TRANS AS METHOD: THE SOCIALITY OF GENDER AND SHAKESPEARE

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Abstract

This special issue on contemporary performance proposes "trans" as method and as a social practice rather than as an immutable identity category that stands in opposition to more established ones such as cisgender men or cisgender women. We ask new questions about Shakespearean performance: How might the meanings of the plays change if we consider them as transgender performances rather than cis-centric stories requiring suspension of disbelief about cross-gender roles? What if the body of the female character and the actor's somatic presence exist on a continuum rather than in contrary fixations? The enactment of gender practices is not predicated upon "substitutions" (as in substituting the boy actor for Desdemona) or entail diagnostic recognition (as in being reminded of the "real" body beneath the illusion of Desdemona). This introduction outlines key issues with today's terminology, suggests a more effective and inclusive vocabulary, elucidates trans as method, and demonstrates trans studies' relevance to Shakespeare studies. Research articles in this issue deal primarily with tacit representations of transness in film and performance, such as the case of an actor who came out as trans posthumously, and interviews highlight practitioners' voices by rerouting the epistemological circuits that have predetermined who can produce knowledge about gender.

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The pandemic of Covid-19 has fueled intersectional forms of hatred and fear that have coalesced around race and gender. In particular, antifeminist, white nationalist, (trans)misogynist, and anti-immigrant movements use "genderism" (Butler 2021) to evoke a range of disruptive identities and to attack legal and social human rights. Even before recent global crises, however, gender has always structured our society and cultural activities, influencing how we read history's relevance to our times and how we read forward to shape contemporary performance practices. Systemic discourses about gender often foreclose the possibilities of marginalized narratives to circulate or to even exist (Spade 2015), thereby producing knowledge that is complicit in the oppression of minorities (Patton 2016, 321) and benefits the socially dominant groups. Drawing on the panel on "Transgender Theory and Shakespeare" that I organized at the Shakespeare Association of America's 2019 annual meeting in Washington, DC, this special issue recovers and amplifies marginalized transgender narratives.[1] I propose "trans" as method and as a social practice rather than as an immutable identity category that is somehow distinct from more established ones such as cisgender men or cisgender women. Trans as method puts into focus, and thereby expands, our collective understanding of human variations and how gender practices are developed and rejected through social links.

Research articles in this issue deal primarily with tacit representations of transness in Shakespearean film and performance (such as the case of an actor who came out as trans posthumously), and interviews with practitioners further demonstrate trans as method in practice. By foregrounding practitioners' voices, I hope to reroute the epistemological circuits that have predetermined who can produce knowledge about gender and to make the new knowledge more inclusive. The interviews also preserve otherwise ephemeral data points for future educators and researchers. Since performances and many forms of trans-ness are ephemeral and fluid, it is difficult to construct a research corpus on the topic and it is therefore challenging to introduce trans and performance studies in the classroom. Collectively, the articles and interviews create inclusive narratives that affirm trans bodies and experiences and reveal oppressive "narrative structures" (Keegan 2020, 387) that have elided attention due to cis-centric attitudes that interpret all gender practices through a "cisgender" lens. For further examination of cis-sexism, please refer to my methodology article in this special issue, "Shakespearean Performance through a Trans Lens."

Taking a cue from recent research that interprets genders as "porous and permeable spatial territories" that support "rapidly proliferating ecologies of embodied difference" (Stryker et al 2008, 12), we, in this special

1 I wish to thank Erika T. Lin for her input at the early stage of this project and Sujata Iyengar for chairing our panel and for encouraging me to put together this special issue.

issue, treat gender as social practices that evolve over time and in different performance settings and social spaces. Trans as method enables us to analyze the *what*, *how,* and *why* of the communal aspects, or sociality, of gender practices. This issue, therefore, deconstructs the toxic formulations of the *who* of identity categories that rely on unspoken assumptions and "normativities that constitute qualifications for categorical membership" (Stryker et al 2008, 12). In Shakespeare adaptations that appropriate gender practices, for instance, we can interpret certain dramatic actions as tacit representations of transness even if the characters or actors do not use our contemporary vocabulary of "identifying as trans."

In what follows, I will briefly outline key issues with today's terminology before offering an executive summary of trans studies' relevance to Shakespeare studies. I will then elucidate trans as method for Shakespeare studies in the context of the genealogy of trans studies. I conclude with a snapshot of this special issue's articles and interviews that demonstrate productive application of this method to performance and film studies. This introduction and my methodology-centered article, "Shakespearean Performance through a Trans Lens," which is a litmus test of my theory of trans lens, are intended to be read together and to serve as reference tools. For instance, one may read the articles and interviews in the special issue while consulting my overview here about terminology and my methodology piece as a road map.

Evolving Terminology

In 1994, biologist Dana Leland Defosse coined the word cisgender in a Usenet newsgroup called alt.transgendered. The Latin root, cis, prefixes things that do not change property. Cisgender has come to refer to the "condition of staying with birth-assigned sex" (Enke 2012, 61) and, as a result, been used to refer to people "who do not identify as transgender," [Davis 2017, 124]). Defined primarily through antitheses (e.g., cis is not trans), cis and trans were set up to be oppositional, mutually exclusive categories of identities.

The word "transgender" emerged just a few years prior. Virginia Prince coined the now outdated noun transgenderist in 1987, and Leslie Feinberg was the first scholar to use "transgender" as an umbrella term to refer to people who "challenge the boundaries of sex and gender" and "whose gender expression is considered inappropriate for our sex" (x). Today, the terms trans and transgender are used to refer to a wide range of practices and experiences. Filmmaker and scholar Susan Stryker uses the term to refer to those who "do not conform to prevailing expectations about gender" (123). Some medievalists use the term to discuss not only movements "across" or "between" ideologies but also people who are "beyond gender or without categorizable gender," connecting transness to "ideas of transcendence" (Bychowski and Kim 2019, 23). Similarly, Jacqueline Rose suggests trans should transcend the better-known variation of "transitioning from A to B." Trans could well mean being "in a different realm from" A or B, or from both "A and B." In this usage, trans could also mean "neither A nor B" (2016). More recently, Jen Manion even uses "trans" as a verb to refer to those who "transed gender" in various contexts (2) to direct our attention to

gender as social practices. Manion suggests that "to say someone transed or was transing gender signifies a . . . practice without . . . asserting any kind of fixed identity on [the individuals]. In this way, we might view the subjects . . . as traveling through life, establishing an ongoing and ever-unfolding relationship with gender, rather than viewing them as simply shifting between two unchanging binaries" (11).

I would like to point out that neither cis nor trans is fixed, because practices of gender always evolve over time. Individuals may have an investment in using "trans" for solidarity or personal identification in a given point in time, and, in new contexts, they may well move on to emphasize other social practices and issues. It is important to note that despite their seeming binary oppositions, all gender practices evolve over time. Some scholars, such as Toby Beauchamp, indeed shun the term cisgender due to the term's "reliance on biological frameworks" (11–12). A. Finn Enke questions the dichotomized distinction between the two, writing that "cis and trans are not functionally . . . parallel figures" (Enke 76). If cisgender authorizes itself as the "real" which has always already arrived, "trans" is disciplined to be the social practices that are always moving away from something that is assumed to be more "normal."

Despite their caveats, the terms "cis" and "trans" still have important work to do in denaturalizing normativity in specific historical contexts. While assigning flexibility to both terms, I use cis to critique the form of sexism that imposes identity categories on individuals' practice of gender. Instead of avoiding these terms that are in wide circulation today, I choose to confront them in order to expose unexamined assumptions in our society, particularly the form of sexism, known as cisgenderism which denigrates "self identified gender . . . expression" (Lennon and Mistler 2014, 63). Performance history, for example, shows us the malleability in both cis and trans as social and stage practices.

Another term that has become problematic is "cross-dressing" because it is centered on the idea of sartorial camouflage. As feminists have turned to performance as a tool to deconstruct the gender binary and "challeng[e] the male caretakers of our cultural heritage" (Miller 2014, 5), the past decades have seen the emergence of new ways of staging and screening historical gendered practices, such as *The Danish Girl* (dir. Tom Hooper, 2015) and *Nos années folles* (*Golden Years,* dir. André Téchiné, 2017), that reject "cross-dressing" as a convenient fiction about binary genders. Breaking away from the toxic trope of framing trans bodies as inauthentic, these films present their protagonists in their own elements. There are also narratives based on fictional, rather than historical, figures, such as *Una mujer fantástica* (*A Fantastic Woman,* 2017) that casts Chile's first openly transgender actress Daniela Vega in the lead role.[2] These performances reveal that gender variance is more than just a dramatic device or theatre practice.

While recognizing the validity of binary trans practices, this special issue avoids reductive, offensive, and "directional" labels such as "male-to-female (MTF)" or "female-to-male (FTM)," because they further marginalize trans individuals, singling them out from "normative" men and women. As Susan Stryker

2 *A Fantastic Woman* won the Academy Award (best foreign film), three awards at the Berlin film festival, and the GLAAD Media Award.

writes, those labels "make about as much sense as calling someone a heterosexual-to-gay man" (11). Instead of MTF or FTM, we use the umbrella terms trans masculinity and trans femininity to describe transgender people's masculine and feminine expressions, respectively, with the understanding that individuals who use those terms in self descriptions do not always identify fully as binary male or female in all contexts. While imperfect, these terms do move us beyond the traditional idea of "cross-dressers" teetering the stage for pity or laughs. Through the trans lens, therefore, we would describe Viola's incarnation as Cesario in *Twelfth Night* as a form of trans masculine practices. Likewise, Falstaff's enactment of the Witch of Brainford in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* would be reconsidered in the context of trans feminine practices. Furthermore, a reform of terminology corrects the biases that are already baked into the language we use. For instance, the term "gender-based violence" is often used without spotlighting the perpetrators, putting undue burden on the victims. The passive voice in the construction of such phrases gives the false impression that bad things — without identifiable perpetrators — simply happen to some people. Likewise, such phrases as "homophobia" or "transphobia" are often employed in place of the more accurate terms anti-gay and anti-trans. Using the -phobia suffix outside clinical contexts reflects able-bodied biases (Rothman 2012) and medicalizes bigotry. Individuals who discriminate against gay or trans people do so not out of pathological fear but rather hate.[3]

Trans and Shakespeare Studies

Gender variance, or gender practices that do not match prevailing norms, is a recurring motif in Shakespeare's plays. Women did not generally perform on the English professional stage before 1660.[4] Characters of all genders were performed by all-male casts, but Shakespeare's plays were designed to appeal to diverse audiences. They carry "trans residues" in the characters and the historical figures who played them (Chess 2019, 243). When Shakespearean heroines dress up as a new person to explore a new world, they become doubly "cross-dressed" characters as boy actors who play female characters transform themselves into pageboys (the term cross-dressed is used by Chess 2016, 103 and Sanchez 2019, 88). As such, the ludic aspects of these characters lend themselves to trans-inclusive interpretations.

For these reasons, Shakespeare as a canon holds a central place in facilitating transgender performance. Shakespeare's canonical position in mainstream cultural discourse empowers minorities who gain access to them (Joubin "Screening Social Justice"). Robin Craig and Jack Doyle, cofounders of the Transgender Shakespeare Company, use Shakespeare to highlight "the ways in which marginalized identities can interact with the mainstream canon and access dominant cultural narratives" (Craig 2017, 7).

3 The -phobia suffix implies a pathological fear certified by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM).

4 Early modern women in England did participate in local celebrations and some social rituals, though they did not perform on the professional stage. Peter Parolin, "Access and Contestation: Women's Performance in Early Modern England, Italy, France, and Spain," *Early Theatre* 15 (1): 15–25.

Beyond the reconfiguration of power dynamics, these ideas by performance artists resonate with adrienne maree brown's principles of "pleasure activism," social justice campaigns that create and promote emotional satisfaction. Pleasure derived from theater-going and theater-making is itself a measure of freedom and "a liberated part of life." An example of pleasure activism is an audience member's response to a transgender production of John Lyly's comedy *Gallathea* in 2021. In her review, Anita Raychawdhuri writes that she "experienced so much queer joy" and, by the end of the show, has developed new ideas to try out "in relation to gender, pleasure, and community" (147). Therefore, the pursuit of satisfaction leads to social change. Since the ideas we pay attention to, through performance, would grow and spread, and since "we become what we practice," in brown's words, transgender adaptations of Shakespeare amplify mutual understanding in actors and audiences through embodied, shared experiences (14–16).

In addition to Shakespeare's canonicity, performance is a foundational practice for exploring gender roles and for excavating inherent transness within the text. Adaptations are central to understanding transness as Shakespearean gender praxis, because they remediate Shakespeare's plays, explicitly activating some of these tacit themes. Therefore, my trans lens becomes the lynchpin for understanding implicit themes that have been obscured by the history of cis-centric criticism.

Since, as Dympna Callaghan points out, "on Shakespeare's all-male stage there were no 'women-born-women' but only 'women' with male anatomy" (xviii), there should have been a natural affinity between trans and Shakespeare studies. While much ink has been spilt over the theatrical gender of the boy actors and Shakespeare's female characters, the boy actors have been regarded as "transvestite actors" (Orgel 1996, 106) who engage in the cisgender practices of "cross-dressing" or drag. A classic of the 1990s, Stephen Orgel's *Impersonations*, despite its astute analysis of the performance of gender, bears methodological limitations of that time. Peter Stallybrass pits "the staged body of a boy actor" against "the imagined body of a woman [through] the material presence of clothes" in early modern "production of contrary fixations" (79). These works tend to approach gender practices from a cis-centric perspective by focusing on the well-being of cisgender audiences. Commenting on Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania* (1621), for instance, Orgel suggests that "the stage's transvestism works to insulate it from lustful feelings" of the audiences (31). More recent scholarship has focused on the stage enactment of femininity and female characters' masculine guises within the context of (queer) desire, such as sodomy (Goldberg 2010, 19, 143), lesbian undertones in the relationships between trans feminine and cisgender female characters (Traub 2015), and feminism's capacity to "denaturalize gender and its related categories" in the second edition of Dympna Callaghan's magisterial *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare* which briefly alludes to, but ultimately does not engage in, trans studies (xviii).

Nonperformance scholarship tends to regard gender practices as more fixed, which reflects the bias that printed text is also fixed. Performance dislodges these unexamined assumptions that text alone encompasses everything the words connote. Cameron Hunt McNabb has observed a similar phenomenon in the

field of disability studies. The scholarly tendency to focus on the narrative text obscures "the embodied significations of disability" (2022). The text-centric attitude treats disability merely as a metaphor, a trope, or "narrative prosthesis" (Mitchell and Snyder). To expand disability studies' vocabulary, McNabb proposes the concept of dramatic prosthesis for a holistic understanding of embodied and textual depictions of disability (2022). Similarly, bringing performance studies methods to bear on Shakespeare studies turns gender variance from merely a plot device on the page into an essential and consequential part of embodied mimesis. The material aspects of performance—actors' and audiences' somatic presence and voice, props, costumes, and sets—add nuance to the meanings of the physicality of gender practices. Embodied experiences of gender move nonconformity beyond such embarrassing themes as individual inadequacy, pity, and solitary—rather than collective—vulnerability.

Applying a trans lens to Shakespearean performance is a dialogic practice that raises new questions to be asked of these dramatic situations. How might the narratives change if we consider them as transgender performances rather than cis-centric "cross-dressing" stories requiring suspension of disbelief? What if the final scene of *As You Like It* is a "charade" by Rosaland's alter ego Ganymede? Instead of asking: "why did the English stage take boys for women?"—which Orgel characterizes as an "irresistible question" (1), we should interrogate the cis-centric formulation of that question itself. Cisgender assumptions expect "that those assigned male at birth always grow up to be men and those assigned female at birth always grow up to be women" (Bauer et al 2009, 356). These assumptions deny the fact that life is an unpredictable and unscripted journey. These assumptions shape the questions we ask and organize social activities; they have institutionalized gender practices.

The trans lens asks us to consider what changes if the body of the female character and the actor's somatic presence exist on a continuum rather than in contrary fixations? My trans lens, informed by performance studies methods, destabilizes the presumed stability of both the text and gender practices on the page. The enactment of gender practices is not predicated upon "substitutions" (as in substituting the boy actor for Desdemona) nor does it entail diagnostic recognition (as in being reminded of the "real" body beneath the illusion of Desdemona).

Many plays lend themselves to transgender interpretations, but historically they have primarily been studied from a cisgender perspective. My trans lens opens a space for the fluidity that is enabled by stage embodiment over text. *Twelfth Night*, a "most happy wreck" (5.1.264), is energized by Cesario's presence and displacement, with only cursory references to Viola. In fact, Cesario is inhabited by both twins at different points in the comedy of confused identities, intentionally by Viola and later, unwittingly, by Sebastian.

In some adaptations, such as Trevor Nunn's 1996 film, Viola impersonates Sebastian to mourn his presumed demise. Cesario is a half-way point where Viola and Sebastian meet, and Cesario eventually unites the twins. Multiple scenes use a mirror to show Viola moving beyond that initial stage of experimenting

with new guises to claiming Cesario — a self-chosen name — as an embodied identity. By centering the masculine body with such gender prostheses as wigs and moustaches, Cesario's presentation affirms trans individuals' needs for legibility.

Other, more explicitly trans, adaptations use the comedy as a vehicle to convey trans embodiment. The two-person show, *I Am the Man* at the First International Drag King Extravaganza in Columbus, Ohio, 2002, stages "cross-identity" exercises that "deny the audience knowledge of which of us had what body, or even the assurance that a definable body existed" (Sennett and Bay-Cheng, 40). In act 2 scene 2, trans actor Jay Sennett's Cesario laments his dilemma in reference to Olivia's infatuation of him, with double entendre: "I am the man! If it be so, / Poor lady she were better love a dream." These lines create an ironic distance between Cesario and Viola as well as between the audience's perception of the actor as "a man who possesses male secondary sex characteristics" and the actor's self-knowledge of not possessing "the primary 'real' body, i.e., the phallus" (44). Truth lies somewhere between fiction and the friction between character and actor.

In Shakespeare's play, even though Cesario alludes to Viola's "maid's garments" (to be fetched by Antonio 5.1.273) in the final scene of "grand reveal," he never changes into them. Orsino continues to call him "boy" and by the name Cesario even as he announces a double wedding which is never staged. Most modern editions of the play conclude with Feste's song "When that I was and a little tiny boy," sung alone after all other characters leave. Serving as an epilogue (5.1.385–405), the melancholic song puts a dampener on the merry-making and adds a somber tone to what may otherwise be misunderstood as a trivial comedy. However, some productions and films make a point of showing Viola in a dress at a wedding or jolly celebration, eliminating Cesario and adding extratextual material not found in Shakespeare's text. This type of interpretation may reflect a cultural tendency to seek false clarity, rather than uncertainty, and regress into simplified binary worldviews. Even though Shakespeare's language can be compartmentalized into discreet emotional units, it is often suggestive, rather than prescriptive, where semantic units overlap with each other.

Further, Orsino uses fluid language to cast Cesario as both "a man" and his "fancy queen . . . when in other habits" in a future that is never solidified before the play closes (5.1.381–384). The main character in this open-ended story without closure is in fact the trans masculine Cesario whose arc informs most of the dramatic actions. This is but one of many instances where my trans lens affords new readings of familiar plays.

As the articles in this special issue demonstrate, trans as method can advance both feminist and performance scholarship by posing new questions and offering new methodologies for Shakespeare studies. Recent scholarship has begun rethinking gender practices on the Shakespearean stage and implicitly advocates for reading Shakespeare through what I call the trans lens. Juliet Dusinberre urges us to abandon our literal-mindedness about dramatic fiction and consider every character's practice in fluid terms (279), and,

in her book *Shakespeare and Queer Theory*, Melissa Sanchez advocates for recognizing transgender performances "as resisting precisely the binaries usually understood to structure modern gender" rather than simply "enacting binary male/female or homo/hetero desires" (88). Reading the representation of female characters on the early modern stage "along a spectrum of theatrical artifice" (2), Courtney Bailey Parker suggests that some female roles were designed to highlight "the young male player beneath the dress" (4).

As these critics demonstrate, using trans as method to analyze representations of gendered experiences in performance can create useful distance between unexamined assumptions and all forms of embodiment. For example, audiences often demonstrate divergent attitudes toward representation of trans feminine and trans masculine figures, with the former seen as material for comedy and the latter as empowered. Trans feminine practices are used, in some cases, to tone down misogynist violence, as against Falstaff as a witch in Barry Avrich's 2020 production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; in others, it is an illegitimate act, such as Carlyle Stewart's 2019 all-male film *As You Like It*. Trans masculine performance also involves risk but is often billed as emancipating, because the act enables some characters to access male-exclusive social spaces, such as Rosalind in Kenneth Branagh's 2006 film *As You Like It*.

A Genealogy of Transgender Studies

At least a century of development was behind the idea that gender is a social script on a continuum. The theoretical frameworks in use at any given time shape scholarly understanding of trans practices, and, as we have seen, terminology evolves with time. Early thinking about gender variance revolved around the idea of inversions of naturalized social roles. As early as 1878, the nineteenth-century Italian forensic examiner Arrigo Tamassia took note of the conflict between gender identity and sexual organs in some cases of "sexual inversion": individuals who "psychologically feel all the attributes of the opposite sex" (99). In the twentieth century, transgender theory evolved historically from a binary toward a continuum model. In German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld's 1910 book, *Transvestites,* gender nonconformity was seen as an independent phenomenon from same-sex desires. He coined the word "transvestite," which is no longer in use today, by combining the Latin words for crossing and clothing: *trans* and *vestis*. He observed individuals who experienced a "feeling of peace, security and exaltation, happiness and well-being . . . when in the clothing of the other sex" (125). He found that "transvestites" could be asexual, bisexual, or have any given sexual orientation. Hirschfeld's conception of the transvestite overlaps in part with the modern-day practice of drag and gender non-conforming sartorial choices. Hirschfeld's contribution lies in his distinction between transvestism and the misconception of homosexuality. In his times, homosexuality, a pathologized concept, was a conflation of sexuality and gender expressions in which homosexual individuals were thought to be gender inverted. It is important to note that there is a racialized dismissal of transness. At the core of anti-Semitism and anti-trans discourses are the ideas of racial and gender "purity," which leads to harmful biopolitics. As a pioneer in gender and sexuality studies, Hirschfeld unfortunately

was persecuted by Nazis for his Jewish and gay identities. His Institut für Sexualwissenschaft was shut down in 1933, with its books burned.

With the endocrine discovery of the universal presence of male and female sex hormones in humans in the 1930s, psychoanalysts and biochemists began developing a theory of bisexuality where humans have inherent features of both sexes. For instance, Lewis Terman and Catherine Cox Miles proposed a seven-part scalar instrument for diagnosing sex psychology (1936). They used the masculinity-femininity scale to survey participants to determine where they were on the spectrum of gender identity in relation to their personalities. Anthropologists Ruth Benedict (1934) and Margaret Mead (1935) further separated sex as the genitalia and an array of secondary sexual characteristics from "gender" as a discrete social category consisting of roles and behaviors with no causal relations to sex. As such, they laid the groundwork for gender as a notion that is detached from sex. Echoing Terman and Miles' work, Alfred Kinsey theorized sexuality as a similar spectrum. In 1953, based on interviews with 6,000 women, Kinsey and his team popularized his homosexual-heterosexual "rating scale" (Kinsey, Pomperoy, Martin, and Gebhard, 596–597) that was built on a continuum model. Known as the Kinsey scale, the measure categorizes a person's sexual orientation from 0 for exclusively heterosexual to 6 for exclusively homosexual. The scale is based on the person's response at the time of the survey. Kinsey found a higher proportion of men who lean towards homosexuality than women.

This work helped distinguish sex from gender, which was a major milestone in the 1950s. Building on that foundation, more work was done on the notion of gender as a social construct. Based on his research of the intersex condition, New Zealand-American sexologist John Money used gender to refer to a person's "outlook, demeanor, and orientation" (258). He further defined binary gender role as "all those things that a person says or does to disclose himself or herself as having the status of boy or man, girl or woman" (254). Eager to prove his hypothesis that gender is a social construct, Money carried out an experiment without the consent of his patient. He performed an involuntary sex-reassignment surgery on an eighteen-month infant, David Reimer, who suffered from a botched circumcision. After the surgery, Reimer was raised as a girl, with the information about the surgery withheld from him. Money used the case to advance his theory that gender has no correlation to reproductive anatomy. However, Reimer eventually rejected the imposed female identity and suffered depression. He began living as a male in his teen years (Colapinto 2006). Despite his contributions to the notion of gender as distinct from sex, Money crossed an ethical line as a medical professional. The case reveals that gender is not a floating signifier. Nonetheless, some scholars erroneously credited surgeons such as Money for having developed the notion of gender identity as separate from sex. Bernice L. Hausman argues that "it is through an analysis of the emergence of transsexualism in relation to the developing medical technologies of 'sex change' that we can trace the introduction of 'gender' as a term referring to the social articulations of sexed identity" (196).

In 1966, transsexualism was officially diagnosed as a medical condition. German clinical endocrinologist Harry Benjamin introduced the concept of transsexualism in contrast to transvestitism which was seen as a set of sartorial and frivolous lifestyle choices. Emphasizing the involuntary nature of the condition, he established treatment protocols for transsexual patients in *Transsexual Phenomenon*. Influenced by Kinsey's scale and Hirschfeld's theory, Benjamin developed the Sex Orientation Scale to account for six types of "gender role disorientation" (19). Due to a lack of critical vocabulary, Benjamin's scale inherited some language from Hirschfeld. For example, types 1–3 are called pseudo, fetishistic, and true transvestites, and types 4–6 are called nonsurgical transsexual, true transsexual with moderate intensity, and true transsexual with high intensity. These scientifically unsound categorizations are no longer current in today's discourses among physicians, psychologists, sociologists, and humanities scholars, because transgender identities are a diversity and human rights issue. It is inaccurate to call some practices "pseudo" and others "true." Benjamin writes with graphic specificity: "true transsexuals feel that they belong to the other sex, they want to be and function as members of the opposite sex, not only to appear as such. For them, their sex organs . . . are disgusting deformities that must be changed by the surgeon's knife" (13–14).

An association named after him was established, Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association. It was later renamed the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) and remains devoted to transgender health. Johns Hopkins University opened the first gender identity clinic in the United States in 1966. Its hospital in Baltimore carried out the first gender affirmation surgery in the country, and the first transsexual support group, Conversion Our Goal, emerged in San Francisco the following year. Indeed, in the 1960s, "most roads [of gender transition] led to Benjamin" (Meyerowitz 2002, 133).

While Benjamin's diagnoses made valuable contributions in his times to the advancement of transgender care, the pathologization of transgender individuals became part of the problem of social stigmatization. Following the 1973 depathologization of homosexuality in the second edition of the American Psychiatric Association's (APA) *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (Drescher), there have been campaigns to depathologize transgender practices as a form of mental illness. Eventually, in 2010, WPATH officially de-psychopathologized gender nonconformity, noting that "the expression of gender characteristics . . . that are not stereotypically associated with one's assigned sex at birth is a common and culturally-diverse human phenomenon [that] should not be judged as inherently pathological or negative" (4). In 2013, the APA used a new term, gender dysphoria, to describe the "conflict between a person's physical or assigned gender and the gender with which he/she/they identify" (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual V*). It is categorized under "sexual and gender identity disorders" (451). In 2018, trans practices were finally removed from the section on mental illness in the World Health Organization's International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11). Under a new term, "gender incongruence," gender dysphoria appears in two sections: "conditions related to sexual health" and "factors influencing health status." In other words, the

"condition" itself is not a mental disorder. Distress results from social alienation of atypical bodies, bodies that diverge "from expected generic form, function, and needs" (Sexton 19).

Within feminist scholarship, too, changes were underway, but the central concerns were quite different from that in medical science. Notably in the 1970s, feminists drew on Money's work to distinguish sex as anatomical functions from gender as social practice. This distinction was important in feminist arguments that women's life should not be dictated by their reproductive function (Rubin 1975, 34; Germon 2009; Beauvoir 1949, 281). In the 1990s, the critical consensus shifted away from a focus on anatomy to social articulations of gender expressions. New theories began seeing transsexualism as a link to queer identities and spaces. Kate Bornstein's 1994 book, *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us*, takes up an advocacy position. These works bring to light unspoken assumptions behind the earlier misconception of trans femininity as an "attack" on womanhood.

The problem was twofold in the early 1990s. First, transsexualism, as Hausman critiqued, was understood in the very limited vein of "male-to-female transsexualism" and seen primarily as "an affront against women."[5] Stryker (2017) and Bornstein were among the few voices trying to correct the misconception. Second, feminist scholarship of this period merely deployed "trans" as a trope to solve some problems with "the woman question" by using "transsexualism as a way to identify gender's complex social articulation" (Hausman 2001, 465). As a result, transness was misappropriated for utilitarian purposes to serve cisgender feminism and a cis institution.

This genealogy shows the urgency of reclaiming all forms of trans presence in performance history across media in order to better understand how performance interrogates the gendered subject. More recent scholarship has begun to assess how transness is inherent in all practices and our current conceptualizations of gender. Building upon these new theories, our special issue examines the trajectory of trans presence in Shakespearean performances.

Outlines of This Special Issue

Collectively, the essays and interviews in this issue offer a model for inclusive discussion of performance, using trans as method to rethink gender in Shakespeare. My article, "Shakespearean Performance through a Trans Lens," elaborates on my theory of trans lens which informs the articles and interviews in this special issue. That article also delineates the relationships between transgender, adaptation, queer, and performance studies.

5 Janice Raymond, *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male* (Boston: Beacon, 1979; New York: Teachers College Press, 1994). See Bernice L. Hausman's critique of Raymond in "Recent Transgender Theory," *Feminist Studies* 27 (2): 465–90; 465.

The fusion of queer and trans theories has profound implications for transfeminism in Shakespeare studies, which is the focus of Lisa S. Starks's article in this special issue. Focusing on trans femininity, Starks examines the disparagement of femininity and trans women in multiple levels of our culture. She reveals the double-standard that is often applied to feminine-gendered behavior and argues that patriarchal institutions and some feminist positions share a misogynistic stance towards expressions and embodiments of femininity.

Complementing Starks's metacritical article are the interviews in this special issue. Responding to the cis-sexist reception of Ben Whishaw's Ariel in Julie Taymor's film *The Tempest* that characterizes the fairy "with a male face and female breasts" as monstrous, Dr. Mary Ann Saunders suggests that we should be mindful of vocabulary we use and to think about the body as method. She proposes a new interpretation of Ariel as a trans woman who is "both beautiful and bittersweet."

Echoing this reparative reading of trans femininity, Daniel Lauby's article argues that performance is empowering for marginalized communities. Their article reads the memoir of actor Quentin Crisp, who came out as a trans woman posthumously in 2017, against Sally Potter's film *Orlando* (1992). Her memoir, authored prior to her demise but published posthumously, gives new meanings, in retrospect, to her then cross-gender performance of Queen Elizabeth I in the film. In this case, performance helped the actor cope with her anxieties about embodiment. Performance gave Crisp the vocabulary for her self-image and trans embodiment. She used performance as a life-affirming practice and as a "vital process of embodiment and transition."

In the interview with scholar and stage director Dr. Terri Power, we turn to the theme of trans masculinity. She reflects on her creative process and the vicissitudes of discourses about trans masculinity from 2004 to 2013 between the premier of her *Drag King Richard III* and its latest restaging. For nearly two decades Power has been at the forefront of trans and queer representation in performances of Shakespeare. Weaving a personal story of the 1990s with Shakespeare's early modern disability narrative, the reception of Power's play reveals that the gender binary was enforced even in queer circles in the 1990s, coding lesbian identities as either butch or femme. The interview concludes with her suggestions for future work in transgender theater based on her collaboration with trans actors beyond *Richard III*.

Other interviews feature performing artists who engage in genderplay. Jess Chanliau, a bilingual actor, shared their thoughts on non-binary stage roles and their experience performing in Shakespeare's plays. In the interview, Chanliau also brings a trans-Atlantic perspective to trans theory and contemporary performance. King Sammy Silver, a London-based actor, uses drag performance to deconstruct toxic masculinity. He has worked with Dr. Terri Power on several Shakespeare productions.

While this special issue focuses on post-1990s films and productions, it is worth pointing out that there are earlier works that could also be productively reinterpreted through the trans lens as well, such as the

French actress Sarah Bernhardt's gender-bending Hamlet on stage in Paris and London in 1899 (and in a short film, *Le duel d'Hamlet*, 1900) and the Danish actress Asta Nielsen's performance of a trans masculine Hamlet in the German silent film directed by Svend Gade and Heinz Schall (Art-Film GmbH, 1921), in which "Princess" Hamlet is raised as a boy and spends his life agonizing over an assigned identity. Some of these works have been analyzed through feminist theories (Buchanan 217–51), but they could be read through a trans lens to create new knowledge about gender.

The keywords of transgender theory are temporality (social practices that evolve over time) and intersectional embodiment (social practices that reflect an individual's gender, race, and class). Analyses of the wide range of case studies in this special issue consider the sociality of gender in time, recognizing that gender practices have relational meanings, contingent upon other vectors such as race, class, stages in life, and social contexts. Transgender theory examines the future and nature of gender in the lived experiences of transgender, intersex, and transsexual individuals in history and today. As Alexis Lothian asks rhetorically, "how could attempts to envisage possibilities outside [normative] structures not involve a certain futurity?" (5). The futurity links transgender studies to campaigns for a better future for all and a more accurate understanding of history.

Parallel to the emergence of one feminist strand out of the women's suffrage movements, transgender theory is rooted in activism and social advocacy. A similar synergy is seen between several black feminist movements and transnational antilynching campaigns. Specifically, building on the feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s, feminist literary criticism emerged alongside new historicism and cultural materialism in the 1980s and replaced Structuralism, Psychoanalysis, and Poststructuralism as a new critical paradigm (Bradley 2010, 187–88). Judith Butler writes, in a hopeful tone, that "if identities were no longer fixed," new political futures "would surely emerge from the ruins of the old" (189–90).

The genealogies of transgender studies as an interdisciplinary field show that evaluative formulas have historically pathologized trans individuals, while some trans practices were not registered at all and therefore rendered invisible. While theories have evolved over time, their trajectory reveals some persistent, common anxieties. As the first collection on transgender contemporary Shakespearean performance, we hope to make visible these anxieties while highlighting artistic creativity that will inspire new research topics and curricular expansion.

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