 Volume 10, Number 2, 2004

relation to the category of gender and what it represents? What are the implications of the interrelated histories of gender studies and sexuality studies? Has gender assumed a new salience in LGBTQ studies recently? Is it necessary to preserve a sense of the specificity of sexuality in relation to the study of gender, or a sense of the specificity of gender in relation to the study of sexuality? Addressing a persistent thematic in feminist and queer theorizing across a range of disciplinary and methodological differences, the following responses to our questions elucidate variously the complex and mobile relations between sexuality and gender that energize our everyday teaching and writing, reading and thinking.

Transgender Studies: Queer Theory's Evil Twin

Susan Stryker

If queer theory was born of the union of sexuality studies and feminism, transgender studies can be considered queer theory's evil twin: it has the same parentage but willfully disrupts the privileged family narratives that favor sexual identity labels (like *gay*, *lesbian*, *bisexual*, and *heterosexual*) over the gender categories (like *man* and *woman*) that enable desire to take shape and find its aim.

In the first volume of *GLQ* I published my first academic article, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage," an autobiographically inflected performance piece drawn from my experiences of coming out as a transsexual.[1] The article addressed four distinct theoretical moments. The first was Judith Butler's then recent, now paradigmatic linkage of gender with the notion of trouble. Gender's absence renders sexuality largely incoherent, yet gender refuses to be the stable foundation on which a system of sexuality can be theorized.[2] A critical reappraisal of transsexuality, I felt, promised a timely and significant contribution to the analysis of the intersection of gender and sexuality. The second moment was the appearance of Sandy Stone's "The 'Empire' Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto," which pointedly criticized Janice G. Raymond's paranoiac *Transsexual Empire* and called on transsexual people to articulate new narratives of self that better expressed the authenticity of transgender experience.[3] I considered my article on transgender rage an explicit answer to that call. The third moment was Leslie Feinberg's little pamphlet, *Transgender Liberation*. Feinberg took a preexisting term, *transgender*, and invested it with new meaning, enabling it to become the name for Stone's theorized posttranssexualism.[4] Feinberg linked the drive to inhabit this newly envisioned space to a broader struggle for social justice. I saw myself as a fellow traveler.

Finally, I perceived a tremendous utility, both political and theoretical, in the new concept of an antiessentialist, postidentitarian, strategically fluid "queerness." It was through participation in Queer Nation—particularly its San Francisco–based spin-off, Transgender Nation—that I sharpened my theoretical teeth on the practice of transsexuality.

When I came out as transsexual in 1992, I was acutely conscious, both experientially and intellectually, that transsexuals were considered abject creatures in most feminist and gay or lesbian contexts, yet I considered myself both feminist and lesbian. I saw *GLQ* as the leading vehicle for advancing the new queer theory, and I saw in queer theory a potential for attacking the antitranssexual moralism so unthinkingly embedded in most progressive analyses of gender and sexuality without resorting to a reactionary, homophobic, and misogynistic counteroffensive. I sought instead to dissolve and recast the ground that identity genders in the process of staking its tent. By denaturalizing and thus deprivileging nontransgender practices of embodiment and identification, and by simultaneously enacting a new narrative of the wedding of self and flesh, I intended to create new territories, both analytic and material, for a critically refigured transsexual practice. Embracing and identifying with the figure of Frankenstein's monster, claiming the transformative power of a return from abjection, felt like the right way to go.

Looking back a decade later, I see that in having chosen to speak as a famous literary monster, I not only found a potent voice through which to offer an early formulation of transgender theory but also situated myself (again, like Frankenstein's monster) in a drama of familial abandonment, a fantasy of revenge against those who had cast me out, and a yearning for personal redemption. I wanted to help define "queer" as a family to which transsexuals belonged. The queer vision that animated my life, and the lives of so many others in the brief historical moment of the early 1990s, held out the dazzling prospect of a compensatory, utopian reconfiguration of community. It seemed an anti-oedipal, ecstatic leap into a postmodern space of possibility in which the foundational containers of desire could be ruptured to release a raw erotic power that could be harnessed to a radical social agenda. That vision still takes my breath away.

A decade later, with another Bush in the White House and another war in the Persian Gulf, it is painfully apparent that the queer revolution of the early 1990s yielded, at best, only fragile and tenuous forms of liberal progress in certain sectors and did not radically transform society—and as in the broader world, so too in the academy. Queer theory has become an entrenched, though generally progressive, presence in higher education, but it has not realized the (admittedly utopian) potential I (perhaps naively) sensed there for a radical restructuring of our understanding of gender, particularly of minoritized and marginalized manifestations of gender, such as transsexuality. While queer studies remains the most hospitable place to undertake transgender work, all too often *queer* remains a code word for "gay" or "lesbian," and all too often transgender phenomena are misapprehended through a lens that privileges sexual orientation and sexual identity as the primary means of differing from heteronormativity.

Most disturbingly, "transgender" increasingly functions as the site in which to contain all gender trouble, thereby helping secure both homosexuality and heterosexuality as stable and normative categories of personhood. This has damaging, isolative political correlaries. It is the same developmental logic that transformed an antiassimilationist "queer" politics into a more palatable LGBT civil rights movement, with T reduced to merely another (easily detached) genre of sexual identity rather than perceived, like race or class, as something that cuts across existing sexualities, revealing in often unexpected ways the means through which all identities achieve their specificities.

The field of transgender studies has taken shape over the past decade in the shadow of queer theory. Sometimes it has claimed its place in the queer family and offered an in-house critique, and sometimes it has angrily spurned its lineage and set out to make a home of its own. Either way, transgender studies is following its own trajectory and has the potential to address emerging problems in the critical study of gender and sexuality, identity, embodiment, and desire in ways that gay, lesbian, and queer studies have not always successfully managed. This seems particularly true of the ways that transgender studies resonate with disability studies and intersex studies, two other critical enterprises that investigate atypical forms of embodiment and subjectivity that do not readily reduce to heteronormativity, yet that largely fall outside the analytic framework of sexual identity that so dominates queer theory.

As globalization becomes an ever more inescapable context in which all our lives transpire, it is increasingly important to be sensitive to the ways that identities invested with the power of Euro-American privilege interact with non-Western identities. If the history and anthropology of gender and sexuality teach us anything, it is that human culture has created many ways of putting together bodies, subjectivities, social roles, and kinship structures—that vast apparatus for producing intelligible personhood that we call "gender." It is appallingly easy to reproduce the power structures of colonialism by subsuming non-Western configurations of personhood into Western constructs of sexuality and gender.

It would be misguided to propose transgender studies as queer theory for the global marketplace—that is, as an intellectual framework that is less inclined to export Western notions of sexual selves, less inclined to expropriate indigenous non-Western configurations of personhood. Transgender studies, too, is marked by its First World point of origin. But the critique it has offered to queer theory is becoming a point of departure for a lively conversation, involving many speakers from many locations, about the mutability and specificity of human lives and loves. There remains in that emerging dialogue a radical queer potential to realize.

Notes

1. Susan Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage," *GLQ* 1 (1994): 237–54.
2. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993).
3. Janice G. Raymond, *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male* (Boston: Beacon, 1979); Sandy Stone, "The 'Empire' Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto," in *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity*, ed. Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub (New York: Routledge, 1991), 280–304.
4. Leslie Feinberg, *Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come* (New York: World View Forum, 1992).

The Categories Themselves
David Valentine

This forum seeks to consider the relationship between sexuality and gender. Still, for me, there is a question that needs to be asked before we can explore that relationship: among those human experiences in which we are interested, which count as "gendered" and which as "sexual"? Or, more simply, what exactly do we mean by "sexuality" and "gender"? Putting these terms in quotation marks highlights the fact that "gender" and "sexuality" are themselves categories that hold certain meanings. Like those of other categories, these meanings can shift, are historically produced, and are drawn on in particular social contexts.

In short, to ask about the relationship between "gender" and "sexuality" requires that we conceptualize them as distinct in the first place. In contemporary social theory, "gender" and "sexuality" are (like all categories) heuristics that generally and respectively describe the social meanings by which we figure out who is masculine and who is feminine and what those gendered bodies do with