Trans Athletic Movements in Performance, Fiction, and Social Media

by

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Abstract

This project looks at how athletic movements borrowed from exercise translate into performance and social media settings mediated through trans bodies, affects, and politics. Trans artists turn to exercise for personal transformation of the body and bring those movements and their accompanying affects on stage in order to perform trans bodies as agentive and generative. The pleasure of personal transformation shifts into a desire to critique the ways trans bodies are regulated, to build community with audiences, and to encourage audiences to become participants. Trans athletic movements can be categorized into three main types: violent, cyclical, and magnetic clusters.

In their two performance art pieces, Cassils takes the violent movements of Muay Thai and fight choreography and directs them towards moulding other bodies — clay and an invisible opponent. For Cassils, the violence of the movements represents a simultaneous creation and destruction, a desire to defeat the regulatory powers that shape trans bodies and create new ways to shape and to memorialize those who have been regulated into non-existence. For Nina Arsenault and Lynn Breedlove, the athletic movements of choice are the cyclical movements of the bike pedals. Focusing more on the potential of repetition and speed to trigger a transcendental experience of connection with the world and with one's emotions, the artists oriented towards bikes harness the cyclicality of movement as form of self-exploration of trans bodies not related to dysphoria but to euphoria. In the move from stage to social media, micha cárdenas, Chase Ross, and Alexandria Gutierrez perform athletic movements of CrossFit, running, and BeachBody, respectively, through Instagram images or YouTube videos. While cárdenas and Gutierrez frame their fitness in accordance within the category of #fitspo, cárdenas troubles that framework by juxtaposing fitness images with captions

advocating trans activism through physical fitness. Ross, on the other hand, presents his running stories as ways of maintaining mental well-being in the trans community.

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Introduction: Trans Athletic Movements in Performance, Fiction, and Social Media

In her *150* performance, micha cárdenas appeared on the makeshift stage of the Fluxx gallery in Tucson in sweltering heat that resembles a CrossFit gym. Cárdenas was dressed in workout gear, sweaty after doing a few warm up laps around the block. She then began to perform a series of burpees. The 10-minute performance consisted only of cárdenas continuously performing burpees, a type of full body exercise consisting of three kinds of movements (squat, plank, and standing position), accompanied only by the artist's voice repeating: "drop to the floor," "push yourself up," "do it again" (cárdenas *150*). This performance was inspired by cárdenas's off-stage interest in CrossFit, a fitness regimen combining elements of gymnastics, weightlifting, and running, and was part of #Stronger, cárdenas's project combining Instagram posts of the artist's workouts with activist and empowering messages aimed at trans women of colour, and offline components such as interviews with trans women and developing a trans fitness app. While the title of the performance refers to the target number of burpees the artist strives to perform in ten minutes, cárdenas gave no explanation as to what the burpees signified, although some of the audience members at this Trans Studies Conference poetry and performance event were aware of cárdenas's interest in CrossFit. At the beginning of the performance, the artist invited the audience to exercise alongside her, and despite the heat, as the performance went on, more people started to participate. The hesitation to participate was in part due to weather conditions and different ability levels, but the act of participation by those who decided to join felt as much as an act of solidarity as an act of excitement. When the exhausted cárdenas took a brief break to drink water and then continued the exercise with the exclamation: "do it again," the audience periodically laughed in disbelief and awe, and cheered cárdenas on.

I take *150* as my opening example because this performance encapsulates trans performers' interest in exercise and the movements of particular exercises extricated from their original contexts, as ways of performing trans bodies. Cárdenas performed in front of an audience of trans and cisgender people who understood the complexities of transness beyond the tropes of the wrong body and details of surgeries, which allowed the artist to forego the

need to explain her identity or narrate her transition. Cárdenas's performance is not about the linear movements of transition, the event that has so often defined trans work; rather, it is a work harnessing the potential of physical movement for performing trans bodies as strong and for translating physical strength into political strength, whether that manifests through activism, stronger community ties, or self-care and well-being. Performed in the intimate setting of the Fluxx gallery filled with cárdenas's friends, colleagues, and acquaintances, the burpees were more than a durational performance testing the body's limits, they were a celebration of trans resilience and the ability to get up again and fight after each fall. The audience who cheered cárdenas on seemed to be aware of the metaphor that the artist was trying to get across and that exercise had transcended its original context of making the body fit. Exercise, or, athletic movements enable trans performers to keep and even highlight the transformation aspect that transition would occupy in a trans narrative but to reframe it not as fixing something that was broken but as asking: what (else) can the trans body do?

There is precedence for reading athletic movements in art that borrows from exercise but translates what is borrowed into a context different than the original exercise "text." Observing Wu Tsang's and Math Bass's video installation featuring two queer, trans artists rehearsing gestures from soccer, Jennifer Doyle reads the work as a sports text that "refuses to offer the basic elements demanded of the sports text: there is no virtuosity, there is no competition; there is no game; there is no audience" (275). Like *150, Soccer* borrows movements that are clearly recognizable as belonging to a sport and translates them into something else, in this case, a more intimate set of movements that draw out "the erotics specific to queer fantasies about what it means to play together" (Doyle 274). While cárdenas also rehearses a set of movements from CrossFit, her movements bear more of a resemblance to the aspects of a sports "text" than Wu Tsang's and Bass's work. *150* could be read as referencing a CrossFit competition, which features athletes performing alongside each other rather than in one-on-one matches, but also as a training session in which athletes compete only against themselves. The presence of an audience could potentially imply an absence of intimacy but the makeup of cárdenas's audience allows for an intimacy between performer and audience, who cheer the performer on as an audience at a sporting event would. What Doyle's example shows is that the introduction of sports themes into art is sometimes less concerned with organized sports and more with experiences that occurred within the realm of sports but that, distilled into a work of art, focus more on particular affect related to a sporting experience than to the totality of a sport or a sporting event. Even though transformation or speeding up to a euphoric state mark most trans athletic performances, in *Soccer*, Doyle finds

the opposite, a performance whose queerness is expressed through the qualities of being "half-baked," incomplete, "a desire not quite formed" (274). Wu Tsang and Math Bass are in fact both trans artists, and the half-baked-ness of the play could equally be read as a reference to collaborative, relational transness, a transness co-created through movements and an in-betweenness unrelated to binary gender but to affects and to soccer, the other player, and to the alienesque aesthetic. One of the warm-up exercises in *Soccer*, running in place, gestures to "queer failure," a queer temporality of non-linear trajectory, but also bears resemblance to cárdenas' 10-minute burpees. Although these repeated gestures abandoned for other types of movements in *Soccer* speak more to an unwillingness to commit to a single movement, cárdenas's work does have a trajectory and a duration because the artist commits to repeating the movements until the body reaches its limit, which speaks to a commitment more consistent with moving towards a goal but also pushing beyond it.

When performed on stage or online, "athletic movements" become something other than movements performed with the goals of fitness or leisure. The term athletic implies a certain kind of fit body and a body that engages in sports professionally or for recreation. And yet, athletic also describes a desire to move one's body in specific ways, to perform exercises because of the affects they create in the athlete. The terms "athletic" and "movements" must be thought of together because movement alone is not sufficiently specific to reflect on why cárdenas performs burpees in *150*. I want to consider movement in a very particular context: the kinetic movements of trans bodies on stage, in print text, and online (through videos and images), intra-actions between trans and other bodies in performances settings mimicking competition or training, and movements that functions as affects binding online communities into affective counterpublics. In trans athletic performances, athletic movements occupy a space with watery boundaries because they exist between sports and art, autobiography and art, and art and politics. Trans bodies performing athletic movements on stage cite the temporalities, spaces, and objects to which athletes' bodies are relational in the gym or the arena but reinterpret them to also be relational to various contexts, such as bodily transformations or necropolitics, that trans bodies inhabit. In approaching my objects of study, I will make my own framework by paying attention to seven aspects of athletic movements: the site of movement, objects of intra-actions, motivation for movement, effects of movement, how movement is mediated through light, sounds, and social media, and the significance of movement for trans bodies. Considering that movement is more complex than just the movements of an athlete's body, an analysis of movement must also include the conditions that enable movement in order to understand the significance of specific kinds of movements

for trans bodies. In the three chapters, although all movements are collaborative and can be conceptualized as intra-actions, this framework has yielded three main types of movements: violent, cyclical, and magnetic clusters. The violently creative movements (punches and kicks) in Cassils's performances are at the same time destructive and creative, seeking to break down in order to rebuild, and memorializing violence through re-creating it by creating space for trans futurities in the wake of trans necropolitics. In Nina Arsenault's and Lynn Breedlove's bike encounters, the cyclical movements of the bike are not focused on creating a new body but inwards, towards triggering euphoric and almost out-of-body experiences that serve as re-connections with the body. When the transformative potential of exercise moves online, as it does in cárdenas's #Stronger project, it has the ability to become a magnet for attracting and shaping trans online communities, or affective counterpublics, and harnessing the enthusiasm of the athlete for their sport as fuel for empowering trans communities of colour. Through #Stronger, cárdenas aims to offer practical steps towards a vision of trans of colour futurity that would counteract the high rates of murders of trans(feminine) people of colour and that recognizes that in this time of increased trans visibility, "only 'some versions of transness' are associated with futurity while for others, having a future at all is not a given" (Fisher et al. 1).

Trans Studies and Affect

Although the concepts of transition and bodily transformation have been important parts of trans studies, movement, and especially athletic movement, has remained largely undertheorized. In trans studies, engagement with movement mainly appears through dance theory or through discussions of trans embodiment, heavily influenced by an affective conception of the body as relational and the surface of the skin as co-created through social interactions but also relationships with other animate and inanimate elements and spatial structures. In considering Sean Dorsey's *Lou,* a dance performance about transition, Julian Carter imagines transness as a gender crossing but a crossing mediated on stage through the dance movements of multiple dancers. Playing with the double meaning of the term transition as both gender transformation and a dance term designating "how movements are linked," Carter re-conceptualizes transition in terms of physical gestures, as "movements from place to place (trans/situ) that simultaneously shift our relations with our own bodies and the bodies of others" (131). For Carter, transition is not a condition of moving away from being trapped in the body, but "a condition of possibility for our movement toward other bodies" (131); not a

linear movement but "places in time where movements — forward, backward, sideways — are equally possible and co-exist" (130). Considering that trans performances have stepped away from transition as their primary kind of movement, Carter's concept of movement can also be extended into post-transition or instead-of-transition spaces and woven into the merger of political and embodied movements that some athletic performances take up. Trans athletic performances also see the movements of the performer as possibilities of moving away from a linear conception of transition and towards other bodies, although not always necessarily human bodies but also art and sports objects such as clay and bikes.

If the move towards other bodies is relevant for trans bodies, then we must also consider what is created between the moving bodies. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari argue that "the middle is by no means an average; on the contrary, it is where things pick up speed" (25). Furthermore, "between things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks" (Deleuze and Guattari 25). Similarly, transness can be conceptualized not only as an inbetweenness that depends on binary gender or a third space between male and female but as an inbetweenness in which speeding up creates other opportunities for thinking about trans embodiment and trans art. Athletic movements embody "speeding up" in that they activate the body of a performer and situate them in relation to another entity — a block of clay, a bike, a dumbbell, an audience member — in order to sweep "one and the other away," or, rather, contextualize one and the other as more than what they were before the encounter. In Cassils's performance, for example, the artist's body and the clay become redefined into victim and perpetrator of violence who continuously switch roles and who come to stand in for the multiplicities of scenarios of violent encounters specific to the locations where the performances take place. A definition of transness in Cassils's performances is, therefore, not an assumption about the artist's off-stage identity but a reading of what transness comes to be in the moment of the performance, when athletic movements mediate Cassils's intra-actions with their chosen objects on stage.

While earlier iterations defined being trans as existing between two binary genders, later definitions invoke openness and connectivity as guiding principles. As an interdisciplinary and intersectional field, trans studies, spearheaded by projects such as the two Trans Studies Readers and *TSQ: Trans Studies Quarterly* journal, always approach transness as related to a variety of other disciplines. Through interdisciplinarity, trans studies adopt "the middle" as an infinitely productive space of potentiality and collaboration. The

move towards relationality and interdisciplinarity in defining trans studies and trans identity that Sandy Stone's "The Empire Strikes Back" enabled is reflected in Paisley Currah's and Susan Stryker's idea of the term trans — with a hyphen, later an asterisk, and sometimes a slash — as a "gesture toward the inherently unfinishable combinatorial work of the trans- prefix" (1). Trans* originated as a way of making "trans," and the earlier term "transgender," more inclusive to non-binary individuals, but in trans studies, it has opened up to a series of other possible connections such as tranimalities, trans-political, and trans/feminism. Such an open-ended structure allows for a non-linear movement of transness into other areas, where it can merge with other concepts relevant for a particular aspect of transness. Isolating the term trans as only indicating gender obscures the other categories or "axes of oppression" such as "class, race, nationality, [and] ethnicity" that transness intersects with and that are often excluded from trans politics and trans studies (simpkins 229). The term trans can be conceptualized affectively, as a rhizome expanding into innumerable connections, but it can also be conceptualized as a movement refracted through the lens of the asterisk, hyphen, or slash into unexpected or underexplored directions. Transness is not just linguistic nor is it just bodily or experiential; it is a complex category that stems from gender identity but can include any number of relevant influences that mediate how gender stabilizes in bodies as well as how it functions in art and cultural production.

The necessity of challenging a linear conception of transition, or, transition as a move from one predetermined end of the gender binary to the other, enabled by hormones and surgery and supervised by medical professionals, and ending with a smooth blending into cisgender society, can be traced back to Stone's inaugural article. Stone challenges the centrality of medical intervention as the defining characteristic of trans identity and calls instead for a refraction of one kind of story into stories that allow for "ambiguities and polyvocalities" (231). There is no one way to transition, no set categories of what one transitions to, and no set goal of when transition is over. The linearity of transition is a trope sustained by the medical establishment, enforced by the "official [gender] categories" trans people are supposed to transition into, and a trope that then proliferates in mainstream media and trans memoir (Spade 317). While works such as Cassils's performances and Breedlove's novel operate outside of a frame of medical transition, other athletic trans performances take post-transition as their starting point and aim to decenter transition while at the same time suggesting that transition is potentially a prerequisite for thinking beyond its confines. Post-transition works show that transness can be legible, at least for trans audiences, even with brief mentions of the medical and a foregrounding of other elements influential for a

particular artist or community. Transness is not transcended because transness as defined exclusively through transition was always an imposed concept. In post-transition narratives and performances, the fascination with movement is emerging as a kind of replacement for transition as topic without replacing the narrative structure that chases transformation. Unlike most trans memoirs, in which surgery or the effects of hormones formed the climax of the narrative, in post-transition athletic performance, the climax in these performances is replaced by the peak of the infatuation with exercise. The differing starting points for explorations of movement show that non-linear movement is not something that simply follows transition but a strategy that authors use to replace transition as the climax in trans autobiographical acts. Of course, there are other methods of displacing the focus from transition, such as transposing the body onto geography, as in Imogen Binnie's *Nevada* and jia qing wilson-yang's *Small Beauty,* onto technology, as in Juliana Huxtable's *There are Certain Facts that Cannot be Disputed* performance, and onto fantastical elements in trans speculative fiction. Engaging with athletic movements is not a deflection of talking about the body but a reconsideration of one's relationship with the body while remaining in the realm of the body and transforming one's body without transitioning.

Although many instances of contemporary trans art forego the kinds of detailed, although many times binary, discussions of gender that trans memoirs had, that does not necessarily mean that writers, artists, and creators imagine themselves or their protagonists as "postgender subject[s] who possess... absolute agency and [are] able to craft [their] gender with perfect felicity" (Salamon 96). Almost all the trans novels published in the past few years start post-transition and forego discussing gender at length in favour of devoting more space to the multitude of other concerns that had been displaced by overemphasizing gender. However, more nuanced self-work and gender-work is still in process and is expressed through different kinds of affective and social bonds. Cárdenas, for example, had gone through transition before she came to CrossFit, but her interaction with this activity has led her to express her gender as related to exercise, as she demonstrates through her self-naming as "femme jock" in one of the prototype images for her trans health app. Considering that becoming muscular is generally considered masculine, it is novel for a trans woman to feel the freedom to represent herself in a way that makes muscles and femmeness complementary. Cassils, on the other hand, takes up gender not primarily as an in-betweenness of masculine and feminine that the audience traces on the artist's nude body but more in relation to their stage opponents (embodiments of the regulatory powers) that influence trans bodies's abilities to exist as gender ambiguous. Exercise also make Cassils more masculine, but unlike

cárdenas, this complies with ideals of masculinity that trans men are supposed to conform to. Along with nuanced references to gender, some trans athletic performances also put race into conversation with gender through taking up #BlackLivesMatter, as cárdenas and Cassils do, in order to stress the precarity of the lives of trans people of colour and embody both that precarity as well as a possibility for resistance through athletic movements.

Affective conceptions of transness precede movement as ways of countering the "wrong body narrative," or, the idea of being trapped in the wrong body that would require getting "fixed". However, theories of trans affects prioritize coming into one's identity, usually during transition, through a kind of osmosis and a focus on space that do not take into account the body's ability to move through space and with one's own muscle power. Trans affects, like the trans rhizome, can be read as kinds of movements as well, but the focus on a more literal kind of physical movement that the body undertakes after, and sometimes instead of transition, adds to the potential of expanding the conversation on what the trans body can do. Athletic movements in performance and geographical movement in new trans fiction are emerging as clear trends and affect alone does not provide a framework to explain why those trends are so prominent. Following the many influences in affect theory, trans affects have been taken up in many different, although mostly Deleuzian variations, all of which foreground the connections between bodies and their environments in order to challenge the notion of trans bodies defined through the interiority of dysphoria.

Theories of trans affects have the basic structure of considering the specifics of a space that influences a trans subject's view of embodiment (a house, a BDSM dungeon, or a neighborhood) and the mutual movements between the body and the space that co-create the surfaces of the trans bodies. The surface of the body, in affect theories as in phenomenology, is conceptualized as porous, negotiable, and socially constructed. For example, Stryker envisions the body as "a psychically bounded space or container that becomes energetically open through the break of its surface – a rupture experienced as interior movement, a movement that becomes generative as it encloses and invests in a new space" ("Dungeon Intimacies" 45). For Lucas Crawford, trans affect is empathy, a high capacity for compassion and identification with the body's surroundings (166). By taking the trans subject away from the confines of interiority and instead tracking representations of interactions with the environment, Crawford finds in texts such as Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* that affect allows for a move towards reading the plethora of non-medical factors influencing transness but also engaging with what can be read *as* trans in non-trans cultural production and architectural structures larger than the body. Also conceptualizing trans bodies in terms of space, Eva

Hayward takes up the non-human to define transness as "relational in terms of social, economic, and political milieus as well as spatial, affective, and speciated registers" (225). As an example of an embodied connection between transfeminine bodies and the animal world, Hayward points to Premarin, a feminizing hormone derived from the urine of a pregnant mare (225). Rather than relating my work to each of these angles, I will think about them together in the next paragraph and consider their limitations for approaching trans art by thinking about space and movement.

Even though affects and movements are similar in that they negotiate connections between bodies, the specificity of each of these versions of trans affect and their ties to transition make them inadequate models for considering movements related to athletic activity and performed on stage or online. What these iterations of trans affect point to is that there could be as many versions of trans affects as there are trans people and that trans affect depends on "formative" situation that open up the body. The same could be said for movements, only in performances, the formative situations that then spark the works of art happen off stage, which can preclude discussing them in ways similar to trans affects. The trans affects outlined above could be better described as feelings rather than movements, and while they shape the surface of bodies, they are not necessarily visible to others unless narrated in essays, as all of the affects above are. There are varying degrees of narration in trans athletic performances, ranging from all movement and no narration in Cassils, to all narration and no movement in Arsenault's *Silicone Diaries* and most of Ross's videos, and a combination of the two in cárdenas, which is why we often need to rely on movement to define movement. Athletic movement is visible to audiences in a way that perhaps most approaches Stryker's scenario, but recreated for an audience to be visible rather than being a serendipitous bodily experience. Spontaneity is key in differentiating affects from movements — if affects are spontaneous bodily reactions to, or effects of, connections with or movements towards other bodies, then athletic movements perform and make visible that reach towards connection with or a collaboration with other bodies.

The focus on trans affects related to athletic movements stems from my own experiences with running. After I began to run regularly and transferred from a gym to an outdoor setting, I started seeking out similar experiences in my work, which had at the time been focused on trans memoir and autobiographical acts. Running not only gave me more confidence but made me rework my distaste for physical discomfort and the repetitive movements of long runs and focused breathing sometimes triggered Zen-like, euphoric experiences that I can only compare to the stillness and presence of meditation. However, my

running was also heavily influenced by the negative affects of the constant discomfort of running with a binder and dealing with mentally-devastating, increasingly-frequent injuries from muscle spasms, which eventually made me only an occasional runner. The works discussed here deal with experiences of coming to physical activity later in life, engaging with exercise not in a team setting but in solitude, and then sharing those experiences with others either through performance or social media. Along with running, the athletic movements invoked here were determined by the strong presence of athletic themes in trans cultural production and will also include CrossFit, cycling, the Beachbody workout, and Muay Thai boxing. Although euphoria and transcendental experiences form one thread stretching across these works, injuries and failures form another. Two of the six athletes discussed here have since quit the sports they were so enthusiastic about and that they so meticulously documented on Instagram and YouTube. Cárdenas quit CrossFit because of repeated injuries and witnessing the serious injuries of her friends, while Ross quit running because of a lingering, unresolvable knee injury. These "failures" are an important part of athletic activities and urge us to reconsider the promise of sports as a sustainable way of maintaining a positive relationship with one's body, mental well-being, a way of managing transition, or exploring one's relationship with one's body post-transition. Failures also point to the cyclical nature of the relationship with one's body. Trans bodies are often imagined and represented primarily in relation to a linear process of transition, after which the body settles into an assumed comfort and staticity. However, trans people's (and everyone's) relationships with their bodies are more complex and constantly negotiated. Injuries, illness, shifting body weight, and engagement with various physical activities change people's relationships with their bodies and subsequently, their art.

Leisure and LGBTQI Sports

My own experience of running for leisure instead of in a competitive setting is also reflected in the overlap of leisure and sports studies in my work. Most critical work that takes up running, cycling, and other athletic activities performed alone and in relation to the effects of repetitive movements, as well as work on LGBTQI people engaged in athletic activities, is situated in sports studies. On the other hand, athletic movements performed on stage rather than in training defy categorization into either sports or leisure because their location demands a performance studies angle. Nevertheless, a focus only on performance studies would not be able to account for the relationship between athletic movements and transness. What follows

is a consideration of some of the main elements of leisure and LGBTQI sports studies that influence this work.

Considering that the concept of sports is often defined exclusively through competition, activities classified as sports, such as running, cycling, and CrossFit, when taken up as training without the element of competition seem to fall out of the category of sports and become recreation, or part of leisure activities ("What is a Sport?"). Although "there is no agreement about what constitutes the leisure experience," Shaun Best notes that it is "commonly assumed to be different from the work experience...often take[s] place in specific places or leisure venues and...is something we look forward to participating in with positive expectations" (1). Athletic movements in performance are similar to but not quite consistent with the concept of serious leisure, which Robert Stebbins defines as the pursuit of an activity "sufficiently substantial" to results in a career, because athletic activities of artists result in becoming only an aspect of their careers (17). Performances that borrow from athletic movement do not fall into the leisure experience because for the artists, they are work rather than free time. Nevertheless, the athletic movements employed in the performances do stem from the leisure activities of exercise that the artists engaged in off stage, in their free time, and for pleasure. In exploring the connection between leisure and performance studies through the angle of athletic movements on stage and online, the vast majority of the theoretical framework does not come from leisure studies. Considering this unclear categorization, a study of athletic movements requires a basis in performance studies but must also consider work from sports and leisure studies, such as studies of flow, the zone, and the runner's high, the philosophies of the particular sports that the artists reference in their performances, as well as the legacies of LGBTQI sport scholarship.

Transness and sports intersect in LGBTQI sports studies, however, this field mostly prioritizes aspects of gay and lesbian sporting experiences on teams and in major sporting events, and trans sporting experiences focusing on cases of gender testing, social discomfort, and exclusion in sporting arenas ranging from PE class and sports teams, to gyms. While some of the research on trans sporting experiences, such as discomfort in locker rooms and the potential of exercise for reconnecting with the body, does translate into the performance of athletic movements on stage and online, aspects relating to teams, gender testing and professional athletes do not. Mainly consisting of sociological work, LGBTQI sports studies do not discuss movement but social relations and the consequences of otherness in team settings, elements of sports that set the site of movement and that can enable or hinder movement and gender expression.

Trans sports research builds on research on gender and sexuality in sports studies and follows intersections of trans identities in team settings, the right to participate, queer bodies that complicate gender segregation in sports, and body ideals, areas that sports studies have established as important for gay and lesbian athletes. As Mansfield et al. note, gender became a topic of interest in sports studies in the 1980s, when "the feminist challenge to traditional sport studies made apparent gender relations as a relation of power" and again in the 1990s, with the emergence of queer theory, "there was a shift from women in sport to gender relations as foci for critical analysis" (Mansfield et al. 7). While the shift to a feminist approach to gender did not yet mean a consideration of experiences of trans or genderqueer people, it did mean recognizing the category of "'sport' as a discursive construct that organizes multiple practices (science, medicine, technology, governing institutions, and the media) that intersect with and produce multiple bodies (raced, sexed, classed, heterosexualized, reproductive, prosthetic, cyborg, etc.) embedded in normalizing technologies (classification, hierarchization, identity production) and consumer culture" (Cole 78). This model will later become important for deconstructing the naturalness of gender segregation in sports and the presence of trans athletes who trouble it.

With more athletes coming out as trans and wanting to compete in the correct gender categories, issues surrounding fairness to the other athletes arise. What trans athletes bring to the forefront is, as many critics have noted, that "as an institution, sport constructs and reinforces perceptions of natural differences between males and females that long have influenced the allocation of resources, status, and privileges conferred upon male and female athletes" (Lucas-Car and Krane 536). Since elite sports are almost always segregated according to gender, athletes who blur the gender line threaten the very structure of competition. The severity of gender segregation varies from sport to sport as well as level of competition and will usually get enforced more when it comes to trans women athletes. The perceived "naturalness" of segregation thus speaks to the pervasive belief about the necessity of maintaining and policing the gender binary. One of the main reasons given in support of gender segregation is that female athletes are perceived as physically weaker, so separation gives women more of a competitive edge and keeps them interested in sports (Gleaves and Lehrbach 318). If a woman performs way above the expected levels, her gender comes into question. During the Cold War era, gender suspicion arose in the form of Eastern European female athletes competing in international competitions being subjected to "femininity control tests," while "visual" testing was replaced with chromosomal testing in 1967 (Symons and Hemphill 110). While the purpose of the testing was to exclude potential "male intruders"

from female competitions, the testing resulted in many athletes being disqualified because they had androgen insensitivity syndrome which gave them an XY chromosomal marker, even though the condition actually inhibits performance and the women in question did not identify as trans. Just before the 2000 Olympics, mandatory gender testing was discontinued and is currently done on a case by case basis.

In 2004, the International Olympic Committee made it possible for trans athletes to compete in the correct gender category providing they have "transitioned". Having moved away from visual inspection, genetic testing, and in the case of trans athletes, required surgery and two years of hormone therapy, trans testing now comes down to testosterone level. Testosterone is a factor in both male and female trans athletes in different ways both because it is listed as a possible doping agent, and because it has become the element distinguishing men from women. A trans woman athlete must demonstrate "that her total testosterone level in serum has been below 10 nmol/L for at least 12 months prior to her first competition" as well as during the competition (Mosier np). The IOC has now accepted that in trans male athletes, testosterone therapy does not give them a competitive edge over cisgender male athletes but, rather, simply puts them on the same level playing field as their competitors since their testosterone levels never reach doping range. Some sports organizations (British Rowing, USA Boxing, International Tennis Federation) still maintain that legal documentation, surgery, and years of documented hormone therapy are necessary requirements for competition; others have adopted a "self-declaration method" policy (World Out Games, World Quidditch Association).

Major sports events and dynamics within sports organizations are another aspect of LGBTQI sport studies, both the mainstream events that often exclude queer athletes as well as the LGBTQI events that can exclude people of color and trans people. Judy Davidson argues that even the Gay Games and Out Games, "emancipatory sexual identity events have ... reiterated white, Western, bourgeois privilege through aspects of their instantiations" and that "these dynamics are fueled by uninterrogated racial and citizenship privileges and unacknowledged racism, xenophobia and nationalism in gay, lesbian and queer communities and organizing" (57-58). The Gay Games (Krane and Waldron, Symons and Hemphill) and lesbian softball leagues (Travers, Travers and Derri) have similarly exhibited transphobic attitudes. Ann Travers found that in American lesbian softball leagues, it was easier for trans women to participate than for trans men, although only after both had taken steps to transition (442). Nevertheless, Travers's research is influenced by the distinction between "gender conformers," or people who undergo hormonal, surgical, and legal transition, and "gender

transformers," people who would now likely identify as non-binary. Continuing this research, Travers and Deri have noted that lesbian softball leagues provide a good model of inclusivity for trans athletes, especially the teams that have adopted "radical (non sex-binary-based) transinclusive policies" not dependent on transition (488). Despite the early date of publication of her work (2006), Travers realizes that the division of trans people into old-fashioned/conservative and queer/progressive is problematic and her work allows for the fact that elements such as race, class, age, and education heavily influence a trans person's views on the gender binary and how they choose to identify. Travers' and Derri's research is a good example of sports research that includes ample references to trans studies and points out that some of the main terminology is sometimes contested even within trans studies.

A large part of lesbian and gay sports studies is focused on the dynamics of teams. In examining butch identity among the players of a UK-based women's football team, Jayne Caudwell argues that in a majority-lesbian team, straight players can be the ones who need to re-examine their gender and sexuality, for example, in identifying as heterosexual for the first time or deliberately finding strategies to present more feminine in order to counter accusations of being a lesbian ("Women's" 396-398). Even though women's sports teams might seem like gay-friendly spaces, as Pat Griffin notes, they can still be "hostile" spaces where acceptance is conditional, and players are in a "glass closet," where they can be visible to players they come out to but should not flaunt their queerness (92). On men's teams, which tend to have fewer out queer players, locker rooms are "a center in fraternal bonding," a process of creating affective ties between players, and a process saturated in displays of hegemonic masculinity through "conversations that affirmed a traditional masculinity" (Curry 119). More recently, in research on Swedish LGBT players in teams, Linghede and Larsson note the possibilities of having sporting spaces "where heteronormativity is challenged and where living nonstraight is not only easy but also 'normalized,' celebrated, and preferred," while at the same time showing that certain players' experiences, such as a trans man on a women's team and a lesbian player who came to identify as bisexual, are more complex (297). This complexity of the experiences of trans men on women's teams, even when it is taken up, is often reduced to their discomfort on their teams and their anxieties about joining a potentially mostly-straight men's team with an environment of hegemonic masculinity.

A few examples of references to the right to compete, exclusion from sports or awkwardness on the wrong team actually do come up in trans memoir. In Juliet Jacques's *On Trans*, involvement with a gay men's football team was a way of attempting to find belonging in a community (albeit one made up exclusively of gay men) and challenging stereotypes

about trans women blindly conforming to gender norms (3016). Despite her enthusiasm, the effect of Jacques's involvement with football is decidedly secondary to the transition and trans politics focuses of her memoir. *Second Serve*, Renee Richards's first memoir, details her transition as well as her involvement with tennis and her fight to compete in the female category in the US Open. Although Richards refers to the "clean simplicity" of tennis as a "refuge" from the problems in her life (including dealing with transness), the memoir chronicles her fight to compete in the female category and does not explore the relationship between tennis and transness in more embodied ways (62). Tennis was a constant in Richards's life before and after transition, which might explain why the sport does not serve as a way of re-engaging with the body after transition and replacing transition as the crux of the trans narrative.

For trans athletes, while team settings and insensitive teammates produce anxieties, much of the anxieties also come from the restrictive regulations imposed through sports organizing bodies. For example, Jodi H. Semerjian and Tamar Z. Cohen's followed one trans woman's experience on a women's ice hockey team and found that for that player, who had been banned from competing on a national level because she was deemed not female enough, her team was actually supportive ("The Collision" 143). Trans experiences on sports teams have not been the main focus of research, although interviews with trans people often do include references to past team experiences. The lack of emphasis on teams could be connected to the fact that trans people's early experiences with sports in PE class can be negative and sometimes lead to "an alienation from team sports" (Hargie et al. 230). For some, this alienation "turned [the participants] towards individual sporting activities" because "individual sport, decoupled from expectations of body 'normality' or gendered performance, reduced … stress by offering … a safe medium through which to express… sporting identity" (Hargie et al. 230). The turn to individual sporting activities and indoor exercise is consistent with the experiences of artists such as cárdenas, Arsenault, Ross, and potentially help explain why there is so little focus on team environments in trans art on athletic movements and sports.

Another stream of trans sports research is concerned with the experiences of trans people in non-professional areas. Much of this research has a clear focus of discomfort and exclusion, which prevents the proliferation of more complex stories of positive experiences with sports. Semerjian and Cohen found that three out of their four participants did experience social rather than physical discomfort in their experiences with sports, in teams, PE, and gyms, while one participant saw sports (ice skating) as a vehicle for transformation, which

suggests that the frame of discomfort might be too constricting ("FTM" 37). Hargie et al., who explored ten non-athlete trans experiences with sports, focused on the centrality of locker rooms as spaces of anxiety and exclusion, and found that "discomfort with communal changing rooms/showers was by far the greatest barrier to respondents taking part in sport" in terms of creating a "strong sense of anxiety" about the way the participants would be perceived, treated, or outed (228). Some participants also pointed out the paradox in the importance of being "in good physical shape for transition surgery" but not having adequate "options for exercise," which led them to "having to cope with the psychological stress of gender transition; being forced to withdraw from sport/exercise during the transition process; suffering lower levels of fitness; and so experiencing increased levels of stress" (Hargie et al. 232). More recently, Agnes Elling-Macharzski echoed the importance of exercise for trans people and found that exercise, not necessarily in team settings, could be "enabling and empowering" and be used as a coping strategy for dealing with dysphoria, and for "gaining body-subject awareness, gender recognition and pride of the 'right' body-self" (256). There is no doubt that exercise is beneficial, that trans people can have positive experiences with exercise, and that the conditions in which these positive experiences can be achieved as well as the effects of these experiences should be further explored. Although research has shown that exercise is deemed as beneficial during transition, there is no need to tie every trans person's sporting experiences only to transition because this focus will preclude outcomes other than the majority-negative pre-transition and more positive post-transition schema.

Although trans athletic performances do not take up organized sports and many of its concerns, such as team dynamics or gender testing, some aspects of organized sports do seep into the performances and change context when moved on stage and into a conversation with trans bodies. The political context of an international sports match might translate into a critique of the regulatory powers that seek to shape trans bodies and the turn to social media might turn to community building rather than athlete brand promotion or match replays. In athletic performance, the effects of athletic movements are, therefore, significantly different than in training and organized events in that they trigger the move from private life to stage and social media and serve as political statements about the capabilities and trajectories of trans bodies. The link to organized sports is not foregrounded; however, athletic movements retain their connections to exercise — the transformative potential exercise can provide, the dual focus on violent disciplining of the body and self-care and well-being, competition, and euphoric connections between the body and its environment. Although athletic performances borrow from athletic movements and structures, they also engage with those elements in ways

that re-contextualize them into critiques of trans necropolitics, memorialization, euphoric post-transition transformations, and activist potential. The stage and social media environments are key to this transcendence of the sports context because they allow for the rearticulation of the elements of the domain of sports to become metaphors for trans embodiment and activism.

Performance

In the term "trans athletic performance," there are actually three different types of performances: performance art, a one-woman play, and social media work comprising of Instagram images and videos of a multimedia project, selfies, and YouTube videos that are performative in entirely different ways. Trans performance art and theatre builds on multiple legacies including performance art, body art, queer performance, trans autobiographical one-person shows, and durational performance. These legacies have also often intersected in that performance art is closely related to body art and durational art. The earliest trans performances — Kate Bornstein's *Hidden: A Gender* (1989) and David Harrison's *FTM* (1994) — relied heavily on autobiographical elements and had to do the work of explaining transness to the audience, borrowed a comedic approach from drag and queer cabaret performances to "disarm" a potentially hostile audience, and also resembled trans memoir in that they made transition the crux of the performances. As Dee Heddon notes, autobiographical performance stems from performances "located within and arising out of the second-wave feminist movement" and was regarded "as a means to reveal otherwise invisible lives, to resist marginalisation and objectification and to become, instead, speaking subjects with self-agency" (3). Even as trans performance has expanded beyond the autobiographical — and many trans artists even resent having their work talked about in strictly autobiographical terms — trans artists nevertheless still use their transness as a jumping off point for the subject matter of their performances. Cassils, Arsenault, and cárdenas, the three performance artists taken up in relation to sports, all reach for their experiences of transness as well as the sports they practise in their off-stage lives and use their bodies as canvases for their art. Although Arsenault is focused on performing, showing, and narrating her transition and her plastic surgeries in many performances, she prioritizes exploring her hyper-feminine, cyborg body and her spiritual pursuits above a transition-focused autobiographical angle. Cassils and cárdenas, on the other hand, perform their bodies withstanding strenuous exercise

in order to critique political issues such as trans necropolitics and therefore depart from autobiographical narratives to a more significant extent.

Non-trans theatre and performance art most often take up athletic movements, organized sports, or sports culture as metaphors for a variety of regulatory powers that demand constant self-improvement, for women's place in sports, and for the homoeroticism in close-contact sports. In Elfriede Jelinek's *Sports Play*, the characters perform their monologues in athletic gear and while performing some type of exercise such as squash or aerobics, all while making fun of their relationship to sports and wading through a mountain of teddy-bear stuffing dumped on stage. In Jelinek's play, sports function as the ludic movements the characters put themselves through to distract themselves from their lives and are symbolic of a capitalist quest for speed, success, and self-improvement. In *Instructions for a Fight* (2016), a video installation documenting Autumn and Chelsea Knight being taught fight choreography by a male coach, the male coach functions as the authoritarian figure who repeatedly turns to stereotypes about men and women to explain certain moves. In this and her other performances, Autumn Knight is interested in the juxtaposition between women's labour under male supervision and the fight choreographer/coach takes a more prominent position than the fighters, who are cast as inexperienced and talked down to. In another performance problematizing women's place in sports, Hazel Meyer's *Muscle Panic,* several queer women perform a series of exercises ranging from a 5K run, stretching, running drills, sit-ups, both outside and inside the gallery. While the other women exercise alone or in pairs, Meyer reads "aloud passages from a variety of theoretical and historical texts, addressing the struggle for gender equality in sports" and re-enacting a moment in lesbian sports history, the "oncourt kiss between WNBA players Diana Taurasi and Seimone Augustus" (van der Avoird). Another queer performance, *Theseus Beefcake*, explores wrestling for its embodiment of masculinity and homoeroticism. Structured as an "ultimate death match" between a "hero and a minotaur," dressed at times as frat boys and cowboys, the performance "journeys into the dark labyrinth of masculinity, colliding mixed martial arts, death metal, American frat culture, rodeos, pornography and Greek mythology" ("Theseus"). Here, the wrestling match is imagined as a physical conversation between men, a comical rather than violent encounter, in which sports present the kind of male-specific medium of communication that the coach in Knight's performance also references as specifically gendered.

Unlike the humour, homoeroticism, hidden histories, and critiques of the self-improvement philosophy of sports that the above-mentioned performances take up, trans

performances seem to relate to sports in a less critical, more earnest way in that they approach the transformative potential of sports not for body shape regulation but as vehicles for well-being and political activism. Cassils and cárdenas, the two trans artists who take up regulatory powers in their performances, do not critique sports culture, as Jelinek does, but use sports as metaphors for the regulatory powers of trans necropolitics, using athletic movements as embodiments of violence against trans bodies but also as the potential for trans bodies' resistance against those powers. The duality of violence and potential for well-being most closely resembles the aims of another queer CrossFit performance, Amber Hawk Swanson's *Online Comments*, a three-hour durational performance, in which the artist performs a series of CrossFit exercises while reciting the mostly-hateful online comments about her body that she received for a previous performance. For Hawk Swanson, CrossFit movements go beyond their initial purpose of disciplining the body with health, strength and wellness in mind, and move towards an unhealthy, obsessively repetitive, and self-punishing set of movements that seek to lead to the physical and mental breaking point. Hawk Swanson's work highlights the dualism in performing athletic movements, movements that simultaneously see the body "as worthy of cultivation yet [also] disdained for its inadequacies," and through which the exercising self "becomes both victim and victimizer, hero and villain" (Getsy 465). The way Hawk Swanson uses CrossFit's militant philosophy and intense exercises, as self-punishing and almost degrading, is completely different to the way cárdenas harnesses CrossFit philosophy as empowering for trans people colour. The hero/villain positioning of the exercising body is more closely related to Cassils's dualistic positioning of the opponents in their boxing-based performances problematizing how regulatory powers shape the body. Although there are originary philosophies to the particular sports themselves, the translations of those philosophies into performances will depend on the bodies that perform them and the performers' relationships with a variety of regulatory powers for which athletic movements then become metaphors.

Trans athletic performances are durational and thus dependent on elements on elements of temporality, slowness, and speed. One of the central tenants of durational art, as Edward Scheer notes, is a quality "that invokes the flux of temporal experience, the quality of time experienced in the doing of an action rather than simply the quantity of chronological time that a task might consume" (1). The methods of bringing attention to this different temporality are often a slowing down and an exaggerated repetition of movements until they reach Brechtian estrangement. With athletic movements, however, there is a speeding up rather than a slowing down of movement — even though repetition still plays an important

role. Acceleration of movement in performance has been read as a comment on the speeding up of contemporary temporality in the post-industrial age (Shalson 102). Nevertheless, Sara Shalson questions if the supposed "radical heterogeneity of durations" that characterizes performance art is necessarily "opposed to the everyday experience of time in our present moment" considering our increasingly networked, multi-tasking societies (102). Seeing as the acceleration stemming from athletic movements is not a comment on or a critique of technology, modernity, or capitalism, we must consider what its role in trans performance is from a different angle. If a different temporality is created in these performance art pieces, is this temporality somehow trans or athletic or queer? In athletic activities that require speed in the repetition of movements, such as running and cycling, the combination of acceleration and repetition in a competition can render the body into a fine-tuned, intensely-focused, well-performing machine whose main goal is achieving results. This process of becoming-machine is not a dystopian act, rather, it can be a liberating cyborgization of positive body-enhancement, especially in act of the body melding with the machine (bike) that enables such movement. Acceleration can be coupled with artistry as well, as in boxing, where improvisation in movement renders acceleration more akin to violence and destruction but also the rapid movements of an inspired artist's brush or pen. In a third iteration, acceleration and repetition can bring the body to a state that resembles meditation, a state not focused on peak performance but on well-being.

Performance is a term that links sports and performance art but has different connotations in each field. In sports, performance signifies a trained body rising to its potential for speed, strength, or endurance in an athletic competition in front of an audience or even during a training session, with no audience present. An athlete's performance is the measure of their ability and training and while the audience aspect is relevant, it is not always crucial, considering that the concept of performance also comes up in non-professional, leisure athletic activities performed in solitude. In performance art, performance is inextricably linked to the presence of an audience for whom something is performed. In durational art, the two definitions of performance meld into one, as the performer is performing both athletically and theatrically. Richard Schechner's "broad spectrum" definition of performance studies as "human actions ranging from ritual, play, sports, popular entertainments, the performing arts (theatre, dance, music), and everyday life performances to the enactment of the social, professional, gender, race, and class roles, and on to healing (from shamanism to surgery), the media and the internet" signals the possibility of this melding (2). In his comparison of play, sports, theater, game, and ritual in thirteen categories, Schechner

finds that the only main difference between sports and theater is the existence of a script and a symbolic reality in theater (12). Notwithstanding, there is an additional category that makes sports and durational performance similar: endurance, which is, as Hentyle Yapp notes, "the key frame for understanding performance art, as the artist's body undergoes pain or other challenges over a period of time" (134). In trans athletic durational performances, where the line between athlete and artist is blurred, the performers exert their bodies by performing movements borrowed from sports and thereby give audiences an experience similar to that of observing an athlete in competition. Athletic movements naturally extend themselves into the rigour of durational performances, which often take significant physical training, are physically exhausting, employ repetitive movements, and can trigger the kinds of Zen-like experiences that appear in both sports such as running and practices such as meditation. The symbolic reality, the fact that athletic movements become metaphorical, is the main distinguishing factor between sports and durational performance art. Adding media as an important part of the comparison between sports and performance, Jean-Francois Morrissette contends that media coverage plays a role "in the staging of sports dramas and heroes" and thus imposes dramatic structure upon a competition setting (383). Although this contention does not translate to most performance art, it does work in reference to Cassils's performances, in which the artist and their opponent are cast as hero and villain performing a fight. The role of the media also becomes relevant in relation to athletic movements on social media, but rather than being provided with external casting into roles, a narrative, and a script, athletes on social media relate their personal athletic experiences into the context of the needs of a particular community.

On social media, performativity is another concept added to the dual idea of performance in trans athletic work. Cárdenas's #Stronger project contains a live performance posted on her Instagram account but also performs a strong cárdenas as a figure of trans activism. At the same time, the strong cárdenas figure is both a persona that the artist takes on for the project and the real cárdenas edited for Instagram, a kind of persona that each Instagram user must inevitably adopt. In my references to social media, I follow the definition of social media as "Internet-based platforms that allow users to create profiles for sharing user-generated or curated digital content in the form of text, photos, graphics, or videos within a networked community of users who can respond to the content" (Burns 6). By social media in the context of trans athletic work, I specifically mean two platforms, Instagram and YouTube, on which trans athletic work appears. While autobiographical elements and art mix in trans athletic work in different degrees, on social media, they come into contexts that are

more explicitly autobiographical and the line between performing art and performing the self becomes much more unstable. As Rob Cover notes, "there is a common tendency in both scholarship and popular discourse to assume that the identities of users are fixed, static, and merely represented or expressed through online activities" and "an alternative view is to consider the ways in which social networking sites operate as a space for the continued, ongoing construction of subjectivity" (55). While an examination of performances on stage has limited potential for speculating on the elements of the performer's identity that are not translated for the stage, on social media, the content creators' identities, while appearing more "authentic" and explicitly autobiographical, are equally curated and managed. Like trans performers, trans social media creators tap into aspects of their identities such as transness and experiences with sports but then translate and frame those aspects to achieve certain goals such as empowering their followers, providing information, connecting to followers through their own stories of hardships, or promoting their brands.

Judith Butler's concept of performativity, which Cover translates for social media, is different than performance in that performativity "consists in a reiteration of norms which precede, constrain, and exceed the performer and in that sense cannot be taken as the fabrication of the performer's 'will' or 'choice*; further, what is 'performed' works to conceal, if not to disavow, what remains opaque, unconscious, unperformable" (*Bodies* 224). While some of these content creators' deliberate social media actions, such as cárdenas's framing of her workout selfies as activism, would fall into the category of performance, others, such as Ross "storytime" videos, are seemingly more spontaneous and therefore not quite performances. Cárdenas's *150* is a performance based on her infatuation with CrossFit but lacks any other autobiographical elements; at the same time, her journey with CrossFit from beginner to competitor is tracked through Instagram selfies, narrated, and contextualized in her other work as an academic and a trans activist. Although cárdenas has stated the series of images were part of the #stronger project, they were at the same also time images of the workouts she would have been performing at the gym even without the art project, considering that the workouts came first. The fact that cárdenas highlights the empowered athlete part of her personality while not highlighting others is a kind of performance common on social media.

Chapters: Sports in Performance and on Social Media

This dissertation is divided into three chapters, each of which will explore how athletic movements are taken up in performance and social media. Through movement, each work negotiates the category of "trans" as it moves to unfold into new relationships. In Chapter 1, trans bodies move violently towards (in)animate or invisible bodies and stage competitions between trans bodies and the regulatory powers that seek to shape or destroy them. In Chapter 2, trans bodies move in speedy, repetitive movements by engaging in intense bike rides but also create a kind of bike-human affective cyborg that is capable of producing euphoric experiences. In Chapter 3, trans bodies move by engaging with athletic activities but also move the experiences of the ecstatic effects of sports to social media, where they become fuel for trans activism. What all three ideas of transness have in common is that they are based in affective relationships with objects, events, and other bodies. Transness is more than in-betweenness and bodily ambiguity; it is collaborative, relational, and affective.

In Chapter 1, in *Becoming an Image* and *Powers that Be,* Cassils stages battles with an opponent — a clay mound and an invisible entity, respectively. Cassils violently attacks and defends themselves from the non-human opponents endowed with symbolic qualities. In *Becoming an Image,* the battle results in the construction of a monument to LGBTQI lives lost through homophobic and transphobic violence, while in *Powers that Be*, the battle tackles oppressive forces against the LGBTQI community. Through intra-actions with regulatory forces that govern certain bodies, Cassils's performances bear a resemblance to the regulation of bodies deemed too gender ambiguous to compete in professional sports. The artist's own body represents a similar site of contention in that Cassils chooses to be almost nude in the first and completely nude in the second performance and thereby challenges assumptions about what a trans male body should look like. Blending the temporalities of a durational performance of slowing time down and an athletic performance that speeds time up, Cassils disengages athletic movements from their moorings in qualitative time and harnesses the presence of qualitative time. The effects of the artist's movements are both destructive and creative and, in these competitions, there are no clear winners; rather, the opponents are mutually transformed.

In Chapter 2, the cyclical movements of bike become central movements in Lynn Breedlove's novel *Godspeed*, and Nina Arsenault's performance *40 Days + 40 Nights: Working Towards a Spiritual Experience,* as well as the last section of Arsenault's

performance *Silicone Diaries* entitled "Venus/Machine". As in Cassils's performances, key aspects in Arsenault and Breedlove are their intra-actions with the bikes and their use of athletic movements as modes of exploring the limits of trans bodies. Bike exercise, as an event of intense movement and acceleration, fosters ideal conditions for the achievement of states of ecstasy and euphoria. In Breedlove's *Godspeed*, a bike messenger named Jim uses daredevil bike rides in order to transform into a cyborg machine and achieve euphoric states that open the body up to the world. In her two performances, Arsenault uses a stationary exercise bike as a way to achieve ecstatic experiences of connecting to her "organic" parts and to spirituality. The intense bike rides produce events that resemble scenes of self-creation but place more focus on movement and feelings of pleasure. The "highs" triggered by labour and endorphins emerge as moments of intense connectedness with the body, the machine, the road, the spiritual, and the molecular. These mergers can also be explored as trans cyborg bodies that use machines as aids to acceleration that transforms the body into an entity characterized by euphoria rather than dysphoria.

Following movement and exercise online, in Chapter 3, athletic movements move online in a consideration of self-presentation of athletic trans bodies that take up fitness as a form of everyday activism promoting health, well-being, and strength for self-defense among their trans followers. On Instagram and YouTube, affect is created between individual accounts that form affective counterpublics through sharing content under the same hashtags, commenting on each other's posts, and engaging in the same games or supporting the same causes. On Instagram, cárdenas posts selfies of herself at the CrossFit gym in strength poses or lifting weights and accompanies the images with calls to action for trans women of color. cárdenas sees CrossFit as a means of getting strong in order to fight back against the violence perpetrated against trans women of color. I will also consider cárdenas's *150* performance that was performed live and then uploaded onto Instagram as part of the #stronger project. Gutierrez's Instagram account also feature post-workout selfies but is more similar to fitspiration posts in that it also seeks to promote Gutierrez's businesses, while at the same time promoting a healthy lifestyle and exercise as a way of achieving well-being. Although cárdenas comes to CrossFit after transitioning, Gutierrez used exercise as a way of enabling herself to start transitioning. Also coming to exercise after transitioning, Ross promotes running as a way of maintaining mental well-being. Cárdenas, Gutierrez, and Ross all found exercise to be transformative and wanted to pass on the transformative potential to their online communities of followers and friends. In this chapter, transformative events of

destruction/creation and ecstatic exercise are replaced with posts containing stories of transformation through exercise and connections with online communities.

Chapter 1: Athletic Movements and Violence in Cassils's *Becoming an Image* and *Powers that Be*

In their two performances, *Becoming an Image* and *Powers that Be,* Canadian performance artist Cassils turns to Muay Thai boxing and fight choreography in order to examine the role of violence in shaping and regulating bodies, intra-actions with inanimate and invisible opponents, and the ideal trans masculine body. Cassils's intensive durational performances stage battles that last until the artist is "gassed out" or left breathless, creating a specific trans-athletic temporality and making athletic endurance a key component of their durational format of the performances. In Cassils's performances, movement manifests through violent creation, a variety of boxing movements performed by Cassils's body — movements sculpting, or creating the illusion of, a second body from inanimate or invisible material. The artist's movements are deliberate, fast, strong, and combine kicks, punches, and moving around the stage in planned and improvised choreographies that simulate boxing matches and transfer destructive/creative energy into the body of the clay or into the invisible opponent. Cassils chooses boxing movements and fight settings to simulate violent acts against trans, gender-variant people, and other bodies on which violent regulatory forces are imposed. The choice of athletic movements as the medium through which violence and bodily regulations are performed, as opposed to other forms of self-inflicted violence taken up in many women's and some trans performances, attribute more agency to the subject acted upon through regulatory forces by performing physical strength and resistance. The effects of the movements are, however, not the destruction of the attacked bodies but the creation of new bodies.

In *Becoming an Image*, the transformed clay block serves as a memorial to victims of anti-LGBTQI violence and an opportunity for physically re-creating those bodies that have ceased to exist in their material forms. In *Powers that Be,* through fight choreography, Cassils performs a trans body that has been trained for receiving punches from an intangible, unpredictable, and unrepresentable violent force and that can serve as a living memorial to inflicted violence. While *Becoming an Image* takes trans deaths as a starting point, *Powers*

that Be starts at the moment of attack, with a trans body that is prepared for the violent encounter and capable of resisting the violence. Unlike the Muay Thai movements, which are designed to not only defeat but eliminate the opponent, the planned aspect of fight choreography, with its hero/villain structure, endows *Powers that Be* with a hopefulness that the hero will come out on top in this fight scene and that death will be prevented. The movements are, however, not contained between the two bodies on stage but are also inflicted upon the audiences through the disorienting and fragmenting light and sound elements of the performances, the flash of the camera in *Becoming an Image* and the collage of radio clips in *Powers that Be.* In *Powers that Be,* the audiences moved by the movements are then also encouraged to share parts of the performance on social media and therefore spread the effects of the movements beyond the performance in unplanned and unexpected ways. Cassils's performances are examples of the complexity of trans athletic movements, movements that dethrone the movements of transition as the primary movements associated with trans creators but are also a study of the ways in which violence moves bodies and moves between bodies.

Transness, Athletic Movements, and Well-being

Cassils's motivation for introducing athletic movements into their work reflects other trans athletic performances in that the choice of the specific sports are tied to the artist's personal history of athleticism. Athletic movements begin as personal movements towards physical and mental well-being but in moving to the stage, they become metaphors for personal and political regulatory actions that both shape the surfaces of bodies. Cassils, a personal trainer and stunt-person, brings to their performance athletic movements that change context from health, entertainment, and competition to representing primarily violence. For Cassils, the turn to athletic activities is closely tied to well-being because as a teenager, Cassils suffered from a long-undiagnosed and untreated gallbladder disease that eventually "got to the point where [their] insides were rotting, [their] bile ducts ruptured, [their] skin turned green and [they] went septic" (Frizzell). Cassils was hospitalized and "had tubes in every orifice, two surgeries and a full blood transplant" (Frizzell). Upon recovery, at sixteen, the artist started using weights and became interested in "physical discipline" because training "helped [them] feel strong again, and being ill made [them] want to articulate [their] own sense of wellness" (Frizzell). The well-being Cassils cultivates does at times seem to be at odds with the performances that put their health in danger or have a high potential of

inflicting injuries. In preparation for their performance *Cuts: A Traditional Sculpture,* Cassils took steroids to achieve muscle mass and definition and notes that it was "a real moral conundrum" (Frizzell). In many ways, the turn to athletic activities is a way of taking back control over one's body that threatens to erupt in illness without any warning. On the other hand, sports can also lead to injury so the line between being well/unwell is often hard to maintain. Cassils builds on the precarity inherent in athletic movements by at the same time embodying the external and internalized impositions of discipline on one's body and the simultaneity of destruction of trans lives and their memorialization.

Along with precarity, transness and athletic movements have other points of connection, such as the ability to transform the body towards a desired ideal. Bodybuilding is a sport that Cassils has called "a fundamentally trans activity" and that Lianne McTavish imagines as "gender regulatory, gender bending and even queer" because "using steroids can make men grown 'bitch tits' and women have extra testosterone side effects like hair and enlarged clits" (99). While for trans men, bodybuilding has the gender-shifting potential to make chests flatter by reducing fatty tissue and increasing upper body size to achieve a more masculine shape, in McTavish's statement, it is not the activity but the steroid use that can (but does not have to) come with it that has the capability of inducing hormone-like changes in the body. In comparison to bodybuilding, Muay Thai and fight choreography have no such links to genderbending results, however, it is not the transness of the activity itself that necessarily makes an athletic activity trans but, rather, the context in which the activity is performed. For Cassils, both bodybuilding and martial arts are activities that allow for the maintenance of a masculine physique but are also used in the creation of performances that challenge conceptions of trans bodies as passive recipients of medical treatment and can turn them into active, productive, and creative forces that shape not only their own physiques but also the bodies of their opponents. Even though Muay Thai and fight choreography are not trans, the movements borrowed from these sports are employed in shaping trans bodies, and trans and cis views of trans bodies.

The move towards shaping other bodies, a shaping that is, for Cassils, a violent process, brings with it issue of fairness, autonomy, and the body as both a personal and a political concept. In relating transness to their art, Cassils stated: "I am an artist. I am not an activist. Activists have real-world policy-changing effects. They do not work with metaphors as artists do" (Teplitzky). Even though Cassils is "a trans artist, so [their] work is rooted in [their] subjectivity, they are "not only interested in speaking to a trans audience, but to a greater audience" and do not consider their transness to be "the be all end all of [their] work"

(Teplitzky). Cassils's performances do not take the artist's transness as the primary object of exploration but, rather, expand the subject matter to site-specific LGBTQI and other minority issues; nevertheless, the T and Q of the LGBTQI do matter here. Considering that the artist's medium is their trans, gender-ambiguous body, which in performance both perpetuates violence against other bodies and has violence perpetrated against it, the elements of the body such as gender ambiguity, muscularity, and strength play a part in the intra-actions with the opponents. Cassils's performances present a novel engagement with athletic activities in that they are inspired by athletic movements rather than being actual boxing matches in which one participant is trans. If we consider the symbolic value that actual sports matches do not (always) have, then Cassils's performances endow the artist's trans body with the symbolic value of standing in for oppressed bodies in the particular site-specific contexts. The movements of the sports match thus become battles between queer and trans bodies and the conservative powers, in the United States and Russia, that seek to pound them into submission or into non-existence.

Becoming an Image and *Powers that Be*

Although Cassils's performances are site-specific in that they were commissioned to speak to the specific spaces of the ONE Archives in Los Angeles (*Becoming an Image*), Los Angeles in general (*Powers that Be*), and the Finnish-Russian border in Kuopio (*Powers that Be*, second version), the performances speak to the geographical locations and not the actual architectural features of the gallery/museum/archive spaces. The performance spaces are, in most cases, transformed into Cassils's characteristic black cave, take place in complete or near darkness and do not augment the features of the spaces themselves. Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks define site-specific performances as "conceived for, mounted within and conditioned by the particulars of found spaces, existing social situations or locations, both used and disused...they are inseparable from their sites, the only contexts within which they are intelligible" because "site is not just an interesting, and disinterested, backdrop" (23). Cassils's performances are correspondingly, conceptualized for the specific geographical locations they are first performed in and are more concerned with social situations than with the conditions of the physical spaces. Cassils's spaces are also not intelligible only in the contexts of their original locations but are abstract enough to work in any location, where the audiences are able to fill in the blanks of what the clay or the invisible opponent represent. In

the first *Becoming an Image* performance, Cassils emptied out the ONE Archives of its contents in order to hold the performance there, in a practical gesture but also a gesture of making space for the missing Ts and Qs of the archive. When *Becoming an Image* was performed in Croatia, "the audience interpreted it against the dark history of the ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia in the 1990s" (Teplitzky). In both versions of *Powers that Be,* the conversation is with reconstructed "outside" elements of the location such as radio clips reshaped into loops and cars moved into indoor spaces. Bowditch et al. argue that "rather than viewing a space as a place to construct a theatre, site-specific work takes the space for what it is, without major alteration, and reveals it in new ways through performance" (5). Cassils's performances, on the other hand, do actually construct a theatre and thus differ significantly from works such as Suzanne Lacy's *3 weeks in May,* a performance about mapping out the streets that rapes took place in Los Angeles, or Phil Smith's *The Crab Walks,* which took place in s shack and encouraged the audience to explore the surroundings. Even though the performance space almost always looks similar for Cassils, each performance is still influenced by each new geographical location in which it is performed, even beyond the original intended contexts.

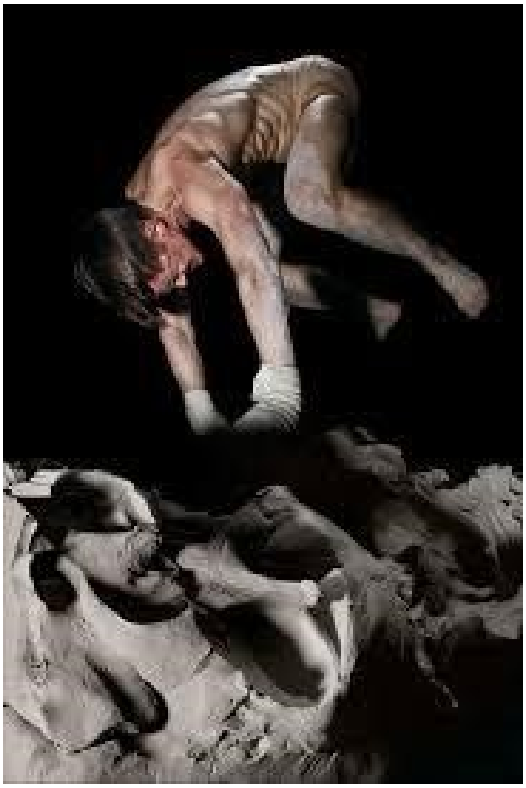

Figure 1: Becoming an Image, Performance Still No. 1, Edgy Women Festival, Montreal, 2013, Photo: Cassils with Alejandro Santiago. Courtesy of the artist and Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York.

Becoming an Image was originally commissioned for the ONE archive in Los Angeles, the largest LGBTQI archive in the country, in order to commemorate anti-LGBTQ violence, and specifically, "the T's and Q's missing in this archive" (Teplitzky). The performance was "intended to be site-specific, a one-off, but is now conceived of as a work in process, a becoming without envisioned end" (Chare and Willis 267). In this performance, occurring in total darkness, Cassils interacts with a 2,000-pound clay block that the artist moulds with punches and kicks and the performance lasts about 20 minutes or until the artist is "gassed out" — left out of breath from exhaustion. While Cassils pounds the clay, a photographer circles the two opponents and illuminates the space with brief flashes of the camera, thereby providing the audience with the only visuals, albeit in a fragmentary and distorted way. Before the performance, the audience receives the following instructions: "Don't enter if you are prone to epilepsy or claustrophobia; Absolutely no cameras, phones, or anything else that emits light; stand against the wall and do not step forward or you risk getting punched; THIS PERFORMANCE CONTAINS VIOLENCE" (Stall). After each version of this durational performance, the clay block is sculpted into a "remnant sculpture," which then remains on display in a gallery.

There are no long video recordings for *Becoming an Image* and the ones that do exist demonstrate the difficulty in capturing such a performance. Considering that the flashes of the camera only illuminate Cassils for a few seconds at a time, the performance seems like a series of images, each one too bright too focus on for long, and consequently, difficult to make out. The actual images of the performance made available online afterwards, as well as the images of the clay blocks, allow for a better consideration of Cassils's movements, facial expressions, and the indentations in the clay. Watching the performance is disorientating and potentially even dangerous in its ability to induce epileptic shock. And yet, considering that following the performance step by step is difficult considering that every second "step" occurs in darkness and that the observation of movement is reduced to images, it is a choreography that the audience of the live performance and an online audience are not completely privy to.

There are several ways of reading the performance: as a sculpting of a monument for victims of LGBTQI violence, as a sports match between two opponents, and as an artist sculpting another body that stands in for trans bodies and their own body. A sports-focused approach highlights the use of Muay Thai movements in this performance and discusses how the concept of competition functions in the match. *Becoming an Image* imagines an opponent as an enemy rather than a respected equal and therefore dramatizes an event of trans murder in which the artist takes the role of murderer. The absence of boxing gloves similarly

demonstrates that this is not a fair fight but more of a street fight without rules and consequences. Thinking of the clay as a trans body allows for the reading of the trans community as resilient in the face of violence and much like the performance, as capable of turning the violence into something productive such as activism and art. Inevitably, the clay becomes animate in any reading as it absorbs Cassils's movements and starts visually resembling the artist's own muscular body, accentuating the doubling effect between victim and perpetrator of violence.

In *Powers that Be,* initially performed in the Broad Museum in Los Angeles in 2015, Cassils stages a 20-minutes battle with an invisible opponent or "force" ("Powers"). Much like in *Becoming an Image*, Cassils foregrounds their nude, muscular body performing boxing movements, although this time, there is no mound of clay and no photographer. While in *Becoming an Image* Cassils collaborated with a Muay Thai instructor, in this performance, Cassils worked with fight choreographer Mark Steger, who helped stage "a brutal two-person fight" ("Powers"). Set in a dark parking garage and illuminated only by car headlights, *Powers that Be* adds to the complexity of sounds made up of breath, punches, and footsteps in *Becoming an Image* by introducing the "stereos of the surrounding cars broadcast[ing] a multi-channel score of static noise and radio samples designed by Kadet Kuhne" ("Powers"). Unlike *Becoming an Image,* during which the use of cellphones was prohibited, *Powers that Be* was "designed to be viewed and recorded on mobile phones," which "further addresses the mediation of violence by calling into question the roles of witness and aggressor on the part of the spectator" ("Powers").

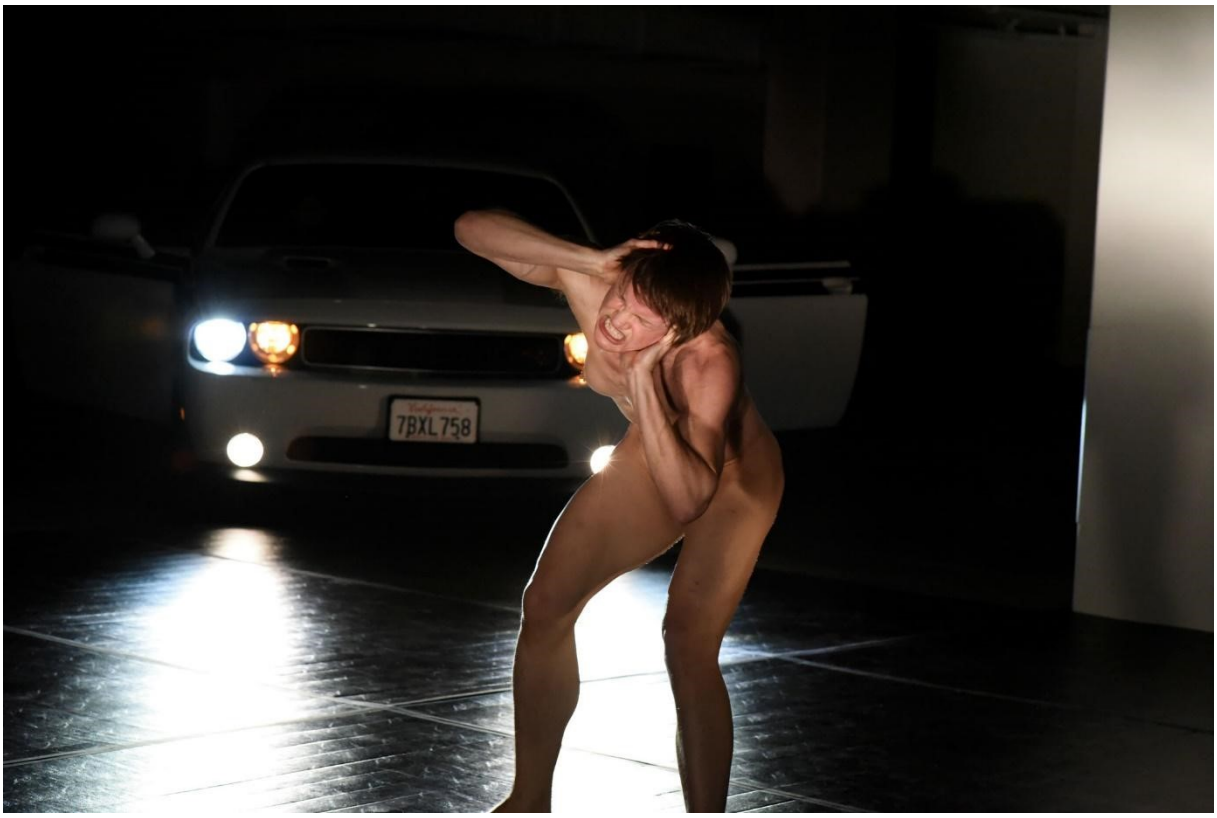

Figure 2: Cassils, Powers that Be – 210 Kilometers. Kuopio, Finland. Cassils.net. http://cassils.net/tag/the-powers-that-be-210-kilometres/

The second performance of *Powers that Be* was commissioned as a site-specific performance by the ANTI Contemporary Art Festival in Kuopio, Finland, a town 210 kilometers from the Russian border. Because of the availability of a longer video recording as well as radio recordings from the Finnish version, I will be mostly discussing this second iteration of the performance, also referred to as *210 Kilometers.* While the Los Angeles performance responded to issues of #BlackLivesMatter, women's and LGBTQI rights in the American context, the Finnish version "addressed the proximity of the festival to a country where queer and trans lives are acutely vulnerable and under siege, lacking any protection under civil law" ("Powers"). The sound design "marked the particularity of site through samples of local news clips, music, and talk radio from both sides of the Finnish/Russian border, highlighting the dire situation for LGBTQI people in Russia" ("Powers"). As the audience walked into the performance, Russian music blared from the speakers of the parked cars with Finnish registration plates. Cassils appears illuminated by the headlights of the cars as if by makeshift spotlights and begins the fight by already being subjected to a kind of headlock by the invisible force. The illumination also casts a shadow of Cassils on the wall behind them. The audience forms a circle around Cassils, filling in the gaps between the parked cars. The floor area delimited with the parked cars is covered with black exercise mats

made from soft material, which enable Cassils to punch the floor full-force and throw themselves onto the floor multiple times without significant injuries.

Powers that Be ends with Cassils overpowering the opponent and punching them while being on top of them on the floor when the lights suddenly go out. The fight sounds continue for a minute and then stop and make way for the audience's applause. While it is unclear who won the fight, the image that the audience sees last indicates that Cassils was winning. The continuation of the sounds beyond the visible speaks to the continuation of struggles with regulatory powers beyond what is available to the public but also speaks to the reverberations of the affects of seeing violence on the audiences who become witnesses. The director of the ANTI festival links Cassils's performance to people "being bombarded with images that are inherently violent" in our daily lives and sees it as a "response to not knowing what to do with images of violence" ("Cassils - The Powers"). Like the photographic flashes that manifest their lingering by burning themselves into the audiences' retinas, the lingering sounds also represent the burden of witnessing that is left with the audience. Unlike the multitudes of violent images in the media that we have become desensitized from and mostly choose to ignore, the audience in this performance, probably knowing what the performance would entail, has chosen to sit with the violence and contemplate its impact on them rather than ignoring it. As there is no clear winner in this fight, there is no resolution of the problem of violence. Rather, the performance is a meditation on the concept of violence and how it affects those who suffer as well as those who witness.

While at the end of *Becoming an Image,* the lights are turned on and the audience finally encounters the sculpture that has taken "the formal shape of a violent attack," at the end of *Powers that Be,* the audience had only been in complete darkness for less than a minute and are faced only with the sweaty and exhausted Cassils, who they had been observing the whole time. The focus on the different senses — sight versus sound — as well as the play with withholding information and disorientating the audience in one versus facing the audience with watching the entire fight in the other performance end up achieving similar effects. Although the visual is highlighted through the flash in *Becoming an Imag*e, it is sound that persists without pause throughout both performances and is the element that differentiates the violent imagery — imagery the audience might be used to ignoring on social media — and that transforms imagery into something more tangible.

Movements: Muay Thai and Fight Choreography

The fights stage the struggles with regulatory forces that threaten to impose themselves on other bodies and potentially annihilate them. The two performances stage two methods of dealing with these forces: pointing to and memorializing the damages that have already been done (deaths) and fighting against the powers directly. Both performances also seek to inundate the audiences in certain affects: disorientation and experiencing violence in *Becoming an Imag*e and witnessing violence and routing for Cassils to win in *Powers that Be*. In the first performance, Muay Thai speaks to the desire to annihilate one's opponent and turn the opponent into an enemy. The competition that defines sports, through its lack of respect for the opponent, here threatens to step outside the category of sports and into a street fight. Nevertheless, the resilience of the seemingly defenseless clay that stands in for a gym punching bag shows the resilience of the trans community in the face of violent attacks. *Powers that Be* is unapologetically a street fight in which Cassils switches roles and seemingly becomes the clay that was given the agency to fight back with more movement. The element of competition becomes fairer and the addition of a cinematic, choreographed fight suggests the progress of the once-defenceless opponent into a veritable underdog hero that audience roots for to win.

Becoming an Image relies on Muay Thai "philosophy" and movements in many ways. Muay Thai is often advertised as "the most effective striking art in the world," which might explain why Cassils turned to this specific sport considering that to make their strikes visible on the clay, the strength of the hits and "effectiveness" do play an important part (Stephen). While most martial arts have a strong component of self-defence, and many (Karate, Tai Chi) also have a philosophical component that connects physical movements to mental well-being, calm, and connection with the world, Muay Thai has a distinct "emphasis on sparring and competition" (Stephen). Unlike some other athletic activities, Muay Thai is not focused on self-improvement, teamwork, or connecting with one's body or the world, rather, it is a sport connected with violence. The aims of the sport correspond to the aims of Cassils's performance: to shape the block of clay with violence. This use of athletic movements, even though the environment is controlled and the non-human clay cannot suffer, surpasses the category of sports considering that sports are defined as not inflicting harm on living creatures or participants, and through its focus on annihilation, is quite similar to the street fight in *Powers that Be.* The combination of the desire to annihilate and the non-humanness of the

clay, if the performance is a kind of staging of a trans murder as well as a memorialization, corresponds to the dehumanization of the trans "opponent" and the desire to annihilate the other rather than engaging in a match with an equal, as in Karate (as represented through bowing/rei at the beginning and end of a match) ("Philosophy").

Muay Thai, the national sport of Thailand, was developed "as a form of close-combat that utilizes the entire body as a weapon" and is also referred to as "The Art of Eight Limbs" ("History"). Using eight "points of contact," the body "mimics weapons of war": "[t]he hands become the sword and dagger; the shins and forearms were hardened in training to act as armor against blows, and the elbow to fell opponents like a heavy mace or hammer; the legs and knees became the axe and staff" ("History"). Body parts morphing into objects or weapons imagines a cyborgisation similar to those Arsenault and Breedlove experience in their encounters with bikes — a similarity that points to the use of athletic activities as kinds of armour that involve reimagining one's body as strong and as related to the objects it uses to becomes strong. By mimicking the movements of objects associated with strength, athletic movements allow bodies a kind of imagined but empowering cyborgization. Unlike boxing, Muay Thai allows for more of a range of movements and on a practical level, considering that the block of clay is taller than Cassils, the use of knee kicks allows for the sculpting of the lower half of the clay without awkward bending. Another key move in Muay Thai, clinching, or closing the distance between the two opponents by grabbing the opponent's head, allows for a range of attacks such as knee strikes while neutralizing the opponent's attack ("4 Essential"). Cassils utilizes this move and grips the clay with their hands while kicking it not to neutralize an attack but to gain more leverage. While in Muay Thai, "the knees and elbows constantly searching and testing for an opening while grappling and trying to spin an enemy to the ground for them kill," Cassils, who cannot spin the clay or force it to the ground, uses clinching to keep bending the top of the clay block closer to the ground.

Equipment is as relevant as philosophy and movements in the comparison between Muay Thai and *Becoming an Image*. Muay Thai fighters use either boxing gloves or special Muay Thai gloves that "have shorter cuffs and allow the hands to open up for clinching" (Stephen). Cassils, however, does not wear gloves but only hand wraps, which would usually be worn inside of the gloves. The absence of the protective layer of the gloves surely results in more physical discomfort and makes the fight resemble wrestling or a street fight. Punching bare-knuckled is not unheard of and some even claim there are benefits to this practice, such as toughening the skin on knuckles, and "strengthening the bones, muscles and connective tissue of your hands" (Sconiers). In the performance, the absence of gloves might contribute

to the variety of shapes left on the clay and the imprints of human fists might be more evocative of an actual attack against a trans person. The punching bag, another important part of the training equipment that Cassils has surely used in training, is in many ways different that the clay. The bag is smaller, but it mimics an opponent's unpredictability in responding to punches by swinging away from and then towards the person dealing the blow. Even though the bag is softer than the clay, it is not malleable. The clay, in turn, is harder to move but it is not static; it accepts all the punches and kicks by permanently denting and serving as a record of all the movements it received. Commenting on the difference between a bag and clay, Jennifer Doyle notes: "[t]raining on a bag is very very hard – and a bag gives to impact...A solid block of clay not only doesn't give – after the performance the artist told me that it seems to push back. It has its own resilience." The resilience of the clay can be interpreted as the resilience of the trans bodies upon which violence is perpetrated. The evidence that this was in Cassils's mind as well shows in the title of the work *The Resilience of the 20%: Monument Project*, an exhibition of the remnant sculptures from various *Becoming an Image* performances. Through the comparison of the two objects, trans victims are posthumously morphed from punching bag to resilient monument.

In *Powers that Be*, the absence of the punching bag becomes an issue to get around. Cassils notes in an interview that "[i]f you're punching a punching bag, there is something that will absorb the hit...and that actually completes the motion. When you're trying to hit something that's not there, you have to put force outwards and draw force inwards at the same time. It's very easy to hurt yourself" (Frank). Imagined this way, the clay in *Becoming an Image* is not just shaped by Cassils's punches, it absorbs them and makes for an important part of the movement itself. In both encounters, one participant necessarily gets injured. The artist noted that "[t]his piece guarantees injuries" and actually "gave themselves a concussion from speeding up and slowing down too quickly" (Frank). The possibility of injury that haunts Cassils's projects is a staple of many athletic experiences and for Cassils, it is imagined in the way a professional athlete would imagine it — as linked to the completion of a project and to one's career and not, at least not visibly, to their mental health and well-being. The looming possibility of injury is also another, invisible form of self-injury on stage that comes from the structure of the movements themselves and not from the invisible opponent or from Cassils's self-inflicted blows. If movements in *Powers that Be* do not result in a visible creation that would symbolize violence or resilience, the spotlight turns to Cassils even more than in *Becoming an Image,* considering that the artist functioning as hero remain the resilient remnant at the end of the performance.

Although the fight sequences in the two performances are similar, the main difference lies in the fact that *Becoming an Image* employs unchoreographed Muay Thai movements while attacking an opponent who does not deliver any unpredictable moves. In *Powers that Be,* with an invisible opponent who needs to be created through the illusion of movement, Cassils follows a set choreography that allows them to maximize the use of stage space and give the performance more of a narrative. John Kreng identifies as one of the most important elements of a good fight scene in a movie the ability to create "a feeling of anxiety and excitement...while getting the audience emotionally involved in the story" (ii). In a non-verbal performance without the cinematic and theatrical possibilities of character development, Cassils demonstrates physical (and symbolically, emotional) struggle through holding tension poses and creates suspense by alternating moments in which they seem to be winning and moments in which their opponent is close to killing them.

At the beginning of *Powers that Be,* as the music starts to shift between different stations and different genres (classical to 70s and 80s pop to news), Cassils's body starts to open up from the headlock into a series of other tense positions that engage all of their muscles, which bear more semblance to a bodybuilder flexing and holding a pose on stage during a figure contest than to boxing. This pose speaks to Cassils's bodybuilding background and like a bodybuilder pose, demonstrates strength and exaggerated muscle definition, although in this case, the demonstration shows the strength of both the artist and the invisible opponent. McTavish imagines going through the poses in a figure competition as a "pursuit of stillness" that can function as a "point of resistance," in instances in which her body "did not comply with the figure girl regime" through refusing to fit the mandatory high-heeled shoes (78). Cassils's headlock pose similarly demonstrates both an oppressive physical situation as well as a resistance to the regulatory powers of that oppression. Posing features prominently in this performance and provides respites of stillness in the movements, at least for the audience, because for Cassils, holding the flexing poses requires as much effort as kicks and punches. There are no rest periods in this fight — the poses that Cassils holds visibly contract all of their muscles and symbolically speak to the strained relationship between the opponents even if visible blows are not being dealt.

One of the more memorable and jarring poses places Cassils on the ground on their back with their hips raised in the air and their spread legs showing their exposed genitals to the audience and the camera. The act of being pinned down with the hips raised up into the air is reminiscent of perhaps a curious counterpoint, the infamous Dolce and Gabbana "gang rape ad" in which the model holds the same pose while being surrounded by a group of male

models, one of whom is holding both her wrists. Considering that women's rights to abortion were a part of the Los Angeles performance in the form of radio speeches about the topic, as well as the fact that sexual violence is a recurring element in violence against trans women and lesbians, this pose can be indicative of such vulnerable sexuality. Flipping the opponent on the ground, Cassils also takes up the opposite role when pinning the opponent down in the same pose, thereby leaving it unclear if they switched into the role of aggressor or became the attacked opponent fighting back. This role-switching is a variation on the fight in *Becoming an Image,* in which Cassils attacks the clay as an embodiment of the regulatory powers that results in trans murders but can also be read as an embodiment of the regulated bodies fighting back.

There is a lot of push and pull during the performance, which demonstrates that Cassils and the opponent are meant to be given equal skills and power in this battle. Even though at the beginning Cassils seems hunted by the invisible force and is at moments pinned to the wall and the ground, they always turn the situation around and become the aggressor again. At one point, the headlock turns into the artist squeezing their head with one hand on each side of their head, pointing to the fact that the oppressive force is not seeking to control the body but also the mind. On another occasion, Cassils is pinned to the wall but comes back at the opponent, knocks them to the ground and kicks them with renewed vigour. This timed choreography creates a sense of suspense, dynamism, and distinct "scenes" that *Becoming an Image* lacks. Kreng notes that "fight choreography" is a "theatrical combative art form in and of itself because it is creating an illusion of a physical confrontation that combines the use of theatrics with martial arts to assist and enhance in telling the story" (iii). *Powers that B*e relies on fight choreography intended for film and stage in order to create a narrative for the performance and an environment in which the audience casts Cassils as the hero. As Kreng notes, fight choreography shares with dance its basic elements, "steps, rhythm, cooperation, and timing of a prearranged set of moves between agreed partners" (iii). The performance similarly relies on rhythm, manifested both through the pace of erratic yet rhythmic breathing and the switching between a variety of poses in order to hold suspense.

In *Powers that Be,* considering that the opponent is invisible, the way Cassils creates the sense of the opponent through movement is through hitting themselves in the stomach with their elbow, lying on their back and kicking the opponent with their legs, resisting an opponent that is seemingly on top of them and holding down their arms, and throwing the opponent on their back and pinning them down with the forearm as in wrestling. When Cassils gets up again, it becomes clear that the opponent is not meant to be clearly visible

even to the artist because they scurry around the stage with their guard up but looking in different directions as if looking for the opponent. The artist is then caught in another headlock, this time performed by the placement of Cassils's open palm on the back of their neck. The transformation of Cassils's arms into the opponent's arms speaks to the duality of the interchangeability of the opponents as well as to self-inflicted violence.

Discussing a similar sports-related duality in Amber Hawk Swanson's CrossFit performance entitled *Online Comments,* David Getsy situates this interchangeability not in politics but in exercise itself. Getsy argues that "exercise requires a dual commitment to self-improvement and self-punishment" and that "for its capacities to be transformed, the body is pushed to its limits and overworked" until it "becomes an object defined through its potentials and its deficiencies, with any positive, self-affirming account of exercise realized only through self-imposed objectification and penance" (465). In their quest for well-being after their childhood illness, Cassils had pursued a rigorously disciplined regime of weightlifting that was simultaneously a quest for self-improvement and health but also a kind of self-punishment of the body that threatened to become ill again. As Getsy argues, "when one's body is simultaneously seen as worthy of cultivation yet disdained for its inadequacies, one becomes both victim and victimizer, hero and villain," and such an approach, for Cassils, yields a second body that takes on one of the roles in both performances. Part of the reason behind the role-switching between Cassils as aggressor and victim of aggression, the hero and villain of the fight scene, can be found in the nature of the exercising body itself.

Hawk Swanson's duality also manifested from a duality but stemmed from her *Amber Doll Project,* a series of performances in which the artist explored her relationship with a RealDoll made in her own image after "a series of failed attempts at finding female companionship" (Getsy 466). After a barrage of online comments comparing the artist's body to the doll's body and pointing out her "divergence from the ideal female body" (Getsy 474), the artist developed "a degree of resentment toward her companion's unchanging and idealized body" and started a strict CrossFit regime in order to move closer to the ideal (Getsy 475). In *Online Comments*, Hawk Swanson performed a series of CrossFit exercises while reading the negative comments about her body. The double self that haunts Hawk Swanson's performance is a complex construction; it is at the same time her ideal partner, a performance partner, a resented better-looking twin sister, and an invisible regulatory force and visible embodiment of unattainable female body ideals. For Hawk Swanson, it is this regulatory force that motivates both the off-stage and on-stage exercises. For Cassils, even though exercise is a regulatory force that demands that the male body must be masculine and muscular off-stage,

on stage, the regulatory force is not exercise but is expressed through exercise, citing the notion of exercise as (self-) disciplining force. The clay can function as Cassils's twin self that must be molded into an ideal masculine body shape that the artist already embodies; nevertheless, the implication of inadequacy comes from the "incongruity" of the artist's genitals. The negative comments in Hawk Swanson's performance are mirrored in the audience's own unvoiced, potentially negative comments about the artist's body that manifest in the blows that the artist receives from the invisible opponent. Similarly, while Hawk Swanson's reading of the comments during intense exercise "interfered with her own ability to breathe" while filling her body with the voices of others and making the exercise "more physically and psychologically challenging," Cassils's ability to breathe was restricted by the intensity of the blows that sought to mimic the violence of the words and movements of others (Getsy 476).

Clay: A Repository of Movements

In the intra-actions with the clay, the mutual shaping of the surfaces of bodies, are visible to the audience, while in *Powers that Be,* the effect of the performance will only be visible on Cassils. In *Powers that Be,* the opponent is an oppositional force and Cassils's body comes to represent trans, queer, and other bodies that violence is inflicted on; in *Becoming an Image,* the roles can be reversed either way. *Becoming an Image* and *Powers that Be* are imagined as staged battles between Cassils and a clay opponent that is inanimate yet malleable, and an invisible opponent that is invisible, respectively. Considering their non-human character, both opponents are imagined as taking on symbolic value by Cassils as well as by the audience. While the clay is a physical object — "a sculpture that is a faithful index of every punch and kick" the artist has thrown — and the invisible opponent is created through movement alone, both are the effects of Cassils's movements (Teplitzky). In the fight with the clay, Cassils's body visibly changes the shape of the clay block as well as physically exhausting the artist; in the fight with the invisible opponent, the artist gives and receives punches, but the visible result is only the exhausted artist's body. Both performances are durational and therefore focus on deconstructing a particular set of bodily actions in order to estrange them through repetition and engage the audience in thinking about a concept associated with those actions in a different way. For Cassils, the repetition of the punches and kicks is associated with the

concept of violence perpetrated against minorities, including trans people. Through being the one performing these violent movements, Cassils embodies and internalizes the violence in order to become the perpetrator, while at the same time attacking an amorphous opponent, who might equally represent either the violent, regulatory powers that Cassils is fighting against or the minorities fighting against those powers. Seeing as the fights are conversations of bodies, we must consider the role and shaping of each body — Cassils, the clay, and the invisible opponent.

Cassils shows the outlines of their body through nudity. In the early versions of *Becoming an Image,* Cassils performed with (Caucasian)nude-coloured underwear and sometimes a matching bra-like bandage across the chest; later, in both this performance and *Powers that Be,* Cassils started performing completely nude. Although Cassils used to wear underwear because "audiences tended to become fixated on that region, overlooking other information," the artist later decides to remove all clothing and allow for that focus (McTavish 96). Cassils performs nude in order to show their muscles, to allow for more movement during intense physical activity, but also because they follow in the footsteps of female body art performers who wanted to point attention to the regulatory powers that controlled the female nude body in life and in art and sought to "remake practices of self-representation to claim their authority as artists and to contest the history of art's representation of woman" (Smith and Watson 4). Cassils has a similar approach. Cassils's sculpted, muscular trans body coupled with their exposed genitals likely presents a contrast for many in the audience and prompts a rethinking of their ideas of femininity and masculinity and which bodies those attributes are allowed to belong to. While female artists performing nude had to negotiate the male gaze that recognized sexuality but not necessarily artistry, Cassils's nudity negotiates cisgender curiosity by essentially exposing the parts of a trans person that cis people stereotypically want to know about. The exposed genitals are a kind of pre-empted response to the ubiquitous invasive question: Have you had the surgery yet? As Chare and Willis note, Cassils's "chiseled physique can be subject to possessive voyeurism, providing strong material for muscle fantasies," but it is unclear who this desire would be coming from considering that desire for trans people is not something many are comfortable admitting or sharing (281). The reactions to Cassils's nudity are, therefore, potentially more complex than to cis performers' nude bodies and can include admiration, sexualization, and voyeuristic curiosity.

Although Cassils is nude, their muscles are a representation of their gender both in their connection to masculinity as well as in their connection to transness. As McTavish notes,

Cassils "renders palpable the work of 'doing gender,' documenting and displaying the labor required to shape the body in a way that both reveals and transgresses the disciplined regulations informing contemporary fitness and beauty culture" (80). Cassils's choice to embody trans masculinity by getting into bodybuilding and martial arts reflects the choices of many other trans men who turn to bodybuilding in order to enhance the effects of testosterone or instead of testosterone. Reaching for this ideal male embodiment is simultaneously conforming to the ideal of masculinity and a refusal of complete conformity through the absence of top or bottom surgery and incorporation of trans body parts into this ideal. In embodying trans masculinity, Cassils's muscles function as "a form of dress because we fabricate and wear them as part of the presentation of self" (as cited in McTavish 97). Even though Cassils performs nude, the muscles are a kind of protective layer, not a costume but a visual marker of masculinity that allows Cassils to be perceived as masculine even without any clothing.

Cassils's nudity serves to foreground his muscles, which are the manifestation of the artist's labour, and through which energy passes into the clay. The marks made on the clay reflect the lines of Cassils's muscles, the wetness of the clay reflects the sweat on Cassils's body, and the changing shape of the clay block mimics the contraction and increasing rigidity of the muscles. In contact with Cassils's body, the clay is also increasingly humanized as it starts to visibly mirror Cassils's body parts. As one audience member observes, the clay resembled a "muscular lump of matter" as "[f]inger marks strafe[d] its surface, handprints gauge[d] it deeper, and yawning smooth[ed] hollows irreparably damag[ing] its core" (Gray). Acting as both a fighter and a sculptor, Cassils fashions a body resembling their own muscular physique and therefore transforms violence into art and creation. Invoking Kathy Acker's musings on what "the process of weightlifting might tell us about violence in art," Eliza Steinbock notes that when "muscle is broken down in a controlled fashion and repaired with rest and nutrients it will grow back larger than before" (266). Similarly, Cassils's rigorous physical training also suggests a productive mode of violence in that muscles must fail in order to grow (Steinbock 253). In her analysis of Cassils's promotional YouTube video entitled "Who is Heather Cassils?," McTavish links the technique of muscle failure to Cassils's statement that "you have to break things down to build things up" and sees the literal tearing of the muscle as a portrayal of "a groundbreaking corporeal situation" (31). More than just productive, then, muscle failure can also be read as transformative and pleasurable because it results in a release of endorphins. Even though the performance might emphasize

the violent aspects of the experience, there are other, pleasurable, exciting, and transformative effects of the intra-actions with the clay that remain unilluminated.

Considering that Cassils acts as aggressor in *Becoming an Image,* the clay block must stand in for trans bodies, including Cassils's trans body. As such, the clay block functions as Cassils's proxy body in conversation with regulatory gender ideals. As a sculpture, the clay can be compared to other such trans sculpture work, namely Emmett Ramstad's fiber work, which Jeanne Vaccaro reads as following the concept of "non-predictive gender," or "a process in which predetermination of gender identity or expression is neither possible nor desirable" (256). Similarly, in Cassils's performances, the Muay Thai movements are not choreographed and the remnant clay in each performance of *Becoming an Image* takes on a different, unplanned or non-predictive shape. Relating sculptures to trans embodiment, Vaccaro seeks to develop "a theory of embodiment that does not seek totality or coherence of self, precisely because legible subjectivity is an unwanted and often impossible achievement for many gender variant people" (256). With the clay, Cassils does not seek to represent themselves or the likenesses of the victims of anti-LGBTQI violence but seeks to show the fragmentariness and incoherence of violence through making the clay bear the marks of their fists and body parts. In performance, the role of the clay sculpture becomes more than a representation of embodiment; "non-predictive" embodiment is performed over and over and can therefore be read also be read as endless becomings. Borrowing Vicky Kirby's phrase "corporeography," Vaccaro defines "trans-corporeography" as a "body in composition with itself, engaged in an autonomous process and choreographic labor, and foreground[s] transformation or transformative processes that are not the result of intervention" (255). Cassils's relationships with clay performs trans-corporeographies in that it foregrounds non-surgical and non-hormonal transformations; and yet, the process is not fully autonomous. Rather than making sculptures that represent trans embodiments, Cassils opens up transness to more than embodiment while staying grounded in the body. In *Power that Be,* the corporeography is not autonomous either as the artist's body grapples with an embodiment of regulatory forces, some of which include the pressure for the hormonal and surgical interventions that Vaccaro mentions. Since there is no sculpture after this performance, the corporeography speaks to the ephemerality of the transformative processes of trans embodiment and the forces that influence it.

Becoming an Image is a performance that stages the process of making a sculpture; yet, Cassils also offers us a glimpse into a labour that has to be re-imagined. Amelia Jones point to the relevance of the "remnant sculpture" as a repository for Cassils's emotion, sweat,

and imprints, but also its potential to then exert its own "agential force" (25). Observing Paul Donald's wooden sculptures, Jones notes the "silent labor" she remembers going into them; this remembered labour is what makes the wood "animate in multiple senses" (22). In Jones's reading, what needs to be reimagined can equally be read as movement, or, the evidence of movement in the clay sculpture. Nevertheless, framing movement as labour forecloses on the possibility that movement is possible without a human actor. Does the clay labour as well? Or is labour collaboratively produced through the intra-action? Jones contrasts these two impressions of labour with the witnessed and remembered labour in watching *Becoming an Image* in performance and installation formats. Vaccaro's and Jones's accounts of the liveness of objects depend on their own "live" encounter with the objects. However, the clay's potential for both resistance to the attempts to mould it, as well its willingness to give way to the pressures of external influence, can be read as performing a collaborative trans embodiment, an embodiment that is always changing, always becoming entangled with entities outside the boundaries of the trans body.

As an artist shaping clay into a new body, Cassils casts themselves as either a Pygmalion or a Doctor Frankenstein-like figure, a casting that is a common phenomenon in trans cultural production. In the first trans memoir, Lili Elbe's *Lili: A Portrait of the First Sex Chan*ge, Elbe is in a Pygmalion-like relationship with her sculptor-doctor and describes herself "like clay which others had prepared and to which the Professor has given form and life by a transient touch" (1816). The reference to clay is a reference to sculpture, creation in the Judeo-Christian sense of God making Adam from clay, and a birth scene that involves a mother and a newborn. In a reference to birth, Elbe takes sole credit for her self-creation when she writes that her confessions would one day make her "the first person who was not born unconsciously through a mother's travail, but fully consciously through her own pangs" (2927). In this second quote, Elbe discards the doctor as mother and envisions herself as both mother and child. In Elbe's memoir, clay is important because it helps envision the body as a malleable substance and therefore naturalizes gender confirmation surgery. And yet, clay is even more important in terms of who gets to be the sculptor. There is no doctor moulding the clay in Cassils' performance; rather, Cassils is the sculptor and, as a proxy body, also the clay sculpture. Even though Elbe, a painter, demonstrates that challenges to the medical model and a desire to replace it with what can be called an "artistic model" can be found in the earliest trans life writing, Cassils's work can be read as completely disengaging with the doctor-figure and focusing solely on artistic creation, which is a novel way of imagining trans body-modification.

Focusing on the agential potential of Cassils's clay block, Chare and Willis also point to the initial pyramid shape of the clay block and see it as a metaphor for "the violence of 'visual and morphological criteria' to which transpeople are expected to conform" (278). If the pyramid shape represents gender classification, and the visual ideal of a gendered body, then Cassils's destruction of the clay shape can be read as a refusal to conform to the ideal of trans masculinity. Like Cassils's earlier performance, *Cuts: A Traditional Sculpture, Becoming an Image* takes inspiration from Eleanor Antin's 1972 performance *Carving: A Traditional Sculpture*, in which the artist followed a strict weight-loss regime and starved herself to critique the ideal female body shape. Cassils similarly embodies the ideal body in order to critique the violence and labour that go into obtaining such a body. While the pyramid provides a set structure that can then be destroyed and transformed, the invisible opponent in *Powers that Be* is more amorphous, which allows the audience to fill in the blank with whatever oppressive power resonates with them.

Intra-actions emerge not only on the level of bodies but also of intertextuality and reshaping the work of antecedents in order to stress self-creation. Cassils reworks Antin's performance through adopting feminist frameworks of criticizing body ideals for trans performance. In reference to another kind of antecedent, the idea of shaping clay can also be traced to Judeo-Christian mythology. Reworking the creation myth in which God sculpts the first man, Adam, "from the dust of the ground," and in his own image, Cassils takes up clay as expressing gender fluidity rather than God's will (Genesis 2:7). As Chare and Willis note, the Hebrew for Adam is related to aw-damh-ah meaning red earth or clay (279). The focus on breathing through the use of the boxer breathing technique reworks the role of breath as creative force in the Bible where God "breathed into [Adam's] nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7). Cassils sculpts the clay block into a body, not similar to Cassils's own in terms of appearance, but in terms of bulging muscle and sweat. Clay is the "Ur-medium for sculpture, associated with the genesis of bodies" but it is also a medium in which many gender nonconforming sculptures were made (Chare and Willis 279). In *Becoming an Image*, the fact that the clay is left unfinished or abstract instead of in human form can be read as a parallel to the state of Cassils's own body whose masculine appearance is achieved through exercise and weight lifting instead of hormones and surgery. Considering that trans memoirs often conclude or begin with surgery, the absence of surgery can be read as a comment on the deliberately "unfinished" project of a trans body. In the act of creating a body out of clay, Cassils takes on the role of God and self-creator. Both embodying and refusing to yield to the ideal form or a masculine body in its cisgender "entirety," by

controlling the shape of the clay, Cassils comments on the necessity of self-determination in trans embodiment.

Some of the remnant sculptures from the various *Becoming an Image* performances, each constructed to be a monument but made from perishable material, have taken on a new life through projects entitled *Resilience of the 20%* and *Monument Push*. *Resilience of the 20%* is a cast bronze remnant of one of the sculptures; an attempt to turn the clay sculptures "into more durable materials" (Teplitzky). The name for the project comes from the "sickening statistic from Amnesty International, that the murders of trans people went up 20% worldwide in 2012" (Teplitzky). Although the initial aim was for the sculptures to be "placed in public sites where acts of violence have occurred against trans and gender nonconforming people," Cassils instead decided that rather than picking "one site, as one usually does when placing a monument," they "decided to highlight several sites" (Teplitzky). *Monument Push* was the first performance of placing several sculptures in Omaha, Nebraska, in "five sites where acts of unseeable violence have occurred" (Teplitzky). Working with local activists in determining the sites and physically pushing the heavy sculptures to each of the sites, Cassils imagined *Monument Push* as speaking to "erased histories of violence" and asking: "Whose lives are worth remembering, and whose histories are erased?" (Teplitzky).

Trans Temporalities of Movement: Out of Breath, Outside of Time

Temporality and breath are also types of movements through which we can read Cassils's performances. While the clay records the movements of the body in a visual way, the artist's breath is an auditory record of movement in both *Becoming an Image* and *Powers that Be*. Breath is an important timekeeping element in both durational performance and in athletic activities and is therefore an important connector of the two in Cassils's work. Temporality in Cassils's performances is characterized by speed, a temporality related to athleticism and structured as the time of a match or competition, but also by rhythm of breath, an element that replaces the dripping of water as the main (or one of the main) sound effects of the performances.

In *Tiresias*, another one of Cassils's performances, Maurya Wickstrom observes that the audience was led into a room that "seemed like an encasement almost outside of time, or

isolated from the time outside entirely, like a tomb" and that "in entering a cave, time shifts dramatically" and becomes "a feeling of no time, or, better, ancestral time" (47). *Becoming an Image* and *Powers that Be* have a similar time-shifting feel in that they take place in dark, damp, cave-like settings that become sites of endurance or struggle, however, the movements in these performances result in the construction of different temporalities. *Tiresia*s, a performance in which Cassils stands motionless (except for short warm-up breaks), marks the passage of time by the dripping water from the melting of a classical Greek male torso made of ice in front of Cassils's chiseled, sculpture-like body. There are several versions of the story of Tiresias in Greek mythology, but the element that remains stable is that he was a blind prophet who the goddess Hera turned into a woman for seven years as punishment. For her consideration of the temporality Cassils constructs in the *Tiresias* performance, Wickstrom combines mythology, transness as shifting between differently gendered bodies, and the slowness that characterizes the point of contact between the fleshed and the ice bodies. For Wickstrom, the "new temporality of the performance is in the endurance 'of the persistence of the point of contact between masculine and feminine', and "[b]y performing in the name of a seer," Wickstrom argues that Cassils "gestures toward futurity" and "directs our attention to a moment of unresolved transformation, to Tiresias as meltingly man/woman" (51). In Cassils's subsequent performances, the shift from slowness to speed, movement, and choreography necessitates a different take on temporality.

In *Becoming an Image* and *Powers that Be*, Cassils departs from slowness but also from conceptualizing transness as being between male and female. Even in *Tiresia*s, both Cassils's and the ice torso were muscular, masculine, and male, both were trans, and both also had a complete absence of any feminine characteristics other than in information (Cassils was AFAB and Tiresias was AMAB) not directly invoked in the actual performance. In Cassils's subsequent performances, transness is no longer invoked through subtle references to maleness and femaleness, as it was in *Cuts: A Traditional Sculpture* and *Hard Times*; instead, transness becomes relational to trans political concerns in the United States (and Finland) and the violent regulatory powers that seek to shape trans bodies and lives. This change of course and a focus on relationalities outside of (yet connected to) trans bodies closely resemble new directions in trans studies and literature. If trans temporalities are no longer being constructed in terms of transition or a point of contact between two genders, how are they constructed? The unresolved transition and temporality as persistent point of contact become irrelevant for *Becoming an Image* and *Powers that Be,* yet the point of contact between transness and other entities remains, even though it cannot fully be categorized as futurity.

Breath plays an important part in both performances and functions as a link to the athletic, a significant constant sound element in the absence of light in *Becoming an Image*, a sound manifestation of a body's movement, as well as of the space in between the two opponents in a fight intra-action. Different activities require different types of breathing. In running, proper breathing maximizes oxygen intake and therefore performance, but it can also help minimize the chance of injury. In running, for example, Budd Coates and Claire Kowalchik contend that "always landing on the same foot at the beginning of exhalation (...) causes one side of your body to continuously absorb the greatest impact force of running, which causes it to become increasingly worn down and vulnerable to injury." It is the presence of breath that fuels the run, but directing the breath in the right places of the body at the right times helps to maintain the body's durability. Such attitudes to the role of breath in athletic activities are one element differentiating athletic activities and sports from performance art, which is mainly concerned with pushing the body's limits during the performance and is not concerned with sustaining the body's abilities and health.

In running, at least in training, relaxed breath is an indicator of a relaxed body, a body that has, through practice and repetition, achieved a level of skill that allows it to enjoy running rather than focusing on performing the movements correctly. Dreyfus and Dreyfus note that "while learners acquiring a skill will be reliant on following rules, once the stage of expertise has been reached, the learner is able to operate intuitively in a state of 'absorbed coping' without any need to process information at the cognitive level (as cited in Purser 38). New and returning runners will inevitably be paying attention to breathing correctly and potentially gasping for breath when they strain beyond their current capabilities. In boxing, however, the movements are not as repetitive and uniform as in running, which is reflected in less uniform breathing. Nevertheless, a rhythmic breathing technique is necessary to sustain such strenuous movement. In *Becoming an Image,* Cassils's breathing is reminiscent of the boxer breathing technique, a style of breathing that entails inhaling and exhaling through the nose instead of the mouth and produces characteristic "hissing" sounds. Unlike some other types of breathing, such as Lamaze breathing, which are intended to relax the body, the boxer breathing technique is "much faster and sharper than through the mouth – which means you can move faster if you exhale through the nose" (Johnny N.). As a former semi-pro boxer, who also received at least three weeks of Muay Thai training before the first rendition of this performance, Cassils is surely well-acquainted with the technique. As Steinbock notes, *Becoming an Image* is structured as a boxing match between the artist and the clay, or, an "all-out attack" lasting until the artist's body runs out of oxygen, or is "gassed out" (254).

Similarly, pointing to the centrality of breath in *Powers that Be*, Hannah Manshel notes that when Cassils exited the performance, *"*all you could hear was their breathing. Short, fast, and labored, their breath was the breath of an exhausted *athlete*, lungs grasping for oxygen" (emphasis mine, 139). While in running, if breathing properly, one is never supposed to become gassed out, in boxing, this seems to be an inevitable situation.

The duration of the performance is then timed by how long the artist can keep breathing, which corresponds closely to the methods of timing — such as the duration in which an artist is able to stand, sit, or perform a repetitive action — employed by other artists. Lottie Consalvo's *Steer a Steady Ship* performance, which entailed a recreation of Chinese water torture by water dripping on the artist's head, was supposed to last for seven hours but was, on at least one occasion, stopped before the designated time due to the artist suffering hypothermia and instead became measured by her body's ability to endure until breaking point. While sports push the athlete to their physical limits of performance, those limits do not usually entail coming as close to serious physical harm or death as some durational performances have come. In the works of Marina Abramović, for example, the set duration of the performances has often been cut short by the artist losing consciousness, sometimes in breath-related accidents. In *Rhythm 4,* Abramović walked towards a large industrial fan while attempting to breathe in as much air as possible in order to try expanding her lungs and eventually passed out. In *Breathing In/Breathing Out*, Abramović and then-partner Ulay put their mouths together and shared one breath until their lungs filled with carbon-dioxide and both passed out 17 minutes into the performance. In these early, dynamic performances, breathing techniques that would extend the performances were not employed because what was put to the test was the body's ability to withstand physical stress. In later performances, Abramović does train by meditating and slowing down the breath to reach a meditative state. Through her emphasis on training, even though not physical or specifically involving breath, Abramović comes close to an athlete. For Cassils, coming from an athletic background, the emphasis is not to injure the body or push it close to death but to utilize the fit, resilient body in strength-related performances that change the opponent through intra-action.

Edward Scheer notes that duration in durational performance "often refers to the actual time that it takes to do things" — to complete an action during a performance — but it also refers to "the time it takes to break away from the things that inhibit creativity, empathy and intuition" (1). A breaking away from whatever it is that "normal time" implies — the speed not necessarily of physical movement but of speedy movement from one task to another and one thought to another — is then conceptualized as a slowing down. Pamela Lee notes

that "it is in slowness and the capacity to parse one's own present that one gains ground on what's coming up next, perhaps restores to the everyday some degree of agency, perhaps some degree of resistance" (308). Through the breaking up and re-ordering of the present, "one refuses teleological end games" and instead "rests with the immanence of being and the potential to act" (Lee 308). Although the real time during which things are done on stage can be either speedy or slow, it is the temporality of presence, of spending time contemplating one concept and sitting with it that characterizes the temporality of durational performances. Durational performance is a creation of a kind of collective time in which the performer and audience share the same focus. In this sense, many durational performances can be characterized as kinds of "temporal sanctuaries," as Wickstrom calls *Tiresias,* not only from the everyday but from temporalities that "construct time without the possibility of innovation, revolt, or the illuminated present" (49). Others, such as *Becoming an Image* and *Powers that Be,* while they allow for presence, cannot be described as sanctuaries because they shift "normal time" through disorientation or a presence that requires witnessing potentially uncomfortable moments. The temporalities in Cassils's performance, similarly, can be imagined as betweenness — not between genders, but between opponents — as tension rather than sanctuary. The two opponents are never gendered male and female; any tension between the two imagined poles of gender are something that the audience imposes upon trans artists even when they do not take it up themselves. Rather, the opponents represent regulatory powers that shape bodies and the bodies that are shaped by such powers.

The variety of temporalities taken up in sports studies do not really match up with tension because they prioritize the passage of time, often in larger chunks, rather than presence and shorter moments. Allen Guttman has argued that quantification and the quest for records are some of the characteristics that define modern sports (16). In most sports, Allen Collinson argues, there is a fixation with "the hegemonic race-and-stopwatch mode," a focus on the times associated with one's performance, and "there is much research still to be done on the subjective experience of time within sports and its social construction in general" (332). The demand for results is both a result of sports matches becoming big business as well as audience expectations of gaining "instant knowledge on quantified variables such as the score" (Lopez-Gonzales 348). However, sports temporalities are more complex because temporality in sports needs to account for both the phenomenological experiences of time as well as the totality of the history of a particular sport and particular athlete. Hibai Lopez-Gonzales argues that "time in sports is built on elements from the linear conception, exemplified in the idea of progress" and "on elements from the cyclical conception, as can be

seen in its seasonal structure and periodic recurrence" (354). The idea of progress or linear progressive time, so embedded in or imposed on any conception of temporality, is something queer temporality and durational performance try to resist by either looking for alternate possibilities of speed or slowness. In sports, speed and slowness are arguably characteristics tied up with race-and-stopwatch time, in that the two are evaluations of many athletic performances and thus attributed to being either good or bad. Cyclicality, the temporality that describes the repetitive nature of training sessions and matches, applies to Cassils if we consider each performance as new match in which the winner is not yet known.
If the temporality of a fight, or a sports competition, is marked by a relatively short burst of intense movement that ends with both the athletes' exhaustion, and promises a win to only one opponent, can this temporality be future-oriented? There is no progression because the opponents are always the same and there is never really a clear winner. If we shift focus from goals to experience, then the temporality of the fight can equally be imagined as the duration of an intra-action between opponents. Steinbock contends that body-shaping practices in Cassils's earlier work, such as diet and exercise, "mark out a temporality that feminist art scholar Clare Johnson describes as a "future-oriented duration" (2006: 315), in which the body shrinks or grows to become gendered ideals" (255). While this fits in terms of preparations for *Becoming an Image* and *Powers that Be,* in the actual performances, futurity is taken up not in terms of a single body that undergoes changes, but in terms of the possibilities of giving trans bodies subjected to violence a kind of futurity through memorialization and the chance to "play again tomorrow" (Kretchmar 101).

If a trans temporality can be drawn out from this work, it will be necessarily different from both queer time, which relies on desire and sexuality, and available models of trans time, which rely on hormones and re-starting time. Jack Halberstam uses the concept "queer time" to show "how respectability, and notions of the normal on which it depends, may be upheld by a middle-class logic of reproductive temporality" (1). As Halberstam notes, "we chart the emergence of the adult from the dangerous and unruly period of adolescence as a desired process of maturation; and we create longevity as the most desirable future, applaud the pursuit of long life (under any circumstances), and pathologize modes of living that show little or no concern for longevity" (1). Queer temporalities are, then, "those specific models of temporality that emerge within postmodernism once one leaves the temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance" (1). One of Halberstam's examples of queer time is the speeding up of time in postmodern queer novels, in which speed, "the drug as well as the motion," "becomes the motor of an alternative

history" with which "queer heroes rewrite completely narratives of female rebellion" (Halberstam 1). Considering that for women, "the time of reproduction is ruled by a biological clock," steering away from reproductive linearity and into temporalities marked by speed and the cyclicality of chasing the next high. Although the temporalities in performance cannot follow the same logic as the structure of character development in a novel, the notion of speed is also related to queerness and transness in Cassils's work. The speed of the artist's movements, the blows, and the flash of the camera and switching of the radio stations all speak to a kind of disturbance of the linear progression of the fights and a desire to manipulate time through disorientation.

The temporalities in Cassils's work do not correspond to the two most prominent kinds of trans temporalities, second adolescence and hormone time, because they do not point to either the past or the future. The trajectory from adolescence to maturation is disrupted through the process of transition, which can, if it occurs in middle age, trigger a second adolescence and recalibrate time back to the puberty that the person presumably never got to enjoy. A similar concept, not specific to middle age, is what Laura Horak calls "hormone time," a temporality that considers the start of hormones a new benchmark for measuring the passage of time. Similarly, Jenny Sunden sees trans temporality as tied to gender rather than sexuality or desire, but also as tied to transition, which she sees as "a continuous process, a movement that does not straightforwardly mark a change from a 'before' to an 'after'" (199). For Sunden, gender is "a temporal form which cuts or vibrates through the body in highly material, embodied ways" and transition is a temporality in which the "virtual potential" of the gender embodiment one strives to achieve is "yet to be actualized" (203). Both Horak and Sunden, like Halberstam, construct trans temporalities by looking at either the totality of a trans life or arguably the most important process in a trans person's life; however, the temporalities of performances like Cassils's are necessarily different, especially if they do not reference transition. Although Cassils does not take hormones, they did go through a process of muscle-building, bodily transformation through bodybuilding and exercise. In *Becoming an Image,* the process of transition from one physical form to another through a similar medium of exercise is displaced onto the clay, the object that undergoes a visible transformation from block to sculpture and embodies what Sunden calls the "actualization" of a "virtual potential" of a body. Like femininity in a trans female body, the sculpture shape was always already in the clay block and it was time and intervention that brought it out.

Reese simpkins expands trans temporality from its base in transition and ties it instead to "becoming-trans*," a process through which "trans* bodies materialise," and through

which they "create unique temporal embodiments that challenge universal frameworks of chronological time, highlight the nonlinear resonation of matter and enmesh past-present-future in open-ended becomings" (124). Considering that "becoming-trans*" is "never complete," for simpkins, "trans* temporalities are nonlinear, affective processes involved in the production of becoming-trans*" (124). In Cassils's performances, becoming-trans* is translated instead into the way becoming trans is influenced and shaped by regulatory powers that threaten to take away trans futurities before they start. Unlike the affects that emerge as a result of engaging in physical activity in Chapters 2 and 3, the affects in Cassils's performances — transphobia and violence — are decidedly negative but the artist works to transform those negative affects into something creative. These becomings, however, cannot quite be described as nonlinear because when there are no clear end goals, there is the inevitable ending of Cassils's exhaustion that marks the end of each performance. Unlike the temporalities of real lives, which can be nonlinear in more unpredictable ways, Cassils's temporalities are firmly determined by the limitations of the body as well as the generic and temporal constraints of performance art.

Rather than problematizing "transition temporalities" or more personal types of trans futurities of transition, Cassils takes up the notion that some trans people do not have the luxury of futurity or longevity that could then be embraced or rejected. Fisher et al. note that the potential for trans futurities, again conceptualized as "the temporality of gender transition" is "racialized, classed, gendered, colonized and able-ized," and is not always available to those trans subjects who do not have the privileges of being white, middle-class, able-bodies, or neurotypical (3). Although Cassils's performances take up just these kinds of trans subjects, the white body of the artist nevertheless is the body that stands in for the bodies that will not get to live either the normative trans temporalities of transition or the other kinds of non-transition temporalities that Cassils creates in their two performances. While non-transition temporalities are more likely to be created, at the present moment, by trans artists with certain kinds of privilege, they do provide a way, albeit problematic, to speak for those trans people who do not get to live their futurities. Trans necropolitics, C. Riley Snorton's and Jin Haritaworn's adaptation of Achille Mbembe's concept designating a "form of power that marks some fraction of a population for death even while it deems other fractions suitable for life-enhancing investment," points to the fact that not all trans temporalities are defined by a utopian futurity (66). Trans necropolitics "reflects the circumstances of trans of color existence" and can be taken up in two contexts (Haritaworn and Snorton 66). The first iteration of necropolitics is naming the intersection of racism and transphobia as culpable for

the high murder rates of trans people of colour in the Americas and around the world. In the second iteration, trans necropolitics is a concept covering white cis and lesbian and gay people's complicity and profiting off these deaths. Haritaworn and Snorton assert that value extracted from the deaths of trans people of color vitalizes projects as diverse as "inner-city gentrification, anti-immigrant and anti-muslim moral panics, homonationalism, and white transnormative community formation" (66). Despite Cassils's whiteness, the artist's work implicates white, cis gay and lesbian communities, represented by the One Archives in the first performance of *Becoming an Image*, and also points the finger at other complicit regulatory powers in *Powers that Be*. In *Becoming an Image*, the clay standing in for the bodies of murdered trans people is contrasted by the fact that white artists such as Cassils are the ones who get to memorialize and perform a cyclical futurity through each new performance while the lives of many trans women of colour get cut short and futurity is denied as an option. In *Powers that Be,* the promise of futurity is revived through the fact that the memorialization fight is replaced with a fight of equal opponents.

Mediations of Movement: Light, Sound, and Social Media

Along with the two opponents, other aspects of the matches such as sound and light effects are also elements that help stage the scene of movement not just in a performance context of stage space but also in the context of sports. Stage-specific technologies, as well as the social media technologies that the audience uses to capture and broadcast the second performance, mediate the ways in which the audiences see Cassils's movements, at the same time citing sporting events and reinterpreting them to comment on site-specific contexts, trans embodiment, and violent regulatory forces that shape bodies. In a boxing or a football match, a commentator would mediate the event for the audience by providing the context, the athletes' biographical information, their past performances and expectations of future results, and in international competitions, the commentator would also cast the clash between opponents as a clash between two countries. Similarly, in *Powers that Be,* the radio clips function as the geographical background for either the political climate in Los Angeles or Finnish-Russian relations in Kuopio. As Jean-Francois Morrissette notes, national sports teams competing in international competitions are often endowed with embodying the values of a country. Even the movements that a team performs can "enact a style of play that

embodies values usually associated with [national] identity, such as 'humbleness, simplicity, honesty and directness' that, for example, the German national football team might want to associate with, and that influence the way they play the game (388). The identification of a sports team or an athlete with certain national values "gives rise to mythic tales in which heroes – players who create and establish order on the playing field – and villains – players who disrupt the action by creating turmoil – take place and engage battle" (Morrissette 388). In *Powers that Be*, Cassils symbolically represented Finnish liberal values while the opponent cast as villain represented Russian conservative politics but also their perceived unfair style of battle, of attacking an opponent that cannot see them coming and does not know in which avatar they will appear. The radio clips do not, however, show a radical difference between the Russian and Finnish clips — both work in unison to provide a fragmented, disorienting experience for the audience. The lack of auditory differences between the two might serve to subvert the very obvious division between hero and villain on stage and to cast all politics as unpleasant background noise rather than contextualizing information. In *Becoming an Image*, Cassils can be read as representing the conservative powers that attack an opponent, representing the (assumed) liberal LGBTQI community that falls prey to conservative politics, but the roles can also be reversed. In *Powers that Be,* the flash of the camera does not provide context but serves as a tool for disorientation and breaking up the continuity of the fight — a technique that corresponds to the absence of a clear casting of hero and villain in *Becoming an Image*.

In *Becoming an Image*, the lighting — the photographer's flashes — is cast in the same role as sound is in *Powers that B*e: it acts on the audience's senses and forces them to participate in the performance not just by witnessing violence but by being affected by this witnessing. Audience members are not only disoriented but they have fascinating accounts of the effects of the flash on their brains. An anonymous blogger notes that even with knowing what the performance would entail, they "underestimated the sensory disturbance the act creates; particularly the disconcertingly stubborn presence of the residual images that flash loudly into view before shuddering across one's field of vision, receding, slipping and only slowly fading, like illusory fireworks" (Gray). The flashes "play havoc with your spatial understanding of the event; it's almost literally impossible to overlook the frozen ghosts haunting the scene, even though the rest of your senses reliably inform you that they are decoys, and that the action has moved on" (Gray). For this audience member, the images created by the flash did not resemble "photographs at all" because they were "lingering, morphing and mixing" (Gray).

Blogger Megan Vaughn, who had been familiar with the performance before seeing it, confessed that she had "completely underestimated what [her] mind would do." The "first couple of times it happened," Vaughn describes, there were gasps in the audiences and the flashes felt like "having your brain photocopied." Vaughn also notes that in the version of the performance she attended, the room was "not quite pitch black, because the tiny green on-light from the camera dances around the space like some kind of insect." This insect is significant because it gave the audience members a place to focus their attention in the darkness; however, any sense of direction this might have implied was misleading. As Vaughn notes, "you're never quite looking where you think you're looking. As one frame burns onto your eyes, you try to drink the whole image in before it fades, but that means your eyes dart around your head chasing its centre." The flash is not only disorienting in terms of darkness and light, but in terms of the movements of the fading image, which compete for attention with the sounds coming form the artist. While the audience is not able to see the artist's body move and focuses, instead, on the seemingly still images, the images themselves create the illusion of movement when they linger in the brain. The performance is, therefore, punctuated with the flashes, but the audience members might also experience a different temporality in which the images actually last longer — rather than darkness interrupted by light, the performance is a series of flashing and fading images. Vaughn also notes the movement in the positioning of her eyes: "when another flash happens, you find your eyes somewhere on the floor by your feet, or over at the other side of the audience, and you have to concentrate on anchoring your focus back on the clay so you don't miss the next one." The disorientation seems to be at once unpredictable, disorientating, yet not quite uncomfortable because the images are something Vaughn is "enjoying." Another unexpected movement of the eyes is blinking, an action that either prevents you from seeing the image at all or renders a partial image. If you are "halfway through a blink and the only image you retain is a row of black and white feet from everyone who's facing you. And by the way it's all black and white in your retina-brain. I wasn't expecting that." Considering the physical effect of the flash, the performance is surely an individual experience for everyone considering that each person's body will process the stimuli differently.

Eliza Steinbock contends that the flash of the camera striking the audience's eyes is meant to represent "all the senseless invisible violence we tolerate" that is directed at trans people (261). In a sense, the shock and violence of the flash, in what is otherwise a dark room, is meant to make the audience physically experience the violence many trans people face. Steinbock argues that Cassils's "dramatized use of flash photography forces upon a body an

unelicited, violent sensation of *Becoming an Image*. A flash aesthetically registers as dazzlingly felt: a sensation image of trans" (262). The violence is not perpetrated by the flash of the camera alone since the audience is "subject to flying sweat and debris from the clay, the panting sounds of the fighter, his shuffling movement" (Steinbock 262). A large part of the discomfort is, surely, the possibility of unwanted physical contact with any matter, light, or even the artist whose punches might accidentally fly in the direction of the audience. The flashes of the camera can also speak to the fragmentary nature of understanding, and perhaps, misunderstanding of what the trans experience can be. The disorientation of the audience can be read not only as an assault but as a process of dismantling preconceived ideas of what constitutes the trans experience.

Along with light**,** sound is a powerful element in this performance because while the audience could not quite trust their eyes, the sounds of Cassils's presence were a constant. In her experience of the performance, blogger Flora Ward focuses more on sounds because "the optical tricks made [her] more attentive to [her] other senses." The discernable sounds were "Cassils moving in the darkness, the smack of flesh on clay, the cries and grunts of pain? Pleasure? Both?" Rather than violence, for Ward, "the sound of flesh," "cries, groans, and grunts" coupled with the darkness and the "subtle scent of the wet clay," created a sense of intimacy and made her "feel like a voyeur watching an private, sexual act." At one point in Ward's version of the performance, Cassils increased the level of intimacy by breaking away from the clay and circling "in front of the audience, standing briefly in front of each of us, breathing heavily in our faces and gently brushing their hands over the front of our bodies." Although Ward characterizes this act as "a gesture of physical connection with the audience [that] snapped [her] out of [her] single-minded focus on Cassils and brought [her] attention to the crowd of observers, under the circumstances of impaired vision, it could also be considered threatening. Rather than sexual or intimate, an audience member in a different version of the performance comments: "you hear Cassils breath and grunt like a fighter in the ring. Or a fighter working the bag. It's gym noise" (Doyle). Both interpretations imagine the sounds not as merely produced by Cassils but produced through an encounter with someone or something that affects the artist.

In the *Powers that Be* performance in Los Angeles, the sounds of the car radios function in ways specific to the location, seeking to represent the juxtaposition of news stories about violence against minority groups and banal content. According to the description on Cassils's website, "by amplifying the sociopolitical conflicts at each performance location with sound, *The Powers that Be* explores the radical unrepresentability of certain forms of

trauma and violence" ("Powers"). The radio signal is in each performance "a transmission of site-specific issues, both proximate and distant" ("Powers"). Cassils identifies the radio in Los Angeles as a "a good way of picking up the pulse" of the city because at "any given moment you can hear about a woman's right to choose, a tanning product, a really bad R&B song" (Frank). The sounds are site-specific but also time-specific because in preparation for the performance, Cassils actually "listened to various radio stations that air around 10 p.m., the time of the performance, and compiled a curated simulacrum of the experience at its most grating" (Frank). Reflecting on the medium of radio in Los Angeles, Priscilla Frank comments that the sound samples mediated through car radios "create a truly Los Angeles experience, the aural equivalent of surfing the internet and being bombarded with images of Syrian refugees and discounted gym memberships in the very same glance." Considering the significance of cars as the primary mode of transportation in Los Angeles, the shifting radio stations would have been something relatable to everyone in the audience. Frank lists some of the discernable sounds in the performance as a "Beatles song, the words 'black lives matter,' Yo Gotti's 'Down in the DM,' an advertisement for teeth whitener — chopped and mixed and layered on top of each other, yielding the cacophonous tune of being caught in traffic with your windows down." In a way, this created sound resembles certain varieties of Noise music such as Vaporwave, which copy-pastes iconic 80s and 90s songs and elevator music, and computer sound clips and early Windows imagery from the 90s in an effort to create nostalgic, relaxing, yet slightly-disturbingly distorted music videos. The soundscape in *Powers that Be* similarly mixes recognizable "background noise" such as advertisements and past and current pop music hits with highly-charged political issues and through this contrast simulates the experience of a typical social media feed. Kadet Kuhne, the sound designer for this performance, sees their work as "an extension of experimental practice in an age of hyper-communication and digital saturation" and combines "prompting erratic and discursive thought patterns and emotional responses" with an "ambient reflection" in order to " heighten tensions between motion and stasis: a balanced, yet heightened 'nervous system' to reflect our own" ("About"). Just like the vision of velocity in performance art as both as estranging experience as well as a familiar reflection of multitasking in our daily lives, the sound arrangement can be read as both a violent attack on the audience's senses as well as an already-everyday experience of media cacophony.

Radio is not directly related to violence here, considering that people witness violence primarily through social media or television, but there is a link between radio and the civil rights movement that the mention of Black Lives Matter evokes. The combination of radio

and Black Lives Matter coverage evokes the American civil rights movement of the 1960s and perhaps points to how little has changed for African-Americans in terms of being subjected to institutionalized racism and violence. Radio played a significant part in the civil rights movement by providing information on roadblocks, motivation, and organization, and was actually more widespread in Black communities than television or print media (Williams 49). Although radio is not an anachronistic medium in Los Angeles, unlike social media, it is a medium that spans to both proximate and distant social issues and has the ability to reflect site-specific issues that remain unresolved in the present. Radio similarly evokes the struggle to legalize abortion in the 70s and points to the struggles for women's reproductive rights in the current conservative and increasingly Christian political establishment in the United States.

In Finland, the medium of radio similarly speaks to the persistence of human rights issues, although this time, exclusively in relation to Russia. The contrasts between Russian and Finnish language on the radio were supposed to symbolize different attitudes to LGBTQI rights, with Finland representing the liberal and Russia the conservative, dangerous space. When reflecting back on the American performance, a counterpart to the political border between Finland and Russia can be found in the invisible borders between liberals and conservatives, white and people of colour, and the Northern and Southern parts of the United States — these invisible borders are also sites of the kind of struggle that Cassils stages. The border between Finland and Russia is at the same time the border between the EU/Schengen area and the East and is therefore a site relevant to the recent migrant crisis. While most refugees aim for Germany and Scandinavia as their final destinations, and they mostly enter the EU zone via the Southern route, some do attempt to cross through Russia. A few months after Cassils's performance, there was a minor incident on the Finnish/Russian border, where refugees attempted to illegally cross into Finland with bicycles and the border was temporarily closed for third-party (not Finnish or Russian) citizens to prevent them from crossing. The mutually-agreed-upon closure shows that even though the countries might see themselves as opposites in terms of human rights, Finland is still not the ideal location that many seem to want to portray it as. The cars in Cassils's performance take on new significance in Finland too. If the border is supposed to be a stable political construct that delineates people by ethnicity, then cars are the mediums through which people criss-cross and negotiate that border. Even though cars are simply parked during the performance, perhaps Cassils and their invisible opponent represent the drivers of those cars, Cassils temporarily belonging to Finland and the invisible opponent to Russia. The space of the

performance surrounded by cars then embodies the border space and represents the space of negotiation.

During the performance, the radio shifts so rapidly between stations that it results in a mostly indecipherable, unpleasant, loud discordance. The fact that the music and the radio voices are all in either Finnish or Russian adds to the indecipherability for members of the audience and subsequent viewers of the video recording who do not speak either language. The loudness and confusion of the sounds form another kind of violence that both the audience and the performer must endure. Like the blows from an invisible opponent, the violence of sounds on the audience's ears is not as tangible as a punch in the head but the lingering discomfort for the duration of the performance surely is grating. Structured as three "loops," or three separate recordings, the clips from the second and third loops clearly relate to the first loop but are slightly different in that they either repeat a portion of a statement from the first loop and add another sentence to it or continue where the statement in the first loop left off. The produced effect does not intend to give a different angle of the conversations, because the continuations do not provide any significantly different details, but, perhaps, to point to the fragmentary nature of our knowledge of the situations and the effects of the oppression in each particular case. In other instances, clips about similar issues serve as juxtapositions of crisis and leisure.

The performance features clips of Russian LGBT activists discussing the situation in Russia, as well as clips taken at various public protests in which heated conversations between gay activists and their harassers are heard. One voice comments on the intrusion of the law even into private spaces: "even if you're not gay who goes to demonstrations. Keeping quiet doesn't mean you're safe in this country. It doesn't mean that the homophobic laws don't have any impact on you, because tomorrow anyone of us could" ("Translation"). Another clip is a recording of a march involving Russian LGBT rights activist Kirill Kalugin, who gained prominence when he protested the June 2013 Russian anti-gay law making the mere mention of being gay in public an offence. In August 2013, Kalugin raised "a rainbow flag with the words 'This is propagating tolerance' painted across the front" in Palace Square in Moscow in the middle of the Paratroopers' Day celebration and was attacked and arrested ("My Freedom"). As Amnesty International notes, "'Propaganda of homosexuality' has no legal definition. What the law actually does in practice is punish people merely for expressing and being themselves" ("My Freedom"). In Russia, homosexuality was prohibited during Soviet times, when it was "taboo to speak about sexuality at all," and the "lingering effects of this historical taboo, coupled with the vague and sinister-sounding new law, has brought fresh

stigma and fear for the LGBT community" (My Freedom"). The performance does not give explanations of the historical context of the clips but does implement keywords that allow the audience to connect the clips to issues they might have heard about in the news. The law means that Cassils could be arrested if the performance would have been performed just a few miles to the East or even, perhaps, if they merely walked down the street.

Aimed at "'protecting children' from 'harmful influences'" ("My Freedom"), the law is also invoked in the opening lines of the radio recording: "Come on, louder, you betrayers of motherland – lesbians – perverts – rapists of children – pedophiles" ("Translation"). This clip combines the language of anti-gay propaganda with language reminiscent of communist propaganda to reappropriate the offensive words and function as a kind of activist call to action. Even though Cassils has stated that they are not an activist, their work is getting much more clearly activist in tone with each new performance. Another similar clip comments: "the men who are looking for small boys or the small boys who are looking for adult men. They get to know each other, then they set up a meeting, this usually happens during the first few days" ("Translation"). Reflecting American 1950s anti-gay propaganda portraying gay men as predatory paedophiles, the clip refers to how homophobia functions through intimidation and imagined threats to the traditional family unit but also the transnational nature of this propaganda, which has spread from the United States to countries where homosexuality has hitherto not been widely discussed or perceived as a pressing threat.

Although the critiques in this performance are mainly geared towards Russia, there are a few mentions of Finland as well. The city of Kuopio is mentioned twice in a fragment of an interview with people who talk about where they like to go out dancing in Maaninka casino. In another instance, 2010 protests over the construction of the Fennovoima nuclear plant in Finland are briefly mentioned several times. The power plant was a potential reference to Finnish/Russian relations because it is in joint ownership with Russia. The Russian-designed reactor, the main feature of the plant, is "seen by some as a safety hazard and others as a tool of Moscow's political influence bleeding into Western Europe" (Digges). There is also a reference to an unnamed maritime accident involving a fishing boat in which "20 bodies" were "found in the seas" and over 400 people were saved ("Translation"). Considering that no such accident occurred in either Russia or Finland, the accident probably refers to one of the events in the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean, the sinking of a migrant boat off the coast of Sicily in August of 2015. In an unrelated clip, another boat, M/s Finlandia, is mentioned in what appears to be a cruise advertisement: "You could be on the boat too. Two departures from Helsinki each day. Check out the prices and book you ticket, www.eckeroline.fi"

("Translation"). The juxtaposition of political issues and tragedies with pastimes like dancing and cruises reflects the performance itself — it is both entertainment, as a good fight scene would be, as well as a politically-charged event that could also be read as a from of activism in that people have come together to call attention to Russia's treatment of LGBT people. Perhaps it is also relevant that the clips in Russian deal almost exclusively with human rights violations and propaganda while the clips in Finnish feature more diverse and less loaded content.

Social Media

The juxtaposition of serious and banal sounds is also reminiscent of the structure of a typical social media news feed. A mix of pressing (trans) human rights issues and comparatively trivial images of cats and food appearing together on Facebook feeds, a juxtaposition similar to Kuhne' sound design in *Powers that Be*, is also taken up by micha cárdenas and Steinbock in relation to selfies and trans representation. The frequency of seeing posts on police brutality cases as well as trans murders on one's newsfeed, along with all the other atrocities happening in the world, can cause overstimulation and fatigue in even the most involved activists. Cassils is aware of this social media connection considering that they invite audiences to take photos and videos of the performance and share them on social media. During the Los Angeles performance, as Frank observes, the audience turned into "an army of iPhones, snapping photos, recording video, uploading and messaging tiny, naked, virtual iterations of Cassils into the ether." Cassils is interested in the shared videos and images for their potential for witnessing as activism and for the videos and images becoming their own pieces that Cassils could "eventually use" for another piece (Frank). As such, they would be comparable to the remnant sculptures and photographs from *Becoming an Image* — the only remaining records of an otherwise ethereal performance. For Cassils, filming videos "speaks to the ways people feel empowered or disempowered to record events in their lives, whether it's an act of police brutality or something funny or a great concert" (Frank).

Pointing to the importance of police brutality videos that become evidence and are shared online in order to generate outrage and influence legal proceedings, Cassils sees the seemingly passive act of filming (as opposed to intervening) as a form of engagement and is interested in "the ways we experience violence when we record; it's like witnessing

something instead of watching a safe spectacle" (Frank). Although forcing the audience to witness violence live, to sit with it, and to experience it more directly than they do on social media was one aspect of the performance, another was surely the replication of the format of witnessing that fosters disengagement and automatically turns to reframing the potentially-traumatic event for good social media content and potentially using the emotions created by witnessing violence into fodder for getting more likes. By allowing social media to be a part of the performance, there is a likelihood of turning a user's empathy for a cause into potential empathy for the user as witness. For example, YouTubers who film "reaction videos" will often pause the video they are reacting to in order to film a close-up of their tears and tell their audiences the tears are real. In such situations, the initial video becomes irrelevant and the reaction becomes the new focus and potentially-lucrative event. At the same time, sharing the content of their performances online benefits Cassils as well since it provides free promotion and secures the likelihood of future paid performances. The combination of social media and emotion has more complex and capitalist undertones than just an acknowledgement of the empowering potential of witnessing.

Conclusion

Cassils's performances take athletic movements and move them through and beyond the performance spaces for which they were originally conceived. *Becoming an Image* and *Powers that Be* put pressure on the format and temporalities of durational performance, which prefer a slowing down of movement and time, by speeding up and activating the muscles of the artist's body. The speeding up of Cassils's body and their breath both follows other breath-focused durational performances but also departs from them in the engagement of the muscles, parts of the same body, as the culprits for "gassing out" and ending the performances. The effects of such speed and athletic intensity are the creations of new bodies infused with both the burden of the deaths from which they materialized and the possibilities of new futurities of living on as memorials. Although the duality and male and female that is often attached to transness has been left behind in Cassils's work, multiple other dualities and multiplicities have sprung up in its place. Cassils's fights are always one on one affairs, but the other, abstract body also always stands in for a multiplicity of other bodies — those of the dead in *Becoming an Image* and those of regulatory and institutional bodies in *Powers that Be*. The multiplicities continue with the multiplications of sites that the performances are

performed in and the subsequent addition or replacement of the original spatial and historical contexts with other, site-specific contexts. Both performances thus spatially multiply both to other geographical contexts and to online spaces, in which they become mediated by other curators, juxtaposed with other serious or banal content in Facebook newsfeeds, and rendered into image fragments coming back to the site of Cassils's body as site of meaning.

Chapter 2: Cyclical Athletic Movements, Affective Cyborgs and Gender Euphoria in Nina Arsenault's *Silicone Diaries* and *40 days + 40 Nights*, and Lynn Breedlove's *Godspeed*

Cassils's violent boxing movements performed intra-actions with bodies in order to perform the severity of the influence of regulatory powers on the surfaces of trans and queer bodies. While Cassils turned to aggressive movements and fight structure in their critique of trans necropolitics, other artists turn to sports movements in ways that prioritize the creative potential of transcendental experiences that sports such as cycling can offer. In Nina Arsenault's performances and Lynn Breedlove's novel, exercising trans bodies engage with a stationary exercise bike and an outdoor road bike, respectively, in exercise sessions that tap into the repetition of the cyclical movements of the bike pedals in attempts to trigger transcendental experiences. Like Cassils, who co-creates movements through intra-actions with the bodies of clay and the invisible opponent, Arsenault's and Breedlove's movements are co-created through intra-actions with their bikes. Considering that their bikes are not opponents but cyborg extensions of exercising bodies, the motivations and effects of the cyclical movements are different in that they create multi-directional affects that blur the lines between body, bike, and environment. Repetitive cyclical movements trigger in the body a kind of meditative, Zen-like state called the cyclist's high, but they also create sensations of the body's connections beyond the bike itself — for Breedlove, to the road, the air, and the landscape, and for Arsenault, to what she calls the spiritual realm as well as to the audience.

Repetition and cyclical movements define Arsenault's and Breedlove's work, but the bike rides are also defined by the state of velocity that enables the Zen-like sensations. States of velocity are states of the body and bike in motion, during bike rides, when the bike pedals and legs are in movement. Both the outdoor and stationary bike are in motion because of the movement of the pedals and the capability of intra-acting with a human body. When it comes

to bikes, velocity is a more appropriate term than motion because it implies speed — the main trigger for euphoria in Arsenault's and Breedlove's bike encounters — while motion is a broader term that encompasses stillness, velocity, and everything in between. In Arsenault's and Breedlove's bike encounters, the hardness/machinness of the bike and the possibility of merger are not threatening but exhilarating and empowering; the authors borrow from associations between hardness and strength to represent and perform affective couplings with the bike machines as sources of strength and euphoria.

The different genres that Arsenault's and Breedlove's works occupy mean that the bike movements function in different ways with respect to audience, space, and mediations. Originally performed in 2008 at the Saint John Theatre Company in New Brunswick, *Silicone Diaries,* a one-woman play in which Arsenault recounts a series of stories about her shifting relationship with the silicone in her body, approaches movements differently because it is structured as Arsenault narrating her stories while sitting on a chair or moving around the stage. Even the most memorable encounters, such as Arsenault's first silicone shot and first bike ride, are narrated without props rather than recreated on stage. Arsenault's narration is accompanied by a projection screen showing images of Arsenault in her various incarnations throughout her life and images of plastic surgeries. *Silicone Diaries* lasts an hour and forty-five minutes and is staged sparsely, with "a simple white circular stage with a transparent plastic stool and a small white table with a water bottle" (Hong). As Beth Hong points out, Arsenault, "a striking vision wrapped in skintight, see-through PVC topped with wavy brunette hair that would put a L'Oréal ad to shame," is so "visually striking" that "there is no need for much more" in terms of staging. The setting of *Silicone Diaries* is intimate and even though "each stage of her transformation is highly stylized," her use of "self-deprecating" and "near-standup humour" allow the "rawness of her experience to seep through" (Hong). Rather than physical exertion, the most prominent kinds of movements in *Silicone Diaries* are the shifts between Arsenault's different looks, reflected in the movements of the images on the projection screen. Even though the movements of the bike are underexplored in the stage version of Arsenault's play and in scholarship on Arsenault, it is clear that the bike represents a pivotal shift that marks Arsenault's later performances and the move towards exploring post-transition spaces that characterizes so much of the current trans fiction and other cultural production.

As a work of durational performance art, *40 Days + 40 Nights* most approximates Cassils's performances in its focuses on physical endurance during the span of 40 days and 40 nights, with bike rides and other extreme physical states, and its sense of timekeeping

negotiated by the artist's body's capabilities as well as the presence of the audience influenced by the artist's exertions. In *40 Days + 40 Nights,* the audience was only allowed to observe the performance for the final 11 days, after Arsenault had already spent the majority of the performance in solitude. What Arsenault tries to achieve in solitude and then tries to get across to the audience is not only her body in movement endowed with symbolic meaning, but genuine moments of the spiritual experiences that she seeks to achieve through various physical practices such as cycling, meditation, fasting, writing, and recreating with the audience Marina Abramović's *The Artist is Present.* Arsenault's performances are not political and ask the audience to witness not the trauma of violent movements perpetrated by regulatory powers but a more personal kind of self-abuse closer to BDSM than to body regulation. In the context of all the practices in *40 Days + 40 Nights*, Arsenault's cycling is removed from a strictly athletic context because it is a way of using flesh as something to be activated or stilled to achieve a kind of presence that would connect the body with world. In articulating this sense of presence and connection, Arsenault is influenced by self-help literature such as Rhonda Byrne's *The Secret* and Eckhart Tolle's *The Power of Now*, which she calls her "spiritual manuals," and which take as one of their main aims the sense of connection between individual and universe. On the other hand, Arsenault's bike is connected to athletic movements because her fascination with it comes from her off-stage experience of using her indoor exercise bike to re-evaluate her relationship with her body and pursue healthier means of sculpting it. The motivation for coming to the bike is health and well-being, but the effects of the encounters with the bike are multiple and span through the "Venus/Machine" section of *Silicone Diaries* to *40 days + 40 Nights*: activating muscles, breath, and organs instead of the gendered parts of the body, tapping into and working through the traumatic memories stored in the muscle tissue, creating two performances featuring the bike, and finally, using the bike as a vehicle for achieving a spiritual experience.

Lynn Breedlove's *Godspeed,* a novel about a queer trans bike messenger, band roadie, and drug addict is a fictionalized version of Breedlove's experiences as member of queer band *Tribe 8* and founder of *Lickety Split*, an all "female" bike messenger service in San Francisco in the 1990s. Jim, the protagonist of *Godspeed,* identifies as a butch dyke starting to flirt with the possibility of being trans, reflecting Breedlove's own gender identity shift: "I identify as trans but I am seen by most people as genderqueer or as a dyke, so I accept those labels too" (McLeod). *Godspeed* is a work that came into being because of Breedlove's fascination with bike movements and speed, and speed as a healthier substitute for drug use. Speed, bike movements and the confidence in the skills that take Jim through the streets of San Francisco

are what at times combine into the moments of being in the athletic "zone," which for Jim resemble his drug highs. Although the draw to the bike is somewhat different than for Arsenault, the bike nevertheless becomes the focus of a work seeking a kind of transcendental experience that also allows for a reconnection with the body. Considering that *Godspeed* is a novel, there is no performance aspect in front of a live audience. The body in movement is, therefore, not witnessed in its exertions but mediated through narrative. The way Breedlove recreates movement is through fast-paced, spontaneous prose and detailed descriptions of the bike ride that are at the same time fast and slowed down to resemble all the components of a movement in an almost meditative fashion. The bike is a literal escape in spatial terms as Jim uses it to get away from people and thus allows for solitude in a way that performing bike rides in front of an audience cannot. Although Jim's bike rides can have an effect on the readers of the novel, that effect is not something that affects Jim or Breedlove in a visible or trackable way. While for Arsenault, the connection and collaboration with the audience is a component of the bike rides in *40 Days + 40 Nights,* in *Silicone Diaries,* Arsenault's narration of the bike rides instead of their performance makes for a kind of in-between space that puts movement on stage but only in its narrative translation.

The relevance of bikes, at least for Breedlove, stems from the abundance of bike messenger characters in queer literature. Queer characters orient themselves towards bike messengering because this job has historically been available to marginalized people and allowed work outside of corporate environments and a flexible schedule. Breedlove's orientation towards the bike is consistent with the bike messenger narrative, while Arsenault's connection to the bike is more focused on the artist's quest for transformative experiences. Arsenault and Breedlove orient themselves towards bikes instead of towards medical substances or medical objects (hormones, silicone, scalpel), which inadvertently or deliberately challenges the primacy or necessity of medical models of trans embodiment and trans writing. Instead, trans bodies are imagined as cyborg machine-body composites that make use of technology not to transition but to achieve states of ecstasy or euphoria. The use of technology to enhance trans bodies cites the medical model of enhancing the body through hormones and surgery but then switches to another kind of technology. Arsenault and Breedlove use exercise as a means of achieving states of creation that produce not a new self but an experience of ecstatic or euphoric well-being.

Well-being to Euphoria

While Arsenault turns to the bike for well-being, Jim does not make a conscious turn to the bike because he is already working as a bike messenger at the beginning of the novel. Rather, the well-being aspect surfaces during the narrative, as Jim contemplates the similarities between drug highs and the cyclist's high. Bikes can be linked to queer and trans well-being in other ways as well. Breedlove's bike messengering company, for example, provided employment and fair treatment for the many queer bike messengers in a time when the then-booming profession had a high number of queer workers. In 2017, trans cyclist Jillian Bearden and 15 other women founded the Trans National Women's Cycling Team (TNWCT), a "national all trans woman USAC race team and club team," which provided a similar kind of cycling community aimed at protecting the rights of trans cyclists ("About"). TNWCT's members link cycling to well-being and see it as lifesaving: "The sport of cycling has literally saved the lives of several of our members as we have struggled to achieve acceptance in our roles and in our communities. Rather than succumb to the struggles and challenges we face as trans women, each cyclist has instead chosen a path of resilience, strength, tenacity, love, and civil stewardship" ("About"). Although cycling can be an activity people organize around, there is something about the activity itself that people respond to and find transformative and that something seems to be in the fact that cycling is a solitary activity that allows for safety.

Bearden elaborates in an interview that cycling had been a way to manage dysphoria: "I had always enjoyed mountain biking and I just started riding more and more and more. I caught the bug, and slowly I felt like I didn't need anti-depressants anymore" (Rook). Bearden further explains: "I could hide behind cycling. Growing up I loved being on two wheels and rode everywhere so I guess it's always been a safe place for me (...) [i]t saved my life then and it saved my life many times since" (Rook). Cycling provided Rook, as it did Jim, with a safe means of exercise and transportation, a reminder that outdoor spaces are not always welcoming to trans and queer athletes (or pedestrians). At the same time, the positive influence of the exercise on the body's well-being allowed Rook to manage her depression, a condition that disproportionally affects young trans people. Other types of exercise could have provided the well-being aspect, yes, but not necessarily the safety of movement through different spaces, the absence of a potentially unwelcoming team environment, no financial burden, and the potential for connecting with outdoor spaces. Walking is not always a safe or comfortable activity for trans people and neither is running outside or going to the gym;

cycling is special in that it combines the safety of a vehicle with the health benefits of an activity such as running.

Sports can help alleviate dysphoria but they can also aggravate it, as Semerjian and Cohen and Elling-Machartzki have found in their research on trans experiences in team sports: sports could provide a "safe place" when places like school could not but sport could also be "a place of discomfort" if the other team members were transphobic ("FTM" 37). For some, the inherent camp and queerness of sports such as ice skating could be a "vehicle of transformation...and potentially a socially transformative act," while for others, the ability of exercises such as weightlifting to build muscle could aid in achieving an ideal masculine body shape that alleviated dysphoria (Semerjian and Cohen, "FTM" 37). For Rook, cycling provided a physical outlet for dysphoria and staved off depression and suicidal thoughts. For Arsenault and Jim, cycling provides a similar kind of outlet, even though neither Arsenault or Breedlove connect cycling to dysphoria or suicide. Rather, Arsenault uses cycling to get in touch with her emotions and reanimate the connection with her body that years of dysphoria and surgery have weakened, and Jim turns to cycling to escape his problems. The endorphin release that intense cycling produces provides a way to manage but also counter the negative emotions of discomfort, not necessarily the discomfort of dysphoria, that might be present in trans and other bodies. While bikes become affective objects for Arsenault and Breedlove later in life, for Bearden, the bike functions as a companion animal who she "grew up with" and who is "a safe place". Even though Bearden says she "hid" behind cycling, cycling remains a prominent part of her life after transition. The bike could, therefore, also be read as a companion rather than a crutch. For Arsenault and Jim, their bikes function as similar safe places and companions in their quests for transformations — not bodily transformations but journeys towards chasing highs.

Euphoria and the Cyclist's High

Through their bikes, Arsenault and Breedlove use exercise as a way of reconnecting with the body, feeling all of its parts, and feeling productive discomfort and pain. Exercise is a way of rethinking the sometimes-problematic relationship with the trans body and focusing not on the parts that might cause dysphoric feelings, but on lungs, internal organs, blood, breath, atoms. The trans cyclist's high or euphoria can also be read as a radical sensation

defying expectations of representation and the perpetuation of the trans wrong body narrative. The bike rides are simultaneously a way of transcending and connecting with the physical body. The point of contact for these two seemingly opposite aims is reaching the cyclist's high, a moment equivalent to the runner's high, in which the body "hits the wall" and a flood of endorphins produces a physical high allowing the athlete to continue even in the face of pain and exhaustion. This moment is also comparable to the "zone," which is described as "a spiritual experience, a transcendent state, going beyond the self, a mystical experience with exceptional feats of strength and endurance" and "an exhilarating, uplifting event, with a sense of mastery and control, or a sense of invincibility" (Lewis). Due to the lack of research on the cyclist's zone and conflicting ideas about whether it exists in this sport at all, I use research on running, which helps illuminate the euphoric experiences in Arsenault's and Breedlove's work. Running and cycling are not the same activity; nevertheless, the repetitiveness of motion and experiences resulting from intense training during solitary rides overlap.

Sam Marye Lewis argues that although the cyclist's zone might not include a high, it still exists as a "zone that allows the cyclist to continue against great odds and overcome injuries, pain and fatigue to finish a race". Whatever the zone is, it need not be reserved only for elite athletes but as Arsenault and Breedlove show, any body can experience it under the right conditions. Tapio Koski sees long-lasting exercises as distinct from short exercises because they "strain humans in a whole in a different way," which can be called meditative and can be characterized as aerobic, rhythmic, and monotonous (25). In their unification of body and place, running and cycling are not dissimilar to Rebecca Solnit's characterization of walking, which is, ideally, "a state in which the mind, the body, and the world are aligned" (5). All the activities presume solitude, repetitive trance-like motion, and an introspective attitude. Like long-distance running, cycling in Arsenault and Breedlove provides a reflective space for self-exploration and connection with self and the world, and it is also potentially euphoric.

One of the most interesting sensations found in descriptions of exercise is the endorphin rush. In Arsenault and Breedlove, this sensation manifests as the feeling of euphoria, which we can read as a type of runner's high. The runner's high or "runner's ecstasy" is a concept that Marko Vapa defines as "a sense of lightness during the physical exercise," a state of "ecstasy" during which "one does not usually feel pain nor have any rational thoughts rather an internal calmness and sense of balance" (as cited in Koski 5). As Koski notes, the term is associated with runners because runners experience it more often; yet,

other athletes do report similar sensations (5). The "mechanism" causing this state is considered to be "the rhythmical and monotonous movement altering one's consciousness even long after the running exercise is over" (Vapa, as cited in Koski 5). In Arsenault and Breedlove, the monotonous, repetitive rhythm of the long bike rides triggers precisely this kind of feeling. However, the long-term effects Koski describes are not present in the two works, rather, the sensations are envisioned as fleeting highs, potentially emotionally transformative but also inconsistent and unpredictable. While Koski's work is sociological research on runners, Arsenault and Breedlove tap into athletic experiences and turn them into works of art, which do not have the same effects of health and well-being but are the effects of exercise that produced something other than well-being.

Euphoria and ecstasy are similar concepts, but ecstasy retains more of a spiritual connotation. Ecstasy, as Koski notes, is "about transcending to the world" since the Greek word ekstasis means "out" and "a stand", "stepping out" (29). In the Judeo-Christian context, ecstasy means "an emotional or religious frenzy or trance-like state, originally one involving an experience of mystic self-transcendence" ("Ecstasy"). Similarly, euphoria is defined as "a feeling or state of intense excitement and happiness" ("Euphoria"). Although the dictionary entries for ecstasy and euphoria are similar and denote pleasurable feelings, the etymology of the word euphoria demonstrates a connection to health. Euphoria comes from the Greek *euphoros,* which means "borne well, healthy," combining the words *eu* (well) and *pherein* (to bear) ("Euphoria"). In the late 17th century, euphoria denoted "well-being produced in a sick person by the use of drugs" ("Euphoria"). Ecstasy locates pleasure in transcending the body; euphoria locates pleasure within the body. Arsenault's and Breedlove's cyclist highs tap into both concepts in that their ecstatic events triggered by bike rides do occur as ways of stepping outside of the body and transcending the notion of the body as fundamentally different and apart from other bodies and the world. The ecstatic events are at the same time euphoric because the experiences of stepping out are highly pleasurable, which makes Arsenault and Breedlove want to recreate them over and over. The highs are a kind of coming to health and a "cure" for the negative emotions of feeling disconnected from one's body altered by surgeries or by drugs, but the desire to recreate them can also come to resemble an unhealthy, addictive need.

Jose Muñoz takes up ecstasy not in connection to illness but to the potentiality of queer utopia. Muñoz invites readers to "take ecstasy" with him and uses the drug ecstasy as a metaphor for queer utopia (185). Working with the Greek term "Ekstasis," Muñoz notes that the term has generally "meant a mode of contemplation or consciousness that is not self-

enclosed, particularly in regard to being conscious of the other" (186). In relation to queer theory, Muñoz defines this kind of ecstasy as "a stepping out of time and place, leaving the here and now of straight time for a then and a there that might be queer futurity" (185). Muñoz reflects on Lorenzo Bernini's marble sculpture of Saint Teresa's ecstasy, an example also taken up by Jacques Lacan, as a visual sign of ecstasy that represents a kind of "affective transport, rapture, and a "leaving of self for something larger in the form of divinity" (186). Ecstasy thus represents "an individualistic move outside of the self" (Muñoz 196). Without venturing into psychoanalysis and jouissance, I want to keep Muñoz's view of ecstasy as a stepping out of oneself and out of time and place. A move outside of the self is consistent with the affective view of the body but gives that move an ecstatic or euphoric target. One does not simply step out one's body, one steps out in order to reach for a feeling of ecstasy. In a way, Arsenault's and Breedlove's ecstasies do represent a kind of trans/queer utopia in which trans people have full agency over their embodiment and in which trans bodies are seen as joyous, open, and ecstatic.

In other trans narratives, the concept of the high appears as hormone euphoria, a feeling of happiness and well-being triggered by hormone injections. The concept of a hormone high is an anecdotal experience that pops up in accounts of hormone therapy and can be used to designate a combination of a physical and emotional high, generally thought to be different from the emotional changes known to be caused by hormones. Noting that she did not herself experience a hormone high, a user on the Sub-Reddit "Asktransgender" nevertheless comments on the ubiquity of the concept: "I've seen a lot of people who talk about this experience of a hormone euphoria - the idea that finally running on the 'right' hormone suddenly changes everything for them mentally, allowing them to function better overall and suddenly confirming that HRT is the right option for them" ([deleted]). As this user clarifies, the hormone high is a concept merging several ideas: a physical euphoric experience, an emotional euphoric experience, and the idea that the hormones will make the body right and thereby create a sensation of "running on the 'right' hormone." Another user notes that the reason behind some people experiencing euphoria and some not is that "what we refer to as euphoria could better be called normalcy. It's what cis people feel *all the time*. And just like cis people, trans people are variable and varied" (Commenter 1). One of the issues in discussing hormone euphoria, an issue similar to discussions of gender euphoria, is that for people "who don't experience it to that same extent, it can almost feel invalidating in a way when it doesn't feel like this 'AHA, EVERYTHING IS AMAZING NOW' moment" (Commenter 2). Nevertheless, accounts of hormone highs, best documented on social media,

are structurally similar to the accounts in Arsenault's and Breedlove's work. Hormones can represent a kind of cure or instrument of well-being that makes one's body become comfortable in the world, but this comfort can only be kept up with regular doses of hormones. Arsenault's and Breedlove's bike rides similarly have to be continued on a regular basis because the euphoric feeling of comfortably aligning with the world can only be sustained through repeated bike rides. While the hormones are initially tied to movement in that they trigger physical and emotional changes in the body, that movement forward later becomes a maintaining rather than a continuous progress; bike rides, which always require and produce a significant amount of physical movement, do not necessarily result in overtly visible physical changes but each ride has the potential to produce the euphoric feeling of hormones.

Describing the effects of estrogen after a few months of therapy, a YouTuber notes: "I can't describe how happy I've been lately. I can tell that the hormone replacement is working...all the emotions, they're just going crazy, and I just cannot control it" (YouTuber 1). Many hormone users, especially those who take estrogen, estradiol, or progesterone, report being "more emotional" and happier after a few months of hormone therapy; however, hormone euphoria can more narrowly be described as a sensation felt right after the hormone therapy begins, or a sensation that occurs with every new injection — aspects that tie the euphoria more closely to the hormones substance, rather than a general well-being. From a medical point of view, Heylens et al. note that after hormone therapy, "the majority of patients indicated that they have a better mood, are happier, and feel less anxious than before," and that hormone therapy "had a positive influence on co-occurring psychopathology if present in GID patients at presentation, by lowering the overall level of psychoneurotic distress." Heylens et al. also note the presence of "an initial euphoria caused by the relief they experience after starting hormonal treatment." The euphoria, it is implied, does not last and is not caused by the hormone substance.

The euphoria is often described as happiness. Upon receiving his first testosterone shot, one YouTuber comments: "when I first started hormones, I was so excited. That my whole life had been leading up to this moment…[the doctor] stabbed me in the butt with the needle and I was just so happy. It was like an overwhelming rush of happiness that came over me… all pain receptors were overrun with happiness. I walked out of that office, I just could not wipe the smile off my face...and that stayed with me for days" (YouTuber 1). The same YouTuber clarifies that "a lot of that happiness was to do with how excited I was for all the changes that were gonna happen to me" (YouTuber 2). For this YouTuber, the hormone high

is equally a physical and an emotional high, even though this person is aware that the sensations are probably mostly caused by excitement and not the hormones themselves. On the *Susan's Place* forum thread entitled "Estradiol Euphoria," a few participants contribute their own experiences of "highs". One participant notes: "I have noticed that feeling you discribe... When your E levels get low you feel like :| Then you take your shot and your like 😁😊 then you get Nausia, headaches and dizzyness dispite this you still feel giddy and happy like you could puke rainbows and wee sunshine >_<" (Commenter 3). Another participant comments: "When I first started I would get ubber happy when I took me E. As the year has gone by I have calmed down. Now I just get a giddy silly feeling when shot day is here" (Commenter 4). It is difficult to determine what causes these euphoric experiences, although the excitement of the impending first or new dose of hormones seems to greatly contribute to the sensation of the high. The euphoria is, nevertheless, not purely emotional but also manifests in physical ways.

Hormone euphoria can be considered a physical sensation, but it is also mainly tied to the experience of gender euphoria, the feeling opposite to dysphoria, a comfort in one's body or the feeling of one's gender being validated. This feeling can be achieved through dressing in what one considers gender-appropriate clothing, being addressed with the proper pronouns, or seeing bodily differences from hormones or surgery. The feeling can be self-generated through certain gender-affirming actions, but it can also be dependent on social situations and involve other people. Gender euphoria has come to be used as a way to combat gender dysphoria as the defining characteristic of trans experience. In relation to exercise, gender euphoria can be linked to the euphoric feeling of the cyclist's high. Both sensations originate in trans bodies, represent a positive feeling within the body, and provide a counter-narrative to dysphoria. Although temporary and fleeting, these feelings can provide a glimpse into a completely positive experience of being in one's body, which can prove transformative.

One of the contributors on the *Out of This Binary* YouTube channel defines gender euphoria as "a feeling of positivity or validation," a feeling of euphoria "when your gender is validated," and when mentally, physically, or socially, you feel in alignment with your gender (YouTuber 3). However, as YouTuber Danica Lee points out, the concept is also problematic. Cisgender people do not feel euphoric when their correct pronouns are used, so gender euphoria can only apply to trans people, and presumably also only if the precondition of dysphoria existed (YouTuber 4). Considering that dysphoria cannot be taken as the defining condition of trans embodiment, gender euphoria would presumably not be a universal part of trans experience either. Nevertheless, there is value in the term because it counters dysphoria

as the defining condition of trans embodiment. On YouTube, many gender euphoria videos and positive comments demonstrate an overwhelming acceptance of the term. In relation to exercise, gender euphoria can be linked to the euphoric feeling of the cyclist's high. Both sensations originate in the trans body, take up a positive feeling within the body, and provide a counter-narrative to dysphoria. Although temporary and fleeting, gender euphoria can provide a positive and transformative experience of one's body.

In Breedlove's novel, dodging cars and riding at extreme speeds gives Jim a feeling comparable to a runner's high or a heroin high. During his rides, Jim comes into close contact with the city and feels the different elements on his skin: "I can feel the fender whoosh by my leg, and I'm swooping out of the alley, dancing to the mellifluous strains of tires screeching, pig squealing, big bike crashing" (25). The experience is at once a rush and an extreme calm, and Jim feels in control of the chaos. It is not only the bike itself that produces the experience, as it does in Arsenault's performances, but the mastery of the chaotic environment full of obstacles and the element of competition. The movement of the legs is repetitive; nevertheless, a variety of movements, such as dancing, whooshing, and swooping, occur during the bike ride. The movements are not just of Jim's body but also of movements in the environment, such as the whooshing fender of a car that Jim passes. In the moment of bike velocity, movements actually pass between body, bike, and environment. The sensation of movement does not belong to Jim; the sensation of movement is merely activated through the bike ride.

The experience of movement makes Jim feel his body in extreme ways: "I am cool, stoned, a bee charmer. You cannot see the atoms smashing out of my skin, you cannot feel the thermonuclear heat radiating off of me, I'm an icy clear deep lake. No diving. No lifeguard on duty" (26). Koski's "internal calmness and sense of balance" manifest through a focus on the change of temperature but also on temporality. While the lake conjures an image of stillness almost outside of time, in order to imagine the smashing of atoms in and out of the skin, time has to be slowed down. Arsenault feels her internal organs through the experience of breath filling her up; similarly, Jim feels his atoms and breaks down the idea of skin as barrier between inside and outside of the body. The atoms smashing out of the skin highlight the idea that the barrier is a fantasy and that brings the awareness of the intimate connection between body and environment. Jim's experience of feeling an intense connection with the world around him corresponds to Koski's contention that exercise makes you "become more aware of your existence in the world," considering that the basis for this setting is that the human body is the centre of one's existence (8). In phenomenological terms, the touch of the body

and the world, the ontic touch, serves as a basis for the experiences (Koski 8). The atoms smashing in and out of Jim's skin are a representation of the ontic touch, the acknowledgement of the intimate connection between the body and the world that only becomes apparent through the experience of the cyclist's high.

Cyclist and writer Steen Nepper Larsen describes a similar experience and notes that during a bike ride, his "consciousness is embedded in things and [his] cognition is incarnated in a restless body. [His] *being-in-the-world* is transformed to a *body-on-a-cycle-in-motion*, being able to do more than it knows" (29). Taking up Heidegger's concept of being-in-the-world and invoking the Spinozan question of what the body can do, Larsen describes an experience of something more than euphoria. Larsen's experience is one of blending into a human-bike cyborg body and achieving a sense of infinite potential. In addition to the ontic touch, this experience can also be described as a state of the full BwO, in which multiple bodies merge and form a larger entity that works in unison. Although Deleuze and Guattari did not envision a machine as part of a BwO, the connection between human body and bike functions in much the same way as a full BwO as it relies on collaboration, openness, and the formation of a new entity. Like Arsenault and Breedlove, Larsen reflects on his connection with the bike from the perspective of an enthusiast rather than a professional athlete and finds cycling experiences to be transformative in a way that does not necessarily show on the body but is experienced in a way that connects the body and the mind. As Larsen notes, the "cyclist high" manifests as a simultaneous intense movement and stillness: "even with a 170-180 heart rate and hard pedaling the body sits quite still, possessing an energy surplus to enjoy, think, and regain power for the return to my non-biking life" (28). Larsen makes a link between biking and ecstasy by suggesting that biking technology fosters what Larsen calls "an *ecstatic-present-attentive* being" but also "eudaimonia," or a sense of general happiness and well-being (30). The high in athletic activities can be a manifestation of well-being; nevertheless, for Jim, it is also a replacement for a drug high.

For Jim, freedom, drugs, and chasing the high are all interconnected. When Jim escapes the congested city centre, he is "home free, South of Market, no more cages boxing you in, you're just watching for potholes and glass, micro-geography" (5). The cage is a reference to the proximity of the buildings and cars but also, potentially, to the confines of Jim's own body. Once the chaos of the inner city no longer needs to be negotiated, the adrenaline rush subsides, and Jim craves to replace the cyclist's high with a drug high following an encounter with a random object on the street: "an orange syringe cap on the street looms godlike" (20). The micro-geography of the street becomes a manifestation of Jim

internal desires. Jim reflects on the root of his desire for drugs: “some people get high to escape, but I got nothing to escape, no torturous childhood. just my own self. i ain't running from or to, i just like running, like riding, that downhill swoosh” (20). Even though Jim says he does not have anything to run from, he is an unreliable narrator and is not fully aware of his reasoning. Jim might not be escaping his childhood, but he is escaping his relationship problems and the very fact that he has a drug problem that other people are increasingly aware of. The desire to chase the rush demonstrates that the bike and the needle are vehicles of transformation that is continuous, never-ending, and cyclical. There is no end-goal — just the next high. The movements of drug highs are similar to the bike highs in that they are described as movement for the sake of movement. Nevertheless, they are also movements towards highs.

Flow, a concept similar to “the zone” present in sports, leisure studies, and psychology, but can be applied to any aspect of life, is defined by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi as follows: “being completely involved in an activity for its own sake. The ego falls away. Time flies. Every action, movement, and thought follow inevitably from the previous one, like playing jazz. Your whole being is involved, and you’re using your skills to the utmost” (“Summary”). Revathi Turaga notes that flow occurs in the sweet spot between anxiety and boredom, when the challenge of an activity is not too high as to cause anxiety but also not too low, which would cause boredom (42). Flow is also dependant on skill level, which needs to be “high enough” to make the challenge appear “within reach” and enable enjoyment of the activity (Turaga 42). Some of the characteristics of a flow experience are:

> “A sense of playfulness and fun, of wanting to be as child-like as one can be. A sense of absolute control of the moment and the situation and actions. A feeling of letting go and being free and in the hands of the Universe. A deep level of concentration and highly focused attention that helps them pay attention to even the minute of details. An hour can pass in the blink of an eye. Feeling of importance in the task being performed. Heightened sense of awareness merging with spontaneous action in the moment. A feeling of being completely in full control. A sense of feeling lost in the activity being performed. Mental and emotional enjoyment of any activity just for the sake of the activity alone, even with no other objective is in sight. A distorted sense of time, i.e., time sometimes seems to stand still or otherwise tends to get finished fast as one is engrossed in the activity at that time. A sense of complete self-awareness and awareness about what is happening around. A feeling of being completely lost in the moment sometimes, and a feeling of loss of self-consciousness and of being led automatically by unseen forces around” (Turaga 41).

Most of the characteristics of the flow experience apply to the experiences Arsenault and Jim describe as results of their athletic movement. Arsenault does not quite feel childlike, but flow enables her to travel back in time to revisit trauma from her younger days. Unlike Arsenault, who is keen to revisit her younger days in order to make peace with her ageing body, Jim engages in flow because he is still mentally in the space of adolescence and flow enables him to inhabit the space of chasing highs as an escape from the constraints of adulthood, such as his job and relationship. The temporality during Arsenault's bike rides shifts to a distorted sense of time that is not characterized by stillness, as it is in Breedlove, or by speed, but by a sense of connection between all the times of Arsenault's life existing in the same moment and in the same space of the muscles. For Jim, time slows down to the point where he contemplates all the elements and connections between them that form a single moment in time. Both Arsenault and Jim are lost in the moment and in the activities they are performing, but while Arsenault feels a pleasurable loss of control, Jim finds moments of flow to give him total control and the ability to navigate the city streets in a highly precise and machine-like manner. A high level of concentration on the primary activity, turning the pedals of the bike, allows for the feeling of flow to bring in a feeling opposite to concentration, a complete forgetting of the movements one's body is engaging in and allowing a pleasurable feeling of presence to overflow in the body.

Arsenault's bike rides can also be interpreted as a transformative kind of leisure, or the "restructuring of life goals and commitments, new activity interests, and greater attention to the present" (Kleiber et al. 230). Although Arsenault does not turn to her bike after a specific trauma the way people take up a healthy lifestyle after a heart attack, she does turn to it in a time that she conceptualizes as a new chapter in her life. The turn to the bike does then become about processing trauma even if it was not intended to be a vehicle for such a transformation. For Jim, the relationship with the bike spans the length of the novel and even precedes it and does therefore not present a shift after a traumatic event. Even though recreation is not a novel activity for Jim, he sees the bike rides as "good leisure," while his drug use can be defined as "deviant leisure" (Best). For Arsenault, known for her performances involving video recordings of plastic surgeries and her fascination with "unreal" beauty, movement and exercise nevertheless play an important role. At the end of *Silicone Diaries*, after stories about seeking comfort and pleasure through silicone injections, sexual experiences, and plastic surgeries, Arsenault suggests that she needs something different. To find it, she does not turn away from the body but towards the "organic" parts of the body she had neglected in her quest for plastic perfection. On the bike, the organic and inorganic parts

of Arsenault's body work together in unison: "I can feel my heart beating in my temples. I can feel my heart pounding against my left breast implant" (225). Unlike surgery, the movement of exercise, as opposed to the transformations of surgeries, makes Arsenault feel the body parts that did not need to be altered and were not in focus. The cyclical movements of the bike pedals thus mimic the path to plastic surgeries and back to the core body.

As in Cassils's performances, breath is again a key element in Arsenault's *Silicone Diaries* exercise scene and the entity through which movement from one body part to another is tracked. The exercise unleashes a host of "new sensations" in Arsenault's body: "I can feel the breath release from my sternum. I can feel the air moving back into my ribs. It's like I can feel the air touching the bones" (225). Replacing silicone as the animate entity that moves through Arsenault's body in previous scenes, the air functions as a translation of the bike movements inside of the body. Unlike silicone, the breath is not a foreign body injected into Arsenault but a substance that is merely "released," a kind of antithesis to the constriction of scar tissue and rigidity of a body marked by plastic surgeries. Although breath is an important part of exercise, Arsenault states in her manifesto that the importance of breath in her bodywork first occurred during her voice lessons, which she also refers to as training. Arsenault describes voice training in terms similar to bike training in that her "body was learning to take more athletic breaths" and experiencing "more sensation": "tender and strengthening— in and around my heart, creating deeper empathy and intimacy with others. There were more feelings in my stomach, genitals, on my pelvic floor, and around my anal sphincter" ("A Manifesto" 67). What the breath does for Arsenault is unlock a plurality of sensations but a kind of plurality that sounds almost disturbing because in results in an ever-increasing number of distinct sensations threatening to overwhelm in their intensity. As it moves through the body, the breath animates and unlocks sensations, and with them, the dormant emotions that Arsenault perceives as inhabiting muscle tissue. Training, for Arsenault, goes beyond exercise and exercise is just another means of unlocking the movement that she really desires — internal movements that trigger intensely pleasurable sensations.

Proper breathing is also a crucial element of running and other exercise and the focus on breath produces a heightened experience of being-in-the-body. Hockey and Allen-Collinson note that runners regularly do "auditory work" to keep track of their breathing, but breathing is also felt "proprioceptively in the chest cavity and sometimes an intense burning in the throat and thorax occurs" (233). New to the experience of tracking her breathing in exercise, Arsenault does not see breath as something to monitor and regulate, but as a

manifestation of her body overwhelming her, a sensation that would be unpleasant during a run, for example, because it would signal that the body is out of control and that the run might not be sustained. For Arsenault as for runners, breath serves a connector between the body and the environment, a kind of conductor for the ontic touch, but the artist welcomes the sensation of being out of control and being creative that this experience can bring. Arsenault also describes the breath in her chest as generative of an imagined "two little Cupid's wings" on her back, which then grow into arm-span-sized "angel wings" or maybe "demon wings" (225). In a Judeo-Christian interpretation of creation, God endows the human body with breath; in this scene, Arsenault positions herself as the creator of breath. The overwhelming breath cannot be sustained and thus exits the body by becoming both wings and the air that will give those wings flight.

As in the scene of Arsenault's first silicone injection, where the silicone is imagined as a lover, the exercise scene also unleashes erotic sensations. Arsenault traces the sensations across her body: "there is stuff happening in this part of my body *(referring to pelvis area, hips, genitals*) that I have never felt before" (italics in original, 225). In their sexual innuendo, the new sensations in the pelvic area are reminiscent of the silicone birth scene in which the silicone fills empty spaces. Interestingly, Lianne McTavish notes that some women have erotic and orgasmic experiences at the gym while doing repetitive core and ab exercises so the sexualization of this experience might be more that just metaphorical (43). In the silicone injection scene, the silicone is sexualized in order to represent Arsenault's identification with the malleable substance; in this scene, the sexualization is a kind of re-animation triggered by breath. Unlike silicone, breath is a malleable substance that can be invoked anytime and without any danger. By replacing silicone with breath, Arsenault signals a turn to healthier and more spiritual ways of connecting with her body.

Arsenault's attitude toward exercise is uncommon in trans work because athletic activity is often stereotypically linked to masculinity and development of muscles. However, not all types of exercise promote this kind of physique. Yoga, running, and cycling are solitary athletic activities that do not promote overdevelopment of upper body musculature but do stimulate weight-loss and body toning. These characteristics make them significantly different than organized sports in which the participant has to engage with a team, locker rooms, or performing gender. Douglas Mason-Schrock noted that trans women would often "casually mention their lack of athletic ability" and "lack of accomplishment in sports" as proof of transness (182). As Cohen and Semerjian note, for some trans women athletes, engaging in sports in childhood and adolescence to reaffirm a male body can also make it

difficult in adulthood to see their strength as female athletes as anything other than their birth maleness presenting itself again ("The Collision" 140). Considering that Arsenault never mentions interest in sports during childhood, such connections might not exist for her and she is potentially able to approach this type of exercise as "ungendered". In fact, the weight-loss accompanying her exercise is seen as a positive side-effect, something making/keeping her looking like a mannequin, her ideal of femininity.

The site of Arsenault's exercise bike and the fact that it is an exercise bike and not a road bike become relevant facts that speaks to the ways in which trans bodies are allowed to move and are comfortable with moving through space. Jim's bike allows him to traverse the streets of San Francisco without harassment (that sometimes occurs during stops); for Arsenault, her bike is not a means of transportation but a vehicle for intimate body work. In a sense, both the speed of Jim's rides and the privacy of Arsenault's apartment give them the privacy of not being seen. Arsenault's exercise bike is stationary, and thus comparable to the treadmill, which, as some argue, diminishes the "aesthetic complexity" of running and offers controlled stimuli that could either make the run more Zen or more boring (Hochstetler 144). Doug Hochstetler argues that people have memorable runs outside, but no memorable runs on the treadmill (144). This is not true because the memorability of a run is not measured only through encounters with aesthetically complex spaces but through the sensations triggered during a run. For Arsenault, an indoor bike ride is memorable enough to trigger an intense emotional response as well as several works of performance. Although a certain degree of risk associated with running outside is positive for Hochstetler, safety is a big concern for women and trans people and cannot always easily be reframed as "adventure." It is precisely the safety of the indoor environment that enables Arsenault to have her euphoric experience without focusing on how people perceive her. Arsenault's calculated and contained risk later does manifest through a stepping outside of sorts, transferring her bike and her intimate bodywork onto the stage of *40 Days + 40 Nights,* where the encounter with the audience is unlikely to result in harassment or an attack.

Pain and Discomfort in Durational Performance

In *40 Days + 40 Nights*, Arsenault's bike rides inherit from durational performances that test the limits of the body in a designated unit of time. Some performances, such as Abramović's

and Ulay's *The Lovers: The Walk on the Great Wall* and Tehching Hsieh's series of *One Year Performance* pieces, expand from a few hours to a year and focus on the repetition of the same acts every day. Expanding on the "Venus/Machine" section of *Silicone Diaries*, in *40 Days + 40 Nights*, the artist explores "what happens when a performance artist who belongs to no religious denomination carries out these kinds of actions [rituals]" and asks "will faith manifest in the body of the performer?" ("*Nina Arsenault"*). In the 40-day-long performance, Arsenault's actions during the first 29 days were not open to the public. During this time, Arsenault spent four days in isolation and total darkness, five days fasting, and three days without sleep, and then began performing daily rituals such as exercise and meditation. In the final 11 days of the performance, visitors were able to watch Arsenault perform a one-hour monologue of "The Ecstasy of Nina Arsenault," and the exercise and meditation rituals through a glass window. In this performance, the bike is not conceived as the final replacement for other modes of embodiment but just one of the many options explored during the performance. In the bike sections of Arsenault's performances and the bike scenes in Breedlove's novel, the passage of time is marked by the spinning of the bike pedals. Each circle can be read as marking one turn of the clock but the temporality created is not deliberately slow but deliberately accelerated. The accelerated nature of the pedaling is not a comment on the acceleration of modern life, as acceleration is performance is sometimes read, but a way of employing bodily movement to create links between body, mind, and soul.

As Hentyle Yapp notes, endurance performance is often discussed "in gender neutral, colorblind, and ableist ways, even though time-based practices possess a normative, white, and masculinist genealogy" (145). Instead of the term endurance, Yapp proposes the term "lingering" as more suitable for performances influenced by meditation and explains that "endurance primarily implicates a fixed sense of time, while lingering describes the melancholic feeling and dwelling in space and time (146). Lingering, Yapp notes, "contends with the possibilities of an incomplete, constantly moving, and formless politic," an aesthetic that corresponds to the trans performances of Arsenault and Cassils, which foreground becomings and a sense of being unfinished instead of a completeness. However, considering the athletic aspect of Cassils's, Arsenault's, and Breedlove's performances, the term "lingering" has limits in that it corresponds more to Yapp's discussion of performances that involve sitting and lying down.

Yapp argues that "endurance is the key frame for understanding performance art, as the artist's body undergoes pain or other challenges over a period of time" (134). In Yapp's analysis of Chinese endurance performance art, which is often read only as a demonstration of

resistance against the Chinese state, Yapp suggests that these endurance performances would benefit from a reading that takes meditation into consideration as an influence. Considering that meditation and Buddhism are influences for Arsenault's work as well, and that *40 Days + 40 Nights* includes meditation sessions, Yapp's approach is related to Arsenault's influences. Although Yapp's examples include performances of stillness in which the artists' bodies are sitting or lying down while enduring discomfort, Zen-like states can also occur during intense and repetitive movement. Ken Wilber notes that most Buddhists stress how meditation requires "a set of practices or experiments in awareness that are performed with an enormous amount of rigor" (xi). Referring to the discomforts of artists being swarmed by insects and enduring the needle punctures of acupuncture, Yapp notes that "the stimulation on the flesh becomes part of their present moment rather than an external challenge they must endure" (140). Rather than resistance, Yapp reads enduring discomfort as part of being in "the present moment" and registering but not engaging with external stimulation. Arsenault's inclusion of whipping into her bike routine is comparable to the buzzing of insects in Zhang Huan's *12 Square Meters* and the acupuncture needles in He Chengyao's *99 Needles.*

Although whipping is a discomfort Arsenault must endure, it is also a form of BDSM that is at once painful and pleasurable. In a radio interview, Arsenault remembers the experience of the bike rides in *40 Days + 40 Nights* as something she "loved" because "the rigorous exercise puts so much breath into the body" and created a sort of physical high ("Nina"). Simultaneously, the whipping (little bursts of pain) acted to "drop the breath, drop the diaphragm and create little shocks which make you feel more alive" (Arsenault "Nina"). After injections and scalpels, Arsenault moved to a whip as an object of inflicting pain, and unlike in the silicone injection scene in *Silicone Diaries,* the pain of the whip did not function as a bonding experience between trans women or doctor and patient but a desire to bond with a higher being. Achieving "a feeling of bliss where the body is super activated" involves strategically whipping the back and the upper part of the head so "blood and sensation will move to those places" (Arsenault "Nina"). In a link to Stryker's concept of generative pain that occurs during BDSM play, Arsenault notes that "S and M enthusiasts already know that pain and pleasure are very intricately linked, and the interplay between them can lead to a place where there is no division between pain and pleasure and bliss" ("Nina"). The main difference is that BDSM practices, as discussed by Stryker, are productive in terms of community and connection, while the whipping in *40 Days + 40 Nights* is more of an individualistic exploration of pain. For Arsenault, pain is a means of reaching a spiritual experience.

Pain and discomfort are parts of certain extreme religious practices, but they are also staples of athletic experiences. As Jeffrey Fry argues, religion and sports, specifically running, can produce a similar kind of altered state of consciousness, or even a state of ecstasy, through which the religious devotee stands outside of or transcends his or her mundane self (61). Sports and religion have a long history of interconnections in which sports have been used as a way to honor the Gods (Olympics) and a way of transcending the physical in order to reach a higher spiritual plain (marathon monks). Fry argues that religion and exercise (running) have many parallels, including rituals, myths, ceremonies, legends, commitment and the possibility of self-transcendence. A ritual, such as running, may "end with a feeling of restoration — both body and soul — but typically only after a period of discomfort" (Fry 58). Prescribed rituals, Fry claims, are thought to affect "inner transformations and, in some traditions, to influence the workings of the cosmos" (60). In *40 Days + 40 Nights,* Arsenault taps into discomfort and pain as modes of transformation that will potentially result in restoration through the "feeling of bliss."

Like an athlete, Arsenault has learned to distinguish between productive discomfort and self-imposed pain that results in a positive outcome, from "bad" pain from an unintended injury. As with long-distance runners, pain thus becomes a part of Arsenault's "sense of identity: the ability to endure pain, tolerate pain, and/or overcome pain" (Bale 7). While equating the trans experience to pain would be problematic, it is important to distinguish the suffering of dysphoria from self-imposed pain that is controlled and productive. For Arsenault, being able to tolerate so much physical pain and discomfort is a personal achievement and makes her appear heroic and even god-like. Because the pain is never "just pain" but is mixed with pleasure, the equation of trans bodily experience with pain is again disrupted. As in running, what actually constitutes "pain" is ambiguous since "sometimes pain sensations themselves can be pleasing" (Kelly 95). Chris Kelly argues that pain is not equivalent to "bad sensation" because not all bad sensations are pain (itching, nausea) and not all pain is a bad sensation (if it is pleasurable). When it comes to endorphins, Kelly claims, they work, "biologically speaking, much like morphine" because they might not reduce pain like anti-inflammatory drugs, but they make it more bearable (Kelly 98). The way endorphins make pain bearable is by creating a state in which pain and pleasure, or euphoria, can coexist.

The whipping in *40 Days + 40 Nights* provides repeated stings of pain that Arsenault must learn to acknowledge and endure in order to achieve her desired spiritual experience. The "present" or "the moment" in meditation is similar to "the zone" in exercise in that is characterized by a heightened awareness of the body and a calmness in the midst of the

intensity of muscle activity. The state of the body in "the moment" of meditation and in "the zone" are also similar to the state of the BwO in that they often include a feeling of connection with the world. The similarity stems from the fact that both concepts were borrowed from Buddhist theories of Zen-like states. In acknowledging meditation as an influence is simply to return to the source of the metaphor. Yapp notes that "when present, the subject expands her boundaries in relation to past objects and others" (143). Within the Taoist Qigong tradition, Yapp notes, "delineations between the self, nature, and others are complicated as one's body is connected to a larger metaphysical entity or force" and "meditation contributes to this metaphysical blurring of subject and object distinctions" (143-144). Through the intense bike ride and the whipping, Arsenault's body is similarly connected to the audience watching her, the desired spiritual realm, and to the fleshiness of her own body in the world. Yapp argues that the point of reaching meditative states in Chinese performances offers not only a critique of the oppression of the Chinese state but contends "with the ways the Chinese have historically been understood as a horde, without singularity, and placed into an economy of objecthood and matter" (139). While Arsenault's goal is achieving spiritual experiences, the inclusion of the exercise bike in her performance can also be read as demonstrating the agency and liveness of the trans body in order to counter a medical, objectifying view of the body that she examines in her other work.

Cyborgs: Technicity and Movement

For Arsenault and Breedlove, the process of achieving euphoria is more than monotonous, repetitive movements that produce a trance-like state. The sensations the body experiences are also influenced by the bike machine in a way that is fundamentally different than the experience of other solitary, meditative exercises such as yoga or running, and team sports, which can generate a group contact-high. That difference is expressed through the cyborg metaphor. Arsenault casts the cyborg as an element that morphs into different avatars in all of her work and Breedlove's cyborg is directly invoked by the bike machine. Considering that the euphoric states are triggered by not just any movements but the movements of the bike-machine, it is crucial to probe further into the role of the bike in the creation of euphoria but also its relationship, as an object-machine, with the human body and specifically, trans bodies.

The concepts of the machine, technology, and the cyborg surface in sports as well as in trans theory. When professional athletes' performances surpass those of their competitors, their above-average bodies can be deemed cyborg in that they, or parts of their bodies are "the embodiment of a superhuman or inhuman feature or ability" (Lopez Frias 97). Even without obvious technologies of enhancement, athletes already are "posthuman" in that their "performance relies, endorses, and depends heavily upon technology;" "technology and human nature merge in one being to such an extent that it is impossible to identify them as separate" (Lopez Frias 98). In addition to technologies, athletes also approximate cyborgs in their motivations to "set higher records and overcome human limitations, that is, to be more than human" (Lopez Frias 98). MMA fighters Evangelista Santos and Chris Justino, for example, have the nickname "cyborg." Another variation of the cyborg athlete comes from athletes' use of more visible technologies — prosthetics, such as Oscar Pistorius's artificial legs, in competition. As the question of fairness is raised with deviations from gender norms in sports, when trans and cis female athletes who outperform their competitors are found to have higher testosterone levels, fairness has also been invoked when athletes like Pistorius — called the first cyborg and posthuman athlete — who use prosthetics in Paralympic competitions. Both testosterone and prosthetics are kinds of technologies of the body that can enhance abilities to the point of approaching cyborgism, a state of being "inhuman" that can be interpreted positively, as with Paralympic athletes, or negatively and approaching monstrosity that threatens to disrupt normative gender categories, as with Caster Semenya.

The connection between machines, or, more generally, technologies, and trans bodies has a long and contentious history. Invoking bikes as technological enhancements of trans bodies resembles discourses of hormones and surgeries as technologies that alter bodies and render them kinds of cyborgs. This is the context into which the bike-machines emerge. In early Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminist (TERF) discourse, trans women were seen as men who were enabled to masquerade as women through the use of technology. In "Sappho by Surgery," Janice Raymond argues that "transsexually constructed lesbian-feminists" are really still men trying to trick, divide, and destroy feminist communities. Raymond dismisses transsexuality as an identity category and contends that "since all transsexuals have to 'pass' as feminine in order to qualify for surgery, so-called lesbian-feminist transsexuals either had to lie to the therapists and doctors, or they had a conversion experience after surgery" (134). For Raymond, trans people use technology to change their bodies and technology is therefore a tool for deception. A later text, Bernice Hausman's *Changing Sex: Transsexualism, Technology, and the Idea of Gender,* recognizes trans subjectivity but perpetuates the notion

that technology and medicine are instrumental in constructing trans subjectivity. Hausman argues that "developments in medical technology and practice were central to the establishment of the necessary conditions for the emergence of the demand for sex change, which was understood as the most important indicator of transsexual subjectivity" (3). For Hausman, the transsexual's claim to transsexual subjectivity is performative — it is a demand for a sex change in response to the existence of a diagnosis and sex change technologies (Prosser 105). According to Hausman, trans people would not exist without technology or without the demand for technology to change their bodies. Technology, in conjunction with feminism, is taken up by trans scholars, writers, and artists as a response to early transphobic accounts. For Sandy Stone and Susan Stryker, it was important to embrace feminism to combat Raymond's and Mary Daly's gender essentialism. Along with speaking from an embodied subject position and advocating for a less essentialist interpretation of the term "woman," Stryker adds to the complexity of trans embodiment by taking back the term "monster" used by Daly in a derogatory manner. The allegation of trans "monstrosity" as a result of technology is both related to enhancement as well as to the disruption of a supposed bodily integrity.

Just as Lopez Frias and others have suggested that the categories of technology and human nature merge in sports, in trans studies, the role of technology as foreign to the human body has been disrupted. Challenging the idea of trans surgeries as "(im)proper corporealities," Stryker and Nikki Sullivan propose a "new understanding of bodily integration, one predicated not on the organic integrity of the human organism, but rather on the body's suitability for integration, its ability to be integrated as a biopolitical resource into a larger sociotechnical field, or into an apparatus such as the State" (50-51). Taking a similar approach, Arsenault and Breedlove turn to technology as a way of challenging the idea of bodily integrity, but rather than connecting this integrity to surgery, they turn to another kind of improper corporeality, a corporeality that makes a claim to a technology that allows for a kind of un-gendered movement. Arsenault and Breedlove do not make any practical claims about what bikes could do for trans people, rather, they explore how technologies associated with athletic activities can influences ideas of trans body integrity by moving towards euphoric sensations.

Following Stryker and Sullivan, Julian Gill-Petersen argues that the ontological separation of technics and living beings is "important to the category transgender because it informs any thinking of 'body modification,' a phrase whose temporal spacing suggests the prior existence of a 'body' that can only be modified after the fact, by means of technology as

a tool, as the extension of the human beyond its biological originality" (Gill-Peterson 405). Although Arsenault and Breedlove do not modify their bodies by intervening in the integrity of the skin, if the line between bodies and technologies coming to interact with bodies is unclear, then mergers with bikes can be read as kinds of body modifications. Gill-Peterson argues for a general reading of all bodies as integrated with technology in some way but also for a redefinition of the word technology. If "forms of trans embodiment are expressions of the originary technicity [the capacity of being the intermediary between form and matter] of the body," Gill-Peterson argues, "then body modification cannot be transphobically exceptionalized as a betrayal of the human's integrity" (407). In other words, if technology is a part of nature and is read as a way of mediating between form and matter, then trans bodies can make use of technology and not cross the line to inhuman embodiment.

The concept of technicity is an extension of the idea of the body as machine, an idea that predates Rene Descartes's invitation "to consider how God might create an artificial substitute for a human being" (Black 4) but becomes "a central preoccupation for western knowledge" only in "the scientific revolution (roughly, 1550-1750)" (Vaccari 5). The human body, "with its motor skills and its moving parts, shares a special kinship with the machine, and indeed there has long been a fascination with the unstable boundaries between them" (Coleman and Fraser 4). Technicity is an acknowledgement of the similarities between bodies and technologies and Stryker, Sullivan, and Gill-Peterson have taken up the concept through the most recognizable trans technologies of hormones and surgeries; however, technicity can also be taken up in the context of other technologies intimately related to trans bodies, even if those technologies do not change the surface of the skin. Erin Manning, for example, takes up technicity in relation to the Jose Gil's concept of overarticulation, an overemphasis of dance movements, as a way of "looking for a chain of sensations rather than a chain of positions" and an example of ways in which "the technicity of movement- moving—movement beyond position—makes itself felt" (101). For Manning, technicity is a kind of practice of estrangement and reconsidering the dancing body's movements that have become habit, because it is only through making conscious the habit of movement that the body can "evolve towards openness-to-invention" (108). Manning's concept contrasts ideas of flow or the zone that require a mastery of movement in order to reach certain affects and proposes instead a different set of movements and affects that make the body feel new and foreign like a kind of cyborg. Unlike technique, technicity is unchoreographed and allows for improvisation and seeking out sensation rather than simply following planned movements. In dance, overarticulation is similar to an endless repetition of choreographed movements, in that they

can both produce estrangement of the body. Yet, with the repetition of pedaling, one is more likely to either become more conscious of the body through labour and pain or forget about the body through the meditative repetition of movement. In either scenario, making movement conscious is a way of recognizing that the body is a mechanism.

Along with the body as an object for the natural sciences, and the body as a signifying medium and a vehicle for expression, the concept of the body as machine is one of three historically prevalent models of the body (Grosz 9). Some models of the body as machine, Grosz notes, including Descartes's model, see the body as a self-moving automaton, much like a clock, car, or ship, according to the prevailing modes of technology (9). The body as a tool, instrument, or machine animated by an inner consciousness or soul, conforms to the Cartesian mind/body split and is problematic because it assumes a passivity of the body and ties into discourses of other binaries such as female/male and nature/culture, as well as to trans discourses of being "trapped" in the wrong body. The trans body, as Arsenault and Breedlove imagine it, at the same time fits and problematizes the idea of body as machine because they see the body as somehow confining and therefore believe in transcendence of the body in order to achieve experiences of freedom or transformation. It could be argued that they see the body as lacking in something, which explains the urge to enhance it with plastic surgeries or imagined cyborg parts.

Although Breedlove's novel does explicitly envision the human body becoming a cyborg machine, for the discussion of Arsenault's bike, it is not enough to turn to metaphors of the human body as a machine; we need to also explore the encounter between body and machine that renders the body more machine-like and the machine more human. In addition, we need to think about bodies not just becoming similar to the bodies they come to encounter but becoming a body unit not unlike the Body without Organs (BwO) or a body with prosthetics. Taking up "extensions of bodies," or, in Merleau-Ponty's terms, "body auxiliaries," such as a blind person's cane or a wheelchair, Karen Barad contends that these objects are not perceived as separate from the body by the person using them but are an "integral part" of the body (*Meeting* 157-158). Even though Arsenault's and Breedlove's bodies do not require bikes to function, as bodies that use mobility aids do, access to bikes opens up a new range of possibilities for functioning. Barad ties the discussion of body limits to disability and argues that "[t]he luxury of taking for granted the nature of the body as it negotiates a world is constructed specifically with an image of 'normal' embodiment in mind is enabled by the privilege of ableism" (*Meeting* 158). These arguments work for trans claims to medical assistance as not a luxury but a right, but they can also be extended to the

discussion of objects. If the body is porous and there is no real boundary between body and technology, as Gill-Peterson argues, or the body and other bodies and objects, then anything entangled with the body in a meaningful way can be regarded as a part of the body. Since bikes are machines that move, help bodies move, and move through intra-acting with bodies, then it makes sense to compare them to mobility aids.

The merger of body and machine occurs most prominently in the concept of the cyborg, which Donna Haraway defines as a "cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (149). Arsenault's and Breedlove's cyborg bike-human creations are similar hybrids that function as creatures of fiction in that they appear as embodiments of trans futurities in which gender euphoria is achieved through the presence of a machine. Although bikes are not futuristic machines, there is a sense of futurity in using bikes in trans performance and fiction in that they signal a shift away from medical interventions as the most prominent types of technologies. In a way, rather than imagining trans bodies as results of the latest technological advancements, bike-human cyborgs are more retro-futuristic version of such ideas. Haraway envisioned the cyborg as an "ironic appropriation," with the intention to "build an ironic political myth faithful to feminism, socialism, and materialism," used it to dismantle links between women and nature, and thus a collective "women's experience," and instead proposed affective groupings (149). The bike-human cyborg is a more indirect kind of political allegiance, one that wants to imagine trans bodies not as individual bodies but as affective clusters formed through movement. The allegiances lie not with other trans people or with bikes, but simply with affective objects that interact with trans bodies. Lissette Olivares notes that for many cyborgologists, including Haraway and Chris Hables Gray, the cyborg is enmeshed with a particular moment of science history, when Cold War politics and a defense imaginary inspired by the technologies featured in the genre of science fiction, were colliding as historical conjuncture (293). Transporting the cyborg into the trans context, the bike-human cyborg appears as a way of responding to a particular moment of trans-specific science history, a moment when trans people become more visible but are still perceived as tied predominantly to surgical technologies.

In her appropriation of the term cyborg, Arsenault takes from Haraway's discussion of the ironic, mythological, and blasphemous, as well as seeing the cyborg as a creature who takes "pleasure in the confusion of boundaries" (Haraway 292). Arsenault started her journey by wanting to erase the masculinity in her features, yet in doing so she "didn't create a female body," but was able to "use the technological and medical tools that are available and as a

result," have a body that she would "consider a cyborg body" (Arsenault 5). For Arsenault, cyborg stands for a body combining organic and artificial elements but also a body that defies binary constructs of gender and ironically embodies a type of femininity that she simultaneously mocks. Cyborgness is simultaneously empowering and estranging for Arsenault. In both her performances, Arsenault takes off the wig in order "to accept the me underneath all the glamour. the unreal cyborg I have constructed" (*Silicone Diaries* 226), but also claims her body "is not a human body, an animal body, anymore but a bunch of visual symbols" (Arsenault 4-5). There is a tension in Arsenault's work that both accepts the artificiality and at times sees it as foreign and problematic. Arsenault's embodiments are, in part, continuous and serial because they are a constant negotiation of her relationship with her body; she becomes a cyborg through her entanglements with medical technology and is therefore a cyborg even before the encounter with the bike. Paradoxically, it is the encounter with the machine that Arsenault sees as a sort of instrument of anti-cyborgization and connection with "the organic." Nevertheless, another kind of Arsenault cyborg is created, thus emphasizing the technicity of all matter. Both kinds of Arsenault cyborg are ultimately empowering and euphoric during the original encounter. Not all contacts with the bike are necessarily euphoric; instead, it is only a certain kind of contact and a certain kind of movement that can produce the high. While it is hard to define the precise conditions of the high, the sensation is connected to intense labour or intense surrender and stillness, and an acknowledgement of movements through and across the body.

In Breedlove's *Godspeed*, Jim is a queer bike messenger straddling the line between identifying as a dyke and trans man, but as a cyclist, Jim also falls somewhere in between human and machine. Jim's bike is both his means of financial support as well as his favorite pastime. Jim's bike is, therefore, the central focus of the novel, whereas in Arsenault's performances, the bike is positioned as an opposition to medical intervention and associated with practices such as meditation. When Jim rides, he transforms into an almost non-human entity different from "lowly peds" (4). In a post-apocalyptic vision of monstrous embodiment, the bike messenger "breathes bus fumes," has "eyes all over [his] head," and becomes "a mutation, a monster genetically engineered to deliver in fifteen minutes what a car would take an hour to do" (3). As in Stryker's vision, the monstrous is here embraced as empowering and an enhanced state of being. The combination of human body and bike machine fed by speed and fumes morphs the bike messenger into an urban cyborg. "Everything's automatic," Jim says, "my leg slings over the seat and I coast down the sidewalk, bounce off the curb, resilient, slow like a Cadillac, with luxury suspension" (27). The comparisons with the car

serve to portray Jim as fine-tuned machine, and he is proud of his machine-like skill. Jim sees the bike messenger job as a way of supporting himself without being part of the capitalist machine so in this sense, the outdoor setting of this type of exercise is in line with Bobby Noble's critiques of gyms as capitalist spaces. The combination of velocity and stillness is also captured in the words "slow" and "coast" when referring to movement. These movements are not necessarily slow at all and might, instead, refer to a kind of imagined cinematographic slow-motion shot of a cruising car. To be "automatic," or repetitive, like a machine, for Jim, provides an air of confidence rather than dehumanization.

Along with comparisons with a car, Jim also likens bike messengers to objects such as a needle or scissors: "you keep stoking, weave here cut there, thread the needle right through the middle of them" (4). In this quote, the cyclist is also a kind of tailor, a specialised craftsman who takes disconnected elements and makes them into unified garments. Like a cyborg, the tailor also melds with their tools, needle and scissors, and becomes so adept at using the tools that it might seem like they are as efficient as a machine. In order to navigate traffic at a high speed, the messenger must morph into an object able to cut through the crowds. Jim describes the transformation process as a natural evolution: "push-pull your whole body into the bike, blend into the machine until you're not straining or stretching, just striding gliding rolling in circles" (4). Although the process of becoming one with the bike requires labour, the result is a kind of effortless, painless state of being "in the zone".

The accentuation of non-human, car-like, skills corresponds to Jeffrey L. Kidder's idea of the bike messenger as a superhero. During their prime in the 1980s, Kidder contends, bike messengers were seen as "cultural icons," "folk heroes" or even "the ultimate urban man – tough, resourceful, self-contained, riding against the odds the city stacks against everybody" (38). Jim's machine-like skill and self-objectification serve to elevate him above the "lowly ped," who is also dehumanized in the interaction, and let him embody the position between pedestrian and car or human and machine. The dehumanization can also be read as a way of taking back the dehumanization of marginalized subjects by mainstream society (embodied by the police). Jim's circle of friends consists mainly of drug dealers and sex workers, and when the police kill "crackheads and hookers," Jim notes, they stamp the case file with the letters NHI (no humans involved) (24). By becoming an enhanced version of human, Jim finds a way to value himself. Jim's cyborgization corresponds with Haraway's connection of cyborg and survival: "Cyborg writing is about the power to survive, not on the basis of original innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other (175). For Haraway, the tools often used in this kind of writing are "stories, retold stories,

versions that reverse and displace the hierarchical dualisms of naturalized identities" (175). Jim uses the bike as a tool to "mark the world" and feel above the "lowly peds" that would usually treat him with contempt because of his androgyny, queerness, and social class.

In his article on bikes and affect, Larsen also sees melding with his bike as a form of cyborgism and notes that the "bike gets reborn under [him] every time [he] ride[s] it" (27). Larsen sees the bike as animate and as becoming animate every time he rides it. Like Breedlove's Jim, Larsen sees himself and the bike growing into the same organism during a ride: "my knowledge of my bike and confidence in it are situated in my body — and my legs, arms, and thoughts are extensions of my bike, which is a part of my organism" (27). Larsen accentuates that knowledge of the machine is a prerequisite of forming a cyborg body. The previous rides that Larsen took made the bike familiar and made it surpass the status of object. Like a horse, to which the bike is often compared (the seat is a saddle), the rider needs to know the animal/machine in order to trust it and be confident on it during fast rides and tricky turns. As in Breedlove's novel, melding with the bike allows Larsen to be hyper-aware of his environment and micro-geographies of the road: "the touch of the tires on the road makes up the outer membrane of my being in the world and handlebars are the admission to navigate intentionally and freely...with intensified awareness I sense every obstacle and change in the quality of the track before me" (27-28). In this description of a BwO, Larsen notes that skin is no longer the limit of the body but that the limit moves to the edges of the bike and allows him to feel the road. Larsen further notes: "the scant security provided by the rubber's tiny point of contact marks the outer skinny limit of the body. The human body expands beyond its borders, it becomes more intense, amplified, and it engages in muscularly demanding, exploratory high-speed processes" (28). The expansion beyond the body's borders is here enabled through movement and labour; nevertheless, energy is not simply spent but also created.

While Larsen expands the limits of the body by including the bike in the process of the bike ride, Manning similarly thinks of dance and choreography as expanding from dancing body to the stage, other bodies, and objects that make up "the event" of the dance. Thinking of movement through dance, Manning proposes the concept of "mobile architectures" as "another way of conceiving the choreographic when it becomes an event not for the individual body but for the ontogenetic architecting of environments in the moving" (100). Manning suggests that a choreographic work "'stands up' when human movement evolves to include its associated milieu such that the milieu's ecologies of relation themselves can be felt" (101). The movement in Larsen, as in Breedlove and Arsenault, is repetitive and cyclical

because it involves primarily the movements of the bike pedals; yet, it can also be choreographed and unchoreographed. The primary movement of the bike is cyclical (corresponds to choreographed), and the "stage" and other bodies and objects the bike-body interacts with are limitless considering that the outdoor bike can travel long distances. In addition, the cyclist shifts their body into different positions during the ride, changes the location of the grip, stands or sits, shifts intensity and gears (responds to unchoreographed). When talking about the stationary bike, the "stage" is comparatively limited. However, Manning reminds that there are many possible connections to explore on stage considering that the stagespace is not "a floor holding objects in place but...a dimensionalizing mobile surface moving tabled bodies, a folding event- space calling forth series of dephasings inflecting space, extracting figures, for the event of architecting mobility" (104). Looking at the role of objects in a dance choreography, Manning wants to emphasize "the objects' generative potential (103) and urges us to "note that the tables are dancing, reconfiguring, moving movement as it 'persons'" (104). The bike, both stationary and mobile, similarly functions as animate during the bike ride and "rides" along with the rider. Even though Arsenault's exercise bike might seem static compared to Jim's messenger bike, Manning's contentions remind that the bike need not be mobile in order for movement to pass through it. The bike's mobile part, the pedals, holds the potentiality of movement that activates in contact with a body and turns both bike and body from potential to kinetic energy.

Even if the stationary bike cannot physically transport the rider into different geographies, it nevertheless has the capability to transport the rider in different ways. This kind of unexpected transporting, rather than transportation or transcendence, is not a movement from point A to point B but an effect of repetitive, intense, speedy movements. At the end of *Silicone Diaries,* Arsenault introduces her exercise bike as a tool for releasing physical and psychological tension and a way to reconnect with her estranged body. After all her cosmetic surgeries, she laments, her body "feels stiff and rigid" (224). She gets the bike to make "the next phase" of her work on her body — maintaining the youth and beauty she has created through plastic surgery (225). The purpose of the bike rides might be body and mental well-being maintenance, yet the unexpected effects, encounters with movement, the organic, breath, and ecstasies, turn out to be the most interesting things about the bike rides.

The stiffness and rigidity of Arsenault's body can also be read as a kind of stillness or pent-up movement awaiting release. Arsenault's therapist tells her that "in the moments of pain and suffering in our lives, that the breath wants to constrict, and if we let that happen, we can lock the pain right into our muscle tissue, into the fat, into the bones" (225). To unlock

that pent-up pain, Arsenault has to breathe through these moments. She does so by exercising to music that makes her "upset" and breathing through the pain she re-experiences (225). Referring to a similar process of remembering, Koski notes that running can tap into "flashbacks of former experiences" and that the same sensation can get us "connected to our former ways of being, all the way to our early childhood" and that "our senses act as open channels and receive the corresponding experiences from the world" (30). Arsenault connects the stiffness of the muscles, the stillness of the body that does not exercise, and the rigidity of the body after cosmetic surgery, and casts these "non-movements" as problematic. In this case, stillness is not meditative, it is constricting. The solution for this problem, then, is intense movement that unleashes a host of movements on every level of body and mind. Movement is seen as healing, time-transcending, and capable of unlocking. Paradoxically, while in *Silicone Diaries* the bike represents a kind of move away from the human-silicone cyborg, it is another kind of cyborg, the human-bike cyborg, that enables this healing movement.

Following the trajectory of "Venus/Machine," the cyborg seemingly loses prominence in *40 Days + 40 Nights.* Considering that this performance is far less verbal than *Silicone Diaries*, we need to move from following references of the cyborg to examining how the cyborg manifests through the increased prominence of the exercise bike in the performance. The biggest difference is the setting: in *Silicone Diaries*, the bike scene was set in Arsenault's apartment, while in the print version and on stage, it was narrated while the artist was sitting on a chair. In *40 Days +40 Nights*, the artist actually exercises on the bike for two hours a day while remaining silent. The setting shifts from private to public and with that comes a dose of exhibitionism. In "Venus/Machine," the artist takes off her wig to shed the "feminine artifice" and focus on the exercise; in *40 Days + 40 Nights,* Arsenault's wig is off most of the time, leaving her bald head exposed, and during the exercise, she is also often nude or semi-nude. The remnants of the cyborg remain visible in the missing wig, a signature Arsenault move, as well as in some visible scars and breast implants. Without the element of narration, in the bike sequences as well as in other non-narrative aspects of the performance, the "internal" movements, realizations, and ecstasies are not visible to the audience. They are, nevertheless, present in the artist, who has structured the entire performance around spiritual transformation. Although Arsenault's performance is about ecstasies, what the audience actually sees are the varieties of movements that have the potential to create those ecstasies.

Mediations

Although the bikes serve similar purposes in being euphoria-inducing vehicles of transformation and cyborgisation, the difference in genres — performance and novel — influences how the movements of the bike are staged, enabled, and received. The bike rides are performed live only in *40 Days + 40 Nights*, while in *Silicone Diaries,* Arsenault performs them through narration. For Breedlove, the movements of the bike rides have to be translated into writing and thus foreground the affects the bike produces rather than the repetition of the cycling movements. All these elements also reflect on audience reception and participation in co-producing the movements.

In performance, the presence of the audience, ephemerality, and liveness of the performance are the main elements differentiating performance from texts and from print versions of plays. Jill Dolan find live performance to have the capability of being utopian, to "provide a place where people come together, embodied and passionate, to share experiences of meaning making and imagination that can describe fleeting intimations of a better world" (2). For Dolan, live performances have the potential of inspiring "moments in which audiences feel themselves allied to each other, and with a broader, more capacious sense of a [participatory] public" (2). Dolan contends that imagining audiences as "temporary communities" and participatory publics might expand on the notion of communitas, "the moments in a theater event or a ritual in which audiences or participants feel themselves become part of the whole in an organic, nearly spiritual way," because this "the communitas they experience through utopian performatives might become a model for other social interactions" (11). Dolan's reading of audiences as publics, however, does not have to rely on liveness because similar kinds of communities can also be formed online, among readers affected by the same novel or spectators of the same video of a performance. In online contexts, the sense of shared witnessing, presence, and organic wholeness might be missing, but the affective pull of a work of art nevertheless creates a different, potentially more long-lasting kind of communitas because online environments allow users to linger in the same space of a particular platform and become friends.

For novels such as Breedlove's, it is more difficult to track the effects on the readership and the existence of community-building potential because these effects might take place in live encounters between friends, in book clubs, or in online forums that might not exist anymore. Breedlove's novel is a reflection of Breedlove's own San Francisco queer, riot

grrl, bike messenger community, but the fact that it is in novel rather than performance format allows it to not be contained in only one or a few local settings and to reach readers far beyond the original, site-specific context of the book. Arsenault's *Silicone Diaries* has come to approximate Breedlove's novel in that there is a print version of this 2012 play, but there are no full video recordings of the performance, which now lives on only its print version, short video clips, images, and articles about the performance. If someone becomes interested in the performance after the live performances have ended, they have no choice but to write about the print version, which will necessarily yield a different kind of work than witnessing the performance would have done. Diana Taylor has noted that "a video of a performance is not a performance, though it often comes to replace the performance as a thing in itself" (20). In my case, the print version of *Silicone Diaries* has come to replace the live performance and there is a sense, more than in a video, perhaps, that something has been lost in the translation to paper as I am unable to note my own reactions and the reaction of audience members to Arsenault's presence and jokes. Nevertheless, working with the print version does allow for more of a focus on the details of the writing that might not have been noticed in a live performance. While the ephemerality of Arsenault's performance and the fact that certain aspects of it are forever lost because they were never recorded puts into question the possibility of a performance studies angle, it also points to the problem of how to talk about performances that are no longer performed but are important to keep alive.

Dolan points to specific kinds of performances, namely feminist autobiographical solo performances, as having radical utopian potential and continuing the community-building potential of feminist autobiographical performances of the 1970s, which were "a means to reveal otherwise invisible lives, to resist marginalisation and objectification and to become, instead, speaking subjects with self-agency" (Heddon 3). *Silicone Diaries* is a feminist solo autobiographical performance but one that does not necessarily use autobiographical elements to foster community or reflect in Arsenault's own life events the stories of other trans or cis women. Arsenault both resist objectification by men and by cisgender people, but also intentionally engages in self-objectification by embracing her "unnatural" body. There is little urge in Arsenault's work to portray herself as being just like everyone else, the way that David Harrison's *FTM,* another early trans solo performance, and most trans memoirs have sought to do. Nevertheless, the artist's use of humour, an element possibly stemming from queer theatre's camp or from cabaret performance, is used to form a connection with the audience and make approachable her often-unrelatable experiences. While the community-making potential is not necessarily located between the artist and her mostly-cisgender

audiences, there are glimpses of a trans sisterhood in Arsenault's silicone injection scene, in which the artist envisions her rite of passage into embodying transness and her bodywork through the aid of other trans women who provide both silicone and support.

While with feminist performances, Dolan aims to deconstruct the audience member presumed to be white, middle class, and male, in order to be able to make space for the political potential of shared experiences, in trans performances, the composition of the audiences will depend heavily on the venue of the performance. The authors of trans and queer novels might presume the majority of their readerships will be trans or queer, however, artists such as Arsenault and Cassils cannot do the same with their audiences because they do not only perform at queer-focused events. *Silicone Diaries* was performed at *Buddies at Bad Times,* a queer Toronto venue, but judging by the reviews and articles written on the performance, there was a necessity to Arsenault's explanation of trans-specific experiences for queer audiences that did not necessarily understand them.

In *Silicone Diaries*, Arsenault did presume the ignorance of at least some of her audiences on trans issues, as most authors of trans memoirs do, and thus included explanations on transness, hormones, silicone injections and trans-specific terms such as being "fishy," or resembling a cisgender woman. In *40 days + 40 Nights,* Arsenault abandoned this approach and made her transness just another aspect of her larger theme of working towards a spiritual experience. Cassils takes a completely different approach even though most of their audiences at the biggest performance festivals in the world are not trans: the artist's transness is legible through their nude body but there are no explanations about the state of their body and the process of transition. While one could assume Cassils's lack of explanations of their transness to their cis audiences can be attributed solely to the performance art format that contains no narrative and therefore no space for explanations, this is not the case. Kris Grey's *Precarity,* for example, is a 2018 durational performance art piece in which the artist stands nude with the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) on their head in a balancing act "reminiscent of finishing school exercises aimed at improving the posture of young women" ("Kris Grey"). Grey's work still references medical definitions of transness and by focusing on the critique of their imposed discipline on the trans body is thus primarily geared towards cisgender audiences for whom the need to critique the DSM is perhaps not as obvious as it is to trans audiences, who might find Grey's work to be not as complex and refined as Cassils's. The move away from focusing on cisgender audiences is a deliberate move that asks cisgender audiences to do their own research in order to fully understand the performance and allows artists to put their transness in relation to

issues outside of transition. While the move away from catering to cisgender audiences risks alienating cisgender audiences not privy to all the trans-specific references and inside jokes, it also enables the formation of a temporary affective public among the trans and some queer audience members who already came to the performance as "insiders."

In *40 days + 40 Nights,* during the bike rides, the mirror is the element that most visibly negotiates Arsenault's relationship to the audience. The biggest difference from the role of the bike in *Silicone Diaries* is that it emerges for two hours daily throughout the main part of the performance and that the audience is now present during the bike rides. Arsenault also sometimes exercises nude while observing herself in a mirror, occasionally wearing a form of head covering, and whipping herself with a cat o' nine tails. Arsenault begins the ritual of the bike ride by dragging the exercise bike in front of a giant full-length mirror, dropping her gown to the floor, and putting on a wig made of equal parts black hair and webbing (Ouzounian). Once naked and on the bike, the "sound system from her computer provides diva-styled doses of grand opera while she drives herself faster and faster, a Valkyrie on her own predestined ride toward the perfect Valhalla of cosmetic surgery, proud, almost triumphant" (Ouzounian). Arsenault is completely nude but for the rosary around her neck, which speaks to the artist's desire to shed all her layers and open herself up to a spiritual experience. Ouzounian also notes Arsenault's gothic appearance with his comparison of the artist to Manuel Puig's *Spider Woman*. A short clip of the exercise bike segment of the performance on Arsenault's YouTube channel also portrays Arsenault as going for a gothic aesthetic (Figure 3). In the video clip entitled "Serve: The Work...an S and M silhouette," Arsenault is shot in black and white film and only her shadow is shown. Arsenault appears without the accompaniment of grandiose music; instead, the only sounds are the crack of the whip, heavy breathing, and the moving pedals of the bike. The shadowy figure provides a disembodied counter to the embodied experience of exercise. Rather than a portrait of extreme liveness, Arsenault's shadow resembles a figure from a torture chamber and links this bike performance to BDSM but also to spirituality drawing from Judeo-Christian practices of self-flagellation.

Unlike the video, a still from the performance (Figure 4) is bright, well-lit, and showcases the mirror. The mirror is an important element in both the context of Arsenault's obsession with beauty and in relation to trans memoir. As Prosser explains, mirror scenes are a convention of trans autobiographies and are as common as surgery scenes. More generally, looking into the mirror is also a figure for the autobiographical act since autobiography is "the literary act of self-reflection, the textual I reflecting on the real I" (Prosser 100). Looking in

the mirror before surgery signifies a disidentification between the "ideal self" and the physical body, and after surgery, looking in the mirror represents "joining the split gendered subject" into the integral I (Prosser 100). In *40 Days + 40 Night*s, Arsenault uses the mirror in order to make herself more visible to the audience, who she turns away from during the exercise. The mirror and the turn from the audience can be read as reminders of Arsenault's multiple performer personas rather than a search for an alignment of body and ideal self. Considering that *40 Days + 40 Nights*, unlike Arsenault's other performances, has nothing to do with surgery, the trans link between mirrors and transition is broken. Rather, the mirror is consistent with Arsenault's exploration of unreal beauty. Arsenault describes herself as "an image of a woman, a reflection of one in a Hall of Mirrors" (Rudakoff 5). Instead of seeking to integrate the "I," Arsenault regards herself as an always plural set of performing personas observable in the mirror. Taking off her wig and gown in front of the mirror and facing herself without any "props," Arsenault continues the self-exploration begun in *Silicone Diaries* but rather than focusing on the "organic parts," Arsenault's desire here is to achieve a spiritual experience.

In theatre performances, the mirror is usually a prop in soliloquies, similarly allowing the audience to gaze at the actor's face while they turn away in order to create an air of intimate space. The mirror is usually a prop associated with actresses and often uncritically perpetuates stereotypes of women as vain and superficial. The mirror is also associated with the intimacy of the boudoir and acts as a kind of diary. In performance and installation art, mirrors are sometimes directed towards the audience and sometimes function as infinity metaphors. Yayoi Kusama uses mirrors in her installation work, enclosing entire rooms in museums in mirrors, in order to achieve effects of repetition, multiplicity, and infinity. In Danny Yung's performance, *Awakening,* the theatre space is enclosed with four mirror walls which are supposed to reflect truth but also transform a table into countless tables and the stage into endless stages. In Joan Jonas's *Mirror Performance,* four performers carried large mirrors, "alternately reflecting their own bodies and the surroundings (...) offering the audience a flattened view of itself as an image within the performance" and showing the performers' bodies in fragmentary, replicated, and surrealist forms (Trotman). Dan Graham's *Performance/Audience/Mirror* explores a returned gaze as Graham directs a large mirror towards a seated audience and engages in describing them. In *Mirror Box,* Milo Moire covers either her breasts or her genitals with a box made up of 4 mirrors and offers passers-by to fondle her through holes in the box for 30 seconds. As the passers-by approach her, they can see their reflections in the box. Arsenault's use of the mirror corresponds to the theatrical

tradition of creating an intimate feminine space but also to Jonas's and Moire's interaction of the mirror and the female body. Unlike Yung's, Graham's, and Kusama's work, Arsenault's mirror is not meant to create an aesthetically pleasing experience for the audience or provide a space for the audience to reflect on infinity. Rather, Arsenault emphasizes the discord between the mirror as a space before which women stand to seek aesthetic approval and her intentionally unkempt appearance. Jones's *Mirror Performance* critiques the objectification of women's bodies and invokes the mirror as an object through which women self-regulate their appearance. For Arsenault, the mirror is more of a constant, although not always benevolent, companion through all of the artist's transformations.

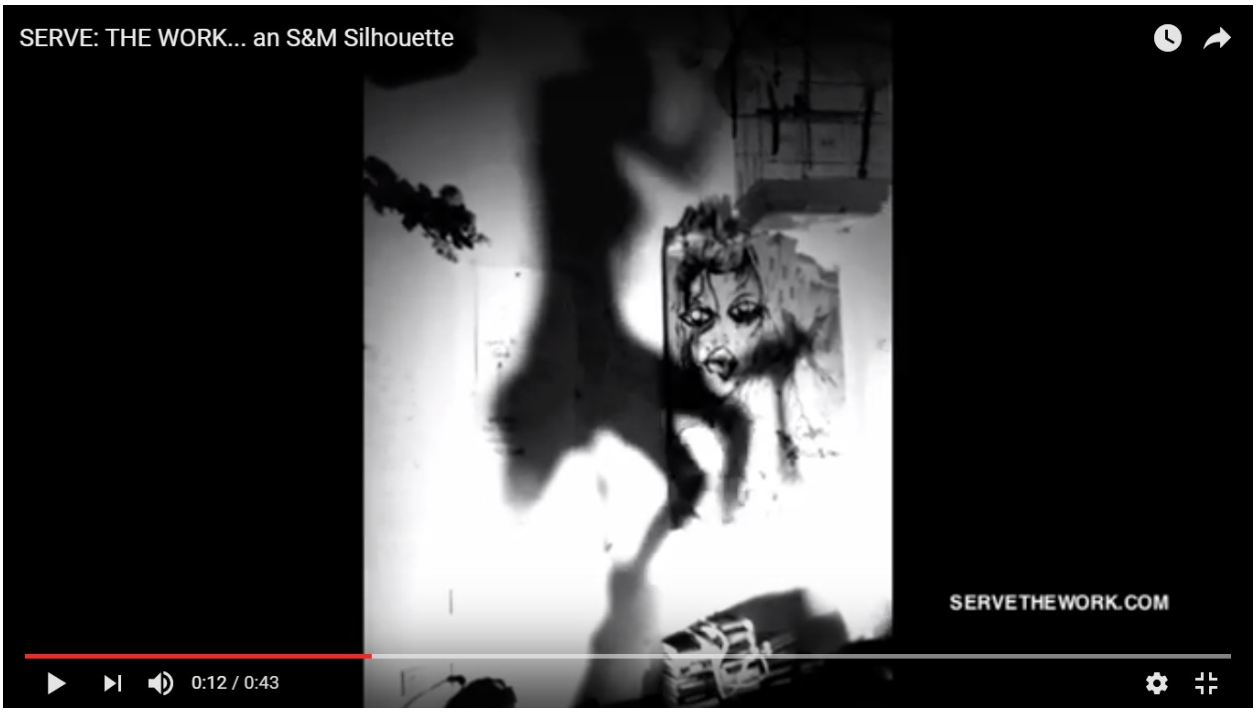

Figure 3: "Serve the Work...and S&M Silhouette," a still from a YouTube clip of 40 Days + 40 Nights. Nina Arsenault. YouTube. 13 Aug 2012.

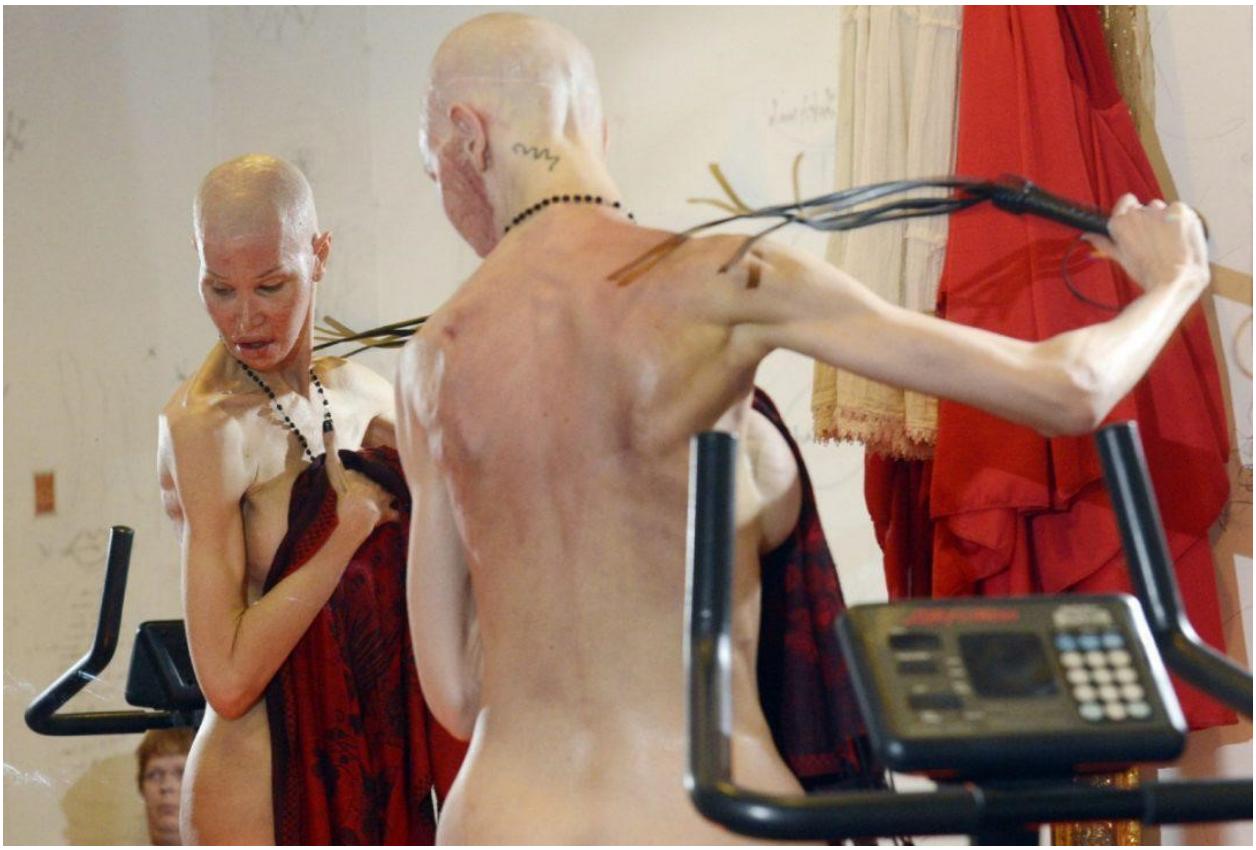

Figure 4: "Nina Arsenault whips herself during 40 Days and 40 Nights." Aaron Harris for the Toronto Star. Published in "Nina Arsenault presents 40 Days and 40 Nights: Working Towards a Spiritual Experience" by Richard Ouzounian. Toronto Star. 15 Aug 2012. https:/

Conclusion

In Arsenault and Breedlove, the movements of the bike rides produce the unexpected effects of euphoria and cyborgization. While Arsenault comes to exercising on her stationary bike as a way of starting a process of renegotiating her relationship with her body, marked by many surgeries and by ageing, the experience of the cycling movements resonates with her in its resemblance to her other passions for chasing bodily highs. For Jim, the bike provides a continual source of euphoric and flow experiences that help him manage his addiction to drugs and allow him to escape his problems. Jim's ability to feel skilled and competent as a cyclist enables him to feel more human in a world where he often feels disenfranchised. Cycling is an athletic activity that allows for the comfort of safety, on the road or in the privacy of one's own home; trans solo cyclists do not need to deal with gym and locker room discomforts or with the lack of safety in outdoor environments that trans runners might encounter.

For Arsenault, the figure of the cyborg preceded her encounters with the stationary bike and manifested through her surgically-modified body but came to be renegotiated through the encounter with the bike-machine, which at the same time made her a kind of bike-human cyborg but also feel her "organic" parts more. While the bike allowed Arsenault to tap into her emotions, the bike enabled Jim to become car-like and feel empowered through his similarity to a machine. Both encounters with the bike and approximations to cyborgness produced euphoric experiences as results of the repetitive, cyclical movements that put Jim's and Arsenault's bodies into states of flow. If athletic movements in performance are metaphors for trans agency and ways of performing trans bodies as active and agential, then the incorporation of the cyborg metaphor brings sports in conversation with technicity and the athletic cyborg becomes a way of challenging ideas of trans bodies as constructed through technology as well as ideas about the linearity of movements of trans bodies.

Chapter 3: Micha cárdenas, Alexandria Gutierrez, and Chase Ross on Trans Activism through Athletic Movements on Instagram and YouTube

When athletic movements move from stage and writing into online environments, and when online audiences witness movements as images, short videos, and narration instead of as performed in their presence, bodily movements become recontextualized and different kinds of movements come to the foreground. Athletic movements in performance have a lot in common with athletic movements on social media platforms: they are effects of the artists' or creators' fascinations with certain sports, they can be performances or performative, and they recontextualize the movements of activities like CrossFit and running. Athletic performances use athletic activities as metaphors for trans embodiment, necropolitics, regulatory powers, and euphoric experiences; athletic movements on social media narrate the creators' personal experiences with athletic activities and their transformative effects and promote exercise as a means of achieving well-being for other trans people. Rather than using athletic movements as a critique of the powers that regulate and threaten trans bodies, online creators turn to the audience, the trans communities of their online followers, and motivate them to take action by engaging in self-work. The differences between the two interpretations of athletic movements can be found in the genres they are taken up in as well as in the types of audiences interacting with the creators. The audiences in performances are temporary and unpredictable while online followers provide a steadier audience that followers the creators' entire online lives, of which athletic activities make up only one part. For cárdenas and Chase Ross, who became interested in CrossFit and running, respectively, athletic activity shifted the direction of their already existing online profiles and potentially motivated a mostly already established follower base. Alexandria Gutierrez, a BeachBody coach, bases her Instagram profile around her fitness business and uses it promote fitness but also her own brand, TransnFit.

The motivation for bringing athletic movements on social media is sharing positive and transformative experiences with sports, but each creator's context is slightly different.

Cárdenas's sharing turns into an outspokenly activist art project presenting physical strength as a mode of fighting back against transphobic violence, Ross presents running as crucial to his well-being, and Gutierrez creates her Instagram account as a way of promoting trans fitness but also herself as an instructor and fitness guru. The sites of athletic movements are both social media and offline environments, such as gyms and outdoor spaces, because the images and YouTube videos frame movements that are taking place or have taken place in offline environments and come to social media as framed stories. Although Ross does include a video of a race as part of his running series, most of his running videos are filmed post-run or post-race, narrate the affects of the run, and track his progress with running. Gutierrez's posts mostly include post-workout selfies adorned with motivational text, while cárdenas's selfies, images, and short videos are usually taken mid-workout and later contextualized with references to #BlackLivesMatter and trans activism. The athletic movements that start as exercise offline are therefore recontextualized as activist or motivational when framed for online audiences. In Cassils's and Arsenault's performances, intra-actions with other bodies on stage were important parts of staging athletic movements; on social media, the most important objects that exercising bodies interact with are the cellphone and video cameras that capture the exercise. The images and video recordings are then transferred to editing software and uploaded onto apps like Instagram or social media websites like YouTube. For so many people, the smartphone has already become an extension of the arm in a similar way the bike was an extension of the body for Arsenault and Breedlove. The cyborgisation of the body does not need to be violent or exceptional; it can be gradual, ordinary, and seemingly invisible in its ubiquity. On social media, it is not only athletic movements that become tools for activism but also the cameras and the platforms on which the posts are located. Although Instagram images and YouTube videos are kinds of trans digital objects, they do not quite fit Cael Keegan's definition of "trans media objects," media objects that were not intended to be trans but can be read as trans through their relationality and importance to trans subjects and their configurations of their own transness (27). For Keegan, a trans media object "would cultivate trans consciousness by offering an aesthetic space in which the subject might feel a way forward through the closed phenomenological horizon of binary gender" (27). While Keegan wants to explore "how trans subjects ourselves might interact with popular media texts to build phenomenologies of the self," cárdenas, Gutierrez, and Ross do not interact with already existing objects but create their own trans media objects through which they create their own visions of transness tied to fitness and activism.

Translations of athletic movements on social media take three formats: Ross films YouTube videos, Gutierrez's Instagram features selfies, and cárdenas's Instagram combines selfies, short video clips of exercises, and images that appear to be taken by someone else. A selfie is "a photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically one taken with a smartphone or webcam and shared via social media," and a category that Stephanie Duguay also extends to "similarly shot and disseminated videos" on Vine (1). Since the publication of Duguay's research, platforms such as Facebook and Instagram have also started incorporating short videos as regular features of newsfeeds and thus blurred some of the differences between the platforms. The short, few second-long videos on cárdenas's Instagram can be considered types of selfies because they do not significantly differ from the actions captured in the thumbnail and are "first-person, self-shot videos" (Duguay 1). Longer, one-minute videos that combine several exercises in different parts of the gym do still follow Duguay's requirements for selfies, however, they also resist the category by not focusing on the face as the focal point of the video, resting the camera on the floor while performing an exercise, and often not looking directly into the camera. Duguay argues that Vine offers a counterpoint to Instagram because it does not have filters, does not allow editing of the short, phone-camera-recorded videos, and thus allows for a display of a more "personal side" (1). Instagram, while not allowing for the application of filters on videos, allow for the editing of short videos and does thus not necessarily offer a rawer and more authentic view of the user.

In order to become a tool for activism, the benefits of exercise must somehow be framed and presented to motivate online followers to join the cause. Sports can contribute to a sense of general well-being that then has an effect on trans self-presentation, artistic production, and activism. Fox et al. point to the 1995 World Health Organization contention that "there is now a worldwide acceptance among medical authorities that physical activity is an important element of healthy living" (1). In health management, "much less attention has been paid to the contribution of exercise to the prevention and treatment of the increasingly burgeoning problem of *mental* disorders" (Fox et al. italics in original, 2). Ari Paunonen contends that in running, the motivation for pursuing the activity changes during a lifetime, and that while in youth, competition is an important motivator, in adulthood, well-being gains more emphasis" (Koski 4). Paunonen's observation about running could be extended to other exercise taken up in adulthood, especially exercise taken up as leisure. Although physical health was surely a motivating factor for cárdenas, Ross, and Gutierrez, in their iterations of athletic movements online, well-being as a synonym for mental health is more foregrounded. I note that other elements of well-being, such as self-esteem, body awareness, and satisfaction

with body image, cannot be tracked as well in my examples as they could be through surveys or interviews. Instead of claiming that athletic activity is especially beneficial for trans people, I want to explore how the effects of well-being produced through engagements with athletic activities surface in digital environments.

The positioning of exercise as remedy bears a resemblance to the way hormones and surgery are sometimes positioned, with expectations that they will improve every aspect of a person's life, and the overemphasis on one thing as a cure can lead to disappointments. As one participant on the *Susan's Place* forum comments, there is a feeling of "Well, I FINALLY did it! I'm complete! I finally have done EVERYTHING that I always wished I could!!!!..... Now what?" (Commenter 5). Depression after major surgeries is common not only because of expectations but also because of the trauma of to the body and post-surgery issues such as "the lingering anaesthetic. Being off hormones for a few weeks. The grind of what seems to an endless repetition of sleep, eat, dilate ...The exhaustion. Not being able to lift/drive." (Commenter 6). Interestingly, physical activity is invoked as a remedy to stave off post-op depression even on this forum thread. One participant pointed to "lack of regular fitness" during the post-op stage as a possible cause of depression (Commenter 7) and another commented that they "exercised and walked a lot" because "the anesthesia lingered" so "physical activity was key in helping [them] get rid of it" (Commenter 8). Cárdenas's and Ross's work taps into this idea that physical activity heals, with cárdenas starting CrossFit after just such a post-op state and Ross starting to run after depression unrelated to transition. Gutierrez's connection to fitness was different in that it preceded her transition and enabled her to feel physically prepared to start transition.

If engagement with athletic activities is transformative for the body, then this sense of non-gendered bodily transformation can influence one's ideas about the ideal trans body, but also about the trans body's abilities and potential. Cárdenas, Gutierrez, and Ross link their experiences with athletic activities to their experiences of being trans in similar ways. Ross sees running as a tool for negotiating dysphoria and mental well-being, cárdenas sees CrossFit as empowering and as increasing feelings of safety in daily life, and Gutierrez sees getting fit through Beachbody workouts as the catalyst for her transition. Although abilities differ, a focus on making the trans community physically and mentally strong is important considering the potential exposure to violence and the pervasiveness of depression. Cárdenas, Gutierrez, and Ross are aware of their platforms and want to use their personal experiences of transformation through physical activity to motivate their followers to be more active and healthier. Considering that many of their followers are trans, and that certain posts about

exercise specifically address the trans community, cárdenas, Gutierrez, and Ross use athletic movements as part of their social media activism in different degrees. Cárdenas overtly calls on trans people, especially trans women of color, to join her in her quest to become "harder to kill" by becoming physically strong and ready to fight back. Gutierrez addresses trans women on her Instagram and offers advice on how to include fitness in transitioning. Although Ross does not connect running to politics or call on his followers to run, he does provide ample personal motivational stories about how running changed his life.

Although the followers' or subscribers' responses to the creators' posts cannot be tracked beyond the comments sections, the responses to motivational posts are mixed. On Ross's running videos, many subscribers note that the videos make them want to start running or exercising. For example, one commenter noted: "I literally put on my gym shorts and t-shirt while watching your video" (Commenter 9). Ross's running videos trigger a kind of affective response that combines identification with Ross as a popular YouTube persona (with over 156,000 subscribers) and shared affective relationship towards running, or exercise in general. For cárdenas, the responses to her more activist posts are far more underwhelming. One of cárdenas's more popular CrossFit posts garnered only six more generic comments such as "well done," "awesome post," "great post," "love this so much!," and 3 flexing arm emojis (Figure 7). Gutierrez's Instagram BeachBody posts share the same fate and her not political, long stories about her transformative experiences with exercise resulted in similar kinds of comments. The stark difference might be explained by the differences in audiences and the number of followers. Ross's channel has been building its audience base of predominantly other trans users for five years before Ross started posting running videos and the channel has more of an intimate connection between creator and audiences because Ross very outspokenly shares intimate details of all parts of his life. Gutierrez's Instagram (public) account existed for only two years and had a distinct business undertone, and even though Gutierrez shared personal information about her transition and fitness transformation, the personal aspects were contained to only certain aspects of her life. Cárdenas joined Instagram in 2012, now has a private account with 1000 followers, is less concerned with gaining new audiences, and generally has fewer and shorter comments on all types of posts. The intimacy on cárdenas's channel is not created by sharing personal details with strangers in hopes of connection but functions more as a network of friends, acquaintances, and fans. Although both YouTube and Instagram operate through likes and comments, the Instagram accounts discussed here demonstrate much less interaction through comments. For contrast, Gutierrez's YouTube account (3,242 subscribers), which contains only seven videos, has a much higher

number of comments per video than any of her posts did — one fitness-related video has 33 while a non-fitness video about voice feminization has 198 comments. Ross's Instagram (68,000 followers), on the other hand, also has a high number of comments, with some recent posts garnering up to 376 comments. The differences in these audiences influence the reception of the creators' activist messages and point to the limits of such activism.

Nevertheless, in classifying cárdenas's, Gutierrez's, and Ross's social media platforms as activist, I will turn to the discussion of publics because they operate as texts that expect being read by their followers. My discussion of publics will therefore be informed both by the self-presentations of the creators and the reception from the followers. Michael Warner differentiates between three kinds of publics: the public as a kind of social totality encompassing entities such as a nation or a city, a public as a concrete audience "bounded by the event or by the shared physical space" — the kinds of publics attending performances — and finally, a public "that comes into being only in relation to texts and their circulation" — like the publics on Instagram and YouTube (50). While audiences of performances are bounded by the short timespan of the performance, publics on social media fall into the third category because they form around shared interests, sometimes embodied by particular creators, and are able to linger as publics for long periods of time, and followers are able to communicate with each other and with creators around whom they gravitate. Warner approaches counterpublics through an example of queer counterpublics and argues that in the 90s, "a culture [was] developing in which intimate relations and the sexual body can in fact be understood as projects for transformation among strangers;" it is the "space of coming together that discloses itself in interaction" that define "publicness" for Warner (88). In a trans and digital translation of Warner's counterpublics, the emphasis on affects as the glue that holds a public together still form the basis of what would be a trans counterpublic, however, sexuality is displaced by a less physical kind of affect that resembles acquaintanceship and, in some cases, fandom. Rather than singular encounters, social media counterpublics are formed through multiple encounters.

As in Warner's account of a public, Lauren Berlant's version of a public is created through affective ties between person and "text" and among people who have affective ties to the text. Berlant argues that "women's" connective affect is created through "women's culture," which emerges from a "sense of lateral identification" that "sees collective sociality routed in revelations of what is personal, regardless of how what is personal has itself been threaded through mediating institutions and social hierarchy" (10). While Berlant identifies that for women, this personal is often constituted through the "female complaint" — that

"women live for love, and love is the gift that keeps on taking" — in trans publics, common personal stories have usually been related to shared experiences of dysphoria, transition, or discrimination (1). These kinds of stories are still an important part of trans online interactions, especially for people just coming out or transitioning, and the sense of a shared "discourse of disappointment," as Berlant notes, serves to "magnetize" many different people to "the scene of suffering" but also of political potential (11-13). Nevertheless, as there are many varieties of women's publics that do not focus on the female complaint but on interests, trans publics have proliferated into different varieties as well. What is specific about trans online publics centred around exercise is that they prioritize the positive affects of post-exercise physical and mental well-being but also offer exercise as a remedy for negative affects of either dysphoria, depression, or anxieties about trans necropolitics. Although the positioning of exercise instead of transition as a remedy is a novel concept in trans work and a trajectory with promising potential for activism, it also holds sometimes problematic or unsustainable assumptions. In reading the work of trans online creators, we must keep in mind that their work — a political art project, personal narratives, and business-related posts — is not prescriptive but predominantly geared towards exploring the possibilities in sharing transformative experiences with exercise.

When a public emerges online, it is always enabled and mediated by the platform it appears on. Contextualizing Warner's and Berlant's concepts for trans YouTube channels, Tobias Raun coins the term "affective counterpublic" to designate "a loosely self-organized entity that uses and to a certain extent is enabled by the tools and framework provided by YouTube" (178). These counterpublics are "defined by their tension with a larger public and offering an alternative horizon of opinion and exchange that both encourages self-validation and claims trans as a positive and legitimate subjectivity" (Raun, "Epilogue" 208-209). Although this still holds true for many communities, Raun's work captured the early stages of trans YouTube, which was still very focused on groupings of channels talking predominantly about transition, trans YouTube and other platforms have greatly diversified in the last few years. Ross' YouTube channel, for example, has existed for nine years and has undergone an evolution from a mostly transition-tracking channel to comedy, trans culture, sex toy and trans prosthetics reviews, podcasts, and running. Although many of Ross's audiences have followed the channel through its evolution, the channel has become one of the most popular trans channels on YouTube precisely because of this diversification of content. Ross's channel does, as do cárdenas's and Gutierrez's Instagram accounts, encourage self-validation

of trans identity but also shows how that identity is more complex than conversations about hormones and surgeries.

Although trans social media can be activist in the sense of what Sonja Vivienne and Jean Burgess call "everyday activism," through the creation and sharing of "personal stories designed to contribute to cultural and political debates," there is also a more direct activist potential in the diversification that addresses important issues in the global trans community (362). Raun similarly argues that trans vlogs can "have a political potential regardless of whether they explicitly address strictly 'political' topics such as trans legislation and policy" because "vlogs are political in the sense that they enable trans people to tell their stories and be visible as trans in a globally accessible forum, and thereby 'publicly' disseminate and contest information about what it means to be trans" ("Epilogue" 207). It is in this expansion of what it means to be trans through relating transness to other areas of interest, such as athletic activity, or to pressing issues such as mental health, that the activist potential of today's trans social media lies. Also linking counterpublics to online activism, Vivienne and Burgess situate the digital storytellers in their research as sharing attributes of both intimate publics and counterpublics but also as activists who "commonly articulate a wish to catalyze social change rather than simply consolidate their values and affirm their identities among like-minded people" (366). Cárdenas, Gutierrez, and Ross similarly transcend the idea of using social media in order to consolidate their values and affirms their identities and present themselves in ways that stimulate change in the perception of trans bodies but also in framing fitness and strength as tools of political activism. As Raun notes, social media "provides space for… practices with transformative potential, both individually as well as collectively," a structure reflected both in transition videos as well as in social media sharing transformative experiences with exercise as community-strengthening practices ("Epilogue" 206). Cárdenas's, Gutierrez's, and Ross's transformative experiences with exercise evolve into different directions, each of which demonstrates a potential for a different kind of community-strengthening: in relation to necropolitics, trans body ideals, and well-being.

Cárdenas

Cárdenas is an American artist, theorist, and activist, whose work engages with immigration politics, technology, and recently, CrossFit. Cárdenas's #stronger project "aims to develop a

decolonial vision of futures of health, fitness and strength for trans and gender non-conforming people" and combines "interviews with trans women and medical professionals, biometric data recordings, an app prototype integrating Apple HealthKit and the Apple Watch, and a personal exploration by cárdenas of gaining strength through CrossFit, [and] overcoming years of trauma in fitness spaces" ("Research"). #stronger, an online/offline multimedia project with focuses on fitness technologies and intersectional trans activism, departs from conversations of transition and renegotiates the terms of forming online trans communities. Instead, cárdenas uses CrossFit for developing strategies "to reduce violence and increase health for marginalized groups" and argues that by "centering trans women of color and gender non-conforming people of color (...) one can learn a great deal about how to respond to the global challenges of racial and gender violence" ("29th Jan"). Instead of tracking her transition, cárdenas tracks and transforms her infatuation with CrossFit into a project for empowering trans people of colour and reappropriates CrossFit's motto of becoming harder to kill for trans activism.

The #stronger project troubles the connection between social media and trans visibility and representation. Even though trans issues are gaining more traction, cárdenas cautions that trans visibility in the mainstream media is not enough, and even that more visibility "has resulted in more violence" ("Dark" 178). Social media posts containing notifications, imagery, and videos of transphobic violence and murders do not only raise awareness but also keep "users scrolling and clicking, increasing revenue for these corporations; they very literally profit off of our deaths, our mourning, our communication, the spread of our affects" ("Dark" 168). Cárdenas suggests being mindful of these implications and working toward "new modes of visibility or methods that do not prioritize visibility" (178), but also toward "more material safety and a shift in the affects that permeate our lives" (173). Cárdenas's #stronger project "continues a practice [cárdenas has] used in projects in the past, attempting to subvert existing technologies and to repurpose them for ends for which they were not designed" ("Dark" 178). With #stronger, cárdenas attempts to "use the algorithms that often reproduce necropolitical surveillance and violence on social media and smart phones to bring about more safety for [her]self and [her] communities" ("Dark" 178). Considering that this project contains local, offline elements, here, I will only focus on cárdenas's Instagram account, and specifically, on how #stronger negotiates trans self-representation on Instagram through CrossFit.

The #stronger project troubles the line between auto/biography and performance in several ways. The project stems from cárdenas's infatuation with CrossFit and evolves into a

combination of the personal, political, and athletic. The Instagram portion of the project follows cárdenas's daily workouts, meals, athletic milestones, and CrossFit-related images and videos. However, cárdenas's Instagram account is not devoted solely to the #stronger project but was always primarily also cárdenas's personal/public/artist/academic account featuring anything from conferences and teaching photos to walks with her dog. Although all self-representation on social media is always a kind of performance, and on her Instagram and cárdenas presents herself in many roles, there is only a tentative line distinguishing her project and the rest of her Instagrammable life. Cárdenas's project resembles Amalia Ulman's Instagram performance, *Excellences and Perfections,* through which Ulman cited and critiqued three popular identity categories available to women on Instagram — "the kawaii girl, the hustler, and the new age 'healed' girl" — in that cárdenas takes on the identity category of the #fitspo woman (Maguire 178). Although cárdenas does not play with the politics of likes or tries to embody a persona she does not identify with as Ulman does, the artist does expand the idea of the #fitspo woman beyond aesthetics and into a political arena. Cárdenas harnesses the power of athletic movement, combines it with intersectional feminist of color calls for action, and distills the two into Instagram images portraying trans women's strength. Through motivational images and videos linking the #BlackLivesMatter and #translivesmatter movements, cárdenas stresses the potential of exercise as a technology of trans strength and wellness.

Approaching exercise through the digital and artistic realms, cárdenas's CrossFit images and videos focus on the transformative potential of CrossFit in terms of wellness and trans activism. At the "Trans Pedagogies" panel of the 2016 *Trans Studies Conference*, cárdenas noted that CrossFit saved her life, helped her "recover from depression," and made her "feel different" ("Trans Pedagogies"). The transformation involved more than physical changes of the body or a regular supply of endorphins, considering that cárdenas had engaged in other sports before starting CrossFit. Instead, cárdenas connects her feeling different to an increased feeling of strength and safety. Since starting CrossFit in the Spring of 2016, cárdenas's Instagram transformed from an account with a balance of different photos to an account overwhelmingly concerned with CrossFit. The CrossFit posts include workout photos usually featuring cárdenas performing heavy lifting or other types of strenuous exercise, Paleo diet posts, or gym photos and gym selfies with workout buddies. Even though cárdenas chooses the image-based Instagram as her platform, it is the captions and hashtags that accompany her photos that transform the workout photo into activist posts. Through the photos, cárdenas embodies the strength that she calls on other trans women of color to strive

for. Cárdenas's Instagram account functions as a kind of transformation diary documenting the changes in her body, wellness, and the increasing influence of CrossFit in her scholarly and activist work.

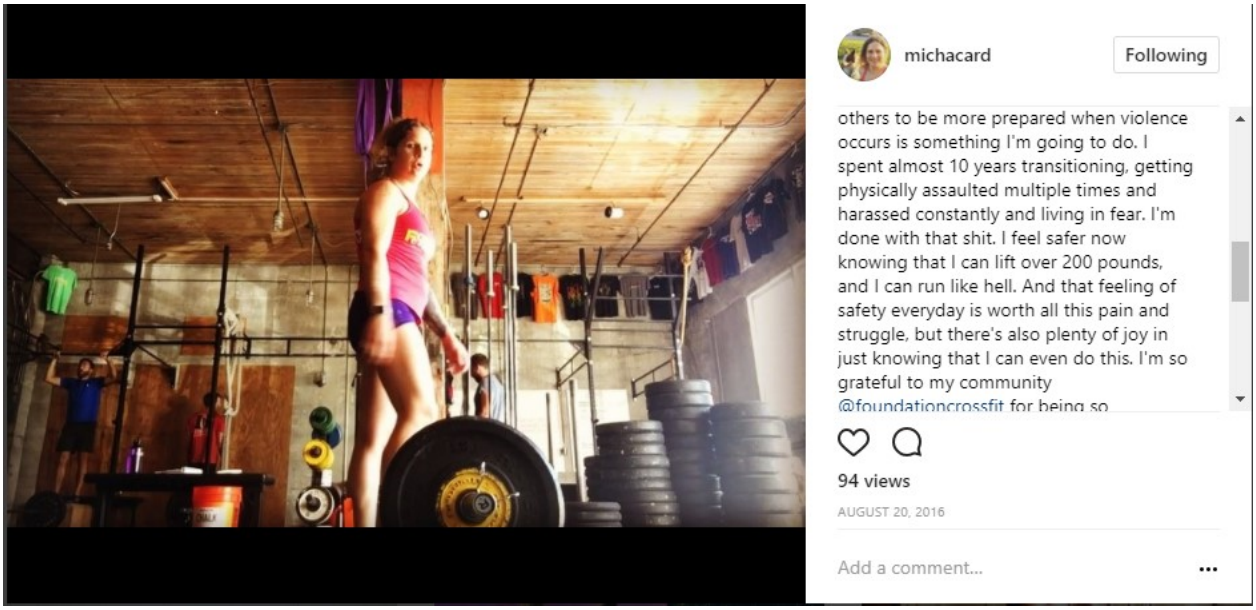

Figure 5: Thumbnail of cárdenas's August 20th, 2016 post

Cárdenas's project stems from a sense of personal transformation of body and wellness, which are documented at the beginning of the project. In Figure 5, a thumbnail of a 1-minute video clip, cárdenas demonstrates not only physical fitness and mental strength but also a kind of battle readiness by posing in front of a barbell and looking directly into the camera. The blurriness of the limbs, which gives the image an additional sense of having captured a movement, is possibly accidental and due to the fact that it captured the beginning of a video. This image connotes a sense of achievement and strength, and the direct eye-contact invites the imagined viewer to read the caption, identify with cárdenas's struggles, and then follow cárdenas's CrossFit path. The video features no speech and shows cárdenas performing several CrossFit exercises demonstrating her strength, resilience, and skill-level. The movements in this video include lifting a barbell, burpees combined with jumping over the barbell, pull-ups, movements on a rowing machine, and handstands. The automatic replay of the video further conveys the repetitive nature of the movements that cárdenas would have repeated in sequence in the gym. In the accompanying caption, cárdenas states: "Honestly I do this for myself because it feels amazing and I love a challenge and to feel stronger so I feel safer, but also for other trans women of color. I want to inspire more trans women of color like me to focus on their health, because I believe we can be safer if we can live healthier

lives" (Figure 5). Here, cárdenas stresses the importance of her CrossFit Instagram photos for the trans community and invites an identification with her by highlighting her own status as a trans woman of color. Cárdenas continues: "I spent almost 10 years transitioning, getting physically assaulted multiple times and harassed constantly and living in fear. I'm done with that shit. I feel safer now knowing that I can lift over 200 pounds, and I can run like hell. And that feeling of safety everyday is worth all this pain and struggle, but there's also plenty of joy in just knowing that I can even do this" (Figure 5). As a trans woman with a history of street harassment, cárdenas already comes to CrossFit with the attitude of survival but shifts her attitude from merely surviving to thriving. Cárdenas also points to the fact that transition alone cannot necessarily bring confidence, self-worth, and happiness but that an appreciation of the body's strength and abilities on a more basic level is also necessary.

Cárdenas's take on personal transformation is influenced by CrossFit's official rhetoric of victim to hero, as well as with its militant tone. On their official website, CrossFit is described as high intensity, "constantly varied functional movements," which reflect "the best aspects of gymnastics, weightlifting, running, rowing and more" ("What"). Rather than describing CrossFit as transformative, the website describes it as inclusive: "The needs of Olympic athletes and our grandparents differ by degree, not kind" ("What"). Although CrossFit boasts inclusivity, the inclusivity only focuses on age and level of ability — not race or gender. CrossFit's transformative discourse appears in documentaries and personal videos rather than on CrossFit's website or in scholarship. In a YouTube series entitled "CrossFit — Killing the Fat Man," CrossFit brands itself as an exercise regime with transformative potential. The series follows self-declared couch-potato Gary Roberts as he kills his former self with CrossFit and is reborn a new man. Roberts frames his transformation as an experiment: "I'm gonna change me, let's see if other shit comes together" ("CrossFit - Killing"). After his transformation, Roberts loses weight and gains muscle but also feels more confident, sexually attractive, alive, has a better relationship with his family, and thrives in his career. The documentary reflects CrossFit's militant, no excuses rhetoric, split before and after self, and violent approach to health and fitness. Following the militant tone, CrossFit's YouTube also advertises the program as "the principal strength and conditioning program for many police academies and tactical operations teams, [and] military special operations units" ("About"). In her interpretation of CrossFit ideology, cárdenas uses the military and transformation rhetoric for trans activism while staying away from the body-shaming aspect. The CrossFit philosophy has cultivated a community that has been described as "almost cultlike," centering "on 'military-style' practical exercise routines," having members who are

"devoted," having "its own vocabulary, online and local social networks, and material culture" (Getsy 475). CrossFit is, like trans online communities, a kind of counterpublic with its own set of rules and practices that serve to create affect among members. Cárdenas's work, however, does not take up the affects within the CrossFit community but taps into her own affects for the practices of CrossFit extricated from the people who perform them to strengthen the other (trans) community she belongs to.

Transformation Media and Body Ideals

Roberts's CrossFit transformation video reflects the well-established "before and after" rhetoric of fitness transformation media (weight-loss ads, transformation videos, fitspiration) as well as trans transition videos. Transformation videos of all kinds (make-up, fitness, and transition) are popular on YouTube and a search for "transformation" yields almost 15 million results. Since the goal of a transformation video is to show the biggest possible change, differences are often emphasized. Transmasculine transition videos often feature the subject topless in order to demonstrate the effects of top-surgery but also to show muscle growth stimulated by testosterone and capitalized on through weight-lifting. In topless photos, subjects will often lift their arms in a bodybuilder pose or flex their abs. The dominant ideal of the male body remains the "gym body" and many transmasculine YouTubers simultaneously strive for the after photos of masculinity and muscularity (Bridel and Rail 136). Transfeminine YouTube transformation videos almost never include fitness as part of the process of transition (although Gutierrez's YouTube videos do). Cárdenas's, Gutierrez's, and Ross's self-presentations do not fit into these models. Gutierrez follows the "transmasculine model" of simultaneously getting fitter and transitioning and her "before" photos feature her both heavier and more masculine in appearance while her "after" photos show Gutierrez fit, thin, and in workout apparel. Cárdenas also follows the transmasculine model of getting muscular and strong but does not relate getting fit to transition. By celebrating their bodies' strength and muscularity, Gutierrez and cárdenas challenge the idea that transfeminine bodies need to conform to the ideal of the thin and delicate female body. Ross's body transforms through running but the transformation to a "marathon body," a slenderer rather than muscular body, is not as visible as the transformation to a "gym body,"

and considering that Ross took up running not to lose weight but for mental health, Ross's transformation is not as physically or visually prominent (Bridel and Rail 136).

On Instagram, fitspiration is the dominant form of fitness transformation media, a category through which both cárdenas and Gutierrez positions themselves. Cárdenas troubles the "before and after" photos by using the format only to post images of the same workout, while Gutierrez blends the fitness and trans aspects of this type of image and portrays her pre-transition self as unfit, unhealthy, and unfeminine. Both cárdenas and Gutierrez do, however, post gym images that are meant to be aspirational and that show off the fitness and strength of their bodies. #Fitspo, a hashtag with over 57 million Instagram followers, is defined as "an online trend designed to inspire viewers towards a healthier lifestyle by promoting exercise and healthy food" and entails mostly Instagram photos of "healthy and attractive" people "often dressed in exercise gear" (Tiggeman and Zaccardo 1). The images range from users performing various exercises, showing off their muscles dressed in workout gear (although not necessarily working out), weight-loss before and after images, to just images of thin people not in any way related to fitness. As Tiggeman and Zaccardo claim, even though "fitspiration images do seem to have the potential to motivate individuals towards a healthier lifestyle (...) the majority of images of women contained only one body type: thin and toned" (5). Although images of fit and mildly muscular women seem to provide an alternative to the ideal female body defined by thinness and fragility, fitspiration bodies still uphold ideals of thinness and ability. Cárdenas does not use fitspiration hashtags, but her workout images and videos fit the thin and toned #fitspo persona and promote healthy eating and fitness as a lifestyle. Unlike the militant CrossFit rhetoric that promotes overemphasized masculinity, #fitspo's rhetoric is more consistent with ideals of thinness and female-body-ideal-appropriate fitness.

Although #fitspo is seen as inspirational and aspirational content that promotes health and well-being, it is also complicit in perpetuating gendered ideals of thinness and attractiveness, as well as the culture of self-regulating the body. Cultures of physical fitness are "healthy alternatives," van Ingen notes; however, they are also "often experienced as a force for body regulation rather than empowerment or pleasure" and "the monitoring or surveillance of one's own lifestyle practices is the base of our public health model" (255). Van Ingen further argues that "individuals become active patients, self-observing actors monitoring their own body and lifestyle for signs of deviation from the role of healthy, and therefore responsible, citizen" (255). In its connection to self-observation and tracking details about one's body, the pursuit of fitness, like transition, is linked to the medical view of the

body. If exercise is a kind of post-transition replacement for the goal-oriented, body-altering trajectory of transition, both practices can be read as types of self-regulatory activities at once following both personal desires for body transformation and working towards socially constructed body ideals of masculinity and femininity, and fit and toned bodies. Tracking and sharing online one's progress with fitness or weight-loss is similar to the way many trans people track and share their progress with hormones. The connection between the two comes to the forefront most in Gutierrez's work, in which Gutierrez credits losing weight and getting fit with the courage to start transitioning and presents her "after" self as thin, fit, and feminine. Ross, who has tracked his progress with hormones since the inception of his channel, adopts the same structure with his running videos, which he usually makes after big landmarks such as races or hitting certain mileage. For cárdenas and Ross, however, exercise is also a departure from a transition narrative because there is no clear physical end-goal to their transformations.

Along with online spaces of fitspiration, gyms are similar offline spaces of gendered fitness and regulations of femininity and masculinity, as well as spaces of surveillance and regulation rather than empowerment or motivation. Connecting class privilege to gender identity discomforts, Bobby Noble refers to gyms as "strange sites of marxist disembodiment and alienation" that fragment "bodies into muscles, arms, chest" (251). Rather than a focus on exercise with the goal of wellness, for Noble, gyms represent uncomfortable spaces where trans bodies are scrutinized and judged. Moreover, Noble asserts that the "gym body is developed not necessarily from use but from an extreme form of docility, repetition and discipline" (251). While Noble sees this as a critique, this is exactly the approach CrossFit aims to achieve. Although Noble does not position himself as either an insider or an outsider, in spaces like the gym, exercise seems to become almost secondary to the relationships with the other people in the gym as well as the gym as a politicized space. Locker rooms, as gyms and bathrooms, remain a site of vulnerability for trans people because of the potential exposure of their bodies and close proximity to strangers who might feel the need to police gender-segregated spaces. Locker rooms can be "seriously problematic spaces for some trans people, as they become forced to expose their bodies to a social gaze most try to avoid" (Perez Samaniego et al. 85), and especially during transition, "any gender specific space is awkward, uncomfortable, and painful" (McCormack and Hanold 37). On his Instagram, triathlete Chris Mosier has noted how his discomfort in locker rooms affected his experiences of sports: "Locker rooms were one of the reasons I pushed away from the [LGBTQ] sports leagues I was a part of before transition" because after transitioning, "I knew I couldn't use

the same locker room, but also did not feel safe accessing the men's space. As a solution, I was told I could arrive to the gym with no coat or bags and in my gym clothes, or I could 'change at the McDonalds down the street.'" (30th Nov 2017). For Mosier, the discomfort came from having to choose between two equally uncomfortable options and from his league's lack of support. If locker rooms, gyms, and teams are not specifically labeled as queer or trans-friendly, they are often cisnormative spaces. With increasingly more out trans and gender-non-conforming participants in competitive sports as well as in sports for leisure, the cisnormative spaces of sports are becoming increasingly queered and transed. By insisting on their right to be present in fitness spaces, trans athletes actively queer (trans) those spaces. Cárdenas is a member of a queer and trans-friendly gym (in CrossFit parlance, box), competes in smaller local CrossFit competitions, and uses social media to document and share her experience. As a Beachbody coach, Gutierrez works in fitness spaces and teaches classes. However, she does not comment on any negative experiences in these spaces on her Instagram. By virtue of being a trans woman in a dominantly cisgender fitness space and working with cisgender students, Gutierrez also queers/transes the space. Gutierrez posts images of the workout groups she teaches and notes positive experiences of her participants' resilience and positive energy but also brings fitness into trans spaces such as trans conferences and offers personal trainer service through her Instagram and YouTube accounts.

Ross started running at the gym but quickly transitioned to running outside, mostly alone. As a "passing" trans man, Ross does not encounter the same issues cárdenas does as a trans woman and does not need to worry about street harassment and safety. While van Ingen points to class as one of the factors potentially inhibiting trans people's navigation of outdoor spaces, being perceived as female brings about other safety issues. As Allen Collinson notes in her phenomenological account of running while female, street harassment underscores women's use of public space and manifests as an inhibition of enjoyment of public space without the fear of harassment ("Feminist" 288). The nature of exercising in public space as a woman is contradictory: "on the one hand, the negative structures of experience loom large; the dangers of and bodily vulnerability to harassment (verbal and physical), threat and attack. On the other hand, the positive elements of running outside include the experience of empowerment, social agency, resistance, bodily power, strength, and sensory pleasure" (Allen Collinson "Feminist" 288). Runner and blogger Amelia Gapin similarly addresses the shifting experience of exercising outdoors after transition and states that she used to "love running in the dark," but she won't do it anymore because "it doesn't feel safe" (Narins). Gapin noticed a difference in taking up space as a female-presenting runner especially in the possibility of

street harassment, stalking, or people finding out she is trans: “Now cars honk at me and guys yell shit at me out of their windows. Men stare. I don't find it flattering or validating of my womanhood at all. It feels really disgusting and dehumanizing every time” (Narins). Although cárdenas calls on trans women to get fit and strong precisely to prevent these kinds of attacks, pursuing certain avenues of getting stronger, such as outdoor recreation, might paradoxically also put them in danger of being attacked.

Cárdenas’s Activism and Necropolitics

As well as being transformative in terms of personal wellness, for cárdenas, CrossFit is an extension of her other performance work and activism that problematize, among other things, the science of the oppressed, and attempt to build practical tools to help people from marginalized communities gain agency (Unstoppable Project, Transborder Immigrant Tool). CrossFit is also a type of self-defence system in which the gained muscle and the dormant potential of the muscle to activate and defend play a part in feeling safe in public. In a play on the before and after photos of trans memoirs and fitness transformation, Figure 6 shows a muscular cárdenas in side by side images of performing pull-ups in two positions. In the accompanying caption, cárdenas states: “Dear trans, queer and people of color family: All the marches in the world aren't enough to stop them from killing us. If someone is ready to kill you, they're already beyond reason. They have to be stopped, so we have to be ready” (Figure 6). Appropriating the CrossFit motto of becoming “harder to kill” for the trans community, cárdenas points to CrossFit and gaining strength as practical tools for fighting transphobic attacks. Cárdenas acknowledges that this rhetoric poses a risk of placing “responsibility for violence or safety on individual trans people,” but that is not her aim (“Dark” 175). Instead, the artist aims to “distribute images of strength and health for trans people, in the hope of encouraging more trans people to prioritize practices that increase their own fitness and wellness” (“Dark” 175). While appropriating Instagram’s platform for unintended use, cárdenas also appropriates CrossFit’s militant rhetoric by emphasizing words such as killing, stopped, and ready to frame transphobia and racism in the United States as a state of emergency calling for desperate measures.

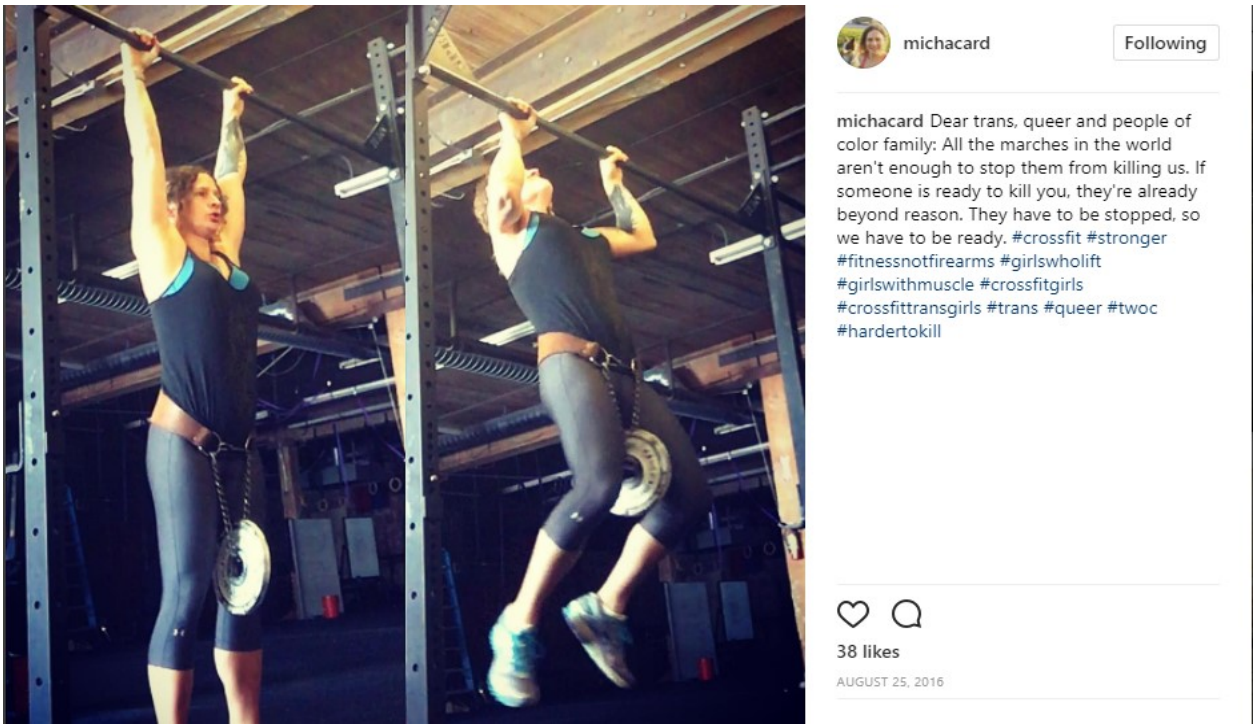

Figure 6: cárdenas's August 25th, 2016 post

Invoking the "harder to kill" motto points to the irony of CrossFit participants coming overwhelmingly from white, privileged backgrounds and likely not having any real threat of being murdered in their daily lives. Citing a post from a blog entitled "Stuff Black People Don't Like," NPR's Gene Demby notes that "CrossFit 'boxes' usually charge expensive membership fees and boast a mostly white clientele" and "a list of CrossFit Games champions and competitors reveals a veritable whitopia" ("Who's"). Here, whitopia specifically refers to the prominence of blond, blue-eyed Icelandic women on the list of CrossFit champions. Demby notes that it's hard to say exactly who the CrossFit clientele is, "in part, because of the company's peculiar corporate structure" ("Who's"). CrossFit boxes, Demby explains, "aren't franchises but 'affiliates' — they're licensed by CrossFit HQ but set their own rules, hours and workouts and buy their own equipment (...) That aversion to top-down orders is a reflection of the libertarian ideology of its founder, Greg Glassman" ("Who's"). Although cárdenas has competed in local CrossFit championships, the artist notes that she would not be competing in the official CrossFit Open because of their transphobic policy stating that trans women must compete in the men's category, which is in contrast to the International Olympic Committee's decision that trans women can compete with their gender after receiving sexual reassignment surgery ("Dark" 175). Even though cárdenas's local CrossFit box "welcomes all genders, races, religions, sexual orientations and nationalities," the larger competition is still discriminatory (cárdenas "23 Feb 2017").

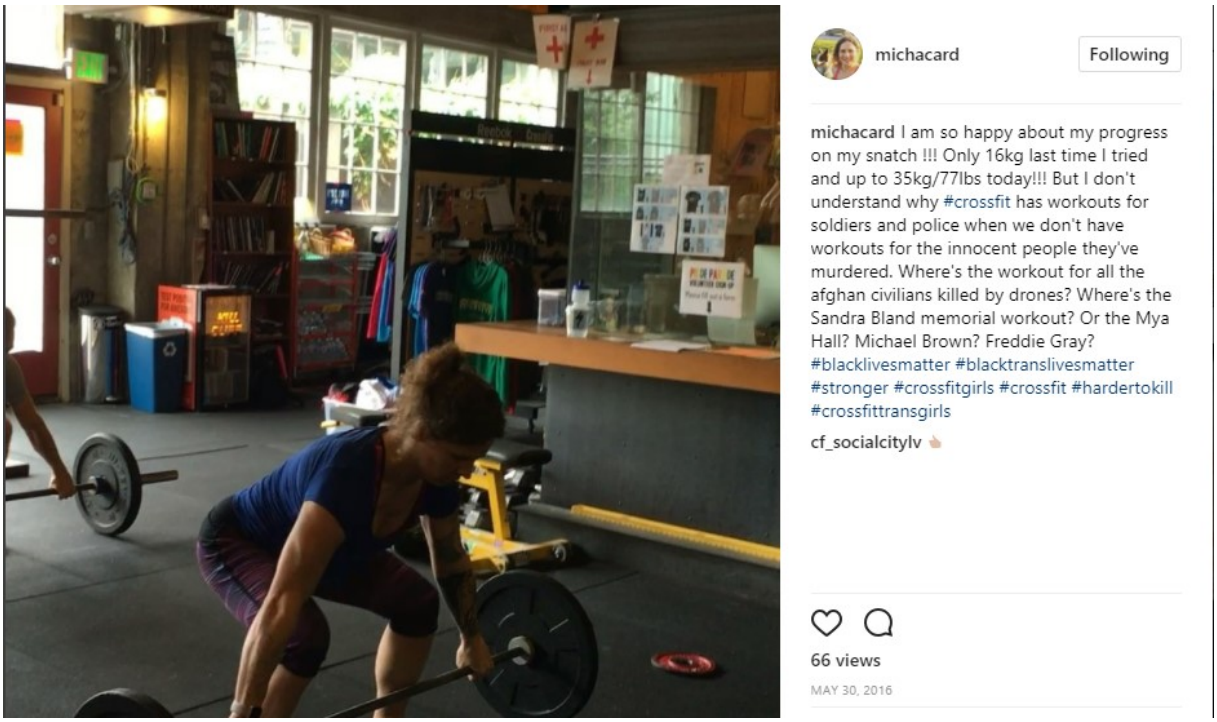

Figure 7: Thumbnail of cárdenas's May 30th, 2016 post

Through her Instagram posts, cárdenas transes the language of CrossFit. The CrossFit company motto and militaristic atmosphere are reflected in cárdenas's August 25th post (Figure 7), which functions as a call to arms for trans people of color by depicting the transphobic attacks and murders as a war between *us* and *them*. Cárdenas's activist rhetoric puts into question the efficiency of marches alone and advocates for a different mobilization of trans people. Since attacks usually happen when a person is alone, cárdenas stresses the importance of individual as well as collective strength, and physical along with political strength. Referencing the irony of the structure of CrossFit participants, cárdenas notes: "But I don't understand why #CrossFit has workouts for soldiers and police when we don't have workouts for the innocent people they've murdered. Where's the workout for all the afghan civilians killed by drones? Where's the Sandra Bland memorial workout? Or the Mya Hall? Michael Brown? Freddie Gray?" (Figure 7). In this post, cárdenas positions herself as a CrossFitter who disagrees with CrossFit's ideology. Instead, she points out the politicized nature of workouts as reflective of the ideologies they stem from, as well as the necessity of subverting such ideologies. This short video of cárdenas lifting a barbell a few times again contains no speech but simply the action of lifting contextualized as reaching beyond exercise through the accompanying caption. Tying together the #BlackLivesMatter and #translivesmatter movements, cárdenas remembers the African-American victims of police

brutality in the United States. Michael Brown was shot by a police officer in Ferguson in 2014, Sandra Bland and Freddie Gray died in police custody in 2015, and Mya Hall, a trans woman, was shot dead by NSA officers in Baltimore in 2015. Extending the idea that posting the names of police brutality victims on social media is a kind of memorialization, cárdenas proposes that workouts can also serve as kinds of memorials that incite action. The need for memorialization speaks to trans necropolitics in its iteration of the high rates of trans murders as well as an extension of the concept to the lives of white cis police officers and soldiers being valued while the lives of (trans) people of color are not. Cárdenas's work does not implicate white, cis gay and lesbian communities but, rather, points a finger at other complicit bodies, the U.S. police force and the CrossFit organization, and their memorializations of perpetrators of violence against people of color. The primary aim of cárdenas's work is not only to reflect on the state of events or to raise awareness but to also provide a more practical tool for trans people in danger. The tool might not necessarily be the organized CrossFit with the expensive gym memberships but aspects of CrossFit such as DIY-ing gym equipment from everyday objects, training as if preparing for battle, and militant rhetoric. As Figure 7 shows, while the post received a decent number of views, there was only one, short emoji comment, which forecloses the possibility of reading the impact of the post on the followers.

However, the potential for reading publics is also in the hashtags, which reflect which publics the user aligns themselves with, as well as the limitations and potential for creating and using new hashtags. Along with the expected #CrossFit, #stronger, and #hardertokill hashtags, cárdenas also regularly posts under a hashtag which no one else is yet using: #crossfittransgirls. Although several trans CrossFit hashtags exist (#transcrossfit, #doilooklikeafemaleathlete), they are almost exclusively used by trans men. The importance of cárdenas's hashtag is that it is anticipatory and creates a virtual space for trans women to fill. However, as Avery Dame notes, while some users introduce new acronyms or, in this case, hashtags, these terms have potentially limited reach (31). Similarly, the limited reach of cárdenas's hashtag is also an issue of the intersection of race and privilege. Commenting on the lack of submissions by trans women of color in *Transgender Studies Quarterly's* issue on blackness, Ellison et al. remind that part of the reason was in "the persistent premature death of Black transwomen and all Black women and their exploitation on the political economy of academia and beyond" (166). CrossFit is a privilege that the most vulnerable trans people might not be able to afford. While the creation of empty hashtags points to a problem dividing trans people according to class status, it is nevertheless important to keep creating spaces that could one day be filled.

In using and creating trans-specific hashtags, cárdenas participates in what Raun calls "affective counterpublics" and Dame calls trans youth "networked counterpublics". Even though research on trans online activity shows that most Tumblr, Instagram, and YouTube users are teenagers or young adults, some of these young adults are ageing and there is now also a significant community of users in their late 20s and 30s who grew up on social media. Dame discusses the use of hashtags in creating trans online communities on Tumblr and notes that "user-assigned tags play an important role in making posts visible and easily searchable, as well as socially locating the user" (23). Social media sites like Tumblr and Instagram lack a "group" function "that allows users to indicate social connection/ interest," so tags serve "as a method for users to make a group membership claim and establish visibility" (Dame 29). While hashtags indicate group belonging, combinations of trans-specific hashtags with other hashtags open up trans networks to other users. Dame gives the example of a trans woman who tags a selfie wearing her Seahawks jersey "#alwaysbe12ing #seahawks #nflplayoffs #mtf #trans* #Transwoman #transgirl #transgender" and thus "not only aligns her interests and build social connection, but also suggests how trans users' self-narratives extend beyond the details of social or medical transition" (30). Similarly, by tying trans hashtags to sports hashtags but also creating her own hashtags, cárdenas extends trans experiences beyond transition and towards activism.

Hashtags can function not only as community binders but also as activist community connectors. Caitlin Gunn defines "hashtag activism" as "activist efforts that take place online, or utilize online networks to promote communication, action, or awareness" (32). Frances Shaw suggests that "too much research into the political potential of the internet looks at the capacity of online social movements to impact upon the state, when instead we should look at how counterpublics online 'allow us to challenge the very conceptions of the state'" (382). Online discourse, Shaw argues, can be a "mode of activism" important "for our understanding of the role of online discursive communities in contemporary social movements" (373). Turning to feminist activism, Rosemary Clark argues that hashtag feminism campaigns are "an extension of the [feminist] movement's historically rooted discursive tactics" such as dramatic performance (788). The discussion of hashtag feminism campaigns is relevant to trans online research considering trans activism's close ties to feminist activism and commitments to intersectionality. Cárdenas's use of political hashtags on Instagram links her activism to feminist, trans, and black lives matter issues. While cárdenas is not involved in a campaign per se, her choice of hashtags demonstrates a type of ongoing, everyday activism that responds to transphobia and racism. Cárdenas's audience are her followers, most of

whom are trans or trans-friendly individuals; nevertheless, because of the hashtag system, her posts can easily reach a wider audience with interest in CrossFit or #BlackLivesMatter. Influenced by militaristic CrossFit rhetoric as well as her own history as a survivor, cárdenas's Instagram is a collage of photos featuring cárdenas as a warrior and captions that serve to elevate the photos to calls to arms for the trans community. By using the hashtags #crossfittransgirls and #hardertokill, cárdenas makes virtual space for other trans women to join the trans CrossFit revolution, as well as appropriating a CrossFit hashtag into a trans power hashtag.

Cárdenas's *150* Performance

In #stronger, Cárdenas performs her body in three different ways: in the CrossFit gym, through photos and video clips of her performances at the CrossFit gym, and in the performance of an isolated CrossFit exercise for a live audience. The performance, *150,* when posted on Instagram, functions much like an Instagram video clip in that it gets likes and comments but has a different impact when performed live. While I reflected on the specifics of the *150* performance in the introduction, here, I want to contextualize the performance within the #stronger project as it appears on Instagram. As previously noted, the performance consisted of a 10-minute timed session in which cárdenas performed close to 100 burpees, which were accompanied only by cárdenas's repetitive, motivational exclamations: "drop to the floor," "push yourself up," "do it again". As cárdenas notes on the accompanying Instagram post, the conditions during the performance were oddly reminiscent of a CrossFit gym: "It was 90 degree weather inside a warehouse w[i]th a metal roof, with no ac, so it was sweltering" ("10 Sept"). Despite the heat, many audience members participated in performing the burpee movements along with cárdenas. By focusing on doing and on capacities, cárdenas pushes the audience to imagine a trans body as radically active and creative and that the energy amassed during the performance can be empowering. Although the impact of such a philosophy would have probably had a more radical impact on a cisgender audience that had not considered trans bodies in such a way, for a majority-trans audience, the impact seemed to have been predominantly one of empowerment and perseverance through hardships rather than of rethinking transness.

In the video clip of *150* posted on Instagram, cárdenas elaborates on the motivations behind the performance: “Inspired by #CrossFit and Deleuze's question (from Spinoza) "what can a body do?" and Luis Camnitzer's statement in Conceptualism in Latin American Art: Didactics of Liberation that “#art, politics, pedagogy and poetry overlap, integrate, and cross-pollinate into a whole — a form overcoming the agitation/construction polarity. Part of my #stronger project” (“10 Sept”). Although the performance can be read as taking the athletic movements of CrossFit as metaphor for trans empowerment and community strengthening, cárdenas’s accompanying statement on Instagram also contextualizes it as a Deleuzian focus on the body’s capacities rather than materiality. Deleuze and Guattari take up Spinoza’s question in an attempt to rethink how we approach a definition of a body, to see the body as “the affects of which it is capable at a given degree of power, or rather within the limits of that degree,” and to avoid “defining a body by its organs and functions” but instead, to “seek to count its affects” (257). In *150,* cárdenas translates affects as movements and instead of counting affects, she counts the number of burpees performed — this number then temporarily become synonymous with the body in the way a runner’s body becomes synonymous with its best run times (Allen-Collinson “Running” 336). During the performance, the definition of cárdenas’s body temporarily switches from the body of a trans woman, a body made of limbs and organs, to the number 150 that the repetitive movements of that body work towards reaching. While the question “what can the body do?” is answered through the number of burpees it can withstand performing, it is also answered through the response of the audience and through the reactions to the video clip circulated online. Reflecting on having witnessed the performance live and seeing it again as an Instagram post, one commenter on the *150* Instagram post elucidated the translation of empowerment to everyday life: “when I’m climbing steps at the train station after 12-hour days I sometimes hear ‘fall to the ground. Get back up. One foot. Then the other.’ It’s like my body remembers something. But of course, I’m not thinking of the steps at those moments but the bigger stuff, the harder stuff. And the words are needed especially then” (Commenter 10). What the exercising body can do is inspire, empower, and generate new creations. The affects of the body are not just cárdenas’s affects but the totality of affects that her body produces in others.

With its focus on pushing the body to its limits, and the duality of violence and potential for well-being, *150* resembles the aims of another CrossFit performance, Amber Hawk Swanson’s *Online Comments*, a three-hour durational performance in which the artist performs a series of CrossFit exercises while reciting the mostly hateful online comments

about her body that she received for a previous performance. For Hawk Swanson, CrossFit movements go beyond their initial purpose of disciplining the body with health, strength, and wellness in mind, and move towards an unhealthy, obsessively repetitive, and self-punishing set of movements that seek to lead to the physical and mental breaking point. Hawk Swanson's work highlights the dualism in performing athletic movements, movements that simultaneously see the body "as worthy of cultivation yet [also] disdained for its inadequacies," and through which the exercising self "becomes both victim and victimizer, hero and villain" (Getsy 465). The way Hawk Swanson uses CrossFit's militant philosophy and intense exercises, as self-punishing and almost degrading, is completely different to the way cárdenas harnesses CrossFit philosophy as empowering for trans people of colour. CrossFit members come together, David Getsy notes, "to perform workouts of the day (WODs) in which they relentlessly push themselves to their personal limits" and "personal goals are externalized and compared, as statistics allow participants to gauge their own and others' fitness in relation to each other" (475). Although this competitive atmosphere of comparing numbers dominates CrossFit boxes, in *150*, cárdenas recreates with the audience a kind of WOD not focused on comparison but on the kind of spontaneous shared joy of movement that resembles dance. While Hawk Swanson uses CrossFit as a way to "allegorize both the positive and the negative sides of exercise," in the #stronger project, there seem to be no negatives — the negatives come only later, with cárdenas's abandonment of CrossFit as unsustainable (Getsy 446). Hawk Swanson's performance also contains an online element in that the comments she received for her previous work are melded with the drill-sergeant-like voice of a CrossFit coach and recited as motivation or "empowering masochism" during her performance (Getsy 446). *150,* on the other hand, is accompanied only by encouragement from the audience, just as cárdenas's Instagram posts were greeted with support and likes in the comments section. Unlike Hawk Swanson, cárdenas does not see exercise as something at once empowering but also mandated by societal norms as a way of keeping female bodies in line with beauty standards.

Self-representation and Workout Images

While cárdenas's transformative experiences with the athletic movements of CrossFit manifest in appropriating CrossFit for trans activism by transing CrossFit rhetoric and

recontextualizing CrossFit movements in *150* as metaphors for empowerment, Gutierrez's selfies are more concerned with an "everyday activism" kind of empowerment and a clear connection to recognizable "before and after" narratives. Cárdenas's and Gutierrez's modes of translating athletic movements to Instagram take place through selfies, and for cárdenas, sometimes images taken by others as well as short videos. In this change of format from performance to Instagram, images of athletic movements embody several of the characteristics that Cassils and Arsenault communicated through their work: they aim to capture either movements or the effects of movements on trans bodies, they do not represent a creator but are kinds of performative stagings of the creator through their fitness personas, and rather than functioning as metaphors, images of athletic movements offer more direct and practical messages of well-being and trans body positivity.

As digital objects that can form relationships "between viewer and viewed, between individuals circulating images, [and] between users and social software architectures," selfies and similar images or videos also keep the basic relationship between creator and followers, the original audience, but that relationship is also complexified by the relationships between the followers themselves and the ways in which these images conform to the demands of the platform they are published on (Senft and Baym 1589). Although a selfie would suggest a high degree of spontaneity, many people take selfies seriously because they want to represent themselves in the best light possible online. In some cases, selfies do often take a significant amount of preparation in one's appearance and location, as well as requiring editing time, and sometimes a concept. Cárdenas's images and videos are part of an art project and therefore transcend a definition of a selfie that would imply a casual and spontaneous image. Cárdenas's images do look unedited, sometimes grainy, with bad lighting, and a full body shot instead of a torso shot, an aesthetic not completely consistent with selfies, which are often edited and to which filters are applied. Gutierrez's images belong more clearly in the selfie category because they are taken with a hand-held device. Even though cárdenas's Instagram images refuse a clear categorization, they nevertheless do belong in conversation with Gutierrez' selfies in that they both seek to stage images of trans women empowered through exercise in order to motivate other trans people to follow their own paths to well-being. Cárdenas's and Gutierrez's workout and post-workout images show them in workout gear, during workouts, in sweaty post-workout bliss, or with a health drink. The comments on the workout images are positive and congratulatory. Neither cárdenas or Gutierrez are popular outside of their niche publics of trans and queer followers, and users into exercise, which might explain a lack of trolling that some of the more popular Instagrammers get.

Gutierrez's self-presentation is more in line with the aesthetic of other Instagram fitness gurus and of Instagram as a platform, which encourages selfies focused on "mainstream discourses of normative beauty and conspicuous consumption with an emphasis on appearance, extending through features constraining selfies' reach and salience" (Duguay 1). Although #fitspo selfies can differ from women's normative beauty standards in their focus on muscles, as Tiggeman and Zaccardo have shown, they also do perpetuate the norms of thinness and femininity. Many #fitspo images foreground the aesthetic of an athletic body rather than the body performing athletic activities. Neither Gutierrez or cárdenas overemphasize femininity in their images but instead strive to portray strength and achievement. While Gutierrez opts for showing achievement through adorning her selfies with motivational writing and narrating her experiences, cárdenas always prioritizes capturing herself in a moment of movement. Although Instagram encourages users to "create selfies congruent with the dominant discourses employed by Instagram's model users (celebrity glorification, consumerism, normative beauty) since they see this content the most," cárdenas and Gutierrez seem to use Instagram differently, albeit to different degrees (Duguay 7). Moreover, cárdenas's images and videos achieve what Duguay critiques certain celebrity selfies for lacking — a more political message (1).

Even though what counts as "aesthetically appealing" is contentions, if the term designates the use of filters, a highly-polished appearance, and artistic background, then cárdenas's and Gutierrez's gym images do not fit the bill; instead, these selfies are grittier, have bad gym lighting, and show cárdenas and Gutierrez sweaty, without makeup, but always in a strength pose or with a smile. Gutierrez does respond to the invitation to use Instagram as a place of consumerism, not in reproducing trends through purchasing certain items, but through promoting herself and the TransnFit, BeachBody and Shakeology brands. Although Duguay notes that not all Instagram accounts ascribe to the same aesthetic, she points out that the platform's aesthetic "affects the reach of selfies questioning these discourses, as they will never be promoted by the app" (7). Cárdenas does not participate in discourses glorifying celebrity cultures but, rather, uses the platform for presenting trans strength and is thus not Instagram's model user. Even though appealing to a more mainstream Instagram user might make cárdenas reach a wider audience, cárdenas sticks to her own aesthetic and her own set of followers who share that aesthetic. Gutierrez, on the other hand, models her aesthetic more closely in line with the #fitspo and #instahealth communities by including before and after images, health drinks, and motivational text on her selfies. Gutierrez posts under the hashtag #transandfit, a popular trans Instagram hashtag with over 2,318 posts. While this hashtag is

not Gutierrez's trademark, she uses the hashtag name as the name of her personal fitness company and thereby attempts to capitalize on the hashtag's existing popularity and her connections to the trans Instagram community. The other hashtags that Gutierrez uses target multiple elements of #fitspo such as #dedication, #fatloss, #gymflow, #gymlife, #fitness, #instahealth, #orlando and #eatclean. Unlike cárdenas, who sticks mainly to trans, Black Lives Matter, and CrossFit communities, Gutierrez expands through her hashtags to potential new followers and customers across the #fitspo-related communities and in her city. Even though many of Gutierrez's selfies are taken in her car or apartment, she still includes hashtags about gyms as part of her posts in order to access a wider audience.

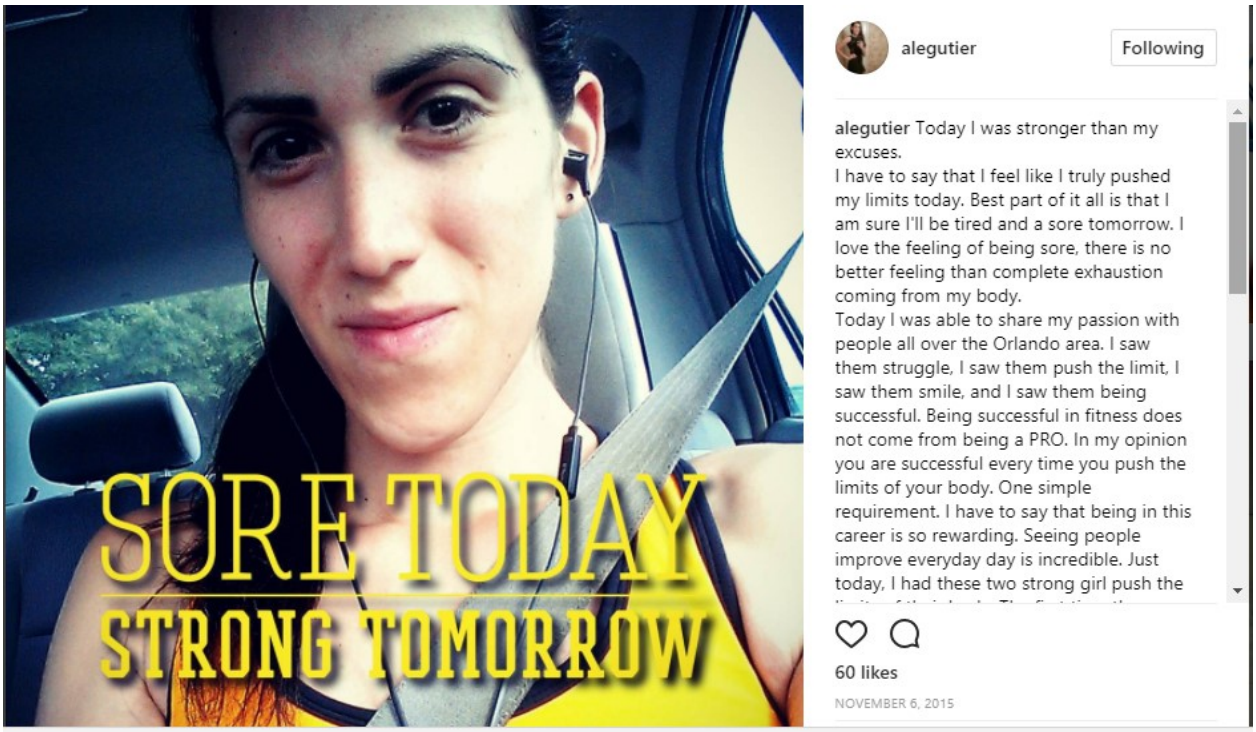

Figure 8: Alexandria Gutierrez's November 6th, 2015 post

Figure 8 shows Gutierrez's post-workout selfie taken in her car. Gutierrez is smiling, is still in workout clothes, with no make-up, with no professional lighting, and accompanies her photo with the caption "sore today strong tomorrow" (Figure 8). In the accompanying caption, Gutierrez depicts herself as strong by saying she was "stronger than [her] excuses," "pushed her limits," and loves "the feeling of being sore" (Figure 8). Gutierrez frames the physical affects of a good workout as a kind of pleasurable pain in order to pre-empt potential followers' excuses about not wanting to exercise. In her "no pain, no gain" and "no excuses" attitudes, Gutierrez's rhetoric resembles that of CrossFit, but her linking of pain and pleasure

also resemble narrative of running similar to those discussed by Ross. The aesthetics of this selfie are not quite consistent with the most popular type of #fitspo, which shows the whole body, but focus in on Gutierrez's face, which conveys post-workout contentment and signals that the goals of workouts should not only be physical fitness but also well-being. The bad lighting, no filters, and the unusual setting contribute to the sense of intimacy in Gutierrez's image, while the yellow text that matches her shirt is meant to convey positivity and is almost meme-like. Gutierrez shares her joy of working out but also of "sharing her passion" with people she coaches. Although Gutierrez does not specifically mention sharing her passion with trans people and does not categorize her classes as LGBT-oriented, the image of a strong, healthy, independent trans woman can be read as motivational for trans people. This selfie can be characterized as motivational but also promotional in that she subtly promotes BeachBody by saying her career is rewarding.

Gutierrez is a coach for BeachBody workouts including Insanity, Piyo, Turbo-Kick, and Bodycombat. Beachbody is an American multinational corporation specialising in creating workouts for fitness classes and DVDs. Insanity, the workout Gutierrez initially started with, is a Beachbody DVD and fitness class workout program advertising itself as "the hardest workout ever put on DVD," boasting to "transform your body in 60 days" and is geared towards weight-loss combined with body definition and building muscle mass ("Insanity"). Unlike CrossFit and running, Insanity is not supposed to be a lifestyle. The program does bear resemblance to CrossFit in that it advertises exercises that push the body to its limits and is similar to running in that it uses no weights or equipment but only body weight. Insanity is meant to be performed at home or in a group fitness class. Beachbody "coaches" are not certified instructors and are "not fitness or nutrition experts" but "just ordinary Beachbody customers that have used a Beachbody product, gotten great results, and became a Coach so they can get paid for recommending Beachbody products to others" (Ochoa). However, BeachBody's structure is similar to a pyramid scheme in that the goal is to keep recruiting more new coaches who will promote their own "credible success stories" on social media (Gensler). The fact that Gutierrez promotes BeachBody on social media is therefore not only a genuine expression of affects linked to workouts but also a mandatory component of her job. Although live workouts are a part of BeachBody, and a way for coaches like Gutierrez to make money, the motto of BeachBody is, at least in the beginning, positioned as "anti-gym": "Forget the gym—you'll never go. Instead, shed those pounds in the comfort of your own living room, then become a cheerleader for others—all while making a percentage of sales to regular customers, plus a slice of any new coach's sales that you bring

on" (Gensler). For a trans person, a workout programme that does not require dealing with gyms and locker rooms might contribute to the appeal because it would allow them to bypass the discomforts that keep many from exercising. Additionally, considering the difficulties in finding employment during transition, being self-employed might have been a necessity and not a coincidence. Nevertheless, the problematic corporate structure of Beachbody makes it a less sustainable type of work and is potentially what made Gutierrez quit and erase her fitness Instagram. BeachBody's "first rule of thumb," as Lauren Gensler has noted, "is to be a product of the product: Do the daily workouts, drink the shakes and brag about your results." Accounts of BeachBody transformations are common among coaches, some even containing "tearful accounts of suicide attempts, eating disorders and drug addictions, often concluding with 'before and after' images and chronicles of how Beachbody changed their lives" (Gensler). Incorporated into this formula for gaining social media followers, Gutierrez's transition story, unusual in BeachBody accounts, was potentially what made her stand out for followers, and although her transness never gained negative comments on her posts, it is difficult to speculate whether her transition story was a positive or negative element for her BeachBody career.

Gutierrez's Instagram is fully devoted to fitness and consists mainly of motivational posts, images of food, and before and after photos. In her before and after transition photos, the after refers to both transition and exercise transformation. Gutierrez's pre-transition photos are associated with being heavier and having a "party" lifestyle, while her "after" selfies demonstrate a fit and thin Gutierrez often sporting smoothies and sports drinks instead of alcohol (Figure 9). In Figure 9, Gutierrez emphasizes the difference in priorities relating to health and fitness rather than emphasizing the shift to a more feminine appearance after her transition. In calling her pre-transition self "old PARTY Alex," Gutierrez invokes comparison with traditionally-structured trans memoirs in which the self is sometimes split in two as a sign of distancing oneself from the former male body (as, for example, in Joy Ladin's *Through the Doors of Life*). By using before and after images, Gutierrez also references before and after images that were, until recently, a key element in trans memoir and by deemphasizing the gendered nature of the before and after images, she challenges traditional ways of representing trans bodies. Gutierrez's selfies fit in with many other fitspiration selfies that have the goal of branding the person as fit, knowledgeable about fitness and nutrition, and a success story of physical transformation, while also ending with invitations to message her for one-on-one workout sessions. Although Gutierrez's social media platforms encourage trans people to get fit, at the same time, they also encourage people to get fit specifically by

using her services. Although the logo on the protein shake is not visible in this image, since selling Shakeology shakes is a profitable part of being a Beachbody coach, the presence of the shakes is not accidental.

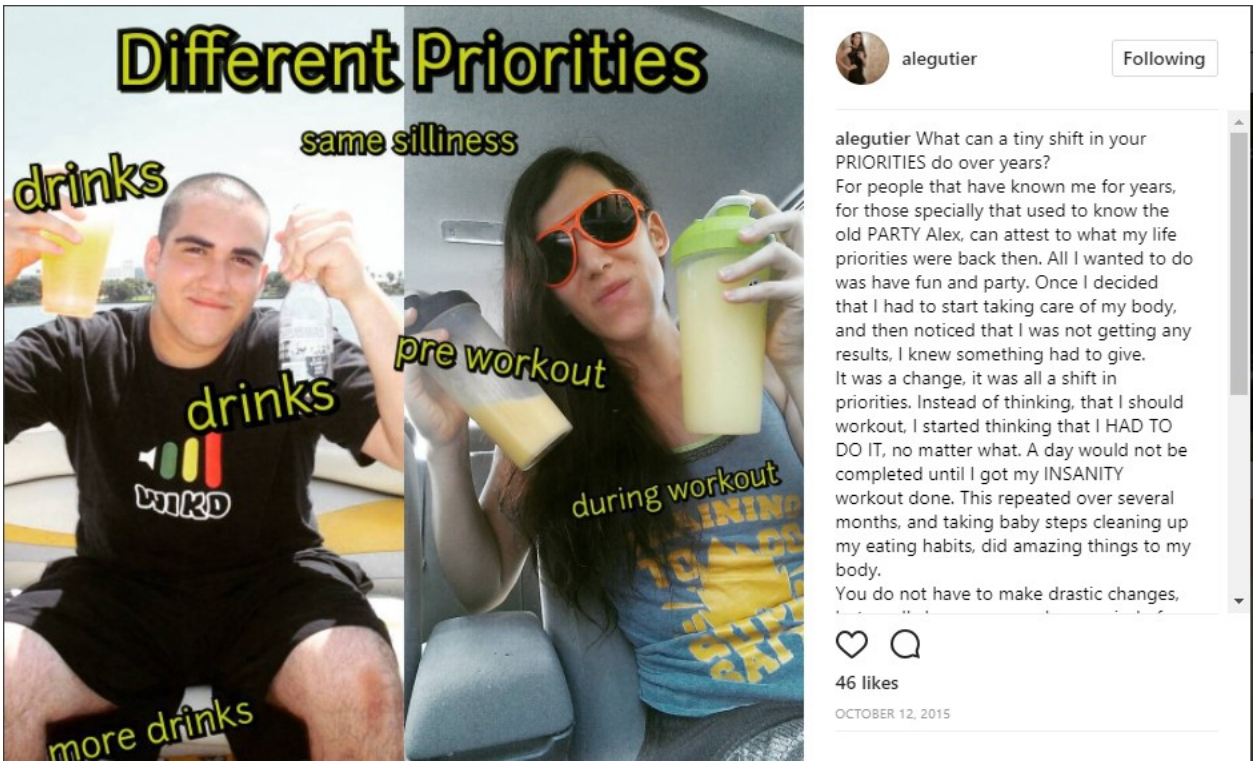

Figure 9: Alexandria Gutierrez's October 12th, 2015 post

Considering that #fitspo images are gendered and ascribe to different sets of ideals for men and women, cárdenas's and Gutierrez's selfies necessarily demonstrate a negotiation of appearance and femininity in the contexts of Instagram and trans visibility. If we read cárdenas's and Gutierrez's images beside images of trans women in mainstream media, images of either murdered women of colour or celebrities like Caitlyn Jenner, we can conclude that the fitness images provide more everyday, relatable and positive images for trans women. Trans celebrities' fame and affluence makes them unrealistic role models for many trans women, while images of exercising, strong trans women provide more achievable goals. At the same time, cárdenas and Gutierrez must also negotiate the body standards within trans social media communities. In her analysis of trans YouTube videos, Laura Horak argues that, like in cisgender videos, "body size, skin color, and accent affect how often vlogs are viewed and what sort of responses they receive" and that "attractiveness seems to be the strongest factor determining a vlog's popularity" (576). The same can be applied to Instagram, another visual platform where an "obvious bias toward slimness and, in trans men,

toward muscularity" and that "many of the most popular trans vloggers look 'all male' or 'all female'" is also a factor in popularity (576). Cárdenas and Gutierrez are both fit, attractive, light-skinned Latina women and while their bodies are muscular and therefore do not fit conventions of female attractiveness or stereotypes of trans women's appearances, they are still conventionally attractive.

Although Gutierrez's selfies feature before and after images, they begin after transition instead of tracking her transition, and in that differ form what Eliza Steinbock has defined as trans selfies or T-selfies. Observing a friend whose selfies shifted from a "process of photographing" to "cohere these parts (e.g., her hands, jawline) and ...feel more in control of her image" before transition to more artistic images while on hormones, Steinbock notes that both series "thrust the beholder into an intimate space of [Kiley's] self-exploration, and challenge the narrative that selfies display Western narcissism at its duckface-bathroom-mirror-shot worst" ("Catties" 159). Steinbock thus situates T-selfies in both a transition as well as an affective context similar to the theories of trans affect in Stryker, Crawford, and Hayward. Although the artfulness of the second series of selfies corresponds to cárdenas's use of selfies and similar images for an art project, Steinbock's transition-based selfie analysis does not quite respond to they ways in which Gutierrez uses similar images. If we expand what a trans selfie could be beyond the transition model, then the definition could include any kind of self-presentation of transness co-produced through affective attachments, such as those to fitness. Nevertheless, an element of tracking seems to linger in Gutierrez's and cárdenas's selfies, as they replace gender-related tracking with biometric fitness tracking. For Gutierrez, trans selfies are inextricably linked to fitness and her career because fitness enabled her transition and because fitness is enabling and mediating her presence on Instagram. Fitness trans selfies are for Gutierrez neither a thing of vanity or of self-exploration but proof of her physical fitness and commitment to her company.

Affective attachments in selfies, Steinbock notes, can be interpreted as a kind of performativity and staging of the affective attachment as representing the subject in a particular way. Through the example of their friend's cat selfies, Steinbock notes a similarity in the structure of the selfie face and the cute cat face and argues that "these authenticating selfie gestures mark the genre as a performance of gestural cuteness" ("Catties" 165). Steinbock offers that "the genre of 'Tselfies' like Kiley May creates" and "catties" are "linked through the production of a resilient, sovereign self that reverberates in and through affective economies of mediated violence" ("Catties" 165). On social media news feed, images of murdered trans women are followed by images of cute cats and both kinds of images are

subject to the BuzzFeed-like categorical framings of “FAIL,” “OMG” or “WIN”. Trans selfies are subject to being met with anger and violence. However, by adding a cute cat or a “puppydog face” filter to a selfie, trans subjects “cutify” their self-image as a self-defence strategy. In online hashtag campaigns for #wejustneedtopee and #transdayofvisibility, Steinbock notes that “preempting attacks on fragile counter-public campaigns by cutifying posts appears to be a strategy for garnering enough affective magnetism to pull in more intimates, and shield against hostile enemies” (“Catties” 168). Although cárdenas’s and Gutierrez’s selfies do not link themselves to animals, they link themselves to activism, and instead of using cuteness as a filter shielding against harsh reactions to their selfies, cárdenas and Gutierrez demonstrate more assertive personas. Through these personas, cárdenas and Gutierrez enact a kind of everyday activism not linked to a specific hashtag campaign. Cárdenas’s and Gutierrez’s audience are also not as broad as the audiences of people involved in campaigns so their “strategic strength” works to empower other trans people instead of appealing to cisgender people to see trans people as human beings.

Running as Trans Activism

Ross’ YouTube channel (UppercaseCHASE1) takes up exercise in a different way than cárdenas and Gutierrez in that Ross does not present his runner self as an unequivocally strong persona whose only goal is to motivate but often also combines talking about running and mental health. As a popular “Trans YouTube” personality and the creator of the “trans enough” project, Ross has more than 156,000 subscribers. Although Ross’s channel is primarily focused on trans topics, Ross’s personal life, and “things that help other trans people,” after getting interested in running, Ross began adding running experiences to the channel, and to date, the channel features 19 videos specifically about running from a trans perspective, tips on getting started, and motivation (“Welcome”). The experiences with running documented on Ross’s channel are similar to cárdenas’s and Gutierrez’s exercise journeys in that the path is well-documented on social media and that they all came to their respective sports by chance and were “transformed” by the encounters. Cárdenas’s CrossFit posts are overtly activist in tone and actively advocate for other trans people to get stronger and Gutierrez’s posts are motivational and contain self-branding; Ross’s running videos are consistent with his other videos in that he offers opinions on various topics based on personal

experience, and lets his followers join in the conversation. In his videos, Ross does not call on trans people to start running; nevertheless, his running videos function as motivation for his followers to take up the activity.

Ross's running experiences span across several platforms: YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and the Runtastic and Strava running apps. On YouTube, Ross creates videos about his own experiences running different kinds of races, as well as practical information to help others who want to start running. The differences in the social media platforms as well as the posters' goals and motivations account for some of the major differences in the types of content cárdenas, Gutierrez, and Ross post. Instagram deals predominantly with photos and short captions accompanying them, although cárdenas also posts short, no-speech videos of various CrossFit exercises performed at the gym. YouTube is a visual platform that focuses primarily on speech, and most of Ross's videos feature Ross speaking to the camera in his apartment. Cárdenas's Instagram revealed only glimpses of her offline activist activity, whereas Ross's career as a prolific YouTuber focusing on trans issues spans more than eight years. In terms of the visual, while cárdenas posts photos and videos of performing CrossFit exercises and never directly speaks to her audience in a video, Ross mostly films running videos after coming from a run but sometimes also films during a race. In Ross's videos, there are no strength poses, but he does film in front of his running "medal wall," which shows his achievements in a similar manner.

Like cárdenas's images, Ross's running videos depart from transition narratives, or the YouTube-specific transition videos. For Raun, transition videos function as "vehicles of transformation," spaces for a "co-production of trans identity" that take the shape of a mirror, a digital diary or autobiography, and as artistic explorations and communications" ("Video" 365). Raun argues that these kinds of vlogs evolve around storytelling, and that the trans self in the vlogs is "a visible narratable self that creates its uniqueness through the telling of his/her/their own story while also being in need of a supplementary Other to tell the story to, whether that is a concrete or abstracted Other or the camera itself as a stand-in for the/an Other ("Video" 370). Although Ross's channel did begin as a channel with primarily transition videos, after a few years, after the results of taking hormones ceased to be dramatic, the channel stepped into a post-transition space of diversification into various areas. At that stage, the goal was no longer to film only update videos, to use YouTube as a mirror for tracking transition, or find others who were transitioning but switched to producing content that would help and entertain the YouTube trans community. In terms of exercise-related content, Cárdenas's, Ross's, and Gutierrez's relationships to the camera are different because

the process of transition the camera reflects in not related to gender but to developments in the exercising body. Documenting this process, which is not as visually dramatic as transition, allows the creators to track a different kind of transformative embodiment. Instead of tracking hormone-induced bodily changes, transformation through exercise involves biometric tracking of food intake, list of exercises, miles run, milestones completed, and a myriad of sweaty, post-workout images. Rather than wanting to be recognized as trans by the camera and their peers, cárdenas, Ross, and Gutierrez present themselves in ways that invoke recognition of their status as athletes.

Although both Instagram and YouTube are made of up a cluster of communities, each with its own set of rules and aesthetic standards, transnormativity is a factor in the success of YouTube channels. Pointing to the channel of a trans teenage boy of Pakistani descent named Achilles, Rachel Reinke argues that "transgender youth who do not fit neatly into transnormative notions of ideal trans youth citizenship are left with limited choices to articulate their subjectivities and live their lives" (58). Comparing Achilles's video about a traumatic experience with mental health to a popular BuzzFeed YouTube video called "Meet a Transgender Homecoming Queen," Reinke argues that viewers of the BuzzFeed video can feel good about and share narratives of progress for transgender youth in the US while at the same time ignoring videos like Achilles's (58). Although this speaks to institutionalized racism, another reason for mainstream media's dismissal of Achilles's videos is that they are not on-brand for platforms like BuzzFeed and Instagram, which favour politics packaged in brief, consumable cuteness with positive messages. YouTube contains many "storytime" videos of traumatic events, however, those videos are not featured on the homepage of the platform. Instead, the most popular YouTubers, even trans YouTubers, embody qualities of relatability, positivity, and transcending the obstacles in their lives in order to film motivational content.

In terms of mental health, there is also a stark difference between Achilles's and Ross's videos. While the teenage Achilles makes videos from the perspective of still being in an abusive household, being homeless, and being put in "a mental hospital," Ross speaks about his own struggle with depression from the more privileged position of having a large online and offline supportive framework and self-care tools like running. The fact that Achilles's videos are raw and full of details of abuse instead of cheerful and positive unfortunately means that they will get less attention and fewer likes. Cárdenas and Ross insist on engaging with politics, are not completely gender-normative in appearance, and therefore do not fit neatly into Reinke's category of trans people "who have overcome their 'bad'

transgender feelings" and are thus "deemed most valuable in their capacity to align with a white heteronormative national body" (58). However, cárdenas, Gutierrez, and Ross all demonstrate "happy affect," confidence, and a "level of 'comfort' in front of the camera or with sharing one's story" (Reinke 59). Cárdenas, Gutierrez, and Ross portray themselves as having overcome or actively working on overcoming their issues and are not as unrelatable as Achilles might be to many. Instead, they occupy an in between space in which visibility and popularity are achievable through a complex negotiation of adopting certain aspects of platform demands while channeling injustices into activism.

Unlike cárdenas, who begins posting about CrossFit from the first week of joining a CrossFit box, Ross's first video about running is posted after Ross has been engaged in the activity for a while. The first few videos about running are just posted along with other "life update" videos and the sub-stream for running videos is not created until Ross feels he has achieved a certain tangible goal — running his first half-marathon. This hesitation reflects the feeling beginner runners often have: that they do not yet deserve to call themselves runners. There is no specific milestone after which one can claim the title, rather, the feeling often sinks in after running becomes a habit, after transitioning to running outside, or after completing your first race. In earlier running literature, there tended to be a differentiation between casual "joggers" and "runners"; today, this stance has been replaced by the view that one gets to call oneself a runner from the first run (Galloway 22). In CrossFit, the milestone is clearer: when you reach level two, you are officially fit enough to call yourself a CrossFitter. Although Beachbody workouts have similarly measurable milestones, BeachBody is not considered a lifestyle the way running and CrossFit are. And yet, for those who become instructors, Beachbody workouts do become a lifestyle.

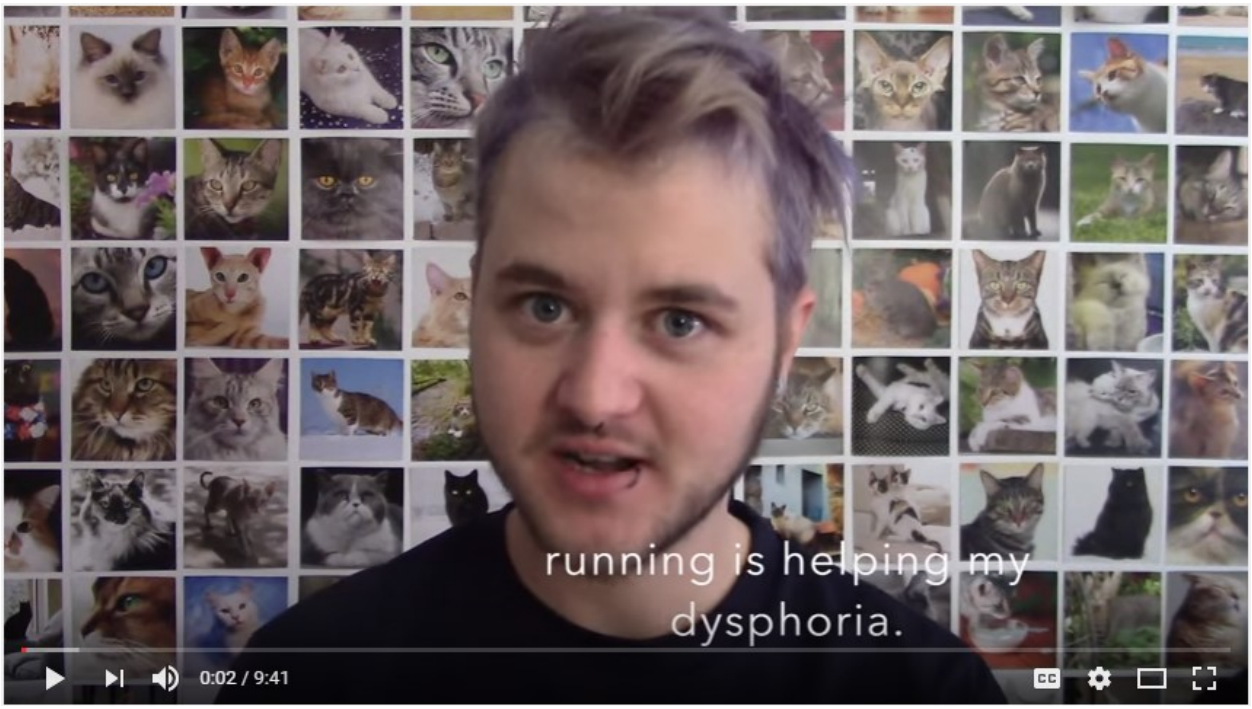

Figure 10: Screengrab from Ross's "what running is doing to my dysphoria" video. YouTube, uploaded by uppercaseCHASE1, 9 Feb. 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fKCRmPFobJY.

In the video entitled "what running is doing to my dysphoria," Ross links running with the experience of being trans. Ross usually shoots his running videos after coming back from a run and is still in running clothes. Like most of his videos, this video is shot in Ross's room, in front of his "cat wall," and is minimally edited. Ross's videos demonstrate "formal qualities" such as "close framing, a private setting, direct address, and amateur style," which "make the claim that this person is real and their statements true" and "position the viewer as a secret confidant" (Horak 575). Although the minimal editing in this video is similar to "storytime" videos, Ross's running videos don't focus only on the last run but also serves as "mental health updates" and updates on dealing with injuries. For Ross, injuries are dangerous because he sees running as his lifeline and the best way to keep his depression under control. The progress updates for running and mental health are similar in structure to the progress videos many transmasculine vloggers film to update viewers about the changes they experience while taking testosterone. As in cárdenas's and Gutierrez's "progress updates," the transition we track is not related to gender but to the transformative experiences with exercise.

In the "what running" video, Ross appears confident and knowledgeable about running and his body. Ross's style of motivation is not aggressive, is not concerned with self-branding or promoting a business and does not link running to violence against trans people. Rather, Ross emphasizes the benefits of running on his mental health and leads by example. In "what running," Ross narrates the transition from running on a treadmill at the gym to

running outside. The fast progress from transitioning to running outside, and to running 10K leaves Ross in awe of the abilities of his body: “I dunno what’s going on with me” (“what running”). The amazement with “what the body can do” and the sense of achievement that follows is a sentiment that reflects cárdenas’s “feeling different” as well as her interest in a Deleuzian concept of the body. Being mindful of his audience, Ross quickly follows this up by saying: “I feel like I’m bragging right now, and I don’t want anybody to feel bad” (“what running”). Along with the sense of achievement and weight-loss, Ross notes that running has had another notable effect in terms of dysphoria. With regard to clothing, Ross states that at a certain point, he simply stopped caring about his running shorts and tights being too clingy and revealing of his hips because his focus changed to “just run, just go” (“what running”). At the same time, Ross notes that wearing a packer is still necessary while running in order to avoid dysphoria. In time, running became less about fitness and appearance and more about performance and being in the moment: “when I’m running, nothing matters, it’s like I’m free. When I’m running, I’m not thinking about anything, all I’m thinking about is where I’m gonna put my foot next, where this is gonna lead me (...) I’m queuing in to my body and how my body is feeling, which I don’t usually do” (“what running”). Although Ross connects the feeling of being “on display” when exercising in public, a sensation not limited to trans individuals, to the feeling of dysphoria, a shift in self-image from “inexperienced casual runner” to “runner” also succeeds in shifting Ross’s focus from negative to positive sensations in the body. Getting accustomed to the strain of running, the endorphin release, and an increased sense of “mastery” all influence the runner’s mental state. With dysphoria, the inevitability of focusing on the body can be potentially problematic during exercise. As Ross notes, “when I do that, I have dysphoria so I try as much as I can to not queue into how I’m feeling and how my body is reacting to everything around me” (“what running”). However, Ross overcomes this obstacle and is able to shift focusing on the body from a negative to a positive experience because he is able to transfer focus from problematic areas of the body onto the lungs, heart, and muscles. The excitement and “obsession” running can create also play a part in the increasingly positive experience: “It’s almost like I’m so excited about other things that I’m not thinking about dysphoria” (“what running”). For Ross, running is therefore transformative in a way that specifically affects his experience of being trans. For cárdenas, CrossFit is most relevant in creating a sense of safety in her daily life, for Gutierrez, exercise provided her with the motivation to transition and now gives her an income, while for Ross, running enables him to feel more control over his body and his dysphoria, as well as giving him a sense of freedom.

The motivational effect on Ross's subscribers can be read from comments, which can be divided into three types: congratulatory comments, comments expressing feeling motivated to go exercise or start running, and comments sharing exercise experiences or experiences of being in "the zone". One of Ross's subscribers is motivated by Ross's videos and writes: "I literally put on my gym shorts and t-shirt while watching your video, then ran to the gym in just that...What I mean is this was super-inspirational! Please do keep the running updates coming! And it's awesome to see you've found such a good thing to do for yourself! I really want to get into a habit of running a lot too" (Commenter 9). Another motivated follower writes: "Hey, I'm thinking about starting running to help with dysphoria and just to feel good in general, I'm wondering if you have any advice for starting out when i don't have much experience with running or long distance running specifically? thanks man :)" (Commenter 11). A third subscriber writes: "I've been thinking about starting to run for a while and I think you just pushed me to...I'm glad you're doing great and I'm hoping to kinda follow these steps one day?" (Commenter 12). Watching Ross's videos resonates with many subscribers and motivates them to go to the gym or to take up running. For other commenters, Ross's descriptions of being in "the zone" resonates with their experiences in other sports: one commenter notes that Ross's zone "sounds almost like [he is] doing mindfulness during [his] run." and shares that he feels it too when he plays "floorball and sometimes when [he] run[s] (using zombies run-app!) :)" (Commenter 13). Another commenter says he feels "the same way when [he] swim[s], and [he] finally started swimming again about 4 years ago" after his dad bought him a suit with chest compression (Commenter 14). Along with experiences of being trans, exercise is another way Ross creates positive affect among his community of subscribers. Ross expands the conversation on trans embodiment and motivates his subscribers to becomes healthier and more active.

On Ross's YouTube channel, there is a thin line between running videos focused on narrating personal experiences of running and videos more focused on practical tips. Both types of videos engage autobiographical experiences to motivate others as well as to provide helpful advice on bettering one's life. While other YouTube communities such as makeup or cooking enthusiasts have DIY and "how to" videos, because trans people are a marginalized group, making videos to help the community can be characterized as activist. Ross notes that while the running videos differ from the other videos on his channel in topic, they come from the same place of wanting to share experiences in order to help others who are going through the same thing. In one video, Ross shares that "it's like when I talk about my trans research and I talk about running, it's almost like the same thing right now" ("what running"). For

Ross, running has become as life-changing and related to all aspects of his life as the experience of being trans.

In the "1 year of running" video, Ross focuses more on the transformative aspect of running. In this milestone video, Ross notes that "the transformation [he] went through running changed [him] so much" ("1 year"). In comparison with the yearly testosterone milestone videos, Ross's emotional state suggests that in some ways, the running milestone is more significant to him than the testosterone milestones because his first run "changed [his] life" ("1 year"). Along with becoming a method of alleviating depression, running became an addiction: "This is like the running bug, you just wanna keep running, and you get a high, and you say I'm never gonna stop running, and it's great...but then the second you do a race, that bug, that feeling is like times a million" ("1 year"). For Ross, as for many runners, the transition from casual to serious runner is often measured through the desire to compete. Galloway characterizes this as one of the "five stages of a runner": beginner, jogger, competitor, athlete, and runner (22). While not every runner will transition straight from jogger to runner, most, Galloway argues, they will get bitten by the running bug and want to challenge themselves through competition (22). Koski, on the other hand, explains the difference between jogger and runner as a question of pleasure: most joggers "complain how dull it is to run and how they actually do it against their will" while runners, at some point, "find in running the enjoyment, ease and momentum, combined with nice scenery and attractive tracks (3).

The desire to compete does not necessarily have anything to do with competing against other runners but, rather, challenging yourself to do better, or, as Ross states, "nobody else was making me run, it was just me" ("1 year"). In terms of connecting with one's body, running serves both as a method of transcending the body and influencing one's psychological state. Ross notes: "When you run, you don't think about anything, you think about your foot going in front of the other...it was just the whole evolution of paying attention to the outside of my body, eventually the positive thinking of the outside helped with the positive thinking of the inside" ("1 year"). Although the inside/outside binary perhaps helps explain the psychological influence of running, the fact that the body and mind are both affected can be taken as connoting that a significant barrier between the two is fiction. As an activity, running can even become somewhat of an affective "object": "And then running came and became like my best friend, and everything was about running" ("1 year"). Running is capable of changing one's relationship with the body by increasing comfort through getting the body

used to a state of discomfort but also through becoming an activity on which one comes to depend for comfort.

In the context of running, the discomfort and suffering caused by dysphoria bears a resemblance to pain, a frequent point of interest in running scholarship. Bridel, Markula, and Denison note that the connection between pain and running has been well documented, and that "part of running's pleasure for many derives from the unquestioned belief that running should hurt and that 'hurting' can, in fact, feel good" (6). While Howe referred to this sensation as "positive pain" or "Zatopekian pain" (7), John Bale argues that runners view non-injury related pain as "the deposit, the investment, through which speed is extracted" (66). Pain thus appears to be part of a runner's identity or sense of self through the ability to endure pain, tolerate pain, and/or overcome pain (Bridel et. al 7). As a trans person who experiences dysphoria, Ross already comes to running with the potential to deal with physical discomfort. Although running scholarship deems the sensation "pain," runners deal with a range of physical sensations, many of which are more akin to discomfort. As with dysphoria, the way to deal with these sensations is to acknowledge them and then shift focus away from them and onto breathing. The experience of being willing to tolerate severe discomfort in order to gain something is a point of view that trans people and runners have in common. While many cisgender female runners with larger chests have similar problems with discomfort, the combination of negative dysphoric feelings and the euphoric runner's high make for a combination that makes trans runners' experiences unique. In long distance running, various modes of discomfort or pain are a part of the activity. As Allen-Collison and Hockey note, in long distance running, "there are positive sensations, for example, feelings of lightness, energy and flow, and sensual pleasures, but overwhelmingly the practice of 'digging in' [or enduring that] means encountering negative sensations and learning how to cope with these" (231). For trans athletes, running can provide a way of dealing with dysphoric feelings that is similar to dealing with the pain and discomfort produced by running. As in similar pain-inducing practices such as cutting or BDSM, inducing pain in the body through long distance running can be a way of coping with dysphoria. Although running is unique for some transmasculine people in the sense that it can intensify not just bodily pain but also the dysphoric feelings at the same time, the ability to endure and overcome both can be experienced as healing.

The practical tips and walkthroughs of the sensations a trans male body might go through during a run create a virtual space for trans runners. As a popular YouTuber with a lot of influence on his mostly young subscribers, Ross serves as a healthy and body-positive role

model for his community. The type of activism on Ross' YouTube channel is necessarily different considering that unlike Twitter, Tumblr and Instagram, YouTube does not function primarily through hashtags. The kind of activism trans YouTubers engage in has more to do with providing information and using autobiographical stories that their subscribers can identify with. Hashtag activism is arguably meant to raise awareness of an issue among people who are not familiar with it, as well create a kind of online support community for people who participate in the hashtag with their stories. While YouTubers create response videos, Instagram and Twitter users similarly see hashtags as "storytelling prompts" (Clark 79). This kind of "storytelling" serves to create bonds that make an online community into what Raun calls an affective counterpublic. Similarly, borrowing from Patricia Lange, Avery Dame calls the videos through which the community communicates "videos of affinity," which have "a presentist focus that aims to transit feelings of connection and maintain an open, active communication channel" and form a "mediated moment in an ongoing social relationship" founded on vlogger- audience conversation ("I'm Your" 46). Over the last few years, trans vlogs have evolved into formats more complex and diverse than coming out videos; nevertheless, the community networks operate in a similar manner. Ross's YouTube channel, other similar trans channels, and the subscribers to those channels make up an online community focused mostly on this specific group of people instead of the larger YouTube community. Ross makes videos for other trans men and vlogs about topics relevant to his community instead of videos targeted towards cisgender viewers or videos that would attempt to explain trans issues to "outsiders". However, if "outsider" commenters appear in the community, trans vlogs can take on an activist tone when the vlogger takes on the role of "expert" in order "to correct inappropriate viewer behavior (Dame "I'm Your" 41). While there are differences in focus and breadth of reception, both cárdenas's Instagram hashtags and Ross's YouTube videos can be deemed activist platforms that have the potential to reach trans and cisgender audiences. Both platforms have the ability to empower the followers who belong to the trans community, as well as educate the followers who are cisgender. The presence of an audience on YouTube also likens trans vlogs to a kind of performance. Drawing a parallel between hashtag activism and performance, Clark argues that "before an audience, social movement actors interrupt normative frameworks shaping interpretations of social identities and phenomena to articulate new ones, constructing alternative possibilities for sociopolitical life" (792). Cárdenas, Gutierrez, and Ross do not interrupt normative frameworks simply by existing as trans individuals online, rather, they interrupt them by constructing alternative possibilities. For cárdenas, this entails becoming a model for strong

and healthy trans women of colour and advocating for fighting back against violence; for Gutierrez and Ross, it involves becoming a model for a healthy lifestyle.

Conclusion

Cárdenas, Gutierrez, and Ross use social media to document their transformations through exercise and to motivate other trans people to get active; at the same time, the interactions with their followers have the potential to create communities centred around movement. Influenced by militaristic CrossFit rhetoric as well as her own history as a survivor, cárdenas's Instagram is a collage of photos featuring cárdenas as a warrior capable of defending herself. In certain posts, the accompanying text serves to elevate the photos to a call to arms for the trans community. By using the hashtags #crossfittransgirls and #hardertokill, cárdenas makes virtual space for other trans women to join the trans CrossFit revolution, as well as appropriating a CrossFit hashtag into a trans power hashtag. In her *150* performance, cárdenas transforms what is essentially one of her Instagram exercise videos into a live performance during which the encouraging comments and likes are replaced with cheering and applause. Cárdenas takes the athletic movements of CrossFit from the gym into online and performance spaces in order to present CrossFit as a tool for the trans community, as well as to embody a role model of a strong trans body. Gutierrez's Instagram account features workout, post-workout, and motivational selfies that can be read as examples of everyday activism in which Gutierrez fashions herself as a strong, fit woman and motivates people to get fit, and yet, Gutierrez also uses her Instagram to promote her company, Beachbody, and her services as a coach. This self-branding approach makes her account similar to other fitspiration accounts that seek to capitalize on fit bodies.

For Ross, the movements of running are transformative in a way that inspires a radical life transformation as well as a transformation of his channel. Although Ross makes running videos a regular part of his YouTube channel, he is more concerned with helping his community of subscribers by telling stories and giving practical tips than calling for a revolution. Ross connects running to being trans by discussing how running influences dysphoria and how to run while binding, while also discussing how running helped him recover from depression and gave him a sense of purpose. Unlike cárdenas, who connects CrossFit to a physical transformation and to her political agenda, the tone of Ross's running

videos corresponds more to the rest of the content on his channel, which is more comedic and easy-going. Gutierrez's selfies are very motivational and even promotional; Ross's accounts of running are more laid back and underscore that Ross uses running as a tool for mental health. Although Ross's approach is subtle, his videos serve as motivation for many of his subscribers to start running, and his social media presence as a trans runner serves as a focal point around which other trans runners have started to congregate.

In terms of movement, cárdenas's, Gutierrez's, and Ross's social media accounts discussed here can be read as exhibiting two kinds of intra-actions: intra-actions between selfies and the affective counterpublic made up of followers or subscribers, and intra-actions between the athletic activity as "affective object" and the person who is oriented towards that object. Although the original athletic movements that inspire the move to discussing, presenting, and performing movement occur offline, the shift to social media transforms the movements into images, text, and narratives that then take on afterlives of their own. The actual movements of the exercises are recounted in detail only in Ross's videos, whereas cárdenas and Gutierrez pay more attention to the potential digital movements the positive affects of the results of their exercise experiences are capable of creating online. The motivation for engaging in athletic movements is always the personal well-being of the creators, but the motivation in sharing the movements online is different in that it considers the health or political benefits that others could gain from engaging with the creators' content. Although the intended effects of sharing the athletic movements online were to empower and motivate, those effects proved to be unsustainable as all three creators seem to have ceased their athletic activities. Cárdenas stopped doing CrossFit and finished the #stronger project because it was "too stressful" and she "finally realized that all the people around [her] had gotten seriously injured when a dear friend of [hers] who introduced [her] to crossfit also had knee surgery recently" (email). Similarly, Ross stopped running because of a lingering knee injury. It is unclear if Gutierrez, who has since deleted her fitness-focused account but kept her YouTube channel (on which she no longer uploads), has stayed with BeachBody, but she is no longer promoting her coaching services online. These "failures" to sustain the activities do not seem to be results of a lack of enthusiasm for the transformative athletic activities but failures of bodies to cooperate and to withstand intense physical pressure. The choice of running and CrossFit is also to blame because both are capable of producing addictive tendencies but are also high-impact and have a high risk of injury. Such athletic activities consequently have a lot in common with performance and content on social media in that they are ephemeral and subject to disappearing, even though their disappearances are dependent on

the physical body rather than on a medium. Nevertheless, the encounters were meaningful and resonant enough to live on, at least temporarily, in performance and writing. Even though the content creators have stopped posting, we need to account for the resonance of the movements they have created and put into circulation. Intra-actions have the ability to transform the participants of the encounter, and thus, even when the movement ends, the effects are still moving.

Conclusion

In my introduction, I opened with micha cárdenas's *150* performance, which presented a connection between athletic movements and trans activism, and which served as an example of how athletic movements in trans performances differed from queer sports performances focusing on spectacle. Here, I want to close with a trans athletic performance that resembles those very same queer sports spectacle performances. Trans performance has shifted from a focus on the autobiographical and explanatory, which still remain important parts in performances about passing, nonbinary people, and people of colour, to the trans-political, exploratory, and areas as diverse as puppetry, Victorian fantasies, video games, and wrestling. While trans performance has a close connection to queer performance, recent trans performances seem to be moving ever-closer to a trans-inclusive kind of queer performance.

One such athletic performance created by a trans artist is *SCOWL: Fight for Your Rights.* Ashley Lauren Rogers's wrestling-based performance combines the spectacle of sports events such as wrestling matches with the queerness the performers see as inherent in such events. Rogers describes SCOWL as "a queer/trans centric, action-packed piece of stage combat theatre in the vein of GLOW, The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity, and WWE which aims to use Pro Wrestling Story Telling but apply stage combat, acrobatics, and improv to create a new theatrical experience (Rogers). Borrowing the format from wrestling, SCOWL performances cast their performers as a variety of characters who engage in one-on-one matches, complete with staged wrestling moves, an announcer, elaborate entrances, costumes, and stage personas. The SCOWL performers transpose wrestling from a sports arena to a theatre space and professional wrestlers with trans performers, who nevertheless must learn the professional wrestling moves and be physically able to execute them in order to entertain. As with Cassils, the structure of the movements is the same as in the originary athletic activity; it is the transposition of the movements onto a different kind of stage and in front of a different kind of audience, and the endowment of the movements with a different kind of symbolic meaning that shifts them from sports to trans performance. In SCOWL, transness emerges through the trans bodies of the performers as well as through some of the performances' characters and conflict concepts. In one iteration of the performance, the "conflict" is staged between the "Riarchy Corporation" (owned by Pat Riarchy), who have bought out the majority shares in SCOWL, and unless they can be defeated, "all members of the SCOWL roster will have to present and compete as their sex assigned at birth or leave

SCOWL" ("Trans Theatre"). In this mix of political and camp, trans performers take on the "heel" representing the forces that seek to regulate their bodies in a way similar to Cassils's fight with the invisible opponent representing the powers that be. The double meaning behind the idea of fighting is also visible in the "fight for your rights" tagline, taken from Julia Serano's *Whipping Girl*, which to Rogers represents "trying to show both literal fights, as well as the figurative what we are fighting for" (Rogers "Ashley Quickie 2"). While Cassils's performance is more serious in tone, Rogers's is more akin to *Theseus Beefcake,* which pokes fun at the theatricality and homoeroticism of wrestling. Although *Theseus Beefcake* centres around a critique of the fragility of masculinity, SCOWL embraces the queerness and campiness of wrestling and uses it as ammo against the "heels." More than Muay Thai, cycling, or CrossFit, the philosophy i.e. storytelling (if not the actual movements) of wrestling make this athletic activity ripe for telling stories of a kind of physical/theatrical trans activism. If the three overarching types of movements in athletic performances were violent, cyclical, and clusters, then the movements in SCOWL could be classified as mockingly violent — seeking to resist regulatory powers through choreographed movements rehearsed purely for entertainment value — but then again, does that approach differ significantly from Cassils's?

While the concept of movement is perhaps most visible in the physical movements of bodies in trans art and in dance, movement is also present in subtler ways in other types of trans media and media about trans people. In mainstream media, trans people are, in a way, conceptualized through the movement of their transitions and more recently, through the right to movements in bathrooms, locker rooms, and public spaces. In such scenarios, movement is never specifically singled out but the two kinds of movements that are implied are a fluidity of movement beyond what are considered conventional movements of bodies and attempts to manage, contain, and stop such fluidity from spilling over from bodies into public spaces.

In thinking again about the ways in which movements have flowed through this work, I want to look back at the chapters and pull up some of the overarching themes that connect works from the three different movement clusters and consider alternate ways of re-clustering the works. After that, I want to expand the concept of movement into other areas relevant in trans studies where movement has not yet been taken up as a guiding focus. In Cassils's and cárdenas's work, the violence that resulted in the deaths of trans people and people of colour is recreated through the violence of the movements of Muay Thai and CrossFit. Although Muay Thai and CrossFit have preparation for violence and honing the skills to inflict violence in their philosophies, those elements can be used in opposite ways. Cassils taps into the philosophy of Muay Thai on a more literal level and uses the movements in a destructive way,

while cárdenas uses the militant rhetoric of CrossFit as self-defence, and performs the movements to build herself up, to build up muscle, and community. In these works, violence can be a catalyst for both destruction and creation, which often come in tandem, mimicking the process of the muscle that needs to be broken down to grow, and what is created stands as a memorial for what was destroyed. For cárdenas, it is the movements themselves — memorial exercises — that serve as memorials for victims of racist and transphobic violence, while Cassils sees the need to memorialize in a more material way with a clay block. Nevertheless, Cassils's performances of athletic movements themselves also serve as kinds of memorial exercises. Violence emerges in other work too in the form of pushing the body to its limits, a push that often results in transformative experiences such as Arsenault's spiritual, Breedlove's euphoric feelings and Ross's Zen-like experiences with running. Even though pushing the body to its limits could be characterized as violent, that violence is not destructive in the same ways that punches and kicks are but in the sense of challenging the body's limits until they are expanded.

Exercise is a kind of movement in which the body becomes activated, muscles tear and grow, the heart rate increases, and potential energy turns into kinetic energy. Activating the body does not only have effect on the body itself but on other bodies that come into contact with the exercising body, and bodies that are affected by the exercising body through indirect means. Cassils and Breedlove, for example, engage in exercise in tandem with inanimate objects, clay and a bike. Cassils's exercise of choice is a boxing match, during which the artist shapes and molds the clay block, and the clay, in turn, offers resistance and impacts Cassils's body. The effect of the encounter is a clay remnant sculpture and a gassed-out, sweaty, tired Cassils. If a tool can be defined as something that helps shape a material or carry out a task, then Cassils's limbs would more closely resemble tools; the clay and the artist, connecting through Cassils's limbs, are mutually changed. Exercise is not pursued for health and well-being but is, for Cassils, a mode of endurance performance, while for Breedlove's Jim, it is a combination of work and leisure. For Cassils, aggressive kicks and punches are a confrontational, violent, and productive encounter, but for Jim, daredevil bike rides through the city are a means of releasing stress and escaping their problems. Surely, during both kinds of intense exercise-sessions, the release of endorphins produces pleasurable feelings, but while Cassils's silent performance leaves this aspect unexplored, Jim narrates the feeling of Zen-like intensity and calm, and of intimacy with the bike enabled by and enabling this sensation.

Ross's experiences of exercise are different because they are not contained in perfect, intense sessions but in post-workout videos recounting the ups and downs of running. In Ross's videos, as in cárdenas's images, the intra-action is between the video and Ross's followers instead of between Ross and an object, although here, running might also stand in for an affective object. Just as there is labour and negotiation in encounters with inanimate objects such as clay and bikes, there is surely negotiation, pleasure, pain, and disappointment in encounters with running. There is nothing worse for an avid runner, especially a runner who counts on running for maintaining mental health, than an injury, and an injury becomes an obstacle that must be negotiated. Ultimately, Cassils's, Breedlove's, and Ross's exercises take place in different settings; the setting changes the context of the exercise and the ways in which we can read it. Cassils's exercise is a performance, Breedlove's is an escape, and Ross's is a way to maintain well-being. All of the exercise sessions have afterlives in that they are turned into works of art or into videos meant to live on online: Cassils's performances live on in the clay sculptures, Jim's exercise exists in Breedlove's novel, and Ross's running videos inspire other trans people to run. However, all of these afterlives are also precarious. How long will Cassils's sculptures be kept in galleries and what will happen to them after they are not exhibited anymore? Breedlove's experiences are preserved in book-form but are also a thing of the past because Breedlove no longer engages in these activities. Ross's running videos remain on his channel, but Ross has since stopped running due to a knee injury. In addition, social media platforms come and go so there is no guarantee that the increasingly commercialized YouTube will not someday live to see MySpace's fate. Perhaps the ephemerality of the afterlives of exercise sessions merely reflect the ephemerality of the endorphin-infused, Zen-like experiences that potentially motivated and sustained those experiences.

Although the artists often interact with other bodies in the processes of exercise — bikes, clay, an invisible opponent, barbells — the presence of the other body is sometimes foregrounded, as it is in Cassils's and Arsenault's performance, and it is sometimes not quote as prominent. For Arsenault and Breedlove, the bikes are more than just a means to an end because there is no clear end. In "Venus/Machine," Arsenault takes up bike rides to prepare for the next phase of her life and initially plans to get toned and healthier through this means of exercise. The effect of the bike ride ends up being an emotional catharsis and a prompt for bike rides as exploratory tools for ecstatic states in subsequent performances. There is an implicit association with the hardness and "strength" of the bike. A merger does not need to be a shifting of the borders of bodies, as it is most prominently explored in Cassils's

performance, but can also be a negotiation not visible to the naked eye. An entanglement presumes that all participants of an encounters are somehow affected by the encounter. Arsenault and the bike are both affected — Arsenault's body energy moves the pedals of the bike and in turn, the resistance from the bike effects changes on Arsenault's body; Arsenault would not be changed in that specific way without the bike and the bike could not be moved or be cast as a transformative vehicle without Arsenault. In *40 Days + 40 Nights,* the bike ride transcends exercise and becomes ritual, and therefore moves into the category of practices such as meditation, prayer, or worship — it becomes an object endowed with a symbolic value just as Cassils's clay had been.

In social media work, the objects that enable athletic movements offline are the workout gear, barbells, exercise machines, home workout videos, while the objects that enables the move of those movements online are smartphone cameras and video cameras, editing software, and computers. In comparing offline and online objects, such as a bike and an Instagram image, we see that they enable the body to be performed in different ways. A bike is a composite machine that we experience and move with our bodies; a digital image is virtual, we can see it, build it, shape it, and share it, but we cannot touch or feel it with our bodies. The contact with the body is, therefore, contained in the visual perception of the image. The images in question, however, are images of cárdenas herself, and are as such, virtual extensions of her body into the digital realm. Existing both as a body in the world and as an image of a body in the world, cárdenas's entanglement with the digital objects is not a simple matter of contact, it is a kind of replication of the self and transformation of the borders of the body by virtue of their extension into the virtual. The digital image is a data-version of the self; it is something the self comes into contact with but is also a version of the self. Yet, the encounter here is not between the artist and the image of the artist but between the image and the artist's Instagram followers. What would constitute the borders of bodies in this encounter? The image has originary borders in that it has a shape and an intention or context given by the creator of the image — if those aspects of the image are changed by someone else or put in a different context, this constitutes a change of borders. The followers, as online extensions of bodies in the world, have borders that constantly shift with each new encounter with different digital objects — knowledge on a certain subject increases, harassment provokes a negative affect, or an identification with an online group of like-minded people — and all these events might change a person's online presence and how they inhabit online spaces. The digital image can also be a tool, in this case, for trans activism.

When performances such as Cassils's and cárdenas's move to online environments, they come into contact with new audiences who shares, like, and comment, and are thus not significantly different than content created specifically for online environments. The original audiences become all but lost in the online videos of performance, their traces distinguishable only through the fragments of their faces and voices and become fully replaces by the new online audiences that receive the content mediated through the platforms the performances appear on. While audiences in performances are more temporary entities pulled to a performance for various reasons, online audiences can mirror offline audiences in their random groupings, but they can also be more stable and lasting affective counterpublics based on shared interests. Affective counterpublics are kinds of assemblages that encompass followers and their affects, but only the parts of the followers that relate to the content. Considering that followers belong to many different groups and affective assemblages at the same time, we cannot consider them "whole" bodies participating in each encounter but, rather, parts, rhizome roots that extend from physical bodies. In the realm of affective counterpublics surrounding cárdenas, Ross, and Gutierrez, there is no pronounced negotiation, no interplay of creation and destruction, rather, the comments the original posters receive are overwhelmingly positive, and the affective groupings created, appear to generate positive (although not euphoric) affects, motivations, and personal experiences with exercise. Negative affects, of course, might sometimes appear in the form of negative comments, generally from transphobic outsiders to the community, but they do not seem to appear on Ross, cárdenas's, and Gutierrez's exercise-related content.

In athletic performances and social media work, athletic movements enable trans bodies to be performed as active, strong, creative, and capable. Athletic movements are not, as in other similar non-trans work, critiques of sports cultures or of the demand for bodily perfection but become metaphors for a political trans strength. In contrast with earlier and more common types of trans performance and social media work that focuses on transition, explaining transness to cisgender audiences, and using stories to create a recognizable narrative, trans performance art influenced by athletic movements foregoes explanations and justifications of transness and replaces them with movements and affects that connect trans bodies with political issues and elements cisgender audiences might not expect. Political undertones can manifest as the everyday activism of taking up space as a trans body and telling personal stories of one's struggles and successes, as insisting on foregrounding post-transition spaces and affects, and as more overt challenges to trans necropolitics that stage, perform, call out, and memorialize violence against trans people and people of colour. In the

more overt invocations of trans political issues, movement becomes a way of performing agency and demanding space in a more embodied and activist way.

Future Directions: Unexplored Connections

I have focused on athletic movements contained in the genres of performance and social media but there are other areas where trans athletic movements and other kinds of movements emerge. Exercise appears in more brief and fleeting ways in trans memoirs such as Renee Richards's and Juliet Jacques's but might in the future appear in the memoirs of trans athletes, who have so far emerged as a popular topic mainly in sociological research. Some prominent trans athletes, such as Chris Mosier, are also doing autobiographical work on social media platforms and provide a growing area for more research on the intersections of the two fields. Trans athletes are still problematically discussed in terms of pre versus post-transition status, the discomforts of dysphoria, and the business of inclusion in teams and sporting events. However, less attention is given to non-binary experiences with exercise, the rise of LGBTQ and trans-oriented sports groups, and exercise experiences in outdoor environments instead of just in locker rooms and gyms. In Edmonton alone, there are several trans-inclusive sports programs such as Team Edmonton's *All Bodies Swim, Queerflex*'s first queer gym, and the Blitz Conditioning/Edmonton Men's Health Collective project aimed towards providing a safe space for a trans and queer-friendly body conditioning program. Trans sports are an emerging field that has the potential of serving as an exciting intersection of philosophy, kinesiology, sociology, auto/biography, and trans studies and the body of work in this area is growing daily.

I have focused on athletic movements in performance and social media, exercise, digital self-representation, and activism, but I have also touched upon strands that are fields in themselves and too expansive to include in this dissertation. Some of the main unexplored topics related to the movements of the body and performance include fashion, geography, BDSM, and transnational elements, although many other compelling aspects of trans works, such as reproductivity, blackness, postcolonial voices, dance, film, and different kinds of social media platforms also deserve more critical attention.

An emerging thread within trans studies, a thread closely connected with performance, the body, and movement, is fashion. Taking their fashion everyday performances to the streets

and to Instagram, Alok Vaid-Menon and Travis Alabanza document the street harassment they endure because of their appearance and their fashions in the captions of the fashion-centred Instagram posts. Like cárdenas's captions, which transformed #fitspo images into trans activism, Vaid-Menon's and Alabanza's work similarly advocates for community-building and empowering trans women of colour through acts of kindness and radical vulnerability. Vaid-Menon contends that "style is actually extremely political" even though our "daily acts of resistance are just seen as frivolous or excessive"; identifying as "both a man and a woman and neither a man or a woman," the artist claims trans aesthetics as an in-betweenness intimately tied to trans of color politics and femme style (Vaid-Menon). Similarly, Francisco Galarte argues that for trans studies, "to return to the notion of fashion-ing pedagogy is to invoke fashion as a site and mode of praxis, a methodology of resistance' (521). Although Galarte gives no definition of what trans fashion is, he gestures toward the uniqueness and embodied labour of the handmade, as well as the potential for transfeminist praxis and resistance of transphobia and gender policing. For Vaid-Menon and Alabanza, performance happens both on stage, on the streets, and on social media, and deliberately seeks out audiences to interact with in all arenas. The body, and the custom-made, second-hand, and colourful clothing that function as its extension, are as exposed as Cassils is with their nudity, as geographically mobile as Breedlove's Jim is with his bike, and as physically active through the act of walking as cárdenas is with her CrossFit exercises. While the street reactions from impromptu audiences often produce negative affects, some of which remain entrenched in the fabric of the clothing itself, the reappearance of the clothing item and retelling of the story of its significance on Instagram allows the artists to from affective bonds with another kind of audience of followers, an audience that is supportive and healing.

Fashion and garments as political also surface in the works of Kama La Mackerel and Jono Vaughan, artists who sew trans women into their work in acts of memorialization. In her *For My Sister or Femme Armour I* work*,* La Mackerel "silk-printed quotes from eight trans femmes of colour from her community that she then sewed together...By documenting their views on ancestry, fashion, history, resistance and spirituality" and showed "the importance of recognizing political identities as situated knowledges in the construction of collective memory" (Olivier and Laurin 112). In *Project 42*, Jono Vaughan set out to construct 42 "memorial garments," each piece being made up of a "screen shot capture from Google Earth of a location where a murder of a transgender individual has taken place" and then turned into "a colourful and abstract pattern that is turned into fabric" ("Project 42"). For La Mackerel and Vaughan, the creation of new "trans" garments is akin to Cassils's sculpting of a clay

memorial to the victims of transphobic violence, and yet, the wearable aspect of the garments that models put on to perform at events makes them less monumental and more akin to everyday acts of resistance through remembering.

Vaid-Menon's and La Mackerel's aesthetics and transness are also markedly transnational because they take inspiration for their fashions from their Indian/Nicaraguan heritage and because bold colours are a political statement against dominant whiteness. A similar reference to the intersection between transnational and trans can be found in *Trisha,* the fashion-based performance work of Vivek Shraya in which the artist wears the fashions and recreates images of her mother in the 1970s. The transnational, another emerging thread in trans studies, seeks to disrupt the dominant whiteness and North American-centredness of trans studies and consider the multiple way in which trans subjects and trans experiences are mediated by travel, as well as how American influences translate in other parts of the world. Susan Stryker has, for example, explored the effects of first trans celebrity Christine Jorgensen's performance at a nightclub in the Philippines and the film that was made about the performance. The film, Stryker argues, "stages substantive questions about the effects of the Eurocentric medico-juridical discourse of transsexuality on the densely layered colonial histories of local Filipino constructions of sex/gender/sexuality – particularly the intertwined categories of *talyada* and *bakla"* (79). Just as Jorgensen had traveled to Denmark for her gender confirmation surgeries, many trans people now travel to Thailand, as Aren Aizura explores in *Mobile Subjects*, where he "maps the uneven use of medical protocols to show how national and regional health care systems and labor economies contribute to and limit transnational mobility" ("Mobile Subjects"). Trans subjectivities and bodies are marked and produced across locations as well as through multiple transnational influences. Even Cassils's performance in Finland can be taken up through the lens of the transnational and focused on how the artist embodied the opposing regulatory forces of two countries through their own trans body that at same time exists at the crossroads of regulatory forces trying to determine its borders and the right to sovereignty.

Geography, not necessarily in movement between countries but across a country, is an important emerging trend in trans work, particularly fiction, as well as a fruitful aspect through which body movements and affects can be examined. Even though the focus on bodies and movements instead of spaces was of more concern in my work, a consideration of space and affect in, for example, Lynn Breedlove's *Godspeed*, or in Imogen Binnie's *Nevada,* another trans novel with a bike-enthusiast protagonist, is an equally engaging course of action. The geography of transness is so often imagined as concerned with indoor spaces — homes,

safe spaces, medical establishments — and is not explored often enough in connection to outdoor spaces and landscapes. Yet, there are increasingly more examples of accounts of bike rides, cross-country road trips, travel, and other autobiographical and fictional outdoor activities that could be considered. Lucas Crawford has notably argued for a view of trans bodies as relational to architectural spaces, favouring "narratives and affects inspired by exteriority, folds, queer décor, assemblage, and the archive" (ii). Nevertheless, these kinds of complex spatialities have not yet appeared in trans cultural production. What is emerging are many road narratives, be it in trans fiction or speculative fiction, that replace the transition narrative and tracing the movements on the body with an open-ended journey narrative that traces movements across a country. Along with Binnie's and Breedlove's novels, jia qing wilson-yang's *Small Beauty,* Kai Cheng Thom's *Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars*, and Sybil Lamb's *I've Got a Time Bomb* all adopt the road narrative format. This attitude to spatiality is notably different to trans performance and social media work, which is not particularly concerned with outdoor spaces, even when athletic activities take place outdoors, as they do in Ross's accounts, perhaps because of the restrictions on safety and movement in outdoor spaces that many trans people experience. Nevertheless, spatiality does appear in trans performance in different ways. In Ariel Zetina's *British Honduras Fantasy* play, a work reminiscent of Audre Lorde's *Zami*, a trans protagonist's story of a journey from one city to another is put in parallel with her mother's journey from Belize to the United States. Although the movement of the journey is not explicitly performed in Zetina's play, the back and forth switching between the mother and daughter scenes performs the transnational movements and affects that influence the protagonist's trans subjectivity.

Another interesting way of tracking movement across the body emerges in the study of BDSM, which in trans texts often shares space with religion or spirituality, pain, and self-harm. Arsenault is, for example, equally fascinated with spiritual, surgical, and BDSM rituals, and all these rituals have in common the potential for the transcendence of the body in hopes for a connection with something beyond the self and the individual body. The connection between spirituality and BDSM, and its invocation in trans work, are an unexplored avenue with potentially enlightening conclusions. In trans studies, Stryker has taken up the rupture of the skin in BDSM play as a way of talking about productive openings of the body to the environment and to other bodies, and these productive openings have made for a popular thread in research; and yet, they have not yet been considered in terms of the pain of self-harm and the pain of internalized transphobic religious views. Outside of the realm of spirituality, BDSM also resembles some artists' encounters with athletic activities and the

tendencies to push the body to its limits, open the body up to encounters with other bodies and to transcendental experiences.

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