The Terrible We

THINKING WITH TRANS MALADJUSTMENT

Cameron Awkward-Rich

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I began thinking in earnest about what would become *The Terrible We* in 2014, a year that was shot through with Obama-era optimism, condensed in the much-discussed *Time* cover story that declared that we had, as a country, arrived at the transgender tipping point. Indeed, 2014 also marked the inauguration of *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, the notorious trans studies cluster hire at the University of Arizona, and the one-year anniversary of the *Transgender Studies Reader 2*, which together formed a decisive tipping point for the field of trans studies.[1] It's crucial to remember, then, that when the essays that make up this book were conceived there was not yet a journal of record, regular conferences, or more than a small handful of tenured/tenure-track faculty who worked primarily in the field. At the same time, it was not true to say that trans studies had not yet begun; indeed, announcements of its beginning have occurred iteratively since the 1990s. What happened in 2014 and after, rather, was the beginning of the field's more robust institutionalization in the US university.

As a graduate student in 2014, then, I felt caught between the profound and varied optimisms that circulated with *trans* as a political and intellectual horizon and the recalcitrant distress that marked the lives/writing of those people who constitute trans pasts and presents. It seemed to me that the version of *trans* that was on the precipice of inclusion—of having an official, institutional life—was one that simply could not accommodate the cognitive/affective divergences, black moods, and peculiar itineraries endemic to what I understood as trans life and thought. Further, the mainstream optimism of 2014 was discordant with what I understood about the way *trans* has, historically, cycled through moments of visibility and repression, possibility and foreclosure. Put another way, I did not believe that those optimistic conditions would prove durable, nor that trans studies as it was being constituted offered me tools for living and thinking with all that persisted, persistently, in optimism's wake. In fact, it seemed to me then—and still seems to me now—that the "disciplinary position" of trans studies as institutionalized in, alongside, and against women's/feminist studies and queer theory, and the

concurrent incorporation of trans people into the disciplinary imaginary of neoliberal citizenship, actually intensified, rather than alleviated, the maddening experience of living in what Talia Bettcher calls, aptly, "the WTF."[2] *The Terrible We*, then, is a book-length inquiry into the "bad"—pathologized, painful, or politically impairing—trans feelings and habits of mind that linger on in (and threaten to undo) trans people's and trans studies' relatively newfound legibility. In particular, the book is interested in what one might learn by thinking with, rather than against, the mad and dismal images of trans life that had to be disavowed in order for *trans* to emerge as a name for a species of rational man who could be the subject, not merely the object, of academic inquiry.

Much has happened since 2014: the Trump administration demonstrated the ease of undoing many Obama-era causes for optimism; trans-exclusionary "feminisms" have resurged in the United Kingdom and the United States and have been shaping conversations about transness (and, notably, transmasculinity) in a variety of domains—cultural, legal, and academic; queer theorists of a certain kind have repeatedly and publicly waged generational and/or theoretical conflicts on the backs of their trans students; and on and on. At the same time, trans studies, trans literature, and trans thought have (thankfully, luckily, with much effort) expanded far beyond the terms of the formative, ongoing conflicts that *The Terrible We* traces, such that this book might be understood to be speaking to and from a different time. In a real sense, it is. I am.

Indeed, at *this* time, I can't help but worry that this book takes too seriously trans-antagonistic forms of thought that I should have, instead, simply ignored. But like so many trans scholars who came to trans studies in a place "before trans studies," I had to write the book in order to learn that, next time, I could.[3] Further, on this side of 2020–21 in the United States—on this side of the coining of "gender critical feminism" and "rapid-onset gender dysphoria;" the conservative desire and legal campaign to define "transgender . . . out of existence;" the killing of (mad/black/trans) Tony McDade (and Aja Raquell Rhone-Spears, Brian 'Egypt' Powers, Sumer Taylor, Tatiana Hall . . .); wide-scale attempts by the Republican Party to restrict the freedoms of trans youth under the cover of a pandemic; the emergence of venture-capital backed transition companies that nonetheless capitalize on structural trans isolation and abandonment through "the promise of happiness," Euphoria, and Bliss—the one thing I know on this side of all this and more is that times recur. [4] More than anything, therefore, *The Terrible We* is

a record of an attempt—an often awkward, sometimes chaotic, but hopefully ultimately space-clearing attempt—to think with the terrible parts of the felt life of trans and trans studies under these conditions.

* * *

The writing and thinking that follows—with all of its partiality and faults and untimely movements—is mine but depends on the labor and living of so many others. This book began at Stanford University, where I benefitted tremendously from the mentorship of Paula Moya, whose intellect and care enabled my trajectory through graduate school (and everything after). Likewise, I am grateful for the time, encouragement, and formative lessons in creativity and capacious thought provided by my other committee members, Sianne Ngai and Lochlann Jain. I owe thanks, too, to Jennifer DeVere Brody, Michele Elam, Mark McGurl, Sharika Thiranagama, Stephen Sohn, and Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano, other faculty who, in one way or another, helped me along. My life and work at Stanford were enriched and enlivened by time and conversation with innumerable other students across campus, perhaps especially: K. J. Cerankowski, David Stentiford, Ben Allen, Corey Masao Johnson, Laura Eliasieh, Rebecca Wilbanks, Annika Butler-Wall, Luz Jimenez Ruvalcaba, Melanie Leon, Jonathan Leal, Calvin Cheung-Miaw, Vanessa Seals, Aku Ammah-Tagoe, Annie Atura Bushnell, Jess Auerbach, and Kate Turner. Thanks also to Mel Y. Chen for inviting me along to a University of California, Berkeley, Center for Race and Gender/Center for the Study of Sexual Culture dissertation retreat, and to the other faculty and students in that nourishing space.

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Krauthamer and the College of Humanities and Fine Arts at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. A portion of chapter 1 was originally published as "'She of the Pants and No Voice': Jack Bee Garland's Disability Drag," *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (2020): 20–36; and an earlier version of chapter 2 appeared as "Trans, Feminism: Or, Reading like a Depressed Transsexual," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 42, no. 4 (2017): 819–41. I thank these editors for giving these essays their first homes. Further, individual chapters of *The Terrible We* benefited from brilliant audiences, interlocutors, and event organizers at the 2019 Alliance to Advance Liberal Arts Colleges funded Queer/Trans* of Color Critique (AALAC QTOCC) Summer Writing Workshop at Mt. Holyoke College, the English Department of the University of Virginia, the University of Mt. Union, Duke University, the 2019–20 Five College Crossroads in the Studies of the Americas (CISA) Seminar, the Pennsylvania State University's Transforming Feminist and Gender Studies Colloquium, and the University of Cambridge's Queer Cultures Research Seminar. Aside from these scripted appearances, I am for better and for worse something of a trans recluse, which means that many of the intimacies that have enabled my thinking here are mostly (or entirely) virtual and/or one-sided. But for varied reasons, this book would not exist without Trish Salah, Aren Z. Aizura, Hil Malatino, Susan Stryker, Alison Kafer, Cáel Keegan, Amy Marvin, and Kai Green, among many others. I am also tremendously grateful for the keen eye and ranging intellect of Zoe Tuck, who helped ready *The Terrible We* (and me!) for review, and for the insight, enthusiasm, and helpful reorientations of my three anonymous reviewers. More generally, I have been lucky to find myself buoyed by the hard-won infrastructures of trans studies, up to and including the ASTERISK book series at Duke University Press. In a profound way, I owe the present form of my life to all of those involved in trans studies' institutional maintenance. This includes all of the workers at Duke University Press, especially the wonderful Elizabeth Ault and Benjamin Kossak, who saw this project through.

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On Staying with the Terrible *We*

But the old Frankie had had no we to claim, unless it would be the terrible summer we of her and John Henry and Berenice—and that was the last we in the world she wanted. —**CARSON MCCULLERS, *THE MEMBER OF THE WEDDING* (1946)**

How much goodness, after all, must one attribute to her identity objects of study to withstand what it means to both represent and be represented by them? —**ROBYN WIEGMAN, *OBJECT LESSONS* (2012)**

In the years leading up to the 2013 publication of the fifth edition of the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5), gender identity disorder (GID) became a concentrated site of contestation. Although freeing transgender identities from the grasp of medical regulation and the stigma of pathology had long been a goal of transgender activism, the revision process made the contents of the DSM again unstable, up for debate, prompting a flurry of discussion about whether, how, and why the GID diagnosis should be revised. It was in this context that I found myself participating in a workshop focused on the preliminary draft revisions to GID that were, at the time, available for public review and comment. The workshop, part of the 2010 Transgender Lives: The Intersections of Health and Law conference held annually at the University of Connecticut, was intended to equip participants with the tools to

engage in this conversation that would ultimately affect our lives.[1] While I didn't walk away from the hour-long session with any clarity as to what I believed an adequate revision might be, I did leave with a bad feeling, one that, retrospectively, became the seed of this book.

During the workshop, a white woman sitting near the front of the room stood up and, through tears, told us that she was the mother of a happy, well-adjusted transgender teenager. Illuminated by the projection of a proposed revision that would continue to describe her son in the language of psychiatric disorder, she insisted, "My son is not sick!" In my memory, this was her only contribution to the workshop, but it opened up what seemed then to be a very strange space of shared pathos. Momentarily, divergent lines of thought and argument were brought into accordance with one another around the "fact" of not-sickness. Before, it had been clear that everyone in the room had a slightly different set of stakes in the conversation, that there was no obvious answer to the GID problem. Suddenly, however, here was the one thing on which everyone in the room seemed to agree: this woman's son was not sick.

If this anecdote feels familiar, it's likely because it echoes the one that Susan Stryker uses to introduce *The Transgender Studies Reader*, the anthology that "gave a name to the field."[2] In her story, Stryker herself attended a panel at a conference, fifteen years earlier. The scene opens with Stryker standing in line to "register a protest" that the panel, on various forms of racialized and otherwise queer gender nonnormativities, featured no transgender panelists and seemed to collapse gender diversity into sexual desire. Before she can articulate this critique, however, she finds herself thrust into "in a fog of righteous anger" by another conference-goer's opposing and "all-too-familiar diatribe," imploring the panelists to reject "the disturbing new trend" of trans politics and interpretive practices "because everybody knew that transsexuals were profoundly psychopathological individuals who mutilated their bodies and believed in oppressive gender stereotypes." From within her fog, Stryker reports that she "leaned into the microphone on [her] side of the room and said, interrupting, 'I'm not sick.'"[3] In 1995, Stryker was, quite literally, interrupting "a line of thinking that passed at that time for a progressive point of view" that sought to exclude transsexuals from queer/feminist politics and knowledge production. In this story, *I'm not sick* functioned as a powerful speech act that cleared the room, literally and figuratively, of those who would dismiss trans people's authority to "be taken seriously on our own terms," a precondition for the existence of what has become

transgender studies.[4] Indeed, in a second anecdote, Stryker returns to the scene of the conference ten years later, and when the same man stands to register his same complaint, he is promptly told by several of the numerous trans people in attendance to "shut up and sit down," indexing the profound success of the trans intellectual project in the United States. A feel-good ending.

And yet. Something about the durability and persuasiveness of the space opened by (and the reflection of) *I'm not / my son is not sick* made me—still makes me—profoundly uneasy. Two things, really. First, how quickly a complex conversation with multiple stakeholders—including incarcerated trans people who have relied on the GID diagnosis to make claims, albeit curtailed ones, to gender-affirming treatment—resolved into something like consensus because of the righteous invocation of a well-adjusted, well-supported, white trans child. Or, in the Stryker anecdotes, how quickly various forms of racialized gender are eclipsed by *trans* through the righteous anger of a white trans woman. And, second, that both of these moves toward consolidation could be produced only in direct opposition to the word *sick*. Thus, while this book shares much with Stryker's introduction—a deep investment in the flourishing of the intellectual project of trans studies as something distinct from (though proximate to) queer and feminist studies; an effort to map the field's origin stories in relation to its present trajectories; and ultimately, a commitment to ways of knowing developed in and by trans life—it works against the strategy of securing trans authority through the disavowal of *sick* on which, in Stryker's account and elsewhere, trans studies is founded.

Retooling this habit of trans thought is perhaps particularly necessary in this long moment in US culture, in which a range of trans bodies, lives, and narratives has become, again, newly visible and affirmable, prompting a relatively widespread liberal announcement of the incorporation of *trans* as yet one more form of minority difference. At the same time, the still-suspect health and sanity of transgender people undergirds everything from mid-pandemic legislative attempts to strip health care and other basic freedoms from trans kids, to hand-wringing about mundane and nonmedical aspects of transition in the pages of the *New York Times*, to the reversal of Obama-era policies regarding the enlistment of transgender service members. Much trans-affirmative discourse responds to this state of affairs by reaffirming the sanity/health of trans people by pointing to, for example, studies that link supported social transition to lower rates of depression and anxiety in trans youth, demonstrating that "being transgender is not synonymous with

[mental health] challenges."[5] The incorporation of *trans*, that is, seems to hinge on whether it can be effectively decoupled from pathology, mental illness, and feeling bad.

In many ways, *The Terrible We* responds to this extended *right now*, to the disorienting trans 2010s (and now 2020s) in the United States. However, while it is only within the terms of *right now* that "a trans person can . . . be considered able-minded" within (some) dominant discourses in the first place, the pervasive undergirding assumption that knowledge, politics, and a worthwhile life depend on "distancing ourselves from disabled and mentally suspect others" has been a recurring ableist conceit of progressive movements and thought.[6] While narrowly focused on white trans[masculine] contexts, *The Terrible We* works generally against the premise that sanity/health indexed by the absence of bad feeling should be necessary to secure the authority of minoritarian subjects and thought in the first place, given that the horizon of health and happiness is itself a "promise that directs you toward certain objects" and ways of knowing, a normalizing technology.[7] Against the imperative of happiness, disciplinary discourses of health, and adjustment to a murderous given—and inspired by work in "the introspective turn" of feminist and queer studies—*The Terrible We* gathers tools from disability studies, queer and feminist studies of affect/emotion, and an archive of trans[masculine] writing to argue for and model a version of *trans* that thinks with, rather than against, what I call *trans maladjustment*.[8]

Trans Maladjustment

In the 1970s manifesto depicted in figure Intro.1, members of three trans liberation groups came together to lay out a list of demands that, from the vantage of the present, articulate a startlingly familiar (if more forcefully utopian) trans politics. Toward the goal of trans liberation, they demand the end to the policing of gendered clothing and comportment, the end to anti-trans discrimination in general and "within the gay world" in particular, the end to exploitative extraction of knowledge and capital from trans bodies (free hormones and surgery on demand), the ability to change one's identification documents "with no difficulty," the end to incarceration in prisons and mental institutions on the basis of trans status, and so on.[9]

Indeed, in addition to foreshadowing contemporary trans activism, the manifesto anticipates the terms of my opening anecdotes as, in the second sentence, its authors insist: "we reject all labels of 'stereotype' 'sick' or 'maladjusted' from non-transvestic and non-transsexual sources and defy any

TRANSVESTITE AND TRANSSEXUAL LIB.

DEMANDS

WE SHARE IN THE OPPRESSION OF GAYS AND WE SHARE IN THE OPPRESSION OF WOMEN.

figure intro.1. Transvestite and Transsexual Liberation Manifesto, as printed in *Gay Dealer: The Rage of Philadelphia* (October 1970). Accessed in Gale's Archives of Sexuality and Gender.

attempt to repress our manifestation as transvestites and transsexuals." On the one hand, this statement seems to confirm Jasbir Puar's observation that "historically and contemporaneously, the nexus of disability and trans has been fraught," at least in part because trans people have often "resist[ed] alliances with people with disabilities in no small part because of long struggles against stigmatization and pathologization that may be reinvoked through such affiliations."[10] On another hand, rather than refusing the affiliation outright, the manifesto leaves an evocative space for precisely the kind of politics and analysis that Puar calls for, in which critical trans and disability theory/politics "each acknowledges and inhabits the more generalized conditions of the other."[11] That is, the manifesto's authors leave open the possibility that, when made *from within trans life*, the association of *trans* with *sick/maladjusted* might be commensurate with trans "manifestation" and liberation.[12] They remind us in advance that trans liberation need not rely on stigmatophobic claims that cut trans off from a broader minoritarian *we* (trans ≠ sick); rather, they contest the use of *stereotype/sick/maladjusted* to deauthorize trans lifeworlds. Further, insofar as a primary object of the authors' critique was the power of medical practitioners to describe, contain, exploit, and otherwise regulate their nonnormative bodyminds and modes of living, their demands articulate the link between trans and gay liberation and contemporaneous disability and mad liberation movements.[13] Of course,

by retaining an identitarian focus—by demanding, for example, the "immediate release of all persons in mental hospitals or prisons *for tranvestism or transsexualism*"—this particular manifesto does not take aim at medicolegal regulation per se; it merely contests that the trans subject is its proper object.[14] However, by leaving open the possibility that claims of trans sickness and maladjustment might not always be hostile to trans manifestation—might indeed be commensurate with trans liberation—they leave open the possibility that this book pursues; namely, that trans maladjustment might, in fact, still be a resource for trans thought.

Briefly, *trans maladjustment* is my shorthand for the tight, durable association between trans identity and particular bad feelings and mad habits of thought that show up again and again in transphobic and trans-affirmative discourse alike, things like depression, social withdrawal, unruly post-traumatic identity/affect, suicidality, dysphoria, feeling haunted, and so on. Insofar as I understand these forms of cognitive/affective divergence as endemic to trans experience, my attention to trans maladjustment resonates with—though does not exactly answer—Alexandre Baril's call to develop a "conception of transness that includes its debilitating physiological, mental, emotional or social aspects" that are not necessarily reducible to oppression.[15] That is, while the predominant version of contemporary trans-affirmative thought encourages us to read these forms of trans maladjustment only as outcomes of oppression, "symptomatic of the destructive forces in which these infelicitous subjects [are] caught," I read them as (also) integral to trans epistemology and cultural production: they point toward ways of knowing (and not-knowing), of living (and not-living) that arise from within being so caught.[16]

The term *maladjustment* means simply "imperfect or faulty adjustment" or, more dismally, "failure to meet the requirements for social life."[17] One can track in the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s illustrative quotations the drifting of *maladjustment* from a more general and neutral use as, roughly, *misfit between two or more things*—a relation—into a sociological use in which this relation was narrowed to be the one between the social and the individual, and finally, into the realm of psychology, where in the early twentieth century it came to take on a sense of being (or being evidence of) an incapacity of a person or organism to adapt to life, rather than strictly a relation. Grammatically, this entails a shift from "maladjustment between" to simply "maladjustment," a loss of preposition that in turn was (and is) used to rationalize intervention into or elimination/abandonment of racialized, feminized, gender nonconforming, mad, neurodivergent, or disabled people who trouble and are troubled by the requirements for officially sanctioned social life.[18] As

one salient example, George Rekers justified his infamous, career-launching, devastating "treatment" of a gender-nonconforming five-year-old child, who appears in Rekers's writing under the pseudonym "Kraig," using the framework of maladjustment. A psychologist and cofounder of the Family Research Council—classified by the Southern Poverty Law Center as an anti-LGBTQ hate group—Rekers insisted that intensive, emotionally and sometimes physically violent intervention into Kraig's "rigidly feminine" bodily comportment, clothing and toy choices, style of play, vocal inflections, and so forth was "ethically and psychologically appropriate" because it corrected maladjustment in the present and warded off "more serious maladjustment" (i.e., transsexuality) "in the future."[19] Specifically, Rekers claimed that such interventions developed Kraig's capacity to flexibly adjust to a world where he was, as he was, marked out for "social isolation and ridicule."[20] That is, although Rekers and his mentor Ivar Lovaas (who in the 1960s and 1970s engineered the applied behavior analysis method of "treating" autistic kids using identical, if often more obviously abusive, methods) recognized that Kraig's "suffering" was relational—the result of others' responses to his way of living—they at the same time located maladjustment as what arose from *within* Kraig, specifically his "deeply ingrained, chronic maladaptive patterns of behavior," feelings, and thought.[21] A relation came to be understood as a condition.

Throughout this book, I use *maladjustment* in a way that is inflected by both "expert" and colloquial uses. However, as this book is not a genealogy of the term there are many others—bad feelings, madness, and so on—that I might have foregrounded instead.[22] But my use of *maladjustment* in particular emerges, in part, from an affinity for disability studies, sharing much with Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's concept of misfit, as what occurs when an "environment does not sustain the shape and function of the body; that enters it" and has the consequence of producing misfitting bodies as social misfits.[23] But *maladjustment* also names a particular, fraught relationship to "disability" as a legal and political category that promises access to the full range of rights and benefits of citizenship through antidiscrimination law and social services, even if only symbolically, contingently, and as an ever-receding horizon. Indeed, while the word has largely fallen out of use, one area in which it continues to have currency is in the administration of accessible education as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004), the current federal law that claims to ensure that students with disabilities have access to public education and that expressly excludes from this assurance students who are "socially maladjusted."[24] *Maladjustment*, therefore, marks the space where (physical, psychic, or social) impairment

cannot become protectable disability, where difference does not or cannot become officially recuperable by these means. In fact, as discussed in chapter 1, this is precisely the status of *trans* in the post-1990s United States, as it is a category that is likewise included in federal disability law in the form of an exclusion.

Embedded in *maladjustment*'s definition, then, as well as in its present uses, is an emphasis on the way in which personhood is premised on the capacity to cultivate certain forms of feeling, habits of thought, and styles of relating—on meeting certain requirements. Although my opening anecdotes might have suggested otherwise, my conception of trans maladjustment therefore shares much with one of Susan Stryker's other founding documents: her endlessly generative theorization and performance of trans madness as trans monstrosity and rage. Framed as it is by Transgender Nation's protest of the pathologization of trans identity at the 1993 American Psychiatric Association's annual meeting, Stryker's "My Words to Victor Frankenstein" can be read as a maladjusted theorization of the conditions that produce trans rage—conditions that include feminist and queer transphobia; compulsory gendering; and the discipline and regulation of gender nonconformity through deeming its subjects disordered—that simultaneously regards that rage as enabling trans ways of thinking and being. Specifically, Stryker's essay is *mad* in at least four interrelated senses of the word: it records and thinks with the phenomenological experience of breakdown; it privileges felt life over and against enlightenment rationality; it is, plainly, furious; and it rages, in part, against the regulation of gender variance by psychology, specifically the political, epistemic, and psychic effects of being subject to diagnosis.[25]

While trans monstrosity animated by rage is certainly one recognizable form of trans maladjustment, in *The Terrible We* I am more interested in figures and feelings endemic to trans life that cannot easily be understood as politically enabling or as "mobilize[d] . . . into effective political actions."[26] What "My Words" and the introduction to *The Transgender Studies Reader* share, after all, is a narrative of righteous trans anger that moves things along by puncturing trans-antagonistic conditions. But, despite the literal and metaphorical association of transition and transness itself with travel, mobility, and movement, trans life under racial capitalism is at least as much about stuckness, waiting, "lag time," and recurrence—about living indefinitely, in Hil Malatino's terms, "in interregnum, in the crucial and transformative moments between past and future, between the regime of what was and the promise of what might be."[27] Accordingly, the forms of maladjustment I think with—depression, dissociation, and asociality/withdrawal—are less

like Stryker's rage and more like Sianne Ngai's "ugly feelings," insofar as each offers a mode of investigating and perhaps bearing "ambivalent situations of suspended agency."[28]

Finally, although I certainly use the language of feeling, I tend toward the word *maladjustment* to retain the associated negativity and baggage and to foreground constellations of feeling, thought, style, and habit. Further, unlike feeling, forms of maladjustment might be understood as chronic, marked by long durations, persistent enough that they can become the ground of identity—a relation comes to be understood as a condition. This is the crucial difference between, for example, feeling social anxiety and being a recluse, feeling depressed and being a depressive, trans desire/dysphoria and trans identity, and so on. Thus, forms of maladjustment, in my usage, contain, cause, or coincide with bad feelings—feelings that are experientially painful, understood as potentially pathological in a diagnostic setting, or politically impairing—but are not reducible to them.

In the remainder of this introduction, I set out to do three things. First, I lay out a brief account of how and why the "methodological distancing" from *sick* has shaped the intellectual and affective horizon of trans studies.[29] Second, I offer an alternative entry point into the project—which is as much about trans literature as it is about trans thought—through a reading of Jack Halberstam's reading of Carson McCullers's *The Member of the Wedding*. I do so both because Frankie Addams's plot and the way Halberstam took it up in the late 1990s serve as an apt allegory for the dynamic within trans thought that I seek to address and because Frankie herself helps me to clarify what, in this text, I take *trans* to mean. And, finally, I sketch the project in full, including an outline of its individual chapters and a primer on its (sometimes idiosyncratic) vocabulary and grammar.

Feeling Trans, Trans Authority

"Transsexuality," Lucas Cassidy Crawford writes, "is a matter of affect at least as much as it is a matter of certain procedures of gender transition."[30] And while Crawford writes here against the harnessing of trans feeling into a single trans narrative, it is true that, over the course of the late twentieth century, we have witnessed the production and consolidation of what scholars have called the transnormative subject. *Trans*, that is, has become widely legible as a particular set of feelings (gendered unease, restlessness, suicidality) that necessitate a particular set of narrative movements (self-discovery, coming out, transition) for the health and persistence of the trans protagonist/subject

within the terms of the liberal-imperial state. In this rendering, *trans* is a feeling that precedes, requires, and so justifies the project of medical or social transition, of living a trans life; for this reason, much ink has been spilled over the question of "what transsexuality feels like."[31] Although this book is undoubtedly another entry into that record, I conjoin it to a related question. Namely, "What does trans studies feel like?" After all, fields are a matter of affect, feeling, and desire at least as much as they are a matter of certain procedures of knowledge production.

As a book that adds to the objects of trans studies only insofar as it takes the emotional habitus of trans studies as its object, *The Terrible We* is most closely aligned with recent work in feminist and queer studies that has taken stock of how the institutionalization of the political desires called *feminism*, *queer liberation*, and *antiracism* has shaped the knowledge projects of women's/gender studies, queer theory, and black feminism. Notable among these are Clare Hemmings's account of the political consequences of the stories that Anglo-American academic feminism tells about itself; Heather Love's attention to how present desires for *emotional rescue* shape approaches to the queer past, and to what queer studies might teach us about "living with injury—not fixing it"; Jennifer Nash's diagnosis of black feminist defensiveness about *intersectionality*, what it enables and what it forecloses; Kadji Amin's argument for, and modeling of, a queer studies driven by *deidealization*; and Robyn Wiegman's taking very seriously that "objects of study are as fully enmeshed in fantasy, projection, and desire as those that inhabit the more familiar itinerary of intimate life."[32]

Wiegman characterizes the psychic life of what she terms *identity knowledges* as being driven by the desire for critical practice to produce justice and the belief that our objects—and our relations to them—might deliver it. The institutionalization of this disciplinary structure of desire places an enormous burden on our objects to be "adequate to the political commitments that inspire" us and to, therefore, be good—desirable, politically enabling, conduits of good feeling, and so forth.[33] Further, one of the ways that justice is routinely "figured" within such fields is "by claiming for minoritized subjects the right to study themselves and to make themselves the object of their study."[34] This definition of justice, in turn, produces a closeness between critics and our objects that, Wiegman suggests, makes it "harder to bear the psychic burdens" of the inevitable failure of our objects—of ourselves—to live up to our desires for them: "how much goodness, after all, must one attribute to her identity objects of study to withstand what it means to both represent and be represented by them?"[35]

Taking this account of the psychic life of identity knowledges for granted, it is easy to understand the assertion "I'm not sick" and the conversion of trans rage into enabling political and subjective movement as defenses of *trans* as a good object in Wiegman's sense. *Trans*, Stryker insists, does not name the delusional, medicalized, politically retrograde "[dupe] of gender"; rather, it names a subject from whom and for whom we might produce justice.[36] Indeed, although *transgender* appears within Wiegman's book primarily as an object on which other critics have pinned their hopes, Andrea Long Chu and Emmett Harsin Drager have since applied Wiegman's insights to account for what they see as the founding "disavowal of the transsexual" at work in trans studies.[37] In their story, in order to understand *trans* (and therefore ourselves) as a "good object" capable of delivering justice, trans studies scholars have abandoned the figure of the transsexual and repeatedly perform this abandonment in order "to prove that we are no longer the medicalized transsexual," who is, we all know, too desirous of normativity to be a theoretically viable political subject.[38] Out of a desire to be resistant and radical, that is, trans studies has abandoned its proper object—"the only thing that *trans* describes that *queer* can't"—and "severely limited our ability to fully understand trans pasts and presents."[39]

While I share with Chu and Harsin Drager the sense that trans studies has been structured by a series of disavowals of trans pathology, bad (painful, pathologized, and politically retrograde) feeling, and mad thought, and although this project is, like theirs, an attempt to ask after what would happen if we thought with these disavowed figures and feelings, it is insufficient to understand the present of trans studies as only the outcome of our own political and affective attachments.[40] Among other things, what Chu and Harsin Drager do not admit into the story of identity knowledges writ large is that such knowledge projects inevitably unfold in political and material contexts in which minoritized subjects' speech is constrained from the outset by the necessity to appear as subjects capable of authoritative speech at all. Only very recently, that is, has it been possible to speak as trans in nontrans contexts—though still, certainly, not all—without that speech being dismissed out of hand as "the confused ranting of a diseased mind."[41] If identity knowledges are, at least in part, projects of securing for minoritized people the authority to be subjects, as well as objects, of knowledge, then we cannot ignore that there are many concomitant factors—chiefly, the uneven distribution of life chances under racial capitalism, the animating context of scholarly desires for radicality—that influence the shape that such fields take. Put another way: while at the outset I, too, set out to understand trans studies' disavowals

as the outcome of intimate and collective desires animating the field, I am mindful of the fact that those founding disavowals, both for better and for worse, enabled trans subjects to emerge into the academy in the first place.

* * *

In an essay collected in the 1999 anthology *Reclaiming Genders: Transsexual Grammars at the Fin de Siècle*, Stryker notes: "While it remains impossible to speak of a single unified transgender movement with clearly articulated goals, it is certainly true that one aim of many activists is to do for gender identity disorder what gay liberation did for social scientific accounts of pathological homosexuality—that is, to make transgender people themselves, rather than their self-appointed clinical caretakers, the ultimate authority about transgender lives."[42] As with other knowledge projects linked to minoritized identities, the goals of early work in trans studies were bound up with the goals of the transgender movement. Indeed, in Stryker's articulation of trans politics here, the transgender movement and transgender studies might be indistinguishable, given that "the aim of many activists" was precisely to establish a discourse in which it would be possible for trans people to be regarded as the "ultimate authority about transgender lives." While this demand for authority arguably animates all minoritarian scholarship, it is a particularly fraught issue in institutionalized forms of trans studies, given that trans identity has been and continues to be described in the language of psychiatric disorder in particular and of madness more generally.

As mad and critical disability studies scholars have noted, there is a way in which the conjuncture of madness and intellectual authority—and, therefore, "mad" and "studies"—presents a clarifying contradiction.[43] To the extent that having rhetorical/interpretative authority "means *making sense* and a [mental] diagnosis is in many ways to be labeled as speaking nonsensically or with the wrong kind of sense," then, within the protocols of rationality that organize the university, speaking from the position of one so diagnosed undercuts one's ability to speak.[44] Speaking madly risks literal and rhetorical confinement or, at the very least, the dismissal of one's sense as nonsense. Especially in the early stages of the field's formation, then, when trans identity was much more universally regarded *as* a form of madness, trans scholars' rhetorical claims to authority were caught within a persistent double bind. How, after all, does one stake a claim to know through a category that renders one's knowledge about oneself and one's world suspect? Under these conditions, to make claims as a trans person was simultaneously "an act of complicity with our own erasure, for no one need listen when we claim a place for our voices in theorizing about us."[45]

In response, trans studies proceeded largely by dismissing pathologizing discourse about trans lives altogether.[46] The first academic performance of this dismissal—one that models, perhaps even generates, a particular set of rhetorical moves that have since been taken for granted—can be found in Sandy Stone's pathbreaking essay, "The *Empire* Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto." While Stone's essay is primarily a response to anti-trans strains of radical feminism—which I will take up in chapter 2—the essay also functions as a repudiation of psychiatric discourse in order to legitimize knowledge produced by trans people. Indeed, before the manifesto reaches its most obvious and most often remembered target, Stone takes on psychiatric texts that link trans identity to mental illness and characterize transsexuals as a class of "depressed, isolated, withdrawn, schizoid individuals."[47] By pointing to irregularities in the research subjects represented in the pre-1980s studies that produced this and similar claims, she then immediately undermines the studies' validity: "In each paper, though, we find that each investigator invalidates his results in a brief disclaimer. . . . In the first, by adding 'It must be admitted that Lothstein's subjects could hardly be called a typical sample, as nine of the ten studied had serious physical health problems' . . . and in the second, with the afterthought that '82 percent of [the subjects] were prostitutes.'"[48] Undoubtedly, a sample that isn't representative of a population should never stand in for that population, and such studies have had lasting negative effects on trans life. That said, there are several assumptions underlying Stone's argument that have subsequently been incorporated into much (especially mainstream) trans-affirmative discourse. First, that sex workers—likely poor, perhaps nonwhite—and disabled trans people are not and should not be considered representative, should not appear at the center of discourse about trans lives. Second, and relatedly, that *if* the transsexuals represented in these studies are "depressed, withdrawn, schizoid individuals," it is *because* they are sex workers or disabled—*trans*, that is, has no relationship to *sick*, but these other marginalized social positions might. And, finally, that depression, withdrawal, and a (too-)rich inner life are characteristics that cannot be incorporated into forms of agential and authoritative personhood, that in order to do work that affirms trans people as living viable lives, forms of maladjustment must always and only be seen as coming from the outside.

My point is twofold. First, and simply, in moving away from such dismal accounts of trans life altogether, we risk doing away with the people whose lives both far exceeded and provided the raw material/data for them. And, second, relying on a concept of authority that *requires* disavowing any relation between trans identity and mental illness paradoxically works to reproduce

the logic of the medicolegal system in the moment that trans thinkers try to escape its purview—insofar as this strategy consents to the equation of the production of usable knowledge with medicolegal norms of emotion, cognition, or sociality. Stone's essay, therefore, represents both an indispensable founding gesture of trans studies and also a way of "working to become non-disabled" that "reinforce[s] the idea that there is something wrong with those disabled people [that trans people] are trying to distance themselves from."[49] While I'm certainly sympathetic to the desire to wholly repudiate self-appointed caretakers' claims to describe trans lives, the form and effects of this repudiation often too closely resemble the mother's insistence that her son is well-adjusted and, therefore, not sick. That is, in Stone's essay, too, the white (post)transsexual emerges as a viable political/academic subject through the reduction of and distancing from racialized/disabled lives via the insistence that trans ≠ sick.

* * *

By the 2010s, transgender studies had extended far beyond the terms of these founding scenes. Now, the steady proliferation of anthologies, journals and special issues, conferences, and so on is testament to the fact that trans scholars are no longer primarily tasked with producing ourselves as subjects, as well as objects, of knowledge. To the contrary, the interdisciplinary field has produced a range of inquiries that foreground *trans* not primarily as a coherent category of people but, rather, as a lens through which to ask and answer questions about governance, aesthetics, the history of science/medicine, digital culture, geopolitics, political economy, literary history, and so on.[50] The preoccupations of scholars in the field, therefore, decreasingly involve questions about what or who *trans* names and increasingly involve ones about what the production and regulation of gender-nonconforming lives, practices, and perspectives allow us to know.

My somewhat obsessive return to what is often taken to be the beginning of trans studies, then, is not an attempt to deny or downplay the sheer bulk and variety of work that has since been produced under its name. However, as trans studies is increasingly institutionalized—and, concurrently, as trans bodies, lives, and narratives increasingly circulate in mainstream representation—it is vital that we think critically about the effects of the stories about *trans* that undergirded trans studies' often para-institutional emergence. Returning to "the beginning" of the field is necessary because, following Stone's example, much work has been done that argues for a productive nonidentity between diagnostic standards of gender and trans self-knowledge, but we have yet to fully take stock of how diagnostic standards of emotion and

cognition similarly shaped, and continue to shape, trans discourse.[51] In particular, founding scholars' disavowal of *sick* both enabled transgender studies and produced a particular mood—an emotional habitus, a space of shared pathos—that has delimited the horizons of the field.

I borrow the term *emotional habitus* from Deborah Gould's extension of Pierre Bourdieu's notion of *habitus*. *Emotional habitus* is also a phrase that describes the juncture of the social and the bodily, how it is that social norms and structures come to be embodied, to reproduce themselves through human action that nonetheless feels innate, like common sense. However, Gould extends the concept of habitus in order to register that, in addition to providing individuals with a shared understanding about action and bodily comportment (what to do and how), social groups also provide members with habits of feeling (what and how to feel, how to name feelings, and how to interpret them). "An emotional habitus," Gould argues, "contains an emotional pedagogy . . . in part by conferring on some feelings and modes of expression an axiomatic, natural quality and making other feeling states unintelligible within its terms and thus, in a sense, unfeelable and inexpressible."[52] In turn, what is feelable and expressible shapes political and intellectual horizons, what kinds of actions, aims, and modes of interpretation are collectively understood as "possible, desirable, and necessary."[53]

Further, Gould's focus on social change, rather than on social reproduction, causes her to emphasize that habitus "are dynamic and always subject to alteration. For their reproduction, habitus must be reinstated [and therefore] . . . are historically contingent, requiring us to investigate the practices that generate, stabilize, reproduce, and sometimes transform them."[54] Indeed, there are numerous examples within trans scholarship of the reproduction of the emotional habitus of trans discourse that I describe above, in which justified anxiety and rage about the delegitimization of trans authority using the idiom of mental illness leads to a wary watch for and reflexive repudiation of pathologized forms of feeling and habits of thought. For example, counter to the view of trans people as "helpless and afflicted," Dean Spade wonders, "What would it mean to suggest that such desire for surgery is a *joyful affirmation* of gender self-determination?"[55] Several essays collected in *The Transgender Studies Reader 2*—which, if *The Transgender Studies Reader* gave the field a name, could be said to be the anthology that records what trans studies became—likewise frame their interventions, explicitly, as movements away from stagnant bad feelings imposed on trans people toward better ones. Julian Carter frames a meditation on trans movement and relation by doing away with the "depressive figuration" of embodiment as a trap; Jeanne

Vaccaro's articulation of a transgender "politics of the handmade . . . put[s] pressure on so-called negative emotions or bad feelings like 'feeling trapped in the "wrong" body' as foreclosing of certain affective possibilities"; Eliza Steinbock closes an essay on the film *Dandy Dust* with a call for "groping theory," which, driven by curiosity, might help us gain some distance from "horrible things"; well, you get the picture.[56] Further, the anthology includes an essay—written by a transgender physician who specializes in trans health care—that takes this emotional habitus as one of its objects, critically examining the arguments surrounding the GID debate; notably, the editors introduce the essay with the caveat that its model of trans identity is insistently "dissonant" with the rest of the reader.[57]

While *The Terrible We*, of course, does not set out to contest the critical value of potentially good trans feelings—euphoria, curiosity, hope, earnestness—nor to mire trans studies permanently in the well of loneliness, it does contend that the emotional habitus undergirding much trans[masculine] discourse is structured around a series of disavowals, and the thing disavowed in each case is a proximity to forms of maladjustment associated with the clinic, the dime museum, the madhouse, and the dissociative rhythms of some trans childhoods. Although distancing *trans* from these sites has been important for authorizing trans voices, each disavowal contains within it a familiar body onto which bad feelings are repeatedly pinned—the girl, the disabled or mad person, and the person of color. Importantly, the structure of disavowal guarantees that these figures will perpetually haunt the version of trans discourse that I have described, because disavowal is premised on recognition; precisely by attempting to disavow an attachment, the attachment is foregrounded, sticks around. In thinking through this set of problems—how the attempt to narrate *trans* through a disavowal of sick produces others as not-subjects, and how we might think with trans maladjustment to avoid this effect—I am arguing for a version of trans studies that can acknowledge and think with a more expansive *we*, terrible though it might feel.

The Terrible *We*

One way to understand this project, then, is as one that is interested in the relatively stable emotional habitus that has structured trans studies—one that allows for some questions, some ways of interpreting, and disallows others—and that follows this interest by investigating how old questions might be rethought if they are approached in a different state of mind. In this way, it is a metacritical project; its object is, ostensibly, a set of conflicts about

who/what *trans* names that frame the field of transgender studies. However, there is another, equally valid way to understand this book: as a project whose objects are a set of (mostly text-based) cultural artifacts—novels, films, poems, newspaper articles, polemics, biographies, and scholarship—by and about transgender people, primarily in the twentieth- and twenty-first-century United States, and that uses the above metacritical framing in conjunction with the method of close reading in order to offer a more or less unified interpretation of those objects. In this version, I argue that, rather than only impeding or confining trans life, thought, and creativity, forms of maladjustment have also been central to their development. More concretely, in one version of the story, this book begins with a feeling of unease generated by the goings-on at conferences. In another, it begins with a quibble over an interpretation of Carson McCullers's 1946 novel turned play, film, and (briefly) musical, *The Member of the Wedding*.

The Member of the Wedding follows the flights of fancy and circumscribed movements of twelve-year-old white tomboy Frankie Addams. When we meet her, Frankie is dressed in a tomboy uniform of "blue black shorts, [and] a B.V.D. undervest," has her hair "cut like a boy's," and understands herself to be "an unjoined person" who "belonged to no club and was a member of nothing in the world."[58] Although the clubs to which Frankie longs to belong are various and far-flung—ranging from the group of neighborhood children that she has outgrown, to the US military, to "the world"[59]—the most pressing is the neighborhood girls' club, made up of girls just slightly older than Frankie. The film version of *Member*, in particular, emphasizes just how pressing the girls' club is, as their clubhouse is located right next to Frankie's house, and we must watch alongside Frankie as this group of composed young women cross her yard, signaling to us and to her that this group is both the one to which she most nearly belongs and one for which she sorely lacks many of the necessary credentials. Notably, this is one of the few scenes that takes place outside of the cramped confines of the Addamses' kitchen; the girls' refusal to grant Frankie a place within their association effectively flings Frankie back into the kitchen, a space she experiences as a nonplace.

Unable to join the girls' club, or to "be a boy and go to war," or to donate blood and circulate in the veins of soldiers, or to fit beneath the arbor with the neighborhood kids, Frankie sets her heart on an unusual site of affiliation; for the majority of *Member*, Frankie schemes, fantasizes, and announces her intentions to join her brother's wedding, not simply as a member of the wedding party but as a member of the marriage itself.[60] Daydreaming about jet-setting about with the newlyweds, and momentarily changing her name

to F. Jasmine (to indicate her belonging to the couple, Janice and Jarvis), Frankie falls in love with the wedding, understanding the couple as the site of her belonging, her "we of me."[61] Importantly, her attempts to belong to the wedding induce Frankie to change her gender presentation—she swaps the boyish moniker Frankie for F. Jasmine and her tomboy uniform for an orange organdy dress, high heels, and silver bow. And even after she is ejected from this "we"—literally dragged from the wedding car—Frankie does not, cannot, return to her prewedding way of inhabiting the world. The novel closes with a coda in which, months later, F. Jasmine is now Frances and has substituted a neighborhood girl named Mary Littlejohn as her love object; she has taken on Mary's interests—Michelangelo, "poets like Tennyson"—and now uses knives for cutting sandwiches into fancy shapes, rather than exclusively for throwing and picking splinters from her tough feet as Frankie once had.[62] Consequently, many have read *Member* as a quintessential female coming-of-age plot: in order to grow up, the adolescent Frankie must accept "her identity as female, [even though] she already suspects that her gender will be confining."[63]

Even though she occupies relatively little space in the book, Frankie Addams is central to the project of Jack Halberstam's *Female Masculinity*, a foundational work in the study of trans and (cis) lesbian masculinities; in at least two ways, Frankie drives Halberstam's book along. First, Frankie provides Halberstam with a political/theoretical stance concerning how best to affirm female masculinities, "not by subverting masculine power but by turning a blind eye to conventional masculinities and refusing to engage."[64] That is, Halberstam's project does not theorize female masculinities as being in a necessarily resistant relation to dominant masculinities or normative configurations of sex/gender; rather, he takes a page out of Frankie's book in order to assert "that power may inhere within different forms of refusal: 'Well, I don't care.'"[65] Second, and more significant for my own project, is that even though Halberstam mimics Frankie's posture, the thrust of *Female Masculinity* moves in opposition to Frankie's plot. In Halberstam's reading, Frankie's is the prototypically pessimistic tomboy tale: first "mired in a realm of unbelonging" and, finally, compelled into normative hetero-femininity, a club whose terms of membership the tomboy "cannot fulfill."[66] Thus, for him, "*The Member of the Wedding* emphasizes the tragic nature of the tomboy quest and quietly confines the tomboy to a past better forgotten and left behind as the girl blossoms into a quiescent young-adult femininity."[67] In contrast, Halberstam frames *Female Masculinity* as a text that "refuses the futility long associated with the tomboy narrative and instead seizes on the opportunity

to recognize and ratify differently gendered bodies and subjectivities."[68] In doing so, in attempting to make adult female masculinity "plausible, credible, and real," Halberstam is thus attempting to make a world to which the tomboy might belong, in which she might be allowed to grow up.[69] If, when we meet Frankie, she is someone who "hung around in doorways," then—foreshadowing the *Transgender Studies Reader 2*'s preference for joyful, curious movement, set in opposition to the trap of bad feelings—Halberstam would like to make it possible for her to go fully outside.[70]

While I can't quite disagree with Halberstam's interpretation of Frankie's plight, his insistence on Carson McCullers's pessimism—her "sense of the overwhelming 'order of things,' an order that cannot be affected by the individual"—overlooks the strangely utopian, collective feeling embedded in nearly all of McCullers's fiction.[71] Put another way, there seems to be little reason to take Frankie's word for it that she is an unjoined person; even though, or more precisely because, she is excluded from membership to the worlds of soldiers, weddings, and normative female adolescence, Frankie is a member of a much queerer collective. When she is flung back inside by the neighborhood girls' refusal, Frankie finds herself in good company, as she occupies the sweaty summer kitchen with the Addams family housemaid Berenice (an unmarried black woman with one blue glass eye) and Frankie's cousin John Henry, a curious child who can sometimes be found in women's clothing, unambivalently desires and identifies with the "Pin Head" girl employed by the local freak show and importantly is "not a bit lonesome"—does not experience his queer proclivities as excluding him from membership.[72] Periodically, this trio is joined by Honey—Berenice's "sick-loose," "lightskinned, almost lavender," horn-playing foster brother—as well as a cast of queer/crip characters who come to the table via the stories that the three tell to each other: the Pin Head girl and the other "freaks" she is employed alongside; "a boy with his whole face burned off"; a cat named Charles who answers to Charlina; two black boys leaning against each other in an alley who, in Frankie's eye, "reflected the sudden picture of her brother and the bride"; and Lily Mae Jenkins who "fell in love with a man name Juney Jones . . . [then] changed his nature and his sex and turned into a girl."[73] So, while the kitchen is certainly a site of confinement and exploitation, it is also the place where a vast, uneven collective assembles; further, it is the scene of the primary trio's ongoing life and utopian dreaming.

Utopian dreaming is featured in much of McCullers's work, but in *Member* it is explicitly so. One of the trio's rituals, which occurs in the time "nearing twilight," is to sit at the kitchen table and "criticize the Creator. They would

judge the work of God, and mention the ways how they would improve the world."[74] While each member offers a different, even conflicting, vision of how things ought to be, the important thing is that this is an iterative practice that creates the collective: "At home," Frankie notes, "there was only Berenice Sadie Brown and John Henry West. The three of them sat at the kitchen table, saying the same things over and over, so that by August the words began to rhyme with each other and sound strange."[75] This description of collectivity as a practice that allows separate visions to "rhyme with each other and sound strange" is instructive because it suggests that, as with words in a poem, the kitchen brings these three quite different figures into correspondence, which, in turn, produces an excess of meaning.[76] But Frankie cannot recognize this meaning as meaningful. For example, at one point in the novel, she fantasizes about speaking on the radio—which is always on in the background, the main way "the world" enters into the world of the kitchen—with Janice and Jarvis, insisting "we will be asked to speak." When Berenice misunderstands this "we" as Frankie, John Henry, and herself, Frankie viciously retorts: "When I said *we*, you thought I meant you and me and John Henry West. To speak over the world radio. I have never heard of anything so funny since I was born."[77] That is, Frankie locates all that might be meaningfully said in the other trio, the wedding *we*. Thus, if we recognize the narration as not entirely trustworthy because it is focalized through Frankie—if we refuse to take Frankie's feeling about herself as descriptively true—then it would seem that the pessimism of *Member* is not only located in Frankie's being coercively compelled into white femininity (although she is) but also in the way that, in being so compelled, she cannot acknowledge the club of which she is a member as legitimate, as productive of its own worlds and rhythms, as anything but a temporary and "terrible . . . we."[78]

While the project of theorizing female masculinity so that it is possible for Frankie, not Frances, to leave the cramped kitchen is an admirable one—and while it has certainly made my own work possible and thinkable—I approach the problem that Frankie's plot seems to pose differently. I want to stay with the imperfect, even terrible, we long enough to understand it as a world that contains its own possibilities. That is, *Member* serves as a useful allegory for the problems that arise alongside *trans*'s desire for—and theorization as—forms of joyful, felicitous movement. Frankie is the center of a story about a refusal to sit with bad feeling—and to stick with the disabled and racialized elements of her world—that has the effect of dissolving a capacious nonnormative *we*. Her trajectory, therefore, helps to illuminate the ways in which trans studies' trouble with bad feeling underlies, and works alongside,

its trouble with race and disability—namely, the tendency of trans to stick to certain kinds of exceptional white individuals, who can be interpreted as "not sick." This trouble is often framed as a problem of the archive, a persistent entrenchment of the authorized medicolegal frames that have made a particular story about trans life visible, even as those frames are objects of trans critique. All this is true, but I suggest that what Frankie can teach us, as a fictional example of just such an exceptional white individual, is that this trouble is also and simultaneously a problem of emotional pedagogy.

In truth, this way of approaching the problem is more in keeping with McCullers; far from providing evidence that she was a social pessimist, McCullers's own life was one lived in opposition to—or, perhaps, in willful ignorance of—the idea that childhood boyishness, queerness, and freakishness must be outgrown.[79] Further, her fiction repeatedly returns to the queer, the tomboy, and the freak—as well as to strange, improbable collectives as sites of dreaming—as evidence, however fleeting, that the world might be other than the unbearable order of things. The trouble for McCullers, in both her life and her fiction, is that these collectives require emotional work—both work on emotions and work that raises emotions—to be maintained, and this is work that McCullers's characters, lovers, and friends (as well as McCullers herself) often find themselves unwilling or unable to do. In large part, this inability and unwillingness is derived from the painfulness of the feelings that tend to both bind together and, ultimately, undo these collectives.

Still, McCullers knew as well as anyone that pain, both physical and psychic, cannot be thought of as *only* hostile to life because it is often the medium in which life unfolds. Indeed, McCullers's own life was marked by chronic and recurrent illnesses, and by the time she was thirty, she had experienced three strokes and was partially paralyzed; "discomfort and pain" writes her biographer Virginia Spencer Carr, "had been a way of life since [her] early childhood."[80] But whereas McCullers's own gendered and sexual ambiguity has been, and is increasingly, read as central to the content of her fiction, her disability is most commonly presented as simply what "limited her productivity."[81] That is, while McCullers's reliance on disabled characters is often read, in universalizing terms, as symptomatic of her fixation on problems of isolation and loneliness that characterize the human condition, her own experience of disability—her pain as a way of life—provides another way to understand McCullers's particular fixation on the relationship between confinement and freedom, between being "caught" and being "loose."[82] She herself lived much of her life confined to bed or to a single room but, from that location, did a great deal of world making. Both her life and her art

insist on recognizing—without romanticizing—various kinds of injury and impairment as productive of their own worlds and rhythms. Doing so, in turn, requires a method of thinking with, rather than fleeing from, Frankie's fearsome, lonely feeling.

Frankie Addams Made Me Trans; Or, Reading the Whitened Transmasculine Archive

Admittedly, there is another, somewhat more idiosyncratic reason for Frankie Addams's appearance in this introduction. In addition to being the center of a story about a refusal to live with bad feelings that dissolves a minoritarian *we*, Frankie was also my first lesson in the difficulty of narrativizing *trans*. To explain, I need to tell one more story.

When I was a young tomboy, I grew up alongside another tomboy; eventually, we both became adults who inhabit the pronoun *he*. But before that, sometime in junior high school, this friend of mine, let's call him J., played Frankie in a local production of *The Member of the Wedding*. For this role, J. had to get his hair cut like Frankie's; specifically, as indicated by the stage directions, he had to get his hair cut "like a boy's."[83] While I can't say whether J. interpreted this change in precisely the way that I did, it seemed to me that this haircut—which he has maintained ever since—marked a shift in how J. publicly identified and was identifiable. To say it more plainly, this haircut was a decisive moment in J.'s movement from tomboy to trans boy. For J., inhabiting the character of Frankie allowed him to make this move not through the differentiation that marked much intragroup conflict at what has been called the butch/FTM border, but through similarity, imitation. In turn, witnessing J.'s trans life enabled my own. J.'s story, my story, and Frankie's story, then, depend on one another, even as the selves produced by and in those stories might be said to exist on either side of various fissures of race and gender.

However, precisely because the tomboy and the trans boy—and, by extension, the transgender, feminist, gay/lesbian, and queer discourse that have been produced by and around them—share histories, psychic resources, aesthetic practices, and so on, the emergence of transgender as a discrete discursive field has necessitated a seemingly endless defining and redefining of *trans*. Hence, ever-expanding glossaries of "trans-related terminology" are often included in academic and lay publications, even if only as exasperated footnotes directing the reader to one of the "many glossaries . . . [that] already exist."[84] In lieu of writing yet another glossary, let me just say that I use the terms *trans*

and *transgender* more or less interchangeably and largely in line with Susan Stryker's definition of *transgender* as a word referring to:

> people who move away from the gender they were assigned at birth, people who cross over (trans-) the boundaries constructed by their culture to define and contain that gender. Some people move away from their birth-assigned gender because they feel strongly that they properly belong to another gender in which it would be better for them to live; others want to strike out toward some new location, some space not yet clearly defined or concretely occupied; still others simply feel the need to get away from the conventional expectations bound up with the gender that was initially put upon them. In any case, it is the *movement across a socially imposed boundary away from an unchosen starting place*—rather than any particular destination or mode of transition—that best characterizes the concept of "transgender."[85]

Still, while Stryker's definition is a useful one, my insistence on staying with the terrible we is an insistence that there is, embedded within this definition of *trans* as movement away, a capacitating story that has some unsettling effects. In particular, as in Frankie's flight from the kitchen, movement away in white trans stories is enabled by—and often necessitates—a movement away from forms of maladjustment, routinely figured as movements away from sickness and blackness that leave the racialized/disabled body mired in fixity or rendered as spectral, "shadows . . . that disrupt the teleology" of trans movement "as corporeal freedom."[86] Put more strongly, the universalization of *trans* as movement away is a capacitating story that is also a racial/ableist one.

It is true, that is, that I can tell the story of Frankie enabling J.'s trans life, which, in turn, expanded my own sense of who it was possible for me to be. However, it must at the same time be said that my identification with Frankie was troubled by my simultaneously being identified with Berenice, Honey, and, especially, Lily Mae Jenkins, a black transfeminine character who appears in the story only to be immediately cast outside its narrative bounds. Appearing as a piece of gossip that Berenice brings to the kitchen table amid an inventory of "many a queer thing," Lily Mae is the only character in *Member* whose trans potential is actualized; according to Berenice, Lily "to all intents and purposes" "turned into a girl" out of love for a man.[87] As a condensation of the blackness, queer desire, and trans flight that must be abjected in order for Frankie to take up her place in the social order—and as someone who reportedly crosses with ease from m to f, as both John Henry and Frankie cannot—we might read Lily Mae as a figure of black ungendering. Lily Mae,

that is, provides a "context" for Frankie's "understanding [of] sex and gender as mutable and subject to rearrangement," of gender's mutability as a potential way out of her predicament of gender, while simultaneously casting Lily Mae as a person outside the boundaries of consideration and care.[88] "You don't need to know Lily Mae Jenkins," Berenice tells Frankie. "You can live without knowing [Lily]."[89]

Two decades after its publication, José Esteban Muñoz's *Disidentifications* still aptly describes the "obstacles in enacting identifications" that marginalized—especially multiply marginalized—subjects must navigate in undertaking the work of making a self, given that "minority identifications are often neglectful or antagonistic to other minoritarian positionalities."[90] Muñoz's insight that disidentification is a strategy that minoritarian subjects—artists, activists, and theorists among them—use to craft habitable selves and usable theories from discourses that are at once solicitous of and hostile to them informs my reading practice here, which is in many ways a project of disidentifying with white trans studies and discourse, "work[ing] on and against" this terrain.[91] Therefore, while a growing body of trans of color scholarship—most notably work by C. Riley Snorton, Matt Richardson, Kai Green, Treva Ellison, Jules Gill-Peterson, Jin Haritaworn, Dora Silva Santana, and Jacob Lau—have provided me, have provided us, with critical concepts for pursuing Lily Mae's rumored life, this book takes up adjacent questions posed by this scene. In particular, what are the conditions in which Frankie might understand and desire Lily Mae as a member of her we?

Importantly, this is a question that black feminists, not only Carson McCullers, taught me to ask. Written in 1977, "The Combahee River Collective Statement," for example, is a document that trained me to, among other things, linger on the importance of the emotional work that might ultimately enable our political/theoretical analysis not only to diagnose the world but also to create the conditions in which it is possible to change it. "The Combahee River Collective Statement" insists on speaking as we. Although individual black women appear as citations, as members, as predecessors, they are folded into the work of the we who *believe*, who *feel*, who *question*, who *have a politics*, who *are*. Certainly, the first-person plural is a feature of many manifestoes, and bringing into being a we is, arguably, the function of the genre. But what I have always found remarkable about this particular statement is that it is committed simultaneously to speaking as an existing black feminist we, to bringing that we into existence, and to revealing to its reader how fragile that pronoun is, how much work goes into its maintenance, especially in the context of a group avowedly "damaged" by the psychic toll of

living under a racist, sexist, capitalist order.[92] A full quarter of the statement is dedicated to documenting the problems of maintaining a collective voice; *we* is sometimes rendered inactive and split by "internal disagreements." It loses its political focus and lapses into an "emotional support" function. It has been made up of "hundreds," though individuals come and go. *We* is held together through, and because of, "success and defeat, joy and pain, victory and failure."[93] Working with its content, then, the form of "The Combahee River Collective Statement" underscores that an essential component of their black feminist work was developing practices of sociality, interpretation, and composition that allow *us* to hang together in the first place.

Admittedly, this minoritarian we is terrible and vexed and the work of maintaining it often distracts from working against the material conditions that necessitate it. And yet, the essays that make up this book are my own attempts at thinking with and against my own formative and terrible *we*, white(ned) transmasculinity, in a way that takes seriously that "trans normativity and trans exceptionalism are aspirational fantasies that very, very few trans subjects are able to live out phenomenologically"—that reads with the maladjustment of even this most normative form of trans life.[94] Certainly, there is another project composed of another archive, one that prioritizes texts that are erased or displaced in trans studies' present institutionalization. Ultimately, however, I decided to focus on well-worn (read: white, transsexual) texts, cases, and debates because, while alternatives can certainly be found by looking just to the side of what has been positioned as central, it's often equally true that there are alternatives imminent to the objects that have accrued—or are in the process of accruing—all the power. Thinking these central alternatives is particularly vital for trans thought given the persistent tenuousness of trans life and the fact that dominant trans narratives have been, for many, profoundly life affirming and life enabling, so it is nothing short of cruel to *only* critique or deconstruct those narratives. One wants the living to go on but also for it to remain attached (emotionally, financially, politically, discursively) to the forms of unlife that it is being rehabilitated from and that it produces, which requires locating the places within the dominant frame that suggest what *trans* could have been and also is.

Organization of the Book

One last word of explanation. You'll notice that, sometimes, I bracket the masculinity of transmasculinity. Within the text, I have tried to limit the use of this construction, *trans[masculinity]*, to places where I am trying to indicate

that I am making a statement about *trans* generally but that it especially concerns transmasculinity. However, I encourage you to read that masculinity as if it were always in brackets, as if it were always a provisional term, a clarifying interjection not in the original text. I encourage you to read this way because the terms *transmasculine* and *transfeminine*—though often useful as descriptors and necessary to indicate the divergences of transmasculine and transfeminine histories and presents—are more or less self-defeating, in that they simply reinscribe the binary sex/gender system in a trans context, linking trans maleness with masculinity and trans femaleness with femininity. In doing so, these terms are both simply inadequate descriptions and also pose a serious theoretical problem. To illustrate, it seems imprecise to call prominent trans activist Lou Sullivan (discussed in chapter 1)—whose deepest, earliest identifications tended to be with fags and drag queens—masculine. When we do, implicitly, we are saying that he was masculine relative to his presumed womanhood and are, therefore, reenacting the founding violence of sex/gender (mis)assignment that *trans* attempts to problematize, evade, or undo. Still, I use *transmasculinity* and *transfemininity* because they are, for now, the best words I have to communicate that trans genders are always inevitably articulations of available gendered forms. The bracket, therefore, is meant as a visual reminder that trans people, like everyone else, "can be simultaneously identifying with and rejecting a dominant form."[95]

With this caveat in mind, I focus on transmasculinity because, to date, academic monographs within and around trans studies have largely taken transfemininity as their object or collapsed transmasculinity and femininity under the sign of trans. I do not mean to suggest, however, that transmasculinities are more marginalized—quite the opposite. In the past decades, trans men and other transmasculine people have come to occupy prominent places within spaces of trans cultural and knowledge production—the academy, the arts world—where social and other forms of capital accrue. At the same time, the trans woman has continued to operate within the public and critical imagination as the paradigmatic trans-figuration, reinforcing the harsh hypervisibility of trans women. This discrepancy creates a particular set of problems for transmasculine narration. In particular, because accounts of transfemininity have defined what is often understood as a universal trans narrative, transmasculine people—and those writing about us—continue to rely on these accounts for producing intelligible selves. For instance, some forms of trans discourse have long relied on one kind of proximity to pain to make claims on the state—the threat of murder and other forms of spectacular violence. However, the vast majority of those murdered are poor, black

trans women, whose deaths must be understood as the outcomes of anti-blackness, the criminalization of sex work, transmisogynoir, and so on, not only or even mostly "transphobia."[96] Most trans men are simply not subject to violence in the same ways but remain attached to this narrative for lack of other viable ways to articulate how—given that, for instance, studies have shown that transmasculine people are affected by sexual and intimate partner violence in numbers that are comparable to other feminized people—our lives (and the imaginaries that shape them) are structured by trans-antagonism, misogyny, and resulting forms of feeling bad.[97] Thus, I chose to focus on the transmasculine archive in particular in order to dredge up some examples of the problem of transmasculine narration and to suggest some ways it might be addressed that do less of a disservice to our sisters and ourselves. In particular, I read with forms of maladjustment that pervade the transmasculine archive in order to argue for and model a version of transgender studies that does not begin with the premise that a commitment to doing justice requires the wholesale disavowal of transgender's historical association with madness. Doing so, I wager, offers new vantage points on—or perhaps might simply help us to bear—old, recurrent conflicts that structure the relationships among queer, trans, and feminist discourse. More than this, however, unlinking trans authority from discourses of emotional adjustment and cognitive coherence is crucial for the work of staying with the terrible we.

To this end, chapter 1 traces the coproduction of disabled and transgender as categories of people at the turn of the twentieth century in order to put forward maladjustment as a resource for doing trans theory. In particular, I focus my analysis on newspaper representations of three transmasculine people who found themselves caught up in a multisited regulatory system—which included the law, the asylum, and the entertainment industry—that attempted to contain disabled, trans, and other "problem bodies" in spaces outside of the properly public sphere.[98] While this system produced a series of constraints—and while contemporary trans and disability activism have, for this reason, attempted to disarticulate these categories—I demonstrate that the coproduction of disability/transgender also allowed for unexpected freedoms. For example, I linger on the life of Jack Bee Garland, whose performance of gender, for a time, relied on a performance of disability; this performance, in turn, granted Garland a profound access to authority and allowed them to maneuver beyond the boundaries imposed on gender-variant and female (both cis and trans) lives.

Just as maladjustment was a resource for Garland's life and livelihood, each subsequent chapter meditates on how contemporary, disavowed figures

of trans maladjustment—the depressed transsexual, the sexually traumatized transgender man, and the trans recluse—might likewise allow for new perspectives on, and imaginative routes around, old impasses. Chapter 2, for example, takes up the central challenge of the work by analyzing popular and scholarly discourse produced by the continually reiterated "conflict" between trans and feminism. Because this conflict largely concerns the perceived incompatibility of trans and feminist theories of gender, scholars and activists have, for decades, tried and failed to build an integrated theory of gender that can accommodate both. Sitting alongside a strain of disability studies scholarship on pain and mad epistemologies, I explore how thinking with bad feelings can be useful for reevaluating the terms of this debate, as its rhetorical force is undergirded by a conflation of "bad feelings" and "bad knowledge." In doing so, I make a case for living with the lack of trans feminist integration, even though it does not feel good.

Chapter 3 extends my treatment of the conflicted relationship between trans and feminist studies by considering transmasculine narratives of sexual harm. Due to the risk of pathology, trans-affirmative scholarship often actively suppresses any connection between sexual violence and trans identity; however, in so doing, I suspect that we have overlooked the centrality of something like a dissociative poetics to transmasculine writing and thought. Reading, among other things, the Brandon Teena archive and the fiction of contemporary writer Elliott DeLine, this chapter explores the possibility that dissociation in transmasculine thought describes at once a response to feminized forms of degradation and a formal/psychic strategy for the inhabitation of trans[masculine] forms of life.

In chapter 4, I read with the enduring figure of the trans recluse in order to reframe debates about the place of the social in the development of trans subjectivity. Insofar as it names a social category defined by a contestation of overdetermination from the outside, *trans* has long been marked by a certain measure of trouble with the social, which manifests as trouble theorizing the relation between, on one hand, the self and the social discourses that produce it, and on another, the self and the others it relies on. This trouble, in turn, gets *trans* in trouble. It is forever having to ward off charges of naïve individualism, gender essentialism, and a lack of understanding of gender's location and function in "the social map of power."[99] Rather than trying to make *trans* properly extroverted, this chapter takes an interest in the forms of sociality to be found in withdrawal. Framed by the life of mid-twentieth-century trans man Michael Dillon, I examine the function of solitary acts of reading in trans projects of world- and self-making, as well as the formal pressure that

trouble with sociality has exerted on trans writing. Ultimately, I argue that Dillon's life and writing offer an alternative, lyric model of trans subjectivity that recognizes the importance of social anxiety to the development of trans thought.

The book concludes with a brief, failed meditation on the ghostly transgender child and representations of trans suicides and suicidality. Ending with a consideration of suicidality is necessary, both because it marks the limit of my own ability to think with maladjustment and because it dramatizes the problem at the heart of my project, namely, the affects and effects of the inevitable failure of the politics of affirmation, love, and legibility to fulfill their promises.

What follows, then, is a series of thought experiments that attempt not to invert the value of but to really think with maladjustment. The goal of not simply revaluing will be felt in the fact that none of the essays that make up this book neatly resolve or point toward a coherent theoretical program. Instead, each chapter returns to the scene of trans studies' terrible we in order to ask what might be found there if it is inhabited in a maladjusted state of mind.

PREFACE/ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

1 Stryker, "Institutionalizing Trans* Studies."
2 Keegan, "Getting Disciplined," 388; Bettcher, "What Is Trans Philosophy?," 651.
3 Adair, Awkward-Rich, and Marvin, "Before Trans Studies."
4 Erica L. Green, Katie Benner, and Robert Pear, "'Transgender' Could Be Defined Out of Existence Under Trump Administration," *New York Times*, October 21, 2018; Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*, 14. For an incisive read of the emergence of transition tech companies, see Geffen and Howard, "Quantifying Transition."

INTRODUCTION

1 Levasseur, "Gender Incongruence."
2 Kunzel, "The Flourishing of Transgender Studies," 268.
3 Stryker, "(De)subjugated Knowledges," 1–2.
4 Stryker, "(De)subjugated Knowledges," 2.
5 Gibson, Glazier, and Olson, "Evaluation of Anxiety," 4. See also Durwood et al., "Mental Health and Self-Worth."
6 Pyne, "Autistic Disruptions, Trans Temporalities," 346, 346–47.
7 Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*, 54. See also Metzl, "Why 'Against Health'?"
8 Nash, *Black Feminism Reimagined*, 12.
9 "Transvestite and Transsexual Liberation," *Gay Dealer*, October 1970, 9, Gale Archives of Sexuality and Gender, accessed October 23, 2019, https://link-gale-com.silk.library.umass.edu/apps/doc/TZIRKR632512870/AHSI?u=mlin_w_umassamh&sid=bookmark-AHSI&xid=aa7955c2.
10 Puar, "Disability," 77–78.
11 Puar, "Disability," 78.
12 "Transvestite and Transsexual Liberation," *Gay Dealer*.
13 Lewis, "'We Are Certain.'"
14 "Transvestite and Transsexual Liberation," *Gay Dealer*; my emphasis.
15 Baril, "Transness as Debility," 61.
16 Lewis, "'I Am 64,'" 24.
17 *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "maladjustment, n.," accessed December 30, 2021, https://www.oed.com.silk.library.umass.edu/view/Entry/112724?redirectedFrom=maladjustment.
18 *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "maladjustment, n."
19 Rekers, "Atypical Gender Development," 559n2, 561.

20 Rekers, "Atypical Gender Development," 569; Rekers and Lovaas, "Behavioral Treatment," 174.
21 Rekers and Lovaas, "Behavioral Treatment," 174; Rekers et al., "Child Gender Disturbances," 4.
22 Toward such a genealogy, see Harrington, *Mind Fixers*, especially chap. 3; de la Cour, "From 'Moron' to 'Maladjusted.'"
23 Garland-Thomson, "Misfits," 594.
24 Language excluding "socially maladjusted" children from those guaranteed an education has carried over from the 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142) into the present Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, passed in 2004.
25 I owe this condensed formulation to Bruce, *How to Go Mad without Losing Your Mind*, 6–9.
26 Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein," 237.
27 Malatino, "Future Fatigue," 642, 644.
28 Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 1
29 Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, 3.
30 Crawford, "Transgender without Organs," 132.
31 Prosser, *Second Skins*, 69.
32 Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*; Love, *Feeling Backward*, 4; Nash, *Black Feminism Reimagined*; Amin, *Disturbing Attachments*; Wiegman, *Object Lessons*, 20.
33 Wiegman, *Object Lessons*, 3.
34 Wiegman, *Object Lessons*, 4
35 Wiegman, *Object Lessons*, 7.
36 Hausman, *Changing Sex*, 140.
37 Long Chu and Drager, "After Trans Studies," 105, 106.
38 Long Chu and Drager, "After Trans Studies," 107.
39 Long Chu and Drager, "After Trans Studies," 108, 107.
40 Adair, Awkward-Rich, and Marvin, "Before Trans Studies."
41 Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein," 224.
42 Stryker, "Portrait of a Transfag," 79.
43 Chen, "Brain Fog"; Aho, Ben-Moshe, and Hilton, "Mad Futures."
44 Price, *Mad at School*, 26.
45 Hale, "Tracing a Ghostly Memory in My Throat," 104.
46 One of the most striking examples of this dismissal can be found by comparing the first and second volumes of the *Transgender Studies Reader*. Published just seven years apart, volume 1 opens with a section on "Sex, Gender, and Science," which critically engages with the work of psychologists and others in the medical sciences, whereas this possible branch of trans studies is all but invisible in volume 2.
47 Cited in Stone, "The *Empire* Strikes Back," 153.
48 Stone, "The *Empire* Strikes Back," 153.
49 Withers, *Disability Politics and Theory*, 112.
50 A nonexhaustive list of such work includes Gill-Peterson, *Histories of the Transgender Child*; Keegan, *Lana and Lilly Wachowski*; Beauchamp, *Going Stealth*; Hayward, "More Lessons from a Starfish"; Spade, *Normal Life*; Snorton, *Black on*

Both Sides; Steinbock, *Shimmering Images*; Heaney, *The New Woman*; and Aizura, *Mobile Subjects*.

51 See, for example, Spade, "Resisting Medicine, Re/modeling Gender"; and Prosser, *Second Skins*.

52 Gould, *Moving Politics*, 34.

53 Gould, *Moving Politics*, 3.

54 Gould, *Moving Politics*, 36.

55 Spade, "Resisting Medicine, Re/modeling Gender," 21n20; my emphasis.

56 Carter, "Embracing Transition," 130; Vaccaro, "Felt Matters," 92–93; Steinbock, "Groping Theory," 111, 116.

57 Gorton, "Transgender as Mental Illness," 644.

58 McCullers, *Member of the Wedding* (2004), 3–4.

59 McCullers, *Member of the Wedding* (2004), 23.

60 McCullers, *Member of the Wedding* (2004), 23

61 McCullers, *Member of the Wedding* (2004), 42.

62 McCullers, *Member of the Wedding* (2004), 159.

63 White, "Loss of Self," 127.

64 Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, 9.

65 Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, 9

66 Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, 8.

67 Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, 190.

68 Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, 8.

69 Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, 19.

70 McCullers, *Member of the Wedding* (2004), 3.

71 Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, 8. On (queer) collectivity/utopianism in McCullers, see Miller, "Utopian Function of Affect"; Adams, *Sideshow U.S.A.*; Hoang, *A View from the Bottom*.

72 McCullers, *Member of the Wedding* (2004), 43.

73 McCullers, *Member of the Wedding* (2004), 38, 80, 32, 75, 81.

74 McCullers, *Member of the Wedding* (2004), 96.

75 McCullers, *Member of the Wedding* (2004), 3.

76 McCullers, *Member of the Wedding* (2004), 3.

77 McCullers, *Member of the Wedding* (2004), 95.

78 McCullers, *Member of the Wedding* (2004), 42.

79 Carr, *The Lonely Hunter*.

80 Carr, *The Lonely Hunter*, 2.

81 McDowell, *Carson McCullers*, 15. On McCullers's gender and sexuality as central to the content of her fiction see, for example, Gleeson-White, *Strange Bodies*.

82 McCullers, *Member of the Wedding* (2004), 118–20.

83 McCullers, *Member of the Wedding: A Play* (1951), 1.

84 Martínez-San Miguel and Tobias, "Introduction: Thinking beyond Hetero/Homo Normativities," 15n1.

85 Stryker, *Transgender History*, 3.

86 Snorton, *Black on Both Sides*, 143. On this point, see also Aizura, *Mobile Subjects*.

87 McCullers, *Member of the Wedding* (2004), 81.

88 Snorton, *Black on Both Sides*, 12.
89 McCullers, *Member of the Wedding* (2004), 81.
90 Muñoz, *Disidentifications*, 8.
91 Muñoz, *Disidentifications*, 11.
92 Combahee River Collective, "Combahee River Collective Statement," 269.
93 Combahee River Collective, "Combahee River Collective Statement," 272, 271, 269.
94 Malatino, "Future Fatigue," 639.
95 Muñoz, *Disidentifications*, 108.
96 For critical reflections on the use of violence in trans discourse see Valentine, *Imagining Transgender*, chap. 6; and Lamble, "Retelling Racialized Violence."
97 In *The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey*, 51 percent of transgender men and 58 percent of nonbinary female-assigned people reported having been sexually assaulted in their lifetime (James et al., *Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey*, 205).
98 Sears, *Arresting Dress*, 10.
99 Butler, "Gender Is Burning," 131.

1. DISABLED HISTORIES OF *TRANS*

An earlier version of this chapter appeared as "'She of the Pants and No Voice': Jack Bee Garland's Disability Drag," *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (2020): 20–36.

1 Renaissance Education Association, "Who's Disabled? . . . I'm Okay but You're Not," *Renaissance News* 3, no. 11 (1989), 3, Digital Transgender Archive, https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/files/b8515n36q
2 Renaissance Education Association, "Who's Disabled?"
3 For an account of the vexed relationship between gender nonconformity and disability law, see Colker, *The Disability Pendulum*, 22–68.
4 Renaissance Education Association, "Who's Disabled?"
5 Halberstam, *In a Queer Time*, 18.
6 Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, 3. See also Baynton, "Disability and the Justification."
7 Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, 2.
8 Withers, *Disability Politics and Theory*, 112.
9 Kunzel, "The Rise of Gay Rights," 459–75.
10 Sears, *Arresting Dress*, 10.
11 Chambers-Letson, *After the Party*, 25.
12 Following Carrie Sandahl's sense of "cripping" as performance that "spins mainstream representations or practices to reveal able-bodied assumptions and exclusionary effects," I use *crip* to emphasize disability performance as critique (Sandahl, "Queering the Crip," 37).
13 Renaissance Education Association, "Who's Disabled?"
14 Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*; Love, *Feeling Backward*; Freeman, *Time Binds*; Amin, *Disturbing Attachments*.
15 Eskridge, *Gaylaw*, 27.