

The Limits of Virtual Memory

Nationalisms, State Violence, and the Transgender Day of Remembrance

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In November of 1999, one year after the brutal murder of Rita Hester, a black transsexual woman in Boston, Massachusetts, transgender activists in Boston and San Francisco organized a candlelight vigil in Hester's memory to raise awareness of anti-trans violence.[1] Hester's murder came just six weeks after Matthew Shepherd was killed in Wyoming, a murder case that lit up the U.S. news media and drew international attention. In contrast, Hester's death was overlooked in most mainstream media, and local news sources - even those self-identified as gay - repeatedly referred to Hester as "he" and insisted on using her birth name, putting "Rita" in quotes. Such media representation, along with minimal police response to Hester's case, prompted the initial memorial on the first anniversary of her death.

Alongside the vigil, the individuals behind Gender Education and Advocacy (GEA), a national Internet-based non-profit organization, set up a new component on their website, gender.org:

"Remembering Our Dead." [2] The site, which lists information about individuals who have died as a result of anti-trans violence, is intended to call attention to the system of transphobia and to publicly memorialize those lives lost to it. Eight years later, the vigil has grown into an annual, international event. This Transgender Day of Remembrance is held in hundreds of local communities each November and therefore exists in multiple, fluctuating forms, but materials such as statistics, poems and publicity templates from the website provide a potential unifying structure for the memorials. Local organizers are encouraged to hold candlelight vigils and engage in a reading of the names of victims. The Day of Remembrance is currently the only widely recognized event concerned specifically with transgender and gender-variant populations, and thus serves as a focal point for both political organizing and for mainstream visibility of trans communities. This kind of organizing is arguably a recent political undertaking. Although trans people played key roles in the burgeoning U.S. gay and lesbian movement of the 1950s and 60s, with trans women of color in particular leading the fights against police brutality and anti-queer discrimination, trans-specific political issues have typically been overlooked within the broader LGBT movement.

The dual nature of the Day of Remembrance - existing both on the Internet as an ongoing obituary and in "real life" as a collection of

local memorial services - makes it an especially rich site for analysis. I am interested here in the Day of Remembrance as a cultural project of public mourning and memorial, a project invested in uniting trans communities through a shared sense of vulnerability and through a seemingly unconstrained mode of communication technology: cyberspace. In this article, I am concerned with the relationships between memorials, nationalisms, and state violences, and how these relationships are at work in the Day of Remembrance specifically. How does a public demonstration of grief also function as a citizen-making project? How might appeals to the state for justice and for human rights reinforce U.S. nationalism, despite the memorial's intent to unite trans people across national borders? Moreover, in what ways is cyberspace cast as the primary tool that enables the memorial project to cross those borders?

In pursuing these questions through the specific site of the Transgender Day of Remembrance, I wish to argue broadly that the cyber memorial, while appearing to transcend social and cultural differences, in fact is intimately tied to nationalisms and state violences - indeed, it is the very refusal to critically engage with these concepts, and to attend to the ways that national identities and relations of power unevenly affect trans subjectivities and communities, that helps position the memorial as a nationalist

project. The emergence of the Transgender Day of Remembrance marks a critical moment in transgender politics, one that sees transgender communities organizing among themselves to address the systemic oppression of trans populations in the form of physical violence. Moreover, in light of the historical erasure of trans people *as transgender*, the Day of Remembrance is particularly useful in that it names and recognizes transgender as a discrete identity category. As such, the annual memorial might be understood on a certain level as an intervention and a step towards a more cohesive transgender movement. Yet the memorial's ability to coalesce trans communities may be tied to its narrow definitions of violence and its refusal to engage the ways in which race, class, nationality, age, and other identity categories work in conjunction with gender in oppressive tactics aimed at trans people, both by individuals and institutions. To talk about violence against trans people, in a broad sense, is really to talk about violence against trans women, trans people of color and trans sex workers. People falling into one or more of these categories are disproportionately represented in murder statistics each year. Indeed, the project seeks recourse in the state - turning to the criminal justice and legal systems as solutions to violent injustices - while failing to critically address the kinds of state and systemic violence that contribute to the over-representation of the violent deaths of people of color and poor people. Gwendolyn Smith, a white transsexual woman who is

a board member and the webmistress of GEA, writes on the site that "over the last decade, one person per month has died due to transgender-based hate or prejudice, *regardless of any other factors in their lives* ." Smith thus argues that because the victims listed on the site came from a variety of locations and contexts, and inhabited their trans identities in a variety of ways (e.g., some were very "out" about their trans status, while others passed easily as non-trans), there is no safe way to be transgender. But factors such as race, immigration status, economic status and geographic location clearly do influence individuals' susceptibility to violence, particularly if we expand our understanding of violence to include more systemic and institutional forms such as access to appropriate healthcare and secure housing.

The attempt to unite trans populations through an effacements of broader structural forces impacting particular communities is just one way that the memorial project tends to position itself as equally relevant to and able to speak equally for trans communities regardless of larger structures of power. Primary among these is the use of cyberspace as a tool apparently enabling the memorial to reach across both personal and national boundaries. How does the Day of Remembrance posit cyberspace as the avenue that would seemingly connect all trans communities, and how might such an agenda only appear possible when we take cyberspace itself to be

a site unconstrained by cultural and political forces? To set the context for this discussion, I want to begin by examining the relationship of trans subjects to new technologies, particularly the ways that Internet technologies have been cast as a site of universal freedom and mobility for trans populations.

Technologies and the Trans Subject

New technologies have frequently been figured as the key factor in producing trans identities, such that much of the literature in transgender studies is grounded in the links between trans subjects and medical practices. For example, in her book *Changing Sex*, Bernice Hausman makes the central argument that "developments in medical technology and practice were central to the establishment of the necessary conditions for the emergence of the demand for sex change, which was understood as the most important indicator of transsexual subjectivity" (3). Thus she positions transsexualism as a 20th century phenomenon. Hausman notes that medical practices help distinguish between different categories of gender variance, such that transsexualism is understood to be distinct from transvestism, gender dysphoria and homosexuality on the basis of each category's relationship to the medical establishment. Suggesting that the category of the transsexual has a dependent relationship with medical technologies, Hausman locates the request for sex reassignment

surgery as the defining act that classifies one as transsexual. She writes, "that the demand for sex change became the key signifier for transsexualism demonstrates the centrality of technology to the consolidation of transsexual subjectivity - asking for technologically mediated sex change is in one and the same gesture to name oneself as transsexual and to request recognition as a transsexual from the medical institution" (129).

While Hausman suggests that medical interventions (or at least the desire for them) produce the category of transsexual, Dean Spade argues the reverse: that it is only through first proving oneself to be transsexual that access to such medical technologies even becomes a possibility. Using Foucault's theory of power as productive, Spade suggests that the boundaries of the category "transsexual" are produced through medical and mental health discourse. He writes that, "in order to obtain the medical intervention I am seeking, I need to prove my membership in the category 'transsexual' to prove to the proper authorities that I have Gender Identity Disorder" (19). Spade, a lawyer working with underserved trans populations, notes that a reliance on medical practices to designate the boundaries around transsexual identity forces trans people to "rigidly conform ourselves to medical providers' opinions about what 'real masculinity' and 'real femininity' mean, and to produce narratives of struggle around those identities that mirror the

diagnostic criteria of GID [Gender Identity Disorder]" (29). Moreover, Spade is concerned with the ways in which different populations' access to those medical technologies associated with transsexuality (indeed, Hausman suggests they are central to the recognition of transsexuality) is structured by social and cultural forces, including racism, ageism, ableism, nationality and economic status. By pointing to the ways that access to medicine is unevenly structured (or completely foreclosed) for many trans subjects, Spade's inquiries push at the limits of Hausman's argument, which directly links transsexual subjectivity to medical intervention. Moreover, Spade's work demonstrates that transsexuality is enacted and produced differently in relation to other identity categories and broader systems of power. In addition to medical technologies, then, Spade asks us to consider what other forces might be at work in our understandings of trans bodies and identities. We might also ask how these forces shape medical technologies themselves. For example, which bodies receive more attention and research in terms of medical advances? Which bodies have been deemed "healthy" enough - mentally, physically, emotionally or socially - to access these medical technologies?

Given these two contradictory arguments about the position of medical technology relative to the construction of trans subjectivity, we might consider the ways that science and culture co-produce

ideas about the ways bodies inform our understandings of gender, and vice versa. For example, historian Joanne Meyerowitz notes that prior to the mid-1950s in the U.S., popular media was perhaps more instrumental than medical research in bringing notions of gender variance, as related to surgery and hormones, into the public eye. She argues that, while medical technology has been significant, "technology alone provided neither a necessary nor a sufficient precondition for modern transsexuality" (21). Nevertheless, her broader history of transsexuality in the U.S. relies heavily on changing medical technologies as a temporal framework, beginning with Christine Jorgensen's very public medical transition in the early 1950s. Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, if we keep in mind Spade's questions about structural barriers to accessing medical technologies, Meyerowitz's history remains focused primarily on white male-to-female trans people. Such histories can belie the ways gender variance has taken shape across multiple locations and historical moments, and can efface the ways sexist and racist practices work through medical and psychiatric establishments.

Still, the fact that new technologies have played a key role in trans identity formation, public recognition and activist organizing is undeniable. In fact, access to medical technologies is often augmented by communication on the Internet. For example, the

information for constructing the kind of dominant narrative Spade references - a narrative that can be key to legally accessing surgery and hormones - can be found not only in medical literature but also through Internet chatrooms and newsgroups, where the best way to approach new therapists and doctors is a frequent topic of discussion. In fact, a recent *New York Times* article on female-to-male (FTM) populations suggests that FTM communities have "gained momentum only in the last 10 years, in part because of [...] the availability of the Internet's instant support network" (Vitello 6). While research by activists and educators like Jamison Green [3] and others demonstrates that FTM communities have been in place considerably longer than ten years, increased use of web technologies has certainly contributed to popular and scholarly understandings of trans bodies and identities. Clearly, the Internet has served as a major site for the performance of a range of identities that would be curtailed offline, and not just for trans and gender-variant populations. Mimi Nguyen points out that one of the draws of cyber technology is the fantasy of leaving one's body behind. She argues that "the prosthesis of digital space enables a mobility that promises both autonomy and inclusivity," in the sense that without the constraints of a material body, our cyber selves appear free from relations of power and structural oppression (286). Indeed, it is not hard to see how such a promise might appeal to gender variant people, whose bodies are often

figured as the primary site of social constraints. Given that the "truth" of trans people's bodies and identities is the source of longstanding medical debate and media spectacle, the promise of a bodiless freedom and anonymity in digital space is certainly seductive. Yet Nguyen points to ways that the promise of escape for an apparently autonomous subject is made available only through "the making of other kinds of cyborgs" - workers whose gendered and racialized bodies work with other machines to provide the technological means through which bodily freedom for some appears achievable (292). Thus, again, questions of access and socioeconomic positioning must shape our understandings of the ways technologies work on, through and with trans bodies, and vice versa.

With this context in mind, it is perhaps unsurprising that the most widely recognized trans-specific event is centrally located on the Internet. For the Day of Remembrance website and other online venues, the fantasy of an unconstrained cyberspace would enable freedom from regulatory gender norms, through users' apparent ability to anonymously take on any gender presentation within digital space - a space that is perceived to be easily and definitively separated from offline lives. Just as it seemingly offers the free crossing of gendered borders, cyberspace would also appear to allow for that crossing of national borders, such that the memorial can claim to be an international project despite never clearly

addressing the specificities of violence against trans immigrants, the complexities of language in relation to gender identity formation, or the unequal access to technology that structures a website's ability to not only reach out to, but also speak on behalf of its target population. These examples can begin to help us see ways that, alongside its offer of new freedoms, the Internet might also present new limitations and obstacles. Arguing that the Internet can never make good on its promise to separate users completely from their bodies and the social meanings attached to them, Juana Maria Rodriguez writes that "[c]yberspace is not the final frontier; it is not a space of liberation; it is not a decolonized zone where gender, nation, and the constraints of culture lose meaning. Existing 'in the machine' does not assuage the social, economic, or political conditions that construct both ourselves and our new mechanical habitats" (117).

In fact, ignoring these conditions may be dangerous in other ways, as demonstrated in journalist Somini Sengupta's discussion of a 2003 legal case in Nigeria, in which the trial of a woman accused of adultery led to the mass circulation of an e-mail petition denouncing Nigerian law as barbaric. Meanwhile, Nigerian supporters of the defendant requested an end to the petition, noting that the volatile political situation in Nigeria would only be aggravated by the demands of westerners, putting at risk the lives of the defendant and

her local advocates. Sengupta suggests, then, that the act of spreading information through the Internet may seem to circumvent national boundaries and constraints, but actually can be harmful in the act of ignoring those boundaries. Thus her work points to "the hazards of using modern global communications to enable people in the developed world to apply pressure in developing nations over a range of issues, without some understanding of the situation on the ground" (Sengupta).

Given these arguments, we might look more critically at the purposes served by the online component of the Day of Remembrance project. In general, the website aims to perform three major functions: first, to ensure the visibility of transgender communities and raise public awareness of anti-trans violence, on the premise that the mainstream media neglects to provide full or reliable accounts of these individuals and events. Second, to provide an educational and historical reference that is an organizing tool for transgender activists, through statistics, flyers and newspaper accounts of anti-trans murders. And finally, to itself serve as a public space of memorial, by making visible the names (when known) and photos (when available) of victims - a constant reminder of the threat of transphobia. In recounting the reasons for creating the website, the webmistress notes, "So many had forgotten some of the individuals we had lost in only the recent past

and I felt that, by forgetting those individuals, we would be doomed to see their deaths repeated." Yet in filling these roles, and crucial to my discussion above, the Day of Remembrance website functions not only as a memorial but also as a tool in trying to solve crimes and in advocating for criminal prosecution. For an increasing number of entries on the site, particularly those entries for people based in the U.S., information about the victim is joined by contact information for local law enforcement. Viewers of the website are urged to call local police if they have any information about the crime, and the website as a whole criticizes the lack of prosecution against perpetrators of anti-trans violence. For example, the site's 2005 press release for the annual memorial references the convictions in the Gwen Araujo murder trial, noting that similar cases have historically received light sentences, and positioning the memorial project as one that could both prevent future acts of anti-trans violence and encourage more aggressive criminal punishment for perpetrators of that violence. Indeed, the press release specifically champions federal hate crime legislation. This turn to the police and to the law is ironic in light of the long history of police brutality against trans and gender non-conforming people in the U.S. and elsewhere. Surveillance technologies used by the police, the military and medical institutions have also been used to discipline and classify trans bodies, figuring them as medical marvels, genetic anomalies, fetish objects, or unruly bodies subject to constraint. These are precisely the forms of

the violence that the website neglects to analyze or even name in its charges, as it focuses instead on individual incidents of bodily violence. Thus the site's tendency to turn to the police and to the state for justice may do more harm than good to trans populations, if we consider the ways that, alongside individual instances of assault, various forms of state violence are also at work against those populations.

Just as new medical technologies have been cast as a primary site of freedom for trans populations, cyberspace has often been positioned as liberatory for trans people. With its apparently unlimited flexibility and built-in opportunities to play out gender identities online that would be curtailed and regulated in "the real world," cyberspace appears to escape the limits of both bodies and nation-states. Yet I would argue that these notions are misguided - that the Internet, and the cyber memorial in particular, cannot escape national boundaries and state power so easily. And more broadly, that while new technologies may offer new freedoms, they also present new limitations and surveillance techniques that reinforce violences against trans and gender-variant populations. In this context, then, I want to now turn to a more detailed discussion of how the cyber memorial might be taken up as a tool for the crossing of borders, and how it simultaneously might serve to reinforce the primacy of western trans narratives and colonialist legacies.

Trans/national

In his discussion of the *bakla*, a Tagalog term for men who "engage in practices that encompass effeminacy, transvestism, and homosexuality," Martin Manalansan notes that while the term is frequently reduced simply to "gay" by mainstream LGBT groups in the U.S., the *bakla* is far more complicated, bound up with shifting class positions, complex interactions between gender and sexuality performances, and mimicry (491). Further, he argues that the figure of the *bakla* is often constructed as a less-liberated form of homosexual identity in contrast to the more enlightened western gay subject, a primitive vs. modern binary in which the dominant U.S. narrative of homosexuality - indeed, the U.S. itself - is relatively positioned as liberatory. In relation to this critical framework that Manalansan sets out, I am interested in the ways that nationalisms and nationalities are operative in the construction of trans subjectivities and identities. How do public memorial projects assign particular identities to victims, and how might conceptions of trans bodies and identities shift across national borders? In what ways could an international memorial project such as the Day of Remembrance challenge monolithic understandings of trans identity, and in what ways could it reconsolidate western definitions? How is a human rights discourse deployed through anti-violence work and in the name of trans victims, and how might this work to buttress U.S. nationalism?

The Day of Remembrance might, at first glance, appear to undermine the narrative that would position third world nations as barbaric and intolerant of trans populations in relation to the west, as most of the memorial's reported crimes occur within U.S. borders, and U.S. citizens make up the vast majority of victims listed in the memorial's statistics. Yet these statistics and reports may also result from U.S. organizers' inadequate collaboration with political organizations outside of the U.S., or use of language that, like the substitution of "gay" for *bakla*, does not adequately express the complex and varied gender identities and systems used in different cultural contexts. For example, the terms transsexual and transgender were both formed in relation to western medicine. We might ask, if these identity terms are being used to frame the Day of Remembrance memorial - if this is the language the website depends on in order to organize itself and to gather reports of murders - are there incidents of violence it might miss because victims have not self-identified as such, or because such terms are not culturally relevant? Conversely, might there be victims named by the site as transgender who would not have identified with that term in their own lives, because it was not politically, culturally or historically relevant? Such an idea is especially ironic given that the memorial project explicitly serves to counteract mainstream media reports that rely on individuals' birth names and pronouns - to record deaths using the names and words individuals chose for

themselves. In depending so heavily on transgender/transsexual as key terms, the site makes its foundation one of a western gender schema. Thus the ability of public memorials and anti-violence organizing to address the needs of trans populations in a transnational context hinges in many ways on how organizers name and identify both violence and gender identity.

Because it is based in cyberspace, the Day of Remembrance memorial can maintain the illusion of being unconstrained by national boundaries, using the tool of the Internet to cross them at will and to offer a feeling of solidarity among trans populations and activists by foregrounding the notion that all trans subjects are equally oppressed by transphobia and binary gender formations. Indeed, the site explicitly makes this point by stressing that "there is no 'safe way' to be transgendered." Gesturing towards a shared sense of vulnerability to violence that would unite trans communities, the memorial project might be viewed as crossing borders both national and personal. Yet any claim of border-crossing is already infused with the history of this term in relation to white and western trans narratives that have used national borders as metaphor for gender borders, an analogy bound up with histories of colonialism. The process of medical transition has most frequently been framed in these narratives as a journey, one in which the subject travels from a body that is incongruent and

unstable to one that feels like home.[4] More critically, such a journey involves not only travel within one's own body and identity, but travel across national borders and thus through the apparently more welcoming and forgiving gendered frameworks of colonized nations. In their critiques of western scholars' idealization of "third gender" frameworks, Evan Towle and Lynn Morgan argue that "the distinction between 'Western' (oppressive) and 'non-Western' (potentially liberatory) gender systems has the unfortunate effect of essentializing other cultures and keeping us from examining other conditions of possibility (490)." Interestingly, while the authors of these narratives tend to delight in their experiences of a seemingly sexually-free social structure, such experiences remain only temporary, part of the transition. In this way, colonized nations represent points to pass through on the way home - a home of the right body, and of the ability to return to the familiar western social framework as a stable social identity within the now-corrected body. This deliberate, unquestioned return to the western world is reminiscent, then, of colonialist dealings with sexuality in the colonies: seeking it out as a refuge for colonizers' own restricted desires, while always working to distance oneself from it as a threat to civilized social relations.

Similarly, Judith Halberstam argues that use of the language of travel and mobility to describe gender and the process of transition

"produce[s] a colonialist narrative in which both gender identity and national identity are rendered immutable and essential" (170). In Halberstam's reading, such narratives first take the body as a site that can be altered to enable different gender configurations and social interactions, but simultaneously freeze the body in "right" or "wrong" categories (where wrong bodies are pre-transition, and right bodies are those that "match" one's gender identity post-transition). Critical of the ways that trans autobiographies figure the post-transition body as "home," Halberstam argues that such narratives do not allow space for those who have no home to return to, or who do not have access to the crossing of borders, whether figurative or literal. Using Halberstam's critique, then, we can begin to see how the myth that cyberspace is exempt from the restrictions of national borders can actually work to efface the material constraints on marginalized trans people seeking to cross rigid national and/or gendered boundaries, as it also effaces the oppressive mechanisms that enforce those constraints.

For example, in her work on U.S. immigration law and the INS, Alisa Solomon argues that violence against trans immigrants often serves as ideological reinforcement of U.S. border control policies. She suggests that both trans immigrants and the violences perpetrated against them are rendered illegible within the U.S. legal system. U.S. asylum law offers one space in which trans immigrants

may become legible, Solomon argues, because it operates within a human rights framework. Yet asylum often requires applicants to demonize their countries of origin and "conform to a new set of regulatory ideals - be they political, sexual or gender-related - in order to be embraced by America" (Solomon 20). In the sense that human rights discourse often relies on the very primitive/modern binary mentioned earlier, by positioning the west as a forerunner in human rights, Inderpal Grewal notes that calls for human rights have been used to justify military intervention by the west, in the name of saving third world victims (133). I would suggest that such discourse might also play out in the public memorial, as notions of modernity, tolerance and rights are taken up in the name of anti-violence organizing. In this way, calls for human rights in the name of victimized trans people - such as the call issued by the Day of Remembrance project - can ultimately serve to support U.S. nationalism, using trans victims and survivors of violence as figures to support a common agenda for all trans populations. We might ask whether such practices buttress the hegemony of western trans communities to influence and set the terms of struggle for trans people worldwide, particularly as projects such as the Day of Remembrance increasingly appeal to the U.S. state for justice and intervention, expecting the U.S. to serve as a model of human rights. With these concerns in mind, I want to now more closely examine the relationship between the public memorial, nationalist projects, and

questions of citizenship.

Violences of Omission

The question of "whose deaths count?" is not a new one. It has been notably invoked, for example, in mainstream discourse surrounding the AIDS epidemic, as hemophiliacs constituted "good" victims, while queers and intravenous drug users were stigmatized as "bad" victims. And U.S. news media discussions of war and militarism frequently position U.S. casualties as those worthy of garnering sympathies while Iraqi deaths, for instance, are framed as deserved, or simply are not reported. While the Day of Remembrance serves to foreground deaths that are frequently ignored in mainstream media outlets, it too positions certain individual deaths as primary. Choosing particular figures of the dead as worthy of memorializing simultaneously helps construct ideals of those lives worthy of being lived - and of being legible.

Brandon Teena and Gwen Araujo have frequently been cast as transgender martyrs, their violent deaths viewed as events that could unite trans communities in a common outrage. Lara Deeb, in her work on Lebanese memorializations of people who died fighting Israeli occupation, suggests that while public images of martyrs are individualized, they simultaneously work to create ideas of political solidarity "with the community epitomized by the lives that were

sacrificed" (18). She argues that this notion of sacrifice enables personal, individual losses to become representative of broader communities, noting that "no community, national or otherwise, can continue to exist without crisis if its dead are understood to have died 'in vain' - if death is solely a discontinuity or disruption" (19). The very act of public memorialization, then - the insistence on remembering the loss, and the use of individual deaths to galvanize broader political movements - may help alleviate the fear of having died in vain. Yet Deeb also asks us to consider the ways that such a discourse might reinforce nationalist projects, for example in the ways that "bring our troops home" anti-war rhetoric positions U.S. soldiers as those who are dying in vain.

The Bush administration's announcement on September 21, 2001 that the U.S. had finished grieving and should now turn to "resolute action to take the place of grief" suggests that mourning is not itself a political act (Butler 29). Yet the construction of martyr figures post-9/11 and of a monolithic, national sense of grief has served as justification for much U.S. military aggression in recent years. In what ways, then, might the public memorial be working in the service of nationalist projects? Judith Butler argues that only particular bodies and populations are deemed worthy of being publicly grieved; that is to say, not all lives are recognized as having been lived to begin with, and in this way some lives are never publicly

recognized as being lost. Clearly connecting the status of grievability with acts of nation-building, Butler writes that the obituary functions as "an icon for national self-recognition, the means by which a life becomes noteworthy" (34). Particular bodies come to represent the nation in their deaths, while others are denied grievability both because they are considered to "function as offensive speech" and because they were never understood to qualify as lives in the first place (35). This denial of grievability, then, might be understood to be a denial of place both in the nation and in the category of the human. Butler's argument, therefore, is not simply that discursive dehumanization sets the conditions for physical violence, but that "discourse itself effects violence through omission" (34).

It is this omission that the Day of Remembrance memorial project seeks to intervene on, both as localized sites of public mourning and as an Internet-based obituary cataloguing deaths resulting from anti-trans violence. In this way, the Day of Remembrance overall serves as both obituary and public grieving, underscoring the dehumanizing effects of transphobia (in physical and discursive forms) while insisting that the lives lost to it be publicly recognized. Although the memorial attempts to undo the "violence by omission" in which trans deaths are determined ungrievable (because trans lives are figured as unlivable), we might also read the memorial as

itself committing violences of omission in effacing systemic oppressions such as racism and classism that work conjunction with transphobia. Moreover, what might we make of the ways that the memorial also seeks recourse in the state, turning to police investigations and legal systems as solutions to the violent injustices perpetrated against trans populations? While it names the police in a list of these perpetrators, the website also features updates and sometimes lengthy accounts of criminal investigations that would seek to punish individual perpetrators, without critically addressing the systems of oppression creating the conditions for their violent acts. In these ways, then, the project tends to efface the kinds of state and systemic violence that contribute to the disproportionate numbers of trans women, trans people of color and trans sex workers listed in the obituaries on the website. Such effacement is of particular concern in a historical moment in which the Bush administration's war on terror leads to intensified government surveillance and a political climate in which the terms of struggle with the state are increasingly circumscribed by the discourse of "with us or against us."

Furthermore, the cyber memorial serves as an obituary that would resist the construction of trans lives and deaths as unlivable, unmarkable and unrecognizable, but as an obituary it also functions to name those lives, that humanness, that can be formally

recognized by the nation, a recognition that is constructed in contradistinction to those designated inhuman, monstrous and Other - particularly in the wake of September 11 and the war on terror. How might the formulation of an obituary for particular deaths also be working to buttress state-imposed limits of citizenship and humanness? Jasbir Puar and Amit Rai write that the current national discourse constructs the human citizen through and against the figure of the inhuman, queer and racialized Other. Using Foucault's discussion of the categories of the abnormal, Puar and Rai argue that the figure of the monstrous Other is always haunted by questions of race and sexuality, "an implicit index of civilizational development and cultural adaptability" (119). The human citizen, then, is figured in contrast to this inhuman Other, a contrast that is drawn ever-sharper in the "us/them" post-9/11 discourse within the U.S. In this way, the memorial's humanization of trans people (in death) might occur through and against the construction of an inhuman, abnormal, racialized non-citizen. Its appeals to the state for justice position the memorial project as one that is intimately tied to state power and ideals of citizenship, seeking as it does recognition from the state that would humanize trans people and legitimate them as citizens, while never challenging the construction of good citizenship that would work to normalize certain trans people, figuring them in contradistinction to (particularly racialized, classed and gendered) Others. In this way,

then, we can begin to understand the ways in which the cyber memorial, far from using cyberspace as a tool for circumventing national borders, is in fact intimately linked to state power, nationalisms and questions of citizenship.

Certainly, the memorial project remains a slippery text for this discussion, in part because it exists in multiple, fluctuating forms. The rhetoric of the website itself remains largely unchanged since being initiated in 1999, but an analysis of only this portion of the project cannot afford us an adequate view of the ways in which trans communities are structuring themselves beyond the reach of this website through community-run memorials each November, and the ways in which transgender politics are in flux as local activists continue to reshape the direction of the transgender movement. In this way, the Day of Remembrance memorial website remains both a relatively static point of representation and an ever-changing site of activism that, taken up in multiple contexts, might still offer the possibility of, as Butler suggests, "furnishing a political community of a complex order" (22).

While new technologies - such as those involved in the use of cyberspace as an organizing tool - may lend themselves to new freedoms and new liberatory strategies, they also bring with them new limitations. Though the Day of Remembrance may be

international in scope, it nonetheless remains a public memorial founded and run primarily through the U.S., looking primarily to the U.S. state as a venue for justice. I am arguing here, then, that the memorial project remains grounded in a particular kind of U.S. nationalism - in naming practices that rely on western gender schemas and terminology, in the human rights discourse that is implicit in the aim of the project, and in its very function as an obituary that seeks citizenship status and state recognition of gender variant individuals. The memorial uses both the Internet and statistics of anti-trans violence to support an implicit claim to unity - perhaps even universality - among trans and gender-variant populations worldwide. Yet such a claim belies the ways that cyberspace and trans subjectivity are shaped by structures of power, cultural norms and political forces, as well as the ways that violences against gender variant populations are structured by factors reaching beyond just individuals' trans status. In the very act of glossing over these critical relationships, the memorial engages in its own kind of violence by omission.

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[1] Both transgender and transsexual are contested and negotiated terms, originating in relation to western medical discourse, yet continually resignified by local communities and political organizations. While conscious of the ways in which such terms may reinforce the dominance of a western gender schema - indeed, this

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article is explicitly critical of such use - this paper is concerned with a very particular discourse relying on transgender (and the abbreviation trans) as its primary terms, and therefore I use them to frame my discussion here as well.

[2] The website is currently located in two places: the main memorial site can be found at <http://www.gender.org/remember/index.html>, and a site focusing on the current year's reported deaths (though apparently last updated in 2005) can be found at <http://www.gender.org/remember/day/>. All quotations from the site that appear in this article are taken from the main site.

[3] Green's 2004 book *Becoming a Visible Man* charts the history of FTM organizing and activism in the U.S. and the beginnings of FTM International.

[4] Jan Morris's 1974 autobiography *Conundrum* is perhaps the most widely referenced example, though certainly not the only one. For further discussion of travel narratives in trans autobiography, see chapter five of Jay Prosser's 1998 book *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality*, as well as Prosser's article entitled "Exceptional Locations: Transsexual Travelogues," in the 1999 collection *Reclaiming Genders: Transsexual Grammars at the fin de siecle*.