
PRACTICES AND CURATIONS

Trans subjectifications: drawing an (im)personal politics of gender, fashion and style

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INTRODUCTION

The lived experiences of gender transition highlight tensions between new and traditional western conceptions of gender and identity, and afford an intimate and unusually broad insight into the mechanisms through which subjectification is gendered and gender subjectivised through daily practices of fashion and style. This experimental, practice-based contribution makes playful and subversive use of a fashion activity book intended for young women and girls to document the author's experiences of gender transition, taking as its cue the notion that the challenges and joys of transition in many ways resemble a form of second adolescence. It draws on an extended ethnographic engagement with gendered social space to explore how we might rethink the question of subjectification in fashion and style as a fundamentally distributed and yet intensely personal social process. The accompanying text maps out some of the project's theoretical impetuses, methodological affordances, and onto-political implications.

The artwork presented here is reproduced from the pages of a slim volume; originally an off-the-shelf activity book for young women and girls,¹ it is repurposed as a hybrid personal diary, research journal, and artist's book (Watt et al., n.d.). In it I explore a process of experimentation with style and presentation during the early stages of adult gender transition. The journal² formed one strand of a broader enquiry into questions of identity, individuation³ and representation, as addressed to problems in non-representational geography⁴ and the politics of ontogenesis⁵. A transfeminist⁶ project, its provocations are at once playful, subversive, restorative, and critical. This 'practices and curations' paper presents the artwork alongside a brief textual exposition of some of the project's theoretical impetuses, methodological affordances, and onto-political implications.

Critical geographies of fashion and style address ways in which the gendered politics of identity, subjectification, and (de)coloniality are materialised through practices of design, production, presentation and performance of dress (Zhang, 2017; Appleford, 2016; Faria, 2013; Enigbokan and Patchett, 2012; Gökarıksel, 2012; Larner and Molloy, 2009). Recent work in fashion geographies (Williams, this issue) extends attention

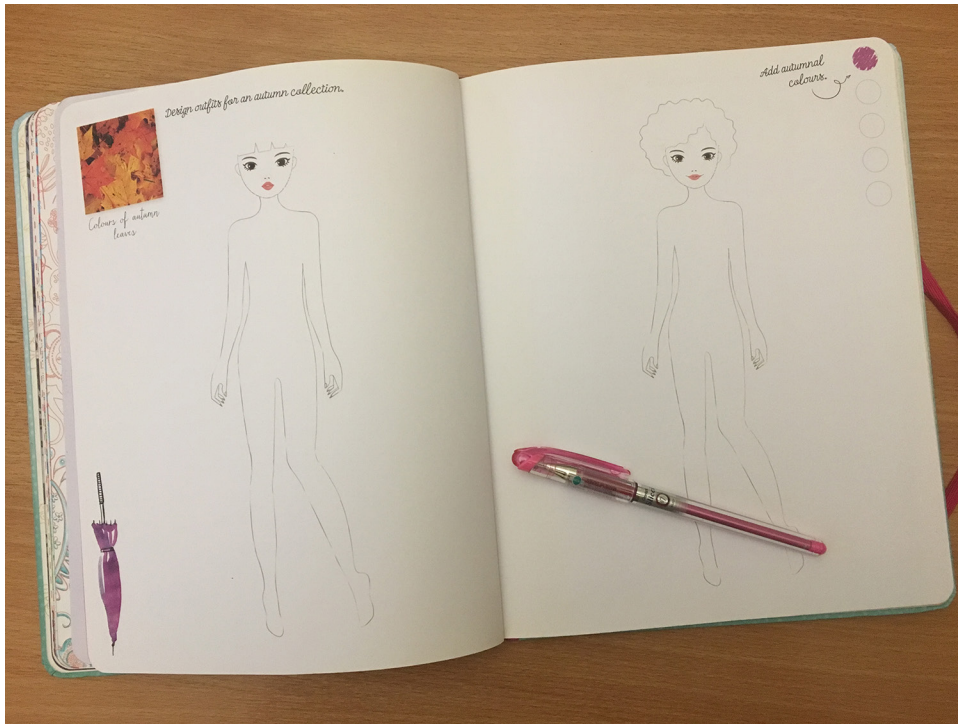


FIGURE 1 An off-the-shelf activity book for young women and teens (showing unworked pages)

to these matters in the light of ontological approaches that decentre the subject, thus both troubling and expanding analyses that have traditionally taken the self-identity of the subject for granted. This commitment to ontologies of process and becoming forces a reconsideration of key concepts in the politics of subjectification. Matters of gender, ability, race, and class must therefore be rethought on terms that move beyond identitarian and representational paradigms (Sharp, 2009, 2011; Colebrook, 2008). Far from being at an impasse, the politics of ontogenesis (collective becoming) and subjectification (individual becoming) operate in generative tension, offering new ways to think through the movements of individual and collective relations of power.

Gender transition offers a powerful methodological opportunity to explore this tension. Trans narratives - with their insistence on a mode of fundamental subjective identity - seem on the face of it to pose a challenge to process-oriented ontologies. What does it mean to talk of 'really being' a man/woman/nonbinary person, if individual subjects are not fixed and discrete (id)entities but rather the always-provisional product of multiple shifting relations? I suggest that this apparent tension takes us directly to the heart of the matter: what reads as a contradiction is in fact exemplary of the way in which trans lives express an urgent collective problem - the problem of gender. Attempts to theorise gender identity through social construction, discursive performativity, or embodied phenomenology all make the error of reducing gender (or sex as its corollary) to an

attribute of pre-given individuals. Whether gender is seen as externally imposed or innate, a prior state of nature is implicated as a necessary condition for its imposition or expression (Butler, 2006, 2011). This formulation sets us up for multiple conflicts in which trans bodies and identities serve as a battleground for conflicting feminist theorisations of gender (Namaste, 2009). Normative positions proliferate, regarding the politically 'proper' expression of trans identities, which are often framed as inherently (and exceptionally) either subversive or regressive (Browne et al., 2010; Colebrook, 2008; Hines, 2007).

Process ontologies offer a new approach to this problem - one that completely displaces many of the persistent tensions in feminist thought. Claire Colebrook (2008), Elizabeth Grosz (2002, 2012), Hasana Sharp (2009) and others have pointed to the ways that a departure from logics of representation might take us beyond the pitfalls of identitarian politics. While their optimism at times soars too easily above the knotty detail of actual lives lived in the midst of an overwhelmingly identitarian social milieu, there is promise in the proposed theoretical shift from *being* to *becoming*. In answer to the limitations of what they see as a politics of recognition, founded on a humanist and juridical concept of the subject, Grosz and Sharp gesture instead towards a more radically distributed political ontology; an 'impersonal' politics. This approach offers a formulation in which gender emerges not as a property of individuals but as a field of tensions and possibilities within collective social space. Individuals enter into specific relations within that distributed field; they engage and transform the field of gender through social encounter, but gender remains a property of their relationship with the collective, rather than a property of the individual per se.

Here we might speak of individuals as manifesting certain dispositions, affinities, aptitudes, and capacities which make up style as much as the wearing of clothes and accessories. These attributes shape the ways that individuals encounter the distributed field of gender. However, they no longer constitute a fixed categorical status which finds its originary ontological premise in the identity of the individual. More importantly, trans lives in this model are not uniquely held to account for the internal (eternal?) tensions and contradictions of gender formulations. Any claim to fixity (or otherwise) of identity categories rests firmly within the space of collective sociality; the 'trans-ness' of trans individuals is precisely an expression of the tensions and possibilities inherently present in changing social configurations of sex and gender. At the same time, because it inverts the ontological hierarchy of individual and collective, this model differs substantially from certain strains of gender-abolitionist approaches, which remain fundamentally incommensurable with trans claims to a sense of originary gender. The 'transgender question' has been press-ganged into service as a fulcrum for leveraging feminist boundary disputes (Namaste, 2009); here the geometry is inverted. Originary gender is not so much accounted for by process ontology as it is displaced: relieved from duty. What comes under scrutiny in such an approach is not transgender identities but the distributive machinery of gender itself.⁷

To live and express as a trans individual is to sustain an acute and relentless engagement with the intimate mechanisms of gendered subjectification and the limitations of identitarian thought. Trans lives precipitate ideological rupture on multiple fronts. To state simply that they contravene normative social orders or undermine theoretical conventions is to miss the point - trans lives do not so much disrupt existing orders of knowledge as they express, compellingly, that charged transformational potentiality which is always already present within such acts of ordering. A radically relational and processual ontology is therefore thoroughly appropriate to the task of theorising gender transition.

The practice-based research presented here is motivated by the corollary of this argument – that an enquiry situated in the midst of gender transition is appropriate to the task of rethinking gender on processual lines. Methodological ‘appropriateness’⁸ is a concept that informs this project in a number of ways. Aspects of the project brief – the format; the timing; the specific qualities of the activity book; the choice of media and the type of creative process – are all selected specifically for their resonance with the theoretical tensions I wish to explore.

First, and in a very practical sense, methodological opportunity doubles here for recuperation of circumstance. I began this project during an extended leave of absence from my normal research and teaching activities, undertaken for complex health reasons during the early stages of social transition. Starting a journal was a strategic move to counter situational anxiety, depression, and fatigue by integrating my academic interests with a mode of restorative and creative practice. Artistic journalling is here taken up as a method for thinking through a problem differently, but also as a mental sleight-of-hand against the double bind of work- and health-related anxiety. This, again, echoes a wider feminist concern, since masculinist attitudes in academia, and the unequal distribution of emotional and domestic labour in general, systematically gender the odds of an individual facing periods in which they must balance the need for time away from the office with the potential impact on their careers from extended academic inactivity.

The anxieties that gripped me will be familiar to many: of not progressing towards looming research targets and deadlines; of abandoning contacts and networks; of missing pivotal opportunities; of losing fluency and competency to return; of becoming lost, disoriented or demotivated – and, of course, of dwindling funds. These were compounded by the fear that I might not recover if I failed to give myself time, space, and permission to do so. This project was designed so that no matter which refrain afflicted me (‘I should be working’/‘I shouldn’t be working’), the impetus would be to spend time with the journal. Journalling was conducted with varying frequency, initially on a daily basis and then intermittently over the months that followed. The process incorporated techniques loosely inspired by mindfulness and self-care practices, together with tangible academic achievement that could progress my studies, provide interesting outputs, and – most importantly – serve to stay the anxiety. The necessity of suspending judgement (to forestall the cycle of anxieties) becomes a methodological imperative in and of itself, so that the work unfolds as a relatively unconsidered flow or jumble of thoughts and impressions, allowing the collision of ideas and events to ‘speak back’ to the process and to become its own generative impetus.

Second, gender transition in adulthood is commonly described as a form of second (or in some cases – deferred) adolescence, both by trans individuals and in the scientific literature (Yarbrough, 2018, 131; Bockting and Coleman, 2016, 145). The import of this comparison is not restricted to medical transitions – as, for example, if an individual is adjusting to new hormones and/or experiencing the profound bodily changes generally associated with puberty. Socially, too, the transitioning individual goes through many of the same processes – of upheaval together with rapid adaptation and socialisation – that are most commonly associated with adolescence. We may find ourselves suddenly having to acquire a whole new set of skills and behaviours, to navigate a range of unfamiliar gendered expectations and limitations, and ultimately to develop a new sense of individual identity. All this while juggling – or losing – jobs, family obligations, and the multiple other commitments of so-called adult life; we become adepts of ‘queer time’ (Halberstam, 2005), our trajectories incommensurable with the conventionally linear and compartmentalised structures of cis- and hetero-normative life stories.

Presentation and style are a case in point. If adolescence and early adulthood is a socially-legit-

imated space for experimentation and formation of personal style - in step with the more general development of a sense of personal identity - trans individuals navigate these treacherous waters at accelerated speed, often outside the sanctioned explorative zones of teenage life. Queer temporalities and process ontologies share a disregard for linear pasts and futurities. This project, then, deliberately collides temporalities by making appropriately inappropriate use of an age-specific consumer product to explore precisely this terrain.

Appropriately inappropriate - third - because trans lives can sit at times uncomfortably with certain feminist - even queer - sensibilities; not least when exploring the uncomfortable and uncertain terrain of femininity. This project takes an activity book for young women and girls as a space to explore that discomfort which coalesces around femininity and the multiple and conflicting ways it has been conceptualised, packaged, celebrated, and denigrated. Are the activity book's cutesy femme figures plucky and assertive or insubstantial and submissive? Do they facilitate joyful and creative self-expression, or acculturation to commodified and gendered norms? Is their aesthetic inherently heteronormative - or is that merely a projection, given the complete absence of male figures from the book? Even the 'wedding dress' page is populated, after all, not with a man and a woman, but with two figures in dresses.

Analyses that rely too heavily on a subject-oriented concept of agency and instrumentality fail to account for the ways in which femininity is created in relation - always already both citational, and generative. Femininity has long been an invisible and contested frontier of queer aesthetic resistance (Volcano and Dahl, 2008; Walker, 1995; Nestle, 1989), and many women in fashion would contest the tired notion that feminine beautifying practices are necessarily oriented towards the male gaze. In her book *Whipping Girl: A transsexual woman on sexism and the scapegoating of femininity*, Julia Serano (2007) points to the range of ways in which misogyny operates differentially along axes of both sex and gender, drawing attention to the singular ways in which oppression of trans women expresses not only an attachment to binary gender, or to its correlation with binary sex categories, but specifically a policing of the hierarchy of masculinity over femininity, which trans women by their very existence threaten to invert. Transmisogyny and femmephobia are expressions of misogyny that extend beyond the arena of sexual difference per se. Femininity is often the direct focus of denigration and persecution, independent of categories of sex. The aesthetic of the activity book - its prettiness simultaneously appealing and discomfiting - offers an appropriately charged space to explore conflicting ideas and orientations around what it means to be (or become) feminine.

Fourth, practices of style and dress invite a close attention to the relation between materiality and meaning. While fashion is commonly theorised as a form of messaging or communication, this omits the ways in which style choices may exceed, or fall short of, logics of linguistic signification (Campbell, 1997 Kaiser and McCullough, 2010; see also Stone, 1962). Trans lives urgently and insistently problematise the relationship between body and mind - between matter and idea. The details of an everyday engagement with gender through dress and presentation draw attention also to the tactile, somatic, performative, and other dimensions that inform individual style practices (Kaiser, 2001). More specifically, they suggest that processes of subjectification - the ongoing becoming of a sense of individual identity - might best be understood not as the articulation of a statement ("this is who I am") but as a not-entirely-volitional involvement in a shifting field of distributed potentialities and relations ("I relate like this"). The result is a reciprocal geometry of gender production that does not fit neatly within the grammars of subject and object. Rather than treat matters of style and presentation as delineating how a subject expresses a pre-given

(presumed) individual essence, we might ask instead how practices of style shape the very terms and possibilities for who it is conceivable that an individual might become. These terms and possibilities are not fixed (either for the individual or for the collective), but rather are generated through encounter between individuals and their collective milieus (Combes, 2013, 4)⁹.

Finally, both matters of fashion and style, and the process of drawing itself, offer vital possibilities for elaborating a theoretical problem through a process of material practice (Brice, 2018). While the written word - and the coded properties of dress as communication - continue to play an important part in this process, language is no longer the dominant mode. Thought takes place in and through the practices of mark making, of free association, collision and refraction of ideas, both on the page and in the process of ethnographic 'participant observation' that is my everyday navigation of style and dress. Both the journalling, and the engagement with gender through presentation and encounter, are here taken up as forms of experimental mapping - a cartography of the emergent field of tensions and possibilities described in the space of encounter between myself as (trans) individual, and the collective milieu within which I am individuated. This collision of material and ideational engagements with the problem of gender is deliberately messy. The pace of work alternates between meditative/contemplative and frantic/urgent - words and imagery interrupt each other and jostle for space on the page.

EXCERPTS FROM AN ARTIST'S JOURNAL

(Figures commence overleaf)

FIGURE 2 Pastel pinks and greens

FIGURE 3 I didn't expect it to move me

FIGURE 4 So many partial solutions

FIGURE 5 Which bodies count as women?

FIGURE 6 There is no such line

FIGURE 7 Mirror therapy

FIGURE 8 Precisely these tensions

FIGURE 9 Oh, to be able

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper concludes with a passage from the poem *Before I step outside* by Travis Alabanza (n.d.)

I take a selfie before I go outside to remind myself how I looked in that moment.
 To archive my existence before physical danger.
 To remind myself of how I looked before I change.

Alabanza's words powerfully articulate the optimism and violence present in each day's renewed encounter with a gendered social milieu. They also articulate a powerful blurring of registers; a profound imbrication of discursive and bodily affects. Processes of self-styling, self-scrutiny, representation, performative iteration, narrativisation, affective encounter, bodily and emotional trauma, survival, and adaptation are here inextricable. Even as these lines memorialise a fleeting euphoric sensation of 'authentic' selfhood, they assert the impossible provisionality of such a sensation. There never is a moment that precedes transformative encounter.

In the world of fashion, gender-transgressing styles and bodies are suddenly all the rage - yet the violence of gender still dogs the lives of trans individuals offstage (Adhav, 2018; Cochrane, 2018; Vaid-Menon, 2018). Trans lives break down boundaries between public and private space; individual and collective thought; between the lives of bodies and of ideas. They attest to the fundamentally reciprocal nature of processes of gendered subjectification. In this, trans lives are not unique. They are simply a particularly compelling and poignant expression of a collective problem - gender - at this moment in a never-ending process of collective individuation.

Fri 5 Jan 2018 - SPENT THE DAY DOING D.I.Y - WITH H
Create outfits for a spring collection.



TASK FOR
THE DAY: KITCHEN
SHELVES (FOR TEA +
OVER THE SINK).



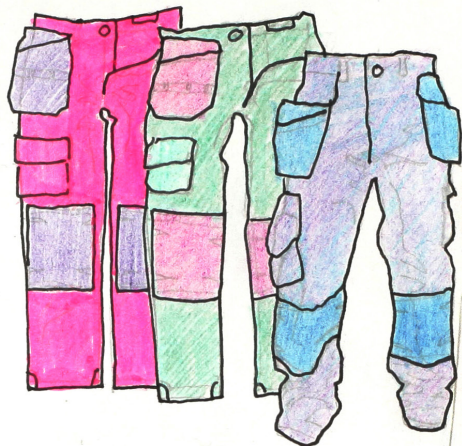
Pastel pinks and
greens



D.I.Y IS ONE OF THOSE
ACTIVITIES THAT BRINGS
ON DYSPHORIA - WHETHER
BY ASSOCIATION OR BE-
CAUSE I TUNE IN TO A
MORE MASCULINE SIDE
OF MYSELF, I DON'T KNOW.
WHY DON'T CORDURATM
WORK TROUSERS
COME IN FLORALS - OR
IN PASTEL PINKS AND
GREEN?

ON WHATSAPP WITH S.B. - DISCUSSING
THE LIMITS OF IDENTITY AND THE PROBLEM
OF ACCOUNTING FOR BODILY DIFFERENCE
IN NON-REPRESENTATIONAL THEORY.

WITH A SHORT TRIP UP TO THE UNI. FOR A WORK MEETING.



military industry

FINISHED THE DAY
WITH A MEAL OF FISH
AND CHIPS. CLASSIC.

IN THE CHIPPIE I MOSTLY
LOOKED AT MY PHONE TO AVOID
CATCHING ANYONE'S EYE.

AT WHAT POINT DOES "BEING
VULNERABLE" CLOSE DOWN, RATHER
THAN OPENING UP, SPACES OF ENCOUNTER?

Add springtime
colours.

cardamom
& ginger

Net Wt 41g (1.41oz)

20 herbal

ER

OW.

tm

OR

ND

VA

Create mood boards, then design
outfits for the dolls.

SAT 27 JAN 2018

* NB This is what I

OUTFIT FOR SEEING
MY GP. SHE AGREED
TO DOUBLE MY
PRESCRIPTION OF
ESTROGEN TODAY.

SHE'S ACTUALLY VERY
SUPPORTIVE - IT MAY
NOT MAKE ANY
DIFFERENCE WHAT I
WEAR - BUT IT'S
HARD NOT TO FEEL
LIKE DRESSING
FEMME, AND DRESSING
MATURE, ELEGANT AND
RESPECTABLE, IS
NECESSARY TO HELP
SECURE TREATMENT.
SHE'S ON MY SIDE
BECAUSE SHE TRUSTS
ME AND FINDS ME
BELIEVABLE, AND THAT
TRUST MUST DEPEND
ON THE IMPRESSION
I MAKE, AT SOME LEVEL.



Bought the
T-shirt on
sale at
'Zara' - had
to remove a
pink fluffy
pocket.

Fluffy
'pocket'
then
became a
comfort-
object -
and an impromptu
'talking stick'.

ac- tually wore.

OUTFIT FOR GOING DANCING.

THE (NEW) LONG HAIR IS GREAT FOR BRINGING OUT THE FEMME IN ME. I REALLY FEEL IT, AND THE DANCING IS GREAT.

SADLY, IT'S ALSO ENOUGH TO BRING MY FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH UNINVITED MALE HANDS IN PLACES THEY DON'T BELONG. OR, AT LEAST, MY FIRST FROM SEEMINGLY CIS-HET MALES. APPARENTLY, IT DOESN'T TAKE MUCH...



This is not what I actually look like...

THE HANDWRITING IS BOTHERING ME.

And writing by hand isn't working very well...

TRANSITION IS FULL OF SURPRISES.

THE MANDATORY (OR NEARLY) RITUALS OF FEMINE HAIR REMOVAL FEMININITY HAVE

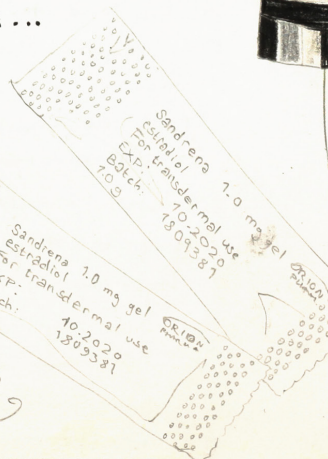
ALWAYS SEEMED TO ME LIKE MISOGYNISTIC TORTURE. THE FIRST TIME I

WAXED MY LEGS, I DID IT OUT OF A KIND OF CURIOSITY ABOUT A COMMON FEMINE RITUAL, AND BECAUSE

I THOUGHT IT'D BE NICE TO WEAR A SKIRT WITHOUT DRAWING ATTENTION TO MY ('MASCULINE') HAIRS. IT TOOK ME ~~BY~~ SURPRISE TO DISCOVER HOW MUCH I LIKED IT. I DIDN'T EXPECT IT TO MOVE ME.



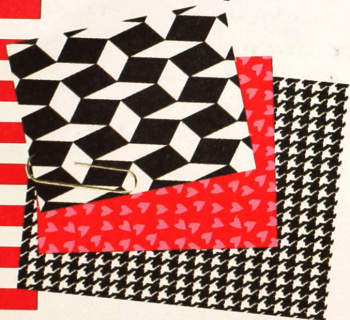
Two
Sachets
daily



Design and colour in the clothes with red, white and black patterns.

Mon 29.1.18

Becoming immersed in the detail of the lace on a favourite top - the rhythmic repetition and alteration of pattern. Remembering that drawing here is intended as a practice of processing, perhaps also healing - not unlike practices of "mindfulness" and meditation. This exercise is intended to be, among other things, a kind of therapeutic process. Sometimes a kind of overly self-conscious authorship can get in the way, and I have to remember to come back to simply drawing



Friday
2 Feb 2018

It took me a long time to dress today, and I can barely leave the house. The dysphoria has been bad lately; there is a plethora of possible reasons, including recent involvement in resisting transphobic activism, a return to a much busier calendar, or even possibly the increased dose of hormones.

Cis women - friends and colleagues - often compliment me on my makeup, invariably comparing it to their own plainer style. I expect they are trying to be friendly and encouraging; maybe this is also something of a formula for compliments - to put yourself down by comparison. More often than not, though, I sense a note of disapproval, as though they think I have a naive view of femininity or am reinforcing

Twisting the fabric and fixing from inside with a hairband creates a kind of pleated whorl - breaks up the flatness of a long 'T' and accentuates hips

a standard they don't want to be held to. I don't think they realise that my make-up routine is finely calibrated to be the minimum necessary to effectively reduce the friction I encounter in my day-to-day life. On days when I take care of over my make-up I get less second glances, less smirks; less people misgender me or stare. My communications with others a smoother and



clearer. On days when I take care over my make-up, also, a quick glance in the mirror will show me myself, a woman, and not a stranger's face.

Some trans folks have shifted to speaking of gender euphoria rather than dysphoria- to describe those moments of sudden elation when you suddenly access what it feels like to be real, to be actual, and to be yourself. Rather than struggling to beat gender dysphoria, a person can strive to cultivate moments of gender euphoria; to be ever more frequently and more easily present in your body without a sense of profound alienation or disassociation from the self.

Make-up works to hide my stubble, to soften my jaw line, to accentuate my eyes and lips, and to give a clearly legible - subtle but emphatic - as to how I wish to be gendered. We are sufficiently habituated to these cues that if I get the balance right it works, both on my own mind and on those I encounter in my daily activities.



"No individual would be able to exist without a milieu that is its complement, arising simultaneously from the operation of individuation."

for this reason, the individual should be seen as but a partial result of the operation bringing it forth. Thus, in a general manner, we may consider individuals as beings that come into existence as so many partial solutions to so many problems of incompatibility between potentials harbored within the preindividual that being dephases or becomes, in order to perpetuate itself."

Coombes (2013)
p.4

Outfits for a catwalk show...

10 Feb 2018 - CHATTING WITH S IN THE MORNING ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO IDENTIFY AS A NON-BINARY TRANS WOMAN.

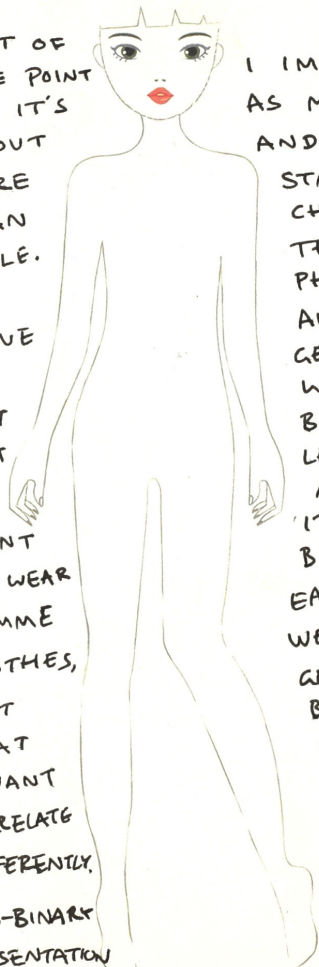


"ARE YOU A BOY OR A GIRL?" - "NO."

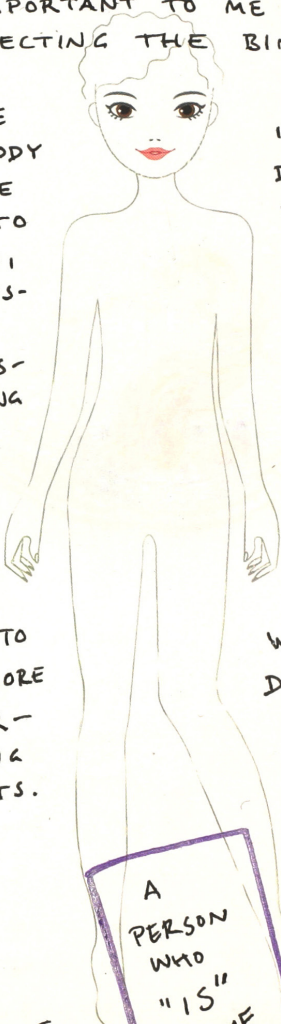
BUT IF YOU INSIST ON HAVING A BINARY, I'M WOMAN.

AFTER TRAVIS ALABANZA'S PERFORMANCE LAST WEEK I WONDERED WHETHER I SHOULD BE PRESENTING MORE EXPLICITLY NON-BINARY RATHER THAN FEMME. I DO EXPERIMENT WITH MORE ANDROGYNOUS CLOTHES, BUT FOR NOW I FIND THAT BEING EMPHATICALLY 'NOT A MAN' IS MORE IMPORTANT TO ME THAN CLAIMING THE LIMINAL ZONE, ~~BEING~~ ACTIVELY REJECTING THE BINARY.

PART OF THE POINT IS, IT'S ABOUT MORE THAN STYLE. MY DRIVE IS NOT THAT I WANT TO WEAR FEMME CLOTHES, BUT THAT I WANT TO RELATE DIFFERENTLY. NON-BINARY PRESENTATION



I IMAGINE AS MY BODY AND FACE START TO CHANGE, THE DYS-PHORIA AND MIS-GENDERING WILL BOTH LESSEN, AND IT WILL BECOME EASIER TO WEAR MORE GENDER-BENDING OUTFITS.



I FIND I → DON'T WANT TO WEAR CLOTHES I HAD BEFORE-EVEN WHEN THEY'RE QUITE GENDER NEUTRAL.



I gave this jumper to S instead. She looks great in it.

WEARING DIFFERENT CLOTHES HELPS ME FEEL GROUNDED AND REAL; ACCESS A NEW SENSE OF "SELF-IN-RELATION."

A PERSON WHO "IS" FEMME

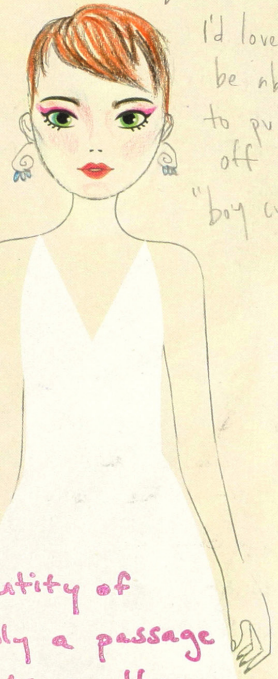
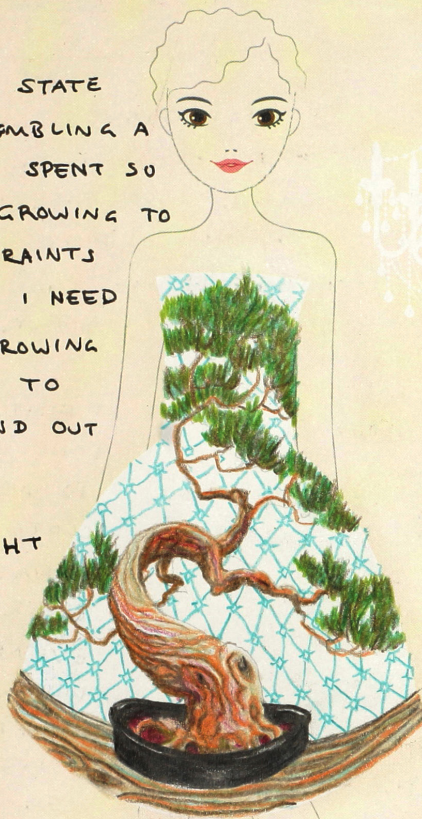
FEELS (TO ME) MORE LIKE A STYLE INTERVENTION - I FEAR BEING READ AS A MAN WEARING A FEMME STYLE, RATHER THAN RE AS INTER

ONE OF THE THINGS AT STAKE IN TRANS LIBERATION IS "WHICH BODIES COUNT AS WOMEN?" IF WE DEFINE A WOMAN THROUGH EXPERIENCE OF MISOGYNY, WHAT DOES THAT DO?

Sun 11 Feb

Bonsai Design prom dresses.


I THINK OF THE CURRENT STATE
OF MY GENDER AS RESEMBLING A
BONSAI TREE. I HAVE SPENT SO
MUCH OF LIFE SO FAR GROWING TO
FIT THE FORCED CONSTRAINTS
OF ONE GENDER, NOW I NEED
TO SPEND SOME TIME GROWING
THE OTHER WAY TO
EVEN FIND OUT
WHERE CENTRE
BALANCE.
BE
HOW
DOES
THIS
FIT
WITH
SIMONDON'S
"DEPHASING"
?



I'd love to
be able
to pull
off a
"boy cut"

"The non self-identity of
being is not simply a passage
from one identity to another
through the negation of the
prior identity. Rather, because
being contains potential, and
because all that is exists with
a reserve of becoming, the
non-self-identity of being
should be called more-than-
identity. In this sense,
being is in excess over itself."

Coombes. (2013)
p. 3



"In order to draw an object, we have only to draw its outline [...] The outline is only the edge difference between light and dark or one colour and another. It is not something definite. It is not, believe it or not, that every object has a line around it! There is no such line."

Feynman
in Barad
(2007) p. 106

Wed 7 Mar

A friend, M, let me house-sit at her place last week. This was the design on the curtains in the room where I slept.

"Why should our bodies end at the skin, or include at best other beings encapsulated by skin?" Haraway, in Barad (2007) p. 109

Designer tip:

Draw around the pale shapes for the outlines of the dresses.

Mon 2 ~~April~~ April

Flight · BA 44 7023 NEW ORLEANS. Reading
Design outfits for a summer collection.



Dyed wool from
Marrakech

MIRROR THERAPY FOR PHANTOM LIMB PAIN:

"A patient is allowed to feel the imaginary movement of the removed body part behaving as normal body movement through a mirror. The mirror image of the normal body part helps reorganise the and integrate the mismatch between proprioception and visual feedback of the removed body. [...] The clinical effect of mirror therapy is much more significant than any other treatments."

Fresh watermelon
red and green



(Young Kim &
Young Kim,
2012)



Some
Women
Wear
leg hair:
Get over
it!

The first summer weather (it was a while ago now): I was finally able to try out some pretty outfits after months of layered and shapeless jumpers. I was surprised to realise what a difference it made - I'd forgotten how important that regular priming is - looking in the mirror and seeing a woman brings me back into my body, into presence. What is that? Does the way we think disassociation rely on the body-mind dichotomy?

Judith Butler and Simondon; watching the handmaid's take box set.

as the subject is constructed,
then who is constructing the subject?"

"The debate between constructionism and essentialism ^{that misses} for the point of deconstruction altogether. The point has never been that 'everything is constructed'; that point, when and to a kind of discursive ^{is discursively} ^{where it is made, belongs} ^{or linguisticism that refuses} ^{elusion, erasure, violent} ^{disruptive return within} ^{legitimacy."} (Butler, 1993)

I was pretty terrified about visiting the U.S. It didn't help that I was assigned 'arbitrary' extra security screening, on my journey there. As it happened, I had a great time in N.O.

I don't know whether people just weren't clocking me, or whether New Orleans folk are just super

down with trans stuff, but it was one of the friendliest and most comfortable experiences I've had in public space.

Even the men collecting rubbish didn't blink or stare. Just a polite and friendly "howyadoin". No hint of creepiness. You can tell.

And of course there's always other dynamics playing out.

Feeling pretty (or not) is just a bonus. Obviously it's nice when you do, but this isn't a "body image" thing

Howyadoin ladies.

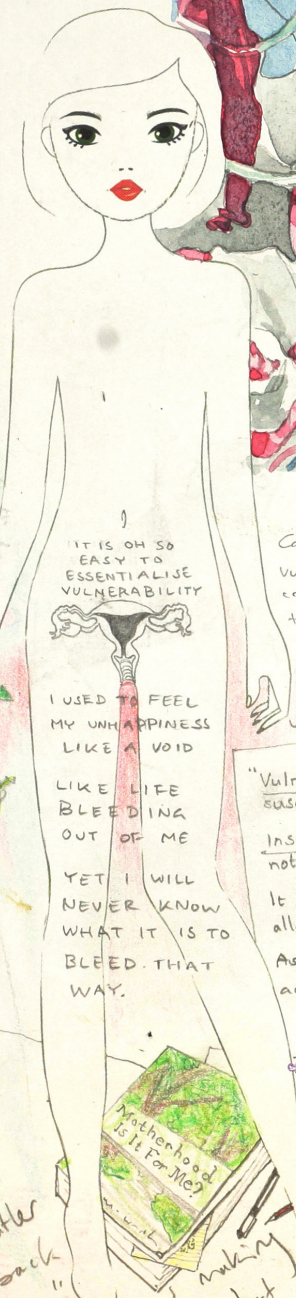


Create mood boards on these pages,
then design outfits from the ideas.



Marjoram
in flower

Tending a garden
is one of the things
that has kept me
going this year. Judith Butler
warns against falling back
on an "ethics of care"
and I'm sure she's making
a good point, but
nurturing has been
a valuable part
of transitioning,
for me.



IT IS OH SO
EASY TO
ESSENTIALISE
VULNERABILITY

I USED TO FEEL
MY UNHAPPINESS
LIKE A VOID

LIKE LIFE
BLEEDING
OUT OF ME

YET I WILL
NEVER KNOW
WHAT IT IS TO
BLEED THAT
WAY.



FREED MAY

(Drawing in order
to feel...
birth + death)

Coming out isn't just becoming
vulnerable to transphobia and dis-
crimination. Coming out is learning
to live fully as a person - daring
to connect, to relate, and to
love. Coming out and making queer
kin is also daring to love people
who, like you, are vulnerable to getting hurt.

"Vulnerable: exposed, wide open,
susceptible to getting hurt.
Insecure: afraid, filled with doubt,
not confident.

It takes courage and confidence to
allow yourself to be vulnerable.
As such, these two words are
antonyms."

Dushka Zapata, N.D

"That visibility which
makes us most vulnerable
is that which also is the
source of our greatest
strength." Lorde (1984)

How many
male
artists
will include
a womb in
their art
works?
Why does it
become dis-
missible as
a woman's
art?

CONFRONTING CLICHE IS ONE WAY TRANSITION EXACTS COURAGE...

4,5 July

I'd like to see these
outline models stand
up off the page and
start to talk back...



TRULY, THERE'S SOMETHING
DISTURBINGLY SUBMISSIVE ABOUT
THESE PASSIVE, INSUBSTANTIAL,
DOLL-LIKE FIGURES. IT IS
BOTH DISTRESSING AND
APPROPRIATE TO TRANS-
ITION IS TO BE CON-
FRONTED WITH PRECISELY
THESE TENSIONS AROUND
'FEMININITY', PASSIVITY
AND POWER. WHEN
ARE 'FEMINE' MANNER-
ISMS PLACATORY, TO
APPEASE DOMINATING
MALES, AND WHEN
ARE THEY A POWER-
FUL REFUSAL OF
MASCULINIST
VALUES? IS THERE
NOT MORE TO
AGENCY THAN
COMPLIANCE WITH
HIERARCHICAL
ORDERS OF
UNITARY AND
VOLITIONAL
SUBJECTIVITY?

Everything about
feminisation - clothing,
mannerism and gesture,
most importantly: voice -
chimes distressingly with
submissiveness. Small
wonder many cis feminists
are uncomfortable with expressions
of femininity - their own and others!

ADOLESCENCE
PRECISELY THIS PROBLEM - THIS IS ONE MORE SENSE
IN WHICH ADULT TRANSITION RESEMBLES A FORM
OF RELATED SECOND ADOLESCENCE.

Create outfits for autumn and winter parties.

Winter brings a whole new set of challenges.

Draped in layers.

it is hard to retain a sense of femme. Harder also to give enough cues;

it's hard not to dread it. With the heat we've had, wearing mainly short skirts and summery tops, I've been enjoying wearing no hair. Trying on the wig feels strange after so long, but I can imagine in coat and jumper weather I will be grateful for its strong femme presence.



As the effect, my no



Autumn

Recently I read about a trans woman who got facial feminisation surgery done in Thailand. She was still travelling and presenting as male, but on her journey home she got consistently gendered female.

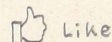
The facial subtleties make all the difference.

I don't know if I'd want to do facial surgery, but oh, to be able to

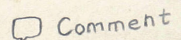
► Transgender Support

Network

My anti-depression leggings. They almost work. Fake it till you make it.



Like



Comment

hormones take
I do get flashes of
her face in the mirror.

I guess I must be unusual
for a woman in mid thirties
in that it makes me
happy that I'm starting
to look more like my
mother as I get older...

just throw on jeans
and a hoodie, short
hair and no makeup,
and still be gendered

almost kinda female by strangers
(and friends)...!

winter



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I would like to thank Nina Williams and Merle Patchett for curating the symposium on Geographies of Fashion and Style, and for their careful editorial work in compiling this special issue. Adeola Enigbokan's contribution to that symposium prompted this article's reflections on methodological 'appropriateness'. An early version of this paper was presented at the session *Besides affirmation - geography and 'negativity'* at the AAG 2017, and received valuable comments from Paul Harrison and JD Dewsbury. The artwork has been exhibited at the Critically Queer conference (2018) and at Ginger Beer 002 (2019). Merle Patchett, Joe Gerlach, Owain Jones, Sam Berlin, Scarlet Hall, and Tania de St Croix all provided generous feedback on iterations of the project. Sincere thanks are also due to Rosa Targett, Rosie Nelson and the Critically Queer network, the Dandelion Collective, and Nic Aaron for formative conversations on identity and/or transgender politics. Finally, I would like to thank my anonymous reviewers for their contributions to enhancing this article.

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NOTES

1. The book does not specify a target audience but was displayed alongside other products marketed to girls, and includes exclusively feminine figures and styles.
2. Artistic journaling has a long history in geographical and ethnographic fieldwork, as a tool for both observation and critical self-reflection (Causey, 2017; Kuschner, 2016; Taussig, 2011). The practice-led, auto-ethnographic approach in this project is an extension of that tradition; its methodological rationale is the focus of this short text.
3. 'Individuation' describes the process whereby one term is differentiated from another – in this case pertaining to the individual subject. My thinking on individuation draws on the work of Simondon (1989; see also Brice, 2019; Keating, 2019).
4. Non-representational geographies emphasise practice, process, and pre-cognitive affects over representational modes of analysis for theorising spatial relations. Key texts include Thrift (2008), Anderson and Harrison (2010), Dewsbury (2010), and McCormack (2013).
5. The concept of ontogenesis centres processes of *becoming*, rather than states of *being*, as the basis of existence.
6. Transfeminism refers to a current in feminism that explicitly includes and is informed by trans struggles.

7. The implication here being an inversion of traditional research roles - this project could be described as a kind of experimental and immersive participant ethnography, in which I, as a transgender scholar, interrogate cisgender practices of subjectification through an induction in style and dress.
8. My use of 'appropriateness' here is inspired by the work of Adeola Enigbokan. For a potent exposition of this word and its associations see Enigbokan (2019).
9. I develop this ontological argument more fully elsewhere (Brice, 2020) than can be undertaken within the format of this short experimental contribution.

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