



## **Translation's Value to Queer Orientations to Technical Communication: On Claims to Interpretive Authority**

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**Abstract:** This essay considers recent scholarship that adopts a queer orientation to technical communication research, education, and activism. I suggest that this scholarship would benefit from further engagement with discussions of technical genres ongoing across both queer and trans\* studies, and I posit translation as a potential methodological and theoretical throughline toward such consolidation. In contrast to assumptions of translation as the neutral movement across discreet languages, this article traces how technical communicators and scholars across both queer studies and trans\* studies have adopted a relational approach to translation that foregrounds the often messy, embodied negotiations of agency and power that occur as meaning is transformed across language representations and genres.

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## 1. Introduction

As the field of technical communication works to realize commitments to social justice, a growing body of scholarship has emphasized not only the need for diversity via social justice theoretical frameworks, but a recognition that diversity alone does not guarantee inclusion or transformations of systems that “assume an anticultural, Westernized, heteronormative, and patriarchal positionality” (Jones, Moore, & Walton, 2016, p. 223; see also: Jones, 2016; Kaiser, Major, Jurcevic, Dover, Brady, & Shapiro, 2013). From this premise, Jones et. al. offer a long antenarrative of social justice efforts in and beyond technical communication and argue that considerable more work needs to be done, including, as they posit by evoking Faris (2015), “any work at all that acknowledges the need to queer technical communication” (p. 223). As an emerging queer scholar, I join this call for intersectional and inclusive social justice work, and I have been encouraged by recent engagement by technical communicators following Ferris’ (2015) and Jones et. al.’s calls for projects that take up questions of queer and trans\*<sup>1</sup> thought, lived experiences, and ways of being in the world (e.g. Alexander & Edenfield, 2021; Cox, 2018; Edenfield, Holmes, & Colton, 2019; Ramler, 2021). Specifically, this work moves beyond reductive notions of “queering” that insist that singular LGBTQ+ identities may transform communication without interrogating the multiplicity of ways that queer and trans activity may manifest. Instead, *queer* operates as a mobile space and political marker; in describing myself as an emerging queer scholar, for example, I am not using queerness as a synonym for my gay identity, but rather as a political space and an identification with what queer rhetoricians such as Smilges (2022) define as a project of making “a space for marginalized populations to coalesce across lines of difference” (p. 4) and “an inherently racialized, gendered, and disabled space that exceeds any neat identity category” (p. 67). In a similar vein, Stryker (2004) has long argued that trans theories and lives often get subsumed into a leveling of difference through association with queer studies, such that “transgender phenomena are misapprehended through a lens that privileges sexual orientation and sexual identity as the primary means of differing from heteronormativity” (p. 214). Instead, intersectional and ongoing queer and trans projects contribute to the work of destabilizing heteronormativity as well as Whiteness, racial capitalism, ableism, and other inequities of power that mediate relationships and languaging practices, including through the labor of technical communication, by considering the complexity both of resistance to these inequities and of space making for alternative ways of navigating the world (rather than classifying texts).

This intersectional labor cannot be accomplished by just one or even a few technical communication scholars. As Gonzales has argued through her collaborations with Indigenous scholars and epistemologies, social justice work requires “deliberate attunement to the

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<sup>1</sup> In line with Edenfield et al. (2019), *trans* in this article operates as an “umbrella term to refer to *transgender*, *transexual*, *nonbinary* and other *gender expansive identities*.” At the same time, the inclusion of an asterisk in trans\* here points to what Hayward and Weinstein (2015) refer to as the “prehensile, prefixal nature of *trans-* and implies a suffixal space of attachment that is simultaneously generalizable and abstract yet its function can be enacted only when taken up by particular objects (though never any one object in particular): trans\* is thus more *and* equal to one” (p. 196). This understanding of trans\* as prefixal and therefore both “more *and* equal to one” indicates for Hayward and Weinstein both a critique of humanism and Western posthumanism, and we might also see the complexity of conceptions of theories of movement here that do not overlap evenly with queer orientations to identity and singularity, which a trans\* orientation to translation speaks to directly.

relationships between language, land, and positionality,” (2021, p. 1), as well as transdisciplinary alliances and cooperation with others outside of our academic circles and contexts (2020). To consider my own research, social justice commitments, and positionality as a White, queer, cisnormative male living in the United States and with the stability and precarity of studying as a graduate TA, I want to begin this article by making visible the transdisciplinary relationships as Gonzales defines them that motivate/that I hope to extend through this work. Specifically, I am interested in furthering the relationships already being fostered by QTTC projects, which often apply queer theory to trans narratives, by engaging directly with work across trans studies in addition to queer theory. Given the complicated history of queer theory’s engagement with trans experiences, and given the seeming newness of interest in technical communication’s direct engagement with queer and trans thought, it is worth pausing to consider technical communication’s relationships to theories both in and beyond queer and trans studies. I do not want to fetishize disciplinarity or draw an easy distinction between queer theory and trans studies; instead, I am suggesting that it is worth foregrounding how my and our collective technical communication scholarship participates in, builds from, has overlooked, and might contribute to the much broader conversations about language, place, and technical communication occurring both across and separately in queer and trans studies, even if such work has not labeled itself explicitly as technical communication. In doing so, I want to work against disciplinary silos and critically reflect on the ways that technical communication scholarship positions the “newness” of social justice projects.

Even as relatively few articles across technical communication’s most visible journals have historically cited queer theory, it is important that we do not start from scratch or uncritically apply queer theoretical lenses to our social justice projects – especially those related to trans thought and communicative practices that manifest tactically outside institutional spaces. Given my positionality, I have turned to Hale’s (2009) “Suggested Rules for Non-Transsexuals Writing about Transsexuals, Transsexuality, Transsexualism, or Trans \_\_\_\_” as a text for continual reflexivity throughout the composition of this article. In this open-access text, Hale calls for scholarly care and relational humility while arguing against the fetishization of trans, the reduction of trans into a singular or coherent narrative, or the notion of “one transsexual discourse at any one temporal and cultural location.” Instead, he suggests, “Focus on: What does looking at transsexuals, transsexuality, transsexualism, or transsexual \_\_\_\_ tell you about \*yourself\*, \*not\* what does it tell you about trans.” Foregrounding these questions means recognizing my own subject positioning as well as the need for greater accountability by technical communication projects to the multiplicity and complexity of conversations occurring across queer and trans\* studies. In this article, then, I abstain from making an argument that takes up primary sources and communicative practices to make claims about trans\* as a singular identity category or narrative. Instead, I ask how further engagement with and accountability to the multiplicity of both queer and trans subjectivities and scholarship, including queer and trans of color critique, transnational orientations to gender and sexuality, and scholarship that intersects with dis/ability studies, might transform social justice commitments in technical communication as ongoing praxis.<sup>2</sup> Ultimately, I suggest that a critical approach to translation

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<sup>2</sup> This is not to say that no engagement by technical communication with queer and/or trans studies exists; to the contrary, studies beyond those that I summarize in this article, such as Ramler’s (2021) piece on Tumblr discourse,

might offer a theoretical point of intersection among trans studies, queer scholarship, and technical communication methodologies working to uncover and generate relationships among languages, genres, and queer and trans claims to interpretive authority.

Such a perspective of translation moves beyond assumptions of the neutral movement of meaning across two discrete languages and foregrounds negotiations of power, identity, and claims to interpretive authority. This article follows two trajectories: first by highlighting translation's theoretical value in weaving together technical communication, queer theory, and trans studies, and second by showing how translation methodologically enriches and extends analyses of technical genres and discursive practices of interest to queer and trans scholarship. By working to forge relationships across these academic conversations, I recognize that I am able to participate in and communicate with almost entirely privileged registers of English in relation to these conversations and the theme of this journal's inaugural special issue, as well as the limitations of any review of literature and the conventions and length of an article genre. My goal in moving across these conversations, then, is to foreground exclusively a theoretical and methodological intervention that seeks to deepen technical communication's accountability toward and relationships with queer and trans studies and the extra-institutional discourses centered in this scholarship. As this literature emphasizes, translation as relational work across named languages and genres always involves active interpretation practices and failures at reproducing pragmatic and textual equivalence, so I am doing a balancing act in this article in reporting on and delineating a brief history of transdisciplinary scholarship across queer and trans studies that takes up questions of translation and technical communication while acknowledging that all writing involves interpretation and messy engagement. To make visible my own interpretation practices, I engage with a few texts deeply rather than aspiring to the scholarly breadth typical of reviews of literature. Following closely and being accountable to the scholarship of queer and trans scholars who have already made visible their interpretive practices would further seem an appropriate path forward toward connecting these conversations given my positionality as an emerging queer, cis scholar. Finally, I ask how translation might help us envision new ways of relating— at times through attunement to technical communicators' resistances/refusals to translate, but also at times by embracing translation's loss.

## 2. Agency and Interpretive Authority in Translational Projects

Questions of interpretive authority have long been taken up by queer and trans scholarship and specifically foreground much work by trans studies on translation. This work often extends from an influential and important essay through which Sandy Stone (1987) responded to feminist author Janice Raymond's transphobic and deeply personal attack on her involvement in *Olivia Records* by lambasting Raymond's efforts to deliberately exclude her from women's activist and social spaces. To both redress Raymond's transphobic views and tackle the ideological issue she saw undergirding them, Stone's essay moved from narrative calls for her inclusion into feminist spaces to a manifesto by demanding both a jettisoning of the gender binary in feminist discourse altogether and greater visibility for trans bodies in feminist spaces. Instead of a "third gender" labeling, Stone offered a reading of the body as a "genre—a set of embodied texts" (p. 165)

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cite queer orientations to technical communication both within and (refreshingly) beyond academic conversations. I hope to extend and deepen such accountability and engagement through this project.

capable of eluding binary-inflected discourse. Through this conception of body as genre, Stone both evoked a term with a long philosophical history of association with gender and highlighted the discursive dimension to claims about trans rights, identities, and knowledge production. Her reading of trans bodies as social “embodied texts” with “inter-textual possibilities” (p. 166, emphasis original) offered a perspective of trans interpretive authority that implicates rhetoric, and particularly rhetorics of genre and mobility. These questions of interpretive authority and embodiment have been taken up across trans studies in the twenty-first century and particularly by queer and trans of color critique (e.g., Awkward-Rich, 2020; Gopinath, 2005) as a way of moving beyond static notions of trans embodiment and toward intersectional resistances not only to heteronormativity, but also to the nation state, material and class inequalities, ableism, and White supremacy.

Such work represents a transdisciplinary effort that has recently come to include technical communication. The development of novel digital and medicinal technologies designed specifically for transgender bodies has been accompanied by the composition of novel tactics for communicating about and theorizing the role of such technologies—often engendering dissonance among heteronormative institutions, health care providers, and trans individuals themselves. Edenfield et al. (2019) offer an important rhetorical analysis of such genres by locating the technical tactics of trans people designing instruction sets for others undergoing hormone therapy.<sup>3</sup> They draw from Barad’s (2015) notion of *agential realism*: the idea that individuals’ interactions are shaped unpredictably from the activity and memories of technologies around them. From this premise, Edenfield et al. highlight the agency of trans individuals composing do-it-yourself (DIY) user manuals from their own experiences transitioning while also revealing how these writers’ individual creative agencies interacted with the memories of other bodies/genres and technologies. For example, they narrate how the comment and editing tools of one manual, *Mascara and Hope* (2013), “function as palimpsests to the original text, which itself is already stitched together... from various official, anecdotal, and informal sources” (p. 186). This stitching together of individual and technological memory ultimately foregrounds what they call a queer tactical technical communication (QTTC) that, like Stone’s manifesto and Jones’ et al’s (2016) antenarrative, moves beyond blanket calls for a diversity of LGBTQ+ perspectives. Instead, a QTTC project considers the limits of individual creative agency within institutions that reinforce heteronormative epistemologies and moves for technical communicators to be open to the kinetic potential of unpredictable, extra-institutional, and ultimately queer tactics of those constrained by such institutions.

This scholarship has been vital to technical communication’s efforts to recognize extra-institutional, tactical discursive practices of care by trans communities (Edenfield, 2021; Edenfield et al., 2019), as well as to critique technical documents that enact violences against queer and trans communities via heteronormative epistemologies (Moeggenberg et al., 2022) and White supremacy (Alexander & Edenfield, 2021). In this article, I want to put such work further in conversation with similar projects occurring across queer and trans studies while acknowledging the complicated history of queer theory’s engagement with trans people’s

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<sup>3</sup> Tactics differ here from strategies in technical communication. While strategies help users follow processes designed to integrate into institutional contexts, tactics involve “individualized appropriations of strategies as implicit forms of resistance” (Edenfield et. al., 2019, p. 181).

experiences (Halberstam, 2020; Robinson, 2020; Salamon, 2010); I am especially sensitive to arguments by trans scholars who have critiqued queer studies as at times engaging in a leveling of difference by overstating trans as nonconformity. What I want to avoid is the recycling of a new materialist or otherwise queer critique that may conflate queer and trans theory in ways that some theorists accuse academics and even Barad herself of doing (see Chu & Drager, 2019) and that justifiably engenders skepticism by some trans scholars of projects that involve queer methodological interventions into trans studies. Such considerations are necessary if we are to hold technical communication accountable to trans knowledge production. What makes a QTTC project divergent from such confluences are the ways in which it takes seriously the medical and technical aspects of trans knowledge production and claims to interpretive authority, while also methodologically helping to make visible the linguistic, discursive, and generic negotiations of such claims. If we understand Edenfield et. al.'s approach to queerness, for example, as speaking more to multiplicities of agency and discourses in every tactical technical communicative act than an attempt to uncover the queer activity of trans bodies, then a queer project by this definition may hold more value than research in which "*queer* and *trans* are obviously synonyms" (Chu & Drager, 2019, p. 112).

Moreover, there are multiple important parallels between QTTC projects that center the needs and technical discursive practices of queer and trans individuals/communities on the one hand, and the ongoing work in queer and trans studies on the other. I want to put in conversation, for example, analyses of technical and extra-institutional genres by queer and trans scholarship that demonstrate technical communication's historical and present role in debates over queer and trans claims to interpretive authority, which predate the digital age, contemporary medical technologies, and technical writing as a field. This history matters because considering technical communication's atavistic role among queer and trans activist groups and communities and research bears on, and complicates, ongoing, contemporary discussions by scholars in both technical communication and trans studies, and greater accountability to these histories may allow technical communication to contribute to these conversations without expropriating knowledges. Ultimately, this article follows both currents of accountability and contribution via theoretical and methodological critique.

Such critique is possible via a critical engagement with agency in/and translation. I take Stone's notion of the body as genre as a point of departure, asking how technical communication's long held application of rhetorical genre theory, and especially understandings of genres as social actions (Miller, 1984) and therefore agentive, might reveal tensions in agency across bodies in texts in ways in line with claims such as Stone's to interpretive authority. I capture such negotiations through the theoretical and methodological affordances of technical translation, which I define not as the neutral movement between two languages, but as the embodied transformations of genres and named languages often constrained by institutions and systems of power. I come to this definition through a synthesis of research on translation in technical communication (and salient work in rhetorical genre studies) with the emerging subfields of queer and trans translation studies. In the final section of this piece, I suggest that the kind of labor envisioned by a QTTC project has already begun across queer and trans studies, and I turn to recent methodologies in these areas to show how technical compositions can displace opportunities for productive alliances and alternative relationships among queer and trans individuals and those from other and at times intersecting positionalities, and poignantly those in

dis/ability studies. I will close this article by considering some of the affordances and considerations necessary for making technical communication both accountable to and productive in relation to ongoing research on translation and technical communication in queer and trans studies.

### 3. Defining Translation's Value toward a QTTC Project

Translation has been of sustained interest to queer and trans studies. The inaugural issue of *Transgender Studies Quarterly* (2014), for example, compiled a list of keywords and definitions salient to the consolidation of Transgender Studies as a field. Here, A. Finn Enke justifies including translation among these keywords as “a necessary and profoundly hopeful act for those who trans gender” (p. 241). Enke understands translation as both an act of creation: a transformation of a text into a new form, and an act of illusion: the concealing of both the translator’s labor as well as any markers that an original existed in the first place. They also understand the term transgender itself as “an explicitly imperfect translation” that “carries institutional and imperial discipline: to be named and to name oneself transgender is to enter into disciplinary regimes that distribute recognition and resources according to imperial logics” (243). Such a conception clearly diverges from assumptions of translational praxis as neutral movement across two discrete languages, a move called for and furthered by multiple technical communication theorists (Gonzales, 2021; Weiss, 1995). Instead, a focus on *distribution* reveals translation’s inherent failures at achieving equivalence, its rhetorical demands on individual translators, and its dependence on the multiple agencies of bodies, texts, and technologies (if such terms are inseparable). Further, it reveals translation across genres as spaces for articulating the retroactive and carceral policing of trans\* bodies by heteronormative, imperialist, White supremacist, and institutional literacies while fomenting opportunities for alternative interpretations and resistance (Bassi, 2017; Savci, 2017). In other words, translation’s indeterminacies become spaces for exposing heteronormative epistemologies that demand the policing of gender and language via imperial logics. If a QTTC project centers extra-institutional discourses of resistance and care, then translation’s failures as exhibited by queer and trans\* translation theory seem a beneficial point of departure.

In this section, I offer a review of research to define translation’s indeterminacies along two fronts – translations across language representations and translations across genres. I argue that both these forms of transformation are necessary to capture moments when translation fails. While technical communication has developed considerable research in both areas, only the former has typically been referred to explicitly as translation research, while translation across genres has been explored by a range of approaches from actor-network theory (Spinuzzi, 2005) to rhetorical genre theory (Emmons, 2009). Yet both Enke’s (2014) and Stone’s (1987) understandings of translation and genre above illustrate that these distinctions are slippery when accounting for how meaning making practices salient to gender and sexuality are negotiated across bodies, texts, and languages. Instead, I put theories of translation in technical communication and related fields such as rhetorical genre studies (RGS) in conversation with the growing subfields of queer and trans translation studies to argue for a critical perspective of translation that holds both forms of transformation and consequently allows for the more distributed understanding of agency theorized by a QTTC project.

Such a transdisciplinary approach may seem novel because technical communication and queer and trans theories appear to have different historical exigencies and methodologies for theorizing translation. These lineages have engendered parallel academic critiques using an overlapping but often separate vernacular, but I see notions of genre and distributed agency as what aligns them, which scholars such as Edenfield et. al. (2019) and Moeggenberg et. al. (2022) also make a pillar of QTTC. For example, the going definition of translation in technical communication is the “written transformation of information across languages” (Gonzales, 2021, p. 3). While this definition may appear to parallel definitions of translation in related fields in/adjacent to writing studies, technical writing’s emphasis on collaboration and on technology displaces the singular author-as-agent model still prevalently assumed elsewhere in rhetoric and writing studies.<sup>4</sup> We see this in Gonzales’ (2018) manuscript on translation moments, which offers a complex understanding of transformation that tacitly accounts for distributed notions of agency. Specifically, *translation moments* capture the rhetorical aspects of transformation that foreground the “layering of modes and media, with critical attention to how modes like visuals, sounds, and words *work together* in creating meaning for various stakeholders” (p. 40, emphasis added).

This notion of “working together” puts less pressure on the individual translator to engender an always illusive, equivalent translation by focusing on the multiple agents involved in the transformation of language representations. For example, Gonzales here affords words and orthographies themselves agency— regardless of whether they are produced via sound, digital device, or text, while her focus on memory still privileges human recollection of linguistic and cultural interaction. In addition, she draws from American Indigenous language heuristics to emphasize embodiment and to foreground slippages of racial and linguistic diversity through the “co-construction of multimodal elements in languaging, remembering, and learning, through dance, theater, and labor with the land” (p. 50), considering human action and gestures as modalities necessarily implicated by translation in and through engagement with genres. To illustrate this, Gonzales describes how Sara, a professional translator with whom she worked while collecting data for her study, used gestures to translate. While anyone who has moved across languages has made use of gestures while struggling to recall a word or phrase, Sara scaffolds gestures onto her linguistic knowledge to translate across both languages and genres simultaneously. When translating a flyer, for example, Sara gestures to show a conscious choice about where to begin using Spanish based on previous experiences translating similar flyers. Her gestures point to moments in which “she envisioned and decided between various sentence structures that would facilitate understanding for Spanish-speaking users interacting with this flyer” (p. 97). At the same time, her use of digital tools to translate the flyer, such as WordReference, help Sara not only recall but decide among different vocabulary options grounded in cultural knowledge about her local Spanish-speaking community in Michigan.

Gonzales’ work reveals how bodies might communicate as much as or more than spoken or written texts, interact with other technologies, and inflect how not only languages are translated,

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<sup>4</sup> Notable exceptions include multimodal and new materialist work in composition (e.g. Rhodes & Alexander, 2015), which engages with queer theory at times but does not directly deal with translation, as well as Jordan’s (2015) critique of translanguaging, which does not explicitly engage with translation but does account for distributed understandings of agency in translanguaging.



but also genres. Moreover, these translation practices are tactical because they often resisted (as opposed to integrating into) dominant and institutionalized notions of translational equivalence and praxis while implicating race and ethnicity. Similarly, case studies of Indigenous NGO workers in the Kyrgyz Republic show how relationships—to both communities and the land—can also influence tactical translation even without digital technologies. A study by Feaux de la Croix (2013) observes how local Kyrgyz NGO workers account for the physical spaces of their work when engaging in translational practices—as well as broader Kyrgyzstani fears about the selling off of Indigenous land to foreign neighbors and/or wealthy elite. In one case study, a local translator, Anarbek, jettisons the format of a *training* seminar he is required to offer through an international NGO that aims to promote democracy in the Kyrgyz Republic. Rather than beginning the seminar with icebreakers, for example, Anarbek commences translations of different seminar components with references to the ecological significance of Kyrgyz land, such as “We all love the mountain pastures, go there after the 15<sup>th</sup> of May” (p. 224, translated by Feaux de la Croix). As Anarbek moves among English and Kyrgyz, he also translates the *training* model as a genre to prioritize relationships with local elders and land over professional relationships with NGO administrators in the West. Doing so engenders subjective success of the seminar, but also points to the value of identifying translation’s relational potential and Kyrgyz understandings of the slippages between Indigeneity, race, and geography.

The labor of translators such as Anarbek and Sara reveals how critical attention to translation in technical communication makes visible distributions of agency and extra-institutional discourses envisioned by a QTTC project. In each case, multiple agents enacted agency and facilitated the transformations of meaning not only across named languages, but also across genres, and in doing so they renegotiated and/or affirmed the relationships among translators and their audiences. This research reveals the significance of accounting for embodied, ecological, and linguistic agency in technical communication, but to fully capture generic agency in this review, I want to turn to research both in queer and trans translation theory, the latter of which often stems from Stone’s exigency by recognizing the agency of the self in translation across bodies-as-texts. Ultimately, attention to generic agency scaffolds empirical methods useful both to the participatory methods and methodologies used to uncover translation practices described above and to historical inquiry in queer and trans studies.

#### **4. On Translations’ Theoretical Value: Transdisciplinary, Generic, and Transnational Affordances**

This means sorting through and selecting from genre’s (and rhetorical genre theory’s) multiple genealogies and intersections with technical communication. I understand genres as typified, “intersubjective” and nameable (Bawarshi, 2016, p. 243) responses to situations: social actions (Miller, 1984) that mediate how individuals and communities ideologically and (socio)linguistically respond to recurrent situations (Devitt, 2015). Genres can make discursive patterns visible or intuitive to technical communicators (Henze, 2018), although Schryer (1993) has noted that even the most ritualized genres are only ever stabilized-for-now and negotiated for new contexts. Through this lens, the fields of rhetorical genre studies (RGS) and technical writing have engaged in mutually-transformative critical inquiry to uncover how various genres, ranging from YouTube Geiger counter videos (Rea & Riedlinger, 2016), to text messaging (Sun, 2006), to accessibility guides (Kain, 2005), to neighborhood zoning policies (Dryer, 2008)

become sites for both occluding and negotiating systems of power among and within communities.

However, scholars who take a rhetorical approach to technical genres also recognize the limits of the agencies of genres, viewing them instead as in distribution with other agents. As Freadman (2012) cautions, “no genre can do more than predict the kind of uptake that would make it happy, and no speaker or writer can completely secure an uptake” (p. 560). In consequence, genre scholars have found a renewed interest in *uptake theory*, which conceptualizes the indeterminacies between genres as the sites where language users grapple with histories of power and materiality to integrate or intervene in the performance of genres. This view of uptake I consider a form of translation. The concept of uptake is often traced back to speech-act theory (Austin, 1962) and has been traditionally defined as the process by which an illocutionary force, for example, “we find the defendant guilty,” elicits a perlocutionary effect, such as a judge then disseminating sentencing instructions. While this process at times appears instantaneous and intuitive, it involves a complex negotiation of power relations dependent on both the relational contingencies of the immediate context and past serializations of the genre serving as the illocutionary act. Uptakes always occur as writers and speakers cross language and generic boundaries (read: translation) and are often occluded by the resulting performance, the kind of concealed “illusion” Enke (2014) theorized above. This leads Freadman to define uptake as a “force,” the “bidirectional relation that holds” (p. 40) together genres and generic performances. While Freadman’s definition has been further complicated by some theorists (Dryer, 2016; Emmons, 2009), it remains the going operationalized definition of uptake in most empirical, rhetorical genre scholarship to date and provides a concrete definition of translation across genres.

Queer theorists have also importantly complicated speech-act theory’s understanding of uptake—a theoretical bridge I seek to construct across technical communication and queer and trans approaches to translation. First, queer theory helps us critique Freadman’s notion of translational bidirectionality as restrictively binary in thought and scope. In a groundbreaking feminist, queer theory manuscript, Sedgwick (2003) takes issue specifically with the notion of the singular illocutionary force eliciting a perlocutionary effect. Instead, she argues that queer bodies often generate knowledges and navigate situations by drawing from multiple illocutionary positions to elicit a range of effects that refuse to sanction or reify the relationship between themselves and the systems of power to which illocutionary genres suppose they might succumb. Rather than a “bidirectional relation that holds,” then, queer knowledges often function outside of generic uptake performances, as periperformative “site[s] of powerful energies that often warp, transform, and displace, if they do not overthrow the supposed authorizing centrality of that same performative” (p. 75). Thus where rhetoricians have been historically concerned with elucidating power imbalances and social violences maintained/occluded/invented through bidirectionality in the indeterminacies of genres, Sedgwick calls for a turn to the allreferential speech acts that queerly upend those relations of force altogether. Such an approach to speech acts that looks beyond singular illocutionary forces scaffolds rhetorically onto the distributed agency and multiple ontologies a QTTC project seeks to locate via extra-institutional discourses.

These ruptures in uptakes become a point of departure for understanding the goals of queer and trans translation theorists, who are interested in exposing translation’s always elusive lack of

equivalence and value in speaking to queer and trans conditions of being in the world. While no singular definition of queer translation exists, those identifying their work with queer translation theory are generally interested in how consolidating queer theory and translation studies displaces the role of the individual translator, grapples with myriad epistemologies that displace or further projects of homonationalism via monolingualism, and centers collective and relational illocutions and negotiations of meaning. In other words, queer translation theorists seek to locate alternative and transnational relationships that translation's indeterminacies and multiple illocutions generate and/or bring to the fore. For example, Bassi's (2017) work considers uptakes of the "It Gets Better" YouTube video across iterations of the genre and into Italian to show the heterolingual, alternative relationships writers may foster via translation. These YouTube videos regularly feature a common trope of gay or lesbian individuals or couples moving from rural areas to cities, gaining stable employment, and coming out to an accepting, cosmopolitan community via discourses that evoke stereotypical conceptions of the American dream. However, one of Bassi's focal Italian participants, Stefania, identifies in her video as transgender but explains her process of "coming out" by framing herself not as "the citizen-subject demanding their rights," but as a "creatura" (or creature) (p. 244). In doing so, she displaces Western notions of the human and neoliberal premises of financial stability and success to engender posthuman relationships and self-acceptance in her rural community. Locating multiple illocutionary positions (my reading) in Stefania's uptake of the "It Gets Better" genre thus allowed Bassi to analyze Stefania's alternative politics and relationships that diffracted from the general neoliberal actions the genre typically performs.

Refusals such as Stefania's to meet the political demands and homolingual limitations of equivalent translation, neoliberal genres, or vernaculars that extend heteronormative epistemologies are often conceived by queer translation theorists as failures. Queer translation theorist Savage (2020), drawing from Halberstam (2011) and Sedgwick (2003), shows how queer translators transform experiences failing into opportunities to recognize, celebrate, and legitimize non-normativity. They argue that "in failing, other goals can be sought, and other values promulgated"; failing offers opportunities to challenge those power structures that seek to secure a domesticated (Venuti, 1995) translation. In recognizing that something is missing, incomplete, or disidentified, failure also draws attention to what is lost even in those translations that seem to mirror one another closely. Moreover, Savage draws from Basile (2017) to suggest that failures to clean up after/conceal that translation has occurred often only exacerbate conditions of fixity against non-normative bodies. Basile uses the metaphor "coming undone" to show how queer translation leads to the "unruly material entanglement of signifiers and of bodies... how a language or a subjectivity's ideational existence as discrete and separate entities is a provisional fiction that requires a constant, and always *retroactive*, policing of boundaries to be kept in place..." (p. 31, emphasis original). This emphasis on retroactivity gestures toward the power of translation to hide the fact that uptake negotiations have occurred at all, that languages do not come into messy contacts, and that genres seamlessly form genre sets and chains. Oppressive ideologies, such as monolingualism or additive multilingualism, shame us into "cleaning up after the fuck" translation, in which the self is "ghosted out" (p. 31) of discourse and replaced by a cleaner, more domesticated representation.

Recognition of failure in translation means considering how translational forces briefly "come undone," before they are policed, put back together, and reproduced. Thus a queer translational

approach to failure would allow writers the ability to “spend time with uptakes” (Bawarshi, 2016, p. 248) before this policing begins and consider what they lose in the process. Through this lens, Basile (2017) and Savage (2020) are calling for a radical reframing of loss in translation, a loss that can be leveraged across radically different genres and/or languages as well as the same genre translated across two or more languages/repertoires. Working at the intersections of Icelandic and English, Savage (2020) perceives this loss intimately and relationally:

If there must be loss in translation, it is not the loss of a less-than, subpar, inferior, betraying product, but the potential loss inherent in radical vulnerability, in partial knowledge, in failing, which allows for this textual encounter to occur. It is a loss inherent in language, writing, textual production, and communication that structures the instability of texts, words, *and* selves, that emphasizes the other that is within us already, in our language, in our texts, in our psyche.

Savage’s conception of loss here adds queer valence to Bakhtin’s (1986) notion that all speech “is filled with others’ words” (p. 89), intimately engaging multiple “others” across temporalities. When this loss is embraced, Savage views the potential as twofold: generating new relationships and new meanings. Creating new meanings involves taking a more radical, translanguaging approach across the artifacts of uptakes (to use Dryer’s term). In describing their translation of Icelandic composites into English compound nouns (e.g. forming new words like “realwoman” and “plasticbagman”), Savage describes purposefully omitting punctuation and spacing so as to more closely resemble Icelandic while simultaneously creating a disruption in the translation in English that would not be read so radically by an Icelandic reader. In so doing, they purposefully flout equivalence, privilege Icelandic ways of meaning making, and highlight to future readers acknowledgement that translation has occurred. At the same time, something has changed in the original, for now the lines in the poem that employ these terms appear disruptive in a way never intended by the author. In the uptake translation, Savage refracts a part of themselves into the text and acknowledges the “psychological work” that accompanies intimately engaging with someone else’s experience with the knowledge that they can never truly represent those experiences. They then complicate the lexico-grammatical structure of the original in a way to privilege Icelandic ways of knowing, fracturing the asymmetrical power relations that typically hold the translations together seemingly bidirectionally, offering the only current English translations of these poems, producing but not reproducing.

At this point, it is worth pausing to consider Enke’s (2014) definition of translation with which I opened this section: a hopeful act that involves exposing and rejecting how negotiations of meanings and bodies are retroactively policed and concealed through the translation process. The queer translation literature that I have covered so far reveals how scholars have leveraged translation’s loss via such rejection; these approaches complicate and coincide with our understanding of translation in technical communication by revealing how negotiations of meaning become sites for embodied memory, vulnerability, alternative relationships and ontologies, and ultimately failure and refusal to conform to such policing. As a QTTC project seeks to find shared values and connections across queer theory and extra-institutional technical discourse, attention to shared translation epistemologies seems particularly fruitful. Specifically, I believe translation scaffolds important theoretical complexity and an emphasis on distributed generic agencies (via uptakes) to the queer phenomenological lenses taken up so far by a QTTC project. This includes Moeggenberg et al.’s (2022) framing of technical genres as “objects that

we orient ourselves to” (p. 414) to analyze an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) form for its accessibility for trans employees. Their study reveals how a genre generates rhetorical force that may circumscribe a patient’s mobility through health systems and institutions, such as when an EEO leaves out important information regarding gender affirming care. They posit that genres (like translators) also often “outright fail” (p. 417), and I am suggesting that we might understand such failure as occurring through the uptake translation of the genre. A queer orientation to translation might ask how this uptake participates as one of a series of illocutions historically sedimented across institutional, State, and other documents, as well as how individuals draw from other illocutionary forces<sup>5</sup> to make claims to interpretive authority, as Edenfield et al. (2019) depict via *Mascara and Hope*.

But why would Enke (2014) argue that such queer translational perspectives inspire hope to trans communities in particular? And since a QTTC project often centers the needs and claims to interpretive authority of trans lives while making its goal to “act justly toward trans people,” (Moeggenberg et al, 2022, p. 427), how have such queer approaches to translation been meaningful to trans communities and scholars facing urgent conditions of inequality? Enke picks up queer translation theory’s attention to failure in answering these questions: they suggest that “*transgender*” as a term “translates an infinite multiplicity into a single disciplinary body. But this project fails, and its failure incites creative elaboration... Transgender demands above all the need for more context, more story, and thus the translation *into* transgender never arrives and rests” (p. 243, emphasis original). The need for more story, for more distributed uptakes, and ultimately for more attention to race, ethnicity, and global material inequality, when translating transgender shows up across translation scholarship in trans studies. Robinson (2019), for example, argues that the terms transgender, translation, and translanguaging “are all ‘stories’ that get left out” (xii) by binary logics that Gramling and Dutta (2016) might associate with “cislingualism” (p. 337)—a vernacular which foregrounds colonial, heteronormative, monolingual ideologies in the uptake of texts, including technical genres.

Gramling and Dutta call for a centering of transnational stories in trans studies to work as part of an ongoing (but never finished) effort against neoliberal notions of objectivity and White supremacist notions of linguistic norms simultaneously. They ask, “How can transgender notions of what a text is... yield new sensibilities” (p. 339) about the nature of the translator? This question reverberates across translation scholarship in trans studies, as scholars such as Rose (2016) call for a reframing of the translator as an active agent in the meaning making process. Like Savage (2020), Rose’s analyses of trans memoirs illuminates translation’s potential for creativity and interpretive authority over genres-as-bodies by purposefully failing to pursue equivalence or conceal changes to a perceived singular original, for example, through choices of grammatical gender. Conversely, translation scholars who analyze technical and medical

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<sup>5</sup> It is worth critiquing this notion of *force* altogether, and turning to other notions that define such force rhetorically, queerly, and/or transnationally. I see potential connections, for example, between translational force and Smilges’ (2022) notion of *rhetorical energy*, defined as “the signifying aura that surrounds marginalized people” (p. 46). This concept draws from affect theory to show the often unsaid, embodied attunements that transform bodies as significations collide, with a special emphasis on the “thick” rhetorical energies surrounding *queer*, “where our mere existence is a powerful rhetorical force” (p. 39). In other projects, I have considered the value of conceptualizing this force as *friction*, drawing from work by Tsing (2005) and others to capture the transnational *and* localized nature of such forces.

documents question how translation often displaces complexity in representations of trans identities in the (global) traffic of meaning (Johnson, 2015; Jarrin, 2016). Taken together, these interrogations chart one of many paths forward for translation scholarship in trans studies, asking how the term transgender itself fails to translate, and how such failures might invite ongoing attention and accountability to a diversity of stories as well as queer oriented and trans peoples' authorities to interpret those stories.

Many approaches to translation in trans studies consequently take a markedly transnational approach, as represented by the translation section of the field's leading journal, *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*. For example, Rizki (2021) opens a recent translation section of *TSQ* by pointing to its transnational scope and posits that to ethically account for how we "translate concepts such as *trans*, *brownness*, and *gender* among others, we must attend to the material, political, and cultural frameworks that freight such concepts with which they travel" (p. 533). Such transnational work requires methodologies that allow relationships— to contexts and communities in which power is regularly and reflexively considered— to determine theories and methods for uncovering communicative practices, rather than *a priori* theories, vernacular, and epistemological variables: methodologies that recognize that "relationalities exist between all things... as well as traverse temporalities and spaces" (Fitzpatrick and May, 2022, p. 18). Moreover, they require that research methods avoid uncritically translating Anglophone discourses of sexuality and of trans identities across contexts in ways that prioritize White vernaculars, racial-capitalist aspirations, and Western conceptions of gender and sexuality. Savci (2017) argues, for example, that Western scholars' unwillingness to cite non-English texts or engage ethnographically in registers beyond English circumscribes any "questioning [of] sexual epistemologies and their co-articulations with racialization, colonialism, imperialism, medical, psychiatric and penal institutions, and neoliberal capitalism" (p. 81). Jarrin's (2016) transnational scholarship similarly traces and critiques how Anglophone discourses of transexuality displace alternative sexualities among working class Brazilian communities. Through extended ethnographic research among hospitals offering plastic surgery to working class populations, Jarrin centers individuals who consider themselves *travestis*, whose disinterest in the label of transgender stems from its association with Anglophone identities as well as sex-reassignment surgery. Jarrin shows how *travestis* face restricted health care access within the Brazilian medical system through their untranslatability into the "dominant Anglophone paradigm" (p. 365), as well as how the Brazilian state affords the medical industrial complex the ultimate authority to determine how trans bodies are interpreted against that Anglophone paradigm. Similar to the findings of Gonzales's collaborative research with Indigenous translators (2021), Jarrin's work cautions us from understanding translation as necessarily an emancipatory or liberatory act and asks us to consider whose interpretive practices and material conditions are excluded or rendered institutionally invisible or untranslatable.

Through this lens, the critical perspectives of translation I have been consolidating so far matter not only for putting queer theory, trans studies, and technical communication in conversation, but for considering how Western, Anglophone, and White epistemologies travel transnationally on the one hand, and how queer and trans claims to authority become entangled with the medical industrial complex on the other. I see this scholarship, for example, as one means for continued engagement with Alexander & Edenfield's (2021) call for more research that probes the intersections of race and gender "to consider available structures (strategies) through which

individuals can enact agency (tactics)” (p. 249). Throughout this section, I have argued that such a critical perspective on translation across *both* language representations and genres allows us to locate multiple illocutionary acts as theoretical and methodological points of departure for analyzing tactical transformations of meaning. Such an approach suggested translation as adding complexity to QTTC’s ontological interventions into technical communication scholarship by foregrounding translators’ often messy negotiations of agency across genres, bodies, languages, and ecologies. By placing technical communication further in conversation with queer translation theory, I also emphasized translation’s loss, and I argued that a queer framework helps us envision how translations generate, negotiate, and displace relationships among the technical translator and myriad agents. In beginning to introduce conversations on translation theory in trans studies, I further asked how ongoing attention to trans claims to interpretive authority— a central question in trans scholarship since Stone’s (1987) groundbreaking work— necessarily evokes transnational and racialized questions of translational praxis with material consequences for trans bodies. As I will argue in the next section, greater accountability to trans scholarship and specifically this body of literature’s methodological grappling with linguistic and generic translation might extend QTTC projects in technical communication to explicitly foreground embodied knowledge practices, non-expropriative knowledge production, and accountable/situated work.

## **5. Generating and Displacing Relationships: The Methodological Possibilities of Translation**

In the previous section, I considered the theoretical complexity and opportunities afforded through putting queer and trans\* scholarship and technical communication in conversation. This scholarship foregrounds all acts of translation as involving interventions and interpretations by the translator. Rather than engaging in such translational practices alone given my subject positions, in this section I review recent scholarship in trans studies with particularly robust, critical methodologies and methods for engaging with technical and professional documents, as well as the primary sources implicated in that scholarship. These scholars expose through attention to generic mobility a long history of harmful technical communication practices of legal and medical professionals and their impact on trans identities and relationships. I argue that our field would benefit from becoming accountable to and learning from the history of these practices and scholarly conversations when researching with and advocating for trans communities, and I view deep engagement with the limited works referenced here (as opposed to a broad overview of scholarship) as a means for making translation’s methodological contributions visible and thus only as a point of departure.

I have selected these texts for their apparent connections with the technical genres highlighted by scholarship that explicitly identifies with a QTTC approach. These genres often include technical medical genres composed external to hospitals or regulatory institutions. As previously mentioned, Edenfield et al. (2019) analyze medical procedural manuals and in particular *Mascara and Hope* (2013), a digital do-it-yourself guide to medical transition, while Edenfield (2021) has looked at practices of “homebrewing” and other medically-inflected, extra-institutional discursive practices performed by trans communities during the global pandemic. Other projects have taken up queer theory to analyze technical documents designed for those who do not identify as trans and yet necessarily implicate trans rights and communities, such as

Moeggenberg et. al's (2022) articulations of the social actions and failures of the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) statement. Alexander and Edenfield (2021), although less engaged with queer theory, emphasize through an intersectional feminist lens the need for idiosyncratic and overlapping attention to race and gender, and of extra-institutional tactics of self-care. In my reading, what unites many of these analyses are questions of interpretive authority, as authors ask how individual and collective agencies become displaced or rendered invisible through the composition and uptake of technical genres.

In this section, I want to follow closely the methodologies of authors operating across queer and trans studies who grapple with claims to interpretive authority to reveal technical writing's long history and unsettling implications in the negotiations of such claims. In opting for close reading of a few (of many important) recent texts rather than a broad overview of scholarship, this review of research prioritizes depth over a typically broad scope that locates a "gap" in scholarship. I ask how approaching these texts through the lens of translation offers theoretical and methodological complexity for understanding how such displacements occur via generic and linguistic mobility. Given QTTC's interest in how both regulatory and extra-institutional documents act on/against trans communities seeking healthcare, I want to begin by looking at conversations in trans studies regarding how the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) shaped and displaced relationships among individuals identifying as trans and/or disabled and interacting with the medical industrial complex. I want to show how reading these authors' methodologies through a vernacular of translation further reveals how the agency of the ADA as a single illocutionary act-as-genre has traced lasting discursive residues with material consequences for trans communities in particular.

Two methodologically complex approaches to considering the impact of the ADA on trans lives and claims to authority have been detailed by Awkward-Rich (2020) and Puar (2015). Neither of these texts would be obviously legible as technical communication scholarship, nor are they making arguments primarily about communication or writing. In her analysis, for example, Puar situates the ADA within broader discourses of inclusion/exclusion popular in public discussions about trans rights, arguing that the politics of inclusion depend upon "the same terms of recognition that rely on such elisions" (p. 46). This premise places Puar genealogically in line with Stone (1987) and only parallel to social justice initiatives in technical communication that move critique beyond inclusion/exclusion narratives (e.g., Jones et al., 2016). My reading of Puar's article's framing argument—that the transnormative subject has become at times complicit with neoliberal assimilationist motives through a racialized vernacular of productive societal integration—locates questions of trans belonging and authority as inherently rhetorical. This framing asks, how might we retroactively historicize how this vernacular has become circulated and transformed to "produce new biopolitical failures" (p. 46)? I want to suggest an understanding of Puar's inquiry along these lines as one inherently concerned with the challenge of locating and deconstructing generic translations-as-uptakes in which one of the earliest illocutions she uncovers is the genre of the ADA; this inquiry also reveals the role of technical communication in shaping understandings of trans agency before the digital age in ways that inflect contemporary discourse across trans studies. Moreover, I ask how translation as a methodology tacitly practiced by Puar can help guide a search for the retroactive covering up of rhetorical practices of selection similar to what Enke (2014) called translation's illusion of a uniform final product. Thus, considering Puar's work here reveals the importance of



accountability to these histories by technical communicators, while thinking rhetorically slant (Rhodes, 2019) about Puar's methodology holds productive potential for more fully appreciating the role of the ADA in discourses of trans interpretive authority.

A focus on the agency of the ADA reveals how this genre's uptake secures more than the provisions of certain protections against discrimination to specified individuals/groups with disabilities. Instead, Puar, drawing from Barry (2013), shows how the ADA acted as a "moral code" (p. 49) for determining both which individuals the government deemed worthy of protection and integration into society and those groups rendered beyond the bill's scope and therefore either able bodied or unworthy of institutionally sanctioned care and/or protection. Most notably, the ADA included in its legal protections individuals with HIV+ status despite intense stigmatization aimed at such diagnoses at the time, while it explicitly excluded other groups defined as experiencing "gender identity disorders (GID) not resulting from physical impairments" (p. 48). The ADA even went as far as to explicitly link GID to pedophilia as well as even kleptomania and illegal drug abuse. Puar is able to read these distinctions by the ADA as engaged in a project of moral determination by tracing the ADA back even further to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* of 1980 as well as to an earlier iteration as the *DSM-II* in 1974. The indeterminacies and ultimate translation of the *DSM* to the ADA ultimately becomes a site for loss and displacement.

While comments from senators of the United States Congress at the time do offer some context for framing the choice to protect some groups and not others, it is the ADA's own location of the *DSM* as its generic precursor that reveals the pernicious underbelly of a bill perceived as otherwise progressive for the time. Despite the *DSM* in 1980 listing GID as a disability and therefore worth protection, and despite the ethos the ADA attributed to *DSM*, Puar details how lawmakers still engaged in a process of selection in which the unequivocal authority of the *DSM* brushed against and ultimately succumbed to the lawmakers' own moral judgements concerning who deserved legal protection and unqualified medical access. Puar describes these exclusions to argue that the ADA "redefines standards of bodily capacity and debility through the reproduction of gender normativity as integral to the productive potential of the disabled body" (p. 49), leading to new forms of ablenationalism. Moreover, Puar notes that these exclusions placed trans activists in a bind in which they sought to affirm trans existence as a completely whole (and therefore able-bodied) way of being in the world while simultaneously recognizing that exclusion from disabilities protections meant facing difficult and immediately realized forms of discrimination in workplace, medical, and legal settings.

While Puar centers her argument here around what Miller (1984) might call the social actions the ADA performs, a focus on translation emphasizes that such actions cannot be severed from the agency of its source material of the *DSM* and the lawmakers who selected it as well. Although the Senate's generic translation decisions that Puar recognizes in what I am calling the uptake of the *DSM* certainly reinscribed prejudiced notions of gender-normativity into legal discourse, a focus on translation reveals that the very selection of the *DSM* in the first place, a genre with distinct social functions and professional authorships, requires scrutiny, as well as both genres' continued uptake in trans academic discourse. Specifically, the location of a descriptive professional document as the perceived singular genre to be taken up bidirectionally (to use Freadman's 2002 terms) for use in governmental generic production allows the ADA to do more than redefine standards of bodily capacity: it also further cements the complex identities of trans

and dis/abled individuals into epistemic categories. In other words, the ADA is only able to secure “the maintenance of gender normativity as a requisite for disabled status” (Puar, 2015, p. 47) because it is placed as a translation of a medical document never intended to serve as a legal genre, and the different perlocutionary purposes for those genres become retroactively erased in the translation process. While the perspectives of disabilities, LGBTQ+ rights, and other activists certainly played an important role in the crafting of the ADA, its continued and almost singular attachment to the *DSM*, an association continued in Puar’s work, highlights its ongoing translation (uptake) in contemporary discourses of trans and disabled categorization as descriptive, epistemic conditions.

Awkward-Rich’s (2020) archival methodology further articulates how these epistemic conditions became taken up by trans activists themselves. He highlights a debate published in a trans community newsletter, *Renaissance News*, surrounding the uptake of the ADA as historically significant to contemporary alliances and frictions among trans and disabled activists and academics. The author(s) of *Renaissance News* foregrounds Puar’s argument as they grapple with frustrations about the pathologizing of trans identities exemplified by the *DSM* on the one hand and the inability to advocate for legal protections through the ADA on the other. Their hypothetical conceptual example is a “transvestite with polio,” who the author recognizes would be protected by the ADA *only* if discrimination against them hinged on the basis of their polio diagnosis without “religiously bona fide” sexual prejudice. The *Renaissance News* piece thus holds the highly material concerns about lack of access to health care, even for less stigmatized conditions such as polio, in juxtaposition with the haunting power of description. They argue “lumping us in with those who have an unfortunate—but real mental illness perpetuates the notion that people who dress as the other gender, or who believe themselves to be the other gender, are sick” (“Who’s Disabled?”, p. 3). These very real concerns reflect the power of what Freadman (2012) calls the relational force that holds genres together, and the work by Awkward-Rich and Puar reveals how the epistemic categories of disabled and trans have become at this point so secured in the translation of the ADA and *DSM* that they now define the terms of debate even among those individuals whose situated experiences seemed well positioned to bring those epistemic categories into crisis. Moreover, these translations further sedimented a racialized articulation of both epistemic categories. For example, Awkward-Rich posits that in San Francisco (as the focus of his study) and across the United States, “gender normativity... was taken to be a property of whiteness, which is what produced individual (presumed white) gender nonconforming people as problems, curiosities, and people to be fixed” (p. 26), as opposed to Chinese gender nonconforming people at the time, whose existence was taken up by public documents such as San Francisco newspapers as evidence of racial difference and as justification for societal exclusion. In sum, these authors reveal how claims to interpretive authority and agency frequently become negotiated, if not attenuated, at the level of genre in that they seemingly must contend with bidirectional uptake residues traced by these documents’ descriptive, hetero-ableist, racialized, and identarian vernaculars in translation.

These conversations highlight the consequences of technical communication unaccountable to trans knowledge production. They also reveal the relational stakes of privileging the agency of a singular genre as the only illocutionary force State institutions acknowledge in discussions of

trans claims to human rights and authority.<sup>6</sup> Puar and Awkward-Rich, as well as other related theorists such as Hong (2002), seek to understand the process of what I am reading as uptake selection that occurred within these transformations from a historical and archival methodological perspective; Puar, quoting Hong, summarizes such inquiry by arguing that “understanding why a dozen conditions were removed becomes an important task” (p. 49). Like Jarrin’s (2016) transnational ethnographic scholarship described in this article’s previous section, Puar further reveals how these removals participate in racialized medicinal practices via cisableism, which, like cislingualism, treats as the norm the White, cisgendered, abled individual legible through standardized medical vernaculars. How could translational methodologies in queer and trans studies as well as technical communication build from such a project? How might we go about questioning the singular ethos of medical genres such as the *DSM* and instead isolate the myriad, multiple illocutions at play yet covered up in this generic translation? How might we account for ableist and racial inequities in these selections? Such questions would mark the ruptures in relationships that occur specifically when translation’s multiple agents are prevented from being retroactively occluded for the sake of epistemic bidirectionality. By assuming as equivalently authoritative the *DSMs* of 1974, 1980, and the ADA, the translation practices of the ADA’s composers and enactors would be revealed not only to have complicated trans legal protections in myriad settings on moral grounds, but to have displaced trans and dis/abled persons’ embodied agencies through an ontological overstatement of a singular genre’s agency – consequently rendering invisible those bodies with overlapping trans and disabled positionalities with implications for how genre analysis occurs in research with populations identifying with such positionalities. Translational methodologies would build from the isolation of the ADA’s effects to “produce new biopolitical failures” (p. 46), as Puar convincingly envisages, to also how make visible how those failures might become productive sites for critiquing singular visions of textual agency and creating intersectional relationships outside of imperialist State discourses toward QTTC uptakes of disidentification and care.

Attention to translation may also contribute to, compliment, and be shaped by contemporary efforts in disability studies that interrogate what Skyer (2019) refers to as discursive regimes related to technical, medical, and legal genres, including the ADA. This research similarly centers questions concerning how texts enact and displace claims to interpretive authority (Campbell, 2009). As Skyer contends, disability activists have long recognized the agency of the ADA as a genre and its both “productive *and* destructive potentiality... [as] an immense vehicle of legal power” (p. 4, emphasis original). While Puar’s analysis of the ADA as described above looks backward to the *DSM-II*, Skyer’s analysis of the ADA follows discursive regimes via genealogical methodologies and discourse analysis methods to show how the ADAs of 1990 and 2008 progress to define and classify individuals toward future integration into a capitalist society. The goals of such integration privilege teleologies of economic productivity as opposed to immediate self-determinacy and liberation. I want to suggest that attention to translation across both languages and genres might theoretically and methodologically compliment these and other critiques of the ADA’s discursive regimes by interrogating how such regimes are translated transnationally and taken up by myriad technical documents with ramifications for disabled as well as queer and trans communities’ claims to interpretive authority. At the same

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<sup>6</sup> Similar important conversations about the ADA are ongoing in disability studies as well (see: Campbell, 2009; Skyer, 2019).

time, bifold attention to discursive regimes and translation importantly questions the descriptive agency and “destructive potentiality” of the ADA and other so-called authoritative documents as they are represented by such technical communication scholarship (Kain, 2005).

Technical genres taken up by the medical industrial complex do not pose the only texts through which translation epistemologies might further connect technical communication and queer and trans scholarship. Another point of commensurability might come through what Johnson (2015) calls *translation regimes*, or “the set of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures through which single, commensurable data states are selected to represent conditions in the world” (p. 162). Similar to discursive regimes, Johnson has shown how translation regimes act as political processes through an analysis of the Utah System of Higher Education’s (USHE) data standard for gender – data standards that render invisible gender-nonconforming people through a binary selection of sex via data collection processes and artifacts. I believe that Johnson’s delineation of multiple kinds of translation regimes and their impacts on trans bodies, including descriptions of atomizing and normalizing translations, for example, might productively engage with Moeggenberg et al.’s QTTC analyses of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission’s self-identification templates. Through attention to translation regimes, QTTC projects might consider the social and digital locations through which technical documents crafted with/for trans communities are designed to move, as well as interrogate how the transnational mobility of such documents might participate in reproducing White, Anglophone rhetorics of gender and sexuality vertically across communicative scales, or what Gramling & Dutta (2016) call “an anglophone disciplinary and discursive disposition [that] will inevitably continue to lead policy makers, public intellectuals, and academics to fall back on ethnocentric and monolingual frameworks and resources” (p. 345). How can technical communication methodologies attuned to translation regimes further operate inline with transnational translation scholarship described by Jarrin (2016), Gopinath (2005), and others to displace singular notions of trans communities and forms of care?

Translational methodologies also ask what relationships are generated and displaced both by our own scholarly interpretation of technical communication practices and by the representation of those practices in our disseminated work. To reframe Rizki’s (2021) translational questions of the prior section, how do our terminologies and methodologies travel through our scholarship, and how do our translations participate in disciplinary siloing or singular epistemologies? Put another way, how might our scholarship displace some communities even as we call for justice for other communities? Even Puar’s (2015) work described above, while lauded for its complex methodology and critiques of neoliberal-abilism via racial-capitalism, has been critiqued by scholars of dis/ability such as Goodley, Lawthom, Liddiard, and Runswick-Cole (2019) for using debility as a stepping-stone for other political projects– such as a condemnation of the medical-industrial complex or the Israeli nation-state– “rather than a development of the potential of disability politics” (p. 981). These scholars ask “where does this leave disability as the motivating subject of analysis, politicization and generator of emancipatory theory and practice?” and raise questions of tokenization. Goodley et al.’s and similar critiques (see Smilges, 2022) point us to the need to do more than locate multiple illocutionary forces in the translations of technical documents, but also to consider how the uptakes of our own scholarship might lead to a more accountable and relational research praxis.

## 6. Implications

Through a review of research, this article has considered the value of translation as both a critical theory and methodology productive for ongoing QTTC projects while also working toward greater accountability and engagement by technical communication with queer and trans scholarship. Whether attempting to mine the archive for generic artifacts to make posthumous claims of trans figures of the past, or whether contending today with discourses of wholeness/ability still inflected by violent epistemologies, translation remains a site where claims to queer and trans authority become voiced, described, taken up, or, to evoke Basile (2017) come undone. Through such engagement and accountability, our field may be able to engage ongoing conversations surrounding technical discourse occurring across queer and trans studies. In addition, we might ask, how might technical translation complicate epistemological binaries that scholars such as Chu and Drager (2019) have accused even Stone (1987) herself of tacitly fomenting? In framing the body as a genre and thus moving away from a technical/medical definition of trans bodies, Chu and Drager argue that trans studies has become “rooted in... binaries of vernacular versus medical and authentic versus inauthentic” that place pressures onto trans bodies to always exert agencies of resistance and political transformation. Instead, they call for attention to the “messiness, contradictions, disappointments, and unexpected outcomes” of trans inquiry beyond “an obsession with resistance and radicality” (p. 107). These concerns have been echoed and responded to by other scholars working at the intersection of dis/ability, queer theory, and trans studies such as Smilges (2022) who similarly ask how scholarship such as Puar’s (highlighted above), which calls for trans people to reject the medical industrial complex altogether (in part via a refusal of all discourses surrounding the ADA), engages in a leveling of difference and agency that “seems to demand that trans people sacrifice the meager offerings of disidentification at the risk of making their lives even more precarious” (p. 168). I see theoretical and methodological value in the relational approaches to translation that I have delineated in this article that could support ongoing efforts to bring into relief such binaries in ways that both foreground queer and trans claims to interpretive authority and point to the need for future scholarship that further engages dis/ability studies,<sup>7</sup> queer and trans of color critique, Indigenous epistemologies, and other intersecting and critical approaches to meaning making.

Finally, technical writers cannot take our own canon as a singular illocution for QTTC projects when trans studies and queer studies are taking on this kind of labor already. Instead, as we consider the social justice aims of this new journal and respond to the seeming newness of queer and trans approaches to technical communication, it is worth acknowledging that neoliberal academic forces in the Western academy thrive off of “newness” and often demand an arrival at answers and the retroactive covering up of the messy relations that make our articles and answers possible. Such projects will always fail. Conversely, queer and trans orientations to translation scholarship reflects a long, difficult indeterminacy of intimate relations that grapple with

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<sup>7</sup> I am particularly interested, for example, in how activists and scholars of dis/ability beyond those cited in this article might speak to Edenfield et. al.’s (2019) repeated rhetorical framing of a QTTC project as necessarily oppositional to identity politics. As Smilges writes in *Queer Silence*, for example, “Disability studies... urges queer studies to move past its political skepticism of identity politics to engage more deeply with the rhetorical implications of identification as they are bound up with embodyminded significations that people do not choose for themselves” (p. 66).

available and continually revised knowledges and “the proliferation stories” (Enke, 2014, p. 243). By putting technical communication and related fields’ work on translation in conversation with queer orientations to translation, I have attempted to show how technical communicators might understand not only translation’s artifacts but also the other illocutions, discourses, and identities displaced as writers move across languages and genres. Such work reveals the relationships generated/displaced in technical translation, but also our own relationships, scholarly identities, and accountabilities to queer projects and trans lives—an intersectional identity politics more in line with the vision delineated by the Black feminist writers of the Combahee River Collective and the analyses of care networks by Alexander and Edenfield (2021) than a reductive identity politics predicated on singularity and “essentialism often grounded in gay, lesbian, or bisexual identities that tends to explicitly or implicitly exclude alternative forms of queerness” (Edenfield et al, 2019, p. 178). Through engagement with scholarship on translation across trans studies, I hope to have moved our vision for advocacy toward the transnational as we dissect the Anglophone and Western discourses that define our efforts. Moreover, if technical texts and translations have long acted as sites for displacing relationships on the grounds of sexual orientation, race, and ability, then we must tread carefully in our engagement as researchers to participate in the actual transformation process. We might ask instead how technical communication broadly and a QTTC project specifically can contribute to loosening the binaries of vernacular and medical that Chu and Drager (2019) critique, and how our theories and methodologies might inspire new participatory methods that expose and leverage the failure inherent through translation’s loss.

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