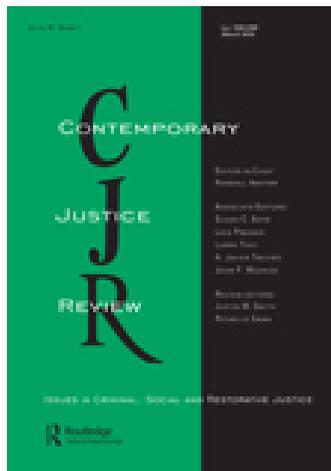


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## Tranarchism: transgender embodiment and destabilization of the state

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## **Tranarchism: transgender embodiment and destabilization of the state**

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Transgender, in the simplest sense, is an umbrella term for individuals whose gender identities and/or expressions of those identities fall outside of binary sex/gender identification norms. Though some anarchists live gender-transgressive lives, and some transgender people would call themselves anarchists, literature formally connecting the two modes of being is scarce. Much existing anarchist literature discussing issues of transgender identity attempts to determine whether gender non-conformity itself is inherently anarchic. The state dictates that gender is a necessary means of categorization in order to classify and manage people. Gender transgressors, in undermining a fundamental tool of the state, must then be acting anarchically. I argue, however, that imbuing trans identification with innate anarchic meanings is problematic. As anarchism itself can be manifested and lived in a myriad of highly variant, even contradictory, ways, gender subversion acts as a tool, rather than embodiment, of anarchy. This study uses queer, anarcho-feminist, and post-structuralist frameworks to examine gender transgression as a means of destabilizing the state by challenging state reliance on binary gender classifications. By understanding how transgender people who often interact with state authority for survival and legitimization possess the power to undermine it, anarchism can both empower and be empowered by the movement for gender justice.

**Keywords:** transgender; gender; identification; legitimization; movements

### **Anarchism and the gender question**

Anarchism can be defined as a political philosophy of opposition to the state, capitalism, and the hierarchy and inequality begotten of these institutions (McKay, 2008). Further, anarchism can also be described as opposition to all forms of systematic and individual oppression and coercion, which are ultimately products of state and economic dominance. By dismantling systems of political, economic, and social domination, anarchists seek to achieve liberation from oppression and maximize individual autonomy.

Anarchism, however, is not defined solely on the basis of opposition. In being anti-authoritarian, anarchism acts according to the fundamental belief that society exists to efficiently and equitably serve the needs of the individuals that build it (Walter, 2002). Ideals of individuality, free, non-coercive association, mutual aid, self-management, and self-government are important components of anarchism. In being anti-domination, anarchism espouses the ideal of liberty; in being

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anti-hierarchy, anarchism promotes equality; and in opposing stratification, anarchism promotes co-operation and solidarity (McKay, 2008).

### *Early Anarcha-Feminism*

Because of its foundational opposition to inequality, anarchism and the most radical factions of other social movements often have convergent histories. These shared concerns, particularly in struggles for sexual and gender liberation, have brought 'the gender question' to the attention of anarchists since the late 19th century. Early anarcha-feminists, such as Emma Goldman and Voltairine de Cleyre, focused on men's domination of women, or patriarchy, as equally oppressive as state authoritarianism (McKay, 2008). In *Woman Suffrage*, Goldman (1917) argues that women will not achieve equality through policies made by the state. Rather, she stresses the importance of women fighting for autonomy, particularly regarding sexuality and reproduction, against legal, religious, and cultural constraints. The views of early anarcha-feminists, in rejecting movements for suffrage and economic equality in favor of issues such as birth control and women's sexual freedom were radical for their time and continued to influence feminism and anarchism through the 1970s.

Although the 1970s is lauded as a time of progressivism and sexual radicalism, conversations about gender within anarchism continued to be undertaken with binary assumptions of gender. The feminist movement of the 1970s gave rise to visible collective action around issues pertaining specifically to women, leading to the growth of spaces such as rape crisis centers and women's health collectives (Kornegger, 1975). The anarchistic side of this 'women's movement,' however, was just that: an anarcha-feminist campaign to unite women in terms of shared womanhood and femaleness against patriarchy. Though by the 1970s anarcha-feminism had made public strides for women's issues, it remained essentialist in its critique of sexism, and transgender issues were all but invisible.

### *The language of transgender*

In order to examine the contemporary relevance of gender transgression to anarchism, it is necessary to define terms used in trans discourse and, more importantly, discuss processes that affect trans lives. I do so, however, with the understanding that language itself has the power (and purpose) to legitimize and privilege certain existences over others; simultaneously, the same language ridicules all gender transgression as separate and lesser than 'normal' gender (Wilchins, 2004). In using labels for the purpose of political legitimization, it is easy to forget that gender itself is neither 'real' nor inherent, but an oppressive product of the social and political system in which we live (Wilchins, 1997). Simultaneously, however, gender-based oppression has real effects on transgender lives. Here, I will use the language common in contemporary trans discourse, keeping in mind the politicization of this language.

Even the most basic of terms used to describe sex-gender non-conformity are fraught with disputation. Gender theorist Wilchins (2004) describes how the term 'transgender' has evolved from its initial use as distinct from 'transsexual,' into an encapsulating term for many types of gender non-conformity. Presently, the term transgender is, indeed, often used as an umbrella term under which many

gender-variant identities and expressions may fall. ‘Transgender [as an] umbrella term encompasses any individual whose identity crosses over or challenges their society’s traditional gender roles or expressions’ (Hill & Mays, 2011, pp. 38–39). With this broad definition, masculine women and feminine men, crossdressers, drag kings and queens, genderqueers, agender and neutrois people, and transsexual men and women could all conceivably fall under the same political description. How people of these identities experience the effects of gender non-conformity, are, however, radically different. For Wilchins (2004), an inclusive (though not exhaustive) umbrella could be politically strategic, but falls short of its potential because of hierarchies and norms that trans activism itself has internalized. The tension of naming lies in the transgender movement’s dual need to recognize and support the varied manifestations of trans lives, while also acknowledging that gendered oppression is intersectional and unequal.

Because ‘transgender’ can describe such a wide range of lives and embodiments, it is reductive (and impossible) to consider all trans lives in the context of a single path to the same goals. In order to live as their preferred genders, however, many transgender people interact with psychomedical and legal institutions in specific ways that non-transgender (‘cisgender’) individuals do not. The majority of transgender people choose to seek hormone replacement therapy (‘HRT’) to feminize or masculinize their bodies. Many trans people also desire to pursue various surgeries to further align their physical characteristics with their gender identities (Grant, Mottet, & Tanis, 2010). In order to access gender-affirming medicine, transgender people often must undergo psychological evaluation and meet certain criteria for ‘Gender Dysphoria’ (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Cisgender people typically move through their lives without finding it necessary to question or alter gender information on identification documents such as birth certificates, passports, and driver’s licenses. In contrast, transgender people must negotiate complex, contradictory requirements of various levels of government to achieve congruence between gender presentation and legal documentation of sex. And for ‘non-binary’ people whose gender identities and expressions lie outside of the two legal options, documentation remains unchangeably inaccurate. These issues, as uniquely common to trans lives, are fundamental to examining the relationship of gender to the state.

In engaging in politicized discourse to describe trans embodiment and experience, it is important to interrogate people and language that claim, whether implicitly or explicitly, to describe an archetypal transgender experience. As the nuances of gender itself are intersectional, assertions that all gender transgression is equally punished and that transphobia is one-dimensional should be fielded with suspicion. In particular, anarchist criticism of authority must be applied to transgender experiences that are taken as exemplary or lauded for their palatability. Why are certain forms of transgression allowed to exist, while others are violently squashed? It is essential that queer anarchism analyze the institutions that create and police the language and regulations that affect trans lives and critically examine the ends reached by this social control.

### *Early queer insurrection*

Gender non-conforming people have a rich history of resisting state oppression. Even while anarcho-feminism was silent about variant genders, queer and gender

non-conforming people were involved in anti-authoritarian insurrection. Recently, lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, and transgender (LGBTQ) histories have gained legitimacy as subjects of scholarly and activist study. In these revisitations of queer history, it has become evident that gender non-conforming individuals were at the forefront of actions the LGBTQ community considers central to its culture, such as the Stonewall Riots of the 1970s (Nothing, 2013). Though contemporary LGBTQ assimilationist groups are quick to reference the visibility of gender non-conforming people as evidence of the historic diversity of the movement, in reality, transgender people were often involved in actions that dramatically opposed gay and lesbian assimilationist agendas.

Silvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson, two early transgender revolutionaries, are often remembered for their participation in the first riot at Stonewall in 1969. But the gay, lesbian, and transgender organizations that incite this memory often conveniently divorce Rivera and Johnson's actual personal and political selves from their involvement in the iconized event. Rivera and Johnson's commitment to activism was radically anti-assimilationist, and these views were influenced by the very aspects of their identities that were derided and ignored by white, affluent, mainstream gay and lesbian groups. Rivera and Johnson were poor queens of color; as such, they were unwelcome in gay organizations that worked to portray images of gays and lesbians as 'the same' as straight people. Instead, Rivera and Johnson formed their own group, called Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR), to care for the gender-variant queers left behind by mainstream activism. STAR and its members were not preoccupied with conforming to the ideal image of 'upstanding' gay and lesbian citizens. Rather, STAR's members were exactly what their name indicates. The STAR were mostly gender-variant poor people of color who spent much of their lives in the streets. Rather than working with the state to gain rights and recognition, STAR's activism was focused on easing the burden of survival for queer and trans youth, people of color, and sex workers whose needs were ignored by both the government and mainstream LGBT advocacy groups. It is telling that STAR's first public appearance was at a public protest of police brutality; STAR's work, both in public and private spheres, recognized the intersecting ways that state oppression affects transgender lives. In anarchic spirit, STAR created intentional spaces in which skills and resources could be shared. Though they may not have called themselves anarchists, Rivera, Johnson, and the STAR undoubtedly employed anarchistic tactics to empower gender-variant people to survive in spite of the state. It is because of transphobia, white supremacy, and continued assimilationist ideologies that these acts of insurrection in the name of queer and transgender justice are erased today (Nothing, 2013).

### ***Contemporary 'tranarchism'***

In recent decades, both academic and casual discussions of intersections of queer and anarchist theory have begun addressing the 'gender question' as meaningful outside of binary definitions. These proposals of queered anarchism draw heavily upon trans-feminism, anarcho-feminism, and queer theory. Some of this discourse examines the role of queer and trans identities within anarchist communities, spaces, and actions, while others consider anarchist philosophy itself through a queer theoretical lens. Both types of writing create parallels between anti-authoritarian and radical queer ideals regarding sex and gender, coming to different

conclusions about the meaning of gender and gender transgression in contemporary anarchy.

Some present-day ‘tranarchist’ writings build arguments upon the assumption that transgender embodiment is, indeed, inherently anarchic. For example, in ‘Tyranny of the State and Trans Liberation,’ Liesegang (2012) states that transgender persons ‘[are] radical and anarchistic, if not insurrectionary, in [their] embodiment’ (p. 97). Transgender people, who are ‘inherently revolutionary,’ have the potential to use their binary-defying embodiments to challenge gender constructs to resist, rather than conform to, the tyranny of the state (p. 96). This tranarchist literature examines gender as a social construct, an arbitrary method of categorization maintained by the state in order to exercise power and control over the populous. The state creates and enforces social hierarchies and borders as a means of discipline and control. Transgender embodiment, in that it defies binary limits of acceptability, must then be transgressive in itself because it exposes the mutability of state-sanctioned ‘truth.’ By demonstrating the mobility and malleability of gender, trans individuals undermine a fundamental mode of categorization used to maintain the oppressive state.

The proclamation that trans embodiment possesses innately anarchic qualities, however, is problematic. The most obvious issue comes with the need to define transgender, which is deliberately unspecific and amorphous, as an expression or embodiment that always serves a single purpose. Do the non-operative transsexual sex worker and the post-mastectomy non-binary porn star possess the same potential (or desire) to dismantle the state? Looking at intersections of identity and oppression, the answer would probably be negative. Claiming that all transgender bodies possess inherent insurrectionary potential places the impetus upon transgender individuals to serve a revolutionary purpose, without regard for their own safety, survival, or preference. This perspective places the responsibility for critiquing and challenging gender norms upon trans people alone; cisgender individuals are, then, exempt from the expectation to use their genders for revolutionary purpose. When examining the role of (trans)gender in anti-authoritarianism, it is critical to remember that ‘anarchic’ is an adjective, not an equalizer.

If all gender is not transgressed equally, then how can we rank the anarchic potential of each theoretical identity? Though ranking various gender identities and expressions may be tempting, it is, ultimately, both reductive and futile. Both anarchism and transgender invite a multitude of interpretations and lifestyles and cannot be described with single definitions. In discussing a philosophical way of life that is marked by a rejection of authority and hierarchy, rating gender on a scale of radical potential is redundant.

Though some ‘tranarchist’ writing fails to address these problems, relationships between transgender and anarchy can be, and have been, conceived in less essentialist terms. Gender transgression can act as a weapon against compulsory categorization and a destabilizer of these binaristic groupings. The impetus for challenging gender-based oppression, however, need and should not be placed solely upon individuals who face the most danger because of their gender expressions. Anti-authoritarianism and gender defiance have the potential to (and, further, must) empower one another in the struggle for revolution (Carolyn, n.d.; Darity, 2009).

Adopting a less essentialist view of the relationship between (trans)gender and anarchy becomes a foundation for queering anarchy itself. There is, of course, no singular method or means of ‘queering.’ One anarchist writer proposes anarchy

queered not solely in action, but in the philosophy's fundamental principles. In 'Anarchy without Opposition,' Heckert (2012) challenges anarchism as a philosophy grounded in opposites. Oppositionality implies binarism, which is a tool of oppression. In order for justice-centered anarchism to avoid giving meanings to identities and hierarchies that are created and maintained in the interest of oppression, the idea of opposition must be queered. Heckert examines liberation as an end achieved not through the equalization and legitimization of all identities, but through the interrogation of identity and social borders as human-conceived and human-maintained. A queered conception of anarchy and opposition makes arguments over who exemplifies particular politics or embodiments redundant. Division itself is imaginary, though the effects of the perception of separateness created by hierarchy are the root of domination (Heckert, 2012).

In examining anarchism as something that, like transgender, cannot (and should not) be defined unilaterally, the initial question of the anarchic potential of transgender identities becomes irrelevant. As transgender exists both through relationships with hierarchy and radical visions of what could be, so does anarchism. Anarchism has power in its oppositional stance to structures that already 'exist,' which are legitimized through belief and adherence. Anarchism, however, presents even greater power in its ability to conceptualize alternative modes of existence without reliance upon opposition to the status quo. Examining queered anarchism requires interrogating the meanings of both transgender and anarchism. A post-structuralist framework is useful, if not essential, in decentering transgender discourse from traps of ranking legitimacy or illegitimacy of identities. Paired with anarchist theory, a post-structuralist critique enables an understanding of the way identities are constructed and coded as legitimate or true within the context of society and state. Queered anarchism, in its ability to conceptualize possibilities beyond binaristic opposition, have the capacity to undermine the state by dismantling the hierarchical social structures upon which enable exclusion, hierarchy, and inequality. By analyzing and understanding the unique ways in which queer, transgressive identities generate intense social and political surveillance and policing, anarchism can expose and target the state's greatest points of weakness.

### **The state and surveillance**

Surveillance and categorization of individuals and groups is critical to the function of the state as an entity that classifies, monitors, and manages the population. Government agencies, non-profits, hospitals, schools, and banks all record, maintain, and compare data about citizens' membership in certain categories (Spade, 2011). Bureaucratic agencies use these categorizations to make decisions regarding the distribution of population-specific services and interventions by designing and interpreting classification of who should and should not be eligible to receive services. These modes of 'inside/outside' separation and analysis of groups and individuals are necessary in order for the state to exist as arbiter and caretaker (Spade, 2011).

From birth until death, we (or our guardians) are handed paperwork and expected to check certain boxes to describe our identities. On every form we fill out, we expect repetition in the questions we are asked. Self-categorization is predictable and consistent, and from a young age we know the 'right' answers to describe ourselves. We identify ourselves by responding to the same formulaic

questions to participate in mundane activities (getting a flu shot, taking a survey) as we do to access services and places that dictate and affect life chances (applying to colleges, entering prison). Because the process of self-categorization is repeated dispassionately thousands of times over the courses of our lives, we rarely think twice about why we are asked for certain details and not others. Why is gender a more important indicator of identity than, say, shoe size? Certain modes of classification are considered natural and neutral, while others are unimportant or ridiculous. Individuals often do not have reason to question the relevance of the boxes they check until they are individually troubled by an inability to classify themselves (Spade, 2011).

It is important to interrogate the notion of familiar modes of classification as neutral, natural, and incontestable. In understanding the role of the state as caretaker and service provider to vulnerable populations, it is easy to conclude that universalized standards for ranking individuals have inherent value, and that these meanings necessarily reflect the conglomerate capacity of groups to function within society as it is. The categories through which institutions organize society, however, were not created in response to existing stratification. Rather, difference and inequality has become concentrated and organized around these once arbitrary categories (Spade, 2011). These modes of categorization, which manage and control the conditions of life, enable the state to act as caretaker of both individual bodies and the reproduction of the population.

### ***Discipline of the body, surveillance of the population***

Many of the factors deemed relevant as categories of classification (race, national origin, sex/gender, date of birth (age), (dis)ability) are perceived as present upon or evident through the actions or functioning of the physical body. The body is a canvas upon which cultural and political meanings are displayed. By classifying individuals based on conditions of the body, the state can exercise discipline, dominance, and control upon bodies and thereby regulate the population. This dual power of life over both bodies and the population is fundamental to the function of both the state and capitalism (Foucault, 1977, 1978).

In applying Foucauldian theories of administration of life via bodies, it is important to understand how Foucault defines power. Foucault (1978) asserts that power is constantly produced in a collection of mobile, unstable exchanges; that is, power is not a force that is held, shared, or lost unilaterally. Though the state undoubtedly utilizes power to exercise authority over a population, Foucault does not believe that the state is the ultimate embodiment of power. Rather, the state and its tactics of law and punishment represent the institutionalization of particular strategies of power. Critiques of the state often position it as an institution that exercises power through domination and repression; Foucault, however, offers a theory to the contrary: Power is not an exterior force, nor is it expressed through top-down domination. Rather, power works within every relationship, and every relationship is always already inside the constantly moving matrix of exchanges of power. It is these micro-level power exchanges that, in their collective convergence, ultimately create hegemonic domination. Individuals who experience subjugation do not lack power, either; to Foucault, silence is not a state of disempowerment, so much as silence is yet another way through which power is expressed (Foucault, 1978).

Foucault has much to say about the purpose of resistance in the context of power, as well. Resistance does not exist as an external, contrary force to power. Rather, resistance operates within power, and is, further, necessary to the functioning of power. For Foucault (1978), resistance, which is mobile and sporadic, makes change possible. This post-structural conception of power as omnipresent, dynamic, and manifested through an infinite web of interactions is useful in understanding transgender bodies as nexuses of various exchanges of power. Trans bodies generate intense surveillance and discipline by the state its bureaucratic institutions. Simultaneously, trans bodies continually and actively exercise power through resistance.

The methods used by the state to exercise control over bodies and populations have changed with the development of modern capitalism. From ancient times until only recently, the state exercised its hegemonic power by determining whether people lived or died. In feudal societies, sovereigns possessed power to seize the land, resources, bodies, and lives of the people they ruled. During this period, famine and disease were constant specters, and the threat of death was omnipresent. By the eighteenth century, however, economic development had begun to alter the role death played in individuals' lives. New technologies increased agricultural efficiency and production, affording workers more leisure time and better health. As death became less imminent and life more stable, the state was compelled to adapt its methods of exercising power. Simply killing people was no longer an adequate, justifiable method of control; the ability for individuals to live and realize a certain potential became recognized as a 'right.' Thus, it was necessary for the state to exercise power within lives through regulation and correction, rather than by arbitrating death. The advent of statistics (note the presence of 'state' within the name itself) allowed the increasingly bureaucratic state to measure the population and, further, decide how to administer services (Foucault, 1978).

Power is exercised in a multitude of ways to dually control living bodies (as productive machines) and the population (through regulating reproduction); simultaneously, bodies themselves possess productive power. Foucault (1978) uses the term 'biopower' to describe these exchanges. The transition of the role of the state from harbinger of death to administrator of life is reflected in the ways biopower enables the physical and organizational control of bodies and populations. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1977) describes the evolution of modern mechanisms of discipline and management. Key to Foucault's prescription for control is the manipulation of physical and metaphorical spaces into places of surveillance and analysis. For discipline to be enacted, space must be 'divided into as many sections as there are bodies' (1977, p. 143). This division can be made physically, such as through cells and beds in a prison. However, Foucault stresses that this type of tangible enclosure is not necessary, or sufficient, for discipline. In abstract terms, 'space' can also refer to positionality within a society. In order for the state to exercise discipline over populations, each body must be individualized and relegated to its own identifiable 'space' (by assignment of Social Security Number, for example), while simultaneously characterized and branded in relation to borders of inclusion/exclusion (such as checking M/F boxes on forms). The exclusionary branding of individualized bodies serves as a means of managing movement and deviance in the interest of creating productive, useful groups (Foucault, 1977).

Thus, the mechanism of discipline through biopower serves the purpose of monitoring and controlling unruly bodies to create appropriately reproductive

populations. In order for power to discipline and control, it must be exerted constantly in ways that pair visibility with concealment (Foucault, 1978). Foucault (1977) invokes the image of the panopticon to demonstrate the duality of visibility/invisibility in the context of control and discipline. On the outside of the panopticon is a circle of cells; in the middle stands a tall tower, in which a powerful observer sits. The inmates within the cells are constantly aware of the observational tower in the center. The tower, however, is not necessarily always occupied. The ultimate power of the panoptic setup is in the duality of the tower itself: The power is visible, but unverifiable. The inmates in the surrounding circle are, then, forced to operate as if they are always watched, because they can never ascertain the presence or absence of an observer (Foucault, 1977). This panoptic model of observation is illustrative of the functioning of the surveillant nation-state. Though all members of society are subject to the nation-state's scrutiny, those who experience it most acutely are those with ambiguous or suspect classifications and unruly bodies. Because of their dangerous potential to inflame dynamics of resistance in matrices of power, the state must contain defiant and transient populations through surveillance. Transgender people are particularly subject to this scrutiny because they trouble a fundamental tool of power used to regulate and control bodies and populations, sexuality. If sexuality is indeed, as Foucault (1978) claims, 'an especially dense transfer point for relations of power' (p. 103), then sexed bodies are the conductors of these electrified exchanges. The deployment of sexuality operates outside of law, instead suffusing bodies and giving meaning to their sensations (Foucault, 1978). How can a legible production of sexuality be assured when the sexed body itself is illegible? Because they trouble the deployment of sexuality, bodies that transgress norms of sex and gender create points of resistance inside hegemonic power as they move through the world. This resistance cannot be imbued with necessarily insurrectionary meaning (as Foucault says, there is no particular 'soul of revolt' [1978, p. 96]), but its manifestations do have the potential to fracture and remold hegemonic power. If the resistance exerted by gender-transgressive bodies can reproduce to infiltrate networks of power relations, it has the potential to incite revolution.

### **Transgender people and surveillance of the body**

The surveillance of transgender bodies is compounded in intensity and complexity because of its occurrence at intersections of legal, medical, and social marginalization. In undertaking social and medical transition, transgender people must continually traverse borders of disclosure/concealment and visibility/invisibility. Trans people interface with the state for official correction and validation of gender on documents; simultaneously, however, transgender people are forced to negotiate interactions with the state, law, and medicine with fear and suspicion, because their bodies confound the constructed notions of binary sex/gender that maintain institutional power.

### ***Sexing medicine, gatekeeping gender***

From the initial sex-determining ultrasound to the moment a newborn child's birth certificate is signed, assigned sex (and, implicitly, gender) is recognized as a critical aspect of an individual's social life. Designating sex as 'male' or 'female' is

undertaken with the assumption that all sex is manifested naturally and absolutely within one of two clear-cut categories. Sex, however, is neither natural nor absolute, nor is it exempt from social and cultural influences. According to Lorber (1993), the gendering of bodies is not, as is commonly believed, a response to the incontrovertible existence of two biological sexes. Rather, sex itself is formulated as a biological dichotomy that enables socialization into one of two gender categories. The process of binary gender socialization itself ‘constructs social bodies to be different and unequal’ (p. 568).

Though sex categorization is ostensibly based on neutral, apolitical, and unchangeable biological principles, the familiar binary sexing of bodies is often troubled by ambiguities and contradictions. Binary sex assignment can be complicated by certain divergences in hormonal, gonadal, and/or genital development (commonly labeled ‘intersex conditions’), which problematize labeling groupings of characteristics as monolithically indicative of one sex or the other (Kessler, 1990). Methods used by medical institutions to respond to babies who are born troubling male and female sex labels and the attitudes held by the doctors responsible for making decisions regarding intersex children illustrate the social importance of constructing sex in binary terms. In intersex cases, promptly deciding the ‘true’ sex of a child is essential. Failure to do so may result in a psychosocial emergency, and the child may be irrevocably scarred (Kessler, 1990).

The medical response to sex ambiguity at birth plainly illustrates the importance of constructing sex, both socially and surgically, to legibly and inarguably embody one of two poles. Ultimately, the only evidence of doctors’ success or failure in assigning the sex of an infant is provided judging whether the individual’s gender identity and expression is consistent with the normative expectations of the decided-upon sex.

Sex is gendered, and gender is sexed. Female-assigned individuals are expected and socialized to present gender in a feminine manner, maturing from girls into women. Male-assigned individuals are expected and socialized to be masculine boys and men. Those who identify and behave outside of these standards ideas of female/feminine/woman and male/masculine/man face affront on social, medical, and legal levels. Maintenance of a binary system of sex and gender classification despite the existence of ambiguities is a method of social control of both sex and gender.

Because this binary system is so rigidly enforced, transgender people must perpetually seek permission and affirmation from medical and legal institutions in order to live as they please. Though transgender political issues are often grouped with those of lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons, there is distinct difference in experiences of surveillance faced by sexual minorities and gender transgressors. Gay, lesbian, and bisexual people are rarely forced to interact with psychomedical institutions as a means of authenticating and legitimizing their identities (Kelly, 2012). Trans people often initiate the process of actualizing body and preferred gender by entering into negotiations with psychomedical institutions. When they enter the psychomedical arena, a transgender individual begins by disclosing their transgender status. Disclosure of trans identification, however, is not as easy as simply ‘coming out.’ In order to be taken seriously as transgender in many psychomedical interactions, an individual must typically present a particular narrative of transgender identification. This narrative is one of exclusion; it must illustrate the individual’s incapacity to function ‘normally’ as a result of persistent, lifelong gender

dysphoria. If this narrative is not related in accordance with a particular archetype of transgender experience, the individual will likely be barred from accessing gender-affirming medicine (Spade, 2003).

Once a transgender person seeking medical intervention establishes their legitimacy as ‘trans enough’ in accordance with the criteria of a gender dysphoria diagnosis, they may be able to seek gender affirmation through hormonal and/or surgical means. Though they require disclosure and visibility as transgender for entrance, the ultimate goal of intervention by medical institutions is to enable transgender people to be recognizable as their preferred gender to non-trans people. This access to hormonal and surgical gender sex/alignment procedures, however, is dependent primarily on the financial and cultural capital the individual possesses. Many trans people do not ever seek medical intervention, either by choice or by barriers to access (National Transgender Discrimination Survey and Report, 2010).

### ***Socio-cultural border crossing***

Transgender people trouble the binary gendering of sex through continual, deliberate experiences of border crossing. Cultural borders, which explicitly and implicitly separate social groups through the delineation of norms, values, and behaviors, serve to create and amplify social hierarchies. According to Kelly (2012), border crossing occurs ‘at any instance when one’s identity is open to inspection, questioning, and determination either by in-group members or by a legal authority’ (p. 103). Cultural borders are maintained and regulated on both institutional and interpersonal levels. Some borders are highly policed, and violators face harsh penalties (e.g. sexual exchanges between adults and children). Other border crossings are less intensely regulated, such as the relationships between managers and workers in a co-operatively operated grocery store. Regulation of borders and the severity of punishment for crossing them is determined by the extent to which the particular border crossing poses a threat to social hierarchies. Gender transgressors fail to consistently inhabit a fundamental category of bodily identification, crossing borders and disturbing cultural expectations of acceptable gender inhabitance. Because of this existence in the borderlands of binary gender, the transgender body is scrutinized as unruly, unstable, and transient (Kelly, 2012).

In certain places, gender borders become sites of conflict and violence for individuals who do not conform. Some of the most intensely guarded crossings occur at what Kelly (2012) calls ‘sex classification borders.’ Here, transgender people must negotiate a cultural border that is monitored by an individual with institutional authority; often, though not always, this border crossing occurs at the intersection of physical and abstract borders (such as movement between countries). At these points, individual gatekeepers’ perceptions of cultural indicators of gender normativity are used to determine whether institutional power will be invoked to punish an individual whose gender fails to ‘pass’ border inspection (Kelly, 2012).

### ***(II) legal sex***

Transgender people often face long processes of legal negotiation with multiple bureaucratic offices in order to obtain documentation that accurately, consistently reflects their lived genders. Requirements for gender changes on birth certificates and drivers’ licenses vary dramatically from state to state. Some states require

genital surgery (which is obtained by a very small proportion of the transgender population at large) in order to correct a gender marker on a driver's license. Some states refuse to alter birth certificates at all, or will change a transgender person's birth sex assignment on the document to a blank space, rather than the correct marker for their lived gender (Beauchamp, 2009; Spade, 2003). Because of these differences and ambiguities in changing different legal sex markers with different agencies, it is common for a transgender person to possess several conflicting, or outright inaccurate, pieces of identity documentation. 41% of transgender people who live as genders other than those assigned to them at birth do not possess state ID that reflects that gender (Grant et al., 2011). This identity inconsistency leads to increased scrutiny of transgender people at border crossings such as travel, employment, housing, and applications for state and federal welfare aid.

In the past decade, the Social Security Administration and Department of Homeland Security has begun reinforcing their efforts to confront undocumented workers in order to identify potential security threats. In the past, comparing official documents from different government organizations was uncommon, undertaken only during specific investigations. Following 9/11, however, it has become routine for the government to perform record comparisons. This new insistence on double- and triple-checking record congruence in employment situations affects trans people, who frequently possess various legal documents proclaiming contradictory sexes, names, or histories. When federal investigations uncover discrepancies in comparisons of state documents, the Social Security Administration may send 'no-match' letters informing employers that a worker may be undocumented. This places transgender people in situations where they are forced to disclose their transgender histories or face being fired (Beauchamp, 2009).

In a post-9/11 era where state security and surveillance have intensified under the impetus of identifying and thwarting terrorist threats, identity inconsistency is viewed not only as an inconvenience, but also as possible threat to national security. The effects of red-flagging citizens with inconsistent identification status (and, implicitly, dangerous bodies) are manifested no more intensely and dramatically than in airports. For transgender people, travel by way of airports demands meticulous negotiation of disclosure and non-disclosure in order to avoid being singled out as a security threat for inhabiting an abnormally gendered and inconsistently documented body. The National Center for Transgender Equality (2013) advises trans people to carry letters attesting to the necessity of transgender-related medical items, or fill out a notification card (used to disclose disability or medical condition) to prevent difficulty in airports. This idea of strategic disclosure (in contrast to non-disclosure, often referred to as 'going stealth') echoes the neutralizing claim that if one has nothing to hide, one need not about being confronted with suspicion. Strategic disclosure, however, is a catch-22: in outing oneself as abnormally bodied, rather than attempting to 'pass' through security unnoticed, one becomes more vulnerable to gatekeeping, detainment, and profiling. When transgender bodies are also deemed 'suspicious' in other ways, such as race or disability, increased scrutiny even with strategic politics in mind may not be desirable at all (Beauchamp, 2009).

### **Tranarchism: state resistance and queer praxis**

It is evident that gender transgressive embodiment provokes acts of surveillance, scrutiny, and policing by the state and its supported institutions. By interrogating

the nature of this surveillance, we can expose the areas that make the state feel most threatened. The more violently a border is scrutinized, the more socially threatening a crossing of the border can be perceived to be (Kelly, 2012). Gender transgression, stigmatized as mental disorder and punished through airport interrogations, firing from jobs without legal recourse, and even physical violence ignored by authorities, is clearly a viciously maintained cultural border. Crossings of this border pose a threat to the state, as they challenge and befuddle modes of classification that allow for the discipline and control of bodies. Trans lives also exert the pressure of resistance within matrices of power, and anarchists can and should learn from this resistance to create praxis for social justice.

### *Tranarchism as state resistance*

Transgender people, with their conflicting identity documentation and binary-defying bodies, resist the state-constructed notion that possessing and living a single, static, easily categorizable identity individualize each citizen. Over the course of their lifetimes, transgender people constantly navigate border crossings in which choices between concealment and disclosure are at the fore. There is, however, no such thing as a transition without a paper trail in the postmodern age. Since this paper trail cannot be hidden or deleted, there remains record that categories created to be binary and static can, with effort, be altered. The phenomenon of different standards for achieving documentation between sectors of government allows for the existence numerous, incompatible histories for the same transgender individual, disrupting the organized, efficient facade of the government.

Returning to the Foucauldian illustration of the panoptic mechanism as means of ultimate control and discipline, we can observe how the multiple, transient identities created by transgender embodiment create cracks in the seemingly impenetrable dichotomy of visibility/invisibility. In order for imprisonment to exist, the spatial dividers that individualize masses must have power. Transgender bodies undermine the sex/gender taxonomic rating scale in uncountable ways, most of which are only tenuously controlled by the government. For example, a transgender woman may present consistently as a woman because of body-altering hormones obtained on the street market. The psychomedical industrial complex has no record of this individual's use of controlled substances, nor is there evidence that the individual has been diagnosed with gender dysphoria (or, until recently, 'gender identity disorder'). Further, let us assume that this woman's birth certificate and driver's license remains marked by the symbol of her assigned sex, male. This particular woman moves through the world in a way that exposes the vast ambiguities that can be present within what would seem to be clear 'male' documentation, while simultaneously undermining the administrative assumptions that are made upon inspection of a 'woman.'

What does the state make of those whose bodies and lives defy the very idea of binary gender in itself? What of gender transgressors who make efforts to 'pass' as their assigned sex to navigate strictly enforced government checkpoints, such as airports, but slip back into dangerous ambiguity when allowed through to the other side? By exposing the inconsistency and permeability of state surveillance, trans bodies undermine the mechanism of 'unverifiable visibility' in border crossings. Though the state would have us believe that the authority it exercises is monolithic and impenetrable, it is, rather, an entity formed from many separate structures. It is

in this fragmentation that the state is vulnerable to the revolutionary potential of gender non-conforming resistance.

### *Tranarchism as praxis for justice*

Discourse about anarchism is only useful when it proposes praxis for implementing the world of our dreams. In discussing the possibilities of queered anarchism, we can examine what we learn from trans lives in dual ways. First, as I discuss above, the experiences transgender individuals have in navigating border crossings can expose how the state acts as an unfixed collection of powered forces, rather than a monolithic manifestation of power. This perspective reveals the importance of gender as an expression of state biopower and exhibits how gender transgression exerts resistance. In addition, understanding the unique positionalities of transgender lives can and should shape how we practically practice anarchy. Since the days of Emma Goldman, anarchism has developed into a theory of opposition to all systematic oppression, rather than simply the ostensible powers of capitalism and the state. For anarchism to hold hope for social justice, it must continue to grow by prioritizing and centering the needs, experiences, and visions of marginalized people in its praxis.

In the words of Audre Lorde, ‘The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house’ (1984, p. 112). These words of revolution should be central to the ways anarchists develop and ‘do’ praxis. The ‘master,’ or the complex web of hegemonic power created by the symbiotic interactions of capitalism and the state, uses strategies of dominance to ensure a docile population. Though power is expressed through an unimaginable number and variety of exchanges, it becomes institutionalized and hegemonic in the forms of racism, ableism, classism, ethnocentrism, sexism, heterosexism (and homophobia), cissexism (and transphobia), and other modes of oppression. These are the tools of the state. When we engage in discourse and implement praxis that does not explicitly work to dismantle all (and not simply some) of these oppressions at their intersections, we continue to use the master’s tools in attempts to destroy the concept of mastery. For anarchism to truly carry the promise of justice, it must reject discourses rooted in dominance.

The issues affecting gender non-conforming people must be central, rather than peripheral, in conceiving of anarchist praxis. This means critiquing the tenets of our anarchisms and see the ways that they, too, can exclude and erase trans lives. Anarcho-primitivism, for example, promotes de-industrialization and advocates for a return to hunter-gatherer subsistence (Anonymous, 2005). But in an un-civilized society, what becomes of chronically ill or disabled people who rely on modern technologies to survive? Further, how can primitivism serve the needs of trans people who require hormones and surgeries in order to live comfortable, self-actualized lives? In addition to asking ourselves difficult questions about our theories, we must likewise examine and adapt our praxes. In undertaking certain types of direct action, it is presumed that activists may face arrest. An individual’s participation in the action may even be validated and celebrated due to their detainment. But what of transgender anarchists, for whom incarceration poses unique risks of gendered violence? When they are arrested, non-trans anarchists can guarantee accommodations in jail that are appropriate for their lived genders; the same is not true for trans people. We must interrogate the ways we define legitimate and valuable participation in anarchist action so that our actions do not themselves alienate those who suffer most severely at the hands of the state.

Ensuring survival is central in conceiving of anarchy as a means of justice. Radical queer leftists and anarchists frequently voice criticism of the priorities of mainstream LGBT organizations as misplaced. This manifests itself most strongly in campaigns for the legalization of same-sex marriage. Some radical queers feel that working for legitimacy under the state-sanctioned institution of marriage is assimilationist at best, and divergent from more serious issues of survival, at worst. There is legitimacy in this sentiment, of course: Again, we remember that the master's tools cannot dismantle his house. But marriage carries with it more than symbolic weight and privileges. Some protections available through legal marriage can be fundamental for survival. The ability to share in a partner's insurance, for example, may enable a chronically ill individual to receive the medical care they need. Though we oppose the bureaucratic state machine, we must understand that work done within existing systems may serve to guarantee that immediate survival needs are met. That is not to say that we ourselves must contribute to assimilationist campaigns for 'equality;' we should, however, acknowledge that survival comes in many forms. As others do work within the system to ensure better chances of survival, we anarchists must continue our own efforts at demolishing the hegemonic power of the state.

Transgender issues are, by nature, intersectional, and our praxis must be, as well. The 2011 National Transgender Discrimination Survey (which contains statistics that cause the state little administrative distress) reveals telling information about the situations of trans lives. We see that transgender people are significantly more likely than cisgender people to fall below the poverty line and are highly vulnerable to unemployment and homelessness. Sixteen percent of transgender people report working in underground economies, such as sex work, for survival. Gender non-conforming people are four times more likely than the population at large to suffer from HIV infection. In addition, transgender individuals are more likely to report suffering from mental health conditions and/or disabilities than cisgender people. Due to unequal access to appropriate and adequate healthcare, transgender people have an increased likelihood of experiencing poor health outcomes. In all of these areas, disparities are significantly more dramatic for transgender people of color, particularly African Americans (Grant et al., 2011). Gender non-conformity is one of many ways that individuals experience vulnerability at the hands of the state and capitalism; this vulnerability is compounded at intersections of marginalization.

Thus, we see that transgender issues cannot be confined to their own realm. When we discuss class issues, we are necessarily discussing trans issues, because transgender bodies are no less instruments of labor production than all other bodies. Further, the bodies of trans people (particularly disabled trans people and trans people of color) are assigned less value and considered more disposable by the capitalist state than non-trans bodies. Sex worker rights are trans rights, because trans people make up a weighty portion of the industry and experience some of the most severe violence (Daring, 2012). In organizing with sex workers, it is critical to ensure that our language and spaces are inclusive of the multitude of gender and sexual identities of sex workers. When we use harm-reduction outreach in HIV-prevention actions, we must be attentive to the unique needs of trans people. In our discourse opposing police brutality, we should not forget that transgender people, especially trans women of color, experience police violence in particularly acute ways. Like the work of the STAR, our praxis must always be intersectional.

We must also, however, understand that all of these areas present highly charged convergences of personal and political identities. We should not expect that all transgender people will want to be a part of our anarchism, but our praxis must center their needs, nonetheless. It is illogical to expect trans people to put themselves in danger for activism that has done nothing to prove its commitment to ending transphobia. We must remember Foucault's assertion that silence does not indicate lack of power; rather, silence is yet another form that power may take in its many exchanges (1978). It is silence that guarantees survival for the most marginalized populations, and there is always resilience and resistance in survival. Non-trans anarchists must organize alongside transgender people around issues that trans people assert are vital to their empowerment and liberation. Though anarchists are undoubtedly justified in our insurrection against capitalism and the state, we must also recognize that survival is the foremost priority for trans people whose lives are ignored, devalued, and wantonly terminated.

### Conclusion

Anarchism is an ideology that opposes institutional authority of all types. Rather than promoting equality within hierarchies, anarchism seeks to eliminate the power assigned to hierarchical establishment altogether. Attempting to rate anarchic potential of different transgender bodies is irrelevant, as power and resistance have no essential qualities. Rather, by deconstructing the workings of biopower and examining the ways that gender non-conforming bodies disrupt control and discipline enabled by classification and hierarchy, we can expose ambiguities in the state itself. State power is deliberate, political, and, most importantly, maintained through our adherence. By empowering many forms of resistance, anarchism can transcend opposition and construct visions of justice, liberty, and equality. It is critical to center trans lives and experience in developing praxis to achieve this justice.

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