Transforming Bodies, Wandering Desires

Intra-actions of Gender and Sexuality in Non-heterosexual Transgender Embodiment

Sade Kondelin
Pro gradu
University of Turku
School of History, Culture and Arts Studies
Master's Program for Women's and Gender Studies
April 2014

The originality of this thesis has been checked in accordance with the University of Turku quality assurance system using the Turnitin OriginalityCheck service.

TURUN YLIOPISTO
Historian, kulttuurin ja taiteiden tutkimuksen laitos / Humanistinen tiedekunta

KONDELIN, SADE: Transforming Bodies, Wandering Desires.
Intra-actions of Gender and Sexuality in Non-heterosexual Transgender Embodiment

Pro gradu -tutkielma, 104 s.
Nais- ja sukupuolentutkimuksen maisteriohjelma
Huhtikuu 2014

Pro gradu -tutkielmani käsittelee sukupuolen ja seksuaalisuuden keskinäisiä intra-aktiivisia vuorovaikutussuhteita elettyjen, ei-heteroseksuaalisten transsukupuolisten ruumiiden kokemuksissa. Tutkielmani haastaa sukupuolen ja seksuaalisuuden pysyvyyden käsityksiä sekä niihin liittyviä yhteiskunnallisia normeja kuvaten tapoja, joilla seksuaalisuuden ja sukupuolen kokeminen ja käytännöt liikkuvat, kehittyvät ja vuorovaikuttavat eletyissä transsukupuolisuuden ruumiillistumissa.

Haastattelen kuutta suomalaista, syntymässä naiseksi määriteltyä transsukupuolista henkilöä liittyen heidän kokemuksiinsa sukupuolesta, seksuaalisuudesta ja näiden muutoksista heidän tähänastisen elämänsä aikana. Tarkastelen nauhoitettuja ja litteroituja haastattelutekstejä transtutkimusta, queer-teoriaa ja feminististä uusmaterialistista filosofiaa yhdistävän teoreettisen kehyksen kautta keskittyen siihen, miten sukupuoli ja seksuaalisuus vaikuttavat toistensa kehitykseen, muutokseen ja materialisoitumiseen eri elämänvaiheissa ja tilanteissa. Erityisen tärkeiksi teoreettisiksi vaikuttajiksi tutkielmassani muodostuvat Judith Butlerin *Gender Trouble* (2006 [1990]) -teoksessaan hahmottelema performatiivisen sukupuolen teoria, Sara Ahmedin analyysi teoksessa *Queer Phenomenology. Orientations, Objects, Others* (2006) ja Karen Baradin teoksessa *Meeting the Universe Halfway. Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (2007) teoretisoima toimijuudellinen realismi.

Päästäkseni kiinni sukupuolen ja seksuaalisuuden yhtymäkohtiin erittelen ensin niitä ominaisuuksia ja kokemuksia, jotka näyttäytyvät haastatteluteksteissäni oleellisina seksuaalisuuden ja sukupuolen kannalta. Tarkastelen seksuaalisuutta suuntautumisen, halun ja seksuaalisten käytäntöjen näkökulmasta: vaikka nämä seksuaalisuuden aspektit ovat kiinteästi kytköksissä toisiinsa, niitä ei voi kokonaan palauttaa toisiinsa. Sukupuolta käsittelen performatiivisuuden näkökulmasta painottaen transsukupuolisiin ruumiisiin ja niiden materiaalisuuteen liittyviä erityispiirteitä. Sukupuolen ja seksuaalisuuden suhteita toisiinsa tarkastelen sekä sellaisissa tilanteissa, joissa niitä on vaikea erottaa toisistaan, että sellaisissa, joissa niiden voidaan nähdä tuottavan toinen toisiaan.

Tutkielmallani on etnografisia, filosofisia ja poliittisia ulottuvuuksia. Yhtäältä tahdon kuvata ja analysoida elettyjä transsukupuolisia kokemuksia ja tuottaa tietoa vähän tutkitun ihmisryhmän todellisuudesta. Toisaalta osallistun sukupuolifilosofiseen keskusteluun ruumiillisuudesta ja sukupuolen ja seksuaalisuuden olemuksesta. Lähestyn tutkimusprosessiani niin sanotusta transgender standpoint -näkökulmasta; kirjoitan transsukupuolisena ruumiina, transsukupuolisia ruumiita koskien, pyrkimyksenäni edistää elävien transsukupuolisten ruumiiden asemaa, toimijuutta ja näkyvyyttä yhteiskunnassa.

Asiasanat: transsukupuolisuus, sukupuoli, seksuaalisuus, ruumiillistuminen, vuorovaikutus, queer-tutkimus, uusmaterialismi, transtutkimus, haastattelu, performatiivisuus

INDEX

1. INTRODUCTION

On the early steps of my gender reassignment process in the spring of 2011, I wondered whether I wanted to label my identification as “transgender man” or simply “androgynous”. I ended up with the following train of thought: “I am gay. I'm attracted to men. I think this makes me a man.” Though my understandings of both my gender and sexuality have since developed into something else entirely, the functionality of this thought process continues to fascinate me. It seems to suggest that the logical operation of figuring out one's sexual orientation from their gender and the gender of their objects of attraction could also work in the reverse – one could figure out their gender from the knowledge of their sexual orientation and the gender of their desired objects.

In my experience, there are two major lines of discourse on the topic of transgender bodies' sexual orientation. The first one is based on the early ideas of homosexuality as *inversion*, where same-sex desire is caused by physical or psychological qualities of the “opposite sex” an individual has. In this line of thought, homosexuality is equated with masculine traits in women and feminine traits in men, and transgender identification is seen as an extreme form of homosexuality. The second, frequently employed in transgender politics, originates from the statement that gender identification and sexual orientation are radically different and have *nothing at all* to do with each other.

To me, both of these rather polarized views on the connections of gender and sexuality in transgender lives seem unintuitive. On one hand, the mere existence of gay and bisexual transgender bodies, as well as both masculine and feminine cisgender (or non-transgender) people of all sexual orientations, seems to prove that gender identification, masculinity/femininity and sexual attraction don't operate on the one and the same continuum. On the other, as our categories of sexual orientation are based not only on the gender of the object of our attraction, but our own as well, it seems impossible that who we are attracted to would have no connections whatsoever to the way we understand and perform gender.

It would thus seem to me that there must be ways in which gender identification and sexuality react to each other, or produce each other, in embodied transgender lives. I find it unlikely that these ways would form any simple patterns such as the inversion theory – from the viewpoint of academic feminisms, gender and sexuality in themselves emerge as

complex multiplicities, especially when it comes to non-normative bodies. The exploration of these complexities, and their different mutual dynamics in lived transgender experiences, resonates well with my interest in new materialist feminist theories and queer politics.

In this thesis I am going to examine the dynamics of queer gender and sexuality in transgender embodiment from the perspective of *intra-active entanglements*. Intra-action has been proposed by Karen Barad, theoretical physicist and professor of Feminist Studies, Philosophy and Consciousness at the University of California, as an alternative to *interaction*. While interaction refers to connections between ontologically separate and independent entities, intra-action suggests relations among bodies that are always already entangled together in complex connections, affecting and being affected by each other.

I will interview six non-heterosexual assigned-female-at-birth transgender people about their lived experiences of gender and sexuality, mapping out the different ways these two intra-act and produce each other. I will read my findings through a new materialist queer theoretical frame, consisting of concepts such as performativity, diffraction, orientation and productive desire, asking the following questions:

1) What kind of different intra-active connections of gender and sexuality can be read in the experiences of non-heterosexual, assigned-female-at-birth transgender bodies?
2) What ways of understanding gender and sexuality are produced in these intra-actions?

1.1 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND, SITUATIONAL FOREGROUND

I figure myself a theoretical dumpster diver – I sift through a large amount of diverse material, grab whatever seems interesting, try to make use of it regardless of what it was originally designed for, and attempt to avoid restricting myself by demands of purity in thought or tradition. I feel that my mentality concerning theoretical thought resonates well with Jack Halberstam's (2011) proposal of *low theory* as a model of thinking that "revels in the detours, twists and turnd through knowing and confusion", and employs the dimensions of "the unplanned, the unexpected, the improvised, and the surprising"[1]. My writing situates itself in the somewhat overlapping fields of transgender studies, queer theory and new materialist feminism, while allowing itself to be inspired by other traditions of theory and

1 Halberstam 2011, p. 15-18.

activism as well.

I approach my research questions through an analysis of told experiences collected through individual interviews. In one sense, my thesis is of an ethnographical nature: I want to examine and describe the life and experiences of actual transgender people. For another part, it might be loosely defined as gender theory: I inquire after the specificities and mechanisms of transgender embodiment, asking what implications they have for our understanding of gender and sexuality in general and of transgender subjectivities in particular.

Finally, my project here is also a queer political one: In his lecture in the 49th annual Nina Mae Kellogg Award Ceremony (2013) at Portland State University, Halberstam calls for the production of "counterfactual narratives" that contest the institutionalized hegemonic understandings of gender and sexuality, among other things[2]. In this thesis, I aim to present such narratives, challenging the institutions of immutable gender and fixed patterns of sexual orientation. Furthermore, I want to demonstrate not only that it is possible to *imagine* gender and sexuality in ways that resist and defy such institutions, as a future to aspire toward, but that there are also practices, spaces and subcultures that already enable the embodiment of gender and sexuality in such ways, in the here and now.

CONNECTING THE DOTS

Transgender studies as a distinct field of research has developed in active and occasionally conflicted discussions with medical psychology as well as feminist and queer studies. David Valentine, in *The Making of A Field. Anthropology and Transgender Studies* (2007), situates texts by self-identified trans people at the center of the field, examples of which include *The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto* (1991) by Sandy Stone, Jay Prosser's *Second Skins* (1998), and *Trans Liberation* (1998) by Leslie Feinberg[3]. This is also where my writing positions itself: I write from what I call a transgender standpoint, which I explain in more detail further on. Valentine also includes research on transgender bodies, from the perspective of social sciences and humanities, by (assumedly) non-transgender authors in his definition of transgender studies[4]. This makes sense to me, especially in the Finnish context: so far most if not all of the Finnish research on transgender bodies has been done by people who have not (at least publicly) identified as transgendered. There is currently, however, a

2 Halberstam 2013, 7:00-42:00.
3 Valentine 2007, pp. 147-148.
4 Ibid., pp. 148-149.

growing number of more or less openly transgender-identifying people, focusing on transgender issues, who have begun their academic careers in the past few years or are finishing their studies in the near future.

Transgender sexualities have been studied relatively little, especially when it comes to non-heterosexual transgender bodies. Examples of existing research texts within the field of transgender studies, with a focus on transgender sexualities, include *Make Me Feel Mighty Real* (2006) by David Schleifer, *Trans (Homo) Sexuality?* (1996) by Vernon A. Rosario II, and *Dungeon Intimacies* (2008) by Susan Stryker. Schleifer and Rosario both discuss assigned-female-at-birth men who identify as homosexual, whereas Stryker examines the significance of sadomasochistic sexual practices and communities for transgender bodies in her article. Additionally, some studies with a different primary focus also take a look at transgender sexualities, such as Halberstam's *Female Masculinity* (1998) and *In a Queer Time & Place* (2005), *Invisible Lives* (2000) by Viviane Namaste, and *Assuming a Body* (2010) by Gayle Salamon. On the far edges of the field of transgender studies, or possibly outside it altogether, are texts such as Janice Raymond's *Transsexual Empire* (1979) and *The Man Who Would Be Queen* (2003) by J. Michael Bailey, both of which are infamous for their approaches on examining transgender bodies. In Finland there has been no focused research on transgender sexualities, though the subject has been touched in texts concerned, for example, with the significance of transgender identification to the family relations of particular bodies or the formation of transgender identities.

Beyond the specific field of transgender studies, I engage in discussions on gender, sexuality, embodiment and power with a wide variety of feminist and queer authors, including Judith Butler, Sara Ahmed, Elisabeth Grosz and Karen Barad.

THE WHYS AND THE HOWS

Interested in examining gender and sexuality as connected to each other in mutually *productive* relations, I gravitate toward queer studies and, specifically, the theory of performative gender proposed originally by Judith Butler (2006). Not only does Butler connect the organization of gender as a binary to the society's need to maintain the privileged position of heterosexuality, they also argue that all gender is performatively produced by repeated acts and styles that cite culturally and historically specific conventions of gender,

which are in turn formed as a result of repeated performances of gender.[5] The way I see it, Butler's theory provides a critically important foundation for understanding the possibility of transgender embodiment: even though bodies are assigned a certain gender at birth, and are brought up to supposedly express that given gender, it is possible for us to contest that givenness and produce different, unexpected interpretations, and to change the direction of both our own gendered lives and our cultural understandings of gender.

Jay Prosser demonstrates, in his *Second Skins,* how transgender bodies and queer sexualities are entangled into each other, in ways that I read as intra-active, in some of "what are now considered [the] foundational texts" of queer studies, arguing that the field owes it entire existence to "the figure of transgender". In the way he interprets Butler's work and its applications in queer theory, transsexual bodies are conceptually shut outside of that which is considered queer, and queer theory is simultaneously revealed as incapable "to sustain the body as a literal category". Prosser, equating "queer" with "homosexuality", argues that transgender has been appropriated by queer, even though "by no means are all transgendered subjects homosexual". He continues to argue that Butler's figuration of queer transgender "illustrates a certain collapsing of gender back into sexuality", resulting in the queer studies' tendency of queering gender through sexuality, and vice versa.[6] Though it seems to me that at least some specifics of Prosser's critique result from his misinterpreting Butler's work, I think his arguments need to be taken seriously.

Butler's theory has also been argued to be lacking in its capacity to account for the materiality of the body by numerous feminist authors, especially ones that situate themselves in the theoretical frame of the so-called new materialist and posthumanist feminisms. Some of this critique also starts out with what I see as misreadings of Butler. Elisabeth Grosz (1995) states in her reading that "[f]or Butler, performance is the mediating term between sex and gender: gender is the performance of sex[7]". However, Butler makes it very clear that in the context of their theory, there is no biological "sex" that pre-exists social "gender", and that what is traditionally understood as sex is always already gender, since our understanding of sex is included in the cultural conventions of gender[8]. Even so, I agree that Butler alone doesn't provide a solid enough foundation for theorizing gender as an embodied materiality. Karen Barad develops on Butler's work in their article *Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter* (2003), demonstrating how the material,

5 Butler 2006, pp. 175-193.
6 Prosser 1998, pp. 21-60.
7 Grosz 1995, pp. 212.
8 Butler 2006, pp. 8-46.

in addition to the social, is performative in nature and has an agency of its own[9]. As Barad only implicitly deals with gender in their text[10], I will read their and Butler's theories through each other, to be able to account both for the materiality of the body and for the specificities of performative gender and sexuality in my writing.

Barad's work is central to my theoretical thinking in other ways, as well. In *Meeting the Universe Halfway. Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (2007), Barad develops on the theory of agential realism they set out to formulate in *Posthumanist Performativity*, presenting an onto-epistemological[i] and methodological framework based on for example Nils Bohr's physics-philosophy, Butler's performativity and Michel Foucault's texts on power. In the core of agential realist methodology are the concepts of entanglement, intra-activity and diffraction. The onto-epistemology proposed by Barad involves thinking of the world not as a collection of individual, self-identical bodies interacting with each other, but as an *entangled* network of material-discursive phenomena, where bodies are produced differently in different contexts. *Intra-action*, thus, refers to connections within phenomena instead of separate "things" that pre-exist their coming together – Barad argues that the boundaries that allow us to tell one body from another, or one group of bodies from another group, are determined in the intra-actions of such bodies rather than pre-existing them.[11] *Diffraction*, in Barad's writing, refers to the physical phenomena in which particles are fed through particularly formed gratings, producing patterns of difference which can be observed to gain knowledge on the nature of those particles and/or the diffractive grating itself. However, Barad conceptualizes diffraction as a wider term concerning entangled differences.[12] My aim in writing this thesis is to approach the process diffractively – to both build diffractive gratings, or apparatuses, that produce difference-making patterns of difference, and to examine the patterns produced to gain insight on the apparatuses as well as the particles entering them.

Another serious issue brought up by Prosser, concerning queer theory, is its disregard for the transgender lives to which it in fact owes its whole existence. Viviane Namaste (2000), also an openly self-identified transgender author, further argues that the political agenda as well as the "epistemological and methodological presuppositions" of queer theory exhibit "a remarkable insensitivity to the substantive issues of transgendered people's everyday lives".

9 Barad 2003, pp. 808-818.
10 See Lykke 2010, pp. 119-120.
i Barad argues that ontology and epistemology cannot be approached as separate from each other, as any statements concerning the ways of gaining knowledge about the world always already involve a belief about the nature of existence, and vice versa. (Barad 2007, pp. 353-384.)
11 Barad 2007, pp. 132-185.
12 Barad 2007, pp. 71-94, 380-381.

Namaste thus rejects queer theory as a starting point for any research aiming to address experiences and issues faced by actual transgender bodies in their lives.[13] While I agree with Namaste in that transgender figures are too often employed in queer texts as theoretical devices, ignoring the lived experiences and political needs of actual transgender people, I am less inclined to dismiss all theoretical advances made within the framework of queer theory. A part of my project in writing this thesis, then, is to negotiate ways in which certain queer theoretical tools can be applied from different angles to work for actual transgender people instead of producing our existence as impossible.

By *transgender bodies*, I refer here to any and all individuals who would regularly, continuously and/or consistently prefer to be seen as belonging to other(s) than their assigned-at-birth gender. I leave the definition wide and quite open-ended on purpose, not wanting to produce inflexible categories of exclusion. I will use the term *assigned-female-at-birth*, or *AFAB*, to refer to the group of transgender bodies I'm studying, including transgender men, transmasculine[ii] people, female-to-other people, feminine trans men et cetera. To best account for the lived experiences of actual bodies, I choose to conduct interviews on transgender people and analyze the texts thus produced as the original source material of my thesis, instead of using for example pre-existing literary sources. I wish to present a detailed reading on individual histories as experienced and told by the people I interview, and will thus concentrate on a small number of people instead of trying to collect a large-scale sample for quantitative analysis. I have chosen to restrict my focus on non-heterosexual, assigned-female-at-birth transgender bodies for a couple of reasons: While I believe there would be valuable insight to be gained on the intra-actions of gender and sexuality in embodied experiences of heterosexual and/or assigned-male-at-birth transgender bodies as well, I want to avoid oppositional comparisons between different categories in my writing, and thus consider it a more fruitful approach to limit my inquiry to a more narrowly defined group of transgender people. As AFAB transgender bodies, especially non-heterosexual ones, have been less studied in the past[14], I find it appropriate to turn my attention toward that direction in my thesis.

I found the people for my research through the Finnish transgender social networks. I posted a call for interviewees on WTFTM (http://wtftm.org), a Finnish online discussion forum, that I frequent myself, for AFAB transgender people. I sent a preliminary survey to the 18 people

13 Namaste 2000, pp. 9-23.

ii 'Transmasculine' has on occasion been used in transgender communities to refer to all AFAB transgender people, but this can involve a risk of causing discomfort in those AFAB people who identify with femininity (not womanhood) rather than masculinity.

14 See Rosario 1996, pp. 36, Salamon 2010, pp. 9.

who volunteered, and got a response from nine of them. In addition to age and place of residence, I asked the volunteers to briefly describe their gender identification, the phase of their (possible) gender reassignment process, their sexual orientation and possible changes that have happened in it, and also their relationship history and some qualities they found especially attractive in a potential sexual and/or romantic partner. I interviewed six of the volunteers in person in October and November 2013 (one of who had not, in fact, filled out the preliminary survey, but contacted me after I had received the answers from the others). The selection was mostly based on who I managed to plan and actualize a meeting with. I originally intended to favor diversity for example in terms of age, location and identification, and for the sake of practicality ended up with a compromise between widest possible variety and greatest availability. The group of people I interviewed range from 20 to 30 years of age, and three of them live in Helsinki and the other three in the cities of Turku, Tampere and Jyväskylä. Of the six, Kaarna is (at the time of the interview) going through the psychiatric evaluation period of the Finnish medical and legal gender reassignment process, Tapio and Daniel are at the later stages of their transition, Perttu and Tuomo have undergone their transition several years ago, and Era has recently finished their process. All appear in the text under altered names.

The people I interviewed discussed their experiences in a very thoughtful and analytical manner: in addition to narrating their stories, they constantly considered why they had felt some way in a certain situation, why they had acted or not acted in certain ways or what kind of thought processes might have been involved in different decisions in their personal histories. They also shared their observations on the Finnish transgender communities and other social circles they'd been involved in. Each interview is about one hour long. Their format is a quite casual conversation – I didn't plan any clearly defined questions beforehand, though I had a loose script of themes and keywords I used to structure the discussion as needed. My motivation in planning the interviews like this was to minimize my own presuppositions' effect on the themes and details discussed. I am conscious, however, of that my own close proximity to the topic and my involvement in Finnish transgender activism, as well as my more or less familiar relationship to the people interviewed, necessarily affects both the interview situations as such and my reading of them.

Told experiences as research data come with their own challenges, as observed by Tuija Saresma (2010): as the experiences of others can only be accessed as they are told, and as the people studied, in addition to the researcher, have their own motivations in the process,

experience can never be taken as a faithful account of what has happened[15]. Furthermore, we can only access our own past from the perspective of our own present, as pointed out by Tuomo during our discussion: "My history of gender... I find it quite difficult to tell about it, as I feel that it changes a little bit all the time how I see it, from the perspective of the present time.[16]" Saresma also remarks that putting too much emphasis on recounting experiences as told and in the same language used by the people studied can lead to the researcher merely reorganizing and describing their material instead of analyzing it[17]. This in mind, I try to balance between giving a voice to the people I study and sufficiently analyzing and problematizing my data to produce a meaningful difference.

STUCTURED CHAOS, WORD SALAD: ORDER OF APPROACH AND LANGUAGE CHOICES

To get a hold of the main attraction of my thesis, the intra-active entanglements of gender and sexuality, I have to take a closer look into how gender and sexuality present themselves in my interview texts, and what aspects within them emerge as significant to the bodies I'm studying. I begin with a reading on sexuality: in chapter 2, I examine my data from the perspectives of sexual orientation, desire and sexual practices. I employ Sara Ahmed's (2006) *queer phenomenology* as a theoretical frame that considers (sexual) orientation from the perspective of embodied relationality in both time and space, and Elizabeth Grosz's (1993, 1995) refiguration of the model of desire and sexuality conceptualized by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Following both Ahmed and Grosz, I dismiss the popular sexual model of psychoanalysis, as it has tended to favor normativity over multiplicity, has difficulties to account for the desires of women and seems unlikely to succeed better with AFAB transgender bodies.[18] Most importantly, the psychoanalytical understanding of sexuality is based on the ontological conceptualization of desire as a lack, a negative, a void seeking to be filled out.[19] In addition to being inherently gloomy, this perspective on desire seems fundamentally faulty to me in its determinism.

In chapter 3, I consider the significant specificities of transgender embodiment that emerge in my material: the performative production of gender and some of its different components, the materiality of gendered and gendering bodies, and the significance of different relations

15 Saresma 2010, pp. 60-72.
16 K5, 2.
17 Saresma 2010, pp. 61.
18 Ahmed 2006, pp. 65-79, Grosz 1995, pp. 141-185.
19 Grosz 1995, pp. 175-179.

within and between bodies in space and time. I engage Gayle Salamon's writing on transgender embodiment in *Assuming a Body. Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality* (2010), as well as Jack Halberstam's thoughts on the complexities of trans/gendered bodies in *Female Masculinity* (1998) and *In a Queer Time & Place* (2005). I also return to Ahmed's queer phenomenology, to look at the concepts of orientation and disorientation from a trans/gender perspective. In chapter 4, I get to the point of exploring the mutual productivities and indeterminacies of gender and sexuality. I employ the concepts that emerge in the previous chapters as important to the transgender bodies I'm studying, as well as Barad's agential realism, in seeking to figure out the mess of gender being sex, sex doing gender, and sexual spaces that can reconfigure embodied gender.

I have chosen to write my thesis in English instead of my native Finnish for a couple of different reasons. First, some of my key concepts, such as *entanglement* and *queer*, don't have directly corresponding words in Finnish, and have proven very difficult to translate. Though I believe translations like this can and should be made, I don't feel like committing myself to that kind of work in writing this particular thesis – while working with Finnish interview material forces me to do some translating, it feels like an easier choice. Writing in English also makes it easier for me to participate in world wide academic discussions, especially since I intend to continue with the themes of this thesis in working toward a doctoral degree in the future. Translating the interview texts from Finnish into English didn't prove especially difficult. I had to do a small amount of research with some words and concepts, and use creativity with others, though. Relationship terminology proved the trickiest to translate: the colloquial Finnish vocabulary referring to partners and relationships is diverse, and many words used in the interviews carry specific connotations in regards to the nature of the relationship, in addition to being indicative of personal style of speech. For example, the word 'säätö', used by Era in reference to sexual or romantic relationships of casual or ambiguous nature, was a difficult one – I ended up translating it as 'fling', though I feel that fling emphasizes casualness more than säätö, and doesn't imply ambiguity quite as well.

After I started writing, I noticed my language choice to have some consequences I hadn't thought of beforehand: In writing in English, gender is always present in the pronouns used to refer to a third person – 'she' for women and 'he' for men[iii]. Not only is this problematic in referring to people who are not women or men, it also forces the writer to assume, guess or avoid mentioning the gender of the person referred to, when not known for certain. While

iii As opposed to Finnish, which only has the gender neutral 'hän'.

still not widely formally recognized as 'proper language', the singular 'they', in reference to a person of unknown gender[iv], is gaining popularity in the English-speaking world, and has also been adopted by certain communities to use in reference to people identifying as neither male nor female.[20] I asked the people I interviewed what pronouns they prefer I use to refer to them. This still left me with the issue of pronouns concerning the large number of authors whose works I'm referencing. To resolve this problem, I use the singular they in this text as the default pronoun to refer both to people who identify as something else than men or women, and to any people who have not, to my knowledge, clearly expressed their gender and/or preferred pronouns. This is both a matter of practicality and principle: I don't really love the thought of having to search the internet for hints about the gender of any author whose name I can't place a gender on. On the other hand, I wouldn't want to assume gender identification on the basis of a traditionally gendered name, either[v].

The feminist sex vs. gender debate, still ongoing, has been pictured as a negotiation between the social and the material, nature and culture, the predetermined and the constructed. As my native language Finnish only has one word, *sukupuoli*, referring to either sex or gender, or both, the choice between the two is a difficult one. I feel tempted, in the spirit of Donna Haraway's (2003) concept of *natureculture*s[21], to solve this terminological issue with *sexgender* or *gendersex*. However, for the sake of clarity more than anything else, I will use *gender* to mean both, and reserve *sex* for the sole purpose of referring to sexual desires and practices. Similarly, I use transgender as an umbrella term for any and all trans* people instead of making a distinction between transgender and transsexual. While this distinction is important to many authors in the field of transgender studies[22], I feel reluctant to employ it in my writing for multiple reasons.

Most importantly, I feel unable to clearly define the difference between transgender and transsexual bodies and identities. In addition, as the population of Finland, and accordingly our trans* communities, are rather small in numbers, I am suspicious of any identity categories that keep us divided into even smaller groups, thus possibly further complicating the organization of political activism. I'd rather see us united under strategic essentialism than divided and competing against each other. Finally, as the celebration of non-binary transgender identities over man or woman-identified transsexual people in feminist and

iv For example: “If *someone* wants to watch TV, *they* need to find the remote controller first!”
20 Kondelin 2012, pp. 18-24.
v Especially as my own first name is traditionally a female name in Finland, and I still prefer to be seen and referred to as male or androgynous.
21 Haraway 2003, pp. 1-25.
22 See for example Prosser 1998, pp. 1-20, Sullivan 2003, pp. 104-117.

queer theory hasn't, in my experience, gained such popularity here as it seems to have in the US, for example, I don't feel a similar need to actively promote the visibility of one or the other[vi].

1.2 ENTANGLED PERSPECTIVES: ETHICS AND OBJECTIVITY

Having touched on the specific challenges related to studying told experiences above, I return for a moment to think about research ethics in the particular context of my thesis. As I approach transgender studies from a so called transgender standpoint – as a transgender body, on transgender bodies, for transgender bodies – my research position as such involves a certain relationship to questions of subject-object relations, epistemic power and social hierarchies. By doing research 'as a transgender body', I want to articulate and actualize my belief that we, as transgender bodies, need to have voices and agencies of our own in the production, reviewing, and discussion of knowledges concerning us. A similar reasoning is behind my working 'for transgender bodies'; making transgender existence, experiences, multiplicity and agency visible in academics and the society. Another angle on the 'for' is that I want to study themes and topics that are of interest to actual transgender people, and work towards respectful and affirmative theories and politics of trans/gender.

I don't, however, claim that knowledge on transgender bodies produced by transgender bodies is by definition better than knowledge produced by cisgender bodies. For another angle to questions of objectivity and power, I approach research ethics from the viewpoint of Donna Haraway's thinking. She proposes a refiguration of objectivity in the form of *situational knowledges* in her *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium. FemaleMan©_Meets_ OncoMouse™* (1997). Instead of a traditionally modern, European, and masculine scientist, claiming objectivity by disconnectedness to his objects of study, Haraway's *modest witness* is a scientific subject aware of their own limitedness and positionality, within the world and necessarily always already connected to whatever and whoever they observe. Objectivity and knowledge are produced in communication with others, by piecing different situational knowledges together, as Haraway argues with a quote from Sandra Harding: “Social communities, not either individuals, or 'no one at all', should be conceptualized as the 'knowers' of scientific knowledge claims”.[23]

vi In fact, my experience is that in Finland, non-binary transgender people are still made largely invisible in public discussions both inside and outside the academic field.

23 Haraway 1997, pp. 23-39.

As a way of observing our own positionality and connectedness to other bodies, Haraway proposes diffractivity instead of rexlexivity, production of difference instead of mirroring the same once again.[24] Karen Barad, as I discussed earlier, elaborates on the phenomenon of diffraction in formulating their *agential realism*. To Barad, as well as Haraway, a diffractive method of accounting for one's own participation within the phenomenon observed involves being aware of what kind of difference is produced by one's work, and also understanding that the subject of research is affected by the process, as well. It also requires the enactment of an *agential cut*, by which certain participants of the process are determined as the objects and others as the subjects of the research. Different phases of the research process, however, can and do involve different agential cuts.[25]

THE INTERVIEW APPARATUS AND PARTIAL PERSONALITIES

In the recordings I made during the interviews, my own voice can be heard quite often. I aimed for the other person to always speak more than myself, but I did also freely describe my own experiences and didn't shut myself up, if the other seemed interested in what I was saying. I believe this had two very beneficial effects on my research data: I think it's likely that the people I interviewed felt more relaxed and willing to open up in a two-way sharing of thoughts and feelings, and I also feel this reciprocality brought up more interesting themes and details than a more one-sided narration would have. It also had an effect of making us more equal to each other, which on occasion resulted in the roles of the interviewer and the interviewee being switched, as the people I interviewed also asked me about my experiences every now and then. When I started to transcribe the recordings and analyze the interview texts, I noticed a difference in what can be understood as the agential cuts between the interviews and my later listening and reading of them: whereas during the interviews agency was more or less equally shared between me and the other person present, later on it had largely been passed on to me as the subject doing research on an object. I, myself, had thus been situated on both sides of the subject/object division – I experienced a surprisingly clear difference between me, as a recorded voice, participating in the interviews and me, as a present body, studying those discussions at a later time.

I will include my voicing of my own experiences during the interviews in my research material as well. This involves an agential cut between me doing research and me as a research object. I underscore this differentiation by referring to myself by a different name,

24 Haraway 1997, pp. 16.
25 Barad 2007, pp. 87-92.

Neva, when examining myself as an object of research. This helps me to limit my inclusion of my own experiences – I will look at them as I find them on the interview recordings, even though I might have changed my opinion on something later on. Even so, the cut between Sade and Neva doesn't mean they are clearly separable; I unavoidably read Neva's told experiences both through the interview text and my memories of those experiences. This sets Neva apart from the other bodies I'm examining, and makes it possible for me to use them as an illustration, an example of my theoretical thought, which I hope will help me to avoid doing the same with the others, who are more not-me than Neva is.

2. OPEN BODIES, WANDERING INTENSITIES

In this chapter I examine sexuality from the perspectives of *sexual orientation*, *desire* and *sexual practices*. I begin with a consideration of sexual orientation in the embodied experiences narrated in my research materials: its formation in space and time, its capacities and meanings in lived bodies, and its transformations along the histories and relocations of our bodies. Applying queer phenomenology, I focus especially on those instances where sexual orientation changes, evolves or becomes illegible or irrelevant, moments of *disorientation*, and the different ways of finding support in those instances. From there, I move on to engage *desire*: How and where desire happens, and what does it do? What do different people find desirable, and what different ways of desiring are there to be found? What kind of things can inhibit or turn off desire? In the final section of this chapter, I take a closer look at *sexual practices* and the ways they connect to or disconnect from desire and orientation.

2.1 DIS/ORIENTATIONS

In her *Queer Phenomenology. Orientations, Objects, Others* (2006), Sara Ahmed, professor of Race and Cultural Studies at Goldsmiths College, University of London, works with a queer interpretation of phenomenology to analyze (sexual) orientation as a way for the body to relate to other bodies and the world. Reading my interviews for experiences and descriptions of sexual orientation, I use Ahmed's queer phenomenology to gain an understanding of sexual orientation in embodied transgender lives.

What is sexual orientation? According to Ahmed, "[o]rientations involve directions toward objects that affect what we do, and how we inhabit space". We take different directions toward different objects, and are moved by them accordingly. While being orientated means knowing our bodies' location and direction, it also necessarily involves being aware of our body in relation to other bodies.[26] Sexual orientations, then, concern the ways we take sexual directions toward other bodies, and our own bodies' relation to them. Such orientations of a body, as well as the body itself, have their histories. Even as political activism concerning non-heterosexual orientations frequently employs statements that we are "born this way", at

26 Ahmed 2006, pp. 1-28.

least our perceptions of our orientations often change over time: all of the people in my interviews report some changes or periods of uncertainty in the history of their sexual orientation[27]. I will examine these dynamics of orientation in more detail a bit later.

Identifying or refusing to identify with a certain orientation can involve different motivations and reasonings. When someone tells us that they are, for example, homosexual, we assume this is *descriptive* of their sexual and romantic desires and practices when it comes to gender. However, this description involves a temporal relation: Gayle Salamon (2010) portrays Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological schema of sexuality as pointing, at the same time, to both the past and the future. According to this schema, the objects we are directed toward depend on our previous experiences, which are read as a recognizable whole to which we "then give a narrative".[28]

Orientation can thus be presented as a summary of our past attractions. Era, defining themself as pansexual, explains that they haven't *noticed* gender to have any effect on who they are attracted to, or on the quality and intensity of the attraction. They further emphasize this way of looking at their orientation:

> Well, if you look at my... like, history with relationships and flings, it's pretty hard to find any kind of [gendered] pattern like that. Because there's really a pretty wide selection. I mean, it's not quite like a checklist, so that you could choose a gender expression and I've fucked someone like that (laughs), but still...[29]

Here, orientation is formed as a *narrative.* It extends to the past as a basis for direction, a line to be followed by our future desires. We don't, however, always keep following these lines formed in our past. While I will return to examine changes in orientations of individual bodies later in this chapter, it is for now enough to conclude that our orientations can and do change. For example a woman who becomes lesbian, after having had sexual relationships with only men in the past, is orientated by her present and future desires and intentions, regardless of her past practices. I call this kind of descriptive sexual orientation *intentional* to distinguish it from narrative orientations.

Descriptive sexual orientation, whether narrative, intentional or both, is always an approximation. We cannot be sure that we won't, in the future, stray from the path of our assumed orientation. Furthermore, when reaching to the past for a line, we might miss attractions and impulses that would blur that line, as Ahmed points out[30].

27 K1, 2., 4., 12. & 24.; K2, 1., 3. & 80.; K3, 18.; K4, 40. & 94.; K5, 10.-16.; K6, 22. & 39.
28 Salamon 2010, pp. 44-45.
29 K2, 29.-31.
30 Ahmed 2006, pp. 72.

(Bisexuality/pansexuality is fascinatingly specific in this way: it can't really be thought of as "reading for a line", nor does it exclude any future desires when it comes to gender.) In addition to not being able to predict the future or to remember everything in the past, we also may not know whether all the people we've been attracted to, or even had sexual relationships with, actually fit into the gender categories we include as desirable objects of our orientation. Approximations must be made, then – while pansexuality would seem to solve the ambiguities concerning sexual orientation, not all of us feel inclined to assume that kind of direction.

I will next discuss some functions of sexual orientation beyond directing our desires and sexual behavior, considering what leads us to lean one way or another in defining our orientations.

ORIENTATIONS TOWARD ORIENTATIONS

As observed by Ahmed, sexual orientations affect other things we do in addition to our sexual behavior: sexuality is not determined merely by our objects of desire, but also as specific relations to the world, so that "different orientations, different ways of directing one's desires, means [sic] inhabiting different worlds". Sexual orientation has become "a matter of being", a necessary component of our subjective identities.[31] It is thus integral to our subjectivity to be sexually orientated, as the way we direct our sexual selves determines the way we exist. Additionally, it is important to know how other bodies orientate themselves: we can only know our relation to them, and thus determine and confirm our own orientation, insofar as we are aware of the lines they move along. It might be said that we are orientated toward sexual orientations.

Sexual orientations, in themselves, can from this viewpoint be seen as objects to turn toward. Ahmed describes, in their analysis of happiness, how objects become feeling-causes, and thus able to cause feeling[32]. In this line of thought, I consider sexual orientations as identity-causes, or objects to identify-with. Different orientations produce different identifications, thus opening some possibilities for the body to extend itself in action while closing others at the same time. Next, I consider some specific motivations and manners of our becoming orientated toward particular sexual orientations as identity objects.

31 Ibid., pp. 68-69.
32 Ahmed 2010, pp. 33.

Era, Tapio, Tuomo, Neva and Daniel all describe having taken the heteronormative pattern of girls liking boys and vice versa for granted as children, confirmed by them all having had crushes on boys[33]. As Ahmed points out, direction is not only something we take; it's also something we are given by and give to others. Being orientated by such directions, "we might not even notice that we are orientated". Even when not actively pointed toward some objects by other bodies, we are directed by lines of coordination that organize space, formed in the ways bodies inhabit that space.[34] Assuming oneself to be heterosexual (or moving along those lines, unaware of being orientated), according to the directions offered by others, could be thought of as *normative orientation*. While heterosexuality seems, obviously, most likely to be assumed this way, it isn't impossible to imagine other orientations too as normative. For instance, a man might assume homosexual orientation after first having a sexual relationship with another man, regardless of his previous relationships with women – the norm adhered to, here, isn't the gender of the desired object, but the idea of having to choose between the one or the other.

Orientation can, in addition to or instead of sexual behavior, also indicate affiliation and identification with a social group, such as Kaarna's sense of belonging to the same category with the feminine gay boys in their high school[35]. As another example, political lesbianism as a feminist strategy insisted that women should make their relationships to other women the main concern of their social life, regardless of whether they had sexual and/or romantic relations with women[36]. Inhabiting a category can thus be a political act, as Tapio observes, describing his sexual orientation as queer: "[it's] a very political term in the sense that I want to proclaim, to hold up my middle finger to that effect, that your system sucks..." *Social* and/or *political orientation* of sexuality can also be assumed and articulated as acts of investment that promise certain kinds of rewards[37]. Neva, Tapio and Perttu have observed that being seen as gay makes their feminine maleness legible and understandable to others[38]. Tuomo also considers "outing" himself as gay in some social circles to avoid having his friendly behavior toward women read as sexual interest[39].

Sexual orientation is a multiplicity of different functions and capacities. Earlier, I discussed descriptive orientations and the difference between narrating the past experiences and voicing future intentions. I made additional distinctions between orientations that function

33 K2, 1., 3. & 81.; K4, 38.-40.; K5, 10. & 11.; K6, 22.
34 Ahmed 2006, pp. 5-16.
35 K1, 66. & 91.
36 Taavetti 2010, pp. 79.
37 Ahmed 2006, pp. 17.
38 K3, 4.; K6, 34.; K5, 107. & 109.
39 K5, 80.

according to the norm, or to fulfill social and political aims or needs, and become objects to identify-with.[vii] Though these modes of orientating ourselves can be distinguished from each other, they are inseparably entangled into each other. Though we might assume an orientation for certain purposes and not others, it can not be made sure it will work the way we want, and not in other ways instead of or in addition to it: a direction taken determines which others are and which are not available to us as objects of desire[40]. This is visible in the case of Neva and Tuomo's normative childhood orientations: as well as having assumed the heterosexual norm, they also tell that they later realized having had crushes on girls as well as boys in elementary school, but hadn't recognized those crushes as such.

> Tuomo: [...] somehow I didn't for example notice, like... the crushes I had on girls. Because I also had crushes on boys. So I didn't even necessarily recognize them, so that afterwards I've noticed that I've been head over heels for someone and I just didn't get it...[41]

Even if we consciously express, for social or political purposes, a sexual orientation that is not descriptive of our desires and sexual practices, our behavior is directed by that orientation. If we are assumed to be heterosexual, or have articulated a homosexual orientation, any and all actions we take that stray from those lines will likely provoke ourselves and/or others to demand an explanation.

It might seem obvious that heterosexuality seems the best object choice among sexual orientations, in the sense that a straight identification allows keeping the body "in line", and thus able to act, more easily than queer identifications[42]. However, that is not a satisfactory option for all of us. While doing much more than just determine our available objects of desire, sexual orientation still *does* that as well. Our sexual objects are also expected to be pleasurable objects; we are supposed to enjoy our sexualities. And though we might assume an orientation, and thus the selection of sexual objects with it, as a given, it is not certain that pleasure comes with the package[43]. Should we fail to find pleasure with the sexual objects allocated to us with a certain orientation, it might seem an attractive option to turn toward other orientations, even at the cost of reduced identity-value. The choice of objects in the case of sexual orientations is very limited, however. Ahmed argues that certain objects are predetermined as happiness-causes even before we encounter them, and that this predetermination might, in fact, direct us toward them[44]. Similarly, the very limited selection of gender-based sexual orientations is predetermined as *the* objects that produce both identity

vii Obviously, the categories I offer here can hardly begin cover all the different ways sexual orientation moves our bodies and the bodies around us.

40 Ahmed 2006, pp. 70.

41 K5, 10. & 11.

42 Ahmed 2006, pp. 79-92.

43 Ahmed 2010, pp. 35.

44 Ibid., pp. 34.

and sexual pleasure.

Not everybody feels content with being orientated toward sexual orientations: while they admit to describing themselves as pansexual "if forced to", Neva and Perttu find the whole system of gender-based sexual orientation disagreeable. They explain that, as things other than gender have much more relevance in who they become attracted to, describing themselves as pansexual feels uncomfortable.

> Perttu: But somehow I don't... in my opinion pansexual is not a good word, as it would mean that I'm interested in people "regardless of gender". But in my experience, my sexual desire has nothing at all to do with gender. [...]
>
> Neva: Yeah... I'm very happy about that... I have myself very recently, like, consciously given up using the term "pansexual" for good, because I concluded as well that I don't like it, that it feels like a cop-out to the system where gender is the only defining factor in sexuality.[45]

In this case, pansexuality seems to take on normative qualities, as it is unwillingly used to appear more in line with the system of gender-based orientation.

Can sexual orientation only ever be understandable in terms of gender? And what happens if we fail or refuse to position ourselves in line with the gendered system of orientation? Ahmed importantly points out that directing our attention toward some objects means turning away from others[46]. But can we be sure, when we deliberately turn our backs to certain objects, that there will be other objects to orientate ourselves toward in the direction we are turning to face? Perttu tells they're only interested in people they see as intelligent. It doesn't seem like this works as an identity object for them, though Perttu clearly feels that they are able to experience more pleasure when they heed this direction[47]. Era points out that orientation toward intelligence even has its own term, *sapiosexuality*, used in some circles, but both they and Neva turn the word down, considering it an annoying social media creation[48].

On the other hand, in my interviews BDSM[viii] roles, such as *master*, *submissive* and *switch* appear as important, even integral, to the sexual subjectivities of certain bodies[49]. I will take a more detailed look into BDSM practices and the identity objects produced in that context later in this chapter.

---

45 K3, 18.-21.
46 Ahmed 2006, pp. 27-37.
47 K3, 26.-30.
48 K2, 109.-111.
viii BDSM refers to the (consensual) sexual categories of bondage & discipline, dominance/submission, and sadism/masochism.
49 K2, 67.; K3, 18. & 22.; K5, 33.-35.; K6, 42.

CHANGING ORIENTATIONS

I have examined sexual orientations as objects we can turn toward or away from. As Ahmed points out, our familiarity with certain objects can lead to us taking them for granted without considering their backgrounds, that which "explains the conditions of emergence or an arrival of something as the thing it appears to be in the present"[50]. Orientations, like other objects, have backgrounds. Though being straight is posited as the natural order of sexual direction, the becoming straight of spaces and bodies is a result of repeated actions that shape the contours of the body[51]. Here, I will look into the conditions for the appearance of sexual orientations in and through the experiences of my research objects.

I earlier described how Neva and Tuomo, because of taken-for-granted heteronormativity, did not recognize the crushes they had on girls as such as children: the naturalization of heterosexuality made it impossible for them to perceive girls as sexual objects, even though they later realized they had felt desire toward girls as well. It seems we can only direct ourselves toward something we know to be there. Thus, we might end up changing our orientation as we become aware of something desirable, or our own ability to desire that something, and turn toward it. Alternatively, we may feel discontent with the possibilities and pleasures offered by the direction we are facing, and turn away to look for alternatives. Indeed, the change can be motivated by a mixture of these: (re)discovering his passion for men and masculinities, Tapio realized he wasn't moved as intensely by women, and no longer felt content with lesbian orientation[52].

The turn involved in the change of orientations might be *exclusive*, so that we abandon our previous direction: after becoming aware of the possibility of desiring girls, Tuomo identified as lesbian for a while[53]. This seems the most likely course in those cases where we fail to be made happy by our direction so far. We can, on the other hand, also include a step back or sideways in our turn to gain a perspective that enables *inclusion*. The changes from being straight, gay or lesbian to bisexuality/pansexuality in the narratives of Era, Neva, Daniel, Perttu and Tapio[54] can all be seen as instances of an inclusive turn in changing orientations. In a way, the largely political switch from bisexuality to pansexuality, as

50 Ahmed 2006, pp. 37-38.
51 Ibid., pp. 79-92.
52 K6, 22.
53 K5, 12.
54 K2, 1., 3. & 81.; K3, 18.; K4, 40. & 94.; K6, 22.

described by Era and Neva, also involves an inclusive turn: though it didn't involve a notable change in sexual objects, they both find it important that pansexuality as a concept includes objects that are outside the gender binary[55].

An encounter with desire that does not support our orientation can sweep us off our feet, as can failure to feel satisfied with the objects in the direction we are facing. In moments like this, we become disorientated. Ahmed describes disorientation with a vocabulary that might, at a glance, seem gloomy: it "can be a bodily feeling of losing one's place", or the feeling we experience as a result of having lost our place. More importantly, Ahmed remarks that "[d]isorientation involves failed orientations".[56] This is made visible by Neva: their attraction toward some woman-identifying people had a disruptive effect on their newfound homosexual orientation, causing it to fail[57]. However, failure doesn't always need to be seen as a disaster. Jack Halberstam (2011) points out that queers are especially adept at failing with style: he argues that, as success requires spending a lot of energy in trying, "then maybe failure is easier in the long run and offers different rewards"[58]. Unexpected pleasures found with previously unknown sexual objects can certainly be seen as such rewards, but those are not the only ones offered by failing orientations. In the fourth chapter I explore the possibilities revealed by changing orientations in the specificities of embodied transgender experiences.

Changes in sexual orientation don't only occur as linear developments over time, as an effect of failing orientations. I would argue that we can also shift directions contextually, according to our needs and our relations to other bodies nearby. Neva and Perttu's reluctant admittance, "if forced to", of pansexual orientation, can be read as such a shift: while they prefer to refuse orientations based on gender, they can use pansexuality as a normative (and in a sense descriptive) orientation in situations where it seems necessary. As shown in the discomfort Neva and Perttu feel in such situations, this kind of shifting orientations involves disorientations, as well, though not necessarily as dramatically as in the kind of more fundamental changes described earlier. Disorientation, here, might be "an ordinary feeling, [...] a feeling that comes and goes as we move around during the day[59]".

Tapio has come to solve the problems he's had with defining his orientation by having multiple words to describe his sexuality, "all of which are correct". As he is primarily

55 K2, 16.-19.
56 Ahmed 2006, pp. 157-160.
57 K3, 79.-82.
58 Halberstam 2011, pp. 3.
59 Ahmed 2006, pp. 157.

attracted to men and masculinities, as well as through his past identification with male homosexuality and gay culture, he becomes gay. Because he is also able to desire women and other-gender bodies, he also defines himself as bisexual. He further identifies with queer as a sexual orientation because it is "defined by being something else", because he sees gender as a wide spectrum and doesn't feel able to claim being attracted only to men, and also as a political statement against normative systems of gender and sexuality[60].

It would seem that we are, at least in some cases, able or even required to orientate ourselves differently in different contexts, to shift our positions as we move across space and time. I will consider some implications of this further on, as I delve deeper into the entangled dynamics of orientation in connection to desire and practice of sexuality.

2.2 ENERGIES IN BECOMING

In the introduction of this thesis I articulated a refusal of an ontology that considers desire a lack. How would I see desire then, if not as inherent incompleteness of the human condition, constantly looking for completion? Trinh T. Minh-ha writes: "The past convention was that we desire because we are incomplete, that we are always searching for that other missing half. More recently, we no longer desire-because, we simply desire, and we desire as we are.[61]" Elisabeth Grosz, seeking to refigure theories of lesbian desire, turns to the tradition originating with philosophers such as Baruch Spinoza, and developed in the works of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, to see desire as a productive capacity that "does not provide blueprints, models, ideals, or goals. Rather, it experiments; it makes[.][62]" Desire is also theorized as having productive capacities, "an immensely generative power", in Salamon's reading of Merleau-Ponty's sexual schema.[63] As I take this way of looking at desire as my starting point, my focus in analyzing desire is, rather than on desire-because, on desire as it is, as it experiments and makes, and on transgender bodies as they are in desiring.

Both in Salamon's interpretation of Merleau-Ponty and Grosz's Deleuzian refigurations, desire is written as intense, productive, and energetic – irrefusably positive by nature. Not willing to simply favor positivity and disregard the negative or the indifferent, I find it important to examine non-desire as well as desire: to look at those moments where desire is

60 K6, 22., 28., 34., 40., 74., 76. & 116.
61 Minh-ha 1999, pp. 258.
62 Grosz 1995, pp. 179-185.
63 Salamon 2010, pp. 46-50.

denied, refused, unanswered, or otherwise simply fails to fall through. Similarly, I believe there is insight to be gained in turning to uncomfortable and unwanted desires and sexualities. Following Halberstam's thoughts on the so called shadow feminisms, I want to think about the possibility of such aspects and instances of desire that are "not of becoming, being and doing, but of shady, murky modes of undoing, unbecoming and violating.[64]"

CAPACITIES OF DESIRE

Tapio describes desire in his life as something inexplicable, instinctual and intense, as something he can't change in himself. As such, desire has been a source of joy to him in many ways: it's something that hasn't been ruined by having been confused about his gender and sexuality, something that's able to survive any and all disorientations and transformations of the body.[65] This depiction corresponds with Grosz's reading of Deleuze: desire is immanent, primary and given, not a property of a subject body, but rather that which produces the body as a subject. Understood in this sense, desire in itself has no goals or objects apart from its own self-expansion – it is an impersonal, yet undeniably active force, an energetic intensity.[66]

Merleau-Ponty agrees, according to Salamon, that desire is that which causes the body to emerge as a subject, in addition to producing its objects in the body's phenomenological field.[67] And though Salamon does use concepts such as "my desire", and states that "[d]esire may be frustrated or unsatisfied"[68], their reading of the sexual schema clearly portrays desire as independent of the subject, and thus having no predetermined goals to be satisfied. This is most evident in their depiction of the concept of *transposition* as "the process by which the desire that houses itself in my body *becomes* my body itself [...and] my body, in its desire, becomes desire itself[69]": if desire is something that can "house itself in" or "become" my body, it clearly is mine only insofar as I am its, and only for the duration we are entangled together in the process of transposition.

Even as an immanent force with no goals of its own, desire moves us toward different objects, and in many different ways: it both makes and breaks assemblages, producing

64 Halberstam 2011, pp. 4.
65 K6, 74.
66 Grosz 1993, pp. 171-172.
67 Salamon 2010, pp. 46-48.
68 Ibid., pp. 50.
69 Ibid., pp. 52.

difference[70]. Tuomo feels he is “romantically interested almost exclusively in other-gender people”, whereas masculine (cisgender) men attract him in a more narrowly defined sexual manner, and these two are “somehow completely separate” to him[71]. Tapio has observed that he experiences sexual desire for men more often and more intensely than for women[72]. There seems to be a difference of both quality and quantity involved; a difference in the manner in which we are moved as well as the intensity of the force that moves us. Furthermore, Perttu makes a distinction between people they could imagine themself having sex with, and such people that they find sexy albeit not in the sense of being personally interested in them: “[...] I can, in a way, see what it is in them, and it's very attractive, but it isn't, like, *for me*.”[73] If desire doesn't require particular objects, and rather produces us as subjects than is produced by our subjectivity, what could this kind of perception mean, this experience of desire-yet-not-for-me? Perttu also notes it can sometimes be difficult to know the difference between for-them and for-someone-else, when it comes to desirable objects.

In addition to our being moved in different ways by sexual desire, we seem to be different from each other in when, where and how often we come to be animated by it. Era, for instance, says that they have never felt interested in one night stands in the classic sense, as they usually only become sexually interested in people after having known them for a while: “I've tended to get interested on a different level, on a deeper level, if it can be put like that... to begin to desire people who are already my friends.”[74] In Tapio's account of his sexuality, on the other hand, desire is present very often and is easily awoken: “[...] I only have to walk across the center of Helsinki once to spot five [men] who are, like, mmm-hmm.[75]”As yet another example, Perttu recognizes two different ways they comes to desire: becoming interested in someone either “physically” or “psychically”. These two ways through which desire can emerge seem similar to Tapio and Era's descriptions, respectively – one capable of being activated by little more than a look, the other requiring a certain minimum level of familiarity. Perttu further explains that usually their becoming interested in someone requires an experience of some kind of *similarity* shared by them and that someone: “[...] at the end of the day I'm primarily interested in people who exist somewhere on the queer continuum, and who have similar values or interests in life than I do.”[76]

If desire is an active intensity, capable of housing and extending itself in our bodies, thus

70 Grosz 1993, pp. 171-172.
71 K5, 18.
72 K6, 22. & 116.
73 K3, 66.
74 K2, 39.
75 K6, 116.
76 K3, 54.-56.

animating us in transposition, is it a permanent inhabitant or a temporary one? Does it carry the master key to our bodies, or are we able to lock it out? According to Ahmed, the actions bodies have or have not taken up in the past shape the bodies and their capacities. Spaces, similarly, assume shape from the bodies they house and the actions such bodies take while in those spaces. As a result of repeated actions, of repeated arrivals and departures of bodies, spaces acquire orientations toward certain bodies and actions that they tend to extend, making it difficult or even impossible for other kinds of bodies or actions to be extended in such spaces.[77] As we look at our bodies as spaces that desire can inhabit, we are able to consider the possibility that not all bodies unconditionally extend sexual desire – some might even resist its entrance in the first place. On the other hand, since our bodies react in many ways to what we perceive in our surroundings, affective encounters can change the position and shape of them, making space for desire to enter and extend itself. The conditions of arrival for desire may be satisfied as a result of various triggers – such as an attractive other passing us by or feeling safe and relaxed. Or it might be a smell associated with previous experiences of desire, adrenaline rushing through our bloodstream, a crack of a leather whip – the ways we are opened up by and for desire are as various as our particular body histories.

Even if desire is immanent and selfsame, it produces different effects when it enters different bodies. We can, then, conceive of transposition as a diffractive apparatus, in which the body and desire become entangled and produce some patterns and not others. As Barad points out, such entanglements affect all bodies partaking in the phenomenon[78]: is desire then, despite its primacy, also transformed in transposition? And if, what becomes of it? In such instances where desire does extend itself in the body (as is its goal), when they become one within transposition, according to Salamon, the materiality of the body "is felt only as an animated leaning, intentional in the sense that the desire animating it has an object"[79].

I maintain that desire, in itself, does *not* have any particular objects, though sometimes the trigger that opens us *for* desire can also be what we lean toward *in* desire – however, this does not mean that the phenomenon of transposition is without an object altogether. As my body becomes desire and desire becomes my body, they take on the properties of each other – or rather, apply them in unison as an entangled multiplicity. From desire we gain determination, productivity, creativity, intensity; from the body, it's capacities of affecting and becoming affected in multiple ways, in connection to multiple other bodies, and it's orientations toward and away from those other bodies and ways of being affected. The

77 Ahmed 2006, pp. 58.
78 Barad 2007, pp. 132-185.
79 Salamon 2010, pp. 52.

desired objects a body leans toward in transposition, then, are ones assumed by the body, either as a result of its own past actions, or of being shaped by the spaces it has inhabited. We might, however, be moved toward something new and unexpected, as within transposition, we also inherit from desire its endless will to experiment. I will consider this experimenting desire, this attraction to the new and the different, through the concept of wonder.

WONDERING BODIES

Philosopher and psychoanalyst Luce Irigaray, in her reading of *The Passions of the Soul* by René Descartes, names *wonder* as that which precedes appropriation or rejection in any encounter with the unknown, "the motivating force behind mobility in all its dimensions". Wonder is sparked by surprise, by not knowing what it is that has arrived. It is curiosity, the formation of the question: "Who is this, who causes me to wonder?" Desire then, to Irigaray, is "the first movement *toward*, not yet qualified", set into motion by its subject's passion and/or its object's attraction.[80]

A certain kind of connection between wonder and desire can be seen in Neva's memory of their first encounter with the object of their unrequited high school love:

> And at first I looked at them and was like, ohhhhh, how fine is that boy with such a long hair... And then I was like, ahhhhh, it seems to be a girl after all. And when they said their name, my confusion grew, because they had like a really deep voice, but the name was a girl's name. And then I was like: 'How cool *is* this person!'[81]

According to Irigaray, it is *rarity* that wonder turns us toward, something or someone *very different* from what we expected[82]. In Neva's narrative, their attention is attracted by "a boy" with long hair, likely exceptionally long for a boy, invoking a sense of wonder and (already) admiration. This wonder is then extinguished by the conclusion that the other person is, in fact, a girl – only to be reignited by the other's deep voice speaking, saying a girl's name, her name. Such wonder, kept in motion by a dynamic of expectation, surprise, disappointment, surprise again, opens a door in the body for desire: Neva was, in their own words, "madly and, like, tragicomically in love with her all the way through high school"[83].

Difference has a capacity to awaken wonder in us, then – and as a result desire as well. But what is it that the different, the new, is different in relation to? Difference in, difference from

80 Irigaray 2004, pp. 62-70.
81 K2, 6.
82 Irigaray 2004, pp. 64-67.
83 K3, 71.

– what? Sanna Lipponen, employing Irigaray's thinking in their interpretation of Susanna Majuri's photography, observes that wonder is spatially and temporally positioned as both oppositional and causally related to assimilation, preceding and following it in a playful manner[84]. This sort of play is hinted at in Neva's experience: The other is perceived as assimilated into the category of "boy", at first, yet set apart by their long hair, invoking wonder. Assimilation, again, follows – the other seems to be "girl", after all, in which case their long hair no longer signifies difference. And yet once again, speaking aloud, the other is perceived as new, their name both confirming *her* assimilation into the female category, even as her deep voice inscribes her body, within its category, as *rare*.

This interplay, or intra-play, of wonder and assimilation, can perhaps give us a sense of the experimenting nature of desire – it is curious, delights in surprise, awakened by the dynamics of the known and the unknown, or the unexpected coming together of what we thought we know. It is also demonstrated here that it is not simply a quality of another body, or a combination of such qualities, that determines how desire enters our bodies and extends its reach in us. According to Lipponen, insofar as wonder is a function of encounters with the new, the unknown, what emerge as significant are

> the relations between the characters and their manner of approaching others [...], their becoming-sensitive to what they perceive, and their attitude of opening up to the world, to others – and at the same time, however, especially to themselves[85].

Wonder, being capable of opening our bodies to allow desire in, is a matter of relationality – not only of our body to another's, but of our body to itself as well, and to its surroundings in space and time – and of the body of another to its surroundings, and of our bodies sensitivity, openness, to the world and one another. While it might be that wonder is just one such trigger that can fill us with desire, I would imagine there are similar dynamics involved in other possible ones as well. I will come back to wonder in chapter four, where I consider difference and similarity of gendering bodies, among other things, with more detail.

DESIRE, INTERRUPTED

I proposed above that transposition, as a phenomenon in which the body is animated in becoming entangled with desire, produces different patterns of emotion and action, and can even be prevented from happening altogether, depending on the capacities of the particular body involved – and its relation to the world and to the other bodies around it. As I believe

84 Lipponen 2013, pp. 58.
85 Ibid., pp. 60.

that useful insight can be gained by examining the negative and the failed as well as the positive and the successful, I will now take a look at desire in such instances where it is denied entrance, fades away or is diminished in intensity, fails to extend the body, or extends it in ways that have unwanted results.

Tapio, as previously described, experiences desire often and easily, triggered at times by the sight alone of an attractive (male) body. This kind of desire however, according to him, is "superficial" in the sense that it is just as easily extinguished if the object of his attraction does something "stupid" such as making a sexist comment.[86] Tuomo, in turn, easily loses his sexual interest, and rarely even gets interested in the first place, in people who turn out not to be interested in BDSM sex – except if his interest is "romantic" in nature, in which case he feels his desire to be more or less independent of sex preferences.[87]

Daniel says it's extremely rare for him to become attracted to people – this has only happened two or three times in his life – in such a way that he would actually consider a sexual relationship with them[88]. While according to him this is connected both to his history of intense gender dysphoria and his preferences concerning relationships[89], to which I will return later, it can also be examined as a matter of desire and bodily capacities. Those times he has felt desire, in such a way that can be considered a transpositional leaning toward another person, his feelings have not been returned – however, one of the two or three people had been attracted to him earlier in their friendship. This and his other experiences and observations have lead Daniel to believe that some people are "faster" than others to come to desire, and that mutual attraction might not be enough if one person is already "past" it when the other is just about to start feeling it.[90]

Daniel's theory seems to me an insightful one. In transposition, according to Salamon's interpretation of it, our body is felt as a leaning toward something, so that our senses become "more ambiguous and diffuse" as they are "located both in [the] body and that toward which [it] bends"[91]. Such state of being, of becoming, insofar as it directs us toward some objects and not others, and in some attitudes of approach and not others, can clearly not be sustained forever, as it might hinder our capacities to act in some other ways and relate to different objects and others. If we then are unable to connect in a specific way with that which we lean

86 K6, 116.-118.
87 K5, 33.-39.
88 K4, 60.
89 K4, 60.-62., 120.-122.
90 K4, 64.-68.
91 Salamon 2010, pp. 54.

toward in transposition, we eventually must allow for our desire to pass, or attempt to direct our attention toward some other others or objects. Indeed, I would imagine that such a state can no more be sustained forever even if our feelings are returned: lovers, too, must sooner or later reconnect with the world outside their desire and pleasure.

So, the following chain of events takes place: A body comes to desire and, unable to gain another's attention, leaves transposition to carry on with their life. Afterwards, the other is affected by some trigger or another, and in turn enters transposition, coming to lean toward the first one. What would stop the first body from coming to desire the second one again? As discussed before, the body's capacities to house and extend desire are shaped by its past experiences, both those related to desire and those that are not. A body that was disappointed before – its desire having transformed into frustration, or become driven away with great effort – might be shaped so that it no longer tends, in transposition, to lean toward that which had disappointed it. Neva, who considers themself one of those who are fast to come to desire, seems to have experienced something like this:

> Especially if I've had to, like, make peace with the fact that this didn't work out... then, if it's done, and the situation resurfaces in some way, then it can be really weird. [...] I mean it can make you feel unsafe in a way, like if I go with this now, will it end up with me having to process [my feelings] away again?[92]

On the other hand, Neva also has had unpleasant experiences with a partner who was "even more fast in that sense": their own desire was heightened by the other's intensity, but there was "no reason or moderation to it whatsoever"[93].

Though desire might be immanent and primary, in entering our bodies it must become affected in that entanglement, or be itself left outside, unable to affect us any more. Thus, as our bodies emerge as a result of their histories, the sexual desire we experience is always already entangled with our sexual practices. I move on to examine such practices: the ways we direct our sexual attention, the partners we would choose or dismiss, and the pleasures we hope to find in such partnerships.

2.3 PUTTING IT TO PRACTICE

In the interviews, sexual practices emerge as a theme distinct from both desire and orientation, though certainly intra-actively entangled to both in multiple ways. In this

92 K4, 71.
93 K4, 73.-75.

context, I define sexual practices as any and all embodied acts of sexuality, from the kind of bodies we intentionally direct our sexual attention at, to the kind of sex acts we engage in. Here, I consider such practices in general and in particular, looking at the different choices and interests emerging in my interviews. I explore the specificities of BDSM – sexual practices dealing with power play and sadomasochistic pleasures – and their importance to the sexual identifications of some bodies, concluding this chapter with a thought exercise of conceptualizing BDSM identities as sexual orientations.

PASSION, PARTNERSHIP, PLEASURE

I make a distinction between desire, which in the Deleuzian sense precedes the subject, and *passion*, which I define as being aware of and owning desire as it inhabits and animates our bodies. In sexual transposition we lean toward something, directed by our bodies' orientations, the experimenting nature of desire, or both. It is when we recognize this desire as such, as well as the way it would move us, and consciously commit ourselves to act on it, that desire is transformed into passion in our bodies. The commitment doesn't need to be to one particular instance of transpositional desire: passion can outlive transposition, developing through experience and analysis into a more comprehensive awareness and determination of how, when and what we tend toward in desire. This is close to what Audre Lorde calls using of the erotic as power[94] – however, she defines sexuality as only one particular area of the erotic, whereas in this context I limit passion as a sexual practice.

We do not become passionate for our every desire. As passion is a conscious practice, it often involves some degree of pragmatic consideration in addition to recognizing our desire – we tend to learn early on that we can't always get what we want, and we might not always even want everything that we desire. Perttu explains, for example, that they don't usually act on their desire in such cases where it's been triggered "physically", by people they haven't previously known at all: "I find it very uncertain. Or I mean it's so difficult to know, in such cases, what kind of a person the other one is. And I think then you would approach and get to know them from a completely wrong angle.[95]"

What kind of people we are looking for and who we actually approach, as well as our partner choices, are important aspects of our sexual practices, regardless of the specifics such as the duration or commitment level of any particular practice – though such specifics might

94 Lorde 1993, pp. 53-58.
95 K3, 54.

certainly affect our choices. Besides the obviously necessary mutual attraction of some kind, we also take compatibility into account in various ways in deciding whether or not we want to enter into a sexual and/or romantic relationship with someone. In the accounts of the people I study, a variety of preferences emerge concerning the qualities of potential partners and the nature of future relationships. Some of them are related to staying interested in the relationship, and to keeping up the desire, such as Perttu's requirement that their partners are able to challenge them intellectually both in and out of bed[96], or Tuomo's preference for sexual partners who are physically different from himself in a distinct way[97].

Daniel, when speaking of his preferences, emphasizes that he has not had any experiences of being in a sexual relationship. He used to think he was asexual, but having since come to understand his feelings better, now defines himself as *aromantic* – not interested in romantic relationships in the traditional sense. He does describe himself as strongly sexual, however, and would also be interested in some form of a long-term relationship, which in my interpretation could be defined as a "sexual friendship"; he would like to find a partner who would make him feel safe, and be willing to give him enough space, as he prefers to spend a great deal of his time on his own. He feels very frustrated at how hard it is for him to come to desire other people, and at not knowing what kind of a person he is actually looking for: he has not figured out what it is that attracts him in general, though he says he does have quite a good idea of what kind of sex he might like.[98] It seems that knowing what we want benefits from a certain amount of experience, lack of which can be confusing and disorientating. Neva, for example, has difficulties with picturing themself in a sexual relationship with a (cisgender) woman, as they have issues relating to female genitals:

> [I]t's not [...] anything like, that I would think vaginas are disgusting somehow. But it's somehow been a bit like 'WHOA I don't know what to do with this', which is silly since I know very well what I do with my own! [...] Maybe it has a bit to do with it that I've only had sex with few women and most of them I haven't been that crazy about.[99]

Tapio, who in general prefers men and masculine other-gender people, similarly expresses some frustration in relation to the rare occasions he has felt strong desire for a woman: "[T]he strong recognition is there, that yeah, this is something I desire, and I can't explain it, and I'm not even sure what I would do with this woman, even if I would have her in my reach, or...[100]" Tapio considers the possibility that this incapability of his to make a connection between desire and practice in his mind might be related to heteronormative

96 K3, 26.
97 K5, 33.
98 K4, 60.-64.
99 K6, 27.
100 K6, 116.

understanding of sexual practice – I will give it more thought in chapter 4.

Regardless of the nature of the relationship, mutual respect appears as critically important: respect for the other's right to self-definition, boundaries, personal space, and their problems as well as their strengths. Being thus respected, and able to respect the other, is defined by philosopher and psychoanalyst Luce Irigaray as the necessary foundation of ethical sexuality, both individually and universally: both parties of the relationship must respect the differences between them as well as their similarities, to have their "own territory" and their personal growth, to become "in self and for self", yet remain also "for the other"[101]. Although Irigaray writes specifically about the relationship and difference of "man" and "woman", these requirements seem valid to me in relation to any (sexual) relationship between two bodies that are connected but are not one nor the same.

What we are looking for in a relationship, as well as our assumptions about what other people might be looking for, affects our choices. Even if someone attracts our desire, we might not know what to do about it, and refrain from even approaching them should we believe that they want something very different from a partner than what we are – Era says they very rarely approach people in this way unless they have a feeling that the other person might also be interested, and even then such connections are more likely to "just happen"[102]. Tuomo, on the other hand, even though he is quite specific in what kind of sex and sexual partners he prefers, says that it's not nearly as important to have matching sexual preferences if the relationship is primarily romantic in nature. He and Neva agree, however, that it might be more important to them if they preferred monogamous relationships instead of polyamory.[103]

What we want from our relationships, and from the sex we have, of course depends on our situation as well as our general preferences. It can even be difficult to define what counts as sex. According to Grosz, sexual encounters happen between two things ("between a hand and a breast, a tongue and a cunt, a mouth and food, a nose and a rose"), and not bodies as closed wholes, and are thus "a relation to a singularity or particularity, always specific, never generalizable" – they inscribe the body with pleasurable or unpleasant intensities that are produced in that moment rather than predetermined[104]. On a similar note, although in a more down-to-earth manner, Perttu points out that there is no recipe for "good sex" that would work for everyone everywhere – even something that's good for me with one partner might

101 Irigaray 2004, pp. 126.
102 K2, 47.-55.
103 K5, 39.-41.
104 Grosz 1995, pp. 182-183.

be unpleasant or boring with another one. They and Neva agree, though, that sex should be fun, and not too serious – it should not be a disaster if it's not always perfect. Perttu stresses, however, that in their mind there are a couple of things that are necessary: discussing your preferences with new partners before having sex (and with longer term partners as well, at least every once in a while), learning your limits and not compromising them.[105]

A lot of the preferences concerning sex and partner choices discussed in my interviews are in one way or another related to the non-normative specificities of transgender bodies. I will consider sexual practices from this perspective in more detail in chapter four. Another major theme in the texts are various BDSM practices: they appear as an important factor in the sexual preferences of almost all the people that I study. As such, I will next take a moment to consider such practices and their significance in the sexualities of my research objects.

POWER IN PLAY

With one exception, all the people I interviewed express an interest in sexual practices that can be seen to fall in the field of BDSM, which involves the distinct categories of b[ondage] and d[iscipline], d[ominance]/s[ubmission], and s[adism]/m[asochism][ix]. In their research on BDSM practices of lesbian-identifying women of color, Patricia L. Duncan observes that such practices are often equated with violence and coercion in feminist discourses, and that women who participate in them are sometimes viewed as being under a "false consciousness" caused by previous sexual and emotional violence. Duncan argues that, rather than always consolidating and renewing power hierarchies, some BDSM practices can in fact provide spaces for "resolving conflict and for reconceptualizing notions of social difference".[106] I am interested in examining the significance of BDSM, in the sexualities of the transgender bodies I'm studying, from this perspective as well. However, I also want to avoid portraying the political nature of sexual practices as something that supposedly legitimizes BDSM practices: sexual pleasure doesn't have to be subversive in order to be pleasurable.

Era states that the most important defining aspect of their sexual identification is that they are a master, meaning that they are sexually dominant[107]. Tapio also identifies with a specific

105 K3, 44., 107.-137.

ix In academic research on such practices, sadomasochism or s/m is often used as an umbrella term for all of these categories. (See for example Duncan 1996, pp. 90 and Pääkkölä 2013, pp. .) However, as BDSM is the term used, rather than s/m, by the people in my interview texts, I will stick to that term as well.

106 Duncan 1996, pp. 87.

107 K2, 67.

role in this sense, with the difference that he is submissive[108]. Perttu, on the other hand, strongly defines their sexuality in terms of BDSM practices, but with a different angle:

> [...] I use the term switch[x] because it leaves you with a lot of freedom... but still is clearly a BDSM term. Because I'm not interested in any other kind of sex, but on that field like a lot of different things...[109]

Era, Tapio and Perttu, as well as Tuomo[110], are primarily or exclusively interested in sex that involves BDSM practices, and also see this as important in determining their identification, whereas for Neva and Kaarna it seems to depend more on the situation and their partner whether they prefer BDSM or "vanilla", that is "non-BDSM", sex practices[111].

Susan Stryker, in *Dungeon Intimacies: The Poetics of Transsexual Sadomasochismu*, places a strong emphasis on BDSM communities as sites of significance[112]. Duncan also discusses to a length the importance of such communities to the identification processes of the people they interview, describing the conflicted feelings these people express in relation to social differences in the communities they have been involved in[113]. In my interview texts, even as various BDSM practices are primarily portrayed in a very positive light, communities that form around these practices do not appear as similarly important, and are rather viewed with suspicion by some: Perttu, for instance, says they have "stopped going to all those [BDSM community] things, because a majority of those people are jerks[114]". It seems that to the people I study, identifying with BDSM sexualities has more to do with individual tastes and practices than with participating in a particular sexual subculture.

Another important aspect of BDSM sexualities emerging in Duncan's research is the concept o f *scene*. It refers to a pattern of sexual interaction, in which the participants negotiate beforehand the specifics of what is going to happen: their needs and expectations, their respective roles in the following encounter, and the rules and conventions (such as safe words) to be adhered to.[115] To Perttu, such negotiations are an important practice with both new and old partners, as personal tastes and boundaries can vary from day to day:

> Because then one of you can say, for example, that they're a little tired today, so their pain threshold is lower than usual, so not that rough this time. [...] And in general I like it that there's a safe word in sex [...] so that it's specifically determined, that you can and you must say it, if all of a

108 K6, 42.
x In the BDSM context, meaning someone who is interested in playing both dominant and submissive roles, depending on the particular situation.
109 K3, 22.
110 K5, 31.-37.
111 K1, 54.-57.
112 Stryker 2008, pp. 36.
113 Duncan 1996, pp. 92-100.
114 K3, 24.
115 Duncan 1996, pp. 91.

sudden you feel like this doesn't feel good after all.[116]

Duncan also describes the BDSM scenes as "sites of transformation", where the participants are able to assume roles and identifications they can't or don't want to take on elsewhere, and to explore their past negative experiences and social power relations in ways that are empowering[117]. This is also referred to by Perttu, who sees the sexual scene as a safe space where they can experiment on different sides of themself, and to try on things they wouldn't want to experience in reality – and where gender, among other things, can be renegotiated.[118]

RETHINKING SEXUAL ORIENTATION

In thinking about the possibility of non-gender-based sexual orientations, I pointed out the importance of BDSM identifications to some of the people I interviewed. I return now to the question of alternative sexual orientations, looking at the specific case of BDSM roles to consider whether they could be seen to function as sexual orientations in some instances – and if so, what kind of identifications and sexual relationships would be implicated by such orientations?

In their Licentiate's thesis concerning sadomasochistic imagery in music, Anna-Elena Pääkkölä (2013a) observes that "[s]adomasochism itself is not tied to any sexual orientation[119]". In the discussions during Pääkkölä's Licentiate defence, Jack Halberstam further argued that sadomasochistic sexual practices can't function as a basis for emancipatory identity politics the same way sexual orientations can, as they are not similarly integral to subjective identities, and as people of "all sexual orientations" engage in such practices[120]. From the perspective presented by Halberstam, not only are sexual practice and sexual orientation distinctively different from each other in nature, but sexual orientation also clearly has more value as an identity-object than sexual practice. Pääkkölä's perception likewise assumes that gendered sexual orientation, as an object to identify-with, precedes not directly gender-related sexual practices in importance. I want to challenge this assumption and demonstrate that what kind of sex we like can sometimes be as relevant (or even more so) to our sexual identification, than the gender of the people with whom we like to have sex.

In *Female Masculinity*, Halberstam examines in detail the figure of the stone butch, who is

116 K3, 44.-46.
117 Duncan 1996, pp. 98-103.
118 K3, 100.-104.
119 Pääkkölä 2013a, pp. 8.
120 Pääkkölä 2013b.

defined not only by lesbian attraction and masculine expression, but also by sexual impenetrability, even untouchability: she will "make love to her femme partner", but will not allow her partner direct contact with her genitals.[121] The stone butch is a good example of sexual identification based on the *how* of sexual practice as well as, or at times even more importantly than, the *who with* of it. According to Duncan's exploration of lesbian BDSM, certain kinds of sexual practices and "the morals and ethics" involved in them make it possible for bisexual women, in addition to lesbians, to identify as "s/m dykes"[122] – another example of how sexual practices can be more significant as identity-objects than the (gendered) bodies we are drawn toward by desire.

Having established that to some bodies, the specific sexual practices they engage in are just as or even more important than the gender of their desire-objects, in determining their sexual identification, I return to my thoughts on sexual orientation in the beginning of this chapter. I first considered our sexual orientations as descriptive of our past experiences and/or future intentions concerning desire and sexual practice – who we have been and/or will probably be attracted to, and who we have had and/or will probably have sex in the future. Here, we are clearly dealing more with *who* than *how*, but this distinction becomes blurred in the interview texts. Era, for example, in describing their BDSM identification as a master, explains:

> [I]n a way I exclude... the same way in which someone who's monosexual[xi] automatically excludes people of certain gender, I exclude, like... other masters instantly. And I also feel more comfortable with people who are clearly sub[missive] than with people who are just, like, switches.[123]

Era's identification clearly functions as descriptive of what kind of people they're interested in sexually, as well as the certain kind of sex they prefere. Similarly, Perttu's use of "switch" as a term of identification indicates their (exclusive) preference for BDSM sexual practices as well as their interest in both dominant and submissive positions. It might also function as a social orientation in certain ways, insofar as its usage can reveal whether or not someone is familiar with the language related to BDSM practices, and help in determining possible mutual sexual interest in the future.

It seems to me that there is no reason why BDSM identifications such as switch, master, submissive and so forth could not be conceptualized as sexual orientations, as they certainly seem to function as such to certain people. They are not likely to be recognized as such by all, as gender is still understood as the primary factor in our sexual attractions by the wider

121 Halberstam 1998, p. 123-125.
122 Duncan 1996, pp. 89.
xi Someone who's sexually interested in one gender only, whether heterosexual or homosexual.
123 K2, 67.

society. Even so, as I earlier observed, orientation is about relation, and as such contextual – in some environments, this kind of descriptions might make more sense than gender-based orientations, in communicating and conceptualizing our sexualities. However, not everyone interested in BDSM sex identifies themselves in those terms. Neva, for example, seems reluctant to define their sexuality in this manner: In their discussion, Era assumes Neva to "be a sub[missive]", to which Neva replies in an uncertain manner that it "depends so much on the context and the people involved", leading Era to conclude that they are a switch[124]. In another situation, Neva explains that they have conflicted feelings concerning their "self-definition on the field of BDSM in general", as they were seen as a woman by others during their previous involvement in BDSM social circles[125]. Even though BDSM roles and preferences can be thought of as non-gender-based sexual orientations, the practices and the identifications related to them seem to carry gendered significations in other ways, which I will examine more in chapter four.

In this chapter I have demonstrated that sexual orientation, desire and practice cannot be simply conflated into each other; they are entangled in complex ways, always already connected, yet each capable of producing an excess not commensurable with the others. I have, at many instances, come into contact with issues regarding gender – it seems almost impossible to discuss sexuality without going into matters of gender as well. In the next chapter, I examine the specificities of transgender embodiment as they emerge in the experiences told in my interview texts, so as to be able to make sense of the mutual connections of gender and sexuality as productive and dependent of each other.

124 K2, 50.-53.
125 K3, 23.

3. APPROACHING TRANSGENDER BODIES

In this chapter, my focus is on the different meanings and dimensions of gender emerging in lived transgender experiences. I begin with a consideration of performativity, its importance to theorizing transgender embodiment, and a detailed examination of some aspects of performative gender appearing as distinct in the interviews I conducted. I then move on to matters of bodily becoming and take a look at the limits and potentialities of embodied transgender performances. In the third subchapter I take a step back from *the body* to gain a perspective on bodies in relation to each other in specific locations in space and time.

3.1 PERFORMATIVE TRANS/GENDER: SOME DISASSEMBLY REQUIRED

In their *Gender Trouble,* Judith Butler introduces the theory of gender as performatively produced. Instead of properties that bodies *have*, it consists of repeated actions that bodies *do*. These performances, and our interpretations of them, are directed by culturally specific understandings of gender – understandings that, in turn, are constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed by individual performances.[126] I find the idea of performative gender to be of critical importance to a transgender point of view: it breaks down the permanency and fatality of assigned-at-birth gender, and opens up the possibility of casting oneself in a different role. I will now take a look at how experiencing and expressing gender is described by the people I interviewed, considering how performativity can be read in these descriptions.

What is involved in performing trans/gender? Butler's description of gender as "the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame [...][127]" is not very specific, nor can it be: as the details of embodied gender performances are specific to their particular histories and cultures, they can only be approached contextually. To attend to such details and their roles in the production of specific trans/gender bodies, I examine gender performance as involving individual *identification*, cultural understandings of *masculinity/femininity*, personal *expression*, and regulative *norms* of the society. This isn't intended as an exhaustive analysis of the mechanics involved in performative gender, but as

126 Butler 2006, pp. 183-193.
127 Ibid., pp. 45.

a boundary-making practice relevant to the specific questions and materials I'm dealing with.

Gender *identification* refers to an individual's self-definition of their gender. Identifying with certain figures, groups and individuals, and not identifying with others, is important to the construction of social and political agencies. From a phenomenological viewpoint, identification gives us lines of direction to follow without always having to tread our own paths[128]. However, as demonstrated by Butler, our cultural myth of identities as "self-identical, persisting through time as the same, unified and internally coherent" produces theories and politics incapable of accounting for differences within individual and group identities[129]. For this reason, I use the term identification rather than identity, to emphasize both the nature of and individual agencies in gendered self-definition as an ongoing process.

Daniel identifies as a man. Perttu and Tapio define themselves as transmen, whereas Era identifies as an androgynous man. Tuomo describes his identification as "something like man-none-whatever", to which Neva feels they can relate to. Kaarna doesn't name themself a man in an explicit way, but uses words such as "guy" and "boy" to describe their identification.[130] This is, however, merely a simplified summary of the current situation. In the previous chapter, I examined sexual orientations as objects arriving through their backgrounds – gendered identification is no less historical, nor is it any more permanent, than orientation. As all of my interviewees were assigned female at birth, they were all brought up to believe they were girls. After that, they've gone through individual histories of gender: Era, Tapio and Neva all identified as androgynous for a while, from where Neva proceeded to identify simply as a man before coming to define themself in a more ambiguous manner, whereas Era decided on describing themself as an androgynous man after a long period of consideration[131]. Tuomo explains he more clearly felt himself a man around the time of his transition[132]. Kaarna, though they don't describe the history of their identification in an explicit manner, what emerges in between the lines is a story of ambiguity and exploration. Kaarna's narrative of their identification builds itself around body image and sexual experiences, and I will give it more thought in the fourth chapter. In contrast, Daniel switched from female to male identification very straightforwardly (excluding a short period of insecurity during which he highlighted being transgendered more explicitly)[133], and Perttu similarly has apparently identified in more or less the same

128 Ahmed 2006, pp. 1-24.
129 Butler 2006, pp. 22-46.
130 K1, 8. & 72.; K2, 155.; K3, 2.; K4, 6. & 32.; K5, 4.-6.; K6, 14.
131 K2, 14.-15.; K4, 29.; K5, 4.-6. K6, 5. & 14.
132 K5, 12.-16.
133 K4, 2.-8.

way since they stopped thinking of themself as a girl[134]. Still, they all have, as in the case of sexual orientation, experienced changes over time in their identification, and it similarly seems to me that some of them experience a certain contextual fluidity of gender in their current lives, as well. Furthermore, gender identification is not only related to who we identify *as*, but also to who we identify *with*, the two not always amounting to the same. Neva and Era, for example, tell they have felt more comfortable in male than female company in the past, even before they had begun to question their assigned gender, whereas Tuomo says he has never much enjoyed the company of masculine men, and rather spends time in groups consisting primarily of women and/or other-gender people[135]. Who we spend time with also has an effect on how we perform our gender and how our gender reads to others, as well as that how open we feel able to be about our gendered histories. I will return to the specifics of these group identifications, as well as the changes in our identifications, in later discussions.

Butler is occasionally criticized for highlighting individual performances and ignoring realities of power and matter in her writing. While Butler explicitly states that performativity does not equal choice, and that bodies *do* matter, their critics argue for example that their focus is too much on drag and other forms of gender parody.[136] Because of this, I believe it to be important to distinguish the *expression* of gendered identification as an element (and not the whole) of performative gender. By expression, I refer to the conscious acts and styles, perceivable by others, that communicate what kind of female/male/other-gender individuals we are. That these acts are conscious doesn't necessarily mean that they are intentional as expressions of gender: Tuomo considers his beard more a matter of personal style than expressing his gender. However, this still produces a gendering effect – Tuomo finds it somewhat problematic that facial hair is understood very explicitly as masculine, “a bit like having a penis in your face”.[137]

In the interviews, concepts of *masculinity* and *femininity* play a big role in how people describe their gendered expression. Perttu, for example, tells they tried to overcompensate conflicted experiences of gender identification before their transition by emphasized feminine expression[138]. Jack Halberstam, in *Female Masculinity* (1998), proposes female and male masculinities as independent of each other (instead of female masculinity mimicking

134 K3, 2.-10.
135 K2, 82.-84.; K5, 18., 66. & 80.
136 See Ramazanoğlu & Holland 2002, pp. 99-100, Lykke 2010.
137 K5, 122.
138 K3, 2.

maleness), basing his argument on a number of historical and cultural examples[139]. I believe that a similar argument can be made about male and female femininities – after all, femininity and masculinity are only given meaning in relation to one another[140].

The idea of distinct female masculinities and male femininities has interesting consequences when read diffractively with the theory of performative gender: According to Butler's reading of Simone de Beauvoir's famous proposal that one is not born a woman, but rather becomes one, there are no guarantees that an individual becoming a woman has a body traditionally seen as female[141]. This in mind, if female masculinity (and thus male femininity as well) is not only about female bodies performing masculinities, but a distinctive kind of masculinity individual of male masculinity, as Halberstam argues, it becomes possible to conceive of male bodies performing female masculinities or femininities, and female bodies performing male femininities or masculinities. I will hold this thought for now, to return to and elaborate on it when discussing bodies and their relations to others.

An understanding of masculinity and femininity as separate from (but connected to) one's experienced gender was voiced in most of my interviews. Tuomo also experiences irritation about masculinity being seen as a value in itself in AFAB transgender people's social circles:

> I was a bit like that myself at some point, but... Then I was like, what's so bad about being feminine? It doesn't take my gender away from me, and I actually think it's pretty nice being kind of feminine in some ways.[142]

Kaarna, Perttu, Tuomo and Neva all describe themselves as feminine to some degree, and think of it as a positive part of their personalities[143]. Kaarna even associates their femininity with transvestism: "[...] this is nothing but clear transvestism, [...] so clearly femme that no one could mistake it for my clothing, were I a masculine woman. I try to break that kind of [boundaries], and in the end of the day I simply like eyeliner[144]."

While it would be easy to read this femininity as a way to make up for not-quite-successful masculinity, that doesn't seem to be the case. Tuomo and Neva both feel, instead, that they currently (successfully) perform themselves in a more masculine manner than they identify as. Failure, in their case, seems more connected to performing femininity than masculinity: Both say that they hesitate to express their femininity as much as they'd like. According to Neva, this is partially a matter of styling skills in their personal case, of understanding what

139 Halberstam 1998, pp. 3-139.
140 See Connell & Messerschmidt, p. 848.
141 Butler 2006, pp. 23.
142 K5, 113.-118.
143 K1, 72.; K3, 10.; K5, 118.-120.
144 K1, 87.

kind of femininity would look good on them. Masculine presentation also has felt, in earlier stages of their transition, easier to Neva, who says they haven't yet had the time or the energy to figure out ways to incorporate more feminine elements into their expression. Tuomo has doubts about expressing his femininity in a visible manner, as he feels it might attract unwanted attention.[145] It is clear that the gendered expression of identification is limited by the *norms* of our society.

On the other hand, expressing femininity or masculinity by wearing a skirt or a tuxedo is in fact made possible by the very same norms. Following Butler's interpretation of Michel Foucault's theories about power as productive[146], the prohibition of men wearing skirts or women wearing tuxedos is precisely that which enables such acts as subversive. As femininity is normatively equated with being a woman and masculinity with being a man, and as skirts are designated as women's clothing and tuxedos as men's, wearing them produces feminine and masculine effects, respectively. Even so, the equation persists, and cultural stereotypes about transgender bodies also play their part: Tuomo is concerned that feminine expression would result in him being labeled a transvestite – which he sees as not at all corresponding to his identification, as he understands transvestism to be about expressing some kind of female identification, whereas he would like to express feminine maleness[147].

SUCCESS AND FAILURE IN PERFORMANCES OF GENDER

Difficulties in having our gender expression interpreted the way we'd like highlights the fact that gender is always performed in and through our relations to other bodies. It is not only about doing things that are culturally designated as masculine or feminine, or things that women or men do: our performances of trans/gender are constantly being judged as successful or failing by how they are received and interpreted.

In this sense, the concepts of *passing* and *blending*, which both refer to being read by others into one's intended gender[148], are of vital importance. While they carry somewhat different connotations, they are used in the same way by different people in my interviews, and I have thus chosen to not make a distinction between them here. In the experiences told in the interviews, passing/blending is mainly portrayed as a positive goal of medical and social

145 K1, 86.; K5, 119.-122.
146 Butler 2006, pp. 18-34.
147 K5, 135.
148 Kondelin 2012, pp. 8-11.

transitioning[149]. On the other hand, especially Kaarna is critical toward discourses of passing, finding the concept repulsive[150], and others have observed unexpected consequences resulting from passing/blending on a practical level[151]. Even so, all the people I study express certain preferences concerning the interpretation of their gender performances.

While performance as a word might, especially in connection to transgender bodies, involve unfortunate implications, such as questions of "authentic" and "fake" gender, it also allows for the exploration of some useful analytical tools. Maaike Bleeker (2009), examining gender in theatrical performances, employs a proposal by Susan Foster to make

> a distinction between, on the one hand, gender as a cultural historical specific *choreography* of behaviour and means of expression and, on the other, gender as the *performance* of an individual who carries out these patterns consciously or unconsciously, and consciously or unconsciously varies them and gives them a personal twist.[152]

I find this somewhat more literally theatrical way of thinking about gender performances especially useful in analyzing passing/blending – after all, passing can be conceptualized as successful, that is to say believable, performance of gender. Our identification, here, becomes the role we aim to perform. (Or we might choose to perform some other role, for different reasons – I will return to this thought later.) Our knowledge of the cultural conventions of gender in our environment gives us the choreography for the part we are going to play – though depending on our familiarity with the part, we still might have to do some research. It is important to note that identification and the wish to be gendered accordingly by others relate to each other in a more complex way than the latter always following the former: Tapio, after having earlier identified himself as a transgender man and then trying to ignore that identification for many years, asked himself how he would like to identify into and express gender. The answer was that he would like to be seen as a man by others, which pointed him to a direction where his identification as a transgender man eventually re-emerged[153]. In Kaarna's account, in turn, their wish to be seen in a certain gendered way and their self-definition as an androgynous transmasculine person appeared almost simultaneously, "at that very second" they first encountered another person who identified that way and visibly expressed their identification[154].

Performing gender in a new way to a successful outcome, just like performing any new theatrical role, requires practice. We might not be aware of some ways we move our body

149 K1, 24.-30.; K2, 45. & 63.; K6, 14.
150 K1, 89.
151 K2, 47.-55.; K5, 65.-103.; K6, 42.
152 Bleeker 2009, pp. 175.
153 K6, 4. & 14.
154 K1, 6.

that affect our performance: Neva explains they have noticed, along the way of their transition, that they have many habits typical to women, such as feminine speech patterns and their way of doing smalltalk, that they prior to their gender reassignment didn't even know to exist[155]. Even with knowledge of the choreography and a lot of practice, casting choices matter. Bleeker critically examines the tradition of women performing the name role of James Barrie's famous play *Peter Pan* and asks, citing Marjorie Garber: "Why is Peter Pan a woman?" Bleeker observes that, on the practical level, this boils down to bodily difference: adult women, as opposed to adult men, can "convincingly pass themselves off as young men". On a similar note, the exceptional occasions of a woman having been cast to play Shakespeare's Hamlet have involved an interpretation of Hamlet as a youth instead of a mature man.[156] Kaarna also remarks on how AFAB transgender people can often pass as youths but not adult men: "[...] you look odd on a general level, or maybe a bit like a teenage boy. And that category is usually one that people can slip into.[157]"

Not every body can pass as any character, then. And further still, the body performing a certain role affects the interpretation of the performance. However, the materiality of our bodies is not merely a stable and permanent frame limiting and directing a sociocultural performance of gender. Karen Barad formulates a posthumanist reading of performativity, proposing that instead of material bodies moving in social and cultural performances, materiality is performatively produced in and of itself. According to Barad, matter is not "immutable or passive", as it is "not a thing, but a doing".[158] Thus, the materiality of the body is as integral a part of our performances as the clothes we wear and the names we use. I will elaborate on this materiality and the emergence of transgender embodiment in 3.2.

A successful gender performance doesn't only depend on the body playing the part and the amount of practice had. The reception of our performances relies also on our audience's ability to read and recognize the role presented. According to Butler, gender performance has to "in some sense institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire[ ]" to appear as legible. This normativity, however, also produces those "spectres of discontinuity and incoherence" it seeks to prohibit, making it possible to think of them in relation to existing norms.[159] This allows for some alternatives to simply "man" or "woman" as goals of passing/blending to appear as more realistic, such as the one assumed by Perttu: "[...] I like it if people can't determine my gender, but if they

155 K5, 83.-91.
156 Bleeker 2009, pp. 167-170.
157 K1, 89.
158 Barad 2003, pp. 808-822.
159 Butler 2006, pp. 23.

reach a conclusion, I'd prefer it to be that I'm a man.[160]”

As suggested by Tuomo and Neva's issues with feminine expression I described earlier, some performances can be more difficult to execute successfully than others. Expressing femininity in certain ways as a male body without unintentionally communicating an effort to look like a woman can be a struggle, as can signaling transgender identification as an AFAB body without presenting oneself in an overly masculine way[161]. Halberstam argues that it is in general easier to not look like a woman than to not look like a man[162], but at least Kaarna and Perttu's experiences seem to contest that: Perttu currently wears a beard to avoid “constant girling”, but says that such gendering happens quite often to them, regardless[163]. According to Kaarna, certain masculine gestures and styles of clothing easily read as butch lesbian instead of male[164]. I am thus inclined to believe that our bodies, and the way they relate to cultural norms, are important factors in how much work it takes to look, or to not look, like a man or a woman.

3.2 EMERGING BODIES

In the previous subchapter I considered expression, identification, gender norms and masculinity/femininity, all of which acquire significance in and through social relations, as areas of trans/gender choreographies and their performance. I will now consider them in terms of embodiment and material discourses, making connections to the thoughts on bodily matters discussed in the interview texts. I consider the makings of a (trans)gendered body, as well as the bodily transformations involved in some transgender becomings, from the perspectives of posthumanist performativity and the bathroom problem posed in Halberstam's *Female Masculinity*. I also discuss some critiques of transgender identifications and body modifications, posed by feminist writers, from the perspective of sexual difference and the body.

GENDERED BODIES, GENDERING BODIES

Our bodies are gendered, and gender us, in multiple ways. The body, in its positioning in the

160 K4, 2.
161 K1, 85.
162 Halberstam 1998, pp. 28.
163 K3, 36.
164 K1, 89.

taxonomies determined by certain biological qualities, is often thought to tell the truth about our gender. The biological gender is, however, a complicated phenomenon, especially as "the fundamental truth" about an individual's gender: which gendered biological quality or phenomenon is it that has the final say in how a body should be classified? I will take a look at the different ways our bodies partake in us assuming a gender on ourselves and others, and consider their significance in theorizing transgender becomings.

Our bodies affect how we are read into gender by others, beginning at the very moment we are born, when we get assigned to a gender based on our genital morphology. On the other hand, the way we interpret someone's gender performance leads us to certain assumptions about their body. Era's relatively recent transition and their resulting ability to blend in with men has led them to think about how people might now have certain expectations concerning their body: "Will I have to have the conversation at some point, that 'oh by the way' [...] What's inside my pants... it is what it is.[165]" So gender is supposedly determined by the body, which allows for us to assume a certain kind of body when we observe a certain kind of gender performance. Insofar as we all grow up to own the gender determined by our genital anatomy and our anatomy stays more or less the same for the duration of our lives, this works just fine. However, by now it seems obvious that this is not how reality works.

I return to Butler, and the notion that it is in no way certain that the body becoming a woman is what is normatively understood to be a female body. Following this notion, logically, we can neither be certain that a body that appears female is going to become a woman. From what is visible to us, in our daily lives, of most of the bodies we encounter, we have no way of being certain what their genitals are like – nor is that knowledge relevant to us, unless we are interested in and/or likely to enter into a sexual relationship with them. Genitals, though often understood to be the central locus of gender, can't be seen from a pragmatic angle as central to the performance of gender in the daily relations of our embodied selves. -reproductive organs: testicles, wombs and ovaries – does a woman who's had to have their womb and ovaries removed stop being a woman, or a man who lost his testicles to be a man? Janice Raymond, in her infamous text *The Transsexual Empire*, defines chromosomal sex as the fundamental truth about biological gender, thus declaring it biologically impossible to "convert a person surgically to the opposite sex", as we can't alter our chromosomes[166].

As few of us have actually had our chromosomes tested, they seem like a somewhat impractical signifier of an individual's true nature, whereas the so called sex hormones,

165 K2, 47.-49.
166 Raymond 1994, pp. 6-10.

namely testosterone and estrogen, yet another biological factor determining our gender, play an important role in both our cultural understanding of masculinity and femininity and the becoming of many living transgender bodies. In their article *Sex, Power and Ontology: Exploring the Performativity of Hormones* (2013), Sari Irni examines the functions of these gendered and gendering hormones from the perspective of posthumanist performativity. With examples such as the affective reactions of a group of women and men, having their testosterone levels tested and announced in a live radio discussion, Irni demonstrates that "the phenomenon of 'the effects of sex hormones' appears not only as chemical effects within bodies, or even chemical effects that cross the boundaries of what is taken as a human body". The amount of gender(ed/ing) hormones in our bloodstream, in addition to chemically affecting the femininity/masculinity of the form of our body, if made known to us can in fact affect how masculine or feminine we *feel* or *believe* ourselves and others to be.[167]

In addition to the actions they take and the clothes they wear, bodies get characterized as masculine and feminine according to their form. Wide shoulders, narrow hips, angular jaw and being tall, for example, are understood as masculine, whereas narrow shoulders, wide hips, round jawline and being short are seen as feminine.[168] It also seems possible not only to imagine, but also actualize, bodies that appear as androgynous: in addition to intersex bodies, which can also manifest ambiguity in genital morphology, bodies that are classified as unambiguously female or male at birth can present a form that doesn't read obviously as male or female when clothed[169]. Halberstam, in his consideration of the so-called bathroom problem frequently faced by "many androgynous or masculine women", is apparently discussing (female) masculinity specifically as a quality of the body's form: it is women who *look like* men who get mistaken for men in public restrooms, not women who *behave like* men[170]. (Of course, from the perspective of gender as performative, "looking like" and "behaving like" can hardly be simply told apart from each other.) From this perspective, taking into account Halberstam's repeated personal experiences with being mistaken for a man in women's restrooms[171], it becomes easier to understand the position from which he writes: "It is remarkably easy in this society not to look like a woman. It is relatively difficult, by comparison, not to look like a man[.][172]" As a synthesis of Halberstam's analysis and the experiences of Kaarna, Perttu, Tuomo and Neva, I would conclude that *for bodies that conform with what is culturally understood as a masculine form*, it is easy to not look

167 Irni 2013.
168 Kinnunen 2008, pp. 165-233.
169 See Prosser 1998, pp. 2-3.
170 Halberstam 1998, pp. 20-21.
171 Ibid., pp. 20.
172 Ibid., pp. 28.

like a woman, whereas it can be far more challenging for bodies that conform with what is understood as a female form, and vice versa.

If “looking like a man” refers to masculinity of a body's form and “behaving like a man” refers to masculinity of the ways the body moves, what is their relationship to each other? How do we gender bodies that “look like women”, yet “behave like men”, or vice versa? While certain acts and styles are culturally gendered in certain ways, they do not necessarily produce the same gendering effects on every body. In other words, different bodies participate in the performance of gender in different ways. Kaarna, who hasn't had any medical treatments that would masculinize their body, says that feminine expression can make them seem gender confirming as a woman, especially to people who aren't aware of their transgender identification[173]. On the other hand, with feminine expression Tuomo is more concerned about looking like a stereotypical transvestite or effeminate gay man than a woman – he transitioned several years ago, has had breast removal surgery and a few years of testosterone treatment, wears a beard – and passes as a man in his daily life[174].

It would seem that the gendered form of a body is privileged, over gendered the ways it moves, as a source of information in interpreting any embodied performance of gender. This does not mean, however, that it is impossible for feminine bodies to pass as men or the other way round, but it seems likely to be “relatively difficult”, as Halberstam puts it, and as such, to require a thoroughly thought out choreography and more practice. On the other hand, as I observed before, the form of a body can also be characterized as androgynous – not distinguishable as male or female. However, our cultural classification of gender traditionally only allows for bodies to emerge as either men or women[175]. An androgynous body has to be recognizable as one or the other, lest it become what is described by Halberstam as a gender deviant: “not-man and not-woman, [...but] also not androgynous or in-between”[176]. It seems reasonable to me to assume that, in such cases, the ways the body moves, speaks and positions itself in relation to others becomes extremely relevant. While this makes it very difficult to pass as something else than man or woman, on the other hand it allows also for such transgender bodies, that are not distinctively masculine or feminine in form, to pass/blend as men or women.

The body, it seems, is in many ways integral to determining how gender performances are enacted, read and interpreted. It is thus important to understand that form and matter are

173 K1, 85.
174 K5, 125.-135.; I5.
175 Butler 2006, pp. 1-46.
176 Halberstam 1998, pp. 21.

neither immutable nor passive; bodies transform themselves, and are transformed by others, all the time. I will next consider the materiality of the body in gender performances as it undergoes changes, the nature and conditions of such changes, and the effects of those changes on lived transgender embodiment.

TRANSFORMING MATTER

Transitioning into gender as a process involving bodily transformations is not a phenomenon reserved for (some) transgender bodies: Nobody is born with a woman's or a man's body. As we are assigned to gender at birth, we first emerge as boys and girls, anatomically differentiated by genitals only[xii]. Any and all other qualities that cause a body to appear as a woman's or a man's develop later – even normative gender, by nature, involves changes in the body, and the failure of such change to present itself is taken as a sign of defect. In puberty, the materiality of the body certainly seems to have an agency independent of its inhabitant's will. Perttu and Daniel describe a sense of disorientation, even betrayal, brought on by the growth of their breasts, and having tried to ignore the changing of their bodies in the hopes that it would stop, or at least feel less real[177]. In this sense, the materiality and agency of the body appear as restrictions to performing gender.

Writing about performativity, Caroline Ramazanoğlu and Janet Holland posit performing "[f]emininity, masculinity, intersexuality, being ill" in different ways as relatively easy, compared to the more difficult "shifting sex [which] requires chemical and surgical intervention"[178]. This way of looking at the biological as "a constraint on the social", as observed by Riki Lane, re/produces the split between the active social gender and the passive biological sex[179], in this case to the effect of presenting performativity as more limited than it need be. We can merely replace "but" with "and" to create a very different approach, where different qualities of the body can be performed in different ways, *and* even the matter of the body can be performed differently with a little help from chemical and surgical intervention.

Lane considers it especially important to transgender studies that we are able to understand the biological as well as the social as productive of diversity, not uniformity[180]. Such a view

xii A certain percentage of us are intersexed, born with more or less ambiguously gendered bodies. However, in most countries, even intersex bodies are classified at birth as either male or female, and ambiguous genitals are often surgically altered to appear "more normal".

177 K3, 2.; K4, 2.
178 Ramazanoğlu & Holland 2002, pp. 100.
179 Lane 2009, pp. 141.
180 Lane 2009, pp. 143-146.

on the biological is exemplified in Grosz's refigurations of Charles Darwin's evolution theories: in the biological nature, there is a fundamental unstability, a constant production of excess to the requirements of survival, causing

> increasing specialization and bifurcation or differentiation of life forms from each other, the elaboration and development of profoundly variable morphologies and bodily forms, but, above all, in their becoming-artistic, in their self-transformations, which exceed the bare requirements of existence[181].

Quite the opposite of setting up predeterminations and destinies, biology creates change and differentiation, transforming life forms which in turn transform themselves. Bodily matter, then, has an agency of its own, and sometimes employs that agency in ways that surprise us, disappoint us, or inhibit us. Yet this agency, this unstable and transformative quality of matter, can also empower us to exceed the restrictions and boundaries defined by cultural norms. I will move on to examine the ways different bodily transformations work in the performative production of transgender embodiment.

To Butler, expressing gender is always already an act of creating and consolidating that gendered identity it is merely supposed to convey[182]. This mechanism is apparent in the way Kaarna tells about the development of their gender identification: “I think I started to get this whole business when I began to bind [my breasts], and after that I never went back to not binding for a single day.“ Kaarna explains that for the first two weeks, they only bound their breasts at home, but then progressed to wear a binder everywhere, as they felt they were going in the right direction. They feel that presenting their body as more masculine has had an affirmative effect on their experience of gender:

> And, at least in my opinion, my gender identity has gotten stronger as I've come to look more like my body, I mean with clothes on, more like myself. And it did, in my opinion, require for me to realize that “hey, this is it”, this is the kind of imaginary body ideals I have, and that I could just try to achieve them in a really determined way. And that has made it stronger, that I still have these ideals, and that actually my ideals go even further, or something[183].

According to Salamon, the experience of the body is only accessible through a mental body image[184]. Kaarna's experience, however, seems to suggest a more reciprocal relationship between the body and its image: their identification with certain “imaginary body ideals” is confirmed and strengthened by performing their body according to those ideals. Their narrative also demonstrates the intra-active relationship between identification, cultural gender concepts and the matter of the body: Kaarna, directed by an uncertain sense of their

181 Grosz 2008, pp. 6-7.
182 Butler 2006, pp. 2-8.
183 K1, 16.
184 Salamon 2010, pp. 147.

identification and the cultural choreographies to performing such a role, tries binding their breasts, which after a short while confirms to them that this kind of gender identification and expression are something they can be comfortable with. The curious agency of the body's materiality is made noticeable: the actualization of a certain body form is able to provide support, of which Kaarna was not certain before going for it.

Also made visible by Kaarna's experience is that not all of the bodily changes potentially involved in transgender performances require medical intervention. This is easy to forget: when gender reassignment as a process is discussed, the focus is often on medical treatments, especially (genital) surgeries. I believe this to be connected to the persistent understanding of the body as a closed whole, and of gender as natural and fundamental to it, together causing doubt, curiosity, disdain and anger to emerge as responses to the possibility of medical procedures able to transform the immutable. Medical intervention to the gendered materiality of the body is repeatedly portrayed as unnatural, dangerous, dramatic, tragic or even in some way malicious. As an extreme example of this, Raymond sees transgender bodies as synthetic products, "radically at odds with their internal environment", composing of "[s]ynthetic parts, such as chemical hormones and surgical artifacts of false vaginas and breasts"[185]. Also Grosz, despite of her views on the biological nature as a site of constant change, sees transgender body modifications as "a misguided project", as demonstrated by Salamon: according to Grosz, the transformations achievable by surgical and chemical intervention are crude (and unable to truly make "the transsexual" feel like or become a woman), usually leaving the individual undergoing such transformations disappointed in the end.[186]

Not very surprisingly, hormonal and surgical body modification are portrayed in a very different light by the people I interviewed: Tapio describes the treatments he has undergone as "nice", and tells that the strong dysphoria he used to experience in connection to sexuality only began to dissipate after he'd had top surgery.[187] Perttu says they like their body very much, and haven't had any complaints since they "got hormones and had mastectomy done"[188], and also Kaarna, who is looking forward to getting their testosterone prescription, has given a lot of thought to the effects of the treatment, and their ability to modify their body to better correspond to their self-image[189]. Bodily transformation, here, is seen as a positive turning point in the histories and futures of these transgender lives.

185 Raymond 1994, pp. 165.
186 Salamon 2010, pp. 152-155.
187 K6, 14. & 40.
188 K4, 36.
189 K1, 18.

3.3 TRANSGENDER BODIES IN SPACE AND TIME

Gender is performed in and through social relations: we emerge as bodies, and are gendered as bodies, in relation to other bodies, objects, and the histories of what brought us all together in this time and place. Salamon, in response to Jason Cromwell's interpretation of performativity, points out that the "social" here doesn't only refer to literal situations where other bodies are present – we are not able to shut the social out just by shutting the door to our room, as shutting the world out "does not make it go away"[190]. I examine the spatial and temporal specificities of transgender embodiment, and the relations of transgender bodies to each other and to other kind of bodies, from the perspective of queer phenomenology.

OUT OF PLACE, OUT OF BODY

How do we become transgender? In 3.2 I remarked that we are assigned a gender at birth, in most cases based solely on our genital morphology. From that moment on, we are treated as members of our assigned gender, which more or less dictates what we are supposed to be like, be interested in and grow up to be like, as well as who we are expected to be attracted to when we get older. The persistent popular narrative of transgender identification involves a belief that the transgender individuals' experiences of conflicted gender identification always or at least usually first emerge during their early childhood years. This is reflected, for example, in the Swedish legislation regulating the legal gender change of transgender individuals, in which one condition of the change is that the individual has "since their youth felt that they belong to the other gender"[191]. Some transgender individuals indeed feel this way: Daniel, though he couldn't make a connection between his experiences and "being a boy" as a child, says that he did from early on visibly and audibly express that he didn't feel like he was a girl, nor did he want to be[192]. Not all transgender bodies share this kind of an experience, though. Tuomo, for example, states that he doesn't feel like he would have been a boy from the start, and that he didn't really think about these things at all as a child: "So in that sense I might say that I probably was a girl as a child.[193]"

In most of my interview texts, the first appearance of some kind of transgender experience is

190 Salamon 2010, pp. 80-81.
191 Bremer 2010, pp. 97.
192 K4, 2.
193 K5, 2.

traced back to puberty and/or late teens, and while Daniel tells he did experience some kind of gender trouble as a child as well, it became more intense and difficult to deal with after the onset of puberty[194]. In the narratives of Daniel, Tuomo, Neva, Tapio and Perttu, their experiences during their teen years also include some forms of transgender identification[195], whereas Era says they didn't make the connection between their own experiences and transgender identities until their early twenties: "Umm, I didn't have, like, words for my experience of gender until I was over twenty. So the way it manifested before was only as a feeling of dysphoria, ever since I was eleven, at latest.[196]" The experience of *gender dysphoria* is also explicitly named as such by Neva and Tapio, and implicitly described by the others as well. Examples of what I read as articulations of dysphoria in the texts include feelings self-hatred and hatred of one's body[197], frustration and helplessness caused by being constantly misgendered by others[198], and inability to connect with one's own body and those of the others around oneself[199].

The concept of gender dysphoria is presented and dealt with in various different ways in the different texts of transgender studies. It has occasionally been equated with having a gendered identification or experiences that are at odds with one's assigned gender and/or their material body – in these approaches, gender dysphoria is usually defined as something all bodies can experience, and especially intense dysphoria might cause people to seek gender reassignment[200]. Jamison Green, as interpreted by Salamon, considers dysphoria as an internal feeling that is central to a transsexual body's sense of self[201]. Both these approaches are problematic in some ways: Equating dysphoria with non-selfsame gender performance either implies that dysphoria by definition isn't necessarily an unpleasant feeling, or that gender incongruence can only be unpleasant. Defining dysphoria as the source of transgender subjectivity, on the other hand, has inherently negative implications regarding transgender agencies, as demonstrated by Salamon[202]. Furthermore, both approaches focus on dysphoria insofar as it defines the transgender body rather than concerning themselves with dysphoria itself.

What is it we feel when we experience gender dysphoria? How does it manifest itself in transgender embodiment, and what does it do? The dysphoric experiences in my interview

194 K4, 2.
195 K2, 26.; K3, 2.; K4, 2.-4.; K4, 2.-4.; K5, 4; K6, 4.
196 K2, 1.
197 K2, 15. & 45.; K6, 4.
198 K1, 24.
199 K4, 120.-122.
200 See for example Halberstam 1998, pp. 152, Salamon 2010, pp. 164-165.
201 Salamon 2010, pp. 83.
202 Ibid., pp. 83-84.

texts relate to different situations and different body parts, and cause feelings of different kinds and intensities. As they can, however, all be understood as being produced in bodily relations (a transgender body's relation to itself, to objects, to other bodies, to the spaces it inhabits etc.), it seems appropriate to approach them from the perspective of queer phenomenology. I employ Ahmed's concept of disorientation in looking at dysphoria as a bodily feeling that "involves failed orientations: bodies inhabit spaces that do not extend their shape, or use objects that do not extend their reach"[203]. I explore dysphoria as a bodily experience of disorientation through three specific kinds of spatial relation: *the body out of place, out of body* and *in the wrong body*.

According to Ahmed, being orientated means being aware of our location, knowing what is around us, and being able to find our way in the world. It also involves our familiarity, the intimacy of our bodies and their dwelling places. Is the "here" of our bodies such that we can see what's ahead of us, a point "from which the world unfolds" and from which we can extend the reach of our body toward the objects and others we are facing? Becoming disorientated, then, involves a loss of orientation, or coming to be aware of orientation "as something we do not have".[204] Moments of disorientation can "throw the world up, or throw the body from its ground", thus making the body lose support and leaving it unable to relate to the world until it can find steady ground and reorientate itself.[205] Not only does the disoriented body not always find its foothold, sometimes the environment seems actively hostile, pulling the carpet away (yet again) from under the body's feet. Daniel says he experienced the bodily changes brought on him by puberty as a wrong *done to* him, against him, and just couldn't understand why this was happening to him: "[...] and as I still quite firmly believed in God at that point, I wondered if I was being tested or something.[206]"

Becoming orientated can, as observed by Ahmed, involve extending our bodies into space, thus becoming a part of that space, making it familiar instead of strange, as we saturate it with our bodily matter. If the space, however, fails to extend our bodies, or if we fail to extend ourselves, we become disorientated – and as Ahmed points out, "[s]ome spaces extend certain bodies and simply do not leave room for others".[207] From this perspective, gender dysphoria can be thought of as a result of our being in a place where the space does not support the success of our gender performance, or does not even allow acts that might compose a performance that is "out of line". Disorientation can be the cause or effect of

203 Ahmed 2006, pp. 160.
204 Ibid., pp. 1-8.
205 Ibid., 157-158.
206 K4, 2.
207 Ahmed 2006, pp. 11.

losing our place[208]. Tapio, describing his past relationship, explains that he was at that time constantly looking for his own place in the gender system, and that he did not feel he was given enough *space* to do it; to wander back and forth on the "spectrum of gender", to constantly change his location in the search for a comfortable place[209].

Daniel says he didn't experience himself as a bodily whole prior to his transition, that his body "merely became some kind of a rack to hold up the head", no longer a part of him or his sense of self[210]. Being disorientated, unable to find support, can leave the body "lost, undone, thrown". Failing to extend itself in a way that "follows the vertical and horizontal axes" of the world around it, to be "upright, straight, and in line", the body becomes an object.[211] To be able to retain subjectivity in such a situation, we might be required to disconnect ourselves from our bodies, the way Daniel seems to have done. The body, thus, remains an object that gets left behind, whereas the self emerges as disembodied, as a subject out of body.

Gender dysphoria, and the transgender experience in general, is often explained in popular depictions as "being in the wrong body". This kind of a narrative is employed by Tapio, who describes his experiences of dysphoria as a sense of *wrongness* at many instances: he felt he was "in the wrong body" or "a wrong kind of person", and he regularly cried as he saw himself in the mirror, as his reflection "looked wrong" to him[212]. "The wrong body", however, should perhaps be interpreted as "a wrong kind of body", a body that fails to extend itself in certain ways, or extends itself in ways that tend to result in disorientation.

According to Ahmed, phenomenology emphasizes "the lived experience of inhabiting a body"[213]. Looking at the body as an inhabitable place, we can gain an important perspective to the relationship between being "out of the body" and being in "the wrong kind of body". Kaarna describes experiences of bodily disconnection that, like those told by Daniel, understood as feelings of being out of one's body, unable to inhabit it[214]. The thought that entered their mind when they first encountered "another transmasculine person" – "Why don't people see me like that?" – can be read as a recognition of what kind of a body might be inhabitable, even become home. This kind of recognition transforms "a body that is not" into "a wrong kind of body", allowing perhaps for the possibility of inhabiting that body and

208 Ibid., pp. 160.
209 K6, 22.
210 K4, 2.
211 Ahmed 2006, pp. 155-159.
212 K6, 4.
213 Ahmed 2006, pp. 2.
214 K1, 8. & 66.

trying to make it home.

Dysphoria can limit the daily activities of transgender bodies in many ways. Era, for example, tells that at some point they used to only go running at night, to avoid being seen by other people[215], and Daniel also says that he distanced himself from social contact as his dysphoria got worse, and even with the few friends he had, felt incapable of physical closeness such as hugging[216]. The fear of dysphoric moments, such as being misgendered or becoming physically aware (through being touched by another) of body parts that feel wrong, emerges as a dysphoric feeling in itself, as a constant awareness of our lack of orientation. As Ahmed remarks, "bodies that experience being out of place might need to be orientated[217]", not to mention bodies out of themselves. I will next consider the possibilities of reorientating oneself as a transgender body.

BODILY REORIENTATIONS

How do transgender bodies deal with dysphoria? How can we reorientate ourselves? While gender reassignment, from the perspective of transgender studies, seems like the obvious way for transgender bodies to "seek to (re)ground themselves[218]", it doesn't always present itself as an available path to take. I will consider the specificities of transitioning as a means of reorientation in a moment; first, I take a look at some of the alternative strategies explored by the people I interviewed.

Perttu, Era and Neva talk about "overcompensation" as a coping method: they all explain they have at some point tried to deal with feelings of dysphoria by performing feminine womanhood to an excess[219].

> Neva: [W]hen, despite all the promising warnings by my mom, my breasts grew to turn out quite big and stuff like that. So the way I dealt with was like, "I'm so fucking okay with this body, everyone, look at me and see how okay I am!"[220]

Tapio, after first naming himself a transgender man in his late teens, kept "moving around on the gender spectrum", and experimented with different ways of being woman for ten years before deciding to transition[221]. Eventually, all of them failed to find "a place where they

215 K2, 45.
216 K4, 2.
217 Ahmed 2006, pp. 158.
218 Ibid., pp. 158.
219 K2, 9.; K3, 2. & 9.
220 K3, 15.
221 K6, 4., 14. & 22.

[could] feel comfortable and safe in the world[222]" on the female domain of the gender spectrum. In such cases, as Ahmed writes, "disorientation cannot simply be overcome by the 'force' of the vertical": it has become that which is given[223].

In all the interview narratives, the existence of transgender identifications and the possibility of gender reassignment emerge as critically important knowledges, offering an explanation for the disorientation experienced by transgender bodies, as well as a way to become reorientated. In his early teens, Daniel didn't know about the existence of transgender people, and thus had great difficulties in understanding his experiences and communicating them to others. In one conversation with his friends, he'd exlaimed: "I think I must be some kind of a transvestite or something!" After this, he'd done an internet search using 'transvestite', the only concept he knew that came even close to what he felt, and found information on different transgender identities and gender reassignment, instantly knowing that this was "it".[224]

Tapio explains that the reason he didn't seek to transition, back when he first came to realize his gender conflict, is that it seemed impossibly difficult. He and Neva have similar memories of having tried to explain their dysphoria away, to "just deal with it", as gender reassignment hadn't emerge as a possible road to take, even though they had both been aware of the existence of such treatments:

> Tapio: And, umm... I did a search on the internet and found an American website meant for transgender women, that didn't, like, in my cultural context feel very relevant, or as having anything to say to me. And then in some, umm, health education school book it was mentioned, that the kind of people exist who change their gender, how weird is that. [...]
>
> Neva: I knew on some blurry level that this transgender thing exists, but it didn't feel relevant to me, because I had understood that if you're a transman, you like football and so on...[225]

Even though Tapio identified *as* a transgender man, he didn't identify *with* the kind of transgender people portrayed in the sources he could find, and Neva even had trouble with assuming any kind of transgender identification, as the stereotypes they had encountered were nothing they could relate to. They did define themself as a transgender androgyne, but did not seek treatment at that point, as they didn't believe it possible to receive it[226].

In Finland, gender reassignment as a medical process is regulated and enacted as a part of

222 Ahmed 2006, pp. 158.
223 Ibid., pp. 159.
224 K4, 2.-4.
225 K6, 4.-5.
226 K4, 21.-23.

our public health services. On one hand, this means that the state at least partially covers the costs for many of the treatments, such as hormones, mastectomy and genital surgeries, offered to transgender people. On the other hand, access to the treatments, as well as changing one's legal name and gender, is quite strictly restricted in this system: The only two clinics allowed to provide medical treatment related to gender reassignment are in Helsinki and Tampere, both geographically located in the southern half of Finland, and both lacking sufficient resources compared to the number of people seeking treatment (according to personal communication with the staff of both clinics in multiple occasions). Before any medical treatments are made available, patients are required to undergo a thorough psychiatric and psychological evaluation determining whether or not they are in stable enough mental condition to assess their own identities and endure the emotional strain possibly brought on by transitioning.

Signe Bremer uses Ahmed's queer phenomenology to examine two AFAB transgender individuals' experiences as patients in the process of medical gender reassignment in Sweden, where the process is organized very much the same way than in Finland. In Bremer's research, an issue of "right kind of transgender bodies" and "wrong kind of transgender bodies", in connection to the psychiatric evaluation period, is revealed in the experiences of Sam, who is a non-white transgender man. According to Bremer, the evaluation process is orientated toward certain ideals of masculinity (concerning female to male transition), as well as a belief in permanent gender and stable identities.[227] Similar normative orientations being involved in the Finnish system as well is hinted at in the experiences told in my interview texts: Kaarna explains that they have looked back at their past to see what kind of continuous narrative could be formed of their experiences of conflicted gender, "because [their] evaluation period is still ongoing"[228]. Tapio summarizes the evaluation part of his transition process as "a horrible amount of shit" and says that he is currently quite happy with his life, "especially as [he doesn't] have to go there and be evaluated anymore"[229].

Regardless of the difficulties faced earlier, or potentially faced in the future, during the medical reassignment process, the bodily transformations enabled by it appear as immensely vital means of reorientation in the interviews: Daniel says he only started to get a grasp of "all this stuff" through the physical process[230], and Era also places the greatest weight, in terms of relieving their dysphoria, on the changes in their body: "I used to think that it was

227 Bremer 2010.
228 K1, 18.
229 K6, 14.
230 K4, 28.

the main source of my dysphoria... the kind of way in which... how others relate to me, that social aspect. But in fact it's precisely [my] body which made me feel dysphoric ever since I was eleven[.][231]" The medical process and its effects are not the only objects that are able to support us, however – and on the other hand, passing/blending as a result of bodily transformations is not always a guarantee of finding our ground: for Tuomo, becoming suddenly read as a man by everyone around him came as a shock, even felt "horrible". This can be read as a sense of disorientation as well, even dysphoric, as Tuomo says he later began to experience mild discomfort with the male gender category, as well, albeit not as much as with being labeled a girl or a woman.[232]

As I observed earlier, the knowledge of other bodies with similar experiences, having people to identify with and categories of gender identification to assume, is clearly a significant reorientating device for transgender bodies. Another important aspect in gaining knowledge about the variety of transgender phenomena is finding words to describe the way we feel, words that are able to function as orientations. Such terms of relationality, as observed by Halberstam, not only describe our identifications but also point toward "a relation between people, within a community, or within intimate bonds"[233]: they can locate us, give us direction and thus empower us to extend ourselves in the world. As pointed out by Salamon, language necessarily has a certain significance to transgender identification – "to define oneself is a linguistic act". For this reason, despite repeated demands that transgender specificities are produced in the materiality of the body, or that gender "must be separated from language in order to be seen clearly", Salamon argues, the "importance of self-definition" is dependent on "the power of language and of naming in the process of subject formation".[234] Furthermore, the linguistic and material makings of transgender embodiment are, it seems, connected to each other in various and complex ways. Even if we don't aspire to change a specific part of our body, or before such transformations become available to us, we might want to redefine that part, as described by Tapio: "...I am allowed to name my body parts in a way that makes them feel right to me. Regardless of whether some outside, "objective", with BIG quotation marks, party thinks they're, umm... something else than what I call them.[235]"

Though the mere knowledge of the existence of other transgender bodies is integral to gaining a supportive foothold in the world as a transgender body, it appears to be at least as

231 K2, 15.
232 K5, 4. & 78.
233 Halberstam 2005, pp. 49.
234 Salamon 2010, pp. 71-83.
235 K6, 40.

important to have personal contact with other bodies that are able to support us, that respect our right to self-definition and expression of gender, whether such bodies are cisgender or transgender themselves. I will conclude this chapter with a discussion of queer and straight time and space in transgender lives, in which I also take a more detailed look at the other bodies that support us and the ways such support manifests.

TRANSGENDER LIVES, CONSTRUCTED WORLDS

Jack Halberstam, in his book *In a Queer Time & Place. Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (2005) operates with the concepts of *queer time* and *queer space* in thinking about "life, location and transformation" of queer bodies and subcultures.[236] I will here briefly consider transgender bodies' life and location, as well as their transformation, in relation to time and space, employing queer phenomenology and Halberstam's observations.

Geographical location can have a significant effect on the possibilities and implications of passing/blending. When he'd been on testosterone for four months, Tuomo felt he didn't pass at all in Helsinki where he lived at that point, but when he moved into a small village up north, instantly started becoming read as a man full time. He attributes this to people in larger cities being more used to gender variance, and thus less inclined to simply interpret masculine qualities as signifiers of maleness.[237] Halberstam makes a somewhat similar observation in his interpretation of the story of Brandon Teena, suggesting that Brandon stayed in Falls City, Nebraska, instead of relocating to an urban area more accepting of non-normative gender and sexuality, because he was better able to pass and live as a man in a small rural town where "most people lived far apart, asked few questions, and kept their opinions to themselves"[238].

As I have demonstrated, dysphoric disorientation can in some instances be understood as a result of transgender bodies being out of place. The choice of the "wrong" gendered public restroom, for example, might result in "stares, hostile commentary, or getting chased right out", as described by Salamon[239]. I have also observed that passing as a body gendered as something else than "man" or "woman" can, depending on the context, be difficult or simply impossible, regardless of how ambiguously the body performs. This has been observed by Tuomo, Era, Perttu and Neva, who all identify as something different than simply "man", but

236 Halberstam 2005, pp. 4.
237 K5, 78.
238 Halberstam 2005, pp. 69-70.
239 Salamon 2010, pp. 79.

are satisfied with being seen as men in situations where readings beyond the binary are not likely to happen[240]. To them, being gendered as women feels more disorientating than being seen as men, though Tuomo does describe the male category as "not working perfectly for [him], either"[241].

Even if a body does become read as ambiguous, it might stand out, causing disorientation or being itself left disorientated, as demonstrated by Halberstam's depiction of gender deviants, who are not-women *and* not-men[242]. A same kind of disorientating potential is shown in Salamon's reading of Jan Morris' experiences with airport security checks: "She is safe whether she passes successfully as a woman or is read as male, in either case. The peril comes if she is 'read' as transsexual, as having no proper gender at all.[243]" For non-binary bodies, then, being read as a woman or a man can, at some situations, offer more support, or at least cause less disorientation, than appearing as a source of gender trouble. On the other hand, not all spaces form according to the logics of normative gender. Insofar as spaces acquire direction performatively from the bodies that pass through and inhabit them, spaces in which transgender bodies gather and extend themselves become transgender spaces.[244] Though not all transgender spaces are necessarily queer spaces and vice versa, I use queer space here as an umbrella term to refer to all spaces orientated toward "giving 'support' to those whose lives and loves make them appear oblique, strange, and out of place[245]".

Halberstam, examining the relationship between the two heroes of the movie *By Hook or by Crook*, describes a dynamic transgender collaboration that creates "a closed world of queerness" around the two, where transgender lives are embodied "outside the storm of law and order, mental health, and financial stability"[246]. While the narratives in my interviews lack such a level of drama, collaboration of transgender bodies and creating queer worlds (or "pink bubbles", as Era calls them[247]) do emerge as supportive and sustaining of transgender embodiment. Collaboration and mutual support within transgender communities can manifest in many forms, as described by Perttu:

> Especially the solidarity among transgender guys works very well in my opinion. For example I've received a call from this trans person, who's a friend of my friend, saying that they're out of Sustanon[xiii] and asking if I can do anything about it. And I was like, okay, you know So-and-so, my

240 K2, 155.; K3, 2.; K5, 4.
241 K5, 4.
242 Halberstam 1998, pp.
243 Salamon 2010, pp. 180-181.
244 Ahmed 2006, pp.
245 Ibid., pp. 179.
246 Halberstam 2005, pp. 79.
247 K2, 47.-57.
xiii One of the testosterone products commonly used by AFAB transgender people in Finland.

> address is such-and-such. And it's a given that you help one another. Or a total stranger is coming to Helsinki – yeah, sure they can stay at my place, since they're t[rans]g[ender].[248]

In this quote, Perttu's apartment can be seen as a transgender space, ready to welcome even previously unknown transgender bodies in situations where they don't have a more familiar place to go to. Tuomo portrays his queer networks and spaces as such that don't assume specific gender identifications or sexual orientations on bodies, and thus allow for more freedom in expressing his personality and gendered specificity, whereas he feels afraid to express femininity in spaces where people assume him to be cisgender and straight[249].

If some spaces can be seen as queer, and others as non-queer, what happens when we move from non-queer spaces to queer ones, and the other way round? To quote Ahmed, "moments when you 'switch' dimensions can be deeply disorientating[250]". While queer spaces might extend bodies that appear as something else than cisgender men or women, straight spaces might not, and as I discuss above, it can sometimes be more supportive for such bodies to reorientate themselves according to the straight lines in straight spaces. Such a strategy is employed by Tuomo, who openly identifies as othergendered in queer spaces but "walk[s] as man out there" – though his beard, helpful in passing/blending as a man, causes him to stand out a bit in othergender spaces[251]. Gender, like sexual orientation, seems to be more fluid and contextual than our beliefs in permanent identities and stable bodies would suggest.

I have so far defined passing/blending as successfully performing gender, without considering in detail what counts as success, except for the "looking like" and "behaving like" I described in connection to bodies. A simplified definition of transgender passing/blending can be given as "having others believe oneself to be a cisgender man or woman" – and this is the way the term is mainly used by the people I interviewed. Defining passing/blending this way loads it with uncomfortable implications, making it about seeming authentic, yet being always fake. However, I would like to contest this definition, to see if it could be rehabilitated, by looking at passing/blending as a matter of "a satisfactory performance" rather than "a perfect performance".

Halberstam describes and analyses the history of Brandon Teena, an AFAB transgender person who passed as a man and dated several women in rural Nebraska in the early 1990's. The women he dated thought of him as the perfect gentleman; according to Halberstam, he

248 K3, 88.
249 K5, R.
250 Ahmed 2006, pp. 158.
251 K5, R.

“lived up to [their] romantic notion of masculinity” as a contrast to the other young men of the area. Brandon explained his bodily difference to his girlfriends varyingly by “hermaphoditism”, transsexuality and intersexuality – explanations that the women accepted, in Halberstam's interpretation, “not because [they were] stupid, but precisely because [they were] satisfied with [his] performance of masculinity”.[252] From this perspective, passing/blending happens when a gender performance and its background story, and the motivation and gender literacy of the “audience” come to an agreement. A friend might, for example, come to see our gender according to our identification, regardless of our ability to pass/blend in other encounters, if they are aware of our wishes as well as motivated by respect for our right to define ourselves – especially after they've had some time to get used to the situation.

The orientation of spaces and bodies is a temporal matter as well as a spatial one, acquired through repetitive arrivals and actions over time. Individual gendered embodiment likewise always relates to its time in particular ways – starting from how we are assigned to gender as children, and brought up in ways more or less directed by that gender. Performative gender, in this sense, involves the performing of certain tasks at certain points in life: assigned gender becomes a gendered assignment, first for our parents and then for ourselves. Halberstam defines queer time as models of time that deviate from “the temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance”[253].

While I'm not sure that Halberstam's concept of queer time is in itself applicable as a perspective at the temporalities of transgender bodies, a certain model of perceiving time emerges from my interviews, defined not by families or career choices, but rather by the process of transition – life before transitioning appears as separate from life after transitioning, in many ways. Bremer also explores the concept of waiting and uncertainty in their article: as the process of transitioning takes a lot of time, during which transgender bodies are left to an in-between spacetime of white rooms[254]. Their stories are not all the same, however: Perttu, Tuomo and Daniel transitioned in their late teens, entering into adulthood at more or less the same pace they were leaving their assigned gender behind at, whereas Era, Kaarna, Tapio and Neva started transitioning in their mid-twenties[255], having begun their adult lives trying to deal with their gender conflict in other ways. This affects, among other things, the kind of sexual and romantic experiences they have had. In the next chapter, I examine these different histories, and the aspects of sexuality and gender I have

252 Halberstam 2005, pp. 64.
253 Halberstam 2005, pp. 5.
254 Bremer 2010, 96-100.
255 K1, 6.; K2, 1.-9.; K3, 2.; K4, 2.-4.; K5, 4.; K6, 4.-14.

discussed so far, trying to map out the different ways they entangle into each other in different embodied transgender lives.

4. THE COMPLICATED RELATIONSHIPS OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY

This is where it gets messy. In this chapter, I employ Barad's agential realism to look at the entangled connections of sexuality and gender appearing in the interview texts, reading for mutual connections and productive capacities. In 4.1, I address those points in the narratives formed in my interview texts where gender and sexuality seem most inseparably entangled into each other, as well as the ways sexuality and gender *produce* each other in different instances in the lived experiences of the people I study. 4.2 deals with the diffractive patterns formed in these entanglements and productions.

An important aspect of diffractive methodology is that it's possible to "[...] use diffraction experiments to learn either about the object being passed through the diffraction grating or about the grating itself.[256]" In 4.3, I look at such gratings, or *apparatuses*, of gender and sexuality, contemplating the boundaries drawn between the productive and the production, and the differences and similarities produced in lived transgender embodiments by different apparatuses at different times and locations.

4.1 PERFORMATIVE DIFFRACTIONS, INTRA-ACTIVE ENTANGLEMENTS

Where does gender end and sexuality begin? As observed in chapters 2 and 3, it is often hard to discuss gender without also considering sexuality, and vice versa. There are, however, instances where it seems even more difficult than in general – where it can be almost impossible to tell one from another. I will demonstrate such entanglements of sexuality and gender as they emerge in the told experiences of the people I interviewed. I will further examine how, in some contexts, sexuality functions as a condition for the emergence of gender, or gender functions as a condition for the emergence of sexuality.

In Barad's agential realism, the focus of observation is on "phenomena" instead of "things", in reference to "*the ontological inseparability/entanglement of intra-acting "agencies"*". From this perspective, the nature of existence is in becoming instead of being, and the boundaries within and between bodies are likewise in a constant state of becoming rather

256 Barad 2007, p. 83-84.

than ontologically pre-existing. Barad conceptualizes "intra-action" as a substitute to "interaction", as interaction "presumes the prior existence of independent entities or relata" – any and all distinctions between the components of a phenomenon are produced by their mutual intra-actions instead of preceding them.[257] Thinking about sexuality and gender as entangled and intra-active, then, doesn't mean assuming that they are one and the same, but rather that they can be told apart only insofar as they are determined as separate in their mutual relations.

ENTANGLED EMBODIMENT: GENDERSEX, SEXGENDER?

The organization of gender and sexuality in the Western society, as described by Butler, depends on maintaining "relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire" – ideally, on the existence of masculine men who have penises, desire women and practice heterosexual intercourse with them, and feminine women with vaginas, who desire to be penetrated by men[258]. Following this logic, there is no need to make distinctions between gender and sexuality, as they can be neatly conflated into each other both on the level of culture and society and in individual lives. However, as there clearly are bodies and practices that deviate in one way or another from this normative structure, the relations of gender and sexuality to each other emerge as a complex multiplicity. Here, I will examine some of the particular ways in which gender and sexuality are entangled into each other both in cultural beliefs and individual embodied lives.

Gay and *lesbian* as categories of identification provide a good example of instances in which the distinction between gender and sexuality becomes blurred. While they can be, and often are, understood as sexual orientations first, they are also often seen as referring to certain kinds of gendered bodies. As Tapio puts it, "[...] sexual identification is of course a different thing than gender identification, but in a way, lesbian is also a gender.[259]" Perttu says they have noticed that their social status is "gay man", meaning they are seen as a man by other people, but "allowed quite a lot of feminine and woman-typical things" – even though they don't actually sexually identify as gay[260]. Neva feels the same way, considering being gay to be more about gender than sexuality to them personally[261]. Returning to the aspects of sexual orientation I discussed in chapter 2, it could be said that Perttu and Neva's social sexual

257 Barad 2007, pp. 139.
258 Butler 2006, pp. 22-26.
259 K6, 22.
260 K3, 4.
261 K6, 33.

orientation is gay, but their descriptive sexual orientation is something else. In this sense, social orientation can be seen as a component of our performed gender.

Another kind of entanglement, a knot even, forms in the cultural equation of gender with genitals, and genitals with specific sexual practices. Ahmed demonstrates this equation in their reading of sexologist Havelock Ellis' work, who sees the bodies of men and women as sexually "'directed' toward [each] other, *as if by design*". Women, as those bodies that have vaginas, and men, as those bodies that have penises, are *meant to* have sex with each other in the form of heterosexual penetration, which thus becomes the proper and most authentic sex act, and which all other sex practices are seen as either leading to or deviating from[262]. While non-heterosexual transgender bodies clearly contest this pattern of equation simply by existing, it can still have consequences in their lives: Tapio talks about having practiced vaginal penetration with his partners before starting to transition, even though it caused intense experiences of dysphoria to him, as it was "the kind of thing you're supposed to do"[263]. He also wonders if the difference in how he desires (some) women, compared to how he desires men, might originate from this kind of sexual norms:

> [With women] I don't have the kind of, I don't get that clear mental image, like I get with some guys who turn me on, this powerful mental image about what I'd like to do with them. I don't know whether this comes from my own lack of imagination or some kind of brainwash by the society, that as I have this kind of parts and they have that kind of parts too, that I don't know what I'd like to do with them...

Tapio concludes that if he were to have sex with a woman, he absolutely wouldn't ("at least not necessarily") want to be "the one who does the penetrating".[264]

"Someone who penetrates" and "someone who is penetrated" are sex roles determined by heteronormative sexual intercourse. As such, they are often equated with masculinity and femininity, and with being a man or being a woman, respectively. The effect of this kind of thought is apparent in the way Perttu describes some of their sexual preferences: "At times I really like to be taken like a woman.[265]" John Stoltenberg, who defines masculinity simply as the power and privilege men have and exercise over women, sees the (male) preference to penetrate as an effect of masculinity and aggression rather than its cause[266]. Regardless of how we define masculinity and femininity, they certainly carry implications of certain kinds of sexual behavior: men and masculine bodies are assumed to be sexually active, even dominant, and women and feminine bodies are expected to be passive, open, submissive.

262 Ahmed 2006, pp. 70-71.
263 K6, 42.
264 K6, 116.
265 K3, 100.
266 Stoltenberg 2009.

From the perspective of performative gender-sexuality, penetrating is understood as a masculine act, and bodies that are seen as masculine are presumed to prefer being "the one who does the penetrating", regardless of the "origin story" of this mutually productive connection.

The sexual equation of masculinity with dominance and femininity with submission has certain implications on the field of BDSM practices I discussed earlier. While I argued that BDSM identifications can be seen to function as non-gender-based sexual orientations in some instances, I also observed certain tensions in relation to gender in BDSM practices and communities. According to Duncan, BDSM sexualities are frequently argued to promote violence against women by feminist authors and activists, who see such practices as reproductive of male dominance and female submission, often disregarding practices that deviate from this pattern[267]. Though all BDSM practices and relationships clearly do not replicate normative power relations, they seem to be implicated in at least some communities and individual desires related to these practices: Neva, as described in chapter two, has experienced difficulties within the BDSM field concerning their gender identification, and they still seem to associate submissive identification with femininity, and having been seen as a woman in the BDSM community. They also express discomfort in their observation that they tend to gravitate toward assuming a dominant role with women and a submissive one with men, even though some of their more recent experiences have come to contest this tendency.[268] I will further discuss the gendered aspects of BDSM practices, and some of their specific implications concerning transgender sexualities, later on in this chapter.

Having pinpointed some of the specific instances – gendered sexual orientation, genital-specific sexual practices, and gendered sex roles – in which gender and sexuality become entangled into each other, I move on to consider the different relations of production between them. I have already touched on a couple of these relations, such as the penetrative-masculine-penetrative -dynamic of gendered sexuality. In the next section, I will focus on the particular personal histories of gender producing sexuality producing gender in the lived experiences told in my interview texts.

INTRA-ACTIONS: GENDER DOING SEX DOING GENDER

As our society's organization of gender and sexuality aims at maintaining coherence between

267 Duncan 1996, pp. 87-92.
268 K2, 154.; K3, 23.

different aspects of gendersex, to keep the individual and cultural lines of orientation straight, different mechanisms are required to deal with deviating lines and "off line" individuals, as demonstrated by Ahmed[269]. These mechanisms operate at the intersections of gender and sexuality, trying to keep these lines from going their separate ways on the first hand and on the second, where that is not possible, aligning them neatly in relation to each other. Because of the proximity of gender and sexuality to each other, and their many points of entanglement, doing gender can produce an effect that reads as sexuality and vice versa. Here, I will look at these functions as they emerge in lived experiences of transgender embodiment.

In the previous pages I described how sexual orientation can be difficult to distinguish from gender performance. In some of the most obvious instances, to look at this entanglement as intra-active relationship, the gender of an individual (and of their object of attraction) can be said to produce their sexual orientation: A woman, being attracted to women, becomes lesbian. A woman attracted to men becomes heterosexual. In some cases, it seems, this production happens the other way round. Kaarna tells that they identified with male homosexuality before they ever started to question their gender. In their fantasies of gay sex scenes, then, they either had to be absent themself, or "[...] to be, like, a guy, or guy*ish*."[270]

It follows, as a consequence of this two-way productivity, that who we're seen to be in terms of gender, and who we're seen to be with, affects how our sexual orientation is interpreted by others – woman plus woman equals lesbian, man plus man equals gay, and woman plus man equals straight. This also means, as previously suggested, that we are expected to assume certain sexual roles and practices based on the different gendered relations between us and our partners: "A straight couple" is assumed to practice heterosexual intercourse, in which "the man" acts as an active partner and "the woman" as a passive one. These kinds of roles are often also assumed on couples that are seen as homosexual, by determining one partner as "more masculine" and thus "active", and the other as "feminine" and "passive". Such distinctions can be based on many different differences, but physical size (or some kind of performance of it) emerges as a common one in my source texts. Tapio, describing some bodily qualities, typically understood as masculine, that he finds attractive, says he very much admires big bodies, regardless of whether they are "muscular or fat or both". He connects this attraction to his preference for being sexually submissive, explaining that he likes being smaller than his partner or "being in some way able to place [himself] in the

269 Ahmed 2006, pp. 65-107.
270 K1, 8.

position where [he] can pretend to be smaller and weaker".[271] Perttu and Era also refer to bodily size having an effect on their partner choices, Era preferring partners who are smaller in size or at least not much larger than themself, related to both their role as a master and their not wanting to be seen as female[272], and Perttu saying that they are drawn to both large-performing and small-performing bodies, but in different ways relating to their interest in both dominant and submissive sexual roles[273].

These logics of production between sexual orientation, sexual practices, gendered bodies and gendered behavior are disrupted by some particular categories. As bisexuality and pansexuality do not define their subject gender, they can't participate in the production of male or female identification, at least in such an obvious way. It would seem, then, that if they are able to function in some ways in the intra-active relations of sexuality and gender, it is on a different level than personal gendered performance. Era and Neva attribute to pansexual identification, as distinct from bisexuality, a conscious commitment to an understanding of gender as a multiplicity instead of a binary[274]. As such, assuming and articulating a pansexual orientation can be seen as performing gender on a more general level, in our interpretations of other bodies' performances, and aiming to affect our cultural gender choreographies.

Non-binary gender identification provides other kinds of challenges to the dynamics of gender and sexuality. If a body doesn't identify as male or female, how can it relate to homosexuality and heterosexuality? Tapio tells about having discussed this problematic with his other-gender sweetheart: "[...] are we supposedly having heterosex with each other then, as we are of different genders? [...] And, umm... have they ever had gay sex? Do people even exist that have the same gender than they?"[275] However, as non-binary performances are, as discussed in chapter three, read into one or the other binary category more often than not, our sexual practices can become a part of our gender performances in the sense that they might make the difference that tips the scale in one way or the other.

According to Ahmed, to orientate ourselves we must both know something is there to be able to turn toward it *and* know our own location[276]. To have a gender-based sexual orientation, then, involves quite a bit of knowing gender – both our own and that of the others. If we are

271 K6, 76.
272 K2, 149.-151.
273 K3, 58.-62.
274 K2, 16.-19.
275 K6, 38.
276 Ahmed 2006, pp. 1-10.

unsure of our gender, or our knowledge points to a kind of gender that doesn't follow the lines we are positioned on, we have no easy means to extend ourselves along those lines. Then again, knowing our own gender might not help, if our knowledge about the gender of other bodies is lacking or we feel that we cannot trust the accuracy of such knowledge. As we are, as I have argued, orientated toward having a sexual orientation, this kind of ambiguity concerning gender not only throws us off line in terms of normative, descriptive sexual orientation, but it also follows that we are forced off the line pointing toward that kind of orientations.

As demonstrated by Ahmed, disorientation as an affect can move around, spreading and sticking to bodies: not only are queer bodies disorientated, off line, themselves, they can disorientate other bodies and spaces by their presence[277]. In some cases, transgender bodies seem able to disturb the norms of sexual orientation for other bodies on an individual level. While Tapio and Neva's heterosexual-identifying long-term male partners aren't attracted to men, both relationships have survived the changes in Tapio and Neva's gender identification and performance; they laughingly employ a concept of "compulsory homosexuality" to describe their relationships to a heterosexual male partner.[278] In a similarly humorous tone, Neva narrates "an experience of personal tragedy": they had "managed to construct a really beautiful, wholesome gay identity", only to have it dislocated by repeated attractions toward people who turn out to be transgender women[279].

However, moments of disorientation cannot always be met with humor. In chapter three, I discussed the experience of gender dysphoria in terms of disorientation. In my interview texts, several ways emerge in which the productive relations between gender and sexuality cause moments of disorientation that can be read as dysphoric. The most obvious of these ways is related to specific gendered sex acts. Tapio says that he used to practice vaginal penetration with his male partners before his transgender identification consolidated itself, as it was something he believed he was supposed to do, despite invariably feeling awful during and after such acts[280]. The relationship between gender and sex clearly works in complex ways here: Having a vagina, and having sex with men, Tapio believed that he was supposed to have vaginal penetration with them. However, this was in conflict with his gendered sense of self, causing dysphoric disorientation. As he had been consciously turning away from transgender identification, however, he was unable to locate the cause of his distress, likely adding to his disorientation.

277 Ibid., pp. 170-171.
278 K6, 100.-104.
279 K3, 79.-81.
280 K6, 42.

Kaarna describes disorientating gendering moments during sex with cisgender men, saying that at first everything's always been going well, and they have enjoyed themself

> until that surprising heterosexualizing moment, that somehow throws me, like 'whoa now he placed me into some category I don't belong in'. At that point I usually sort of dissociate myself from the situation and just stop feeling much of anything. It's not like I panic or anything, it's nothing obviously visible. It doesn't really communicate itself, at least not that clearly.[281]

On the other hand, Era says they have not experienced significant dysphoria during sex, even before transitioning, and that in fact sex has been the bodily practice least affected by their conflicted experiences of gender[282]. Neva, similarly, has experienced sex acts as positive or neutral in relation to their gender – until they began to "grasp the bigger picture" of how the sex they had with men "positioned [them] in the female gender from every direction", at which point they also started to experience dysphoria in relation to sex[283].

Being perceived as and approached as heterosexual emerges as a cause of discomfort in many of my interview texts. Tapio and Neva, who both are in long-term relationships with heterosexual-identifying men, describe having felt discomfort in being interpreted as "straight" before transitioning[284]. According to Era, many queer identifications first form on the basis of "at least not being heterosexual"[285]. As both gender and sexual orientation can and do shift and change during our lives, they have different functions to each other in the course of such shifts. As discussed in chapter two, Tapio, Perttu, Neva, Kaarna and Tuomo all have identified as lesbian or experimented with lesbian identification and practices at some point in their past. Kaarna, though they have from very early on identified with male homosexuality, felt unable to actualize that kind of desires, as they were seen as a woman by gay men and produced as one in sexual relationships with straight men. They therefore experimented on lesbian orientation, resulting in interesting discussions and friendships, but not mutually satisfying sexual relationships.[286] Even so, it reads as a reasonable solution to try: we might feel, for different reasons, unable to actualize our desires for the objects we are facing, and turn to look for alternatives.

Or it might be that our choice of objects limits our capacities to extend ourselves to act in some way not directly related to sexual desire: Tapio, Perttu, and Neva believe their past

281 K1, 52.
282 K2, 45.
283 K6, 41.
284 K2, 96.; K6, 40.
285 K2, 99.
286 K1, 24.-38.

lesbian identification to be connected to the wider possibilities of gender expression offered by lesbian identities than heterosexual womanhood[287]. Tuomo, on the other hand, feels he has always been romantically attracted to similarity of gender, and that his objects of attraction have changed in accordance with his own gender performance.[288] Furthermore, as he is also orientated in a more precise sexual manner toward masculine cisgender men, his self-definition as "widely homosexual" gains an interesting dimension – in some sense, he feels that he is romantically interested in similarity and sexually interested in difference. However, he still sees his attraction to masculine men as homosexual. I will discuss this, and other observations I have made in relation to difference and similarity, in the next section, in which I also examine the ways in which transgender bodies could, would or do use the intra-active relations of sex and gender in their negotiations of passing and blending. I will also consider the spatiality and temporality of sexual practices in connection to gender.

4.2 PATTERNS: DIS/CONNECTING BODIES AND SPACES

Above, I described and analyzed some of the ways in which sexuality and gender are or could be entangled into, and productive of, one another in embodied transgender lives. Here, I take a more detailed look at some of the patterns that have, in my perception, started to come together in my diffractions. I begin with a focus on the functions and uses of the relations between sexuality and gender in transgender lives, asking how sexuality can be used by trans bodies to negotiate matters of gender such as dysphoria. After that, I engage the concepts of difference and similarity, and "the same gender" and "another gender", inquiring for their significances and possible reconceptualizing in transgender sexualities. Finally, I return to my earlier discussions of spatial and temporal relations between gendered, sexual and gendersexual bodies, and think about the implications of fluctuating gender and sexuality and differently gendered/gendering sexual spaces to the sexual subjectivities of transgender bodies.

SEXUAL BODIES NEGOTIATING GENDER

Having discussed sexuality, gender and their relations to each other, I want to examine some ways in which those relations are or could be employed as supportive or reorientating devices in embodied transgender performances, negotiating issues of dysphoria,

287 K2, 80.; K3, 18.; K6, 22.
288 K5, 22.

misgendering and unwanted attention. I mainly focus on how sexuality affects gender, as I have come to understand transgender dysphoria primarily as an issue of gender, affected by sexuality through its intra-active relationship with gender. However, I also discuss some instances in which choices of gender performance are employed as a means to a sexual end.

As gender identification and sexual orientation are closely connected, and as heterosexuality still is the norm in our society, matters of sexual attraction can complicate negotiations of transgender identification. Neva, who in the past was very anxious about being considered straight because of their relationships with men, says they tried to assume an identification involving sexual preference for women and social preference for men, despite the fact that they had relationships and sex almost exclusively with men[289] – "being straight" would have more explicitly marked them as a woman, which they were desperate to avoid, even though they did not identify as a man either at that point. Daniel says that his being attracted to boys as a child and a teenager made it more difficult for him to identify as a transgender man[290]. Tuomo, as well, considers his brief heterosexual identification during his transition as being caused by the lingering belief that transgender identification necessarily involves heterosexuality[291]. For Kaarna, gay male identification actually preceded their transgender identification, which suggests that it can occasionally be easier to grasp the cultural specificities of sexual orientation than our experiences of gender conflict. For Tapio, gay identification has also become important to the formation of his gender identification, as he has experienced the gay male subculture as something easily identified with, even though he currently expresses a strong critical attitude toward that culture.[292]

In addition to assuming an identification, its articulation and expression also plays an important part in transgender becomings. As the evaluation period of the Finnish medical and legal gender reassignment process is, as I observed in chapter three, orientated toward certain kinds of bodies more than others, it can encourage transgender bodies to try and fit their personal experiences together with narratives that are more in line with our cultural understandings of gender and sexuality, and the myth of stable and permanent experiences and self-identical bodies. This extends to sexual identification and preferences: as pointed out by Kaarna, sexuality is one aspect of our lives that the medical professionals conducting the evaluation tend to be especially interested in. Kaarna also expresses an opinion that these professionals might not be prepared to hear about sexual experiences that deviate from the

289 K2, 80.
290 K4, 38.-40.
291 K5, 12.
292 K1, 4.-8.; K6, 30.-37.

popular beliefs about transgender identities.[293] Furthermore, Neva points out that even recently there have been individual doctors conducting the evaluation, who have had difficulties understanding the possibility of, for example, a homosexual transgender man existing[294]. Thus, articulating certain sexual identifications, and not others, can appear as a condition for the availability of medical gender reassignment, or at least make it easier to negotiate the evaluation. As I argued concerning sexual orientation, it might not make such a big difference whether an identification we perform is "authentic" or not, as appearing to be orientated in a certain way can prevent us from taking actions that would deviate from the line we appear to be positioned on, regardless of how we actually feel about ourselves.

On the other hand, narratives of gender and sexuality can also be employed by transgender bodies to organize and reason with their past experiences and identifications. Neva, for example, insists that they never really identified as a woman, but rather went directly from identifying as a girl to defining themself as an androgyne. However, Neva explains that they did, in a way, perform a sexual identification as a woman – as they were interpreted as a woman by others, and had sexual relationships from that angle, they experienced it as important to present themself as a sexually active and adventurous woman, and in a sexual sense identified with many qualities that are often categorized as feminine or womanly. They also consider this part of their past as something that makes it more difficult for themself to express their femininity now, as it has previously been so enmeshed with "woman as a sexual identification". As they say that this is something they have only recently come to realize[295], it seems that the importance of this narrative lies in its ability to align the past with the present in a way that makes sense to Neva personally.

In chapter three I demonstrated that expressing femininity involves a risk of becoming misgendered, of failing our gender performances, for AFAB transgender bodies. As "gay man" as a category refers not only to sexual attraction toward other men, but also to male femininity in some sense, expressing a gay male identification can function as a supportive device in producing a successful performance of "male" or "not-female". It is employed in this sense by Perttu, who feels that the social role of gay male allows for and explains their more feminine looks and interests[296]. Neva, in turn, has experienced that being seen as gay, or even articulating such an identification, can sometimes be helpful in otherwise somewhat tense social encounters with strangers[297], in my interpretation allowing for everyone to know

293 K1, 61.-66.
294 K5, 13.
295 K3, 11.; K6, 45.
296 K3, 4.
297 K5, 107.

where they stand, thus warding off a sense of disorientation caused by the presence of a queer body.

As observed before, sexual practices can be a source of dysphoric disorientation for non-heterosexual transgender bodies in many ways, from the discomfort caused by being seen as heterosexual to sex acts producing gender conflict and bodily dysphoria. In avoiding this disorientation, or becoming reorientated, partner choices play an important role. Perttu and Tapio's former lesbian identification can be seen as an example of such choices: choosing to have relationships with women and not men not only provides for AFAB bodies the lesbian gender role sometimes seen as more flexible than that of a heterosexual woman, it also helps them to avoid being seen as straight and thus to escape the normative organization of gender and sexuality in this way as well. Kaarna's attempt to sexually reorientate themself as a lesbian also demonstrates the potential of partner choices as reorientating devices – however, as they did not feel satisfied in lesbian relationships, they have gravitated toward (primarily AFAB) transgender people, with whom they feel both comfortable and sexually desiring[298].

In terms of partner choice, as I discussed in chapter 2, mutual respect is of critical importance to any sexual relationship. Tapio, having had difficulties with dysphoria during certain sex acts in the past, explains that after coming to his transgender identification, he has been very strict about his personal needs and limits, demanding that any sexual partner of his respect that[299]. Similarly, when Era says that they in some sense evaluate the potential of other bodies as future sex partners based on how queer they are[300], it doesn't seem to mean that Era is only attracted to queer bodies. Rather, in this context “queer” seems to refer to the other body's knowledge, understanding and respect of non-normative gender and sexuality – it's more about respect and sensitivity in relation to difference than about difference as the body's own quality.

From another perspective, as gender can transform itself and fluctuate contextually in the present tense as well as in the past, modifying our gender performance can also be helpful in negotiating sexual orientation and partner choices in some instances. Tuomo's partial identification as a man can be seen to function in this sense in relation to his sexual relationships with (masculine) cisgender men. As his gender performance likely reads as male to most people, the potential partners for him are likely to be men looking for sex with men. Though not all men interested in sex with men identify as gay, and not all gay-

298 K1, 12., 24. & 38.-39.
299 K6, 40.
300 K2, 39.

identified men exclude other-gender people from their desire-objects, it still seems likely to be easier, and definitely more simple, to articulate a male identification, especially since Tuomo is not looking for long-term relationships – after all, he needs to be open about his non-normatively gendered body in any case, and explaining a non-binary identification on top of that might be excessive.

In dealing with sexual dysphoria, as described by Tapio, some transgender bodies need to think about their personal needs and desires quite a bit, to find out what they like and don't like, and how that relates to what they feel they can do without experiencing dysphoria:

> [A]fter having admitted to myself that I'm trans, I have finally come to demand that my partners treat my body in ways that don't feel bad to me. And that I must not get into thinking that, because I have this certain kind of parts, they have to be used in certain ways, like it would be determined directly by the kind of genitals you have. And that I can have the kind of sex, that... or... and only that kind of sex, that doesn't feel bad to me or cause dysphoria.[301]

Neva and Kaarna believe BDSM practices to be quite common among transgender bodies, linking this to the dysphoria many of them experience in relation to genital sex acts: BDSM as a sexual field and subculture involves a lot of practices that don't require genital contact, thus offering, according to Neva and Kaarna, better possibilities for sex that doesn't produce dysphoria than "vanilla" sexualities[302]. On the other hand, Perttu and Tuomo also remark that BDSM related desires might be more common than it obviously appears among cisgender bodies as well, but as transgender bodies often have more difficulties when it comes to sex, they have usually had to give it more thought than cisgender bodies, and thus might have more clearly defined ideas about what kind of sexual acts they actually prefer. Tuomo also points out that (non-heterosexual) transgender bodies are often more accustomed to deviating from the norm, so identifying with non-normative sex practices might not be as big a deal to them as to cisgender and/or heterosexual bodies.[303]

However, in some cases dysphoria throws us out of our bodies in a way that makes sexual contact with other bodies impossible – the body does not extend as an embodied, sexual self. For such bodies, transition might be a necessary condition for the arrival of sexual subjectivity. Daniel, as I described earlier, has only recently come to feel himself capable of physical intimacy of any kind: his bodily transformation has allowed him to come to face a future in which sexual relationships are not only possible, but also desirable[304]. Also Tapio, although he did have sexual relationships before transitioning, feels it easier to have sex

301 K6, 40.
302 K1, 53.-59.
303 K3, 37.-42.; K5, 33.-56.
304 K4, 122.-124.

without the fear of dysphoria after his mastectomy, as his breasts were the most problematic body part for him, in a sexual context, in the past[305].

DIFFERENT SAME, SIMILAR OTHER

Insofar as heterosexuality means desiring that which is different, and homosexuality means desiring that which is similar, and gender is perceived to be difficult to define, the categories of "same" and "other" are themselves called into question. In chapter three, I argued that there is no single characteristic in either the form of an individual body or the ways in which it moves that could be understood to unambiguously contain a definitive truth of the gender that particular body should or will perform. So if there is no universal means to know what gender our bodies "are" or "will be", how can we know who is of "the same" gender, or of "a different" gender, than ourselves?

Tuomo, who identifies gender-wise as "something like man-none-whatever", considers both his romantic relationships with other-gender people and his more strictly sexual relationships with masculine (cisgender) men as homosexual in some sense. He finds this somewhat confusing himself, laughing about it:

> It's funny that I define myself as gay in that way even when I'm with a cis man, whose gendered experience I might not identify with at all. But maybe I think about it in those instances somehow from the perspective of my social role. I don't know. You are at the same time both of the same and of a different gender with someone.[306]

Kaarna problematizes the definition of homosexual orientation as "attraction toward the same", finding it difficult to determine any specific points of "the same" in their own desire for bodies that "slip into" the category of boys and men, as such bodies come in so many different shapes and sizes, all of which can appear as attractive, and "not all of them are something you'd want to be like yourself". On the other hand, Kaarna also says they find it very attractive when bodies that become gendered in a certain way disturb the boundaries of that category in different ways, for example when someone who appears as a man in a quite typical way uses words or speech patterns that are conventionally understood as feminine.[307]

In chapter two, I applied Irigaray's thought on wonder in reading Neva's story about their high school love. In that instance, as well, the disturbance of normative gender by an individual body is what brought on wonder, leading to desire. While Irigaray observes that

305 K6, 40.
306 K5, 20.-24.
307 K1, 68.-72. & 80.-85.

wonder is motivated by surprise, by difference, it seems to me that this difference, even if we specify it as gendered difference, is not necessarily "different-than-self": in Neva and Kaarna's told experiences, wonder appears as being set into motion by bodies that are "different-from-the-norm". While such bodies might also be "different-than-self", it is their standing out in the crowd, their being rare in terms of gender, that appeals to Kaarna and Neva.

What about similarity – that which is, or appears to be, the same? According to Irigaray, love of same can be thought of "as love of that which does not and will not know itself as different", and love of other, likewise, as "love of same that does not recognize itself as such". Sameness, here, means undifferentiation, a radical availability; "the maternal-feminine which has been assimilated before any perception of difference".[308] It is not this sameness as unity, or sameness-before-difference, that I wish to turn toward in this context, but rather sameness as a resonance, a recognition, a kinship. Irigaray's figure of "the same other[309]" however remains relevant to my thought: it is able to evoke the figure of "the other same" as its companion, as well as the qualities of "same difference" and "different sameness", enabling the theorizing of sameness I turn toward here, even though that sameness is not the same as the one Irigaray writes about.

As seen in Tuomo's reflections on his gender and sexuality, in being able to be at the same time the same and the other with someone, as well as Kaarna and Neva's attraction toward bodies that are "different-from-the-norm", similarity and difference gain different meanings in different contexts. As I discussed in chapter two, Grosz sees sexual encounters as happening between two things and not bodies as closed wholes, as specific and particular rather than universal and generalizable. I want to propose that experiences of difference and similarity, as well as those of pleasure and pain, are determined and produced in particular connections between two things, rather than between bodies as closed wholes. Thus, while Irigaray defines love of same as love that does not recognize the loved as different, and love of other as love that does not recognize the loved as similar, I am inclined to redefine them as "love that forms at the recognition of what is similar in something" and "love that forms at the recognition of what is different in something" – regardless of whether or not that something is perceived as "same" or "other". Attraction toward that which is different or that which is similar, then, becomes more of a matter of what it is that grabs our attention, rather than whether or not we recognize something as different or similar.

308 Irigaray 2004, pp. 83-84.
309 Ibid., pp. 84-86.

In their article concerning affectivity of audiovisual materials, Susanna Paasonen employs the concept of resonance to examine that which grabs a hold of our bodies, commanding our attention, and moves us in different ways. Paasonen links resonance with Jackie Stacey's fascination as a reframing of identification in discussions of audiovisual analysis, since "[i]dentification implies sameness – recognition between people, viewers and images of human bodies – yet in order to resonate with one another, objects or agents do not need to be human, or similar to one another. They merely need to connect."[310] However, if difference and similarity are produced or defined in particular connections, as I am proposing, the recognition or sameness involved in identification need not happen "between people"; the "objects or agents" involved do not need to be human. "Similar to one another", yes, but that similarity can be, and always already is, partial and temporary. I am not contesting the distinction between fascination and identification as such – I can easily accept that we can be fascinated by, or resonate with, bodies that we do not identify with – but I do want to argue that the distinction should not be determined by whether or not the bodies we are fascinated by are human, or similar with us as closed wholes.

Paasonen points out that, even though affective resonance "is precognitive in the sense of preceding conscious processing (albeit intimately tied to it)", the historical specificities of our bodies affect the ways in which they come to resonate with each other.[311] In other words, our bodies' previous experiences, including their conscious processing, affect our future precognitive resonances. Insofar as "love of same", or sexual attraction toward similarity, is perceived as affective resonance involving identification, and "love of other" is perceived as affective resonance that does not involve identification, an issue of causality still remains: does my body resonate in this way with another's because of my identification with them, or do I identify with them because my body resonates in this way with theirs?

Taking into account that Neva and Kaarna themselves break the norms of gender in many ways, their attraction toward norm-defying gender performances can be looked at as an instance of attraction to similarity, to the "same difference" – a tendency toward sexual resonance involving identification. This does not mean that they identify with the bodies they become attracted to in every possible way, as pointed out by Kaarna in their consideration of the variety of attractive male bodies in existence. Similarly, Tuomo being romantically interested in other-gender bodies and sexually interested in male bodies can be seen as two different patterns of resonance involving gendered identification, the first concerning self-definition and gendered histories, the second being a matter of the male social role. Tuomo's

310 Paasonen 2013, pp. 353-360.
311 Ibid., pp. 364.

history of "attraction toward similarity", the changes in what kind of bodies he has tended toward, would suggest that identification precedes resonance. On the other hand, his contemplation of why he defines his sexual relations with masculine cisgender men as homosexual, and his conclusion that this definition results from sharing the male social role, can be seen as hinting at identification following from resonance. From a viewpoint of performative intra-activity and historically forming and transforming bodies, it seems reasonable to assume that both kinds of causal relation can be involved: bodies that are accustomed to become attracted toward bodies they identify with also likely tend to identify with the bodies they become attracted toward, and the temporal relation of resonance and identification might be impossible to perceive in embodied phenomena.

Having problematized the concepts of difference and similarity of gender and proposed an understanding of them as produced in particular and partial connections, I move on to examine the contextual specificities of gender and sexuality from another angle. Throughout my writing, spatial and temporal relations of bodies to themselves and each other have emerged as essential in any attempt to understand sexual connections and (trans)gendered bodies. Thus, I will next look at the timespaces of sex and gender and their significance in the production of sexual transgender embodiment.

EMBODYING TRANS/GENDER IN SEXUAL SPACE-TIME

In the second chapter of this thesis, I demonstrated that sexual orientation is a matter of location and relation, and that it can change not only over time, but also as we move between differently orientated spaces. This kind of multiplicity of genders, bodies and selves, is also observed by Tine Damsholt in her article *How Towels Came to Matter* (2012): according to her, different spaces and situations – different apparatuses – produce our bodies in different ways, so that we actually perform new reiterations of our "selves" constantly and continuously[312]. I have also proposed the application of the BDSM concept of scene to examine time and space in connection to particular sex acts. In chapter three, I observed how gender, as well as sex, seems to be something that can fluctuate and transform itself as we move from one space to another. Here, I will concentrate on the idea of sexual and gendered spaces as they are produced, inhabited and passed through by sexual transgender bodies, and the effects such spaces and such bodies have on each other. I will also take a brief look at the significance of time and timing for the sexualities of transgender bodies.

312 Damsholt 2012, pp. 100-101.

As I described earlier, certain sexual acts and situations can cause dysphoric disorientation in transgender bodies, and on the other hand, specific kinds of sex and choosing partners who respect us can help to avoid or even alleviate our dysphoria. In their discussion, Kaarna and Neva talk about the practical and bodily dimensions of BDSM sexualities in connection to transgender embodiment. Thinking about the why of their interest in this kind of sexual practices, Kaarna tells that certain kinds of eroticized pain can help them to connect with their body in other ways than through dysphoria: "Then I just cease to care at some point, so that I forget, in a way, my rationality. It connects to some kind of a lizard brain area in just the right way, and then it becomes very interesting and pleasant that someone wants to do something with my body."[313] Perttu also refers to the possibility of using the BDSM scene to explore, deconstruct and even reclaim gendered difference and other kinds of social stereotypes in an environment that is safe and in some sense disconnected from the "out there" world[314] – something that is also described by the "s/m dykes" interviewed by Duncan[315].

Salamon analyses as "an artifact of queer sexual culture" the calendar titled *'Boys' of the Lex*, sold for the year 2002 by The Lexington Club, "San Fransisco's only seven-days-a-week self-proclaimed 'dyke bar'". The calendar portrays a world in which the relations of bodies, identifications, differences and sexual practices operate very differently than the straight lines of gender and sexuality assumed in the structures of the surrounding society: a world where butch lesbians homoerotically engage with male masculinities, where "every night is ladies' night", and where "ladies" can and do identify as boys.[316] This kind of refiguration of gender and sexual orientation, and of similarity and difference, in the specific sex lives of some queer bodies, is proposed in many of my interview texts, as described above. Perttu also very explicitly says that, in their experience, gender (and species, even) can be redefined in the time-space of sex: "Or that it's in a way like this field of experimentation, where you can look at the different sides of things.[317]" Neva, in turn, tells about having recently encountered such possibilities in having had relationships with "dominant women, who want to have gay male sex with [them]"[318].

This way of thinking about transgender sexualities, and Kaarna's notions of eroticized pain producing the body as a site of pleasure instead of dysphoria, resonates with Stryker's

313 K1, 56.-59.
314 K3, 100.-104.
315 Duncan 1996, pp. 101-111.
316 Salamon 2010, pp. 69-71.
317 K3, 102.
318 K6, 115.

account of sadomasochistic sexual practices, within particular BDSM communities, as "a technology for the production of (trans)gendered embodiment, a mechanism for dismembering and disarticulating received patterns of identification, affect, sensation and appearance, and for reconfigurating, coordinating and remapping them in bodily space.[319]" The BDSM scene as a spatial and temporal sexual dimension, insofar as its dynamics and rules of engagement are explicitly negotiated, understood and followed by the participants, provides a site that is conscious of and resistant to the norms and normative practices taken as a given in "the outside world". In the terms of queer phenomenology, it becomes a space that is produced by its participants, thus allowing for the extension of their bodies in ways that might not be supported in other spaces.

It might not be necessary to see BDSM practices as unique in the sense of producing spaces in which gender can be renegotiated or set aside for a while. Era and Neva explain that even before their transition, sex for them was, rather than a cause of dysphoria, a location of what might be conceptualized as positive disorientation: it pushed the affect of dysphoria and self-consciousness about conflicted gender to the background, allowing for a space where the body produces pleasure instead of grief[320]. As the capacities of the body to extend itself are affected not only by the spaces it inhabits, but also by its previous actions and experiences, the production of spaces in which transgender bodies can extend themselves in action is crucial: in addition to being able to extend our bodies for the duration for which we inhabit such spaces, we might be able to train our bodies, to build up its capacities, so that we become more capable of extending ourselves in more restricting spaces, as well.

Time and timing also play important roles in the embodied entanglements of transgender sexualities. In the third chapter I discussed waiting and the future in the dynamics of gender reassignment, passing and dysphoria. I have also described how Daniel, who had found physical intimacy next to impossible prior to his transition, is now looking forward to possible sexual relationships in the future. As the gender reassignment process in Finland involves long periods of waiting and insecurity, and as romantic and sexual relationships are presented as a more or less crucial to the lives of young adults, such transgender bodies that do not feel able or willing to engage in that kind of relationships are at risk for becoming disorientated, "off line", for a long time in this way as well as in terms of gender. On the other hand, transgender bodies capable of physical intimacy might encounter other kind of challenges in relation to time and transitioning, such as Kaarna's difficulties with straight men, with whom they have experienced misgendering and dysphoria, and with gay men who

319 Stryker 2008, pp. 43.
320 K2, 46.; K6, 41.

have not seen them as a desirable object, as Kaarna has long been interpreted as a woman by others.

Our failures to pass can easily result in us also failing to extend ourselves sexually. However, as observed by Halberstam, failure can turn us toward directions we otherwise might not consider, and offer certain rewards, as well[321]: though there's no way to be certain, it seems likely that Tapio wouldn't have ended up with his current (heterosexual male) partner, had he already been living and passing as a man at the time they got to know each other. And as observed by Perttu and Tuomo, our failing to follow the normative lines set as directions for our gendered and sexual becomings might force us to think about our sexual preferences and pleasures more than we would if we could take them as given from the outside.

4.3 APPARATUSES OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY

One of the most visible recurring themes I have explored in this thesis has been the contextual production of gender and sexuality, of difference and similarity, of orientation and location, and of identification and subjectivity. Here, I will examine this contextuality employing Barad's concept of *apparatuses* as "specific material reconfigurings of the world that do not merely emerge in time but iteratively reconfigure spacetimematter as part of the ongoing dynamism of becoming". In reconceptualizing apparatuses, Barad refers to Nils Bohr's arguments that 1) "the cut delineating the object from the agencies of observation" – the distinction between something that is being observed and the instruments used to observe it – "is enacted rather than inherent" and that 2) "the concepts used to describe phenomena are not ideations but specific material arrangements", as well as Ian Hacking's accounts on the "activities that enable experimental practice to work". They then read Bohr's theories and Butler and Foucault's texts diffractively through one another, proposing an understanding of apparatuses as material-discursive "boundary-making practices" that both produce phenomena and partake in them, and also are phenomena in themselves. Apparatuses, thus, are not merely instruments of observation, as they in fact partake in and produce the phenomena they only aim to describe and measure.[322]

Having problematized the givenness of gender and sexual orientation, and on the other hand linked them with specific material becomings, I believe it to be fruitful to examine them as

321 Halberstam 2011, pp. 2-3.
322 Barad 2007, pp. 142-146.

apparatuses in this sense, as boundary-making practices that are themselves produced and reproduced as phenomena. While this might, at first, seem like a simple rewording of Butler's performativity, I propose that Barad's terminology might help to produce a more detailed understanding of the material entanglements of gender and sex in embodied life. In chapters two to four of this thesis, I have discussed the material multiplicities of sexual orientations and transgender performances, and their intra-active connectedness to each other. I have demonstrated instances in which

> a1) sexual orientation is produced as a description of the past and/or the future, as a political and/or social identification, as a normative direction, or any combination thereof
>
> a2) sexual orientation produces certain experiences and interpretations of desire, certain sexual practices, and affects the capacities of bodies to extend themselves in space
>
> b1) gender is produced as an embodied material-discursive practice involving identification, expression, femininity/masculinity, and norms
>
> b2) gender, and experiences of gender conflict, produces bodies and their capacities in different ways
>
> c1) sexual orientation produces gender
>
> c2) gender produces sexual orientation.

As I have also shown that in some instances, gender and sexuality can appear as entangled into each other and more or less indistinguishable, the difference between sexual orientation producing gender and gender producing sexual orientation is not self-evident – indeed, apparatuses always participate in the phenomena they produce. How can we know, then, which one is the apparatus and which the phenomena produced, in any instance of gender producing sex producing gender?

According to Barad, "apparatuses enact agential cuts that produce determinate boundaries and properties of "entities" within phenomena, where "phenomena" are the ontological inseparability of agentially intra-acting components. [...] In short, the apparatus specifies an agential cut that enacts a resolution (within the phenomenon) of the semantic, as well as ontic, indeterminacy.[323]" In the phenomena "Tapio's gender identification as a man produces his tendency to desire men as homosexual orientation" and "Kaarna's identification with male homosexuality produced their gendered identification as guy-ish", gender and sexual orientation are respectively determined as apparatuses by an agential cut enacted by my analysis – which itself is determined as an apparatus in my observation of those phenomena. Instead of seeing gender and sexual orientation as apparatuses that produce different bodies in different ways, I could also look at the specific transgender bodies I study as apparatuses

323 Ibid., pp. 148.

that produce gender and sexuality in different ways. Or I might, as suggested by Grosz's reading of Deleuze, enact an agential cut in which desire is the apparatus that assembles, disassembles and reassembles reality, producing difference in its desire to extend and expand itself indeterminately.

DIFFERENCES THAT MATTER

Whatever it is that gets determined as the apparatus, as the productive, in particular phenomena, the important point to my writing is that, as Barad puts it, "apparatuses produce differences that matter[324]". Having described some of the differences (as well as similarities) in the ways gender and sexuality have been and are embodied in the lives of the transgender bodies I'm studying, I now want to look at some of the contexts, at some diffractive apparatuses, that might have participated in producing those differences (and similarities).

As discussed in the third chapter, knowledge about the existence of transgender bodies and of the possibility of transgender identification emerges as a crucial turning point in all of the (trans)gendered histories told in my interview texts. While it is obvious from those histories that feelings of gender conflict can and often do pre-exist such knowledge, the knowledge seems to function as an apparatus that produces a connection with individual experiences and our cultural organization of gender – it enacts a boundary that includes the subject individual in the group of transgender bodies instead of (or in addition to) possible earlier cuts that both include the individual in their assigned-at-birth gender and exclude them from it because of their conflicted sense of gender identification. This kind of boundary-making can also make the medical gender reassignment available to transgender bodies as a way of reorientation.

While not all transgender bodies seek medical and/or legal gender reassignment, it has been and is an important aspect of the gendered and sexual lives of the particular bodies I study. The material-discursive transformations enabled by medical transition have made important differences in Daniel's capacity for physical intimacy in particular, and allowed for him as well as Tapio, Neva, Era and Tuomo to pass/blend – on the other hand, it has also brought on unexpected effects, such as Tuomo's difficulties with expressing the feminine aspects of his identification and the assumptions of masculine heterosexuality experienced by Neva. These unexpected and unwanted effects highlight the complexity of intra-active entanglements: it is impossible to foretell all the effects produced by any particular apparatus. As an apparatus that produces many kinds of embodied difference, the reassignment process in itself is

324 Ibid., pp. 146.

produced as spatially and temporally specific: I have pointed out some of the particular aspects of the process in Finland, and it also comes up in my interview texts that the process might in the past have been more suspicious in its attitude toward, for example, non-binary gender identifications and non-heterosexual orientations.

The apparent fluidity of gender and sexuality has become one of the most important themes of this writing. However, not all of the bodies I study seem to experience and perform their gender and sexuality to the same degree of variance. All of them were defined as female at birth, but their current self-definitions differ somewhat from each other: Daniel and Tapio identify as men and Era as an androgynous man. Kaarna does not seem to define themself as a man, but identifies with male homosexuality and uses terms such as “guy” and “boy” to refer to themself. Tuomo and Neva are hesitant to clearly define themselves, but appear to shift and fluctuate between other-gender and male performances according to the situation. Perttu describes themself as a transman, but in terms of other people's interpretation of their gender performance prefers to not be read as clearly male or female. They also vary in terms of their self-defined sexual orientation, though all identify as non-heterosexual: Daniel is bisexual, Era pansexual and Tuomo “homosexual in a widely defined sense”. Neva and Perttu identify as pansexual “if forced to”, but prefer to not define their sexuality in gender-based terms. Tapio identifies as gay, bisexual or queer depending on the perspective, and Kaarna defines themself as pansexual, yet prefers male and masculine bodies in terms of desire and transgender bodies as partners.

In the past, both the gender and sexual orientation of my research objects have undergone transformations, and some of them also perform themselves differently in the present tense, depending on the situation. Daniel has gone from identifying as a girl to identifying as a man, and from his childhood's assumed heterosexuality to asexuality to aromantic homosexuality to aromantic bisexuality. Currently, his gender and sexual orientation seem to stay more or less the same regardless of his location. Neva, as quite an opposite to Daniel, currently prefers not to categorize their gender or their sexual orientation in any definitive way, but seems to employ a multiplicity of gender identifications and performances contextually. In the past, they have identified as a tomboy, an androgyne and a transgender man, and as heterosexual, bisexual, heteroromantic homosexual, pansexual and homosexual. Based on the example of these two bodies, it would be easy to draw a conclusion that more complex gender identifications tend to go hand in hand with more complex sexual orientations, and that more culturally understandable categories such as “man” and “bisexual” as transgender identifications are less likely to fluctuate as the bodies

materializing them move between spaces.

However, like Daniel, Tapio also identifies as a man, yet his description of his sexual orientation is quite complex – though his gender, indeed, does appear to be less fluid than Neva's. In the past, his gender and sexuality have undergone a similarly varied development than Neva describes in their own narrative. What they have in common is that both tried to ignore their transgender identification for a long period of time and transitioned only after having tried to deal with their gender conflict in multiple other ways, whereas Daniel transitioned as a young adult. Era also waited until their early twenties before seeking gender reassignment, but their gendered and sexual history doesn't seem quite as complex than Neva and Tapio's: they went from woman to androgyne to androgynous man and heterosexual to bisexual to pansexual – after assuming a non-normative identification, they seem to have merely refined it later, rather than switching directions, in terms of both gender and sexuality. Currently, they employ similar tactics of gender performance than Perttu: they prefer not to be simply interpreted as men, but are satisfied with such readings in situations where it doesn't seem possible to achieve a more ambiguous interpretation.

As a summary, there seems to be some degree of causal connectivity between the complexity of gender identification and sexual orientation, the fluidity of gender and sexuality, and the timing of gender reassignment, in particular transgender embodiments, but that connectivity is not obvious, and the multiple ways in which gender and sexuality are produced in material-discursive practices make it even more difficult to grasp. Furthermore, transgender bodies are not only produced by our cultural specificities and their own experiences of gender and sexuality, as Namaste points out, but are also "constituted in the mundane and uneventful: going to the pawn shop; finding a doctor; bad clients; electrolysis; looking for a job; losing a lover; perfecting the art of binding breasts; trying to get a date; fixing junk; watching films featuring psychotic transsexual characters; learning how to inject hormones; recovering from surgery; electrolysis; Norvir, Crixivan, and Interferon; overdoses; visiting the hospital; trying to find a surgeon willing to perform sex reassignment surgery on a seropositive transsexual; attending funerals; and changing legal documents[325]". The mundane and the uneventful, though often left unsaid, can affect our perspectives of our selves, of our bodies, and of our sexual relationships in ways we might be quite unaware of ourselves. From this perspective, I find it quite impossible to conceive of transgender sexualities in the terms of either "not in any way connected to each other" or "transgender identification as a manifestation of sexual desire".

325 Namaste 2000, pp. 2-3.

5. SEXUALITY AND GENDER: STILL COMPLICATED

It seems obvious to me by now that gender and sexuality, as multiplicities of various transformative functions and energetic intensities produced as, in, and between our bodies, do not exist and operate as a continuous and coherent whole. Nor can they be seen to be radically independent of each other; they are entangled and transform into each other in complex relations of mutual intra-activity. In my inquiry to these relations as they emerge in non-heterosexual, assigned-female-at-birth transgender embodiment, I have barely begun to understand the width of the entangled networks of sexuality and gender – any one answer to the questions I have asked has produced a number of new questions, and new possible paths of thought and research to turn to. It has required me to learn and practice quite a lot of self-restraint to stay focused on what I set out to do in this thesis, and to keep my analysis from wandering off toward any and all attractive thoughts and theories that managed to surprise me, to awaken wonder in me, by their emergence.

In this final chapter of my thesis, I summarize my findings and analyses and consider their significance in relation to my research questions and to the academic discussions on gender and sexuality I have engaged in my writing. Looking at what I have not said as well as what I have, I think about potential starting points for future research on transgender bodies and sexualities. I also examine my methodological choices, evaluating my success in selecting and applying the theories and methods to analyze my material and starting my preliminary work in conceptualizing a methodological viewpoint I call queer materialism.

5.1 DOING DIFFERENCE

In asking what kind of intra-active connections of gender and sexuality can be seen emerging in the told experiences of transgender bodies, and what implications do these connections have on our understanding of gender and sexuality, I set out to observe and demonstrate the complexity and variance of these boundary-making practices in embodied lives, and to produce "counterfactual narratives" to the cultural myths of permanence, stability and simplicity of sexual and gendered identification. Did I achieve these goals? How would I evaluate my success in the project that becomes my thesis?

To get my hands on the mutual productive relations of sexuality and gender together, I first mapped out different significant aspects of them separately in the experiences told to me in the interviews I conducted. Starting with sexuality, I made a distinction between orientation, sexual desire and sexual practice, which I saw as intra-actively entangled into each other, yet separable in the agential realist sense. I then produced a deconstruction of gender performance into likewise intra-actively entangled components of identification, expression, masculinity/femininity, and normativity, considered the material body and its participation in transgender performances, and explored the spatial and temporal relations of transgender bodies to themselves, each other, and other bodies. In the fourth chapter, I finally brought gender and sexuality together to examine their relations to each other. I perceived them as entangled and intra-actively productive of each other, and also productive of and produced by other aspects of embodied transgender lives.

Even though I started my project with a hypothesis of complexity, I was caught by surprise by the degree of it that emerges in my analysis of the data I collected. Rather than produce a comprehensive description of the ways in which gender and sexuality can, do or could produce each other in embodied transgender lives, I ended up concentrating on a handful of particular instances as examples, since I also wanted to be able to look into the meanings and material realities implicated in each example. Still, I consider my study a successful one: I have demonstrated that matters of sexuality and gender are entangled multiplicities of function and transformative capacity, further entangled into each other as a multiplicity. I have observed that transgender bodies with relatively similar backgrounds – assigned-female-at-birth, white, of Finnish origin, went to high school, 20-30 years of age – still materialize as sexual and gendered in ways distinct from each other, employing different strategies to cope with gender conflict and dysphoria and sexually approaching other bodies in different ways and at different frequencies. I believe I have definitely succeeded in producing such narratives of embodied lives that position themselves in resistance to the hegemonic "facts" of naturalized gender and (hetero)sexuality and permanent identities. However, rather than "successful", I would prefer to evaluate my study as a meaningful one: themes of failure and success, and the power relations determining that which is successful and that which fails, have repeatedly surfaced in my data, compelling me to problematize them.

FAILING TO COMPLY

The important failures emerging in my interview texts are related to the directions given us

by others, or assumed by ourselves to be the given: As non-heterosexual AFAB transgender bodies, we have failed and will fail again in inhabiting the category of women, in inhabiting our bodies as female bodies, in passing as men and blending in with men, in being seen as other-gendered, and in producing gender performances and narratives that comply with the popular myths of transgender bodies. We fail in being desired as not-women, in desiring women, in not desiring women, in having sex with men, in not having sex with men, in being sexually satisfied in the relationships we enter motivated by safety and comfort, in feeling safe in the relationships we enter motivated by desire, by passion, in defining the gender of others and, thus, in defining our sexual orientation in those terms. While not all of us share all these experiences of failure, we all have failed in extending ourselves in space as ourselves in the gender we were assigned to at birth.

Failure is often painful. It can involve affects of inadequacy, of inferiority, of exclusion and shame, affects that compel us to try again, try harder, try better – as embodied in Era's excessive performances of femininity in their past, and in Tapio's multiple attempts of trying to find a comfortable way of being a woman. However, when success comes to seem less and less likely, we are forced to look for other options, other paths to take. In transgender lives, failure can be a moment of revelation, a moment of disorientation that throws our bodies upside down, allowing us to perceive the world and the future as unfolding ahead of us instead of closing in on us. When the givens of the world we live in fail to extend our bodies, when the paths pointed out to us lead to nowhere, it might just be that we come to see those given paths as what they are: choices among others. While it is clear that some choices provide more rewards than others, and not all choices are available to all bodies, seeing different paths of gender and sexuality as viable is a practice of making a difference for ourselves and for others.

As bodies that are off line, bodies that fail to orientate themselves along the straight lines of gender and sexuality, have a potential to by their proximity alone to disrupt those straight lines, to reveal their straight and linear nature as a matter of perspective rather than of natural order, the failure of some transgender bodies to embody a permanent identification is a crucial observation. It points to the co-dependent relationship of normative gender and normative sexual orientation: failure of one threatens the other, as they emerge as conditions for each other's arrival. More indeterminacy and fluctuation leads to more indeterminacy and fluctuation, and the actualization of such chaos in living bodies is threatening in its proximity. It is not the abstract possibility of transgender bodies that threatens the hierarchies of gender and sexuality; the presence of living, functional, active transgender bodies is what

is frightening to those who would preserve the privileges of white, heterosexual cisgender men over others.

TRANSGENDER EXPERIMENTATION

> *To experiment is to create, produce, refine and stabilize phenomena...*
> *But phenomena are hard to produce in any stable way. That is why I spoke of creating and not merely discovering phenomena. That is a long hard task.*
> *Or rather there are endless different tasks. There is designing an experiment that might work. There is learning how to make the experiment work. But perhaps the real knack is getting to know when the experiment is working.*[326]

Experimentation seems to play a critical role in assuming and embodying a gendered identification or a sexual orientation. Experimentation has also emerged in my analysis as a quality of desire, and of queer sexual spaces. In relation to failure and trying again, experimentation might be conceptualized as trying again in a different way, or as trying something new altogether: it can be about either trying to find a new solution to a persistent problem, or applying a solution to a new problem, or exploring the world of possibilities in search for new problems, new solutions and new perspectives – or any combination thereof. It carries with it the same sense of iterative becoming than the concept of performance: the world unfolds, and is perceived to unfold, in repeated acts of difference.

I propose experimentation as an alternative to understanding transgender becoming as a matter of performance. It might allow for a shift of focus from the authentic and the fake, from the legible and the illegible, to functionality: to the knack of "getting to know when the experiment is working". While I demonstrated that we can set different goals to our performances of gender, it can still be difficult to shake the theatrical terminology, in which the goals of transgender performances are easily determined in terms of audience responses – and such responses are, undoubtedly, an important aspect of connecting with the world as a transgender body. However, the concept of gender experimentation might enable us to think about the goals of particular experiments, and the functioning of those experiments, in wider terms, and to better account for the material and the mundane of our lives, as produced by and productive of our embodied gender.

---

326 Barad 2007, pp. 144-145, quoting Hacking, Ian (1983): *Representing and Intervening: Introductory Topics in the Philosophy of Natural Science*. Cambridge University Press, New York.; pp. 230.

5.2 TRANSGENDER FUTURES UNFOLDING

Although I am quite satisfied with what I have achieved in my study, a lot was left unsaid, awaiting future projects. I will here briefly describe some of what I consider the more interesting or important research potentials in those directions I could have turned to but chose not to, in the context of this thesis, and think about how I might have approached them here and/or what might be fruitful ways to approach them in the future. Taking into account the limits of my data and source materials, I further present some of the questions that are motivated by my study, but could not be answered from my current position. I will also think about the future of the Finnish transgender studies in general, asking myself what kind of research approaches and objects would I consider important in the construction and consolidation of the field.

In general, there is much more that could and should be said on the intra-active relations of gender and sexuality, both in general and concerning transgender bodies in particular. It would be intriguing to examine similar personal histories of gender and sexuality for this kind of intra-actions with a different framing of research objects, such as AMAB and/or heterosexual transgender bodies, as well as cisgender bodies of different sexual orientations. However, now aware of how many variables must be involved in this kind of intra-active connections, I would probably not take up such a project with the limitations of time, energy and resources that have restricted my capacities in writing this thesis. Based on this experience, I would say that narrowing down the number of interviews examined, putting other projects and assignments on hold and/or having some form of secured income are highly recommended for anyone planning to engage this kind of research.

RECONFIGURATIONS OF SEXUALITY

In making a distinction between sexual orientations as descriptive of our past, present and/or future sexual desires and practices and as identifications assumed and articulated for social and/or political reasons, I pointed out that in many cases, our descriptive orientation and our social/political orientation are likely to be similar to each other, and even when they significantly differ from each other, they might have various causal intra-actions with each other. For example, a body might desire and practice sexual relationships with male, female and other-gender bodies alike, but in certain environments articulate a homosexual

orientation for the purpose of social legibility and political representation. This probably requires that the body, in those spaces in which it orientates itself as homosexual, is perceived to follow that line in its sexual practices. However, I was only able to scrape the surface, so to speak, of this kind of phenomena, and it seems to me that a lot more research and analytical thought would be required to comprehend these relations within sexuality: How are our different sexual orientations motivated in different contexts? How do our social and political orientations affect what kind of bodies appear as potential desire-objects for us? What kind of situations can motivate switching orientations?

Examining desire from the viewpoint of looking at Grosz's interpretation of Deleuze and Salamon's reading of Merleau-Ponty diffractively through one another, I proposed an understanding of transposition as an entanglement of desire that has no subject or object, and of a body that is orientated toward other bodies in different ways. This kind of perspective could provide more detailed insight into our sexualities as particular and experimenting and generalizing and goal-orientated at the same time. An approach combining queer phenomenology and Deleuzian rhizomatics fascinates me as a potentially powerful tool in coming to understand embodied sexuality.

TRANSGENDER ARRIVALS

As I observed in the introduction, the field of transgender studies in general, and particularly in Finland, is young and quite diverse. In my inquiry to the material-discursive becomings of transgender bodies, I have relied heavily on the works of Salamon and Ahmed, in addition to Barad's posthumanist reconfiguration of Butler's theory of performativity. I have examined transgender bodies as constituted in both form and function, or in matter and discourse which, from the perspective of Barad's agential realism, are not determinate as separate from each other. The intra-active entanglement of the form and movement of transgender bodies is something deserving of a more detailed analysis, which might take as its starting point for example Brian Massumi's theorizing of bodies, movement and perception.

I touched Jack Halberstam's notion of female masculinity as independent of male masculinity and its implications to transgender bodies in my account of femininity and masculinity. I pointed out that, while the multiplicity of masculinities, and female masculinity in particular, have been discussed to a length in women's and gender studies, male femininities seem harder to tackle, and they have been most comprehensively explored in connection to

assigned-male-at-birth transgender bodies, cisgender gay men, and theatrical cross-dressing. Femininity appears as an important aspect of the gender identification to many of the bodies I have studied here, but the focus on AMAB bodies in the majority of research concerning male femininity makes it hard to apply it in connection to AFAB transgender bodies. Femininity in embodied AFAB transgender experiments is an interesting phenomenon, which ought to be studied more: it seems to me that some AFAB transgender bodies are able to use femininity as an identity-object in ways quite distinct from how femininity is experienced and embodied by AMAB transgender and/or homosexual bodies.

The experience of gender dysphoria, which I have approached as an embodied relationality through the concept of disorientation, continues to haunt me, as there has been relatively little contemporary research with a focus on dysphoria – it is discussed in many writings within the field of transgender studies, but not really given that much thought in any of them. I am interested in continuing the thought-work I began in this thesis, and inquiring after the variety of affective experiences that are conceptualized under the header of gender dysphoria: What is is that we feel when we experience dysphoria? What kind of effects does it have in our lives? If dysphoria is being disorientated in terms of gendered orientation, is all gender disorientation dysphoric?

In Finland, the field of transgender studies is, as described by Huuska, full of holes – or rather, it seems to me that it is a vast sea of emptiness with a small lone island here and there. As highlighted by Namaste, it is important that transgender research studies the mundane and the uneventful of transgender lives, instead of or in addition to merely theorizing (trans)gender identifications and sexualities on an abstract level, being responsive and responsible to actual living transgender bodies. In Finland, a quite large portion of the existing research actually does focus on the experiences of actual transgender people: this is probably related to the social and medical sciences' approaches having dominated the field, as a lot of the research texts focus on themes such as transgender people as customers in the social and medical services. However, I would say we need to do more research on the everyday lives of transgender bodies within the humanities as well, as transgender people are not only customers and patients of different welfare services, but also partake in culture, arts, history, language use and so forth.

In the course of my writing, I noticed that in the interview phase of this project, some assumptions were made by both me and the people I study – assumptions that have somewhat affected the content of my thesis. The most significant of these seems to be a

preference for the relationship models of consensual non-monogamy or polyamory, surprisingly enough shared by me and all but one of my six volunteers. Not only did I not notice beforehand that nearly all of the people I had chosen for the interviews were or sought to be in non-monogamous relationships, the topic was barely mentioned in our discussions. I don't really have any explanation as to why I ended up with an almost completely non-monogamous group of people. While it probably has something to do with me being openly polyamorous myself, which might have encouraged a more like-minded group of volunteers, it is also my experience that polyamory and other forms of consensual non-monogamy seem more common among the Finnish transgender communities than in the population as a whole. While I have had no way to prove this hypothesis of mine in the context of this thesis, or even properly address the issue of transgender non-monogamy with the sources I have, it seems fascinating and potentially fruitful as a future research interest.

WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

Writing this thesis has in every way been the learning experience it is intended as. My skills in academic research and writing have significantly improved, not to mention a certain resilience that seems essential to the completion of any long-term research project. I have kept to a tight work schedule, but I am also starting to have an understanding of how important it can be to include enough free time in that schedule. While keeping on writing has been hard at times and not trying to fit everything I would like to in the thesis seems to require superhuman self-discipline, I still plan on continuing my adventure in the academic world and applying for a position as a doctoral student as soon as possible.

In my future doctoral dissertation, I plan on staying on the track of queer materialist inspired transgender studies. Although there would be a lot more to say about transgender sexualities, I plan on shifting my focus toward the onto-epistemological specificities of transgender embodiment. I am particularly interested in questions related to the fluidity of gender I have discussed in this thesis, as well as to knowledge of gender – that of our own and that of others. Beyond that project, I am interested in a more ethnographic and/or sociological approach to the everyday life of transgender bodies in Finland, as well as in the methodology and philosophy of transgender studies as a field. As this research project has brought up many thoughts and questions related to the theoretical choices I have made and will make in the future, I conclude my thesis with a brief consideration of methodology in studying transgender bodies: How did the choices I made work? In which ways did the authors and

texts I discussed with come together? What kind of methodological choices would I make in the future?

5.3 A QUEER MATERIALISM EMERGING

One of the goals I set for myself in the first chapter was to test the applicability of queer theoretical writings in transgender research. I brought posthumanist and/or new materialist feminist theory into the picture because of their interest in embodied lives and situational knowledges – that which is perceived as lacking in queer theory by Viviane Namaste, Jay Prosser and other transgender-identifying critical writers. In the course of this project, I have come to see queer theory, new materialism and transgender standpoint as intra-actively entangled in the works of Sara Ahmed, Jack Halberstam, Judith Butler, Karen Barad, Gayle Salamon, Elisabeth Grosz, Riki Lane and many others – and it has been challenging and rewarding to diffractively read these works together and through one another, looking for the differences, and the similarities as well, in their understandings of gender, sexuality, embodiment and experience.

In the spirit of recognizing the partiality of intra-actions and the nature of existence as becoming rather than being, I have not demanded that the writings I have engaged in my analysis agree completely with one another. When there has seemingly been a clear conflict, in the proximity of what I have explored, between two texts or two authors, I have either gone with the opinion that seems more logical or applicable in the particular context, or tried to negotiate a position from which both perspectives make sense. For example, as I observed, Salamon insists in their interpretation of Merleau-Ponty's sexual schema that desire is always orientated toward an object, whereas Grosz's reading of Deleuze explicitly states that desire as such has no objects or goals. As Merleau-Ponty's concept of transposition is, however, described by Salamon as a phenomenon in which the body and desire become entangled into each other, I reasoned that by seeing desire as having no objects and human bodies as being orientated in multiple ways toward objects, the phenomenon of transposition can as intra-active entanglement be both at the same time. If we are looking for particular connections and experimenting with the desire to know, to understand, what previously appeared as two incompatible statements can surprise us by their capacity to intra-act and produce new assemblages together.

In the beginning of my thesis I articulated a research position I named transgender

standpoint: as a transgender body, on transgender bodies, for transgender bodies. Here, already, I identified myself with the new materialist perspective on embodiment. However, I have on occasion ended up in disagreement with the new materialist and posthumanist writings I have worked with, primarily over issues of power and resistance, and over a number of such texts' and writers' focus on energetic intensities and affirmative attitudes, almost to the point of a complete denial of negativity, which in itself is a fascinating concept. While I understand the empowering value of affirmativity, I also believe that too much focus on the positive can lead to a dismissal of potential knowledge to be produced by turning toward the negative and the uncomfortable aspects of embodied life.

As gender dysphoria, for example, appears in my analysis as an important component of transgender experiences, I find it important for transgender research to be able to look at that which is distressing and painful as well as that which is empowering and vitalizing. Even so, what I have often felt reading the critical writings of Namaste and Prosser, and of other similarly outspoken transgender theorists, is a defiant cynicism without joy or pride to balance it. This is a mindspace I am familiar with, produced and renewed in our daily experiences of being ignored, belittled, forgotten, patronized, within the field of feminist and LGB activism as well as in the society as a whole. As a long-term accommodation, that space can be very depressing and isolating, offering little more than anger and bitterness to occupy ourselves with. This in mind, I think there are useful tools to be found, produced within the fields of queer and feminist theory, that transgender research and activism could make use of in refurnishing our own spaces with more color, if not more light. We can be defiant without fatalism and angry without losing heart. We can be negative without accepting defeat and we can point at the privileges others have over us without predetermining all of them as hostile.

From these and other methodological observations I have made in writing my thesis, I begin to conceptualize the transgender standpoint I now stand at as *queer materialism*. In this I am especially inspired by Donna Haraway's research ethical notion of asking the difficult and the uncomfortable questions, which appears to me as an inherently queer idea in its approach and playfulness, and Sara Ahmed's remarks on how disorientation, from the perspective of queer phenomenology, can allow for an angle from which it is possible to see the world around us, the conditions of our emergence, but as active and affective, as a world in which tables and doorknobs come to have an agency of their own, which in turn reminds me very closely of the thought-work of many self-identified posthumanist and new materialist thinkers. From my transgender perspective, a queer materialist ethics and methodology might emerge as a framework for research interested in the mundane materiality of our

embodied lives as well as in revolutionary subcultures, is aware of structures of power and privilege and of matter as participating in them, and suspects oppositional dualisms yet dares to stand up in resistance to oppressive hegemonies.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

ORIGINAL SOURCES:

Interviews:

K1: Kaarna, 14.10.2013.
K2: Era, 16.10.2013.
K3: Perttu, 21.11.2013.
K4: Daniel, 22.11.2013.
K5: Tuomo, 22.11.2013.
K6: Tapio, 23.11.2013.

Preliminary survey:

S1: Kaarna
S2: Era
S3: Perttu
S5: Tuomo
S6: Tapio

PRINTED SOURCES:

Ahmed, Sara (2006): *Queer Phenomenology. Orientations, Objects, Others.* Duke University Press, Durham and London.

Ahmed, Sara (2010): *Creating disturbance. Feminism, happiness and affective differences*. Liljeström & Paasonen (eds): Working with Affect in Feminist Readings, p. 31-44. Routledge, London and New York.

Bailey, J. Michael (2003): *The Man Who Would Be Queen. The Science of Gender-Bending and Transsexualism*. Joseph Henry Press, Washington, D.C.

Barad, Karen (2003): *Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter.* Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, vol. 28, no. 3, p. 801-831.

Barad, Karen (2007): *Meeting the Universe Halfway. Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning.* Duke University Press, Durham and London.

Bleeker, Maaike (2009): *Peter Pan's gender and feminist theatre studies*. Buikema, Rosemarie & van der Tuin, Iris (eds): Doing Gender in Media, Art and Culture, p. 163-177. Routledge, London and New York.

Bremer, Signe (2010): *Mellan Vita Rum. Om väntan, vithet & maskulinitet i två berättelser om transsexuella patientskap*. Tidskrift för genusvetenskap nr 1-2, p. 91-112.

Butler, Judith (2006 [1990]): *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.*

Routledge, New York and London.

Damsholt, Tine (2012): *How Towels Came to Matter – on Discursive-Material Reconfigurings of Gender in Academia*. Kvinder, Køn & Forskning, nr. 1-2, p. 92-102.

Duncan, Patricia L. (1996): *Identity, Power, and Difference: Negotiating Conflict in an S/M Dyke Community.* Beemyn, Brett & Eliason, Mickey (eds): Queer Studies: A Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Anthology, p. 87-114. New York University Press, New York and London.

Grosz, Elisabeth (1993): *A Thousand Tiny Sexes: Feminism and Rhizomatics.* Topoi 12, pp. 167-179.

Grosz, Elisabeth (1995): *Space, Time, and Perversion. Essays on the Politics of Bodies.* Routledge, New York & London.

Grosz, Elisabeth (2008): *Chaos, Territory, Art. Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth.* Columbia University Press, New York.

Halberstam, Jack (as Halberstam, Judith) (1998): *Female Masculinity.* Duke University Press, Durham and London.

Halberstam, Jack (as Halberstam, Judith) (2005): *In a Queer Time & Place. Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York University Press, New York and London.

Halberstam, Jack (as Halberstam, Judith) (2011): *The Queer Art of Failure.* Duke University Press, Durham and London.

Haraway, Donna (1997): *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium. FemaleMan©_Meets_OncoMouse™. Feminism and Technoscience.* Routledge, New York and London.

Haraway, Donna (2003): *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness.* Prickly Paradigm Press, Chicago.

Irigaray, Luce (2004 [1984]): *An Ethics of Sexual Difference.* Continuum, London and New York.

Irni, Sari (2013): *Sex, Power and Ontology: Exploring the Performativity of Hormones.* NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research, Vol 21, No. 1, p. 41-56.

Kinnunen, Taina (2008): *Lihaan leikattu kauneus. Kosmeettisen kirurgian ruumiillistuneet merkitykset*. Gaudeamus, Helsinki.

Lane, Riki (2009): *Trans as Bodily Becoming: Rethinking the Biological as Diversity, Not Dichotomy.* Hypatia, vol. 24, no. 3, p. 136-157.

Lorde, Audre (1993 [1978]): *Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power*. Zami. Sister Outsider. Undersong. Quality Paperback Book Club, New York.

Lykke, Nina (2010): *Making Corporealities Matter. Intersections of Gender and Sex Revisited*. Feminist Studies: A Guide to Intersectional Theory, Methodology and Writing, p. 106-122. Routledge Sociology, New York.

Minh-ha, Trinh T. (1999 [1989]): *Write Your Body* and *the Body in Theory.* Price, Janet & Shildrick, Margrit (eds): Feminist Theory and the Body. A Reader, p. 258-266. Edinburgh University Press.

Namaste, Viviane (2000): *Invisible Lives. The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People.* The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London.

Paasonen, Susanna (2013): *Grains of Resonance: Affect, pornography and visual sensation*. Somatechnics Vol. 3, no. 2, p. 351-368.

Prosser, Jay (1998): *Second Skins. The Body Narratives of Transsexuality*. Columbia University Press, New York.

Ramazanoğlu, Caroline & Holland, Janet (2002): *Feminist Methodology. Challenges and Choices.* Sage Publications, London, Thousand Oaks & New Delhi.

Rosario, Vernon A. II (1996): *Trans (Homo) Sexuality? Double Inversion, Psychiatric Confusion, and Hetero-Hegemony.* Beemyn, Brett & Eliason, Mickey (eds): Queer Studies: A Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Anthology, p. 35-51. New York University Press, New York and London.

Salamon, Gayle (2010): *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality.* Columbia University Press, New York Chichester, West Sussex.

Schleifer, David (2006): *Make Me Feel Mighty Real: Gay Female-to-Male Transgenderists Negotiating Sex, Gender, and Sexuality*. Sexualities 2006 9: 57, p. 57-75.

Stoltenberg, John (2009 [1974]): *Toward Gender Justice.* Murphy, Peter F. (ed.): Feminism and Masculinities, p. 41-49. Oxford University Press, New York.

Stryker, Susan (2008): *Dungeon Intimacies: The Poetics of Transsexual Sadomasochism*. parallax, vol. 14, no. 1, p. 36-47.

Sullivan, Nikki (2003): *Transsexual Empires and Transgender Warriors.* A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory, p. 99-118. New York University Press.

Valentine, David (2007): *The Making of a Field: Anthropology and Transgender Studies.* Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category, p. 143-171. Duke University Press, Durham, NC.

UNPRINTED SOURCES:

Halberstam, Jack (2013): *No Church in the Wild: Queer Anarchy and Gaga Feminism*. Lecture at the 49th Annual Nina Mae Kellogg Awards ceremony, Portland State University, 13th of May. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eIL9k8dCtwU (link verified as functional on April 11th 2014).

Kondelin, Sade (2012): *Is it a he, a she, or a they? Englannin kielen sukupuolittuneet ja sukupuolineutraalit persoonapronominit transidentiteettien projekteissa.* Bachelor's thesis, University of Turku, School of Languages and Translation Studies, General Linguistics.

Lipponen, Sanna (2013): *Itsen merellinen rakastaja – Itsen rakastamisen feminiininen versio*

Susanna Majurin valokuvissa. Pro gradu thesis, University of Turku, School of History, Culture and Arts Studies, Master's Program in Women's and Gender Studies. Doria database, http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe201310116532 (link verified as functional on April 11th 2014).

Pääkkölä, Anna-Elena (2013a): *Sadomasochistic Power Relations in Audiovisual Music Performances.* Licentiate thesis, University of Turku, School of History, Culture and Arts Studies, Musicology.

Pääkkölä, Anna-Elena (2013b): *Licentiate Defence: Sadomasochistic Power Relations in Audiovisual Music Performances.* University of Turku, 12th of December.

Taavetti, Riikka (2010): *"Sinunko rintasi? Ei vaan pääoman!" Marxist-Feministerna -ryhmä ja sosialistisen feminismin mahdollisuus.* Pro gradu thesis, University of Helsinki, Faculty of Social Sciences, Political History. http://hdl.handle.net/10138/23785 (link verified as functional on April 11th 2014).

Sade Kondelin
Pro gradu
Turun yliopisto
Historian, kulttuurin ja taiteiden tutkimuksen laitos
Nais- ja sukupuolentutkimuksen maisteriohjelma
Huhtikuu 2014
Suomenkielinen lyhennelmä

Transforming Bodies, Wandering Desires
Intra-actions of Gender and Sexuality in Non-heterosexual Transgender Embodiment

Tarkastelen pro gradu -tutkielmassani ei-normatiivisen sukupuolen ja seksuaalisuuden keskinäisiä vuorovaikutussuhteita transsukupuolisessa ruumiillistumisessa *intra-aktiivisen yhteenkietoutumisen* (intra-active entanglement) näkökulmasta. Kalifornian yliopiston feististen opintojen, filosofian ja tietoisuuden professori ja teoreettinen fyysikko Karen Barad esittää intra-aktion käsitettä vaihtoehtona interaktiolle: siinä missä interaktio viittaa yhteyksiin ontologisesti erillisten ja itsenäisten yksilöiden välillä, intra-aktio implikoi suhteita sellaisten ruumiiden kesken, jotka ovat lähtökohtaisesti ja erottamattomasti yhteenkietoutuneita ja vaikuttavat toisiinsa moninaisin tavoin.

Haastattelen kuutta ei-heteroseksuaalista, syntymässä naiseksi määritettyä transsukupuolista henkilöä koskien heidän elettyjä sukupuolen ja seksuaalisuuden kokemuksiaan ja kartoitan erilaisia tapoja, joilla nämä kaksi intra-aktiivisesti vaikuttavat toisiinsa ja tuottavat toisiaan. Luen havaintojani uusmaterialistisen ja queer-teoreettisen kehyksen kautta hyödyntäen muun muassa performatiivisuuden, diffraktion, orientaation ja tuottavan halun käsitteitä ja esitän seuraavat kysymykset:

1) Mitä erilaisia sukupuolen ja seksuaalisuuden keskinäisiä intra-aktiivisia yhteyksiä voidaan havaita ei-heteroseksuaalisten, syntymässä naiseksi määriteltyjen transsukupuolisten ruumiiden kokemuksissa?
2) Millaisia sukupuolen ja seksuaalisuuden ymmärtämisen tapoja näissä intra-aktioissa muodostuu?

Tutkielmani paikantuu teoreettisesti osittain toistensa kanssa limittäisten transtutkimuksen, queer-teorian ja uusmaterialistisen feminismin kentille ja sillä on etnografisia, sukupuoliteoreettisia ja queer-poliittisia päämääriä: haluan kuvata ja tarkastella todellisten transsukupuolisten ruumiiden elämää, pohtia transsukupuolisen ruumiillistumisen erityisyyksiä ja niiden merkitystä sukupuolen ja seksuaalisuuden käsityksillemme sekä

tuottaa vaihtoehtoisia narratiiveja normatiivisille näkemyksille muuttumattomasta ja pysyvästä sukupuolesta ja seksuaalisuudesta.

Transsukupuolisten ruumiiden seksuaalisuutta on tutkittu verrattain vähän. Keskustelen muun muassa Gayle Salamonin transsukupuolista ruumiillisuutta käsittelevän *Assuming a Body* (2010) -teoksen sekä transsukupuolista sadomasokismia *Dungeon Intimacies* (2008) -artikkelissaan analysoivan Susan Strykerin kanssa. Varsinaisten transtutkimuksen kentälle sijoittuvien tekstien lisäksi tutkielmani pohjaa useiden sukupuolta, seksuaalisuutta, ruumiillisuutta ja valtaa teksteissään tarkastelevien feinististen tutkijoiden näkemyksiin. Karen Baradin (2003, 2007) toimijuudellisen realismin teoria, jossa materiaalinen olemassaolo ymmärretään jatkuvasti kehittyvänä ja uudelleenjärjestäytyvänä prosessina staattisen ja deterministisen ruumiskäsityksen sijaan, on oleellisessa osassa analyysissani. Erityisesti tärkeäksi muodostuu Baradin diffraktiivisen tutkimusmetodologian käsite, jolla hän tarkoittaa tutkijan hahmottamista tutkimusprosessin osana, siihen vaikuttavana ja myös itse vaikutuksille alttiina: tutkija ei pyri sulkemaan itseään havainnointinsa ulkopuolelle, vaan tulemaan tietoiseksi niistä eroista, jotka hänen läsnäolonsa ja toimintansa tutkijana saa aikaan hänen tarkastelemassaan ilmiössä.

Haastattelemani ihmiset, jotka tavoitin suomalaisten transsukupuolisten vertaisverkostojen kautta, ovat 20-30 -vuotiaita, syntymässä naiseksi määriteltyjä suomalaisia transihmisiä, joista kolme asui haastatteluhetkellä Helsingissä ja loput kolme Tampereella, Jyväskylässä ja Turussa. Noin tunnin pituiset haastattelut etenivät suhteellisen vapaamuotoisina keskusteluina, joissa jaoin ja pohdin haastateltavieni kanssa myös omia kokemuksiani. Koen tämän vaikuttaneen tilanteeseen positiivisesti siinä mielessä, että haastateltavat olivat rennosti läsnä ja innostuivat jakamaan ja pohtimaan sellaisiakin asioita, joita en olisi osannut suoraan arvata kysyväni. Toisaalta valitsin tämän toimintatavan myös omien ennakkokäsitysteni ohjaavan vaikutuksen minimoimiseksi: tutkimuskohteeni on sekä teemojensa, niihin liittyvien vertaisyhteisöjen että haastattelemieni ihmisyksilöiden suhteen lähellä minua itseäni, ja ennalta käsikirjoitettujen haastattelukysymysten riski tuottaa juuri sellaisia vastauksia kuin haluaisin, olisi sen vuoksi voinut olla suuri.

Omien kokemusteni jakaminen myös tasa-arvoisti haastattelutilanteessa tutkija-tutkittava -asetelmaa – toisaalta se kuitenkin myös aiheutti tilanteen, jossa oma ääneni kuuluu haastattelunauhoilla verrattain paljon. Diffraktiivisen metodologian hengessä, haluamatta tehdä itseäni näkymättömäksi, päätin tarkastella tutkielmassani myös omia kokemuksiani niiltä osin, kuin niitä tuli esiin haastattelutilanteissa. Nauhoja tekstiksi litteroidessani huomasin kokevani tiettyä etäisyyttä suhteessa haastatteluissa kuuluvaan omaan ääneeni –

ikään kuin olisin tutkijana kolmantena henkilönä seuraamassa kahden muun keskustelua. Nähdäkseni tämä demonstroi Baradin kuvaamaa toimijuudellisen leikkauksen muutosta: ilmiöihin osallistuvat ja niissä muodostuvat ruumiit määrittyvät eri tilanteissa eri tavoin toimijoiksi suhteessa itseensä ja toisiinsa. Haastattelutilanteessa toimijuus jakautui suhteellisen tasavertaisesti minun ja haastateltavani, kahden kokemuksistaan keskustelevan transsukupuolisen ruumiin, kesken. Myöhemmin tutkimusprosessin analyysivaiheessa puolestaan minä tutkijasubjektina tarkkailin ja analysoin haastattelutekstejä tutkimusobjektina. Olen siis itse paikantunut eri vaiheissa prosessia subjekti-objekti -jaon eri puolille. Tämän vuoksi, korostaakseni eroa tutkija-minän ja tutkittava-minän välillä, käytän haastatteluteksteissä puhuvasta itsestäni tutkielmassani pseudonyymiä Neva.

Luvussa 2 tarkastelen seksuaalisuutta suuntautumisen, halun ja käytäntöjen kautta. Sovellan analyysissani Sara Ahmedin (2006) queer-fenomenologiaa ja erityisesti orientaation ja disorientaation käsitteitä, keskittyen erityisesti tilanteisiin, joissa haastateltavieni seksuaalisessa suuntautumisessa on tapahtunut muutoksia. Erittelen seksuaalisen suuntautumisen motivaatiota ja funktioita: se voi toimia paitsi menneisyytemme tai tulevaisuuden aikeidemme kuvaajana, myös sosiaalisena ja/tai poliittisena identiteettivälineenä. Seksuaalinen suuntautuminen näyttäytyy tutkielmassani elävänä ja muuttuvana suhteena omiimme ja toistemme ruumiisiin: paitsi että seksuaalinen suuntautumisemme voi muuttua henkilökohtaisen elämänhistoriamme aikana, näyttäisi myös siltä, että osa meistä pystyy tai jopa joutuu orientoitumaan eri tavoin nykyhetkessä tilasta ja ympäristöstä riippuen. Halua käsitellessäni luen Elisabeth Groszin (1993, 1995) tulkintoja Gilles Deleuzen ja Félix Guattarin näkemyksistä halusta energisenä, tuottavana ja intensiivisenä. Luvun viimeisessä osassa tarkastelen seksuaalisuuteen liittyviä käytäntöjä ja valintoja: pohdin halun ja muiden vaikuttavien tekijöiden suhteita kumppanin valinnassa sekä kyseenalaistan BDSM-seksuaalisuuksia havainnollistajana käyttäen yksinomaan sukupuoleen perustuvan seksuaalisen suuntautumisen normeja.

Totean, että seksuaalista suuntautumista, halua ja käytäntöjä ei voi palauttaa toisiinsa; ne ovat monimutkaisesti toisiinsa kietoutuneita, mutta pystyvät kaikki tuottamaan ominaisuuksia ja vaikutuksia, jotka eivät ole täysin yhteismitallisia toisten kanssa. Törmään seksuaalisuuden tarkastelussani toistuvasti sukupuolta koskeviin kysymyksiin ja havaintoihin – näyttää lähes mahdottomalta keskustella seksuaalisuudesta ottamatta myös sukupuolta huomioon.

Trans/sukupuolta käsittelevässä kolmannessa luvussa pohdin Judith Butlerin (2006) teoretisoiman sukupuolen performatiivisuuden yleisiä ja trans-spesifejä ominaisuuksia. Teen

sukupuoliperformanssin suhteen jaon, joka erottaa yksilön sukupuoli-identifikaation, kulttuuriset maskuliinisuuden ja feminiinisyyden käsityksemme, henkilökohtaisen sukupuolen ilmaisun sekä yhteiskunnan sukupuolta sääntelevät normit. Demonstroin tämän jaon avulla sukupuolen kokemisen ja tekemisen moniulotteisuutta haastattelemieni transsukupuolisten ihmisten elämäntarinoissa. Pohdin lisäksi ruumiin ja ruumiillisuuden merkityksiä transsukupuolisissa kokemuksissa: Mikä on ruumiillisen sukupuolen sijainti? Miten sukupuolidysforian kokemus vaikuttaa ruumiisiin ja niiden välisiin suhteisiin? Tarkastelen sukupuolen kokemisen muutoksia queer-fenomenologisin menetelmin ja osoitan, että seksuaalisen suuntautumisen tavoin myös sukupuolen kokeminen ja tekeminen saattaa joissain tapauksissa vaihdella paitsi ajan kuluessa, myös tilasta toiseen liikuttaessa.

Neljännessä luvussa tarkastelen varsinaisia sukupuolen ja seksuaalisuuden keskinäisiä vuorovaikutussuhteita. Aloitan sellaisista haastatteluteksteissä havaitsemistani tilanteista, joissa sukupuolta ja seksuaalisuutta on erityisen vaikea erottaa toisistaan. Tällaisia ovat esimerkiksi seksuaalisen suuntautumisen stereotypiat: sekä taustamateriaaleistani että haastatteluteksteistä käy ilmi, että “lesbo” ja “homo” ovat kategorioita, joihin liitetään seksuaalisen halun ja käyttäytymisen lisäksi tietynlaisia sukupuolen kokemisen ja tekemisen muotoja. Toisaalta seksiakteissa ja niihin liittyvissä odotuksissa puolestaan sukupuoli-identifikaatio, ruumiinmuodot, maskuliinisuus/feminiinisyys ja tietynlaiset roolit seksissä kietoutuvat yhteen huomattavan tiiviisti: se, jolla on penis, määrittyy mieheksi ja siten penetroivaksi osapuoleksi seksissä. Tästä seuraa, että mieheksi itsensä määrittelevän tai muiden tulkitseman ruumiin odotetaan olevan maskuliininen ja ottavan seksissä penetroivan roolin. Niin ikään mieheksi tulkittu ruumis, jonka tiedetään nauttivan penetratiivisen seksin “vastaanottamisesta”, päätellään lähtökohtaisesti tavalla tai toisella feminiiniseksi.

Seksiaktien sukupuolittavien vaikutusten lisäksi seksuaalisuus ja sukupuoli vaikuttavat toisiinsa monin muin tavoin, pohjautuen niiden eri osa-alueiden tiiviisti toisiinsa kietoutuneeseen ja kietoutuvaan luonteeseen. Naiseksi itsensä kokeva ruumis, joka huomaa kiinnostuvansa seksuaalisesti naisista, omaksuu homoseksuaalisen suuntautumisen kuvaamaan seksuaalisuuttaan. Koska homoseksuaalisuuden katsotaan miehillä usein liittyvän jonkinasteiseen feminiinisyyteen, homona pidetty mies saattaa voida toteuttaa perinteisestä maskuliinisuudesta poikkeavia kiinnostuksiaan esimerkiksi pukeutumisessa tai harrastuksissa vapaammin kuin heteroksi tulkittu mies.

Toisaalta käy ilmi, että ei-normatiiviset ruumiit voivat häiritä läsnäolollaan näiden intra-aktiivisten suhteiden sisäistä logiikkaa. Jos transsukupuolinen ruumis ei identifioidu tai tule tulkituksi yksiselitteisesti miehenä tai naisena, onko hänen harrastamansa seksi miehen tai

naisen kanssa homoseksuaalista vai heteroseksuaalista? Jos kumppanimme sukupuolen kokeminen ja tekeminen muuttuu suhteemme aikana, mutta olemme edelleen yhdessä, muuttuuko seksuaalinen suuntautumiseni? Jos se ei muutu heti, voiko kuitenkin olla niin, että suuntautumisestani poikkeavassa suhteessa eläminen muuttaa sitä, millaisia muita ruumiita pidän mahdollisina seksuaalisina ja/tai romanttisina kumppaneinani?

Tarkastelen neljännessä luvussa myös tiettyjä erityisen kiinnostavia toistuvia teemoja, joita nousee esiin analyysissani. Demonstroin sitä, miten transsukupuoliset ruumiit hyödyntävät tai voisivat hyödyntää sukupuolensa ja seksuaalisuutensa neuvotteluissa niiden keskinäisiä suhteita. Tässä keskeisiksi tekijöiksi muodostuvat esimerkiksi identifikaatioiden tietoinen omaksuminen, kokeilu ja uudelleentulkitseminen, oman historian muodostuminen erilaisiksi narratiiveiksi erilaisten tarpeiden mukaan sekä erilaisten kompromissien etsiminen ristiriitatilanteissa esimerkiksi omien ja kumppanin seksuaalisten preferenssien välillä. Toinen tällainen toistuva teema on erilaisuuden ja samuuden ymmärtäminen: jos tietoni sekä omasta että toisten sukupuolesta osoittautuu epävarmaksi ja sukupuoli muuttuvaksi ja monimutkaisesti määrittyväksi tekijäksi, miten määritellään se, mitkä ruumiit ovat kanssani “samaa sukupuolta” ja mitkä puolestaan “eri sukupuolta”? Pohdin tätä problematiikkaa suhteellisuuden ja osittaisten yhteyksien valossa ja esitän, että “eri” ja “sama” määräytyvät tilannekohtaisesti esimerkiksi sen mukaan, mikä kulloisessakin tilanteessa läsnäoleville ruumiille näyttäytyy oleellisena. Kolmanneksi pohdin seksuaalisen tilan merkitystä transsukupuolisille ruumiille: näyttää siltä, että ei-normatiivisesti suuntautuvissa seksuaalisissa tiloissa sukupuoli ja muut ruumiilliset erot voidaan nähdä erityisen liikkuvina ja paikallisina, ja niitä voidaan tarkastella, kokeilla ja tutkia eri tavoin kuin “ulkopuolisessa” maailmassa kenties on mahdollista.

Lopuksi totean, että sukupuoli ja seksuaalisuus näyttäytyvät jälleen ja edelleen monimutkaisina ruumiillisina ja performatiivisina ilmiöinä, joiden keskinäisten suhteiden moninaisuutta olen hädin tuskin hipaissut tutkielmassani. Näkisin ehdottomasti, että tämäntyyppisiä vuorovaikutussuhteiden kartoituksia ja analyyseja olisi syytä tehdä myös toisenlaisia tutkimusrajauksia käyttäen, esimerkiksi heteroseksuaalisia, cissukupuolisia tai syntymässä mieheksi määriteltyjä transsukupuolisia ruumiita tarkastellen. Oma tutkimusrajaukseni osoittautui alkuolettamaani laajemmaksi – tai pikemmin sanoisin, että uusmaterialistinen teoriapohja on taipuvainen tuottamaan lisää yhteyksiä ja lisää kysymyksiä riippumatta alkuperäisestä rajauksesta. Tällöin tutkimuksen rajaaminen onkin ymmärrettävä jatkuvana prosessina, jossa oleelliseksi muodostuu taito olla harhautumatta jokaiselle mielenkiintoiselle sivupolulle. Esimerkiksi pintapuolisesti pohtimiani seksuaalisen suuntautumisen uudelleentulkinnan mahdollisuuksia sekä halun ja seksikäytäntöjen eroja ja

yhteneväisyyksiä olisi syytä pohtia yksityiskohtaisemmin, erityisesti transsukupuolisten ruumiiden tapauksessa. Niin ikään ruumiin muodon ja liikkeen suhde toisiinsa transsukupuolisessa performanssissa oli jätettävä myöhempään tarkasteluun, mutta se jäi erityisesti kiehtomaan minua – millaisissa tilanteissa ruumiin muodot ymmärretään ensisijaiseksi sukupuolen määrittäjäksi suhteessa ruumiin liikkeeseen tai "käyttäytymiseen", ja millaisissa puolestaan liike nähdään oleellisempana kuin muoto? Tulevissa jatko-opinnoissani aionkin keskittyä transsukupuolisen ruumiillisuuden, performatiivisen materian ja sukupuolen tietämisen kysymyksiin jatkaen tässä tutkielmassa aloittelemaani queer-materialistisen metodologian hahmottelua.