

against political art  
 a. not anti-  
 b. bad esthetics  
 (women's lib → trans luxury  
 (gay identities) utilitarian edge  
 gender)

↓ NEED political art excess — cliché (bersani)

postmodern/irreducible

images  
 70% fem. /

Contingency p. 95  
 proletariat (late capital)  
 universality of community (

rehabilitation  
 mediation = control?

mean to pull together discourses  
 - philosophy  
 - science (differentiated sexuality)

authority: the state  
 the law  
 the father  
 god  
 the sun

— OR — = yes (refusal of choice)  
 privileging of economic class struggle  
 is an esthetic facistic?

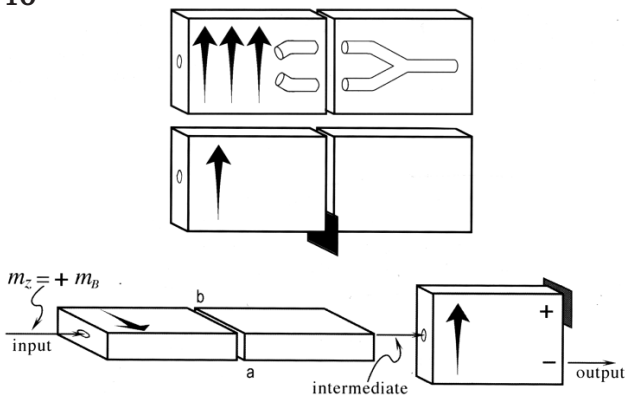
yes

## Speak with out/naming.\*

The following treatment of *trans* politics and resistant strategies is loaded with respectful regard for authority. I am speaking for example of categories of identification, mainstream media, critical discourse, cultural icons, physical prowess, norms, and essentialist sentiments. So often our understanding of resistance forms in relation to, or in the blending of these kinds of declarative forces, but our re/ actions are responsible first of all to language. We must continuously reposition our vocabulary, because it is constitutive of any claim to rights. In response to the idea of authority I assemble a few terms of violence, which obstruct viable life<sup>1</sup> at levels of the body, subject, and nation: (I list, to perform the opposition): rape, coercion, violation, hate, erasure, enslavement, colonization. Positional power flows like capital—we must know it is tied up in the same string, and we cannot ever be fully outside of it. Such grounding continues to inspire different/disadvantaged groups to collaborate upon overlapping struggles. Furthermore, the semantic relationships of our identificatory claims run deeper than their metaphoric echo (activity/passivity, penetration/reception), but have ontological basis. This is a definitive formulation, that I utterly reject coercive sexual reassignment surgery for intersexed bodies, as much as I champion the radical potential of elective transsexual transitions. It is a feminist position, to disrupt normative “correcting,”<sup>2</sup> which can have such traumatic (to the realm of physical violence) effects on the subject.

I want to talk about the relationship of FTM’s (female-to-male-transsexuals) and women. I am worried that the trans

yes



The interferometer demonstrates quantal interference, illustrating a movement of *both/and*. (Daniel F. Steiner)

yes

community is becoming cast as boy-centered. As a member of this community I am confronted by the authoritative presence of whiteness, privilege, and unproductive victimization, which characteristically dominates common conversation and representation, acting as a kind of phantom entitlement on the part of certain constituents. Currently in the United States, expanding 'trans sub-culture' is so affected by consumptive race and class determinants, that one can even draw a "tranny" stereotype as a 12 year-old white boy (the idiom, the dress, the adolescent pitch of the voice).<sup>3</sup> I want to address the FTM phenomenon because I cannot overlook it; it is already sweeping mainstream media. Indeed many feminists have balked with uneasiness at the trans phenomenon, as they locate their understanding of it in a very expensive, radical surgery. From another angle of mislocation, in the territory of hyper-critical discourse, *trans* (as in transgressive/transgendered) ideologies have been targeted as obfuscating specific precarious identities,

which differentiate a spectrum of non-normative sexuality, such as lesbian and particularly butch (trans thereby replacing female masculinity).

What interests me about this quandary is how it relates to a familiar problem of self-erasure, which is shared by so many marginalized communities. I immediately draw insight here about invisibility from Leo Bersani, whose work on contemporary American gay politics incorporates a broad range of intellectual and affective influences. He writes about the dilemma of gayness as being strapped to assimilation and appropriation in its presence, and suffering from homophobia and definitional crisis in its absence. I interpret his work as a way to productively mediate the contradictions of visibility: “By not accepting and radically reworking the different identity of sameness—by rejecting the whole concept of identity—we risk participating in the homophobic project that wants to annihilate us. Only an emphasis on the specifics of sameness can help us to avoid collaborating in the disciplinary tactics that would make us invisible.” (Bersani 76) I’m interested in how this different identity of sameness can also be a feminist strategy. Bersani hints at certain essentialist (partially-representative) formulations by rehabilitating the contested term *sameness*.<sup>4</sup>

yes

Recent media spectacle has led me to conclude that trans visibility is a grave<sup>5</sup>; but can most people sustain their investment in a project of disidentification?<sup>6</sup> I realized recently that even in my own thinking and casual discourse “elusive” has become cast as indulgent, or that this trans-identity is not a feminist priority. Times of crisis require direct enunciation and concrete objectives. Time to talk about women (again?). I realize when I say it that my verse lacks the context of belonging to a social movement. If I make a demand of behalf of women, it does not necessarily

relate to any one particular strategy.<sup>7</sup> For that reason I am harboring the potential of a certain register of decades past, of explicit declaration on behalf of a group—which is has since been rendered unidentifiable, forgotten, misappropriated, and even parodied by the current moment. However I view the general dispersion of the feminist project to be more of a reflection of its inevitable path towards destabilization, which results whenever a project is fully named. This dispersion certainly does not reflect any irreversible progress for women's rights (nor the rights of other feminist constituencies). But I harbor this moment before naming as being ever-full of linguistic possibility, as well as a practical time to produce change.

yes

Meanwhile, I am working on a formulation about transsexuals and women, which is both grammatical and applicable. It is about mobilizing upon the fact that we all occupy similar feminized positions, as recipients of bodily control. Across strata we are regulated, undressed, coerced, and corrected. I propose that while we disrupt the two-gendered system, we should simultaneously inhabit female subjectivity, as a kind of double-positive resistance. The disruptive thinking here belongs at least partially to a postmodern legacy—although it may also be a partial undoing of its own Western tendencies (which are both [expansively] colonialist in their application to subjects, and [locally] limiting to identificatory potential. Take the Deleuzian idea that we could obliterate gendered systems through widespread “becoming-women”<sup>8</sup> by all. It is a playful rhetorical argument about shifting our notions of passivity/femininity, as well as a strategic rehabilitation of essentialist construction. In some light it is also absurdist logic, but still nearly approaches the paradoxical tension of negotiating identification (to evoke Bersani's “different identity of sameness”).

AUTHORITY      AUTHORITY  
 with respectful regards for

AUTHORITY

- . LEGITIMATE CATEGORIES
- . MAINSTREAM MEDIA
- CULTURAL ICONS
- CRITICAL DISCUSS
- \* ATHLETIC PROMESS
- RULING FIGURES
- NORMS
- AP SOLUTE STATEMENTS!

Violence <sup>to colonize</sup> [ "colonize" ]  
 . RATE  
 . VIOLATION\*  
 INVASION  
 COERCION  
 → IMPERIALISM

Although the rhetoric may at first seem evasive, you must trust in the possibility of access and discover unexpected, individuated terms of reemergence. This is a declaration of new feminist work. It is a vote to get somewhere, to get specific about commonality, and not to hide in the realm of impossible negative.<sup>9</sup>

yes

\**Speak with out/naming* is re-written based on an original text titled, *Vocalization in an Ethical Matrix*. The title also makes phonetic reference an exhibition organized by Brendan Fowler in Los Angeles this year (titled, *This talk we have, this talk we have had, this talk we have/have had*).<sup>10</sup> It feels perhaps obvious but significant to note the influence of current feminist work on my own thinking. To speak, as opposed to vocalize, implies a slightly different relationship to language than the previous text. I discovered a surprising pleasure in trying to completely rearticulate my position from within the confines of a previous one, particularly one of intense polemic (still present here). To revisit something I have had such an ideological and strategic break from. However I wanted the extremity of contrast between then and now to reveal itself in some way, as testament to how fast these dialogs shift. The ground is no less diminished. I

continue to be interested in this process of political identification, where it initiates and dissipates. Let this text itself demonstrate how these processes become marked by the ways we speak.



yes

1. Butler's specific term relates to a philosophical question of "the good" in *Undoing Gender*. This approach lays significant ground for an ethical discussion of human rights, where terms of freedom may be more ambiguous.
2. "Although intersex and transsex sometimes seem at odds with one another, the first opposing unwanted surgery, the second sometimes calling for elective surgery, it is most important to see that both challenge the principle that natural dimorphism should be maintained at all costs." (Butler, Judith. *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge, 2004, pg 6)
3. This image is proven wrong by any substantial investigation into the struggle and history of transsexual activism and culture.
4. The idea of sameness refers to one popular sentiment in recent gay rights activism, which embodies modern assimilation. It is an movement to prove that gay people want the right to replicate the same socioeconomic and familial patterns as a white bourgeois straight people.
5. A reference to a particular set of analogies put forth about the AIDS Crisis in mainstream media, and gay sex as a "self-shattering" violence, written by Leo Bersani in *October's* "Is the Rectum a Grave?"
6. José Esteban Muñoz's established the discourse of disidentification with his book in the late 1990s: *Disidentifications, Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. This text alludes to the idea that disidentification "negotiates strategies of resistance within the flux of discourse and power." p 19
7. I'm indebted to an ongoing dialog with Emily Roysdon for this understanding of social movements, particularly in terms of Mary Kelly's interpretation of Jaques Rancière's essay "Cause of the Other." Kelly emphasizes the initial dis-identification of an individual with a particular social/economic group, which initiates the process of becoming a true political subject (in the sense of belonging).



*Oprah Winfrey Show*—from “The 11-year old who wants a Sex-Change.” ...Kayla then told her mother that she believed she was a boy living in a girl’s body. Angelina knew that she needed help, so she found a therapist who specializes in transgender issues.

**yes**

8. My use of the concept of “Becoming-woman” references the Deleuze and Guattari model. Particularly, see Guattari, Felix. *Soft Subversions*. Sylvere Lotringer, ed. New York: Semiotext[e], 1996.

9. “Of history I do not want to exist in the impossible negative.” (Bass, Math. “Attention Gap.” *Pilot TV Guide*. Chicago, 2005.)

10. *This Talk We Have...* organized by Brendan Fowler at David Kordansky Gallery, includes work by Luke Fishbeck/Lucky Dragons, Brendan Fowler, Wynne Greenwood/K8 Hardy, Chris Johanson, and Emily Roysdon. May 2006.