PERFORMING FASHION OUTSIDE OF THE BINARY: THE PROCESS OF BECOMING WITH THE CLOTHING WE WEAR

By

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Abstract

Clothing comprises a significant aspect of the intelligibility of all gendered behavior, acts, citations; as Butler understands gender to be a "surface signification," (1990) I argue that clothing cannot be considered separate from gender itself. Together with clothing, a person becomes intelligible/unintelligible and their clothing conveys or conceals aspects of their gender identity and embodiment. Therefore, I consider clothing to play an important role in negotiating one's intelligibility as nonbinary. In this thesis, I build on Butler's theory of performativity (1990) by demonstrating how gender is an effect of the process of *becoming with* the clothing we wear and consider the citation of gender norms to be an "intra-active" practice (Barad 1999). Through the process of conducting in-depth interviews with self-identified trans*[1] and gender non-conforming people, I analyze how my interviewees "intra-act" with their clothing negotiating its citationality and embedded meanings in relation to their gender identities in an effort to establish intelligibility and authenticity. I use the term "intra-act" because I want to contest the idea of distinguishable boundaries between the physical body and clothing. The idea of considering the enactment of gender as an intra-active practice is necessary to establish my further discussion of visibility and/or intelligibility of one's gender identity in clothing. Ultimately, I critique the notion of visibility as it is embedded in regimes of surveillance (Magnet and Mason 2014, Sullivan 2009). Although a few of my interviewees begin to trouble the notion of clothing as expressive as such, overall they seem to understand their potential for intelligibility to be associated with visibility, which is embedded in surveillance.

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[1] I use the asterisk to indicate that I use "trans*" as an umbrella term signifying inclusion of all gender nonconforming identities.

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Introduction

I'll use the following anecdote about my first interview that I completed for this thesis project, which nicely articulates the tensions I wish to describe concerning notions of authenticity and one's visibility and/or intelligibility. I was first put in contact with Jean[2], a sophomore in their undergraduate studies[3], by my sister through email. Jean seemed really enthusiastic about the interview and excited to meet up. After we set up the time and location for the interview, I e-mailed Jean to see if they were comfortable with showing me some of their favorite garments during the interview. Jean replied that they would have to see how the interview went before agreeing to show me their clothing. As one of the angles I am criticizing in my thesis is the notion of visibility and/or intelligibility (I will distinguish between these two terms later) of one's gender identity in clothing I was curious to see what Jean would be wearing during the interview, as presumably one typically wears their favorite clothing. It seemed that Jean didn't want to be visible in this way to me, at least not yet.

The day of the interview I was waiting outside of Jean's university for them to sign me in[4]. Jean, a 20 year old, thin Korean-American person with a "male-identified body,"[5] is about my height 5' 8, and has their dark brown shoulder length hair pushed back in a headband. They approached me and asked, "Devin?" Relieved, I say yes, they sign me in and we walk over to

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[2] Two of my key informants were Jean and Lydon, their interviews were particularly long, both around three hours. Their information was especially important in relation to how I want to suggest we use and conceive of clothing.

[3] Jean goes to a private university and is studying business.

[4] Typically, on American campuses, guests have to be signed in with security in order to access university spaces.

[5] By using the term "male-identified body" as opposed to "male bodied," I mean to highlight the tension that these bodies are typically identified as male by other people, not that they *are* male. An interviewee used the phrase in reference to themselves, and I thought it nicely highlighted the role of surveillance in the process of determining one's embodiment. I use quotes to identify the fact that I am to an extent essentializing when I identify my interviewees as having either male or female-identified bodies. However, as they conveyed to me in these interviews, their embodiments comprise an important aspect of their relationship with clothing. Therefore, I feel it is important to convey although I am wary of making these distinctions. Unless noted, all introductions of my interviewees' embodiments are my own presumptions.

a bench where we begin the interview. Jean is wearing a blue/gray t-shirt, a blue hoodie, gray sweatpants, navy crocs and a Jansport plaid backpack. In essence, Jean proceeds to tell me how unimportant fashion was for them. I was fascinated by this revelation as I am after all studying the significance of fashion in relation to one's gender. However, Jean was really aware of how their clothing was gendering them, in part due to the physical change their body was undergoing due to hormone replacement therapy.

> I think the reason why I wear pajamas, other than just the pure comfort, is the fact that, when I wear pajamas *people don't gender me as much*. I feel like they don't. Instead of thinking like this person's a guy, this person's a girl, they just think this person doesn't care. Like this person is a slob, this person, you know, and that's what I want. I don't care if you're judging me for not dressing to your norms, I don't care if you're judging me in terms of anything else, but for the one thing that I do care about, *I don't want to be pinned down*. I'd rather be pinned as a slob and as a person who doesn't know how to dress than to be pinned as a fashionable guy or as a transwoman.

Jean told me that they wear pajamas right now because they feel that they aren't gendered. They are comfortable with the identity of slob, but not male or female. It seems that Jean uses the process of dressing to somehow disrupt the process of gendering, even though this is essentially impossible to avoid, as I will demonstrate in this thesis. Jean attempts to convey that they don't care, by wearing clothing like sweatpants, when in fact it is because they care *too much* that Jean dresses this way. Jean's gender is too important to them to submit it to the surveillance of the general population. The tendency to use clothing to avoid being gendered easily, or to avoid attracting any unwanted attention on the basis of their gender identity is a theme that arose in many of interviews.

After speaking for an hour, it seems that the interview is winding down, and I finally ask Jean about their five favorite garments. They tell me that they can show me if I would like. They assured me that it was okay, and actually confided in me that they were worried that I would come and make fun of them, which is why they originally told me they weren't sure about showing me their clothes. I was a little shocked. I felt terrible that Jean may have felt this way about our interview, but I told them that I hoped anyone interested in doing this type of research would be an open-minded person and empathetic with the struggles that trans* and gender nonconforming people encounter with clothing.

We walk over to their dorm room and they ask me how I identify, which I believe they attributed to the fact that they thought I was dressed pretty androgynously. At this point I want to highlight my position as a researcher and external observer. I am aware of my position as both "insider" and "outsider" in this context (Hesse-Biber 2007). As a gender studies master's student, as well as someone with a background in fashion design, I have intimate knowledge of my thesis topic. Furthermore, it seemed that many of my interviewees appeared to "read" me as gender nonconforming due to my appearance, which I draw upon to garner their trust and acknowledge I was to an extent attempting to convey. During the interviews, two of my participants became uncomfortable in their clothing, which one directly attributed to the interview claiming that they needed to go change because they "felt gross." Although only two of my participants confided in me about this, I can infer that this potentially happened in other interviews as well, and despite my attempts to be as open and accepting as I could, I had a role in instigating some of the discomfort my participants discussed.

When we arrived back in the dorm, Jean tells me that they have to change. They told me when they got dressed this morning as they were leaving they realized they were wearing gray on gray, but they simply didn't care enough to change. However, as soon as we get back, Jean

seems frustrated at their outfit, says that they're wearing a gray jumpsuit, and changes into a pink tank top with a little girl and a pig on it, characters from Gravity Falls, which they later tell me is one of their favorite garments. Although I hadn't begun recording again, I believe Jean said something to the effect of "I feel gross," which is actually exactly what the other interviewee, who told me they had to change at the end of our interview, said.

I suggest that this interview with Jean is to an extent representative of my wider argument. They used their clothing to both obstruct and garner intelligibility from me at different points in our meeting. They didn't want me to gender them, which is potentially why they didn't want to show me or wear their favorite clothing when we first met. Once they met me and became more comfortable, and potentially because of the way I was dressed, Jean felt comfortable wearing their favorite clothing in front of me. Perhaps the interview's focus on their clothing and intelligibility made Jean feel as though they were being misgendered or weren't intelligible through their clothing, which could be potentially why they changed. This anecdote hints at the understanding that intelligibility is embedded in surveillance. As a researcher, I became a part of this surveillance matrix.

I was particularly invested in the relationship between trans* and gender nonconforming people and their clothing because I was interested to find out how they negotiate the matter of embodiment in relation to their gender identity. I posited that people with nonconforming gender identities may have a different relationship with their clothing as opposed to how a cis woman, for example, dresses in feminine garments produced for female bodied people. I suggest that the tensions between one's gender identity and clothing may be more evident in the relationship between trans* and gender nonconforming people and their clothing. If I were to expand or build upon this study, I would be interested to compare these findings with how cis people negotiated their own gendered relationship with clothing.

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Statement of Argument

In this thesis, I aim to complicate the way we do, perceive and enact gender in clothing and emphasize the importance of clothing in the citation/emergence of gender itself. I elaborate on Butler's understanding of performativity (1988, 1990) by considering gender an "intra-action" (Barad 1999) in which clothing and a person intra-act in order to produce meaning; however, I do not consider this contingent meaning to be decontextualized from all past meaning, in fact *it is dependent on it*. I claim that the potential for subversion lies in the "intra-action" of a clothed subject, and in order to more comprehensively understand how this subversion is happening, we must examine the ways in which the citation of gender is happening. I want to emphasize the citationality of clothing itself in the process of reiteration of gender norms. I suggest that dressing is a much more complicated process than it has been conceived to be in the past. I do not claim to provide a comprehensive understanding of all the ways in which people and clothing intra-act; however, I want to suggest some ways that trans* and gender nonconforming people negotiate their visibility in relation to their authenticity while conceiving of intelligibility as embedded within surveillance (Mason & Magnet 2014).

Methodology

Throughout the month of April, I conducted 13 semi-structured in-depth interviews with people who self-identify as trans* or consider themselves gender nonconforming in some way. I used the snowball method and began by contacting three friends, whom I thought may be interested in participating or may know people who would be interested. These three people were either taking or had taken hormone replacement therapy or testosterone, and had switched pronouns. Even though I conveyed that I was focusing on interviewing trans* and gender nonconforming

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people, I had reservations about contacting them directly in this way, and developing a sample like this because I was to an extent naming them as trans* or gender nonconforming. It took a while for the initial people I contacted to respond to me, so I began asking my cis friends if they knew of anyone who may be interested. I found six participants through this method. Quickly, I had a small group of people to begin interviewing and the initial people I contacted finally responded positively to my request for an interview. After seven interviews, I was still searching for more participants, so I posted a request for interviews on my facebook page, and a high school classmate responded. I also sent out the request for participants through three of my previous professors, one whom put me in contact with the designers of Kirrin Finch[6], who introduced me to three more people who were interested in being interviewed. Overall, I was put in direct contact with each of my interviewees either initiated by myself, a professor or a friend. I will not be using pseudonyms as none of my participants desired to be anonymized.

Nine of the interviews were conducted in person and four were skype interviews with people who had moved away from New York recently. Due to scheduling conflicts and potentially personal reservations, I was only able to interview three participants in person in their homes, whom allowed me to photograph their favorite garments during the interview, and two of the skype interviews were conducted in their homes as well. Only one person told me that she wasn't comfortable being interviewed in her home since her mother would be there. Unfortunately, no other participants disclosed their reasoning behind choosing a location other than their homes. I contacted all my participants about supplementing my analysis with pictures of their clothing or the participants physically in the clothing. Some people have not responded to my request for images, but those who have responded have provided pictures thus far. Likewise, I cannot determine the reasoning of those participants who have not responded to

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[6] Kirrin Finch is a brand that designs masculine tailored clothing for female-bodied people. I believe it is significant to note their brand as it is directly geared towards gender nonconforming people.

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my request for visual representations of their clothing. I suggest these five interviews, that were conducted in close proximity to my interviewees' closets, centered more on the tangible garments and it may have been easier for participants to talk about their clothing.

In keeping with a feminist ethnography, I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews which allowed for respondents to rephrase my questions and issues to arise that they felt were important to them and relevant to the topic. I consider them to be in-depth interviews as I sought "to understand the "lived experiences" of the individual" (Hesse-Biber 2007, 118). I draw on Donna Haraway's theory of situated knowledges (1988) in an attempt to locate myself within this study. "Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. It allows us to become answerable for what we learn to see" (Haraway 1988, 583). I obtained informed consent from all my interviewees, and explained to them my interest in critiquing the relationship between authenticity and their intelligibility as their gender identity. I conveyed to my interviewees that I was looking for stories about their experiences in clothing, and asked them to ground these stories with specific garments.

I want to address my background in fashion design, as it undeniably had an effect on how I approached and conceived of this project. When I was a junior in my BFA fashion design program, I first began seriously considering the gendered nature of the fashion industry and my role in producing these garments. The main struggle I encountered when designing was the issue that clothing is inevitably produced for bodies, typically normative male and female bodies. How could I escape the embedded meanings of certain styles? How could I create clothing that didn't confront the wearer's embodiment? I discovered that to an extent I couldn't, I needed to negotiate the potential meanings of garments in relation to the embedded historicity of the fabric, colors and styles I designed. I began this project, with a designer's perspective

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that I could resolve the tension of how gender nonconforming people use and relate to clothing by creating clothing that was potentially less gendered than the existing clothing on the market. Reflecting on the garments I made, I attempted to disregard the wearer's embodiment to an extent in order to avoid gendering both my garments and the people in them as well as well as juxtaposed gendered garments with different embodiments. In this thesis, I look to my respondents to help me answer the question of how they negotiate the relationship between their gender identity and embodiment within the scope of the existing market of clothing.

I will be analyzing my interviews as "constructed cuts" (Barad 1999), instigating a contingent boundary in order to garner a conditional form of knowledge production, in which I address how my interviewees "intra-act"[7] (Barad 1999) with their clothing, closets and relate their gender identity to their clothing. I do not aim to be representative of this group of people in any way; however, I simply want to suggest that the process of getting dressed is perhaps more complicated than we have previously considered it to be. Following Valentine (2007), I wish to highlight the tensions that arose in my interviews rather than attempting to simply highlight examples that support my theoretical framework. I am interested in what these tensions tell us and what they do in complicating how we understand the process of dressing. When possible, I addressed contradictions that arose during the interview, however sometimes I didn't pick up on the ambiguities until the transcribing and coding process. As a result, there are many contradictions within the conclusions of my research. These interviews demonstrate that the way in which gender is theorized, is not necessarily the way in which it is enacted or discussed. I hope to show how theory informs practice and practice can help shape and interrogate theory. Once again, drawing on Valentine (2007), I strived to take into account how I was being led to

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[7] I claim that these are *intra-actions* instead of *interactions* because I do not want to impose the hierarchy that interaction implies such as that one subject interacts with another subject or object rather than considering the "inseparability of the objects and agencies of observation" (Barad 1999, 5).

this group of respondents, and my role in naming my initial participants as trans* or gender nonconforming, and asking my friends and professors to do the same.

A Queer World/Already Queer

Due to their situatedness within queer communities and discourses in New York City as well as within and tangential to the fashion industry, the majority of my interviewees had pre-existing familiarities with the language I used, gender studies as a discipline and queer theory as well as the fashion industry. Therefore, many had already imagined themselves situated within the discourse and/or in relation to it, and were able to articulate their responses to my questions in a very specific manner. I understand that this group of people is a very particular subset of trans* and gender nonconforming identified people, which acts as a limit on my study as I did not interview people less acquainted with this terminology and theories. Three of my interviewees were in the same fashion design program as I completed in my undergraduate. Although I would agree with Parkins assertion that "clothing's temporal transience calls into question the permanence of the very identities with which it is associated" (Parkins 2008, 510-11) and everyone is subject to this constant production of identity due to the fashion design industry turnover, I want to acknowledge it may be more intimately personal for these three interviewees. Furthermore, I met three of my interviewees through the designers of Kirrin Finch, they had spoken to the designers already about their struggles with clothing as a part of the the designers' marketing research. Therefore, these participants had already taken into account the particular issues that they face in relation to both their clothing and how they portray their embodiment. Finally, I think it is significant to note that the majority of the people I interviewed had recently embarked on this process of change in how they identified, almost all assumed these gender identifications in the past year or two. Several interviewees conveyed the fact that they valued change, and considered their style to be constantly changing. I suggest

that this valuation of change may have connections with their queerness and have implications for the ways in which they "express" themselves through clothing. I don't perceive it to be a causal relationship, but I do think it is worth noting.

The following are the terms that my respondents used describe their gender identity: genderqueer, androgynous, transwoman, gender nonconforming, queer, gender fluid, bigender, nonbinary and male, sometimes indicating his trans history. I was able to gather a relatively representative sample of respondents with five participants falling somewhere on the masculine presenting side of the spectrum and five on the feminine side, with three who I would consider to be occupying both sides of the spectrum at different times. Although some pronouns I use for my interviewees may seem to be in conflict with how they identify, I always use the pronouns they indicated I should use.

Class/Age/Race/Education/Embodiment

I did not specifically engage in a discussion of racial and class identity in relation to a gendered experience of clothing or presentation in my interviews, which I realize is a limitation of my research as well as a possibility for future study. I sent a follow-up email to all of my participants asking them to provide this information, which I share when provided, otherwise I give context information to the best of my knowledge. I interviewed a total of thirteen people. All my interviewees lived in New York for a portion of time: nine are currently living in New York and two are originally from New York. Nine of my interviewees were 25 and under, the youngest being 18 years old and the oldest being 37. Age was an important factor of my participants' experience as the majority were either in college or just leaving university. The confines of one's presentation in relation to a professional atmosphere are much different, so I suggest that the majority of my participants had a relative amount of freedom in their

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appearance at the moment. Five participants are white-American[8], three are Asian-American, one is American of west-African descent, one is Puerto-Rican American, one is white Hispanic/Latina and one is Japanese and one is undeclared. The majority of my participants were middle class, with two identified as working class.[9] I suggest that the intersections of race, class, age and education inform my participants' aesthetic judgments and access to clothing; therefore, I think it is important to contextualize the study with this information. Furthermore, I suggest that these classifications as well as their embodiments can have implications in relation to my participants' ability to become intelligible as their gender identity. As I explained in relationship to my background in fashion design, I struggled conveying my interviewees' embodiment, as I am aware that many of my interviewees attempt to negotiate conveying or concealing it through clothing.[10]

Limitations

My sample was limited as I used the snowball process, although fragmented, and focused my group of interviewees around friends of friends situated in New York. As I addressed above, my respondents were situated in a very particular world, which definitely shaped how they conceived of their gender identity in relation to their clothing as well of their aesthetic judgments. I had a somewhat diverse sample in terms of race; however, the majority of my respondents were quite highly educated and situated somewhere within the middle class. Despite this limited framework of respondents, I suggest that this research begins to hint at the complexity of how trans* and gender nonconforming people negotiate feeling authentic in

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[8] I acknowledge that these racial distinctions are awkward and potentially even ironic as this thesis is about another type of identity; however, I provide them to give context and to avoid portraying a false sense of universal. As I hyphenate other racial identities such as Asian-American, I feel obliged to convey my interviewees' whiteness in a similar manner.

[9] All my interviewees are middle-class except where I indicate otherwise.

[10] Therefore, I attempt to discuss my respondents' embodiments in the way in which they addressed them.

relation to their intelligibility and becoming gendered in clothing. However, my study does not begin to address the structural limitations which affect people's access to clothing. It does not speak to how the intersections of class/race/age/education inform subjects' aesthetic judgments. My study could benefit from addressing the ways in which style changes over time, however, I was temporally bounded. Finally, as I am addressing a specific Western urban context, I do not address the entirely different significations clothing may have in another cultural context.

Chapter Summaries

In Chapter 1, I lay out the theoretical framework for this thesis, and situate this study in relationship to other work connecting authenticity to one's gender identity and/or queerness. I intertwine Barad's use of "intra-action" (1999) and Butler's notion of performativity (1988, 1990) in order to account for the relationship between a person and their clothing, suggesting that the citation of gender is dependent on the historicity of the garments we wear themselves. Although I suggest that there is a contingent production of meaning in the intra-action, I argue it cannot be separated from the citationality of both the garment and the behavior. I draw on Butler's notion of intelligibility (1990) in order to account for the fact that people are only intelligible within the heterosexual matrix.

In Chapter 2, I examine gender as an intra-action between a person and their clothing. I draw on six instances in my interviews in which my participants intra-act or *become with* their clothing (Barad 1999). I analyze what type of gender emerges from these intra-actions. I suggest that conceiving of gender in this way is necessary because it accounts for the role of clothing in a person becoming intelligible or *unintelligible* in their gender identity. Furthermore, I suggest that it is not only a person doing gender, but the clothing itself in intra-

action with the person. I propose that through these intra-actions my respondents embrace, reject and subvert meanings of gender coded garments.

In Chapter 3, I examine the three ways I suggest we do clothing, which I observed in my interviews, although I do not mean to suggest this is the only way we use clothing. First, people can draw on the historicity of garments and engage with them to feel that they are authentically portraying their identity by allowing it to manifest in a visible, although not always intelligible, aspect of their appearance. Second, people can decide not to express themselves, or express themselves in a way that they are quite certain people won't understand, *or they don't want people to understand*, by drawing on knowledge of what certain garments are collectively understood to express. The third process is that people express themselves through "borrowing" other people's authenticity. I draw on Mason and Magnet (2014) to understand intelligibility as a process that is embedded in surveillance, and I describe how my interviewees negotiate their authenticity in relation to this matrix of surveillance.

"Did I answer the question?"-Embodying Queer

During the process of interviewing, I found that some interviews were more difficult to structure than others as interviewees sometimes avoided my questions entirely in an attempt to discuss something else. At first, I was frustrated at this, but towards the end of the research period, it occurred to me that my respondents might be embodying queerness to such an extent that they were obstructing this process of knowledge production in which I was attempting to engage. Although I expected some ambiguity surrounding the process of dressing, as I think it is a difficult process to articulate, I suggest there was an attempt to resist being defined. As many respondents had discussed their attempts to avoid being "pinned down" as any gender in

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public, I infer that some interviewees also participated in the process of obstructing my attempts to extract answers to my questions through these interviews.

Chapter 1 – Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Overview

In this chapter, I draw on Butler's concepts of performativity, intelligibility and original/copy to ground my thesis (1988, 1990, 1993a, 1993b, 1993c). Although I ultimately find Butler's concept of intelligibility as embedded in the heterosexual matrix to be useful for my analysis in Chapter 2, I do critique it as well. I interweave Butler's theory of performativity (1988, 1990) with Barad's concept of "intra-action" (1999) in order to account for the role of materiality in performativity. Although I use the posthumanist notion of "intra-action," I do not mean to claim that an "intra-action" is ahistorical; therefore, I complement it with an understanding of the embedded citationality of clothing. Through this framework, I establish gender as an intra-action. I draw on Butler's understanding of original/copy (1993c) to discuss authenticity in relation to establishing the self as "original." I use Sullivan (2009), Magnet and Mason (2014) to critique the notion of intelligibility as inextricably linked to visibility which is embedded in surveillance. I draw on Mason and Magnet's use of "haptic optics" (Deleuze & Guattari 1987, 492) to refer to a couple of instances in which my interviewees expressed concern at their physical bodies being visible.

Gender as an Intra-Action

Judith Butler's understanding of gender performativity (1988, 1990) is that it is "always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed" (1990, 25). For Butler, gender consists of continual repetitive acts of doing gender, which produces the illusion of a stable gender identity. As Butler claims, gender is citational, we can do gender because

there is history. There is a pre-existing script for culturally intelligible gendered behavior and appearance. "This repetition is at once a reenactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation" (1990, 140). Following Butler, I agree that the subversive potential of gender resides in its citationality, as well as its need for repetition, which implies its instability. In my reading of Butler (1990), she doesn't explain exactly how the citation of gender is happening. In order to more clearly understand gender's subversive potential, I suggest that it is important to explore more deeply the practice of citation itself. I expand upon Butler's theory of performativity by accounting for the ways in which gender is produced as an effect of the process of *becoming with* the clothing we wear. We continually become gendered through the "intra-active" (Barad 1999) practice of dressing. I propose that the potential for subversion of gender norms exists in the daily intra-actions we have with clothing.

I want to begin with a popular interpretation of Butler's theory of performativity (1990) in order to begin to unpack how I will both build on and depart from how she has conceived of gender. In an interview with Liz Kotz for Artforum (1992), Butler refutes this popular interpretation of gender in Gender Trouble. Butler considers this to be a misunderstanding because she doesn't suppose the subject to preexist gender, and she does not understand agency to exist as such in this context. However, I approach this interpretation as a productive misunderstanding of Butler, on which I ground my own critique and elaboration of her concept of performativity.

"The Body You Want: Liz Kotz interviews Judith Butler," Artforum 31, no. 3 (November 1992): 82-89

> **Judith Butler:** The bad reading goes something like this: I can get up in the morning, look in my closet, and decide which gender I want to be today. I can take out a piece of clothing and change my gender: stylize it, and then that evening I can change it again and be something radically other, so that what you get is something like the

commodification of gender, and the understanding of taking on a gender as a kind of consumerism.

Liz Kotz: And also as a totally volitional act....

JB: …my whole point was that the very formation of subjects…presupposes gender in a certain way—that gender is not to be chosen and that "performativity" is not radical choice and it's not voluntarism. I just finished writing another manuscript in which I spend page after page trying to refute the reduction of gender performance to something like style. Performativity has to do with repetition, very often with the repetition of oppressive and painful gender norms to force them to resignify. This is not freedom, but a question of how to work the trap that one is inevitably in.

While I do not think it is a simple as Butler recounts it in this anecdote, I suggest that the process of becoming intelligible as a gender happens through clothes. Even though to an extent, this is exactly the interpretation that Butler is attempting to evade, I draw on it to ground my understanding of gender as an "intra-action" (Barad 1999). Although I don't believe Butler would disagree, I argue that choosing/wearing clothing is an essential component of doing gender. I suggest that she doesn't adequately account for the role of clothing in her theory of performativity (1990). I argue that subjects enact their agency in the "intra-action" of dressing in an attempt to convey or conceal their gender identity. It is through garments, that a subject becomes or fails to become intelligible.

In my thesis, I establish the citation of gender as an intra-active process in which the clothed subject becomes gendered. I want to highlight the tensions between my use of the posthumanist concept of "intra-action" and my understanding of human agency. I do not mean to argue for the existence of a volitional subject, however, I suggest that Butler's notion of intelligibility (1990) doesn't account for the different meanings of failures to conform to gender norms and for the complexity of the consequences of not conforming. I suggest that the subject attempts to enact their agency through the process of dressing. Even though I was not able to develop

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this fully in this thesis, I mean to suggest that the posthumanist aspect of this "intra-action" is that the subject attempts to become intelligible or unintelligible in a certain way, but they ultimately fail due to the embedded citationality of both their clothing and the fact that the body is embedded in cultural meaning. Therefore, the subject can only negotiate their own intelligibility or unintelligibility to a certain extent because their intelligibility is always already prefigured by the "intra-action" between their clothing and their body. As a result, I suggest that my interviewees ultimately fail at becoming intelligible using Butler's understanding of intelligibility as embedded in the heterosexual matrix.[11]

In "Building a Feminist Theory of Fashion" Parkins (2008) proposes the use of Barad's "intra-action" (Barad 2000, 232 in Parkins 2008) to examine the relationship between people and the clothing they wear in order to understand the significance of the fashion industry for gender. Parkins asserts that the import of Barad's agential realism lies in its interrogation of the idea that any subject is independently constructed or constituted as separate from the material. Parkins explains that "clothing situationally, provisionally makes her (a subject) intelligible, a condition she cannot approximate without this material other" (Parkins 2008, 508). Barad and Parkins' understanding of intelligibility emphasizes the significance of things, in this case clothing, in the process of "becoming-intelligible" (2008, 506). Clothing is unknowable/unintelligible without observation; each "intra-action" works towards making the garment intelligible only within the context it exists for the moment. Parkins use of Barad's agential realism, "agential realism recognizes and endorses the ongoing work of interpretation as the only 'end' result of intelligibility" (505) provides a framework for understanding intelligibility as an intra-active process. According to Parkins, "For Barad, the intra-activity of any phenomenon, and the agency, as well-whereby the constituents become knowable and

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[11] However, I do not mean to suggest that all my interviewees wish to become intelligible in this way.

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known to one another-depends on intelligibility" (Barad 2003, 822 cited in Parkins 2008). Barad understands intelligibility to emerge from an intra-action. Therefore, knowledge production becomes a negotiation between human and nonhuman agents rather than something that can be accumulated by a subject. Parkins warns against the potential of "intra-action" to preserve the concept of "observation independent material entities" (2008, 505). According to Parkins, both the subject and garment become intelligible in each intra-action of the clothed subject.

Framing My Argument

Parkins (2008) uses Barad to help us understand the significance of material in the process of becoming intelligible. Following Parkins, I argue that it is essential to consider gender an intra-active process of *becoming with* in order to account for the work that clothing does towards making a clothed subject intelligible. "Intra-action" highlights the inseparability of clothing from its wearer, they "become" together (Barad 1999). The idea of considering the enactment of gender as an intra-active practice is fundamental to connect it with my further discussion of visibility and/or intelligibility of one's gender identity in clothing. Clothing plays an important role in negotiating one's visibility as nonbinary. Together with the clothing, a person becomes visible/invisible and their clothing conveys or conceals aspects of their gender identity and physical body. I do not claim that all of my participants even wish to be visible or intelligible in their gender identity, but I want to explore how this notion of intelligibility is situated in relation to the biopolitical complexity of visibility which embedded in surveillance (Magnet & Mason 2014).

Although it is my understanding that Parkins' was more invested in the effect of the transitory nature of the fashion industry on the "reproduction and instability of identity," (2008, 511) I will be utilizing her suggestion to examine the fashion industry through Barad in order to

critically engage with Butler's notion of performativity (1990). Even though I consider it impossible to discuss clothing as separate from the matrix that is the fashion industry, I will mainly be focusing on every day intra-actions between subjects and their clothing, intermittently tying them to the broader structures of the fashion industry.

Negotiating Authenticity and Visibility in relation to Trans* Bodies

In this section, I investigate the relationship between clothing, gender identity, authenticity and visibility through the use of Sullivan's somatechonology and Magnet and Mason's critique of intelligibility. I want to situate this discussion in relation to the following quotes from the article "On Lying: Street harassment is too high a price for "Being Ourselves"" (2015) by Alok Vaid-Menon, who is a member of the duo Darkmatter. As described on their facebook page, "Darkmatter is a non-binary trans* South Asian artist collaboration." This article was written as a part of the series What I Wanted To Wear Today, which is a platform for trans* people to discuss the negotiations they make about their appearance when they leave the house everyday.

> I started thinking about how so many narratives in our culture are obsessed with "authenticity." How we as trans people are celebrated because we have "embraced our truth." And I think about what this does: how it standardizes visibility as authenticity, how it understands authenticity outside of violence, how it erases all of the calculations we must make to keep ourselves safe and whole.

Alok finishes the article with this thought:

> Today I woke up and looked at my closet and I remembered the street outside and that man and his girlfriend's laughter so I put on a button down shirt and a beard and some pants and I have never felt more like a woman in my entire life.

Using Alok Vaid-Menon's discussion of What I Wanted to Wear Today as a starting point, I want to explore what it means to be trans* in a society where visibility is demanded in order for one to be considered authentic. Not only is visibility demanded, but it is sometimes presumed that what is visible is authentic. Before addressing the tendency for visibility to be conflated with authenticity, I want to problematize the notion that what is visible is necessarily expressive.

In "The Somatechnics of Bodily Tattooing," Nikki Sullivan (2009) explores the idea that tattoos are not the manifestation of an external expression of the inner self. In the same manner, maybe even more so, (because clothing is considered a more temporary change in outer appearance) I want to consider the possibility that clothing is not always expressive in the way that we expect it to be. In this text Sullivan refers to Grumet's study, which concludes that the objective meaning of a tattoo may be different than its personal meaning for the person. If we consider clothing in relation to Vaid-Menon above, similar to the tattoos in Grumet's study, there is clearly a discrepancy between the meaning for the wearer and how the meaning is perceived by an onlooker. There is no "objective meaning." The relationship between the signifier and signified is unstable. It is instead a process of meaning making in which meaning is continually renegotiated. In her critique of Jeffreys' research, Sullivan refers to Jeffreys' understanding of tattoos as "a form of corporeal confession." Similarly, there is a tendency to presume that expression through clothing reveals a truth, it is in a way confessional. I want to explore further the ways in which clothing may be expressive but not in the way we expect it to be. As I mentioned in the example above, for Vaid-Menon, a button down shirt, a beard and pants makes them feel like a woman. Their experience is a perfect example of how there are more complex mechanisms in place when one considers their self-expression, such as negotiating the potential threat of violence. Therefore, I suggest it is important to complicate the idea that clothing is expressing an inner essence of the wearer.

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In another article written for the What I Wanted to Wear Today project, Vaid-Menon states, "The thing about being a transfeminine person is that everyone always remarks on how "fierce" or "fabulous" you are, but few people ask how you are getting home" (2015). In other words, transfemme people are embraced for their display of visible authenticity but only in certain spaces. Vaid-Menon emphasizes the importance of the delineation of space in relation to acceptable trans* expression, which is distinction I want to explore. I want to differentiate between the spaces where trans* people are praised for their authenticity and the spaces where trans* people are punished for this same display of authenticity. Furthermore, I want to distinguish between when trans* expression is perceived as authentic and when it is perceived as duplicitous. Events such as fashion shows and red carpet events have been recently much more welcoming to trans* people due to media coverage and television shows such as Transparent. However, as Vaid-Menon emphasizes, no one asks how they are getting home.

I want to suggest that especially when boundaries are being reinforced and differences need to be emphasized, trans* expression is regarded as duplicitous. This surveillance typically takes place in bathrooms and public spaces such as the street as well as at national borders, which I will elaborate on later. I do not mean to suggest that these are the only spaces in which trans* people experience surveillance; however, I am attempting to distinguish between the spaces when clothing is viewed as expression and when clothing is viewed as intentionally duplicitous. In certain spaces, such as television shows and media coverage of trans* people, their expression and visibility as well as intelligibility as a trans* person is accepted and welcomed. However, in situations in which a person is wearing clothing that appears to not match the gender assigned clothing associated with their sex, others demand the unveiling of their body to make visible their authentic gender, usually associated with their embodiment. A trans*

person's clothing is considered duplicitous, for instance, when they attempt to enter a bathroom that differs from their perceived embodiment.

In this next section, I consider the imperative of making certain bodies visible in relation to the cross-dressing terrorists in Magnet and Mason's text, "Of Trojan Horses and Terrorist Representations: Mom Bombs, Cross-Dressing Terrorists, and Queer Orientalism." (2014). Whose bodies are considered suspect? Some suspect bodies justify the use of biometric technology such as backscatter x-rays, which are then deployed on the general population. These figures of female suicide bombers and male terrorists in the burqa provide justification for the encroaching of biometrics in our everyday lives. By attaching this terrorist deviance to a form of dress, we can not delineate between who is considered to be using the burqa for its traditional purposes and who is using it for concealment and protection from the state.

As stated in the text, "concealing the body sartorially poses a risk to the nation state" (Magnet and Mason 14). In this excerpt, the very act of clothing the body, which is an activity most people are expected to participate in, becomes a threat to the nation state. In what ways do we conceal? Is concealment a matter of the intention? Can we consider Vaid-Menon to be intentionally concealing themselves when they wear masculine clothing as opposed to the feminine clothing they would prefer to wear? What can be considered a duplicitous covering? I would suggest that usually clothing is perceived as concealing the body when the gendered clothing does not coincide with one's perceived embodiment. When clothing is perceived as an attempt to conceal, in the name of security, your body must be made available to us. The creation of new technologies is justified in order to be able to access all the bodies that convey the possibility of queerness. Backscatter x-rays aim to strip the body and reveal it beneath its duplicitous covering. The idea that a male could be underneath a black burqa in heels, validates access to all other female bodies. In a way, our allegiance to security technologies is paramount.

We must make the bodies visible because these machines/technologies require visibility. They require intelligible bodies. Even though the purpose of the technology is to make bodies visible, they necessitate somewhat already visible bodies.

When clothing is considered to queer the body wearing it, the clothing acts as a veil or is considered to act as a veil by those who desire to unveil the body. This unveiling is in relation to the project of modernity which is one of visibility, transparency and control. This idea of tactile knowing disproportionately targets those bodies imagined to carry new threats. Instead of the terrorist becoming queer/being already always queer, the queer body becomes a terrorist, a threat to national security. As noted in the text, the "threat of duplicity operates across differently marked bodies" (2014, 21). In this context, "marked bodies" refers to Arab and Muslim bodies, which are already rendered deviant. Trans* people embody a similar threat of duplicity as I have expressed earlier on. I do not mean to suggest that all trans* people are considered to be terrorist threats to the state. However, I do propose that specifically trans* people of color and trans* people who do not adhere to the feminine woman and masculine male ideal bodies and gender presentations are considered to be terrorists to the state. As we have seen in Magnet's "When Biometrics Fail," (2011) trans* bodies are rendered quite literally unintelligible by these surveillance technologies, which are manufactured and programmed to read the ideal normative white able-bodied male. Trans* bodies blur the distinct gendered ideal bodies that surveillance technologies have deemed intelligible. As these technologies are employed in border control, bodies deemed duplicitous or intentionally deceitful are considered a threat to the nation state precisely because they are unintelligible.

In conclusion, in this section, I have outlined the ways in which we can begin to imagine clothing as something more complex than simply expression. I have begun to delineate between the spaces in which clothing is perceived as expression and when it is perceived to be

duplicitous. Finally, I have related this imperative for visibility to the justification of the infringement of biometrics in our everyday lives. I will continue to develop the paradox of clothing being used to reveal or express oneself as well as being used to conceal the body in the case of a burqa on a male bodied person. It is necessary to make certain bodies visible either when they don't reveal embodiment or they attempt to conceal it. I think this distinction is important because it reveals the significance behind the intended use of clothing.

Literature Review

In this section, I review the existing scholarly literature on clothing in relation to gender identity, sexuality and performativity. I frame significant discourses in the literature focusing on the negotiation of authenticity of one's gender identity through clothing in order to introduce how I will be discussing authenticity in relation to visibility/intelligibility. I wish to contribute to discussions of how people negotiate their authenticity in relation to the intelligibility of their gender identity.

As I am instigating a critique of the relationship between visibility and intelligibility in this thesis, I want to begin with a working definition of what I mean by the terms visibility and intelligibility. I use visibility in this thesis to denote one's external appearance, that is what is discernibly visible. As I focus on gender identity in this thesis, I use intelligibility to indicate when one's gender identity is understood. Intelligibility is sometimes related to one's visibility although not always. Although a few of my interviewees took issue with the connection between their visibility and intelligibility by attempting to communicate the inability of clothing to be "expressive" as such, I suggest that the majority understood their intelligibility to be inextricably linked with their visibility.

Alok Vaid-Menon is a part of the duo Dark Matter, and they have written about authenticity in relation to trans* expression. In "On Lying: Street harassment is too high a price for "being ourselves,"" (2015) Vaid-Menon discusses how celebrating trans* people for their gender expression equates visibility with authenticity. This important distinction is vital for my discussion concerning whether clothing can be truly expressive. Is authenticity important when trans* and other gender non conforming people face the violence of being in the "wrong" clothing everyday? Discussions of authentic expression in relation to violence against trans* people has influenced the direction of my own research.

Sara Crawley's "The Clothes Make the Trans: Region and Geography in Experiences of the Body" (2008) focuses on the ways in which geography and climate impact one's embodiment and feelings of authenticity. Due to temperatures in South Florida, Crawley has not been able to disconnect herself from the physicality of her body as she presumes other butch dykes are able to in places with more varied seasonal climate changes such as New York (369). Crawley argues that clothing directly impacts one's ability to experience their own body and the way in which they are recognized as a subject by others. Her lack of clothes, by necessity, didn't allow her to conceal her body. In cooler temperatures, when her body was concealed from her, she conveyed that she felt more masculine (370). Clothing changes Crawley's ability to persuade her audience as well as herself that she is a transman (371). For Crawley, authenticity is linked to the temporal and geographical experience of her embodiment as well as the ability for her identity to be recognized. In her case, the visibility of her embodiment due to her location, impeded her legibility as an authentic transman. I draw on Crawley's work to support my own; however, I do not solely tie clothing to geographical context. Her analysis is valuable for my

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further discussion of the role intelligibility plays in determining one's own understanding and perception of their gender identity.

In "'I am who I am'? Navigating norms and the importance of authenticity in lesbian and bisexual women's accounts of their appearance practices," (2013) Clarke and Spence investigate how lesbians and bisexual women deal with pressures to appear as authentic lesbians and individuals through their use of clothing and other bodily adornments. An important concern raised for survey participants was recognition within the community in order to be deemed intelligible and worthy of desire. Women who had longer hair, or wore more feminine clothing reported feeling judged in lesbian spaces and felt the need to provide verbal confirmation of their identity in order to be accepted (27). Generally, it became even more important for one's sexuality to be legible in a straight space in order to render oneself visible to other lesbian or bisexual women. Although some participants conveyed that adapting their appearance to these visibility standards felt inauthentic, they balanced these feelings of inauthentic individuality with a recognition that this conformity was strategic, a way of accessing intelligibility from others, or an unintentional manifestation of their inner lesbian. This text is important for discussions of authenticity in relation to boundary policing of LGBT communities. Authenticity is negotiated in relation to intelligibility differently in distinct spaces. Although I do not deal directly with sexuality in this thesis, this text is useful for demonstrating the strategic use of self-presentation in order to garner intelligibility within a space. Furthermore, it demonstrates the significance of recognition, whether acquired visually or verbally, for lesbian and bisexual women, which they facilitate in order to feel authentic. While this is not addressed in this work, I will suggest in the analysis of my data that recognition by peers as one's gender identity is crucial for one's own self-perception.

In "The Suit Suits Whom?" (2008) Lori Rifkin attempts to expand the space for opportunity in which heterosexual women can access female masculinity and be subversive while wearing a suit. In the attempt to protect female masculinity from being absorbed into the mainstream, queer theorists have resisted allowing non-lesbian women to be considered to authentically masculine, conflating "real" masculinity with "real" lesbianism. Rifkin criticizes Halberstam for his inability to separate one's embodiment from their authentic performance of masculinity. She questions which aspects of a woman's embodiment disqualify her from being subversive with her masculinity. Through her analysis of Halberstam, Rifkin attempts to separate one's embodiment from expressions of authentic female masculinity. Furthermore, Rifkin argues that conceptualizing butchness within the butch-femme framework posits "butch as powerful because of the butch's visible transgressions" although Halberstam denies this (165). In other words, the subversive potential lies in the ability of the butch lesbian to be visibly transgressive in order to be rendered useful for countering heteronormative society. The butch lesbian then lends her intelligibility to her femme counterparts. One can only be recognized as subversive when they are intelligible in a certain manner. Rifkin criticizes this butch-femme dyad because it fails to account for transgressive potential of the femme lesbian. She problematizes the association between authenticity and visibility, which is important for my analysis. Following Rifkin's critique of Halberstam, I want to critique the idea of visible subversion.

According to literature on transsexualism (Suthrell), for crossdressers and transsexual people who have not disclosed their identity to other people, there is much anxiety around being seen. People who crossdress will imagine that people can see them even while in their homes completely concealed. The sense of being watched stays with them when they move from a private to public space, even when they are no longer crossdressing.

Some secret TVs are literally paranoiac about discovery and go to the most amazing lengths to hide their activities even from their closest relatives. Yet they always have the feeling that 'people can tell'. Between sessions, they wonder if they've got the lipstick off properly, or if they've remembered to put everything away. While dressing, they imagine that people can see through curtains, through walls. They jump at every creak of the floorboards. Thus, the release of crossdressing is replaced by the fear of discovery, the guilt and the secrecy. They feel that social attitudes are such that they dare not speak of it to anyone. There is a feeling of loneliness in having to keep it to oneself. … Efforts to control, like 'wardrobe burning', fail repeatedly. The person may attempt other escapes, through alcohol, drugs, tranquillisers, workaholism. He will tell lies and will become less 'present' for his family. (Bland: 1993: 12–13)

I want to situate this fear of been seen, in relation to Magnet and Mason's use of "haptic optics" (2014). There is a fear of being hypervisbile, one's surroundings become porous and they imagine they are being revealed. In this context there is a paranoia of being visible, and as a result, intelligible in a certain way.

Chapter 2 – Becoming Unintelligible

Overview

In this chapter, I turn to my interviewees to illustrate how gender emerges from the intra-action between a person and their clothing. I provide these specific examples to elucidate that the way in which gender has been theorized thus far is insufficient to support the multifaceted ways in which my respondents engage with their clothing. I suggest that my participants draw on and distance themselves from the historicity of the garments they wear in an effort to either become or hinder intelligibility of their gender identity. Although I began with reservations about Butler's notion of intelligibility, I found that it can effectively support the ways in which some of my participants are gendered in clothing. Ultimately, I suggest that all of the interviewees I discuss in this chapter are attempting to create a form of androgyny through clothing, by negotiating the relationship between their embodiment and clothing. They are attempting, to an extent, to neutralize their embodiment through these garments. Drawing on Butler's notion of intelligibility (1990) as embedded within the heterosexual matrix, I suggest that they ultimately fail in this attempt as they all have the potential to be misgendered. The idea of considering the enactment of gender as an intra-active practice is fundamental for a more comprehensive understanding of the role clothing plays in negotiating one's intelligibility as nonbinary. Together with the clothing, a person becomes visible/invisible and conveys or conceals aspects of their gender identity and physical body. I argue that the process of becoming gendered in clothing is embedded in surveillance.

Becoming with their sailor hat

In this section, I suggest that Lydon uses their sailor hat in an attempt to garner anonymity and detract attention from themselves as well as their embodiment in an effort to avoid being gendered. It seems that Lydon associates attention with the potential of being misgendered.

I'm standing outside of Lydon's university fine arts building[12] when I get a text from them, "outside ! in a sailor hat." I turn around and see Lydon, who is white-American[13], about 23 years old[14], petite and thin with short jet black hair, leaning against the brick facade smoking with a friend. I introduce myself and we cross the street to sit on the steps outside of an apartment building. There's a woman already on the stoop who moves over to make room for us remarking on how precious street space is in the city. I start to tell Lydon about my project and the woman interjects at some point to remark on Lydon's outfit saying that they look like a sailor's wife. They muster a stiff smile and I'm trying to read how Lydon must feel. As we begin the interview about their clothing in relationship to their genderqueer identity, Lydon has already been misgendered once.

Lydon identifies themselves as the one in the sailor hat to me, because it is the one distinct thing about their appearance that they are certain no one else will have. I ask Lydon about the hat, because glancing over their outfit: an unbuttoned navy short sleeve button down with white polka dots, which appears to be a pajama top, worn over a worn-in camisole with white Levi's jeans spattered in paint, black latex gloves and black heeled boots, it seems to be the most distinct marker about their appearance, as they correctly presumed.

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[12] Lydon attends an art & design school in New York City.

[13] I acknowledge that these racial distinctions are awkward and potentially even ironic as this thesis is about another type of identity; however, I provide them to give context and to avoid portraying a false sense of universal. As I hyphenate other racial identities such as Asian-American, I feel obliged to convey my interviewee's whiteness in a similar manner.

[14] They didn't confirm their age, but this is an estimation considering we were in the same year in university together.

"I like both this refusal and the submission to the clothing, you know, and to what it is associated with." Lydon draws on the embedded citationality of their sailor's hat in this intra-action to become intelligible in a certain way to the general public. A sailor's hat is both recognizable and referential, and typically implicitly gendered as male. The woman called them a "sailor's wife" because as a person with a "female-identified body"[15] in a sailor's hat, their imagined relationship to the owner of the hat is heterosexual kinship. I begin to understand Butler's notion of intelligibility (1990) in this intra-action, because in the woman's eyes Lydon is always the sailor's wife, never the sailor. I do not mean to claim that this is the only way in which Lydon is considered, however, it is telling of how intelligibility functions within the heterosexual matrix.

In referring to themselves, Lydon tells me they want to "look like a little boy":

> when I'm wearing what typically makes me feel most comfortable, which is not form fitting clothes...I like to look like a little boy, you know…I like it because it makes me feel anonymous to a certain degree. I don't get like commented on as much, and so it's, it feels safe to me…I like to, it's not that I don't want to be noticed, but there's something about, yea, *being anonymous that makes me feels safe*.

To contextualize this quote, Lydon is comparing "looking like a little boy" to times when they dress more femme, which is when they have gotten much more attention and comments on their outfit. It seems that Lydon dresses in a way to foster anonymity, which is achieved when

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[15] By using the term "female-identified body" as opposed to "female bodied," I mean to highlight the tension that these bodies are typically identified as female by other people, not that they *are* female. An interviewee used the phrase in reference to themselves, and I thought it nicely highlighted the role of surveillance in the process of determining one's embodiment. I use quotes to identify the fact that I am to an extent essentializing when I identify my interviewees as having either male or female-identified bodies. However, as they conveyed to me in these interviews, their embodiments comprise an important aspect of their relationship with clothing. Therefore, I feel it is important to convey although I am wary of making these distinctions. Unless noted, all introductions of my interviewees' embodiments are my own presumptions.

they don't receive unwanted attention in relation to their embodiment. In an attempt to conceal their embodiment, Lydon tells me that "80% of my life is spent in a turtleneck," which is about concealing their embodiment to an extent. "I think I might have even been wearing a sleeveless turtleneck, and they (a friend) were like "I don't think I've ever seen your arms." All about long sleeves, the shell, you know."

Although they convey that they want to be anonymous, for some reason, Lydon is comfortable with the attention they have been receiving in the sailor hat. They say that people are really into the whole sailor look, and they get quite a lot of commentary from strangers. "And the comments I've gotten on this hat, to some extent, seem really genderless to me. Just like that people love the character of the hat." It seems that for Lydon, they are not gendered as much in this hat, despite being misgendered moments before by the woman I mentioned.

> I think that genuinely clothing for me is an expression, it's a way for me to like refuse any sort of definition and I think that comes from using the binary of clothing in this way of like becoming and layering and like the plural, the blurring, which is like, part, so much part of queerness in like *building this non-identifiable identity*.

In addition to wanting to be anonymous, Lydon conveyed a reluctance to be identified as anything, which they attribute to their queerness. It seems that anonymity may be difficult to garner in such a noticeable accessory such as a sailor's hat. However, Lydon also refers to using clothing in a way to conceal their queerness from others, "using clothing as the veil and shield and the distancing of the reality…where I know queerness is not welcome. To make sure I feel safe." For Lydon, I suggest the sailor hat may function as a somewhat visible hiding place from which they are extremely identifiable and completely unidentifiable at the same time.

Feeling Faggy

> "When I feel like I'm dressing faggy or whatever, which is pretty much always, and to me that's how I understand it, is identified as feminine, whereas on the other hand, in dressing more masculine, it's always associated with the feminine, so it's not masculine...it's like butch or something, you know?"

Lydon conveys that due to the reality of their "female-identified body," their appearance is constantly understood through its relation to their body, which frustrates them.

> The fact that I am…confronted with a certain reality of my body (in a swimsuit) …I know how others are seeing that…I feel extremely vulnerable. I hate it…I enjoy clothing that confuses my body, not necessarily to myself, but to others. So…certain pants, where I'll have a bulge, it's funny to me…things that, *confuse my own anatomy*…I mean I never wear a bra, I just don't believe in them…I don't like certain things that draw attention to this area at all (pointing to their chest), but at the same time, I love my sternum because it is completely flat and like not gendered to a certain degree…I feel tight clothes are confining, not only physically, but again it's being *faced with the reality*, to a certain degree…I have to feel very powerful and very confident in my own, in my sense of self, and in my queerness to be able to do that…because when I do, it's very much about turning it on itself.

When referring to being in a swimsuit, Lydon feels that they are revealed and confronted with both the physicality of their body and *how other people see them*. For Lydon, wearing tight clothing is both physically and mentally restricting because they feel that it confines them and confronts them with the physicality of their body. It seems that these garments, a swimsuit and other tight clothing almost limits their body, as Lydon discusses that they like the ability of clothing to confuse their body. There isn't much room for confusion when the body is revealed through tight clothing in this way.

In conclusion, part of Lydon's queerness, which as a genderqueer person can also be identified as part of their gender identity, is confusing and/or concealing their embodiment. It seems that anonymity offers Lydon a space of refugee from the commentary and unwanted attention of passerby that have the potential to limit and misgender Lydon. In this example, we see how Lydon cannot be intelligible, but also how Lydon does not necessarily *desire to be intelligible*. Being unidentifiable to an extent, lends itself to unintelligibility. Lydon doesn't want to be identified, because in being identified they are limited and confined to realities in which they don't wish to be contained.

Becoming with her kimono (Yoriko)

Figure 1: Yoriko wearing her kimono with Western clothing

I almost feel like I pick out certain pieces to create this certain balance of gender identity, that I feel that way and it's kind of like by mixing separate pieces, I mean it might just even be the color or…the silhouette or something, but I think I'm more probably tuned to that since I do

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fashion myself… So I can kind of identify oh this is more, you know I need to add this in or something.

In this section I suggest that Yoriko layers certain garments of clothing and balances her appearance in order to visibly convey her complex gender fluid identity. She both draws on the citationality of the garments she wears, and interweaves them in her outfits and wardrobe in order to gender her behavior. Yoriko is a 23-year-old fashion design student, born in Japan, with "female-identified body," who identifies as gender fluid and uses female pronouns. She tailors her clothing to the gender she feels and therefore acts.

As a fashion design student, Yoriko welcomes the embedded citationality of clothing as well as designs her own clothing. I want to acknowledge, as she does, that Yoriko, like me, has a much different perception of clothing and its limitations and/or possibilities than the average person because we have developed the mindset that almost anything is possible in the realm of design. I suggest that fashion designers have both a respect for clothing's historicity as well as the ability to disregard to an extent because as we are familiar with fashion history we feel that we also have the ability to both draw on it and deviate from it.[16] I suggest that the potential resignification of clothing happens through the intra-action of the clothed subject as well as through the design of new clothing.

When I asked Yoriko about the last time she felt uncomfortable in a garment, she told me about the following experience in her kimono when she was in high school in Japan: "that was when…I was just very much about like being girly and everything. I was more open about wearing clothes that were more suggestive I guess? in my teenage years." For one of the national holidays, students had to dress in traditional garments, kimonos. When worn traditionally, the kimono becomes quite physically restrictive and one must take small steps

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[16] Personally, I am of the opinion that clothing is produced as restrictive through its citationality rather than inherently restrictive, which has influenced both my approach to this topic and analysis of these interviews.

when walking.[17] While Yoriko was in her kimono, one of her teachers approached her and told her that she thought Yoriko was acting more like a "reserved female" in her kimono. Yoriko had not recognized any change in her behavior until her teacher made this observation, and became extremely uncomfortable once she realized her teacher was correct. She says she became so uncomfortable that she wanted to change out of the kimono immediately.[18]

Although this is true of all garments, a traditional garment like a kimono cannot escape the citationality of its use. There are traditional gendered ways to wear a kimono. As Yoriko explained, when traditionally worn the kimono becomes physically restrictive, and typically more reserved movements are associated with feminine behavior. In this intra-action between Yoriko and her kimono, Yoriko becomes the "reserved female" that has been traditionally associated with the kimono, and the kimono is cited as a feminine garment associated with feminine behavior. In her account, once she realized how she was acting, she did not only attempt to change her behavior, she attempted to physically change out of the garment. This indicates an association of the behavior, which she was trying to change, with the garment itself. In this example, Yoriko feels restrained by the citationality of the kimono. The garment and Yoriko become indistinguishable in this intra-action. One cannot tell whether Yoriko is enacting gender or the kimono.

Even though Yoriko claims that "certain pieces of clothing have a notion of restriction," acknowledging the citationality of the kimono, she now wears kimonos in combination with other Western garments in a way that is less physically restrictive, yet still she feels is respectful of the kimono's history (as pictured in the photo above). "And I quite like wearing the kimono,

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[17] This is Yoriko's assessment of a kimono, not mine.
[18] Unfortunately, I do not have more context for this anecdote, so I can't discern whether the comment delivered in a positive or negative manner.

especially with the turtleneck, because I think it, I feel comfortable in it, and I feel like there's just the right amount, the right balance of masculine and feminine that feels true to myself."

Yoriko uses the kimono in a way that recognizes and works with its citationality rather that attempting to overtake the garment. "I'm pretty aware that I act more masculine when I'm wearing pants. Yeah it's kind of like the switch…I use the different pieces in order to cater to how I want to act…that way or be seen." In this way, Yoriko chooses her behavior through the clothing she wears, as well as indicates how she wants to be perceived and as a result treated. When shopping in retail stores, Yoriko conveys that she chooses clothing that is least representative of the brand that she is purchasing from as it is easier to accommodate a new piece into her wardrobe that doesn't have a "specific gender or identity or image attached to it."[19] I suggest that due to Yoriko's background in fashion design, as well as the complexity of her own gender identity, she has a deep respect for clothing, but also a desire to design new garments that have the potential to both draw on and move away from the citationality of existing gender coded garments.[20] She tells me that clothing that is "very limited I guess, like very masculine or very feminine" would make her uncomfortable to wear. It seems that she may prefer not to navigate certain garments that are deeply embedded in gendered connotations.

In conclusion, I offer Yoriko's experience as an example in which she works with and draws upon the citationality of gender coded garments in order to engage in certain behavior she

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[19] For example, a garment that wouldn't have a logo, or a style that is repeatedly produced by the same brand each season in a new color or fabric. It seemed that Yoriko wanted to limit the ability of the garment to be easily assessed in terms of gender.

[20] It seems that Yoriko may be more attentive to clothing's historicity than I am, as she is attentive to the associations that certain garments have when considering whether to incorporate them into their wardrobe.

wants to enact. She explains that she uses garments in assemblage with one another in order to feel that she is conveying her gender fluid identity visibly through her clothing.

Becoming with their tank top (Jean)

Figure 2: Jean's pink tank top (one of their favorite garments)

As I explain in the introduction, when we return to Jean's, who has a "male-identified body," dorm room to see their clothes, they tell me that they have to change immediately. They hate their outfit, they're wearing gray on gray, it's like a jumpsuit. They seem frustrated until they pull on their pink Gravity Falls tank top and sit down on their bed. Jean tells me about the pink tank top: "it makes me feel more feminine because it makes my BODY feel more feminine and then for me that is what androgyny is, and for me its an attempt to become feminine without being uncomfortable with femininity like we talked about before." Jean explains to me that they use clothing to gender their body in order to avoid feelings of dysphoria. They have been on hormone replacement therapy (HRT) for several months now. Jean said that when they feel

particularly dysphoric[21] they put on this pink tank top with characters from the show Gravity Falls, a little girl and pig, on it. I acknowledge that I may have made Jean feel uncomfortable in their clothing, which is why they insisted on changing, or they could have simply begun to feel more comfortable conveying their femininity to me after speaking for an hour.[22]

"So for me, when I'm creating androgyny…it kind of gets rid of my dysphoria. It's an attempt to go somewhat feminine, but not so much that I become uncomfortable." Even though Jean acknowledges that the tank top probably doesn't change anyone's perception of them, they say that looking at their arm in that top makes their arm appear more feminine to them in relation to the top. I infer that in this context, Jean meant that other people still perceived Jean's body as masculine in this tank top as it was in any other clothing. However, for Jean, they felt softer and their shoulders became more narrow to them. Jean explained it by saying that because this tank top is so clearly feminine, they felt that they couldn't even try to be masculine in this tank top, so they allow themselves to act in a more feminine manner. In this tank top, Jean both experiences their body as more feminine and behaves more femininely.[23] They contrasted this experience in this pink tank top to a white tank top that they also wear often. Jean explains that because they typically associate white tank tops, "wifebeaters" was the term they used, with masculinity they almost feel like they have to behave in a more masculine way and act tougher while they are in the "wifebeater" than when they are in this pink tank top.

Jean has told me that they wear the pink tank top as a way avoid the pain of dysphoria during this parallel process of their body becoming more feminine due to HRT. They even said that the tank top calms them when they put it on. I experience this effect, as Jean seems calmer once they change into it, after the frustration they expressed about their previous gray on gray outfit.

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[21] I want to indicate that Jean uses the term dysphoria in reference to themselves to describe these feelings.

[22] As I indicate in the introduction, Jean uses pajamas to avoid being gendered, and they don't consider this tank top to be pajamas.

[23] Due to the HRT, as Jean wears this tank top, their body is actually physically becoming more feminine with it.

I suggest that this garment extends beyond the functionality or significance we would traditionally afford it. Jean wears it as a calming mechanism, which reassures them of their gender identity during this process of figuring out how they identify as well as physical transformation due to HRT. Jean said that the tank top is a level of femininity that they are comfortable with as they become more comfortable with how their body is changing. In Jean's account, the tank top is fundamental to the process of their body becoming gendered as more feminine. In this intra-action the pink tank top and Jean become gendered as one. I do not mean to disregard the citationality of the garment in this account, rather I simply want to address that we are dependent on this intra-action between Jean and their tank top for the production of current and future meaning. Although it is contingent on the present, the intra-action draws on the historicity of the garment in order to enact this repetition of gender norms. I suggest that human agency cannot surpass the citationality of the tank top. Jean is using the tank top to become more comfortable with their femininity as well as the changes in their body; however, Jean's use of the garment doesn't make the tank top feminine, it is because of the associations that the tank top has in terms of its color and the characters on the shirt that Jean is able to use it in this way.

Jean feels that for them, "dressing like a guy, is like admitting like I'm a guy… then people would perceive me as a guy and that would drive me absolutely insane, cause I don't want that." They are really concerned with not being perceived as male at moment, because that perception threatens the foundation on which they affirm their gender identity. Jean draws on the citationality of this feminine coded garment, to allow themselves to become and act more feminine. In this intra-action Jean intentionally interweaves the citationality of the garment with their embodiment. I do not mean to privilege an account of human or nonhuman agency, instead I employ Barad's understanding of agency through agential realism to understand agency as an enactment. I do not attribute agency to either ""subjects" or "objects" (as they do

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not preexist as such)" (Barad 1999, 7). In this way, Jean enacts their agency through this tank top. Jean becomes more comfortable with their gender identity in the garment. Their gender is confirmed and reinforced by this tank top. From this intra-action Jean emerges as androgynous and more feminine in relation to the masculinity of their body.

In conclusion, I use the example of Jean becoming with their pink tank top to convey the use of clothing in order to gender the body. While their body is changing due to HRT, Jean juxtaposes the masculinity of their body with the femininity of their clothing in order to create an androgyny with which they are comfortable. This use of their embodiment in juxtaposition with their clothing was discussed with many of my interviewees. As I explained, I wish to elaborate on Butler's idea of performativity (1990) because in my understanding it does not account for the role of material in relation to the body. After all, we don't only do gender, we do it in clothing, and we become gendered in clothing.

Becoming with their skirt (Chris G)

> Chris: This is why I have an issue wearing pants. I feel like…everything is just like attached to like my skin, you know?...I like clothing being like very loose and I can just like, you know…
>
> D: So like space between like your actual body and the clothing?
>
> C: Yeah

Chris is wearing a baby pink long sleeved crewneck shirt, dark wash denim skinny jeans, black Chelsea boots and lipstick leftover from last night. They sit with their legs crossed closely together and are holding, and sometimes twirling, 3 pink flowers in their hands. Chris G.[24] is 18 years old, an American of west-African descent, identifies as a gender non-conforming

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[24] Chris self-identified themselves as working class.

person, uses they/them pronouns and has a tall, quite thin "male-identified body."[25] When I mentioned Jean's struggle with dysphoria to convey how Jean uses clothing, Chris told me:

> I mostly go for what's more feminine to to give more of an image of androgyny. So people don't really know what I am, at first. Like when they first look at me, well sometimes, like I got stopped going into a men's bathroom once. Because there's no gender neutral bathrooms. Because they thought I was a woman.

> I have a pretty I guess like neutral perception of my body… I guess that's also…a privilege[26] of mine. Because I just happen to look…I've been told that, I just look more like questionable… I just like the idea of just not looking like a gender. Just being a person.

As they mentioned, Chris sometimes passes as a woman. They use feminine clothing in relation to the embodiment in order to create androgyny, similar to how Jean uses their pink tank top.

Chris tells me they love flowers, but that for them, they do not have a gender. They say that although people typically associate flowers with femininity, they carry and wear flowers to make a statement that flowers aren't gendered. However, they say that when their outfit isn't especially feminine, like today, they carry flowers to "enhance the image." It seems that even though Chris considers flowers to not be indicative of gender, they use them at the same time to create a more feminine appearance.

When I asked Chris if they felt that they acted more feminine while they were in feminine clothing, they responded firmly "no." But they told me that when they first began to wear more feminine clothing, some people (unspecified) made comments that if Chris was going to dress

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[25] Chris was the interviewee who first used this term, "male-identified body," in referring to themselves, which I adopted to discuss all my interviewees' embodiments.

[26] Several times the notion of privilege was addressed in the interviews, quite often in relation to interviewees' embodiments. Although I do not address this in detail in this thesis, I want to acknowledge the role of body size in relation to privilege, for example, thin privilege. Thinner bodies are usually privileged in terms of creating a less gendered or more androgynous body. Some interviewees didn't have issues specifically with their embodiment, and I want to suggest that their body size played a role in this more neutral perception of their bodies.

like a girl, they should act like one too. Chris indicated that they were implying that Chris should sit with their legs closed while wearing garments such as dresses and skirts. Chris told me that they were frustrated by people's limited views of how women should act in clothing, and refused to conform to others' expectations. As a result, Chris says they make a point to sit with their legs spread while in skirts and dresses, but usually cross their legs when in pants.

In this intra-action, Chris's skirt breaks with the citationality the garment has had in the past. Instead of submitting to the citationality of the garment, Chris enacts their agency through this intra-action by actively subverts and confronts the citationality of the skirts/dresses they wear. Chris's use of the skirt departs from the feminine behaviors normally associated with a skirt. The possibility of the intra-action lies in potentially encoding new citations for garments and bodily practices. I argue that as as result, the subversive potential of this garment, Chris's skirt is realized in Butler's understanding of subversion (1990). It is only because of the repeated citation of the skirt as feminine, and thus requiring and associated with feminine behavior, that Chris's use of the skirt is able to become subversive. Without citationality we have no context. We cannot escape from the citationality of garments. My use of intra-action is not an attempt to claim that these instances are completely decontextualized from history.

In conclusion, I provide the example of Chris becoming with their skirt to show how they attempt to break from the citationality of a garment, by juxtaposing their skirt with typically unfeminine bodily behavior. Both the further production of the clothed subject as gendered and its ability to be subversive is contingent on the intra-action of the clothed subject. However, I argue that it is not possible to divorce this intra-action from the citation of gender coded clothing.

Becoming with her suit (Andrea)

Andrea is a 24-year-old white-American with a "male-identified body"[27] who identifies as nonbinary and uses female pronouns. During our interview, Andrea conveyed an incident in high school in which someone attributed something Andrea said to the way she was dressed (in a suit), "Well of course you'd say that, look at how you dress."[28] Andrea said that she couldn't remember exactly what she said, but it was something that either was or could have been construed to be conservative, which was then attributed to her conservative way of dressing. This provoked her to reflect on what dressing in a suit meant for her. She said that at the time, she didn't feel like she was wearing her suit to convey her masculinity, rather it was more of a tongue-in-cheek way of dressing. She reflects: "The idea being, you know, I think I was…I don't think I was dressing in suits to prove my masculinity, I think I was dressing trying to disprove it. You know?"

To Andrea, this gesture did not feel necessarily gendered, she just loved wearing suits at that time. Even though in high school she wasn't wearing lipstick with suits, she frequently brought up the satisfaction of playing with people's expectations. Now if she wore a suit, she would definitely wear lipstick with it. She continues to say, "Because with lipstick you ruin a suit, you know? And I don't mean, ruin, in the sense that you know, you don't ruin it, but you ruin the masculinity that the suit is founded on." The manner in which Andrea was referring to these experiences conveyed a desire to play with people's expectations of her and what she was wearing through this process of dressing. She seems to trouble notions of interiority and

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[27] Andrea attributed a lot of her issues with her body to be due to her weight as opposed to simply her gender identity as nonbinary. Although I do not develop this discussion here, I want to note that she stressed the association between thinness and androgyny, questioning the potential of "fat androgyny."

[28] At the time of this incident, Andrea was using male pronouns and did not identify as nonbinary.

exteriority in her intra-action with the suit. As a nonbinary person who wears suits with lipstick, she refuses the citationality of the suit, as she mentioned, she ruins its masculinity.

Separately Andrea and the suit have distinct meanings; therefore, it vital to investigate what is happening when they intra-act together in the process of dressing. This intra-action of Andrea and her suit has subversive potential because of the way in which they come together. It is only in relation to one another that this citation has meaning or potential for subversion. Therefore, I argue that considering the citation of gender an intra-action is necessary. It is not useful to simply think of Andrea doing gender. She is doing gender in the suit, with the suit. The suit affects the way Andrea does gender and enacts gender of its own. It also affects Andrea's appearance and how she is perceived to be doing gender, which goes towards the notion of being intelligibly queer, or intelligibly the gender you identify as.

> Androgyny is seen as as sort of this transparency that people believe through to masculinity. you know so, so someone will look at me and when I'm wearing something that I think of as androgynous I know they're thinking of masculinity. Its the same reason I've done my nails many colors but I've never done black because I know people will look at black and say oh masculinity…I am tender and feeling and caring and excited about the universe. I don't wanna portray that (masculinity) to people.

I argue that Andrea is attempting to ruin the masculinity of the suit or subvert its citation through this intra-action. Once Andrea is revealed as "feeling fucking gay and really femme in my life" the potential of the suit is changed. The suit can be gay and femme.

When referring to wearing or shopping for masculine clothes Andrea says the following:

> I feel like I'm giving people I don't like what they want you know? I feel like I'm giving them the masculinity they want me to perform you know? I wanna say fuck you to all those people

because I'm like you know don't you dare assume that about anybody but there's the sense of like you know denial. So like fuck you I'm not this thing.

Andrea, as someone with a "male-identified body," feels that wearing a men's button down shirt is obvious, so she is more tempted to wear a dress as a way to "fuck you" to the gender norms of dressing.

> I would dress in anything and everything, but we live in a world where its obvious for me to wear a button down shirt and not obvious for me to wear a dress. so my temptation is more to get a dress just as I, back to Freddy Mercury saying not gay as in happy but queer as in fuck you

Andrea attempts to both resignify the citationality that is linked with gender coded clothing, for example the suit, as well as refuses to be what is expected when she is a dress. Andrea wearing a dress, as she mentioned, is an attempt to be intentionally subversive, and to refuse to give people what is expected of her. In this intra-action, the dress is worn on a "male-identified body," potentially resignifying the dress's meaning as feminine, as well as opening up the possibilities for its citation in the future.

I provide this example to convey the ways in which people use clothing to both break with its citation, when Andrea wears the suit and it becomes "gay and femme" as well as embracing the citation, when Andrea is drawn to wearing a dress, because it is less obvious due to their embodiment. Like Lydon, Andrea seems to use clothing to refuse any definition of themselves, describing it as a disavowal, "I'm not this thing" you are attributing to me. Andrea conveyed that she didn't want to be associated with the masculinity that masculine garments imply. Andrea uses clothing in juxtaposition with their embodiment in order to *visibly* refuse the masculinity she says people expect of her due to her "male-identified body."

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Becoming neutral (E)

> In terms of my friends, I do talk about it, but I think that the reason why I do try to convey a little bit more neutrality in my clothing is because it's an easy way for me to feel like I'm being true to myself and putting out there, putting it out there that I do identify in this way, without having to really confront it.

E, is a genderqueer person in their 20's with a "female-identified body." Recently they have begun wearing more masculine clothing and through clothing strive for a more neutral appearance. Due to their female body, E feels that wearing more masculine clothing, which conceals e's feminine shape is more of an attempt to appear neutral than masculine. In e's opinion, e's effort to wear more masculine clothing counterbalances the femininity of their body. For example, E wears sports bras to flatten the shape of their chest and avoids tucking in shirts because they feel that it draws attention to their feminine hips. E wears men's button down shirts, which are constructed with straighter seams so they don't create a feminine figure through the use of curved seams. When they leave their shirt untucked, the shirt hits their hips in a way that creates a straighter or less feminine torso.

Through this intra-action between their sports bras and their shirts, E's figure becomes more neutral, which E feels is in line with and representative of e's genderqueer identity. Once again, I want to emphasize the significance of the *visibility of clothing* in this becoming. E does gender, and is gendered/misgendered by other people in e's clothing. Therefore, it is necessary to consider e's clothing in this process of becoming. The idea of becoming neutral is very interesting to me, because it usually involves clothing that is gender coded in some manner. After all, clothing is produced for men and women. There is only beginning to be clothing that

is considered gender neutral (from a design standpoint)[29], so I am interested in how people create gender neutrality through gender coded clothing. Most of my participants seemed to be working in relation to the masculinity or femininity of their body. They used clothing in a way to neutralize the gender with which their body is typically associated. For E, instead of citing the masculinity perhaps of the button down shirt, E is using it to convey e's own neutrality. However, even though E claims that they do not perceive themselves as masculine, E is consistently being confronted with the fact that E is perceived as such. From what E has told me, it doesn't seem that E is doing anything to change this perception, so it seems that this masculinity may be what E is intending to convey through their appearance.

I use the example of E in order to convey how clothing can begin to be used in assemblage with other garments in order to achieve a neutrality. All of my interviewees I discuss in this section refer to similar ways in which they create androgyny by juxtaposing clothes with their embodiment. However, E is one of the people who conveyed using these garments together in this way, a sports bra to flatten their chest and a men's button down shirt, untucked to conceal their hips. Lydon and Yoriko talked about layering and using different garments together in relation to the gendered connotations of these garments, but E refers to them in order to layer and conceal their embodiment.

Conclusion

Though these intra-actions with clothing, the six interviewees I just discussed, attempt to create a form of androgyny for themselves, however, this often doesn't succeed. As embedded in the heterosexual matrix (Butler 1990) as we are, my interviewees are usually gendered in relation

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[29] I suggest that the issue with clothing that has thus far been designed or claimed to be "gender neutral" is that clothing is ultimately designed for bodies. Typically these "gender neutral" clothes are designed for "male-identified bodies" and also worn on "female-identified bodies."

to their embodiments. Although I examine the above instances as intra-actions in which the clothed subject emerges as gendered, these intra-actions are constantly being negotiated by the notion of surveillance because as many of my interviewees convey to me, they understand their intelligibility to be associated with their visibility which is embedded in surveillance (Magnet and Mason 2014). They dress in relation to how they have been perceived or imagine they will be perceived and alter this presentation in relation to whether they deem their appearance as successful or unsuccessful in gendering them. In conclusion, through these intra-actions I claim that my interviewees work with the embedded citationality of clothing rather than performing mastery over it. We cannot escape the historical situatedness of a garment and its citation. Therefore, I suggest that clothing and subject work with one another in order to enact gender. Finally, it is within the intra-action that the possibilities for subversion are realized.

Chapter 3: Visibly Authentic

Overview

In this section, I investigate the relationship between clothing, gender identity, authenticity and visibility through the use of Sullivan's somatechonology (2009) and Magnet and Mason's understanding of intelligibility as embedded in surveillance (2014). Using Alok Vaid-Menon's discussion of What I Wanted to Wear Today (2015) as a starting point, I want to explore what it means to be trans* or gender nonconforming in a society where visibility is demanded in order for one to be considered authentic. In this chapter I discuss how my interviewees negotiate the imperative to "express themselves" in relation to their own feelings of authenticity about their gender identity, drawing on Mason and Magnet's understanding of intelligibility as embedded in surveillance (2014). I begin to trouble the distinction between interiority and exteriority by examining how what people do with clothing disturbs the notion of self-expression. I will demonstrate the following three ways in which I suggest that we use clothing; however, I do not mean to claim that these are the only ways in which people engage with clothing. First, people can draw on the historicity of garments and engage with them to feel that they are authentically portraying their identity by allowing it to manifest in a visible, although not always intelligible, aspect of their appearance. Second, people can decide not to express themselves, or express themselves in a way that they are quite certain people won't understand by drawing on knowledge of what certain garments are collectively understood to express. The third process is that people express themselves through "borrowing" other people's authenticity.

When I was discussing this thesis with a colleague, Masha, she said, there may not be an inner self but there is always an inside, just as a jacket has an inside. With this thought in mind, I

will begin to describe the tensions between how my interviewees used clothing to both express and conceal their gender identities while using terminology which implies the existence of an inner self. Although I do not suggest the existence of an "inner self" as such, it seems that this notion is important for my interviewees' discussion of their relationship with clothing and creating their appearance.

Feeling fake (Chris N.)

In this section, I argue that Chris N. associates her feelings of authenticity with how people perceive her appearance, as she understands her intelligibility to be tied to visibility which is embedded in surveillance. Chris N., 28, is an Asian-American who identifies as androgynous, uses female pronouns and has a "female-identified body," didn't have an answer to my question about how she identifies at first. "This sounds maybe silly 'cause I should know the answer to this, but what are the options for the first question? Like, how I identify? 'Cause I actually don't talk about this very often." When I listed the ways in which the other people I interviewed have identified she responded,

> "I guess I would say androgynous only because that's a word that…I'm pretty definite about the definition…if I were to tell…someone who has absolutely no knowledge of anything that I wanted to look androgynous, they would know what I was talking about…"

As I will elaborate on in this section, the way other people perceive Chris is extremely important in relation to how she perceives her own gender identity. It is important even for the label she assumes as her gender identity to be intelligible to other people even though she tells me she doesn't discuss it often.

Over the course of my fieldwork, it became clear that when people feel uncomfortable in clothing it is usually in relation to the idea of being perceived by other people as someone with whom they don't identify, as well as perceiving themselves as someone whom they don't recognize.

> If I'm looking in a mirror, or see my reflection or whatever, I'm just, I'm always trying to see myself as how other people would see me. That's really important to me. So in that respect, I am uh, I care about other people's opinion as much as my own.

For the past two years, Chris has been presenting intending to come across as masculine. However, when I asked her about feeling uncomfortable in clothing, she refers to a time a few years back when she had to wear a dress for a wedding. At the time, she wasn't presenting as masculine in front of her parents because she wasn't "out" as gay, and she comes from a very conservative religious family. Chris seems to associate her somewhat masculine appearance with her gay identity, but doesn't elaborate on how they intersect.

> "I just, didn't look like myself…that's the most vague thing to say. I think, I don't know, I just, I felt like I looked really feminine and I-- it just felt, so fake in a way…Like, it just feels really wrong, and not-- it doesn't-- I don't feel good about myself."

When I asked Chris N. if she could explain why she felt so uncomfortable in a dress, she told me that she "felt so fake." She didn't feel physically comfortable in the dress as she wasn't able to move as freely as she would be able to in pants, but also she didn't feel like "herself." In the dress, Chris is perceived as feminine; it seems that she is not comfortable with people seeing her this way and potentially seeing herself in this way. Chris appears to associate her feelings of authenticity in a garment to her visibility, which is embedded in surveillance.

what I mean is that I want to…be noticed for looking put together, but…not noticed in the way where people are like, oh why is that girl dressed like that?...if people notice me, "Oh, like that looks really good,"…those are the kind of thoughts I want people to have…

Figure 3: Chris N.'s favorite clothes

Chris emphasizes that she wants to be noticed for looking well dressed, but doesn't want to be noticed for her gender necessarily. She stresses that if she were a guy, her way of dressing wouldn't be considered to be out of the ordinary in any way. She is sometimes perceived as a guy, which she has begun to take as a compliment, "because it meant that I was successfully achieving the look that I wanted." For Chris, the way that she sees herself is equally as important as how other people perceive her. She told me that when she is getting dressed or planning her outfits for the week (which she does the Sunday beforehand), she imagines herself on the subway.

Uh, "I am ready to sit on the subway…And for people to look at me." That was a weird way to say it, but I think I have that thought. 'Cause most of the time, when I'm thinking about what people think of my appearance, it's like, on the subway…

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In New York City, she explains, everyone is pretty much heads down when it comes to walking, but it's on the subway that people have time to sit and really look at someone else. This is when Chris herself also notices how other people are dressed. On the subway, there is time for Chris's visibility to turn into intelligibility, and Chris wants to make sure that she is intelligible in the right way.

> even though I think I dress pretty distinctly, I also weirdly just don't want to be noticed…I like looking very understated…I don't like drawing attention to myself…if it were a guy dressing like this, it would be super normal.

I suggest that Chris curates her appearance in order to be recognized or perceived as unremarkable in terms of her gender identity. If she achieves this unexceptional appearance, no one will pause long enough to question her gender. It seems that Chris wants to fit in so perfectly that people barely register her. She strives for an appearance is so unremarkable that she is almost imperceptible as different in any way. She has an extremely pre-meditated way of dressing. Every Sunday she plans outfits for the week, and makes note of combinations of clothes that she thinks work particularly well together and which outfits she will complement with a tie. She stresses that she is aware that the way she dresses is quite masculine and that she is attempting to look more like a guy; however, if she were a guy, the way she dresses would be considered normal. I suggest that several of my interviewees use clothing in the same way as Chris does, to become unnoticeable to an extent. It seems that people who have more nonconforming gender identities are more aware or more concerned with how their appearance is perceived, and I suggest that they attempt to interrupt or control the way in which they are gendered through their use of clothing.

In conclusion, the way in which Chris N. uses clothing is to avoid any negative attention in relation to her gender identity. As she explains, her use of clothing is embedded in how people

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perceive her. When getting dressed, she imagines herself on the subway because that is when her visibility has time to turn into intelligibility, and she wants to be intelligible in the right way. In a dress, people perceive her as feminine, which causes Chris to "feel fake." In this way it seems that Chris's feelings of authenticity are directly related to her intelligibility in her gender identity.

Negotiating Authenticity (Christine): "*Yea, they were just like me, you know.*"

In this section, I suggest that Christine uses clothing in a way to maintain her sense of feeling authentic which she relates to her visibility. Even in situations where Christine may otherwise feel uncomfortable, she is able to maintain a sense of self by combining clothing she feels portrays her "self" with clothing that she doesn't want to wear. Christine is a 23-year-old white-American, and although she identifies as a cisgender woman (female-identified body), she described herself as nonconforming in terms of her appearance, "you know totally like cisgender woman, but just totally nonconforming to the typical appearance." She conveyed that "clothing's actually my best expression of my gender expression like the short hair and just my clothes…because I am cisgender that's the only place where my expression really differs."

Christine tells me that one of the last times she felt uncomfortable in clothing was when she wore a dress to her senior prom. Due to a combination of external pressures, including her parents' expectations as well as her peers and the largely conservative town where she lived, she wore a dress to prom even though she never wanted to wear one. She felt uncomfortable the entire time and took off her high heels as soon as she got to the event. I asked her if she felt that she behaved femininely while she was in the dress, and she responded:

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C: you don't feel comfortable, but I'm not gonna play the part. So I'm still going to be myself…but it does hold you back. I remember really…wanting to sit at the table at prom and not really adventure.

D: Because you didn't want to draw attention?

C: Yea. I just kind of wanted to just like do my own thing, stay with my friends, so I was just like, let's pretend I'm not wearing a dress and just keep on going like this is a normal day.

Because she wasn't feeling like "herself," Christine didn't want to draw attention to herself or do anything that may make people notice her. She contrasted this experience with going to her girlfriend's prom, where she wore a tux. Even though she really didn't know anyone else at the prom, she was out on the dancefloor all night and she felt great.

I was so comfortable at that prom…I didn't know any of these people, which I think is almost worst, you like have self conscious being…the only like girl on girl couple there…but I was just like rocking it the whole time.

I suggest that because Christine felt that she was being true to herself, she was comfortable being the center of attention even though she and her girlfriend were the only same sex couple at the prom.

She then mentioned her experience at her high school graduation, where all the girls were supposed to wear a white dress. Even though she usually doesn't feel comfortable in dresses because "I had lime green sunglasses on…I still had a part of me…I was pretty OK that day, wearing that dress, but I transcended through my sunglasses." Despite the fact that she circumstantially had to wear the dress for graduation, Christine uses the sunglasses to maintain a sense of being true to herself even though she is in a dress.

I begin to understand further how Christine perceives her appearance when I asked her whether she has any clothes that embarrass her:

> you just feel embarrassed. All in your head, obviously, cause no one says anything. I think it's just…an embarrassed of settling. That I'm settling…by putting on this piece of clothing. I'm willing to put on this piece of clothing and not really show my true self because it's more convenient, or cause I'm settling to society's set standards, you know. It's embarrassment that I'm not being true to myself. It's more embarrassing around people you know, I think. Because I think that they know that they know that's not your true self, as opposed to people you're just meeting…So I think I would be a little less embarrassed around them. They don't know that…I'm not being my true self at that moment in time. Very true friends do.

Christine's view of "settling" in terms of clothing can help us understand how she approached her previous experiences in dresses. Christine feels more uncomfortable with her appearance, if it is too feminine for example, when she is around people she knows because then she is revealed to be settling or fake, even though they may not say anything to her. At her high school prom, Christine potentially felt more uncomfortable than she would have with people she didn't know because her friends could tell that she was "settling." However, at her graduation, she was able to feel more comfortable in that dress with her classmates because she wore the lime green sunglasses, which made her feel like "herself."

In conclusion, in contrast to Chris N. who also felt fake, and not like herself in a dress, Christine is able to transcend her discomfort in clothing that she would prefer not to wear, by combining them with certain accessories or garments that she feels really represent her, like the neon sunglasses. In this way she is able to feel comfortable in clothing that she would typically not feel comfortable in because she feels that people are still seeing her as herself, and she also is

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able to recognize herself. Through the neon sunglasses, Christine is able to feel like she is not settling as well.

Visibly Neutral (E)

> In terms of my friends, I do talk about it, but I think that the reason why I do try to convey a little bit more neutrality in my clothing is because it's an easy way for me to feel like I'm being true to myself and putting out there, putting it out there that I do identify in this way, without having to really confront it.

Instead of verbally conveying E's genderqueer identity, E, has a "female-identified body" prefers to suggest their identity by using their clothing to become visibly neutral, because E is not always able, depending on the situation, to speak about e's identity. Although E talks about e's gender identity with friends, as a director at a children's preschool, E isn't really in a position to talk about e's gender identity at work. As a result, E uses clothing to convey e's genderqueer identity, which manifests in a form of neutrality. This way, E feels that e's appearance suggests that e's gender identity isn't aligned with the traditional way "female bodied people" present, and E is open to talk about how e identifies if anyone instigates the conversation. Similar to Christine, E associates their visible appearance with feeling like e is being "true to myself." As I mentioned in Chapter 2, E endeavors to create a neutrality in the way e dresses as opposed to a masculinity, by wearing a sports bra to flatten e's chest and untucked button down shirts to draw attention away from e's hips. However, because E's clothing is always in relation to e's "female-identified embodiment," E feels that masculine clothing is the best way for e to portray a neutrality; although they acknowledge that it doesn't always succeed as E is quite commonly misgendered as a male. Nonetheless, by conveying this aspect of their identity through clothing, E feels that e is being true to e because people can still

see it, even though it may not be always intelligible. Through e's understanding of e's visibility as sometimes lending itself to e's intelligibility as genderqueer, e's visibility seems to be inevitably wrapped up in notions of surveillance as well as e's feelings of authenticity.

"Making you male" (Chris G.)

Figure 4: Chris G.'s floral skirt (one of their favorite garments)

In this section, I argue that Chris uses clothing in a way to create androgyny by juxtaposing their typically "male-identified body" with the femininity of their clothing to portray a form of androgyny. Through the visible representation of their gender nonconformity in clothing, Chris attempts to avoid being misgendered and is able to feel secure in their gender identity.

"I guess it's more of like what gets attributed to me when I wear masculine clothing. So that's why…I don't feel comfortable wearing that as often. Actually like, just recently threw most of my masculine clothes away. I think I'm just more into like feminine clothing right now." Chris

avoids masculine clothing because of the assumptions and associations that come with being a person with a "male-identified body" in traditionally masculine clothing. They are more often misgendered in male clothing, which is something they are trying to avoid. Even though Chris says that they typically wear more feminine clothing and they would rarely change their outfit in order to avoid unwanted attention, sometimes they have to wear pants, like today, for practical reasons. I ask Chris to tell me about the outfit they are wearing today:

> I wanted to wear a skirt but I was carrying a lot of luggage so I didn't want to wear a skirt and have to deal with that so that's why I just chose some pink. And then just like pants so that…I wouldn't be struggling with the luggage. Because…with male identified bodies…I feel like there's a lot of like positioning I have to do in public. I don't like looking awkward in public especially when I'm in that kind of clothing because it just *draws more attention to me*.

When I first ask Chris how they choose their clothing everyday, Chris says, "I want an outfit that that's really like uh standoutish." It seems that clothing is important tool for Chris, which helps them convey their femininity. They tell me that they wear their feminine clothing in order to standout. However, when talking about choosing their outfit today, they are in skinny jeans and a pink shirt, they tell me that they don't want to draw attention to themselves when they are in feminine clothing. It seems that although Chris is usually not willing to sacrifice their feminine appearance in public, they also don't want to draw attention to themselves while they are physically in more feminine clothing.

Occasionally, in order to be safe, Chris will wear sweatpants under a skirt when going to a place that they're not used to so their outfit wouldn't be as revealing, they attribute this precaution to the threat of violence against gender nonconforming people. "If I like know I'm going to be somewhere I'm not used to, I'm gonna like tone it down. I mean I might still wear a skirt, but I might wear sweatpants under it. So that it's not as like…revealing. So and there's

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some aspect that's still hidden. So it's not like I'm just like vulnerable." For Chris, their vulnerability in a skirt is associated with the *visibility* of their physical body. I would consider it potentially dangerous for a perceived black male to be in feminine clothing, but it is not the external appearance of femininity Chris attempts to cover or conceal it is *their body underneath* the clothing itself. I want to compare Chris's understanding of their vulnerability in a skirt to Magnet and Mason's notion of haptic optics (2014), in which biometrics physically touch the body by visibly unveiling it.

Furthermore, Chris's theory on why they have been able to avoid experiencing violence in feminine clothing is because as a "society viewed black male" they are always considered to be a potential threat, even when presenting femininely. "I think it's interesting in my case since I'm a society viewed like black male…Even when I interact with like, some white women and I'm wearing lipstick…or something feminine like I see them like kind of get scared. Which I'm just…like how are you threatened by this." Although I don't address the violence of being dressed in the "wrong clothing" in this thesis as much as I would like to, I wanted to include Chris's perspective in order to hint at the broader societal implications of doing gender "wrong" as I believe they are important to take into account.

I ask Chris if they feel that they experience themselves and their identity any differently when they wear clothing that could be considered more masculine.

> No, because I know that it's like circumstance. It's not like I'm choosing to look more masculine because I feel more masculine, and it's just like I'm wearing this because it's more convenient…Oh, actually. When I do wear more traditional clothing and people misgender me more, it makes me I guess like insecure in my gender identity because it's so new to me. I guess it's hard to feel more androgynous and non-binary when everyone is, you know, misgendering you and *making you male*.

At first Chris quite firmly claims that they don't feel any differently when they wear masculine clothing, "I wear lipstick usually every day. So it's not even like I like switch between masculine looks one day or feminine looks the other day. I feel like it's just like one hundred percent…just feminine now." However, in terms of their intelligibility, Chris acknowledges that they feel they are misgendered more in male clothing, which is why they choose not to wear it. Since Chris's gender identity is relatively new to them, it is more difficult to negotiate their own identity in relation to other people's perception of them in masculine clothing. Although they claim that their relationship to themselves doesn't change in masculine clothing, Chris tells me that over the course of the interview, "actually thinking about this...I'm like growing to be really uncomfortable in this outfit. Like I want to go change like immediately, into a skirt." It seems that I have made Chris uncomfortable in some way, it appears that they may feel that they are being perceived as masculine or just be more highly aware of their appearance as a result of the interview. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, Chris spoke about having a problem wearing pants because they felt that they were confronted with the reality of their body due to the proximity of the clothing to their physical body. In the beginning of the interview, Chris told me that they wanted to wear a skirt today, but couldn't because they were carrying a suitcase. Chris is wearing pants today, and clearly the focus of our interview is their clothing, which happens to be something that they would prefer not to wear.

In conclusion, it seems that typically Chris is not wiling to sacrifice their feminine appearance, no matter the situation. Chris wears feminine clothing both to portray their femininity to others as well as to avoid being misgendered as male. They do not like the masculinity that is associated with them when they wear masculine clothing. They feel that they are confined to the reality of their embodiment in clothing that is fitted to their body. They acknowledge that when they are misgendered it is in relation to their visible appearance, which is not always

intelligible; therefore, it seems that they understand their intelligibility to be inextricably linked to visibility which is embedded in surveillance (Magnet and Mason 2014).

"It's not a look, and it's more than a look" (Lydon)

> And I think that not being able to fixate on, like this is my style, or this is what I always wear, yes we have these things that are dear to us and make us feel some sort of sense of self, then, but I think that a lot of times that comes with the sentimentality of an object, rather than like what it, what it expresses in the outside world. *It's like internal as opposed to external*. And which is strange to think about in that clothing is external.

> But at the same time, I have a responsibility too, I can't expect that from the world, you know, to say I'm queer and so…I think that that is so much part of queerness, is that it's a refusal of any one conclusion or any one definition, which is why it's so amazing, the moment that we conclude this is queer, and this is the aesthetic of queer and can accept that, that's where queerness ends, you know. That would be it's, that would be totality in general, it just fatal.

I want to emphasize the tension between Lydon's assertion that their queerness cannot be ascribed or contained in any one garment, which emphasizes the internal meaning of a garment, and the idea that Lydon's identity can be stolen, which refers to Lydon's external appearance. At the beginning of the interview Lydon claims that they can't point to any one garment that would define their queerness because it is a "constant becoming," and to define queerness would be "fatal." They attribute the importance of garments to be in the sentimental *internal* meaning for a person rather than external, which troubles the idea of expression and boundaries of interiority/exteriority. Instead of using clothing to convey one's inner "self," Lydon claims that the clothing has inner personal meaning that cannot be conveyed.

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L: again, it's just an object, it's just something that is at once aesthetically pleasing, to a certain degree, but then *again it means more to me* and there are certain things that mean more to me, that again, like these pants. If I saw someone wearing the white jeans, you have no idea the history   of   this   and   what   that   means   to   me. D: So   it's   like   belittling   the   clothing   to   mere   clothing? L: Yeah

However, they acknowledge the significance of clothing's *external* appearance when they are copied.

My one roommate…copies me all the time…but for me it feels like…my identity and my look is able to, like someone can have that, and that's not what it is for me. *It's not, it's not a look, and it's more than a look…*I would leave the house in a long coat or not like take off my clothes and put on PJs when I got home, because I didn't want her, I wanted her to stop. It felt invasive, it felt like she was *exploiting my identity* to a certain degree.

Although Lydon asserts the internal meaning of clothing for them, it seems that they are equally concerned with its external resonance as it can potentially reveal Lydon to be a copy and therefore inauthentic. For example, their sailor hat is a very specific hat. I recently saw a picture of sailors during New York fleet week, and it occurred to me that Lydon's hat is not the only sailor hat worn, the one Lydon wears is referred to as the "dixie cup hat."[30] Contrary to Butler's notion of original/copy (1993c), it seems that in order to produce themselves as an original, Lydon does not want to have copies. The act of copying poses the threat that Lydon's identity itself can be stolen, and replicated. Lydon claims "*it's not a look, and it's more than a look*" to assert that their appearance is not a "look," because it implies exteriority, when Lydon is stressing the *internal* significance of their clothing. However, by connecting the copying of

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[30] Since Lydon never responded to my request for images, and they were very concerned with the internal significance of a garment for them, I won't provide a picture of their hat.

their look to the *exploitation of their identity*, it seems that Lydon understands that one's exteriority is taken to be expressive of one's interiority. Lydon avoids association with anything trendy because they don't want their exteriority, and as a result interiority, to appear to be a copy.

L: so when I walked in and tried on the (sailor) hat, it was just like, try, *let's see someone try* and it just makes it more apparent you know, to me. *That this is something that can't be replicated to a certain degree…*this is going to be my thing…it's a little bit out there and a little bit like silly, like caricature…yes, it is an object, it puts myself out there, and it gets a lot of, I wouldn't say it's costumey, but at the same time it sort of is.

And yea, I think it's *something that people wouldn't be willing to wear*, and I like that about it.

D: So there's a hope that people that they won't buy sailor hats?

L: Yea, if they do, I'll just burn it.

In this excerpt, I suggest that Lydon chooses the sailor hat based on its external appearance despite their assertion of the internal significance of garments. They choose the hat because they don't think that it is something people would willing to wear, because it's too "out there." They identify the hat as something that "can't be replicated," when realistically, it could be. Lydon asserts their reluctance to be copied, claiming that they would burn the hat if it became trendy. For Lydon, copies don't cement their status as original as there is the threat that they would be associated with something that has the ability to be replicated.

Despite their earlier claim of the internal significance of clothing, when I ask Lydon if they think that their clothing or their "look" can be said to be expressive of their genderqueer identity or whether it is important for their gender identity to be intelligible, they say that it is. They refer to their leather jacket, which they have personalized by painting it and adding pins. They say, "it's very much me…and I feel like it truly says things that I don't have to say." It seems

that the jacket speaks for Lydon, and confronts people with their gender without having to verbally convey it. At the same time, Lydon is quite adamant that they don't like to draw attention and are wary of people looking at them.

> even if someone's like…"oh I love your jacket," I don't like to draw the attention…I see you looking at me and I see you making assumptions about me, and…trying to…connect with me on something, on a superficial level, which is frustrating, though it's nice, and I know the intention is harmless…at the same time it can be, it can be extremely frustrating.

It seems that Lydon is annoyed by people who draw on the external significance or familiarity of a garment, in order to connect in an insincere way, when the garment is so much more than that for Lydon. However, for some reason, they are comfortable with the attention they have been receiving in the sailor hat. They say that people are really into the whole sailor look, and they get quite a lot of commentary from strangers. "And the comments I've gotten on this hat, to some extent, seem really genderless to me. Just that people love the character of the hat." What does anonymity mean, if one's visibility is heightened in a certain garment? Even though to an extent, contrary to Lydon's fondness for anonymity, their visibility is heightened in the hat, I suggest that they still enjoy a sense of anonymity. In this intra-action, Lydon is drawing on the embedded citationality of the sailor's hat to become intelligible in a certain way to the general public. A sailor's hat is highly recognizable and they are drawing on the fact that people can identify with it. I think it is because Lydon views the hat as a persona or a character, they feel that they are not so gendered in the visibility that it brings them. Throughout the interview, Lydon spoke about the importance of anonymity and not wanting to be identifiable. Once, when referring to one time they had to dress professionally Lydon said, "there's a safety in wearing something you know is perceived as professional, even if you don't feel comfortable in it. Even if it's not you.." Because of the way Lydon has spoken about the safety/comfort of

being in a garment in which one is to an extent unrecognizable, I infer that for Lydon, the idea of anonymity comes with the fact that Lydon is not a sailor, and they become this persona or character while in the hat, which allows people to identify them in a certain way, as a sailor's wife for example. However, Lydon is precisely not that, and exactly that at the same time. They are intelligible as someone that people recognize and make attempts to connect with, but at the same time I suggest to an extent it functions as a visible hiding place, which troubles notions the notion of clothing as expressive.

I suggest that Lydon queers notions of authenticity by performing authenticity in order to produce themselves as untraceable and inimitable. Although Butler conveys that in order to constitute oneself as original, the original needs copies; however, Lydon does not want to have any copies because then Lydon could potentially be confused for a copy of them (Butler 1993c).

Building on this idea of anonymity, Lydon recently began wearing black latex gloves, which first began as part of their art practice because they were preparing canvases. They have bad anxiety and constantly pick at the skin around their nails. When they realized they couldn't pick at their fingers anymore while they were in the gloves, they started wearing them constantly.

> I love the feeling of latex too. And I feel sneaky in them. It feels like my finger prints are... have you ever seen Seven? Anyways…the murderer, cuts off his finger prints, so he's untraceable. And between the way I pick at my fingers, I feel like I never have an identifiable print, and with the latex gloves I don't either, so *I'm sort of like untraceable*.

The gloves are facilitating this anonymity that Lydon is after. I suggest that Lydon's desire to be untraceable stems from the attempt to create an authentic self. By being untraceable, Lydon becomes authentic because it is impossible to trace the origins of their "look," which like everyone's is copied to an extent.

In this process of becoming authentic, Lydon is to an extent borrowing or drawing on other people's authenticity. They love the idea of naming, and unnaming so they have several garments, which are not only second-hand, but actually have someone else's name inscribed in the garment. Part of the appeal of this sailor hat to Lydon, is the name "Tucker" written on the inside of the hat. They spoke about wearing a named garment, "like this is not what I call myself. And I'm going to wear this name." They use certain garments to reclaim their identity. They like the idea of wearing other people through clothing. "Yea, it's an authentic sailor's hat. Someone wore it out to sea. Kind of dark, I don't know. It's a reclaiming too. Reclaiming, through clothes, I feel like, I'm reclaiming my own identity."

For Lydon, the sailor's hat shifts from being authentic to inauthentic when they wear it for special occasion or dress it up. It is because Lydon wears it everyday that it becomes part of Lydon as a regular person. "It serves a function, which is why I wear it on a daily, whereas when it is dressed up, it becomes symbolic of a character…or a costume, and becomes inauthentic. If they only wore it every so often it would take on the characteristics of a costume, which implies that it is not serious. I want to draw attention to the tension between Lydon's claim that their clothing is not expressive, with their efforts to prevent others from copying them. For example, Lydon spoke about covering their outfit or changing right when they got home in an attempt to prevent their roommates from copying them; however, Lydon conceals their clothing at one point only for it to be revealed later in public. In this way it seems that Lydon understands their authenticity to be linked with their visibility which is embedded in surveillance (Magnet and Mason 2014). I do not suggest that intelligibility necessarily is important for Lydon as they convey that people cannot understand the internal significance of their clothing for them. However, people can copy them and that visibility would reveal Lydon to be a copy.

Even though I am critiquing the idea of authenticity and interiority/exteriority, Lydon has almost been able to convince me of their authenticity. While they have essentially explained how intensely curated this look is, I notice that I have become more attuned to my own investment in clothing. It seems that Lydon's relationship with clothing is almost a hyper allegiance to the idea that all we have is "surface signification." I suggest that it may be due to a deep-rooted anxiety about the fact that all that one is, exteriority, and therefore interiority can be stolen. If someone wears clothing from a department store that anyone has access to, what is there to differentiate yourself externally? If we understand clothing or one's external appearance to be "expressive" or representative of an inner self, then as a result internally as well. I do not wish to claim that there exists an "inner self." However, the way in which Lydon refers to their own look, they use this kind of terminology.

The way Lydon uses clothing is about their queerness, but as Lydon identifies as genderqueer, their queerness can be said to be part of their gender identity. In conclusion, I suggest that Lydon is queering notions of authenticity through their use of their clothing. They produce themselves as the original by performing authenticity. Lydon both wants to be untraceable, and inimitable, when they claim, for example, that they would burn the sailor hat if anyone were to copy it. They conceal their outfit from their roommates in order to later, during the day, reveal themselves in public to other people. Finally, I suggest that Lydon troubles notions of expression by conveying the importance of the internal meaning of a garment rather than its external meaning. However, I am skeptical of their assertion (will elaborate above in analysis) that the external meaning doesn't matter because Lydon purchases second hand garments that are unlikely to have copies or perhaps it may be more difficult to obtain a copy. In this sense, it is exactly the exteriority of the garment that matters. Furthermore, if Lydon was so convinced

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of the internal significance of a garment, I suggest they may not be as concerned when someone copies them, but on the contrary they are extremely concerned that anyone will copy them.

Keeping Queer (Andrea)

> for instance if I take a selfie, if I decide to post it on the internet…there's some part of the back of my head that feels I need to perform queerness…because…people are going to think I'm revoking it but…*deep down this is what I really am*… if I don't present that certain level of queerness that someone's going to be like oh yeah he is just…a guy and you know has got his beard… I think for people who struggle with, who are openly queer, sort of in a way that has to be opposed, it sort of its of a fight that those people need to keep up all the time. you know?

After I introduce my thesis project to Andrea and convey to her that I'm questioning the idea of visibility and/or intelligibility as a gender identity and how this relates to one's feelings of authenticity, she tells me that she has always strongly considered invisibility to be a privilege. "The idea that being able to blend into the background is a tremendous privilege in many spaces." With this in mind, I begin to describe her relationship with clothing and gender identity, acknowledging that for her, invisibility may be a privilege in which she doesn't want to engage. When I ask Andrea about her visibility and/or intelligibility as nonbinary, she starts to talk about the way she portrays herself on social media. She feels that when she posts an image of herself, she needs to be wearing lipstick because otherwise she won't be taken seriously in her gender identity or she will be misgendered as male. "I feel I need to look a certain level of queer because otherwise someone's going to think I'm just faking it or just doing it because it's cool." At the same time, Andrea conveys that "deep down this is what I really am" referring to her queerness, and there is an effort to portray this to people so she is understood. Intelligibility appears to be important for Andrea so that she is not misgendered, but also potentially because she considers invisibility, potentially of one's gender identity, to

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be a privilege. She first began this process of conveying her gender through her appearance by "painting my nails far as like doing weird gender stuff then my clothing." When I interview Andrea, she has dyed green hair with pink nail polish. She is interested in the juxtaposition of these parts of her look with her beard and chooses to complement her appearance in this way because it is not obvious as someone with a male-identified body, "its not obvious because people will look at me and be like oh that person has a beard what are they doing with painted nails."

In terms of using her clothing in order to create an intelligible presentation of her gender identity, Andrea explains

> Wanting to speak to a disjunction of self, by saying I'm gonna wear a bow tie and a blazer and you know, leather shoes tonight, but I'm also going to wear lipstick, eyeliner and I'm going to put my hair in a ponytail, you know? To put these things together and sort of say, this is speaking to my gender directly, but also fuck all of this. And maybe that's what I'm feeling, you know? I have no idea what I am, deal with it. Or I am 800 things, deal with it.

> I was wearing a full dress, lipstick and I think even a rainbow hat and I got called sir three times that day. I was just like, the kind of intellectual flexibility to not even second guess yourself in that situation is pretty impressive. you know?

She acknowledges that the way in which she combines different aspects of her appearance is to an extent can be representative of her gender identity. However, she also recognizes that her clothes may be expressing that she doesn't know who she is exactly. She indicates that this external representation of her gender may not be actually conveying anything about her gender, troubling the idea that clothing is expressive. She cannot be defined simply by her appearance, but at the same time she recognizes that it is her external appearance that defines her.

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I suggest that since she believes that invisibility is a privilege as well as the fact she doesn't want to appear to disavow her queerness, it is important for her to be able to express it through her appearance.

> I'm always trying to be really unhip and I feel like when something I'm doing will catch on in one way or another I'm like god damn it. I was wearing bow ties and then bow ties became this really hip thing and sure enough stopped wearing bow ties. …I also started being identified as the bowtie guy which I you know its just fine. I just, the second you have a peg for me I will remove it, I will remove it from that wall.

In terms of building a sense of authenticity, Andrea, like Lydon, is reluctant to have their queerness lie in any one garment or accessory that they wear. Once anyone begins to tie them down through their style or clothes they wear, they change.[31] Lydon and Andrea specifically attributed this process of change to clothing and were reluctant to tie representations of themselves down to any one garment or look. In this way, they suggest that clothing cannot be representative of the gender identity; however, by continuously striving to represent their uniqueness through clothing by wearing clothing that isn't in style, I infer that they do in fact see clothing to be representative of their individuality.

In conclusion, Andrea shows us how people work to trouble understanding of clothing as expressive by claiming that the clothing she wears is both representative of and cannot contain her queerness. Andrea is concerned with portraying their queerness visibly to other people through their appearance, such as their social media friends, because she feels that if she does not, she will be both misgendered and her queerness will not be taken seriously. For Andrea,

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[31] As I mention in my introduction, many of my interviewees valued change and spoke about their identity and becoming as a continual process.

her intelligibility as queer seems to be extremely important and necessary for her understanding of her own gender identity as nonbinary.

Conclusion

In conclusion, in this chapter I problematize the notion of visibility, due to the fact that being intelligible is embedded in visibility and therefore related to surveillance (Magnet and Mason 2014). I argue that clothing is extremely essential in the process of becoming intelligible, and people seem to have an understanding that one's exteriority is taken to be representative or expressive of their interiority. I suggest that all my interviewees attempt to convey their identity and negotiate feeling authentic by what they feel is a visible representation of their gender identity. By visibly conveying their gender identity, they hope to avoid being misgendered, which threatens their gender identifications. I argue that my interviewees' understand the visibility of their appearance through clothing and other signifiers to be inextricably tied to their intelligibility and that their actions are in reaction to surveillance. Furthermore, I begin to problematize clothing as expressive, drawing on Lydon and Andrea's relationships with clothing. Finally I attempted to address why intelligibility matters for my interviewees and relate it to their feelings of being authentic in their gender identity.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I begin the work of complicating how we think about gender by considering clothing a fundamental part of the process of gender and becoming gendered. I began by supplementing Butler's notion of performativity (1988, 1990) by considering gender as an "intra-action" (Barad 1999) in which a person and their clothing become gendered. I then give six examples of how this process of "becoming with" is realized in people's lives. I attempted to give a diverse sample of intra-actions in order to convey the complexity of how we relate to clothing. With Lydon, we see how she becomes both intelligible and unintelligible in her intra-action with the sailor's hat. I suggest that Lydon provides an example of how Butler conceives of intelligibility as embedded in and inextricable from the heterosexual matrix (1990). Lydon draws on the historicity of this specific garment in order to become intelligible to the public to an extent and conceives of the hat as playing a role in *ungendering* them to an extent. However, as we see with the passerby who names Lydon as the "sailor's wife" we are reminded why Lydon is precisely unintelligible in this hat. They are never the sailor, always the sailor's wife. Lydon's imagined relationship to the owner of the hat is heterosexual kinship. With Yoriko, we see an example of how one draws upon the citation of kimono and decontextualizes it to an extent by pairing it with Western clothing in order to allow for more physical comfort and mobility. In the example of Jean's tank top, Jean draws on the citationality of the tank top to *gender their body* as feminine and begin to act more feminine. Chris G. attempts to break with the citationality of the skirt by changing their behavior and movement while they are in the skirt; however, it seems that at the same time gendering themselves as feminine in their skirt.

I argue that this understanding of gender as an "intra-action" is necessary to explain how clothing plays a role in the intelligibility of one's gender, which drawing on Mason and Magnet, I suggest is embedded in surveillance (2014). In Chapter 3, I suggest that Lydon and Andrea

begin to trouble the notion of clothing as expressive; although ultimately, it seems that all the interviewees' I discuss use their visibility in order to garner intelligibility in certain ways in order to avoid being misgendered.

Is she me?

Before I began this process of interviewing, a friend asked me what pronouns I use when she was contacting a friend to introduce me to as part of the snowball method of gathering respondents. I was a little taken aback. I replied, "she for now." Throughout the process of this short study, I have had to field questions in reference to my own gender identity. Thus far, I have always answered "I don't know" or "I'm not sure," but when you're writing a thesis about how nonbinary people intra-act with and use clothing it's difficult to avoid reflecting on your own relationship with clothing and gender.

As I relayed it to several interviewees, I can trace this process of change back to when I first cut my hair short. First it was in an asymmetrical bob, then I changed it to a pixie hairstyle. As soon as I got the pixie hairstyle, I went out and bought lipstick afterwards. My face felt too blank. It was an attempt to make me look more like a woman. In retrospect, during this time, I felt that I was matching my outfits to my hair. My hair felt feminine so I matched the rest of my appearance to this femininity. I began to wear more makeup than I had been wearing because I wasn't comfortable with my less feminine appearance. However, when I cut my hair into my current hair cut, which is more textured and edgy I feel that once again I was matching my clothing to my haircut which is now an edgier style. Although at first I was still wearing more feminine clothing because that was what I was accustomed to, soon I stopped wearing makeup and took on a more androgynous style. This has been a process over the past eight

months which has only begun to accelerate in the last month. It was because of this more androgynous look that I suspect my interviewees questioned how I identified myself.

When I began to reflect on this, and the possibility that my gender identity, for the first time, could really be in question, I realized that the category of woman felt foreign to me. I can't trace this change in identification, but it was there. I thought about how I attribute this change to my change in hairstyle, and I began to hate it, but I also realized I couldn't go back. Nothing about those years of femininity felt familiar to me now. Even referring to myself as she felt wrong. I deliberate on how extraordinary it seems that working on this thesis has almost completely altered my experience of myself so quickly. Although I can almost certainly say that this acceleration of my heightened awareness of how I dress and how I identify is directly related to this research I am doing, it did not make the experience feel any less real.

Contributions

My analysis contributes to the discussions of performativity by considering gender an "intra-action" (Barad 1999). In this study, I examine what clothing means to people and how they consider their relationship to it. My contributions will reshape our future discussions concerning gender identity, queerness and notions of authenticity. I hope my thesis can begin to contribute to notions of surveillance in relation to biopolitics although it was not explicitly addressed in this thesis.

Implications

While I was truly inspired by Barad's notion of "intra-action" (1999) and in many ways her theory of agential realism helped me conceive of and shape my thesis, I was not able to focus on the materiality of the clothing and how the materiality of clothing affects the intra-action as

much as I would have liked to in this thesis. However, I consider this a vital aspect of the "intra-action" and definitely worthy of further research, which I hope to expand on as I build upon this project further.

Although I only begin to discuss this in my thesis, clothing is also always existing in an assemblage with both the other garments in one's outfit and the wearer's embodiment and behavior. I consider Bennett's understanding of assemblage to be important for further discussions on how garments exist in relation to one another in a person's closet. One's closet is not stagnant just as one's gender identity is not stagnant. People buy new clothes and the clothes become part of that person's perception of themselves and people stop wearing clothes and donate or get rid of them. If we begin to conceive of the closet as always in flux, I believe we will be able to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how one's gender "expression" or presentation shifts and varies over time.

I don't necessarily want to claim that in viewing gender as an "intra-action" (Barad 1999) that the clothed subject emerges as either masculine or feminine. I suggest it is more of a relational spectrum, which is embedded in preexisting cultural and social significations of clothing and bodies. The emergence of gender is contingent on the intra-action between an observer and a clothed subject. Typically, people are wearing an assemblage of garments that can individually be identified as either more masculine or feminine outside of the context of the entire outfit due to their citationality. These garments are also usually as identified as more masculine or feminine in relation to one's embodiment. Therefore, I suggest it can be the combination of one garment in relation to both one's embodiment and the other garments that one is wearing that end up somewhat definitively defining a person as male or female within the binary. I don't want to claim that this is always the case, however, as we are situated within the heterosexual matrix, people are not intelligible as other than male or female (Butler 1990). As I mentioned

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above, because Lydon is wearing the sailor's hat, which is understood by many people as being referential to a male sailor, they are misgendered as female because of their embodiment. Instead of being conceived of as masculine, it is possible that the masculinity of the hat emphasizes the femininity of their body. I argue that my interviewees juxtaposed their embodiment in relation to their clothing in order to attempt to convey their gender identity in a visible manner.

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