

Transing Dystopia: Constituting Trans Monstrosity, Performing Trans Rage in Torrey Peters' *Infect Your Friends and Loved Ones*

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The current US government is aggressively rolling back Obama era policies that directly target trans people. Concurrently, US government structures are animated through an intersectional platform disproportionately effecting trans folks navigating multiple marginalized identities. These reversals are legitimized through the rhetorical construction of a world constituted in fear; and these changes allegedly seek to ease these fears. More precisely, marginalized difference is exploited precisely because of its outsider status and promoted as monstrous enactments to be feared. Once the other is rendered monstrous and of eliciting fear, the State is enabled to promote a series of policies and procedures that attempt to remedy the fear by demolishing the monster. For instance, in recent and ongoing bathroom legislation designed to target and criminalize trans folks, stereotypical images of trans women are conjured as a means of provoking fear. The erasure of trans men and non-binary folks in many of these scare tactics highlight the transmisogyny that undergirds these monstrous renderings (Serano, *Excluded*).¹

A recent YouGov survey finds trans phenomena continues to be understood as either a mental illness or as a choice and less as a core sense of self. Moreover,

¹ Cisheterosexism locates gender within various intersections of sexism, cissexism, and heterosexism. Conversely, cisheteronormativity names gender norms defined through cisgender and heterosexual criteria that privileges men, males, and masculinity (see LeMaster). At the same time, identity is always intersectional and thus any focus on cisheterosexism is equally defined in and through race and class, for instance.

the survey found that most cisgender or non-trans folks have no interest in befriending, dating, or fucking trans people. In short, trans folks are understood conceptually not dialogically and often through mass mediated means that continue to use stereotypes to tell their stories (Lester). In addition, political and religious discourse is constituted through exclusionary ideologies. For example, Pope Francis placed the detriment of the human race in tension with trans-affirming subjectivity in his address to the 23rd General Assembly of the Members of the Pontifical Academy for Life (see Holy See Press Office). He paradoxically calls for a “renewed culture of identity and difference” and to end women’s oppression while referring to trans-affirmation as “techniques and practices that make it irrelevant for the development of the person and for human relationships.” The inference being isolation and desolation; that is, if one is not authoring the future through cisheteronormative reproductive means, one is ushering in apocalyptic ends. He continues by suggesting that these techniques and practices “remove both the human dignity of the sexually different constitution, and the personal quality of the generative transmission of life” effectively rendering trans subjects as anything but human; indeed, monstrous. Ultimately, the Pope warns against the “utopia of the ‘neutral,’” a world that is defined through the antithesis of “creativ[ity] and fruitful[ness].” Though, the utopia the Pope warns against is clearly utopic from the vantage of those who affirm those techniques and practices he warns against. Indeed, from his vantage, this *utopia* is his *dystopia*. Likewise, the Pope’s utopia—one in which trans-affirmation is inconceivable—is dystopic from the vantage of trans and gender non-conforming subjects. Said differently, temporality serves as a point of contention in which differing ideological positionalities provide frameworks for constructing a particular futurity cast as utopic for some and dystopic for others.

Informed by theories of monstrosity and transfeminism, this essay examines the dystopic potentialities that emerge as a result of “trans monstrosity” and its affect “trans rage.” This essay argues trans rage can enable queer worldmaking that serves as the grounds for reassessing and reconfiguring dystopia as a queer utopia all along. If one is to desire a *utopia of the neutral*, and this essay asserts one ought to, then one must first recognize such utopias as relationally dystopic enactments constituted through normative fears. Indeed, to trans dystopia—to destabilize the boundaries attempting to contain dystopic meaning—is to consider the contradictory ways dystopia and utopia are co-constitutive. In this way, such an endeavor reveals queer utopias to have been always already “creative and

fruitful” all along, regardless of the Pope’s apocalyptic vision otherwise. Indeed, it is in the refusal to embrace normative futurity that utopia and dystopia are understood as co-constitutive and as the epistemic grounds on which monstrosity and its concomitant affects animate potentiality.

Four sections order the remainder of this essay. First, the theoretical grounds for an analytic framework are provided. Specifically, we explicate a heuristic device derived of Susan Stryker’s theorization of “transsexual monstrosity” and its attending affect “transgender rage” (“Words” 241).² Second, we describe the text under investigation: Torrey Peters’ *Infect Your Friends and Loves Ones* (henceforth: *Infect*), a dystopic novella centering trans women. Third, *Infect* is analyzed through a transfeminist approach to monstrosity. In particular, the analysis engages two co-constitutive processes derived of Stryker’s work: becoming monstrous and monstrous becomings. And fourth, a conclusion traces the potentiality of dystopia through a transfeminist framing of monstrosity. In the end, we explore trans monstrous affect as a ground for enacting queer worldmaking. With that, let us shift to theory.

THEORIZING TRANS MONSTROSITY AND THE POTENTIALITY OF TRANS RAGE

The figure of the monster has long haunted transness just as transness has long haunted monstrosity. Anson Koch-Rein characterizes the relationship between monstrosity and trans discourse as “ambivalent,” or as “serving widely divergent narratives of transphobic insult and trans*³ resistance alike” (135). On one end, the monster has been used as a metaphoric means of articulating a dehumanized trans subject; in particular, trans women. For instance, citing Frankenstein’s Monster, Mary Daly infamously characterizes trans women in nothing short of

² While the subjects of the current analysis are indeed transsexual, “trans” is used so as to open the epistemic terrain for scholars to explore the potentiality in trans discourses as they pertain to a multitude of experiences (For distinctions, see Johnson; Booth).

³ Following Susan Stryker, Paisley Currah, and Lisa Jean Moore, this essay deploys *trans* (without an asterisk) as “the capillary space of connection and circulation between the macro- and micro-political registers” including monstrosity (14).

monstrously cissexist terms: a “necrophilic invasion . . . of cyborgs which will be part flesh, part robot, of clones” (71). Borrowing Jeffrey Cohen’s words, one can read this framing as the “exaggeration of cultural difference into monstrous aberration” (7). In a more recent projection of trans-exclusionary thought, Sheila Jeffreys frames trans folks as pathological creations of modern patriarchal medicine enacting harm against self and other. For Jeffreys, the “treatment” for this monstrous ailment is “iatrogenic” in that its purported cure exacerbates the illness (183). In this regard, Jeffreys feigns concern that people must be saved from the monstrosity of transness, including children who Jeffreys frames as victims of “gender eugenics” (123). In Jeffreys’ discursive/dehumanizing/monstrous rendering, trans folks are victims and perpetrators of (their own) monstrosity.

Such views are not new. While trans folks are recent pariahs in a long line of cultural scapegoats, cisheterosexism is an intersectionally constituted structure that has long been used to categorize bodies within Western culture. Indeed, taxonomy is a hallmark of colonialism used to distinguish bodies based on arbitrary racialized criteria that persists to this day.⁴ María Lugones frames gender as a “colonial imposition” that distinguished/s European “men” as humans and “women” as inverted men whose task it was to reproduce men from non-Europeans (e.g., monstrous others) who were taxonomized based on sexual dimorphism (“male” from “female”) with the intent of designating reproductive capacity. Similarly, C. Riley Snorton finds in his powerful study of racialized gender at the intersections of blackness and transness that the institution of slavery discursively crafted a “plantation visuality” that positioned “captive flesh [as] the material and metaphorical ground for unsettling a view of sex and gender as neatly divided according to each term’s relation to medicoscientific knowledge” (*Black* 33). In this way, colonial racialization animates cisheteronormative gender. Thus, those whose sense of gender evades normative binary criteria are forced to endure legacies of colonial articulation that attempt to assert a hierarchy of racialized relevance.

⁴ For a history on transgender communities, identities, and subjectivities see Susan Stryker’s *Transgender History*.

Within feminist movements, these colonial fronts manifest in the works of anti-intersectional feminists like Daly and Jeffreys above. Such trans-exclusionary works are designed to antagonize trans phenomena.⁵ Likewise, religious and political leaders continue to privilege a binarized worldview that articulates transness as a deviation from a presumed cisheteronormative core evidenced in conservative ranks or as models of individual freedom and agency lauded by liberal camps. In either framework, the trans subject is defined in and through a cisheteronormative model that either constrains trans difference or demands a respectable universal formation in line with liberal-humanist sensibilities. In turn, many trans activists have resisted both camps, vying for self-determined gender articulations that evade normative criteria. Indeed, self-determination animates trans social histories through its rejection of state-imposed taxonomy and pathology. Noted in the coloniality that opens this paragraph, self-determination “opens up space for multiple embodiments and their expressions by collectivizing the struggle against both interpersonal and state violence” (Stanley 90). Gender self-determination functions as a coalitional strategy that affirms different experiences with a common force: Cisheterosexism.

Given this cisheterosexist and colonial backdrop—one on which trans folks are rendered monstrous due to their difference—trans folks have turned to the image of the monster as a source of identification through resignification. That is, the monster provides a metaphoric means of re-articulating the self in light of monstrous renderings. Eric Stanley notes the importance of this self-determined labor: We are “*becoming liberated as we speak*” (91). On this, Susan Stryker asserts: “I will say this as bluntly as I know how: I am a transsexual, and therefore I am a monster” (“Words” 240). For Stryker, “rage” is the affect that constitutes and animates trans monstrosity. This rage is located at “the margin of subjectivity and the limit of signification” (248). Discursive and material cisheteronormative standards constitute the trans monster while rage is the effect of those standards affectively animating the trans monster. Stryker clarifies, transgender rage marks “the subjective experience of being *compelled* to transgress . . . the highly gendered regulatory schema that determine the viability of bodies” (249,

⁵. For an important discussion on transfeminism in response to trans-exclusionary articulations see Susan Stryker and Talia Bettcher’s special issue of *Transgender Studies Quarterly* titled “Trans/Feminisms.”

emphasis added). Said differently, trans rage emerges in recognition of being *compelled* to perpetually assert one's own worth as a human in a cisheterosexual culture. Stryker frames trans rage as a site of potentiality in which "stigma itself becomes the source of transformative power" (249). This reclamation labor situates Stryker's work as transfeminist, or in Talia Bettcher's words, committed to a "politics that focuses on the intersections of sexist and transphobic oppression" (387). Conversely, a transfeminist reading of trans monstrosity demands an heir of ambivalence. That is, of embracing the positive (trans monstrosity as generative) and negative (cisheterosexual renderings of trans folks as monstrous). As such, a transfeminist analysis of trans monstrosity and its attendant affect trans rage focuses our attention to two co-constitutive processes: (1) becoming monstrous and its affect (2) monstrous becomings.

First, becoming monstrous engages the discursive and material means by which a trans subject is rendered monstrous as an effect of oppressive structures. Informed by Bernadette Calafell, here one is concerned with "how [...] difference, or Otherness, gets constructed as monstrosity" (4). In the case of trans monstrosity, this includes analyzing the effects of cisheterosexism on trans subjects. At the same time, identity is always intersectional and as Calafell adds, "intersectionalities inform monstrosities" (5). Becoming monstrous traces embodiment and subjectivity as it is rendered monstrous precisely because of its intersectional difference. In her transfeminist analysis, Stryker argues both Frankenstein's monster and "transsexual monstrosity" resist normative criteria, and thus thrive, in oppositional though complimentary ways. Frankenstein's monster fails normative visual standards and is thus rendered monstrous. Though, as Stryker writes, the monster masters a human language "in order to claim a position as a speaking subject and enact verbally the very subjectivity denied it in the specular realm" ("Words" 241). Thus, by acquiring language, Frankenstein's monster destabilizes a human/monster distinction via existing normative linguistic means.

Conversely, Stryker argues "transsexual monstrosity" resists a cis-human/trans-monster distinction by contextually meeting cisheteronormative standards while refusing to be interpolated as such through linguistic means. She writes, while trans folks may "successfully cite" cisheteronormative standards, the "citation" is resistant only "through a provisional use of language, [in which] we verbally declare the unnaturalness of our claim to the subject positions we nevertheless occupy" ("Words" 241). While Frankenstein's monster uses

language to minimize and distract from his physical monstrosity, trans monsters use language to assert one's monstrosity while "passing" cisheteronormative criteria. At the same time, Stryker's framing presumes whiteness in that racialization, Blackness in particular (Snorton, *Black*), always already signals monstrosity in a white supremacist culture; transness thus risks exacerbating already persistent monstrous projections along intersecting lines of identification and embodiment.

The effect of these structures pressing on and creating monsters lends itself to our second analytic pillar: monstrous becomings. Monstrous becomings denote the affects that are the effect of becoming monstrous. In essence, monstrous becomings explore the "emotional response to conditions in which it becomes imperative to take up, for the sake of one's own continued survival as a subject" (Stryker, "Words" 249). In the case of trans subjects, this might include the affects that enable one to fight back or the affects that sustain a family of choice. More than emotions, Harlan Weaver articulates affect as a "technology integral to embodiment and bodily movements" (289). For Stryker, trans rage animates trans monstrosity; it is a refusal in the sense that trans rage refuses victimhood. It thus understands monstrosity not as destructive but as productive. Monstrous becomings realize, desire, and embody futurities that have yet to be realized. Refusing normativity in favor of monstrosity, thus, "enables the establishment of subjects in new modes, regulated by different codes of intelligibility" ("Words" 249). The trans monster is thus "affirmed from the vantage of becoming itself" (Rai 16). In summary, analyzing trans monstrosity highlights two focal points: (1) becoming monstrous and (2) monstrous becomings. With an analytic framework in place, we now consider text.

INFECT YOUR FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES

Infect is a dystopic story that author Torrey Peters describes on her website as depicting "how two trans women can love each other, hate each other, and pull everyone they know into their violent, vengeful, and righteous orbit." The narrative flow follows a non-normative temporality that in Jules Roskam's words maintains the "queer temporalities and teleological inversions inherent in trans lives" (587). The story thus ebbs and flows and unfolds in relation to that which

names the tale: Infection. At the same time, the story centers two primary characters: you—the reader—and Lexi.

The protagonist of this tale is unnamed. Her name is ostensibly your—the reader's—name and you are thus the central trans woman character. In this regard, pronouns such as *you* and *your* are used to reference you-as-protagonist in this analysis. We maintain that this complex narrative form animates trans monstrosity in this tale; that is, you, the reader, are equipped to empathically grapple with the material means by which you are rendered monstrous precisely because of *your* trans womanness—regardless of your personal identity—and, in turn, to note the liberatory means by which *you*, as a *trans woman*, might envision queer utopic potentiality while grappling against and transforming cisheterosexism. Indeed, Lexi, your love-hate interest, declares: “In the future, everyone will be trans” (Peters 15). And in the case of the reader-as-protagonist—*you*—you are precisely that: Trans.

You and Lexi first meet on Craigslist in the “t4t” personals; that is, “trans girls fucking trans girls” (Peters 53). Your first physical meeting takes place at Lexi’s “small three-room cabin on a lake in rural New Hampshire, the interior marred by half-finished repairs or renovations; from every surface [you] look, nails and screws menace soft fabric or skin” (21). Like her home, scars map Lexi’s body; and you’re intrigued as you come from a relatively privileged background that has insulated you from such corporeal violations. Lexi lives in isolation and is conscious of, and vengeful of, cisheterosexism (her scars providing the justificatory means); in response, she is isolated and armed. Conversely, you are working on a doctorate from Dartmouth and are on fellowship. You live with your cisgender girlfriend of eight years in an apartment owned by a professor of medieval literature (23). You note the three things the two of you have in common: “we are both trans, we are both newly on hormones, and we are both lonely as fuck” (24). Raleen is a key—though temporary—character largely responsible for Contagion Day.

Raleen is a homeless trans woman of color “despite her enrollment as a NSF-funded graduate student in molecular biology at the University of Washington”

(Peters 16). Raleen is a first-generation student whose parents live in Colombia.⁶ She began transitioning while conducting her dissertation research; her parents do not know and her doctoral advisor “lost interest in advising and collaborating with her” once she began to transition (16). Raleen and Lexi get wind of Improvac: a bio-engineering company that vaccinates livestock against their own sex hormones leaving industrial farmers to determine the hormone a mammal receives. Raleen clarifies, “The vaccine causes a body’s antibodies to bind to gonadotropin (GnRH)” (28). Once GnRH is synthesized it is “hook[ed] to a foreign protein” (28). Once in the body, antibodies re-classify GnRH as “bad” (28); “subsequently, any and all GnRH in the body triggers an autoimmune response, resulting in a complete cessation of the production of all sex hormones” (28). On Contagion Day, Lexi infects you—without your consent—with synthesized GnRH bonded to “live bacteria,” which means *you* are contagious (28-9). In this dystopic future, access to sex hormones are regulated by local provisional governments, which echoes the past.

READING TRANS MONSTROSITY

We have suggested thus far an analytic means of reading monstrosity through a transfeminist lens. The result is a focus on two co-constitutive processes: becoming monstrous and monstrous becomings.

Becoming Monstrous: Constituting Trans Monstrosity.

Becoming monstrous engages the means by which a subject is rendered monstrous as a result of their embodied difference. In *Infect*, the constitution of trans monstrosity, of becoming monstrous, assumes two co-constitutive formations: physical and psychic. The physical form engages the corporeal effects of navigating cisheterosexist violences while the psychic form is interested in the psychological and emotional effects of negotiating cisheterosexism. Snorton makes a bid for the “psychic dimensions” of passing so as to account for those

⁶ Raleen’s parents are from “Columbia” (17). In personal correspondence with the author, this is a spelling error. Raleen’s parents are from Colombia; Raleen is a “first generation Latina.”

embodiments and experiences that are “not read as the gender they prefer all the time” (“New” 87). The psychic dimensions affirm “internal deliberation” as key to one’s sense of self. Snorton adds that the psychic dimensions of passing allude to an “aspirational future” that “allows for the flexibility to make claims about the body that transcend conversations about materiality. It allows for the possibility of transition, which does not occur on the surgeon’s table but instead in the spaces where people come together or in the quiet moments of reflection in one’s room” (89-90). Moreover, that transition is subjectively defined and not always desirable nor accessible highlights the importance of affirming the psychic dimensions of passing. Extending Snorton’s thought to the psychic dimensions of becoming monstrous, we consider the psychological and emotional effects of cisheterosexism but also the productive dimensions of misrecognition by privileging a subjective sense of self regardless of externality. Taken together, trans monstrosity is constituted through physical and psychic means.

You and Lexi first meet two years prior to *Contagion* with the intent of fucking; in her isolated rural home in New Hampshire. What is established are the classed differences between the two of you, in particular, as white trans women. Lexi’s isolation is a direct result of her being trans, alluding to the psychic dimensions of becoming monstrous. Describing Lexi, Peters writes: “By the time she hit twenty, she had a routine: Come home from work every day, lower the blackout shades so no one could see in, put on women’s clothes, and get to work on a bottle of vodka. She bought the cabin so that she could expand the routine without attracting noise” (21). Matt Fournier positions gender dysphoria as the moment “when the socially determined coordinates of familiarity-identity-gender no longer add up to a legible (legitimate) pattern, when materiality escapes the frame of representation, because this frame is built on gender binarism” (121). The result is potentially shattering. While our intent is not to pathologize, it is worth noting the medical discourse that highlights psychic dimensions of becoming monstrous and how these internalized renderings co-constitute materiality.

The American Psychiatric Association’s most recent edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistic Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5) pathologizes transness through gender dysphoria which is determined by (a) “marked incongruence” between the sex one was assigned at birth and one’s gender identity and (b) “evidence of distress about this incongruence” (453). The DSM-5 notes that prior to accessing gender affirming “techniques and practices”—citing the Pope—trans

folks are at increased risk of suicide. Concurrently, the long-term consequences of cultural exclusion as a result of cisheterosexism highlights that for some, gender transition does not minimize the risks of suicide (454). In addition, anxiety and depression tend to accompany gender dysphoria. Indeed, cisheterosexist oppression can lead to “negative self-concept, increased rates of mental disorder comorbidity, school dropout, and economic marginalization, including unemployment” in trans subjects (458). While Snorton’s psychic dimensions of passing privilege an internal sense of self as a means of avoiding psychological harm, the reality persists that for some trans subjects, the psychological depth of these traumas run deep regardless of ones’ capacity to harness a productive sense of misrecognition. However, by honoring internal deliberation as Snorton advocates, we are arguing the psychic dimensions of becoming monstrous includes the psychological and emotional effects of cisheterosexism and the means by which one is forced to navigate immaterial toxicity; this navigation denotes both internal deliberation as well as externality, which emerges as the materialization of these psychic dimensions via articulation, performance, and practice (“New” 79).

Lexi, like her home, is disheveled and unraveled. Peters adds, “Occasionally, she’d [Lexi] get it into her head to repair or change something in the house, and would tear out a cabinet, or pull up a floorboard. Most of those projects, she never completed” (22). In fact, the incompleteness alludes to a perpetually unfolding horizon in which a beginning and end are indiscernible. Likewise, becoming monstrous is understood as a process with no foreseeable beginning or end (Cohen). For her home, this becoming includes “half-finished repairs and renovations” along with “nails and screws . . . from every surface you look” (Peters 21). However, she also admits that some of the “fucked up or half-replaced” items in her home are such because she “shot them to shit while drunk” (23). Her unruly home, in short, is a materialization of the psychic dimensions of trans monstrosity.

Noting the stark difference in lived experiences, you are both “fascinated and repelled” by Lexi (Peters 23). Exploring her body, you inquire about the scars that map her monstrosity. The “long scar of faded pink on her forearm” is attributed to drunkenness coupled with manual labor (22). The “white button of scar tissue just under her armpit,” Lexi recalls, happened after she “blacked out, and hung [herself] up from a nail” (22). A scar on her abdomen and “a jagged line cut by a fishing hook where the hip bone kisses against the inside of her skin” denote

additional means of becoming monstrous (25). While none of these scars suggest self-harm in the physical sense, we understand Lexi's alcoholism, understood as a coping mechanism, as a mode of self-harm. In this regard, the scarring marks an indirect means by which monstrosity is materialized. Your lack of scars are made all the more clear when you find yourself a fully realized monster five and a half years after Contagion; when monstrosity eclipses your privileges in this dystopic future.

After roaming the dystopic land for years, you are scavenged by a trans woman who Lexi has sent to find you. In this dystopia, the privileges that once enabled you to ignore your trans monstrosity have faded away. You and Lexi are once again lying together in Lexi's home; this time on a couch. This time in "a tiny cabin next to a little pond, on the edge of the land" patrolled by other trans women in rural Iowa (Peters 60). Your "hair is long and scraggled. [You've] been avoiding the sight of [yourself] for years" (48). When you first arrived in Iowa, you took estrogen that was intentionally poisoned by a Nebraska militia. The result: "caused rashes and boils that ruined [your] skin, especially the left side of [your] face" (48). You note plainly of the long term and uncertain disfigurement: *You* will "never again be a beauty" as you, like Lexi, are now monstrous (48). As structures amalgamate into new formations in this dystopic tale, access to endocrinology is reserved for fertile cisgender women. In turn, your transition is defined through unregulated hormones with unknown consequences including disfigurement and death. Prior to Contagion, class and racial privileges insulated you from many of the realities poor trans folks, and trans folks of color in particular, endure including unregulated hormones. However, it would be naïve to suggest that your trans monstrosity is realized only after Contagion and only as a response to unregulated hormones. Indeed, the trajectory of your monstrosity is evident though shielded through class and racial privileges.

It is two years prior to Contagion and *you* have just begun hormone therapy. Shortly after starting hormones, you and your cisgender girlfriend stop having sex. "You smell different," your girlfriend notes during a final sexual encounter. And as your monstrosity materializes, you "wake every morning ... to her back, want[ing] to spoon her, but pull[ing] away from the chill of her grief" (Peters 24). Your girlfriend believes she has lost you; well, the human part of you. You internalize your exclusion "knowing that you beckoned it [trans monstrosity] by . . . choice" (24). You begin to believe your transness is the cause of your relational struggles as opposed to the cisheterosexist expectations your partner has projected

onto your body and identity; standards designed with your exclusion in mind and thus standards you can only ever fail. Later, when you try to kiss her after picking her up from the airport, she “flinches” refusing to engage you; at this point, you look like “neither boy nor a girl” (33). In turn, you leave her; and your pursuit of a doctorate declaring: “Fuck doctorates, I wanna be a rich dude’s housewife” (33). The monstrosity others project onto your body is unbearable and yet you desire to be affirmed.

Unlike Lexi who opts for cultural exclusion, you strive to pass cisheterosexist standards so as to deny your monstrosity. In your pursuit of this denial/affirmation you date a few men who enact “inadvertent cruelty,” as a result of perpetual transmisogynistic violences (42). Indeed, becoming monstrous is materialized through perpetual, subtle even, inadvertent machinations of cisheterosexism. One boyfriend covers your cost of living in exchange for sex: “He can come over and fuck me when he wants, which has turned out to be for about two hours, three times a month” (34). Your limited interactions are amplified by the reality that he is married and that you are his secret. Another boyfriend who was also married expressed his attraction to you thusly: “You’re so beautiful, I feel sick” (43). Indeed, your beauty “triggered a desire that made him disgusted with himself” (43). Even in dating a trans man you find inadvertent cruelty as he minimizes your daily navigation of cisheterosexism. Over time, the psychological and emotional impact of these microaggressive gestures materializes *your* trans monstrosity. Taken together, becoming monstrous is constituted through physical and psychic dimensions. The affects that are the result of becoming monstrous signal monstrous becomings.

Monstrous Becomings: Performing Trans Rage.

Monstrous becomings explore the potentiality in becoming monstrous. More specifically, monstrous becomings theorize mundane affects as providing the embodied grounds for modes of resistance and survival as a result of becoming monstrous. Revenge drives the impulse to infect, which is a performance of trans rage enacting global dimensions of trans monstrous revenge. Raleen and Lexi resolve early on to develop a pathogen. While cisheterosexism drives both Raleen and Lexi’s respective performances of trans rage, classed whiteness animates Lexi’s enactment as classed racism compounds Raleen’s. Raleen is an immigrant trans woman from Colombia who was pursuing a doctorate in molecular biology

but who was pushed out of her program as a result of her mentor's racist cisheterosexist biases. While her parents remain in Colombia, Raleen's immigration status is unaddressed. In Calafell's critical exploration of women of color in the academy, she writes: "Women of color already embody monstrosity" (12). Indeed, becoming monstrous for Raleen is the intersectional effect of compounded identities in the context of higher education. The cisheterosexism that materializes her monstrosity is defined in and through racist and classist policies that restrict movement across national borders. Her monstrosity materializes and is read through a racist lens that presumes whiteness: Raleen "barely speaks, and even when she does, she hardly makes sense" (Peters 16). Moreover, Raleen carries herself in an "unobtrusive way" taking up "less space than a child" while failing to make mention of Lexi's abusive proclivities; white supremacy, compounded by cisheterosexism, elicits the mundane embodied responses Raleen performs (16). José Esteban Muñoz theorizes "feeling brown" as a means of affirming "minoritarian affect" (in Latinas in particular) as always "no matter its register, partially illegible in relation to the normative affect performed by normative citizen subjects" (679). In this regard, Raleen is neither inarticulate nor passive but, rather, interpreted through a white supremacist lens that presumes whiteness and that serves as an "affective gauge" that "prescribes and regulates national feelings and comportment" (680). Indeed, you interpret Raleen's affect—"feeling brown, feeling down" (680)—in a way similar to your own exclusion as a result of cisheterosexist standards: As monstrous; and yet, you discursively distance yourself through racialized stereotypes.

So as to complicate whiteness, Muñoz notes: "some modes of whiteness—for example, working-class whiteness—are stigmatized within the majoritarian public sphere" (680). Lexi is a white ("pale" [38]) working-class trans woman from New England. Though Raleen's intellect enables dystopia, it is Lexi who is understood as the mastermind. Indeed, Raleen's monstrosity—intersectionally rendered through Peters' racist and classist description above (nonsensical, quiet, child-like)—renders Raleen *surprisingly* capable of molecular biology. At the same time, the emotionally unstable, abusive, and alcoholic white heroine, Lexi, is framed as the *natural* trans leader in this apocalyptic tale; we do not hear from Raleen after Contagion Day. Raleen has served her purpose for Lexi's utopic projection informed through classed whiteness; a utopia that excludes Raleen's racialized gender. In this way, we might understand Lexi's global infection as a white working-class woman's performance of trans rage in that her pursuit of

mass infection fails to account for the existing structures that will inevitably and disproportionately impact already multiply oppressed communities—trans or otherwise. Lexi exploits both Raleen’s intellect and your body as conduits to enact her white trans rage. Conversely, your monstrosity is evident though unrealized until the end of Contagion Day. You thus emerge as a “feminist monster” who embodies utopic potential as you transform from human to monster; your broader purpose is to “actualize” queer utopia in relation to Lexi’s classed whiteness and Raleen’s racialized gender (Abdi and Calafell 362).

You’re sitting with Lexi and Raleen. Lexi excitedly foreshadows that *everyone will be trans*. Though she clarifies, not “trans” in some “squishy philosophical way. I mean we’re all gonna be on hormones. Even the cis” (Peters 15). She restates her sentiment clearing any ambiguity: “*Especially the cissies*” (15). Raleen envisioned the infection beginning with “one of the frat boys that called [her] faggot” (29); to that, we might add racist microaggressions—a point she may not readily disclose to her white counterparts who readily center their transness at the dismissal of intersecting lines of identity and embodiment. Raleen ultimately wanted “to live in a world where everyone has to choose their gender” effectively normalizing trans monstrosity by neutralizing difference via global transition; a framing that discursively erases race through the author’s rendering of a trans woman of color in relation to white protagonists who author this political trajectory. Lexi, Raleen, and you jokingly plot about vaccinating J. Michael Bailey whose research perpetuated institutionalized cisheterosexism. While you joke alongside Lexi and Raleen you do not yet fully grasp the reality of the situation; you are simply along for the ride. Indeed, your monstrosity is not yet realized. And it is Lexi who pushes you; indeed, you –like Raleen—are but a supporting role in Lexi’s performance of white trans rage, which in turn enables your own trans monstrous performance of trans rage. Lexi takes the “epi-pen thing” that holds the pathogen and “slams the blunt end into [your] forearm. There’s a prick as the needle goes in, and when [you] pull [your] arm back, the point scrapes [your] skin” (20). *You* are Patient Zero.

Up to Contagion Day, your monstrosity was insulated by privileges that afforded you the capacity to pass white middle-class cisheterosexist standards. Your monstrosity was internalized vying for release. Lexi looks at you as you hold your newly punctured forearm and says, “Now you’ll have a scar, too” (Peters 20). You leave angrily, confused even. It’s late. Your monstrosity materializes as you walk home. Two white men stop and harass you. They learn

you are trans. They hold you and “wanna see your dick” (70). They note your physical monstrosity effectively enacting a performance of trans rage in which your psychic self counters their physical expectancies. *You* transform: “My emotions are back. Fury, then a wave of bone-weary exhaustion, then back to fury, when they both begin to laugh” (70). You think to yourself in the heat of your transformation, like Lexi and Raleen, you are “sick of this shit” (71). *Infect* ends, in its non-normative temporal sequence, with your realized trans monstrosity and a concomitant performance of trans rage. You narrate the performance: “[You] want them to know how [you] suffer. [You] want them to suffer. [You] open [your] mouth to say something, and he leans forward, to catch [your] words. But no voice comes out. Instead, an elated, vengeful sprite rises up from [your] lungs, ascends through the passage of [your] throat, and announces itself to the world as [you] cough right in his face” (71). Through infection your dystopia becomes utopic.

The performance of trans rage in this instance is understood as biological in origin. In particular, trans range ruptures a static sense of self. The medical industrial complex assigns sex based on an arbitrary and binarized articulation that privileges genital morphology over gonads, chromosomes, hormones, or secondary sex characteristics. The performance of trans rage through global infection dislodges the privileging of binarized genital morphology in favor of a new gender order defined through classed, raced, and sexed access to hormones. Indeed, through Contagion, the world becomes a staged performance of trans rage.

Because sex hormones are regulated by local provisional governments including state militias, only those cisgender men with the material means and cisgender women with the biological means are equipped to “choose” their sex hormones. The resulting post-Contagion gender order is rearticulated in slight though substantial ways. For instance, “T-slabs” are males who can afford access to industrial-grade testosterone that they “overinject” resulting in an embodied and performed hyper and toxic masculinity. Conversely, “auntie-boys” are males who, as a result of racialized classism, are incapable of affording testosterone and thus “began to inject poor-quality estrogen” (Peters 10). In this way, these men are forced to trans their gender as a means of survival. Concurrently, we might locate trans men and non-binary folks in this category as they may lack the material means needed to access testosterone effectively forcing them to acquiesce to poor quality estrogen. In this regard, racialized classism determines

hormone access and thus men's placement within the new gender order, regardless of assigned sex or identity. Trans women are termed "Antediluvian," referencing their transness prior to Contagion; *you* are Antediluvian (11). Cisgender "women of promising fertility" are granted the "good estrogen" because estrogen is "tightly rationed and regulated" in a future in which the population is "aging, dwindling" (10, 12). Peters notes, "everyone knew" Antediluvian trans women were to blame for the Contagion (49). As a result, Antediluvian trans women continue to bear cisheterosexism's violent regulatory grasp even in the new gender order. Indeed, you note, "Even if we came out of hiding, there's no bribe large enough to get us estrogen" (11). As a result, trans women rely on "black market estrogen" harvested from genetically modified pigs (10).

In the new gender order, in which trans women remain cultural pariahs, separatism emerges as a performance of trans rage. In this regard, there is little difference for Antediluvian trans women who knew a world prior to Contagion in which exclusion organized much of Western culture. Indeed, prior to Contagion, Lexi and Raleen lived among fellow trans women in what you term a "freak coven" in an attempt to discursively amplify the distance between *you* and the *real* trans monsters (Peters 26). However, after Contagion, and after the materialization of your own trans monstrosity, even you consider the potentiality in separatist logics.

In this dystopic theatre, trans women survive through an ethical commitment to one another. While "t4t" was used as a means of generating intimacy between trans women before Contagion, t4t emerges in a post-Contagion world as a relational ethos (Peters 53). To be certain, you do perform utterances of this ethos prior to Contagion when you house Lexi in times of need (31) or when you recognize "of course trans girls all love and fuck each other. Who else will?" (42). Zoey, a fellow Antediluvian trans woman clarifies: "It's not a gang. It's a promise. You just promise to love trans girls above all else. . . We settle for looking out for each other. And even if we don't all love each other, we mostly all respect each other" (54). In hearing this commitment you recall your pre-Contagion orientation to trans monstrosity as defined through embarrassment, "for fear that her transness would reveal [your] transness" (55). The performance of trans rage is enacted through becoming monstrous and affirming the means by which one becomes such. In this dystopia, you no longer seek the affirmation of cisheterosexual folks as the distinctions have become blurry since Contagion.

Your performance of trans rage emerges in chorus with other Antediluvian trans women seeking survival through a collective commitment to one another. And it is solidified through the materialization of this psychic ethos. That is, through scarring. On Contagion Day, you note Lexi's tattoo—marked physical monstrosity—denoting the performance of trans rage: “a stick and poke. It reads t4t” (14). In this regard, becoming monstrous and monstrous becomings are co-constitutive means animating the materialization of trans monstrosity and the performance of trans rage that existed all along.

TRANSING DYSTOPIA

In this essay, we read monstrosity through a transfeminist lens. In developing Stryker's theory, we articulate a heuristic means that highlights two co-constitutive processes: becoming monstrous and monstrous becomings. Becoming monstrous engages the material means by which a character is rendered monstrous as a result of oppressive structures. For the trans subject, this includes cisheterosexism. But it also includes intersecting structures that animate cisheterosexism: racism and classism, for instance. With monstrosity materialized, the concomitant effect are monstrous becomings or the performance of affect, which are the grounds for queer worldmaking. In reading Peters' *Infect*, physical and psychic dimensions are revealed as key dimensions of becoming monstrous. Conversely, monstrous becomings are understood as the performance of trans rage, which functions through global infection and local survival.

While the global implications of infection certainly render the world “trans,” it would be naïve to suggest the new gender order is defined through identity alone. Indeed, post-Contagion gender is reliant on existing structures of domination in ways similar and different than pre-Contagion gender. Prior to infection, gender is articulated through subjective and administrative tensions (Spade). After infection, gender is articulated through material and biological means while identity is reserved for those like Antediluvian trans women who craft communities of survival in response to continued persecution. Those with material means are equipped to “choose” the sex hormones they will use, regardless of genitals. Cisgender women who are determined to embody promising fertility are granted privileged access to regulated estrogen that enhance human reproductive capacity while the rest of the population, including

Antediluvian trans women, are forced to use unregulated hormones that are often poisoned effectively marking its users as estrogenized monsters, regardless of identity. Indeed, this dystopia is a repetition with a difference.

The Pope's concern for the "utopia of the neutral," his dystopia, is realized in *Infect*. A transfeminist reading of monstrosity reveal utopia and dystopia as blueprints for futures informed through ideological commitments. The Pope's desire for a cisheterosexual utopia defined through reproductive capacity emerges as a trans dystopia in which trans-affirmation is framed as antithetical to human development. At the same time, the trans utopia (of the neutral) realized in *Infect* is defined through a new gender order that while rendering all bodies trans reinscribes trans women as persistent monstrous exemplars. In this way, the performance of trans rage is not about liberating trans monsters. Rather, the performance of trans rage is about externalizing the internalization of becoming monstrous. It is about enacting rage against a cisheterosexual gender order that relentlessly oppresses and in turn oppresses others as noted in the exploitation and concomitant erasure of Raleen in this dystopic future. In this regard, transing utopia necessarily recognizes potentiality in desiring that which is at odds with normative ruminations of futurity. It requires recognizing the means by which trans utopia always already exists in the performance of mundane survival; in the performance of trans rage.

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