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Stubborn Futures: Caring Against Anaesthetic Time

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ABSTRACT: In this farewell essay, the coeditors of *Gender and Language* reflect on leading the journal through a 6-year period marked by escalating global crises and rising hostility toward feminist, queer, and trans scholarship. Drawing from their previous Editorials on refusal, hope, and potency, the coeditors explore yet another affect that animated their tenure: stubbornness. This essay suggests that stubbornness, as more than mere obstinacy, must be reclaimed within a transqueerfeminist ethics as a rebellious insistence on caring, persisting, and imagining otherwise. From this perspective, stubbornness is uniquely suited to counter the political numbness of what Heyes terms “anaesthetic time.” Everyday editorial labor is presented as a microactivist gesture of concern that can sustain the language, gender, and sexuality community amid global turmoil.

KEYWORDS: affect, anaesthetic time, editing, feminist, queer, stubbornness, trans

RESUMO: Neste ensaio de despedida, o coeditor e as coeditoras da revista *Gender and Language* refletem sobre a condução da revista nos últimos seis anos, período marcado por crises globais crescentes e pelo aumento da hostilidade em relação aos estudos feministas, queer e trans. Com base em seus editoriais anteriores sobre recusa, esperança e potência, o coeditor e as coeditoras exploram outro tipo de afeto que animou seu mandato: a teimosia. O ensaio sugere que a teimosia, mais do que mera obstinação, deve ser reapropriada, dentro de uma ética transqueerfeminista, como a insistência rebelde em cuidar, persistir e imaginar o contrário. A partir dessa perspectiva, a teimosia é especialmente adequada para combater a apatia política do que Heyes denomina “tempo anestésico.” O trabalho editorial cotidiano é apresentado como um gesto microativista de cuidado que pode sustentar os estudos sobre linguagem, gênero e sexualidade em meio à turbulência global.

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PALAVRAS-CHAVE: afeto, tempo anestésico, edição, feminista, queer, trans, teimosia

要旨:

本稿は、*Gender and Language* 誌の共同編集者が、世界的な危機の深刻化やフェミニズム/クィア/トランス研究への敵意が高まる状況の中で、6年間にわたり本誌の編集を担ってきた経験を振り返るファイナル・エッセイである。これまでの巻頭言で取り上げてきた「拒否」「希望」「力強さ」というテーマに加え、本稿では任期を通して自分たちを支えてきたもう一つの感情、「スタボーンネス(stubbornness/粘り強さ)」に焦点を当てる。ここでいうスタボーンネスは、単なる“頑なさ”ではなく、ケアを続け、踏みとどまり、異なる未来を思い描こうとする反抗的な姿勢として、トランス＝クィア＝フェミニスト倫理の中で積極的に再評価されるべきものと論じる。この観点に立つと、スタボーンネスは、Heyes が“anaesthetic time (無感覚の時代)”と呼ぶ政治的な麻痺状態に抗うために、特に適した情動となる。また、“gesture of concern (気にかける行為)”としての編集の実務的な営みは、世界が混乱する中でも、言語・ジェンダー・セクシュアリティ研究のコミュニティを支え続ける小さな実践的アクションとして位置づけられる。

キーワード:

情動、無感覚の時代、編集、フェミニスト、クィア、トランス、スタボーンネス(粘り強さ)

Introduction: Looking Back, Moving Forward

For the last 6 years we have served as coeditors of *Gender and Language*. The time has come to step down, close an eventful cycle that taught us more than we ever expected, and let in fresh air. We take pride in the work we accomplished at the journal and the service we provided to the International Gender and Language Association community. As we bid farewell, we also warmly welcome Farhana Abdul Fatah (University of Malaya, Malaysia), Sandhya K. Narayanan (University of Nevada Reno, US), and Lexi Webster (University of Southampton, UK), who will shepherd the journal through new and exciting directions. From the cleft where the journal's past and future meet, we find it fitting to frame our farewell as an anticipatory retrospective. Simultaneously looking back and forward, we reflect on what the editorship of *Gender and Language* means during a period of rising hostility toward sexual and gender diversity while anticipating the journal's future in the difficult years ahead. As such, this is not a conventional report of our tenure; rather, it is a critical reflection on what it takes to pursue our scholarly work in a moment when persistence itself is a political achievement.

When we took on the position in late 2019, we inherited not only the responsibility to edit the International Gender and Language Association's flagship journal but also the challenge to continue (and expand on) the excellent work of our

predecessors. Thanks to the sustained commitment of its various editors, *Gender and Language* has evolved from a modest, niche journal into a leading forum for cutting-edge feminist, queer, trans, and nonbinary scholarship on language and discourse. Such a change is evidenced, among other things, by rising citation scores across various databases. In 2019, *Gender and Language* reported a respectable journal impact factor (JIF) of 0.619 and a 5-year impact factor of 0.713. As of 2025, both the JIF and the 5-year impact factor have risen to 1.2, with an all-time high JIF in 2021 of 2.4. We attribute this rise in part to the enthusiastic reception of new publication initiatives during our tenure, including the annual “Year-in-Review” essays that map emerging trends in the field through the analysis of language, gender, and sexuality publications in a given year. J Calder’s (2020) inaugural Year-in-Review essay reflects on normativities as the field’s central concern in 2019; Jaspal Naveel Singh (2021) discusses the contributions of research in/from/about the Global South in 2020; Branca Falabella Fabrício (2022) analyzes the affective dimensions of violence, civil unrest, and resistance in 2021; Lucy Jones (2023) reviews the year of 2022 by focusing on the role of language in protesting and resisting oppressive discourses; and Vincent Pak (2025), turning to 2023 scholarship, traces the push-and-pull of tensions between increasing queer visibility in legal and sociopolitical arenas and the concomitant retrenchment of bigotry. Collectively, these review essays do not just document the shifting concerns of our field; they also exemplify our commitment to fostering a journal that is analytically attuned, politically responsive, and stubbornly dedicated to keeping language, gender, and sexuality scholarship vibrantly alive amid turbulent times.

Improving the journal statistics was only a tiny fraction of what we envisioned for *Gender and Language* at the outset of our tenure. The toughest challenges festered elsewhere. In their farewell Editorial published 6 years ago, Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard and Tommaso Milani (2019) had already noted the difficult times ahead for sociolinguistic scholarship on gender and sexuality. Against the global rise of far-right ideologies demonizing diversity, equity, and inclusion, they powerfully argued that “*Gender and Language* is of utmost importance at this historical juncture since it contributes to deconstruct ideologies of exclusion and discrimination” (p. 422). During our tenure, the far-right wave that preoccupied the previous editors has worsened. The past 6 years have seen the intensification of crises that redefine the affective and material conditions of knowledge production: a global pandemic, the wars in Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, and Yemen; the alarming rise of authoritarian regimes from Brazil to the United States, and from Hungary to Argentina; escalating tensions between communist and non-communist regions in East Asia; growing xenophobia in Japan; and the precarization of intellectual labor as neoliberal rationalities hijack universities and publishers. These overlapping catastrophes have reshaped the terrain of language and gender politics, and in turn

have reoriented the very possibilities of feminist, queer, and trans scholarship. The severity of our current crises is attested by the recent “Statement on the Importance of Sexuality and Gender Research,” collectively signed by the editors of 24 leading science journals of gender and sexuality research, including *Gender and Language* (Graham et al., 2025).

From the outset, our editorial view was animated by affective intensities that responded to the political urgencies of the moment, even as we navigated the time-consuming (albeit rewarding) labor of editing and the emotional exhaustion brought by an unrelenting cascade of crises and bad news. Against this backdrop, our debut Editorial explored refusal as both a theme and a tactic (Borba et al., 2020). As an empirical illustration, we analyzed the popular protest chant “Un violador en tu camino” [A rapist in your path]. First performed in the streets of Santiago, the Chilean capital, on November 25, 2019 (the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women), the protest drew attention to the recalcitrance of misogynistic oppression and the perils of victim blaming. Social media amplified the chant’s scope, and similar protests took place in many languages in several parts of the world, emerging as a defiant answer to neo-nationalist discourses casting “gender” as the enemy. That essay sprang from our concern about a rising global enmity toward feminist, queer, and trans politics, and our belief in the importance of obstinate resistance. By refusing the silence imposed by patriarchal norms, we argued, feminist, queer, and trans communities were forging new forms of solidarity across geopolitical axes. Refusal, in our framing, was an affective stance of anger, indignation, and willful noncompliance with systems that seek to render women, queer, and trans folk obedient. In feminist writer Sara Ahmed’s (2014, 2023) terms, refusal necessitates the stubborn and difficult “feminist killjoy” who disrupts patriarchal comfort. This willfulness, although often read negatively, can be revalued in positive terms as persistence in saying *no* to injustice, despite its relentlessness.

A year into our tenure, we found ourselves editing in the throes of the COVID-19 pandemic. Grappling with the nefarious effects of a global sanitary crisis, our second Editorial turned toward hope as an affective mode of survival amid catastrophe (Hiramoto et al., 2020). Indeed, even as the virus turned our streets into sites of contagion, we witnessed marginalized groups around the world transmute rage into collective action. Faced with the racial, classed, and gendered inequalities that the pandemic brutally aggravated, we were moved by creative forms of resilience and solidarity initiated by women, queer, trans, and nonbinary folk on the ground. At this junction, our essay insisted on hope as the “affective infrastructure of refusal,” as a bedrock emotion whose performative force “creates opportunities for . . . inventive forms of collective agency” (Hiramoto et al., 2020, p. 355; see also Avramopoulou, 2017; Gray, this volume; Silva & Borba, 2024;

Silva & Lee, 2024). Drawing on feminist theories of affect and their sociolinguistic dimensions, we argued that hope can be a form of political work: a way of imagining futures beyond crisis despite what cultural theorist Lauren Berlant (2011) terms *crisis ordinariness*. In Berlant's view, "crisis is not exceptional to history or consciousness but a process embedded in the ordinary that unfolds in stories about navigating what's overwhelming" (p. 10). With this in mind, we insisted that hope can be an act of resistance that counters dominant narratives of despair and numbness. Stubbornly hopeful, we believed (as we still do!) that to gain any real transformation, our communities must willfully "push harder to dislodge what has become harder" (Ahmed, 2017, p. 110). Hope, in this sense, is not empty reassurance but a stubborn insistence on possibility, a refusal to relinquish our vision of "more bearable worlds" (Ahmed, 2017, p. 1), even when the worlds around us feel unbearable.

By early 2021, our third Editorial sought to translate refusal and hope into potency (Hall et al., 2021a). Drawing on Argentine activist-intellectual Verónica Gago (2019, 2020a, 2020b), we theorized *potencia feminista* to differentiate between static, institutionalized power (*poder*) and dynamic, affective potency (*potencia*). In Gago's parlance, while *poder* signifies the top-down forces of continuity (the entrenched patriarchal and colonial systems that seem so unyielding), *potencia* highlights a collective drive for change arising from below. Echoing the affective undertones of our editorship, we reflected on how feminist movements were reinventing the language of social justice, from the "green tide" of abortion rights activists in Argentina to Polish women's strikes against abortion bans. These movements demonstrated that even when institutional power seems intransigent, feminist potency can erupt in unpredictable ways. As Gago (2019) notes, "no sabemos lo que podemos hasta que experimentamos el desplazamiento de los límites que nos hicieron creer y obedecer" [we do not know what we're capable of until we experience the displacement of the limits that we've been made to believe and obey] (p. 13). Crucially, these movements also demonstrate the importance of alliances across feminist, queer, and trans communities (a theme we have developed across all our Editorials), especially since the rhetoric of hate targeting each group is semiotically intertwined, reinforcing, and codependent. To us, *potencia* celebrates the affective energy of an allied, intersectional feminism emerging from the convergence of refusal (of the status quo) and hope (for otherwise futures), and which holds the collective capacity to buck patriarchy's grip. An ode to feminist resilience and creativity, the Editorial discussed how a feminist register from the streets, with its words of protest, chants, and symbols like the green scarf, can unsettle older orders and conjure alternative imaginaries.

If refusal was our *No* and hope our *Yes*, then potency was the accompanying *Do*: the generative force that cracks open continuity, making room for change.

Writing our farewell Editorial at the end of 2025, we find that our insistence on highlighting possibilities against otherwise paralyzing conditions has been quietly undergirded by yet another affect: *stubbornness*, an obstinate will to continue when continuation itself feels impossible. Despite the turbulent years during which we coedited *Gender and Language*, we kept going. Despite the pandemic, the rise of Trump and Bolsonaro, and troubling wars across several continents, our colleagues in the field kept going, even those facing personally precarious circumstances. Despite the demonization of gender and sexuality, LGBTQ+ scholars kept going; despite the encroachment of anti-Black racism and white nationalism, Black and Latinx scholars kept going; despite the renewal of colonialist violence across diverse world contexts, Global South scholars kept going. In hindsight, stubbornness seems to be the affective alloy of refusal and hope, refusing to let us lose hope even when the world seems determined to dull us, numbing our capacity to act. Put simply, it is the heart and soul of a transqueerfeminist ethics. As we bid farewell to *Gender and Language* while anticipating its future, we argue that stubbornness is uniquely suited to enduring the political numbness of our era. To this end, we explore how stubbornness manifests in our editorial labor and why it matters for feminist resistance in an era characterized by what philosopher Cressida J. Heyes (2020) dubs “anaesthetic time.”

Stubbornness as Feminist Resistance

Conjuring the image of the mule that digs in its heels, mindless and unmoving, stubbornness is often used pejoratively to describe the behavior of groups struggling against normative systems of race, gender, sexuality, colonialism, and ability. Women have figured prominently in such portrayals, particularly those who defy expectations of politeness, deference, and submissiveness by holding onto their own ideas. Culturally recognizable figures of stubborn females abound: “the nagging wife,” “the headstrong girl,” “the unyielding mother,” “the nasty woman.” Male stubbornness, by comparison, is often valorized, as implied by archetypes such as “the silent type,” “the visionary leader,” “the unwavering father,” “the lone wolf.” Given these representations, we wish to reclaim stubbornness as a vital feminist, queer, and trans affect, as a mode of moving that entails *refusing to be moved* by forces that seek to anaesthetize and demoralize. To be stubborn, in our sense, is to inhabit defiant persistence when dominant temporalities and ideologies push us to give in, numb out, or back down.

Stubbornness is well suited to navigating the crisis ordinariness that pushes life to the edge. Indeed, it even has the potential to reframe inaction as action, breathing life into the sensory-erasing anti-projects that populate what Heyes (2020) calls the “anaesthetics of existence.” In Heyes’ formulation, *anaesthetic time*

is a diffuse temporal zone that has emerged as a counterpoint to the abusive self-making demands of life under neoliberalism. Against the highly scheduled *postdisciplinary time* of our speeded-up world, anaesthetic time involves numbed perception, dulled sensation, and a blunted orientation to the future; it is a state of checked-out suspension that “loves the night and doesn’t care about the future” (p. 22) (although not with the anti-normative drive of nonreproductive queer time; cf. Halberstam, 2005). Heyes draws our attention to anaesthetic time to question what counts as experience under late capitalism, suggesting that a temporality based in “not-doing” may be better seen as a site of protest against the “neoliberal experience of social acceleration and temporal fragmentation” (p. 21), even if “unpunctuated, unproductive, and unsynchronized” (p. 22).

In this essay, we take up Heyes’ (2020) concept of anaesthetic time for what it says about the affective climate of the mid-2020s and the challenge for feminist intervention. After years of perpetual crisis, ranging from a global pandemic to ecological disasters, political upheavals, wars, and humanitarian atrocities, many of us have felt a creeping temporal lethargy, a sense of stuckness or unreality. For Heyes, anaesthetic time can interrupt the frantic rhythm of neoliberal life, creating hiatuses of idleness in which the demand to always work, to always be productive, to never stop improving oneself stalls, allowing alternative modes of apprehending the world to become possible. In Berlant’s (2011) terms, we are living in an ongoing impasse, “a stretch of time in which one moves around with a sense that the world is at once intensely present and enigmatic.” In such contexts, even dealing with an ordinary, banal crisis demands “both a wandering absorptive awareness and a hypervigilance” (p. 4). As a corollary, exhaustion and numbness become the pervasive affective disposition. We scroll through endless bad news, our senses saturated to the edge, feeling everything and nothing all at once. Political rhetoric oscillates between shock and cynicism, yielding a collective fatigue that borders on resignation. These are times of widely felt anaesthesia, both in the physical sense of feeling numb (an *anti-aesthesis*, an undoing of perception) and in the political sense of being anaesthetized to structural violence. We take Heyes’ insight seriously, not just as a diagnosis of contemporary affect but as a strategic provocation: critical scholarship must find a way to work with the diffuse atmospheres of numbness that increasingly structure collective life.

How can feminist, queer, and trans politics endure (and flourish!) under such conditions of systemic numbness? How can we find ways to be agentive (and feeling!) without opting into the neoliberal temporal regimes that drive us to that numbness? The years we served as coeditors of *Gender and Language* have taught us that agency does not emerge from suspension alone. Inaction may indeed constitute a response to neoliberal temporalities, but it becomes politically meaningful only when shaped by stubbornness, which for us, as we outline in this farewell,

is an affective-political stance anchored in endurance, insistence, and principled noncompliance. A powerfully disruptive force, stubbornness is not mere obstinacy or blind inflexibility; rather, it is a conscious politics of refusal to be numbed. To borrow from our essay's title, it is an unhurried but resolute insistence on "caring against" the anaesthetic pull of the present. It is how feminist, queer, and trans politics can inhabit slowed or suspended time without capitulating to resignation. If reactionary forces want us demoralized, if neoliberal academia wants us burnt out and desensitized, then stubbornness is the act of caring anyway, persisting anyway. The numbed inaction identified by Heyes (2020) may suggest resistance to neoliberal expectations, but stubbornness is what makes that resistance agentic. In Ahmed's (2017) terms, stubbornness is the decision to "stand up only by standing firm" (p. 82), not by accelerating, optimizing, or producing more, but by digging in our heels when the world pressures us to withdraw.

In her book *Living a Feminist Life*, Ahmed (2017) reminds us that feminists are routinely dismissed as angry, irritating, pushy, insistent, willful, shrill, humorless, and unhappy (the list goes on). By questioning oppressive norms, feminists (like queer, trans, and nonbinary folk) are often portrayed as troublemakers who refuse arrangements of power that thrive precisely when no one pushes back. Rather than take this as a deterrent, Ahmed (2014) invites us to embrace the figure of the "willful subject" who will not comply with unjust norms, even at the cost of being labeled difficult. Put in succinct terms, stubbornness is willfulness embodied in political practice. Human rights (to hold public office, choose a profession, work, own property, secure an education, marry by free will and consent, access reproductive healthcare, divorce) have not resulted from male benevolence; rather, they have been achieved through obstinate collective feminist action. And yet, even with these gains, women are still disparaged, belittled, misrepresented, assaulted, harassed, raped, and murdered. As Deborah Cameron (2024) painfully notes, "sexism and misogyny . . . have not just gradually faded away: rather they have evolved" (p. 3). In our view, this evolution includes the recursive mapping of misogynistic ideas onto queer, trans, and nonbinary communities as well as communities of color. As feminists, we want to change it all! Indeed, when set against patriarchy's recalcitrance, stubbornness has always been the *potencia feminista* that inspires *el deseo de cambiarlo todo* [the desire to change everything], as the title of Gago's (2019) book resolutely insists.

Fueled by a desire to change everything, feminist linguists in the 1970s began scrutinizing how everyday language use reproduces patriarchy by invisibilizing and subjugating women. The publication of Robin Tolmach Lakoff's (1975) book *Language and Woman's Place* transformed thinking in linguistics by illuminating exactly this. Now in 2025, just as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of her ground-changing, field-creating book, Lakoff has passed away. Her loss has

weighed heavily on us as our coeditorship draws to a close. When Lakoff proposed in 1973 that “linguistic imbalances are worthy of study because they . . . are clues that some external situation needs changing, rather than items that one should seek to change directly” (p.73), she performed a courageous act of defiance against dominant linguistic theories of the time. Her talent to convert complaint into critique and critique into theory set the intellectual agenda for half a century of language, gender, and sexuality research. Lakoff’s oeuvre reminds us that our field has always been built on willful scholarship (Ahmed, 2017). Shattering the façade of neutrality and objectivity, our scholarship refuses to be apolitical and persists in asking uncomfortable questions. In this sense, Lakoff’s legacy points precisely to the affective stance we identify as stubbornness, particularly her willfulness in taking on the role of feminist troublemaker against disciplinary gatekeepers.

Losing Lakoff means losing someone who nurtured, guided, and challenged generations of scholars to develop sharper ways of listening to everyday language and to find their academic voice. Kira, who earned her PhD under Lakoff’s direction at the University of California, Berkeley, recalls her “funny genius,” her brilliantly incisive humor, her capacity to cut through patriarchal nonsense with a single, no-nonsense line. This farewell Editorial is a fitting occasion to say farewell to our founding mother, while reiterating her stubborn insistence that linguistics must do better when it comes to gender. Sadly, Lakoff is not the only luminary we lost this year. We also say farewell to Marcyliena Morgan, a linguistic anthropologist whose work helped to legitimize the study of both Black women’s language and hip hop as academic subjects. In 2021, we curated a four-issue themed series to mark the 30th anniversary of the 1992 Berkeley Women and Language Conference, which featured essays by both Lakoff (2021) and Morgan (2021). Published under the title “Thirty-Year Retrospective on Language, Gender and Sexuality Research” (Hall et al., 2021b, 2021c, 2021d, 2021e), the series explored four longstanding areas of concern in the field that are in many ways motivated by the work of these two women: Politics, Practice, Intersectionality, and Place. We are pleased to report that at the time of this writing the essays appearing in the theme series have already drawn 289 citations (Politics, 52; Practice, 59; Intersectionality, 119; Place, 59), a testament to the now global reach of scholarship in our field. In a moment when reactionary politics promises to dull feminist imagination everywhere, the deaths of Lakoff and Morgan remind us that words can still do things in the world, even as our theories shift to reflect changing times. As Lakoff (forthcoming) puts it in an “Afterword” drafted shortly before her death, “We have come a long way from the 1970s, and still have a great deal to learn. And that’s how we like it.”

Neoliberalism, political extremism, academic capitalism, white supremacy, anti-Black racism, anti-Asian racism, sexual harassment, LGBTQ+phobia, anti-trans animus, hostility toward nonbinary identities, climate dread, rampant

disinformation, digital overwhelm, xenophobia (a truly endless list!) anaesthetize our senses, dull our perception, and numb our sense of urgency, naturalizing bigotry through exhaustion. In this context, to be stubbornly hopeful constitutes what Ahmed (2017) calls “a feminist life.” She urges us never to forget the promise of feminism, “a word that fills [us] with hope, with energy” (p. 1). Ahmed’s idea of hope is akin to what we described in our second Editorial as the infrastructure of agency, an agentic affect that undergirds “loud acts of refusal and rebellion as well as the quiet ways we might have of not holding on to things that diminish us” (p. 1). Sensitive to the political disengagement fostered by exhaustion, Ahmed (2017) propounds that “the experiences we have are not just of being worn down; these experiences also give us resources . . . to keep one’s hopes alive . . . to become willful to hold on when you are asked to let go” (p. 235). In this sense, stubbornness encompasses both the loud and the quiet, from the rallying cry on the streets and its viral spread online to the private decision not to accept what hurts us, iconized by the discreetly extended hand on which Brazilian women draw an X to cry for help against domestic violence. It is the feminist scholar continuing to write truth to power in a climate that devalues truth; it is the trans activist continuing to organize when each day brings a new onslaught of hate. As Ahmed (2017) beautifully puts it, “we need each other to survive; we need to be part of each other’s survival” (p. 235). Social change comes into fruition only through an unflinching commitment to care for one another and ourselves. It is by caring *together* and by caring *against* that we may lean collectively toward the world feminists envisage—moving, persisting, protesting, rebelling, demanding, complaining, questioning, rallying, boycotting, researching, publishing, and even editing.

Crucially, stubbornness entails its own temporality. While the (a)temporal logic of anaesthetic time numbs our capacity to move, inviting escape from a paralyzing present that exhausts our energy to imagine, stubbornness insists on futurity. To be stubborn is to hold open a temporal interval that feels foreclosed. It is to dig one’s heels in firmly against a present that drains the desire for possibility. Here, we find an unexpected resonance with media scholar Chris Ingraham’s (2020) “gestures of concern”: the small but stubborn acts that orient us toward an imaginable future, even when their immediate effects appear negligible. Seemingly trivial gestures—a get-well card, an “I Voted” sticker, a social media post of solidarity, a comforting hug, a genuine “how are you?,” an encouraging peer review—carry an intrinsic “affective force” that exceeds practical utility and enables us “to level up from ‘mere’ gesture to something more effectual” (Ingraham, 2020, p. 194). Such gestures might not change policy or stop a virus; still, in their stubborn ordinariness, they foster a set of affective “dispositions that orient us to one another and to the prospect of a shared future” (p. 8). By reminding us to *feel*, they give larger transformations the chance to germinate. In this sense, the innovative

special issues shepherded by members of our *Gender and Language* community during our tenure have also functioned as gestures of concern: Momoko Nakamura's (2020) "Language, Gender and Sexuality in Japanese Popular Media"; Ksenija Bogetic's (2022) "Gender and Language in Eastern and Central Europe"; Lynnette Arnold and Kristine Mortensen's (2024) "Mobilising Language, Gender and Sexuality Studies"; Catherine Tebaldi and Dominika Baran's (2023) "The Anti-Gender Register in Global Nationalist Movements"; Cedar Brown et al.'s (2024) "Cultivating Trans Linguistics"; and finally, Dietha Koster, Christine Ott, and Jane Sunderland's (this issue) "Gender and Sexual Diversity in Language Education: Global Approaches to Educational Media." As suggested by the affective force underlying each of these special issues, feminist, queer, trans, and nonbinary scholars have always been stubborn against the odds, even through the quiet and often invisible work of editing.

Editorial Labor as a Gesture of Stubborn Concern

If stubbornness fuels our work as scholars and activists, editing *Gender and Language* has been our everyday practice of stubborn care. During our editorship, the journal evolved into what Ingraham (2020, p. 136) would call a microactivist gesture, a series of small acts that, cumulatively, enact feminist, queer, and trans resistance. Academic editing is often unseen and undervalued work: the painstaking organization of peer reviews; the tough choice of suitable reviewers (overworked scholars whose job is poorly paid while academic publishers obtain obscene profits); the shepherding of papers from submission to publication; the detailed line-editing; the careful polishing of phrasing, style, structure, and argument; the mentoring of inexperienced writers; the curation of issues that address relevant debates. Yet we have come to understand our editorial work as a collective exercise of affective, political, and epistemological endurance. Each acceptance letter sent, each special issue curated, each Editorial written was, we believe, a stubborn statement about the obstinacy of language, gender, and sexuality scholarship and our community's refusal to go numb.

Behind every decision and every issue lies a community of companions who helped us edit with stubborn care against cascading crises. The work of stewarding through such turbulent times was sustained by a wide network of colleagues whose support, insight, and labor deserve explicit recognition as this cycle draws to a close. This includes our book review editors Federica Formato (University of Brighton, UK) and Hannah Dahlberg-Dodd (Tohoku University, Japan), who worked with scholars around the world to bring cutting-edge books into the *Gender and Language* record; our line-editors Ayden Parish (Virginia Commonwealth University, US) and Laurie Durand, who gifted the journal with sharper

arguments and clearer prose; our very patient and attentive copyeditors and editorial assistants, especially Rivka Israel and Daniel Gronow, whose work we deeply appreciate and value; our social media managers Kate Arnold-Murray (University of Colorado Boulder, US) and Alessa Francine Silva (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil), whose facility with online platforms and digital media enhanced the journal's visibility; and finally, our production specialists Ailsa Parkin (Equinox Publishing Limited) and now Hannah Lee (The University of Toronto Press), who are masterful at helping time-compromised editors turn a folder of papers into a published, polished product.

Throughout our editorship, we lived through global conditions that often made the production of critical scholarship feel both urgent and absurd. The COVID-19 pandemic upended academic and social life from 2020 to 2022 (and still hovers over us today). Many contributors to our journal faced unexpected long-lasting challenges, such as caregiving burdens, health crises, and renewed levels of precarity. We, too, navigated lockdowns and uncertainties. Terrified by pandemic tragedies while confined to our offices in Rio, Boulder, and Singapore, our commitment to *Gender and Language* nurtured bonds of respect, admiration, friendship, and concern. Looking back, we now see that the very act of putting together an issue under those conditions was a gesture of concern toward the language, gender, and sexuality community. By editing *Gender and Language*, we hoped that our intellectual labor behind the scenes would in some small way contribute to keeping us together. Anaesthetized by fatigue from Zoom meetings and social distancing, scholars turned to the journal as a place to reflect, rage, and hope together on the page.

In addition to the pandemic, waves of political upheaval tested our capacity for stubborn persistence. As we strived to put issues together, we witnessed authoritarian regimes assault the very notion of gender rights. Many of our Zoom meetings scheduled for editing tasks turned into sessions of despair as we tried to share our way out of the pain we felt from these developments. In Brazil, Rodrigo's home country, the years of our coeditorship overlapped with a far-right administration that treated "gender ideology" as a monstrous threat to the nation's most basic building block, the cishet family. In the United States, Kira watched Trump's transphobic and xenophobic rhetoric defeat the inclusive politics of a Black woman born to immigrant parents, ushering in a new era of anti-trans policies and intensifying backlash against racial justice movements. In Singapore, where Mie works, LGBTQ+ communities struggled for recognition amid conservative retrenchment. Across all corners of the world we were witnessing the rise of what Ruth Wodak (2021) terms "politics of fear," the scapegoating of women, migrants, and queer and trans people as enemies of the nation. These political storms threatened to overwhelm us, given their scale of human cruelty and suffering. How

does one write about language, gender, and sexuality, or encourage others to write about language, gender, and sexuality, when children are being bombed in their homes, when democratic freedoms are being stripped away, when words fail to name experiences and feelings at the edge?

Our approach was to weave these conditions into our vision for the journal without letting them dictate the terms of our editorial work. One gesture that exemplifies this stance was our pronoun initiative (to our knowledge, the first of its kind in academic journal publishing). By inviting authors to include their pronouns in their published biographical information, we sought to normalize gender self-determination at a moment when trans and nonbinary people's very right to name themselves was being contested around the world. *Gender and Language* did not publish neutral, detached papers describing the world's horrors from a distance. Instead, we asked contributors to acknowledge these realities as the backdrop so that the analysis of gender and sexuality—on whatever topic, no matter how small—might help us unravel the tangled semiotics of oppressive rhetoric. This made our editorial work both rewarding and precarious. In various ways and to different extents, the papers we published from 2019 to 2025 asked what it means to study language, gender, and sexuality in anaesthetic time, what it means to see feelings of numbness repackaged into rage at the wrong targets. Several papers interrogated how authoritarian and neoliberal discourses manipulate affect; others explored how feminist, queer, and trans groups counter such manipulation by cultivating collectivity through gestures of concern. The papers appearing in Tebaldi and Baran's (2023) special issue on "anti-genderism," for example, collectively illustrate how the relentless portrayal of feminists as troublemakers, queer families as threats to the nation, and trans people as evil deceivers drives citizens to extremist ideologies. In their own way, the papers reveal that such rhetoric thrives on the interrelated actions of anaesthetizing empathy and stoking enmity. After all, as we now know well, citizens trapped in anaesthetic time are easily manipulated for sinister ends. *Gender and Language* stubbornly kept publishing work that unpacks these discourses, refusing to cede the discursive arena. Each published article was for us a gesture of concern, fueled by the hope that the very act of paying attention and circulating stories might springboard broader social change.

From this perspective, editing is caring. Although often invisible, rarely recognized, and frequently underpaid, editorial labor is a gesture of concern that "orient[s] us to one another and to the prospect of a shared future" (Ingraham, 2020, p. 8). Whenever we celebrated an author's insight, tempered a critique with positive feedback, or consoled a scholar whose submission was not accepted for publication, we felt the bonds of the community grow tighter. Yet editing is also political labor: deciding whose voices get amplified, what conversations are

forwarded, and which silences are broken. During our tenure, we strove to open the journal's pages to voices from across the globe, especially from the peripheries of the Global South where research on language, gender, and sexuality is thriving but often ignored in journals such as ours. This was not always easy due to structural inequities regarding access to scholarly resources and English proficiency. But we remained steadfast in our commitment to fostering transnational dialogue. The result, we would like to believe, is a richer, more polyphonic journal featuring scholars from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and beyond. In this sense, our transnational orientation was more than an editorial choice; it was a stubborn gesture of concern against a geopolitical axis of academic inequality. In a period when nationalism and isolationism were gaining ground, our editorial practice insisted on global solidarity and relationality.

Defiantly Persistent: A Farewell and a Beginning

Stubbornness, ultimately, has been the affective motif of our editorship, carrying *Gender and Language* through moments of refusal, hope, and potency. As we step down, we do so with heavy hearts and fervent resolve. We are proud of the work we have accomplished and deeply grateful for the community that made it possible: the authors, reviewers, readers, line-editors, typesetters, copyeditors, editorial board members, social media managers, friends, and family who, in spite of everything, kept the intellectual and political project of *Gender and Language* alive. This collective perseverance stands as proof that simply caring about research, about ideas, and about each other can be an act of defiance against anaesthetic time. We have seen how easily the never-ending demands of neoliberal universities, now heightened by political turmoil across the globe, can induce cynicism and fatigue. Yet we have also seen how our feminist, queer, trans, and nonbinary colleagues stubbornly refuse to go numb. This journal became a repository of affective intensities. It has been our honor to keep the pages turning and the ideas flowing, even as the wider world often felt frozen.

In closing, we return to the central theme of stubbornness, not just as a descriptor of our past efforts, but as a provocation for the future. Stubbornness is often misunderstood. It can appear in reductive terms as a reactive stance, a refusal to budge. But over the course of our editorship, we have come to understand it as profoundly generative. To be stubborn for feminist, queer, and trans liberation is to generate new forms of life amid conditions that want to obliterate life itself. Feeling stuck in a temporality numbed by continual crises cedes the ground for bigotry, injustice, and inequality. Stubbornness, as political affect, entails swimming against the tide, or in Berlant's (2011) terms, "treading water in the impasse" (p. 249). It requires "taking up the position of the interfering intellectual, the

counterconceptual aesthetic activist reorganizing the senses along with common sense” (Berlant, 2011, p. 249). Feminists may be depicted in mainstream discourse as “killing” joy but they in fact inspire it, cultivating the feeling of elation that comes from struggle, solidarity, and connection. Stubborn persistence is knowing the odds and choosing to fight anyway.

Stubbornness will carry our field and movements forward. It encompasses refusal (the courage to say *no* to injustice), hope (the vision to say *yes* to possibility), and potency (the capacity to *do something* with our rage and hope together). In one of our early Editorials, we quoted the Chilean performance that declared to a hostile world: “Y la culpa no era mía, ni dónde estaba ni cómo vestía” [And the fault was not mine, nor where I was, nor how I was dressed]. Those lyrics, shouted in unison by thousands of voices, were a stubborn demand for social justice that refused patriarchal discourses of victim blaming. In that gesture of concern, we hear the resonance of a sentiment that we have tried to foster as editors of this journal: Our field will not yield. Not to patriarchy’s lies, not to pandemics or wars, not to authoritarian fearmongering, not to the slow anaesthetization of our senses. We have come to learn that editing a feminist journal is much more than managing a publication; it is participating in resistance. It is an ongoing, collective gesture of concern that says: We are still here, we still care, and we will not be quiet.

As we hand over the journal to our new editors, we do so with the belief that stubbornness will continue to pulse through its pages. The reactionary politics that characterized our tenure will most certainly intensify over the next decade, demanding even more silence and compliance from our community. But language, gender, and sexuality scholars have always stood against these demands, and we know that our incoming editors are ready to harness that potency with courage, care, and clarity. The struggle continues, and now it continues with them. *Gender and Language* will persist in amplifying the stories of those who fight back, those who imagine otherwise, and those who make language a site of refusal. From the junction where the journal’s past and future meet, we sign off with stubborn hope that what comes next will be extraordinary.

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