



Shapeshifting

a tranny's guide
to being fresh



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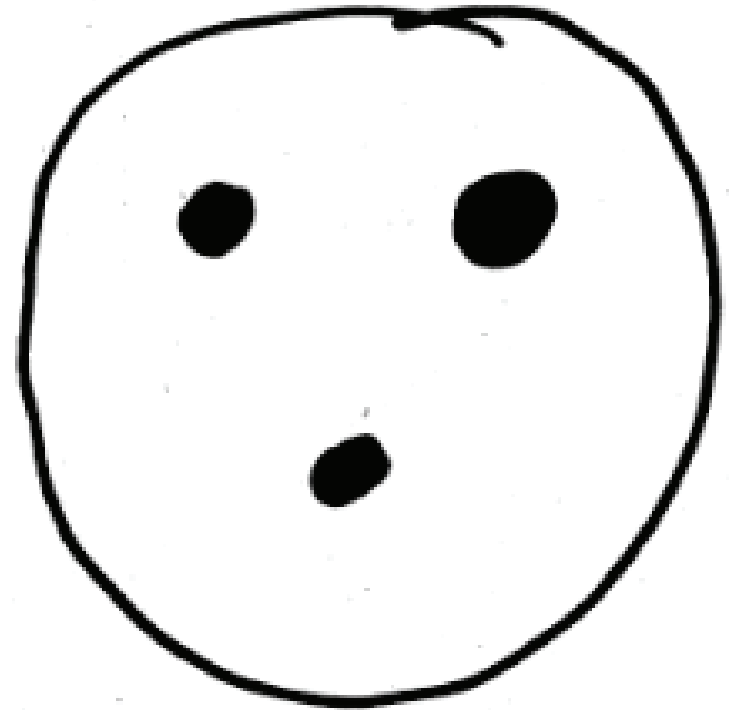
You are the stuff you are made of.

I have been called a woman trapped in a man's body. I would like to meet this man and demand my freedom, but he does not exist. My body does not belong to a man; my body belongs to me. I am a woman. I am my body. I am a woman's body.

I was raised protestant. Christian philosophy dominates every corner of the culture in which I am immersed. Part of this philosophy is Hellenistic dualism, which considers the body and the soul to be separate. It originates in Greek philosophy but has become common (though not universal) in Christian theology. Even though my parents, two Christian ministers, reject Hellenistic dualism, it has been inescapable in the media and schooling that has been handed to me my entire life.

This division of body and spirit just doesn't work for me. If I am separate from my body and my body belongs to a man, then I do not exist. I want to exist. My capacity to exist has been challenged since birth. The first words I likely heard were "it's a boy!" and some variation of that is likely true of everyone else as well. This declaration was a death sentence to a newborn trans girl. As soon as I was born, I was told not to exist, to submit myself to a man who was meant to exist in my place.

What're you



gonna be?

I shapeshift my own body in order to revolt against the violence that has been committed against it. I shapeshift my image in order to take back power over where I fit into the portrait of the world. I shapeshift my reflections in order to break down the patriarchal systems that use gender to oppress. There is such majesty in shapeshifting. Transness is sacred. We must cherish it.

I reject this Christian teaching of body and spirit. I am not a spirit. I am what I am made of and I am made of meat. I am made of many things. I am made of thoughts produced by a nervous system wired through meat. I am made of behaviours and decisions carried out by meat. I am made of images constructed by light bouncing off of meat and sound resonating from meat. All of my existence begins with meat and only with meat can I learn to exist.

I cannot tell you what you are made of. You may very well be spirit inhabiting a body, unlike me. But if you are having trouble existing, I recommend figuring out what you are made of and working with that. I have had a lot of trouble existing for a long time and I think I'm getting better. So I'm documenting what has helped me exist as meat. I hope it can help you too.



Trans is beautiful
sacred
necessary
the BEST



This is you.
You are
made of
???



This is a
mirror.
It is made
of glass.

Biohack the Meat

I don't always like my meat. It's not easy when I am so frequently told my meat is bad or belongs to some imaginary man I can't kill. So I change my meat. I shapeshift.

A common assumption I have been told many times is that "natural" meat is of the highest quality. Women face harsh criticism for wearing too much makeup or having plastic surgery. Trans people face accusations of mutilating our bodies with gender affirming hormones and surgeries.

This assumption predicated on the separation of body and spirit. My meat is natural and I am unnatural, making any alteration I attempt on my meat unnatural as well. But once again, I am meat. I am natural. My impulse to shapeshift is natural; it originates in the meat and exerts itself on the meat. There is no "me" changing my "body." I am changing myself. My body is changing itself. They are the same.

Final Thoughts

There is nothing easy about existing. While writing this, I have attempted to come across as more confident than I am, because I hope to inspire confidence in others. But please understand that I struggle to apply everything I've said here and it's okay if you struggle with it too. I can't say it's easy, but I can say it is worth it. Sometimes you may wish you didn't exist. I do too. But you and I are still here and nothing can convince me that's a bad thing. There is such profound beauty in your presence. The world is in dire need of people who can exist.

I have grasped desperately at what it means to be trans. Every explanation of what we are, what we do, what defines our bodies has left me unsatisfied. The best answer I have been able to give myself is that we are shapeshifters. Many people who's gender differs from the one they were assigned at birth do not feel fully comfortable with the word transgender because it means "change" gender and many trans people feel as though their gender has never changed, but that it has merely been misidentified by cis society. But I choose to view the word transgender differently. I do not consider my gender to be have changed from man to woman, or from binary to nonbinary. I consider my gender to be change itself. I consider my gender to be the embodiment of shapeshifting.

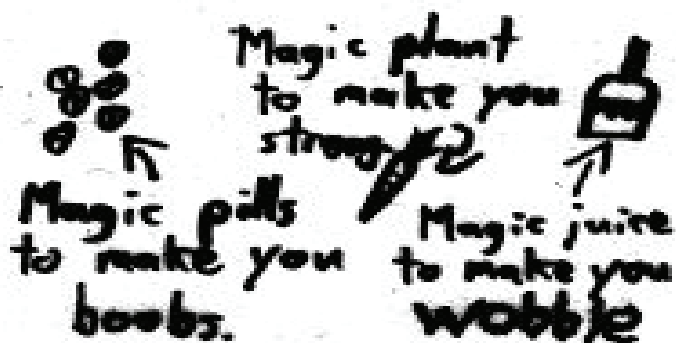
When I confuse people, when I make them uncomfortable, when I challenge their assumptions about how humans exist through my expression and experience of gender, I reclaim power from them. I force them to reflect back what they do not want to reflect, what they do not want to see. I take the mirror they've given me and smash it.

I refuse to adhere to the gender I was assigned or to the expectations of the gender I live as. I will not be demure, pretty, passive. I will not be petite, high pitched, sexually available. I will not "pass." I will be chaotic, dangerous, and frightening. I will take whatever assumptions you have of me, break them, force you to make new ones, and then break them too. I will be a mirror painted black. I will be endlessly shapeshifting and intangible. That is how I am able to exist. I wish you the best of luck in figuring out how you can exist.



My freedom to change the shape of my meat with estrogen pills is no different from my freedom to change the location of my meat with my legs. Denying me the right to shapeshift is as restrictive as a cage denying me the right to walk. Telling me not to change my appearance and just accept myself as I was born is like telling an artist to leave the canvas alone and accept how the factory made it.

There are many ways to biohack the meat. I take estrogen pills because I want to be an hourglass shape; I want to be soft; I want to be tits. I drink, smoke, eat garbage, and deprive myself of sleep because I want to be a catastrophe, a disastrous storm of hedonism. I'm vegan because I want to be plants, made of earth, not made of animal exploitation. The gasses you breath, the liquids you drink, and the solids you eat become what you are made of, what you are. The power to control what we take into our bodies is the power to control what we are. Fight for that power. Fight to exist.



Perform the Image

Meat does all kinds of things. It creates sounds and shapes, it moves and makes decisions. All of these behaviours become text interpreted by everyone around us. Meat creates an image and that image becomes what we are. Just as we shapeshift the meat, we may shapeshift the image.

I am an actor. I've been studying the techniques and methods of shapeshifting my image since I was thirteen. It has taught me that I have so much more control over my image than I was raised up believing. There is this question of authenticity, the origins of our speech patterns, mannerisms, gestures. We are assumed to be unconscious of these patterns and where they are consistent, our "authenticity" can be found. This is absurd.

While our patterns of behaviour are often unconscious, they can always be brought under conscious scrutiny and changed. Such is the work of the actor. And a decision becoming conscious does not undermine its authenticity.

We understand ourselves through the reflections others give us. The people in our lives act as mirrors, giving us feedback to our existence. Abusers will give you a warped reflection and systematically isolate you from people who might give you a more accurate reflection. Cis society does the same to trans people.

I have found a deep inconsistency in the reflections of myself I am given. I am called beautiful and ugly, feminine and masculine, aggressive and docile. As a trans woman, my body is so politicized that virtually everyone I interact with has an agenda in how they interpret my body. There is a spectrum from people who will reflect what I want because they love me, to people who will reflect what they think fits the social justice narrative so that they can be a good person, to people who will reflect what they see in porn because they want to get in my pants, to people who reflect a man because they reject the existence of trans people, to people who reflect a grotesque ugly creature because they want me to die. And there are infinite variations within this spectrum. I am left to interpret this mess and try to understand myself through it. The only conclusion I can draw is that I am formless, a mirror painted black. From here I can shapeshift my reflections into whatever I want by surrounding myself with reflections I enjoy and smashing reflections I do not.

Smash the Reflection

Humans are overwhelmingly social animals. If we are not held when we are born, we develop holes in our brains and eventually die. We depend on others to teach our hearts and brainwaves to regulate healthily. So much of our ability to exist arrives through our social relations to other humans.

Those who are placed in solitary confinement for extended periods of time face a deteriorating reality. They hallucinate intensely and risk permanent damage to their senses. This is because our brains are not actually very good at using our senses to understand reality. Dreams offer a wonderful example of how strange our reality becomes when our brain can't be sure of what's going on. We need others to confirm for us what is real and what is not. The consistency of others' senses builds on our own and enables us to gain some understanding of what must be real. This is also why it's virtually impossible to not believe in something if everyone around you tells you it exists, even if you cannot experience it yourself. Reality is not a material thing; it is collectively constructed by our social relations. This is essential to how we come to understand ourselves as well, how we exist.

In acting, we are congratulated on performances that feel "real," "sincere," "authentic." And yet every performance is a set of decisions we have made to alter how we behave in day to day life to better suit a character written by someone else. But it's not the character on stage, the character is nothing but lines in a script, it's the actor that steps on stage. Performance is an actor rearranging themselves and a good performance is called "authentic." Why should our performance off-stage be inauthentic when it is a conscious rearrangement of the self?

When trans people consciously change their voice, the way they walk, the way they stand or sit, it is common to worry that what we are doing is dishonest, even deceptive. After all, we're regularly accused of deception for performing our genders as we see fit. The legitimacy of our genders are under constant suspicion and we must always fight to prove they are real. And so, we ask ourselves, what about our performance of gender is real? If I don't speak in a feminine tone without thinking about it am I really feminine? If I don't stand with a masculine posture without thinking, am I really masculine?

There is no such thing as authenticity. There is no real or unreal gender expression. There is only what we choose to do and what we choose not to do. The unconscious mind is still the domain of choice. It thinks just as much as the conscious mind thinks. It merely lacks the sensation of thought.

If you walk home the same route every day, you will eventually be able to do so unconsciously. But you were not born with this route planted in your unconscious; it is not "real" or "authentic," it depended on your conscious decision to take that route over and over again. It's still a decision to take each turn in that route, just an unconscious one. The same is true of the routes we take in performing an image in our day to day lives.

I speak in a low, booming voice when I'm enjoying raucous camaraderie and debauchery with friends. I speak in a high, bubbly voice when I'm enjoying sassy gossip and tenderness with my friends. I cross my legs and walk softly when I draw power from poise and elegance. I spread my legs wide and take up space when I draw power from rebellion and strength. All of these actions are equally authentic if we are to believe in such a thing. They are all equally woman.

Cast off all expectations and assumptions of how you perform yourself and simply shapeshift the image to your will. There is no wrong way to exist.

What shall I wear today?

