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Shifting bodies:

transgender self-representation in moving image art practices

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Abstract

The art of the moving image flows with a multiplicity of images and sequences, and has been channelled by Aotearoa New Zealand-based transgender artists to express their own bodies as they shift between cisnormative realms of gender. The transgender or gender diverse body refuses singularity, as it occupies our expectations of both male and female contours, resulting from clothing choices, hormone treatments or surgical interventions; just as the fluidity of film resists a single or static image or reading. The moving image contains endless potential to convey this shifting, this visual indeterminacy of escaping fixed states of being. I examine how a range of artists use self-representation to render themselves in perpetual motion; shifting physically between frames, shifting ontologically with the corporeal effects gender affirmative treatments provide, as well as shifting in their very being between external conceptions of genders. I discuss three artistic methods, which can be analysed as an emerging transaesthetics. Language firstly created indefinable realms through which the corporeality of the body can be manipulated in words, sounds, and poetic imaginings, as artists navigate linguistic strategies for escaping bodily experience. Secondly, through means of cropping sections of the body out of the image frame, artists used film techniques to aesthetically affect the removal and amputation of undesirable and redundant body parts. This disjunction within the image between the face and the body of the individual can be compared to the disassociation between self and body that constitutes a common experience of gender dysphoria, a medical symptom of identifying as a different gender than one is assigned at birth. Lastly, Māori and Sāmoan artists used post-production editing to layer transparent images of themselves, creating ethereal and kaleidoscopic figures which create the effect of coexistence with a spiritual realm, as an alternative means of escaping normative physicality. Here, the medium of film is being explored to create enigmatic self-expressions, which resist the notion of fixed states, and deny the viewer the ability to easily classify the figures into binary genders. I theorise the artists' manipulation of

film techniques such as slow cinema to create an expanded sense of the passing of time, enabling the viewer to have a meditative and measured engagement with the works, as non-binary durationality. Transaesthetics here encompasses a spectrum of visual ambiguity, and celebrates dynamic indeterminacy.

Contents

Introduction

In my thesis, I examine how moving image art can be harnessed to capture the human body, as it moves between cisnormative male and female territories. More specifically, I am interested in how Aotearoa New Zealand based artists use film for self-representation. The transgender body is one that resists singularity in perpetual motion. Both historically and in contemporary mainstream magazines, medical journals, films, and television programmes, transgender or gender-diverse individuals are represented by cisgender, or non-transgender individuals, either as directors, writers, photographers, or even in acting roles. This means that both the experience of being transgender, and the aesthetic representation of transgender individuals are largely conceived of and conveyed to the public without the input of transgender individuals themselves. The image contains endless possibilities for representation, and here I examine an array of transgender and gender-diverse artists who focus moving image technology onto their own bodies. As a visual site, I am interested in how transgender individuals look at themselves, display themselves, and chose to represent themselves within the context of art. Is it possible that an aesthetics of transness can be located through examining multiple artistic practices? I examine the moving image works of various artists to ascertain whether the internal reality of gender diversity can be seen to appear through external self-representation.

By very definition, the body of the transgender individual challenges gender essentialism, scientific categories, processes of medicalisation, technology and cisnormative culture. Individuals who occupy a non-binary space of gender identity often shift their presentation of their gender to be in closer accordance to their self-determined sense of individuality, and may elect to use hormone therapy, specific clothing, or gender affirmation surgery to combat dysphoria with their body. Furthermore, while the term transgender can be used to connote individuals whose experience of gender does not align within the constraints of the gender they were

assigned at birth, it is an incredibly broad category, and as a broad definition, in its singularity it attempts to stretch over unimaginable multiplicities and varieties of personal experiences. The term itself, as I later discuss, can be seen as a term which constantly moves and shifts. By placing the body in a state of flux, the physical surface of the transgender individual is caught between both being and becoming.

The transgender body provides a challenge to singular and ingrained modes of seeing which seek to automatically categorize and establish gendered boundaries, rather than to abide with indeterminacy and the inability to discern clear and cohesive definitions of another. It can be seen as providing a structural intervention to the act of looking itself. This indeterminacy can become visibly apparent, or can shift to being illegible based on even just a slight shift in posture, lighting, or viewpoint. In the same way, the moving image as an artistic media is one that is highly suited to capturing perpetual motion. As a media with the capacity to combine an abundance of different visual images, moving image art occupies a space of multiplicity, where each additional frame resists singularity. By utilising moving image as a media, artists are able to capture every frame of shifting bodies; where the body as a site shifts in multiple ways, and in the viewer's perception of the body. Not only does this shifting occur as a movement in physical space, and in gender transition between different articulations of male and female anatomy, but this shifting is also ontological, where the transgender individual moves away from easy classification into binaries, as their fluidity of being celebrates the quality of dynamic indeterminacy.

I examine the representation of the gender diverse body in three sections: in relation to language, the physicality of the body, and the specificities of culture. In my chapter on language, I unravel some of the terminology around transgender individuals, and some basic tenets of transgender theory. I then continue to focus on the use of language within two artists' practices, that of Aliyah Winter, and Jordana Bragg, who both use words alongside the visual image as an expressive tool. By applying the practice of

transpoetics as a means of reading these works, I examine how language can provide a means of self-expression where the body is a problematic locus of transgender experience. My chapter on the physicality of the body then focuses on the surface of the body as ocularcentric, and as a plane for visual analysis. I propose a means of looking as non-binary durationality, where automatic and ingrained gendered reading is refused to the viewer, in favour of sustained examination and uncertainty. Here, I also discuss where artists such as Aliyah Winter, Jordana Bragg, and Mainard Larkin dislocate and crop sections of their body, and compare it to the mental dislocation of the body that is sustained by transgender and non-binary individuals as a symptom of the medical condition of gender dysphoria. Lastly, I examine alternatives to the contemporary Western methodology of transgender in medicine and science, as perceived in Māori and Sāmoan cultures. In these cultures, community and connection with the spiritual presence of ancestors is of a high priority, and is expressed in cinematic techniques through the works of Tāwhanga Nōpera, Shigeyuki Kihara, Tanu Gago, and Pati Solomona Tyrell. Specific cultural histories of colonisation and early indigenous interactions with European settlers are also explored in the works by Nathaniel Gordon-Stables and Aliyah Winter, and Shigeyuki Kihara. Altogether, my thesis provides a comprehensive examination of transgender and gender-diverse artists working in moving image practices at this particular moment, in Aotearoa New Zealand.

I

The transgender body in language

> Any argument asserting the importance of self-definition for trans people must already recognize the power of language and of naming in the process of subject formation. Language is figured as that which is able to deliver a stable and coherent identity to trans people, but also that which obscures it.[1]

Where the body is a contested site of one's personal identity, language can provide a platform for the concept of change. It is also through the act of definition that one can give form to nebulous concepts, even if the definitions are vast and remain borderless. Regardless of the increased visibility of transgender concerns in mainstream culture and in academic articles, it is still commonplace, and somewhat necessary to firstly define what is being discussed when one uses the term 'transgender.' First, let us pick apart 'gender'; here I refer to a set of cultural norms, practices, expectations, and modes of being. Gender is independent of sexuality; gender is who someone is, sexuality is who someone is attracted to.[2] Sex consists of external and internal anatomy, which are formed as a response to chromosomes. Chromosomes are genetic, and cannot be changed, regardless of one's anatomy, and one's sex can (if so desired) be changed by means of prosthetics, hormones, and surgery. For a majority of individuals, their personal sense of gender follows the sex they were assigned at birth, for example, a person assigned male at birth is likely to grow and identify as a boy, and later a man. Within contemporary Western society individuals are divided into the binaries of female and male, and thereafter are prescribed a particular gender, or expected to follow a group of coded practices that are accepted within society.

The term transgender is slippery, and while it continues to add aspects to its definition, it also seems to evade a singular definition itself. Transgender exists as a placeholder rather than a determined point, and is used in various ways by different LGBTQI+

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[1] Gayle Salamon, Assuming a body: transgender and rhetorics of materiality (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2010), 82.
[2] However, there are points of convergence between the two, as with genders such as fa'afafine, which historically has been used to identify a specific identity which includes both gender and sexual attraction, as I discuss in the chapter on culture.

communities. Largely, it exists as a place of rejection of the gender that is socially imposed with one's assigned at birth sex. It extends to those who elect to alter their bodies to become more congruent with their internal sense of identity, and those who do not. It includes those who choose to, or have the liberty to, live openly within their gender identity, and those who are unable to, or choose not to. In its broadest definition, it includes all identities that are non-cisgender, including culturally specific non-binary genders. I myself am non-binary, so my research is informed by an emic perspective which results from my own experience through life, the medical system, and my own transgender community. However, I do not claim to speak for the variety of experiences that transgender covers; instead my voice should be read as one among many.

Susan Stryker has written that it is difficult to employ the term transgender unless one maintains the 'word's definition [as] very flexible.'[3] However, it is a useful common denominator to advocate for changes such as 'community mobilization, resource accrual, and social, political, and legal policy change.'[4] It also carries the implication 'that all formations of sex and gender are … taxonomically containable.'[5] Likewise, while claiming to encompass all, it actually effaces the intersectionality and inclusion of culturally specific genders, such as the Sāmoan non-binary gender fa'afafine.[6] Ludwig Wittgenstein has argued for the flexibility of definitions around the usage of a word in a particular time and locational context, stating that a word possesses 'the meaning someone has given to it.'[7] Here, while the term transgender originally concerned a narrower definition, its current usage has come to be inclusive of a wide range of gender diversity, extending to anyone who does not identify as cisgender. An individual

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[3] Susan Stryker, Transgender history (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2008), 23.
[4] Lizzy Kaval, '"Open, and always, opening": trans-poetics as a methodology for (re)articulating gender, the body, and the self "beyond language"' (master's thesis, City University of New York, 2016), 12.
[5] T. Benjamin Singer, 'Keywords: umbrella,' Transgender studies quarterly 1 (2014): 259. http://doi.org/10.1215/23289252-2400199.
[6] Kaval, 'Open, and always, opening,' 12.
[7] Ludwig Wittgenstein, quoted in Bede Rundell, Wittgenstein and the contemporary philosophy of language (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 72.

who is cisgender is one who identifies with the gender assigned to them at birth. Transgender thus becomes a resource of unification, above a singular signifier. This broad reading of transgender has been supported by Lizzie Kaval, who has said that the term is helpful as a 'tool for organizing a broad coalition of non-normative gender identities and expressions' against binary cisnormativity.[8] Stryker, has identified transgender as 'the widest imaginable range of gender-variant practices and identities,' and here, I follow her usage of the term.[9]

Gender expression is the outward manifestation of one's gender identity; how they dress, how they select outfits or wear items such as binders, cinchers, packers, wigs and makeup to enable them to present themselves in a way congruent with their gender identity. Freedom of gender expression depends on the individual's situation, their safety, cultural and social acceptance or lack thereof, their access to clothing, their financial and work situations, their family and friends and so on. To successfully pass in one's gender expression is dependent on class, and as Bettcher notes, assuming this is correct, legibility is more likely 'as class status decreases' while 'negative consequences of visibility will increase.'[10] While some people feel that their gender identity is fully realized in their own choice of traditional cisgender expression, others, either by choice, safety, comfort, an aversion to navigate others' social expectations, or general indifference, may continue to don the gender expression of their assigned at birth gender.

Gender affirmation surgeries are often desirable, but in Aotearoa New Zealand, the high costs of the surgery and the lack of sufficient government funding make it a prohibitive option. Gender affirmation surgeries include 'top' surgery, a double mastectomy in transmasculine people or breast implants in transfeminine people, and 'bottom'

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[8] Kaval, 'Open, and always, opening,' 12.
[9] Stryker, Transgender history, 19.
[10] Talia Mae Bettcher, 'Evil deceivers and make-believers: on transphobic violence and the politics of illusion,' Hypatia 22, no. 3 (2007): 52.

surgery, a series of operations to construct a penis in transmasculine people or a vagina in transfeminine people. Many New Zealand residents resort to overseas travel to access cheaper surgeries in countries such as Thailand, choosing to self-fund the surgery rather than accept the lack of availability of government funded surgery.[11] Hormone therapy for transgender individuals is non-invasive, and is achieved with oral pills, intramuscular injections or dermal patches, and changes secondary sex characteristics. Access to hormones in New Zealand relies on an informed consent model to discern the suitability of the individual. As with surgeries, the reasons many individuals may elect to have or not use hormones are myriad, varied and complex, and cannot be reduced to the salutary results alone. The effects of these various decisions of medical care are what Stryker terms the 'body morphology' of 'gender signifying features.'[12]

The term transsexual is less commonly used, as it does not fully encompass the variety of identities of people included in the term transgender, and the ways people may elect to, or refrain from, modifying their bodies.[13] It also reduces individuals' own self-determined identities to medicalisation and whether or not they have accessed surgeries, and so does not allow for the intricacies of financial, socio-economic, social and cultural obstacles. Current clinical best practice considers the term transsexual as unhelpful and outdated for these reasons, and prefers the term transgender as it accommodates a 'holistic perspective on gender.'[14]

The definitions individuals may identify with are adulterated by the taxonomies of the medical discourses surrounding transgender treatment. To define oneself with

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[11] 'The realities of gender reassignment surgery in New Zealand,' Express magazine online, last modified July 2016, http://gayexpress.co.nz/2016/07/realities-gender-reassignment-surgery-new-zealand.
[12] Stryker, Transgender history, 10.
[13] Although she is not a transgender artist, Hye Rim Lee's computer-generated animation moving image works such as crystal beauty: electro doll (2008) and BOOM BOOM: super heroine super beauty (2005) can be read as relating to the transgender transformation of a body through surgical practices, as the character TOKI has her breasts, clitoris and vagina created and continually augmented throughout the works.
[14] Byron Burlingame, 'Terminology for the transgender community,' Aorn Journal 101, iss. 2 (2015): 282.

commonly utilized terminology for one's gender identity, it may be necessary to operate within the definitions that are set out by the healthcare industry, particularly if one desires access to medical treatment to transition. Marjorie Garber notes that an exception to this linguistic vulnerability are cross-dressers, who 'often resist such diagnostic taxonomies for political reasons.'[15] One may argue however, that cross-dressers have this ability, as they have less of a dependence on medical treatment than the transgender individual wishing to modify their body. Within Aotearoa, the rigidly enforced definitions for a diagnosis of gender identity disorder — a common diagnosis to access treatment — are quite narrow, and regardless of whether an individual finds them appropriate or applicable to themselves, individuals may articulate their identity within these diagnostic boundaries and terminologies in order to gain treatment. Talia Mae Bettcher has noted that in a similar way, trans people can 'find ourselves involuntarily animating' stereotypes 'in how [we] behave, speak, and interact,' showing that identity for transgender people is often formulated in response to existing frameworks.[16] Either consciously or unconsciously, transgender people may subscribe to accepted medical narratives as a way to validate and frame their personal experience and sense of self.[17]

The relationship that transgender and queer people have with their voice is quite specific; the pitch, cadence, and tone of one's voice is an aspect of the body which is particularly difficult to perform and therefore has the potential to unwillingly give away one's assigned at birth gender. Appearance, posture, mannerisms, can all be contrived and learned; one may endeavour to pass, only to have one sentence uttered which give them away entirely. Transwomen often have low voices which are difficult to disguise except by vocal training or surgery, and transmen often have higher pitched voices, even after undertaking testosterone therapy. As such, it is an area that many

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[15] Marjorie Gaber, Vested interests: cross-dressing and cultural anxiety (Oxford: Taylor & Francis Group, 1991), 3.
[16] Bettcher, 'Evil deceivers and make-believers,' 50.
[17] Jay Prosser, Second skins: the body narratives of transsexuality (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 104.

non-cisgender individuals find difficult to negotiate. As an area prone to prompt gender dysphoria, the voice can be a site of continuous critical self-consciousness. It is no surprise then that moving image works that feature the voice have a particular relationship with gender in a specially nuanced way.

Aliyah Winter's two moving image works, Eli Jenkins' Prayer (2016) and Danny Boy (2016) show single long shots of her, with close-ups of her face daubed in other-worldly makeup. Her mouth moves and she appears to sing, though she is actually lip syncing to diegetic recordings. In Eli Jenkins' Prayer, Aliyah's face is covered in pieces of gold leaf, and she wears a black hat with a silver buckle — the dark background makes the silver buckle stand out like a small halo above her head, and the shining gold coating her face render her angelic. In Danny Boy, she wears thick white face paint, and her hair is pulled back tightly from her face. Affixed over the white paint to her forehead are five white artificial roses, while a red rose sits high on each cheekbone. The white flowers blend in with the pallor of her face, while the red roses stand out like circular rouge marks. The flowers allude to comparisons between white flowers and fair complexions, and a healthy glow of cheeks to a red rose often used in traditional sonnets.[18] In both works, facial adornment takes on a symbolic weight, as with more abstracted forms of drag, rather than any semblance of contemporary mainstream New Zealand beauty standards.

A male soprano sings gently in the backgrounds of Aliyah's works. The voice is in fact Aliyah's late grandfather, Ieuan. Aliyah accompanies him in giving physical form to his words, and while her facial expression remains detached and mask-like, she tilts her head and moves her mouth to give the appearance of singing alongside, or instead of, him. In this way, she becomes a channel for him. The recordings of his voice exist as in an archival state, a standing glimpse in time of the singer, who has since passed away.

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[18] See poems such as Edmund Spencer's 'Fair is my love'; William Shakespeare's 'Sonnet 130'; and Philip Syndey's 'Astrophel and Stella: 91.'

Lip syncing along with her grandfather, Aliyah communicates with him and brings his music back into the present, through several layers of mediation; the vinyl record, the digital recording, the speaker at the time of the video recording, then redigitised again as the audio of the moving image work. It works an atemporal magic which reaches beyond the stopping power of death for granddaughter and grandfather to participate in a familial performance. Aliyah's transfeminine body accompanies her grandfather's cisgender voice, so that the viewer is unable to discern the gender of either singer or performer.[19] This act of lip syncing has the power of 'transforming [his singing] somehow, without [Aliyah] fully knowing the outcome of the performance.'[20]

While lip syncing is often condemned in mainstream music, the mode of performance has a particular history with transfeminine, drag, and cross-dressing artists as a celebrated form which resists clear reading of gender. Lip syncing enables a queer performer to circumvent their own voice and the gendered connotations that their own pitch encompasses, and instead embody the voice of someone else, usually a pop star, and access the aura and glamour of the singer. Furthermore, Eric Shorey has argued that, historically, lip syncing has enabled gay men and the drag community the freedom to openly express passion, love, and the difficulties of relationships that they experienced with men with a certain amount of social sanctioning, as they were lip syncing the words of a cis woman.[21] Lip syncing has recently been revived in heteronormative public consciousness, particularly through the reality television series Rupaul's drag race, in which the two losing contestants must lip-sync for a chance to stay in the series. The art form is used to display their passion, ability to perform, and creativity in order to earn Rupaul's favour.

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[19] A comparative work would be Juliet Carpenter's work Luma Turf (2013), in which a script is read by an unseen performer while the moving image plays various slow track shots of the inside of a lighting showroom. The script is heavily feminine in nature, as the reader toys with the memories of Swarovski crystals and her lover, yet the audio is read by a deep-toned male voice actor, which convolutes cis- and hetero-normative readings of the work.

[20] Aliyah Winter in discussion with the author, March 2018.

[21] Eric Shorley, 'Read our lips: On the power of and meaning behind lip syncing,' Nylon, last modified December 5, 2017, http://nylon.com/articles/semiotics-lip-syncing-drag-queens.

Sasha Velour, who won the ninth season of Rupaul's drag race, has widely discussed drag culture and lip syncing in her public role, stating that it has long held its place as a politically motivated art form. She sees that the practice is 'about creating space and creating validity for people who want to express gender differently and by their own rules,'[22] Within visual artistic practices, lip synching finds its footing also; artist Wu Tsang has used lip syncing in the moving image work Full body quotation (2011) to bring to life again audio excerpts from the film Paris is burning, a widely celebrated glimpse of gay ball culture in New York. Bruce Nauman, in Lip Sync (1969), has also used this art form to bring attention to the adulterating effect of replication and repetition. The transformative potential of lip syncing to be a form of representational mimicry and pantomime is pulled to an extreme in Aliyah Winter's works, where the art form becomes a kind of mystical divining and other-worldly connection to a family member, leaving corporeal reality behind.

Jordana Bragg's artistic practice occupies multiple platforms, yet their use of language is figured as the central component to their work.[23] Their work includes photography, performance, digital-based works, and moving image works. Their art meets their audience in many contexts, as much of their work is accessible online as well as shown in art galleries and other physical spaces. As their body is the key feature through Jordana's practice, they are focused on the creation of themselves as a brand; that is, visually consistent, instantly identifiable, encompassing their values, and occupying space as an extension of their practice. Jordana shows a level of dedication to the brand of themselves as an artist, and this extends from digital modalities, to their performance of self at art exhibition openings. Much of their practice is moving image art, which, as digitally based, edited, and accessible online, is highly suited to the

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[22] Jeremy Hobson, 'Sasha Velour on why drag is a 'political and historical art form,' Wbur, last modified July 24, 2017, http://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2017/07/24/sasha-velour.
[23] Throughout my thesis I refer to both Jordana Bragg and Tāwhanga Nōpera by the singular and gender-neutral use of the pronoun 'they/them,' out of respect for their preferences.

proliferation and sharing of social media, as well as the common usage of our hand-held digital devices; namely, to view videos. While video art here shares their body, as in performance art, it lacks the immediacy, as it is heavily mediated, edited and controlled. In this way, moving image art raises questions of performativity, where they use it as 'accessible... as a sort of weapon of reconstruction.'[24] Jordana's video work oscillates around several points of inclusion; the presence of their body, actions they enact onto their self, and the theory it engages with, combining physical and virtual spaces. Previously their practice was based more on confrontational aspects of bodily limitations; now it is more concerned with emotional existence and contemplation; equally confrontational, but perhaps more navel-gazing, and theoretical.

Control of vocal affect is also a choice that Jordana Bragg has personally made within their artistic practice. They have spoken in an interview about their conscious curation of a particular brand of self as an artist persona. This extends through all their work, as they have articulated, and covers every aspect of their practice: from how Jordana 'speak[s] about my work and the way I present myself at openings.'[25] Because Jordana's body is central to their artworks, when they are physically present, there is a sense of them activating space as an art work and a commodity or a brand, as well as them as an individual. These extend into 'heavily curated ideas that [they] circulate within [their] practice' and in being a key player within the discussion of their art work, in embodying their artistic practice, they are able to mediate a large degree of discussion around their artwork. This enables Jordana to disclaim 'politically what the purpose is through artist talks and writer talks.'[26] This idea of the artist is one of the artistic genius, the myth of the artist, and the untouchability of one's practice. By elevating themself, and divorcing themselves from reality in such a way, they are able

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[24] Ellie Lee-Duncan, 'The edited self: an interview with Jordana Bragg,' The pantograph punch, last modified November 20, 2017, http://pantograph-punch.com/post/interview-jordana-bragg.
[25] Lee-Duncan, 'The edited self.'
[26] Ibid.

to exemplify their art work in any situation. However, they have said 'the body in my work is the myth, but not Jordana Bragg walking down the street.'[27] They identify as non-binary, but believe that this puts them in a position of 'linguistic vulnerability,' as no term can fully encompass the complexity of any individual.[28]

As a constructed persona, Jordana Bragg has no interest in 'the idea of authenticity or being genuine' but within this position, acknowledge that this does not mean that their persona or performance is necessarily false; it is a construction of many constructions, an iteration amongst a culture of recreating ourselves endlessly.[29] Control of affect is a way of disconnecting a sense of authenticity, and the expectations of truthfulness, from art. Being genuine and open emotionally has little bearing for body-based performance and moving image artists such as Jordana Bragg and Aliyah Winter. With trans identity, authenticity as a category becomes problematized. As in Bettcher's theory of the basic denial of authenticity, transgender identities as self-realized are often denied, with denial as genital-centric and focusing on the individual as 'really' their birth-assigned sex.[30] Appearance in Bettcher's theory, is seen by cisgender individuals as transforming trans individuals as 'deceivers or pretenders' and demarcates them as 'morally suspect,' further arguing that these seemingly inconsequential dismissive judgements of identity find their extreme in the justification of transphobic violence.[31] Bettcher's theory complexifies what constitutes authenticity and reality to show that an individual's perception of self may not extend to others around them, and shows that gender liminal individuals are scrutinized with suspicion for signifiers of 'truth' and the 'concealed reality' of their genitalia by others, others who seek to define authenticity independently of the transgender person's sense of self.[32]

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[27] Lee-Duncan, 'The edited self.'
[28] Ibid.
[29] Lee-Duncan, 'The edited self.'
[30] Bettcher, 'Evil deceivers and make-believers,' 51.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Bettcher, 'Evil deceivers and make-believers,' 60.

Within their artworks, both Aliyah Winter and Jordana Bragg show a tight control of emotional affect, particularly in vocalisation, to prevent the viewer from reading their works with a strong emotional lens, and as a way of reserving themselves from their artwork. Aliyah Winter exhibits severe restraint of facial expression in lip-synching works such as Danny Boy and Eli Jenkins Prayer, as well as more noticeably in their work with Nathaniel Gordon-Stables I have come and joined my love with yours (2017), as does Jordana Bragg in the majority of their works, most notably in their older works such as their How to water the roses series (2015) and Happier than we have been (2015). This is not to exclude emotional vulnerability, but Jordana disregards it as a primary method of reading in their work. It is a way of acknowledging that such displays of emotion are gendered; if one were to exhibit such emotion, one is therefore gendered. It also acknowledges the performative nature of displays of emotion, the self-consciousness with which one articulates emotional reality through gestures, facial expression, and cadence.

Vocally, both Jordana Bragg and Aliyah Winter show a removal of emotional disclosure in their speech patterns; their intonation is kept minimal, marked by a droning monotone, and with words and sentence structures evenly stressed and with even breaks between words. This can be seen in Aliyah Winter's audio and participation work Pantomime dames (2017) and her collaboration with Nathaniel Gordon Stables, I have come and joined my love with yours. In Jordana Bragg's work, this appears as a primary technique in Wherever our river ran (I ran to, I ran too) (2016), Effortless (2017), We need each other, we need each other (you know we do) (2017) and Steel and sting (2017). And again (2018) differs with a gentle sing-song rhythm and repetition, creating a sense of a children's song or nursery rhyme, while Super sin inaction (2018) their voice is the closest to normal spoken language, inflected with emotional resonance. While the language used within these works is at times emotional, personal, and heavily charged, there exists is a sense of disconnect between what is being spoken and the delivery of the words. This creates a dissociative effect between personhood

and body, wherein the body becomes a husk for the delivery of sentences, yet is charged with none of the visible emotional effects of such words. This sense of disconnect between mind and body becomes comparable to the sense of disconnect between the transgender individual and their own body; or, another possibility is that it could be a stylistic decision to keep the viewer at a distance.

Jordana Bragg's moving image practice is particularly text heavy, as is one work by Aliyah Winter, did you spit in his face or ease the burden? (2017). Several themes emerge through both of their works, such as seduction and manipulation. Aliyah Winter's work is almost silent, and phrases appear pasted over images of Aliyah going about daily tasks within her room. In this way, they intrude on the image, breaching the frame in no particular order, and in no apparent composition. The words are layered onto the image space that Aliyah inhabits, they directly invade her physical realm, as it seems they inhabit her mind. Each sentence is fragmented in the manner of informal instant message correspondence, and the words included are direct screenshots from conversations, adding a sense of being exposed to an emotionally authentic reality of Aliyah, as well as a ghostly digital presence of the writer.

Jordana Bragg's works include language at every turn; it is rare for their recent works to lack a layer of textuality. Instead, Bragg incorporates words as poetry and prose, occasionally as visual text, yet most often as non-diegetic spoken audio. Their language use often denies clear articulation in favour of poetry, word play, illegibility, and multivalent meanings. While like Aliyah's work, they consider personal experience, they more regularly shift into musing theories, internal monologues and free-form streams of consciousness which become shapeless in their vastness.

Both Aliyah Winter and Jordana Bragg consider how attraction is so often merged with power, where vulnerability opens one up to manipulation or pain. Jordana's how to water the roses series encompasses moving image artworks which are highly staged,

with flat coloured backdrops and close-ups of Jordana's face. Each considers the ideas of femininity, pain, and love in kitsch colours. The pastel pink, blue and yellow palette encourages a reductive reading, or dismissal of the works as lighthearted and aesthetically pleasing, while Jordana's digitally airbrushed face, framed by overt eyeliner and scarlett lipstick stands in as an extreme of feminine seduction. In how to water the roses (3) (2015), Jordana is robed in white and pale blue as the Virgin Mary, and reclines on a deep red bedspread. Text adapted from Jean Baudrillard's book Seduction reads underneath in white font, parallel to their white robed body. Sentences appear as fragmentary; 'you seduce with your vulnerability.' This is echoed in how to water the roses (1) (2015), where sickness is considered as 'a becoming frailty, an appealing vulnerability.' Expanding on this, another sentence in the work reads 'sadness makes one interesting.' Attraction here is considered as an accompaniment to sickness, sadness, and frailty. It finds a maturation in works such as we need each other, we need each other, (you know we do) where vulnerability and emotional openness is part of close relationships: Jordana repeats three times, like an incantation: 'for you I ask my fears to come to the front, and here I meet myself.'

Emotional distance, the end of relationships, and manipulation are more directly addressed through explicit declarations. In the work Disaster series, Jordana says conversationally, with more than a hint of frustration at their place in their partner's life, 'fine, love is a pastime, I am a distraction tactic, I am coincidence.' Aliyah Winter's direct quotations from an ex-partner in did you spit in his face or ease the burden? are by turns gentle and self-deprecating, revealing a pattern of emotional manipulation; 'I may never forgive you xx'; 'I opened up with you as I trusted you'; 'Please don't lie that you love and care about me'; 'I truly hope you're doing okay.' It reaches a height in the screenshot 'words don't normally make me want to kms', where suicidal thoughts, blamed on the receiver, are reduced and dismissed to a three letter abbreviation of 'kill myself.' The lack of capitalisation of this abbreviation, as with the title of the work did you spit on his face or ease the burden?, lends to both the informality of messaging,

and gives a self-dismissive air, as if both the writer of the statement, and the artist want to make the matter inconsequential and are afraid of the reality of the depths of emotional impact of the situation. The emotionally laden and sensitive topics flitter between short sentences and the repetition of 'you' and 'I.' The staccato directness of text in Aliyah Winter's work evidences an almost desperate urge to communicate the complexity of felt emotions.

'Trauma implies a specific devastating event … the implication of lowered value', Jordana states in how to water the roses (1). Trauma here is envisaged as an occurrence which results in the sense of some aspect of value lost. In partner abuse, there is often the sense of the victim being of blame, at fault, and of having a sense of removed or lost wholeness and value. Regardless of it not being the victim's fault, the sense of loss is tangible and painful, lasting as a wound as much as the memory of the trauma. This psychological experience of loss in relation to sexual abuse has been envisaged as four distinct types of loss felt by survivors: Loss of self; loss in interpersonal areas; loss of childhood happiness; and loss of meaning in life.[33] These aspects of loss are played out in Winter and Bragg's works, often as physical disconnection from the camera and surrounding environment, and a disintegration of wholeness of self. In did you spit in his face or ease the burden?, emotional manipulation is envisaged as a high-needs relationship of the lover wanting emotional and physical labour from Aliyah, with needy texts such as 'can barely move' alternating with emotional attacks such as 'why do you expect me to ever want you around?.' An abusive pattern emerges within the screenshots, and evidences itself in possessive and controlling behaviour, and threats of suicide.[34]

Wherever our river ran I ran to, (I ran too) is a poetic exploration of a specific, unnamed

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[33] Meera Murthi and Dorothy L. Espelage, 'Childhood sexual abuse, social support, and psychological outcomes: a loss framework,' Child abuse and neglect: the international journal 29 (2005): 1216.
[34] Orin Strauchler, 'Humiliation, manipulation, and control,' Journal of family violence 19, no. 6 (2004): 339.

traumatic event. Closeups of Jordana's pained and panting face outdoors, the family house with one window left open, and phrases such as 'here where men's hands have been' make it difficult not to read the work as an autobiographical account of unwanted physical contact, or worse, sexual abuse. Aliyah's work did you spit in his face or ease the burden? records her walking through her room and meticulously setting it back in order. In one scene, she rehangs a pelmet above a curtain; in another, she plucks out dead leaves from an indoor plant. This does not prevent the continuous circulation of cruel words that intersect with her space, but it distances her from them as she reclaims her room as her own. A sense of painful dissonance occurs when any kind of abuse happens within a relationship, as the individual must cope with the discrepancy between the positive and caring elements of the relationship, and the reality of the partner as emotionally unsafe and abusive. Similarly, Jordana's Wherever our river ran I ran to, (I ran too), shows a longing in Jordana to return to a period of her life pre-trauma, as they reminisce about the need to return to 'years ago when we left responsibility at the tops of every tree, buried our regrets at the roots.' Here childhood is placed here within the physical proximity of adventure and freedom from boundaries of where one can exist outside of policing of how and where to use one's body within space. Bodily actions here become an 'abstraction of violence,' like transmasculine artist Heather Cassils' performance work Becoming an image (2012).[35] Sanderson, discussing sexual abuse within relationships, states that in 'the absence of being able to validate the trauma it becomes difficult to generate meaning, or make sense of experiences.'[36] The glimpses of sensory experiences then, in Jordana's work, such as particular memories of gravel hitting palms, falling over, and vomiting become a kind of mosaic of scattered experiences, seeking to reorder scattered felt emotions into a semblance of cohesion.

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[35] Eliza Steinbock, 'Disfiguration: on violence and negativity in queer art,' in Pink labour on golden streets: queer art practices, eds. Christiane Erharter, Dietmar Schwärzler, Ruby Sircar, and Hans Scheirl (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2015), 141.
[36] Christiane Sanderson, Counselling skills for working with trauma: healing from child sexual abuse, sexual violence and domestic abuse (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2014), 20.

One theme that Jordana addresses through their work is that of the wounded woman. In how to water the roses (1) they directly quote from Leslie Jamison's Grand unified theory of female pain. Here, they examine the trope of the wounded woman, and regardless of emotional performance being seen as a cliché, they argue for the validity and authenticity of emotion as felt, even when sentimental expression borders on performance. The idea here is that emotion will always be subject to self-conscious performance and excess, but that that does not remove or negate the reality of the felt emotion. This draws upon the ideas of emotionality and self-surveillance that John Berger puts forth, stating that the woman will always be watching and monitoring her performance of emotion, regardless of where she is.[37] In this way, one acts as one's own police while expressing vulnerability. Through the inclusion of text, Jordana explores the cliché of the idealized wounded woman. In how to water the roses (1) they quote, 'the wounded woman is a kind of goddess / her illness is romanticized her suffering is idealized / but that doesn't mean she doesn't happen.' In discussing the inability of women to express themselves freely outside of the constraints of etiquette, Jordana outlines the tacit regulations for how to act within societal standards; 'don't cry too loud … don't ask for pain medication you don't need.' In Effortless, Jordana again discusses the state of woundedness, as one left by a lover: 'the absolute violence of abandonment.' Their phrasing of it as an 'absolute violence' to lose a friend in a crowd emphasizes their experience of overwhelming pain and disorientation.

On the other hand, Jordana also frequently returns to articulating a self-consciousness around the problems of discussing pain, and the difficulty of wanting to discuss emotional vulnerability without seeming ineffectual or becoming stereotypical. In Effortless, they expand a theory of 'hot distance' as the discomfort and longing of missing a lover when alone. In how to water the roses (1) they seek to validate their emotionality by stressing the logical, empirical side of themselves, assuring us they are 'not a melodramatic person' . In this work they argue their case: 'the possibility of

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[37] John Berger, Ways of seeing (London: Penguin, 2008), 54.

fetishizing pain / is no reason to stop representing it.' Continuing, Jordana states that wounded women 'are aware that woundedness is overdone and overrated' and that 'post-wounded women makes jokes about being wounded / or get impatient with women who hurt too much.' This astute observation examines the ways in which there is a certain level of embarrassment, of distancing and dismissal of painful emotions out of a desire to not be seen as weak, helpless or incapable. Self-aware, they examine angst and ache as 'conducive to dismissal … sourceless, self-indulgent and affected.' In Super sin inaction (2018), Jordana explores this further; expressing the negative connotations of being emotionally open. They use wordplay and repetition, as they unpick the problem in explanatory sentences; 'It is an undoing to be so undone'; 'it is distasteful to be so dissatisfied.' This theme becomes passionate and defensive in Disaster series (2018): 'don't ever pin your mercy on me.' Throughout each of these works, Jordana fluently addresses the difficulties of exploring vulnerability and woundedness in their own terms, and desiring that this self-examination could be exempt from being seen as overdone, self-indulgent, or as dependent.

The use of language in Jordana's moving image works is poignant, with poetic descriptions to 'locate' bodies and emotions. Bodies here lack corporeal descriptions for their own sake, but are considered as the locus from which feelings and thoughts emanate. Rather than sensory experiences of embodiment described for their own sake, sensory experiences are considered as inextricably joined to negotiating relationships. In Effortless, the body is centred as a locational site of physical joining, in which the body is a spatial nexus of emotional contact: the lover that one 'had been beneath, under the skin of before you were both born, whose bones turned to pollen beside you in the night.' Here, skin is figured poetically as a permeable space to inhabit, while the innermost solid structure of people, their bones, becomes as nebulous and fleeting as pollen. In We need each other, we need each other (you know we do) (2017), Jordana states, 'we speak in the same tongues we kiss with.' The lack of a conjunction such as 'that' or 'which' gives the sentence an informal poetic sense

of immediacy bordering on stream of consciousness, which continues through the whole work. The tongue as a sensual element in kissing here occupies the same sentence as its potential as a communicative tool. Likewise, the sentence in the same work, 'you are the space between where my eyes meet the air and the back of my skull,' holds the body in a space of symbolism, where the space of the head holds the space of thoughts, memory, and care. In each of these examples, the physical place of the body is not a space of fleshy viscerality, but instead becomes the topographical locus of affection, communication, thoughts, and emotionality. This extrication of the body from apparent physical corporeality to the symbolic location of emotions avoids addressing the body as a physiological space, particularly one which could equate to discomfort or dysphoria.

Emotions themselves make appearances as language that is multivalent, layered in metaphors, similes, and poetic contrasts. Jordana's how to water the roses (1) describes how 'the pain of women turns them into kittens / and rabbits and sunsets and sordid red satin goddesses,' echoing the threat of the 'venomous infertility' described in Effortless. Likewise, Steel and sting envisages love as 'green and sharp', 'like money' which infects the lover akin to 'a poison.' The pessimistic undertone and lack of trust in emotion continues in Disaster series, where Jordana says, 'we are to each other what a bright day is to waking up without hope.' They continue with their honesty; 'I hesitated for so long on how to behave my compassion ran dry, ran out of town by my inability to react.' Poetics here holds the sentences, which ricochet between 'I' and 'you', twisting in comparisons in attempts to describe emotions. Present emotions here are not named; the alteration of love is not defined except by a colour, green, money, and poison. Likewise, connection isn't named, except for as a comparison to the breaking of a sunny day to hopelessness. Similarly, in Juliet Carpenter's moving image work Luma Turf (2013), the speaker articulates their feelings in meandering prose which portrays a kind of disembodiment: 'I was indelible, inaudible, inedible… Wouldn't you like to take me apart?' The hesitancy to name

feelings gives a sense of the tangled difficulty of pinning an emotion to a definition, and instead turns to poetry to lend form to feeling.

By examining the practice of transpoetics, we can utilise it as a methodology to analyse the use of language included in various artworks by artists in Aotearoa. Transpoetics has emerged as a term to encompass a particular kind of poetry related to the transgender and genderqueer experience, concerning bodily dissonance, linguistic multifunctionality, and bending of systems of writing to create new meanings. Transpoetics refers to poetry by transgender individuals which use language in ways to deviate, counter, and wrangle freedom from boundaries such as physical space, language itself, fixed temporality and corporeal experiences. While language has long been used to dodge and disentangle the self from the constraints of the tangible and the bodily, as well as to stand in for the body, transpoetics has emerged recently as a defined practice. It includes modes of writing which consider the 'complex, unstable, contradictory relations between body and soul, social self and psyche.'[38] Defining transpoetics based on the gender of the writer then, lacks veracity and cannot be a conclusive indicator of the genre, as poetry by cisgender individuals which use language and grammar in this context may be included in this definition, just as not all poetry by transgender individuals fits within this category; it is more to do with how language is utilised by individuals, with an extensive body of work outlining a particular poetic aesthetic written by transgender individuals.

Troubling the line: trans and genderqueer poetry and poetics, compiled in 2013 and edited by T.C. Tolbert and Trace Peterson, was the first extensive arrangement of transpoetry, and drew upon 55 authors, with a total of over 150 poems.[39] As well as bringing together a selection of what transpoetics can look like, the compilation itself

[38] Joy Ladin, 'Trans poetics manifesto,' in Troubling the line: trans and genderqueer poetry and poetics, eds. T.C. Tolbert and Trace Peterson (New York: Nightboat Books, 2013), 306.
[39] T.C. Tolbert prefers to be referred to their initials, as with many transgender individuals who elect to avoid using their birth name.

also raised the visibility of the individual poets, as included poetry was accompanied by a photograph of the poet and a statement from them about their work. By doing so this seminal volume which contributed greatly to the definition of transpoetics, also literally made visible the range of writers, and the range of genders represented. This inclusion of the visual placed literary and visual expression side by side, and as Peterson said, highlighted the 'relationship between how trans poets look and how they look (at the world, at language), between how they read and how they want to be read (or be unreadable).'[40]

Joy Ladin has defined poetics as 'the building blocks of making poetic experience', and develops this in the context of transpoetics as functioning by 'layering, overlapping and creating collisions' between systems that operate semantically and linguistically.[41] Transpoetics then, 'refers to diverse and interpretative and compositional strategies attentive to relational movements between / across / within linguistic, embodied, affective, and political domains.'[42] Through harnessing 'figurative language and experimentations with form', Kaval sees that poetry can at once transcend the structures of 'gender, sexuality, race, class, nationality, ability' and language, though it is simultaneously inextricably located within these very structures.[43]

Trish Salah sees the escape from boundaries as key to the movement, the freedom of 'narrative return [and] temporal sequence' which is comprised of displacements within

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[40] Trace Peterson, 'Introduction,' in Troubling the line: trans and genderqueer poetry and poetics, eds. T.C. Tolbert and Trace Peterson (New York: Nightboat Books, 2013), 20.
Stephen Burt's review of Troubling the line notes that here, reading has a multilayered meaning, as not just reading in the literal sense, but also as slang for 'to be identified, especially by a stranger, as trans.' Stephen Burt, 'The body of the poem: on transgender poetry,' Los Angeles review of books, last modified November 17, 2013, http://lareviewofbooks.org/article/the-body-of-the-poem-on-transgender-poetry.
[41] Laura Markowitz, 'The emerging language of transpoetics,' Arizona public media, last modified June 13, 2015,
http://radio.azpm.org/p/radio-azspot-splash/2013/6/15/24851-the-emerging-language-of-transpoetics.
[42] Rebekah Edwards, 'Trans-poetics,' Transgender studies quarterly 1, iss. 1-2 (2014): 253, https://doi.org/10.1215/23289252-2400109.
[43] Kaval, 'Open, and always, opening,' 18.

form and language.[44] Lizzy Kaval discusses that in its ability to create articulation out of intangible thoughts and emotions, poetry can create definition that is 'concentrated yet non-restrictive' in creating new spaces for inclusion and ideologies.[45] Another central tenet of the composition of transpoetics is destabilising language through employing coded, slang and multivalent language, and by reappropriating language from lived experiences, often as used by others as forms of erasure or abuse toward the writer.[46]

Transpoetics becomes especially important as a way to navigate creative expression when one's physical body is a problematic site. Tolbert, transgender poet and compiler of Troubling the line, has stated that transpoetics enables a creation of a world with freedom of expression that he 'didn't know how to inhabit with [his] body,' arguing that one's 'physical body is not as malleable as the textual body.'[47] Again, Kaval argues that poetry 'becomes a necessity when figuration and self-expression cannot be found in the literal world.'[48] Similarly, the body as reconstructed within visual art allows an artist the same experience of escape and control over self-representation. As a way of putting words to the self, Trish Salah conceives of transpoetics as 'the articulation of identity as repetition with a difference.'[49] Poetry draws on emotions, termed by Audre Lorde as 'those hidden sources of power from where true knowledge and, therefore, lasting action comes.'[50] Here, this feeling of fracture or fissure, 'arises in the course of confronting the actions and needs of a body that differs from the subject's primary "ipseity" or sense of self.'[51] Likewise, Peterson argues that trans poetry may avoid the body entirely, and with it, avoid 'directly presenting a narrative about being trans.'[52]

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[44] Matthew Hall and Trish Salah, 'Genderqueer and transpoetics: an interview with Trish Salah,' Cordite poetry review, last modified August 1, 2012, http://cordite.org.au/interviews/hall-salah.
[45] Kaval, 'Open, and always, opening,' 1.
[46] Oliver Moore, 'The importance of a forward looking trans-poetics,' Philament 23 (2017): 34.
[47] Markowitz, 'The emerging language of transpoetics.'
[48] Kaval, 'Open, and always, opening,' 1.
[49] Hall and Salah, 'Genderqueer and transpoetics.'
[50] Audre Lorde, quoted in Kathleen Weiler, 'Friere and a feminist pedagogy of difference,' in The poetics of liberation: paths from Friere, eds. Colin Lankshear and Peter McLaren (New York: Routledge, 2004), 28.
[51] Moore, 'The importance of a forward looking trans-poetics,' 37.
[52] Trace Peterson, 'Becoming a trans poet,' Transgender studies quarterly 1, iss. 4 (2014): 523.

Within transpoetics, there is a tension between self-expression as necessarily separate from the body, and as an alternative means of articulation of the self, and the ability of words to divide self from body, dividing psyche from skin.

When transpoetics does concern itself with the body, it may do so on a more in depth level, around specificities of anatomy, specific areas of skin and flesh or internal functionings. It may centre on areas deemed to be comfortable for the writer, and either avoid, or place particular emphasis on areas which invoke stronger gender dysphoria. Lizzy Kaval notes that transpoetics pays particular attention to the corporeal workings of the body itself; the internal 'the psyche, the organs, the endocrine system' as well as the external, skin, form, 'the surface, self-presentation.'[53] In this way, Kaval draws upon Salamon's imagining of the trans body which emphasizes 'the importance of how one feels in and senses with and inhabits one's body.'[54] Australian scholar Nikki Sullivan writes of transgender individuals in bodily expression, that we must 'rethink ways that bodies are entwined in (un)becoming rather than presuming that they are simply mired in being unless they undergo explicit, visible and transformational procedures.'[55] The transgender body can be surgically, hormonally, physically altered or not, it is the sense of the individual's presence in it that counts. Thus, both body and psyche are united again in poetic form, in pairing the extrinsic with the sense of self-awareness that the writer has. Salamon continues, that for trans individuals, while the body is a centre for subjectivity, the trans understanding of gender is envisaged internally, and this inward sense grounds oneself in the body, while consequently rejecting the definition of sex that the 'external contours' of the body may give.[56]

When read aloud, as in the works of Jordana Bragg, poetry reintegrates body and mind, inserting back into the poem the physicality, the particulars of a moment in

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[53] Kaval, 'Open, and always, opening,' 22.
[54] Gale Salamon, quoted in Kaval, 'Open, and always, opening,' 22.
[55] T. Garner, 'Becoming' in 'Keywords: becoming,' Transgender studies quarterly 1, iss. 1-2 (2014): 30.
[56] Salamon, Assuming a body, 62.

space and time, that poetry, in its formal capacities, 'attempts to escape.'[57] Here, the body becomes text, and the word becomes flesh. As Frances Richard notes, 'the conceit that the poem is flesh made word has circulated at least since Whitman cried "Camerado! This is no book;/ who touches this, touches a man."'"[58] Monica/Nico Peck in 'Real poetry transifesto' beautifully phrases it, where 'language actually is the connective tissue between consciousness & material realms. It transits from the most mundane to the most ineffable.'[59] Again, Gayle Salamon writes that 'the body is not an envelope for the psyche, and the skin is not an envelope for the body: both body and psyche are characterised by their lability rather than their ability to contain.'[60]

By working outside of socially imposed systems within time and space, including systems of binary genders, poetry can exist at liberty. Lizzy Kaval considers the ability of poetry to 'free language', operating outside of fixed temporalities which allows the rejection of socially imposed boundaries such as binaries, so instead poets may live 'between multiple realities.'[61] However, Salah has raised the problematics of the subject matter of transpoetics, stating that if trans writing is always conceived of as 'deconstructing binaries' then it continues to exist for the purpose of those who still live within a cisnormative, binarised gender system; that it continues to exist for the purpose of cisgender readers.[62] Salah has considered that if poetry finds ground outside of the rigid boundaries of the gender binary and enables readers to view trans individuals as just people, then it opens up possibilities of thinking about how the language itself, and the use of literature is used to bring about social justice, that we then consider 'how it can function to reimagine the social, articulate experiences of living lives that are marginalised or erased, contending with criminalization, or lack of

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[57] Stephen Burt, 'The body of the poem: on transgender poetry,' Los Angeles review of books, last modified November 17, 2013,
http://lareviewofbooks.org/article/the-body-of-the-poem-on-transgender-poetry.
[58] Frances Richard, 'Multitudes,' Poetry (2014): 169.
[59] Monica/Nico Peck quoted in Frances Richard, 'Multitudes,' 169.
[60] Salamon, Assuming a body, 28.
[61] Kaval, 'Open, and always, opening,' 4.
[62] Hall and Salah, 'Genderqueer and trans poetics.'

healthcare.'[63] In his interview with her, Matthew Hall agreed, saying it is here more useful to think of gender operating for the poets as a set of practices which 'constellates a series of power relations.'[64]

Jordana Bragg's work Wherever our river ran (I ran to, I ran too) marks the first of their more recent works, concerned with intimate, personal experience.[65] It exemplifies an abrupt shift in style from their previous pastel coloured works, and shows them centred in a garden. Different edited cuts pull together scenes of a house, with a single window ajar, close ups of dirt, and finally, and central, Jordana themself, standing at a pile of freshly dug earth. Strenuous, they stretch downwards toward the dirt, grasping it loosely in their hands. They hold breezeblocks within their denim jacket, like weights on their chest, and drop them with a dull sound into the earth throughout the work. Their hair is wet, and they seem wild eyed, gasping between cuts. The work itself is highly intimate, speaking of an inarticulable trauma, pain of loss, adolescence.

The script of this moving image work is spoken aloud over the sequence of images. Poetics meanders in this work in a highly schematized manner, with layers of readings and shifts in meaning between words. It centres around their memory of falling, running, and waiting, wanting to wash, waking up, and their bodily memory of a traumatic event. It is written haltingly, with pauses and shifts, turning back in on itself. It begins: 'I remember I fell from here to there, to the ground and from the ground, looking up. I remember having looked up and waiting, I waited and in waiting I remembered having fallen and running, I ran. I remember running and falling again.' With their consistent lack of inflection, their intonation is repetitive, dull, staccato-like and removes emotionality from their speech. It is difficult to distinguish within the

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[63] Hall and Salah, 'Genderqueer and trans poetics.'
[64] Ibid.
[65] Due to the highly personal nature of this artwork, I have endeavoured to keep my speculation about Jordana's personal experience minimal, and to tentatively work around interpretation by instead following the textual elements of the piece as closely as possible. The piece is particularly complex, and I would rather err on the side of caution in seeking to do justice to writing about the work.

repetition where sentence breaks occur (if indeed they occur) and where grammar is placed (my edits are provisional). This repetition happens multiple times, again such as 'I remember something thrown, throwing up' where the word takes on different meanings when posed differently. The whole narrative has these repetitive arcs of words and sentences, and eventually circles back to the beginning, with the end line 'Here where we run from to get to, running I ran, I remember running.'

This is interspersed with particular bodily memories, encoded in symbolic or cryptic language, on the border of sense. Particular somatic and rhythmic memories punctuate it; 'my palms against the gravel'; 'the lights off'; 'reaching out and across.' The discomfort of a painful physical trauma is envisaged with cleansing rituals, where they realise they could have washed with 'soap labeled "only good" but it wouldn't have made it so.' The reference to a named brand of soap becomes a sense of loss at being unable to regain a sense of self as good, or perhaps experience as good. Intimate areas are envisaged here as a place where hands are laid onto, and as the central location to the narrative occurrence, as simply 'here.' 'Here' becomes a place of being 'held up by', a location where 'men's hands have been', 'bleeding.' Following this, are the lines 'Here where women's hands are. We dig, we pull together, apart, we push away from and up against.' The digging and pulling carries meanings which are difficult to ascertain; it could stand in for self-discovery, yet also does not resist a reading of woman to woman based sexual experience.

II

The transgender body in art

In this section I examine the formal properties of transgender artists' images of self-representation. Here, I discuss moving image works in which the body of the artist is the subject. How does this fit into a wider rubric of how we acknowledge physical difference? How, and in which ways might the reading of visual cues and categories of binary gender based bodily reading be overrun by the fluid duration of transaesthetics? I seek to examine how artists circumvent viewers' visual-based analyses, delay them, or to render themselves intentionally ambiguous. What methods can artists use to reveal a body, while also denying the viewer signs of conclusive evidence to categorise it? Are these bodies allowing themselves to 'be read' or self-consciously manipulating our own in/abilities to read and recognise? I explore how the body has potential to be a communicative tool, and how this alters when the body is directly recorded by a camera.

Physical transitioning is understood as something many gender-diverse individuals see as vital to their sense of self, and as a medical requirement in order to alleviate dysphoria. For many others, their gender identity may be expressed in different ways, or they may feel no desire to make bodily alterations. A common experience of many transgender individuals is a sense of discomfort in their body. Often described as an ever-present sense of discomfort and disgust at their body, this is termed gender dysphoria, and is considered one element that may lead to a diagnosis of someone being transgender.[66] This dysphoria is often a large priority for an individual to alleviate through medical transition — such as hormone therapy and surgery. These choices around appearance and transitioning are matters that individuals navigate for themselves, often continually. I step tentatively, not wanting to fix or capture these images as I attempt to infer their fluid durations and nuances.

However the internal conceptualisation of gender is understood, it is contingent on the

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[66] Susan Stryker, Transgender history, 13.

physical body of the individual, and to what extent they have an associative connection with it. Thinking of this not in terms of medicalisation, but as 'transsubjectivity' enables us to understand the individual in terms of their own experiences and how they interact with others.[67] Often cisgender people experience their body congruent with their gender, and although some may elect to alter or modify their appearance, it may not be perceived as intrinsically tied to their gender identity. Non-invasive methods of minimising gender dysphoria range from gendered clothing, makeup, wig usage, undergarments such as binders and cinchers, padding, prosthetics and sex toys. Many images, both emic and etic ones, of transgender bodies show a high level of fascination over the transformative process of transition, and the end result.[68] It is often seen as a visual based climax, in which one physical transition narrative is repeated, prioritising the surface and effacing the intricacies of the individual.[69]

Within the medical terminology developed by mainly Western scientific methods and traditions, and incorporated into terminology within transgender and LGBTQI+ communities, there is a rigorous focus on the medicalisation of the body, and I am interested in how discrepancies between body and mind are negotiated in moving image art. Currently, transgender experience is considered a medical, rather than holistic issue, and is treated as such — to the extent that Bernice Hausman has termed that a transgender 'relationship to technology is a dependent one.'[70] This transformation to be recognized as congruent with one's gender identity is a contentious subject. Although it empowers individuals to live free of the continual surveillance of not passing, it can be seen to replicate binary ideas of gender in

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[67] Sandy Stone, quoted in Stryker, Transgender history, 127.
[68] Ellie Lee-Duncan, 'Autonomy and representation: the transgender self in photography,' Artmatter (to be published in 2018).
[69] While this is a choice many trans people may decide to be open about, there is a regular cisgender expectation that individuals must share these personal details. Not only is there often an expectation to the right to knowledge of which methods trans individuals may choose to change their appearance, but also many narratives and expressions of self have been sidelined due to the cisgender desire for explicit transition details of an individual's life.
[70] Bernice Hausman, quoted in Judith Halberstam, Female masculinity (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 160.

subsuming the visibility of gender diversity.[71] This rigid emphasis seated around medical transition elevates the state of the individual's body as the epitome of their gender expression, and thus, identification.[72] This reduction of transgender experience to a medical concern to alter the perceived inconsistencies between the topography of the gendered body, and the individual's perception of a true and correct body, centres on a process of addition or subtraction. By surgical methods and hormonal methods, surface addition, here, is of breasts in transfeminine individuals, and an enlarged clitoris or penis in transmasculine individuals. Surface subtraction also, of breasts in transmasculine individuals, and of larynx cartilage, penis and testicles in transfeminine individuals.[73] This process of subtraction is also repeated in non-surgical bodily interventions individuals may elect; such as the use of chest binders in transmasculine individuals, and the use of waist cinching and intimate tucking undergarments in transfeminine individuals to negate body weight distribution and intimate organs. Subtraction can also be sought in numerous other ways, such as through photographic cropping in selfies, the selection of loose clothing, and makeup. Through these methods and many others exist a plethora of options in the pursuit of rendering aspects of the body less visible. Transgender corporeal existence becomes a focusing on the the body as a site of erasure.

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[71] Toby Beauchamp, 'Artful concealment and strategic visibility: transgender bodies and U.S. State. surveillance after 9/11,' Surveillance and society 6, no. 4 (2009): 357, https://ojs.library.queensu.ca/index.php/surveillance-and-society/article/view/3267/3230.

[72] Alternatively Yuki Kihara's perspective of Western cisnormative gender situates this problem as due to this separation of gender concepts, rather than a result of 'living truthfully' to gender diversity. This intensified separation, to Kihara, is 'why the genders don't operate equally … because they're totally separated from each other in balance and harmony.' As an alternative, Kihara cites traditional indigenous Moana people's preference as a harmonious combination of gender, the reliance on 'these two energies to have a balanced cosmology.'
Shigeyuki Kihara, quoted in Dan Taulapapa McMullin, Shigeyuki Kihara and Tressa Berman, 'LeVasa: Dan Taulapapa McMullin and Shigeyuki Kihara in conversation with Tressa Berman on sea changes, transnationalism, transgender and cultural translation,' Pacific arts 8 (2009): 48.

[73] This is a simplification of the many and varied ways that transgender individuals may choose to alter their bodies, as there is never one 'lower' surgery procedure, but multiple methods and variations, including the difference of which pre-existing body parts may stay extant or be removed. See below for further discussion:
'Gender confirmation surgeries,' American society of plastic surgeons, accessed July 10, 2018. http://www.plasticsurgery.org/reconstructive-procedures/gender-confirmation-surgeries.

How does this erasure manifest itself in moving image art, where while appearing in the frame of an image, an artist simultaneously seeks to render aspects of their body less visible? One technique that appears through several different artists' works, whether it is intentional or unintentional, are modes of detachment or subtraction. In some works from we see this evidenced as a physical removal, a literal segmentation and violent cropping of the perceived redundant or dysphoric parts. As a compositional method, detachment occurs between the face and shoulders of an artist, and between the body of an artist, or parts of it; areas of the body which are more likely to be weighted with feelings of dysphoria. There seems to be a repeated pattern of cropping the face and head out of images in which the image of the body, as seen by the artist, could provoke a sense of discomfort or distress. Thus, the face and identity of the individual is removed from the body which is pictured. In particular, this appears regularly in the practices of Jordana Bragg and Aliyah Winter's works, where over many different works, one can see this particular element visually evident, beyond what may be coincidental.

This cannot be explained away as in relation to privacy or anonymity in these examples, as the artists make no attempts to disguise the fact that their body is bared in these works. Nor can it be explained by the physical proximity between the camera and subject when the camera is hand held, like when an individual takes a selfie and cannot fit their whole body in the frame. Both artists often use self-timers, and both occasionally use a different artist to film their works. At times, the artists use close shots of their faces excluding their bodies, and at times use close shots of their bodies excluding their faces. Over several works, there emerges a discernible pattern of exclusion of the whole body in favour of fragmentation and division.

I think the lack of exposure of the full body to inspection is not just a decision regarding nakedness, but also one of dissonance. In Aliyah Winter's The horror of nothing to see (2016) and Jordana Bragg's Effortless (2017), the artists' naked torsos are shown with

such a tight crop that their from their necks up, and from their waists down are excluded. Their torsos are thus solitary body parts truncated out from the wider context of the individuals. In the climax of Larz Randa's music video Turtles (2015), Mainard wrenches off his shirt to reveal his chest, which bears the scars from top surgery. Following this, he masks his face with a beanie, rendering himself faceless. Below I discuss each of these works at length, but for each of these artists it seems that there is a fierce reluctance, whether conscious or unconscious, to represent their face and their torso within the same space. The dissonance of gender dysphoria here affects each of these artists: Aliyah's growing breasts assert hormone therapy; Mainard's top surgery scars have healed but are still raw and pink; Jordana deigns to show the lower third of their breasts but fidgets in discomfort.

The torso is an area of the body which lends ambivalence to gendered readings based on binary divisions, as with the absence of large breasts, and depending on camera angles and lighting, it can simultaneously read as female and male. An image of a flat chest, or small breasts, is charged with intimacy which renders the torso an ideal ambiguous bodily surface. It is sexually suggestive to the viewer, yet without revealing the sex of the individual, and more emotive and personal than a back or limbs, yet without revealing the face, the torso exists as an in-between area of the body. The torso troubles a viewer's ability to discern the gender of an individual, and resists the tendency to define individuals as cisgender, transgender, or 'passing.'

While the genital area is never shown, the bodies that are so severely cropped often border on nakedness. John Berger has argued for a point of difference between nudity and nakedness, stating 'Nakedness reveals itself. Nudity is placed on display.'[74] Jane Harris has discussed Berger's ideas further, defining the nude as 'an object … an admired and appreciated figure whose presentation is a pleasure to behold.'[75] Berger

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[74] Berger, Ways of seeing, 54.
[75] David Ebony, Jane Harris, Frances Richard, Martha Schwendener, Sarah Valdez and Linda Yablonsky, Curve (New York: Universe, 2003), 11.

thus distinguishes the difference between nakedness as being exposed unclothed, and nudity as one being acceptably clothed within a set of visual conventions, which demarcate a state of being subjected to an objectifying gaze. To be naked is thus 'to be oneself.'[76] In the works outlined below, where the artist is unclothed, they fall into Berger's category of being naked. They reject traditional conventions of displaying the figure, and opt for awkward self-consciousness, a casual (dis)comfort within their own bodies, and entirely enveloped in their own concerns. By facing the camera and using alert and confrontational postures, the artists display awareness of the viewer's presence, and a resistance to being fetishized.

The cropped body becomes dissected at the expense of wholeness. In Surrealist art of the 1920s-30s, in approaching the nude (female) body there is a similar rejection for showing the whole body and face in preference for showing fragmented parts. This interplay between distance and presence can be seen in works such as René Magritte's Les liasons dangereuses (1936), which, like many of his works show a woman's body at the expense of her face, or Man Ray's portrait of Meret Oppenheim (1933), where her body is exposed yet her arms obscure her face. This convention of effacement in Surrealist art has been discussed at length by Mary Ann Caws, and defined as 'repetitions of fragments of females', where throughout different works, 'never is the flow of vision … integral.'[77] Instead 'the disjunction of parts' occurs as a device which fractures a sense of the unity of an individual, particularly between their face, representing the centre of their psyche and self, and their chest and genitals, signifiers of their sexuality and gender.[78] It is considered to enact an ocular violence on the subject, severing and limiting them so they may 'neither speak nor think nor see.'[79]

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[76] Berger, Ways of seeing, 54.
[77] Mary Ann Caws, 'Ladies shot and painted: female embodiment in Surrealist art,' in The female body in Western culture, ed. Susan Rubin Suleiman (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 272.
[78] Caws, 'Ladies shot and painted,' 278.
[79] Mary Ann Caws, The surrealist look (Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology press, 1997), 54.

Robert Giard's early photographic self-portraits show a similar approach in their combination of the obscured or cropped face and the exposed body, becoming '"headless" and thus "faceless" at the same time.'[80] This divide between self and self-representation (that is, the image of the body) occurs again in the process of photography itself; a splitting which Roland Barthes has termed 'a cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity.'[81] With gender dysphoria, this division is immense, and individuals experience this 'identity/body incongruence' as painful to the point of causing suicide, anxiety, and depression.[82] This common feeling of dissonance between mind and body as a specifically transgender experience thus becomes a catalyst for this specific aesthetic rubric through these transgender artists' works. By representing themselves unclothed, these artists make the decision to vulnerably expose themselves to bodily interpretation. By surrendering themselves to the viewer's gaze, the artists open themselves to reading, and therefore, the possibility of misreading. Unfortunately, many people still look with the unconscious habit of attempting to distinguish the sex of the person's body, and this classify individuals based on cisnormative assumptions. This categorization of individuals into binary genders comes from the ingrained and reductive assumption that genitalia is the determinant of gender identity.[83] Thus, one is scrutinized for visual signifiers of sex, in the supposition that this knowledge will reveal the core of a person's individuality. This act of looking impeaches on identity as self-determined, and instead renders transgender identities as 'fictitious.'[84] This classification is instant and automatic, whereas art slows down instant aspect identification so that more classes and identities can come into frame as possibilities.

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[80] Allen Ellenzweig, 'Facing facts: an analysis of the early "nude self-portraits" by Robert Giard,' Studies in gender and sexuality 15 (2014): 91, accessed June 10, 2018, http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15240657.2014.911048?src=recsys&journalCode=hsgs20.

[81] Roland Barthes, Camera lucida, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 106.

[82] Jemma Tosh, Psychology and gender dysphoria: feminist and transgender perspectives (London: Routledge, 2016), 112.

[83] Bettcher, 'Evil deceivers and make-believers,' 51.

[84] Ibid.

The female gaze was contrasted to the 'monolithic' male gaze by encompassing 'a whole variety of looks and glances — an interplay of possibilities,' and only showed glimpses of the body.[85] The notion of a specifically male gaze was championed within film theory by Laura Mulvey in 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema', and considered the power imbalance between a passive female subject who becomes erotic and objectified, for the delectation of the active male spectator.[86] If we consider these two distinct gazes, not as fundamentally male and female, but within cultural constructions as dominant and subaltern, they can be simplified down into two categories. Firstly, the 'male gaze' as sexualizing, possessive, confrontational, subsuming, and prolonged; and the 'female gaze' as intimate, non-confrontational, partial, and fleeting. This manner of looking through 'glances' can be seen as incomplete yet intimate, and fragmentary, yet emotive. As with the concepts of the male and female gaze, the dominant gaze and the subaltern gaze are multifarious and dependent on class, race and culture. The subaltern glance then, seeks to look without disrupting, seeks to comprehend without replicating modes of domination or violence. This system glimpses then deflects, without 'capturing' the whole. This glance 'consumes' albeit 'surreptitiously.'[87] For transgender individuals, this mode of glancing at the body may minimize the possibility of a rush of dysphoria which can accompany a sustained self-examination of the whole body, including the face and genitals. By working within set confines, this is a gentle and fleeting glimpse. It is peripheral in nature rather than confrontational, and fragmentary rather than all-encompassing. Within these works, glimpses appear as partial images of the body, where the whole person is never revealed, but is parcelled into different shots.

Barthes has identified the fractalization of self that occurs when one is captured by a camera; 'In front of the lens, I am at the same time; the one I think I am, the one I want others to think I am, the one the photographer thinks I am, and the one he makes use

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[85] Suzanne Moore, quoted in Laura Marcus, 'Taking a good look,' New Formations 15 (1991): 103.
[86] Laura Mulvey, Visual and other pleasures (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 14.
[87] Caws, 'Ladies shot and painted,' 268.

of to exhibit his art.'[88] In the case of an artist's self-representation however, this could be altered to, 'I am at the same time; the one I think I am, the one I want others to think I am, and the one I as an artist use myself to exhibit my art.' In being captured by a camera, Barthes notes 'I do not stop imitating myself … I inevitably suffer from a sensation of inauthenticity.'[89] This sense of self as performing oneself, is of the internal spectator, the self as replicating the idea of ourselves. This in-between state while one is photographed, states Barthes, is the precise moment that we are in flux between being 'neither subject nor object.'[90] Likewise, Foucault's perceptual gaze, is a clinical and self-detached form of seeing, and while initially formulated within the realms of medical surveillance, can be applied to the visual analysis directed at transgender individuals. The individual is objectified, and in the process of Foucault's 'pure gaze', there exists a clear power imbalance in which the gaze is used to scrutinize an individual.[91] Halberstam notes that historically, the body of the transgender individual can be seen as a continuous 'representation of unstable embodiment.'[92] This oscillation between subject and object, male and female, between being seen as ourselves and in performing ourselves, is precarious within these queer modes of self-representation.

Amelia Jones argues that queerness resists static definitions, and that it instead denotes 'that which indicates the impossibility of a subject or meaning staying still, in one determinable place.'[93] In her book Seeing Differently, she outlines the concept of queer feminist durationality, where one's preconceptions of visual-based identification, are complicated and necessitate an extended mode of looking.[94] Jones' theory of queer feminist durationality is strong, but I would like to adapt it to the specificity of transgender and gender-diverse individuals. I propose the term non-binary durationality

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[88] Roland Barthes, Camera lucida, 13.
[89] Roland Barthes, Camera lucida, 13.
[90] Roland Barthes, Camera lucida, 14.
[91] Michel Foucault, The birth of the clinic (New York: Routledge, 2003), 133.
[92] Judith Halberstam, In a queer time and place (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 105.
[93] Berger, Ways of seeing, 174.
[94] Ibid.

to articulate images which celebrate the indeterminacy of visual-based gender identification. Here, non-binary durationality can be seen as a feature of works which refute the viewer's ability to enforce binary gender-based assumptions onto the subject. It is non-binary, in that the representation of the subjects at once refuses categorization as either female or male, and simultaneously questions the matrix of two set genders. It is also durational, in that it requires sharing time with the image, slowing down their perceptions, during which the viewer becomes aware of the image's indeterminacy, and allows them to become self-critical of their own assumptions. At its core, it frustrates optical coherence. In this state of frustration, the viewer must come to terms with their inability to judge based on perceptions, and to relinquish control over the image. This loss of judgementality and control becomes extended into a cultivation of patience with the work, and its ability to create meaning.

This theory of non-binary durationality can also framed in relation to post-structuralism and Jacques Derrida's theory of binary oppositions. Derrida argues that language creates a framework through which we view concepts, and that words do not exist alone, but in relation to their opposite. This challenged linguist Saussure's theory in which meaning could be applied against the opposition of other words. Thus, many terms are considered as defined by the absence of their polar opposite, which emphasizes the difference and incompatibility between the two. In this sense, words such as black / white, male / female, and light / dark always exist in a hierarchy and in relation to one another, where 'one of the two terms governs the other.'[95] In this sense, post-structuralism is envisaged as a necessity to undermine the connection between binary oppositions, as the resiliency of oppositional hierarchy 'always reestablishes itself.'[96] Rather, in refusing to accept either the male or the female as dominant, Derrida makes it 'necessary to leave open all categories of sexual demarcation,' rendering the

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[95] Jacques Derrida, Positions, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 1982), 41.
[96] Derrida, Positions, 42.

question of sex undecidable.[97] By arguing that these distinctions are arbitrary, and that defining them as oppositions is unnecessary. By destabilising male and female as oppositional, Derrida enables the possibility of non-binary modes of reading. By applying this post-structuralist methodology to non-binary durationality, it enables one to read images with male and female as not polar opposite, but as two modes of being with the possibility of being overlaid, combined, or of seeking an alternative in-between space.

Chantal Zabus and David Coad argue that visual-based identification techniques cannot be applied to non-binary individuals, arguing that these attempts to define queerness relegate trans individuals into either non-conformity, and the associated dangers within transphobic societies, or passing as cisgender, thus rendering them illegible and invisible.[98] Alternately, Sandy Stone in The empire strikes back: A posttranssexual manifesto argues visible difference in transgender individuals is a positive declaration of otherness, where the body of the trans person 'produce[s] not an irreducible alterity but a myriad of alterities … physicalities of constantly shifting figure and ground that exceed the frame of any possible representation.'[99] In representing their own bodies, these artists frustrate the gaze, creating non-binary durational images with the potential to shift boundaries, or even to be unintelligible.

Aliyah Winter's moving image work, The horror of nothing to see (2016) consists of a single, continuous shot, closely cropped, of Winter's torso. Barely moving, we register the rise and fall of her small breasts and ribs with her breathing. At first her slightly reddened nipples are the most evident contrast in the image, which stand out against her pale skin. However, when drawn into a close observation, we notice indistinct areas

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[97] Kelly Oliver, 'Sexual difference, animal difference: Derrida and difference "Worthy of its name,"' Hypatia 24, iss. 2 (2009): 58.
[98] Eveline Kilian 'Claiming space: transgender visibility,' in Transgender experience: place, ethnicity, visibility, eds. Chantal Zabus and David Coad (New York: Routledge, 2013), 86.
[99] Sandy Stone, 'The empire strikes back: a posttranssexual manifesto,' in Body guards: the cultural politics of sexual ambiguity, eds. Kristina Straub and Julia Epstein (New York: Routledge, 1996), 56.

that have a hint of chest hair.[100] Although bare chested and freshly shaved, the prickle remains over a slight swell of breast tissue.

The title immediately names what the work renders barely legible — that the 'horror' here is the 'nothing.' That is, we can assume, the 'nothing' of breast tissue. This articulation of a 'nothing' negates the existence of Aliyah's actual breast tissue — instead, the lack of the tissue to be large enough to be comfortable with, renders this amount as currently a nothing, a nil. The viewer might interpret the horror as Aliyah's, in one possible reading of the work. However, if it were her recording her own horror, perhaps she could have chosen to position the perspective as one from her own point of view, looking downwards on her body in self-examination. Instead, this mid-shot perspective could refer to the angle she would find when looking at herself in the mirror — suggesting self-examination, grooming, and perhaps the feminine domestic realm of the toilette. However, again, this is not shot at the slightly downward angle which would result from her looking into a mirror. Since the camera viewpoint is level with her nipples, we could also consider this as the horror of a viewer, or someone exposed to her body at this height. Who would this be? Perhaps a friend, a lover, a doctor. Then, this 'horror' could be the viewer's own — ours, or another whose perspective we have adopted in this work.

The horror of nothing to see was initially exhibited in the window display at Meanwhile gallery, next to the Wellington police headquarters. In doing so, Aliyah placed this work within an historically and politically charged space concerning police prejudice and abuse toward the queer community, particularly transgender people within Aotearoa.[101]

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[100] At the risk of misgendering, I use the word chest here to refer to Winter's torso this shot focuses on. Even the choice between the words chest or breast here reflect the difficulty in discussing a single part of the body outside of gendered terms.

[101] Although I have not found an article solely focused on New Zealand, there is a comprehensive article on police abuse toward transgender individuals throughout the Asia-Pacific region, including in New Zealand, in Sam Winter, 'Lost in transition: transgender people, rights, and HIV vulnerability in the Asia-Pacific region,' Asia Pacific transgender network, and the United Nations Development Programme, last modified May 2012,

Prior to 1986, homosexuality was illegal in Aotearoa, and police went to the extent of entrapping people in the queer community, as consensual sexual encounters were punishable with a prison sentence.[102] Most particularly this problem was experienced by sex workers, prior to the legalisation of prostitution within New Zealand. With this intention of situating the work at this site in recognition of the injustices committed against trans people, the layer of this work can be read as someone else's horror. Bettcher has noted violent transphobia can arise from the revelation of a person being transgender, when the transphobic aggressor perceives the trans individual to be inherently deceptive; this work then holds the potential for a more dangerous reading, if we assume the 'horror' was experienced by a client of a sex worker, upon unexpectedly finding 'nothing to see'.[103]

The title The horror of nothing to see holds several references. One is to Zackary Drucker's performance work, titled The inability to be looked at and the horror of nothing to see (2008-2009). In this work, Zackary, another transgender woman artist, lies in a pair of underwear on a table, surrounded by tweezers in an art gallery. Viewers are guided by an audio recording through a collective meditation, into approaching the table, where they are instructed to pluck her body hairs out, placing their frustration, shame, and trauma onto the act of plucking.[104] The other link is to Luce Irigaray's writing, which conceptualizes the lack of a penis to young girls as a discovery of 'nothing to see' which generates a horror.[105]

The slow breathing doesn't sit congruently with horror as shock and repulsion — but rather, of horror as abhorrent disgust. There seems to be a distancing, a reluctance to

http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/hivaids/UNDP_HIV_Transgender_report_Lost_in_Transitio n_May_2012.pdf.
[102] Brett Coutts, 'Inclusion / exclusion,' in Re-reading the rainbow, eds. Steve Lovett and Pepper Burns (Auckland: INKubator, 2017), 101.
[103] Bettcher, 'Evil deceivers and make-believers,' 47.
[104] Zackary Drucker, The inability to be looked at and the horror of nothing to see, live performance, 2008-2009.
[105] Luce Irigaray, This sex which is not one, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell University press, 1985), 26.

situate the torso and small breasts within her own body, against arms, legs, neck, face. It is dissected from herself with the tight cropping and framing as the mode of detachment. The removal of the face here is also somewhat the removal of a sense of agency and consent, from the removal of facial expression — the close crop, severing the body, gives the sense of a voyeuristic intrusion and shame. This seems to be indicative of the discomfort, the 'horror' of the chest to be envisaged as part of her. Non-binary durationality is figured in the inherent ambiguity of Aliyah's chest, and the injunction to pause and slow one's analysis of the work.

Aliyah's work To take to the waters (2017) plays out a desire to connect with and remember Dr. Hjelmer von Danneville, who was incarcerated on Matiu / Somes Island near Wellington during WWII on suspicion of being a German, and for being of indeterminate sex. By considering Dr. Hjelmer as transgender, Aliyah navigates immersing herself in imagining the historic experience of this incarcerated individual. In this work through a series of long, single shots, we see Aliyah interacting with the landscape of the island, including cattle pens reminiscent of the incarceration cells. One artist model Aliyah drew from was Carrie Mae Weems' photographic series Roaming (2006), in which a figure is seen amongst various landscapes, with the scale of the body as a measure of power. Like Weems, Aliyah endeavoured to face away from the camera, and give her back as the unreadable presence in her work: 'Seeing only my figure from behind, this concealment from view was intended to represent transness and something larger, less specific.'[106]

In the piece, Aliyah walks through the landscape, and within the close confines of a small room off from the cattle pens, Aliyah swells into wailing, or keening as a vocal expression of distress. The figure remains with their back to us, while they beat at the walls and cry aloud; when they turn, their face is cropped. Their face is effectively removed, and with it so is Aliyah's emotional readability. This particular concealment is

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[106] Aliyah Winter in discussion with the author, March 2018.

especially evident in the extended single opening shot, where we see Aliyah only from the back. Again, when Aliyah becomes expressly distressed, hitting the walls and cattle fences around her, her hair is positioned to cover her face when she leans toward us, and the remainder of the shots she faces away from the camera. In these shots, which are predominantly mid-shots, there continues a concealment. Perhaps her quote, her desire to 'represent transness and something larger, less specific' indicates trans issues as something somewhat removed from visibility. Or otherwise, the unknown, the lack of connectedness with a complete history. Perhaps even as something difficult to define and articulate, extending to the inability to visually articulate the self.

Another moving image work by Aliyah which shows a specific approach to cropping is Hardening (2017). In black and white, it pictures a garden through different vantage points, and shows Aliyah grounded in the garden, sensorially appreciating the plants and the wind. A series of abrupt cuts between the environment and Aliyah create the overall effect. We see Aliyah's whole body crouching, with her face obscured. One shot is cropped from her mouth to her chest, wearing a plain white shirt dress, reminiscent of a hospital robe. One shot shows her from behind, as she picks rosemary stems. Another is a close up of her feet pressing into the lush vegetation and indenting it slowly. Here, Aliyah explores the historical health practice of air bathing, in which one bares one's body to the elements — a practice also explored in Louise Menzies' film work Peloha (2009), where a nude woman stands on a porch practicing calisthenics.

In two close shots, she stands as the wind buffets her frame. One shows from her chin to her waist, in a close up of her torso. The other shows from her ankles up to her waist. At times the wind pulls the fabric of her dress against her body, at once revealing yet concealing her legs, the contours of her breasts, and rippling her skirt up to reveal her upper thighs. The shirt of the dress seems each second to almost reveal her intimate areas to the camera, and the film hesitates on this scene, drawing it out in length to build a sense of suspense. Aliyah discussed this work with me as examining

the cisgender desire to have access to knowing about the genitals of trans individuals, how their anatomy changed with hormones, and whether or not they had undertaken lower surgery.[107] The shots sever Aliyah's body into segments, and distance her face from the inevitable eyes of the viewer which, like the wind, sweep her body in the thin garment. The elongated shot renders the viewer self-conscious. There is a tension between the focal point of the fabric covering Aliyah's upper thighs and concealed sex, and the resistance which denies the viewer visual closure. In doing so, Aliyah questions the viewer's desire to expose her, and renders herself impenetrable to a gaze which would deny her self-identity.[108] She thus draws attention to an expectation of compulsive bodily confession, and provides time for the viewer to question these body politics.[109]

Both Aliyah's works Hardening and The horror of nothing to see can be read in relation to movement-image and slow cinema. Gilles Deleuze's theory of the movement-image is one which 'make[s] time and thought perceptible' in slowing the viewer's reading down to heighten a sense of duration.[110] Likewise, with the theory of slow cinema, a 'sense of unfettered, living duration' is achieved by the slow, time realistic shot.[111] This unadulterated sense of temporality heightens the labor required of the spectator to engage with the moving image.[112] Slow cinema aligns the experience of time passing between the filmed subject and the spectator, layering the spectator's perception of temporality, and creating a 'coordination' between both bodies.[113] The viewer's breath shares the same temporality as Aliyah's in The horror of nothing to see; they become aware of inhaling and exhaling in time with her chest rising and falling. This awareness

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[107] Aliyah Winter in discussion with the author, March 2018.
[108] Bettcher, 'Evil deceivers and make-believers,' 56.
[109] Ernst van der Wal, 'Crossing over, coming out, blending in: a trans interrogation of the closet,' South African review of sociology 47 (2007): 50.
[110] Gilles Deleuze, Cinema 2: The time image, trans Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minnesota: University of Minnesota press, 1989), 18.
[111] Karl Schoonover, 'Wastrels of time: Slow cinema's labouring body, the political spectator and the queer,' Framework: the journal of cinema and media 53 (2013): 154.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Schoonover, 'Wastrels of time,' 156.

of mutual breathing is heightened in the 'everyday banality' of the close, ponderous long shot of her chest.[114] In Hardening, the extended shots of Aliyah's dress being tenderly manipulated by the wind also create a slowing time perception, with the extended shots occupying time at a slow pace parallel to the viewer; a dilation which spans the binaries of the time-image and movement-image. In both works, the effect is a queering of our perceptions, and a rich space created for the viewer to process their own observations and reactions to Aliyah's presence. The long shots in both works are unaccompanied by a varied soundtrack; Hardening only has quiet sounds of buffeting wind and Hardening is silent. The lack of sound only heightens the viewer's sense of the visual texture of the image, and adds to a quiet, meditative and observational viewing typical of slow cinema.

While these works by Aliyah Winter enable the viewer to observe the image and question their own perceptions, her audio work Pantomime Dames (2017) harshly confronted audience participants with the reality of trans-exclusionary radical feminism. Trans-exclusionary radical feminism is a subset of feminism in which transgender individuals are excluded from participating as part of a feminist community, on the grounds that trans women cannot overcome their essential maleness, and are consequently not to be trusted, or even a threat.[115] This work was exhibited at Dark Matter, and was a participatory artwork where viewers were asked to lie in a room with their hands over their genitals. Aliyah's recorded voice slowly reads out a section entitled 'Pantomime Dames' from Germaine Greer's book The Whole Woman in which she describes transgender women, and gender affirmation surgeries. Greer takes a clear standpoint that trans women are not women, and regardless of accessing surgery, are undeserving of sympathy, support, or a space within feminist communities. Aliyah reads the work slowly, and the audio permeates the gallery. After guiding the participants into a desired position of lying on the floor, the audio reciting Greer's text

[114] Deleuze, Cinema 2, 17.
[115] Kelsie Brynn Jones, 'Trans-exclusionary radical feminism,' last modified February 2, 2016. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kelsie-brynn-jones/transexclusionary-radical-terf_b_5632332.html.

describes male to female lower surgery: the construction of a vaginal canal by slitting the penis, scraping off the flesh, then turning it inside out to form the interior lining of the vagina. Throughout the visceral description, the terminology is intended to harshen the reality of the surgical procedure, for example through the use of words such as 'scraping' rather than merely 'removal.' Following this, Greer then discusses that despite going through this procedure, trans women will never be accepted into women's spaces, and will never be accepted as women. She criticizes them of violence and loudness as if it is related to inherent and irremovable maleness, rather than a specific set of conditioned and learned traits, which extend to individuals regardless of their assigned at birth sex. Reading Greer's words, Aliyah emphasizes the textual violence toward trans people inherent in the original writing.

Pantomime Dames was an audio work, recorded at Aliyah's own timing, thus removing her body and presence from the work. The result is that there was no direct interaction with the audience, no sensing of the atmosphere and response at the time of the work, and therefore no altering or ceasing it on the audience's reaction. Since the work was intended to shock a cisgender audience, Aliyah had not taken into account the possible response of trans individuals in the audience. Although there were signs in the galleries as trigger warnings, and although Aliyah intended to give a verbal trigger warning prior to the work commencing, the audio technician pressed play before she had the chance. The result was that this artwork traumatised a number of trans participants. Aliyah has since apologised, and although the audio work is available on request, this work is not part of the body of her work available to the public online.

Adulterated through voice, Aliyah tried to omit emotionality from entering the work through a bland, monotonous register. Although delivered with a lack of intonation, this is still expressive of the very reticence or removal of self and emotion. This work is inaccessible online, unlike her other works, out of Aliyah's awareness of the confrontational nature of the work. It raises questions of the medicalisation of the

transgender body, and Germaine Greer's argument that gender is based on essential sex, and that despite surgical transition, transgender women cannot be accepted among cisgender women.

Queer theorist and philosopher Judith Butler severed sex from gender in her writings — first in 'Performative acts and gender constitution,' an essay written in 1988, and famously expanded in her publication Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity from 1990. Here, Butler argued that gender is not naturally essential to sex and bodily anatomy. Rather, she states that gender consists of a complex series of daily actions, thoughts, and mannerisms which have been produced by way of subconscious internalisation and repetition of the actions of those around one. Following the birth of a child, Butler states that the sentence 'it's a boy/girl!' holds the power of a declarative statement, which shapes the child's life. For the child to exist as a viable subject within society, the child must first be assigned a gender.[116] Around this axis of gender, an individual's life takes form. Gender thus, is not biologically inherent, but is ingrained performativity; gender is what an individual does rather than is.[117] Thought processes, modes of behaviour, and accepted conduct congruent with the declared gender are thus demonstrated to the individual, who assimilates into this pattern of learned behaviours. Butler takes up Simone de Beauvoir's assertion that one is not born a woman, but rather becomes one, and extends it thus: 'it follows that woman itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end.'[118] This opens up the concept that whoever is doing the 'becoming,' regardless of the gender of their starting point, can draw themselves into the network of gender performativity and continuous 'constructing' of themselves. Here, transgender becomes a term which 'denotes something like a transition that has

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[116] Judith Butler, 'Critically queer,' in The Routledge queer studies reader, ed. Donald E. Hall (New York: Routledge, 2013), 26.
[117] Judith Butler, Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity (New York: Routledge, 1999), 33.
[118] Ibid.

no end.'[119] While Germaine Greer shares the theory that gender performance is a learned behaviour, she persists in the belief that transgender women are not women.[120] As a transgender woman herself, Winter used Greer's writing in her work as a way to emphasize the insulting nature of her theories as opposed to Butler's views.

An element of gender performativity is present also in Aliyah Winter's Did you spit in his face or ease the burden? (2017). In this moving image work Aliyah is located within the domestic realm of the home, as she rearranges the contents of her room, while superimposed screenshots of personal messages intrude over the surface of the work. Aliyah's gestures are soft and slow as she moves around the interior scene. Almost like a performance, she rearranges her belongings, adjusts the pelmets above her curtains, and deftly plucks out dead flowers from her indoor plants. The work is punctuated with glimpses of her, running her fingers across her lips, or pulling on a strap-on harness and dildo. Her movements here again allow for an extended engagement with the work, as she moves in real time, and with meditative slowness. Gender is imagined here as what she does, her behaviour, and the rich internal world hinted at through the solemnity of her motions.

Unlike most of her other works, this is shot in portrait format, instantly revealing it was made on a cellphone, and so lends it an air of informal and personal spontaneity. The text that is superimposed over the image, from digital screenshots of a conversation by turns appears affectionate, manipulative, abusive, cruel, and tender: 'Please don't lie that you love and care about me'; 'I may never forgive you xx'; 'you should be embarrassed by yourself.'

Despite these words, Aliyah remains expressionless, removing any emotionality. Instead, she coexists with the remainders of an apparently unhealthy relationship,

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[119] Judith Butler, quoted in Sara Salih, 'Changing the subject: Judith Butler's politics of radical resignification,' in The Judith Butler reader, ed. Sara Salih (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 348.
[120] Germaine Greer, The whole woman (London: Doubleday, 1999), 369.

confined to the house. In the sexualized closeups of her lips, neck, or waist, the upper half of her face is removed or cropped out, removing the expressive potential of her gaze. This contrasts to the more complete view of her figure while occupied with daily tasks. Perhaps rather than an absence of embodiment, this hints at an absence of embodiment she experiences at particular times. Here, her visage becomes segmented and removed at only particular times, times when intimacy, sexual exploration, and physical mindfulness within the body are often experienced by cisgender individuals. She becomes removed at the very point of eros and physical vulnerability.

In Jordana Bragg's work Effortless (2017), their body as an artist is treated to a variety of glancing camera shots throughout the moving image work. Their body is revealed through a series of brief shots, showing them tapping their collar bone, stretching and flexing their back, and hazy glimpses of succulents and the mundanities of urban life. Effortless opens with the sound of Jordana's breathing, heavy but slow, as if in preparation, accompanying the blurred image of a garden. This image is indistinct, and features a screen of oversaturated red, which is reminiscent of the effect of looking through one's eyelashes, eyes almost shut, on a bright day.

Abruptly, this introduction ceases and transitions to the next section of the work, marked by a sharp intake of breath. Carefully spoken, emotionally heavy, words follow with an overexposed image of Wellington city. 'Making ends meet is impossible in a room with you.' This hazy beginning of glimpses from heavy eyelids, and the heavy breathing gives a sense of intense intimacy. We then see segments of images, of a chair, heavily textured clothing, of Jordana's head in bed, lolled back and reaching for two heavy chains which encircle their neck. This quick shot makes this feel as if we, the viewer, is intruding, then suddenly it is cut to a table top set for a Chinese meal of yum cha, with white cups reflected in the tabletop becoming glossy mirrored forms. Then, there are shots of outdoors, plants, the silver backfin of a fish, then suddenly Jordana's cropped muscular shoulder, arms, and back. The audio is of Jordana reciting

a work explicitly about a sense of loss and absence. They discuss their theory of 'hot distance' as the experience of feeling the absence of a lover or close friend. Jordana notes, for example, that when a friend is 'lost in a crowd' everyone else 'becomes not them.' The disappointed expectation becomes transferred to anonymous individuals, who become defined by the fact they are not the friend that is sought for.

In one section, there is a shot of orange peels discarded on the street, which then cuts to Jordana from the mid ribs to mid thighs, shirtless, and pulling their fingers across the top of their jeans. The audio continues to catalogue the giving of self, and the possibility of a rupture occurring: 'hot distance is throwing yourself at someone, hoping you arrive in one piece.' Their voice turns to intimacy and sharing a bed: 'our bones turned to pollen in the night.' There is a latent emotionality and an unspecified anxiety which is caught between transferral from their body onto their surrounding environment. Like Aliyah Winter's work to take to the waters, the artist's internal reality becomes extended to charge their surrounding environment with emotions. Using the technique of slow cinema, the long takes which examine the visual textures of urban life, with very little occuring, bring the viewer into a sustained sense of pause as they consider the audio around the felt absence of a loved one.

While the work threads visions of Jordana's body together, the image remains partial. At each point Jordana's face is either entirely cropped out of the image, or the viewer only glimpses the back of their head. This hesitancy about having their whole body and their face within a shared frame of the moving image work creates a sense of the intentional removal of self. Here, Jordana crops their body tightly within the work; not just horizontally (that is, the omission from the head up head and the waist down) but also here vertically. Where certain frames show their upper back, it is only half revealed as a thin zip down one side of the image, half out of the frame and beyond the viewer's sight. This creates a sense of voyeurism when they are turned from us, as if we are glimpsing them incomplete through a crack in the door. Other shots, like partial

glimpses for the viewer, include Jordana's collarbones, stomach, and the lower halves of their breasts. This disjuncture between permissible, but fragmentary parts of the body, and the reluctance to allow the viewer access to a complete image of the artist is also demonstrated in the focus of the camera itself. When Jordana stands four square facing us with their torso, in the centre of the composition, they are in crisp focus. Where they are turned away or side on, the image shifts out of focus, breaking our ability to read the surface of their body. In this way, the representation of Jordana's non-binary body flickers between welcoming, and refusing visibility. This ability of the artist to be self-representational without complete self-exposure again echoes Sandy Stone's 'myriad of alterities' in 'shifting figure and ground' to dodge comprehension, physically manifesting itself in the filming techniques used.[121]

The last work I would like to examine in terms of the segmenting of the body is a music video, Turtles, by Mainard Larkin and directed by the company Thunderlips. In it, Mainard performs as his stage name, LarzRanda, to his rap Turtles, shot in a single take on 35mm film. The shot opens showing an interior in a small kitchenette, with the lower half of a plastic male mannequin on our left and an inflatable banana on our right. Mainard enters the room, pours himself a glass of water, and sits between both artificial signifiers of masculinity. Lit by an anglepoise lamp and a lurid fluorescent light, nostalgic 1990s colours in synthetic grape purple, and turquoise green wash over the scene.

Mainard sits directly facing us, and maintains eye contact while he raps directly into the camera. Throughout the whole music video Mainard slowly undresses. Mainard enters wearing an indigo raincoat and beanie, which he removes to reveal a plain black skivvy with the word 'Elle' printed on it. The brand, also translates to the word 'she' in French, and at this point, he opens a lipstick case and applies it to his lips. Gazing at the camera, he says 'I didn't mean to come across so sprung, it's just that I'm so young

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[121] Stone, The empire strikes back, 60.

and my heart weighs a ton.' Simultaneously, and in one swift motion, he then wrenches his shirt off his head.

He is left hatless and topless, his hair fluffy, revealing muscular arms and his chest with puckered top surgery scars. Continuing to rap, Mainard recounts his break up with a lover, and pulls his hair in stress and frustration. Picking up his beanie from the floor, he covers his whole face with it and head with it while repeating 'I feel so dumb, so dumb, so dumb…' This is the final line of the song. This climax of the song becomes deeply honest, as it is the first (and only) time he has appeared shirtless on camera, revealing the scars from gender affirmation surgery, and also the first time his lyrics have been so personal.[122] The repeated line 'I feel so dumb' reflects this openness, naivety and pain from the break up. This end point of the song shows an alternation between his bare chest with his obscured face which is literally blacked out and covered with his beanie, and his second posture, with his face showing after removing the beanie, but with his arms crossed to obscure his chest. In these two postures, his body language prevents his chest from being seen in the same shot as his face, until the very end of the film when he leans back, seemingly exhausted, head tilted, and his scars showing still pink from healing.

This is actually the first time Mainard has actually shown his chest in a video or photograph. He said that the creation of the video was 'quite a cathartic performance and … exposing my chest felt like a natural progression … rapping the lyrics already made me feel really bare.'[123] In this quote, for Mainard the lyrics were the primarily revealing, personal aspect of the video, which lead to this exposure. His lyrics in no way mention his gender in Turtles; it is a long about falling in love with someone who said they 'were on a break' but returned to their relationship after a brief 'hiatus' with

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[122] Susie Garrard, 'LarzRanda's video for Turtles is a strong statement about transgender identity,' last modified January 21, 2016,
http://hhhhappy.com/larzrandas-video-for-turtles-is-a-strong-statement-for-transgender-and-identity/.
[123] 'LarzRanda bares all,' Gay NZ online, last modified January 30, 2016,
http://www.gaynz.com/articles/publish/33/article_17847.php.

Mainard. Rapping about his love for this person is unusual for LarzRanda, as he is more commonly known for nostalgic lyrics referencing childhood pop culture, sitcoms, video games, and fast food, which feature predominantly in his albums such as Lunchbox, Rangers, and Summer Camp. Since the lyrics to Turtles in no way mention his gender, the central element of the video is all around the relationship; the top surgery scars are not central to the video, they are just approached as another aspect of his life alongside many others. Mainard, the only artist I examine who reveals the results of gender affirmation surgery explicitly, represents them as just one additional element in their personal life, rather than as the focus. Framing it within the rap narrative of their love life, Mainard shows their identity as fully formed, cohesive and not trans-centric. As part of a larger music video where they undress while rapping, Mainard frames his transgender body within the context of his wider identity as a lover, a creative musician, and someone vulnerable and learning. This deflects the ability of the viewer to be objectify his body; unlike a medical or fetishizing gaze, Mainard necessitates viewing his transness within the wider context of his life.[124] The use of clothing, gendered objects, and makeup are revealed as secondary props compared to his essential self, asserted by his own decisions over his body, and converge to confront the viewer with the truth that their gaze cannot truthfully determine his gender. Here, Mainard's appearance becomes dispensable in its inability to articulate the individual's gender.[125]

In Sandy Stone's Posttranssexual manifesto, Stone argues for an opening of gender from a narrow, binary definition, and encourages transgender individuals to exist as visibly non-normative in an effort to expand an expectation of what gender diversity looks like. By doing so, she endeavours to encourage others to draw into 'the genre of visible transsexuals' and so reduce the prevalence of cisnormative expectations.[126]

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[124] T. Benjamin Singer, 'From the medical gaze to sublime mutations: the ethics of (re)viewing non-normative body images,' in The transgender studies reader, eds. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2013), 607.
[125] Prosser, Second skins, 104.
[126] Stone, The empire strikes back, 67.

Within New Zealand, access to gender affirming surgeries is strictly limited, and while funded top surgery may be available depending on an individual's local District Health Board, lower surgery is regulated by an unmoving waiting list, and is more often accessed by individuals who travel overseas where they may be able to afford it. While this was identified as a problem by the New Zealand Human Rights Commission in To be who I am, the inquiry into discrimination experienced by transgender people from 2008, very little has changed in terms of the lack of access to salutary lower surgeries. [127] While passing can be considered contentious by some, as it can render transsexual individuals invisible, it is also recognised as a welcome safer alternative to daily interrogation and prejudice from cisgender individuals. [128] And although historically transgender individuals accessing medical treatment were pressured to subscribe to all hormonal and surgical options in order to pass more readily, more and more frequently individuals are able to elect which means, if any, they may choose to alter their bodies by, using 'their sense of self, their experiences, and their bodies' to determine what is the best course of action for them. [129] Overall, individuals seeking to transition do not always prioritise the same transitions, and those seeking to align their identity with the surface of their body may pursue different treatment pathways if or when they elect to medically transition. [130] This approach to accessing gender affirmation procedures, supports Judith Butler's assertion that transgender cannot be contained as one category, but rather, 'identifications are multiple and contestatory.' [131]

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[127] Human Rights Commission New Zealand, 'To be who I am/ Kia noho au ki toku ano ao report: the inquiry into discrimination experienced by transgender people,' last modified January 2008, http://www.hrc.co.nz/files/8214/2378/7655/24-Nov-2008_11-36-56_To_Be_Who_I_Am_ HTML_ Aug_08.html.
[128] Jason Cromwell, 'Queering the binaries, transsituated identities, bodies, and sexualities,' in The transgender studies reader, eds. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2013), 513.
[129] Cromwell, 'Queering the binaries,' 514.
[130] Halberstam, Female masculinity, 164.
[131] Judith Butler, quoted in Cromwell, 'Queering the binaries,' 512.

III

The transgender body in culture

In this section I will set out to examine some examples of moving image works produced by Aotearoa artists, and artists with a moana based heritage, in relation to indigenous identities. Due to the close cultural interchange and number of similarities between island-based communities, Māori, and Pākehā New Zealanders, I have narrowed my examination to these specific peoples, although I am aware that it is a somewhat arbitrary limitation. I will discuss several artists in depth, and seek to extricate how culturally-specific non-binary gender identities can change or impact an artist's self-representation. In particular, I seek to examine in what ways artists who are critically engaging with a non-Western culture have a different approach to exploring gender in their works, congruent with the different ways that gender is conceptualised in different cultures. How does this alter the narratives that these artists spin around their work? Furthermore, the effects of colonisation, systematic racism and social expectations create differences between the experiences of these multicultural artists and that of Pākehā artists. These artists grant themselves the ability to be self-determining, and I am interested in their examination of their own work and the correlations they make between culture and practice. I also seek to understand the impact of generational colonial trauma, and the limited application of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in society, on these artists' understanding of their individual autonomy and agency, and how artists use their art to explore their own whakapapa. It is difficult to apply Western theory to non-Pākehā artists, and so I also seek to understand how alternate theories, such as that of ta and va, kaupapa Māori, and others can be contemplated to supplement, replace, or alter, my already existing knowledge bases and schemas.

In Sāmoa, the term fa'afafine designates a culturally specific gender, and is most commonly used for individuals assigned male at birth who may be androphilic (attracted to males or masculinity) and who may express themselves in a more

feminine or effeminate way.[132] Emphasis was based around a specific supportive relationship to their aiga (family) and their tasks were often ones associated with women's work and domesticity. Pre-colonisation, their role within a community was recognised, and was integrated and accepted within Sāmoan society.[133] Artist Pati Solomona Tyrell identifies fa'afafine as previously people treated with religious reverence, 'as oracles and persons of status'.[134] Historically, European colonial cultures specify a dichotomy between gender and sexuality, however fa'afafine negotiate a specific series of attributes of femininity or womanhood as a specific social category which encompasses elements of both gender identity and same-sex attraction.[135] Sāmoan and Japanese artist Shigeyuki Kihara is fa'afafine, and unites this within her artistic practice as an element of her cultural heritage. Kihara has argued that 'throughout Oceania the ideal of balance and harmony' is held within the ideal of male and female energies as in harmony, in order 'to have a balanced cosmology,' as opposed to the Western practice of polarising the two binary genders.[136] Fa'afafine and other similar designations in Polynesia such as māhū from Tahiti and Hawaii, and fakaleitī from Tonga have often been represented as 'frozen in time', existing unaltered from pre-colonisation and the adaptations of interaction with the subsequent gender policing by missionaries, and the following decades of modernisation and cultural evolution.[137] However Kihara notes that the linguistic term fa'afafine is post-contact, and she argues that prior to missionary involvement and colonisation the term didn't exist, as there wasn't a cultural compulsion to define it as a gender category.[138] Tangata whenua artist Tāwhanga Nōpera is whakawahine, which in Māori translates as being a man who is like a woman, similar to fa'afafine in Sāmoan. Nōpera values this over other gender identity descriptions, as this description 'doesn't impose value, it neither

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[132] Niko Besnier, 'Polynesian gender liminality through time and space,' Third sex third gender: beyond sexual dimorphism in culture and history, ed. Gilbert Herdt (New York: Zone books, 1993), 300.
[133] Besnier, 'Polynesian gender liminality through time and space,' 298.
[134] Pati Solomona Tyrell, quoted in Leafa Wilson, The cold islanders: art on the pacific spectrum (Hamilton: Waikato Museum, 2017), 43.
[135] Besnier, 'Polynesian gender liminality through time and space,' 308.
[136] McMullin, Kihara and Berman, 'LeVasa,' 48.
[137] Besnier, 'Polynesian gender liminality through time and space,' 328.
[138] McMullin, Kihara and Berman, 'LeVasa,' 48.

privileges tāne or wahine, men or women, but tells me I can be both at once if I choose.'[139]

Throughout this chapter, I will use the untranslated word fa'afafine due to the cultural specificity of this term, which does not correlate neatly to a singular Western gender or sexual identity. Niko Besnier translates the term literally as 'in the fashion of a woman', noting it functions as noun, verb and adverb with 'linguistic multifunctionality' suggesting that the description 'gender liminal person' may be more useful in order to resist Western binary descriptors.[140] Shigeyuki Kihara has used the translation 'in the manner of a woman' in her photographic series of the same title, and elsewhere in an interview with Kihara, artist Dan Taulapapa McMullin further pulls apart this term fa'a:

> Fa'a: a causative word that means 'to follow the way' or to elicit something, like longo is a sound and Fa longo is to listen to the sound, as if you are causing the sound to happen. Fa'afafine: to follow the way of a woman; a mature woman in her body and experience.[141]

So, the causative prefix is an active verb, an act of doing or following, rather than the more passive occupation of a position as 'in the manner of', 'in the fashion of.'[142] This active form can be seen in relation to Judith Butler's understanding of the performative nature of gender, where one does gender, rather than is a gender.[143]

Within the twentieth century, there has been an absence of visibility of fa'afafine, with a recent swelling visibility coinciding with the transgender rights movements. Hulleah J. Tsinhnahjinnie, a Seminole and Diné writer and artist, writing on the intersection of

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[139] Tāwhanga Nōpera, 'huka can haka: Taonga performing tino rangatiratanga' (Doctor of philosophy thesis, Waikato University, 2016), 90.
[140] Besnier, 'Polynesian gender liminality through time and space,' 286-87.
[141] McMullin, Kihara and Berman, 'LeVasa,' 49.
[142] Ibid.
The history of the term 'fa'afafine' as allocated by European missionaries is further explored in this interview with an alternate translation denoting shame or impurity.
[143] Butler, Gender trouble, 33.

indigeneity and gender in regards to Indigenous First Peoples in America discusses the non-binary gender of two-spirited individuals. They note that as a survival tactic, two-spirited persons became invisible in mainstream culture for decades where it was unsafe to be visible, where acting stealth, or invisible within society: 'by no-means connotes defeat. Being invisible signifies the condition of the current political atmosphere.'[144] Throughout my thesis, I will discuss artists only who openly discuss their gender publically, and who have rendered themselves professionally visible within their identity. In this chapter, I will place higher emphasis on how moving image works and photography show the artist as actively 'doing' gender, or how they are actively expressing themselves, rather than scrutinising their gender identities. And while moving image works by explicitly transgender artists are the focus of my thesis, I also examine photography in the works of queer artists Pati Solomona Tyrell and Tanu Gago as providing a contribution to indigenous representations of non-binary gender.

In Kihara's work, body, and culture are inextricably tied. Her series of three photographs In the manner of a woman (2005), are about her gender as a Sāmoan specific identity, with the title itself being a direct translation of the term 'fa'afafine.' Here, gender is couched within culture and location, which ties to a wider understanding of how this culturally specific gender exists, its acceptance, and its particularity as Sāmoan / Moana specific. In the work, Kihara reclines on a chaise longue in the art historical tradition of such paintings as Venus of Urbino by Titian (1534), or Manet's Olympia (1863). Kihara's facial expression, like Olympia's, is uninviting, unyielding and devoid of flirtation or the desire to please. Kihara's prone pose is repeated through the three images, with only her intimate area different in each image. In the first, she wears a Sāmoan flax laua skirt, in the second, she is shown naked, appearing as female with a rounded public mound, her penis hidden, and in the third she reveals herself as fa'afafine, with her penis lying on her thighs. In this series

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[144] Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie, 'When is a photograph worth a thousand words?' in Photography's other histories, eds. Christopher Pinney, Nicolas Peterson, and Nicholas Thomas (Durham: Duke University press, 2003), 40.

she first playfulling highlights the fetishisation of moana women as 'dusky maidens', and then exposes the binaries of Western sexual expectations in the slight change of untucking herself.

Kihara is acutely aware of the art historical notions of nudity versus nakedness and in these images she clothes herself in the aesthetic conventions theorized by John Berger, in which to be nude is always to appear within the formal constructs of art history.[145] From the elongated and sexually available pose, the fingers brushing the leg, to the boudoir chaise longue, Kihara's photographs recall so many images of unclothed women through centuries of European fine art painting. The familiar velvet furniture and the reclining pose together act to dislocate it from a specific temporal location, and place it within the context of codified images of the nude woman, available for the viewer's delectation.

The background of In the manner of a woman is comprised of tropical plants, and a woven mat, which is placed on the wall with its frayed edges exposing a painted background of lush ferns and sky. Kihara wears a flax skirt, an ornament or flower tucked under one ear and falling down her face, and a line of shells unraveling across her body. Her breasts are supple and slight, and her limbs are thin to the point of ungainliness. Her stomach has a slight paunch, her thighs and hips are slender and combined with the small breasts, her weight distribution pattern reads as not necessarily hormonally cisgender. Kihara has chosen the incomplete and damaged woven mat, perhaps as a nod to Charles Frederick Goldie's paintings, recalling so many disintegrating woven panels as a signifier of the disintegration and collapse of a traditional culture under colonisation. Within the context of colonisation, individuals from Sāmoa were subjected to scientific anthropological photography and anthropometry, which objectified them and stripped them of their personhood. Particularly in relation to the body, models, who has often taken up wearing elements

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145 Berger, Ways of seeing, 54.

of European clothing, were asked to strip naked for the photographs; nakedness in Sāmoan culture in the Victorian era was not considered unusual, yet to the viewers back in Europe, nakedness had a very different connotation, as unacceptable, 'primitive' and erotic.[146] Through photography, the colonised subjects' bodies were always available to the white gaze, and 'rather than desexualising the gaze, as the rhetoric would suggest, this guaranteed that those scrutinising such images would always have access to the views of the genitals' of each individual.[147]

In referencing these early colonial photographs of Sāmoan 'dusky maidens' Kihara rebuts the viewer's gaze that seeks to objectify and to other her, with a deadpan gaze that confronts the viewer. Within the realm of the image she is self-assured and sovereign. In her role as image maker and artist, Kihara had control over every aspect of production, from the woven panel, dismal furniture, backdrop, mise-en-scene, and photographic technique. While recalling colonial photography studios, her self-determined nudity in which she presents herself as fa'afafine rejects the binary gender system imposed by colonisation. In an interview with Dan Taulapapa McMullin and Tressa Berman, Kihara discussed the history of fa'afafine in relation to satirical comedy theatre, where fa'afafine actors occupied a space of liminality and imitation in switching between various characters. In this manner, Kihara draws upon the practice of fa'afafine as multiplicitous, performing 'mimicry, [and] transformation.'[148] With the photographs displayed as a triptych, they are able to resist a singular reading, like moving image, and the shifting between the different apparent sexes that Kihara displays create again a non-binary indeterminacy, which privileges neither the male or the female presentation.

FAFSWAG, short for fa'afafine swag, is an artistic collective located in South Auckland

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[146] Mandy Treagus, 'From anthropometry to Māui: a study of a Sāmoan savage' in Study of a Sāmoan savage, ed. Shigeyuki Kihara (Waitakere: Te Uru Waitakere contemporary gallery, 2016), 4-5.
[147] Treagus, 'From anthropometry to Māui,' 4-5.
[148] McMullin, Kihara and Berman, 'LeVasa,' 47.

of queer, tagata o le moana individuals who utilise dance, creativity, vogue culture and art to promote the visibility of Polynesian LGBTQI+ individuals. Tanu Gago, a queer Sāmoan artist and member of the FAFSWAG collective created a photographic triptych tited Takatāpui (2013-2016), which shows portraits of three of his friends, Shannon, Raukawa and Levi. The te reo Māori term takatāpui was used prior to colonisation to denote a man who had homosexual intercourse with another man, but has since been embraced by the queer community to designate any tangata whenua person who identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, or who does not want to categorise themselves within the restrictions of English terminology.[149] Gago's triptych shows portraits of three individuals, dressed in traditional cloaks. The lighting is stark, and emphasizes the deep-set shadows on their faces, against a black background. Each figure brandishes a mere, a short-bladed weapon in pounamu. Rather than emphasizing particular gender traits of each individual, the works emphasize the traditional Māori attire and weapons, situating them as persons of prestige. In this sense, the works serve as a reminder of the acceptance of non-binary gender identities prior to the influence of Christian missionaries.[150] Here, the title of the work is the primary indicator of the individuals' identities, rather that the visual appearance of the work. Instead, the works prioritise the genders of the individuals as emerging out of a basis of indigeneity, mana, and cultural belonging.[151]

Pati Solomona Tyrell's series of six photographs, Masculine me tender (2014), show Tyrell's face and torso, as he shifts between various stages of wearing a full face of make-up and a blond wig, to his short cropped hair and unmade, stubbled face. As another queer Sāmoan, and co-founder of the FAFSWAG collective, there is a conflation of gender and cultural identity present in the photographs. One image shows his full, muscular form caught flicking his wig over his shoulder. The pose

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[149] Jessica Hutchins and Clive Aspin, Sexuality and the stories of indigenous people (Wellington: Huia publishers, 2007), 7.
[150] Wilson, The cold islanders, 51.
[151] Ibid.

encompasses the dynamism and force of not only the physical movement, but the shifting between representing a polarisation of staunch masculinity and tender femininity, and the state of embracing both within the same shot. His images create a space where a stereotype of athletic, masculine Sāmoan men can be rejected in favour of presenting as femme.[152] Transaesthetics here becomes a binding together of binary oppositions.

When discussing visual representation, as well as visual interpretation, the matter of visual sovereignty comes into question. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the state of being sovereign as: 'one who has supremacy or rank above, or authority over, others,' and here this applies to the self-determinacy and agency within image making.[153] Visual sovereignty can be understood as a method of decolonising representation by indigenous makers, who in determining their own images, 'fight against appropriated and romanticized imagery that misrepresents Native communities.'[154] Tsinhnahjinnie, defines visual sovereignty as 'a particular type of consciousness rooted in confidence which is exhibited as a strength in cultural and visual presence.'[155] The history of Pākehā and European image creators — artists, painters and photographers alike, of having control over the creation of images of individuals who are either tangata whenua or tagata o le moana means that early naturalistic images of these peoples were not self-representations. Furthermore, the majority of interpretation of these images has historically been done by European and Pākehā writers, researchers, and academics, such as myself. Kihara consciously created her series In the manner of a woman, in response to the history of colonial photography, in what has been described by Fa'anofo Lisaclaire Uperesa as an 'unflinching critique, re-working and re-interpreting

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[152] Wilson, The cold islanders, 43.

[153] 'Sovereign, noun and adjective,' Oxford English dictionary online, last modified January 2018, http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.auckland.ac.nz/view/Entry/185332.

[154] Nicole Blalock, Jameson D. Lopez, and Elyssa Figari, 'Acts of visual sovereignty: photographic representations of cultural objects,' American Indian culture and research journal 39, no. 3 (2015): 85.

[155] Tsinhnahjinnie, 'When is a photograph worth a thousand words?,' 46.

colonial photography.[156] The same argument can be applied to queer and transgender representation histories, which have been dominated by cisgender individuals. This separation between the represented subject, the creator of the image, and the interpreter or art historian creates an ongoing sense of disjunction between the subject, and the author, distancing the ability of the subject to exert visual sovereignty. Visual sovereignty is immensely important, not only over the production of the image, but also in the narration and discourse around the work.

Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie, in 'When is a photograph worth a thousand words?' offers a re-evaluation of visual sovereignty through rereading photographs. In doing so, Tsinhnahjinnie differentiates between their family's 'philosophy that was very protective' of image-making, and how it was perceived as superstitious, misunderstood by Western viewers.[157] She also discusses being invisible as a survival mechanism for certain political climates, noting that it is not always safe to have full visual sovereignty within a culture.[158] For Hulleah, photographic sovereignty is outworked in her own ability to take 'responsibility to reinterpret images of Native peoples.' Here, she discusses visual sovereignty as 'a particular type of consciousness rooted in confidence which is exhibited as a strength in cultural and visual presence', which is one that 'does not ask permission to exist, but . . . require[s] responsibility to continue.' As a Pākehā writer, I am aware that it is walking a fine line, or even crossing it, to write on these images.[159]

Another reason for the necessity of visual sovereignty is not only the historical, but the current representations of tangata whenua and tagata o le moana in our culture. The contexts we perceive Māori men in within mainstream media are overwhelmingly

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[156] Fa'anofo Lisaclaire Uperesa, 'Of savages and warriors,' in Study of a Sāmoan savage, ed. Shigeyuki Kihara (Waitakere: Te Uru Waitakere contemporary gallery, 2016), 8.
[157] Tsinhnahjinnie, 'When is a photograph worth a thousand words?,' 47.
[158] Tsinhnahjinnie, 'When is a photograph worth a thousand words?,' 48.
[159] Morgan Jerkins, a cultural critic, provides an excellent analysis of the issue on privileged white writers writing on people of colour in her essay 'Who will write us?'.
Morgan Jerkins, This will be my undoing (New York: Harper Perennial, 2018).

negative, smattered by continuous reports of poverty, and crime, as Nōpera has noted numerous times in their thesis.[160] Likewise, the predominant visual narrative of Sāmoan men is reductive, diminished to their athletic abilities, implying a division between this and their intellectual abilities.[161] Treagus notes that this creates a false dichotomy within the framing of the visual between body and mind, where we see a 'morphing of the exoticised, savage body into an exoticiced, muscular body [which] becomes part of the project of the invader-settler nation.'[162] So, although the anthropological lens of studying the 'noble savage' is removed, there is still visual stereotyping which impacts on the formation of, and assertion of identity.

Culture for sale (2011) by Shigeyuki Kihara, was a moving image and performance based work, wherein a model would perform a traditional dance, either on screen, or in person, as a response to the viewer purchasing the cultural performance by putting money into a slot or bowl. In this, Kihara draws attention to the historic lack of visual sovereignty experienced by colonised moana based peoples, specifically Sāmoan people. She drew upon the historic human rights abuse of the Völkerschau, a human zoo which existed in Europe during the period of the German administration in Sāmoa between 1900 and 1914. Groups of people from Sāmoa featured as human exhibitions in Germany as part of a zoo of 'exotic entertainment and colonial theatre.'[163] This practice placed Sāmoan people as a subhuman commodity, reduced to the status of animals, to be paid to be viewed in the human zoos. Kihara's work Culture for sale emphasises this capitalisation of culture and people, and incorporated live performance and moving image works, of models standing frozen stiffly in traditional cultural attire. When the viewer placed money into a slot next to the screen, or into a bowl in front of the model, the model would come alive with movement and perform a small dance, before resuming their pose again. Even to the point of being coated in

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[160] Tāwhanga Nōpera, 'Presentation,' Journal of global indigeneity 1, (2015).
[161] Uperesa, 'Of savages and warriors,' 10.
[162] Treagus, 'From anthropometry to Māui,' 5.
[163] Yuki Kihara, Culture for sale, live performance, 2012.

sweat, the performers continued their movements identically with each time money was received. Unlike a traditional performance where the emphasis is on the pride of the performer to engage their audience, in Culture for sale, dancers stare blankly ahead whether in person or on screen, and do not make eye contact with the viewer. Between each performance, they resume the same stiff pose, like a plastic doll or robotic figure. This lapse between performances can be seen as slow cinema, where the individual maintains holding a single pose, sharing time with the viewer and prompting them to consider their complicity in the transaction.

The fact the viewer must physically handle money into the slot or bowl to participate in the artwork — rather than asking, or pressing a switch — implicates the viewer in a process of dehumanised financial transaction. The transaction culminates in the performance, but the viewer is an active voyeur and spectator. It is similar to Payómkawichum artist James Luna's performance Take a picture with a real Indian (2010), in which he invited members of the public to take a photo alongside him, both while he was dressed in traditional attire and dressed wearing casual contemporary Western clothing. In both Kihara and Luna's works, the viewer participating whittles away a sense of personhood of the individual, in favour of participating in using their culture as a commodity.

Tāwhanga Nōpera is a Māori artist who is whakawahine, and of non-binary gender expression, and HIV positive, whose practice revolves around retheorising raranga, the Māori practice of weaving as a tool for spiritual healing. Rather than perceiving it as a static form, where 'traditional art' carries connotations of being inflexible to change, instead Nōpera utilises critical thinking to retheorise raranga as full of queer possibilities. In their interview for Cultured Queer, they discuss it as a fluid media in which one balances seemingly oppositional elements.[164] Here, they consider transgender as a liminal space between 'things that look concrete', akin to Kihara's

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[164] Tāwhanga Nōpera, 'Interview,' Journal of global indigeneity 1 (2015).

consideration of fa'afafine as occupying the va, or the Sāmoan space of the void. In this sense, non-binary genders are considered as occupying an in-between space of possibility, or of liminality.[165]

In considering the genders of male and female as separate and self-contained, Nōpera extends this thought pattern of liminality into weaving sheaves of harakeke, or flax. Prior to weaving, individual sheaves or leaves of flax are separate but through the process of weaving, methodically and slowly they are both interlinked, as how Nōpera perceives that binary genders can be interlinked and combined.[166] This weaving is several things — methodical and consistent, entirely depending upon the equal proportion and strength of both strands to create a whole, and based with the body as a tool to create this interchange.

Visual sovereignty in the creation of an image also necessitates a sustained period of self-examination. By recording oneself, one regards oneself, and the creation of an image generates new and diverse methods of visual self-knowledge. In their art practice, Tāwhanga Nōpera notes the transformative effect of capturing themselves, as a way of analysing the discrepancy between their own self-perception as a transgender individual, and others perceptions of their appearance. As Nōpera says, 'between what I think I look like and what others see, I am able to gauge a comparative distance. Through looking at myself and creating self-portraits … I am able to weave parts of myself together again.' Dan Taulapapa McMullin, has said 'when making images that are a part of Indigenous sovereignty, one has to make them for oneself and the community. It's not going to be part of the market.' Nōpera asserts that in order for individuals to have tino rangatiratanga, that is, sovereignty and autonomy over their own lives, that sovereignty must also be expressed within control over visual consumption. One way to counter this is to use traditional forms of visual culture as a

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[165] Besnier, 'Polynesian gender liminality through time and space,' 298.
[166] Nōpera, 'Presentation'.

means of expression. Through this, Nōpera is able to create a counter to the 'contortion and control of image industries.'[167]

What shift occurs when trans people express or perform their gender as a form of storytelling, particularly embodying another individual's narrative? Tāwhanga Nōpera collects particular stories, then reweaves them as part of their practice. In the process of creative storytelling, the story or idea itself becomes malleable and flexible, and open to the possibility of change and alteration as the teller expresses it once again. In retelling stories, by renegotiating the narrative, one may create correctives or curatives to how we remember particular events and stories. In this way, pūrākau (oral storytelling), is open to continuous discussion pauses, alterations, reiterations, interruptions and reconsiderations; and as it is oral, contains the possibility to be reinterpreted or grounded in the relevancy to a particular issue or audience within a particular moment.

In Tāwhanga Nōpera's work, storytelling also enables a decolonial rewriting of narratives and histories, within a framework of Māoritanga theory and perspectives. Rangimarie Mahuika has spoken of kaupapa Māori theory as a platform which enables Māori people to 'articulate their own reality and experience, their own personal truth as an alternative to the homogenization and silence that is required of them within mainstream New Zealand society.' Mahuika stresses the importance of kaupapa Māori as it holds a unique difference in modes of thinking and experiencing the world as a counterpoint to Western thought. Nōpera has discussed this reimagining of stories in relation to retelling the mythology of Māui, a trickster hero. Within the role as a trickster, Nōpera notes that Māui was able to challenge the common ways of doing things, continually questioning the world around him 'by theorising beyond the limitations of normal practice.'[168]

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[167] Nōpera, huka can haka, 31.
[168] Nōpera, 'Presentation'.

In Māori tradition, Māui died within the body of Hine-nui-te-pō, the goddess of the underworld, in an attempt to gain immortality. Māui intended to reverse the pathway of life, and travel back through the goddess's uterus to overcome his mortality; in some versions of the story he is crushed between her thighs, in others he climbs into her vaginal canal, where he is killed by the obsidian teeth within that line it. Reconsidering this as a trans space, Nōpera questions Māui's ability to inhabit a female body within Māui's own hyper-masculine, male body, in which her 'feminine body [represents] a space of creative potential.'[169] In retelling stories in this way, Nōpera states they are able to 'narrate Māui purakau to consider a gender reality that shifts' and where the practical methodology of raranga practice can be used to 'trick and shift the rigid boundaries of the academy's ivoried vault.'[170] This liminal space within the feminine exists as a void filled with the ability to create and bring existence into being. By reimagining this myth to continue drawing out different concepts from it, and other ways it can inform our lives, Nōpera is able to consider wider possibilities of how, and in what ways there are narratives around crossing gender binaries in Māori pūrākau.

> What both transgender theory and raranga share, are their intersectional ways to organise thinking; helping to resolve problematic intersections in myriad ways. Transgender theory gives presence to spaces where many layers of oppression meet, collide, conflict and shift – and although limited because it is only a theory, it offers a political means to re-think the experiences of transgender people.[171]

Tāwhanga Nōpera's practice is one that looks backwards and reinterprets historical forms of art making in alternative concepts, in order to understand them in a different form. One example of this is their reinterpretation of raranga, a method of Māori weaving which brings different aspects together in a pattern of integrating polarized sides. The process of raranga involves preparing harakeke, or native flax, and

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[169] Nōpera, 'Presentation'.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Nōpera, huka can haka, 91.

positioning it in rows. The weaver then brings the two outermost strands and brings them to the centre, crossing them over other strands in the process. This is repeated multiple times, with a resulting flat surface created on which geometric patterns form as the weaver navigates through the process. So rather than bringing together the two closest elements, the weaver brings the furthest possible components together, combining them to form a sense of harmony and design. Nōpera, in their analysis of raranga, considers this within a queer framework: that the opposing components are at the utmost extremities, and can be seen to represent binary aspects of gender, which are then brought together and connected as part of a larger pattern. Likewise, raranga transverses areas in other aspects, not just bringing the binary sections together as one. With the harakeke, the inner side and outer side of the leaves are also interwoven and combined, as are the areas of void or in-between spaces and the material, the flax itself combined in order to make the complete shape.

Within Nōpera's practice, they utilise both bodily motion and digital motion to create a sense of movement and shifting. Whilst living in Canada, due to the lack of harakeke available, Nōpera began weaving with digital material and moving image, desiring to transform themselves to occupy an ephemeral space 'using weaving with [their] body' as a way or replicating the muscle memory repetition that is unique to the physical media or raranga. In their collaborative work fight clubbing (2014), they worked with designer Adrienne Whitewood (Rongowhakaata, Ngāi Tamanuhiri) to create a series of photographs in which they both appear to move between poses. Each exchanged clothing and dressed each other with a combination of garments belonging to each of them, both determining how they would like to be perceived. As a collective work, this method ensured that autonomy over representation, what each wore and how they were both perceived was determined collaboratively. The resulting series of photographs were fed into Photoshop to automatically generate 127 further images 'between' existing images. Both the photographs taken, and the digitally generated photographs were then combined to form a moving image work that shifts slightly in a disconcerting,

jarring way — it exists both as real representations and as digitally created multiplications. Nōpera discusses this method, that 'making non-linear animated videos through repetitive batch production… intensif[ies] image foci while maintaining open spaces for contemplation.'[172] The awkward motion that jolt back and forth between the figures is intended to invoke 'puppetry, passive habitualisation and conflict.'[173] Both the practice of repeating motions until they are habits, and the use of puppets as a metaphor suggest a loss of autonomy, a trapped or repeated existence, and the disruption of external influencing forces upon the individuals (which perhaps creates the violence). The shifting between the multiple frames of images again feeds into a viewing experience dependent on indeterminacy and extended viewing.

Aliyah Winter and Nathaniel Gordon-Stables both collaborated on the moving image work I have come and joined my love with yours (2017). Aliyah Winter is a Pākehā , Jewish transgender woman, and Nathaniel Gordon-Stables is a Māori transgender man, and both are Wellington based artists. In this work, together they perform a reenactment of a conversation between the European leader employed to take down the Kīngitanga movement, Governor George Grey, and his oppositional leader, Wiremu Tako Ngātata. The conversation took place in 1896 and was subsequently relayed and dictated by Wi Tako, recorded, and translated into English to be published in the Wellington Independent newspaper. The work has the audio of both artists enacting the conversation, overlaid by the visuals of both looking at each other, unmoving except for blinking, and split with shots of their hands pulling a piece of blanket between them. The cloth here takes on the connotation of land, blankets as a source of trading, and the wrestle, a wrestle for sovereignty.

This work concerns historic notions of identity, and draws on archival material as a source, with the rearticulation the material opening the possibility to reenact some of

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[172] Nōpera, huka can haka, 68.
[173] Nōpera, huka can haka, 69.

the tension inherent in the original discussion through the use of visual metaphor. In electing this representation, Nathaniel aligns himself with the leader of the King movement supporting tangata whenua, and a political opponent of colonisation. In situating herself, Aliyah not only aligns herself with a Pākehā, but also one that is a perpetrator of colonial injustice and exploitation. This also sees her enacting an identity of a cisgender man. Perhaps in electing male vocalisations, and as a male character, this allows Aliyah a certain freedom in trespassing gendered boundaries, if temporarily, without the pressure of maintaining a singular gendered narrative and presentation.

This work is presented in her exegesis as firstly introduced around 'the possibilities of translation and the conflicts of power through interpersonal relationship.'[174] It is a performance of identity and gender, albeit one that maintains expression itself within facial features or voice as tacit. This record of the conversation is several times removed, and the error or swaying of the translation itself from the event. 'The subsequent translation is incredibly cryptic, moving between registers of poetic metaphor, Shakespearean quarrel, and factual information' as Aliyah says.[175] There is a translation of the word 'aroha' into the English word 'love', which in this sense allows them to purposefully reframe it in a mistranslation around love and imagined homoeroticism between the two individuals. 'It speaks to acts of violence within ordinary language, which insidiously work to reinforce racial hierarchies implemented through colonisation.'[176] This layering of a narrative of love effaces the violence inherent. The bodies only interact through the act of renting the cloth, and grasping at the neck. The emphasis here is not on the original situation, but more on what happens to translation removed several times from its context, represented and divorced from political and historical nuances.

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[174] Aliyah Winter, 'to represent the sex of angels: trans/poetics' (master's thesis, Massey University of Wellington, 2017), 15.
[175] Winter, 'to represent the sex of angels,' 15.
[176] Ibid.

Art can be freshly defined as a sustained time-space transformation from a condition of crisis to a state of stasis, involving the rhythmic production of symmetry and harmony. . . The tā-vā theory of reality has many ontological and epistemological tenets, several of which state that time and space are the common medium in which all things are, in reality; that time and space are socially organised in different ways across cultures; that all things in nature, mind and society stand in relations of eternal exchange, giving rise to either order or conflict; and that order and conflict are one and the same, for order is itself a form of conflict.[177]

In Māori understandings of art and taonga, items are charged with a mauri or essence, an energetic life force. In this sense, there is a spirituality present in the creation of art, as there is in Sāmoan understanding, where often art occupies a space of the va. The va exists as the in-between space of potential, or the spiritual plane which co-exists with the external, tangible world. Here, the va becomes a space in which one can interact with the ancestor body, the creator, and the essence of creation. This sense of spirituality as co-existent within art practice is separate from traditional Western art historical practice, which characterises artworks as primarily objects which may generate an effect of transcendence upon a viewer, and that historical anthropological artefacts may be spiritually significant to indigenous cultures, but do not actively occupy a space as portals to a spiritual realm. However, in this section I seek to examine narratives of spirituality as latent and continually present within works, unseen yet often unacknowledged. Yuki Kihara notes that within Western art history, there is an argument for contemporary Pacific Art as lacking the traditionality of historical works, thus missing a 'generation of sacredness' in art.[178] However regardless of time period or use of media, Kihara argues that her moving image works are still sacred and have a spiritual presence, as she argues they continue to activate and convey 'the ancient ideas of my people from a thousand years back' and that the sacredness and the va her works occupy are not diluted 'in any way.'[179]

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[177] Hūfanga 'Okusitino Māhina, Maau Filifili selected poems (Auckland: LRS publishing, 2010), 18.
[178] McMullin, Kihara and Berman, 'LeVasa,' 49.
[179] Ibid.

Some of Kihara's works have negotiated this space of a spiritual va by creating collaborative moments between cultures, where they can connect within their own artistic contexts. In Kihara's series Talanoa: walk the talk (2010), she took up a role as mediator, linking and commissioning two cultural performance groups to collaboratively play music or dance as a public performance. One example was bringing together the Otahuhu and District Highland pipe band together with the E Pac lion dance and dragon team. This created a unique moment where members of each culture were in a moment in the va where they were intuitively working together, relying on spontaneity, communication, and cross-cultural negotiation.[180] This project was curated by Pontus Kyander, the Public Art gallery manager, and was formed with the intent for art to act as a catalyst for others to engage inter-culturally.

Taualuga: the last dance (2006) is a live performance and moving image recording by Kihara, wherein she enters the space of the va within her work. In the moving image recording, it exists as a wide angle, single shot in sepia toned colours. Each detail is picked out sharply — it is shot as a documentary style image. Kihara performs a dance in a Victorian mourning dress, and she is lit from the left on the floor, which creates a shadow larger than herself on the wall to her right. The shadow is cast on a slight angle, and so appears to be someone different dancing alongside Kihara, a shadowy figure joining her in choreography. The dance she performs is one that is specifically Sāmoan, but one that is widely performed in variants throughout indigenous cultures within the South Pacific. The taualuga dance is typically the ceremonial dance which is performed at the end of a range of different other dances, and is typically performed by a tāupōu, (high-ranking maiden) or another high-rank individual.[181] This form of dance to Kihara is one 'of negotiation and celebration; with an emphasis on dance movements based on a combination of facial expression and elegant hand gestures to

[180] Yuki Kihara, Talanoa: walk the talk I, documentary video, 2009.
[181] Erika Wolf, 'Shigeyuki Kihara's "Fa'a Fafine; in a manner of a woman": the photographic theater of cross-cultural encounter,' Pacific arts 10, no. 2 (2010), 23.

convey certain political ideas.'[182]

It embodies a specific 'fictitious character' for Kihara, that of Salome, the dancer before King Herod, whose used her power of seduction to request the execution of John the Baptist and was influenced by her version in the play Salome by Oscar Wilde. By imagining herself as Salome, the dance is informed with particular presence of performing another woman. The dance also carries a weight of grief, with the inclusion of the Victorian mourning gown as a costume, and the impending imagined death of John the Baptist. This style of Victorian dress was introduced to Sāmoa following the German colonial administration of the early 1900s. As it is a physically concealing and highly restrictive garment, it becomes a method for 'negating the European fantasy of Sāmoan women as sexually provocative and resisting the male colonial gaze.'[183] She is accompanied by Sāmoa drums, singing, and the traditional Sāmoan ususu, or cheer. The costume stands in for the restriction imposed on Sāmoa post-colonisation, and yet despite the weight and constrictions of her dress, she continues dancing freely and fluidly.

Although the dance of the taualuga is usually lighthearted, Kihara's gestures and solemn expression change the tone. The slowness of her gestures communicate the mood and bring the viewer into the same meditative state as Kihara, typical of slow cinema. Erika Wolf observes that Kihara here operates as 'a temporally displaced figure, mediating between past (both pre-contact and colonial), present, and future.'[184] Within this space of the va, Kihara moves between these temporal dimensions in order to be present alongside her deceased predecessors. Here, Kihara has said that while dancing, she occupies the va, and the dance itself becomes, 'an attempt to communicate with her ancestors in in seeking solutions to today's global issues that

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[182] Wolf, 'Shigeyuki Kihara's "Fa'a Fafine,"' 23.
[183] Natalie Poland, Undressing the Pacific (Otago: Hocken collections, University of Otago, 2013), 3.
[184] Wolf, 'Shigeyuki Kihara's "Fa'a Fafine,"' 23.

affect the small islands of the South Pacific region.'[185] She speaks of this act as a 'tribute to the many leaders and people of Sāmoa for their resilience in the struggle against modernisation and globalisation', and in her performance she embodies both strength and sorrow in response to the va she opens.[186] In this realm of slippage between the past and present, Kihara embodies and experiences the past as a sense of the pain and dislocation of colonial trauma. Kihara has said that 'in the Sāmoan cosmology in terms of time and space, while the West looks to the past in order to look to the future, our concern is more about the past informing the present, and the present is what determines the future.'[187] She said that while performing the dance, she was aware she would 'awaken the ancestor body. It was a graveyard.'[188] By doing so, this enabled her to tie into her heritage, experiencing her ancestors' pain, while also being closely supported by them in her performance.

Kihara's moving image work Siva in motion (2012) can be seen as an extension of her ideas put forth in Taualuga: the last dance, yet with the added desire to make visible the spiritual. While until this point, Kihara's works had minimal post-production editing, and had a naturalistic, sharp focused aesthetic, Siva in motion blends and blurs boundaries between the dancing figure and the space they inhabit. The performance is entirely silent. Against a black background, Kihara again dances a taualuga in Victorian mourning dress. The whole image is dark, and she is lit sharply by two unseen spotlights on her upper left and right. This creates a dislocation, and that it appears that only the edges of her body and dress are picked out by light and identifiable. The detail of her body and garment between melt away into a black void, with her face and dress inner areas are black as the background, so she appears as only a hollow silhouette. This separates the individuality of the figure from the work, and shifts the focus to the gestures she makes with her arms in front of her. Many layers are built into

[185] Shigeyuki Kihara, 'Taualuga,' last modified 2010, http://vimeo.com/13811424.
[186] Ibid.
[187] McMullin, Kihara and Berman, 'LeVasa,' 43.
[188] McMullin, Kihara and Berman, 'LeVasa,' 44.

the final moving image work, and each is layered transparently atop the last, creating a solemn, synchronised dance of multiple figures.

Kihara's legs move very little — in this dance it is her hands and arms which are most expressive, even above her facial expressions. Her hand motions are soft and supple, with extreme dexterity and control, so that there is an almost liquid quality to her gestures — smoothly flowing like water, but with the necessary muscular strength and exactitude to perform these complex gestures. The motions of her hands are largely from the established gestures of siva Sāmoa, or Sāmoan dance, but the particular motions as she uses them together with her arms and torso are not adhering to a set compositional choreography — rather, she uses the language of dance with her own movements to tell a story. The clothing again indicates grief and mourning, and the dance itself is a way of embodying sustained grief — located with the costume in post-contact colonised Sāmoa.

Rather than one version of Yuki, there are three figures of her that are superimposed around the central vertical axis of her body facing us, and at times others overlap and extend to either side. Although each layer of the moving image is filmed separately, each coexists in the finished work and negates singularity, or a linear sense of time and motion. This inability to articulate a set singular image or moment lends the work a visual sense of slippage into the spiritual realm. Like there is no singularity, there is also no hierarchy in each image in terms of opacity or colour, as each is equally emphasized. Although each figure dances a slight variation on the dance, each tells the same narrative through bodily action and gestures. This aesthetic of spiritual transcendence is heightened by other visual elements, such as the symmetry of the image around the centre line, the costuming, the lack of external points of reference and the emphasis on the transparency of each layer as ghostly linear outlines, rather than more substantial images which could emphasizes the form and three-dimensionality of the body. The result is a kaleidoscopic image which seems to

exist in an other-worldly realm, divorced from a sense of fixed spatio-temporality. It becomes hypnotic and mimetic in the rhythm of imitation, repetition and the liquid-like gentleness of the work.

Drawing on an European art historical lineage, Kihara references the Futurist desire in Europe to capture speed and movement. This work particularly references the works of Eadweard Muybridge, Felix-Louis Regnault, and Etienne-Jules Marey who sought to capture motion and dynamism in order to analyse individual components of movement. [189] Instead though, this is also combined with her own cultural heritage, and the other-worldly dimensionality of the space of the va. Does this work exist in the va? Analysing this work merely in terms of its visual and symbolic weight neglects addressing the occupation of the work in relation to the va. Here, Shigeyuki Kihara uses the process of creating the work to become spiritually co-existent with her ancestors in opening a portal to the va in time and space. Visually, there is a removal of the singularity of any figure, and in the obscured face, a removal of individual identity also in favour of spiritual co-habitance, repetition, multivalency, and iteration.

Pati Solomona Tyrell's Aitu vogue ball (2016) shows a similar striving out of a physical realm in favour of the metaphysical space of the va. This moving image work was created as part of a push to raise awareness for a vogue ball held on the 24th September 2016. Although the work formed part of an ad campaign, it exists more as a moving image work of figures dancing. It shows a series of overlapping figures including Tyrell, and the individuals in the FAFSWAG collective, dancing in various intricate costumes. Each shot is reflected over the centre vertical line, with transparent layers of individual figures built up in each frame, so that the movements appear kaleidoscopic and mesmerizing. The brightly coloured clothing and hair accessories create their own arcs in response to the momentum and movement of each dancer,

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[189] This is more notably explored in Kihara's work Māui descending a staircase II (after Duchamp), moving image, 2015. This shows Māui in almost caught in the repetition of ascending and descending a staircase.

while the figures ebb and coalesce into each other, with swirls of fabric pooling out like ink. Although each individual is shown with multiple iterations of themselves, the continual shifting between figures creates a sense of unity, and emphasis on community. The name 'aitu' refers to spirits or ghosts, and the transparency of the figures and the trance like motions carry a spiritual tone of occupying the va.

Kihara's work, Galu afi: waves of fire (2012), is a moving image work that was awarded the 21st annual Wallace art award in 2012. This work was a collaborative effort, with Kirsty McDonald as the creative producer and director, and Rebecca Swan as the camera person. This was filmed on the same day and set as Siva in motion, but in a horizontal format, and featuring only a close up of Kihara's hands. This acts as a work specifically in response to the tsunami, and as a way to communicate with her ancestors regarding the land issues of Sāmoa and Moana based South Pacific islands. The story she expresses through her gestures is one of the tsunami of 2009, in September, and the sense of awe of watching the sea being drawn out, exposing reefs and coral, and then the devastation as the tsunami gathered momentum and came back inshore. 189 people were killed, and it affected Sāmoa, American Sāmoa, and Tonga the most extensively. Erika Wolf speaks of this work in a moving, poetic manner which reflects the weight of the work itself:

> There is this tension between the scientific desire to break down, analyse, dissect and pull apart dance — and then there is the dance itself. It flows and slows and it erupts. The motion and the feeling breaks out of that attempt to contain it.[190]

Multiplicity exists in all these works, bringing a sense of the spiritual through the formal use of layering transparent figures, with subjects appearing several times in different forms within the same frame. With Taualuga, this is as the elongated shadow on Yuki's right, but with Siva in motion, Galu afi, and Tyrell's Aitu vogue ball the doubling and

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[190] 'Making Siva in motion — Shigeyuki Kihara 2012,' last modified 2012, http://vimeo.com/50271507.

multiplicity are created through digital layering of different shots of each artist. Rather than a removal of a part of an individual as I discuss in my chapter on bodies, instead each individual exists alongside variations and iterations of themselves. Neither frame is given precedence, and each seems non-hierarchical, instead delighting in the blurring and diffusing the figures. This is further emphasized in Siva in motion, Galu afi, and Aitu vogue ball, in which each figure's various motions are superimposed and freely permeate each other iteration. The figures, in their transparency, draw attention to ghostly insubstantiality and spirituality, and the blurring of boundaries and fixed borders.

Tāwhanga Nōpera's work Mass production: transmitting the reel back through the TV haka screen (2017) exists as a performance work, and a recording of it. In it, Nōpera performs poi while chanting a karakia, as a way of embodying the gestures and actions of their ancestors, and a way of weaving gestures in the air with their body. In creating this work, they were able to enter a state of meditation and mindfulness where they were able to use this form of creative expression to gain a sense of release and healing from past traumas. Their monologue was given while performing the poi while they wore headphones and listened to Rihanna at a high volume. In doing so, with their own words almost obliterated from their own hearing by the sound through their headphones, they sought to 'convey how difficult it might be to perform haka and recite poetic text whilst being bombarded with mainstream culture.'[191]

Tāwhanga Nōpera considers practice-lead research as part of his thesis, seeing the learning process as an integral part of understanding raranga. In this way, knowledge emerges through repetitive action and the creative process. Nōpera states it is similar to 'Polanyi's tacit knowing, where a sense of hidden-knowing emerges through communal action in motion… through raranga, weavers solve problems as they

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[191] Nōpera, 'huka can haka,' 116.

untangle and organise through thinking fingers…'[192] In this sense, the path of researching is the process of weaving, and the process of weaving is also a process that enables healing and emotional catharsis. This method is also a manifestation of a desire to challenge current visual systems of oppression.

Nōpera argues that as a result of colonisation, in institutional structures and spaces, and over generations, has traumatised indigenous peoples out of their strongly embodied state into a state of disembodiment.[193] The antidote is to repattern 'bodies with the same gestures ancestors used… [to] bring back our sense of self back into our bodies again' via a gestural overlaying.[194] Nōpera notes that one finding of their thesis is that 'raranga is a powerful tool to interpret sexual trauma, offering connective strategies to release damaging internalised behaviours.'[195] With weaving, there is the Māori concept of te pa harakeke, the harvesting methodologies and family symbolism of the plant. The outer sheaves of flax represent grandparents, parents, siblings, and so forth. When harvesting flax, it is protocol to remove the leaves on the outside first; metaphorically, grandparents are the first losses, which through weaving, are then transformed into necessities such as clothing and art, preserving the inner, younger flax at the centre of the plant. The importance of weaving is seen through Nōpera's work Kōwhaiwhai (2014), which is a moving image work with kaleidoscopic images of flax, reversed, inverted, rotated, flipped, and merging in and out of different images. For Nōpera, the process of weaving with moving image art, and with their body in space creates a transformative and healing process, in which their transgender body is re-situated within a larger genealogy of the cultural practices of their ancestors and iwi, within which they find a sense of belonging.

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[192] Nōpera, 'huka can haka,' 129.
[193] Ibid.
[194] Tāwhanga Nōpera, 'Interview: Tāwhanga Nōpera,' Cultured queer / queering culture: indigenous perspectives on queerness symposium, University of Wollongong, last modified December 22, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GId0GjFQAQo.
[195] Nōpera, 'huka can haka,' 4.

Conclusion

As I composed my thesis, I was particularly interested in comparing, contrasting, and collating different artistic strategies of representing the body of the artist in a moving image work. The title of my thesis, Shifting bodies, connotes not only the movement of the bodies and identities of the individuals, but also the difficulty faced when attempting to articulate similarities over such an unwieldy and diverse topic, where the differences between artistic approaches and techniques refuses a static examination or singularity of definition. My work instead aims to clarify the multitude of ways that artists can and do relate to their body as a physical site, and to draw attention to it as a tool of non-normative gender communication. In each work, I try to establish consistencies and differences in filmed self-representation.

In regards to imaging and imagining the body, I found that artists Jordana Bragg, Mainard Larkin, and Aliyah Winter could be seen to approach the self with a tentativeness and with a lack of cohesion. This inability to envisage the body as complete I argue to be indicative of the felt experience of gender dysphoria, which can render parts of the body to be inexplicably uncomfortable to embody. This erasure of aspects of the body, and the exposure of other aspects lends to a particular kind of examination of the body, which frustrates the viewer's desire for comprehension, and in its lack of complete vulnerability, resists attempts at an objectifying gaze. Instead, elements of the body are revealed as fragmentary, and caught in specific motions and gestures which can be read in relation to gender performativity, or the process of enacting gender. I theorise this as a particular mode of transaesthetics, terming it non-binary durationality, which extends the way viewers interact with the images, participating in the image's indeterminacy as a method of suspending automatic gendered reading. The array of methods for creating an inexact or incomplete image of the body, whilst still wanting to depict the body, speaks to a certain ambivalence toward the physical self as a site of negotiating gendered realities.

The social and cultural components of gender identification are examined in my section on culture, where it becomes apparent that utilising the same lens of reading is insufficient for the specificities outlined in the works of Nathaniel Gordon-Stables, Shigeyuki Kihara, Tāwhanga Nōpera, Tanu Gago and Pati Solomona Tyrell. Perhaps the communal kaupapa of Māori and Sāmoan cultures necessitates a point of departure, as in works by these artists, the individual is centred within a context of spirituality and community, rather than medicalisation and corporeality. Both Shigeyuki Kihara and Pati Solomona Tyrell, as artists of Sāmoan heritage, enter the spiritual realm of the va within their practices, and the aesthetic techniques they use to portray this are similar. Distinct stylistic choices for depicting artists as they dance are seen in kaleidoscopic, sensory, overlaid, and transparent multiplicities of form, which are create the encompassing visual structure in their works.

Possibilities for putting language to experiences of the transgender self are explored in relation to transpoetics, particularly in Jordana Bragg and Aliyah Winter's works. The linguistic vulnerability one encounters when defining something so physically intrinsic becomes a problem of finding adequate language, or of manipulating language in new ways. Through language, the body is extricated from being a centre of kinetic and corporeal experience, and instead becomes the containing site of emotions and thoughts. Like the techniques of erasure discussed in my chapter on the body, this removal of the physicality of the body renders it open to internal contemplation, but removes the possibility of actually examining the body as surface. Emotions are articulated through language that is laced with poetic techniques, and symbolic language becomes a way of cloaking trauma and loss to be processed in a manageable way.

However similarities are attempted to be sought in methods of asserting presence through language, body, and cultural references, each work must be considered in

relation to the artist's own desire and trajectory of their practice. The arguments I make are considered in light of the limited range of material produced within this category by openly transgender artists within Aotearoa, of which I have provided a précis of. The categorization of these artists' works as indicative of various unified transgender aesthetics must also be interrogated, as transgender as a mode of identification and a methodology is still undergoing vigorous and accelerated development. This becomes not only a formal analysis, but a political analysis, intended to consider ways in which the aesthetics of binary genders can be denaturalized in favour of pluralism and multifariousness. This thesis is resonant in the variety of methods that Aotearoa artists express their individuality in ways which are mesmerizing and profound.

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