

Sons of the Movement: Feminism, Female Masculinity and Female To Male (FTM) Transsexual Men

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ABSTRACT

This article argues that the relation between female-to-male transsexual masculinity, female masculinity and feminism is an underexplored site of politics in the field of gender studies. While FTM transsexual men have been viewed with some suspicion within feminist and lesbian circles, I argue that since FTMs have the potential to offer a unique vantage point on both feminism and masculinity, FTM masculinity instead should be rearticulated as an alternative and pro-feminist embodiment of non-phallic masculinity.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article dénote que la relation entre la transsexualité masculine se femme à homme, la masculinité féminine et le féminisme est un domaine inexploré des politiques dans le domaine des études des sexes. Tandis que l'homme transsexuel (femme à homme) ont été perçus avec un certain doute dans les cercles féministes et lesbiens, je soutiens que puisque les transsexuelles (femme à homme) ont le potentiel d'offrir un point de vue unique sur le féminisme, la masculinité (femme à homme) devrait au lieu être réarticulé comme une alternative et une incarnation pro-féministe de la masculinité non-phallique.

I AM A LESBIAN MAN
(Devor 1997)

*What the paradox was to me in the sphere of
thought, perversity became to me in the sphere of
passion.*
(Oscar Wilde in Dollimore 1991)¹

In my first department meeting as a professor in an unnamed university, one held during a long and very successful academic strike on our campus, the department was attempting to address the gender imbalance amongst its rank of Full Professors. Given that many of the full professors are male, the department was taking the very important step of finding a remedy to this situation. One senior professor (but not full professor), a woman who teaches, amongst other things, feminist theory, made the very curious claim that given how easy it is these days to change one's gender - and this even after Ontario government delisted sex reassignment surgeries - that she would volunteer to do so if it would allow her to help to step into the pay increase that accompanied a full professorship. A friendly round of laughter ensued, in which all seemingly agreed that this was indeed an easy process and the meeting continued. I sat a little dumbfounded that, in the midst of a unionized labour action on the campus, a locale which has been remarkably progressive in its inclusion of trans issues in its mandate, and in the face of both the aggressive delisting of sex reassignment procedures and the sad reality that male professors still outranked the female, white outranking the

professors of colour, any of these matters would be so easily the source of laughter amongst faculty. This work, in part a response to these comments, attempts to look at the most recent current border war in this political conjuncture of feminist theory and activism, as well as trans, queer and gay, lesbian, bisexual and anti-racism social movements.

The title of this paper references Julia Creet's 1991 essay called "Daughters of the Movement: The Psychodynamics of Lesbian S/M Fantasy," a paper which theorized the dynamics of the sex war that raged throughout the 1980s between feminism and sex radicals. These debates, conflicts, and extremely acrimonious battles circulating around questions of feminist sexual practices began, so our mythologies tell us, around several very early events: the publication of *Heresies #12: The Sex Issue* (1981), and the 1982 Barnard College conference entitled *The Scholar and the Feminist IX* (Vance 1989). In fact, Patrick Califia has suggested that the opening missives of the sex wars were fired as early as 1977-1979 in San Francisco (Califa 1982). The sex wars seemed to end shortly after the publication of Judith Butler's paradigm shifting treatise *Gender Trouble*, a text which, again, as our mythologies have it, co-parented the spawn of the sex wars: *Queer Theory* (1990). Creet's paper also made important interventions in these debates, arguing that one of the most consistent tropes in lesbian s/m writing was the motif of the good feminist mother and the "bad" irreverent daughter (Creet 1991). I borrow my title from Creet's work to secure the argument of this paper in a history of feminist acrimony which seems, through even just a cursory look at intellectual and political histories, to be quite productive

rather than futile.

I focus on the most recent border war within feminism/women's studies: that of transsexuality.² But I want to locate both the argument of this essay as well as its content within feminist histories of acrimony. It might seem strange - deliberately evoking a history of tension within the feminist movement - but I think such tensions and, more often not, our *inability* to resolve them rather than our erasure of the conflict, constitute the present and future critical possibilities of feminist scholarship rather than its failure.

In her book, *Am I That Name? Feminism and the Category of "Women,"* Denise Riley makes a similar assertion (1988). Arguing that feminism needs to refuse to locate itself in categorical and essentialist foundations, Riley suggests instead that feminism might entertain the possibility of contingency, indeterminacy and instability as a willful epistemology and politic. Given that these passionate fictions of gender, sexuality, embodiment, class, race, nation, ethnicity are all historically specific and enmeshed with the lived histories of other concepts, as for instance the social, the subject, constructions of power, the mind, the soul, the body, capitalism and economics, then, Riley asks: why does feminism attempt to secure its politics to a fixed and ahistorical essence of gender? Leaving behind the "why" question, Riley and others argue that any strategy that attempts to ensure victory through fixity rather than flexibility cannot win in the long run. If the sex/gender system and its rhetorics of biological determinism work by stabilizing gender essences, then why attempt to build a politic on that same supposed self-evidence of the body? Such corporeal self-evidence is precisely the stakes of the border skirmish under discussion in this paper.

I also evoke the concept of history here for another reason. I want to articulate this work within my own personal history - as a white transsexual man - inside the feminist movement. Like many transsexuals - and despite a panic to the contrary - I come to this current border war with a long feminist history: I came out as a working class lesbian in my last year of high school, 1978. I had found the word lesbian in the very important feminist book *Lesbian Woman* by Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon (1972), and after asking myself "am I that name?," I answered "yes." After a brief stay in Toronto in the late 1980s, I made my way west to Edmonton, Alberta where I spent almost a decade working inside the lesbian feminist movement. My pre-academic resume details much of this work: I worked almost four years with the Edmonton Rape Crisis Centre; I was part of the lesbian caucus of the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee; I organized and took part in far too many Take Back the Night Marches. I was one of a very small group of people to organize and march in Edmonton's first Gay Pride Parade (about 1987: there were seven of us; we walked for a block and then ran for our lives). I've spray painted the sides of more buildings than I care to remember; I took the very first

"Women and Literature" course at the University of Alberta with Professor Shirley Newman; my feminist poster archive includes an original 1979 Toronto IWD poster but also a huge but very battered YES poster which was part of the 1976 American ERA equal rights amendment campaign. I started and sustained through two Edmonton winters a sex worker advocacy group called the Alliance for the Safety of Prostitutes, a group which met, during the coldest winter nights, in the only gay bar in Edmonton. I was "the" out lesbian for many television and radio interviews and published many activist articles, pamphlets and tracts in a variety of feminist and lesbian feminist newspapers and magazines. I've helped build many parts of our activist movement long before I entered university and claim this history quite proudly.

I don't find my home in the word lesbian any longer (although that's often my dating pool) but I want to be very clear that I'm not here - as a transsexual man - knocking at the door of the feminist movement asking to be let in. I have been in, of, and indeed, have been the feminist movement and in my work on masculinity, and in my burgeoning identity as a transsexual man, I continue to wear that banner with a great sense of history and with a great deal of pride, if not frustration some days. I belabour this very personal introduction because I want to make it clear here that instead of imagining that female-to-male transsexual men are inside the Trojan horse when we come to the feminist movement, we need to rethink our movements to understand that trans men are actually inside the belly of the beast when we leave feminist spaces. We are, like many other men, sons of the movement and feminism has much to gain by claiming its masculine progeny.³

That there are triangulated border wars between women's studies, lesbian butches and female to male transsexual men (FTMs) is by now almost cliché. This relation is flagged by the paradox and/or contradiction in the epigraph to my paper: "I am a lesbian man." This, by the way, is not autobiographical; it is borrowed from one of the subjects of Aaron (nee: Holly) Devor's book-length study of *FTM*, where, among other things, conventions of grammar, logic and intelligibility fully break down under the weight of such paradoxes. Devor's strategy of using mixed pronouns to describe the same subjects and of not developing an analysis of her subjects as men has led to some very strange grammatical and discursive constructions, such as "when Johnny was a little girl" or "I am a lesbian man." However, beyond these epistemological limitations of Devor's work, the categorical taxonomies and definitional border wars which condition intelligibility remains, I argue here, undertheorized.⁴ Those border wars within feminism and women's studies over the subjects of what I'm calling No Man's Land - female masculinity, transsexual masculinity and masculinity studies - are, I'm going to argue, absolutely vital, not dangerous, to the future of feminism.

Such a belief - that thinking masculinity (trans or otherwise) in the context of feminism is its undoing - is the grammar of continued feminist scholarship; for instance, Tania Modleski's book, *Feminism Without Women: Culture and Criticism in a 'Postfeminist' Age* (1991). Confusing feminist deconstruction with anti-feminist "postfeminism," Modleski rightly queries the stakes of a deconstructive feminism but wrongly draws conclusions which are, at the very least, trans-phobic in their oversights. Modleski's book is curious. On the one hand, she interrogates the ideologies of texts that proclaim or assume the advent of postfeminism but draws inevitable conclusions when she argues, on the other hand, that these are texts that are instead "engaged in negating the critiques and undermining the goals of feminism - in effect, delivering us back into a prefeminist world" (3). Modleski's invocation of a simultaneous post- and pre-feminism suggests, rhetorically and self-servingly, that feminism hasn't occurred at all yet and supports her assertion that a progressive, theoretically sophisticated and politically effective feminism needs to return to its own limited and historically bound moment of origins, something third wave feminism is attempting to and needs to transcend. This temporality is reiterated in the final sentence of the book: "The postfeminist play with gender in which differences are elided can easily lead us back into our 'pregendered' past where there was only the universal subject - man" (163).

Throughout her readings of texts as varied as the film *Three Men and a Baby*, the phenomenon of Pee-wee Herman as well as male masochism, Modleski never once reads female masculinity, transsexual or transgender politics, or performances like drag kinning for their productive feminist rearticulations of gender. What she accomplishes with her occlusions is the reconsolidation of a gender system that is bound by biological essentialism. Modleski's project is an example of feminist scholarship which, to quote MacDonald:

[O]ften maintain[s] gender systems, albeit "alternative" ones, designed to stand in direct opposition to those of dominant society. [...] One sees [in] them [...] the continued assignment of femininity and masculinity to specific behaviors. (1998, 7)

In fact, the word "transgender" appears only once - the last paragraph of the book - to reference the failure of queer politics and theory, as well as feminist masculinity studies, to "break free of restrictive gender roles" (1991, 163). Work such as Modleski's holds out much deconstructive promise but fails to supercede its own limited essentialist frameworks. The result is the complete erasure of the productive possibilities for feminism of a politic located within No Man's Land and a reconsolidation of a categorically conservative identity politic.

But these reconsolidations are not limited to

feminist theory. Queer theorist Judith Halberstam and trans theorist C. Jacob Hale document similar border skirmishes in "Butch/FTM Border Wars," their essay in "The Transgender Issue" of *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, but they examine these border wars as they emerge between transsexual/transgender politics and queer theory (1998). Attempting to rearticulate an argument from an earlier controversial essay, Halberstam, in particular, queries the space between lesbian masculinity and transsexual men. That earlier essay, "F2M: The Making of Female Masculinity," generated a great deal of debate when Halberstam argued that within postmodern economies of gender, all genders are "fictions of a body talking its own shape... for some an outfit can be changed; for others skin must be resewn. There are no transsexuals" (1994, 210-12). In the *GLQ* essay, Halberstam addresses the controversy generated by the earlier essay by suggesting that part of the stakes of each essay is the stabilization of the terms - transsexual, transgender and butch - as unique and distinct identities, each separate from the other. Instead, Halberstam writes: "One of the issues I want to take up here is what model of masculinity is at stake in the debates... and what, if anything, separates butch masculinity from transsexual masculinities," suggesting instead that what has been at stake in the border wars are the terms of gendered embodiment itself (288). Halberstam gestures to the strategic deconstructive experiences of transsexual masculinity although, as I will argue later, she resorts back to categorical determinism when coining the phrase "female masculinity."

Clearly, what interests me about these debates is less the veracity or authenticity of these conversations (presuming such things are even possible or valued), but rather the way that these terms flag shared feminist histories, or histories of the ideas about gender and sexuality. That is, these movements - feminism, gay, lesbian, and bisexual movements, the pro-feminist men's movement, and trans movements - each remind us that becoming any gender is a socially constructed process that is on-going, contingent, non-foundational and self-producing. That is, articulating one's self as a subject (engendered, racialized, sexed, nationed, classed, etc.) is the process through which we learn to identify our "I" relative to bodies, power grids, as well as culturally available categories, like pronouns, and then always already attempt to become that configuration (echoing Riley's question: "is my 'I' that name?"). Bound within this process are, of course, two axioms which are coterminous with those of feminism: first, not all "selves" are commensurate with, and reducible to, the categories, pronouns and, indeed, bodies intelligible in the sex/gender system; and second, not all incongruities are equal, and although we cannot always know in advance how they will be different, we certainly do need to anticipate and correct for the ideological work these differences are doing within our social justice movements (Sedgwick 1990, 27).

These incongruities amongst the subjects flagged by the phrase female masculinity are radically de-emphasized in Judith Halberstam's extremely important book *Female Masculinity* (1998). Besides being the source of my book's title *Masculinities Without Men?* (2003), it is, after *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*, (Kennedy and Davis 1994) the first book-length study of subjects heretofore neglected in academic inquiry.⁵ *Female Masculinity* makes several important interventions in sexuality & gender studies. First, after coining the phrase female masculinity, which works through juxtaposition - in other words through categorical indeterminacy - Halberstam produces and then deconstructs the subjects who are now visible through that oxymoron. Halberstam herself notes the mis-recognition which has collapsed the very significant differences between subjects hailed by the phrase female masculinity - butch masculinity, transsexual masculinity, transgendered subjects, drag kings, and so on. She argues, as remedy, that while these subjectivities might appear to be similar, each has different representational and discursive histories. Where some of the work theorizing these subjects challenges a binary or two-genders system by positing a third gender, Halberstam's work instead gives us multiple engenderings. That is, her work is most potent when she suggests that instead of conceptualizing female masculinity and lesbianism as coterminous and thus, as a singular figure between masculinity and femininity, our analytical findings are richer when female masculinity itself is understood as multiple, contradictory, and inherently plural.

But another important goal of Halberstam's work is that of distinguishing female masculinity as distinct from male masculinity, or as she says in an oft-quoted expression, "conceptualizing masculinity without men" (1998, 2). In the end, she wants to make masculinity safe for women and girls, even heterosexual women, so that with more gender freedom, perhaps even men will be able to re-create masculinity using her model of female masculinity. A number of critics have read the phrase "masculinities without men" to suggest that it means without relation to men. For instance, in his review for the *Journal of Men's Studies*, Daryl B. Hill comments that "the assertion that [female] masculinity is 'masculinity without men' is problematic." What Hill seems to be identifying here is how Halberstam's work, like my own, is predicated upon a rupture or distinction between "masculinity" and "men." If the term "men" is successful for both an ideology and as a signifier, then the referent it imagines itself marking is the male body, complete with penis as supposedly self-evident referent. If, however, the term "masculinity" accomplishes its work, then "men" no longer references a self-evident penis. What it references instead is that same sex/gender system which feminism has identified and critiqued, only now we see it operating on a new site: masculinity. "Men" collapses the distinction between signifier and referent whereas "masculinity" not

only reasserts it, but suggests that the possession of a conventionally defined penis has nothing to do with securing manhood. Masculinity is a free-floating signifier, detached from that referent. So, when we posit that sometimes masculinity has nothing to do with men, we are not necessarily arguing literally that female masculinity is not related to male masculinity. Instead, the argument is that masculinity now has nothing to do with the male body as it has been conventionally defined. Both trans and female masculinity are each non-derivative forms of manhood where that subject is no longer secured or privileged by a referent.

That said, the irony of Halberstam's accomplishment is that it is achieved through a series of problematic disavowals. First, and perhaps less immediately significant but still glaringly problematic, is the question of the taxonomizing impulse which organizes Halberstam's inquiry. That this categorical imperative is confusing has already been noted in a number of reviews. *Female Masculinity* suffers from an "excessively schematic taxonomy... characteristic of gay and lesbian identity politics where the solution to the problem of categorical thinking is to come up with still more categories (Hill 2002)." Why Halberstam chooses this particular tactic is puzzling. But what seems clear is the effect of this impulse: *Female Masculinity* is a text primarily concerned with lesbian masculinity; I hope to articulate a post-identity politic, and, post-queer, anti-heteronormative, that is, counter-cultural trans- masculinity. What Halberstam's categorical imperative accomplishes is that it produces an odd alignment of sex and gender which is most powerful when it refuses categorization altogether. What I want to offer through FTM transsexual men is a feminist refusal of essentialist categorical schemas. Post-queer - that is, trans-gendered and/or trans-sexual but not gay and/or lesbian subjects are, by definition, newly configured masculine subjects and bodies which deconstruct - in the flesh - the terms of hegemonic gendered embodiment and do so in proximity to masculinity.

These relationships amongst men of different genders within similar class, racial, sexual orientations etc., are the deconstructive stuff, as it were, of transsexual masculinity. Halberstam suggests and declares a performative indifference toward male masculinity which she hopes will pass as an affirmation of female masculinity. "Such affirmations," Halberstam writes in *Female Masculinity*, "begin not by subverting masculine power or taking up a position against masculine power but by turning a blind eye to conventional masculinities and refusing to engage [...] power may inhere within different forms of refusal: 'Well, I don't care'" (1998, 9). I, on the contrary, am interested in taking up power precisely in and as a male subject, although one schooled, as I have alluded in the beginning, as one of the sons of lesbian-feminism. The subjects I am theorizing, not lesbian men but FTM tranny men and boys, are subjects who find power not by feigning

indifference but rather by cultivating proximity, identification, similarity with other subjects of masculinity. Can we entertain the possibility that sometimes, as my first epigraph suggests, some "lesbians" actually do want to become men? The argument that female masculinity does not take notice of, or is not influenced by, or does not reciprocate or return the gaze to male masculinity cannot be supported. Each instance of masculinity is informed, influenced, mentored and otherwise learns to become itself from other men in his class or race. FTM tranny guys - either as transgendered or transsexual - not only have to directly "engage" the men around them, they must also, to turn a clichéd phrase, embrace the boy within himself in order to move closer to becoming him. Halberstam's "I don't care" might work as a rhetorical disavowal but, like all disavowals, moments where subjects cannot know what it is they both already know and are always already constituted by, it certainly begs the question of psychic proximity to and identification with masculinity, not distance.

Still, proximity and repetition, together with a critical and strategic distance, are often crucial for those of us who want to become political men. I want to suggest that masculinity simultaneously needs to be reconfigured as a deconstructive fiction as well. Such deconstructions must be predicated upon two things: an intersectional model of thinking identity and a permanent rupture or distinction between "masculinity" and "men," and also a strategic necessity of that rupture. Given the first premise of intersectional theories of social construction, each subject of any identity is also articulated in and through different classes, races, ethnicities, abilities, sexualities and bodies at the same time. These relationships amongst trans men of different genders within similar class, racial, sexual orientations, are not only the stuff, as it were, of transsexual masculinity but they remain the measure of its critical potential as well. Let me come at this from a very real fear and criticism within the context of feminism about these transitions into masculinity. One of the most frequent critiques I hear about FTMs is the assertion that by "crossing over this divide," that is, by transitioning and therefore becoming men, FTM transsexual men are now living a kind of privilege not accorded to lesbians or biological women and so, as a result, are somehow betraying their feminist sisters. I have been troubled by this critique - that of crossing over - but it has been only quite recently that I have been able to discern what is at stake in its metaphors. While I recognize that the presence of masculinity in feminism has been complex, the topography of this metaphor recognizes only one singular battlefield (to continue to use a troubling metaphor). That is, part of what this criticism does is to reduce the complex distributional matrix of power to the site of gender only. If there is only one side that is good, and one side that is bad, then we are back to models of thinking which are singular and non-intersectional. And so this model of thinking paints

masculinity with one simple brushstroke as "bad" and antithetical to feminism. If our model of feminist critical practice privileges a singular mono-linguistic identity only (gender), then FTM transsexual men have betrayed the cause. But, within the intersectional models of identity - where we understand power being distributed through a matrix of identities simultaneously - this criticism of FTMs cannot hold.

What this criticism actually reveals when it seeks and thinks it finds privilege accruing to gender is, first, its own inability to think intersectionally and second, its complete erasure of whiteness as a mark of power. Let me phrase this differently: when we think we are seeing FTM transsexual male privilege, what we are actually seeing, I suggest, is whiteness modifying masculinity to give it power. If, for instance, transgendered "women" of colour transit into FTM transsexual masculinity, we would be remiss to suggest that this FTM is transitioning into a privileged gender position in our culture. We cannot say in good conscience that a transsexual man of colour has more power than a white born female, heterosexual feminist, can we? So, if I have more power as a white transsexual man than I had as a transgendered and extremely masculine lesbian, is it not the cause that my whiteness is articulating power through my gender? Especially when we consider that FTM transsexual surgeries are not producing passable bodies; they are producing intersexual bodies that are outside of our gender taxonomies. Whiteness, as so many have told us, works invisibly to modify and articulate identity; but white supremacy also works aggressively to de-privilege particular groups of men in our culture while distributing power quite happily to others. These criticisms, of FTM transsexual men, that is, are bound within non-intersectional models of thinking identity within white supremacy, which either tell us more about the anxieties of whiteness or tell us a great deal about the limitations of our theoretical paradigms.

Having said that, it is important to acknowledge here that some groups of men do have more privilege than others. To be sure, white middle to upper class men have more power; heterosexual more than queer; bio men more than trans men. It is not at all my intention to suggest otherwise. But, can we not also suggest that embodiments of masculinity are privileged differently in proximity to hegemonic imperatives of the sex/gender system? That is to say, one of the other things that worries me about this categorical dismissal of FTM transsexual men is the way in which it also tells us something about how we are thinking about the transitional process itself. For FTMs, more than MTFs, the transitional process is one fraught with categorical indeterminacy. FTMs almost never fully become men; they stay in the place of transit even if some strike a hegemonic bargain with masculinity that is similar to that of whiteness. That is, to be a trans man means to accept and to allow others to accept, as James Baldwin suggests about whiteness, a hegemonic mobilized fiction,

albeit a powerful one. "White people are not white," suggests Baldwin: "part of the price of the white ticket is to delude themselves into believing that they are" (xiv). That is, they accept the hegemonic bargain which traffics in a fantasy of primary, pre-colonial, universal and racially unmarked whiteness. Baldwin is in conversation with historical thinkers like Sojourner Truth, W.E.B. Du Bois, but also contemporary theorists like bell hooks, Ruth Frankenberg, Chandra Mohanty, Gloria Anzaldúa and many more women who argue that there is no such thing as pure, categorical whiteness. The existence of the now newly configured non-intersectional white race produces the unconscious (at best) willingness of those assigned to it to place their racial interests above class or any other interests they hold. Whiteness, in other words, is bound by and is, in effect, secured by its imperative of universal, categorical singularity (that is, non-intersectionality). Entrance into this fictionality of whiteness is purchased through an ideological belief in naturalized whiteness.

Kessler and McKenna suggest something similar in their early work, *Gender: An Ethnomethodological Approach* (1978). They argue that the perception of a fixed gender role is one interactionally and pragmatically coded by the external signifiers of gender. "Gender attribution is a complex, interactive process," they write, "involving the person making the attribution and the person she/he is making the attribution about" (6). The "reading" of a body as gendered, they suggest, involves presenting gender signifiers within an economy where the signifiers accrue toward the appearance of a coherently gendered body. Becoming a transsexual man, however, means occupying the permanent space of becoming [to transit: n. & v., going, conveying, being conveyed, across or over or through, passage route...]; that is, it is a permanent place of modulation of what came before by what comes after, never fully accomplishing either as an essentialist "reality." For me, as an example, this permanent state of becoming means also failing to become the kind of man privileged in our culture. I have lived for almost thirty some years as a lesbian feminist first and this training ground has made me one of the best, although admittedly, always already and strategically failed heterosexual men you are likely to find. One of the things that has been key for me in this "transition" is a refusal of what we've identified in feminism as the hegemonic imperatives of adult manhood. Along with John Stoltenberg; the "Michaels" Kimmel and Kaufman; Stuart Hall and so many other very political pro-feminist men, I have refused, and continue to refuse, the privileges of becoming a man in the hegemonic ways this category is constructed. Instead, I have opted to occupy the pre-man space of boy/boi, a space of what I argue elsewhere as a productive failure. I have done this, by, among other things, maintaining the discursive space of "F" on my driver's license, living and working in lesbian and queer circles, working against white supremacy, capitalism and so on. These juxtapositions between how I

present, my categorical refusal to be fully "manned" either in language or in body (Bob or Robert vs. my boi name of Bobby), but also my refusal to step into the discursive space of "M" to match my gender presentation, signal the critical, political but also discursive space of tranny masculinity for me outside of the clinical and medicalized treatment of transsexual bodies. This often puts me, in daily practice, into some very interesting positions, where my presentation trumps the "F" but where my political refusal of manhood - taking up space for instance in male ways; or jockeying for position with other men for the alpha male position; or allying myself with anti-racist practice; or encouraging other men, as an educator, to remain boys instead of becoming manly men; but most importantly, refusing power (not responsibility) if women, and/or men of colour and/or gay men are present to step into that power instead - allows me a daily deconstructive practice that aggressively refuses the hegemonic fantasy of "manhood." Part of what I am trying to say here is that there are many different ways of being masculine; there are many different subject positions available for men, some of which have more power than others. If this is true, then there are many different subject positions for FTMs to transit into (masculinity as modulated by power). As a tranny-man, then, it is my constant practice to refuse that hegemonic bargain by refusing to become a man. What I seek as a trans-man is radical modulation and categorical indeterminacy rather than categorical privilege. The trans space of masculinity needs to be reconfigured as concept of negative space, which, like any other concept of negative space, is only as effective as the things on either side of it. As a critical practice, then, we might embody a disidentified space of woman, yes, but the space of disidentification only *means in so far* as it informs the simultaneous refusal to become a hegemonic man at the same time. It is the relation that matters here: hence, the need to think paradox: I'm a guy who is half lesbian.

My own work on and through these border wars of feminism, FTM masculinities and male masculinities does not just map these proximities; I advocate for the social, psychic and political necessity of these relationships. Post-queer relationships amongst men are often at different angles to each other politically - even though we are not likely to see the masculine version of the television show "Will and Grace" (could we even imagine, let's say, "Bubba and Butch" or "Spike and Mike") - the space between men and butches or between men and FTMs - male masculinity and female masculinity. Female to male transsexual bodies are bodies that not only matter - and need to matter a great deal to feminism - but these are bodies that defy matter. Both female and trans masculinities have much to offer a gender politic: in addition to the necessary reconceptualizations and deconstructions of masculinity, these subjects, especially trans masculinity, offer us a new way to defamiliarize heterosexuality. To be sure, politicized trans-men can embody a feminist anti-normative

heterosexuality and more often than not, queer both it and masculinity [if by queer we mean pervert, challenge, de-form]. That, it seems to me, is a project that feminism might want to embrace to stay vital in the twenty-first century.

ENDNOTES

1. Holly Devor, *FTM* (1997, 448). Oscar Wilde, *De Profundis*, qtd. in Jonathon Dollimore's *Sexual Dissidence*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991, p.103.
2. The Graduate Programme in Women's Studies at York University held a very important day-long symposium called "Transgender / Transsexual: Theorizing, Organizing, Cultural Production," where a version of this paper was presented on November 29, 2002. Thanks are due to Linda Brinkin.
3. Much of this is not new at all. See *Men in Feminism*, edited by Jardine and Smith; *Feminism and Men*, edited by Schacht and Eking, as well as an important new collection, *Masculinity Studies and Feminist Theory*, edited by Gardinar. But what this paper and the larger book length project of the same name seeks to do is claim a space for masculinity in women's studies without this having to mean the end of feminism. What it can mean is an even more potent gender politic and deconstructive programme for the twenty first century.
4. The space surrounding transsexuality and feminism has been theorized in the work of feminist scholarship already. See essays by both Eleanor MacDonald and Patricia Elliot, to whom this essay owes acknowledgements.
5. I was reminded of *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold* in conversation with Elise Chenier, whom I thank.

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