

narrated moments of sheer joy, such as Kendra's excitement about her first gallery showing, at which she sells some of her paintings. There is much beauty and tenderness in her blossoming relationship with Meghan, who is dealing with her own trauma at the hands of a physically abusive and neglectful alcoholic mother. Kendra also finds peace through her support network: Carolyn, Sandy, a family friend who facilitates her artistic pursuits where her own jealous mother, an artist herself, can only criticize, and Mrs. Archer, her compassionate and encouraging art teacher. The end of the novel also leaves readers hopeful. A heroic and dramatic confrontation with her abuser reveals the depth of Kendra's strength and courage. Kendra also witnesses some developments in her relationship with her mother, but her ultimate ability to form a reconstituted family through her support network is what allows her to feel loved and safe.

At the end of the book, Rainfield includes an open and honest author's note, in which shares some of her personal experiences of abuse and self-harm, and an annotated bibliography of web resources for queer teens, survivors of incest, ritual abuse, and self-harm. These make the novel an incredibly useful pedagogical tool. But the most important work that *Scars* does is to reveal the importance of bearing witness to trauma. After Kendra's sexual abuse is revealed to everyone in the narrative, she says, "I'm not afraid. And I'm not ashamed either. I just feel a lightness now, like I can breathe easier. And I don't think that's going to go away." Kendra's is a profound narrative of survival. Yet through her strength, she is able to do more than merely survive; as Sandy tells her: "you, my girl—you're going to thrive." This might well be the most powerful message of *Scars*, and the most important one for anyone seeking to find solace and encouragement in its pages.

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TRANS/FORMING FEMINISMS: TRANS-FEMINIST VOICES SPEAK OUT

Krista Scott-Dixon, Ed.
Toronto: Sumach Press, 2006

REVIEWED BY EMILY VAN DER MEULEN

Krista Scott-Dixon's *Trans/Forming Feminism: Trans-Feminist Voices Speak Out* is an insightful introduction to the complicated and often contentious union of feminist and transgender/transsexual theories, politics, and lives. The editor and contributors challenge feminists to build bridges with trans communities and activism though an exploration of transfeminism.

An interesting theme of the text is the significance of language and a critique of the usage of certain terminologies and classifications. Scott-Dixon draws on bell hooks' definition of feminism as a movement to end sexist oppression but chooses the plural 'feminisms' in both the title and in the introduction to point to the varied history of the movement and the term itself. Likewise, the text employs the term 'trans' to refer to "the many forms of crossing gender boundaries." This transgression of gender boundaries and engagement with non-normative gender expressions, according to Scott-Dixon, can be located in one's behaviors, identification, and/or experiences. The contributors' thorough exploration of gender binaries effectively destabilizes the conventional categories of man/woman, male/female, his/hers.

The text is divided into four themed topic areas: *Narratives & Voices*, *Identities & Alliances*, *Inclusion & Exclusion*, and *Shelter & Violence*. The first section begins with writings rooted in the contributors' lived experiences and day-to-day realities. The essays in this section draw into question determinist 'ways of know-

ing' and critique overly simplistic assumptions and theories about gender, sex, and sexuality. As Darryl B. Hill's essay demonstrates, debates on the origins of gender (essentialist vs. constructionist) do little to encapsulate trans peoples' perspectives and lived realities.

In the second section, aptly titled *Identities & Alliances*, the essays focus on the complications of building solidarity and alliances across multiple, and often fragmented, identities. Reese Simpkins' particularly compelling chapter makes the argument that trans and feminist struggles can ally themselves based on the shared aim of disrupting normative gender-based discourses and oppressive systems of gender coherency. I am persuaded to agree with Simpkins' argument that "trans politics are key to feminist politics" and am simultaneously sensitive to Kyle Scanlon's critique of the feminist/queer co-optation of trans identities and the importance of true trans allies.

Possibly the two best known examples of the barring of trans peoples from feminist activities and organizations are the focus of the third section, *Inclusion & Exclusion*. The essays center around Kimberly Nixon's expulsion from Vancouver's Rape Relief and the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival's womyn-born-womyn only policies. The politics of "women only spaces" are hotly debated and (mainly) critiqued as unjustifiable. Most interesting is Lara Karanian's chapter that advocates for the development of more complex and nuanced legal arguments that are not based on exclusionary strategic essentialist positions.

Building on the examples raised by the previous contributors, the essays in the final section, *Shelter & Violence*, reveal the impacts of transphobia and violence on trans peoples' lives. The contributors discuss trans-specific violence and barriers that trans people face when trying to access services. Wolfgang Vachon argues for the importance of developing trans-inclusive shelter

policies even though they might not be fully implemented or respected by shelter residents or staff.

Interestingly, and not surprisingly, the various essays often contradict one another in their positioning and understanding of both feminism and gender. Some contributors discuss their gender identities (regardless as to how they identify) as though they are innate or essential truths about themselves where others clearly argue that debates about biological determinism are more harmful than helpful to trans communities and activism. The nuances in the arguments and variations in the personal politics of the contributors are educational and thought provoking. While these differences make for an intriguing read, two chapters in particular stand out. I am left bewildered as to why the editor would include A. Nicki's reactionary piece which she concludes by arguing, "To include transsexual and transgendered people in women's spaces would, in fact, undermine a feminist commitment to human liberation...."

Similarly, I wonder what is the purpose of Joanna Harris' essay written in support of Rape Relief's decision to exclude Nixon from volunteering. These essays are particularly problematic for a text that claims to support solidarity building between trans and feminist communities. There are plenty of other anthologies in which Nicki and Harris can publish.

In spite of the gaudy front cover design and the extremely odd inclusion of some transphobic content, *Transforming Feminisms* is an important text for those interested in critiquing the limitations of gender-normative theories. This impressive anthology will make an excellent addition to introductory women's studies courses as well as more advanced studies of gender and sexuality.

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CHALLENGING LESBIAN NORMS: INTERSEX, TRANSGENDER, INTERSECTIONAL, AND QUEER PERSPECTIVES

Angela Pattucci Aragón, Ed.
Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press, 2006

REVIEWED BY ALISA GRIGOROVICH

As Aragón writes in the introduction to this collection, the relationships between lesbian, queer, and transgender subjects and communities are often fraught with tension and disagreement. In some cases, there is outright hostility and exclusion of transgender and intersex subjects from lesbian spaces and communities. As Aragón notes, much of this tension arises from the 'homonormativity' that is based on an essential view of gender and sexuality that exists in many lesbian and LGBT communities. In particular, many LGBT communities and organizations pay little attention to the experiences and perspectives of intersex, transgender, and queer people from diverse backgrounds and abilities. Using her own experience of 'coming-out' as intersex and the negative reactions that it has generated, Aragón argues for the need for lesbian communities and their members to critically examine their practices of exclusion and their

politics. This timely collection of essays offers an example of the ways in which intersex, transgender, intersectional, and queer subjects, theories and experiences can be used to engage with and confront exclusionary practices within lesbian communities and expand the meanings of lesbian identity and sexuality.

Published simultaneously as an edited collection and as an issue of the *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, this text is primarily aimed at professionals working with LGBT communities, activists, post-secondary professors and students and other academics. The essays are written in a clear and engaging manner by professionals from multidisciplinary backgrounds and fields ranging from cultural studies to mental health. While many of the essays use personal experiences to illustrate their main points, the collection is well balanced in terms of methodological approaches and theories offering discussion based on both sociological research studies and literary and cultural criticism. Topics include marginalization within lesbian communities, the relationships between transsexual/transgender theories and lesbian theories, practices of teaching transgender, queer and intersex perspectives in Women's Studies as well as explorations of lesbian narratives and films.

While the essays are written as separate pieces, they are anchored together in that they all tackle the issue of the consequences of lesbian homonormativity and the ways in which lesbian theories, communities, and norms can be using transgender, transsexual, intersex, queer, and intersectional perspectives and theories. Most of the essays in this collection also end with a brief section of issues and questions that could be used to further discuss and expand the themes and concepts raised in the article. Some of the essays that stand out from this collection include Coogan's analysis of the relationships between transsexual and lesbian subjects and Detlof's exploration of the investment that lesbian com-