

I DON'T
WANT A
BODY
ANYMORE

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“I don’t want a body anymore - trans witch in VRChat”

The title above is the title of a video I made in summer of 2021. Here’s the URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R89ce-TWjoyM>

I am in virtual reality / talking to the virtual camera

This is an edit from a livestream. I am in an anime-styled 3D avatar with long elf ears and purple hair, off the shoulder sweater, and light emitting tattoos across my collar. I’m looking back out at the camera with glowing purple eyes. My head and my arms are motion captured by the VR headset and a controller in each hand, so when I raise my hands IRL, my hands raise in the virtual world. I speak through my avatar with a built-in mic on my headset. The scene behind me is bright pink, a room with a couch and an open ceiling to blue sky. Everything is a bit glitchy and low poly. That is, my lips track behind my words and don’t quite form the exact right shapes for the sounds. You can see pixelated edges and sharp lines of my figure.

I am talking about starting to play VR “I’ve been playing VR for about a month now. It’s made it so weird to go outside. I don’t know if things have changed or people haven’t seen a trans person in so long because of the pandemic, but I get harassed every time I go out.”

In this month, I’ve started livestreaming from VR to Twitch. I’m speaking to my chat: a handful of people watch my live video stream and can participate in a chat window that I overlay onto my wrist in the virtual world.

“Oh!” I stop and look to my left, to camera right. A pink butterfly lands on my elbow. I point at it “Look!”

A video cut and I am running towards camera in an avatar with a different art style, that appears to be a character model ripped from another game and uploaded here. “My boobs are huge!” The massive boobs pillow up in front of my face, rigged to wiggle uncontrollably while I walk.

Another cut: “I like the pentagram on the chest.” I am pointing to a pentagram of straps across my chest, holding my top to my neck. I’m in a new avatar now. It is a spider girl. My humanoid torso sits on the front of a spider body like a centaur. My legs are the spider’s dangling fangs. I am now posed in front of a mirror. There are mirrors in every world here. They help feel body to figure, avatar to feeling. The mirror fills in the edges of

vision, beyond the narrow frame of the lens I peer through. Lets me see without turning, what is to my left and to my right.

Here is VRChat. It's a virtual reality social platform that allows users to upload virtual environments called worlds and characters to inhabit as avatars. There are tens of thousands of users on simultaneously. Friend groups sprawl across these worlds, gathering across timezones to go dancing at clubs, play games, or hangout and cuddle in front of mirrors. Yes there is VR sex and it's called ERP, or erotic roleplay.

The worlds are usually small, game-level like spaces. Many are recreations of highrise condo apartments. Some are games like minigolf. Some are hallucinatory trips through swirling, melting color.

One of the places I start exploring is avatar worlds. In avatar worlds there are floating thumbnails on pedestals for each avatar to try. I click one with my laser beam pointer and my current body disappears, blinking into a transparent blue shard standby form while the new avatar downloads. Then it appears.

The first avatar I feel fits me best is a greyscale cat girl with big round eyes. I have knee-high black boots, a collared jacket with striped sleeves over a simple bodice and shorts. I have fluffy cat girl ears, a floofy tail, and a messy bob with bangs that flop back and forth over the bridge of my nose.

My first friend in VR is a guy about my age from the midwest who works as a car mechanic. His main avatar is a wolf girl with fluffy hair and bushy ears. He's customized it with a denim jacket with the sleeves torn off. He takes me to all kinds of different worlds. Cathedrals, sailboats, a photo studio where we take turns posing in front of a backdrop. Different buttons on the controller make different hand gestures. Open palm, pointing, finger guns, peace sign. And like a puppet, the avatar's face changes, smile, wink, tongue out.

He and I are sitting on a rock outcropping overlooking a fantasy starscape and lush purple planet. Meteors zip by. I am staring down at my hand. I am staring down at my pinky finger. There is a shiny, metallic ring in the shape of a gear that gleams as I tilt my hand back and forth.

The headset is two circle lenses, wrapped to my head in the darkness of a box, against brow and cheeks. Two circles of light gazing back into my pupils. Dance across lines of perspective.

Stretch the Grid Over My Skin

I've gone from trying to narrate the experience of looking at my hands in the virtual world to something else

I'm sitting in front of a mirror in a warmly lit bedroom. My friend K, a femmemy fox person, is sitting in my lap. I pet their head while we talk about our lives, the places we live, creative projects, politics, our bodies

I've been learning how to make an avatar of my own from YouTube. Rainhet's avatar tutorial is really great.

I'm on day six of trying to make a hand for my avatar. Something keeps fucking up with the proportions. I look at it in Blender and it all lines up, but when I upload it, there's some template rescaling everything. I can't figure it out. The palm is too small, the thumb bends weird, the fingers stretch too long.

When I dissociate I leave my hands first

I stretch the grid over my body
I stretch the grid over my skin
What is the grid beneath our feet
What is the grid between my skin and yours

Reality has always been virtual. This thing pressed up to my eyes
tearing away my body
I sleep in a nest of cables so lines get printed all over my skin

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Home changes when I'm renting, when it's a verge. A verge and
threat of houselessness
What pushes me away from myself
I know I want home but I don't know yet what that means
I mean space that is stable from which I can progress that I'm not
continuously renegotiating
Because not a moment goes by where I am not negotiated and
fluid and blocked and shaped
I don't want a body anymore
A point of origin.
I am what flows in and what leaves
I don't want a body anymore

What about everything that runs back to me that insists on constituting me as a body
my body is always in the way. It is in the in the wayness that I
associate into this world

I don't know about body but I am with arriving through being
broke in the metaverse

I sleep in a nest of cables so that lines get printed on my skin

Slip the rent check, naked under the door

There's no home any more. Just rent
no one is here
don't answer the door
for anyone
not the cop or the agent or the courier
no one is home
Let them bang and bang and bang and leave
The documents on the floor in the entry way
No one is home

No more home only rent
No more body only debt

*

I don't know about body —
but I am with arriving through
being broke in the metaverse

Rushing through to a surface that extends into a space of projected
mesh and textures and cameras splitting from body
and body taking to
animation and a mesh of hand
that touches mesh of ears
and mesh of pillow

There's something to handling the fabric, turning it over and
folding
the folding of the video
the foldability of the VR space
into, onto the surface of real space

Coming through, out of dreams

Arriving and evaporating
arriving through
body to the back side
of the front side of surface

My body is always in the way, it is in the in the wayness that I feel
connected

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I like the way virtual reality, when I'm hanging out with people
in it
its glitchiness or failure to work right is part of the conversation
and part of the
humor and fantasy of it
this makes a space where reality
is expected and allowed to fail
bodies are expected and allowed to fail

What if my body was never meant to contain all it's asked to?

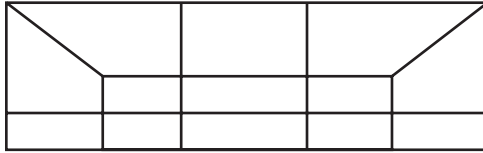
My wholeness will never be returned to me.
VR is a route along the way to find where my
body is arriving in the whole
This body was always meant to be consumed
figure that flashes across eyes as avatar

The joke of optical illusion is not that there are two reads but
that the reads are so absurdly bounded as to create unexpected
distance.
The unexpected distance is not the joke either.
The joke is two reads that are exclusive of each other arriving
through one form that claims as a property of its form the erasure
and impossibility of moving between those two reads.

The closer we draw to the intimate, the space within my arms,
the more vision becomes queer
The spell of vision crosses
Single source optical perspective shears
My eyes turn inward and together you become round

Remember we have two eyes.

demongirl-2-118.blend



I'm building a low-poly mesh to start my avatar.

The low-poly mesh lets me catch any mistakes and glitches by using as few lines as possible to form the topology. Cube into sphere into nose and chin and lips. A topology is made up of a series of four sided polygons. So the quads flow in strips around the figure. Five sides can glitch the texture in the final stage. Can mess up the UV map. The XYZ of the 3D figure and then UV coordinates that write my 2D skin to the flowing grids.

I keep this diagram above at hand. The description of it is a rectangle of black line of medium weight. The rectangle is divided by same weighted lines first vertically into three sections and horizontally into two. Then from each top corner, a diagonal that reaches to form the corner of an inset rectangle that crosses the first dividing lines. In this way, the top edge of the rectangle goes from three divisions to on the bottom edge, five divisions. This is how detail gets added going from a flow of three quads to five. I use this where the wrist connects to the hand. The fingers need more detail and need more quads.

how many are joined into one / adding without glitching

there are two bodies
one which I am with alone in my room
the other body that meets the world
that flashes across eyes as avatar

she opens her legs and says:

“Look! I made it myself!”

Visual description for the next page:

The center spread of this zine is a picture of my virtual pussy. It is a screengrab from the 3D modeling software Blender. Set in wireframe mode, a series of adjacent polygons, dense and overlapping each other at the center page seam, grow wider and more evenly distributed to the side. The wireframe is black against a mid-grey ground. The wireframe has mirrored, bilateral symmetry across the page seam axis. In lowercase letters, serif font, a little over half way down the right hand page the phrase, “low-poly trans girl pussy.” This is flipped and mirrored onto the left hand page in the same place so the text reads backwards there.



low-body trans girl pussy



low-poly trans girl pussy

“My pussy came out so good!”

“No but for real I made the sex parts for my avatar yesterday and it was really gender affirming if that makes sense. Like I’ve never imagined being able to afford bottom surgery and it’s sometimes hard for me to think abt what things would mean to me if I don’t think they are possible. This was a way of finding and feeling what that imagination means to me. Also I wish I could have that kind of self creativity and agency over my body. Like I could open my legs and say look I made that. That would be so cool. It’s not so much what form the parts take as the possibility that they can be whatever I want to spend time making them to be.”

COOCHIE! COOCHIE! CHOOCHIE!!!

COOCHIE! COOCHIE! CHOOCHIE!!!

COOCHIE! COOCHIE! CHOOCHIE!!!

my fav shape in blender right now is a TORUS
you can do so much with it

“Just a warning before I sit down. my coochie needs to be re-
weight painted. it might clip through my undies”

clipping coochie

UV Map

Sandy Stone Keynote performance, Gender Bodies & Technology 2014: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z5BhZwQv8b8>

Starting at 34 minutes in: Sandy Stone is standing up on a darkened stage wearing loose dark clothes, a smock shirt and cargo pants. A tall white trans woman in her 70s. Her hand is raised in the air. She has just been talking about the mapping of the idea of the body to the surfaces that it extends through.

“I will remap my clitoris into the palm of my left hand. Okay? I’m going to do that now. Here we go.”

She hums and closes her eyes and then stretches her hand out again. “There it is.” Hesitant claps from the audience.

“I can tell that there are a few people out there who don’t believe that I can do this. So how can I convince you? Well I’ll tell you what. I will masturbate to orgasm with the clitoris in the palm of my hand. Now for this I will need help.”

Nervous laughs.

“Because I get off on noise. So in order for me to really make this work. I’m going to need your help in terms of making alot of noise!”

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the wobbling pleasure of the dissociative
going to make a 3d print of my pussy

if you can map your clit to your hand
why not send it all the way across the world

hallucinate my bones
when I dissociate I leave my hands first

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The Hammer of Witches: A Complete Translation of the Malleus Maleficarium by Christopher S. Mackay

The original satanic panic, this is a 15th-century Catholic theo-

cratic screed from Germany. Written by a clergyman it was one of the first texts distributed popularly because of its coincidence with the invention of the printing press. The audience was clergy, judges and lawmakers as well as conspiracy minded lay people to provide frameworks for categorizing witchcraft and demonic possession for use in social and legal oppression.

“In bodies assumed and formed into effigies in this way, they are like a sailor in a ship that he has moved.” (303)

“Nothing can block their passage up or down. If bystanders address them by name they immediately fall to the ground as if hurled.” (296)

“Demons lack tongues and lungs but by art they can create and show a tongue as well as teeth and lips according to the condition of the body.” (305)

“They knock air that has not been drawn in through inhaling, as in the case of humans, but has been held within an assumed body, and then they release it in an articulate way to the air outside up to the ears of the listener.” (304)

“The body has two sorts of boundary, one of mass and one of essence.” (352)

“Whether they perform filthy acts of this kind with each other visibly or invisibly it should be said as far as experience has taught us, although the incubus demon always works visibly from the point of view of the sorceress so that it is not necessary for him to approach her invisibly because of the ratified and explicit agreement in terms of bystanders, it is frequently the case that the sorceresses were seen lying on their backs in fields or woods naked above the navel and gesticulating with their forearms and thighs. They keep their limbs in an arrangement suitable for that filthy act while the incubus demons work with them invisibly in terms of bystanders.” (313)

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I want a different temporal spatiality that relies on glitch and dislocation to drop through and arrive at that which has been set beyond the horizon and which has been made placeless in the field.

there are two bodies
I have to know this because what is at stake right now is a crisis of
embodiment
where do we begin and end
at our skin
at the crumpling edges of our state
handholding with the metaverse

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The Future of Trans Politics: Jules Joanne Gleeson and Nathaniel Dickson

<https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4269-the-future-of-trans-politics>

I love the speed and clarity with which this essay meets the popular violence that fascism is mounting against trans people, not just in the US but internationally. It identifies the site of crisis as one of embodiment.

“Fascism imagines the nation as the extension of the body of the fascist — his power, his righteousness, the hegemony of his identity and his place in the world. This fiction must work hard to obscure its own bad logic, and it falters every time a trans person enters a restroom.”

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the fascist identifies their body as aligned with the body of the state. transness names the actions of body being stretched to other bounds, names it as foreground. the fascist relies on this ability being theirs alone and merged with, in union with the form of the state. the illusion allows only one read and one subject: to step beyond is to die. the fascist is surrounded by death

transness names the conherence of the nation body. fundamental truth of captitation

And the horror of the death one faces seeing their own guts outside themselves. what have you gained and lost in this hybridization of your body. imagine the tenuousness and final mortality of those bonds.

“agency begins where sovereignty wanes”

That Y2k See-Through Jelly Plastic

I'm fantasizing already about my next avatar or versions
I want the thighs to be made out of that
Early-2000s colorful jelly plastic electronic casing

See through
I don't know what's inside but I imagine
Lying on my back and tapping my legs
Thock thick
Click of finger on plastic

I recede from figure
Leaning into succubus

My first draft of the body I wanted more hips a bit of belly and
small boobs is what I kept sculpting

The first avatar I got in VR is a petite cat girl. It reminds me of
the rail thinness of my body when I crossed adolescence and into
the void. When my grandmother would say "I'm going to feed
you a stick of butter." I am less than. I am 1.2 meters tall, most
people loom over me.

I like this body, it is black and white and grayscale with glowing
eyes
I like its expressions wide-eyed, staring into the abyss, the inten-
sity of focus and pending unexpectedness comes to the surface
I get headpats from above, fluffing my ears back and forth

The second avatar I used was a demon girl with white skin, a flat
chest covered with a black crop top and little denim booty shorts
a skin colored tail. Fishnets and converses and a massive, round
jiggly butt. My first friend in VR tells me, you picked a femboy
avatar.

When I would stream with this avatar, I'd get weird chasers com-
ing in so I quit using it.

I've always wanted more butt

Most of all I feel that my center of embodiment is in my hips

I square up to what comes at me. My feelings stick and release in my hips, in the gap wedges between hipbone and femur. Sometimes emanates pain, sometimes not.

Now I move from my hips for work, on my film gigs, to make the camera steady to move without shaking. My hips move first and I attach the camera to my hips so it follows. My hips hold me still and hold time steady. For money.

I use my body to measure in moments of crisis like when the man chased me from the bathrooms in Marsha P. park. Breathe, focus on breath and expand my attention, which direction am I headed, what's around me, how much room between me and my attacker. I let my hips carry my limits and my labor.

I do want a body now though and that's the funny point of growth that turned over me in the past few weeks. I feel caution or dissociation still when I step outside but I just accept it as long as I can do it in small pieces. Being able to find my own rhythm of being is literally saving me. IDK how else to put it. That I've given myself: months of time to think and move however I want. Hyperfocused in, working on this avatar into the early hours of the morning. I feel so much more trust in myself.

What I saw last summer was that everything was going to be abandoned. I don't want a body was saying, or being in the shock that no, I really couldn't keep opening my body to the people who won't be in solidarity. Realizing that the shared space of solidarity was a tangible body thing. This is basics I feel and a process I am coming to terms with now as a white trans person.

Transness can name this moment of exchange between my body, self, and this greater body. In the best sense, it calls upon the emergent, participatory responsiveness of the collectively shared embodiment, exposing the bounds of what we have a say in and are refused to have a say in. Where a cis white society believes things to be as they are, fixed, perhaps not right or in need of change, but ultimately exempt from day-to-day agency. So me practicing appearing as I do names their participation in the making of the material of this reality. Their bodies and genders are just as emergent or fungible or precarious as mine.

It's funny to me that the writer of Hammer of Witches used one of the first popularly printed books to go so obsessively into description and delineation of the bounds of the body. He trips over his own technology, his voice vaporized and transmitted

by page to the heads and tongues of his readers. Has he become a bodiless demon himself? Has his technology eaten him alive? His scrambling determination that the fluidity and reworkings of these bounds, the figure of the body, should only be the domain of the law and of god.

Maybe this is the fear that possesses him. Not of actual sorceresses or demons, but the possibility his moment in technology brings to his reckoning. His moment of technology is still our moment of technology. The possibility of single-point perspective constituting individual subject with private, exclusive vision from this point. This perspective can be and is often formed to overwrite all other reality. To transport into an image is to lose sight of what is around us. So when the technology of embodiment is felt to be changing, he must assert his dominion or die. Don't be caught outside the illusion. Nothing exists beyond the grid of perspective but the edge of the law.

I am printing this zine, so that my tongue might knock against the roof of your mouth, against your teeth and conjure voice to your ear.

For the animation
the possession of this second body

the body of language and law

She lies on her back and opens her legs and says, "Look, I made it myself."

demongirl-3-152.blend

I tried out a new avatar version last night. I made a new save.
demongirl-3-152.blend.

I imported a new topology “basic anime body” that I paid \$7 for plus tip.

The poly count is low but after I weight painted the mesh to the bones, it still deformed perfectly.

I added it to my file, scaled it, proportioned it, deleted its hands and stitched back on my own. I upload it through Unity and put on my headset. I’m standing in an art deco train car whisking through outer space, starfield. The golden yellow glow of the sconce lights and wood panels renders my skin soft and living. There’s a mirror on the wall that shows my figure as cut out – the wall only reflects me, not what’s behind me.

There I am, black combat boots, a thigh sleeve made of light purple translucent plastic like from a y2k era jelly look electronic. Fishnets over a black bikini bottom and a sheer black skirt with bright glowing pleats that pulse in a cascade animation like the legs of a deep sea creature. A shiny black vinyl dommy mommy crop top and a chain necklace. I have blue hair in an undercut, two curls dance between my double black horns that shine like my top. I have hypnotic purple eyes.

The new topology fits me although I’m glad I brought in my own hands. My butt hangs over the purple plastic wrapping on or making up my thigh, yes this feels right.

Become a body!

The individual has been scaled up to contain parts to the body or embodiment that may or are simply too much for the individual to contain. In VR, I am practicing an active, commented on, expansiveness of embodiment: that my body always extends through my technology and language.

There is a sloshy, recursive continuum between the private body and my body of the commons. Privatization under capitalism wields its power by establishing boundaries or borders on that continuum.

It doesn’t want to remove the fluidity, but rather mediate and determine the agency or participation and awareness of that fluidity. It is fundamentally working the power of illusion. Illusion lets us operate AS IF, dissociated from the underlying

material. Illusion involves constituting the individual as the focus of a private point of optical perspective and individual as self contained or whole.

So we say, "it is impossible for me to carry on paying rent and funding my own healthcare" because it literally is and the harder we draw to these bounds we realize the absurdity of the illusion, the violence of its edges.

We have been ridded of the words for that which is simultaneously mine and someone else's.

What if my body was never meant to contain all its being asked to contain / Debt is the excising of the near side of my embodiment.

What reaches through the field/figure of the body commons to the fence of the land commons. What is simultaneously mine and ours.

I am working on a poetry that happens on this near field embodiment - the half of individuated self that is in fact commons that capitalism must privatize to stay alive.

So this is a poetry of debt, technology, sampling, and bending the existing onto itself.

The near field of embodiment is the field of my hands and my skin and my bones extending their way through language and technology into shared, common body. The definition of this near field is one of debt creation. To say I am possessed of this body that is mine but I die to encompass it and in my death I am supported by those I am with and the forms we make together. I am in this field creating debt which is a relation to death that is a fundamental function of living with each other. The numerical debt is a one to one thing, an actual measure of the size of debt I have to my community yet has been carried away into loans and cards and stolen wages. You can extract my time and turn it into money, but that's not enough. Money can still circulate and I can use it how I like. Debt is more valuable and effective. Set the limits of the body.

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from the back side of the front mesh of surface, arrive.
within topology through two lines of perspective
brush my cat ears, hold me close between arms and eyes
stretch the grid over my skin

Notes

Most of my notes are in the text but here's the overview just in case.

Stretch the Grid Over My Skin

Rainhet Chaneru, *Rainhet 3D Avatar Class*, <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2EEbgwoJzdt5kFVDyY2lliNqf7cWJeD3>. Concepts and language from *Queer Phenomenology* are throughout. Ideas about body, figure, and field: Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, Duke University Press, 2006. The glitch as trans embodiment. Legacy Russell, "Introduction," *Glitch Feminism*, Verso, 2020. Construction of western optical perspective traditions and the kinds of illusion based on these traditions. E.H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, 1960.

UV Map

Christopher S. Mackay, *The Hammer of Witches: A Complete Translation of the Malleus Maleficarium*, Cambridge University Press, 2006. Jules Joanne Gleeson and Nathaniel Dickson "Future of Trans Politics," <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4269-the-future-of-trans-politics>, 2019 March 14. "agency begins where sovereignty wanes" from Judith Butler, pg 16, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, Routledge, 1997.

Thank You

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About Me

I go by Marie Hinson or hexe.exe. I'm a poet and a performance artist and virtual reality cybergoth demon girl. My pronouns are she/her. You can find more on my website mariehinson.com.



Image Description: Author headshot. Grayscale image, projected light with lines of blurry text light my face against a dark background. I'm a white trans femme. Dramatic eyeliner, dark lipstick, gummy bear earrings, chain necklace, messy flannel collar is open. Short hair buzzed on the side.