Terri Power
MFA – PhD Candidate

For Queer Eyes Only?: Creating Queer Performance Art at University

A number of social changes over the last few decades have resulted in the rise of cross-gendered casting; I think that's a good start, but cross-gendered casting merely scratches the surface of what we could be really be doing theatrically with gender. There (sic) so much more to playing with gender than simply going from man to woman or from woman to man….What might you build with bodies that walk beyond the boundaries of what's allowed by the proprietors of the popular culture? (Bornstein 2004: 17)

This quote taken from Kate Bornstein's article Theatre and the Future of the Body featured in *Women &Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory*, reads like a transgender performance call to arms and as a queer performance artist in academia, I couldn't help but to rise to the challenge and create a performance that would walk within and without such boundaries. Bornstein is essentially describing the performative convention that I have been developing as a dramatic practice towards a PhD in Performance Practice at the University of Exeter. Throughout my research I have staged and defined what I term 'trans-dressing' and have offered clear exercises and insights to playing with gender in front of audiences.

Trans-dressing, unlike theatrical conventions such as Drag or cross-dressing, oscillates between and beyond gender categories, constructing and deconstructing gender(s) fluidly throughout a performance. Throughout my research I use the prefix *trans-* to evoke the sense of crossing over, between and mostly beyond categories. In my use of trans- I also reference transgender attentive politics and scholarly writing derived from the queer and academic community. My description and technique of trans-dressing in performance is based upon queer, feminist, transgender, and gender performativity theories introduced by such scholars as Judith Butler, Jill Dolan and Judith Halberstam. In my work I have taken these theories and turned them

into practical exercises and performances that investigate and play with gender in 'the performance of the performance' for diverse audiences.

In this article I would like to detail how my practice-led research resulted in an original performance that was underpinned by queer, gender and performance theories and how my queer subjectivity and trans-dressing performance practice was intertwined in the process. I also aim to describe my understanding of gender performance theory and how I infuse theory into practice in order to (re)present and deconstruct gender axioms theatrically. I will also detail my devising process and set it within queer methodologies, practices and discourses, and finally, I endeavour to describe the academic reception that the performance garnered. As a result of the audience's interpretation of *Through a Glass Darkly*, the controversial question, which is also the title of this paper, was posed. Should queer performance and theory remain 'for queer eyes only?'

Performing Gender

One major discovery that resulted from my performance explorations throughout my practice-led research was the importance of the audience in the interactive event of 'gendering' the performer. I learned that 'gender proves to be performative' (Butler 1999: 33), defined and performed through repetitive acts of social interaction and intelligibility. These acts do not exist in a vacuum, but rather in constant consort with an external audience; for one does not perform gender acts for oneself but for an audience that dictates and recognises those acts and therefore interprets the performance in order to gender the performer.

This gendering process I am describing originates in the social 'everyday' performances of gender deemed by the status quo as 'natural'. My use of dramatic language such as 'acts', 'perform', 'audience', and 'performer' references terminology used by gender theorists. They have borrowed from theatrical and dramatic terminology in order to highlight theories of gender and 'performativity'. Their appropriation of theatrical language also implicates gender as not a state of being but as an action, a doing, and a doing that is not for oneself but for an assumed audience and therefore is a social, political and dramatic act. When a performer on stage

highlights the theatrical semiotics of gender, particularly in cross- and trans- gender play, her act doubles not only as a (re)presentation, but a social and political critique of gender, marking gender performance as 'queer' in context.   Jill Dolan writes: 'To be queer is not who you *are*, it's what you *do*, it's your relation to dominant power, and your relation to marginality, as a place of empowerment' (Dolan 2002: 5). Gender performance and theatre is embedded in 'queer' acts of deconstruction, discord and the subversion of dominant ideologies: 'Theatre and queer theory challenge ideas of fixed identities. Both break through the seemingly impermeable walls of gender and sexual categories by unmooring them from the idea that they derive absolutely and inevitably from an original objective source' (Solomon 2002: 14).

This is not to say that dominate ideologies have no value in queer explorations of gender performance and theory. I have discovered, through my approach, that the social 'everyday' performance of gender and its ontological material effects, language, codes and acts are blueprints for the 'extra-daily' performance of gender on the stage. It stands to reason that if the audience in the theatre is the same audience that 'genders' the actor on the street outside the theatre, that this same audience will use the same gendering process and language to gender the character the actor plays on the stage. Therefore it is imperative, particularly in cross- and trans - gender castings that the actor not only understands this process and its codes but employ practices that help her build her character's gender in consort with or against the social and political gender ideology of her 'theatrical' audience.

This performance of socialized ideologies of gender construction is furthered articulated and set against theatrical language and modes of presentation by Elin Diamond:

> Gender refers to the words, gestures, appearances, ideas and behavior that dominant culture understands as indices of feminine or masculine identity. When spectators 'see' gender they are seeing (and reproducing) the cultural signs of gender and by implication, the gender ideology of a culture. Gender, in fact provides a perfect illustration of ideology at work since 'feminine' or 'masculine' behavior usually appears to be a natural – and thus fixed and unalterable – extension of biological sex. (Diamond 1988: 84)

The Dance of Darkness

Through a Glass Darkly, was constructed as a performance that would not only stage my growing research-led practice towards a PhD, but also to foreground trans-gender theory in performance under the umbrella of queer social and artistic politics. Transgender theory and politics as described by Katrina Roen 'are informed by postmodern conceptions of subjectivity, queer understandings of sexuality and gender, radical politics of transgression and the poststructuralist deconstruction of binaries…' (Roen 2001: 11) and it was with these radical conceptions that I originally wanted to shape my performance. In the end, it was through a playful embodiment of trans-gender performance that I was able to stage queer theory and politics within a personal viewpoint and public event that constructed and deconstructed gender and its prescriptive categories.

My overall interest in queer performances of gender and 'radical politics of transgression' led me to study transmogrification of the body in performance, particularly the work of Japanese 'butoh' artists. In 2006 I was invited to study butoh with renowned practitioner Endo Tadashi and I was introduced to his personal practice of butoh-MA.

MA is a word derived from Japanese Zen Buddhist philosophy and means 'emptiness' or 'the space between'. It describes a state of being that, as Endo explains in dance terms, is '…the moment just at the end of a movement and before the beginning of the next.' (Endo 2006: 2) Immediately I was inspired by the shape-shifting and metamorphic aesthetics embodied in the practice. Endo's practice of butoh-MA seeks to perform between genders, and other dualisms including life and death, visibility and invisibility, night and day, heaven and earth, and so on, revealing that there is always an 'in between' and 'other' space to be explored.

Like Endo Tadashi, my practice of trans-dressing is rooted in the act of exploring the 'in between', 'other', or 'queer' space in performance. My interest and exploration of the intersection between gender categories is considered a butohist quality as butoh dance 'befuddles the rational mind…it survives on images that continually change, riding the moment of meaning in transition.' (Fraleigh and Nakamura 2006: 3-4) Although butoh is a dance form, its ethos of

'becoming' echoes arguments within gender performativity theory, and its focus upon the intersections between corporeality and nothingness mirrors my trans-dressing practice. Also, at the core of butohist philosophy and theory, is the rebellion and deconstruction of the social body as it is 'culturally conditioned or constructed.' (Fraleigh and Nakamura 2006: 73) Butoh's aesthetics are based upon queer models and practice, and, particularly in butoh-MA, its shape-shifting between genders fundamentally implies a transgender discourse.

My use of butoh-MA did not result in dance compositions (as is usually the process) but in building my trans-gender performance, artistic approach, and radical play with the audience. My use of butoh's theatrical and philosophical approaches to creating performance resulted in a multi-layered cross-cultural trans-formative context for the staging of *Through a Glass Darkly*. This context guided my creative process in writing, devising and performing my production.

Devising a Solo Performance

As a solo performance artist I have always had great difficulty in working alone, yet my solo performances have always resulted in the most artistic and creative explorations of my innermost expressions. In nearly every solo performance I have devised, I have staged layers of meaning through appropriation, adaptation, integration, deconstruction, and re-imaginings. *Through a Glass Darkly* was a similar attempt. My approach to solo performance is not unlike Matthew Goulish's description of Elizabeth LeCompte's work from the Wooster Group:

> Although LeCompte's approach appears fundamentally deconstructive, one sees how the process of gathering, altering, and recombining texts easily lends itself to the construction of the more-self. The texts become a layer on the surface of the actors, and that surface then becomes the more-self. This may be what Gilles Deleuze meant when he spoke of, in contrast to Jung's "collective unconscious," the existence of the "constructed unconscious" and its imminence to creativity. (Goulish 2000: 83)

In addition to performing my approach in a theatrical context, *Through a Glass Darkly* was my attempt to construct and stage the unconscious of a character caught 'between' genders. As I attempted to devise a performance that would evoke an unconscious or dreamlike effect, I started to recognize echoes of the 'more-self' within the piece. In the beginning, I tried to delineate between the character and myself, but soon, lines blurred and I realised that this blurring was essential to the process. If, as I had argued, trans-performance seeks to transcend and explode all boundaries, then certainly it should follow that the boundary between self and character would be territory for such disruption and eventually be blurred as well.

This key concept was further explored in my work as I integrated advanced technologies into my performance and began researching aspects of intermediality within my staging. Like trans-gender politics and theory, intermediality attempts to break through boundaries and criss-cross between binary oppositions:

> …intermediality is associated with the blurring of generic boundaries, crossover and hybrid performances, intertextuality, intermediality, hypermediality, and a self-conscious reflexivity that displays the devices of performance in performance.(Chappele and Kattenbelt 2006: 11)

Foregrounding the devices of performance, particularly in application to gender in performance, was exactly what I had aimed to accomplish, and with the addition of intermediality, I had introduced into my process a new means whereby I could do so.

Inter- Trans- Mediality

Through a Glass Darkly was devised in the final 'practice' year of my PhD and at a time when I was beginning a very difficult multi-media editing process of the video documentation of my research. The more I engaged with these advanced technologies to support my thesis, the more I became fascinated with the performance possibilities new media introduced. I began to research

theoretical applications of technology on performance and integrated these applications in the staging and devising of *Through a Glass Darkly*.

Of particular interest in incorporating technology into my work was exploring arguments and examples of live/mediatised performance possibilities. I wanted to incorporate a possible 'future' trajectory of gender performance and felt that advanced technologies and new media juxtaposed with 'the live' body/performer would create a nexus of intersections that could theatrically stage and foreground transgender performance and its future outcomes. Freda Chapple and Chiel Kattenbelt write about the changing representations and transformative performance meanings imbued in applications of intermediality to performance, 'These new modes of representation are leading to new perceptions about theatre and performance and to generating new cultural, social and psychological meanings in performance.' (Chappele and Kattenbelt 2006: 11) Furthermore, intermediality in performance negotiates through between spaces, creating new sites for performance investigations whilst riding on its own wave of change and 'becoming':

> …(Intermediality) is creating new modes of representation; new dramatical strategies; new ways of structuring and staging words, images and sounds; new ways of positioning bodies in time and space; new ways of creating temporal and spatial interrelations. (Chappele and Kattenbelt 2006: 11)

Fundamental aspects of intermediality and butoh also influenced my writing methodology as I created the written components of the performance. During my dramaturgical practice, I approached creating a written text that conveyed intertextualities, particularly as they are represented in the staging and artistic viewpoint of my developing 'play'. I wrote primarily in spurts, which served to subvert any tendency to write towards a defined narrative or linear structure and therefore my writing methodology resulted in a 'queering' of the text. I also wrote in prose and poetry on specific themes, such as binary oppositions; night/day, life/death, masculine/feminine, etc, and this acted to highlight the experience of living in the shifting sands of 'between-ness' which was my attempt at textualizing a trans- experience.

From *Through a Glass Darkly* written and performed by Terri Power, 2006:

Seeking to Destroy

People seek out my eyes. They want to look into them
to 'know' my sex.

They can't read me and it disturbs them.

They want to know what sex I am so they can determine their relationship to me. If they think I am male, they will show me respect, move out of my way, give me space in this world and let me walk on by. If they think I am female, they may look down upon me, push me aside, stop my mouth, and objectify my body.

They need to determine if I am equal or lesser than. They calculate, compare, analyze, dissect and weigh me up. It's a gendering science in which I defy all social and biological laws. I suppose it's hard for them to wrap their little brains around that.

I imagine that this practice will continue after my death.

Perhaps one day anthropologists will dig up my bones
and sex me 'female' because my pelvis bone is fused. They'll determine that I never had children and make all kinds of assumptions based on my body.
Under a microscope my DNA might tell another story. Maybe they will note high traces of testosterone and discover the gay gene, and with this forensic information they'll make new assumptions about me based on my body.

What remains is not me.

I am much more than hardware and compounds.

Jelly Fish

I am from the sea

Nothing about me is static or permanent

I am fluid. I slip through fingers.

I rise and fall with the tide.

I appear and disappear in the wake of a wave

In seafoam and shattered shells.

My main aim in mixing these textual forms throughout the piece was to highlight the dramaturgical performance of liminality and subliminality in context with an embodiment and/or disembodiment of gender performativity. By foregrounding these performances through text, particularly in spoken form, I aimed to further stage my performance of 'between' and 'crossing'. In my view, these pieces of text represented the liminal 'body' and the subliminal 'essence' and the socio-political content they conveyed was furthered through my extensive use of metaphor and imagery throughout the performance.

Trains and (Trans)portation

The main body of the piece, 'the text', was written and envisioned primarily on trains in southwest England. At first, I didn't think much about this aspect of the process, except noting that I had time nearly everyday to write in short bursts between my home in Exmouth and my working life in Exeter. As I reflect on the creation and writing process, I can see how trains and transport had influenced the conceptual vision of the piece and furthered my trans-performance investigation.

Riding in trains is, in my experience, a trans- subject position and can inspire deeper 'constructing of the unconscious' in writing. My experience of being on these trains is usually

deeply reflective as I forget my body and turn inwards towards my thoughts. I am also inspired into further meditative reflection as I watch the changing scenery pass by through 'dirty' train windows. The views are tainted yet spectacular and constantly shifting from the sleepy Exmouth seaside, the still and natural estuary, the rolling Devon hills, to the growing capital city. Unconsciously or serendipitously, this experience is mirrored throughout *Through a Glass Darkly*. In devising the performance and creating the environment for an audience, I wanted to convey these ideas and experiences.

What is interesting to note is that trains are a social technology, moving people across spaces. They have their own social rules and are a microcosm for the world at large. The train world creates sites wherein we are in transition as we are transported from one place to another. When aboard a train we enter a world 'between', and unconsciously this location helps to dislocate me, the artist, from my personal 'world' and perspective and write from the viewpoint of my character, or rather, my own unconscious musings from the more-self.

Bodily Enactments

As part of my devising and research practice, I also spent long hours studying the performative body on digital video. I wanted to experiment with the technology and its representations and visual applications to the body and gender readings. I had been inspired by the work of contemporary trans-gender artists' use of bodily acts in their performances such as in the photography of Lauren Cameron. The more I learned about the subversive effects of these performances the more drawn I became to my own explicit use of the body in my performance. I had taped my nude body on digital video in practical experiments with cameras and had planned to show that as a backdrop to my live performance, but I also felt compelled to stage a 'live' nude body in performance as well. I believed that in staging a nude body, I could introduce performative bodily discourses into the political and social gender challenges I was already presenting.

In the past few decades, naked bodies have taken the stage to aggressively signal the power of theatre and performance…(throughout these decades) the naked body was presumed to organize a dramaturgical site from which both a political charge and a seductive promise could be launched. The body bared was perceived as enabling the stage and the social. (Case 2002: 186)

In my view, by introducing performative bodily discourses into my trans-gendered dramaturgical structure, I ultimately stage a critique of the social prescriptions of gender and its effects on 'real' and 'lived' bodies; representing both the 'archetypal' gendered body and the 'subversive' critique. To me, in this context, the idea is clearly articulated that sex is not gender is not sexuality; that other genders can be performed and read on a 'naturally' sexed body 'revealing' that 'natural' is not, as the preconception maintains, 'normative' bodily acts. Furthermore, trans-gender and more specifically trans-sexual bodies and experience have always been a key element in trans- discourse and have fundamental, complex and important relationships to technology. Sue-Ellen Case explains:

Of course the basic problem for the performance theorist is to understand how anything like the performing body might be configured in such a space. The fleshly body, along with other material effects, seems likewise distant, and more ephemeral. Yet there is one kind of body that admits, at base, to virtual, technological intervention – a body enacting, in the flesh, the oscillation between gendering systems and sexual practices – the transsexual body. More than naked, this body displays itself as a construction at the deepest base of physiological and hormonal structures. Moreover, its very technological intervention is the site of the construction of sexual difference. (Case 2002: 195)

I felt that through my nude (re)presentation of the body, set within a woven framework of trans-gender and gender performativity theory along with applications of intermediality and theatrics, I was deconstructing social gender performitivity, highlighting the performance as a performance through theatrical conventions and the mechanisms of my own technique, and reconstructing

gender(s) through new modes of representations. Performance artist Guillermo Gomez Pena writes about this experience and theatrical use of the body in performance:

> Our body is also the very center of our symbolic universe – a tiny model for humankind…and at the same time, a metaphor for the larger socio-political body. If we are capable of establishing all these connections in front of an audience, hopefully others will recognize them in their own bodies. (Gomez-Pena 2005: 23-4).

Through this means, I believed that I was ultimately staging my PhD thesis and Trans-dressing the stage.

Shock Spaces and the Contention of Performing 'Otherness'

One of my main aims in constructing my performance was to apply queer methodologies and practice to not only the content and devising of the performance but to its delivery and in effect its reception. I wanted to evoke a 'otherness' in the delivery of the production to dislodge the final performance outcome from the usual, casual and normative performative experiences audiences, particularly those attending University productions, were anticipating. How I aimed to accomplish this was through many 'disruptions' in time, space and content that emerged as 'shock spaces'. I originally thought that these shock spaces would not be 'shocking' but rather simple disruptions or provocations that could allow the audience to interpret the meanings and images being presented in innovative ways. These spaces in practice however, were received by the audiences as quite provocative and so disrupting that the performance's place of 'otherness' was hotly contested as segmented, indecent and even blasphemous to the non-queer audience.

The first shock space was encountered at the very start of the performance. At this point, the audience was led by an attendant dressed in casual attire into a pre-show room. This room was a large empty space with white walls and a clinical/industrial setting. Suspended from the ceiling were three television screens upon which my image was projected out of sequence. Once the audience had all entered the room the attendant started a pre-recorded video of me, the

performer, speaking as 'the self' to my 'standing room only' audience about the queer performance 'my persona' was about to present. As the recording aired each television became increasingly out of sync and the content became harder and harder to comprehend. Suddenly the televisions, one by one, became fuzzy and there was a loud buzzing noise that dominated the studio. All the lights in the pre-show room were turned off and the room was lit by the fuzzy televisions. A soundtrack played with the song 'Utopia' from Goldfrapp blaring over the buzzing and the lights were turned on whilst the attendant opened a hidden door in the room instructing the audience to follow him into the next performance space. As the audience moved from the pre-show space to the next performance space, the Utopia song continued through the spaces simultaneously with the audience.

The second performance space was also the site of the second shock space. Although this space was similarly designed like the first, it was larger and had seating set up for the audience facing a blank white wall. There was a bit of a 'stage space' with a microphone on a stand to the right and a television on a stand to the left. Once the audience seated themselves the sound track stopped playing and a 'black font' quote was projected onto the blank white wall:

"For now we see through a glass darkly" 1 Corinthians 13:12.

At this point in the production the television on the stand was rolled to centre-stage by the attendant who then started a recording that was aired on the small screen. This recording was a recording of a the same television with a fuzzy screen playing in a small white room with a stained glass window just behind it giving off some light. As this recording played a voiceover rang out through speakers in the room of an Evangelical minister giving a sermon about Adam and Eve. The sermon lasted over seven minutes and it seemed like a legitimate sermon at first, but as it went on it was clear that the voice was mine and the content became queer as I included men, women and Trans people in the biblical Eden story.

The television screen then went fuzzy and was turned off by the attendant and moved back to the left side of the stage. The stage went black and the audience sat in the dark in silence for a few seconds. Soon a film was projected across the entire white wall with a trans-voiced

speaker (the voice of my persona) narrating. The images presented were of trans-spaces, such as interiors of moving trains and the sandy wet slopes where the sea meets the beach. The content of the spoken narration was of a person caught between genders and feeling the ongoing pressure to perform either masculinity or femininity.

After this screening of the short film, the audience experienced another moment of silence and darkness. Soon I entered the stage space in high-heeled shoes as my persona, wrapped in a white sheet (worn like a toga) and wearing a bad blonde wig. I entered precariously and reluctantly, as images were projected onto my persona's body of socially 'ideal' women and the body I was being 'programmed' to inhabit. As this series of images ran, another pre-recorded voiceover of my trans-voiced persona narrated. In this recording my persona explained how these ideal images and my persona's 'lived experience' of gender were not congruent.

Then again, the lights went out and the audience sat in silence until my nude body was presented in a small pool of blue light. The same pre-recorded voiceover played as I presented my body (representing the trans-gender body of my persona) in various positions and shifting between masculine and feminine semiotics. At this point in the production, if about one third of the audience *had not* left because of the previous 'shock' spaces, they would leave during this time. Presenting a nude body performing trans-gender fluidity was apparently the final straw that shattered the decent morals of some hetero-normative university audience members.

The performance continued along these lines; shifting between live and recorded materials as well as fluidly moving between gender performances in various states of dress and undress. My voice also shifted between gender readings as well; sometimes being presented live, sometimes recorded. The shock spaces increased and the content continued to support and give voice to a trans-gender experience. I also made the deliberate choice to increase the 'between' spaces of silence and darkness to disrupt the theatrical experience in order to make my production distinctly queer in not only content but overall delivery. This was the point of most contention for the audience that stayed. After each performance they repeatedly spoke to me suggesting that if I 'tightened up the theatrical elements' the performance wouldn't seem so segmented and strange.

The Audience Enters (and Leaves)

Over the course of my PhD, most of my gender performance explorations were created for conventional audiences, such as my all-female staging of *Romeo and Juliet* or for specific queer audiences such as my Drag King acts performed in gay clubs and pubs in London. These performances were well received, and the audiences either interacted with the event, or were very vocal about its positive reception. However, when I created my trans-dressed 'queer' performance piece *Through a Glass Darkly* for a mostly academic audience as the final homage to my research, my queer subjectivity, the queer content of the piece, and the queer methods I employed became a source of contention between 'queer' and 'vanilla' audiences. This experience of creating a strategically queer theatrical performance within an academic course of learning prompted me to question if queer has a legitimate place in academia.

As I devised, wrote, characterized, composed, filmed and edited the artistic pieces that would meld to become the *Through a Glass Darkly* event, I did not give much thought to the reception of this performance. In my view, I wanted to stage my work unashamedly and with the artistic belief that elements of the radical and provocative in behaviour, play and identity was essential to my performance in staging the ultimate trans-gender experience. By not pre-censoring my work or shaping it for a particular audience or sensibility, as I had done with my past productions, I felt that I would achieve a more poignant production located in the nexus of gender, self, art, identity, biology and culture. I wanted to cross into what Gomez-Pena refers to as a 'conceptual territory'; a queer territory that was embedded in an unchartered and rough terrain:

> (Performance artists) converge in this overlapping terrain precisely because it grants us special freedoms often denied to us in other monocultural/unidisciplinary realms. In a sense, we are hardcore dropouts from our original metiers and communities, embarking on a permanent quest to develop a more inclusive system of political thought and esthetic praxis. (Gomez-Pena 2005: 22)

I naïvely believed that in not sculpting my performance for any particular audience and allowing myself absolute freedom of expression, I would create a performance that was essentially inclusive and relevant to any audience.

The audience that attended my performances of *Through a Glass Darkly* was a mixture of academics, students, friends and my PhD research examiners. Most of the students were from the Gender in Performance classes I had taught within the drama department as a student teacher during my PhD, postgraduate drama and sociology students or they were members of the university's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) organization. The reason I mention this demographic is because, with a few exceptions, it was my queer 'student' audience that responded most positively to the material. Also, there were a few postgraduate students studying gender and sexuality in the social sciences department that also positively received and interrogated the socio-political themes in the piece. In fact, a member of the sociology department emailed me following the performance and invited me to perform the piece as part of the inaugural Centre for the International Study of Sexuality and Gender in Europe (CISSGE) conference.

The academics were apathetic to the material, unless, they identified, in some way, as queer. For example, in a meeting with my two examiners, I probed them for their responses and thoughts on the performance. One, a married heterosexual mother of two and a very accomplished academic on the subject of performance stated bluntly "I didn't get it", whilst the other examiner, an out lesbian and queer scholar, quickly tried to explain the work and how it conveyed a completely unique queer subjectivity. As they interrogated me with regards to my approach, my examiners debated back and forth about the integrity and validity of my performance in respect to my academic research.

Most of the audience was nearly the same, although about a third simply walked out during the performance, either they enjoyed the content and delivery of the piece or demonstrably argued against its validity and artistic merit. Many academics interpreted the performance as 'obscene', 'disconnected', 'lacking narrative', 'offensive' and even 'exhibitionist'. My queer-identified audience, however, described the performance as 'engaging', 'intelligent', 'thought provoking', and even reflecting of their own personal experiences. One

hetero-sexual woman that felt her own social gender performance was deemed queer by others, said to me after the show "Thank you. That show (the performance) is how I feel everyday", and I took her words as genuine. With an outcome that resulted in blatant oppositional opinions and receptions I began to question my work. Had I created a performance that could only be understood by a queer audience, or was academia lacking in its understanding of queer theory and practice?

Since the performance of *Through a Glass Darkly* I have continued to resolve these questions through my everyday practice of living and learning as a queer scholar, teacher and practitioner. My research, practice and experience has led me to realise that in order to legitimise my work in academia I have to teach my students, colleagues, audiences, and yes, even examiners about queer theory and practice. I understand that this is part of creating a discursive educational environment. I cannot assume that queer theory is an acceptable theoretical framework in which to underpin my arguments and practice, but rather I have to constantly *prove* that it is and that it contains all the hallmarks of legitimacy that academia requires.

References

Bornstein, Kate (2004) 'Theatre and the Future of the Body.' *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory #*28: 15-17.

Butler, Judith (1999) *Gender Trouble*. New York: Routledge.

Case, Sue Ellen (2002) 'The Emperor's New Clothes: The Naked Body and Theories of Performance.' *Substance #98/99*, Vol. 31, no. 2&3, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin.

Chappele, Freda and Cheil Kattenbelt (2006) *Intermediality in Theatre and Performance*. New York: Rodopi.

Diamond, Elin (1988) 'Brechtian Theory/Feminist Theory.' *The Drama Review* 32, no.1. 82-94.

Dolan, Jill (2002) 'Introduction: Building a Theatrical Vernacular: Responsibility, Community, Ambivalence, and Queer Theatre.' *The Queerest Art*. Ed. Alisa Solomon and Framji Minwalla. New York: New York   University Press. 1-8.

Endo, Tadashi (2006) *Butoh- MA* (workshop materials). London: 1-4.

Fraleigh, Sondra and Tamah Nakamura (2006). *Hijikata Tatsumi and Ohno Kazuo*. New York: Routledge.

Gomez-Pena, Guillermo (2005). *Ethno-techno: Writings on Performance, Activism, and Pedagogy*. New York: Routledge.

Goulish, Matthew (2000). *39 Microlectures: In Poximity of Performance*. London: Routledge.

Roen, Katrina (2001) 'Either/Or and Both/Neither: Discursive Tensions in Transgender Politics.' *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 27, no. 2 Chicago: University of Chicago.

Solomon, Alisa (2002) 'Great Sparkles of Lust: Homophobia and the Antitheatrical Tradition.' *The Queerest Art*. Ed. Alisa Solomon and Framji Minwalla. New York: New York University Press. 9-20.