

Call for Papers for *Whatever - A Transdisciplinary Journal of Queer Theories and Studies*

<https://whatever.cirque.unipi.it/index.php/journal/about/submissions>

*Ephemeral Trans Practices: T-girls, Transvestites and Crossdressers*

**Editors:** Luca Greco (Université de Lorraine) and Diego Semerene (University of Amsterdam).

Within the conceptual framework of this special issue, T-girls, transvestites, and crossdressers are different ways of naming a male-assigned-at-birth person who moves toward an ideal of femininity for a short amount of time, however repetitively, and either privately or semi-privately. Such ephemeral trans feminine practices are performed through a variety of spatial, material, sartorial and linguistic resources. T-girls, transvestites and cross-dressers (we leave the possibility for new taxonomies to emerge from contributors) have been a consistent presence in the landscape of social movements and social imaginaries both queer and straight, sex-positive and reactionary. As the exemplary case of Mario Mieli in Italy, a leading figure of FUORI (Fronte Unitario Omosessuale Rivoluzionario Italiano), who defines himself as a “part-time transvestite,” (Mieli 2019), they question the dichotomy between cisgender vs. transgender identities, bringing to life very specific forms of passing and transiting.

In this issue we would like to turn our attention to the figure of the ephemeral trans woman, whose trans-ness is made visible to others for short periods of time and either privately or semi-privately (unlike drag practices which are the subject of public performances). We are particularly interested in the contemporary part-time trans feminine subject who emerges, or is rendered possible, with the popularization of the Internet, when she is able to purchase her accoutrements and connect with trans amorous partners with practicality and privacy – as if nothing ever happened. T-girls, transvestites and crossdressers have not succeeded in attracting the attention of scholars all while growing with and via the popularization of digital media technologies and the hook-up cultures that they have enabled. It has never been *technically* easier to become, play, or pass as, trans for a day, an evening, or a half hour. This trans subject oscillates back and forth, quickly transitioning and detransitioning between multi-semiotic gender presentations, through styling, not surgical or pharmacological means. In this special issue, we want to explore trans-ness, then, as a fleeting embodied *enjoyment* device (potentially for short-lived sex, fantasy, desire and amusement) and as a nomadic assemblage (Deleuze & Guattari 1987, Braidotti 1994) composed by corporeal, linguistic, material, and spatial resources. In this framework, trans(-ness) is

more praxeological than ontological, closer to a technological means than an end, or even a process.

We would also like to investigate why the figure of the part-time trans, who may “be” trans full-time but whose trans-ness is made legible only in targeted moments and discrete spaces, has been neglected by queer theories invested in less elusive forms of being. What kind of fantasies of queerness, or trans-ness – in academic, intellectual and activist circles – might the T-girl/ transvestite/crossdresser threaten to disrupt?

We envision four main axes in the sexual/social life of the part-time trans woman: **linguaging, temporality, spatiality, and sartoriality.**

• **Linguaging: labelling, interacting, mixing**

i) What are the multi-semiotic resources mobilized by transvestites in order to perform their different, and intersectional, femininities? How do they linguistically occupy the other’s gaze? What are the categories, the pronouns, the names used by transvestites in order to talk about their bodies-in-progress, and to refer to their own selves in encounters with trans-attracted partners? Are they disidentifying with binary linguistic models of masculinities and femininities? And how might they forge a place for themselves in different languages, geographies and settings? Can we observe some hybrid linguistic, plurilingual forms of indexing polyphonic, racialized and *fronterizas* identities (Anzaldúa 1990, Barret 1999, Hall 2005)? What does the “T” in T-girl really stand for? Can she speak, or does her voice pose a threat to the fantasy that makes her encounters possible? What is the role of words, uttered or typed, in the transvestite’s enjoyment and her quest for the gaze, touch and recognition of others?

• **Temporality: preparing, waiting, passing**

ii) Is there a peculiar temporality in the encounters of the part-time trans from the time of preparation to the time of the digital and/or fleshly encounter? How is time interpreted and occupied in the to-and-fro movement between her gender embodiments? What happens in the temporal lacunae between embodiments? How are the temporalities of transvestite practices entangled with the temporalities of non-transvestite situations? What is the actual distance (symbolic, discursive, political) between part-time and full-time trans practices? Do part-time trans practices produce a different kind of waiting, or are there temporalities where transvestites, cis and trans women writ large meet? How does part-time trans feminine time complicate established ideas around *trans time*, along with its splits, cuts, disruptions and delays (Greenberg 2020)? How might cross-dressing time situate itself in relationship to screen time (Bak 2020), family time (Halberstam 2005), queer and crip times (Kafer 2013)?

• **Spatiality: hosting, cruising, camming**

iii) What are the spaces occupied by the contemporary cross-dressing subject? Domestic spaces, (semi-)public spaces -- digital (cruising sites, apps, cams) and analog (dogging sites, streets, parking lots, woods, clubs, parks, saunas, homes, hotels)? Do transvestites occupy the periphery or the blind spots of the very center(s) of cities, digital landscapes and sexual matrixes? How and where do they have sex? Are there not spaces within these practices that acquire a specific intimacy and that become less intimate once the experience is over? How does the T-girl transit, or make others transit, geographically? How might she queer, or not, there where she passes (through)? What kind of *mise-en-scène* (lighting, props, set dressing) does the crossdresser compose, how might or must she set the scene, to host her partners? If she travels, how is her movement made possible?

• **Sartoriality: dressing, waxing, styling**

iv) What are the material instruments that make up this present-day transvestite? How do T-girls negotiate idealized thresholds of passability with the body's often contradicting borders and seams, or the "gorgeous messiness of trans" (Malatino 2020), through fashion practices of feminization? What are their stylization skills and dressing rituals? How much sartorial signaling is enough for the transvestite to successfully court the so-called admirer's gaze? At what point does such sufficiency break down? What is the function of hair, color, scent, make-up, texture and posture in the encounter between the part-time trans woman and the other? Where does she buy her clothes and her shoes? How does she figure out her size? Can her aesthetics point toward new epistemologies, or epistemological disobediences (Preciado 2020), of sexual difference beyond the somatic, the binary, the social and even the signifier?

We seek article-length submissions that explore the contemporary cross-dressing subject as laid out here but we are also interested in submissions that respond to the CFP's blind spots.

We would like contributions that engage with ephemeral trans feminine praxes of our time through trans-national and inter-disciplinary approaches that include, but are certainly not limited to: trans studies, queer theory, psychoanalysis, feminist theory, queer of color critique, fashion theory, media studies, semiotics, anthropology, philosophy and linguistics.

## **Timeline of the special issue**

Prospective contributors should submit 1000-word extended abstracts by **19 April 2022** through the journal website following a guided five-step anonymous submission process. Abstracts should be clearly labeled as such. A submission checklist and guidelines are available at: <https://whatever.cirque.unipi.it/index.php/journal/about/submissions>.

Extended abstracts must include: topic, thesis, type of data, methodological and theoretical approaches, expected conclusions/findings, partial bibliography.

### **Bio of the co-editors:**

**Luca Greco** is Full Professor in Sociolinguistics and Gender & Language Studies at the Université de Lorraine (Metz, France). Greco is the author of a monography on Drag King Workshops - *Dans les coulisses du genre: la fabrique de soi chez les Drag Kings* (2018) - and of various articles, special issues and edited books on gender and language studies, queer linguistics, and border studies. Greco's research focuses on embodied gender and multimodality, performance in contemporary art and everyday practices, and on borders in action. Forthcoming publications include "Imagining Performances : Entangled Temporalities and Corporalities in Drag King Encounters ». In R. Barrett & K. Hall (eds.) *The Oxford*

*Handbook of Language and Sexuality*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, and "Rethinking gender as performance in language, gender and sexuality Studies: some examples from walking practices in drag king workshops". In J. Baxter & J. Angouri (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Language, Gender and Sexuality*, London, Routledge.

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**Diego Semerene** is Assistant Professor of Queer and Transgender Media and Cultural Analysis at University of Amsterdam and member of the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (ASCA). Semerene holds a Ph.D. in Media Arts and Practice from the University of Southern California and has published on new media technologies, psychoanalysis and queer sexual practices. Recent publications include "Cross-Dressing Violence: Digital Barebacking as Symbolic Drag," in R. Varghese (ed.) *RAW: PReP, Pedagogy, and the Politics of Barebacking* (University of Regina Press), "Creampied to Death: Ejaculative Kinship in the Age of Normative Data Flows," in *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society*, and "Tailoring the

Impenetrable Body All Over Again: Digitality, Muscle and The Men's Suit" in *The Routledge Companion to Fashion Studies*. @diegoSemerene

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