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GESTURING TOWARD UTOPIA

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GESTURING TOWARD UTOPIA: QUEER TIME AND
PLACE IN THE PERFORMANCE ART OF CASSILS,
BOYCHILD AND MARVAL A REX

A Master's Thesis

by

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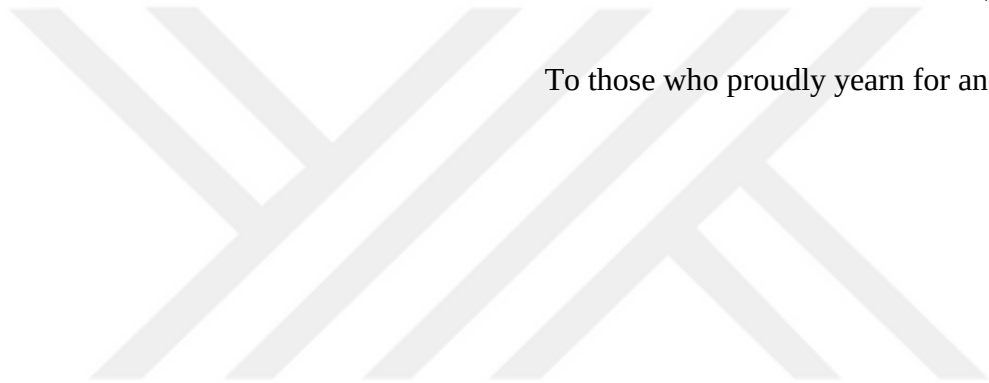
Department of

Communication and Design

İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

Ankara

August 2020



To my dede

To those who proudly yearn for another world

GESTURING TOWARD UTOPIA: QUEER
TIME AND PLACE IN THE PERFORMANCE
ART OF CASSILS, BOYCHILD AND
MARVAL A REX

The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
of
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By

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ABSTRACT

GESTURING TOWARD UTOPIA: QUEER TIME AND PLACE IN THE PERFORMANCE ART OF CASSILS, BOYCHILD AND MARVAL A REX

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M.A. in Media and Visual Studies

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This thesis examines queer body/performance art concentrating on the concepts of time and space. Prioritizing the approach of queer theory to the perception of time and space, the performances of Cassils, boychild and Marval A Rex are explored. The primary purpose of this thesis is to reveal the queer politics and potentials regarding time and space in the performances of the selected artists. To achieve this goal, this thesis explores how the concepts of time and space are built depending on gender and sexuality and how heteronormativity excludes queers during this building process. Accordingly, seeking to find a way to suspend the formation of this normative spatio-temporality which renders queers invisible, this project approaches performance art as a world-making practice to explore alternative ways of existence. In this respect, this thesis argues that these artists entail their bodies and performative spaces into a never-ending process as a queer strategy to build their own non-normative peculiar existence. Thus, the chosen artists gesture toward a utopian world which remains vital for queers by conceptually dismantling the domination of heteronormative body, identity, gender and sexuality.

Keywords: Becoming, Performance Art, Spatio-Temporalities, Utopia, Queer

ÖZET

ÜTOPYAYA DOĞRU: CASSILS, BOYCHILD VE MARVAL A REX'İN PERFORMANSLARINDA QUEER ZAMAN VE MEKAN

Hamamcıoğlu, Gamze
Yüksek Lisans, Medya ve Görsel Çalışmalar

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Bu tez, queer beden/performans sanatını zaman ve mekan kavramlarına odaklanarak inceler. Bu çalışmada; Cassils, boychild ve Marval A Rex'in performansları, queer teorinin zaman ve mekan kavramlarına olan yaklaşımı doğrultusunda incelenir. Bu tezin öncelikli amacı, incelenen performanslardaki queer politikaları ve zamansal ve mekansal potansiyelleri açığa çıkarmaktır. Amacına ulaşmak için, bu tezde, zaman ve mekan kavramlarının nasıl cinsiyet ve cinsellik üzerinden inşa edildiği ve bu inşa edilen heteronormatif yapının içinde queer bireylerin nasıl dışarda bırakıldığı araştırılır. Sonuç olarak, queer bireyleri dışlayan bu normatif mekansal-zamansallığın oluşumunu askıya almanın bir yolunu arayan bu proje, performans sanatına bir dünya yaratım pratiği olarak yaklaşıyor. Bu bağlamda, bu tez, bir queer strateji olarak, seçilen sanatçıların bedenlerini ve performatif alanlarını, kendi normatif olmayan özgün varoluşlarını inşa etmek için, hiç bitmeyen bir dönüşüm sürecine soktuklarını savunur. Böylece bu sanatçılar, heteronormatif beden, kimlik, cinsiyet ve cinsellik tahakkümünü kavramsal olarak ortadan kaldırarak, queer bireyler için hayati önem taşıyan ütöpik bir dünyaya yönelirler.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dünya Yaratımı, Oluş, Performans Sanatı, Ütopya, Zamansal ve Mekansallık, Queer

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In a contemporary deployment, queer is perceived as a term used to refer to identities that are in a constant process of transformation (Jagose, 1996). In Annamarie Jagose's words:

Disillusioned with traditional identity-based forms of political organisation and engaged in a radical denaturalisation of all identity categories, queer operates not so much as an alternative nomenclature—which would measure its success by the extent to which it supplanted the former classifications of lesbian and gay than as a means of drawing attention to those fictions of identity that stabilise all identificatory categories. (Jagose, 1996, p. 125).

The goal of the queer theory is to reject the categorization of gender and sexuality. In a queer understanding, identities cannot be reduced to fixed labels and categories because queer as a term rejects the gendered binary oppositions which are defined by normative social power.

Like queer theory which has subversive qualities over fixed gendered identities, performance art similarly spoils the established conventions of art. Art historian and curator of performance art RoseLee Goldberg remarks:

For artist did not merely use performance as a means to attract publicity to themselves. Performance has been considered as a way of bringing life to many formal and conceptual ideas on which the making of art is based. Live gestures have constantly been used as a weapon against conventions of established art (Goldberg, 1988, p.7).

Performance art became an acknowledged medium of artistic expression in the 1970s (Goldberg, 1988). Throughout the history of performance art, it can be observed that theoreticians and art historians could not find a specific definition for performance art since it is a mixed medium. Goldberg argues that performance art “draws freely on any number of disciplines and media for material –literature, poetry, theatre, music, dance, architecture and painting, as well as video, film, slides and narrative” (Goldberg, 1988, p. 9). She contends that performance art is also “a permissive, open-ended medium with endless variables, executed by artists impatient with the limitations of more established forms, and determined to take art directly to the public” (Goldberg, 1988, p. 9). Hence, the art of performance has an innate anarchist structure by nature.

Jill Dolan argues that “performance and politics have always been intertwined” (Dolan, 2008, p. 3). Art theorist and critic Amelia Jones also draws attention to the political subversive qualities of body/performance art. For her, performance art can be perceived as postmodernist construction since it has the ability of subverting modernist fixed meanings. Her understanding of performance art intersects with the feminist poststructuralism as a mode giving way to speak of new subjectivities. She argues “social, political and cultural context is crucial to this analysis of what body art (and, for that matter, poststructuralism, feminism, and theories of postmodernism) can tell us about our current experience of subjectivity” (Jones, 1998, p.11). As Jones explains, through body/performance art, the body became political since it is a more personal and powerful realistic medium to express and experience. Concordantly, Marvin Carlson argues that performance art does not depend on “characters previously created by other artist”, it rather depends on performers’ “own bodies,

their own autobiographies, their own specific culture” so “individual body remains at the center” (Carlson, 2018, p. 5-6). Carlson also remarks that performance art can be considered as a “quest for contemporary subjectivity and identity, the relation to structures of power, the varying challenges of gender, race, and ethnicity (Carlson, 2018, p. 6). In this fashion, for performance artists, the body becomes a tool for conveying identity both as a personal and social construct. Performance becomes a medium for dismantling the stable ways of beings and building new spaces for alternative subjectivities. Thus, performance artists, especially queer body/performance artists, using their non-normative bodies as a medium, can go beyond the limits of the notion of body and challenge the established norms on gender and sexuality.

In light of aforementioned perspectives on transformative power of performance art, this thesis aims to embark on a study on queer body/performance art by concentrating on the concepts of time and space. The reason behind this thesis’s desire to engage in the concept of time and space is to allow queers—who are ignored, excluded, erased, in other words, who cannot open for themselves a temporal space to exist since it is in the monopoly of a heteropatriarchal structures—to imagine a self-fashioned non-normative utopian world full of hope that does not allow for any formation of normative heterosexuality. This research project prioritizes the performance practices of three genderqueer trans performance artists Cassils, boychild and Marval A Rex. It aims to examine the relationship between exclusionary practices applied to queer individuals and the concept of heteronormative time and space, in an attempt to find queer performative potentials in the performative praxes of the artists in question. As a final remark, selected artists

criticize not only heteronormativity but also homonormativity in an inherent way.

Homonormativity as well as heteronormativity is imposed on queer people.

Homonormativity as Lisa Duggan theorizes aims to design “a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption” (Duggan, 2002, p. 179). As it is inferred, homonormativity does not aim to challenge heteronormativity, but rather reinforces it and allows it to endure in a much more secure and robust way. Hence, standing against heteronormativity and its restrictive exclusionary impositions may be perceived as destroying

homonormativity at the same time. Therefore, at this point, it can be argued that the chosen artist this thesis is mostly exploring how your artists’ work challenges heteronormativity. In light of the aim of the thesis, throughout this thesis, various arguments will be presented: the concept of time and space has a connection with gender and sexuality. Heteronormative structures only allow certain people to exist in a spatial and temporal plane and accordingly, queer individuals cannot functionally exist in this hetero-temporal space. Through their bodies, performative spaces and acts, the performance artists discussed in this thesis reclaim the status of oppressed queer individuals who cannot find a way to spatio-temporalize. Thus, via different queer strategies and interventions, selected artists’ performative spaces remain as a utopian world “where people come together, embodied and passionate, to share experiences of meaning making and imagination that can describe or capture fleeting intimations of a better world” (Dolan, 2008, p. 2).

To set the methodological base, Jack Halberstam’s concept of queer time and place will be placed as a starting point for this project. This thesis theoretically will approach queer body/performance art as a world-making practice. While examining

the world-making potentials in selected performances, Muñoz's concepts of utopia which is full of potentiality, and contemplated as a "flux, a temporal disorganization" (Muñoz, 2009, p. 97), "a perpetual becoming" (Muñoz, 2009, p. 100) and queer futurity carrying "not-yet-conscious" (Muñoz, 2009, p. 3) will be taken as a basis. Accordingly, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concepts of becoming, assemblage, In-betweenness, etc will be used as supplementary theoretical tools along with Donna Haraway's cyborg theory to examine how the aforementioned artists separate their subject positions from a representative state by (un)building their performative spaces, bodies and identities outside the westernized, essentialized and gendered notion.

In light of the conceptual tools used, Cassils, boychild and Marval A Rex are gathered together for this thesis. They are all contemporary genderqueer trans body-based performance artists. They problematize the perception of essentialized and totalitarian body/identity using their performative spaces, acts and bodies. These artists refuse to assign themselves a gendered body which exists on the borders of the binary gendered system. They position their bodies at the core of their performative spaces and view their bodies as a raw material, aiming to transform it constantly, to disrupt its stable form conceptually. In their own unique fashion, during their performances they all approach their body and performative spaces as an unfinished project. Via their performative acts, these artists gesture toward a utopian future where normative heterosexuality can be no longer placed as the only authoritative identity shaping society. Yet, this thesis does not aim to establish a queer canon, but to examine these three artists' practices as a specimen from queer body/performance art scenes. There are surely numerous amounts of performance artists dealing with

gender and sexuality in their own peculiar ways, but the selected three artists were regarded as the most convenient ones to be brought together among the others, considering the themes they use and the notion of body and identity they embrace.

There are also certainly other academic studies which was conducted on the selected performance artists. Exemplary, Leila Nicole Riszko in her PhD thesis titled as *Breaching Bodily Boundaries: Transgressive Embodiment and Gender Queering in Contemporary Performance Art* (2016), examines the performances of Cassils and boychild. In her thesis, Riszko theorizes the non-normative transgressive queer body through Cassils and boychild's performances. In the article *Queering Identity: Being and Becoming Queer in the Work of Cassils* (2017), Cath Lambert approaches Cassils' body and performative practices by means of challenging the fixed classification of sexual identity. Eliza Steinbock, in *Photographic Flashes: On Imaging Trans Violence in Heather Cassils' Durational Art* (2014), explores the issue of trans violence via the flash of the camera by means of photographic violence in Cassils' performances. Taylor Morgan Hosford, in his MA thesis *Seeing Cassils: Transformative Coalitions and the Trap of the Visible* (2020), examines the problematic aspects of trans visibility and representation, queer kinship, bathroom politics, etc. Discussions revolving around queer kinship touch upon Muñoz's utopianism but do not centralize it. In *Reading Contemporary Performance: Theatricality Across Genres* (2016), Halberstam examines boychild's performances in the context of trans rage. When other researches, which are not covered here, on the artists and the ones mentioned in this section are examined, it is observed that almost none of these studies approach the aforementioned artists' performances by tracing the marks of a utopian world which remains vital for queers to build their

own idiosyncratic subjectivities. Therefore, this thesis aims to awaken a crucial yet ignored perspective within the further academic studies on queer body/performance art and theory. Accordingly, it may be observed that the field of performance art has mostly been examined through feminist theory when its historical trajectory is taken into consideration. Besides, studies in the field of queer performance are mostly concentrated on the framework of gay and lesbian visibility and representation and drag performances. This representative perspective restricts the formation of alternative body forms, identities, gender and sexuality. However, the researches have been carried out in the field of queer studies and transgender studies –Paul B. Preciado’s countersexual manifesto (2018) and the concept of trans*¹ (2018) proposed by Halberstam– can come to the fore as outstanding examples, as they have quitted approaching the concept of identity from a representational lens. Thus, this thesis can be a guideway for further researches in queer studies, performance studies, transgender studies and other related fields, as it brings the queer body and performative spaces to a point “away from figuration or indexical or mimetic representation” via exterminating all gendered normative assumptions subjected to body (Halberstam, 2018).

This thesis consists of four chapters. The first chapter is designed as a guidance that brings together the theories that will be used while examining the performances of the artists that the thesis deals with. This theoretical chapter primarily presents what the concept of heteronormative time and space means, then discusses how queer and trans individuals are excluded from this heteronormative time and space. Within the

¹ The usage of trans* comes from Jack Halberstam’s book *Trans**. Halberstam presents this usage as an anti-relational term that is fed from being undefined and discorded from the binary logic of the trans experience.

context of queer theory, this chapter theorizes the concept of queer time and space, which disrupts the production of normative time and space. Once the concept of queer time and space is theorized, the last part of this chapter examines how this queer spatio-temporality can function through performance art. The second chapter examines Cassils' performances, based on their approach to their body as a social sculpture, and their refusal to define their body and performative space as fixed notions. Before delving into the analysis of the performances, this chapter primarily discusses the transgender experience through the perspective of wrong body, to demonstrate why Cassils seeks a way of destroying the perception of body and identity fed from a binary and fixed notion. The third chapter examines boychild's lip-sync performances under three sections. The first section discusses how boychild's lip-sync performances destabilize the drag performance tradition. In the second part, dance and movement as artistic disciplines are scrutinized by means of how boychild furnishes a liminal and queer utopian world. The following part approaches boychild's trans body as an imagined landscape of monstrosity. Last analytical chapter explores Marval A Rex's performative space as a queer spatio-temporal place. This chapter consists of three sections as well. Via Marval's specific performance the first section centers on hegemonic masculinity and its reflection on trans masculine experience. Via the performance, this part explores how the artist spoils the codes of hetero-patriarchal society and offers a non-normative identity and body, while letting queers imagine a spatio-temporal world outside of hetero-patriarchal codes. The second part investigates the cyborgian aesthetics in Marval's performances so as to spoil any formation of binary normative gender. The last section theorizes the utopian queer time and space formation through Preciado's concept of dildotectonics.

Overall, this research project carries concerns such as: how the concepts of time and space are related to sexuality and gender, what role heteronormativity has in this construction process, how a queer time and space can be built, and how queer body/performance art can function in this construction process. Seeking to assuage these concerns, the upcoming chapters, in which selected artists' performances are addressed, aim to demonstrate that performance art has a utopian counter spatio-temporal potential and it can queer the concept of heteronormative time and space. Since all three artists are intertwined with queer politics considering their performative spaces and non-normative bodies, the ignored utopian queer potentials can also be revealed in visual and performing arts especially through the spatial and temporal lens of queer theory.

CHAPTER II

HETERONORMATIVITY, QUEER SPATIO-TEMPORALITIES AND QUEERNESS IN PERFORMANCE ART



*“You could be me and I could be you
Always the same and never the same
Day by day, life after life
Without my legs or my hair
Without my genes or my blood
With no name and with no type of story
Where do I live?
Tell me, where do I exist?”*

— SOPHIE, *Immaterial Girl*

2.1 Introduction

Seeking to detect potentials in queer body/performance art to lay the base for further chapters where performances of chosen genderqueer artists will be explored, this chapter examines how the concepts of time and space are associated with body, sexuality and gender. This chapter basically aims to serve as a theoretical toolbox for the analysis chapters, and it consists of three sections. The first section evaluates the concept of time and space through a heteronormative lens. In this section, it is important to discuss heteronormativity and its relation to spatio-temporal coordinates

to understand why queer time and space is needed. The second part, beyond the normative exclusionary temporal and spatial formations, offers the concept of imagined queer time and space in light of queer theory. It is crucial to conceptualize queer spatio-temporalities in this section, as the performance artists included in the thesis position their identities, bodies and stages outside the heteronormative orders. The third part conceptualizes queer body/performance art to uncover its utopian and world-making potentials in order to lay a foundation for the following chapters where Cassils, boychild and Marval A Rex's performances will be evaluated as "utopian performatives" (Dolan, 2008, p. 5).

2.2 Heteronormative Relations to Time and Space

In his book *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1990), David Harvey argues that time and space are the fundamental concepts since the beginning of human existence. He, without referring to any normative outline, contends that time and space as concepts develop through social interaction and culture. Jack Halberstam, in *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (2005), adds another stimulating perspective to Harvey's understanding of spatio-temporality by looking at the notion of time and space through the lens of queer theory. Through his alternative spatio-temporal approach, he allows the reader to comprehend the effects of heteronormativity on queer lives (Halberstam, 2005). Halberstam draws attention to Harvey's concepts like "family time", "industrial time", "time of progress", "austerity versus instant gratification", and "postponement versus immediacy" (Halberstam, 2005, p. 7). For Halberstam, as Harvey hints, these versatile temporal states are the outcomes of the capitalist system. The aim of the capitalist system is to create a cycle that people think it is natural to ensure that the system works

(Halberstam, 2005). At this point, Halberstam finds Harvey's approach and the perspectives of Marxist tradition in general incomplete. In fact, this temporal order of adjustment, which Marxist tradition criticize, was primarily made to create a normative society, but Marxists fail to address it (Halberstam, 2005). Halberstam argues that Marxist approach skips the questions of how and why the normalization occurs. Halberstam states that the meaning of the "naturalization of modes of temporality" (Halberstam, 2005, p. 6) should be deconstructed to figure out "how hegemonic constructions of time and space are uniquely gendered and sexualized" (Halberstam, 2005, p. 8). If time and space is perceived as a social construction, the question of how authoritative mindset constructs time and space as gendered and sexualized should be contemplated. In this context, considering the perspective that Halberstam adds to Harvey's approach of time and space, what Harvey calls naturalization is not much different from normativity.

Within the Foucauldian notion, the body has become a political subject and considered as the heart of power. In his book *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (1978), Foucault asserts that throughout the history, in western societies, the body has been politicized and controlled through oppression or normalization. He supports the idea that state apparatus is not the only mechanism shaping power, there are other mechanisms which regulate people, their lives and even bodies. He argues that "power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (Foucault, 1978, p. 93). For Foucault, the mere goal is "to ensure population, to reproduce labor capacity, to perpetuate the form of social relations" (Foucault, 1978, p. 37). It can be implied that power mechanisms determine temporal heteronormative goals for people like

“family time” and “time of reproduction”, causing people to become individuals who will serve future society (Halberstam, 2005, p. 5). Thus, by establishing a normative pseudo-natural cyclical progress for the members of society, this mechanism can easily throw out bodies that do not contribute to capitalism, namely queer.

Temporal concepts like reproduction, longevity and inheritance can be regarded as the main concerns of heteronormative hegemonic society (Halberstam, 2005) which shapes the logic of “temporality of social life” (Monaghan, 2016, p. 14). Whitney Monaghan argues that this mindset of heteronormative temporality enforces “linear and progressive life narratives; lives marked by a particular set of celebrated milestones—birth, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, marriage, reproduction, parenthood, anniversaries, retirement and death” (Monaghan, 2016, p. 14).

Halberstam also argues that “in western cultures, [...] we create longevity as the most desirable future, applaud the pursuit of long life (under any circumstances), and pathologize modes of living that show little or no concern for longevity”

(Halberstam, 2005, p. 4). This temporal linearity is also named as “straight time” by José Esteban Muñoz. Muñoz argues that “the only futurity promised is that of reproductive majoritarian heterosexuality” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 22) to prove that there are alternative non-heterosexual life forms that are eventually confined to become extinct in straight time. In the analysis chapters where the performances of all artists are discussed, the exclusionary structure of heteronormative reproductive time and space and its effect on queer individuals will be examined over the topics such as binary genderism, passing, entrapment, phobia, violence, hatred etc.

Elizabeth Freeman, in her book *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (2010), refers to this hetero-temporal process by naming it as “chrononormativity”. She argues that chrononormativity is “the use of time to organize individual human bodies towards maximum productivity” (Freeman, 2010, p. 3).

The implanted need of efficiency and organization relates to hetero-patriarchal capitalism which needs a household space with the figment of familial security. The system, in other words, power mechanisms classify people considering their use value. To add a gendered perspective, in light of Foucault’s concept of biopolitics, in her book *Arranging Grief* (2007), Dana Luciano calls this naturalization and normalization process “cronobiopolitics” so as to accentuate a sexual reproductive future-oriented organization of a life time. In chronobiopolitical process, only normative bodies that manage to spatio-temporalize can enter the cycle of sequential natural time by embracing success and goal-oriented teleological practices. These practices, in Freeman’s words, are “marriage, accumulation of health and wealth for the future, reproduction, childrearing, and death” (Freeman, 2010, p.4). Other bodies which cannot enter the cycle of the reproduction based heteronormative system, “are characterized as immature and even dangerous” and excluded from hetero-temporal society (Halberstam, 2005, p. 5).

Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, in their essay “Sex in Public”, scrutinize the concept of sex “mediated by public” (Berlant & Warner, 1998, p. 547). The title of their essay carries a twist in itself. Rather than discussing sexuality as an act, they think about how sexuality develops, transforms, and becomes part of culture. For Berlant and Warner, some spaces are directly related to sex: “pornographic cinema, phone sex, adult markets for print, lap dancing” (Berlant & Warner, 1998, p. 547)

and there are also places that are revolved around sex but not directly on sex acts:

“queer zones and other worlds estranged from heterosexual culture, but more tacit scenes of sexuality like official national culture which depends on a notion of privacy to cloak its sexualization of national membership” (Berlant & Warner, 1998, p. 547).

The purpose of the article is not only to create a safe space for queer individuals, but to propose the practice of developing a queer culture that includes alternative identities and spaces that do not involve hegemony of heterosexual couples. To explain heterosexuality, Berlant and Warner argues:

The institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent—that is, organized as a sexuality but also privileged. Its coherence is always provisional, and its privilege can take several (sometimes contradictory) forms: unmarked, as the basic idiom of the personal and the social; or marked as a natural state; or projected as an ideal or moral accomplishment (Berlant & Warner, 1998, p. 548).

As they indicate, the concept of space is shaped and connected in line with these gendered assumptions, and the accepted and superior identity is always heterosexual identity in societies. It is important to show how the concept of space is regulated through gendered assumptions, to emphasize that in the following chapters, genderqueer performers can create a counter space using their performative spaces. As Berlant and Warner suggest, this thesis will approach the performative spaces of selected artists as a queer zone built outside of heterosexual culture.

Similarly, Viviane K. Namaste, in her essay “Genderbashing: Sexuality, Gender, and the Regulation of Public Space” (2006), examines the concept of public space that is developed upon gender. Namaste explores public and private spaces through transgender identity. She argues that the visibility of transgressive bodies provokes violence and the violence imposed upon these non-normative bodies is done through “policing gender presentations” (Namaste, 2006, p. 585) in public and private spaces.

According to Namaste, public space is in the monopoly of binary sex and under male domination. She argues that western societies only acknowledge two sexes and gender. The only way to exist in public spaces for Namaste is to formulate identity “through the enactment of a sanctioned gender identity, preferably within the context of a heterosexual dyad” (Namaste, 2006, p. 589). All other sexes and gender identities, other than two genders such as men and women, are erased through a tacit acceptance from public spaces. Exclusionary practices applied to trans and queer individuals will be included in all analytical subsequent chapters. In the next chapter which deals with Cassils’ performances, Namaste’s argument will be examined to claim that trans individuals have to experience a passing issue in order to exist publicly. In boychild’s case, the issue will appear when the non-normative body is discussed. In last chapter dealing with Marval’s performances, phobic discrimination and marginalization of minoritarian subjects will be mapped through hegemonic masculinity.

Bodies are spaces where social structures of differences are instilled to people. Susan Stryker explains that representatives of medical sciences also have the power of defining and judging people, their identities and bodies. She asserts that “medical practitioners and institutions have the social power to determine what is considered sick or healthy, normal or pathological, sane or insane and thus, often, to transform potentially neutral forms of human difference into unjust and oppressive social hierarchies” (Stryker, 2008, p. 36). According to her, the system regulates bodies “by enmeshing them within norms and expectations that determine what kinds of lives are deemed livable or useful” (Stryker, 2008, p. 51). Considering her argument, it would not be wrong to say that the system in which people live designates certain

restrictive descriptions for body that are strictly appropriate to system's own functioning. The existence of bodies that do not comply with this functioning process disappears in the system. Correspondingly, Butler (2004) argues that normative heterosexuality forms bodily regulations and the bodies that do not comply with the requirements of these regulations are not recognized as human who leads a viable life. Thus, since queer bodies are the bodies that are beyond normative formations specified by the system, they cannot satisfy the expectations of the system so they cannot function in the society. Hence, they cannot be spatio-temporalized in heteronormative society. Since they are disallowed to spatialize and pushed to the margins of society, they have to remain out of sight because of their supposed threat to the general public. Hence, the performance artists that this thesis deal with are trans and they refuse to follow binary genders like man/woman, so their bodies from the perspective of the system cannot function for the benefit of the heteronormative society.

2.3 Queer Temporalities

In *Friendship as a Way of Life*, Foucault suggests that homosexuality is not about one's sexuality, it is about using "one's sexuality henceforth to arrive at a multiplicity of relationships" (Foucault, 1996, p. 135). For Foucault, through multiple interactions and relationships, queers hold a space outside of "institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction" which are for stable, linear and fixed life forms. (Halberstam, 2005, p. 1). Halberstam similarly perceives "queerness as an outcome of strange temporalities, imaginative life schedules, and eccentric economic practices" (Halberstam, 2005, p. 1) and hence he also attaches queerness to Foucault's understanding of alternative way of life (Halberstam, 2005). Foucault also

asserts that “what makes homosexuality disturbing” is that “the homosexual mode of life, much more than the sexual act itself” (Foucault, 1996, 136). Halberstam, drawing on Foucault, argues that intimacies and relationships of queers, the very existence of “subcultural practices, alternative methods of alliance” (Halberstam, 2005, p. 1) and the ties queers establish with space and time as they apply these practices, can be perceived as a threat to heterosexuality. In this context, the performance practices of the artists, which this thesis integrates can be considered as subcultural practices. In this way, via their performative space, Cassils, boychild and Marval can build an alternative space that is not fed by heteronormativity, not only with their sexual orientation or identity, but also through their performance practices, and that can transform and evolve with queer intimacies and contacts. Thus, as the subsequent chapters will collaboratively argue, the genderqueer body-based performance artists and queer body/performance art that this thesis deals with can form a particular queer time and space, and the performances of Cassils, boychild and Marval can become a pathway to queer liberation.

As it is noted above, in his book *Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (2005), Halberstam theorizes the concept of “queer time and space”. He, in this work, offers queers “new life narratives and alternative relations to time and space” by pulling them out of heteronormative temporality created by the reproductive middleclass mindset (Halberstam, 2005, p. 2). The term queer offered by Halberstam is not completely but partly different from the contemporary theory’s usage of the term which is essential to sexual identities like gay and lesbian. What Halberstam prefers to touch upon when saying queer is that the mindset of the community that embraces the practices that are out of hetero-patriarchal normative

models. As Halberstam argues, queer time emerged through AIDS epidemic at the end of twentieth century. Those times for queer communities were like a break point. Queer lives became equivalent to death, and the concept of the future was severely taken away from them. This incident precluded queers from reaching a linear and natural time cycle. However, at the end, this ostracization also created an emergent need of questing alternative ways of spatio-temporalization for queers (Halberstam, 2005). To support this argument, Halberstam asserts that “yet queer time, even as it emerges from the AIDS crisis, is not only about compression and annihilation; it is also about the potentiality of a life unscripted by the conventions of family, inheritance, and child rearing” (Halberstam, 2005, p. 2). Thus, he propounds subcultural practices as rehearsal of the formation alternative imagined queer spatio-temporalities because this temporal state reclaimed by queers has the potential of disturbing “conventional accounts of youth culture, adulthood and maturity” (Halberstam, 2005, p. 2). The power of subcultural production lies in its potential to promise its participants a future away from a “natural” cycle of “birth, marriage, reproduction and death” (Halberstam, 2005, p. 2), hence a heteronormative linear life cycle. Thus, queer spatio-temporalities can be regarded as an intervention to heteronormative understanding of time and space. Within this context, the next chapters will evaluate the performative spaces of the chosen artists as a queer temporal space that suspends heteronormative rampant lifestyle.

Muñoz, in his book, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (2009), criticizes queer studies’ anti-relational approach to time and space. To explain the anti-relational turn of queer studies, Muñoz exemplifies Leo Bersani’s book *Homos*

(1995) which he sees as one of the milestones of anti-relational and anti-social thesis of queer theory. In *Homos*, Bersani argues:

Gay desire is a revolutionary inaptitude for heteroized sociality. This of course means sociality as we know it, and the most politically disruptive aspect of the homo-ness I will be exploring in gay desire is a redefinition of sociality so radical that it may appear to require a provisional withdrawal from relationality itself (Bersani, 1995, p. 7).

Bersani posits that there is something innately anti-social about being gay, about homo-ness. In a chapter *The Gay Outlaw*, he asks “should a homosexual be a good citizen?” (Bersani, 1995, p. 113) and he believes that any effort to find a place in society is an inapt affirmative effort. Queers should not necessarily be “good parents, good soldiers, good priests” (Bersani, 1995, p. 113). In other words, queers should not follow heteronormative steps to live a pseudo happy life. Since heteronormative society and its mindset are apt to ostracize alternative life forms such as queer lives, and since queers have to remain out of sight because of their supposed threat to the general public, for Bersani, what queers should do are to embrace anti-social homo-ness and negativity rather than adjusting themselves to be accepted. Similarly, before theorizing queer futurity, Muñoz touches upon Edelman’s book *No Future: Queer Theory and Death Drive* (2004) in which he associates queer theory to death drive and posits child-oriented future as the center of heterosexuality since the goal is to reproduce and maintain the lineage. According to Edelman’s approach, future is equal to the figure of child and in this “reproductive futurism” (Edelman, 2004, p. 3), queerness and future cannot align with each other. Instead, he locates queerness as against the notion of futurism. He argues that “the queer comes to figure the bar to every realization of futurity, the resistance, internal to the social, to every social structure and form” (Edelman, 2004, p. 4). That is why he invites queers not to fight for the future. Queers, again as Bersani suggests, should take this inherent negativity

and they should refuse both hope and the future (Monaghan, 2016, p. 15). As an answer to this negativity that exists in queer studies, Muñoz introduces his concept of utopia and offers a spatio-temporal future-oriented setting in which queers can inhabit.

Muñoz's understanding of utopia comes from Ernest Bloch's utopianism. Muñoz refers to Bloch's philosophical work *The Principle of Hope* (1995). As Muñoz refers to, Bloch speaks of a sharp distinction between "abstract utopias" and "concrete utopias" (Muñoz, 2009, p. 3). According to him, abstract utopias carries "banal optimism" in essence, but concrete utopias "are the hopes of a collective, an emergent group, or even the solidarity oddball who is the one who dreams for many" (Muñoz, 2009, p. 3). Concrete utopias can be evaluated as "educated hope" (Muñoz, 2009, p. 3). Bloch, in a lecture under the title of "Can Hope Be Disappointed?" asserts that "not only hope's affect (with its pendant, fear) but even more so, hope's methodology (with its pendant, memory) dwells in the region of not-yet, a place where entrance and, above all, final content are marked by an enduring indeterminacy" (Bloch, 1998, p. 341). This condition of indeterminacy as it is also described by Giorgio Agamben (1999) carries potentiality and this potentiality is future-oriented or anticipatory in Muñoz's word. Unlike the anti-relational queer theorists who have squeezed queerness to "the quagmire of present", Muñoz associates queerness with the idea of being forward-looking (Muñoz, 2009, p. 1).

In *Cruising Utopia: Then and There of Queer Futurity* (2009), Muñoz refers to a panel he attended called "The Anti-Social Thesis in Queer Theory" (2006). In this panel, he argues that anti-relational queer theory, fed from negativity, should be

replaced with the concept of queer utopianism, but he has been criticized for not presenting a new concept. Muñoz accepts that it is nothing new about utopianism. Utopia is an already established concept and his aim is not to reach any “notion of extremity, righteousness, or affirmation of newness” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 10). His utopianism is like a response to this anti-relational and anti-social thesis of queer theory in which queers are rendered invisible and lonely in “a politics of here and now” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 10). Muñoz believes that the anti-relational mindset promotes “romance of singularity and negativity” rather than reinforcing “the romance of community” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 10). For Muñoz, escaping from relationality somehow hampers the possibility of emergence of differences. However, differences have the potential of opening up new alternative spaces and that is why he contends that “queerness is always in the horizon” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 11). Muñoz opens his book by arguing that “queerness is not yet here. Queerness is an ideality. Put another way, we are not yet queer. We may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of horizon imbued with potentiality” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 1). For Muñoz, “here and now” is like a prison for queers and queers should embrace “then and there”. Thus, his notion of queerness is like a rejection of “here and now and an insistence on potentiality of concrete possibility of another world” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 1).

Muñoz's also in his book *Disidentification: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (1999) offers theory of disidentification. Muñoz discovers how minorities find a space and negotiate identity in a normative majoritarian world which aims to reject the formation of non-normative identities. He argues that disidentification can be apprehended as “survival strategies the minority subject practices in order to

negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere that continuously elides and punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship” (Muñoz, 1999, p. 4). He aims to reclaim minority subjects who are being erased by normative majoritarian society. He suggests that in order to form an identity, one does not have to be a part of majority and does not have to follow the norms. By his own words:

Disidentification is about recycling and rethinking encoded meaning. The process of disidentification scrambles and reconstructs the encoded message of a cultural text in a fashion that both exposes the encoded message’s universalizing and exclusionary machinations and recruits its workings to account for, include, and empower minority identities and identifications. Thus, disidentification is a step further than cracking open the code of the majority; it proceeds to use this code as raw material for representing a disempowered politics or positionality that has been rendered unthinkable by the dominant culture (Muñoz, 1999, p. 31).

Thus, disidentification is presented by Muñoz to queer individuals in order to make them claim public spaces which are phobic and majoritarian and transforms those spaces via spoiling the codes of majoritarian culture. As minoritarian subjects, the artists and their works presented in this thesis will also be discussed by means of disrupting the functioning of the system using its own codes.

2.4 Queer Body/Performance Art

Performance art in its nature has the potential of dismantling established conventions in art and queer theory in its nature has the capacity of rejecting stable ways of being by means of identity, gender and sexuality. Considering performance art as a spatial and temporal practice, it can be argued that it is possible to evaluate it within the notion of queer time and space. In the queer time and space which performance art can harbor audiences and performers have the opportunity to re-establish standards or complicate and interrupt normative formations. Gay McAuley contends:

The physical places of performance as they exist in the wider social space of the community, the space of interaction between performers and spectators, the energized space of the stage when it is occupied and rendered meaningful by the presence of the performers, the organization of stage and offstage, the fictional places that are represented or evoked within or in relation to all these physical areas, and interacting with all of them, the space of verbal reference (McAuley, 1999, p. 7).

As McAuley set forth, both the performer and audiences have the ability of “inhabit and mediate space” in an idiosyncratic way (Davies, 2012, p. 26). Performance art as a temporal space has a subversive capacity not only in theatrical norms, but also in the formation of subject and power. Cristyn Davies argues that “performance art, like queer theory, is frequently deconstruct and denaturalize assumed allegiances between bodies and identities, spaces and practices, and norms and subjectivities” (Davies, 2012, p. 25). In this context, it can be asserted that spatio-temporally, performance art has a great impact on queer subjectivities.

Barbara Adam, in her book *Timewatch* argues that “market economy depends on a standardized, decontextualized, commodified time” (Adam, 1995, p. 9). As a result, “the institutional structures and practices of Western-style education work to socialize, habituate and train” (Adam, 1995, p. 7) youth to appraise clock-time by disregarding alternative times. For Adam, the concept of time symbolizes “constraint, discipline, control and structure” (Adam, 1995, p. 6). She contends that clock-time is finite, and it excludes becoming. The concept that Adam calls clock-time can be considered in conjunction with Freeman’s concept of chrononormativity, as it supports natural normative and standardized temporality. If this view of Adam is read through the gender lens, it would not be wrong to say that this concept, which

Adam referred to as clock-time, which does not include alternative temporalization, is an output of heteronormativity. Freeman claims that any formation of queer time can suspend chrononormativity or in Adam's word, clock-time. Freeman calls this process anachronism. Considering anachronistic time frame offered by Freeman, the following chapters will claim that performances of selected artists can disrupt chronological order of time because their performative spaces are terrains that allow continuous transformation: a process of becoming. As it will be further analyzed, their performances have no path to a certain beginning, a linear process of development and an end, just like the trans body that is explored in various ways in these performances. Thus, their performances remain in a flow and generate their own anachronistic temporal developments.

This anachronistic temporal approach can also be proceeded spatially in the name of anarchitecture. Anarchitecture is a concept offered by Halberstam in *Unbuilding Gender: Trans* Anarchitectures In and Beyond the Work of Gordon Matta-Clark* (2018). In this article, Halberstam argues that in the 20th and 21st centuries, the trans body should be handled outside the concept of wrong body. Transgender should now be seen beyond the meaning of switching from one gender to another. He alleges that "trans* embodiment, rather, is the visual confirmation that all bodies are uncomfortable and wrong-ish, situated as they are within confining grammars of sense and security" (Halberstam, 2018). But the wrongness that Halberstam mentioned here is not discussed under the name of trans experience that trans individuals feel themselves "out of place and time", on the contrary, he prefers this term "to dismantle the system that metes out rightness and wrongness according to the dictates of various social orders" (Halberstam, 2018). Based on this perspective,

Halberstam resembles the construction process of trans bodies to architecture. It compares architecture's stable, fixed and holistic approach to the bodies imagined by heteropatriarchy and presents anarchitecture as a projection of non-normative trans bodies. For Halberstam, anarchitectural bodies unbuild the "frames of representation" since those bodies resist to be completed. They are the product of abject "creative destruction" and "[engage] in violent, destructive, and rigorous" unmaking processes. Cassils, boychild and Marval A Rex apply anarchitectural interventions to their bodies and performative spaces mostly in the form of Donna Haraway's (2016) cyborg to destroy the fixity of normative body, to eliminate the wholeness of gendered embodiment, to reveal the non-normative monster residing in their bodies and to go beyond even the limits of embodied body. All those possibilities will be examined in detail in the subsequent analytical chapters.

The incomprehensible monstrous figure that is imagined by Cassils, boychild and Marval A Rex will also be approached through the lens of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari because their perspective provide alternative perspective on bodies based on non-hierarchical becomings which embraces the couplings of different multiplicities instead of a molar hegemonic stable identity. In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari argue that "multiplicities are defined by the outside: by the abstract line, the line of flight or deterritorialization according to which they change in nature and connect with other multiplicities" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 9). Collectively the next chapters will propound that through their performative works, genderqueer performance artists Cassils, boychild and Marval A Rex put their bodies into a never ending process of change or becoming in order to remain always in formation without aiming to reach any final point. To support this

process-oriented change and its queer potential, Ellen McCallum and Mikko Tuhkanen, in their book *Queer Times, Queer Becomings*, perceive queerness “not as an identity or substantive mode of being but as a way of becoming” (McCallum & Tuhkanen, 2011, p. 8). Through the process of becoming, it will be shown how Cassils, boychild and Marval A Rex form a Deleuzian assemblage together with their unfinished bodies and destructive performative spaces. Thus, these concepts of becoming and assemblage will be useful and/or relevant to discuss how the selected artists constantly transform their identities, bodies and performative spaces in order to spoil the formation of fixed hegemonic notion conceptually.

Performance art can be a non-heteronormative world-making process for queers. This world-making project has the potential of destabilizing the forms of “intimacy, coupling and kinship” that hegemonic heterosexuality vulgarizes by reducing them to reproductive futurity in the name of “rightness and normalcy” (Berlant & Warner, 1998, p. 554). Rightness and normalcy are installed in heteronormativity.

Heteronormativity is not just a phobia against LGBTQ+ individuals, “it is produced in every aspect of the forms and arrangements of social life: nationality, the state, and the law; commerce; medicine; and education; [...] and affects of narrativity, romance, and other protected spaces of culture” (Berlant & Warner, 1998, p. 554-555). Counterpublicly, Berlant and Warner define queer world as “a space of entrances, exists, unsystematized lines of acquaintance, projected horizons, typifying examples, alternate routes, blockages, incommensurate geographies” (Berlant & Warner, 1998, p. 558). Halberstam argues that “queer space refers to the place-making practices within postmodernism in which queer people engage and it also describes the new understandings of space enabled by the production of queer

counterpublics” (Halberstam, 2005, p. 6). Similarly, Muñoz deals with this counterpublic production and world-making project specifically in queer performance art specifically in the part “Latina Performance and Queer Worldmaking”. In this section, he argues that performance can be conceived as an example of worldmaking practice for minoritarians. He asserts that “minoritarian performance labors to make worlds - worlds of ideological potentiality that alter the present and map out a future” (Muñoz, 1999, p. 195) He sees performance art which embrace minoritarian queer subjects as transformative since it has the potential of deconstructing and reshaping the reality (Muñoz, 1999, p. 196). The logic of worldmaking process for Muñoz comes from the concept of disidentification. Minoritarians use the element of majoritarian subjects “as raw material to make a new world” (Muñoz, 1999, p. 196). All three artists selected in this thesis use their performative spaces as world-making practice. The queer worlds, each artist builds through different ideologies and aesthetics, will be discussed in detail in the upcoming chapters.

Performance art is utopian. Following the mindset that argues the time frame we belong to is a heteronormative one and queer individuals cannot exist in this time, it can be suggested that performance art creates a queer space that is utopian and anticipatory and free from heteronormative temporality and spatiality in which queer individuals can exist. The art of performance does not follow an established narrative, the interaction between the audience and the performer ensures the improvement of performance. Muñoz opens the part “Queers, Punks, and the Utopian Performative” with a question “How does one stage utopia?” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 97) and discusses how one enact or perform a utopia. Utopia for Muñoz is “a

horizon of possibility” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 97). He contemplates utopia “as flux, a temporal disorganization, as a moment when the here and the now is transcended by a then and a there” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 97). Without a utopia, Muñoz argues, minoritarians are rendered hopeless because they cannot get into the cycle of heteronormative life which centers on reproductive future. As a result, queer individuals are classified as individuals who have failed to complete their life cycle based on heteronormative temporality. Based on this idea, Muñoz refers to families with queer children and likens their efforts to transform their children’s orientation into a stage production using “savage pseudoscience, coercive religion, sometimes masquerading as psychology” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 98). Muñoz associates this effort on producing a stage to protect children with the idea of “queerness as a stage” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 98). He considers “the idea of queerness as a stage in a way that rescues that the term from delusional parents and others who attempt to manage and contain the potentiality that is queer youth”, “queer wild child of punk” who rejects to be stabilized (Muñoz, 2009, p. 98). Cassils, boychild and Marval A Rex perform queerness in their stages and provide a utopian spatial and temporal organization. This utopian queerness, each of them present in different ways, will be examined in the following chapters.

The potentiality Muñoz sees in performance is aligned with Miranda Joséph’s ideas on performance which she argues in the book *Against the Romance of Community* (2002). Muñoz explains Joséph’s understanding of potentiality in performance by asserting that performance art carries “a potentiality that is transmitted to the audiences and witnesses [...] performance is the ability to generate a mobility of knowing and recognition among audiences and groups that facilitates modes of

belonging, especially minoritarian belonging” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 98). This perspective can be a pathway to utopian performance which abounds with potentiality. To support his argument on the anticipatory quality of potentiality, he refers to a distinction made by Aristotle. Aristotle distinguishes possibility from potentiality. Possibilities can only exist within present and are “linked to presence” but potentialities “have a temporality that is not in the present but, more nearly, in the horizon, which we can understand as futurity” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 99). This “not yet” potentiality of queer futurity and its indeterminacy in performance as Muñoz explains is inspired by Agamben’s notion of “means without an end” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 100). Muñoz’s understanding of utopian performance politics is derived from a notion of trying not to reach anywhere, not to seek totality, “it is a perpetual becoming” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 100). His mode of performance politics “reminds us that there is something missing, that the present and presence (and its opposite number, absence) is not enough” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 100). Muñoz’s idea that performative spaces creates a sense of belonging, especially for minoritarian subjects, and the potentiality emerging in those spaces to generate a utopian hope, will be particularly discussed through the use of boychild’s underground nightlife spaces as a transformative temporal and spatial force in the third chapter.

Jill Dolan, in her book *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at Theatre* (2008), posits performance and politics as an intertwined subject and emphasizes the transformative potential of live performance. She argues that “live performance provides a place where people come together, embodied and passionate, to share experiences of meaning making and imagination that can describe or capture fleeting intimations of a better world” (Dolan, 2008, p. 2). As the previous theoreticians this

chapter issue, Dolan also sees performance as a meaning-making process in which anticipatory practices are embedded. Performance, for Dolan, has the potential of providing a “hope for our collective future” (Dolan, 2008, p. 4). In her essay, “The Time of Architecture” (2002), Elizabeth Grosz evaluates the concept of utopia as timeless and it can be argued that this timelessness opens up a temporality that has not a beginning or an end. It can signify a never-ending process, a liminality. To support this idea, Victor Turner, in his book *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*, contends that “social world is a world in becoming, not a world in being” (Turner, 1974, p. 24). Utopian performances, for Dolan, are also a social world that can never be considered in the concept of being because utopian performances are “not stabilized by its own finished perfection, not coercive in its contained, self-reliant, self-determined system, but a utopia always in process” (Dolan, 2008, p. 6). Dolan’s utopia in performance rejects any attempt “to find representation of a better world; the word utopia means, literally, “no place” (Dolan, 2008, p. 7). Utopian performance cannot be reduced to “any fixed, static image or structure” (Dolan, 2008, p. 7) because it “would be much too finite and exclusionary for the soaring sense of hope, possibility, and desire” (Dolan, 2008, p. 7). Dolan’s utopias can be perceived “as doings, as never finished gestures towards a potentially better future” (Dolan, 2008, p. 7). Concordantly, as Dolan implies “utopia is always a metaphor, always a wish, a desire, a no-place” but queer body/performance art “is a doing” and “hope adheres”, “communitas happens”, “the not-yet-conscious is glimpsed and felt and strained toward” (Turner, 1974, p. 24) in utopian queer body/performance art. Hence, as Dolan suggests, the three artists whose performances will be examined in this thesis use performance art for a political purpose. Their performative spaces have a transformative power to desire a

future away from the stability heteronormativity. Through the transformative power of performance art, their peculiar practices of reaching utopian queer time and space where hope is felt; doing is emphasized instead of being; and representation is rejected, will be examined in detail in the analysis chapters.

2.5 Conclusion

Overall, the purpose of this chapter was to form the basis of the concept of queer time and space and examine how this spatio-temporality functions in performance art. This chapter was presented to examine the concepts of time and space through queer body/performance art which is a field full of transformative resistive potential. The concepts discussed in this chapter were presented as a guide in order to comprehend each artist's singular non-normative time and space formation practices in the subsequent chapters. The next chapter will examine Cassils, their body and performances as a space of indeterminacy.

CHAPTER III

BODY AS A SOCIAL SCULPTURE: TRANSGENDERISM BEYOND PASSING

“Transition is always a relief. Destination means death to me. If I could figure out a way to remain forever in transition, in the disconnected and unfamiliar, I could remain in a state of perpetual freedom.”

—David Wojnarowicz, *Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration*

3.1 Introduction

“I perform trans not as something about a crossing from one sex to another but as a continual becoming, a process-oriented way of being that works in a space of indeterminacy, spasm and slipperiness” (Bashing Binaries, 2017) says Cassils to explain that they² perceive their body as a medium in their performance art pieces. Cassils contends that there is a misconception about being a transgender throughout the histories. For them, transgender people to be acknowledged as trans conventionally, have to take hormones or undergo a gender reassignment surgery. Being a trans is perceived as the fact that someone has to adopt a binary gender but Cassils rejects the compulsion of living as a man or woman. What Cassils is trying to do with their art and body is to dismantle any fixed gender categories implemented

² Cassils prefers nonbinary they/them/their pronouns.

on human body. Halberstam defines the term “trans” as not a fixed but rather, for him, “the term trans* puts pressure on all modes of gendered embodiment and refuses to choose between the identitarian and the contingent forms of trans identity” (Halberstam, 2018, xiii). Thus, Cassils’s notion of a body matches with Halberstam’s definition. Cassils sees bodies as “sculptures formed by society’s expectations” and says “my body is my medium” (Frizzell, 2013). They approach their body as a social sculpture and put the body in constant transformation. Cassils emphasizes fluidity predominantly in their performances. They transform their body, time and space, and disrupt normative linear time via creating a queer spatio-temporal state.

In light of Cassils’ approach to body, firstly, this chapter discusses how transgender experience throughout the history is reduced to sexual organs, femininity and masculinity, in order to lay the groundwork on the concept of trans*, rejecting a binary logic and constantly transforming, as Cassils embraces. After discussing the discriminatory transgender experience established over binary sex and genitals throughout history, this chapter proceeds to introduce visual artist Cassils who is working in live performance, film, sound, sculpture and photography and their approach to body and art. This part aims to reflect Cassils’ notion of body as a sculpture by touching briefly upon their performances such as *Cuts: A Traditional Sculpture*³ (2011-2013), *Fast Twitch//Slow Twitch*⁴ (2011), *Pissed*⁵ (2017), *Tiresias*⁶ (2011) and *Hard Times*⁷ (2010). Then, the chapter continues with the analyses of one

³ Cassils: Artwork: Cuts. (2019). Cassils.Net. <https://www.cassils.net/cassils-artwork-cuts>

⁴ CUTS: A TRADITIONAL SCULPTURE. (2011, September 25). [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZFumYzWYGA&feature=emb_logo

⁵ This Trans Artist Collected 200 Gallons Of Urine To Protest Trump (HBO). (2017, October 18). [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-TT7GoJ2iw&feature=emb_logo

⁶ Terasias. (2010, November 14). [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vTjLpSITiMw>

⁷ Hard_Times.mov. (2011, December 15). [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TtHqkwZ2h5s>

of their exceptional performance *Becoming an Image*⁸ (2012) in conjunction with its component installation project *Ghost*⁹ (2013) in detail to argue that Cassils's art allows spectator to imagine a queer time and place that has no relation to heteronormative spatio-temporality.

3.2 Transgenderism: The Wrong Body

Transgender people¹⁰ have always existed and they were not the subject of violence and oppression before in early history. Leslie Feinberg in "Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come" (2006) states that one of the most noticeable examples of the transgender people living in history was "berdache" people whom they were named by the colonialist. They were Native Americans living in a communal society. Berdache people were honored in society. They were considered as leaders, they were at the front lines in the war, and they were invited to council so that a decision could be made taking into account their recommendations. Besides, there were ancient European societies that were worshiping transsexual deities, shamans and religious representatives (Feinberg, 2006). For instance, in Egyptian culture, the sculpture of Queen Hatshepsut is "a sacred symbol of power and wisdom" (Feinberg, 2006, p. 208). In Indian folklore, Ardhanarishvara is an androgynous figure displaying the composition of Hindu God Shiva and Parvathi. Besides, Hermaphroditus is known as a half male half female child of Aphrodite and Hermes. There are too many examples to be given in this context. The reason why I

⁸ *Becoming An Image*. (2013, February 13). [Video]. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TzM8GTL2WGo>

⁹ Cassils: Artwork: *Becoming an Image*. (2019). Cassils.Net. <https://www.cassils.net/cassils-artwork-becoming-an-image>

¹⁰ I use this term as an umbrella term for people who did not spend their life-time physically and socially regarding their biological gender. This term can include transsexual, cross-dressed, cross-gendered or transgender women and men which is drawn from Leslie Feinberg's usage of the term in *Transgender Liberation* (2006).

want to emphasize ancient history of transgenderism is that Cassils also touches upon transgender myths in their performances as well.

Christianity or the concept of religion in general, private ownership, class system, nuclear family etc. such concepts have pushed society to separation over gender throughout history regarding what people had and did not (Feinberg, 2006).

Patriarchal family system began to be the heart of the concept of society. Men gained privilege and this brought oppression to women. In a patriarchal order limiting

women's freedom and equal participation to economy, it has been observed that women have had to cross-dress in various societies and business lines, military etc.

“[C]apitalism forced many thousands of women who weren't transgendered to pass as men in order to escape the economic and social inequities of their oppression”

(Feinberg, 2006, p. 216). Those women were biologically women but cross-dressed as male soldiers, writers, singers, painters to get the voice they need in public spaces.

Passing as man for those women became pseudo forced freedom and was popular

especially in 17th and 18th centuries. For instance, Feinberg tells the story of a jazz

musician Billy Tipton. Billy Tipton spent her entire life in disguise of a man for 74

years. No one ever discovered that she was a “woman” until she died. The

controversy surrounding Billy was that he gave up his femininity in order to take part

in the male-dominated music industry (Feinberg, 2006, p. 207). Thus, the passing

state that those women have to cope with and the passing situation in which the

transgender individuals are obliged in patriarchal societies that are fed by binary

genderism channels with each other.

In a documentary about Jacques Derrida (2002), he is asked what he would have wanted to see if he had watched a documentary about Martin Heidegger, Immanuel Kant, or Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Derrida answers this question as he would love to see them talking about their sex life. I can understand the humor behind this response but still this response of Derrida makes me think about Foucault's perceptions on sexuality and power. The intent of Foucault's concept of productive power is like a critical analysis of the effects of medical treatments and diagnoses. He denies the concept of "repressive hypothesis" when he overviews the history of sexuality (Foucault, 1978, p. 10). According to him, there is no correlation between repression and sexuality. On the contrary, the history of sex has progressed through people's desire to talk about sex. As Derrida wishing to learn about those philosophers' sexual life, "sexuality becomes the locus of the "true self" –to know the self is to know one's sex, sexuality, and desire" (Spade, 2006, p. 318). It is not a phenomenon that should not be talked about, but it turns into a problem that medicine, psychology and law should regulate and fix. Foucault explains that addressing this issue is the practice of learning about the origin of sex and desires (Foucault, 1978). Hence, he is concerned about "how sex is put into discourse. His model of power as productive requires that power does not just say 'no' and enslave free subjects, but rather produces knowledge, categories and identities that manage and regulate behavior" (Spade, 2006, p. 318). As an example of his mindset in general, he claims that medical practitioners who specialize in sexuality were not describing a model that pre-exists, but they were simply inventing homosexuality (Foucault, 1978). On the occasion of this invention, medicine has established a diagnosis and then its ultimate goal is to treat it. Additionally, according to Foucault, this invented problem now turns into a problem not only of medicine, but of many

different control mechanisms such as psychiatry, education etc. From this point, these institutions discipline people, their sexual and social behaviors by creating “norms”. Alan Hunt and Gary Wickham in *Foucault and Law: Towards a Sociology of Law as Governance* argues “with ‘standards,’ that the subject of a discipline comes to internalise or manifest in behaviour, for example standards of tidiness, punctuality, respectfulness, etc” and “these standards of proper conduct put into place a mode of regulation characterised by interventions designed to correct deviations and to secure compliance and conformity” (Alan & Gary, 2006, p. 49). Thus, it can be argued that transgenderism, like invented homosexuality, is, in this context, eligible to fall into an invented category of diseases that institutions and many other micro mechanisms are trying to fix to bring “abnormal” bodies into compliance with the norms.

Sandy Stone in “The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto” (2006) approaches transgenderism as a genre and argues that throughout the history of the visibility of transsexuals, trans people had to choose a binary gender, had to pass from one gender to another in order to be accepted. Stone contends that “passing means to live successfully in the gender of choice, to be accepted as a ‘natural’ member of that gender” (Stone, 2006, p. 231). Riki Anne Wilchins in “What Does It Cost to Tell the Truth?” states that “gender system tends to enforce monolithic meanings” (Wilchins, 2006, p. 551). In this phallogentric system, transsexuality has been reduced to the genitals by the society and medicine and even by trans individuals themselves to fulfill cultural assumptions, norms and conditions. As Bernice L. Hausman in *Changing Sex: Transsexualism, Technology, and the Idea of Gender* contends “transsexuals must seek and obtain medical treatment in order to be recognized as transsexuals. Their subject position depends upon a necessary relation

to the medical establishment and its discourse” (Hausman, 1995, p. 3). Throughout the evolution of the genre of transsexuality, its discourse constantly revolves around the concept of –wrong body–. This oppressive discourse of wrong body was reinforced by medical practitioners and institutions as well. Judith Shapiro contends that in order to be a –real– man or woman, one has to have the –right– genitals because health system is ruled by phallogentric binary system and the bodies are authorized under the perception of totalization and fixation. In this case, although medical science has improved trans people’s lives socially, “medical practitioners and institutions have the social power to determine what is considered sick or healthy, normal or pathological, sane or insane– and thus, often, to transform potentially neutral forms of human difference into unjust and oppressive social hierarchies” (Stryker, 2008, p. 36). As Susan Stryker explains, representatives of medical sciences have the power of define and judge people and their bodies. J. R. Latham (2017) examines the gender reassignment surgeries and processes of trans males’ and drawing on Latham, Halberstam argues that “all too often medical frameworks produce rather than treat, diagnose rather than observe, and fix rather than care for transgender bodies” (Halberstam, 2018, p. 32). The problem with this mindset relies on the fact that this mindset prioritizes what is ill instead of constructing “what is ‘healthy’” (Spade, 2006, p. 319).

Riki Ann Wilchins, in “What Does It Cost to Tell the Truth?”, alleges that “the purpose of a gender regime is to regulate these meanings and to punish those who transgress them” (Wilchins, 2006, p. 549) and tells the alienation process of a friend. Wilchins tells:

She will wake one day to find herself lost within the unfamiliar landscape of her own body, like a nomad in some strange and foreign desert, surrounded

by unknown landmarks and inhabited by those whose alien features, and distant ways, she can no longer recognize” (Wilchins, 2006, p. 549).

Through the agency of the restrictive and exclusionary language and images produced by gendered system, which draws sharp lines and attributes limited normative definitions to the bodies, eventually Wilchins’ friend became alienated to the body in which she has resided. Her body becomes “a symptom of self-hatred, and that it should be read as evidence of the internalization and perpetuation of patriarchal abuse in the form of self-mutilation” (Sullivan, 2006, p. 557). She, in this case, becomes the subject of double exclusion since both she could not find a place in society and her body. Viviane K. Namaste uses the term “erasure” for this exclusionary process. Namaste argues that she uses:

The term ‘erasure’ to designate a conceptualization of gender that excludes the bodies and experiences of transsexual and transgendered people, and that informs the taken-for-granted work of institutions. ‘Erasure’ refers to the conceptual and institutional relations through which transsexual and transgendered individuals disappear from view (Namaste, 2006, p. 586).

Based on Namaste’s argument, it would not be wrong to say that the existence of trans individuals is expressed through the term erasure, in fact, the existence of trans individuals is absent. The passing issue discussed above is also infused as a supplementary practice that reinforces this erasure. All control mechanisms function to fix the non-normative bodies in some way, in other words, “erase” them for the system to work. Hence, after all, as Wilchin’s friend, unable to spatio-temporalized, lost, erased and traumatized bodies left.

3.3 Cassils’ Body as a Social Sculpture

Cassils moves the term transgender away from its passing status and offers the audience an alternative trans experience through their body and art. They assert “I aim to make images that bash through binaries and the notion that in order to be

officially transgender, you have to have surgery or take hormones” (“Bashing Binaries”, 2017). As Cassils emphasizes, they resist the idea of being obliged to “live as a man or as a woman” (Frizzell, 2013). In an interview with *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Cassils tell the story of their childhood memory on their illness. They say: I had undiagnosed gall bladder disease. The doctors didn’t find it; moreover, I was told it was psychosomatic. For several years I was vomiting profusely daily. Very ill, it stunted my growth. Once my bile ducts ruptured and the whites of my eyes turned green, they opened me up and I was literally decomposing inside. I had to have two surgeries which led to bleeding ulcers, which almost bled out. I had a near-death experience at age 14. That made me aware of my mortality [and] one’s wellbeing and not only that, one’s agency in the body. I was, unfortunately, a victim to the dismissive sexism of doctors’ thinking, ‘This is just a young, hysterical teenage girl’ (Dow, 2019).

Barbara Adam, in her book *Timewatch: A Social Analysis of Time*, asserts that “clock time is finite” and this time pattern “excludes becoming” (Adam, 1995, p. 52). Adam conceptualizes clock time by arguing that “[c]lock time, the organizational time-frame and structure of industrial production, is governed by the non-temporal principle of time, a time that tracks and measures motion but is indifferent to change” (Adam, 1995, p. 52). This clock time in western societies creates a consciousness relying on time and provide terms such as “time-efficiency, time-budgeting, time-management” (Adam, 1995, p. 52). In one point, Adam associates this conceptualization of time with respect to well-being and discusses illnesses and their relation to this time. Health, for Adam, cannot be explain with “the harmonious orchestration of the rhythms of our biological and social being but also with

reference to how we relate to the times of the world around us, our identity, and the past, present, and future” (Adam, 1995, p. 53). Thus, she emphasizes that the clock-time concept, when handled with diseases, instills a sense of rush in time since “the pervasive feeling of time running out, with the speeded-up pace of living, and with the pressure of getting things done in time” (Adam, 1995, p. 52) depending on death drive. In this context, Cassils’ childhood body, which is judged by doctors, as well as their trans body (in the context of perceiving transexuality as a disease, pathologizing trans individuals and as a result, associating this diseased body with hatred and death, transgender people may feel like time is running out) can be read as a projection of finite clock time which excludes becoming.

In light of this trauma in childhood, Cassils has been pondering over the domination of the body and self-construction of the body since their childhood. They started to interest in constructing their own body and this incident led them to actualize their career as a bodybuilder. Then, Cassils combined their art career with their personal training career. The aim of creating this synthesis is both to queer sport sciences and art. They even changed their personal statement from “artist and body builder” to “implementing rigorous physical training practices and queering their knowledge of kinesiology and sports science, they formally manipulate the body into shapes that defy expectations” (Keplitzky, 2015). Cassils criticizes bodybuilding itself to be a practice that evolves over genders and argues that different programs are prepared by trainers for women and men in the gym, because there are social expectations that shape how women and men should look physiologically. They also emphasize that “if you train for strength and size there is no way in which the training differs. So it is about queering sports science and adapting these methods of bodybuilding towards

my own end of self-transformation” (Keplitzky, 2015). With this approach to bodybuilding, Cassils lets us imagine a body away from being gendered space as they see and shape their body as a self-constructive architectural structure. Thus, based on bodybuilding practice and body perception, they approach the notion of body as a sculpture in most of their performances and actualize their performances by focusing on this sculptural form. As it is discussed later in this chapter, they mostly make a reference to a hyper-masculine figure in Greek mythology to dismantle, build/unbuild their body via practicing bodybuilding in durational performances to resist the idea of gender fixation, reduce their body into abstract structure such as glass bottle, clay block and sound system to abolish representation, use stable clay block to transform it into an undetermined “anarchitectural” structure. Frederic Jameson in *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1992) unintentionally proposes a queer mindset for global capitalism via postmodern architecture. For Jameson, postmodern architecture forms a “mutation in built space itself” and this mutation “stands as something like an imperative to grow new organs, to expand our sensorium and our body to some new, as yet unimaginable, perhaps ultimately impossible, dimensions” (Jameson, 1992, p. 7). Henceforth, since Cassils’ formulates their own body with new “organs” and non-normative components, it can be concluded that inspired from Jameson’s view of postmodern architecture, Cassils’ sculpted body forms can be utopian and imaginative architectural queer constructions.

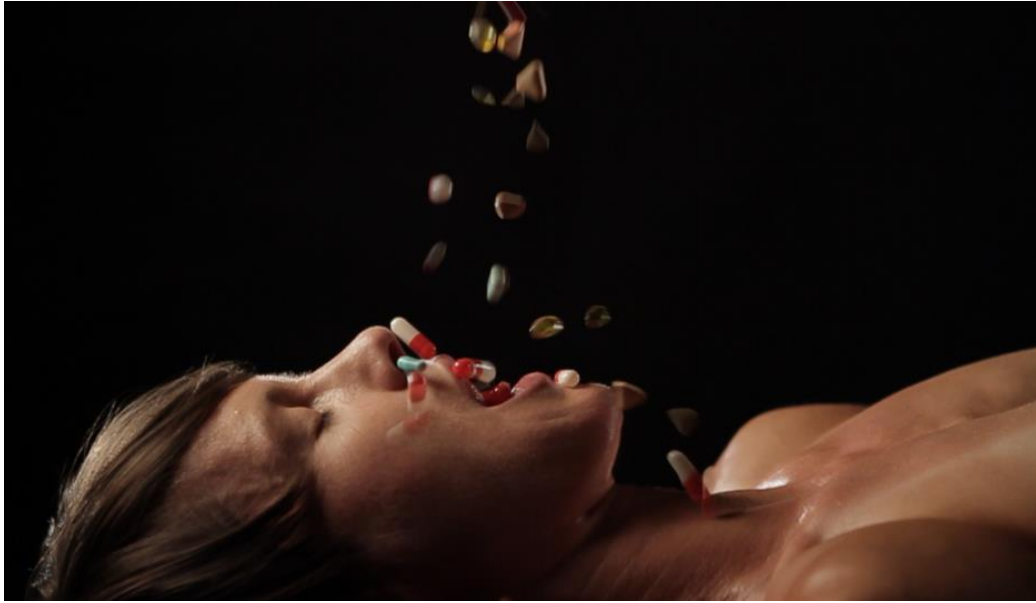


Figure 1 Fast Twitch//Slow Twitch, component video art for Cuts: A Traditional Sculpture

Cassils' motivation in all their performances is that they use the unlimited potential of the body, turning it into a playground where they take it away from gender norms. For instance, *Cuts: A Traditional Sculpture*, is a reinterpretation of Eleanor Antin's durational piece *Carving: A Traditional Sculpture* (1972). In their performance, Cassils uses "their mastery of bodybuilding and nutrition to gain 23 pounds of muscle over 23 weeks" (Artwork: Cuts). Unlike Antin who carves her body by losing weight and documenting it to criticize problematic sides of visual culture such as patriarchal gaze directed at women, femininity and ideal beauty, Cassils' performance projects their "transformation into a traditionally masculine muscular form" (Artwork: Cuts) as a response to the hyper-masculine idealism that is found in Greek Sculptures. In this performance, Cassils mocks the concepts created by the mainstream bodybuilding, under the influence of capitalism, such as the self-discipline, responsibility and having a more important body. E. Hella Tsaconas in

“Bad math: Calculating Bodily Capacity in Cassils’s Cuts: A Traditional Sculpture”

contends:

Within athletic performance, bodily capacity becomes meaningful through systems of measure: athletic formalism functions biopolitically in its attempt to contain the anxiety produced by the threat of radically unknowable raw physical capacity, subsuming the body’s movements into predetermined categories of legibility that are in turn mediated and consumed as spectacle (Tsaconas, 2016, p. 201).

Cassils does not set a limit for themselves in this performance, they do not set an end goal. They do not try to reach from one point to another, thereby developing a non-teleological system. What Cassils aims for in this performance is that where to go when you use the body at its maximum capacity (Tsaconas, 2016). Therefore, Cassils does not provide the viewer with a linear visual narrative that will create a before-after effect. In the supplementary video of this performance called *Fast Twitch//Slow Twitch*, Cassils emphasizes the instability through their body and footages. It can be argued that Cassils does not try to transmit how ideal a body can become. Rather, they present “the possibility of a non-linear kind of building, composed of disjointed motions and speeds, that simultaneously composes and undoes itself: a body coheres only to fall apart” (Tsaconas, 2016, p. 203).



Figure 2 Fast Twitch//Slow Twitch, component video art for Cuts: A Traditional Sculpture



Figure 3 Fast Twitch//Slow Twitch, component video art for Cuts: A Traditional Sculpture

Cassils' another exceptional piece *Pissed*, which is a sculpture, performance, sound and photography, is a product of Cassils' accumulation of 200 gallons of their urine to criticize the discriminatory bathroom policy for trans, which was introduced during the Trump period (Artwork: *Pissed*). They transform their urine into a sculpture. In his article *Unbuilding Gender: Jack Halberstam on Trans**

Anarchitecture, Halberstam argues that many theorists, artists and activists, who have centered on the transgender embodiment over the years and fell into the trap of representation, are now going through a new process (Halberstam, 2018). He asserts that “they —we— have turned away from figuration or indexical or mimetic representation and towards the abstract, the symptomatic, even the architectural” (Halberstam, 2018). Halberstam analyses American artist Gordon Matta-Clark’s artworks within the notion of “anarchitectural practices of unmaking” (Halberstam, 2018). Gordon Matta Clark established the Anarchitecture group in 1973 with Laurie Anderson, Tina Girouard, Carol Goodden, Suzanne Harris, Jene Highstein, Bernard Kirschenbaun, Richard Landry and Richard Nonas. This group, which got its name from the combination of the words ‘Anarchy’ and ‘Architecture’, questioned and protested the understanding of the architecture and architecture of the era. Their artworks revolve around the ideas of unbuilding and creative destruction (Halberstam, 2018). Halberstam sees the body and the building as twins and reinterpret Gordon’s anarchitecture project through the trans* body and explain trans* art by arguing that “trans* art engages in violent, destructive, and rigorous if chaotic attempts to unmake the frames of representation through which the transgender body has been viewed” (Halberstam, 2018). Cassils can be perceived as a trans* artist, as Halberstam defines, since they destroy and un/build their own body in *Pissed* performance and reconstruct it as an abstract sculpture with the urines that they have accumulated.



Figure 4 Pissed performance (2017)

In *Tiresias* performance, Cassils also works with a sculptural form. *Tiresias* is not only a live performance but also a video installation that is exhibited collaboratively with other artists and disciplines. In this durational performance, Cassils “melts a neoclassical Greek male ice sculpture with pure body heat” (Artwork: *Tiresias*).

After Cassils performed, *Tiresias* performance was prepared as a video installation with sounds of melting ice, birds (*Tiresias* predicts future by interpreting birdsong in Greek mythology) and Franz Schubert’s song cycle *Winterreise*¹¹. *Tiresias* is a mythological figure that is also known as a blind prophet. Under Cassils’ desire to name their performance *Tiresias* lies the transformation of *Tiresias* from one sex to another for seven years in the Greek mythology. As Cassils mentioned in their own statement, they press their body to ice torso and melt it with their own body heat and put the torso in an instable and unsustainable form as they remove its ideal form. In

¹¹ Winter Journey

doing so, Cassils reinterprets the myth of Tiresias “as a story of endurance and transformation” (Artwork: Tiresias).



Figure 5 Becoming an Image (2011)



Figure 6 Becoming an Image (2011)

The myth of Tiresias is also handled by Cassils in *Hard Times* performance. This time, Cassils approaches their body as a sculpture instead of using ice torso as an object and turns themselves into blind prophet Tiresias. Through special make-up effects, Cassils is turned Thebes' blind Prophet Tiresias who was transformed from male to female. They wear "frosted blond wig" and "coral body thong" and are covered in "deep tan of a bodybuilder and a terrifying prosthetic mask" (Artwork: *Hard Times*). *Tiresias* performance is based on Cassils' straining their body by practicing the bodybuilding routine for six minutes. Cassils slowly and controllably practices bodybuilding poses on a very unstable ground throughout the performance. This performance is like a reflection of the effort made to reach the ideal image in the capitalist system. As it is mentioned in the theoretical chapter, in chronobiopolitics, bodies, under the name of normalization, enter the cycle of sequential natural time by embracing success and goal-oriented teleological practices. Based on this concept of Dana Luciano, it would not be wrong to say that Cassils criticizes this system and mocks with the concepts caused by capitalism such as over-consumption, nonsatisfaction and denial.



Figure 7 *Hard Times* (2010)

3.4 Becoming an Image

Cassils' artwork *Becoming an Image* includes performance, photography and sculpture and sound. The performance passes through in total darkness with zero visibility. In the middle of the stage, there is a 2000 pounds clay block. As the performance continues, Cassils kicks the clay but the spectacle becomes visible only by the flash of a photographer. *Becoming an Image* is initially designed only to be performed for the ONE Archives in Los Angeles, the oldest active LGBTQ archive in the United States (cassils.net) and now it is being performed around world.

Besides, as a component work, *Ghost* was exhibited at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts Gallery in 2013. *Ghost* is a 4-channel sound installation that regenerates the artist's process of inhaling and exhaling, pulse and wheeze during a single performance of *Becoming an Image* (Artwork: *Becoming an Image*). The clay block, which was used in the performance *Becoming an Image*, is placed in the middle of the sound system, and exhibited together with the photos on the wall taken during the performance.

This performance with all its components creates "a visual critique and discourse around physical and gender ideologies and histories" (Frank, 2017). In this performance, Cassils draws attention to those that have been removed from the LGBTQ+ archives and political acts and brings an abstract interpretation to the removal of bodies and lives.



Figure 8 Becoming an Image (2012)



Figure 9 Becoming an Image (2012)

In *A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century*, Donna Haraway blurs the boundaries “between natural and artificial, [...] self-developing and externally designed, and many distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines” (Haraway, 1991, p. 106). Haraway, to conceptualize the obscure relationship between human and machine, introduces a figure of cyborg. For Haraway, a cyborg can blur the distinctions between human

and machine, reject essentialism, fixed identification, gender, totalization, naturalization, and binary logic. A cyborg has never been a coherent homogenous entity, away from the idea of wholeness, it exists as a heterogeneous fluid figure celebrating its own multiplicity (Haraway, 1991). Depending on Haraway's depiction of cyborg, it can be argued that through the beaten clay block and the sound system, Cassils' body becomes immaterialized and disembodied. Cassils's body actually becomes the sound system and clay block. The clay carries the traces of Cassils body such as sweat, blood, etc, and the sound system embodies the sounds of Cassils; their emotions, rage, pain, etc. All of these elements constitute an immersive unnatural figure, a cyborg. This cyborgian figure can be classified as neither human nor machine. That cyborg, Cassils, comes from Haraway's imaginary utopian post-human world where there is no gender, boundary, identity and representation (Haraway, 1991).



Figure 10 Ghost Installation

That immersive figure in *Ghost* can also be perceived as an anarchitectural trans* figure. Even if Cassils does not exist there materially, the glimpses of their body exist there in the form of sound installation and deformed clay block. It can be argued that Cassils splits their body into pieces, spoils their integrity and comes into life in installation as a non-normative figure. The idea of “unbuilding and creative destruction” here creates a sense of “a queer concept of anarchitecture focused on trans* body” (Halberstam, 2018). Cassils breaks their body apart from integrity through the sound system and block clay in *Ghost* performance, as they do with urine and bottles in *Pissed* performance. The reason that Cassils cuts their body conceptually and symbolically and rebuild it unnaturally can be interpreted as Cassils’ desire to position the trans body away from representation.

“If patriarchal systems of domination are understood as architectural, then queer/trans*/feminist activist responses can be received as anarchitectural” (Halberstam, 2018) argues Halberstam. Based on this argument, it can be perceived that the initial form of block clay is a reflection of the patriarchal system of domination. Cassils’ attack on clay can also be interpreted as an anarchitectural intervention. Former figure of the clay is still, stable, fixed and structured but the intervention of Cassils’ trans* body destroys the stillness, exploits the every definitive structure encoded in clay’s phallocentric patriarchal symbolism. Halberstam explains Cassils’ art of unmaking by saying that “trans* art engages in violent, destructive, and rigorous if chaotic attempts to unmake the frames of representation through which the transgender body has been viewed” (Halberstam, 2018). Considering this explanation of Halberstam, Cassils’s fluid trans* body which

is far from definitions and representation, can be read as the destruction of the trans representation through trans* art, as it destructs the clay's initial stable form.

“Anarchitecture is the an-archive of what has been omitted, what was never there to begin with, what has been abandoned” (2018) argues Halberstam. Based on Halberstam's argument, it can be suggested that Cassils' physical absence in the *Ghost* installation, and the total darkness in the *Becoming an Image* performance is actually a reflection of the identities that have been omitted and ostracized. This absence in actual time and place can in fact be regarded as a reference to queer individuals' inexistence in normative time and space. But this absence and the void created contains a resistive potential rather than a mournful reaction. Halberstam contends that “absence is as important as what is present. The heteronormative cultural field is shaped to encompass the home as if it lacks nothing. But anarchitectural performances insist on attention to what is not there” (Halberstam, 2018). Because absence and total darkness contain power and potential, when Cassils reaches that point, there is nothing left to be expressed with the definitive language there anymore. Cassils's installation body and the total darkness in *Becoming an Image* performance are now located in a place where they leave the safe space and reach nowhere and nothingness. For the purpose of arriving nowhere and nothingness, Cassils moves away from the safe zone, where being visible means being normative to reconstruct and redefine the concepts via strange couplings and differences. Karen Barad in “Transmaterialities: Trans*/Matter/Realities and Queer Political Imaginings” presents “nothingness as the scene of wild activities” (Karen, 2015, p. 394) and here the zero relation to normative body in *Ghost* and total darkness in *Becoming an Image* opens up a space for wild activities.

Ghost and *Becoming an Image* can be considered also as utopian projects. José Esteban Muñoz examines the photography of Tony Just¹². For a project, Just wanders around ruined men's room and tea house where public sex acts are engaged. He cleans these spaces and documents the process as a performance. In this way, Just documents the traces of anonymous sex activities and these haunted spaces. This performance is considered as a queer act because he gives the audience an access to reach hidden queer history of public sex (Muñoz, 2009). Muñoz argues that he sees "the ghosted materiality of the work as having a primary relation to emotions, queer memories, and the structures of feeling that haunt gay men on both sides of a generational divide that is formed by and through the catastrophe of AIDS" (Muñoz, 2009, p. 41). According to Muñoz, these haunted spaces project queer memories, absence of people as a "utopia through the negative" but free from dialectic (Muñoz, 2009, p. 42). He touches upon Derrida's notion of ghost in Marxism. Derrida defines ghost as "neither living or dead, present or absent" and totally irrelevant "to ontology, to discourse of being of beings, or to the essence of life and death" (Derrida, 1994, p. 51). The logic of Derrida's ghost is beyond "a binary or dialectical logic"; Derrida's ghost is against "effectivity of actuality" and "ideality" (Derrida, 1994, p. 63). In *Ghost* performance, Cassils' body is not exactly there, nor is it. Like its voice, pain, breaths, traumas, traces of Cassils' on beaten clay, as a ghost as a whole, it exists as a figure that sneaks around the visitors in liminal space.

On the other hand, in *Becoming an Image*, Cassils performs in total darkness; audience can only hear Cassils' voice and fight but cannot see what is happening,

¹² In the chapter *Ghosts of Public Sex* in his book *Cruising Utopia: the then and There of Queer Futurity*.

and they are only able to see when the photographer's flash burst into their eyes. What they can see at the moment is very instant and ephemeral, blurry and incomprehensible image, the light is not permanent as long as their brains can transform that image into information. This incomprehensible image of Cassils again forms a ghostly presence and Cassils turns into otherworldly entity that cannot be discerned if their existence is there but can be felt in that immersive environment in some way. In *Queer Art of Failure*, Halberstam argues that "the darkness becomes a crucial part of a queer aesthetic" (Halbertsam, 2011, p. 96). Media Theorist Zach Blas in *Queer Darkness* contends that "[q]ueer darkness is a refusal to cohere, to become legible" (Blas, 2012, p. 129) and Cassils, as Halberstam and Blas emphasize, in this performance, puts darkness at the core of the performance and uses it as a resistive force in the form of a ghostly figure.

Both *Becoming an Image* performance and *Ghost* installation can be perceived as utopian. Since Cassils' ghostly figure stands out from the life-death dialectical stance, that figure can be seen as an intervention to the existence of all transgender people whose lives have been expanded and have been synonymous with death. Considering all the discriminatory transgender history and Cassils' ghostly trans figure's position there, it can be argued that Cassils' ghostly trans figure in both works symbolizes all those ostracized, discriminated and dead trans people in history. However, Cassils' ghostly figure fights the symbol of heteropatriarchy, the clay block, but does not die. Cassils' all-encompassing, intergenerational, trans-temporal, eternal, ghostly trans figure's ever-present endurance nullifies the dead trans figure who is condemned to death by the hetero-patriarchal imagination. Hence, Cassils' ghostly trans figure draw attention to its liberating, emancipatory ubiquity.

Conceptually, Cassils does not leave queers in the past, they bring each of them to the moment by creating an immersive environment through their ghostly figure. Muñoz suggests that “ghosts exist inside and out and traverse categorical distinction, [...] attempts to understand communal mourning [...] and the need for a politics that carries our dead with us into battles for the present and future” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 46). In the same manner, Cassils moves the queer body away from being expendable, from a position that can be killed. Cassils symbolically through their performance gives all those trans people who were bereft of future, rendered futureless, a future. The act of equating death with trans lives is dismantled by Cassils’s ghostly trans figure. This figure, which emerges by way of Cassils’ performative medium, becomes the epitome of resistance. Thus, Cassils’ ghostly trans figure that is positioned in a liminal space far from dialectic, which Derrida also states, is conceptually able to exist beyond and this heralds a utopian potentiality.

Cassils’ fight with clay in the darkness can also be considered a utopian attempt. As Karen Barad’s approach of nothingness as the scene of wild activities, Muñoz sees emptiness as a “room for other worlds” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 42). Muñoz’s queer futurity cannot be accessed via here and now. This should be via “crazy, risky, wild leaps into the void” (Halberstam, 2018) full of possibilities. Here and now for Muñoz, “is a prison house” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 1) that traps queers. Thus, the total darkness becomes a site for us to see what is missing here, a moment to grasp what is not enough and a site for us to imagine what possibilities may happen when we start to think beyond here and now. Besides, since “neither witness nor accomplice, the camera cannot totally document what is wild about these live activities” during the dark parts of the performance, Cassils reminds us “of the abyssal quality of time

itself” (Halberstam, 2018). Cassils also performs queerness in a way while fighting clay, because, as Muñoz argued, queerness is performative and rejects here and now. Hence, Cassils insists “on potentiality or concrete possibility of another world” in a dark abyss (Muñoz, 2009, p. 1).

Cassils argues that transness is a “political position that offers the possibility of resistance. I want to play with formal possibilities which embrace the obtuse and the unrecognizable. I am curious as to what ideas and questions can come from continual transformation” (Transgender Artist Explains, 2015). Inspired by Cassils’ commentary for their performance it can be argued that *Becoming an Image* –as the title itself refers– is a process of becoming. Becoming as a concept is at the core of Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy. According to them, all identities are in motion. The identity of the subject is in a state of constant articulation and change. Beyond the identities, all objects and subjects are also in constant transformation, no matter how they look fixed and rooted. It is actually part of a loop captured before it undergoes a new change, which is perceived as fixed. In fact, the concept of becoming presented by Deleuze and Guattari in its simplest form is a projection of the life cycle. Damian Sutton and David Martin-Jones, in *Deleuze Reframed: A Guide for the Art Students* (2008), to conceptualize becoming give an example of a coffee mug. They argue that at first glance, the coffee cup can undoubtedly be perceived as a fixed object. But if the coffee cup falls to the ground and shatters, it will lose its essence, which makes it the coffee cup. In fact, the coffee cup was a mud before, then it became a cup, then it will be broken and thrown away, after which it will continue to evolve in nature in a different form. What Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of becoming aims to emphasize is that it does not really matter whether the

coffee cup has an essence or not. What is important and what is emphasized here is that the beginning and end of an object or subject cannot be discerned (Damian & David, 2008).

According to Sutton and Martin-Jones, becoming “is behind the creation of rhizome, since the rhizome exploits and enjoys continual change and connection, rather than seeking to fix or prevent it” (Damian & David, 2008, p. 46). The philosophy of becoming has been one of the concepts used in the discussions of many diverse fields since it has an “ability to help us understand how hierarchies of identity and essence are constructed and resisted” and “as a stage of critical self-awareness”, it lets individuals comprehend and appreciate “how identity itself is formed through opposition, alterity and difference” (Damian & David, 2008, p. 46). Difference is the essential emphasis of Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy. Deleuze and Guattari classify subjects as molar/major or molecular/minor. However, the purpose here is not to make a binary distinction. For them, man is always a fixed molar entity. The woman is minor but while making this distinction, the goal is to disrupt the hierarchy and rebuild it. The goal at this stage is to perceive this transformation as a process of becoming, not a binary opposition like leaving the molar position and moving to a minor position (Damian & Sutton, 2008). Sutton and Martin-Jones contend that “in order to dismantle a prejudiced system based on sex, gender or race, one has to understand from within the things that make differences different” (Damian & David, 2008, p. 47). In light of this argument, it can be argued that Deleuze and Guattari perceive differences as a construction. A subject cannot be different on its own. In order to enter the process of becoming, it must be articulated with another subject and gone through the differentiation process. The fact that one subject begins

to be articulated with another subject means that both subjects absorb their differences and leave the traces, the essence of their subjects on each other. Hence, they are nested in a different state and remain in the process of becoming other than what they already are without seeking any final destination.

As I discussed above, in the performance of *Becoming an Image*, Cassils as a symbol of anarchitecture and clay as a fixed hegemonic architectural figure can be seen as two separate structures. Throughout the performance, through the fists, kicks, jumps, sweats, blood, tears, rage, anger, pain, desire, etc of Cassils, and the mud that spread around Cassils' body, begin to enter into a transformation. In every stage, in every second, they become meshed up and intertwined. Their differences physically and conceptually are mingling in with each other. Amelia Jones explains *Becoming an Image* by arguing that "its hybrid and performative nature makes such analyses less than useful as there is no single final product to be examined" (Jones, 2015, p. 21). As Jones remarks, Cassils does not actualize this performance to maintain a final product via clay. During the performance Cassils destroys the clay and clay also destroys Cassils. Halberstam argues, "in the process of becoming an image, both the subject and the object were un/becoming, deforming, demolished and demolishing. What remained were two bodies, present but destroyed" (Halberstam, 2018).

Becoming an Image through the intervention of photographer's flash suspends chrononormative linear order of time and creates its own trans-temporality. As discussed in the theoretical chapter, chrononormativity is a term coined by Elizabeth Freeman as "a mode of implantation, a technique by which institutional forces come to seem like somatic facts" (Freeman, 2010, p. 3). It is a time that pushes individuals

to use their bodies at their maximum productivity. It is a goal-oriented heteronormative cyclical time. It is Eviatar Zerubavel's (1985) "hidden rhythm", Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) "habitus", Butler's (2006) "gender performativity" and Muñoz's (2009) "straight time" (Freeman, 2010). It is linear and heteronormative. Dana Luciano also named this term as chronobiopolitics to emphasize the sexual arrangements of the body through control mechanisms. To normalize the bodies, power mechanisms temporalize bodies via "teleological schemes of events or strategies for living such as marriage, accumulation of health and wealth for the future, reproduction, childrearing, and death and its attendant rituals" (Freeman, 2010, p. 4). If clock-time is considered choronormative, it can be argued that Cassils' performance disrupts the perception of harmonic time and suspends forward going linear heteronormative time since Cassils does not allow their spectators to track their performance in a natural order. Via instant and unexpected shifts between flashlight and darkness, Cassils creates asynchrony and anachronism as a queer strategy to suspend chrononormativity and fashion a queer spatio-temporality.

3.5 Conclusion

Jill Dolan, in *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at Theatre*, argues:

A utopian performative gives us a mode of thinking and seeing; it can't be confined in a set of stable, immobile criteria, because it relies on the magic of performance practice, on our belief in social justice and a better future" (Dolan, 2008, p. 171).

As Dolan suggests, Cassils gives the spectator a queer mode of thinking and seeing the world. Through their performances and with their queer body, they build a queer time and place, away from the binary logic, where heteronormativity does not render queer individuals invisible. Their perception of "queer refers to non-normative logics

and organizations of community, sexual identity, embodiment, and activity in time and space” (Halberstam, 2005, p. 6). Hence, via different tactics, aesthetics, and concepts, Cassils uses performance art to let people imagine a future that is rendered by queers. Next chapter will examine Boychild’s performances as a landscape of monstrosity.



CHAPTER IV

DANCE OF DARKNESS: MONSTROSITY AS A PERFORMANCE OF EMANCIPATION

“Dreaming is nursed in darkness.”

— Jean Genet, *Funeral Rites*

4.1 Introduction

Peggy Phelan in *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* argues that “[p]erformance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations” (Phelan, 1993, p. 146). For Phelan, live performance “becomes itself through disappearance” (Phelan, 1993, p. 146). She emphasizes this ephemeral and non-reproducible state of performance. Phelan asserts that the body becomes a metonymical figure embracing multiple different elements such as self, character, voice, presence, etc. With all these different layers coming together, the body ceases to be itself and begins to gain other meanings. Since the way the body’s reception is changed with these additions, the receiver can no longer see the body as it is. In this way, performance provides the opportunity to offer alternative views by disabling fixed gazes. She contends that through the creation of metonymical body, performance can resist “the reproduction of metaphor, [...] the metaphor of gender, a metaphor which upholds the vertical hierarchy of value

through systematic marking of the positive and the negative” (Phelan, 1993, p. 151).

As Phelan argues, boychild¹³ does not record and archive their¹⁴ performance acts as a queer strategy to establish a conceptual space standing against the representative fixed hetero-patriarchal dominant visual culture.

Darkness, liminality, illegibility, becoming, monstrosity and multiplicity are the primary words that define boychild’s aesthetics of performance acts. They use darkness as a site for queerness, blackness as mobility, monstrosity as against fixity.

They blur and dismantle the definition of drag. Their performance does not follow a certain linear order and do not have a clear beginning and an end. They break down the notions of linearity and fixity with his gestural, sensational and improvised dances and movements. They also use shadows, light and darkness to disrupt stability, representation, and linear construction of time and space. With the paints they apply to their body randomly, they mess up the state of being people of color and spoil racial fixity. Via remixes that they use for lip-sync performances, they suspend linearity and build their own spatio-temporality. Besides, since boychild prioritizes improvised dance and movements to convey their feelings, messages, ideologies, etc. “as an attempt to challenge and reinvent the ways in which we communicate with each other” (Akel, 2016). At last, otherworldly monstrous body of boychild adds another layer to his in-between state. Thus, via their performative strategies, they desire a queer time and space which is utopian, they “get lost in dance or [...] use dance to get lost: lost from the evidentiary logic of”

heteronormativity (Muñoz, 2009, p. 81)

¹³ boychild’s name is Tosh Basco but they use boychild as their performative persona. They prefer to use it as miniscule that is why this chapter insists to refer to them as boychild.

¹⁴ Boychild refuses to designate a gender to themselves and prefers they/them/their pronouns



Figure 11 Gallery Weekend Berlin (2014)

Overall, this chapter examines boychild's performances as a practice of queer world-making via multiple strategies and argues that boychild opens up space for queers who are excluded from heteronormative time and place to reimagine a utopian queer world. To conceptualize this argument, this chapter approaches to boychild's performances under three main themes. The first part discusses how boychild's performances *Untitled Lip-sync 1*¹⁵ (2013) and *Untitled Lip-sync 3*¹⁶ (2013) differ from traditional drag performance practices, and how boychild uses the concept of lip-sync. The second part touches upon the dance movements channeled by boychild and discusses how they create a liminal and queer world using dance and movement via the performances *Untitled Lip-sync 2*¹⁷ (2013) and *Untitled Lip-sync 3*. Final part speculates boychild's trans body as the imagined landscape of monstrosity by

¹⁵ Arika. (2016, May 18). *boychild - Friday Performance, Untitled Lipsync #1 at Episode 5: Hidden in Plain Sight, 2013* [Video File]. Retrieved from [http:// https://vimeo.com/167119076](http://https://vimeo.com/167119076)

¹⁶ Arika. (2016, May 18). *boychild - Sunday Performance, Untitled Lipsync #3 at Episode 5: Hidden in Plain Sight 2013* [Video File]. Retrieved from [http:// https://vimeo.com/167119073](http://https://vimeo.com/167119073)

¹⁷ Arika. (2016, May 31). *boychild - Saturday Performance, Untitled Lipsync #2 at Episode 5: Hidden in Plain Sight, 2013* [Video File]. Retrieved from [http:// https://vimeo.com/168760885](http://https://vimeo.com/168760885)

discussing the performance *Untitled Lip-Sync 3*, the lip-sync performances in Rifflandia¹⁸ (2013) and Off Festival¹⁹ (2013).

Boychild is a movement-based performance artist living in California. In an interview with *I-D Vice* (All About the Boychild, 2013), they explain how they begin performing and who they are. A friend who has a master's degree in Berlin asks them to create a character for a project. At that time, boychild was a photographer and never thought about performing. A clown and some kind of a healer figure comes alive in their head for the character that they want to create for their friend's project. As they state, they begin to search "clowns functioned in non-western cultures, medicine men, shamans, witches" (All About the Boychild, 2013). They say "[t]hose figures were suddenly interchangeable in my mind. To me it makes sense that clowns in a community might use humour and knowledge (magic) in a very cunning way to heal those around them" (All About the Boychild, 2013). Then, their friend's project is canceled, but boychild goes through a lot of research, makes the sketches, and creates the character. From that point on, "boychild" character begins to find a physically tangible body. They explain that "boychild's physicality was then birthed, nurtured and inspired by the drag scene in San Francisco, specifically by a performer named Dia Dear" (All About the Boychild, 2013). They begin their performance career by lip-syncing at San Francisco drag scenes, night clubs and music venues in 2012 (Riszko, 2017).

¹⁸ RifflandiaTV. (2013, July 17). *Rifflandia 2013 – Boychild* [Video File]. Retrieved from <http://https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0mTlVosk4bQ>

¹⁹ bloodybootleegs. (2013, August 5). *boychild (live @ OFF Festival 2013) [HD]* [Video File]. Retrieved from <http://https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fkhvly0sns>

4.2 Shattering the Drag

Although it differs within the context of a traditional drag performance, drag as a theatrical practice dates back to 1500s. Since only men were allowed to perform on stage during Shakespearean periods, female characters were played by male actors in the plays. Later in the 19th century, occupied mostly by Latinx and African American queer communities, drag balls and beauty contest began to be held in Harlem.

Historian George Chauncey in his book *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of Gay Male World 1890-1940* states that “gay men created cultural institutions and rituals that fostered a sense of collective identity” (Chauncey, 1994, p. 291). This communal structure was built as a space for resistance and solidarity against white hetero-patriarchal supremacy for those who have different sexual and racial identities. The word drag etymologically refers to tradition of wearing the costumes of the opposite sex. Anthropologist Esther Newton, in *Mother Camp*, explains that “a drag queen is a homosexual male who often, or habitually, dresses in female attire. (A drag butch is a lesbian who often, or habitually, dresses in male attire.)” (Newton, 2006, p.121-122) and sees drag as “the most representative and widely used symbols of homosexuality” by means of its commitment to binary opposition between feminine and masculine (Newton, 2006, p. 122).

Accordingly, this tradition can be said to have a representational structure. Although boychild came from this drag king tradition, with their performances, they dismantle the medium in their own fashion by making it much more ambiguous. Halberstam explains Boychild’s drag as “an ecstatic mode of drag where, instead of re-performing an act in a cross-gender mode, the artist becomes a vessel for a performance that moves through her and disorders her in the process” (Halberstam,

2016, p. 210). They rearticulate and present a new way of looking at the language of movement and language of lip-syncing. They combine the performance art with lip-sync. They combine drag, a fixed notion, with performance that is already in motion and create a liminal performative space that is similar to both but far from both.

Boychild performs lip-sync, accompanied by mostly pop song remixes of the DJs they collaborate with at nightclub scenes, even if they no longer perform as a drag king. They usually prefer dark settings, perform half naked with their shaved head, mostly covered in white paint, and wear white contact lenses, put a luminous led light ball into their mouth. Leila Riszko in *Breaching Bodily Boundaries: Posthuman (Dis)embodiment and Ecstatic Speech in Lip-synch Performances by Boychild* argues that “boychild’s vocabulary of fluid movements are interspersed with jerky shudders and contortions and her facial expressions flit between pained grimaces and ecstatic grins” (Riszko, 2017, p. 154). Boychild also defines their performative space as a hybrid of monstrosity, a liminal space in a conversation with Jack Halberstam in the event *Dance of Darkness: A Performance, a Conversation, a Rehearsal for the Future* held under Bridge Project, “Radical Movements: Gender and Politics in Performance” (2017). For their artistry of drag, they say:

I use the term ‘drag’ very loosely. [...] I really like Hollywood because to me, it demonstrates how everyone does drag. Nobody actually ‘is’ Superman. Judith Butler brought this concept to us in the 80s: gender is performance. It’s exemplified in Hollywood and it’s kind of amazing to me. It’s also kind of like, tired but fantastic at the same time. Like, I love action films. For me, drag is everything. We all participate in drag. Which maybe means that I’m not into visibility (hopemohr, 2017).

Here boychild emphasizes that drag is somehow getting away from visibility. Hence, boychild’s main purpose in moving away from visibility can be interpreted as

moving away from a fixed identity rather than hiding or being in closet as their performances are taken into consideration.

Muñoz deals with the temporal quality of performance. He argues that performative space creates “a knowing and recognition” between the artist and the audience or who else is involved. Thus, this knowing and recognition “facilitates modes of belonging, especially minoritarian belonging” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 99). By evaluating performance with this perception, he suggests the concept which he calls “utopian performative” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 99). The belonging that is imagined and actualized by virtue of utopian performative acts, suspends the here and the now and run toward a there and a there. Muñoz asserts that “[p]erformance, seen as utopian performativity, is imbued with a sense of potentiality” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 99). Inspired by Aristotle, Muñoz emphasizes the distinction between potentiality and possibility. The possibility, according to him, still corresponds to a place with ties to present, but potentiality temporally cannot be imagined through present time. Potentiality exists in the horizon. Thus, for Muñoz, if this potentiality is perceived through performance lens, potentiality remains hanging in the air after the performance. He says “[a]t the performance’s end, if it is situated historically and materially, it is never just the duration of event. Reading for potentiality is scouting for a ‘not here’ or ‘not now’ in the performance that suggests a futurity” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 99).

Via their lip-sync performances actualized in nightlife scenes, boychild negotiates a certain mode of belonging through their performative space and allows queers to spatio-temporalize in this non-normative time and space. “Nightlife is important for my work because it creates a space for me to exist; nothing contextualises my performance the same way as these places do. It’s my world, my existence in the

under-ground” (Perlson, 2014) says boychild to describe their bond with performative nightlife stage. Muñoz suggests that “[t]here is indeed something about the transformative powers of nightlife that queers [...] have always clung to” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 108). The partner and the collaborator of boychild, Wu Tsang, in an interview that they attend together with boychild, argues “[t]here’s a tradition of queer night-life spaces being places that people needed, to figure out who you are, not having a support group or a family in a way, and some of the communities that have come out of that. It’s queer people starting a club to have a place to go basically, a safe space” (Perlson, 2014). The belonging and the non-normative relationships built in those spaces do not disappear after performances as Wu Tsang suggests, so the performances and the places they perform offer queers to reimagine a world that belongs only to them. Hence, in this way, nightlife spaces turn into a utopian performative space for both boychild and queers, where heteronormative present time is seen as inadequate and incomplete, the potentialities of conceptually non-normativity are embraced, and the limitations of the heteronormative present time are overcome. The performances become a world-making practices, a world that is imagined and desired, that is garmented with future outside of heteronormative structures.

One of the most prominent queer time and place making strategy of boychild is the use of song pop remixes. The place of remixes is very important in boychild’s lip-sync performances because it removes the perception of linear time by playing with the tone of the sound, distorts the perception of gender, deterritorialises the meaning of the words, disidentify with those meanings and then redo them with boychild’s otherworldly monstrous creature and its enigmatic voice after this undo process. By doing so, boychild reorients the codes of dominant culture. Boychild collaborates

with black DJ Total Freedom for the pop song remixes they use in the performances. They mostly work on pop music made by black musicians in pop music history such as Destiny's Child and Rihanna. Thus, via these strategies they queer the pop culture, performance and lip-syncing.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, concept of rhizome has the ability to enter subjects and objects into a transformation, a constant change, and this change occurs through deterritorialisation. Deleuze and Guattari argue that "the rhizome is made only of lines: lines of segmentarity and stratification as its dimensions, and the line of flight or deterritorialisation as the maximum dimension after which the multiplicity undergoes metamorphosis, changes in nature" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 21). In the rhizomatic journey, an entity needs to encounter another entity to enter into a process of becoming to deterritorialise itself. Through this process, the rhizome steadily creates new lines of flight to enable the entities to shift to new and unknown territories. In these new lines of flight, "the multiplicity experiences an outside, and transforms, and changes" (Damian & David, 2008, p. 6). To explain the logic of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, Deleuze and Guattari give an example of a pollination process happening between a wasp and an orchid. This example evinces that every deterritorialisation is followed by a reterritorialization. After the wasp and orchid encounter, the wasp breaks off its habitual characteristics and the orchid also loses its former form. Deleuze and Guattari name this process as a "becoming, a becoming-wasp of the orchid and a becoming-orchid of the wasp. Each of these becomings brings about the deterritorialisation of one term and the reterritorialization of the other" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 10) and in this becoming process "[t]here is neither imitation nor resemblance, only an exploding of two heterogeneous series on the line of flight composed by a common rhizome that can no longer be attributed

to or subjugated by anything signifying” (Deleuze & Guattari, p. 10). Thus, with these encounters, disparate entities steadily transform each other into different entities and form a heterogenous assemblage.

In 2013, boychild performed in a ‘Hidden in Plain Sight’ festival that is organized by Arika in Glasgow. They performed with Destiny’s Child’s Say My Name (1999) in *Untitled Lip-sync 3* performance, and Rihanna’s Rude Boy (2009) in *Untitled Lip-sync 1* performance. If this process is applied to boychild’s lip-sync performances, it can be argued that through sound system technology, Rihanna’s and Destiny’s Child’s voices are deterritorialised and reterritorialised into boychild’s mechanic genderless voice. In both performances, Destiny’s Child’s and Rihanna’s voices are slowed down and their genders are no longer grasped by their voices. With this intervention, operations applied to the songs distort the gendered voice, distance the gender from being a fixed category by transforming it into a gender-ambiguous voice. The former voices that are embodied by Rihanna and Destiny’s Child cease to be Rihanna’s and Destiny’s Child’s gendered voices after they get into a process of becoming with the sound systems technology. Considering this distorted ungendered voice as a projection of boychild’s character, it can be alleged that Rihanna’s and Destiny’s Child’s voices are reterritorialised into boychild’s and their mechanical voice as a result of this process of becoming.



Figure 12 BOYCHILD - #UNTITLED LIPSYNC 1

If the lip-sync performances and the use of black and white paint are also taken into consideration via queer performance theory lens of Muñoz, it can be argued,

boychild disidentifies with cultural codes of heteronormative pop music culture via remixes they use and the racial fixed identity via paints boychild apply to their body. To problematize the fixed and hegemonic essentialized approach, Muñoz proposes the concept of disidentification in his book *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (1999). The main purpose of this concept is not to reject the imposed hegemonic order, but through performance practices, using that phobic culture as a weapon against that culture, to problematize it and offer a new perspective on identity. In this way, this concept gives minoritarian subjects a power to resist against majoritarian hegemonic culture. With this power, minoritarian subjects get the opportunity to redesign a non-normative self. To conceptualize what he means by “disidentification”, referring to political theorist’s perception of identity formation, Muñoz argues that identity is “produced at the point contact between essential understanding of the self (fixed disposition) and socially constructed narratives of self” (Muñoz, 1999, p. 6). Within this perception, the essentialized notion of identity formation tends to classify individuals and reduces them into fixed stereotypical socially encoded meanings. To summarize this normative and exclusionary perspective directed to identity formation process, Muñoz asserts that “[s]ocially encoded scripts of identity are often formatted by phobic energies around race, sexuality, gender, and various other identificatory distinctions” (Muñoz, 1999, p. 6).

As Muñoz elucidates, boychild inhabits this concept of disidentification to defy the cultural fixations. As their first disidentificatory attempt, boychild speculates that “[i]t’s also my relationship to music because it’s my way of being. It’s more fun, instead of working against pop culture, to work within it, recontextualise it and appropriate things” (Perlson, 2014). Depending on their declaration, it can be argued

that boychild uses remixes as disidentificatory practices. In their performance *Untitled Lip-sync 1*, they lip-sync to Rihanna's *Rude Boy*. *Rude Boy* seems to be a stereotypical heterosexual love story. When the lyrics are examined, if Rihanna is positioned as the first-person narrator in the song, her voice can be thought of as a projection of a heterosexual woman calling out to her man. The demands and desires uttered by female persona such as "love me", "give it to me", "I need it" and "I'ma get a little crazy" reveal that she yearns to be loved by this "rude boy". She wants him to play it hard and big. In a part, she says:

I like the way you touch me there

I like the way you pull my hair

Babe, if I don't feel it I ain't faking

No, no

I like when you tell me kiss me there

I like when you tell me move it there (Rihanna, 2009)

As it is discerned from these lines, it would not be wrong to say that the woman wants to be ruled, controlled and dominated by her lover. However, in this performance, boychild empties the concept of hetero-patriarchal normative relationship that manifests itself through *Rude Boy* and turns it into a new form via sound design technology and boychild's gender-ambiguous otherworldly monstrous persona. Firstly, by applying the slow down process to Rihanna's vocal, her tone is distorted and the first-person narrator female character in the song disappears. The heterosexual love story under man's domination remains, but the voice of the woman who is encoded as oppressed by the patriarchal society and waits to be controlled by the man, disappears. When the oppressed woman figure is removed in this process, the story loses its initial meaning, so it becomes no longer possible to speculate about

a heterosexual love story. Besides, with boychild's tangible monstrous existence embodying the distorted sound, the heterosexual love story is completely disidentified with.



Figure 13 BOYCHILD - #UNTITLED LIPSYNC 1

Boychild also applies this disidentificatory strategy to break down racial fixity. In the same performance, at the very beginning, the audience sees the boychild half-naked and covered fully with white paint. In the middle of the performance, as lyrics "take it" and "love me" is heard, boychild begins to randomly spread black paint around their head and neck. At the end of the performance, boychild remains messy with all the white and black paints on their body. Seeing white and black as the projection of racial fixed identities, it can be argued that boychild inhabits these codes and smashes them by mixing both identities. They disrupt fixity and creates a mobile ambiguous self-constructed creature. As a result of this process, with all the abjection presented through boychild's lip-sync performance, disidentification becomes manifested. Thus, boychild's performative space and even their body become a medium "to change the ideas of spectators, but in order to trouble them, to stir up uncertain desire-zones that they always more or less refuse to explore" (Guattari, 1996, p. 37).

As a result of these strategies embraced by boychild to problematize the notion of wholeness and fixity of time and place, the production of chrononormativity becomes spoiled. In almost all lip-sync performances, boychild suspends the song's natural order through sound designs such as voice slowing down and pitching down. During 'Dance of Darkness' event, boychild contends that remixes are great tools to play with the sense of time. Both in the performances that cover the songs *Say My Name* and *Rude Boy*, natural orders of the songs are distorted by technological interventions. With this distortion process, the non-fixity and elasticity of the time is emphasized. Besides, with the usage of light in almost every performance, not only temporal but also spatial suspension occurs and the tangible view of boychild's presence on the stage becomes questionable. In the performance *Untitled Lip-sync 3*,

boychild becomes visible as the blue light hitting their body in the middle of a total darkness. The audience first sees boychild on the ground, lying and moving like a creepy incomprehensible creature, with a red light coming out of their mouth, while they are trying to rise and stand up. At that time, boychild seems like a weak and timid creature who does not belong to this world. Boychild, at that time, channels Mary Shelley's angry, confused, timid and desperate Frankenstein. When the song *Say my Name* is heard, through the beats, boychild stands up and arms wide open. They stand still without moving. They acquire an otherworldly powerful image as if they embrace their monstrosity and flourish through their rage. As blue lights wink fast, boychild looks like a giant hologram projected onto the stage. Since the performances pass in a total dark environment, the lights irregularly make the boychild visible, audience cannot perceive the presence of them without interruption. Boychild's reflection also becomes reminiscent of Cassils' ghostly figure in *Becoming an Image* performance that is discussed in the previous chapter. The ghostly figure of boychild, like Cassils, comes from the past, reclaims its own monstrosity, builds its own non-normative queer time and place and from that moment, celebrates it through the dance of darkness as they construct anachronism.



Figure 14 BOYCHILD - #UNTITLED LIPSYNC 3

As it is discussed in the previous chapters, for Muñoz, the concept of utopia rejects what already exists, does not satisfy with here and now. Utopia always pursues the potential of not being here. Utopia is a horizon and full of potential. In this context, it would be effective to evaluate utopia “as flux, a temporal disorganization” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 97) since the concept of utopia tends to go beyond the here and the now, as it constantly offers a mode of thinking about the idea of a then and a there. Utopia deals with how something can happen, how it should be and creates a temporal disorganization by discomposing the present time via constantly incorporating it into the future (Muñoz, 2009). As a result, it can be argued that boychild’s interventions toward linear time via lip-sync performances in nightlife scenes lead to temporal disorganization. The potentiality arising from this disorganization when that linearity is broken, becomes utopian.

4.3 Dance of Darkness

In an interview with Artsy, “I find it very interesting to hear the ways in which people describe what I do, but I try not to” says boychild and adds “[w]ords are constraining for me. Using my body and performing is so much easier for me to explain something”²⁰. As boychild does not prefer to define their body, gender and identity within the socially constructed terms, they also do not put their art into definitive categories. Throughout the performances, it seems that music shapes boychild, boychild shapes the music, and the audiences also are shaped by the immersive atmosphere. Boychild prefers that words speak over their body rather than using words to explain, convey, and describe things. What they do is actually using silence to get away from visibility. They always avoid putting themselves and their art in a fixed place.

Boychild’s artistry is like hybridization of performance, dance, movement, improvisation. They have a quite eclectic aesthetic style. When they dance, the traces of different dance movements, eras, choreographers and dancers can be observed. The way they dance carry the aesthetics of German expressionist dance movement which occurs as a protest against classical ballet, a dance that is fixed, formalized, systematic, structured and austere. Especially, Pina Bausch’s *The Rite of Spring* (1978) manifests itself via the dark, lecherous, furious, tempting and immersive atmosphere in boychild’s performances. The most explicit feeling that one can grasp in *The Rite of Spiring* is the feeling of uneasiness. Through dance, dancers reach the darkest parts of the nature, human nature. The dancers wear very minimalistic

²⁰ Retrieved from: <https://www.artsy.net/artist/boychild>

costumes like a piece of skin tone fabric and seem to be in a battle because of the paint that is scattered through their bodies and costumes. They are like dancing to death, dancing to die. It almost seems like the dancers practice a shamanic ritual or a witchery. Boychild's costume made of skin tone fabric, messiness achieved through the application of body paints and the ritualistic figures in their dance are quite similar to *The Rite of Spring*. Furthermore, Mary Wigman's witch dance, also known as death dance, which becomes an inspiration of Volk dance practiced in *Suspiria*, Martha Graham's minimalism and movements as a way of reaching the depths of darkest human emotions, Merce Cunningham's avant-garde unstructured moves, etc., all these dancing and moving bodies that are fed by darkness, disorder and indeterminacy echoes boychild's body that is a landscape of monstrosity.



Figure 15 Pina Bausch's The Rite of Spring 1978

As well as these inspirations using dance as a medium of expression and pushing the limits of body, Butoh is core figure in boychild's performances. In his book *Hijikata Tatsumi and Butoh: Dancing in a Pool of Gray Grits*, Bruce Baird explains that "Butoh defies description" (Baird, 2012, p. 1). Butoh is essentially an improvised indeterminate type of dance with no aim of progression, and boychild follows the

element of improvisation as a strategy in their performances. Boychild sees their performative practice as “queer becoming as opposed to a fixed identity” (Altman, 2017). Their performances do not have an established progressive structure. Audiences, boychild, music, lighting, paints, stage, emotions, experiences, identities, bodies, all different elements constantly enter into a process of becoming “without aim or destination” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 353). All the multiplicities intermingling with each other form a rhizomatic pattern. Deleuze and Guattari argue “a line of becoming has neither beginning nor end, departure nor arrival, origin nor destination” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 293). All the elements that actualize the immersive atmosphere go through a constant transformation. Boychild lets their queer body flow through multiple becomings and make everything enter into a process of queer becoming through improvisation. In this way, with improvisation which brings unsteadiness the body turns into a resistance against restrictive forces, linearity, and fixity.

Besides its expressionist essence, Biutoh is a traditional Japanese dance taking its roots from other Japanese dance forms, Kabuki and Noh. Butoh is founded by Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno as “the sign of darkness” (Fraleigh, 2010, p. 1). Butoh, an avant-garde type of dance, expresses the anguish of society through the body after the destruction brought by the war, and the uncertain characteristics of the dance channels that destruction. Unlike an idealized and aesthetic human body, Butoh dancers present their body with a unique language as if they suffer from the modern world which is painful, mortal, fragile, and diseased. Naked androgen bodies covered in white paint, stage decors and costumes shaping the atmosphere that blurs the distinction between life and death are the elements of Butoh. Dancers use a body

language made of intensely disciplined micro movements, as a reminiscent of human death/birth experiences. Butoh offers a primitive, dense and raw experience to the audience. This dance carries the anger of postwar generation since they live with the legacy of war generation which is poisoned landscape. In “To Prison”, Tatsumi Hijikata remarks “[d]on’t I have to recover in order to be sick?” (Tatsumi, 2000, p. 43) and this statement makes people aware of the fact that people have to admit that they are sick and refuse to be recovered. In her book *Chaos, Territory, art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth*, Elizabeth Grosz, inspired by Deleuze, contends that “[a]rt, [...] does not produce concepts, though it does address problems and provocations” (Grosz, 2008, p. 1). Depending on this logic, it can be argued that rather than adopting an escapist attitude, Butoh turns into a dance practice that problematizes the culture of war, its effects on generations, and its ignored history. It becomes an expression of anguish and a refusal of beauty. In essence, Butoh turns into a dance practice that embraces ugliness, chaos and terror with an anarchist attitude.



Figure 16 Kazuo Ohno and Yoshito Ohno - Japan Society (1999)

In their performances, boychild internalizes Butoh's dark aesthetics by transforming both their body and stage into a landscape of monstrosity. In one point of their conversation with Halberstam in 'Dance of Darkness', when Halberstam and boychild discuss how boychild uses the dark aesthetics of Butoh in their performances, boychild says "it can visually be very dark; there is a lot of pain and vulnerability" for their performance acts. *Untitled Lip-sync 2* performance starts in total darkness. In the beginning, the audience sees three red lights hanging in the air, forming a triangle shape. When looked more carefully, the red lights positioned in the shape of a triangle start to illuminate boychild's shaved head. With the red lights they hold in their hands and mouth into the darkness, only the half of their body becomes visible but it cannot be discerned as a body, only the shape of it can be

perceived. Boychild moves very slowly, sharp and disjointedly. They resemble a creature sneaking around the fire, and at the end of these kinky moves, boychild moves away like a red shadowy silhouette and disappears in the dark. Then a spotlight piercing the dark bursts into the middle of the stage and the audience sees boychild, covered in white paint while they are crawling on the ground with ropes wrapped around their body. As the lights flash at an epileptic intensity, boychild slowly stands up on their knees accompanied by industrial distorted sounds. With an antagonized gesture on their face, their legs open to the ground, their arms firmly lifted to the air, their shoulders try to fall to the ground, but boychild tries to hold themselves upright again and again, like a reflection of a body that is suffering but not surrender, that is integrated with that grief. For the rest of the performance, boychild unleashes this monster to perform their liminal dance that “is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 25).



Figure 17 BOYCHILD - #UNTITLED LIPSYNC 2



Figure 18 BOYCHILD - #UNTITLED LIPSYNC 2



Figure 19 BOYCHILD - #UNTITLED LIPSYNC 2

Drawing on Ernst Bloch's "principle of hope", Muñoz conceptualizes utopia as "politics of emotion" (Muñoz, 2009, p. 97). Muñoz considers this practice as a survival strategy for queers/minoritarian subjects because straight time that is a future-oriented reproductive time is under the domain of heteropatriarchy and in such world, queers are rendered hopeless and futureless without the concept of utopia. However, hope does not have to be the only emotional recognition that should be adopted here. Negative emotions such as shame, disgust, hate etc. can also be considered as elements that connect people to each other (Muñoz, 2009) as a refusal of the formation of normative feelings. At this point, the lip-sync performances, stage of boychild, the otherworldly monstrous creature they create, and the negative affect that occurs while performing, can also be interpreted as supplementary resistive elements for utopian modes of emotional recognition. Considering that boychild is mostly fed from darkness, dark emotional elements such as pain, anger, hate, desire etc. can construct a mode of emotional recognition that enables queers who suffer from hateful hegemonic heteropatriarchy share a sense of belonging via boychild's practice of Butoh.

In *Untitled Lip-Sync 3*, in the beginning of the performance, boychild stands in the middle of the stage with their body covered in white and a piece of fabric covering their legs tied to their waist. Their body echoes a ghost as blue light strikes their body in the dark. There are red lines on their face that seem like tears. They also emit red light into their mouths. This red light and tears create the impression of blood as the blue light, shadows, darkness and red lights are commingled into each other. In the middle of performance, they take off the fabric and turns into a naked silhouette which cannot be figured out whether they exist materially on the stage or not,

whether this silhouette is a man or machine, dead or alive, human or non-human. Through the practice of Butoh, indiscernible monstrous figure of boychild turns into “a body without organs, which is continually dismantling the organism, causing asignifying particles or pure intensities to pass or circulate, and attributing to itself subjects that it leaves with nothing more than a name as the trace of an intensity” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 4). The most distinct argument coming out of this performance is the fact that the non-normative inorganic revengeful monstrous figure as if they are in the form of Deleuze and Guattari’s “molecular multiplicity” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 30) remains thirsty to eradicate the formation of any organic normative entity.



Figure 20 BOYCHILD - #UNTITLED LIPSYNC 3



Figure 21 BOYCHILD - #UNTITLED LIPSYNC 3

The anguish and pain that boychild possess through the dance of darkness, Butoh, coincide with trans rage. It can be argued that through their movements, in an abstract way, they struggle with the conceptual invisible structures of the hegemonic culture. The main reason why boychild's trans body is perceived as a monster can be regarded as the hetero-patriarchal hegemonic culture. Kazuo Ohno states "when I dance [...] I carry all the dead with me" (Fraleigh, 2010, p. 2-3). As it is discussed in the previous chapter, Muñoz also proposes a ghostly intergenerational figure coming from the past and sneaking around the present time to negotiate negativity as a queer strategy. Muñoz also proposes to carry the dead with them into the battle as Ohno does when he performs Butoh. Boychild's ghostly figure, like Cassils', Ohno's and Muñoz's ghostly figures carries dead into their performative stage as a resistive strategy to fight with the burdens and the fixity of present time, to destroy it and to suspend its order. Boychild refuses to be erased by the hegemonic system. They acknowledge that the system sees their non-normative body as a monster. Even if they suffer, they embrace the monster inside them, per se. Boychild contends that "I wouldn't say that I'm aiming to make dark work, but with a reflection of light and

bliss, comes darkness and sorrow. Without sorrow joy wouldn't taste so sweet" (All About the Boychild, 2013). As Halberstam explains in 'Dance of Darkness' event, Tatsumi Hijikata calls this dance as criminal, criminal against repressive state apparatuses. Thus, Butoh practiced by boychild may be the dance of pain and darkness, but as an aesthetic concern, resisting rather than disappearing in the darkness, being destructive, adopting criminality by crushing the order imposed by power mechanism, institutions, and heteropatriarchy can be perceived as an anarchist resistance.

4.4 The Monstrous Body

Boychild's character has a cyborgian monstrous aesthetic. In interview Magazine, "it's like the physical body turning into a cyborg" (Small, 2014) claims boychild to place themselves in Haraway's cyborgian world. White lenses, white paint covering the whole body, shaved head, led lights coming out of their mouth and hands, blue light that depicts them as a hologram in the *Untitled Lip-Sync 3* performance, the geometric shapes they draw on their body in their performance in Rifflandia, the silhouette that appears in the dark with the lights reflected from behind at the Off Festival, when all of these come together, boychild finds a place in the cyborgian world of Haraway. It can be said that the monstrous character presented in these performances is a liminal creature. Since boychild's existence on the stage becomes questionable via the usage of paint, lights and shadows, their monster appears in the form of one of Haraway's "cyborgs, hybrids, mosaics, chimeras" (Haraway, 2016, p. 60). It stands still on the stage as a body which is rampageous, revengeful, destructive and criminal "cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism (Haraway, 2016, p. 5). Their existence as a cyborg remains "oppositional, utopian,

and completely without innocence” (Haraway, 2016, p. 9). Thus, this cyborg as a queer becoming “is not simply a being but a doing for and toward the future” and its “queerness is essentially about rejection of here and now and insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility of another world” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 1), a cyborgian world.



Figure 22 Rifflandia 2013



Figure 23 OFF Festival 2013

“Bring something incomprehensible to the world” Deleuze and Guattari argue (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 378). This seems to be the most concordant

explanation for boychild's aesthetics. Their body seems to be unknown. There is mindset that refuses to be known in boychild's character. Boychild supposedly concerns about radical uncertainty. Judith Butler regards that gender is performative and actually what she wants to say is the fact that culture speaks through our bodies. As discussed in the previous chapter, as a result of the transgender experience being compressed into cultural norms, the recognition of these individuals through binary gender can help us understand Butler's gender is performative phrase (Butler, 2016). Transgenderism, as it was discussed, craves for visibility under certain forms of gendered definitions like 'man' and 'woman' but like Cassils, boychild also resists the idea that trans individuals must have a legit body and have to choose a binary to be recognized by the society. Boychild prefers illegibility over gendered embodiment and reflect this stance through their art.

Susan Stryker in her article "My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix" (2006) likens transgender body to Frankenstein and argues "like the monster, I am too often perceived as less than fully human due to the means of my embodiment; like the monster's as well, my exclusion from human community fuels a deep and abiding rage in me that I, like the monster" (Stryker, 2006, p. 245).

Adopting the monster quality attributed by the community to Stryker's body, she reclaims the phobic discourse directed towards the trans body with this definition because "[b]y embracing and accepting them, even piling one on top of another, we may dispel their ability to harm us" (Stryker, 2006, p. 246). After that point, she directs Frankenstein's rage to a place where the transgender rage overlaps.

Transgender rage turns into Stryker's survival strategy because she has to challenge natural order and tackles it in order to survive as subject. Stryker's adoption of the

monster, which is the outcome of the phobic discourse, and the battle against this mindset over its monster, coincides with Muñoz's disidentification concept. Muñoz argues that "[d]isidentification is meant to be descriptive of the survival strategy the minority subject practices in order to negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship" (Muñoz, 1999, p. 4). As a disidentificatory practice, boychild always sees their trans body as it is inherent to their artistic works (All About the Boychild, 2013) and they completely release the monster residing in their trans body.

In the performance²¹ actualized at Moma PS1 in 2014 as a part of a Korakrit Arunanondchai's exhibition, boychild unleashes their inner otherworldly chimerical monstrous in-between body. Performance starts in a dark shadowy place resembling foggy and nebulous post-apocalyptic landscape. Performance hall resembles a rotten abandoned derailed landscape as if there is a giant swamp with a messy vegetation in the middle of the stage. All the life forms in that landscape seem to be out of control and they remain amalgamated and immersed in that disintegrated place without any touch, arrangement and intervention. In the middle of that swamp, in the middle of that uncanny landscape, boychild stands upright as if they reclaim their monstrosity and move haphazardly order accompanied by distorted sounds. Boychild also appears to be part of that vegetation. They are half naked. The piece of fabric around their legs is shattered. The whole body is covered with messy paints. They appear like a creature that has not yet been fully embodied because of the visual effect of sticky paint running through their body. Although all these descriptions look quite

²¹ TheMuseumofModernArt. (2014, July 3). *KORAKRIT ARUNANONDCHAI | Sunday Sessions* [Video File]. Retrieved from [http:// https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4WkrZFrfSI](http://https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4WkrZFrfSI)

dark and grotesque, it can be argued that this monstrous creature of boychild actually symbolizes potentiality in this messy vegetation. Deleuze and Guattari contend that “an assemblage is [...] a multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections. There are no points or positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree, or root” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 8). All life forms that exist there, including boychild, become coalesced and form an assemblage, a multiplicity. Each of them enters into a continuous process of becoming as different heterogeneous entities. Since organic and inorganic heterogeneous “entities, particles, and elements come together” on the stage, boychild’s performative space remains as an assemblage “not as objects meeting but as multiplicities emerging from interactions” (Puar, 2007, p. 294). Hence, boychild’s performance with all its dark, uncanny, shaky and trembling environment accompanied by monstrous figure of boychild practice a utopian move because, for Muñoz, disidentificatory performances have world-making power. Boychild’s assemblage with messy vegetation and their emergence out of that swamp is like the symbol of an imagined and desired utopian new life which is outside the heteronormative “prison house” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 1).



Figure 24 Moma PS1 (2014) Korakrit Arunanondchai's exhibition



Figure 25 Wu Tsang's The Looks (2018)

4.5 Conclusion

Through their performances, body, movement, dance, lip-sync, and all the other elements that create their monstrous hybridity, let boychild frees themselves from the burdens of language. They state:

It's really about creating or evoking certain emotions that I can't with words, which has always been a very difficult way to precisely tell a story [...]. It's like this language that I had inside of me to explain these emotions in a way that words couldn't" (Kane, 2014).

As it is inferred by their own statement, emotions, words, ideas, etc. speaks through boychild's body. Boychild's body becomes a medium to express, to criticize, to affect, to imagine, to desire, to build, to destroy, or any other infinite to does.

"[Performance] is my way of interpreting it while being sentimental, but also, emotional, powerful, and critical" (Small, 2014) says boychild and this statement briefly and remarkably explains the power of performance. Boychild's performative space becomes a shared space for queers to experience the world they desire. As a final remark, in Wu Tsang's video work *The Looks* exhibited at 'Strange Days: Memories of the Future' event in 2018, the whole body of boychild is covered with a colorful mirror-like surface consisting of multiple fragments. They, with their polished fragmentary and disintegrated look "as vivid as it is necessary" as if they are a shamanic healer living in a queer utopian world where queers "come together, embodied and passionate, to share experiences of meaning making" (Dolan, 2005, p. 1). Thus, boychild like Cassils uses their body and performative space as a medium so as to present non-normative trans experiences to let the audience envisage a queer time and place. With the notion of drag they build; the movements, dance, Butoh; the nonlinear time that they follow; and the monstrous body they embrace, boychild conceptually suspends the formation of hetero-familial normative spatio-temporalities and turns their performative space into an imaginative and utopian queer fantasy land for both boychild and queers. In the following chapter, this thesis discusses the performance practices of Marval A Rex who aims to problematize oppressive formations of heteropatriarchal capitalist system such as gender binarism, hegemonic masculinity and trans masculinity.

CHAPTER V

MONSTROUS MASCULINITIES: PERFORMING COUNTERSEXUALITY

“Pick up the dildo and write your way out of History.”

—Jack Halberstam, *Countersexual Manifesto’s* Foreword

5.1 Introduction

To conceptualize the importance of ephemera and gesture in performance art, Muñoz argues:

Ephemeral evidence is rarely obvious because it is needed to stand against the harsh lights of mainstream visibility and potential tyranny of the fact. (Not all facts are harmful, but the discourse of the fact has often cast antinormative desire as bad object.) Ephemera are the remains that are often embedded in queer acts (Muñoz, 2009, p. 65).

For him, ephemera and gestures “signal a refusal of a certain kind of finitude” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 65). His ephemeral utopian performative notion is inspired by Giorgio Agamben’s concept of “a means without an end” as an intervention to totalitarian politics via placing them into “a performative doing, a perpetual becoming” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 100). This utopian performatives also prioritize amateurism because Muñoz sees a potential in this political aesthetic practice that stands against the concept of totality. For his body and artistry, Marval A Rex claims

that “as a queer body [...] We, my work and I, are quasi together—I need my work to sustain my subjectiveness, they their objectiveness, and in this tension we simultaneously assume each other. And dissolve” (Deliberations of a Cyborg-aeon). Based on this argument, Marval’s trans body and art can be perceived as an unfinished project that does not desire to be completed or even refuses to be completed. His body and art allow for an ephemeral loss.

As Marval states in an interview with *VoyageLA*, he was born in Salt Lake City, Utah. He was raised as girl or mother’s princess as he call himself and says:

As a child, I had a mahogany bowl cut and watched the Mormon Bishop’s wife’s cat devour a large moth in their mansion on the mountainside. It was Utah in the ‘90s. Mormonism reigned supreme; the conservatism was thick in the air, the quality of which is still some of the worst in the country (look it up it often beats LA for worst air!). As a gender non-conforming creature I both literally and figuratively struggled to breathe. (Meet Marval A Rex, 2019)

As an individual who grew up in a conservative heteronormative family and failed to exist in the norms of the body he was born in, Marval is able to survive these stifling experiences through his art. Via his art practices, he problematizes the concept of gender identity and heteronormativity. Marval’s non-normative trans body is a part of his art and he uses it as a medium to blur normative binary perceptions caused by gendered power mechanisms. He locates his performances as “a political act” and states that “I’m building my own reality, asserting that I am and I am here. It’s a political act as a weirdo queerdo self-oculting tranny—to assert that I exist” (Invisible Archives,²² 2019). As Marval emphasizes, his performance acts are a queer world-making practices, in which he reclaims his and other queer individuals own non-normative existence. What is more, Marval’s artistic history begins with

²² Arce, V. (August, 2019) Issue 4: Marval A Rex. Retrieved from <https://www.goodbyebooks.org/la-2.html>

sculpture. Based on his background, he perceives himself as a sculpture and builder (Invisible Archives, 2019). Like Cassils, he is an artist who constantly transforms, builds, unbuilds, rebuilds etc. his own body and queer space.

This chapter consists of three sections. The first part focuses on masculinity. This part begins with Raewyn Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity and discusses how fixed and problematic codes of masculinity affect the trans experience. In light of exclusionary masculinist approach, this part examines Marval's *WET: Performing Utopia-Z23* (2019) performance to argue that the artist dismantles the codes, offers a non-normative identity and body and lets queers imagine a spatio-temporal world outside of hetero-patriarchal codes via his performative space and acts. In the second part, this thesis presents the concept of non-normative, ambiguous and incomprehensible trans body over Marval's performances *Marval A Fuck*²⁴ (2018), *Marval A Fuck 2.0*²⁵ (2018) and *Rex Laps*²⁶ (2019) based on his self-declaration as cyborg. This part argues that this cyborg figure can conceptually carry the potential of eradicating the existence of a binary gendered body. In the final part, the performances *Marval A Fuck*, *Marval A Fuck 2.0* and *Marval A Virgin*²⁷ (2018) are examined as a formation of queer time and place under the name of dildotopia that Marval builds via his monstrous existence. This utopian world is aesthetically and conceptually imagined as a world full of dildos. This is a disorganized, messy, dirty

²³ Retrieved from <http://marvalarex.com/heat>

²⁴ Retrieved from <http://marvalarex.com/heat>

²⁵ Marval A Rex. (2018, October 1). *NYC Unspeakables* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=We9_9ACRHFw

²⁶ Marval A Rex. (2019, April 12). *REX LAPS* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kId_LGrFk08

²⁷ Retrieved from <http://marvalarex.com/heat>

and abject world and it has the potential of suspending the formation of heteronormative time and place.

5.2 Masculinity in Crisis: WET: Performing Utopia Z

Hegemonic masculinity, for Connell, takes its roots from Antonio Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony which is the examination of class system organization. It is basically a critique of social and cultural elements that a certain community assume and preserve to dominate a space in the society. Inspired by this notion, Connell, in her book *Masculinities*, defines hegemonic masculinity "as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Connell, 2005, p. 77). According to Connell's gender theory, masculinity has many variables. Differences such as history, time, society, culture, and the individual itself can lead to many masculinity identities. Within those multiple masculinities, hegemonic masculinity prevails male domination and classifies being woman or femininity as a characteristic that need to be oppressed. Hegemonic masculinity marginalizes a group of men or identities by creating oppressive norms, even though its definition seems basically like the subordination of women. Hegemonic masculinity makes a sharp distinction between femininity and masculinity and essentially dominates all identities that can fall into the category of feminine (Connell, 2005). Mike Donaldson, in his article "What Is Hegemonic Masculinity?", explains hegemonic masculinity as:

A culturally idealized form, it is both a personal and a collective project, and is the common sense about breadwinning and manhood. It is exclusive, anxiety-provoking, internally and hierarchically differentiated, brutal, and violent. It is pseudo-natural, tough, contradictory, crisis-prone, rich, and socially sustained (Donaldson, 1993).

In westernized societies, this exclusive idealized privileged form of masculinity is mainly the projection of white, heterosexual and middle-class men (Connell, 2005).

The wearing effects of hegemonic masculinity can also be tracked in trans experiences. This essentialist identity formation ignores and even tries to destroy trans individuals and their complex identities. As it is discussed in the introductory chapter, this exclusionary hegemonic masculinity is an outcome of heteropatriarchy which is the core of straight spatio-temporalities. Within the logic of reproductive heteronormativity, transgender people are excluded from a great part of social life, they are exposed to discrimination, violence and even murder since their bodies do not meet the codes determined by the heteronormative society. Hegemonic public space “belongs to men—heterosexual men, to be more precise. Entrance into the public sphere is secured through the enactment of a sanctioned gender identity, preferably within the context of a heterosexual dyad” (Namaste, 2006, p. 589). The system has more power to speak on their own bodies than trans people have. Trans people are forced to put their bodies in certain gendered forms in order to be recognized and accepted by society. If they want to be recognized and accepted in order not to be excluded from the society, they should follow one of the binary genders and receive the necessary medical treatment (Spade, 2006, p. 317). As depicted in this argument, public space and private space are shaped through genders and supported by a hetero-patriarchal hegemonic understanding. In such an exclusionary system, a transgender person is perceived as a threat in society, especially if this individual has not completed the transition process. Viviane K. Namaste argues that “the definition of public space is intimately linked to culturally sanctioned gender identities” and thus “for people who live outside normative

sex/gender relations” (Namaste, 2006, p. 598). As Namaste explains, those hegemonic spaces becomes a site that is open to abuse, assault, violence and crime. Hence, the non-normative bodies, who do not want to be expended by this system, either are annihilated by the system or follow a binary gender and lead an invisible life and neither option offers a solution for these bodies to exist.

As a trans individual, Marval problematizes binary gendered system created by white masculinist heterosexual exclusionary domination via his performances. Marval was also a body trapped in this hegemonic system in the past. As mentioned above, Marval was brought up as a girl in the childhood; he felt the primary entrapment in a girl’s body, and then second entrapment comes after he decided to change his gender since he has to turn his body into a fully masculine man’s body. In both conditions, it can be said that Marval is stuck in a normative body fed by holistic mindset. He argues that “I felt trapped for so long, and I see how many various kinds of people are also trapped by a subjectivity placed upon them at birth” (Meet Marval A Rex, 2019). For Marval, within the transgender experience, when one passes as male, “being perceived as male and having to negotiate what that means in relationship to fascism, violence, and physically-oriented cruelty is complicated” (Invisible Archives, 2019). The complexities he experienced on masculinity due to the codes that society attribute to the male identity, all of which are the results of hegemonic masculinist patriarchal system.

His performance art practices complicate and resist against this hegemonic system. He argues that “my performance art is a form of celebratory resistance against the layers of the common paradigm of ‘realness’. This paradigm is characterized by

patriarchal oppression, analytical hegemony” (Deliberations of a Cyborg-aeon). He aims to problematize “notions of a gender binary, essentialism, and gender essentialism” (Invisible Archives, 2019). He rejects to be recognized under the definitive norms that are specified by the heteronormative system because he is aware of the fact that this system restricts the formation of alternative bodies and tends to erase those bodies since those bodies suspend the functioning of the capitalist system (Stryker, 2008). What the system cares about is not that individuals have the desired bodies and orientations, but that its own reproductive order can last. It never allows the formation of alternative and authentic bodies in order to sustain this order. However, Marval’s performances are like the practice of breaking the codes determined by the hegemonic system. He argues:

I have to navigate the dizzying complexities of passing as a cisgender man. It is complex for me. I know the whole gender system is corrupt, and I push against the codifier of trans too. [...] I am interested in a radically different system(s)– based on an entirely different notion of subjectivity” (Meet Marval A Rex, 2019).

As it is understood from his argument, he sees that the whole gender system is dubious and he tries to dismantle, transform, rebuild the boundaries served by this hegemonic masculinist system. Even though Marval may seem to reflect a trans masculinity experience, it presents a selfhood built by himself outside of the restrictive and oppressive codes offered to trans men. He states “I find that my presentation of trans masculine identity is not necessarily familiar, popular, [...] Society doesn’t seem to know much about trans men/trans masculinities at this juncture, and I directly seek to change that” (Invisible Archives, 2019). Thus, the trans masculine identity offered by Marval via his performative acts is far from the society’s assumptions and it allows queer individuals to rethink that there may be identities outside the norms and ways of existence.

WET: Performing Utopia Z is organized by Marval as a collective live performance series including multiple self-identified queer artists who are working with clay at a ceramic conference in the USA. In the performance of Marval, a bust of a male figure made of clay is placed on a white column. Throughout the performance, Marval sings Shitkid's *Never Seen a Girl*²⁸, dances in Butoh style, and then shaves his head and pussy²⁹. As performance progresses, Marval starts to interact with the white male clay bust. He distorts the form of the male face while dancing, then hooks himself to the bust with a needle and string like a fish hooked by a fishing rod and continues to perform until the clay bust keels over. Overall, in the performance, Marval aspires to queer the "notions of time, space, subjecthood, objecthood, and overall existential anxiety" (Meet Marval A Rex, 2019).

Marval's practice of eradicating the clay male bust figure is an anarchitectural intervention that conceptually suspends the domination of hegemonic masculinity. Just as Cassils destroying the form of block clay in *Becoming an Image* performance, Marval also eradicates the clay male bust in this performance. As examined in Cassils' performance, this unbuilding process can be perceived as an anarchitectural intervention. In Halberstam's article *Unbuilding Gender: Trans* Anarchitectures In and Beyond the Work of Gordon Matta-Clark*, Halberstam compares the buildings and bodies, especially the trans body. Hegemonic is the architectural one for Halberstam, and "queer/trans*/feminist activist" interventions to this hegemony are anarchitectural (Halberstam, 2018). He argues:

²⁸ Shitkid - Konu. (2017, June 1). *Never Seen a Girl* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yoadZkPIDuw>

²⁹ Marval's uses of the word is pursued here.

We must destroy both the woman in the building and the building in the woman. In so doing we can begin to reimagine the (re)constructed body as it intersects the coordinates of gender, the social constructions of identity, and the familiar contours of the built environment (Halberstam, 2018).

Based on this argument, Marval destroys the male image of that structure, which is architectural and hegemonic. Other elements that interact with the male clay bust during this destruction also allow imagination and construction of a new identity, as Halberstam argues. During this destruction, Marval is naked and shaving his head and pussy. As he symbolically and conceptually transform his body's physical appearance, this act of Marval can also be regarded as a reflection of the construction of a new identity. In the process of building this new identity, the song *Never Seen a Girl*, which Marval sings, seems like an additional layer that makes a reference to the body that hegemonic society is not familiar with. Marval builds his own non-normative gender as he dismantles the clay's gendered form and thus, "as new genders have been formed, old genders have also been destroyed (Halberstam, 2018).



Figure 26 WET: *Performing Utopia Z* (2019)



Figure 27 WET: Performing Utopia Z (2019)

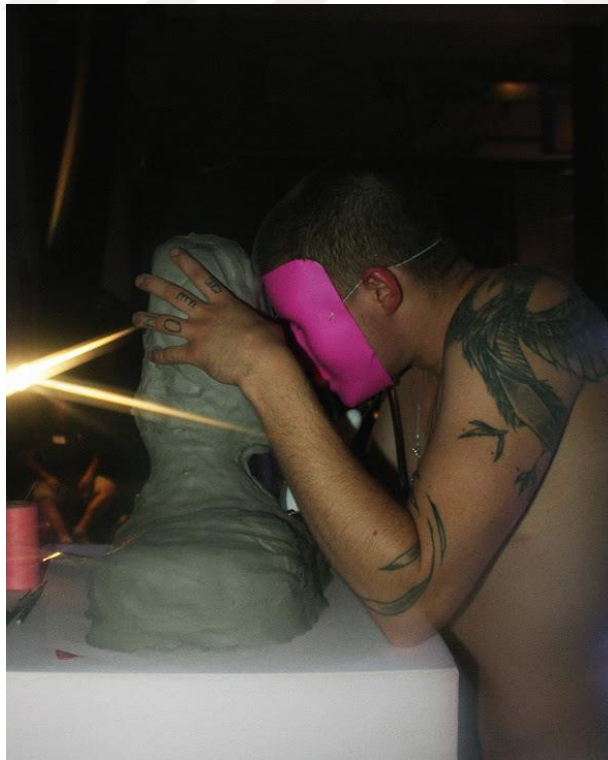


Figure 28 WET: Performing Utopia Z (2019)



Figure 29 WET: Performing Utopia Z (2019)

It is a disidentificatory practice for Marval to hook himself up to the clay male bust and make himself look like a conceptually hooked body by hegemonic masculinity. Pulling the bust, which he attaches himself with strings and making the bust topple over, can be interpreted as the projection of Marval or a trans masculine body being trapped by masculinity. By destroying the figure, Marval actually disidentifies with the codes of dominant masculinity. Marval cracks “open the code of the majority” and through disidentification process, he “use[s] this code as a raw material for representing a disempowered politics or positionality that has been rendered unthinkable by the dominant culture” (Muñoz, 1999, p. 31). This practice can be perceived as minoritarian subjects’ interpretation of the oppression applied by the dominant majoritarian hetero-patriachal system. According to Muñoz, the purpose of this disidentificatory practice is not to destroy the existence of dominant culture, but on the contrary, “like a melancholic subject holding onto to a lost object, a

disidentifying subject works to this object and invest a new life” (Muñoz, 1999, p. 12). He associates melancholic subject with invisible queers who are excluded by majoritarian culture and refers to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s (1993) affect theory on shame. Muñoz suggests that shame can be used as a potential element for queer performativity. Sedgwick argues:

The forms taken by shame are not distinct ‘toxic’ parts of a group or individual identity that can be excised; they are instead integral to and residual in the processes by which identity itself is formed. They are available for the work of metamorphosis, reframing, refiguration, transfiguration (Sedgwick, 1993, p. 13).

As Sedgwick points out, being hooked by masculinity and suffering from its oppression do not have to be entirely toxic parts of a trans masculine identity. Negative feelings are also the aspects that individuals experience during the formation of an identity. Marval recalls hegemonic, oppressive and masculinist negative aspects of the identity that form him, recalls the harmful parts of the experience coming from the past, and performs those aspects, removes the suffering, and destroys the codes of the oppressive masculinity. Thus, he actually disidentifies with the codes of hegemonic masculinity.



Figure 30 Wet: Performing Utopia Z (2019)

Marval's interaction with the male bust, the attempt to disrupt the former prior form of both himself and the male bust throughout the performance, the choice of not having a linear sequence in the performance, when all of these are considered together, it can be argued that his performance can be regarded as a process of becoming in a Deleuzian sense. While Muñoz discusses stages as a utopian space, as it is also referred to at the beginning of the chapter, he sees the utopian performative

acts fed by amateurism as a nonlinear process or a process without a beginning or an end, evaluating this process “as a performative doing, a perpetual becoming” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 100). This approach resonates with Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of becoming since Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizomatic way of thinking concentrates not on fixed entities and identities but on “dynamic flux of life” (Colebrook, 2002, p. xix). Deleuze and Guattari advocate that every subject remains in a constant process of transformation without any predetermined goal. A line of becoming, for Deleuze and Guattari, never entails a certain definitive and stable point but it always remains in one point which is in-between per se. They assert:

A line of becoming has neither beginning nor end, departure nor arrival, origin nor destination; to speak of the absence of an origin, to make the absence of an origin the origin, is a bad play on words. A line of becoming has only a middle. The middle is not an average; it is fast motion, it is the absolute speed of movement. A becoming is always in the middle; one can only get it by the middle. A becoming is neither one nor two, nor the relation of the two; it is the in-between, the border or line of flight or descent running perpendicular to both. If becoming is a block (a line-block), it is because it constitutes a zone of proximity and indiscernibility, a no-man’s-land, a nonlocalizable relation (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 293).

If this argument of Deleuze and Guattari is addressed in the context of Marval’s performance, it can be claimed that Marval is involved in a process of becoming with all the elements with which he interacts. He firstly enters into a process of becoming with the male clay bust. Both Marval and the clay lose their former static forms through this encounter. Marval loops and sings *Never Seen a Girl* and dances in Butoh style which has repetitive incomprehensible movements as it is presented in the previous boychild’s performances chapter. In her book *Gilles Deleuze*, Claire Colebrook explains the repetitive quality that inherently exists in the process of becoming and explains that “repetition is not the re-occurrence of the same old thing over and over again; to repeat something is to begin again, to renew, to question, and to refuse remaining the same” (Colebrook, 2002, p. 8). As the song repeats, the

clay's form deteriorates; Marval shaves his head and pussy; clay's traces defiles Marval's body; Butoh kills all gendered definitions given to the clay or Marval's body as a dance of death. Every elements in the performance "becomes perpetual, without aim or destination, without departure or arrival", constitute rhizomatic parts of the process of becoming and Marval moves away from heteronormative order's fixed boundaries (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 353).

5.3 Cyborgian Trans body

Susan Stryker, in her article "My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix" (2006) states:

The transsexual body is an unnatural body. It is the product of medical science. It is a technological construction. It is flesh torn apart and sewn together again in a shape other than that in which it was born. In these circumstances, I find a deep affinity between myself as a transsexual woman and the monster in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*" (Stryker, 2006, p. 245).

Hence, she equates the trans body, which undergoes a gender reassignment process via medical and technological interventions, with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* that comes to life via a series of scientific operations. Stryker not only likens her body to *Frankenstein's* body and embraces this monstrous embodiment for scientific reasons, but also because *Frankenstein* is excluded by the society just as trans body. The correlation between *Frankenstein* and Stryker or trans people who undergo a body modification process is also valid for Marval's trans body. In his performances, Marval also exhibits scientifically modified parts of his trans body—his chest either half naked or fully naked, by embracing the monster in him so as to allow the existence of non-normative selfhoods. He embodies the hatred directed to his non-normative body, rejects to be recognized with the codes of heteronormative body and presents this monstrosity via his performative space.

This creature who inhabits Frankenstein's monstrous elements in his body, Marval, like the other two performance artists this thesis deals with, also comes from Haraway's cyborgian world. Haraway, to conceptualize her manifesto, argues that "gender, race, or class consciousness is an achievement forced on us by the terrible historical experience of the contradictory social realities of patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism" (Haraway, 2016, p. 16). Her half imaginary, half realistic essay allows reader to imagine a different world for cyborgs who live in a postgender world. Via offering this inorganic unnatural creature, she criticizes the classical western ontology which depends on the perception of totality, essentialism, unity, fixation, etc. Her non-normative cyborg rejects the formation of any organic relationship. If this perception is read through the lens of queer theory, it can be argued that this creature "is uncoupled from organic reproduction" (Haraway, 2016, p. 6) and "does not dream of community on the model of the organic family" (Haraway, 2016, p. 9). With the cyborg figure she created, Haraway suggests an identity prioritizing self-fashioning that can be managed without following the norms in order to avoid discrimination in the society.

"Modern medicine is also full of cyborgs, of couplings between organism and machine (Haraway, 2016, p. 6) to let Marval enter into her monstrous land. Donna Haraway presents her cyborg as a chimera and contends that this figure consists of "hybrids of machine and organism" (Haraway, 2016, p. 7). Her cyborg is "a condensed image of both imagination and material reality" (Haraway, 2016, p. 7). Marval in his performative website questions his existence in this world and states as such:

Myself a gender-fucker/cyborg-aeon— a sexy synthetic individual— I wonder again: how do I effectively expose the collective anxiety of human/natural melding with cyborg/synthetic? [...] I'm intent on queerfully expanding these fears until they implode on themselves. This is where the Cyborg inserts itself (Deliberations of a Cyborg-aeon).

Haraway's definition of cyborg resonates with Marval's cyborg-self. Via his scientifically modified and almost naked body in his performances, he turns into a cyborg. To add another layer to his monstrous state, in an interview with Invisible Archives (2019), he tells a story: in his childhood, he likes reading comics and identifies himself with x-men characters. When he thinks about those mutants, he finds a resemblance between trans individuals and x men. In the forms of cyborg, mutant or Frankenstein, in his performative space, Marval's non-normative trans body becomes the epitome of anarchicist resistance since it blurs the boundaries between "natural vs artificial ontology: human vs cyborg, straight vs queer, white vs black, cis vs trans" as Marval states (Deliberations of a Cyborg-aeon).

Jasbir Puar, in her article *Disability*, refers to Deleuze and Guattari's ideas on transsexuality by arguing that their "use of 'transsexuality' opens to a fluid spectrum of possibility: trans as a motion, not an identity, and trans as a continuum of intensity, not identity" (Puar, 2014, p. 80). The concept of becoming destabilizes the notion of being and the construction of power that comes with it because becoming "misconstrues the nature of organizations of power, which are in no way located within a State apparatus" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 8). Becoming does not allow stability and renders the molar subject fluid and indeterminate via deterritorialisation and reterritorialises the subject as a "molecular nonidentity, extending beyond the limits of dominant corporeal and conceptual logic" (Garner, 2014, p. 30). To explain the notion of becoming, Colebrook further argues that via "disruptions, breaks, new

beginnings and monstrous births”, new becomings can be achieved (Colebrook, 2002, p. 57). Hence, the monstrous trans body, which can undergo a constant transformation, can be evaluated through the lens of the process of becoming. Within this light, transgender studies in general can be a productive way of approaching the concept of becoming because “queering produces becomings that go beyond normative couplings to invent new connections” (Conley, 2009, p. 25). Within this logic, Marval’s trans body can also be perceived as a part of a process of becoming since it is transformed through unnatural and inorganic interventions, by being the opposite of the original and natural body which is achieved through normative and homogeneous couplings. Fournier, in the article “Lines of Flight” (2014), conjoins Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of geophilosophy with the notion of transgenderism and argues:

[This] perspective allows us to navigate gender as a geography, as a landscape, with its gridded plains, its wastelands, its hidden underground; and to perceive gender transition as a move—that is, as a political move, a strategic or tactical move, a move in a game-space—and as movement itself, a displacement between the established plateaus of gender (Fournier, 2014, p. 121).

Through the process of becoming, through transformation and the formation of lines of flight, trans body has “the capacity to deterritorialise, to undo, to free up, to break out of a system or situation of control, fixity, or repression” (Malatino, 2014, p. 138). Thus, it can be argued that Marval’s scientifically modified body has the power to queer and transform his performative space as it sabotages fixity.

In the performance *Marval A Fuck 2.0* as the name of the performance also echoes, Marval likens to a cybernetic entity, Marval is located in a metal tub, with a pink wig on his head, and his whole body covered in pink, white and black paints. A white medical costume hangs on the wall with a pink mask on its head. Marval stands half

naked in the water, in the middle of the tub. As the water touch her wig and body, his painted body and wig get messy. Marval looks anxious, but cold-blooded, like a creature just born. This monstrous creature, its body and the ruined messy performative space are far from being complete. It looks like the creature does not belong any place and time with its whole abject existence, and the costume hanging on the wall suggests that it is part of a scientific inorganic formation. This incomplete and unfixed monstrous creature seems to have come out of the water to build dangerous couplings with different entities in his other performances. In *Rex laps* performance, he crawls on the streets like a reptile on the ground with a plastic inorganic mask on his face and a plastic dildo on his pussy. In the performance *Marval A Fuck*, he covers his whole body with a messy pink paint and wears a pink mask on her face that suspends his identity; this time he puts the dildo on his belly. A piece of a white fabric is carelessly placed around his breasts. There is a binocular symbolizing the hetero-patriarchal gaze directed towards the trans body attached to his underwear. Thus, Marval states “the self is thus a verb rather than a noun; becoming, rather than being. The hauntology of cyborg-aeon. I am a self-iterating cyborg|aeon becoming” to claim his monstrous cyborgness as a landscape of change (Deliberations of a Cyborg-aeon). By using his abject monstrous self as a verb, he draws everything into a process of becoming by transforming, dismantling, building, unbuilding, doing, undoing etc. and what remains is a “perpetual change” (Deliberations of a Cyborg-aeon).



Figure 31 Marval A Fuck 2.0 (2018)



Figure 32 Rex Laps (2019)



Figure 33 Marval A Fuck (2018)

As it is contended in the previous chapters, Muñoz, in *Ghosts of Public Sex*, conceptualizes Derrida's ghost as a utopian entity. He argues "visual effects [...]" as a performance of a familiar yet otherworldly affective function that leaves a certain

ephemeral trace, the appearance of which I am calling the production of ghosts” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 42) and presents Derrida’s hauntology. Derrida introduces this ghostly figure to conceptually deconstruct western ontological understanding which is dialectical and binary. This figure, which is a philosophical element for Derrida, has no origin and history; it comes from the past to destroy already established and fixed notions. Muñoz argues that this figure breaks the binarism between life and death and it is totally disconnected from the type of ontology which prioritizes the discourse of being. For Muñoz, this timeless and spaceless queer ghostly figure comes from the past or retrofuture, echoing queer rage as a practice of haunting heteronormative spatio-temporalities to reimagine what is missing in the here and the now. (Muñoz, 2006). To conceptualize his ghostly figure, Marval argues:

I reluctantly acquiesced to a lifelong affair with the medical industry as I took Depo-Testosterone shots and removed breast tissue. This was 2015, right around the transgender tipping point. Four years later, in the infancy of 2019, I have discovered: I am a strange multiplicity, beyond any one label, and I am ancient... and four years old (Meet Marval A Rex, 2019).

This argument seems like a testimony that Marval sees himself as an anachronistic cyborgian ghostly figure suspending the linear time. Haraway claims that “modern machines are quintessentially microelectronic devices: they are everywhere and they are invisible” (Haraway, 2016, p. 12-13). As Haraway suggests, Marval’s conceptual body, which has no origin and is brought back to life by medical interventions recently, becomes something that can escape from the constraints of linear natural time and space. This figure establishes its own anachronism and disrupts chrononormativity.

Marval states that “I am knowing myself [...] touched by mechanization—hence the term cyborg. Neux is a word that comes to me as an electrochemical prayer when I pain for a utopia of the body. It is a word that can signal newness, a word to haunt

the new” (Deliberations of a Cyborg-aeon). His self-iterating trans cyborg figure channeling Derrida’s ghostly figure is thirsty for a utopian non-normative futurity. Hence, Marval’s monstrous creature comes as a ghost from any time in the past, but its scientifically created cyborgian body seems to belong to the future. This multi-temporal and multi-spatial creature can be regarded as a utopian figure who turns its face toward what has not been experienced and defined so far.

5.4 Claiming Dildotopia

If Marval uses his performative space as an alternative world for his chimerical cyborgian figure, that world’s name can precisely be dildotopia. In his book *Countersexual Manifesto* (2018), Paul Beatriz Preciado claims that the heteropatriarchal system dominates bodies and genitals, emphasizing biological gender differences, identifying organs (vagina and penis) as natural pleasure zones that complement each other and feed on reproductivity with a heterocentric approach. He argues:

Western human nature is a product of social technology that reproduces the equation “nature=heterosexuality” on our bodies, architectures, and discourses. The heterosexual system is an epistemic regime and social apparatus that produces femininity and masculinity and operates by dividing and fragmenting the body: it cuts out organs and generates zones of high sense and motor intensity (visual, tactile, olfactory), which it afterward identifies as natural and anatomic centers of sexual difference (Preciado, 2018, p. 24).

This essentialist and constructivist perspective excludes all other alternative bodies and desire realms. Thus, Preciado offers a new political approach via dildo sexual plasticity— “as something that exceeded contemporary gender politics, something that implied the fabrication of a different regime of sexuality” (Preciado, 2018).

Preciado opens his book by describing the process of writing Marquis de Sade's *The 120 Days of Sodom*. During his imprisonment in Bastille in 1785, Sade writes the book almost in the dark for thirty seven nights, uses the smallest handwriting on both sides of 12-meter piece of paper. He asks "his wife, Renée-Pélagie, to make him a wooden dildo" for the masturbation practice (Preciado, 2018, p. 1) and hides the pages he writes inside this dildo and keeps it inside the prison wall. This script manages to survive inside that dildo in the wall until the early 1900s. Based on Sade's book's survival capacity, it can be argued that "a book can operate like a dildo by becoming a technique for fabricating sexuality" (Preciado, 2018, p. 2) rather than being a tool to keep a secret or keep the book. For Preciado, his book, "too, is a dildo. A dildo-book and a book about dildos that aims to modify the subject who might use it" (Preciado, 2018, p. 2). In *Marval A Fuck* performance, Marval wears the dildo on her stomach and penetrates it into a laptop that is painted in pink and records it with the phone camera attached to his body. In *Marval A Fuck 2.0* performance, the tub in which Marval emerges as a newborn monstrous figure, is surrounded by dildos. In both performances, it seems that the monstrous figure created by Marval is surrounded by dildos. Based on the approaches of Sade and Preciado to the figure of dildo, Marval's performances can also be regarded as dildo because, through his performances, he fabricates an authentic sexuality with the aesthetics he creates in that space.

Like Halberstam approaching queer body as an anarchitectural figure, Preciado also sees body and architecture as two interconnected fields and suggests that if architecture is considered as "a political technology" used for the formation of social space, bodies can also be interpreted "in architectural terms" (Preciado, 2018, p. 3).

Through anarchitecture, Preciado approaches bodies and sexualities as “as specific effects of construction and visual techniques, including framing, collage, replication, imitation, assemblage, standardization, segmentation, spatial distribution, cutting up, reconstruction, transparency, opacity, and so on” (Preciado, 2018, p. 3). According to Preciado, there is no such thing as a sex organs. Organs which people perceive as sexual are not biological constructions or sex via these organs is a natural drive. The heteropatriarchal technological system of domination reduces the living bodies to erogenous zones using the outcomes of gendered power dynamics such as femininity and masculinity (Preciado, 2018). Based on these similarities between architecture and body, it can be said that architecture and anatomy shape binary notions such as “public or private, institutional or domestic, social or intimate, able and disabled” (Preciado, 2018, p. 29). To demolish this binary system of domination, Preciado presents dildo as an anarchitectural intervention and offers the term “dildotectonics”³⁰ (Preciado, 2018, p. 41). Dildotectonic intervention can deconstruct the formation of sexual privilege and authority because it can reshape the heterocentric sexuality depending on natural sexual organs, subordinated vagina and privileged penis (Preciado, 2018). Thus, as an anarchitectural figure, dildo can undo, unbecome, unbuild, destroy, build, rebuild, redo etc. the notion of body.

The dildo has an anarchitectural potential in Marval’s performances since he utilizes dildo while breaking the structure of his body. Dildotectonics, for Preciado, is “a branch of first importance within countersexuality assumes consideration of the body

³⁰ *Dildo = plastic penis Téktón = builder, generator* (Preciado, 2018, p. 41).

as a surface and territory, a site of the dildo's displacement and emplacement” (Preciado, 2018, p. 41). In the *Marval A Fuck* performance, he positions the dildo on his belly and penetrates the laptop with his dildo, ties a piece of a fabric to his breasts as a reflection of a trans masculine body, wears an underwear designed for the penis and fastens a binocular in front of it. When all these elements are brought together, it can be argued that Marval spoils “naturalized sexual practices and gender system” with an anarchitectural intervention (Preciado, 2018, p. 21). In *Marval A Fuck 2.0* performance, there is a dildo in the faucet part of the tub. Another dildo is also placed in front of the tub. During the performance, Marval also retains shaping a piece of clay which resembles a face. He distorts clay's form and also shapes his dildos with the clay. In both performances, Marval implements a deformation, displacement and abnormality practice as suggested by Precido in the dildotectonics. Thus, he conceptually disrupts the perception of “the body-pleasure-profit-body chain of production within straight [...] sexual cultures” via both his indeterminate trans body and the dislocated dildos (Preciado, 2018, 42).



Figure 34 *Marval A Fuck* (2018)



Figure 35 Marval A Fuck 2.0 (2018)



Figure 36 Marval A Fuck 2.0 (2018)

“The dildo is to sex and to the straight systems of representation of genitals what the cyborg is to the nature/culture divide. [...] If the penis (phallus) is the organic embodiment of this hegemonic tradition, the dildo is its cyborg other” argues

Preciado (Preciado, 2018, p. 9). In *Marval A Fuck 2.0* performance, a dildo is attached to the faucet of the tub and the inside of the tub is filled with a pink liquid. Having the dildo where the tap should be and the presence of Marval in the fluid flowing from that dildo makes Marval look like an abject, monstrous and inorganic creature equipped with different sexualities born through that inorganic dildo. This abject symbolic birth happening through dildo adds a new cyborgian existence to Marval's cyborgian creature which has already left organic / inorganic binary behind with his scientifically built trans body.

Based on Haraway's cyborg concept, Preciado sees dildo as a postnaturalist and postconstructivist. Dildo surpasses "life and death, [...] the organic and the machine" (Preciado, 2018, p. 9) binaries. Dildo is beyond the concepts of having and not having. It has nothing to do with being, ontology, essentialism, or the concept of property. It even betrays those concepts. Dildo is not an organic and biological organ, and even if it belongs to someone, it can never be possessed by someone naturally (Preciado, 2018). It "belongs to an economy of multiplicity, connection, sharing, transference, and usage. The dildo refuses to be inscribed into the body to create organic wholeness or identity. It stands on the side of dispossession and nomadism" (Preciado, 2018, p. 7). Marval also inserts the dildo to his body in the performance of *Marval A Fuck*, but does not position it in a sexually coded area of the body. In *Marval A Fuck 2.0* performance, dildo even ceases to be a part of the body, so Marval dispossesses the dildo, problematizes bodily wholeness, organic sexuality and identity.

In one part of *Marval A Fuck 2.0*, Marval is seen in the room with a pink string and entangled all over his body. This action of Marval tying himself to a random object and places, the combination of all different entities via preserving their differences, can be interpreted as a practice of constructing an assemblage. Preciado, in *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era* (2013), claims while describing her act of having sex with her girlfriend with a dildo:

Fucking with her is going back to each knot of my life—the straight girls who kissed me and then left me to go out with cis-guys, the dykes who were disgusted by my dildos; hetero knots, lesbian knots, transphobic knots, androcentrist knots—biting into them until they become undone. I’m her trannie, her monster (Preciado, 2013, p. 331-332).

Accordingly, the fact that Marval’s trans cyborgian monstrous body is entangled with strings may indicate that he is trapped by the phobic exclusionary system like Preciado. However, as a weirdo queerdo self-occulting tranny and a total multiplicity, like Preciado claiming his monstrosity via the act of fucking his girlfriend with a dildo, Marval does not hesitate to exist in his abject dildotopia.

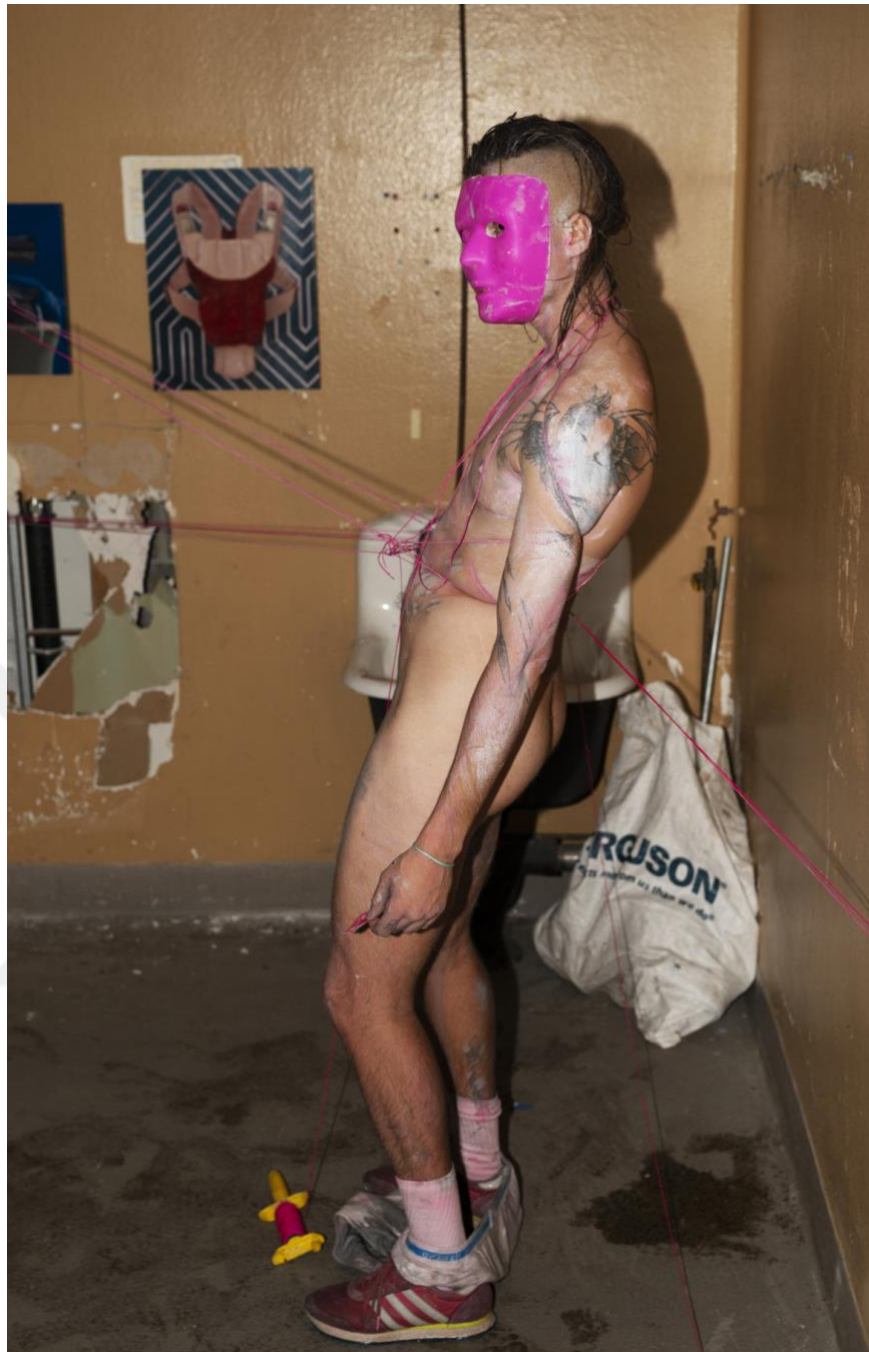


Figure 37 Marval A Fuck 2.0 (2018)

“It’s a performance, it’s its own parody, just as the gender binary is indeed a parody to itself; an ouroboros of artifice” claims Marval in his interview with Invisible Archives (2019). As a disidentificatory practice, Marval parodies gender roles and reidentifies the codes via the messy gender-ambiguous creature he builds. Preciado argues:

The dildo is the truth of heterosexuality as parody. The logic of the dildo proves that the very terms of the heterosexual male/ female, active/passive system are nothing but elements among so many others within an arbitrary signification system. The dildo is the truth of the genitals as a signifying mechanism, against which the penis looks like the false imposture of a domination ideology. The dildo says, 'The penis is a fake phallus.' The dildo shows that the signifier generated by sexual difference has gotten caught in its own trap (Preciado, 2018, p. 70).

Similarly, Muñoz sees disidentification as a way of breaking the code of majoritarian culture and using this code as an element to display the disempowered logic omitted by hegemonic majoritarian culture. Parody as a tool also for Muñoz carries a disidentificatory potential in order to transform the codes (Muñoz, 1999). Primarily, choosing a pink dildo figure in all his performances can be considered as an attempt of parody because this choice of colors makes the dildo away from being an organic signifier of a sexual male organ. Besides, in the performance of *Marval A Virgin*, he paints his body white and wears a pink wig on his head. In the middle of the stage, there is a big ball and a dildo fixed on it. Marval is also tied somewhere with a leash around his neck and tries to reach the dildo. Marval is also tied to an object resembling a ladder with a leash. There are fragile objects on the top of this object. Marval runs around like a creature far from being human, using his hands and feet, tugs himself from leash, and knocks fragile objects on the floor shaking the ladder like object. Then he pulls himself again and approaches the ball with the dildo. At one point, the dildo penetrates his mouth. Marval's body can be seen as a reflection of a body that is controlled and trapped by the hegemonic system. He uses the paint to refer to whiteness, dildo, leash and BDSM-like interactions to establish countersexuality as a parody mechanism and criticizes the hegemonic system's oppressive regulations imposed on bodies. In *MARval A Fuck* performance, he penetrates the laptop with the dildo put on the belly to parody the naturalized sexual

organs. Thus, he uses dildo as an element of parody to suppress the codes of the dominant heteronormative culture.



Figure 38 Marval A Virgin (2019)



Figure 39 Marval A Virgin (2019)

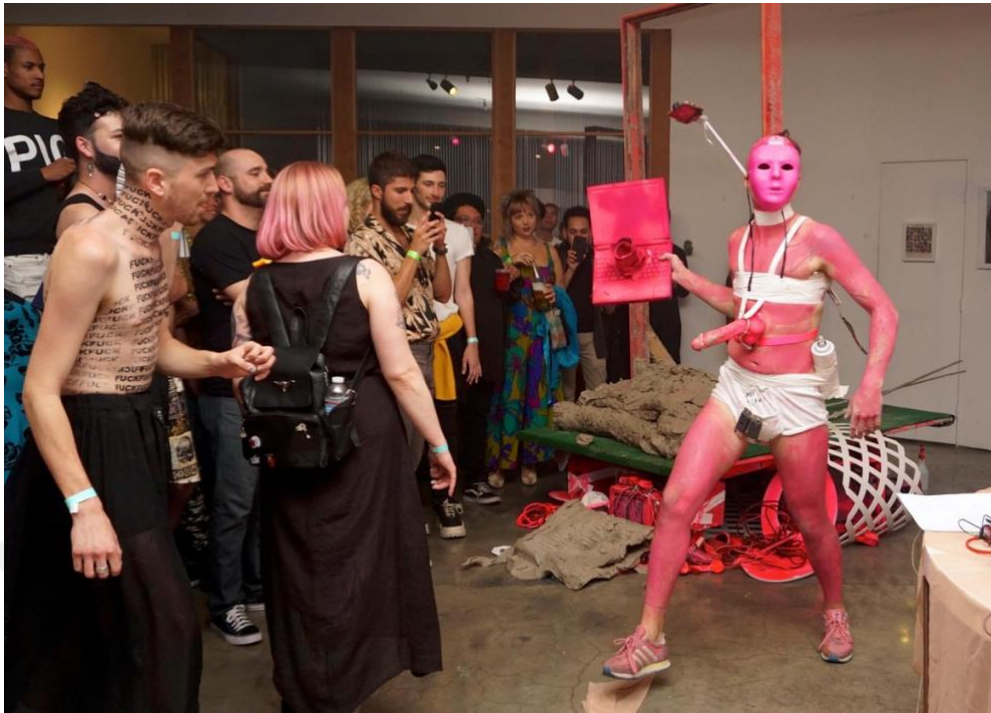


Figure 40 Marval A Fuck (2018)

5.5 Conclusion

Even though he always coped with the traps of the hegemonic patriarchal system in his own body while identity building process, Marval problematizes that system through his self-proclaimed identity and body. He approaches his body as a sculpture like Cassils and draws it into the never-ending anarchitectural process of becoming. He uses the oppressive codes of the domination of hegemonic masculinity over alternative non-normative bodies as a disidentificatory practice, embraces those oppressions and uses them as a weapon to criticize and prevent codes from functioning. In addition, Marval, like the two other artists discussed in this thesis, places cyborgian aesthetics into his performative space and creates a monstrous creature to establish a non-normative queer body outside of the imagination of heteronormativity. He also positions the dildo as an inorganic transformative element to fabricate countersexualities at the core of messy environment he builds via his

monstrous figure. Through all the strategies he uses, Marval, like Cassils and Boychild, suspends the formation of any heteronormative order which adopts a fixed notion and renders queer existence invisible. Thereby, he offers an alternative utopian spatio-temporality to queers as “a way to reinvest our energies in a different future, one full of hope” (Dolan, 2008, p. 2).



CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

“I think the struggle for a bearable life is the struggle for queers to have spaces to breathe...With breathe comes imagination. With breathe come possibility. If queer politics is about freedom, it might simply mean the freedom to breathe.”

—Sarah Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*.

“The courage to hope, like laughter and dance, is an attempt to endure, to persevere, to fight, and to struggle come what may. Nothing can extinguish or crush radical hope no matter what we continue to think critically about, care deeply for, or hope substantively to achieve-and this is the blues shining through the darkness.”

—Cornel West, *Celebrating Tikkun and Tragicomic Hope*

As clarified at the onset of the thesis, the goal of this research has been to awaken the utopian queer spatio-temporal potentials in performance art via Cassils, boychild and Marval A Rex’s selected performances. To achieve this goal, they were analyzed in consideration of queer and philosophical critiques. Placing their performances at the core of this project opened up a space for rethinking the concepts of time and space, and its relation to heteronormativity. Accordingly, this thesis explored how this

exclusionary normative spatio-temporality could be deferred via different aesthetics, strategies and interventions and yet common goals established on the stage.

Jill Dolan believes that utopian performances “enact the affective possibilities of ‘doings’ that gesture toward a much better world” (Dolan, 2008, p. 6) and this better world has nothing to do with representation; for her, utopian world remains as “no place”, refusing to embody a definitive structure (Dolan, 2008, p. 7) since “any fixed, static image or structure would be much too finite and exclusionary for the soaring sense of hope, possibility, and desire that imbues utopian performatives” (Dolan, 2008, p. 7-8). Dolan’s utopia always remains “in process, always only partially grasped, as it disappears before us around the corners of narrative and social experience” (Dolan, 2008, p. 6). “As doings, as process, as never finished” concept, her sense of utopia “gestures toward a potentially better future” (Dolan, 2008, p. 8). In the light of Jill Dolan's utopian performatives perspective, as it is aimed, this thesis arrives at a conclusion that Cassils, boychild and Marval A rex turn performance art into a utopian medium using their bodies, performative spaces, and the objects they engage in. Their bodies, performative acts and spaces, which reject arriving any state of being, articulate a sense of temporality and spatiality that carry a “not-yet-conscious” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 3). This not-yet quality, which rejects any destination and never settled, also calls a Deleuzian process of becoming. Through the process of becoming which they constantly enter into, as a queer strategy, their bodies, identities and performative spaces remain indeterminate and unstable so they can “no longer be attributed to or subjugated by anything signifying” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1978, p. 10). Patricia MacCormack argues that “queer is the pure indeterminate [. . .] unspeakable and unrepresentable, not because queer is aberrant

but because within majoritarian language there are no words” (MacCormack, 2009, p. 139). It would not be wrong to argue that Cassils, boychild and Marval A Rex as unfixed and indefinite entities via their bodies, performative acts and spaces gesture toward a utopian future and “open up new life narratives and alternative relations” (Halberstam, 2005, p. 2) outside of majoritarian hegemonic mindset.

Regarding the corpus of this thesis as the performance artists who use their bodies as their mediums and keep their bodies away from a settled gendered position, this project primarily operates in the modality of queer body/performance art by building upon the earlier queer interventions made into long-established field of body/performance art. The queer body/performance art conceptualized in this thesis emphasizes the constant transformation of the body and the stage. This conceptualized and presented art form operates transformation as a queer strategy and by doing so, it manages to stay away from the traps of gendered and sexualized representation which leads to the exclusion of some identities/bodies cannot be identified with certain static images. In this respect, the world, which queer body/performance art builds, remains utopian because it allows every singular non-normative identity/body to claim its existence. This art form rejects to be stabilized because it acknowledges that “any fixed, static image or structure would be much too finite and exclusionary for the soaring sense of hope” (Dolan, 2008, p. 7-8), for a utopia. In this respect, this thesis approaches performance art as a world-making practice. It pursues an aim of building a queer time and space through performative stages and acts. Thus, by emphasizing the political stance of performance art, for further studies, this thesis provides an insight to students and researchers who have

similar goals by means of creating an emancipatory space for queers who are rendered hopeless in hetero-temporal spaces.

Consequently, by prioritizing the performances of Cassils, boychild and Marval a Rex, this thesis promises an alternative utopian temporal space where queers cannot be rendered invisible. As a final remark, this research is not exhaustive at all; as part of future research vectors, can be enriched by creating a much more multiplicitous territory by adding other performance artists from around the world.



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