Introduction

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Introduction:

Early Modern Trans Studies

SIMONE CHESS, COLBY GORDON, AND WILL FISHER

When it comes to trans politics, one pervasive assumption can be found broadly diffused through such disparate media as pop culture and evangelical sermonizing. This assumption is present in reactionary conservatism as much as left-wing scholarship: that trans people are a recent phenomenon, the product of cutting-edge medical technology and manifesting a psychological complexity that would have been inconceivable before the advent of modernity. The essays collected here take aim at the misguided supposition that transition was unthinkable until the development of hormone therapies and surgical interventions that, in some quarters, define trans experience. Where Susan Stryker's magisterial *Transgender History* documents "A Hundred-Plus Years of Trans History" (45), carefully tracking the emergence of the category of transgender from its origins in nineteenth-century sexology,[1] this volume pushes that timeline back by four hundred-plus years and reveals premodern trans histories that include the queer philology of seventeenth-century words for gender transition ("transfeminate" and "transsexion"); the tranimal world of early modern prodigies, plantlife, and manuscripts; the queer residues of genderfluid boy actors and trans-affirmative productions of Renaissance plays; and the racialized gender of Amazons, the obscure race of eunuchs, and the masculine "whiteness" of the Christian soul. We suggest that the methods, topics, and insights of trans studies have the potential to recalibrate critical work on gender in Renaissance texts. At the same time, the essays in this special issue beautifully indicate that early modern studies has a great deal to offer trans studies in return. We are not merely borrowers, but also lenders.

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This special issue is the first published collection to bring the analytic framework of trans studies to bear on early modern English literature. As we undertake this work, we want to acknowledge that, in some respects, we are a little late to the party. It is surprising that it has taken so long for early modern studies to explicitly engage with the analytic lenses offered by trans studies, a well-established and thriving academic discipline that boasts almost three decades of scholarship.[2] Moreover, trans studies already informs a significant amount of research in historical, literary, and cultural studies. The fields adjacent to ours have produced important works of scholarship that have helped to extend the parameters of trans history further back in time. These include a special issue of *Medieval Feminst Forum* on *Visions of Medieval Trans Feminism* (2019), edited by M. W. Bychowski and Dorothy Kim; a collection on *Trans and Genderqueer Subjects in Medieval Hagiography* (2020), edited by Alicia Spencer-Hall and Blake Gutt; a special issue of *Early American Studies, Beyond the Binaries in Early America* (2014), edited by Rachel Hope Cleves; and an edited volume *Trans Historical: Gender Plurality before the Modern* (2020), edited by Anna Klosowska, Masha Raskolnikov, and Greta LaFleur. It is particularly surprising that it has taken early modern studies so long to engage with trans studies, given the deep roots of queer studies in our field. Moreover, early modern literature includes a seemingly inexhaustible reservoir of material on gender, which has already fueled many decades' worth of research. Given the situation, it is worth asking where this reluctance comes from. Does it reveal an unfamiliarity with, or even suspicion of, trans thought? Subterranean tensions between feminist, queer, and trans scholarship and politics? An unwillingness to interrogate the unexamined cisness of our field? A fear of saying the wrong thing and being cancelled?[3] The pressures to maintain our status as canonical and therefore essential in a moment of shrinking resources? The almost complete absence of trans and nonbinary scholars in tenured or tenure-track positions? Some combination of these things?

If early modern trans studies is arriving somewhat late to the party, we have done our best to make up for lost time with a dramatic, multi-vocal entrance. This special issue has generated writing that is inventive, surprising, and genuinely new, produced by scholars at every rank and stage of their careers. The essays bring diverse methods to bear on a wide range of texts and images and give us a glimpse of what early modern trans studies might look like without presuming to present a unified—much less programmatic—vision

of what the field is or what it might be. We believe that the variety of essays included here is one of the volume's strengths, and that it is an indication of the wide-ranging possibilities that trans methodologies have to offer. None of the essays collected here does what we expected when we began this project; few of the authors took up the prompts or processes that we imagined would be the obvious approaches to early modern studies. Nonetheless, the special issue shows how spacious this emerging field already is, and how much room there is, still, for new methods and objects of study.

Early modern trans studies is informed by the research of feminist, queer, and critical race studies scholars, who offer inspiration and methodological models. In some instances, the essays here follow familiar paths of historical recovery and/or literary analysis with the new aim of excavating the period's gender-variant practices, and in order to think about how they continue to shape—or might reshape—the present. At the same time, early modern trans studies can help to identify troubling oversights in the earlier research and areas of productive friction and divergence.[4] In some instances, it may be beneficial to hold on to those tensions and meditate on them, rather than to simply try to resolve or dispel them; trans studies approaches may complicate, deepen, or revise the methods upon which they build. Furthermore, as the essays in this volume demonstrate, early modern trans studies will inevitably uncover new and unexpected archival materials as well as its own methods and trajectories.

In terms of field formation, early modern trans studies might take its cues from the development of trans studies itself. The first iteration of the field, what Susan Stryker and Aren Aizura call "Trans Studies 1.0," formulated "the kind of identity politics necessary to gain speaking positions within discourse" (3). As the discipline has developed and expanded, however, it has moved away from a strict ethnographic focus on identity, subjectivity, and personal narrative. "Trans Studies 2.0" has more readily embraced theoretical approaches that thread explorations of trans embodiment into animal studies, disability studies, biopolitics, phenomenology, affect studies, ecocriticism, critical race studies, indigenous studies, and posthumanism, among others.[5] All of these other areas of inquiry have already found their place in early modern studies; therefore, it is natural and intuitive to think that early modern scholarship might expand to include a trans analytic. Some of the essays in this collection show how this might be done, unearthing the trans possibilities of vegetable blazons, werewolves that feel "hairy on the inside," and

playable manuscripts that fold Adam and Eve into hybrid chimeras. At the same time, these essays—even some of the more theoretically inclined pieces—offer important figures, archives, and terms that we might use to flesh out early modern trans histories: for instance, work on the philological predecessors of the term "transgender," the queer careers of boy actors, and the materiality of gender in anatomical treatises. That is to say, early modern trans studies does not aim to replace or supersede historicist or archival work, but rather to embrace a capacious set of approaches to understanding the prehistories of transgender embodiment.

Crucially, as the field of trans studies has developed, it has become an increasingly intersectional endeavor, and that ethos must extend to early modern trans studies. A distinguishing feature of current work in trans studies is its recognition that while the identity politics of the first wave of scholarship gave voice to some trans individuals and their histories, it actively suppressed others. According to Stryker and Aizura, Trans Studies 2.0 often "directs its critical gaze at the inadequacies of the field's first iteration, in order to correct them, taking aim at its implicit whiteness, U.S.-centricity, [and] Anglophone bias" (4). Such criticism interrogates "transgender normativity" more broadly, which works "to secure citizenship for some trans bodies at the expense of others, while replicating many forms of racism, xenophobia and class privilege" (4).[6] The most important ongoing conversations in trans studies have centered race, exploring how transphobia differentially targets people of color, particularly through the disciplinary structures of policing, surveillance, and border securitization; how white supremacy aligns whiteness with cisness; and how genocidal histories of colonization enforced cisgender norms and extirpated non-cis identities, practices, and communities.[7] Building on these insights, one of the most urgent reasons to expand the scope of trans history to encompass early modernity is that it will lead us to unearth the histories of trans people of color, and also contribute to the project of binding together the genealogies of gender and race. That is to say, thinking with trans studies presses us to account not just for gender, but for racialized gender, since, as C. Riley Snorton powerfully argues, "the condensation of transness into the category of transgender is a racialized narrative" (8). Consequently, any attempt to discern the contours of gendered embodiment in Renaissance texts requires sustained attention to the emergence of modern forms of race and racism. This collection was compiled at a moment when the field is belatedly beginning to grapple with the racism that has structured our

curriculum, canon, and scholarship. Because such recognition is emerging only after decades of marginalizing the field-building work of critical race scholars in early modern studies, early modern trans studies must be explicit and intentional in examining racialized constructions of gender and gendered constructions of race. We especially acknowledge the crucial, field-shifting conversations and scholarship generated by #ShakeRace and the #RaceB4Race seminars and symposia. To that end, the essays in this volume explore many different ways in which the histories of transgender embodiment and racialization are interwoven by the logics of white supremacy. By analyzing the intersecting histories of gender deviance and colonialism, antiblackness, the gendered idealization of whiteness, Christian universalism, anti-Semitism, and the triangle trade (to name a few), these essays point to the ways that early modern studies can contribute to genealogies of the biopolitical operations of the modern state, a central concern of both trans studies and critical race studies.[8]

When we first began this project, we formulated two relatively simple questions that have continued to guide our thinking: what tools, methods, and perspectives might trans studies offer early modern studies? And conversely, what can early modern studies contribute to the contemporary landscape of trans studies, politics, and activism? In the process of putting the special issue together, these chiastic questions sparked more complex questions about the interplay between modern methods and identities, on the one hand, and premodern texts and ideas on the other. What are the possibilities of—and limits to—identifications and recognitions across time? How did people think about transgender embodiment in an era that preceded the possibility of modern medical transition? What conceptual vocabularies did they use to imagine the potential, or even inevitability, of gender fluidity? How do the forms of trans embodiment taking shape in early modernity illuminate genocidal histories of white supremacy, anti-blackness, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, settler colonialism, and empire? Can early modern ideas about gender variance help us attenuate the lethal biopolitical power that doctors, psychiatrists, and policy-makers wield over trans bodies and lives today?[9]

The essays included in this issue allow us to sketch some preliminary responses to these questions. Some of these articles bring trans studies approaches to familiar texts to generate important new readings that change the ways we might understand and teach those works. Others identify historical individuals and groups, generating a longer and richer history for trans studies,

theories, and methods. Still other essays extend early modern trans studies forward, manifesting trans-inclusive casting and staging of early modern plays for modern audiences and contexts. And several essays bring early modern trans studies into conversation with theories from animal studies, environmental studies, and plant studies. Together, the thirteen essays of this special issue offer an array of overlapping but new approaches to articulating trans histories, enlivening trans performance studies, historicizing trans philologies, and radically revising our ways of reading bodies, environments, materials, race, and genders across time.

Trans studies helps us to see familiar texts and characters in new and surprising ways. *The Roaring Girl*'s "bold masculine ramp" Moll Cutpurse, or Milton's angels, "so soft and uncompounded is their essence pure" that they "can either sex assume, or both," simply look different when we approach them according to the underlying principles of trans studies, if only because such readings begin with the simple premise that anatomy does not determine any individual's gender in the final instance.

At the same time, trans analysis of literary characters can take many different forms. Take Moll Cutpurse as an example. Whereas feminist scholarship has generally viewed Moll as a cis woman and/or as a crossdresser,[10] scholars might now want to reclaim or recast Moll/Jack as trans, nonbinary, bigender, intersexed, transmasculine, or transbutch (to name but a few possibilities).[11] Marjorie Rubright's "Transgender Capacity in Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton's *The Roaring Girl* (1611)" allows for such readings but offers another possible avenue for interpretation that does not turn on identity.[12] Rubright begins with a word cloud of all the names and descriptions given to Moll/Jack over the course of the play, arguing that the abundance of terms (while "a philologist's dream") hints at the difficulty of denominating an individual that, as Sir Alexander puts it in the play, "one knows not how to name." Rubright maintains that *The Roaring Girl* ultimately refuses to produce any definitive "classificatory clarifications regarding [Moll/Jack's] gender (particularly Moll/Jack's self-expression)," but instead of trying to dispel this opacity, Rubright allows it to generate interpretive possibilities—what Rubright calls Moll/Jack's "transgender capacity." In the process, she calls attention to the ways that our "naturalized critical practices," such as using "singular names and gender markers," unwittingly "condition us to be less critically kaleidoscopic [than we might want] in our engagements with . . . gender-expansive figurations [and characters]." In the end, Rubright's article suggests

that engaging critically with the opacities surrounding "the soma-semantics of gender" is one way of registering a character's transgender capacities—or their "proliferating modes of gender non-conformity"—and thereby gesturing toward "gender's 'dynamism, plurality, and expansiveness.'"

The investments of Julie Crawford's "Transubstantial Bodies in *Paradise Lost* and *Order and Disorder*" are similarly anti-identitarian. Like Rubright, Crawford acknowledges that Milton's "soft" angels might resonate with modern notions of nonbinary or genderfluid identity.[13] However, rather than reading the angels strictly in these terms, she contends that Milton and Hutchinson actively explore "the transubstantial capacities of human bodies" and simultaneously manifest a "shared indifference to any ontologically meaningful status for human sexual difference."[14] She observes that one way *Paradise Lost* does this is by privileging "holy hermaphrodism," or the notion that "the most elevated state of embodiment is characterized by the absence of binary sex." As Crawford notes—and Leah DeVun's research has shown—religious writers had long glorified nonbinary gendered states: in addition to representing angels as genderfluid or agender, they regularly articulated the belief that Adam was originally created as an androgyne or a "hermaphrodite" and imagined Jesus as a mother.[15] Crawford suggests that there are productive continuities to be drawn between Milton and Hutchinson's "transubstantial bodies" and their engagement with early modern theories of matter such as vitalism and monism, and current theorizations of "transmateriality" and "transcorporeality" by scholars such as Karen Barad and Stacy Alaimo.[16] Indeed, Crawford stresses that scholars in trans studies have been interested not only in "bodies that 'exceed or elude capture within the gender apparatus' (Stryker, 40), but also [in] the 'intra-active' nature of materiality more generally." In different ways, Rubright's and Crawford's essays bring trans possibilities to bear on central texts from the early modern queer canon, yet they also resist assigning a singular form of trans or nonbinary identity to any of the characters. Instead, they argue against fixity, showing that the varied descriptions of the characters resonate with and across several different forms of modern gender identity, blurring distinctions and specificity, even though those identities now tend to be seen as discrete (if sometimes overlapping).

If early modern trans studies helps us read familiar texts and characters in newly complex ways, it also opens inroads for reassessing familiar historical figures and types.[17] Some of the essays explicitly address the conceptual and methodological challenges that confront scholars seeking historical representations

of trans or "trans-like" people in Renaissance texts.[18] While the archives offer up an embarrassment of riches concerning some potentially proto-trans figures, other forms of gender variance have not left substantial traces. Dealing with these archival silences constitutes a major challenge for any efforts to locate historical trans people. Turning to José Muñoz, Simone Chess's essay "Queer Residue: Boy Actors' Adult Careers in Early Modern England" suggests that reading for "queer residues" and "performative affects" offers a possible avenue for dealing with the absence of more tangible forms of material evidence regarding proto-trans figures. As Chess notes, "The affects and coded ways of being that produce queer feelings—you know them when you see them—are rarely documented." Being attuned to residues and affects sidesteps the apparent need for a strong, first-person claim about the performer's core identity and instead attends to the historical ephemera clustering around them, looking to their gestures, postures, and bearing, the timbre of their voices and their gendered habitus to build her case. To that end, Chess uses Muñoz's concept of "residue" to examine what we know about the lives and acting careers of Richard Robinson, Richard Sharpe, and Edward Kynaston. Chess calls attention to the fact that all three performers were renowned for playing women's roles, and that they continued to be known for their effeminacy even when they played "adult" men's roles. Moreover, their feminine presentation extended not only into their adulthoods but also beyond the theatrical context. The Lady Rich Robinson, for instance, is said to have attended a dinner party "dressed as a lawyer's wife," where Robinson entertained all with "frolicks" and "bawdy talk." Chess analyzes the specific roles that these actors played, arguing that even when they took on masculine roles, they frequently exhibited a queer or nonbinary "residue." Because it suggests that Robinson, Sharpe, and Kynaston might be seen as transfeminine or nonbinary ancestors, Chess's argument has significant implications for our understanding of the concept of the "crossdressed" "boy" actor. Whereas previous feminist analyses of crossdressing tended to emphasize either the ways that crossdressed *characters* transgressed binary gendered distinctions *or* the ways that "boy" actors deconstructed early modern stage performances of gender, we are now in a position to reconsider the overlap of actors' identities and character performances from a trans perspective. Indeed, if we imagine a potentially trans or nonbinary actor like the Lady Richard Robinson playing a role like Rosalind-Ganymede or Moll-Jack, the performance will undoubtedly begin to resonate in even more complex ways than we have previously recognized. Chess encourages us to explore these possibilities, but even more importantly, she urges us to

imagine well-known nonbinary or genderqueer actors playing seemingly "typical" masculine roles. In this respect, the essay might help us perceive the unexamined queerness of those characters' gender, and hence expand our discussions of trans characters far beyond the obvious examples.

Abdulhamit Arvas works toward more fully developing a raced and gendered historical trans type in "Early Modern Eunuchs and the Transing of Gender and Race," which proposes the eunuch as a precursor to contemporary trans and nonbinary subjects, floating the possibility that castration procedures "may [sometimes] have been a form of voluntary gender transition and hence a part of trans history." As Arvas notes, the issue of consent is a complicating factor when trying to think about eunuchs as trans figures, given the range of pressures that might have compelled individuals to submit to the knife. Furthermore, as Arvas states in his conclusion, "the issue of will and consent" is further complicated by the fact that it was "racialized," insofar as "it was mostly white European boys rather than black Africans who underwent voluntary castration." Arvas balances his optimistic assessment of the capacity of eunuchs to undermine binary gender formations with their imbrication in histories of racialized gender. Focusing on the emergent divisions between black and white eunuchs in the Ottoman Court, Arvas considers how their transitional relationship to gender was facilitated by their racial marking, which inserted black bodies at the bottom of a fixed racial hierarchy. Arvas's provocative account of the racialized space of the Ottoman harem offers an exciting complement to existing work in trans studies on the convergence of racism and the consolidation of gender identity centered on the afterlives of the trans-Atlantic slave trade (as in Snorton's work) as well as settler colonialism and the genocide of indigenous people. Moreover, Arvas zeroes in on the transhistorical purchase of the eunuch, both as a specter haunting trans-antagonist polemics and as an active identity category with a fraught relationship to the transgender community, demonstrating the ongoing and not merely historical resonances of Renaissance texts and archives.

Sydnee Wagner's "Racing Gender to the Edge of the World: Decoding the Transmasculine Amazon Cannibal" focuses on another early modern trans figure or type: the Amazonian cannibal. The essay reads the Amazonian cannibal women in travel writing such as Raleigh's *Discoverie of Guiana* (1596) as "transmasculine figure[s], using material on indigenous Amazons to argue that people of color in early modern European discourses were considered gender deviants, and that gender was (and is) an important tool in

strategic race-making." Wagner also suggests that the depictions of Amazons or cannibals in travel writing "were an important means [of reaffirming] and naturaliz[ing] white masculinity" by constructing an "other" that was the antithesis of white European values and ideals. As she puts it, "The figure of the Amazon cannibal provided the foil through which Europeans naturalized their own gender constructs, and those constructs, in turn, relied on and informed white identity." In Wagner's account, the gender variance imputed to the Amazons serves to buttress and naturalize both the whiteness of Europeans and their monopoly over stable, normative gender identities. In this respect, early modern discourse about Amazonian embodiment speaks to the gendered histories of white supremacy, as such evidence reveals "the interworkings of race and gender" and "the biopolitical system those categories support."

Thus, if some of the essays identify early modern trans ancestors, others work to maintain the historical distance between contemporary identity categories from the premodern figures under consideration. Like Arvas, Melissa Sanchez's "Transdevotion: Race, Gender, and Christian Universalism" concentrates on the figure of the eunuch, but she "emphatically takes the eunuch *not* as an ancestor of the modern nonbinary or transgender person." Instead, Sanchez analyzes the representations of eunuchs as a point of entry into the complex genealogy of Christian universalism. She contends that while Pauline discourses esteem "transcending" embodied difference through Christ, and promise "the incorporation of racialized and gender-nonconforming believers [such as eunuchs]" into the church, this assimilation involves the violent erasure of their "particularity" since Christian universalism takes the white, cis-gendered male as its norm. Thus, when racialized and gender-nonconforming individuals are positioned as exemplars of universalism, it is only by having "transcended" their "particularity" or "differences."[19] Sanchez's work wraps the Biblical trope of the Ethiopian eunuch into the ostensibly "colorblind" futures of Christian universalism. The Books of Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Acts invoke the Ethiopian eunuch stranger who is "washed white" through conversion as a sign of the transformative, salvific power of divine grace to incorporate everyone into the *corpus mysticum* of believers, regardless of somatic difference. Sanchez, however, warns against the easy multiculturalism of this "transdevotion," turning to the poetry of Anne Locke, John Donne, and Richard Crashaw to demonstrate that the apparent transcendence of difference always amounts to an assimilation to whiteness and masculinity. The

continuity that Sanchez brokers, then, is not between historical eunuchs and modern trans subjects, but rather between premodern Christianity and the modern neoliberal state.

The historicizing research included in this volume will undoubtedly serve a number of different purposes. Most obviously, it will offer scholars a more nuanced understanding of gender variance in the earlier period. After all, the early modern period is of particular interest for trans history because it was an era that was populated by female husbands,[20] trafficked boy actors, spontaneously transitioning saints, genderfluid angels, the invaginated Jesus, Ethiopian eunuchs, Amazonian warriors, gender renegados, menstruating Jewish men, and hermaphroditic prodigies. These figures and the archives they open onto have long been wrapped into the history of gender and sexuality, but their value for the genealogy and intellectual history of transgender subjectivity is just beginning to be explored.[21] In some cases, the essays corroborate the argument put forward by Simone Chess in her groundbreaking monograph *Male-to-Female Crossdressing in Early Modern England*,[22] which claims that gender nonconforming individuals were sometimes accepted—even supported—by the communities in which they lived, rather than being ostracized or condemned.[23] Thus, as Leah deVun and Zeb Tortorici maintain in the recent *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* special issue on "Trans*historicities," deepening our understanding of trans history may disrupt teleological narratives about the progressive emergence of trans identity and "prevent us from drawing facile conclusions about what is unique about our own era" (523). At the same time, this historicizing research has "political value" today, since "history often lends legitimacy to a community's claim that it belongs" (521) and is sometimes even cited by policy makers or in legal contexts as a way of depathologizing gender variance and promoting trans rights, as Paisley Currah and others have suggested.[24]

If many of the essays in this volume help to extend trans history back in time, they often fuse historicist methods with presentist concerns, drawing on insights from both sides of the historicism debates.[25] Sawyer Kemp's "Transgender Shakespeare Performance: A Holistic Dramaturgy," for instance, acknowledges the importance of exploring both continuities and discontinuities between gender variance past and present, though it ultimately emphasizes the need for a "presentist methodology in Shakespeare criticism and performance" that "puts contemporary trans social issues at the center of early modern trans studies" and "is as invested in lifting up contemporary trans voices and issues as it is in the act of historical discovery." Kemp

contends that incorporating "contemporary trans perspectives into our thinking" and considering "the material realities of transgender people['s lives]" is critical not only because those perspectives can provide "a valuable [new] dimension to readings of Shakespeare's work," but also because they might "lead toward . . . a more trans-inclusive pedagogy." Kemp's previous work on *Twelfth Night*, "In That Dimension Grossly Clad," compellingly makes this point, contrasting Cesario's experiences with the often difficult and dysphoric experiences of contemporary trans people in order to expose the play's largely utopian vision of gender transition. Building on these ideas, with a deeper focus on contemporary casting and performance practices, Kemp's essay in this volume recommends that since "Shakespeare continues to be a way that audiences encounter gender diversity and look for transgender themes," trans-affirmative productions should adopt a "holistic dramaturgy." Kemp describes several recent productions as a way of articulating this concept, one of which is the California Shakespeare Festival's *As You Like It* from 2017. Kemp notes that the CalShakes *As You Like It* did not just "present a modern genderfluid Rosalind/Ganymede" and cast a trans actor to play the role,[26] it also engaged with the trans community and trans issues in a range of ways, including collaborations with a community youth program and an interactive exhibition space in the lobby. The production incorporated still other trans-inclusive elements as well, from having all-gender bathrooms at performances and creating education materials for schools to avoiding the "transphobic stage trope," according to which "a man in a dress is funny."[27] Kemp insists that cis critics, in particular, need to educate themselves about this and other transphobic stage tropes in order to avoid repeating them, and in order to begin to educate others about them.

The conversation between Andy Kesson and Emma Frankland, "'Perhaps John Lyly was a trans woman?': An Interview about Performing *Galatea's* Queer, Transgender Stories", also engages trans issues related to contemporary performance practices. Kesson and Franklin, an academic and an actor/director, discuss their shared work on a production-in-progress of Lyly's *Galatea* that "puts performers and scholars into dialogue and honours the play's queer love story and non-binary gendered characters." This production exemplifies many of the ideas about holistic dramaturgy outlined in Kemp's article and makes visible the decision-making and planning that goes into trans-inclusive stagings of early modern plays. For example, in their casting

practices, Kesson and Frankland seek to "privilege and recentre marginalised identities—especially queer, trans, disabled and racially-diverse performers—in a production where no one person and no one identity characteristic is asked to bear the burden of diversity." Kesson and Frankland cover a lot of ground in their candid and informal discussion, but one central question from Kesson returns to the special issue's theme of revisiting old texts in new ways: "Why *Galatea*, and why *Galatea* now?" One answer might be that this work helps build meaningful trans histories, as Kesson points out that "one of the most important aspects of [Frankland's] production for our company has been the way it uses *Galatea* to offer queer and trans people a sense of history, in the face of a contemporary society which wants always to label this community as new." The production also models the transhistorical recognition of queer and trans types—characters and actors and humans—across time. In workshopping the play with a diverse cast, Frankland documents the multiplicative and varied trans and queer possibilities of *Galatea*, and further acknowledges the value and significance of "rediscovering a text that actually invites my queerness and transness [into] the classical canon." Kemp's and Kesson and Frankland's work reminds us that early modern trans studies is not restricted to excavations of the past, but extends to contemporary theaters and communities; further, their work shows a fluidity between early modern scholarship, trans theory, activism, and performance.

Certainly, the tools and methods of trans studies have helped early modernists to revise our thinking about familiar texts and characters, to recognize trans and nonbinary historical figures, and to change our approaches to staging and performing early modern drama. But in exchange, these essays also contribute methods, approaches, and archives to contemporary trans studies. The work collected in these pages pushes back against the idea that early modernity is simply too distant, too removed, or otherwise exhibits the wrong "conditions" to have any significance for trans politics today. The shape of transgender history shifts when we broaden it to include English materials from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, not only by recognizing individual trans or gender-variant people in these periods, but also by asserting the ongoing relevance of the very systems and structures through which early modern gender was understood, produced, and queered. The Renaissance was, after all, an era when gender was conceptualized in ways that, at times, predict, push past, or resonate powerfully with contemporary theorizations of trans life.

For instance, early modern gender was not always imagined in strictly binary terms, and spontaneous male-to-female transitions like the one that occurred to the French peasant Marie/Germain were thought to be both possible and natural.[28] Jess Pfeffer's "Trans Controversies: Crooke's *Mikrokosmographia*, Sexual Dimorphism, and the Embodiment of Identity" offers a timely reading of Helkiah Crooke's anatomy textbook as a document that anticipates the theoretical framework of Paul Preciado's account of trans materiality in *Testo Junkie*. By aligning Crooke's account of humoral heat with the pharmacological regimens of transition such as hormone replacement therapy, this essay considers how early modern anatomical thought disrupts accounts of "natural" bodies in ways that prefigure the denaturalization of gendered embodiment in trans studies. Aligning *Mikrokosmographia* with *Testo Junkie* also implicitly presses on early modern scholarship that has been eager to seize upon the one-sex model and discourses of performativity in ways that leave cisnormative assumptions about sexual difference intact. Moreover, Pfeffer makes a powerful argument for recruiting early modern anatomical thought as a resource for contemporary trans studies. Because *Mikrokosmographia* explores the transformative potential of the "bare material" of "bodily materiality," Crooke provides a more rigorous theorization of embodiment than scholars focused on agency and representation.

Likewise, in "Toward a Trans Philology," Joseph Gamble explores how early modern thought might provide tools for contemporary trans studies. Gamble reveals the existence of special terms from the period used to describe gender transitions: dictionaries included entries for "transfeminate" (meaning to "turn from woman to man") and "transexion" (meaning "turning" or "passing from one sex to another"). Gamble argues that these "trans-" words, introduced in 1641, anticipate now-widespread terminology like "transgender" and "transmasculine/transfeminine." In fact, the existence of these terms might prompt us to ask whether we need to rethink the narrative that "trans" terminology specific to gender transitions only emerged in the twentieth century, and that such terminology—and the concepts it designates—did not exist before that time.[29] Gamble traces the history of the terms "transfeminate" and "transexion" up through the nineteenth century, exploring the transnormativity encoded within their philological emergence and propagation, and asking about the extent to which their use is colored by the racism of two of the prominent figures who promoted them. As Gamble puts it, the "intertwining of the historical development of 'trans' with both early modern and modern

genres of racism makes it clear that the tools with which some of us craft livable, gender-nonconforming lives are wrought in the same conceptual, historical, and philological fires that forge the shackles that bind others to 'premature death.'" As a result, Gamble stresses that trans philology must "engage with critical race theory not merely as a political imperative but also . . . as an historical and linguistic one."

Once we acknowledge the existence of terms like "transfeminate" and "transexion," it seems that it is not entirely by chance that "trans" eventually became the dominant rubric around which modern identities, activism, and scholarship coalesced. As Gamble puts it, "Trans [proves] to be something of an historically overdetermined sign of gender variance." Trans studies is richer for knowing its philological history; indeed, both Gamble and Rubright extrapolate from Jeffrey Masten's *Queer Philologies* to begin the process of envisioning what early modern *trans* philology might look like, and how trans philologies are distinct from queer philologies broadly. Gamble's essay offers some "conceptual and methodological propositions" for this purpose, and it includes the cogent reminder that "even as queer and trans philologies can be complementary practices, it will remain vitally important for those of us who work at the intersections of these two fields of inquiry to be attentive to the potential conceptual and political divergences of the very different field-organizing impulses of 'queer' and 'trans.'"

Gamble's and Rubright's turn toward trans philology begins to bridge Trans 1.0 and 2.0 by focusing on language rather than individual identities. Similarly, essays by Colby Gordon, Holly Dugan, and Vin Nardizzi bind together archival and theoretical approaches by considering the ways that Renaissance texts feed gendered embodiment into complex relationships with animal, vegetal, and ecological forms of life. Gordon's essay on "Abortive Hedgehogs" attends to the patchwork of affiliations, exchanges, and dependencies between gender and animality in *The Duchess of Malfi*. The mixing of human bodies with animal matter and inhuman substances haunts this strange play, filled with hybrid humanoid creatures like werewolves and mandrakes. In the Renaissance, transitionally gendered creatures that crossed species divisions were grouped as prodigies, portentous beings whose births heralded death and social dissolution. Gordon frames the play's bestiary of unexpected and unmanageable transitions as a study in what Mel Y. Chen calls "animacy," the vital energies inhering in figures excluded from membership in the category of the human. In clustering gender fluidity and animality,

Webster does not anticipate contemporary forms of transgender identity. Rather, the play's prodigious bodies speak to a material feature of transition that commingles human and nonhuman matter, as in the bodies of trans women whose features are feminized through estrogen tablets derived from horse urine, or the transmasculine bodies reconstructed with bovine collagen, shark cartilage, and cadaveric tissue. Gordon also notes the convergence of gender transformations, human-animal hybridity, and racial difference in early modern prodigy discourse, showcasing how Webster folds together anti-Semitism, animality, and hermaphroditism in the courtiers' account of the disgraced Antonio. Just as contemporary animacy hierarchies are organized according to racist principles about which lives matter, so too does *The Duchess of Malfi* envision prodigious life as both transitional and racialized. This conjunction speaks to the ways that early modernity wrapped genderfluid bodies into the emergent logic of white supremacy.

Holly Dugan also thinks through the hybridization of human and animal bodies in her "Early Modern Tranimals: 57312*." Dugan's essay outlines the affordances of a single illustrated manuscript (BL Add #57312) that was folded concertina-style, and then cut to allow users to mix and merge the images to create all sorts of combinations in what is effectively a kind of playable media. The manuscript is modeled on *The Beginning, Progress, and End of Man* (1650), a story primed to deliver normative and allegorical messages about the relations between men, women, and animals, but even this source text reveals unexpected juxtapositions and transitions. The manuscript also draws on Edward Topsell's *History of Foure-Footed Beastes and Serpents* (1658), a cataloguing bestiary. In merging these genres, the manuscript works for both instruction and play, delivering moral history while allowing readers to perform creaturely transformations that fuse Eve's genitalia to Adam's torso, or to render him a merman or sphinx. If this manuscript attests to a historical form of trans life, Dugan speculates, it is not because it provides evidence for the existence of trans-identified people. Rather, the manuscript speaks to a trans materiality that resists the fixity of bodies along axes that include gender and animality. In the process, Dugan's essay contributes to the process of bringing together trans studies and the work on material texts and history of the book.[30] In part, the essay narrativizes the ways in which puzzling archival materials have been awaiting Trans Studies 2.0; at the same time, Dugan's attention to the specificities of the manuscript's making—hand-drawn copies of engravings, queerly folded—and materials—animal skin vellum rather than

paper—reveals the importance of archival knowledge in the analysis of trans texts. Finally, Dugan notes that some of the feminine figures who appear as part of the folding, endlessly morphing manuscript have lightened faces that stand out from the darker vellum background. These figures not only evoke the cosmetic traditions of face-whitening that worked to link whiteness and femininity, but also, consequently, offer an interesting twist on what Miles Grier has termed the "inkface" phenomenon, which encompasses the racialized resonances materialized through black ink on white paper.

Moving from the world of animals into vegetative life, Vin Nardizzi's "Shakespeare's Trans*plant* Poetics" explores the Ovidian transformations and trans aesthetics suggested by the "vegetable blazon" of Bottom's face as he plays Pyramus. This transformation poetically reassembles Bottom's face into an odd mix of cherries, lilies, and leeks that "scrambles regular patterns of idealized male and female beauty." As the blazon does this work to disarticulate binarized gender and the ideals of white beauty integral to it, Nardizzi further shows that it draws on the ugly beauty tradition that, as Heather Dubrow notes, "vectors misogyny and racism," using plant analogy to depict racialized, gendered, and classed body parts. Bringing critical plant studies into the early modern trans studies conversation, Nardizzi makes a case for what he calls "trans*plant* poetics," an approach to trans/vegetative embodiments grounded in aesthetics, botany, and sexuality, alongside ecocriticism, transgender capacity, and temporality. In this move from tranimal to trans*plant*, Nardizzi's essay expands conceptually on the influential work of Mel Y. Chen, Eva Hayward, and Jami Weinstein. Simultaneously, the trans*plant* poetics of blazons expands the gendered dynamics of the Petrarchan tradition as understood in early modern studies.[31] Using paintings by Archimbaldo together with the plant history of the seasonably nonbinary tatume squash and the leaky, tear-inducing leak, among others, Nardizzi shows the slippages between vegetable and human in poetry and drama.

These essays in trans philology, tranimality, and trans*plant* poetics contribute to emerging trends in trans theory, but they are also grounded in early modern literary and cultural history. Where the heuristic division between Trans Studies 1.0 and 2.0 marks a separation that pits historicism against theory, the essays in this collection refuse to align neatly with one camp or the other, and rightly so. The necessary work of finding trans ancestors in Renaissance archives benefits from an awareness of the evidentiary capacities of affects and residues; inquiry into the material conditions of trans

embodiment in the present involves historicizing "animacy hierarchies;" philological analysis of trans- words also involves exploring capacitation. Most importantly, the work collected here binds its entry points into trans history with the histories of race and white supremacy. If these essays are any indication, early modern trans studies stands to benefit from all the varied skillsets employed by scholars of Renaissance literature, regardless of their methodological orientation. There is a place for everyone in early modern trans studies, even those who might not immediately assume that their work would contribute to or be enhanced by a trans analytic.

The work collected here truly is a beginning and not an endpoint. We hope these essays will provide starting points for new work, new debates, new syllabi. We are not here to advance a party line, or establish a settled theology of early modern trans scholarship. Instead, we hope to have captured and shared some of the energy of a dynamic moment in an emerging field, and we hope that the essays in this collection will point toward the profusion of pathways into and through early modern trans studies, opening perspectives that are both historicist and theoretical, archival and presentist. Given the depth and range of the essays in the issue, we have every expectation that they will begin a productive conversation that will continue to grow in the years to come.

NOTES

We are grateful to the many people whose contributions enriched and enlivened the process, including but not limited to the participants in the "Trans* Historicities" seminar at the 2016 meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America (SAA); the participants in the "Trans/Early/Modern" panel at the 2018 meeting of the Modern Languages Association, especially Rachael Green-Howard and Ari Friedlander; the participants in the "Shakespeare and Transgender Theory" plenary panel at the 2018 meeting of SAA, especially Alexa Alice Joubin and Lisa Starks; Bryn Thompson from Bryn Mawr College; all of the participants in the Bryn Mawr #EmoTrans conference, especially noncontributor participants Blake Gutt, Lisa Starks, Sarah Wall-Randall, and Jordan Windholtz, and Kadin Henningsen (@meanwhileletterpress) for designing and printing beautiful posters for the conference; the four generous anonymous reviewers of this issue; the *JEMCS* editorial team, especially Melissa Vipperman-Cohen; and each of our brilliant contributors.

1. Trans studies is usually said to have emerged in the early 1990s, though some argue for an even earlier date. On these debates, see Stryker 151–95. Stryker fixes the origins of transgender history in the 1850s, since only then "did social conditions take shape that would foster a mass transgender movement for social change in the century that lay ahead" (46). Stryker does not dispute the existence of gender-variant, intersex, or even transgender people in premodern periods, but she does bracket their usefulness in thinking through the contemporary landscape of transgender politics and activism.

2. Even if we restrict ourselves to unambiguously institutional formations, we might point to the founding of *Transgender Studies Quarterly* in 2014, the publication of the two volumes of *Transgender Studies Reader* in 2006 and 2013, or the many conferences, research clusters, and courses that now exist. Kunzel casts the endlessly "emergent" status of trans studies as an "infantilizing temporality" that both "communicates (and contributes to) perpetual marginalization" (285).

3. Those with this particular concern might make use of guides to transgender terminology and language, the *GLAAD Media Reference Guide*; Stryker's "Contexts, Concepts, and Terms" in *Transgender History*; Spencer-Hall and Gutt's "Trans & Genderqueer Studies Terminology;" and "Words: Understanding Medieval / Trans / Feminist Discourses" (Bychowski and Dorothy Kim, 19–29).

4. See Keegan, who addresses how both queer studies and women's studies "may seek to include or cite trans* studies . . . without fully welcoming its specific material and political investments" (3).

5. For the convergences of trans studies and animal studies, see Chen; Hird; and Hayward and Weinstein. For trans studies and disability studies, see Puar; Adair; Clare; and Chess, et al. For accounts of trans embodiment drawing on phenomenology and affect studies, see Chen; and Salamon, *Assuming a Body* and *Life and Death*.

6. See Aizura, et al.

7. For the necessity of thinking trans studies through the lens of critical race theory, see Green; de Vries; and Bey. Special issues of *Transgender Studies Quarterly* have been particularly helpful at focusing on the intersections of trans identity and embodiment with race. See, among others, "The Issue of Blackness," particularly the introduction by Ellison, Green, Richardson, and Snorton; "Trans-in-Asia, Asia-in-Trans," with an introduction by Chaing, Henry, and Leung; and "Trans Studies en las Américas," with an introduction by Rizki et al. On Two-Spirit and third gender categories in indigenous traditions, see Driskill; Miranda; and Morgensen. On the murderous convergences of transphobia and policing, Spade, *Normal Life*, as well as the essays collected in Stanley and Smith. For the impact of surveillance technologies on trans people, particularly trans people of color, see Beauchamp, Aizura, Fischer, and Cotton.

8. For work in trans studies that employs a biopolitical framework, see among others Malatino; Beauchamp; Preciado; Snorton and Haritaworn; Puar; Stanley; Gill-Peterson; and Spade, *Normal Life* and "Mutilating Gender." For work in critical race studies, see among others Weheliye; Chen; Mbembe; Morgan; Schuller; and LaFleur, *Natural History*.

9. Kim and Bychowski powerfully articulate the urgency of doing "work on the past . . . to tell the story of trans lives for the political, intersectional, and community aims of building a future for trans lives now" (11) particularly in the current academic and political climate.

10. Influential feminist readings of *The Roaring Girl* include Rose; Garber; Howard; Orgel; and Baston.

11. For one example of such an interpretive move, see Pfeffer. It would also be possible to claim the historical figure of Mary Frith as a trans ancestor.

12. Rubright builds on the methodological insights developed by Traub, *Thinking Sex*.

13. Her trans analysis builds on—and expands—earlier queer readings of Milton's angels, including Goldberg; deGruy; Guy-Bray; and Luxon.

14. Crawford's point resonates with the argument in Menon.

15. On the convergences between Christian theology and trans studies, see DeVun as well as Gordon, "A Woman's Prick" and "The Sign You Must Not Touch." See also Boyarin's analysis of the Talmudic tradition.

16. On "transmateriality" and "transcorporeality," see Barad; Alaimo; Shelton; Halberstam; and Chen. For an account of that binds transmateriality to transubstantiation in a different literary context, see Gordon's discussion of "trans technogenesis" and in Shakespeare's Sonnet 20 in "A Woman's Prick."

17. Following DiGangi, we might label these cultural figures "trans types".

18. Traub italicizes *lesbian* in order to highlight both continuities and changes; Bennett adopts the term "lesbian-like."

19. Sanchez focuses on the ways that Christian universalism may have worked to deter or diminish gender nonconformity, but interestingly, other contributors in the volume (like Crawford, Dugan, and Gordon) explore the ways that religious texts and discourses might have allowed for—or even licensed—it.

20. For a reading of female husbands attuned to figure's relevance for trans history, see Manion.

21. For work on trans ancestors in fields adjacent to early modern studies, see Bychowski; Baldassano; Trainor; Wichelns; Nestel; LaFleur, "Sex and Unsex;" and Henningsen, "Calling [herself] Eleanor."

22. Chess's book—published in 2016—is still the only monograph that engages with trans studies in a sustained way and brings the insights of the field to bear on early modern English literature and culture.

23. Heaney demonstrates how sexological models of transsexualism imagined trans people as isolated, excluded, and solitary, although trans women's own narratives often speak toward lives of sociality and acceptance.

24. DeVun and Tortorici cite Attorney General Loretta Lynch's statement in opposition to the North Carolina "bathroom law" of 2016. Currah also mentions, by analogy, George Chauncey et al's brief in the Supreme Court case of *Lawrence vs Texas*.

25. For debates about queer historicism, see Goldberg and Menon; Traub; Frecerro; and Dinshaw.

26. Kemp addresses casting practices at length in the essay as they have important material and ideological ramifications, noting that while there has been a proliferation of cross-gender casting in productions and all-female castings (and the essay considers instances where these practices might resonate with trans issues), it is still true that "very few trans people have made it to the stage in professional Shakespeare theaters."

27. The documentary *Disclosure: Trans Lives on Screen* (2020) exposes a range of transphobic representations from the media; one particularly horrendous example is the "comedy" scene from Jim Carey's *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective*.

28. On Marie/Germain, see Laqueur. For a critique of Laqueur's thesis, see King. Needless to say, early modern medical thinking about gender and the body does not fit seamlessly into trans history, given that gender transitions were generally only imagined to occur in one direction (female to male) and were not generally thought to be voluntary or an expression of an individual's gender identification. Moreover, many scholars and activists within the trans community resist the medicalized models of trans identity, such as Spade, "Mutilating Gender."

29. Stryker sketches an influential version of this narrative in *Transgender History*, noting in her first sentence that "'transgender' is a word that has come into widespread use

only in the past couple of decades" (1). Stryker then weaves the narrative about the development of modern "trans-" terminology into the rest of the book. The terms in Gamble's essay are particularly significant because they reinforce the idea that there is a long history of terminology specifically used for talking about transgender phenomena dating back well before the nineteenth century.

30. Kadin Henningsen is currently writing a dissertation that puts these two seemingly disparate fields into conversation with one another, focusing on the nineteenth-century American context. See also Henningsen, "You deciphered me."

31. See the special issue of *Transgender Studies Quarterly* on "Tranimalities"; and Hayward's "Tranimacies."

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