Cello Pfeil
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On Changing the Names of All Things
Jan 12th, 2026

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In his documentary *Orlando, My Political Biography* (2024), Paul B. Preciado invites us to reflect on the possibility of changing the names of all things, stating that, in Virginia Woolf's novel *Orlando: A Biography* (1928), four metamorphoses can be identified. Here, I am interested in the first. In Preciado's words, "the first revolutionary metamorphosis is poetry", which he defines as "the possibility of changing the names of all things". Inspired by this passage, I aim to elaborate that changing the names of all things entails the possibility of abolition – not necessarily of other names, but of what underlies them; that it implies challenging that which subsists in the act of naming, that is, its normativities. To name, rename, unname, when one considers what underlies a name's pronunciation, is to suggest that there is no such thing as a determined identity or a purified nature. Yet, habitually, in engaging in linguistic and epistemological disputes, we often reproduce the dynamics that we oppose[1], as for example assimilationist postures in trans movements (Raha 2015).

As Ursula Le Guin (1987: 86) wrote in *The Left Hand of Darkness*, "To oppose something is to maintain it". If to oppose something is to maintain it, how do we oppose without reinforcing it? As an alternative, Le Guin proposes that we pursue other ways. Although we choose to go in opposite directions to what

[1] This is a reference to the 2024 LGBTIA+ Pride in São Paulo (Brazil), in which participants wore Brazilian national shirts and raised the national flag as a symbol of pride, in an attempt to "reclaim" nationalism. It is important to note that I write from Brazil, with an academic background centered on anarchist and decolonial studies. And that my experience in academia, as a queer trans man, reveals plenty about the heteronormative, cissexist and supremacist hierarchies so prevalent in both universities and the State. Although trans movements are quite distinct in Brazil and the United States, there are commonalities: these movements, insofar as they do not derive from white cisgender elites, oppose the repressive forces of the State and its modern institutions. Thus, I combine Brazilian and North American theoretical references, establishing a tranarchist and transfeminist dialogue on cisnormativity, anarchism and depathologization.

we repel, when we look back, we find ourselves facing the State, the Church, white supremacy, cisnormativity, albeit at a reasonable distance. Since it seems unwise to give up on opposition, I turn, among other things, to an analysis of the act of "naming" in order to find, or create, other paths. Opposing the power of the State and that of Capital would require opposing our identities, which are inevitably in conflict with normative modern forms of identification. While we cannot completely disassociate ourselves from what once constituted us, we can, in other directions, prefigure possibilities for a future that rejects a modern and supposedly univocal conception of reality.

This matter of prefiguration, vital to anarchist ontology (Jourdan 2017), is reflected in transfeminist initiatives to denaturalize cisnormativity, and is intrinsically aligned with anarchist critiques of intellectual oppression and academicism. To understand this alignment, in this essay, I explore the intersections between important principles in the history of anarchism – such as direct action, self-government, mutual aid (Kropotkin 1972) and the complementarity between freedom and equality – and trans movements' criticisms regarding cisnormativity and the pathologization of gender identities perceived as deviant. Without any ambition of completeness, I write about tranarchism both in terms of its organizational and anti-assimilationist sphere, and in terms of its corporeal and linguistic dimension, materialized in our bodies, in our language and in what we can reach. Since the invention of the "transsexual" diagnosis, during the second half of the 20th century, scientific authoritarianism has undermined claims for self- determination and self-government. This authoritarianism captures our ability to cultivate difference, establishing the criteria for classifying "gender incongruence". Thus, the invention of the 'trans' antagonism seems to be an expression of Otherness, as Grada Kilomba (2019) states, to the detriment of which the modern Self is constituted –

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a subject that constantly protects himself against its own fragility, constituting the "Other" as a permanent threat.

Through this line of tension, a tranarchist critique involves the possibility of transition: by confronting assimilationism in certain trans and queer movements, and refusing all pretensions to essentialism, it proposes, as Shuli Branson (2023) believes, that anarchism transitions, while raising the element of prefiguration as fundamental for imagining other worlds. Along these lines, I introduce the concept of "offense of naming" (Pfeil & Pfeil 2022) in order to debate whether naming the norm – as is done by transfeminism – can be seen as a tranarchist way of perceiving language. To this end, I interweave a brief historical overview of the pathologization of transsexuality and the conceptualization of cisnormativity, as well as the emergence of trans and queer initiatives for depathologization. By understanding that initiatives for depathologization, combating institutional violence and refusing the systematic silencing of trans people in academia are organized according to strategies aligned with anarchist principles, it is possible to observe the meaning of what Elis L. Herman (2015) presents as tranarchism: far from resorting to essentialisms about "being" trans or "being" an anarchist – since there is no way of establishing univocal definitions of these categories – my approach here is based on that which unfolds, which is observed in emancipatory action.

In this regard, we encounter exhausting contradictions. As Herman explains, dealing with institutional powers is necessary not only within social movements, but in our daily lives, at every medical appointment, at every job interview. It involves an exercise of naming: certain people are marked as the Other, while normativity hides within itself (Morrison 2017). As a response, "cisnormativity" is not only a term used to describe conformity around sex/gender norms, but also a statement denouncing the naturalization of an idealized body; it is an argument indicating that the cisgender body is just as socially con-

structed as the trans and intersex body. I do not intend, however, to argue that tormenting academia is something anarchic or done only by anarchists – for it is not. Rather, it interests me to observe the extent to which the reactions of refusal to the naming of cisnormativity reveal the fragility of those institutions that confer on themselves the legitimacy to name the Other as such. From this, one can consider a tranarchist use of language, which is in continuous transition, refusing, in turn, to remain unchanged.

It is along these lines that Brazilian transfeminism stands in relation to the concept of cisnormativity (De Moura 2021). Regarding this normatization, Bruno Pfeil and I (2022) address the cisnormative refusal to acknowledge its own naming: while academia names transsexuality as a pathology, this same academia is offended by its own designation. The offense of naming is evidence of a certain shudder caused by trans people inside institutionalized spaces – which denotes, as I see it, the disruptive aspect of naming the norm, of constraining its institutionalization and naturalization. Naming the norm is a way of opposing that which inferiorizes us.

Although both trans and anarchist movements oppose scientific authoritarianism (Bakunin 1999) and strive to constrain its aspired universalism, it is worth noting the negative perceptions in certain anarchist spheres towards a supposed "identity politics" – encompassing, among other factors, gender barriers (Jeppesen & Nazar 2012: 173). Jeppesen & Nazar perceive a scission between feminist/queer anarchism and a cisnormative anarchism, which would not consider 'identity' issues as relevant to the popular struggle. Despite these disagreements, one arena where both trans and anarchist critiques can be identified is in the field of pathologization. The extensive and intemperate affair between pathologization and institutional violence seems rather ambivalent as it occurs between practically synonymous instances. Pathologization is a form of institutional violence and institutionality relies firmly on pathology to justify its le-

Although trans, feminist and queer movements are often captured by institutional politics, an anarchist transfeminism, or a transfeminist anarchism, can be identified, among other things, through the enactment of offense: from the disruption caused by naming the norm to the prefiguration of other forms of life that make our lives possible. And transfeminism, especially in my experience in Brazil, strives to name a normativity that camouflages as a reality, as an imperative form of life.

Such reality can be disturbed insofar as we inject testosterone with intramuscular shots and experience the body confronting itself, or as we affirm our gender without even touching a syringe; as we change our names, or give them other meanings. Tranarchism is aimed at an anarchic transition, and at an anarchism in transition: for us not to hold as a standard of humanity that which annihilates us, and for us not to "humanize" that which inspires us to revolt. Humanity is no more than an attempt towards order, and the order provided by representation has, for us, the taste of tutelage: "order is poverty; it is famine become the normal order of society." (Kropotkin 2019: 55) It is not so much a matter of changing names while maintaining the structure, but of realizing that destroying it requires that we simultaneously construct other realities while maintaining a profound disagreement with the structure in itself. The offense of naming *is meant to be offensive*, and the restlessness we feel when truths are challenged could lead the way to creating other paths that are not only based on opposition, but on prefiguration.

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Conclusion: On the possibility of changing the names of all things

In my academic trajectory, I have wandered through different spaces in the hope of finding some refuge from what bothered me – institutionality and assimilation – and of creating other possibilities of organization and life. As a radical imagination and prefiguration demand that normativities be named and denaturalized, I have here argued that offending the norm can be considered a tranarchist and transfeminist way of using, or organizing, language.

Returning to Herman, it is by no means a matter of associating "gender incongruities" with a kind of anarchic nature, but rather of stressing and dismantling the hegemonic bodily, discursive and normative ideals about sex/gender. Prefiguration accompanies a radical imagination, for we must radically imagine that our bodies, and thus our language, can be something else. While it cannot be said that being a trans person inevitably means being a revolutionary, it does appear that the embodiment of self-determination prefigures, albeit in an incipient way, possibilities for a future that comprises our lives as possible. And language, in this tranarchist transition in which I find myself immersed, is a concrete practice. It is a transition that refuses to determine the truth of life, once we understand that "to say someone else's truth is to dominate" (Jourdan 2019: 50, my trans.). Refusing to tell someone else's truth implies a continuous movement of rupture and disidentification, since we must assiduously question our own assumptions about the other and ourselves. By embracing our monstrosity and refusing the modern biomedical/psychiatric plateau, we engage in an anti-assimilatory stance. And this is precisely how Kropotkin describes order – if order is misery, then we defend disorder; if humanity is white supremacy, State and assimilation, then we defend monstrosity.

gitimacy. For how many do not recoil when the *difference*, or the Other, takes the stand? Although classic anarchist literature does not engage with the conceptions of the Other and Otherness, such arguments can be found in tranarchist literature.

Tranarchist literature is defined by Herman as a range of studies that associate transness with anarchy, or with an anarchist ontology, that is, the refusal of the paradigm of representation. Although it is not possible, even at a glance, to associate a sort of trans essentialism with an anarchist essentialism – Bakunin's critique of scientific universalisms rules out this seductive association beforehand –, it is important, even necessary, to expose the contradiction in defending trans lives and, at the same time, raising the national flag; of defending sexual and gender liberation and, simultaneously, corroborating the imperative of the State; or of defending black, indigenous and marginalized communities and, on the other hand, legitimizing military violence. To follow Le Guin's suggestion regarding the creation of other paths is to commit to anti- assimilation, which involves stripping away the universalistic aspect of normativity. The tranarchist critique has a dual direction and makes a proposition – it criticizes, on the one hand, the assimilationist attitude in some trans movements and, on the other, the conservatism of anarchist organizations; and then, in addition to proposing that anarchism should transition – considering transitioning as something continuous and unfinished – it proposes the factor of prefiguration as the basis for creating other world configurations.

In other words, tranarchists strive not to fall into the trap of certainties, as we move away from conceptual fixity. Similarly to Branson's idea of an anarchism in transition, and Herman's idea of a *queered* anarchism – and not a queer, self-enclosed anarchism – my impression is that naming the norm and prefiguring other bodies and languages *offend* the principle of authority that guarantees its maintenance, and is a fundamen-

tal element of the first revolutionary metamorphosis: that of changing the names of all things. It is important, then, to examine one of our main objects of criticism – an institutionally refined cisnormativity, from which the scientific definitions of transsexuality were formed.

Pathologization and institutional violence: an extensive affair

Different terms emerged to designate "sexual deviations", such as "transsexualism", "transvestism" and "transsexuality". Although some of these terms had already been elaborated, they only acquired a pathological and institutional meaning in the 1950s. The publication in 1966 of "The Transsexual Phenomenon", by German endocrinologist Harry Benjamin, and the official definition of "gender dysphoria", by American sexologist John Money, were important steps towards pathologization. The pursuit of the truth of the sexes turned into pathology and diagnostics (Bento & Pelúcio 2012). In the 1980s, the diagnosis of transsexuality was included in the International Code of Diseases[2] (ICD) and in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). The impact of these events is significant globally, since the ICD is signed by the World Health Organization, to which 194 countries subscribe, and the DSM is published by the American Psychiatric Association, which

[2] The ICD's tenth version, valid until 2018, defined transsexuality as a disorder of sexual identity, characterized by "a desire to live and be accepted as a person of the opposite sex" accompanied by "a feeling of unease or inadequacy in reference to one's own anatomical sex and a desire to undergo surgical intervention or hormonal treatment" (WHO 2019: n.p.). The eleventh updated version, on the other hand, classifies transsexuality as a gender incongruence, "a marked and persistent incongruence between an individual's experienced gender and assigned sex" (WHO 2022: n.p.). Despite the clear change between the two versions, transsexuality is still regarded as an incongruity, a deviation, something-that-is-not-right.

ous movement of impermanence – which does not mean that there should not exist categories to organize social relations, but that their contextual and non-universal character must be recognized, contrary to what occurs in the academic canon.

For a transfeminist tranarchism, language is managed as an instrument of emancipatory organization not through a dichotomy between the means and the ends, but rather through the notion that the means correspond to what is desired. Offending the norm is an attempt to anarchically understand language. To embrace transition is to be involved in its continuous movement; it is to renounce totalizing perspectives; it is to discard assumptions of completeness and its certainties. It is something distinctly anti- modern. An anarchism in transition is, to me, an anarchism of monstrosity. So, in search of a way out of the cisnormative regime (and, for me, out of the paradigm of representation), Preciado refers to the creation of a new grammar, a new language – a task that cannot be accomplished individually.

With tranarchism, Herman is not suggesting an abandonment or rejection of "classical anarchism", but rather a revision based on what affects us; a recognition that there is no universal knowledge that can cover everything, let alone our singularity. The possibility of changing the names of all things is reflected in the need to offend namings that purport to be permanent, that are binary and othering; namings that typically have an institutional character. The possibility of changing is, to me, the possibility of uncapturability, which, lest it become a trap in itself, must be anti-assimilationist. It is along this path, of transition and impermanence, that I believe in both an anarchist transfeminism and a transfeminist anarchism – a transfeminist tranarchism that offends the naming of the world in its current form.

and "cisgender" to be categorically included in the ICD, nor for transsexuality to be considered a gender incongruence and thus a less harmful type of pathology – but rather appropriate the means to produce our own health, based on our demands; create our own language, based on what affects us; name cisnormativity as a reflection of the violence to which we are subjected; so that our direct action is tied to the recognition that we create our language to the extent that we create our own worlds.

In this sense, I wonder: could we consider this as a tranarchist way of maneuvering language? Far from giving concise, definite answers, I believe that raising these questions demonstrates, in some way, how the offense of naming and tranarchism are intertwined. But beyond all that, it is the reaction of refusing to be named that denotes the fragility of the modern canon. On the other hand, by refusing the mediation of biomedicine/psychiatry, we defy the authority of protocols that do not suit us, even if they are imposed on us. The perpetuation of the binarity and permanence of cisnormativity require clinical and diagnostic protocols to describe the Other, but these same protocols and categories serve as a sort of laboratory of normativity. Scrutinizing them allows us to understand their fallaciousness, and above all their limitations.

When Branson invites anarchism to transition, it seems to me that she follows this path: not only is it an invitation for anarchism to reconsider some of its strategies, but to detach itself from certain essentialisms, to abandon the Self, to name its own norms *in order to denaturalize* them. It is in this regard that Herman reflects not on a queer anarchism, but on a queered anarchism, on something that is constantly transforming rather than aiming for a state of completeness. Branson invites anarchism to transition, thus becoming something continuous that refuses binarity and permanence. "The monster", according to Preciado (2021: 24), "is one who lives in transition." The possibility of changing the names of all things lies in this continu-

serves as a model for countless psychiatric institutions worldwide. Regarding my territorial context, in 2008 the Transsexualizing Process of the *Sistema Único de Saúde* (Unified Health System) in Brazil was instituted, based on the diagnostic criteria of the ICD. And on May 8, 2025, the Federal Council of Medicine (Conselho Federal de Medicina) published Resolution No. 2.427/2025, which, amongst other things, prohibits trans people from undergoing hormone therapy without a psychiatric diagnosis (Conselho Federal de Medicina 2025). This resolution is based on the pathologizing assumptions of the ICD and DSM.

It is by contrast with an unnamed notion of normality that the trans body is defined. This process is described by Bento & Pelúcio (2012: 574, my trans.) as

> a process that has qualified certain scientific knowledge as the only knowledge capable of providing the right answers to experiences that challenge gender norms. A process which, on the other hand, authorizes the tutelage of the bodies and subjectivities of people who recognize themselves as transgender.

While the strengthening of a biomedical notion of transsexuality made it possible to institutionalize medical care for hormone therapy and surgical procedures, on the other hand, an ideal model of "being trans" was established, to the detriment of an ideal model of being a person. If we are provided with specialized medical services, we find ourselves on the verge of being classified as depressed, immature, narcissistic, potentially explosive and individualistic (Bento 2006). And these classifications are not limited to biomedicine: in 2017, the *Latin American Journal of Fundamental Psychopathologies*, volume 20, number 2, published an article with a psychoanalytical scope that assimilated transsexuality to an "epidemic" of "hysteria" in the

age of globalization. Although psychoanalysis has performed a clear rupture with the medical/psychiatric literature of the 20th century, among its converging points is the understanding of transsexuality as an incongruence[3].

Based on pathology, the non-normative gender identity would be legally recognized, thus allowing the trans person to change their name and gender on civil documents, access specialized – and, in the Brazilian context, universal – health care, access academic environments and acquire a certain – albeit precarious – inclusion in the formal labor scene. Until 2018, for example, the legislation that applied in Brazil only allowed trans people to change their name and gender on civil documents if they formally presented psychiatric and psychological reports to confirm their transsexuality, in addition to witnesses, photographs, personal accounts and other elements. Nowadays, this process can be conducted directly in public registry offices, without the need for legal proceedings. The use of modern biomedical studies to legitimize State violence can also be observed in Operation Tarantula, which took place in 1987 in São Paulo (Brazil), when police forces began arresting travestis under the allegation that they were committing the crime of HIV contagion. Such an allegation, despite presenting no evidence whatsoever, was based solely on a discriminatory and pretentiously scientific assumption about them. Their bodies were deemed inherently dangerous in order to justify their harassment. As Bakunin (1999: para. 12) wrote, "that which is true of scientific academies is also true of all constituent and legislative assemblies, even those

[3] While Harry Benjamin (1966) proposed a biomedical definition of the "transsexual phenomenon", for which "treatment" would necessarily include hormone therapy and surgical procedures, Robert Stoller (1975) presented a psychoanalytic definition that attributed transsexuality to psychic factors, especially concerning the patient's relationship with their mother. Despite the seemingly opposite directions followed by biomedicine and psychoanalysis, their destination was the same: pathologization.

From a tranarchist perspective, self-determination is regarded as a form of self- government, far removed from individualism and atomistic views. A person's self- government depends on others being able to exercise it as well. Self-government is not individual, but collective. No wonder trans movements benefit from mutual aid in organizing themselves, in LGBTIA+ shelters, in producing autonomous publications and research about ourselves, in collective efforts to change name and gender in civil registries, in mobilizations, usually in virtual environments, to make access to health and information less bureaucratic.

These are all expressions of self-defense, ranging from throwing bricks at the police to building shelters for trans people in vulnerable situations; from organizing preparatory courses for entering higher education to efforts to confront the institutional literature that focuses on the supposed "truth" of transsexuality. Returning to the transfeminist provocation of naming the norm, we find that conceptualizing cisnormativity confronts an academia that produces Otherness, that inferiorizes difference and imposes itself authoritatively on the othered body; an academia that grants itself the ability to discover the "truth" about someone, and that keeps its norms *unsaid*.

As Herman understands tranarchist literature to be a selection of texts that associate the emancipation of trans people with anarchist ideas, tranarchism can be thought of in the sense of a critical stance towards both governmental authoritarianism and scientific oppression. A tranarchist transfeminism engages not only in naming the norm, but in doing so in order to question the distribution of institutional power that confers on certain historical figures the authority to name; it is a transfeminism that refuses to fall into the trap of assimilation, that remains vigilant about the paths of our politics and our language; that refrains from, or at least limits, maintaining what we oppose. Perhaps we should not strive for "heterosexuality"

Acervo Trans-Anarquista[8] (Tranarchist Collection), aims to facilitate access to trans anarchist literature in Portuguese.

Despite these tactical alignments between trans insurgencies and anarchist ontology, Jeppesen & Nazar (2012) identify a scission between feminist/queer anarchisms and a supposedly cisnormative and heteronormative anarchism, which categorizes gender issues as "identitarian" and irrelevant to working-class struggle. Contradictorily, the opposition to State power in these cases itself upholds aspects of the norms that the State supports. However, anarchism has developed considerably as a response to queer, feminist and trans organizations and their ways of confronting the conflicts of the State. It is in opposition to such a separatist approach that tranarchism is thought of. Similarly, Jason Lydon (2012: 199) invites anarchists to "reconsider their repulsion of identity politics and learn some of their history". By distancing itself from a presumed "identity politics", from racial, feminist, trans and queer issues, the white and cisnormative anarchism distances itself from its own history. In line with what Le Guin wrote, through prefiguration, it is my understanding that anarchism proposes to create other paths and directions that seek not to reiterate what we oppose; or, rather, that strive to be in a constant movement of change and questioning.

In the same sense as Jeppesen & Nazar, Herman explores the "tranarchist literature", according to which there are clear parallels between gender dissidence and resistance to State violence: "gender non-conforming people have a rich history of resisting state oppression." (Herman 2015: 78) This is a view of the history of anarchist movements in line with trans and queer opposition to institutional constraints. Something that marks this view is the defense of self-determination; a vigorous role in the movement for depathologization.

[8] Available here: https://transanarquismo.noblogs.org/. [accessed 13 Aug. 2024]

chosen by universal suffrage." It hardly seems possible to renounce an oppositional stance, given that opposition stems from concrete circumstances, in the face of concrete violence that takes place on a daily basis.

Just as the State defends its borders with militarism and legislation, biomedical practice materializes, in its official documents and service protocols, the naturalization of cisnormativity and the pathologization of gender transgression and queerness. These are conventions – or, as Paul B. Preciado writes, contracts – historically and culturally created, but naturalized by modern institutions. These specialized health services on transsexuality, which Alex Barksdale (2023) describes as gender-affirming care (GAC), appear to be the legal means by which we can access health care. It is not, then, a matter of questioning the need for these spaces – because they are necessary –, but of questioning the governments and corporations' monopoly over all our access to health care. Inside clinics and hospitals, there is no possibility of a counter-argument or of questioning the authority of these specialists, who hold epistemic privilege (Grosfoguel 2016), that is, the authority to *name* and to (in)validate our bodies, identities and desires.

In response, trans organizations mobilize to take charge of these services and conduct them autonomously. Barksdale describes these initiatives as autonomous health practices, based on mutual support networks, exchange of information on medical care and accessible pharmaceuticals, application of hormones among each other and clandestine transit of substances. Autonomous health practices disrupt, or at the very least challenge, the authoritative relationship between doctor and patient.

Although the maintenance of social relations requires the establishment of profound agreements, it is to the extent that these agreements are aimed at the extermination of the "other" that the individual is transformed into a Self and the "other"

into an Other. In other words, when contracts are mediated by institutions and violently reinforced, the four pillars listed by J. Rogue (2012) that mediate gender experiences become explicit: the State, patriarchy, capitalism and racism. Highly guarded places, such as airports, border highways and police stations, operate through validation: we continually need to resort to ways of avoiding possible harassment, institutional violence, embarrassment and bodily violation (Herman 2015). Paul Gialdroni (2024: 1:20:08), in his presentation at the *Seminário Latinoamericano de Transmasculinidades* (Latin American Seminar of Transmasculinites), told us that "sabemos que ser trans es difícil; sabemos que ser migrante es difícil. Pero más difícil todavía es ser trans y migrante."[4] In his migratory experience to Mexico, because he had not changed his documents, Paul had to make an effort to be read as a woman, despite his undergoing hormone therapy; otherwise, he would not have made it through immigration. In urban spaces, from his personal experience, it is safer to be read as a cisgender man, "simply for survival", even though this category does not correspond to his gender identity. The same cannot be experienced by black trans men in the face of racism and police violence.

These are material demonstrations of a norm that is expressed quite objectively in the name of security, of the law, or the reaffirmation of a scientific standard considered to be neutral. In opposing it, we are portrayed as a threat to security, to traditional institutions – for example, the heterosexual and patriarchal family –, since any act of resistance performed by the Other would be a threat to the State. Thus, the norm materializes in that which it opposes. To put it another way, "the norm is where it claims not to be; it makes itself explicit when it invents its antagonism." (Pfeil & Pfeil 2024: n.p.) In general terms, a cisnormative imaginary is forged for an ideal body,

[4] "We know that being trans is difficult; we know that being a migrant is difficult. But it is even more difficult to be trans and migrant."

Violence and the Audre Lorde Project are dedicated to sheltering victims of violence, especially institutional violence, and hate crimes. There are also trans and anarchist initiatives in the field of abolitionism. Since 2010, in Montreal, the Prisoner Correspondence Project has offered incarcerated trans people the possibility of sending and receiving correspondence to people outside, as a way of socializing and creating bonds. In San Francisco, the Transgender, Gender Variant and Intersex Justice Project, organized by trans women, offers support to trans and intersex people who are incarcerated, and accompanies them after their release from the prison system for reintegration. In Boston, the Black and Pink project produces and sends a monthly newsletter with poetry, political articles and stories to more than 1,300 trans people deprived of their freedom.

In Brazil, there are significant trans mutual aid networks, such as shelters, organizations to welcome LGBTIA+ people in vulnerable situations and cultural events: Casa Nem, in Rio de Janeiro; Casa Aurora, in Salvador; Instituto Transviver, in Recife; the NGO Transvest, in Belo Horizonte; Casa 1, in São Paulo. In terms of education, in Rio de Janeiro Casa Nem offers PreparaNem, a free preparatory course for trans people seeking to access higher education; and *Revista Estudos Transviades* – a Brazilian journal of transmasculinities that has been active since 2020 – organizes the Transviades Preparatory, a free program for trans people seeking to enter master's, doctoral and specialization programs. Another well-known organization, of which I am a member, is the Brazilian Institute of Transmasculinities (IBRAT), which provides free legal assistance for trans men to undergo top surgery/masculinizing mastectomy at a reduced cost, besides organizing health information maps and lists of medical professionals so as to improve access to health care. Additionally, among other things, a virtual collection organized by trans anarchist activists, entitled

according to a contractualist argument, on the war of all against all. The State, according to this argument, was founded to mitigate generalized war. However, for anarchists, it is not competition but solidarity that organizes societies and enables its complexification; a solidarity that can be found at the very base of trans and queer movements, given the need to organize, as Paul Gialdroni puts it, "simply for survival". The Hobbesian myth of the state of nature is nothing more than that, *a myth*. Again, this brings us to the point of questioning who is granted the power to name the world, who are the historical figures authorized to categorize a form of life, and to establish the criteria for how we should live – or not live.

Although there are internal differences within trans and transfeminist movements, direct action and mutual aid are practiced in confrontations with the imposing forces of the State. Both Veronica Bolina and Maria Clara de Sena, as well as various trans organizations in Brazil and abroad, received support – evidently, not from any government instance – to overcome the situation they found themselves in. Similarly, anarchists organize to dismantle the fictional and yet concrete frontiers materialized by modern institutions. The need to organize against violence coming from a State that, in the name of security, sanitization and the family, creates conflicts both inside – such as between different types of police – and outside marks the history of trans movements in Brazil. Since its foundation, ANTRA has been dedicated, among other matters, to advocating for trans women and travestis detained by State forces. It is a continuous confrontation against continuous violence.

This can also be traced in the North American context. The Stonewall uprising anticipated the formation of The Gay Liberation Front and, shortly after the occupation of Weinstein Hall at NYU, Street Transvestites Action Revolutionaries (STAR) was formed. In the US context, autonomous organizations such as the Sylvia Rivera Law Project, Communities United Against

so that we differentiate ourselves from the norm at the same time as we are urged to reiterate it. This imaginary presents itself as pre-discursive, and pre-discursivity is, according to Viviane Vergueiro (2016), one of the constitutive pillars of cisnormativity. We glance back – or around – and there it is, staring back at us.

In agreement with Vergueiro, cisnormativity can be characterized, structurally and institutionally, by binarity, pre-discursivity and permanence. Pointing to these elements, the naming of the norm transpires as an initiative of denaturalization that goes against the pathologizing authority. In naming the norm as it is, exposing its regulatory tenor, we encounter a refusal on the part of this very norm to recognize its own naming. Cisnormativity defends itself from its antagonism by denying the names that the Other assigns to it. Branson (2023) proposes that the threat, the radical antagonism attributed to gender non-conformity, ought to be amplified in order to also amplify the damage we can cause. That is, we can appropriate our designation as antagonisms and "embody the threat". We embody the threat both through the body and through language; both by affirming difference – or, as the ICD puts it, "gender incongruence" – and by unveiling the assumption of congruence. It is an unveiling that addresses the core of the issue, even within anarchist circles: the aforementioned normative anarchism that sidelines such "identitarianism" often reacts in an intemperate manner when we point out that some of its figures rely precisely on the normativities they claim to despise.

In attributing to the queer body the elements that the Self represses in himself (and I refer to a "him" on purpose), such cisnormativity serves as a sort of inverted mirror for us to understand the structural and institutional aspects of othering (Morrison 2017), that is, the transformation of a person/group into an Other. This is the expression of what Kilomba (2019) understands as Otherness. The modern "Self" grants himself the

ability to invent Otherness, naming it in diagnostic manuals, and any attempt at self- defense, on the part of this Other, is seen as a threat. What happens, then, when we embrace the threat?

The concept of cisnormativity reached several countries, arriving in Brazil in the early 2000s, in the transfeminist movement. A central issue in Brazilian transfeminism is the conceptualization of cisnormativity, with the aim of dismantling the established biomedical contrast between transsexuality and normality. It is interesting to consider that transfeminism, as a social and academic movement, is not rigid and inflexible. As anarchists argue that theory and action should not be separate grounds, the Brazilian transfeminist movement has relied on empirical experience and action to defend the naming of cisnormativity and discussions on depathologization. There are breaches that can be pointed out and criticisms that can be made in theoretical and practical terms.

In his reflection on transmasculinities, the transfeminist author Cauê Assis de Moura (2021: 113, my trans.) addresses a certain invisibility regarding transmasculine narratives in debates on transfeminism in Brazil, and he asks, "And couldn't I be a transfeminist?" It is important to consider this lack in order to emphasize that transfeminism, as de Moura (2021: 115, my trans.) writes, "is a process that is under construction, that is plural." That is, in transfeminism, it is possible to notice a refusal to produce new essentialisms. By defending the conceptual definition of cisgender, transfeminism turns to something that modern biomedical literature rejects: the recognition of its own difference. And recognizing our own differences – not through othering, but rather in experiences of alterity – is vital in creating other paths. If dismantling requires us to be familiar with the structure, prefiguration requires us to be familiar with the figures that surround us. With this in mind, the following section is dedicated to conceiving an anarchist perspective

the State. If Malatesta (2015: 21) defines governments as "authoritarian organisms which, by using force, even, possibly for good ends, impose their will on others", then we can observe that trans and queer movements, especially in marginalized communities, are precisely opposed to the imposition of police harassment and control and pathologizing medical protocols. And this posture dates back further than the last century. Anarchofeminism, incipiently corroborated by anarchists such as Emma Goldman, Voltairine de Cleyre and, in Brazil, Maria Lacerda de Moura, sought to undermine, though not by institutional means, male oppression of women. Queer anarchism dates back to the second half of the 19th century, when, in Europe, autonomous activists began to defend homosexuality publicly. Voltairine de Cleyre, for example, defended both sexual freedom and the struggle against patriarchal oppression in "Sex Slavery", published in 1890.

Anarchofeminists called for autonomy, along with the abolition of the State, in their struggle for emancipation. Radical movements for sexual liberation emerged within the anarchist movement, with Goldman being regarded as one of the first to defend homosexual emancipation. Not surprisingly, the German doctor and sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld, a pioneer in the defense of homosexual rights, referred to Goldman as "the first and only human being, of importance in America, to carry the issue of homosexual love to the broadest layers of the public" (Liesegang 2012: 94).

In response to the militarist forces, numerous trans movements with political strategies aligned with anarchist inclinations, with an emphasis on mutual aid (Kropotkin 1972), emerged and/or received greater visibility after the Stonewall uprising. Mutual aid is a fundamental practice, as it refutes the founding myth of the State. If we understand, in agreement with Kropotkin, that cooperation, and not competition, is a fundamental element in the evolution of species, the founding myth of the State collapses, as it is supposed to be based,

alcanti 2024: 182, my trans.). As Gill- Peterson observes, transmisogyny, especially directed against people who fall within the scope of transfemininities, can be traced back to colonial archives and marks the history of colonialism in the Americas. As a form of extermination, transmisogyny is expressed both through brutal violence and pathologization.

Such violence can still be witnessed in our time. In 2015, for example, Veronica Bolina, a black travesti sex worker, was arrested, beaten, and had her face disfigured by police officers after being accused of getting into a conflict with a neighbor. This happened in São Paulo. Photos of this brutality were released on social media, causing an outrage, especially among virtual LGBTIA+ groups. It was only through the intervention of LGBTIA+ movements that Veronica obtained a certain amount of protection.

It is also worth telling, as did Cavalcanti (2024), the story of Maria Clara de Sena, a trans woman who worked as an expert in the Brazilian anti-torture system. In 2015, during an inspection, a prison guard disrespected her and even threatened to shoot her in the head. After reporting the case, the officer was dismissed, but the Union of Officers and Employees in the Penitentiary System of the State of Pernambuco (Sindasp-PE) publicly declared its support for the officer and accused Maria Clara of disrespecting him. In Sindasp-PE's support letter, Maria Clara was repeatedly addressed with male pronouns and by her birth name. At the beginning of the investigations, Maria Clara suffered virtual attacks from fake profiles on social media and, shortly afterwards, on her way home from work, she found her apartment completely trashed and her door broken down. Maria Clara then resigned from her position and obtained political asylum in Canada, where she lives to this day.

These practices are not at odds with the foundations of the government apparatus and its militarism; on the contrary, these are practices that are in line with the inherent logic of

on transfeminism, or a transfeminist perspective on anarchist ideas. This route is designed to illustrate the tranarchist aspect of denaturalization, especially in the realm of depathologization and the critique against intellectual oppression.

Tranarchism and the offense of naming

In November 2019, at the annual conference of the *École de la Cause Freudienne* in Paris, Paul B. Preciado delivered a speech, by invitation of the event's organizers, to nearly 3,500 psychoanalysts. Although Preciado does not define himself as an anarchist, it is possible to trace similarities between his thinking and anarchist ideas. By asking "Can the monster speak?", Preciado invited an academy of psychoanalysts to recognize the normativities that psychoanalysis produces and reifies. Preciado stood in front of those psychoanalysts, presenting himself as a trans individual "whose right to speak as an expert about my condition, or to produce a discourse or any form of knowledge about myself is not recognized by the medicinal profession, the law, psychoanalysis or psychiatry" (2021: 12).

Otherness in itself exposes the discourses that produce it and the institutions that legitimize it. To name cisnormativity, especially within the scientific academies that pioneered pathologization, is an affront to the intellectual authority that anarchists are so critical of. If, until the mid-2000s, the antagonist of transsexuality was normality, from that moment on, with the term 'cisgender', this antagonism dissolves – and the term is promptly rejected by academic circles, especially in the area of gender studies[5]. One cannot find the definitions of heterosexuality and cisgender or cisness in the ICD and DSM – not even before 1990, when the diagnosis of homosexuality

[5] Here, I refer more specifically to the Brazilian and North American contexts, where the term cisgender has become widespread.

was still included in the ICD. As a strategy for maintaining the norm, it silences itself, it remains *unsaid*, despite its clear presence in the designation of otherness. And the reactions of denial to the exposure of the norm and its self-protective silence are indicative of how fragile the institutions that restrict us may be. Just like Herman elucidates how border zones put trans people at risk, we can identify discursive, linguistic, academic and predatory border zones, which become explicit whenever we stress their camouflage.

In the Brazilian context, a recent event of this sort of rejection can be traced to the denouncement of an important academic as "persona non grata" by numerous national transfeminist collectives[6]. This movement arose because this scholar delegitimized the efforts that Brazilian transfeminist activists have been making for more than two decades to name the concept of "cisgender", to define it and mobilize it as an initiative for depathologization. Immediately after the publication of this statement, signed by numerous autonomous trans collectives, the Brazilian Society of Sociology, along with the National Association of Graduate Studies and Research in Social Sciences, published a formal letter in support of the scholar – signed entirely by white, cisgender university professors. The discomfort caused by the naming of the norm denotes precisely the fragility of modern identities, their identitarianism, and academicism.

Commonly, as we name and discuss the norm; as we affirm that the "Self" is nothing more than an "other", or to put it another way, that cisgender is as culturally and historically structured as transgender; as we expose the partiality of academic literature, we encounter responses of rejection and refusal. While academia diagnoses transsexuality as an incon-

[6] For more information, see: <https://adiadorim.org/noticias/2023/11/rede-de-pesquisadores-trans-e- travestis-se-articula-para-combater-transfobia-academica/>. [accessed 10 March 2024]

At the end of 1991, according to activist Jovanna Baby Cardoso da Silva (2021), the Rio de Janeiro mayor's department, headed by Marcello Alencar, sent city guards into the streets to deliberately arrest travestis in the area ranging from Santos Dumont Airport to Ipanema, an upper-middle class neighborhood. Before the operation began, Jovanna called the institute where she worked, ISER – Institute for Religious Studies, to prevent the arrests. As soon as the city guards arrived at Augusto Severo Avenue, Jovanna and her companions contacted the military police from a pay phone, and the police were able to prevent the guards from arresting them, because the power to detain people was solely within the police's jurisdiction. In other words, the police prevented the guards from exercising institutional transphobia in order to reinforce that only the police could do so. From this moment on, Jovanna and her colleagues organized institutionally to formally denounce this type of occurrence. In summary, they were forced to strategically make use of internal conflicts between the city guards and the military police to avoid being arrested. This is how they founded ASTRAL – the *Associação de Travestis e Liberados* (Association of Travestis and Liberated People), on May 15, 1992. Even so, they suffered violence at the hands of both the guards and the police. Eventually, ASTRAL became ANTRA – the *Associação Nacional de Travestis e Transsexuais* (National Association of Travestis and Transsexuals), which is today the association with the greatest political impact for trans people in Brazil.

It must be stressed that the police and administrative authorities' arguments for legitimizing these actions of detention and extermination were based on a scientific and hygienist argument: that travestis were committing the crime of HIV contagion and should be detained in order to preserve the well-being of the "general population". In the case of this police operation and the aforementioned Operation Tarantula, it was clear that "the state and the general population were on one side, and travestis and other openly LGBTI people on the other" (Cav-

Tranarchist and queer resistance

A distinction should then be made between what anarchists understand as State violence and as revolutionary violence. On the latter, the Italian anarchist Malatesta (2015: 22) wrote that "we do not wish to impose anything on anybody; that we do not believe it either possible or desirable to do good by the people through force […]." The use of revolutionary violence is justified when an individual or group needs to defend themselves against State violence, supported by mechanisms over which the governed have no or little control. If using force is only legitimate when in a situation of self- defense, violence is legitimate when there is an imposition of compliance with duties and norms, as occurs in gender and racial relations. Once certain names and categories are imposed on us, as well as a way of life that invalidates our own, our self-protection is, following Malatesta's argument, on the line. If government violence is a means of guaranteeing the maintenance of State imperativeness, the violence of the governed constitutes a way of self-protection.

In her book *A Short History of Trans Misogyny*, historian Gill-Peterson (2024) maps the persecution of transfeminine people in different territories affected by colonialism. The way in which these people identified themselves internally, in relation to their own expressions of gender and sexuality, mattered little when confronted with their own demise, because only the external and patriarchal gaze served as a criterion for their extermination. The histories of trans movements cannot be approached without considering the emergence of the prison system and the incongruities that exist within it. As the Brazilian psychologist Céu Silva Cavalcanti (2024) investigated, the first unified Brazilian organization of travestis and transsexuals was formed as a result of confrontations with the police.

gruity and offends us, stripping us of our integrity and constantly putting us to the test, in denouncing its normalization this same normativity is offended. By revealing what is left unsaid, tensions arise. There is a systematic refusal to recognize that what is considered natural is an invention. To offend the world is to confront it; to confront the norm is to denaturalize it, and those who articulate this confrontation immediately become threatening. The offense felt by the psychoanalysts regarding Preciado's statement serves as a response to Otherness: during his speech a considerable number of psychoanalysts in the auditorium began to demand that Preciado be silenced. As did Preciado, we offend the world by embracing our monstrosity; by *not* refusing the place of monster; by embodying the antagonism; by rupturing with the paradigm of representation and thereby with its ontological presuppositions.

This denaturalization is conceived in academia as a threat to the neutrality of science, and any assumption of neutrality collides with trans and queer narratives that reveal the culturally defective bias of the "gender incongruence" diagnosis. It is precisely in this sense that the offense of naming unveils the authoritarian tenor of cisnormativity. Anarchists refuse mediation, that which purports to be the liaison between the rulers and the ruled. It is along these lines that we refuse to separate theory from practice and means from ends, or that we refuse the diagnostic categories that purport to justify our access to health services. As Preciado puts it, the capacity for self-determination of the "trans body" is annulled by medicine, the law, psychoanalysis and psychiatry. The regulators of gender experiences pointed out by J. Rogue are expressed in Preciado's words. The State, legitimizing modern biomedical and psychiatric knowledge, allies with patriarchy and racism in the Othering of those who antagonize the norm – non-white, non-heterosexual, non-"natural". This same chain of power determines the 'true' transsexuality, in its numerous and biased diagnostic criteria.

The direction that tranarchism follows regarding academia is not one of claiming legitimacy or freedom – in Audre Lorde's words (1983: 94), "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house", or, in Preciado's words (2021: 17), "they who bind are as imprisoned as they whose movements are hobbled by the knotted ropes." And it would be incoherent to ask for freedom, since freedom, according to Bakunin, is indivisible; freedom cannot be granted; it is not an object to be handed over to someone, nor is it a fragment with scarce content to be measured and regulated. The logic behind the categorization of transsexuality as "gender incongruence" and the latest "progress" we are witnessing in terms of inclusion and humanization comes from a concept of freedom as something divisible, something that can be distributed.

We refute this logic by defending that freedom materializes in our bodies, in our prefigurations of the worlds in which we wish to live. We do not wait for normativity to recognize its normative character so that we can materialize that which is perceived as incongruity; we do not wait for the health system to completely depathologize transsexuality so that we can then handle 'transsexualizing' substances, as stated by Barksdale; and we certainly do not wait for the orthographic arrangements of formal language to adopt all the recent transformations so that we can employ other modes of speech and naming. The elaboration of Pajubá[7] by travestis and trans women during the military regime in Brazil, as well as the naming of

[7] Pajubá is a language elaborated by travestis and trans women in Brazil, in the context of the 1964-1985 military regime, with the intention of communicating without being detained by the police and other oppressive agents. It is influenced by African dialects and religions of African origin, and has been adopted by marginalized groups of the LGBTIA+ community in Brazil. In Yoruba, "pajubá" means "secret". Travestis, trans women and other LGBTIA+ people during the military regime chose to use pajubá to not be fully understood, especially by the authorities and agents of the state. It is, therefore, a "secret language", which assumes that it is not possible to establish an effective dialog with government authorities.

cisnormativity and the creation of other nomenclatures that (de)codify certain expressions, could be understood not only as forms of self-defense per se, but also as the making of other worlds – in simple terms, as forms of prefiguration. And prefiguration offends the world as we know it, precisely because we aim, while creating a new world, to destroy the current one.

Any attempt to refuse assimilation in refusing names, renaming, unnaming or constraining the act of categorization and pathologization, is therefore a threat. The monster must not speak, even less in a language that is inconsistent with normativity. Interestingly, both in Preciado's case and in the Brazilian episode, strong delegitimizing arguments were raised to invalidate trans knowledge based not on its arguments, but on an assumed intellectual incapacity on the part of its authors.

Rogue (2012) argues that although gender transgression is not essentially revolutionary, the destruction of power relations structured on gender concepts is subversive and necessarily anti-State. For throwing bricks at the New York police during the Stonewall Riot (1969), Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera were accused of being violent terrorists, of having carried out attacks against society and the State. By confronting the norm and embodying the threat, we concretize the threat of imminent violence that is attributed to us by the fact of our existence. It is not at all uncommon for trans movements to be described as outrageous, as offenses against the canon of academia. As discussed in the next section, I believe that the power of "protection from threat" and of naming the world are concentrated in the same normativity – referring to the Self who owns his own humanity and his own body, who is shielded behind institutional legitimation, and who is offended by having his reign of naming confronted by a tranarchist and transfeminist way of language.