

Stryker, S. (1994). *My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage*. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*. pp.237–254.

Susan Stryker is a co-editor of *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, the first non-medical journal for transgender issues, published in 2014. For years before she has been a prominent figure in queer academic research.

In her most known essay *My Words to Victor Frankenstein*, Stryker argues that the way to fight oppression of trans people, in particular trans women, is to reclaim the word ‘monster’. Transphobic narratives for years have referenced Mary Shelly’s *Frankenstein* when speaking about transgender people, commenting on the ‘unnatural’ transgender body. This comparison does not seem effective or meaningful to Stryker, as she proposes Frankenstein’s monster to be a master of his own creation, who has developed and perfected his personhood in solitude. By reclaiming the word ‘monster’, the transgender community is able to reduce its ability to cause harm, essentially causing the word to lose power. Stryker views the innate rage that comes with being viewed as ‘unnatural’ in a world full of ‘natural’ people as a driving force for resistance and transformation.

This essay proposed a general framework for my research on transgender resistance, however Stryker’s personal perspective caused the essay to not delve very deep into the politics of gender identity, but rather read like a diary.

Butler, J. (1993) *Bodies That Matter: On the discursive limit of sex*. New York: Routledge.

*Bodies That Matter* is one of the first formative texts on gender studies within third wave feminism, starting in 1990s. Drawing on ideas from Judith Butler's 1990 book *Gender Trouble*, Butler rejects gender essentialism - the belief that gender is fixed and binary - and instead argues that gender is fluid and constructed through performances, meaning it is 'lived' rather than inherently given. With a particular focus on the 'materiality' of gender and how it is performed by queer community such as drag performers or transgender people. Butler critiques the gender binary by proposing that it is not natural, but rather upheld by systems of power which decide on which 'bodies' 'matter'.

This book does not speak primarily for the experiences of transgender men, but nevertheless is central to my research into the politics of transness and ways of 'refusing to participate in oppressive discourse' by not conforming to stereotyped representations of one's gender.

Rubin, H. (2003) *Self-made Men*. Vanderbilt: University Press.

*Self-made men* is a reworked version of Henry Rubin's 1996 PhD dissertation in sociology that focuses on transgender female-to-male (FTM) people. Rubin interviewed 22 participants and by using qualitative research techniques, revealed a tension between the demand for visibility and affirmation, and the desire for privacy in everyday lives. By including fragments of interviews, we are able to grasp that 'fitting in' does not mean that all trans masculine people wish for gender conformity, but rather that the perceived

conformity can be a way of survival in a society that has yet to become accepting of transgender people.

Rubin acknowledges bodies as 'expressive representations of a person's soul'. The society at large assumes a person's gender by their outward appearance; therefore, a trans person might choose to pursue gender affirming treatment to align their body to their mental perception of gender to alleviate gender dysphoria. The author however highlights that by challenging society's need for gender congruity, FTMs often find themselves scrutinised, stigmatised and discriminated against. I will attempt to explore the relationship between 'coming out' and 'blending in' in the FTM community and adapting new strategies for creating authentic representations of trans masculinity without the need of participating in oppressive societal norms.

Kristeva, Julia (1982). *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Although not directly related to the transgender studies, *Powers of Horror* was later used as a foundation for other queer theory authors. By contrasting the Lacanian concept of 'object' as cause of desire, Kristeva introduces 'abject' as something to be repulsed by, existing between the self and the other, something that invokes fear – for example a lifeless body or blood. The abject is not an otherworldly force, but rather something of nature, something that lives alongside humanity, and functions as a disruptor to the societal 'order of things', rules and limitations. Kristeva ties the abject to religion and art,

and by associating it with sin or dirt, suggests a possible 'purification' process through catharsis. The abject, then, acts as a medium to convey new meanings.

The concept of an abject can be compared to the transgender experience, as there are common themes of 'casting out' and the dichotomy between 'the Self' and 'the Other'. Transgender people are often viewed as 'repulsive', and exist in an 'in-between the worlds' state, however, they are not unnatural or requiring purification, like the parallel of Kristeva's work might suggest. The aim of introducing abject in context of my area of research is to invite the cisgendered, heterosexual audience to consider the role of an abject in understanding the transgender experience as seemingly different, but still stemming from Nature.

Glissant, É. (1997) *Poetics of Relation*. Ann Arbor University: Michigan Press

In *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant explored the concept of opacity in social movement politics. Glissant as a person of colour born into a French colony in the Caribbean. He felt inspired to write on the language of colonisation and the impact that it had on marginalised communities.

Glissant introduces opacity, meaning the right to remain unintelligible and untranslatable. He argues that opacity has the power to challenge superiority, as it allows the oppressed, often seen as the 'Other', to resist being fully understood or forced into conformity. Despite not talking about queer theory, *Poetics of Relation* is a good

example of intersectional research touching on systemic alienation. In the context of my research, the coloniser can be understood as a cisgender, heterosexual society, pressuring queer people to act in stereotyped ways.