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Book Review: Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex

Arlyn Katen

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***Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex*, edited by Eric A. Stanley & Nat Smith, Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2011. 300 pp., \$21.95.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex is the first anthology to entirely focus on the intersection of prison abolition and queer/trans* liberation. In his introduction to the anthology, editor Eric A. Stanley calls for people fighting for queer liberation to take up prison abolition—rather than marriage equality, military inclusion, and tougher hate crimes laws—as one of the most important tenets of their struggle (p. 3). He also demands that prison abolitionists commit to dismantling the current gender and sexuality hierarchy that privileges heterosexuality and gender normativity (p. 8). By refiguring the voids in the fields of queer/trans* and prison abolition studies as opportunities for new scholarship, editors Stanley and Smith amassed a “rogue text, a necessarily unstable collection of voices, stories, analysis, and plans for action” that they hope will serve as a space to begin conversations about gender self-determination and prison abolition (p. 4).

The anthology is divided into four sections. First, *Out of Time* highlights the history of the radical queer/trans* struggles against the police state. Second, *Prison Beyond the Prison* reveals that the prison-industrial complex extends far beyond prisons and jails, creating spaces of imprisonment in the everyday lives of trans* people. Third, *Walled Lives* presents narratives from trans* people who have themselves experienced the confines of cells. Fourth, *Bustin’ Out* collects practical guidance from people involved in grassroots queer/trans* anti-prison work. Together, these sections form an excellent anthology that breaks new ground in both prison abolition and queer/trans* scholarship.

II. OUT OF TIME: FROM GAY LIBERATION TO PRISON ABOLITION

The first section of *Captive Genders*, entitled *Out of Time*, traces how the LGBT movement has morphed from its more radical roots into an assimilationist quest for gay rights.¹ Although early collective queer outcries, such as the Stonewall riots, protested police violence against LGBTQ people, today, the more visible, better funded LGBT movement currently cooperates with federal

1. Generally, the terms “gay rights” or “gay politics” are contrasted against queer and trans* politics throughout *Captive Genders* to emphasize that the mainstream LGB(sometimes-T) movement advocates for rights that primarily benefit affluent white gay men. *See, e.g.*, p. 16.

and local law enforcement, inviting police to participate in Gay Pride parades and district attorneys to speak at trans* rallies (pp. 15-16). Together, the six articles in this section examine the historical narratives often forgotten or rewritten by LGB organizations, and illustrate how they are still relevant to the politics of current radical groups that work with queer/trans* people in prisons.

Building an Abolitionist Trans and Queer Movement with Everything We've Got, coauthored by Morgan Bassichis, Alexander Lee, and Dean Spade, provides an excellent overview of the current terrain of the queer/trans* movement. The authors begin by contrasting the Stonewall riots, the Black liberation movement, and the Vietnam War protests—"the culmination of years of domination, resentment, and upheaval in many marginalized communities coming to a new consciousness"—against the current "official" gay rights agenda, which is "largely pro-police, pro-prisons, and pro-war" (pp. 15-16). The article charts the current landscape of diverging "official gay 'equality' politics" and "radical 'justice' politics" (pp. 17-19). For example, the "equality" solution for decreasing the disproportionate policing, arresting, and imprisoning of queer/trans* people and violence against queer and trans* people in prisons, is cultural-competency training for law enforcement and the creation of new "gender-responsive" prison facilities; by contrast, the radical or transformative solution is to work directly with queer and trans* people in prisons, build stronger community networks to help people transitioning from incarceration, and aspire to achieve prison abolition (p. 19).

The article examines how this fragmentation of the LGBTQ movement into radical and equality politics stems from two central historical changes in the second half of the 20th century: radical movements actively resisting state violence coupled with massive changes in the global economy. Referring to this phenomenon as the "New World Order," the authors argue that it indicates how "powerful nations and institutions . . . destroy the minimal safety nets for vulnerable people, dismantle the gains made by social movements, and redistribute wealth, resources, and life changes" (p. 20). Through what the authors call the "perpetrator perspective," the government encourages people to locate violence and discrimination against members of marginalized populations within individual "bad actors," rather than to understand that this violence is symptomatic of structural oppression (p. 23). Overall, the New World Order has fragmented oppressed communities and movements, forcing their members to "think of [their] identities and struggles as separate and competing," and more specifically, pressuring the "official LGBT agenda" to seek an elevated position in this system "in exchange for helping to keep other oppressed people at the bottom" (p. 28).

After outlining the current landscape of the fragmented LGBTQ movement, the authors examine how current radical queer/trans* groups have borrowed their successful organization and leadership models from radical activist groups throughout history. For example, the Sylvia Rivera Law Project renounces the hierarchical structure of conventional nonprofits and continues the

collective structure of earlier radical-feminist and women-of-color-led organizations. Similarly, FIERCE!, an organization operated by queer and trans* youth of color in New York City, continues the radical tradition of placing people with the most to gain from social justice work in leadership roles. While this analysis of the radical lineages informing queer/trans* organizing could have been enhanced by citing specific examples of historical organizations that used these methods, the broad overview is helpful for reminding readers that radical organizing methods are not new or experimental.

From this examination of radical queer and trans* activism, the authors draw lessons that they believe should inform those who work at the intersection of gender justice and prison abolition: “We refuse to create ‘deserving’ vs. ‘undeserving’ victims”; “We support strategies that weaken oppressive institutions, not strengthen them”; “We must transform exploitative dynamics in our work”; “We see ending trans imprisonment as part of the larger struggle for transformation” (pp. 33-35). The article concludes by responding to the common allegation that prison abolition is an impossible or unnecessary goal, asserting that “[w]e see the abolition of policing, prisons, jails, and detention not strictly as a narrow answer to ‘imprisonment’ and the abuses that occur within prisons, but also as a challenge to the rule of poverty, violence, racism, alienation, and disconnection that we face every day” (p. 36).

As the first chapter of the anthology, this article provides a broad framework for critically examining the contemporary field of radical trans* organizing. It also serves as a good primer for readers who do not know much about how radical queer/trans* organizations’ goals and methods differ from those of more mainstream gay and lesbian organizations, and, more specifically, how those differences impact queer/trans* people ensnared within the prison-industrial complex. Because the authors are working to integrate historical analysis with praxis to map how radical queer/trans* work fits within the fragmented terrain of LGBTQ politics, this short article only scratches the surface of these vast topics.

Further articles in the *Out of Time* section analyze specific facets of queer/trans* history, showing how they are still relevant to the criminalization of queer/trans* people today. In “*Street Power*” and the *Claiming of Public Space: San Francisco’s “Vanguard” and Pre-Stonewall Queer Radicalism*, Jennifer Worley explains how Vanguard formed in San Francisco’s Tenderloin district in the late 1960s. By positioning the sex worker as the typical Vanguard youth, the group’s publications and demonstrations illustrated “a radical class analysis of public space, of sex work, and of queerness itself” (p. 53). Although Stonewall is widely recognized as the watershed event of the LGBT rights movement, Worley points out that the queer/trans* community’s first radical protest against harassment occurred three years earlier, when Vanguard members picketed Compton’s Cafeteria, an all-night diner where queer and trans* street youth gathered until the night manager died and the new manager used private security guards to ban them (pp. 48-49). One of the highlights of the article is Worley’s

Careful analysis of Vanguard's street-sweeping protests, in which its members used push brooms to sweep the city streets and held signs stating "Fall Clean Up: This Is a Vanguard Community Project." The purpose of this demonstration was to symbolize Vanguard's resistance of "middle class efforts to 'clean up the city' by representing themselves as *agents* of change rather than as targets of the middle-class's program of change" (p. 50). Vanguard created a physical space for its members by hosting events as well as a literary space by circulating monthly magazines in which many submissions criticized police who profiled the young gay and trans* hustlers in the Tenderloin. Vanguard's organizing efforts illustrate how the push to decriminalize what "two consenting adults do in the privacy of their own home" did very little to help economically marginalized queer and trans* youth who were frequently forced out of their homes and needed to access queer public spaces for sex in order to survive (p. 50).

Overall, the *Out of Time* section highlights the development of queer public spaces and the state's attempts to prevent people from accessing them. This emphasizes another level of confinement—one in which people must seek limited spheres of acceptance at the risk of being violently removed from them. While the policing of public sex and queer spaces has changed over time, it still occurs today.² Perhaps the main difference between early police raids and more recent ones lies in a point made in passing in one of the articles in this section—people were more likely to radically resist in the past because even if they weren't necessarily in a particular space during a raid, "they knew that they *could* have been there" (p. 71). As Bassachis, Spade, and Lee point out in their article, the fragmentation of the LGBT movement over time may make it less possible for members of the mainstream movement to understand that the policing of a few queer/trans* people does indeed affect other LGBTQ people. While this section focuses on the history of queer/trans* struggles and prison abolition, it also shows how this history is relevant to radical practice today and suggests that we can potentially build a less fragmented movement by remembering how the policing of public spaces and the prison-industrial complex affect all of us, not just those who are incarcerated.

III. PRISON BEYOND THE PRISON: CRIMINALIZATION OF THE EVERYDAY

The second section of *Captive Genders* shows how the prison-industrial complex can extend far beyond prison walls to criminalize queer and trans* people. It begins with Wesley Ware's article, "*Rounding up the Homosexuals*": *The Impact of Juvenile Court on Queer and Trans/Gender-Non-Conforming Youth*, which examines how the juvenile justice system is set up to reinforce normative gender identities and police queer sexuality. In a brief historical overview, Ware indicates that the juvenile justice system broke off from the adult prison system, but for decades after that, black children were perceived as

2. In 2009, police raided the Rainbow Lounge, a gay bar in Fort Worth, Texas, where they physically assaulted and verbally harassed a number of customers (p. 2).

“incapable of rehabilitation” and were sent to racially segregated institutions or to adult prisons (p 78). Today, parents and guardians can bring their children to family court for “being ‘ungovernable,’” and police can arrest youth for status offenses for which they may not arrest adults (p 79). In these ways, by citing the child’s best interest, parents and the state can “‘protect’ the child—or perhaps society—from gender-variant or non-heterosexual behavior” (p. 80). Queer and gender-variant youths in juvenile prisons are penalized for not conforming to gender norms, and are often banned from speaking with other queer youth because it may encourage them to behave too flamboyantly and create disturbances. Moreover, queer and gender-variant youth spend a lot of time segregated in isolation cells or in protective custody, and are punished excessively for consensual sexual acts with same-sex youths (p. 80). Ware concludes with a persuasive argument that we should focus on queer and trans* youth in detention facilities; not only does data show that 15 percent of youth in detention centers are queer or trans*, but they are often placed there to correct their “transgressive” sexuality and gender identities (p. 82).

Ware’s article is a strong starting point for this section because many readers may be unaware of how easy it is for young queer and trans* people to be forced into these institutions. In his brief conclusion, Ware states that listening to queer, trans* and gender-non-conforming youth in juvenile prisons reveals that “none of us will be free” until we abolish state systems that criminalize their expressions of gender and sexuality (p. 83). However, although this article increases readers’ awareness about juvenile prisons’ harmful effects on queer/trans*/gender-non-conforming youth, it does not offer practical suggestions for how to help queer/trans* youth in prisons or specific descriptions of the work people or organizations are doing around prison abolition for queer/trans* youth.

Michelle C. Potts opens *Regulatory Sites: Management, Confinement and HIV/AIDS* with an account of Victoria Arellano’s death while she was detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (“ICE”).³ Interestingly, although Potts mentions that very few of the articles written about Victoria’s death mention that she was a transgender woman, her own article focuses on the terrible treatment of individuals who have HIV/AIDS in prisons without specifically focusing on trans* people (p. 102). Much of the article focuses on how people with HIV, living inside and outside of prisons, are considered walking bioweapons, and that HIV-disclosure statutes and bioterrorism law do little to prevent HIV, and instead primarily reinforce the “regulation and the stigmatization of HIV and the bodies that live with it” (p. 104). Potts explains

3. The guards and nurses refused her the HIV medication she needed, and instead gave her Tylenol and water; they refused to take her to the infirmary for weeks, until as many as eighty other detainees began to chant “Hospital! Hospital! Hospital!” (p. 99) Even after she was finally transported to the hospital, Victoria was not given any medication used to treat AIDS-related infections, and she died of pneumonia and meningitis soon after her mother reached the hospital (p. 100).

how HIV-positive inmates are often segregated from other prisoners, and that many states limit the types of work that these inmates can do in prison (pp. 105-06). Potts abruptly shifts from discussing the HIV-positive body as a walking bioweapon to discussing solitary confinement, arguing that “the forced idleness of the body and mind is just another violent form of management and regulation” (p. 108). Potts concludes her analysis by returning to Arellano’s story, and pointing out that although she doesn’t want to romanticize Victoria Arellano’s death, she does want to draw attention to the other detainees’ solidarity and support, “and extend those forms of resistances to the larger project of prison abolition” (pp. 108-09).

Unfortunately, because this article is so disjointed and devotes so much space to Arellano’s story, it gives short shrift to the idea of HIV status as a “prison beyond the prison.” As a result, the analysis connecting HIV status and solitary confinement became too much of a cognitive leap. Like many other articles in this anthology, Potts’s article ends with an abolitionist message. The final section is titled *Imagining More* and calls on readers to remember the other detainees who fought to help Victoria Arellano as a story of solidarity and care that should extend to the larger prison-abolitionist movement. At the same time, however, the article seems to grapple with too many themes to be truly informative about any one of them and, as a result, does not add much new information to the anthology or to the broader theoretical discussion of how HIV has marked queer and trans* bodies.

Yasmin Nair frames *How to Make Prisons Disappear: Queer immigrants, the Shackles of Love, and the Invisibility of the PIC* [Prison-Industrial Complex] with a careful analysis of two very different immigration narratives. Shirley Tan, an immigrant from the Philippines living in California with her citizen partner and their children, was arrested by ICE for violating her deportation order and was characterized in the news as “an exceptional and all-American immigrant, [who] had done everything necessary to deserve citizenship” (p. 124). At around the same time, Rigo Padillo, an undocumented Mexican citizen who had lived in the United States since he was six years old, was pulled over for a DUI and sent to a federal prison (p. 124). Lawyers would not take Padillo’s case because he was not a “good” immigrant (p. 124). Nair compares the two narratives in detail, highlighting how the ankle bracelet both immigrants were forced to wear represented “a horrifying aberration, a wrinkle in [Tan’s] self-described ‘almost perfect’ existence,” whereas it represented “an inevitability” in Padilla’s case (p. 127). She then analyzes how queer immigrants are pressured to conform to “fictional narratives that seek a pre-determined authenticity,” in which they must “assert themselves *as queer*” in relation to their family. “Queer immigrants in particular are harmed by an emphasis on family reunification,” Nair writes, “because their families of origin may, in many cases, prove dangerous to them” (p. 131).

Nair’s analysis is strongest where she examines intersections of immigration, class, and sexuality, focusing on how immigration regulations

differ for economically marginalized families. The Uniting American Families Act (UAFAs) requires U.S. citizens to prove that they can “provide 125 percent of the income required for a single-family unit” for both them and their partners. Although Shirley Tan’s situation fits within this family reunification narrative, Nair rightfully suggests that the UAFAs represents a suburban, class-based fantasy, where the immigrant is financially dependent on the sponsoring partner (p. 132). At the same time, people often accuse Mexican and other Latin Americans immigrants of reproducing in order to have “anchor babies” that will help them gain permanent residence through their children’s citizenship; this further implies that only certain types of families are supposed to be united through the UAFAs (p. 131). Using two additional anecdotes of queer immigrants, Nair suggests that their support for the UAFAs and gay marriage represents their acceptance of “measures that contradict the realities of their existence” (p. 134).

Nair concludes her analyses of government-sanctioned immigration narratives of love, family reunification, and violence against immigrants by turning to abolitionist rather than assimilationist reforms. She calls for readers to recognize and combat the violence that marks immigration: violence at the border, sexualized and gender-based violence that is often silenced within families, the violence that accompanies gender normativity, and pervasive abuse that dehumanizes and kills immigrants in detention facilities (p. 135). *How to Make Prisons Disappear* illuminates how the entire immigration system, not merely detention facilities, is an extension of the prison-industrial complex, but it does not focus on trans* immigrants. Victoria Arellano’s narrative is tacked onto the article’s conclusion, and the article’s arguments are not fully extended to their logical implications for trans* people and their families. In this sense, the article seems slightly disjointed from the anthology’s focus on trans* embodiment, but still it draws excellent connections between queer and anti-prison-industrial complex critiques of the immigration system.

Together, the articles in *Prison Beyond the Prison* demonstrate how trans* people can be marked by the prison-industrial complex without being incarcerated. The juvenile prison system, HIV/AIDS, the immigration system, low-income housing, and sex-offender registries all have ways of making queer/trans* bodies seem disposable to the rest of society. These articles are important additions to any analysis of how the prison-industrial complex extends beyond prisons and jails, but at times the authors miss opportunities to focus on how their topics specifically impact trans* people connected to the prison-industrial complex. As a result, while this section seems too broad in places and slightly out of joint with the anthology as a whole, it adds subject matter necessary for a queer interrogation of the prison-industrial complex.

IV. WALLED LIVES: CONSOLIDATING DIFFERENCE, DISAPPEARING POSSIBILITIES

More than any other part of the book, the third section of *Captive Genders* includes personal narratives of trans* people who are currently or have been incarcerated. The second article in this section, Stephen Dillon's *'The Only Freedom I Can See': Imprisoned Queer Writing and the Politics of the Unimaginable*, is a thought-provoking entry point into reading these personal narratives. Using examples from his correspondence with two non-normatively-gendered people who have been in prison for more than twenty years (referred to as "C" and "R"), Dillon offers ways of reading how "carceral state violence underwrites various epistemological gaps, fissures, and impossibilities" in prisoner's lives (p. 170). Deeply troubled by the "epistemological and ethical crises" illustrated in his correspondence with these two prisoners, Dillon wonders: "How does one correspond with people who are socially and civically disappeared, people whose right to exist has been eliminated, people subjected to bodily and psychic disintegration? What mechanisms structure the failure of our correspondence?" (p. 171) As an introduction, Dillon discusses how his failure to explain aspects of his everyday life to C indicates that their vocabularies are often insufficient to communicate with each other. For example, at C's request, he tries to describe what it feels like to fly in a plane, but C reports that he can't imagine it (p. 170). At the same time, C leaves much of his everyday life unexplained, "a tactic for avoiding the terror of memory and the surveillance by guards of anything he writes" (p. 171).

Closely working through what his correspondents say and leave unsaid in their letters, Dillon sometimes treads too close to interpreting their personal narratives to conform to theory. For instance, it is difficult for readers to trust that C's omissions are a product of "avoiding the terror of memory," when it is also plausible that he simply assumes Dillon will understand what he means (p. 171). Moreover, the frequent quotations of other theorists may distract readers from Dillon's careful readings. Perhaps Dillon could have minimized these issues by either focusing the entire article on one of the many topics that he glosses over in fourteen pages or offering a full letter or poem from C or R, rather than filtering snippets of the correspondence through his own interpretations of them.

Despite these criticisms, Dillon's piece is powerful and well written, especially at its conclusion, where he unpacks a particularly moving part of R's poem: "'So the only freedom I can see / Is death in a prison cell'" (p. 181). Although this language may initially appear to be counterintuitive, these lines makes more sense in the context of R's spending many years in Administrative Segregation, where the cells have no windows, or isolated while trying to reenter the "free" world, so that "biological death" could be preferable to "a state of isolated living-death" (p. 182). This contextualization, Dillon concludes, "is precisely the epistemology required to fight against unimaginable and

incomprehensible formations of power . . . R and C's writings push us toward imagining forms of insurgency and resistance that refuse to settle for bigger cells, softer chains, or normative notions of freedom" (p. 182). Like other articles in this anthology, Dillon's piece ends on a utopian note of prison abolition. Although analyzing R and C's correspondence risks exploiting their narratives for the sake of theory,⁴ Dillon's excerpts of their letters enhances the sense of urgency in his conclusion by reminding readers that prison abolition could and should be more imminent than an abstract utopian theory that may be realized in some future world.

blake nemece (sic) begins the final article in the *Walled Lives* section, *No One Enters Like Them: Health, Gender Variance and the PIC*, by recounting a frightening interaction with ten to twenty police officers who invaded his friend Kim Love's apartment without producing a warrant (p. 220), simply because they suspected that she had guns and would "harm[] herself" (p. 218). Following this anecdote, nemece segues into a transcript from his interview with Kim Love, a formerly incarcerated transgender woman who sits on the board of the Transgender, Gender Variant, Intersex Justice Project (TGIJP) (pp. 220-21). Love describes how correctional officers use transwomen in men's prisons "to keep the violence rate down" by putting them in cells with men who will be their "husband[s]" in the hope of decreasing "sexual tension" (p. 222). Love also mentions that since she did not want to be outed as HIV positive in prison, when she was called to go to the HIV-positive ward over the loudspeaker, she refused to acknowledge the public announcement, because admitting to being HIV positive is "the worst thing you can do" (pp. 225-26). nemece supplements Kim Love's interview with an analysis of prison healthcare mechanisms. Prisons limit their accountability for HIV and other STIs by typically delaying testing until the end of prison sentences (p. 227). The prison officers' strategy of assigning transwomen to cells with certain men to decrease sexual tension is called "V-coding," and gender-variant women are often V-coded close to their release dates "because if they defend themselves against rape or other violence that occurs with their 'husband' or cellmate, it is common for them to be charged with assault . . . [which] shreds the previous parole possibility" (p. 229).

Like Dillon's conclusion in *The Only Freedom I Can See*,⁵ blake nemece's article ends with a prison-abolitionist message. "[H]ow many stories like Love's must be amplified before people understand reforming the PIC holds severe limitations?" he asks (p. 229). Love's interview ends with her comment that "The prison system is a money maker and nothing's gonna change that" (p. 229). Taking up that point in his conclusion, nemece offers some concrete ways to work towards prison abolition through economic and educational routes and

4. Dillon acknowledges that sharing details of R's life story risks "critiques of the representational crises involved in writing about violence and terror," but he argues that he tries to temper the narratives of "spectacular violence" with examples of how that "terror also exists within the mundane and routine" (pp. 183-84, n. 20). Perhaps including R's entire poem, with her permission, would have been more helpful in this case.

transformative justice models, such as offering financial support for peer-based programs that collaborate with hospitals and schools to disseminate information on sex work, people living with viral diseases, and gender-variant groups to the broader community (p. 230). In comparison to Dillon's piece, nemeč's article poses a more constructive, informative way of incorporating Love's narrative—he offers the opening anecdote as he experienced it, replicates his full interview with Kim Love, and then offers additional information as a supplement to the conversation, rather than a theoretical interpretation or theory of the conversation. Moreover, nemeč's focus on healthcare is especially helpful for shaping the interview and the anti-prison industrial models offered in the conclusion.

Together, these two articles are well situated within the *Walled Lives* section of the anthology, and they do not detract from the section's spotlight on several excellent submissions from trans* people who are directly subjected to the prison-industrial complex. More consistently than any other section of the anthology, *Walled Lives* reminds readers of how pressing prison-abolition work is and how important it is to make sure that the people directly affected by prisons are always kept front and center in the movement.

V. BUSTIN' OUT: ORGANIZING RESISTANCE AND BUILDING ALTERNATIVES

The articles in the final section of *Captive Genders* primarily focus on people and organizations that do prison-abolitionist work. S. Lambel begins the first article, *Transforming Carceral Logics: 10 Reasons to Dismantle the Prison Industrial Complex Using a Queer/Trans Analysis*, by explaining that there must be “stronger connections” tying together the mass-incarceration crisis and the movement for sexual and gender justice (p. 236). After offering introductory comments on both movements and arguing that both queer/trans* organizers and prison-abolition organizers exclude one another from their broader justice movements (p. 236), Lambel defines a “queer/trans politics of prison abolition” as one that interrogates society's need for prisons by analyzing the “role of imprisonment in perpetuating gender, racial, and sexual violence” and “developing alternative community responses that better address problems of harm” (p. 237). Unlike most other contributors to this anthology, Lambel clearly outlines the intended audience—people who haven't fully embraced the intersection of queer/trans* justice and prison abolition—and also prefaces the article by pointing out that it offers few novel arguments, and that academic research offers very little information that people who have personally experienced the prison system do not already know (p. 238). Indeed, rather than contributing fresh subject matter to the anthology, this article organizes them into concise discussion points supported by some helpful empirical data; for example, “6. Prisons reinforce dominant relations of power, especially racism, classism, ableism, and colonial oppression” (p. 246) and “9. Prisons and police do not make queer, trans, and gender-non-conforming communities safer” (p.

250). The article concludes with the emphasis that without integrating both movements, “we’ll neglect the very cages that prevent us from working toward broader social justice goals” (p. 254). *Transforming Caceral Logics* is relatively simple and broad, but the clear organization enhances its practical functions: it is a great introductory article for queer/trans* justice organizers who are either misinformed about prison abolition or for prison abolitionists who know little about queer/trans* justice work, and it also could be used by organizers to craft straightforward messages to relay to new audiences or to generate discussions.

In *Making It Happen, Mama*, Jayden Donahue interviews Miss Major, “a black, formerly incarcerated, male-to-female transgender elder” (p. 268) who is currently the executive director of TGIJP, a San Francisco-based nonprofit that “promot[es] the well-being and mental health and stability of transgendered women of color that are housed in the prison industrial complex” (p. 269). After describing the structure of this grassroots collective, Miss Major discusses some of the challenges women she works with face when they come home from prison: it is difficult for a transgender woman to secure a job before she has had time or resources to “keep herself feminine. . . [and] portray the woman that she is inside” (p. 274); at the same time, she cannot always present her true gender identity during meetings with her parole officer without risking harassment and threats of returning to prison (p. 275). Miss Major also provides practical advice on how to do the type of work TGIJP does, reminding people to be consistent and persistent when they work with trans* women in prison and to remember that they have been abused for so long they often feel that no one will be able to help them (p. 275). One of the most powerful statements in this interview is Miss Major’s assertion that the critical connection between being trans* and involved in the prison-industrial complex is that “we already, from the moment we decide to be a transgendered person, are living outside the law,” and because it is difficult to pursue education or work without facing rejection from mainstream society, “[y]ou are already a convict for just how you express yourself and you might start to live a lifestyle of a person that is living outside of the law” (p. 277). Whereas the connection between trans* embodiment and the prison system is often made through long, careful arguments elsewhere in the anthology, here Miss Major bluntly and powerfully states that being trans* *is* an extension of the prison-industrial complex; even if not all trans* people end up in prison, their gender identities are constantly policed through other social and state mechanisms.

Maroon Abolitionists: Black Gender-Oppressed Activists in the Anti-Prison Movement in the US and Canada by Julia Sudbury (also known as Julia C. Oparah) analyzes the results from a study the author conducted with eight “black gender-oppressed activists in the anti-prison movement in the US and Canada” (p. 294). The author uses the term “gender-oppressed” to mean women, transgender and gender-non-conforming people (p. 318, n.1). Sudbury organizes her analysis around two central points. First, she found that all eight participants in her study were directly affected by the prison-industrial complex in at least

one of three ways: through policing and surveillance, family members imprisoned or working in the prison system, and/or personal experiences of incarceration (pp. 296-98). Second, she found that “the historical memory of slavery and rebellion” shaped her study participants’ abolitionist visions (p. 299). Sudbury uses the term “maroon abolitionism” for two reasons. First, it “identif[ies] the tactics of those directly affected by slavery/ incarceration” and “[a]s maroon abolitionists, black gender-oppressed activists know that the consequences of failing to achieve abolition are that they themselves, their family members, and their loved one will continue to be disappeared” (p. 303). Second, the term “avoids implying that the society outside the prison is ‘free’” (p. 304). As the author acknowledges, one potential problem with her “slavery-prison analogy is that it tends to erase the presence of non-black prisoners” (p. 305). Although she includes a section specifically on “Trans/forming Anti-prison Work,” the analysis in that section does not mention much that hasn’t been mentioned elsewhere in *Captive Genders* (pp. 306-10).

One point that could have been explored more arose in one research participant’s claim that black prison gangs adopt the view that “It’s OK to be racist to trans women because they’re ‘traitors to the race’” (p. 309). Otherwise, there is not much in-depth analysis of what it means to be both a “maroon abolitionist” and to identify as trans*. This may have partially occurred because women, transgender, and gender-non-conforming activists are all lumped together in this small study. Also, perhaps because Sudbury explains in her introduction that this article expands her previous scholarship on women of color’s imprisonment and resistance to include transgender and gender-non-conforming people, the trans*/queer section feels somewhat tacked onto preexisting theory rather than truly becoming the focus of a new article (p. 294). Nonetheless, this is still a good addition to *Captive Genders*, and it shows that there is plenty of room for an even deeper analysis of how gender-variance and race operate together within the prison-industrial complex.

The final section of *Captive Genders* ends with *Abolitionist Imaginings*, Che Gossett’s interview of Dylan Rodríguez, Bo Brown, and Reina Gossett about their prison-abolitionist work. One key point about prison-abolition activism that the interviewees emphasize several times is that we have to let the communities most affected by the work dictate what work is done. For example, Rodríguez stresses that “if we really take the queer, trans, gender-non-conforming political *position* seriously. . . We don’t simply ‘stand alongside/behind’ our queer/trans peers; we inhabit a position *with* them in absolute political intimacy” (p. 330). Afterwards, Bo Brown returns to this movement-building point, asserting, “If you want to support prisoners, you don’t take over the movement; you encourage prisoners to create their own movement and you support that movement” (p. 337). In her final comment, Reina Gossett stresses that prison abolition “is about liberation rather than reform, and the abolition of genocide rather than genocide management” (p. 342). While *Abolitionist Imaginings* doesn’t introduce much fresh discussion to the

anthology, it wraps up *Captive Genders* effectively, reminding readers about not only how much ground the anthology covers, but also highlighting that many different voices have participated in fleshing out that terrain. Together, the articles in the final section of *Captive Genders* emphasize the editors' commitments to crediting activists who work at the intersection of queer/trans* and prison-abolitionist activism and providing practical resources for other organizers who hope to dismantle the current system.

VI. CONCLUSION

Captive Genders proves again and again that it is a necessary body of work that adds to the growing fields of both queer and trans* legal theory and prison-abolitionist theory. It is easily accessible to a wide base of readers, regardless of whether they know little about trans* rights or they are not fully convinced that abolition is the proper approach to reforming the criminal justice system. Most of the articles do not rely heavily on critical theory, which may make it even more accessible to wider audiences. Indeed, many of the authors included in *Captive Genders* are concerned with pragmatic applications of their work, as evidenced by their frequent efforts to incorporate lists of coherent talking points and examples of how current grassroots trans*/queer prison-abolitionist groups operate.

Although *Captive Genders* is a vital contribution to this particular intersection of social justice work, it is vital to remember that it is only a starting point for critically writing about queer and trans* people ensnared in the prison-industrial complex and for empowering them to write for and about themselves. The price this anthology pays for trying to incorporate as many voices as it can on this intersection is that it often leaves its intended audience(s) out of focus. It is unclear whether the anthology is geared more towards people who are already aware of issues surrounding queer/trans* rights but not the prison-industrial complex, or if it is designed for prison abolitionists who should start incorporating trans*/queer issues into their work. Readers could, of course, be new to both fields or people well-versed in both. The issue, however, is that the articles are often written towards different audiences with different levels of understanding and acceptance of the tenets of critical trans* theory and prison abolition. As a result, some of the articles seem to backtrack and (re)define key terms rather than build on one another to offer new information. Every article offers something different to *Captive Genders*, but many of them overlap too much to make the analysis feel fresh, and this may lose some readers. Much of this overlapping content could have been minimized by defining terms and key themes at the intersection of trans* and prison-abolition politics from the outset of the anthology or each section, and trimming those concepts from many of the articles. Overall, however, since most articles assume that the reader does not know much about trans* people in the prison-industrial complex, few readers would find this anthology wholly inaccessible.

Moreover, despite the often soul-crushing nature of prison-abolition work, *Captive Genders* has many moments that charge readers with desires to stop reading and start working. Many of these articles end with a utopian call to action that is fitting for the anthology's subject matter, for trans* bodies are often considered "impossible" by those who fail to comprehend them and prison-abolitionist groups envision a world without prisons. *Captive Genders* is rewarding and necessary reading for anyone who desires to learn about trans* people in the prison-industrial complex.

Arlyn Katen