationality, rather than an identity—with cisgender people being those who don’t desire transition. Trans is its own identity solidified against the myth of a cisgender social identity, someone who feels at ease in their gender in correspondence with their assigned sex at birth. Of course, experientially even presumed cis people have trouble with gender norms. But there might be a distinction between discomfort—or even a critical perspective—and the desire to change one’s presentation, physiology, social, and legal status to match one’s gender. (Hints again of the universalizing spectrum.)

Amin’s larger argument makes an important contribution to an understanding of gender/sexuality outside of identity categories that divest gender/sexual deviancy not only of its real context, but also its power of resistance and worldbuilding. I combine Zazanis’s claim that cisgender would be the outcome of successful coercion and Amin’s point that the invention of the term cisgender helps spread the myth that anyone is actually comfortable in their gender, to reiterate the fundamental understanding that gender, before anything else, is a disciplinary tool. Though Amin’s essay offers a critique of Butler’s concept of performativity and its legacy of misreadings as simply a change of costume, this idea of gender as discipline does undergird Butler’s theory, which clearly



sees gender as something done under threat. But I would suggest that Amin's definitional rephrasing becomes important for re-imagining transness in its potential threat. Since, as he writes, trans people are those who "desire transition," we might specify, following Zazanis, that this desire leads to a refusal of discipline and coercion. This refusal is what I would like to develop into an anarchist understanding of transition.

If we stick simply to the fact of gender as a means of discipline—as a lived form of oppression—then, when we talk about trans people, we risk confining ourselves in this abject position. The lived experience of oppression and violence is understandably hard to ignore, but it then becomes integral to (self) definition. When the social situation of transness morphs into an identity position in the neoliberal climate, then we see a clinging to the abjection of oppression, especially when that can be rewarded by the "politics of deference," where the fact of positional oppression supposedly makes your political ideas more worthy of being heard.

On the other hand, the reactive position that wants to do away with trans nominalism that allows for, as Amin describes, a nonbinary identity that has no social or lived expression, also risks getting trapped. Nominalism means here, I'm trans because I say I am. I'm nonbinary, even if I don't deviate from the gender expectations of my forcibly assigned sex, the much lampooned self-identification. I understand Amin's objection to nominalism not simply as an attempt to gatekeep some people outside of transness or gender nonnormativity, but an attempt to retain the focus on transness as a lived *social* experience. Nominalism, he cautions, can become an idealism where gender is understood simply an internal identity. However, Amin's response to the fear of losing the specificity of transness can lead to similar results as the medicalist "real life" test, where transness is arbitrated ("gate-kept") from outside by a certain external measure and authority. Naming oneself trans could very well be an articulation of a desire to transition, and we don't know where that person stands in the process, along with all the difficulties of accessing forms of transition and the vulnerabilities it exposes one to. People claiming different genders may not be a clear material shift in the moment, but we don't know where it ends. We can keep it open while still acknowledging the fact the fact of differential positioning in relation to power and violence.

To rephrase it: we want to understand transness through its material effects. But in doing so, trans experience might still end up being gauged by subjection to violence, by your exclusion from resources or access to hormones or surgery.² This only

² Vivian Namaste's "Undoing Theory" provides an earlier objection to Butler and others who use trans women as examples in theory and thus lose the specificity of their experiences, for example, with HIV or as sex workers. She discusses how the Trans Day of Remembrance actually ends up flattening out trans life by reducing it all to transphobic violence.



complements the medicalized definition of transness, which has been applied both externally (by medical and psychiatric professionals) and internally (by trans people seeking access and therefore performing medical norms to get what they want and need). A certain materialist thinking could simply invoke transness as defined either by medical intervention (a material modification of your body), or a history of gendered trauma (the material violence aimed at your body). This binary leaves out other forms of transition—social transition, which probably includes most trans people, but also forms of legal transition in terms of documents. If this binary of trans definition through medicine or violence remains consonant with the normalization of the medical institution then it might enshrine particular paths of transition, ones that keep the patriarchal binary intact. But as Hil Malatino points out in *Side Affects*, only a small number of trans people would actually live up to a medical definition of transition as goal, since access to resources is often out of reach or intermittent, or not always desired. Therefore, there has been a turn in materialist visions of transness towards transition as a social practice. To define transness through an unending process of transition aims to avoid reproducing the violence of the social order; it understands the discipline and coercion that puts us into immutable gender categories and refuses those terms (destroys the world) in order to offer a lived pathway towards a different world in the uneven, unpredictable, difficult and often joyful process of changing gender and living out multiple sexual lives.

Dean Spade writes that singular, medicalized transition narratives work to interfere with trans desire: “recognizing that trans people make fine pleasures and benefits apart from the ability to conform to gender norms raises the threat discussed earlier that, indeed, trans people might be engineering ourselves” (2006: 324). Spade specifically understands the desire for transition as a threat to the social order. Part of that desire for transition, Susan Stryker famously describes as “a means for disidentification with compulsorily assigned subject positions”: the trans person chooses “a set of practices that precipitates one’s exclusion from a naturalized order of existence that seeks to maintain itself as the only possible basis for being a subject” (1994: 249). It would be an error to imagine this as a simple freedom of choice based on an autonomous subject, since as Stryker points out, we don’t only choose to be excluded but are compelled by our own desires, our inability to fit within this naturalized order. In this theorizing of trans life, Stryker melds the individual and the collective at the point of contradiction, with a politicized affect, rage, that can alter the space of understanding of the self, the world, and its power structures.

But far from the threat of “engineering ourselves” that Dean Spade articulates, the combination of certain versions of trans materialism with the norms of representation still risks ending up limiting the scope of transness to another identitarian, rights-based movement—in other words, only asking for survival without demanding the end of the



world. I worry that an iteration of a trans politics that rejects the legacy of gay liberation (perhaps due to its bastardization in queer theory) and its critique of identity as idealism, in favor of a so-called trans materialism that remains grounded in our neoliberal white supremacist state-sanctioned hellscape will merely continue to reproduce the class structure of transness itself, rather than aim to destroy this society. This is understandable as a response, for when we face state attacks on our very existence, it shuttles us towards policy measures and civil rights claims that narrow our politics and often pushes out an anarchist approach, which understands the idea of “survival pending revolution,” but brings the revolutionary moment into the present, rather than push it to an unknown future. Still, the insistence on a certain representation of certain forms of trans life risks reaffirming the conditions that the process of transition works against. We might learn from the failures of struggles around abortion that limiting our horizon to policy and state-sanctioned possibilities renders us ever vulnerable to the whims of moral panics that instrumentalize our lives to stoke anger and garner votes.

Even if it is naïve or wrong, I want to think here of transition, then, as a threat to the social order, not just another way of living that must be supported (though it is that too). This isn't to claim the trans person as “a revolutionary subject,” which remains within an outdated Marxist rubric, or as Ellis L. Herman warns in “Tranarchism: Transgender Embodiment and Destabilization of the State,” would let cis people off the hook of joining in the destruction of the social order (2015: 80). In fact, the collective care that trans people perform is a form of anarchist mutual aid, a horizontal and decentralized community care, which reproduces transness through transition as a social phenomenon, a form of social reproduction that alters the conditions of this world. This mutual aid is also a form of self-defense and participation in struggle, and thus already part of the destruction of this world and the building of a new one (or many different worlds), whether that is conscious or intentional or not. Hil Malatino theorizes this in the form of t4t practices of love between trans people: “As such, t4t is inevitably a difficult practice of love across difference in the name of coalition and survival, and it thus can't presuppose or predicate such love on identitarian or subjective sameness” (2022: 49). But this mode of coalition and survival still must be pushed further—towards an anarcha-feminist analysis. Otherwise, we risk remaining in the collaborationist space that Joy James theorizes through her idea of the “captive maternal,” a space of care and survival for those held captive—specifically Black people—that contains a threat yet still stabilizes the general reproduction of capitalist state violence. These instances of care contain revolutionary potential, but can yet be integrated into the functioning of the racial capitalist world.³ The failure of gay

³ Besides the amazing work done by the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries, I can think of the work of Ash Williams and House of Kanautica, supporting incarcerated Black trans women get what they need



liberation shows us that we can't naively assume trans is in itself a revolutionary position, because along with this social world we want to destroy, we would have to give up the very idea of transgender/transsexuality, too. This point harkens back to Sedgwick's definitional incoherence, or Hocquenghem's claim that after the gay movements splintered—or exhausted themselves in the act of coming out—we no longer want to be homosexuals.

At the height of his work with the militant gay group the FHAR, Guy Hocquenghem wrote, "We don't choose to become homosexual, but we choose to remain homosexual" (2022: 85). But he was already ready to leave this position behind. He was writing in response to the endless quest to find an origin for homosexuality—a quest he abjures in his first book, *Homosexual Desire*, as he theorizes a socially disruptive desire that can't be narrativized in that way. The desire for origin is the same as the desire for cure—or, in other words, genocide. This claim walks the line between the liberal autonomous subject with freedom of choice and the fated biological minority through the path of desire. Hocquenghem discusses the "sense of betrayal, hiding something from your parents, and kind of from everyone, which is both repulsive and delightful": "in this pleasure of secret complicity there is both something radical [...] and at the same time a kind of masochistic pleasure that I'm bored of" (2022: 85). Put this way, against the backdrop of the gay movement that framed itself as confession, or coming out, there was already a sense of puerility. As he writes, it didn't really matter if one tries to hide it, the others—the normals—will clock you. In fact, this is how Hocquenghem discovered his own queerness, by being told he was a faggot by the other kids at school. This is why at the end of his stint within French gay liberation movements, Hocquenghem no longer even wants to retain homosexual—he moves on to the idea of the *folle*, the queen, the effeminate man, another abject figure that Amin reminds us was left behind by the assimilation opened up to white bourgeois cis gay men. We don't choose to be gay/trans, we do choose to remain gay/trans, and ultimately, we will be able to leave these positions behind.

In the spirit of gay liberation, I want then to expand on Amin's "desire for transition," and Spade's "fine pleasures." I don't mean "gender euphoria" as the opposite or antidote to dysphoria, when your transition allows you to get recognized correctly. The important shift is away from trans as an identity to transition as a process. As Susan Stryker, Paisley Currah and Lisa Jean Moore explain in the introduction to the "Trans-" issue of *Women's Studies Quarterly*, they use "trans-" instead of trans or transgender to move away from the "implied nominalism of trans" towards the "explicit relationality of trans-" (2008: 11). This shift removes the apparent mistake in Butler, which relies on

inside while also helping them as they come out. As Ash Williams said to me in conversation, so much focus goes into the trauma of Black trans life, without enough attention to supporting the life and joy of Black trans women on a daily basis.



the agency of an autonomous subject—another replay of the failures of the gay liberation-cum-gay rights movement, which exhausted itself in coming out—announcing oneself. In the introduction to *Transgender Marxism*, Jules Joanne Gleeson and Elle O'Rourke add to this understanding of transition, writing, “transition, too, must come to be understood by revolutionaries as a response to its own form of *hunger*. The longings that drive so many to reforge lives for ourselves that leave us thoroughly proletarianized or cast out, rendered surplus” (2021: 9). In other words, trans people are those with “restless energies that produce for us new needs,” who don't “deny their cravings, nor curse themselves for their untoward identity” (2021:9).

Even if we didn't know about transition, we might still be clocked as trans (a common experience for youth who eventually do transition)—another point in which we see that identity (and difference) confines us and even kills us. Eric Stanley asks about this moment of recognition/misrecognition, “why anti-trans/queer violence, more often than not, is *correctly* levied against us” (2021: 25), regardless of whether the language accurately describes us. The blanket epithet “faggot” for example will cover anyone who is perceived to be a man but deviating from gender/sexual norms. In this moment, the trans woman is folded back into the general definition of homosexuality as deviancy that existed before the splintering that Amin describes. There is a difference of course, but in the moment of being violently clocked, it's simply difference that is the threat. If liberalism uses “difference as its organizing principle,” there are both assimilable and unassimilable differences that texture livability and disposability, typically along racialized lines (Stanley 2021: 25). Stanley builds off Fanon's analysis of Blackness here, and similarly avoids an ontological or essentialist reading of this positionality, instead pointing to the tautological definition of abjections (you are oppressed because you are Black, you are Black because you are oppressed). In a chilling complement to this moment of clocking, Stanley also claims that the phenomenon of trans suicide “reads the world for the filth that it is” (2021: 98). Both instances of violence—trans antagonism and trans suicide—contain an accurate description alongside a fundamental misalignment. We are deviant, the world is filth, and we don't belong here.

For all the atmosphere of violence that Stanley details for racialized trans/queer people living in modern “democratic” states, the horizon of resistance Stanley determines is “seditious life” and “becoming ungovernable,” “a behavior recast as being.” While cataloging incessant violence, Stanley also points to other ways of life that currently exist in anarchic trans ungovernability. Stanley draws a definition of “ungovernability” from the juvenile court system “as a charge for youth who live in refusal.” They note that “the legal category of youth produces numerically young people under the jurisdiction of others and who are to some degree also their legal responsibility” (2021:118). But the category gets imposed only in instances of deviance.



Youth ungovernability is then “an attempt to find safe passage out of” “the control” of a system of violence (2021: 119). But Stanley notes that they are “shared tactics of survival—a sociality of *bad kids* who know the goodness of group disruption” (2021: 120). I’ve set all of these ideas up to make the claim, perhaps not surprising in terms of reclaiming the negation put on us, that trans people are indeed a threat. That, just as the fearful, hateful Christian fascist parents claim, we are trying to turn their kids trans. Instead of Lee Edelman’s famous refusal of the figure of the child, as it gets invoked in modern politics to ensure the reproduction of the same oppressive social order, we can now invoke the queer/trans child as a disruption of that order, an interruption, an opening glimpse on to an ongoing practice of our own refusal. Rather than demand social peace in the face of death, we need to expand this ungovernable and seditious life. With a detour through strands of feminist theory, I will now explain how we might find ways of living that contain both these destructive and constructive impulses.

Feminism against Society

One of the major contributions of Marxist feminist thinking has been the analysis of social reproduction. In the classical Marxist emphasis on production and the waged laborer, the reliance on what Marx and Engels called unwaged reproductive labor, the unacknowledged domestic work by women—people gendered as women, but inclusive also of other feminized and racialized people, specifically Black people doing housework—gets overlooked. Silvia Federici has written perhaps some of the most influential of these analyses in her book *Caliban and the Witch* (2004), and also in her manifesto *Wages Against Housework* (1975). Following Federici’s argument, we can see that the forceful imposition of capitalism and the state form helped create Woman as we understand the gender today, as the degraded object of patriarchal control. The secret of capitalism’s seeming function is a reliance on this gendered labor, enabling the masculine worker to show up each day ready to work, not to mention the creation of new proletarians through gestation and birth. The transition to capitalism was also enabled by the capture and enslavement of Africans and the genocide of indigenous groups in the Americas and elsewhere. We can’t untangle the creation of European (white) womanhood from a racialized (un)gendering of Blackness and colonial imposition of gender regimes. Even the unpaid domestic work of the white woman is reliant on further stolen labor and land.

But if we stick for a moment with the term itself, “social reproduction,” we can gain some insight into an insurgent response to this situation of gendered labor seen as simply exploitation and enforcement—and this will tie into decolonial feminist thinking, and a decentering of (white) Western women’s perspectives. The Marxist feminist critique of “social reproduction” shows that this enforced labor actually lays the



groundwork of reproducing class relations of exploitation. Without the gendered division of labor that keeps the white “woman” at home serving the man, industrial production and profit making wouldn’t work, and all of this relies on the racial and global division of (forced) labor. This is why Federici calls her pamphlet “*Wages Against Housework*” not “*Wages For Housework*.” Her claim is that demanding wages is the first step towards refusing to do the work at all. It first needs to be recognized as work—because up till now, this routine labor of care has been seen simply as “love,” as the natural desire of the woman to create family. In fact, it is seen as the fulfilment of womanhood itself. Even the people forced to do the work don’t see it as such. Once this mode of exploitation becomes recognized—so subtly entwined into a sense of identity—the call is to extricate oneself from this relationship of exploitation, in order to redefine life and love. If all the feminized people stopped keeping house, the capitalist world would stop.

Still I think, as often happens with Marxist thinking, the theoretical term social reproduction can become too obscure or even formulaic, and we often stop at the demand for wages, or recognition. Though some exciting work—particularly in recent trans Marxist writing—has used this concept to analyze the forces that go into continually recreating this world of domination, it still ends up that insufficient emphasis goes into halting the process of reproduction of capitalism and the state—ending the world. As is common with Marxist analysis, one can get caught up in all the particulars of theory and the seemingly correct way to talk about social phenomena. As an anarchist feminist, I would like to substitute “social reproduction” with what we call life. Beyond our forced labor for money to survive, the Marxist term ends up abstracting all the aspects of our daily actions that constitute where we actually want to put our hearts and intentions, things that would no longer be called work after abolishing capital and the state. Rather than the value produced for the capitalist who exploits our labor for his profit, we create our own value in our relationships with each other—not mere survival, but all the textured interactions with each other and our world that go into life. In *Wages Against Housework*, Federici writes, “We want to call work what is work so that eventually we might rediscover what is love and create what will be our sexuality which we have never known” (1975: 6). This line contains so much to unpack, and I agree with the idea that the love and sexuality—and gender—that we know under racial capitalism and (settler) colonialism merely ensnares us in an endless process of self-definition through the terms of domination. However, I would also counter that this isn’t the whole story; we are already creating love and sex that counters the forces of domination.

Decolonial feminism offers another view on the creation of these identities like gender that can be more helpful than the Marxist formation of social reproduction. It still retains the emphasis on social, but in so doing, it grounds us in the mundane relations of our life. White Marxist feminism can fall prey to the universalization of an



understanding of gender that ends up replaying the colonial process of exporting Western hierarchies around the world. Similarly it quite often doesn't account for the antiblackness that underlies the formation of the modern state and capital. On the other hand, the Black and decolonial feminist takes on Marx works to "extend" his conceptual framework, as the Combahee River Collective put it, by including the experiences of Black, Indigenous, and Women of Color, whose lives trouble the application of the theory and mark other points of resistance and refusal (1977:29). I would argue, we can push this to an anarchafeminist position, where feminism aims to abolish the hierarchy of patriarchal gender, it also implies the overturning of all ruling and static hierarchies.

In her important essay, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," Chandra Talpade Mohanty critiques the "monolithic notion of patriarchy" underlying most Western (white) feminist discourse, which, in complement to its idea of male supremacy, proceeds from the "assumption of woman as an already constituted coherent group with identical interest and desires regardless of class, ethnic, or racial locations or contradictions" (1984: 336-37). Homogenizing the difference in this way, Mohanty explains, "implies a notion of gender difference and even patriarchy (men as a coherent group) that can be applied universally and cross-culturally" (1984: 337).

Against this assumed uniformity, where Western feminists—even perhaps with good intentions—look at "Third World" contexts in order to find solidarity but only find women in their same old circumstance, Mohanty exposes the way that gender is lived, a way that allows for the possibility of change rather than universal and eternal degradation. She argues that women are "produced" through social relations but are also implicated in forming these relations (1984: 340). We could just pass this insight by glibly, as if we understand it, but I think it bears expansion. Whatever "woman" is in any particular society—and we will get to that from a colonial perspective—does not preexist the relationships between the people who form the society. We aren't dropped down into the world fully formed. The power dynamics of social relations may precede us, in the form of culture, but we also form our social relations through our actions. We have a hand in producing ourselves. For Mohanty, this perspective can lead to a particular form of "devising political action," "understanding the *contradictions* inherent in women's location within various structures" (1984: 346). The term contradictions has a Marxist resonance, but rather than think that the internal incoherence of these structures automatically spells their doom (with the march of history), we have to understand, as Eric Stanley explains, that "pedagogies of direct action [...] remind us how disciplinary power's force resides in its resolute incoherence" (2021: 5). There are points of possible refusal. If we had neat binaries of power and powerless, revolutionary struggle would have no point except to flip the table—the Foucauldian idea that resistance is "inherent in the operation of power" (Mohanty 1984: 352) or Marx's



dialectical class struggle. Mohanty, like Stanley, makes room for us to act to bring down these power structures, without falling into the trap of a dialectic of power.

One of Mohanty's overarching points is that feminist knowledge production itself is a form of power; it is not neutral. If you come to a situation with a preconceived notion of what you are looking for, you will find it. Even if feminists consider their work a critique and analysis of power, their discourse itself creates avenues of power, which get supported by their position within other cross-sections of power (like institutional situation, closeness to whiteness, etc.). The risk of feminist studies as an academic discipline is that it takes on the structures of Western knowledge production and theory, grounded in false ideas of objectivity or universality. Like the Combahee River Collective's idea of "identity politics"—not the neoliberal recuperation that gets performed today—that starts from lived experience and positionality to understand how we get free, Mohanty later advocates a politics stemming from "the experiential and analytic anchor in the lives of marginalized communities of women" (Mohanty 2003: 510). Rather than a top down approach or primacy of knowledge produced in the colonial centers, Mohanty argues that we need to start with the micropolitics of everyday life to understand not just the larger global structures of capitalism and colonialism, but also the many ongoing strategies of resistance that are taking place.⁴

This move that Mohanty makes—to displace the typical forms of academic knowledge production in favor of on the ground movement work that might not even scan in the academic understanding—is important for imagining the intervention that a trans anarchy-feminism can make. We can't understand feminism simply as a lens of analysis, but a larger project of collective liberation, opening the possibilities of direct action. If feminists want to produce knowledge, it must have the explicit aim of ending patriarchy, colonialism, the state, and capitalism (generally agreed upon by radical feminists as the source of gendered and racialized oppression). As Cindy Milstein puts it in the title of a volume dedicated to the "poverty of liberalism," we have to take sides (2015). In other words, if we produce knowledge, we have to do so explicitly to end these hierarchical structures. We can't aim simply to perform correct theoretical analysis within the institutional structures that determine rightness. Perhaps our wrongness has political value, if we set our aims on destroying hierarchies. More specifically, our knowledge production ought to understand already existing social relations and help devise social relations that no longer reproduce that world. Our actions right now prefigure the world we want, and will help end the world that tries to

⁴ I am using Mohanty here as exemplary of strands of thought found in decolonial and Black feminisms. But this can also be seen in Black anarchist writings, such as Saidiya Hartman's *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (2019), where she articulates an everyday anarchism of Black women in and out of the archive, or Zoé Samudzi and William C. Anderson's *As Black As Resistance* (2018), which theorizes Blackness as a statelessness that can lead to anarchist organizing.



contain us. We can taste the old world's death in our relations that extricate its logic and control. We can't make academic knowledge just to describe how terrible everything is and paint ourselves into a corner. Our knowledge must be partisan, and it must be grounded in action, not ideas.

Turning to Oyèrónké' Oyěwùmí's work, we can try to understand how Western knowledge production itself cuts off the possibility of action. She has diagnosed within Western thinking a deep seated biological determinism that always swoops in to naturalize hierarchies. Even for Marxists analyzing social relations, or feminists operating through a social construction theory of gender, she sees the understanding of the social still relying on a biological understanding of difference that explains behavior and interaction. Race and gender are the paradigm of this biological/genetic thinking that makes difference plain as sight, excusing vast generalizations of dispositions and deservingness. Social construction theories, she argues, end up being an "invitation to endless constructions of biology" (Oyěwùmí 2005: 10), which just points to the fact that Western thinking relies on a socially constructed idea of biology to understand the make-up of society. The (neo)liberal instance of this often gets explained through identities, but also the false neutral individual who has an equal start and an endless field of gain ahead of them, if only they tried hard enough.

Oyěwùmí explains that the Western recourse to biological or essentialist understanding of the world comes through privileging the sense of sight as the way of interpreting and producing knowledge of the world. It creates these tautological loops where you can prove what you already know by seeing what you want to see. She looks to pre-colonial Yorùbá society to offer an alternative—prior to the universalization and export of Western biological understanding of gender: "society was conceived to be inhabited by people in relation to one another [...] how persons were situated in relationships shifted depending on those involved and the particular situation [...] One cannot place persons in the Yorùbá categories just by looking at them. What they are heard to say may be the most important cue" (Oyěwùmí 2005: 13-14). Social hierarchy was more related to "seniority," which Oyěwùmí describes as relational and dynamic. Oyěwùmí goes on to critique the knowledge production of Western academics, including feminists: "If the investigator assumes gender, then gender categories will be found whether they exist or not" (2005: 16). The academic looking to understand gender participates in "one of the most effective international hegemonizing forces, producing not homogenous social experience but a homogeny of hegemonic forces. Western theories become tools of hegemony as they are applied universally, on the assumption that Western experiences define the human." (2005: 16). There is a resonance here, too, with Sylvia Wynter's work on the Western overrepresentation of Man, organizing possible knowledge to insist that the social world that must exist as it is, and allocating



immiseration to groups of racialized people—specifically Black people—outside of its purview (2003).

The nexus of knowledge and violence that capitalism and the state have produced through the history of enslavement and colonialism creates the sense of a universal understanding of what man is, what woman is. But this gender schema is always racialized and therefore installs the impossible contradiction that Maria Lugones defines in “Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System,” where “colonized females got the inferior status of gendering as women, without any of the privileges accompanying that status for white bourgeois women” (2007: 203). The failure to see the colonial/racial distinctions of gender, Lugones explains, created an understanding of feminism that “presumed a sisterhood, a bond given with the subjection of gender,” without doing the work of “creating coalitions” (2007: 204). Similarly in the context of Black American womanhood, Hortense Spillers theorizes, through the experience of the Middle Passage and the forced reproduction of slave status through sexual assault, a different experience of gender for Black people. Sometimes afforded the expectations of hegemonic white gender, but also cast “out of the traditional symbolics of female gender” (Spillers 1987: 80), Black women occupy what she calls an “ungendered” position. The task Spillers points to is not “joining the ranks of gendered femaleness” but instead “gaining the *insurgent* ground as female social subject,” ultimately pointing to a different set of tactics for a Black feminism (1987: 80).⁵ I bring Lugones and Spillers together here both to point to the similarities and differences in the ways the hegemonic gender regime was imposed on colonized and enslaved people, but also more importantly to point to the practical interventions their ideas make possible. They both loosen the hold of the very terms of the debate that feminism instills in order to highlight the need to take a side against the dominant form—not to find liberation within it. The Black woman or the colonized woman inhabits an impossible role, both woman and not by the terms of dominant order, expected to correspond but removed from any benefits, and violently punished for any deviance.

Returning to Oyěwùmí, we can see how this complex operation gets written on the body through the visual sense, where race and gender seem so plain to see, that one can instantly place people in the social hierarchy—and assume these hierarchies reflect a natural order. The gaze being “passive” creates the situation of Self and Other, subject and object, the “concept of objectivity” that produces an incontrovertible knowledge (Oyěwùmí 2005: 15). No matter that the perception of Black femininity, or colonized womanhood, still troubles those distinctions. As Lugones and Spillers imply, these dissonant positions only create the possibility of a space from which to destroy and

⁵ C. Riley Snorton (2017) builds on Spillers understanding of racialized gender to tell histories of Black transness—or sex and gender seen as “mutable”—came into form the medical understanding of sex and gender as well as fugitive possibilities.



create something new. That destruction is the work for all of us to do—but I will look at it in the mode of a tranarchist feminism.⁶

Trans Care to End the World

Though our cultural imaginary of transness might smooth it over, the embodied experience of being seen as trans is another instance of perceptual trouble that contains both possibility and violence. The embodiment of transness itself exposes again the contradictions of binary colonial gender. Moving from “misrecognition” to “recognition” is “a rare privilege for trans folks,” Hil Malatino reminds us (2022: 77). Malatino describes the “trans genre of misrecognition” (2022: 53), slightly different from the clocking that Stanley discusses, where general deviance is punished. In outlining this misrecognition, Malatino critiques a transnormative medicalist future-oriented narrative of transition where the goal would be to escape and overcome all of the moments of misgendering, misrecognition, the daily violences trans people are subjected to by approximating cisgender. Indeed, Malatino, narrating their own experience of being misnamed at a work meeting, discusses the perpetual dissonance between perception and internal experience: “how our interpellation and positioning in the world might be clashing with our own selfunderstanding” (2022: 53-54). Malatino hazards that this disorientation, this dissonance “might very well be the only kind of subjectification that [they] understand intimately” (2022: 54): “a structure of recognition that feels like it almost encompasses the complex history of living in a trans, intersex body” (2005: 55). This structure of recognition Malatino claims as nonbinary, though of course it has reference to the binaries that are not being correctly embodied. But the nonbinary, for Malatino, sits in the interstices of cis and transgender, a place where most trans people actually live.

When we ground our understanding of transness in this mutual encounter based in (mis)recognition—since it could go either way, another binary—Malatino explains elsewhere “recognition comes to us in the form of a gift” (2020). Malatino quotes McKenzie Wark in conversation with Andrea Long Chu: “But I think if you start, first, with just the dyad, a me and a you, then one starts as a supplicant, requiring that the other give gender back to me. And for us, for trans people, it’s in the way we are asking; in that, for us to be free to be ourselves is to insist that others give recognition to our gender” (Malatino 2020). There is a paradox in this moment, however, since it is “identity assignation”—the formation of the individual subject, caught in a singular

⁶ In this way, we might return to the reticence Butler displays to follow out their claims around performativity, for they too were stuck against a feminist discourse that needed to retain some definitional concept of woman. I would risk saying then too that transfeminism is also a threat to (white cultural) feminism—the TERFs are somewhat right, but not for the right reasons.



identity as we think about it politically—that is actually the result of a social situation determined through the gendered regime of sight that makes us feel the need to categorize bodies hierarchically. In the social structure we currently inhabit, we want to receive that gift—and quite often we don't. But a trans anarchist prefiguration would point to the time and place where we can refuse the gift of gender.

If we want to get to the desire that underpins transness, we can't imagine that it is simply to feel a snug fit within recognition, because as Malatino notes, the actual experience of trans embodiment is a series of dissonances and misrecognitions that make us feel our bodies as “fundamentally disruptable” (2022: 76): “many trans subjects experience ‘passing’ only in discontinuous, situationally dependent ways” (2022: 28), making this linear view of transition “inadequate.” Against this form of transition and recognition, Malatino asks “how trans subjects might (and do) cultivate forms of self-regard and intracommunal recognition that bolster our ability to see ourselves—and love ourselves, and each other—even as crucial forms of intersubjective gendered recognition are withheld” (2022: 29). Our disruptable bodies might also embody disruption. Malatino suggests we reframe our understanding of transition, away from a goal of some perfect or perfectible gender identity—especially since so few people actually have access to achieving this mythical idea—instead emphasizing the “interregnum,” transition as a process of becoming: “a moment of foment, generation, complexity, and fervor, rife with unexpected partnerships, chance events, and connections fortuitous and less so; a space of looseness and possibility, not yet overcoded and fixed in meaning, signification, or representative economy” (2022: 32). Malatino finds an iteration of this transitional space in narratives and examples of t4t love and care, a “strategic separatism” that could help with “cultivating self-love, self-regard, and self-care, especially because it confronts and disrupts the assimilationist logics that structure the limiting forms of individuated futural aspiration” (2022: 45). Between trans people, transition gets focused through “shared desires and affective orientations rather than access to technologies of transition” (2022: 47): people sharing information on navigating medical and other systems, people sharing hormones, people helping raise money for surgery, and providing aftercare, etc. In this collective formed through transition around desire, Malatino emphasizes “ethical imperfection and complexity,” a “trans relationality” that doesn't idealize identities, good and bad, or even the idea that all people need to get along all the time. The complexity and the desire is key here, since in our understanding of our trans lives and possibilities we must make room for conflict. The inter-space of transition, of conflict and complexity, of care and refusal, forms contemporary trans sociality, an enclave in the midst of the ongoing violences of racial capitalism and the state, which embodies the practical ethics of anarchism and abolition.



We can add this social process of transition to our decolonial feminist understanding of the way we create and are created by social relations. This will help us think about our attempts to stop reproducing this world—in order to end it. Kadji Amin argues that the simple claim to refuse gender through nonbinary identity, while often announced as a refusal of the colonial/racial capitalist regime of patriarchal gender, most often does little to trouble that regime, and more often relies on “the autological sovereign individual” over “the unchosen genealogical bonds of the social” (2022: 116), in other words, it replicates colonial ideology. Amin calls on us to “relinquish the fantasy that gender is a means of self-knowledge, self-expression, and authenticity rather than a shared, and therefore imperfect, social schema” (2022: 117-18). Instead, Amin reminds us that “what is socially relevant is *transition*—a shift in social gender categories, whatever they may be—not *identification*—a personal, felt, and thereby highly phantasmatic and labile relation to these categories” (2022: 115). The distinction isn’t simply that nonbinary people who don’t enact gender deviation or don’t desire transition don’t encounter the same social moments of misrecognition with all the attendant violence (this perspective, while social, still grounds gender as an identity). It focuses on the process of transition, what it is like to change genders. Like Malatino, Amin here wants to reframe transness between people, holding on to the lesson that there cannot be liberation in the regime of gender itself.

Amin’s larger project in the essay, of tracing the separation of transgender from homosexual identity through specific political projects, speaks to the separation of gender from sexuality in our thinking. Even though sexuality had already become an identity—are you gay? straight?—gender even more so seems to speak to a specific kind of selfhood. Going back to Oyěwùmí and Mohanty, when we proclaim our gender as something known and knowable, we might just be trapping ourselves in this preconceived notion that automatically determines our relationality. Reframing transness through the desire for transition, a kind of hunger that disallows one to remain in the imposed category, not simply to deviate minimally, but to change genders, helps us rethink transness outside of the individual, as a refusal of the wages of social legibility our dominant world offers.⁷

Amin’s work connects with the recent work in trans materialisms that focuses on transition rather than identity, to emphasize what Zazanis calls “collective agency [...] through everyday acts of reproduction in community” (2021: 33). Rosa Lee shows that transition as a process provides “a glimpse of the forging of new forms of solidarity that might breach a new mode of production” (2021: 67). And Jules Joanne Gleeson, looking at the process of transition in community, claims that these “autonomous sources of strength and forms of organization which have promoted the current growth in the

⁷ See Harry Josephine Giles, *Wages for Transition* (2019).



prevalence of trans people around the world” (2021: 82), a forming of a new world where “trans communities serve as the basis for the shared development of ethical standards” (Gleeson 2021: 81). Gleeson reflects on the fact that trans people, among ourselves—t4t—have created these forces that have indeed interrupted the reproduction of the racialized gendered regime of the state and capital. Transition here shows that we can reorient our social relations, away from the reproduction of family, of atomized (cis)gendered self, of society at large. That this is social fact can be seen in the way fascist backlash has instrumentalized transness as its current strategy. It’s not simply visibility, recognition, policy changes to medical access or ID cards. It’s the fact that more people see the possibility of transition. That we are finding each other in care and struggle and forging our own lives. Engineering ourselves, as Dean Spade said.

What could this ethical social realm be that t4t care and struggle create? I want to stay with the complexity—as trans people, we probably have had some experience with attempts at accountability, and surely experiences of trauma and abuse. As Malatino and Amin caution, we have to avoid idealization. It’s not that transition makes you a better person. And we can’t simply say that transition is liberation. But it does make you a different person—we only need to look at the social media phenomenon of publishing pictures a decade apart, pre- and post-transition. In the rupture with the dominant modes of reproduction (and often of production, as you may find it harder to find work), we find new forms of relating, new locations for our pains and joys, that have no interest in preserving the social world as it is. Drawing from Rupert Raj’s multi-decade experience of aiding people through their transition, Malatino writes of trans people performing “gender work,” the kind of care work that makes transition possible—and that also burns us out (2022: 147). However, the process of discovering in community that life can be lived otherwise, that the pain and misalignment that you feel is real and can be named and hence for a moment at least grasped, is necessary for the living out of transness. It burns us out because the world is inimical to this process. But trans people doing this work are practicing another kind of solidarity and mutual aid, or at least, taking these things as a given place to start from.

Herman cautions against assuming an easy or natural anarchism to trans embodiment, but also points out that “As transgender exists both through relationships with hierarchy and radical visions of what could be, so does anarchy” (2015: 81). I want to articulate a trans-situated gender abolitionist project along these lines: where our horizon is the abolition of gender *as we know it*—a racialized and colonial system of hierarchy, surveillance, and violence—while also supporting any person’s transition, and getting everybody everything they need to realize it. There have been transphobic versions of gender abolition going back to lesbian separatist feminists in the 1970s (up to today), and many trans “allies” feel uncomfortable with the idea of gender abolition because they understand gender as the terrain of expression or representation that



allows their trans friends to live the lives they want. Instead of these perspectives, I take the anarchist/abolitionist view that gender is not a means of liberation, that the term itself as we currently understand it is imbedded in these histories of violence and hierarchy and whatever gender we live through our self-determination is still bounded by these systems. But that those who desire transition are taking an initial step of refusal.

Prison abolition, through concepts like “non-reformist reforms,” tries to walk the line between the horizon of ending the prison system (and the carceral state) while supporting the people who are currently incarcerated and facing daily violence at the hands of the system. This kind of support work is particularly imperative for incarcerated trans people, who are likely to face more violence from guards and other incarcerated people, along with lack of access to medical care, and often other forms of forced detransition such as housing in the wrong gendered institution and denial of access to hormones. Often, trans prisoners are put in isolation as a form of “protection,” though this really amounts to intensified punishment, for it has been widely acknowledged that solitary confinement amounts to a specific kind of torture. Furthermore, many trans people who are incarcerated find that even if they get moved to a facility that matches their gender, they aren’t free from extra violence and surveillance due to their transness—not to mention that there can be retribution from the officials for forcing their hands to accommodate their transness. Non-reformist reforms and prisoner support is work that abolitionists (both inside and outside) do to ensure the survival or access to basic needs for people who are currently incarcerated. The rule of thumb is to avoid advocating for reforms that strengthen the carceral institution (one major example is not to advocate for trans prisons, because this means more prisons, which is opposed to the abolitionist goal of ending prisons). We can learn from this organizing on the outside: by focusing on legislation or the court while the state tries to erase us, we tie up our movement into countering the state on its territory, which means any gains we get will be compromised from the beginning (Roe v. Wade, for example, not providing safe abortion for all, but still stratified access along racial-class lines).

My thinking in response to this is to amplify the threat that trans people embody in the ideology of the antagonists, and to think about the disruption trans lives might create to the state. This means actively confronting the current forces that are using us to stoke fear and violence. In a classic fashion, we can reclaim the abjection put on us by the social order and embody the threat. But we have to do so anarchically—not getting stuck on policy measures, social democratic reforms, or socialist/Marxist-Leninist blueprints. By this I mean a number of things. We have to know that transness itself must be abandoned, along the lines of Federici’s struggle for wages to be able to refuse work, or Monique Wittig’s struggle of women as a class to end Woman as a class (1981).



In this way, we can see transition as one step of refusal of the wages of this world, but it must go further to root out the other internalized logics of antiblackness, the carceral state, racial capitalism, settler colonialism, not to mention homophobia and (trans)misogyny. As Cathy Cohen argues in “Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens,” we won’t be saved by our identities rooted in binaries that easily map on to good and bad. Rather, to form coalitions towards liberation, she tells us our identities and communities “must be complicated and destabilized through a recognition of the multiple social positions and relations to dominant power found *within* any one category or identity” (Cohen 1997: 459). This allows for unexpected connections through position, understanding that deviancy from the norm is both enforced on people and continually chosen. I didn’t choose to be trans, but I did choose to transition. Where that leads, I don’t yet know.

The best movement-oriented feminist thinking over the last fifty years has ever sought out ways to form coalition. Imposed identities like racialized gender don’t automatically connect us—not all gay people are comrades. As June Jordan writes, “The ultimate connection cannot be the enemy. The ultimate connection must be the need that we find between us. It is not only who you are, in other words, but what we can do for each other that will determine the connection” (2003: 14). She mirrors Mohanty’s point here, as we form the social connections in our interactions, not through who we assume we and others are. It’s work that we need to do, different from work under the capitalist scheme.

This is the work we do to refuse our positions within that world. For now, we start from that position, but if we mean to survive the end of the world, we leave it behind—we transition. And thus, a tranarchist feminism, grounded in the care of transition, ushering each other through the process, knows that we will fail and try again. You don’t have to understand your transition as political, for anarchism like feminism refuses the liberal division of our lives into political and personal spheres. But we can embody our transness as refusal, a refusal of coercively assigned gender, and a refusal of the society that understands us through violence. We don’t know where we are headed—transition is an open-ended, non-teleological process, just like anarchism. Anarchism as transition is a feminist overturning of hierarchies wherever they form in order to build a world of mutual care. We are already implicated, so we must start now.

Works Cited

Amin, Kadji (2022). “We Are All Nonbinary: A Brief History of Accidents.” *Representations* 158: 106-119.



- Anderson, William C. and Zoé Samudzi (2018). *As Black As Resistance*. Chico, CA: AK Press.
- Butler, Judith (1988). "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal* 40.4: 519-531.
- Cohen, Cathy J. (1997). "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" *GLQ* 3: 437-465.
- Federici, Silvia (2004). *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body, and Primitive Accumulation*. Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia.
- (1975). *Wages Against Housework*. Bristol, UK: Falling Wall Press.
- Giles, Harry Josephine (2019). *Wages Against Transition*. Dundee, Scotland: Dundee Contemporary Arts.
- Gleeson, Jules Joanne (2021). "How Do Gender Transitions Happen?" *Transgender Marxism*. Ed. Jules Joanne Gleeson and Elle O'Rourke. London: Pluto Press, 70-84.
- Gleeson, Jules Joanne and Elle O'Rourke (2021). "Introduction." *Transgender Marxism*. Ed. Jules Joanne Gleeson and Elle O'Rourke. London: Pluto Press, 1-32.
- Hartman, Saidiya (2019). *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*. New York: Norton.
- Herman, Elis L. (2015). "Tranarchism: Transgender Embodiment and Destabilization of the State." *Contemporary Justice Review* 18.1: 76-92.
- Hocquenghem, Guy (2022 [1974]). *Gay Liberation After May '68*. Trans. Scott Branson. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- (1993 [1972]). *Homosexual Desire*. Trans. Daniella Dangoor. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- James, Joy (2016). "The Womb of Western Theory: Trauma, Time Theft and the Captive Maternal." *Carceral Notebooks* 12: 253-296.
- Jordan, June (2003). "Report from the Bahamas, 1982." *Meridians* 3.2: 6-16.
- Lee, Rosa (2021). "Judith Butler's Scientific Revolution: Foundations for a Transsexual Marxism." *Transgender Marxism*. Ed. Jules Joanne Gleeson and Elle O'Rourke. London: Pluto Press, 62-69.
- Lugones, Maria (2008). "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System." *Hypatia* 22.1: 186-209.
- Malatino, Hil (2022). *Side Affects: On Being Trans and Feeling Bad*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- (2020). *Trans Care*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Milstein, Cindy (ed.) (2015). *Taking Sides: Revolutionary Solidarity and the Poverty of Liberalism*. Oakland, CA: AK Press.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade (1984). "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." *boundary 2* 12.3: 333-358.
- (2003). "'Under Western Eyes' Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles." *Signs* 28.2: 435-499.



- Namaste, Viviane (2009). "Undoing Theory: The 'Transgender Question' and the Epistemic Violence of Anglo-American Feminist Theory." *Hypatia* 24.3: 11-32.
- Oyěwùmí, Oyèrónké' (2005). "Visualizing the Body: Western Theories and African Subjects." *African Gender Studies: A Reader*. Ed. Oyèrónké' Oyěwùmí. New York: Palgrave, 3-22.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky (1990). *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Snorton, C. Riley (2017). *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Spade, Dean (2006). "Mutilating Gender." *The Trans Studies Reader*. Ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle. New York: Routledge, 315-332.
- Spillers, Hortense (1987). "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book." *Diacritics* 17.2: 64-81.
- Stanley, Eric. A. (2021). *Atmospheres of Violence: Structuring Antagonism and the Trans/Queer Ungovernable*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Stryker, Susan (1994). "My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage." *GLQ* 1.3: 237-54.
- Stryker, Susan, Paisley Currah and Lisa Jean Moore (2008). "Introduction: Trans-, Trans, or Transgender?" *Women's Studies Quarterly* 36.3-4: 11-22.
- Wittig, Monique (1992 [1981]). "One is not born a woman." *The Straight Mind and Other Essays*. Boston: Beacon Press, 21-32.
- Wynter, Sylvia (2003). "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom." *CR* 3.3: 257-337.
- Zazanis, Noah (2021). "Social Reproduction and Social Cognition: Theorizing (Trans)gender Identity Development in Community Context." *Transgender Marxism*. Ed. Jules Joanne Gleeson and Elle O'Rourke. London: Pluto Press, 33-46.