

Mix Tape: Masc*4 No-Category: Troubling Categorical Desire

by Loren Britton

Gropius Bau - Masculinities: Berlin Perspectives

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Following a new code:

When you make an access copy, you get to shout-out the last writer whose access copy you read. So this goes out to the poet Trish Salah.

Track 1:

What does passing mean? - this is Masc* for No Category

Pass,
pass
whoosh
whoooooosh
swoooosh wheeeew
... sloooww...
dooooown.

Passing by deviating from the line,
disrupting the figures,
falling in line and looking just like
'one of the guys'.

Dad, Daddy, Father, Man, Manly, many many men,
Uncle handlebar mustache,
drive a motorcycle,
wear leather,
be disappointed in your wife,
make fun of your trans*gender nibbling.
nibbling?
used to be a niece,
now has no name to you,
using a made up word to say something in a gender neutral way, that's
not crossed your mind.
Last time we saw one another you laughed at me, in not the nice sort of
way,

Masculine.

Masculine, Muscle, Masculine, Man,
Masculine feelings don't feel so comfortable with me.

If trans* Asterix is a line of flight, an expression of desire,
an archetype of strength and power, disrupting, topping, undoing the
power of you,
manly man,
let's find spaces together for soft power.

Intentional power,
power for using my voice,
my voice?
My scratchy crackly voice?
This voice that has changed so many times over past months and years,
just let me be,
vulnerable.
And uncomfortable.

I've got a trans voice,
it changes and shifts,
I can't hit the high notes in the song anymore,
but I forget and my next singing note
disappears.

When I think about male archetypes, I think about my Dad who I don't
speak to.

His masculinity unravels
at every end. Bulldozing
laws regulations, rules, it landed him
in jail once, he's tough like
a real man.

He doesn't listen –
he doesn't listen
to me. Are you
are you
listening to me?

Once, when I was in the passenger seat,
he drove the wrong way down a street.
I said,
could you please not do that,
and he said,
you're never going to like me because I'm a man.
What if that is true?

What if I never liked or never will like this archetype of a man,
because of my father,
because he is not the kind of man who would teach me.
Manly man,
his masculinity is not mine.

What happens when the archetypes of masculinity you are surrounded by
produce and reproduce the worst of men?
Capitalist,
abusive,
misogynist,
white supremacist?

Archetype of man,
my grandfather.
My grandfather who looks at me through the camera on the screen,
through the extractive monstrosity of Zoom.

My grandmother and I talk about her dolls,
how she arranges them,
how they chatter and speak at night,
how she sews new clothing for them.
And now that I sport a full beard my grandfather, who seems like he is
looking at me on the screen says
"I'll let you girls talk now, I don't do 'chit chat'".

Is he seeing me?

Does he refuse to see me?

As Claudia Rankine says in Citizen,
why do you feel comfortable saying *this* to me?

Archetype,
Archetype,
Archetype right
– strength: I’m quite weak.
bad boy: unfortunately I tend to follow the rules.
into working out: unfortunately I’m too body positive to be into worrying
about my stomach.
Into women: well we have that in common.

Archetype, Archetype, Archetype,
Paul Preciado,
there’s a man I can get behind.
read into.
follow with attentiveness.
This body essay,
this intoxication protocol,
this Fiction,
actually.
This record of a white trans*masculine person showing up and trying to
attend to Archetypical Masculinities.
being here with you,
(whomever you are listening to me)
as though speaking into an empty room.

Trying to find where these masculinities
dissolve,
and to ask:
what other figures are there?

I was labeled a woman,
but that’s imperceptible.
Except,
I just told you,
and gender benders like me love playing with flowers and femininity even
when,
I am not a woman,
nor a man,
oops.

Start in the front,
turn off the machine,

adjust the setting to zero.

As if for surgery, I will perform for you now.

I'm Loren Britton,

and

I've recently been considering changing my name to Ren.

I use they / them pronouns

and

this is Masc* for No Category.

Track 2:

Shapeshifting Love

I've fallen in love.

I've fallen in love

for the first time,

and this time I know its for real.

I want to break free,

I want to break free,

you're so self satisfied,

I've got to break free.

Masculinities, Male, transgendere/ed, transsexual, transgenderist, crossdresser, trans, transsexual man, man, trans man, androgyne, anomalous, transie, tranny, trannie, pre-op transsexual, pre-op TS, non-op transsexual, boi, boy guy, transguy, female dyke with a twist, neutrois, intersex.ed, intersexual, intergender, csgender/ed* (with a star), polygenderal, queer, transboy, transperson, gendervariant, genderqueer, transsexed, transfag, new man, gendertrash, genderfuck, gender-free, dyke, human, me, gender atheist, gender variant, transsexual, non-normatively gendered, female-towards-male, queerboy, gender eurphoric, transvestite, man with transsexual history, man with transgendered history, two-spirit, third sex, genderless, bigender, bi-gender, bye gender!, gender challenged, gender gifted, flexible, agender, nongendered, pangender, butch, female boy, gender deviant (positively!), dysphoric, questioning, gendered, stealth trans boy, t-person, person, non-gender-specific, fluctuating gender, incomplete gendered person, trans Woman, inbetweenie, gender-fabulous!, cross dreamer, dreaming of trans*feminism.

Honestly, I'm committed to trans*feminism.

And trans*feministTechnoScience.

Trans*FeministTechnoscience

(T*FTS)

as I defined it with my friend Helen, is a branch of science studies and practices that recognizes the inseparability of boundaries and the inseparability between science / technology / society its technoscience.

T*FTS

remakes the material semiotic boundaries of the body, nature, and technology.

She and I use the formula of the gender star (*)

which sharpens the points of the intersections of
antiracist,
queer,
disabled,
trans-disciplinary sensibilities
to make frictional access into spaces that never were feminist
and were overtly Masculine to start with.

I'm into trans*feminism because like Andrea Long Chu,
I'm real with the desire that peeks out of the text
like a tattoo from the edge of a t-shirt sleeve –
it reminds me of the flesh behind every idea.
Crossing genders is comical because its fantastical but serious.
It is impossible but engaging with the edge of this impossibility is the
desire that I engage with when crossing.

No category could hold the desire to not be held by the category.
No category could hold the desire to not be held by the category.

With Ocean Vuong,
I never wanted to build a “body of work,”
but to preserve these,
our bodies,
breathing and unaccounted for,
inside the work.

This what I know.

That my body in its whiteness, and its trans*ness, in its Americanness, in its Migrantness, in its poorness, in its changingness, can intentionally take up space and center the voices of those less heard.

I also know that my body alone can't account for this because bodies aren't metaphors.

Track 3: Unknowing Masculinity

I looked for Masculinity in Audre Lorde's writing
and I asked her to tell me about poetry

In Poetry is not a Luxury she told me:
she said:

poetry is the light that we form our ideas by
poetry is the way we pursue our magic and make it realized.
Poetry is illumination.

Poetry is how we give name to those ideas which are
— until the poem —
nameless and formless,
about to be birthed, but already felt.

I looked for Masculinity in
Jose Esteban Muñoz's *Crusing Utopia*,
and right where it would alphabetically be listed
is instead
"Karl Marx" and "commodity fetish".

Muñoz refused my question!
Masculinity is not yet here.
It approaches like a crashing wave of potentiality,
like a fetish,
always better in imagination than in practice.

I looked for Masculinity in
Hortense Spiller's
Black, White and in Color,
and right where it would alphabetically be listed,
instead is: mask, mass, materialism, materiality and patriarchy.

Mothers teaching strength,
possibility,

practices of quotidian excellence,
survival through repetition, attending to the material necessities,
re-mothering, caring,
and masking to stay safe.

I looked for Masculinity in Alexis Pauline Gumb's *M Archive: After the End of the World*, and thirteen pages, in.

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.
- E.
- F.
- G.
- H.
- I.
- J.
- K.
- L.

page 13.

is

"From the Lab Notebooks".

Gumbs writes:

the only precedent was gallstones. or maybe (according to some critical black oceanographers) pearls. how the smallest piece of sand can transform you until you organize your life around the pain. hard shell almost impossible to pry open, but inside everything soft, naked, new. except the rock. the round and hard place they were built around.

turns out i shine my fear with all of me, keep it moist and fed and perfect. tend to it and tiptoe around like it's a newborn baby. it's not. it has been here much longer than i have. someone else has cared for it before. it seems like it gets more precious with the passing years, but that's wrong.

when they came to the planet looking for traces of the humans we had been, all they found were these round and gleaming stones. it was poetic for them, given the shape of the planet itself. given all the water so close to the expanding sun. if we could have seen it, maybe we would have

found it more poetic than ironic too. the planet shone with all our perfectly round fears and how we left them.

i hope they build iridescent shrines. i hope they decorate a path to dreaming thrones. i hope they make a rainbow waterfall of marbles. or reflect passion into action with pinball confidence and speed. make something out of who i never was. have fun with it. the fear that made me whole.

Including footnote number 8:

How would you know why the stone is there, whether you need to remove it, bury it, or ignore it?

From Pedagogies of the Sacred by M. Jacqui Alexander page 311.

I looked for masculinity in myself
what do I think about Masculinity
and I realized I don't know.

Defining it in opposition to femininity,
which it isn't.

Leads me to think of toxicity...
as in toxic Masculinity or father,
as in patriarchal masculinity.

But what about all the other Masculinities?

A Crip masculinity?

A Disabled Masculinity?

A Trans* Masculinity?

A Faggy Masculinity?

A Feminine Masculinity?

A Femme Daddy?

A tough softie?

A tough on the patriarchy, doing everything he can against it, feminist,
manly man?

Track 4:

COMMUNITY resonances

Don't leave me this way.
Let's trace our resistances
to the norm.

I can't survive, I can't stay alive.

I can't exist,
Masculinity.
So, hey!
don't leave me this way.

Expressed as domination,
don't leave me this way.

Economically as privilege,
don't leave me this way.

Bodily as aggression,
Ahh, baby!
what can(not) be done!

Let's, not defend what we are,
Let's reject it.
Let's, disidentify,
from coercion.
Let's, desire
beyond
the norm.
Let's,
rather than
reproduce it.

This burning fire down in my soul,
has taught me to love my,
uncommon relations.
Friendships,
lovers,
plants,
boundaries that don't stop at the edge of my skin.

We are constantly changing.
We are constantly demanding the 'impossible',
Let's make space for what can be invented.

How about

politics
in a vulnerable body.
not subjected.
collectively defined.

Now can't you see it's burning outta control.
Now can you see it burning outta control!

Let's not work with definitions of their defining.
Let's undefine, with care.
Oh baby please, please, don't leave me this way.

Track 5: Waiting for Other Stories

Interventions upon
categories
and labels.
suggested by these masculinities.
How about,
different stories?

Disrupting the Archetype:
Dismantling the category beyond referent.

Male order: power,
patriarchy
and space:
Uncomfortable foreclosures, spatial re-arrangements and strength:
Nothing about us without us.

Too close to home: family and fatherhood:
Staying close, comfortably: loving the figure of the nuclear family out of
style.

Queering masculinity:
Questioning the stability of a name.

Reclaiming the black body:
Making space, centering, and caring for the black bodies that are already
present. Stopping to re-center white experience.

Women on men: reversing the male gaze:
Out of time, for more waiting.