

# Bodies with New Organs

*Becoming Trans, Becoming Disabled*

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“Transgender rights are the civil rights issue of our time.” So stated Vice President Joe Biden just one week before the November 2012 election. Months earlier President Barack Obama had publicly declared his support for gay marriage, sending mainstream LGBT organizations and queer liberals into a tizzy. Though an unexpected comment for an election season, and nearly inaudibly rendered during a conversation with a concerned mother of Miss Trans New England, Biden’s remark,<sup>1</sup> encoded in the rhetoric of recognition, seemed logical from a now well-established civil rights–era teleology:<sup>2</sup> first the folks of color, then the homosexuals, now the trans folk.<sup>3</sup>

What happens to conventional understandings of “women’s rights” in this telos? Moreover, the “transgender question” puts into crisis the framing of women’s rights as human rights by pushing further the relationships between gender normativity and access to rights and citizenship. I could note, as many have, that failing an intersectional analysis of these movements, we are indeed left with a very partial portrait of who benefits and how from this according of rights, not to mention their tactical invocation within this period of liberalism whereby, as Beth Povinelli argues, “potentiality has been domesticated.”<sup>4</sup> As Jin Haritaworn and C. Riley Snorton argue, “It is necessary to interrogate how the uneven institutionalization of women’s, gay, and trans politics produces a transnormative subject, whose universal trajectory of coming out/transition, visibility, recognition, protection, and self-actualization largely remain uninterrogated in its complicities and convergences with biomedical, neoliberal, racist, and imperialist projects.”<sup>5</sup> In relation to this uneven institutionalization, Haritaworn and Snorton go on to say that trans of color positions are “barely

conceivable.” The conundrum here, as elsewhere, involves measuring the political efficacy of arguing for inclusion within and for the same terms of recognition that rely on such elisions. There is a tension between the desires for trans of color positions to become conceivable and their bare inconceivability critiquing and upending that which seems conceivable.

Biden’s remarks foreshadow the steep cost for the intelligibility of transgender identity within national discourses and legal frames of recognition. Does his acknowledgment of transgender rights signal the uptake of a new variant of homonationalism—a “trans(homo)nationalism”? Or is transgender a variation of processes of citizenship and nationalism through normativization rather than a variation of homonationalism? In either instance, such hailings, I argue, generate new figures of citizenship through which the successes of rights discourses will produce new biopolitical failures—trans of color, for one instance. Susan Stryker and Aren Z. Aizura call the “production of transgender whiteness” a “process of value extraction from bodies of color” that occurs both nationally and transnationally.<sup>6</sup> Thinking of this racial dynamic as a process of value extraction highlights the impossibility of a rights platform that incorporates the conceivability of trans of color positions, since this inconceivability is a precondition to the emergence of the rights project, not to mention central to its deployment and successful integration into national legibility. Adding biopolitical capacity to the portrait, Aizura writes that this trans citizenship entails “fading into the population . . . but also the imperative to be ‘proper’ in the eyes of the state: to reproduce, to find proper employment; to reorient one’s ‘different’ body into the flow of the nationalized aspiration for possessions, property [and] wealth.”<sup>7</sup> This trans(homo)nationalism is therefore capacitated, even driven by, not only the abjection of bodies unable to meet these proprietary racial and gendered mandates of bodily comportment but also the concomitant marking as debilitated of those abjected bodies. The debilitating and abjecting are cosubstancing processes.

In light of this new but not entirely unsurprising assimilation of gender difference through nationalism, I want to complicate the possibilities of accomplishing such trans normativization by foregrounding a different historical trajectory: one not hailed or celebrated by national LGBT groups or the median or explicitly theorized in most queer or trans theory. This is the move from the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to the present moment of trans hailing by the US state.<sup>8</sup> Historically and contemporaneously, the nexus of disability and trans has been fraught, especially for trans bodies that may resist alliances with people with disabilities in no small part because of long struggles against stigmatization and pathologization that may be reinvoked through such an affiliation. But stigmatization is only part of the reason for this thwarted connection.

Neoliberal mandates regarding productive, capacitated bodies entrain the trans body to recreate an abled body not only in terms of gender and sexuality but also in terms of economic productivity and the economic development of national economy.<sup>9</sup> Thus, trans relation to disability is not simply one of phobic avoidance of stigma; it is also about trans bodies being recruited, in tandem with many other bodies, for a more generalized transformation of capacitated bodies into viable neoliberal subjects.

Given that trans bodies are reliant on medical care, costly pharmacological and technological interventions, legal protections, and public accommodations from the very same institutions and apparatuses that functionalize gender normativities and create systemic exclusions, how do people who rely on accessing significant resources within a political economic context that makes the possessive individual the basis for rights claims (including the right to medical care) disrupt the very models on which they depend in order to make the claims that, in the case of trans people, enable them to realize themselves as trans in the first place? I explore this conundrum for trans bodies through the ambivalent and vexed relationship to disability in three aspects: (a) the legal apparatus of the ADA, which sets the scene for a contradictory status to disability and the maintenance of gender normativity as a requisite for disabled status; (b) the fields of disability studies and trans studies, which both pivot on certain exceptionalized figures; and (c) political organizing priorities and strategies that partake in transnormative forms not only of passing but also of what I call “piecing,” a recruitment into neoliberal forms of fragmentation of the body for capitalist profit. Finally, I offer a speculative differently imagined affiliation between disability and trans, “becoming trans,” which seeks to link disability, trans, racial, and interspecies discourses to make boundaries porous through the overwhelming force of ontological multiplicity, attuned to the perpetual differentiation of variation and the multiplicity of affirmative becomings. What kinds of assemblages appear that might refuse to isolate trans as one kind of specific or singular variant of disability and disability as one kind of singular variant of trans? What kind of political and scholarly alliances might potentiate when each takes up and acknowledges the inhabitations and the more generalized conditions of the other, creating genealogies that read both as implicated within the same assemblages of power? The focus here is not on epistemological correctives but on ontological irreducibilities that transform the fantasy of discreteness of categories not through their disruption but, rather, through their dissolution via multiplicity. Rather than produce conceptual interventions that map onto the political or produce a differently political rendering of its conceptual moorings, reflected in the debate regarding transnormativity and trans of color conceivability, I wish to offer a generative, speculative reimagining of what can be signaled by the political.

## I. Disability Law and Trans Discrimination

The legal history that follows matters because it both reflects and enshrines a contradictory relationship of trans bodies that resist a pathological medicalized rendering and yet need to access benefits through the medical industrial complex. The explicit linkages to the trans body as a body either rendered disabled or (perhaps *and*, given the teleological implications) rehabilitated from disability have been predominantly routed through debates about gender identity disorder (GID). Arriving in the *DSM-III* (third edition of the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, published in 1980, on the heels of the 1974 *DSM-II* depathologization of homosexuality, GID was eliminated in the *DSM-5* released in May 2013, now replaced with gender dysphoria.<sup>10</sup> These complex debates have focused largely on a series of explicit inclusions and exclusions of GID in relation to the *DSM* and the ADA. The inclusion of GID in 1980 and its focus on childhood behavior were largely understood as a compensatory maneuver for the deletion of homosexuality, thus instating surveillance mechanisms that would perhaps prevent homosexuality.<sup>11</sup> In contrast, a notable passage in the ADA details the specific exclusion of “gender identity disorders not resulting from physical impairments” as a disability—couched in an exclusionary clause that included “transvestitism, transsexualism, pedophilia, exhibitionism, voyeurism, . . . ‘other sexual disorders,’” and completely arbitrary “conditions” such as compulsive gambling, kleptomania, pyromania, and substance use disorders involving illegal drugs.<sup>12</sup> This clause was largely understood (unlike the specific exclusion of homosexuality) as an entrenchment of the pathologization of GID. This deliberate inclusion of the terms of exclusion is a crucial piece of the story, in part because to date the ADA is “the most extensive civil rights law to address bodily norms.”<sup>13</sup>

Given the ADA's hodgepodge of excluded conditions, many of which carry great social stigma and/or are perceived as criminal activity, most commentators concur with L. Camille Herbert's sentiment that “while one might argue for the exclusion of certain conditions from the definition of disability as justified by not wanting to pathologize certain individuals and conditions, this does not appear to have been the motivation of Congress.”<sup>14</sup> The process by which Congress arrived at these exclusions also appears marred by moral panic discourses about diseased and debilitated bodies, discourses that the ADA was produced in part to ameliorate. Former senator Jesse Helms (R-NC), writes R. Nick Gorton, “raised the specter that the law would provide disability protections to numerous politically unpopular groups,” concluding that most people who are HIV positive are drug addicts, homosexuals, bisexuals,

pedophiles, or kleptomaniacs, among others, and that the exclusion was enacted “as a direct result of Helms’s efforts.”<sup>15</sup> Noting that the ADA “unequivocally” endorses the use of the *DSM* in recognizing conditions of disablement, Kari Hong argues that “understanding why a dozen conditions were removed becomes an important task,” as the exclusion not only disqualifies certain conditions from consideration as a disability but also “isolate[s] particular conditions from medical authority.” Hong also points out that Helms’s “bifurcation of disability into ‘good’ (wheelchairs) and ‘bad’ (transvestitism) categories echoes a disturbing misuse of medicine.”<sup>16</sup> Ultimately, Congress capitulated and sacrificed these excluded groups in exchange for holding onto the protection of another vilified “minority” group: individuals with HIV.<sup>17</sup> This move of course insists on problematic bifurcations, perhaps strategically so, between individuals diagnosed with GID and individuals diagnosed with HIV.

Thus, Kevin Barry argues, “the ADA is a moral code, and people with GID its moral castaways.” He adds, “GID sits at the uneasy crossroads of pathology and difference,”<sup>18</sup> an uneasy crossroads that continues to manifest (especially now as GID has been eliminated in the *DSM-V*).<sup>19</sup> Adrienne L. Hiegel elaborates this point at length, with particular emphasis on how this exclusion recodes the labor capacities of the transsexual body. In segmenting off “sexual behavior disorders” and “gender identity disorders” from the ADA’s definition of disability, the “Act carves out a new class of untouchables. . . . By leaving open a space of permissive employer discrimination, the Act identifies the sexual ‘deviant’ as the new pariah, using the legal machinery of the state to mark as outsiders those whose noncompliant body renders them unfit for full integration into a working community.”<sup>20</sup>

In essence, the ADA redefines standards of bodily capacity and debility through the reproduction of gender normativity as integral to the productive potential of the disabled body. Further, the disaggregation, and thus the potential deflation, of political and social alliances between homosexuality, transsexuality, and the individual with HIV is necessary to the solidification of this gender normativity that is solicited in exchange for the conversion of disability from a socially maligned and excluded status to a version of liberal acknowledgment, inclusion, and incorporation. The modern seeds of what Nicole Markotic and Robert McRuer call “crip nationalism”—the hailing of some disabilities as socially productive for national economies and ideologies to further marginalize other disabilities—are evident here, as the tolerance of the “difference” of disability is negotiated through the disciplining of the body along other normative registers of sameness, in this case gender and sexuality.<sup>21</sup> And further, what Sharon Snyder and David Mitchell term “ablenationalism”—that is, the ableist contours of national inclusion and registers of pro-

ductivity—ironically underwrites the ADA even as the ADA serves as groundbreaking legislation to challenge it. Snyder and Mitchell describe ablenationalism as the “implicit assumption that minimum levels of corporeal, intellectual, and sensory capacity, in conjunction with subjective aspects of aesthetic appearance, are required of citizens seeking to access the ‘full benefits’ of citizenship.”<sup>22</sup> In reorganizing the terms of disability, ablenationalism redirects the pathos and stigma of disability onto different registers of bodily deviance and defectiveness, in this particular instance that of gender nonnormativity. In that sense, crip nationalism goes hand in hand with ablenationalism; indeed, ablenationalism is its progenitor. While these details about the passage of the ADA are obviously not without implications regarding racial and class difference, the specific details of the exclusionary clause might gesture toward the multifaceted reasons that, as Snyder and Mitchell observe, “queer, transsexual, and intersexed peopled . . . exist at the margins of disability discourse.”<sup>23</sup>

It is not simply that the ADA excludes GID and, by extension, trans from recognition as potentially disabling but, rather, that transsexuality—and likely those versions of transsexuality that are deemed also improperly raced and classed—is understood as too disabled to be rehabilitated into citizenship, or not properly enough disabled to be recoded for labor productivity. Further, the ADA arbitrates the distinctions between homosexuality and transsexuality along precisely these pathologized lines. Contrary to what Hiegel claims, the sexual “deviant” is hardly the “new pariah.” Rather, there is a new sexual deviant in town, demarcated from an earlier one. Indeed, the enthusiastic embracing of the ADA by some gay and lesbian activists and policy makers for the exclusion of homosexuality as a “sexual behavior disorder” did not go unnoticed by trans activists who felt differently about the ADA.<sup>24</sup> Proclivities toward queer ableism are therefore predicated in the ADA’s parsing homosexuality from other “sexual disorders,” as well as in the histories of political organizing. Zach Strassburger describes the process of homonationalism by noting that “as the gay and lesbian rights movement gained steam, the transgender movement grew more inclusive to cover those left behind by the gay and lesbian movement’s focus on its most mainstream members and politically promising plaintiffs.”<sup>25</sup> Given the political history of parsing trans from queer through the maintenance of gender normativity, can disability function proactively and productively, as a conversion or translation of the stigma through which trans can demarcate its distance from aspects of LGBT organizing that are increasingly normative?<sup>26</sup>

I offer this brief historical overview to lay out the stakes for the debate between demedicalizing trans bodies (favoring the use of gender discrimination law to adjudicate equality claims) and successfully using disability law to access crucial medical care. What is evident from these

discussions is that trans identity, straddling the divide between the biomedical model and the social model of disability, challenges the postulation that disability studies is “postbinary,” especially given that vociferous debates about the utility of the medical model in trans jurisprudence persist. Strassburger, who argues for an “expanded vision of disability” based on the social model that could be applied for trans rights, notes nonetheless that the medical model of trans has often been more successful than sex and gender discrimination and sexual orientation protection, and that the transgender rights movement in its emphasis on demedicalization (despite reluctantly admitting the success of medical strategy) ignores the pragmatic aspects of litigation. Further, Strassburger notes the historical effects of stigma, writing that “demedicalization would mirror the gay rights movement’s very successful efforts to frame gayness as good rather than a disease.”<sup>27</sup>

For others, the debate between medicalization and demedicalization forestalls a broader conversation about access to proper medical care, one that has been foregrounded by feminist struggles over reproductive rights, for example.<sup>28</sup> Proponents of the use of disability law further note that difficult access to medical care is not a complete given for all disenfranchised populations. For example, Alvin Lee argues that the “unique aspects of incarceration and prison health care justify and indeed compel the use of the medical model when advocating for trans prisoners’ right to sex reassignment surgery.”<sup>29</sup> Lee notes that the usual bias against lower-income populations in the use of the medical model does not apply to the “right-to-care” prison context, where medical evidence is the best way to demonstrate serious and necessary rather than elective health care, given the “general principle that individual liberties should be restricted in prison.”<sup>30</sup> Other legal practitioners such as Jeannie J. Chung and Dean Spade are curious about the success of social models of disability in transgender litigation. Spade, for example, has carefully elaborated his ambivalence about the use of disability law and the medical mode in relation to his firm social justice commitment to the demedicalization of trans, arguing for a “multi-strategy approach.”<sup>31</sup>

## II. Trans Exceptionalism: Passing and Piecing

In addition to the robust debates about jurisprudence on trans and disability, transgender studies and disability studies are often thought of as coming into being in the early 1990s in the US academy, a periodization that reflects a shift in practices of recognition, economic utility, and social visibility that obscures prior scholarship. In terms of trans, for example, Stryker and Aizura note that “to assert the emergence of transgender studies as a field only in the 1990s rests on a set of assumptions that permit a

differentiation between one kind of work on ‘transgender phenomena’ and another, for there had of course been a great deal of academic, scholarly, and scientific work on various forms of gender variance long before the 1990s.” Among the various historical changes they list as significant to this emergence are “new political alliances forged during the AIDS crisis, which brought sexual and gender identity politics into a different sort of engagement with the biomedical and pharmaceutical establishments.”<sup>32</sup>

This emergence of disability and trans identity as intersectional coordinates required exceptionalizing both the trans body and the disabled body to convert the debility of a nonnormative body into a form of social and cultural capacity, whether located in state recognition, identity politics, market economies, the medical industrial complex, academic knowledge production, subject positioning, or all of these. As a result, both fields of study—trans studies and disability studies—suffer from a domination of whiteness and contend with the normativization of the acceptable and recognizable subject. The disabled subject is often a body with a physical “impairment”; the wheelchair has become the international symbol for people with disabilities. In trans identity, the more recently emergent trajectory of female-to-male (FTM) enlivened by access to hormones, surgical procedures, and bodily prostheses has centralized a white trans man subject. While the disabled subject has needed to reclaim forms of debility to exceptionalize the transgression and survivorship of that disability, the transnormative subject views the body as endlessly available for hormonal and surgical manipulation and becoming, a body producing toward ableist norms. Further, transgender does not easily signal within “conventional notions of disability” because it is not a “motor, sensory, psychiatric, or cognitive impairment” or a chronic illness.<sup>33</sup>

The disabled body can revalue its lack, but the transnormative body might desire to rehabilitate itself to a status of nondisabled. Eli Clare, a trans man with cerebral palsy, has generated perhaps the most material on the specific epistemological predicaments of the disabled trans subject or the trans disabled subject, providing much-needed intersectional analysis.<sup>34</sup> Clare writes of the ubiquity of this sentiment: “I often hear trans people—most frequently folks who are using, or want to use medical technology to reshape their bodies—name their trans-ness a disability, a birth defect.”<sup>35</sup> Here Clare emphasizes the trans interest in a cure for the defect, a formulation that has been politically problematized in disability rights platforms, reinforces ableist norms, and alienates potential convivialities: “To claim our bodies as defective, and to pair defect with cure . . . disregards the experiences of many disabled people.”<sup>36</sup> Disability here is not only the “narrative prosthesis”<sup>37</sup> through which the trans body will overcome and thus resolve its debility but also the “raw material out



of which other socially disempowered communities make themselves visible.”<sup>38</sup> Seen through this mechanism of resource extraction, disability is the disavowed materiality of a trans embodiment that abstracts and thus effaces this materiality from its self-production.

Toby Beauchamp adds to the conversation about cure the notion of concealment via legal (identity documents) and medical intervention, stating: “Concealing gender deviance is about much more than simply erasing transgender status. It also necessitates altering one’s gender presentation to conform to white, middle-class, able-bodied, heterosexual understandings of normative gender.”<sup>39</sup> The cure, then, revolves around rehabilitation to multiple social norms. Beauchamp further notes that of course the process of diagnosis and treatment inevitably reinforces this rehabilitation: “Medical surveillance focuses first on individuals’ legibility *as* transgender, and then, following medical interventions, on their ability to *conceal* any trans status or deviance.”<sup>40</sup> While access to adequate and sensitive health care for trans people can be a daunting if not foreclosed process, emergent conversations on “transgender health” can also function to reassert neoliberal norms of bodily capacity and debility.<sup>41</sup> The transnormative subject might categorically reject the potential identification and alliance with disability, despite the two sharing an intensive relation to medicalization, and perhaps because of the desire for rehabilitation and an attendant indebtedness to medicalization. Clare avers that while the “disability rights movement fiercely resists the medicalization of bodies” to refuse the collapsing of the body “into mere medical condition,” in his estimation “we haven’t questioned the fundamental relationship between trans people and the very idea of diagnosis. Many of us are still invested in the ways we’re medicalized.”<sup>42</sup>

Even in politically progressive narrations of transgender embodiment, for example, an unwitting ableism and the specter of disability as intrinsic disenfranchisement often linger as by-products of the enchantment with the transformative capacities of bodies. For example, Eva Hayward’s take on the “Cripple” toggles a very tenuous line between the “Cripple” as a metaphor of regeneration and the crippling effects of amputation.<sup>43</sup> Likewise, Bailey Kier, describing an instance of fishes’ ability to transsex in response to toxic endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs), wonders if such transformations are a “technology beyond our grasp,” disregarding the uneven biopolitical distribution of such toxins that render his desires for a global “embracing [of] our shared transsex” violently idealistic: “EDCs are part of the food, productive and re/productive chain of nonhuman and human life and we will need to devise ways, just like fish, to adapt to their influence.”<sup>44</sup>

I would thus argue that there is a third element here that produces disability as the disavowed material co-substance of trans bodies. While

there are understandable desires to avoid stigma and, as the ADA demonstrates, a demand for bodies with disabilities to integrate into a capitalist economy as productive bodies, the third factor involves aspirational forms of trans exceptionalism, one version of which is about rehabilitation, cure, and concealment. However, this exceptionalism is not only about passing as gender normative; it is also about inhabiting an exceptional trans body—which is a different kind of trans exceptionalism, one that gestures toward a new transnormative citizen predicated not on passing but on “piecing,” galvanized through mobility, transformation, regeneration, flexibility, and the creative concocting of the body. Regarding “piecing” as an elemental aspect of neoliberal biomedical approaches to bodies with disabilities now globalized to all bodies, Snyder and Mitchell argue that the body has become “a multi-sectional market” in distinction to Fordist regimes that divided workers from each other:

We are now perpetual members of an audience encouraged to experience our bodies in pieces. . . . Whereas disabled people were trained to recognize their disabled parts as definitely inferior, late capitalism trains everyone to separate their good from bad—a form of alienation that feeds the market’s penchant for “treating” our parts separately. The body becomes a terrain of definable localities, each colonized by its particular pathologies dictated by the medicalized marketplace.<sup>45</sup>

While this partitioning of the body is not a recent emergence, in that there is a long history of bodily compartmentalization as a prerequisite for capitalist production,<sup>46</sup> this piecing is not only about productive capacities but also about extending the body experientially and extracting value not just from bodies but from body parts and particles.

In this economy of alienated parts, piecing becomes a prized capacity. Jack Halberstam observes that “the transgender body has emerged as futurity itself, a kind of heroic fulfillment of post-modern promises of gender flexibility.”<sup>47</sup> Halberstam is cautious about overinvesting in gender fluidity as transgressive capacity, noting that market economies already capitalize on “flexibility” as the hallmark of neoliberal economic productivity. But which transgender body (bodies?) is actually understood as “futurity itself”? This suturing of trans to exceptional futurity and the potential that the future offers are the new transnormative body. Again, this is not the transnormative body that passes but the transnormative body that “pieces,” the commodification not of wholeness or of rehabilitation but of plasticity, crafting parts from wholes, bodies without and with new organs. Piecing thus appears transgressive when in fact it is constitutive not only of transnormativity but also of some aspects of neoliberal or market economies.

To situate this trans body that is “futurity itself,” we might want to

turn to trans organizing. Importantly, strategic interfaces between disability law and trans discrimination are also mirrored in growing political organizing and alliances between the two groups. One recent example includes a coalition of trans and persons with disabilities organized at the University of California, Santa Barbara, to jointly address issues of access, surveillance, and spatial configurations that dictate the gendered and abled expectations of public restrooms called PISSAR (People in Search of Safe and Accessible Restrooms).<sup>48</sup> As another example, the Transgender Law Center in San Francisco has an activist handbook titled *Peeing in Peace* that uses disability-informed arguments for gender-neutral public toilets.<sup>49</sup>

Along with a distinction between the disability rights movement and disability justice organizing maintained by activists such as Mia Mingus, one should also retain a distinction between the transgender rights movement and trans justice organizing. TransJustice, one of the two major initiatives of the Audre Lorde Project in New York City, is a political group created by and for trans and gender-nonconforming people of color. TransJustice works to mobilize its communities and allies into action on the pressing political issues they face, including gaining access to jobs, housing, and education; the need for trans-sensitive health care, HIV-related services, and job training programs; and resisting police, government, and anti-immigrant violence. The members of TransJustice tend to be African-American and Latino working-class youth, and most are male-to-female (MTF). The convergence of racial identity and MTF seems significant and hardly incidental. Everything available on economic indicators, transgender health, incarceration, employment, street violence, and education amply demonstrates that trans women of color, especially black trans women, are massively disenfranchised in relation to other trans bodies and that the gulf between them and (white) FTMs is vast and growing. Data are sparse but stark: “In 2003, 14 murders of transpeople were reported in the U.S., and 38 worldwide. Most were MTF and most were people of color.”<sup>50</sup> The major concerns of TransJustice members cluster around access to school, employment, welfare provisions, and uncontaminated and inexpensive drugs and treatments—hormones, fillers, and surgeries. Many articulate their awareness of trans identity occurring simultaneously with a realization that they were attracted to the “wrong” sex (so not only or necessarily that they were in the “wrong” body.). They desire to pass as beautiful, feminine, sexy. While a trans politics might render such forms of passing either a validation of a radical identity or a version of assimilation, misrecognition, or “selling out,” for these members it is often entwined with, albeit obliquely, avoiding police harassment, community stigmatization, and familial rejection. Their engagement with the medical industrial complex and with desires for transformative embodiment is not

necessarily or only victorious, empowered by choice, or ultimately capacity building. Medicalization can be experienced as transformative, capacitating, debilitating, or all of the above, not to mention exclusionary.<sup>51</sup> They do not embody “futurity itself”; rather, their bodies can be read as sites of intensive struggle (medical, educational, employment, legal, social) over who indeed does get to embody—and experience—futurity and who as a result will be cast off as the collateral damages of such strivings to capture the essence of the future.

Kris Hayashi, former director of the Audre Lorde Project, elaborates the emphases of trans organizing in New York City in general and TransJustice specifically:

In New York City, TGNC [trans-gender nonconforming] youth of color and low-income youth in the West Village neighborhood face ongoing violence and harassment at the hands of the police, as well as from residents who are primarily White and middle class to upper class. As a result, FIERCE!, an organization led and run primarily by TGNC low-income and homeless youth of color, prioritizes issues of police brutality and violence, as well as gentrification. TransJustice, a project of ALP [the Audre Lorde Project] that is led and run by TGNC people of color, has prioritized issues of unemployment and education access due to high rates of unemployment (60%–70%) facing TGNC people of color. Also in New York, a coalition of organizations and groups including TransJustice, Welfare Warriors, and the LGBT Community Center’s Gender Identity Project have prioritized efforts to end the regular harassment and discrimination faced by TGNC people seeking to gain access to public assistance. Finally, many TGNC groups led primarily by people of color and low-income communities have also prioritized ending the U.S. war on terrorism, both in the United States and abroad.<sup>52</sup>

The work of TransJustice situates the vexed relations to futurity that its trans constituency must mediate in terms of quotidian survival. In doing so, TransJustice activists put transnormativity in full relief as a function of the privilege of whiteness, foregrounding a critical approach to the racializing technologies of trans identity. Their analyses centralize the privilege of who is *able to be* disabled and is *able to be* transgender as a function of state and legal recognition that is often elusive for their bodies, demonstrating capacity—the ability to not just be but become, not to pass but to piece—rather than only debility, deviance, victimhood, ostracization, or nonnormativity at the center of these projects. The trans body that pieces, then, also passes not as gender-normative male or female but as trans. Susan Stryker and Nikki Sullivan, elaborating on this capacitation through piecing, write: “Our research . . . leads us toward a new understanding of bodily integration, one predicated not on the organic integrity of the human organism, but rather on the body’s suitability for integration,

its ability to be integrated as a biopolitical resource into a larger sociotechnical field, or into an apparatus such as the State.”<sup>53</sup> In other words, they render a critique of the rehabilitation model as intrinsically a return to wholeness. Integration through piecing, rather than wholeness through passing, becomes a valued asset in control societies. Stryker and Sullivan continue: “The integrity of the body—that is, the ability of the body to be *integrated*—is thus, paradoxically, dependent on its enfleshment as always already torn, rent, incomplete, and unwhole.”<sup>54</sup> This capacity to “integrate” oneself—not to pass but to piece—thus mediates the production as well as the lived experiences of molar categories such as race, class, and gender. What I am arguing here is that capacitation around health and attendant registers of bodily prowess, not necessarily identity as trans or disabled or abled or queer or not-trans, ultimately serves as the dividing social practice in biopolitical terms.<sup>55</sup> The debates about the disabled self and the nondisabled other reflect wider discourses of how those selves are materially constructed through the discourses that abound on abject and successful bodies.

While the capacity to piece (in order to pass as not passing) can produce new forms of transnormativity, Stryker and Sullivan rightly point out that bodily comportments that do not strive to manifest wholeness or an investment in the self as coherent do not have to reproduce liberal norms of being: “It is this aspect of bodily being that the liberal discourse of property rights in oneself does not, and cannot, account for; it is this aspect of bodily being that we seek to highlight when suggesting that individual demands for bodily alteration are also, necessarily, demands for new social bodies—new somatechnologies that ethically refigure the relationship between individual corporealities and aggregate assemblages of bodies.”<sup>56</sup> This formulation, then, of new somatechnologies that refuse the individualizing mandate of neoliberal paradigms of bodily capacity and debility in favor of articulating greater connectivities between “aggregate assemblages of bodies,” precisely flags the challenge of crafting convivial political praxes. And yet, it is also the case that such political praxes must never occlude the stratifications inherent in the quest to access such somatechnologies. The transnormative body of futurity that reflects neoliberal celebrations of flexibility and piecing remains an elusive reality for many. The distinctions between passing and piecing are thus fluid and shifting, given the kinds of piecing together of medical access and legal accommodations that trans of color bodies are forced to seek in any efforts to pass.

### III. Becoming Trans? A Geopolitics of Racial Ontology

Molecular lines of flight trace out little modifications, they make detours, they sketch out rises and falls, but they are no less precise for all this, they even direct irreversible processes. . . . Many things happen on this second kind of line—becomings, micro-becomings, which don't even have the same rhythm as history. This is why family histories, registrations, commemorations, are so unpleasant, whilst our true changes take place elsewhere—another politics, another time, another individuation.  
—Gilles Deleuze, *Dialogues II*

Thus far I have surveyed how biopolitical recognition of disability has installed a version of gender normativity, in this case specifically through the political apparatus of the ADA. I have then outlined forms of bodily exceptionalism that may produce trans ableist discourses. I turn now from the focus on subject construction—the trans subject(s) and the disabled subject(s) that are hailed and/or denied by legal legitimation, state recognition, public accommodation, and resource distribution—to offer a reconceptualization of corporeal assemblages that foreground ontological continuums in relation to epistemological bifurcations. It is also an approach that highlights how bodies are malleable not just as subjects but also as composites of parts, affects, compartmentalized capacities, and debilities, as data points and informational substrates. This continuous oscillating between the identity or rights-based claims of the trans subject and the disabled subject seeking recognition and biopolitical control that operates largely through securing the sub- and paraindividual capacities of bodies for privatized (in the United States) regimes for pay is necessary because these “poles,” as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari note, are never without each other: “These two poles are inseparable; they entertain perpetual relations of transformation, conversion, jumping, falling, and rising.”<sup>57</sup> Further, if it is understood that the battle against the extraction and exploitation of bodily capacities and habituations is not going to happen through the terrain of intersectional politics alone, and that in fact biopolitical control societies work insidiously by using disciplinary power to keep or deflect our attention around the subjection of the subject, thus allowing control to manifest unhindered, I would argue another interpretation of disciplinary apparatuses is that in part they function as foils for control mechanisms.

Enacting this oscillation moves between questions such as what disability is and what trans is toward what disability does and what trans does. In disability studies, James Overboe develops the Deleuzian notion of the impersonal life—one without a self—to cut through a disability politics of identity that centralizes the self-reflexive individual. He generates this intervention in order to “affirm disabled lives that are simply

expressed without cognition, intent, or agency.” Overboe writes: “The vitalism of an impersonal life is often considered noise that will be filtered out, in the name of clarity, in order to facilitate the real business of social change and so-called emancipation. This re-establishes and reinscribes the dominant language or communication style associated with being a person or individual with agency.”<sup>58</sup> There is a refusal here of the medical impairment versus social construction impasse, in part because Deleuzian theory embraces biomateriality, foregrounding vitalism and potentiality of impairment rather than seeking its recontextualization in the social. Overboe also reminds us that the construct of the subject itself—even the disabled subject—is already discursively abled.

One could also point to efforts to articulate trans as an ontological force that impels indeterminate movement rather than an identity that demands epistemological accountability or as a movement between identities. Paisley Currah, Lisa Jean Moore, and Susan Stryker explicate the “trans-” (trans-hyphen) in the sociopolitical;<sup>59</sup> Jami Weinstein develops the notion of transgenre.<sup>60</sup> Deleuze and Guattari’s use of the term *transsexuality* opens to a fluid spectrum of possibility: trans as a motion, not an identity, and trans as a continuum of intensity. For trans studies, Mel Chen argues that the “simultaneous limitation and promise” of a Body without Organs (BwO) is “precisely that the genitals (or nongenitals) matter, but are not necessarily constrained by normative gender and sexuality.”<sup>61</sup> Chen is pointing to trans as a reordering of what organs signify which genders, or if any organs need to signify genders at all.<sup>62</sup>

While earlier I highlight the troubling discourse of shared transsex in relation to unmarked and uneven biopolitics of toxicity distribution, Kier’s formulation of transgender as all-encompassing category—“everyone on the planet is now encompassed within the category of transgender”—is suggestive to me not of the desire to retain the category of transgender but, rather, of its imbrication in an unfolding interspecies biopolitical vision. Kier proclaims that “we might be better off responding to this rearrangement, not through fear of the eco-catastrophic assumptions transsex invokes, but by embracing our shared interdependent transsex.”<sup>63</sup> Weinstein also mobilizes the notion of becoming as a dismantling of the “very speciation and biopolitical identity construction” that Michel Foucault elaborates.<sup>64</sup> In a critique of species taxonomy, Julie Livingston and I use the term *biopolitical anthropomorphism* or, reworded more appropriately, *biopolitical anthropocentrism* to “highlight the biopolitical processes that cohere the centrality of the human, and of certain humans; and, the tendency of biopolitical analyses to reinscribe this centrality by taking human species as the primary basis upon which cleavages of race and sex occur.”<sup>65</sup> Biopolitics, as Foucault explains, is the process by which humans become a species (and in fact specimens) to join all other biologi-

cal species. This becoming is also the process by which anthropomorphic frames of the human thus take force and are consolidated. Foucault explains in *Security, Territory, Population* that “the dimension in which the population is immersed amongst the other living beings appears and is sanctioned when, for the first time, men are no longer called ‘mankind’ (*le genre humaine*)” and begin to be called “the human species (*l’espece humaine*).”<sup>66</sup> A paradox occurs: the animalism of humans—“the life of the body and the life of the species”<sup>67</sup>—is taken up as a project of population construction, and humans join species. The (androcentric) human is thus rearticulated as an exceptional form of animality within an anthropomorphized category: humanity. Therefore, although Foucault’s own work does not explore the implications of this in terms of interspecies relating, his theory of biopolitics understands anthropocentrism as a defining facet of modernity.

Transgender studies has taken on the question of speciation through a posthumanist or nonhumanist turn; in fact, it is leading the way toward posthumanist inquiries, a fair amount of it emboldened by Deleuzian thought. This meeting of transgender studies, animal studies, and posthumanist studies is fantastically rich, considerably complicating humanist presumptions of sex dimorphism<sup>68</sup> and conceptualizing sex as a reaction norm in dynamic emergence with the environment and as an effect of genes and (hormonal) environments interfacing.<sup>69</sup> Myra Hird’s work defuses the nature/culture distinction by unpacking the human exceptionalism embedded in continually evoking the trans human body as transgressive. Given its plentitude in nonhuman forms, Hird argues that trans is not a cultural artifact of technological means, or gloriously perverse in that it is unnatural, but is in fact constitutive of nature itself. Hird deploys trans not just beyond or across sex but across “traditional species classifications.” Taking a cue from the complexity of intersex and transsex and the nonapplicability of gender and sexual dimorphism to most nonhuman life, Hird argues against a nature/culture binary where the human trans body is understood as a technological invention alone. The upshot of Hird’s argument is that trans is not transgressive but, rather and in fact, natural.<sup>70</sup> In concert with Vicky Kirby’s proposition that nature is writing and re-presenting itself, and that perhaps culture has been nature all along,<sup>71</sup> Hird argues that technology must be understood through its interspecies dimensions: “The use of technology to distinguish between nature and culture obscures the very real and energetic invention and use of technology by nonhuman living organisms . . . as well as the extent to which so-called human technologies actually mimic technology already invented by other species.”<sup>72</sup> Hird’s argument, which complicates if not refuses the nature/culture bifurcation, has vast implications for the debates in disability studies about the biomedical versus social model of



disability. Within the context of transgender jurisprudence and activist debates regarding the use of the medical model within legislative battles for health care and attendant provisions, her analysis suggests a strategic deployment of the model that might defuse pathological conceptualizations when posited as a manipulation of the terms of technology and what constitutes the natural.

But despite challenging the foregrounding of the human and its centrality to defining the parameters of sex, gender, and sexual reproduction, the deepening conversations between transgender studies, animal studies, and posthumanism has fastidiously avoided an engagement with disability studies, a field always in conversation with arrangements of the human, especially as it relates to cognitive and mental disabilities. This occlusion is further notable in light of a rich, emerging dialogue between disability and animal studies.<sup>73</sup> Further, the growing partnership between transgender studies and animal studies has elided discussions of racial difference crucial to debates about biopolitical anthropocentrism, foregrounding instead the category species, as if species were not also a forum for understanding cleavages of racial difference.<sup>74</sup> One effort to redress these elisions is Chen's articulation of the "prefixal trans—"—a materialism of grammar—as a "way to explore that complexity of gender definition that lies between human gender systems and the gendering of animals."<sup>75</sup> In attending to the relationship between human animals and nonhuman animals as a racializing technology of biopolitics, Chen's analysis articulates trans not just as "mutilating gender,"<sup>76</sup> as the rescrambling and reorganizing of gender, but trans as mutilating or perhaps better stated as mutating race as well. In some cases, this mutating is a reterritorialization and enhanced capacitation of racial privilege and the projection of racial coherence through rearranging gender. Bobby Jean Noble, for example, describes his process of regeneration from a working-class butch woman to a trans man as one of moving from "formerly off-white [to a] now White person" in a landscape wherein "the 'self' is the hottest and most insidious capitalist commodity."<sup>77</sup> The confusing designation of "off-white" notwithstanding, Noble describes this capacitation of race—a revival of the privileges of whiteness now afforded through masculinity—as a by-product of trans body modification. If one queries this derivative formulation, however, the possibility that mutilating gender might not be so easily cleaved from (desires for?) racial recuperation, or from constructs of ableism, needs to be considered. What kinds of attempted recuperation of one sort or another subtend or even preface these rearrangements of gender?

Recall that for Foucault racism is not derivative of biopower but, rather, a prerequisite for how biopolitics works; that is to say, Foucault wrenches racism out of notions of cultural tolerance by stating that the caesura in the biological spectrum that is accorded to race is necessary

for licensing the four coordinates of biopolitical will: making live, making die, letting live, letting die. This formulation of racism as a “caesura in the biological domain”<sup>78</sup> can be mobilized as a preemptive critique of a posthumanism that does not acknowledge race as a critical threshold of demarcation. Given the centrality of racial demarcatedness to biopolitics, I read Foucault’s later explanations of biopolitics, or what he calls the regime of security, later recapitulated in Deleuze’s theorization of “control societies,” as in fact a *geopolitics of racial ontology*.

Re-suturing the foundational function of race within biopolitics to the production of ontologically irreducible entities in control societies, the geopolitics of racial ontology marks the manifestation of different spatializing regimes of the body, and its particles, such that the biological caesura that demarcates the cut of or for racism is now not just a question of visible racial difference or of the taxonomic and eugenic science of phrenology and the scientific racism of the eighteenth through early twentieth centuries. It is, rather, the biotechnologies of genetic engineering, assisted reproduction technologies, human genome sequencing, and phenotypical variation—which may well intersect with/appear as gendered transformations—that mean the “cut” of racism is not made only through disciplinary categories of race but, more perniciously, through biopolitical control aggregates of population.<sup>79</sup> This geopolitics of racial ontology destabilizes the relentless focus on epistemological correctives that tend to dominate political interventions. But, more trenchantly, the emphasis on geopolitics amends what might otherwise be a location-less notion of ontology, an unmarked locational investment of recent work on ontology, much of it neither accounting for the productive force of geopolitics within its scholarly purview nor acknowledging the geopolitical forces that enable theorizing.

In the oscillation between discipline and control, which is less about the end of disciplining and more about the constellation of relations between discipline and control, the question, are you trans? morphs to, how trans are you? Both discipline and control pivot on the fantasy of a body that is concretely and distinctly a real trans body—the (transnormative?) body that pieces—manifest in opposition to the body that is most certainly cisgender. Similarly, the question, are you disabled? morphs to, how abled are you? and how disabled are you? In the context of an array of medical procedures that change in terms of access, signification, cultural capital, and socialization, the moves around these questions are not signaling merely degree. The end goal—to pass? to piece?—is impossible and always shifting: there is no trans. Trans becoming masquerades as a teleological movement, as if one could actually become trans. Trans is often mistaken as the horizon of trans and, as such, is mistaken for becoming trans as linear telos, as a prognosis that becomes the body’s

contemporary diagnosis and domesticates the trans body into the regulatory norms of permanence.<sup>80</sup>

*Becoming trans*, then, as opposed to trans becoming, must highlight this impossibility of linearity, permanence, and end points. In Deleuzian terms, becoming is the “I” cascading into the impersonal, the stripping of all registers of signification that make each body succumb to subjectification over “signifiante.” Becoming, as Weinstein contends, is a “wholesale deterritorialization of the human,” and a “becoming imperceptible”—a divestment of codes, of signification, of identity and a process of taking on the register of the impersonal. Becoming is not about trying to make the body more capacitated but about allowing and reading more multiplicity, multiplicities of the impersonal and of the imperceptible. Importantly, becomings have no static referent of start point, end point, or climax; they have no narrative. Becoming is awash in pure immanence, never coincident with itself, marked only by degrees of intensity and duration.<sup>81</sup> But none of this is to obscure the fact that becoming has become a zone for profit for contemporary capitalism, for neoliberal piecing and profiteering, a mode through which profit is being aggressively produced. And as such, all theorizations of becoming are generated through and within the geopolitics of racial ontology that it inhabits.

As trans transition is increasingly theorized as the mobilization, modulation, and modification of bodily matter rather than a retroactive cutting and severing from being in the wrong body, control societies must be understood as deeply sympathetic to if not partially productive of this reframing. Control mines gradations of surface and depth, tension and attention, penetration and withdrawal, finding multiple uses for the diversification of vestments and investments. Once again, however, we can de-exceptionalize trans bodies, as they are neither exceptionally susceptible to control and its forms of continuous surveillance (given the continuities between rhinoplasty and other trans surgical procedures, for example, and body modification in general),<sup>82</sup> nor are they exceptionally capable of modulation, flexibility, and attunement.

Biopolitical control foregrounds the subindividual capacities, the nonhuman capacities, the prosthetic capacities, the molecular capacities, and the hormonal capacities and manipulates the telos of degree granting driven by the medical industrial complex. Beatriz Preciado develops a formulation of the “pharmaco-pornographic” to describe the proliferation of bodily modulations in control societies, forms of microcontrol he calls “soft technologies” that “enter the body to form part of it: they dissolve in the body; they become the body”: “Here the body no longer inhabits disciplinary spaces, but is inhabited by them. The bio-molecular and organic structure of the body is a last resort for these control systems.”<sup>83</sup> The disciplinary spaces Preciado writes of—encompassing the molar cat-

egories of race, gender, sex—proliferate from bodily habitations of identity to *in*habitations of the body. This inhabitation is perhaps one of the most pernicious modalities of power that control can manifest—control as discipline par excellence, in that discipline reproduces itself continuously throughout time and space. These “micro-prosthetics” of control, which Preciado claims impel “a process of miniaturization,” “take the form of the body; they control by transforming into ‘body’, until they become inseparable and indistinguishable from it.”<sup>84</sup> Thus, the term *body modification* becomes a redundancy: the body is (endless) modification. This body, however, is not only the contoured organic body with a race and a sex; it is composites of information that splay the body across registers of disciplinary space and time. The target is data, not only identity or the subject or its representation. Identitarian communities of belonging—traditionally understood through disciplinary categories of identity, spatiality, coherence—are reorganized through statistical populations, stratified through aggregates of biopolitical life chances in the nexus where state, market, scientific, and geopolitical realms meet.

While I find Preciado’s description of control economies of bodily inhabitation very persuasive, he optimistically describes the molecular as the “paradoxical condition of contemporary resistance and revolt”:

We are molecularly equipped to remain complicit with dominant repressive formations. But the contemporary pharmaco-pornographic body . . . is *not* docile. This body is not simply an effect of the pharmaco-pornographic systems of control; it is first and above all the materialization of . . . “power of life” that aspires to transfer to all and to every body. This is the paradoxical condition of contemporary resistance and revolt: pharmaco-pornographic subjectivity is at the same time the effect of biopolitical technologies of control and the ultimate site of resistance to them.<sup>85</sup>

We might want to pause at the formulation of the molecular and the nondocile body within which it resides as “the ultimate site of resistance,” an ontologizing of the molecular as a thriving site of resistance by virtue of its mere presence and flexible relation to biomedical control economies (indeed, part of the transnormative body that pieces, and driving the reterritorialization of whiteness). Given the geopolitics of racial ontology that condition any possibilities for becoming, for a wholesale deterritorialization of the human, and given that all the coordinates around the relation of the medical model to the social model and the access to subject recognition and the medical industrial complex revolve around not just gender and sexual alterity but also racial alterity and disenfranchisement through racial difference, I want to propose *becoming trans* as a capacitation of race, of racial ontologies, that informs the functioning of geo- and biopolitical control. Becoming trans is a process that courts not only the

transformation of bodies in terms of gender, but also solicits the capacity of race to reinvent its terms. Race here is understood not only as a function or synonym of color but also, and perhaps more perniciously, as speciation. Becoming trans is distinct from trans being, or trans normativity that revels in the futurity of the body that pieces, because it specifically and deliberately acknowledges a political commitment to thinking through the forms of racial capacitation and reterritorialization that subtend and inform trans movements.

We could see becoming trans, then, as the dissolution of this category of signification through manifesting the intensive multiplicity of race, outpacing the forces of signification that seek to contain and compartmentalize what is raced, what is not raced. Insofar as *race* continues to be defined in relation to the White Man who sets its parameters, what Amit Rai calls “race racing” proliferates racial ontologies that are irreducible and unto themselves, in relation through infinite variation rather than difference from (the White Man). The impetus for race racing stems, for Rai, from the context of antiracist organizing in Britain, where he laments the continual reiteration of the centrality and normativity of white subjects and bodies in even the most progressive antiracist political forums. On thinking race not representationally but intensively, what he calls race racing, Rai writes:

If one is to consistently think race racing as an intensive process, the multiplicity of race lacks any resemblance to itself; race racing multiplicities give form to processes, not to this or that final product (a race, a name . . .). Indeed, the end results of processes realizing the same multiplicity may be highly dissimilar from each other, like the spherical soap bubble and the cubic salt crystal, or like Jazz music and the narrative novel, “which not only do not resemble one another, but bear no similarity to the topological point guiding their production.” The multiplicity of race racing is of an obscure yet distinct nature quite different from the clear and distinct identity of rationalistic essences.<sup>86</sup>

Race racing, as Rai elaborates, tracks the insistent becoming of race, the way race—“lack[ing] any resemblance to itself”—is always mutilating and mutating (to invoke the language from mutilating gender) its form in order to resituate and revive its capacitation within biopolitical fields. Race racing then, allows a reading of racial capacitation—deterritorialization, reterritorialization—in becoming trans. Becoming trans is of course just one potentiality of race racing. But if we are serious, to invoke Chen and others who think of trans as a movement not solely tethered to modulations and modifications of gender and sexuality but also of species, race racing changes trans becoming insofar as it potentially changes what race is, proliferates its intensive, singular forms, reorganizes its registers

of significance and signification, and reterritorializes and multiplies its capacitation, its presence, its mutability. But becoming trans also carries through and out a process of racialization as much as it also marks an intensive race racing, a moment of race becoming futurity. There is no doubt that the reterritorialization of whiteness, in particular of white masculinities, might occur through the reassembling of gender and sexuality into versions of transnormativity. But becoming trans as a practice and a politics takes on a deterritorializing force not only in relation to gender and sex but also in relation to race and speciation. The question then is not, does gender and sex nonnormativity lead to racial nonnormativity? but, rather, about creative lines of flight that mutate and distort and swerve in Lucretian fashion. Not swerve from, just swerve, creating intensive rather than qualified difference. Thinking of becoming trans as a form of race racing illuminates the relations of white trans-normative (FTM) bodies of futurity—the ones that pass by exemplifying piecing—to the TransJustice (MTF) bodies of color, those that struggle to piece (in order to perhaps pass), by seeing all these bodies as implicated in the redistribution of capacitations and reterritorializations of race in their intensive differences. The multiplicity, not the either/or of normativity or nonnormativity, of racial and gender difference is foregrounded. Thus, passing and piecing would be destabilized from their discrete sexual and racial referents and understood, rather, as produced through interfacing assemblages of de- and reterritorialization, of proliferating not only genders but also races and, indeed, species.

A deconstructive model of race insistently repositions the white male subject as determinant of what race is, of making sense or different sense of a representational format or forum; language dominates the political realm here. But theorists such as Arun Saldanha, Amit Rai, and myself are arguing for a political and theoretical methodology that intensifies and proliferates race rather than deconstructs it, a proliferation that, rather than hoping to dissolve binaries, makes them fade through the overwhelming force of ontological multiplicity, attuned to the perpetual differentiation of variation to variation and the multiplicity of affirmative becomings. If race is a technology of regeneration, in that race is insistently reinventing itself in manners both “obscure” and “distinct” as Rai avers, this methodology doggedly pursues the inventive movements of race itself. Writing that “race is a whole event,”<sup>87</sup> Saldanha exhorts: “Every time phenotype makes another machinic connection, there is a stutter. Every time bodies are further entrenched in segregation, however brutal, there needs to be an affective investment of some sort. This is the ruptural moment in which to intervene. Race should not be eliminated, but *proliferated*, its many energies directed at multiplying racial differences so as to render them joyfully cacophonous.”<sup>88</sup>

This joyful cacophony is in part what Rai understands as “an experimentation on race itself,” one that would “continuously mutate, never resembling itself, changing the metric of its own measure through a resonance that moves beyond its terms.”<sup>89</sup> Unlike for Preciado, for whom resistance is simply a priori installed in the molecular as the “ultimate site of resistance” and utterly un beholden to any collective—an ontologizing and individuating politics at best, as Jord/ana Rosenberg so deftly demonstrates<sup>90</sup>—Rai calls for social and political practices of experimentation, a deeply pragmatic manipulation of the partitioning capacities of bodies. I suggest this “[move] beyond its terms” is one way of working through and also against how biopolitical control seeks to modulate sub- and para-individual capacities of the body (it seeks to modulate the impersonal, the becoming) while promoting an individual recourse to subject identification. Becoming trans, as suggested by race racing, would be a politics of manifesting beyond what control can control, a molecular line of flight, a moment of intensification in the process of becoming that is characteristic of race racing. As with all becomings, lines of flight are immanent, and their availability for reterritorialization, or capacity to newly territorialize, imminent. The revolution is not molecular; rather, movement resides in the interstitial shuttling—“the ruptural moment in which to intervene”—between intensive multiplicity and its most likely recapture.

## Notes

This article has evolved over many conversations, places, and times. I have been very lucky to have had engaged audiences at the University of Maryland, Ohio State University, Linköping University, the University of Indiana, the University of Bergen, Cornell University, the Institute for Cultural Inquiry in Berlin, King’s College, and Manchester University. Thanks also to Tavia Nyong’o, Ed Cohen, Julie Livingston, Elena Glasberg, and Susan Stryker for feedback and encouragement on various drafts, and to Alex Pittman for his endless patience. As ever, my analyses have been challenged and sharpened (hopefully) through many dizzying exchanges with Jord/ana Rosenberg, who never fails to follow through on the implications of every last thought and idea.

1. Donovan Slack, “Biden Says ‘Transgender Discrimination Civil Rights Issue of Our Time,’” *Politico*, 30 October 2012, [www.politico.com/politico44/2012/10/biden-says-transgender-discrimination-civil-rights-147761.html](http://www.politico.com/politico44/2012/10/biden-says-transgender-discrimination-civil-rights-147761.html).

2. See Siobhan B. Somerville, “Queer Loving,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 11, no. 3 (2005): 335–70.

3. There was healthy skepticism from other quarters, including trans rights grassroots activists asking the important questions about welfare, safety, work, economics, and health care. For some examples, see S. E. Smith, “Joe Biden Calls Transgender Discrimination ‘the Civil Rights Issue of Our Time,’” *xoJane*, 31 October 2012, [www.xojane.com/issues/joe-biden-calls-transgender-discrimination-the-civil-rights-issue-of-our-time](http://www.xojane.com/issues/joe-biden-calls-transgender-discrimination-the-civil-rights-issue-of-our-time); Natasha Lennard, “What Took Biden So Long on Trans Discrimination?,” *Salon*, 31 October 2012, [www.salon.com/2012/10/31/if\\_trans\\_discrimination\\_is\\_the\\_civil\\_rights\\_issue\\_of\\_our\\_time\\_why\\_is\\_biden\\_just\\_mentioning\\_it\\_now/](http://www.salon.com/2012/10/31/if_trans_discrimination_is_the_civil_rights_issue_of_our_time_why_is_biden_just_mentioning_it_now/).

4. Beth Povinelli, lecture at American University of Beirut, 14 March 2013.
5. C. Riley Snorton and Jin Haritaworn, "Trans Necropolitics: A Transnational Reflection on Violence, Death, and the Trans of Color Afterlife," in *Transgender Studies Reader 2*, ed. Susan Stryker and Aren Z. Aizura (New York: Routledge, 2013), 67.
6. Susan Stryker and Aren Z. Aizura, "Introduction: Transgender Studies 2.0," in *Transgender Studies Reader 2*, 10.
7. Aren Z. Aizura, "Of Borders and Homes: The Imaginary Community of (Trans)sexual Citizenship," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 7 (2006): 295.
8. Susan Stryker (personal communication via e-mail, 20 June 2013 and 25 August 2013) has referred to this as "transnormative citizenship." As she wonders: "Is trans just an additive to the concept of homonationalism, or does it create (trans) gender trouble for the concept? My own sense is that homonationalism involves the capture of homonormativity by state/governmentality, and the capture of transnormative gender is another instance of the same process, but is not necessarily homo (sometimes it is, sometimes it isn't)" (23 June 2013).
9. Dan Irving writes that "constructions of transsexuals as viable social subjects by medical experts, transsexual individuals, researchers, and allies were, and continue to be, shaped significantly by discourses of productivity emerging from and reinforcing regimes of capitalist accumulation. To move toward achieving social recognition, the transsexual body must constitute a productive working body, that is, it must be capable of participating in capitalist production processes." Irving claims that this results in "the construction of transsexual subjectivities in ways that reinforce dominant exploitative class relations." Perhaps it is worth affirming that while perhaps correct, this assessment can be made of many bodies solicited for neoliberal subjecthood. Irving goes on to exceptionalize the trans body by arguing that "appeals to mainstream society to accept transsexuals as legitimate subjects often emphasized their valuable contributions to society through their labor." Dan Irving, "Normalized Transgressions: Legitimizing the Transsexual Body as Productive," *Radical History Review* 100 (2008): 42.
10. Karen Nakamura, "Trans/Japan, Trans/Disability" (paper presented at "Debilitating Queerness" conference, University of Maryland, College Park, 5 April 2013).
11. See David Valentine, *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Susan Stryker, "We Who Are Sexy: Christine Jorgensen's Transsexual Whiteness in the Postcolonial Philippines," *Social Semiotics* 19, no. 1 (2009): 89; Janice M. Irvine, *Disorders of Desire: Sexuality and Gender in Modern American Sexology* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1990).
12. Section 12221 of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act reads as follows:
  - (a) Homosexuality and bisexuality
 

For purposes of the definition of "disability" in section 12102(2) of this title, homosexuality and bisexuality are not impairments and as such are not disabilities under this chapter.
  - (b) Certain conditions
 

Under this chapter, the term "disability" shall not include

    - (1) transvestism, transsexualism, pedophilia, exhibitionism, voyeurism, gender identity disorders not resulting from physical impairments, or other sexual behavior disorders;
    - (2) compulsive gambling, kleptomania, or pyromania; or
    - (3) psychoactive substance use disorders resulting from current illegal use of drugs.



13. Adrienne L. Hiegel, "Sexual Exclusions: The Americans with Disabilities Act as a Moral Code," *Columbia Law Review* 94, no. 4 (1994): 1451.
14. L. Camille Herbert, "Transforming Transsexual and Transgender Rights," *William and Mary Journal of Women and the Law* 15, no. 3 (2009): 540–41.
15. R. Nick Gorton, "Transgender Health Benefits: Collateral Damage in the Resolution of the National Health Care Financing Dilemma," *Sexuality Research and Social Policy Journal of NSRC* 4, no. 4 (2007): 84. Gorton continues: "Therefore, although obtaining transgender services through Medicaid is difficult but possible depending on the court, obtaining federal protections through the ADA involves convincing courts not only that gender identity disorder is a legitimate illness needing treatment but also that the exclusion within the law itself is unconstitutional—a much more formidable challenge. To date, no court has struck down the ADA's exclusion of transgender people" (84).
16. Kari Hong, "Categorical Exclusions: Exploring Legal Responses to Health Care Discrimination against Transsexuals," *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law* 11 (2002): 123.
17. See Ruth Colker, "Homophobia, AIDS Hysteria, and the Americans with Disabilities Act," *Journal of Gender, Race and Justice* 8, no. 1 (2004): 33.
18. Kevin M. Barry, "Disabilityqueer: Federal Disability Rights Protection for Transgender People," *Yale Human Rights and Development Journal* 16, no. 1 (2013): 1–50.
19. We might ask what the shift from GID to gender dysphoria entails: Will there be a shift away from the emphasis on childhood? What new populations will be impelled and curated? While beyond the scope of this discussion, the elimination of GID from the *DSM* might entail that successfully litigating for ADA coverage of trans is an even more remote possibility.
20. Hiegel, "Sexual Exclusions," 1452–53.
21. Nicole Markotic and Robert McRuer, "Leading with Your Head: On the Borders of Disability, Sexuality, and the Nation," in *Sex and Disability*, ed. Robert McRuer and Anna Mollow (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 165–82.
22. Sharon L. Snyder and David T. Mitchell, "Ablenationalism and the Geopolitics of Disability," *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies* (2010): 124.
23. *Ibid.*, 122.
24. See "Queer Channel Media: Trans-washing the ADA," ENDAblog, 28 July 2011, [endablog.wordpress.com/2011/07/28/queer-channel-media-trans-washing-the-ada/](http://endablog.wordpress.com/2011/07/28/queer-channel-media-trans-washing-the-ada/).
25. Zach Strassburger, "Disability Law and the Disability Rights Movement for Transpeople," *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism* 24, no. 2 (2012): 7.
26. If trans has become the figure of radical alterity from a now-domesticated queer, as it is increasingly claimed, then is trans the disabled Other of a queer ableism? Is transphobia in queer organizations and communities, for example, in part a manifestation of ableism, of anxiety or phobia toward disability? This is not in any way meant to reduce transphobia to ableism, or to any other -ism, but to ask what components, including race, class, and ableism, might be fueling the assemblage that is transphobia. Why is the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival still barring trans women? Is the "inability" to completely embody originary biological femaleness responded to phobically, as if this inability were a disability? Is there value in conceptualizing transphobia as a variant of ableism?
27. Strassburger, "Disability Law," 3–4.
28. Stryker, personal communication via e-mail, 25 August 2013.
29. Alvin Lee, "Trans Models in Prison: The Medicalization of Gender Iden-

- tity and the Eighth Amendment Right to Sex Reassignment Therapy,” *Harvard Journal of Law and Gender* 31 (2008): 464–65.
30. *Ibid.*, 470.
31. Jeannie J. Chung, “Identity or Condition: The Theory and Practice of Applying State Disability Laws to Transgender Individuals,” *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law* 21, no. 1 (2011): 1–45; Dean Spade, “Resisting Medicine, Re/Modeling Gender,” *Berkeley Women’s Law Journal* 18, no. 1 (2003): 37.
32. Stryker and Aizura, “Introduction,” 1.
33. Abby L. Wilkerson, “Normate Sex and Its Discontents,” in McRuer and Mollow, *Sex and Disability*, 184–85.
34. See Eli Clare, “Body Shame, Body Pride: Lessons from the Disability Rights Movement,” in Stryker and Aizura, *Transgender Studies Reader 2*, 261–65.
35. Clare, “Body Shame, Body Pride,” 262.
36. *Ibid.*
37. David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).
38. David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, “Introduction: Disability Studies and the Double Bind of Representation,” in *The Body and Physical Difference: Discourses of Disability*, ed. David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 6.
39. Toby Beauchamp, “Artful Concealment and Strategic Visibility: Transgender Bodies and US State Surveillance after 9/11,” *Surveillance and Society* 6, no. 4 (2009): 47.
40. *Ibid.*
41. Jonathan M. Metzler and Anna Kirkland, eds., *Against Health: How Health Became the New Morality* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).
42. Clare, “Body Shame, Body Pride,” 265.
43. Eva Hayward, “Lessons from a Starfish,” in *Queering the Non/Human*, ed. Noreen Giffney and Myra J. Hird (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 249–64. Hayward writes in a footnote: “Again, I risk reading the ‘Cripple’ as a trans-subject not to iterate the pathologization of trans-folks, but to explore the imaginings of the song. For the transsexual/transgender subject, gender assignments can feel ‘disabling’, even wounding. I’m speaking about this traumatic experience, not about transgressive exceptionalism” (254).
44. Bailey Kier, “Interdependent Ecological Transsex: Notes on Re/production,” in Stryker and Aizura, *Transgender Studies Reader 2*, 194, 196.
45. David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, “Disability as Multitude: Re-working Non-productive Labor Power,” *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies* 4, no. 2 (2010): 190–91.
46. For an incisive critique of the ahistorical claims regarding the particlization of bodies necessary to capitalism, see Jordana Rosenberg, “The Molecularization of Sexuality: On Some Primitivisms of the Present,” *Theory and Event* 17, no. 2 (2014), [muse.jhu.edu/journals/theory\\_and\\_event/v017/17.2.rosenberg.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/theory_and_event/v017/17.2.rosenberg.html).
47. Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 18.
48. See Isaac West, “PISSAR’s Critically Queer and Disabled Politics,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 7, no. 2 (2010), 156–75; also Sheila Cavanagh, “Touching Gender: Abjection and the Hygienic Imagination,” in Stryker and Aizura, *Transgender Studies Reader 2*, 426–42.
49. *Peeing in Peace: A Resource Guide for Transgender Activists and Allies* (San Fran-

cisco: Transgender Law Center, 2005), [translaw.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/94930982-PIP-Resource-Guide.pdf](http://translaw.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/94930982-PIP-Resource-Guide.pdf).

50. “Remembering Our Dead,” [www.rememberingour-dead.org](http://www.rememberingour-dead.org) (site inactive; accessed 13 June 2013). See also Juliet Jacques, “Remembering Our Dead: Global Violence against Trans People,” *openDemocracy* (digital commons), 26 November 2013, [www.opendemocracy.net/5050/juliet-jacques/remembering-our-dead-global-violence-against-trans-people](http://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/juliet-jacques/remembering-our-dead-global-violence-against-trans-people). On the distinctions between MTF and FTM and trans women of color, see Michelle O’Brien, “Tracing This Body: Transsexuality, Pharmaceuticals, and Capitalism,” in Stryker and Aizura, *Transgender Studies Reader* 2, 56–65.

51. For a transnational analysis of racial difference that informs the possibility of transformative experiences of surgical procedures, see Aren Z. Aizura, “The Romance of the Amazing Scalpel,” in Stryker and Aizura, *Transgender Studies Reader* 2, 496–511.

52. Paisley Currah, “Stepping Back, Looking Outward: Situating Transgender Activism and Transgender Studies—Kris Hayashi, Matt Richardson, and Susan Stryker Frame the Movement,” *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 5, no. 1 (2008): 100.

53. Susan Stryker and Nikki Sullivan, “King’s Member, Queen’s Body,” in *Somatechnics: Queering the Technologisation of Bodies* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009), 51.

54. *Ibid.*, 61.

55. See Metz and Kirkland, *Against Health*.

56. Stryker and Sullivan, “King’s Member, Queen’s Body,” 61.

57. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 147.

58. James Overboe, “Affirming an Impersonal Life: A Different Register for Disability Studies,” *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies* 3, no. 3 (2009): 254.

59. Paisley Currah, Lisa Jean Moore, and Susan Stryker, “Introduction: Trans-, Trans, or Transgender?,” *WSQ: Women’s Studies Quarterly* 36, nos. 3–4 (2008): 11.

60. See Jami Weinstein, “Transgenres and the Plane of Gender Imperceptibility,” in *Undutiful Daughters: New Directions in Feminist Thought and Practice*, ed. Henriette Gunkel, Chrysanthi Nigianni, and Fanny Söderbäck (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 155–68. Particularly, Weinstein provides an important rereading of Nietzsche and a corrective around Judith Butler’s use of “no doer behind the deed,” asserting that the doer and the deed are both fictions according to Nietzsche, and implores us in nonessentialist terms to “become what we are” (162–63).

61. Mel Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).

62. See also Lucas Cassidy Crawford, “Transgender without Organs? Mobilizing a Geo-affective Theory of Gender Modification,” *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 3/4 (2008): 127–43.

63. Kier, “Interdependent Ecological Transsex,” 189.

64. Weinstein, “Transgenres and the Plane of Gender Imperceptibility,” 156.

65. Julie Livingston and Jasbir Puar, “Introduction: Interspecies,” *Social Text* 106 (2011): 3–14. In the paragraphs that follow, I paraphrase several points from our cowritten introduction.

66. Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2009), 75.

67. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990), 146.
68. See Joan Roughgarden, *Evolution's Rainbow: Diversity, Gender, and Sexuality in Nature and People* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).
69. See Eva Hayward and Malin Ah King, "Toxic Sexes: Perverting Pollution and Queering Hormone Disruption," *O-Zone: A Journal of Object Oriented Studies* 1 (2013), 1–12. Hayward and King theorize toxicity as a threat and a possibility.
70. Myra Hird, "Animal Trans," in Giffney and Hird, *Queering the Non/Human*, 242.
71. Vicki Kirby, *Quantum Anthropologies: Life at Large* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).
72. Lynn Margulis and Dorion Sagan, quoted in Hird, "Animal Trans," 241.
73. Much of this dialogue seems fixated on Temple Grandin, an autistic person known for her work on livestock animal behavior. See Cary Wolfe, "Learning from Temple Grandin, or, Animal Studies, Disability Studies, and Who Comes after the Subject," *New Formations* 64 (2008): 110–23; Kari Weil, *Thinking Animals: Why Animal Studies Now* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).
74. See Max Hantel's review of *Queering the Non/Human*: Max Hantel, "Post-humanism, Landscapes of Memory, and the Materiality of AIDS in South Africa," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (2012): 251–56. While an excellent initial collection on the generative connections between trans studies, animal studies, and post-humanist studies, the book, edited by Noreen Giffney and Myra Hird, participates in this elision.
75. Chen, *Animacies*, 137.
76. Dean Spade, "Mutilating Gender," in *Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 315–32.
77. Bobby Jean Noble, "Our Bodies Are Not Ourselves: Tranny Guys and the Racialized Class Politics of Incoherence," in Stryker and Aizura, *Transgender Studies Reader 2*, 249.
78. Michel Foucault, "*Society Must Be Defended*": *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–1976*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 255.
79. Many other critical race theorists have made this point, including Kim Tallbear, Nadia Abu el-Haj, and Dorothy Roberts. Kim Tallbear, *Native American DNA: Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetic Science* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013); Nadia Abu el-Haj, *The Genealogical Science: Genetics, the Origins of the Jews, and the Politics of Epistemology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Dorothy Roberts, *Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics, and Big Business Re-create Race in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: New Press, 2011). Denise da Silva has written on the passage from the biopolitics of race to nanopolitics: "That cancer cells do not indicate dark brown skin or flat noses can be conceived of as emancipatory only if one forgets, or minimizes, the political context within which lab materials will be collected and the benefits of biotechnological research will be distributed" (Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007], 8–9).
80. On UK legislation that requires the acquiring of one's transgender to be committed to "until death," see Emily Grabham, "Governing Permanence: Trans Subjects, Time, and the Gender Recognition Act," *Social and Legal Studies* 19, no. 1 (2010): 107–26.
81. If we follow the lines of thought that inform Deleuze and Guattari's "becoming," we see that becoming animal and becoming woman (two major examples that they mobilize) are aspirational trajectories not toward these intersectional

coordinates but beyond them. A becoming manifests as an occupation not of these categories but of the dissolution of the binary frames that inform the coherence of the categories in the first instance. Becoming animal is not a reaching out of the human to the experiences of the animal but, rather, a dissolution of the human animal/nonanimal binary such that it no longer makes sense, no longer signifies as sensemaking, sensible. Becoming woman, for example, is Deleuze and Guattari's version of actual transsexualism. It is the potentiality of overwhelming—not deconstructing or transcending but, rather, overwhelming through infinite multiplicity—sexual difference into incoherence. Edward Mussawir writes that “‘Becoming woman’, a figure indeed suggestive of transsexualism, links ‘minor’ politics with an ontology of movement” (Edward Mussawir, *Jurisdiction in Deleuze: The Expression and Representation of Law* [New York: Routledge, 2011], 53).

82. Spade, “Resisting Medicine.”

83. Beatriz Preciado, “The Pharmaco-pornographic Regime: Sex, Gender, and Subjectivity in the Age of Punk Capitalism,” in Stryker and Aizura, *Transgender Studies Reader 2*, 271.

84. Ibid.

85. Ibid.

86. Amit Rai, “Race Racing: Four Theses on Race and Intensity,” *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 40, nos. 1–2 (2012): 67.

87. Arun Saldanha, “Reontologizing Race: The Machinic Geography of Phenotype,” *Environment and Planning: Society and Space* 24, no. 1 (2006): 12.

88. Ibid., 20–21.

89. Rai, “Race Racing,” 74.

90. Rosenberg, “The Molecularization of Sexuality.”

