

The constitution of transgender masculinities through performance: a study of theatre and the everyday.

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The Constitution of Transgender Masculinities through Performance:

A Study of Theatre and the Everyday

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PhD

I declare that work presented in this thesis is my own work.

Signed: Cate Meston.

The Constitution of Transgender Masculinities through Performance:

A Study of Theatre and the Everyday

Catherine McNamara

Abstract

This doctoral project is concerned with gender and the way that transgender masculinities are manifested, articulated and debated through drama, theatre and performance. The central question of the research is how 'performance' contributes to the process of constituting individual identities and communities, specifically transgender masculinities. The research engages with the multiple ways that the concepts or categories of the individual, of community and of performance are defined, and how they function and are experienced when transgender identities or transgender masculinities are central to a 'performance event'.

The particular individuals and groups of transgender-identified people, or people who might be described in relation to a trans framework of identity, are those for whom gender is not a fixed state rooted in a binary system, but a state that can be bent, moved or made malleable in order to fit according to individual need. The individuals and groups on whom I focus tend to have had their sex assigned female at birth and at some point in their lives have identified themselves as male rather than female. There are also individuals who do not self-identify as male but refute gender categorisation, thereby not identifying as female either. Moreover, there are people who still self-identify as female but have developed or produced markers of masculinity on their body that have a significant impact on their day-to-day living and in their performance work. In this thesis I will be referring to this range of varied identities as transgender masculinities.

This research will be of relevance to contemporary theatre scholars, particularly those with an interest in the creation of avant-garde and community-generated practices. The research will also be of use to those interested in queer and non-normative identities as manifested through drama, theatre and performance, whether this is by solo artists or within project work with groups of people who identify as transgender, genderqueer or have an otherwise complex relationship to gender.

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* DVDs within the appendix will play on a domestic DVD player, Mac or PC (using Windows Media Player and PowerDVD)

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Chapter 1

How does Performance Constitute Transgender Masculinities?

Queer performance creates publics by bringing together live bodies in space, and the theatrical experience is not just about what's on stage but also about who's in the audience creating community. (Cvetkovitch 2003: 9)

1.1 Introduction

This doctoral project is concerned with gender and the way that transgender masculinities are manifested, articulated and debated through drama, theatre and performance. The thesis is rooted in the productive intersections between the fields of performance studies and trans studies.¹ This chapter puts forward the framework of the thesis and contextualises the research.

In the quotation prefacing this introductory chapter, Ann Cvetkovitch comments on the social and intra-personal nature of the performance event or

¹ Performance studies is a well-established field of academic study which began in the 1970s, incorporating the study of drama, dance, performance and installation art, music performance and related disciplines such as anthropology, philosophy, sociology and critical studies. The origins of the field are most often attributed to Richard Schechner and Victor Turner's work on intercultural performances (Schechner 1976; 1985; 1988, Turner 1969; 1975; 1982). Trans studies is a newer discipline that focuses on transgender as a concept, a category or construct and as a lived experience. Though sometimes subsumed into gender studies or queer studies, the trans studies field is emerging as significant (Ekins & King 1996; Butler 1999; Stryker & Whittle 2006; Valentine 2007). It too connects with the related disciplines of anthropology, philosophy, sociology, and medicine.

‘theatrical experience’ and the potential that such experiences have to constitute the people who are participating, performing and also witnessing, as ‘publics’. By analysing a range of specific events that have taken place with performers and spectators within transgender community settings, this notion of the constitution of publics and communities through queer performance events will be explicated.

The central question of the research is how ‘performance’ contributes to the process of constituting individual identities and communities, specifically transgender masculinities. I will expand Cvetkovitch’s point to include consideration of how involvement in the process of making performance – and in using drama and theatre as processes with no necessary performance outcome, as well as the act of performing and witnessing performance – can contribute to the process of constituting both individual transgender identities and transgender communities. This thesis explores the concept, category and identity ‘transgender’ through myriad lived experiences by drawing on practices that have been created by, with and for transgender people as part of those lived experiences.

The contribution to knowledge that this thesis makes is that it serves as a corpus of transgender performance practice and culture, it contributes to developing Trans Studies discourse in the UK, and it disseminates innovative new practice in the context of gender identity and transgender identity formation. The research concentrates on the experiences of particular transgender people as they connect with theatre, drama and performance in different ways, for different reasons and to different ends. It gives due attention to notions of self, while also considering communities. These are complex and interrelated concepts, and the

ways that transgender masculinities emerge through performance will address the complexities of that interrelation. This research will be of relevance to contemporary theatre scholars, particularly those with an interest in the creation of avant-garde and community-generated practices. The research will also be of use to those interested in queer and non-normative identities as manifested through drama, theatre and performance, whether this is by solo artists or within project work with groups of people who identify as transgender, genderqueer or have an otherwise complex relationship to gender.

The particular individuals and groups of transgender-identified people, or people who might be described in relation to a trans framework of identity, are those for whom gender is not a fixed state rooted in a binary system, but a state that can be bent, moved or made malleable in order to fit according to individual need. The individuals and groups on whom I focus tend to have had their sex assigned female at birth and at some point in their lives have identified themselves as male rather than female. There are also individuals who do not self-identify as male but refute gender categorisation, thereby not identifying as female either. Moreover, there are people who still self-identify as female but have developed or produced markers of masculinity on their body that have a significant impact on their day-to-day living and in their performance work. In this thesis I will be referring to this range of varied identities as transgender masculinities.

In dealing with a collection of performance practices where transgender identities feature, converge or are debated, I will also be able to look at the ways these phenomena 'reveal the operations of systems and institutions that simultaneously produce various possibilities of viable personhood, and eliminate

others' (Stryker and Whittle 2006: 3). This focus on transgender subjectivities, lived experiences and embodiments is critical to the research. Individual perspectives, positions and identities are sutured together to create the narrative of the chapters, and the narrative of the various ways that performance is a contributory factor to identity formation. Some queer theoretical discourses have employed the trans-identity position to talk about gender and assert social constructivist arguments (Kessler and McKenna 1978²) or to use 'transgender' as a trope to explain larger issues of identity and human behaviour (Baudrillard 1993³). The category 'trans' is not being used in this research in a figurative or representational way.

This body of research has enabled a series of intellectual engagements with the relations between sex, gender and gendered expression, drawing on a diverse range of critical practices that explore the representation of transgender masculinities in 'text', analyses of the social and political power relations of sex and gender expression, critiques of the sex-gender system, and studies of transsexual and transgender identification. In examining the processes and structures that constitute 'normal', Judith Butler emphasises Foucault's ideas of the ways in which normativity is structured and how norms are maintained and reproduced within a specific culture. She argues that:

A norm is not the same as a rule, and it is not the same as a law. A norm operates within social practices as the implicit standard of normalisation... Norms may not

² Suzanne Kessler and Wendy McKenna (2000) acknowledge that 'it seemed to us in the mid-1970's that transsexuals exemplified the social construction of gender' as they write about a shift in perception with regard to the essentialism/constructivism debate in 'Who put the "Trans" in Transgender? Gender Theory and Everyday Life', *International Journal of Transgenderism*, 4(3).

³ Jean Baudrillard, in *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena* (trans. James Benedict): 'We are all transsexuals, just as we are biological mutants *in potentia*. This is not a biological issue, however: we are all transsexuals *symbolically*' (p. 21). He goes on to argue that the sexual liberation movement was a 'stage in the genesis of transsexuality' (p. 24) and that people are all now undifferentiated, androgynous and hermaphroditic beings.

be explicit, and when they operate as the normalising principle in social practice, they usually remain implicit, difficult to read, discernable most clearly and dramatically in the effects they produce. (1999: 41)

Regulation and norms produce social intelligibility and it is not only what is seen in the social that is important, but also, what can intelligibly exist to a society or culture. Gender can serve as a normalising process that enables a social legibility through the legitimisation of certain expressions of that gender. These regulatory powers are structures that can serve to legitimise certain kinds of identity practices (e.g. legal gender recognition or civil partnerships). The kinds of practices that are legitimate are usually part of sustaining dominant modes of gendered expression. The kinds of practices that are not legitimate can be described, as Butler says, as unintelligible in that they are hard to see or read. The idea of the regulation of subjects can be useful for looking at the cultural intelligibility of gender variance and at transgender masculinities in that they enable an establishment of a relationship between intelligibility and legitimacy. In order to be a legitimate being, one must be an intelligible being.

As readers of norms, according to this point of view, we are always already gendered when we read. Any analysis of gendered expression will always be influenced by our own experience and knowledge of gender and/or gender variance. Social intelligibility relies upon the reader 'making sense' of what is read and the reader has to have some ability to articulate within the terms of what they see – what may be intelligible to one person may not be intelligible to another because of different experiences of and knowledge of gender (especially where that gender is other in some way to their own experience). Added to this idea of experiences and the ability to perceive intelligibility is the

concept that in order to read gender intelligibility the reader needs to have some kind of idea of what counts as a norm within a particular culture. I am asserting that gender variant readers of norms are far more perceptive of the regulatory structures of gender, which maintain gender norms as intelligible. Gender variant readers of gender are far more gender-intelligent. The impulse to open dialogue with other people about those regulatory properties of gender is an impulse that underpins the practice at the core of this thesis. Transgender masculinities are constituted through engagement and participation within a creative process for the transgender performers and applied theatre project attendees, and also through the social interaction with audiences of various kinds, whether this be a spectator in a theatre auditorium, a school student in a workshop on gender and trans subjectivities or a barman receiving an order from a trans man who is experimenting with his voice.

This thesis is concerned with some of the specificities of particular transgender masculinities. It is also about broader issues of gender expression and masculinity as a component of identity. The research explores the function of performance for the individual and for communities. It engages with the multiple ways that the concepts or categories of the individual, of community and of performance are defined, and how they function and are experienced when transgender identities or transgender masculinities are central to a 'performance event'. This introductory chapter identifies some key intellectual problems and paradoxes that will be dealt with more fully, and in relation to practice, in succeeding chapters. It begins by making clear how the research is underpinned by the discourses of both trans studies and performance studies and moves on to

outline the trajectory of the dissertation by mapping out the content of each of the following five chapters.

1.2 The paradox of the category

To approach a study of transgender masculinities as they are formed, mediated and manifested through the medium of performance involves an engagement with multiply paradoxical constructs:

the stage [thus] operates both as a separate space subject to its own laws, and also as an extension of the every day. It is a place where the ‘performances’ of everyday life are themselves re-performed, and in the process changed. It embodies a defined set of cultural practices which are marked off from everyday social reality, while claiming at the same time important forms of continuities between theatrical representation and that everyday reality. (Mangan 2003: 22)

The relationship between theatre, performance and daily life, with the intersections where one feeds and bleeds into the other, underpins all of the practice at the core of this research. Performing on a stage or on the street, acting out a theatrical role, and performing the ‘role’ that is one’s own persona in the everyday, are all acts that feature in the following chapters. As Alan Read says in the introduction to *Theatre & Everyday Life: An Ethics of Performance*,

I am not saying that everything is theatre, nor that everyone acts ... [T]here remains nevertheless, however fraught and prone to the imaginary, the need to move beyond the domain of the theatre as named and defined into the realm of the quotidian, the

everyday, where micro-theatres are in constant states of emergence and disappearance (1995: 16–17).

This position is most pertinent in that everyday lived experiences of transgender people, who engage in theatre-making and with performance practice in more oblique, embedded ways, make up the fabric of the research.

The construction of transgender subjectivity is complex: ‘Female-to-Male transsexuals both embody but are also articulated by paradox’ (Noble in Scott-Dixon 2006: 98). Embodiment of transgender subjectivity produces apparent contradictions or things that do not seem to ‘fit’ together when considered within a hetero-normative framework. Bodies with so-called male signifiers, such as both secondary sex characteristics as well as so-called female genitalia, lack coherence. In articulating those subjectivities, narratives of trans masculinities disrupt the logics of gender as essential or as socially constructed. Later in this chapter I will develop a full discussion of the relationship between the theorising of gender as a practice and the ‘practices’ of trans, but the point here is that the constructs of transgender, masculinity, performance, the stage and the everyday all contain inconsistencies and illogicalities that Bobby Noble’s statement connects to the paradox of *passing*, for example; of striving to become something so identifiable (a ‘man’), that one’s ‘trans-ness’ is rendered invisible. A person is both more visibly a man than he has ever been, and yet he becomes invisible as the transgender man that he is, as he passes more and more successfully and blends into a normative environment.

The trans body is one that might not want to be intelligible, even where it ‘blends in’, particularly through conventional modes of representation. Peggy Phelan argues that greater visibility for disenfranchised political subjects does

not necessarily mean greater power, thus calling for a politics of the unmarked, of that which does not ‘fully’ appear in any performance of the subject (1993). I am asking what this means for transgender masculinities and their relationship to performance. What becomes significant here is the relationship between trans identity and privacy.

One goal of transsexualism could be said to be ‘passing’ as someone that you feel yourself to be (though at the same time, deemed by many *not* to be). Binaristic thinking would assert that there is no spectrum of sexualities or genders and, if one is to engage in sex reassignment, one must deny one’s former sex to pass as the opposite (Cranny-Francis 2003). This way of thinking, or this act in and of itself, would seem to suggest the transgendered person seeks invisibility, where an individual’s aim might be, in Sandy Stone’s words, ‘to erase h/erself, to fade into the “normal” population as soon as possible’ (1991: 11). Perhaps we might say that transsexuality is about achieving a desired state of being which may result in a kind of disappearance. Jay Prosser offers this perspective:

While sex reassignment surgery brings with it the chance of incorporation as a man or a woman, an unremarkability (a passing as real that should not be undervalued), becoming fully unremarkable requires the transsexual to renounce the remarkable history of transition – the very means to this unremarkability. (1998: 130)

In his paper ‘Impossible People: Seeing the Trans Person’ (01/05/04), Stephen Whittle suggests that while invisibility has widespread negative connotations, visibility as a result of publicising oneself as trans is not often wholly positive. However, he continues, it is exactly this ‘being seen’ and being read, as well as

the viewer's acts of seeing and reading, that enable trans people to 'come into existence'. Whittle describes the dichotomy of being trans in that the more 'successful' a trans person you are, the less visibly transsexual you will be and the less 'successful' you are, the more visible a transsexual you are. Where passing can be literally about survival on the streets, 'success' or invisibility might be desirable. Jamison Green alludes to the power society has to render bodies illegible, as shame and fear collude to instil a desire for disappearance:

We will always wear a scarlet T that marks us for treatment as a pretender, as other, as not normal, as trans. But wearing that T proudly – owning the label and carrying it with dignity – can twist that paradigm and free us from our subordinate prison. By using our own bodies and experience as references for our standards, rather than the bodies and experience of non-transsexuals (and non-transgendered people), we can grant our own legitimacy. (Green in More and Whittle 1999:123)

'Transgender' and 'masculinity' are the two key categories which I use within my research to attempt to communicate what it is I am concerned with and to employ a method of marking out some of the boundaries of the foci of the research. This marking out is partial and relative and requires qualification, explanation and acknowledgement of the rudimentary nature of categorisation. Categorisation is useful to me as a researcher, but it is also a useful organising principle in everyday life. Where individual people find it productive to self-identify as trans in some way, for example, grouping and categorising is worthwhile.

To problematise the act of categorising is, however, also worthwhile, and is something that numerous individuals who feature in the discussions of this

thesis engage in as part of their art-making or their everyday lives. Categorisation is context-specific and 'transgender' as a category has evolved through time and in relation to other categories. For example, David Valentine discusses the 'origin(s) and meaning(s) of transgender' in Chapter 1 of *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category*, and points to standard accounts of the history of the term in 1970s America. He looks too to academic discourse of the 1990s, socio-political activism and to shifts later in the 1990s around the use of the collective sense of the category and the lived experiences it attempts to contain and describe as 'part of organisational schema' (2007: 34). Valentine also acknowledges the other 'newer' categories that transgender exists in relation to (and often in some degree of opposition to) such as 'genderqueer'.

Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (2006) talk about transgender as a term of choice for 'a wide range of phenomena that call attention to the fact that "gender", as it is lived, embodied, experienced, performed, and encountered, is more complex and varied than can be accounted for by the currently dominant binary sex/gender ideology of Eurocentric modernity' (p. 3). This is a useful way of categorising, in that the 'thing' the category refers to remains open and non-specific (wide-ranging phenomena that call attention) and the function of those phenomena is the thing that leads them to come into the category of being transgender.

I am consciously utilising a term, or category, in order to make use of the fact that categories can create meaning, while at the same time, using categories critically and testing the borders of their meanings and the multiple ways they can be understood, applied, refuted and challenged. Throughout this thesis certain terms used need explanation for the sake of clarity.

Trans is used in this thesis to include transsexual and transgender identities.

Transsexual emerged as a medical term used to refer to a person who identifies themselves as a gender different from the one that would usually cohere with the sex they were assigned at birth. Transsexual people usually undergo a medical process of sex reassignment through the use of surgery and/or the administration of hormones. There exists a degree of antagonism towards this medical term with a history of pathologisation and some prefer not to prefix their identity category of man or woman with the word 'transsexual'.

Transgender has been a more colloquial term used increasingly in many contexts including academia and describes a person who feels that the sex and gender assigned to them at birth is not a correct or complete description of what they are or feel themselves to be. Transgender can be used to describe a wide range of gender expressions, which are variations from normative gender expression (for example including masculine or 'butch' women, feminine men, cross-dressers), though again, this term is not universally accepted as appropriate.

Genderqueer is an alternative term that is gaining currency and describes someone who identifies as a gender other than 'man' or 'woman', or someone who identifies as neither, both, or some combination thereof. In relation to the male/female binary, people identifying as genderqueer generally identify as more 'both/and' or 'neither/nor', rather than 'either/or' man or woman. Some genderqueer people may identify as one specific gender and some see their own gender as a third gender in addition to the traditional two but there is ambivalence about the notion that there are only two genders in the world. Once

again, reclamation of the historically derogative term *queer* has not been universal.

Performance and its paradoxical or uneasy relationship to trans is another key aspect of this research. Performance is a key factor in the ways that people construct themselves and are constructed by the world. Through performing, whichever form that performing takes (i.e. on stage in a piece of theatre, or within a social exchange with another person in an everyday encounter), a performer is experimenting with re-presenting ways of being. One is selecting what works and what does not work, evolving the practice over time and doing all of this in relation to other social beings, which in turn and at the same time contributes to the making of the person. The differentiation between self and re-presentation of self is fluid, as I shall discuss in relation to the different modes of performance with which this research deals.

The research examines performance of several different modes, each of which have different aims and functions. Part of the project of the research is to map the approaches taken to create performance and investigate whether different modes of performance ‘do’ different things in relation to transgender masculinities: I am asking if it is possible to analyse which type of performance practice is more useful or productive for which context. One mode is performance as a commonly understood social practice involving presenting a prepared piece of theatrical work that uses theatrical strategies and tools to an audience. The intention for the people discussed who deploy this mode is usually to draw on one’s own personal experience and to share stories with other people, though of course this is not always the intention behind performers’ work. The focus on personal experience has a potentially constitutive effect/affect on the

individual(s) who are making the stories, and on the people who witness and receive the stories and it is their experiences on which I will focus in Chapter 2, where the story is multi-layered and complex and is told over, for example, 60 minutes to a quiet audience who are seated for the purpose of watching and listening. The performer's intention in this mode seems to be to use theatre to create an interesting story that might relate to the spectators in various ways, whoever they are, and to make clear that the performer has created the story from aspects of his own history. The works are autobiographical to a significant extent.

There are also examples of cabaret-style performance where the story is recounted in a fairly simple way, using direct address to an audience where the telling is an explicit part of the social event. The performer is telling the spectator about his life. Here the performances contain a story that is usually told within approximately five minutes to a noisy audience with partial attention who may not have even known they were going to be presented with this story. Alan Read makes a useful distinction between theatre that takes place in theatre buildings, and theatre that takes place in more 'quotidian' settings:

I consider theatre to be a process of building between performers and their constituencies which employs the medium of images to convey feeling and meaning. While traditional theatre buildings might provide heat and light for this exchange, they also serve to solidify this process as institution and representation (1995: 5).

The opportunities and challenges for those performers and spectators involved in this less formal exchange are then different but the performer is still trying to

make a comment about identity in a way that will entertain and provoke people to think. These examples form the basis of Chapter 3 and this kind of less formal performance is also discussed in Chapter 4.

In Chapters 4 and 5 I look at performance that might be described as a more micro-level portrayal of 'character' or 'role' (gender role) in which nuanced features of a person are being experimented with, on an everyday level rather than within a theatrical context. In these examples the performers are engaged in offering a composite picture of themselves as a person, in order for the 'spectator' to relate to the 'actor' or 'performer' in a way that they want people to relate to them, in order for productive, comfortable communication. The roles of the spectator and the performer shift here to become less formally theatrical though still connected to notions of performance.

The majority of published research on transgender-related issues is concentrated in the United States. Stryker and Whittle's *Transgender Studies Reader* (2006) is a collection of essays by approximately 50 authors, at least 35 of whom are American or have worked primarily within American medical or academic institutions. There was a boom in the production of research and academic writing on trans in the 1990s, partially in response to Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999) and the reprinting of Janice Raymond's *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-male* (original publication 1980, reprinted 1994). That interest grew again in the mid-2000s as the result of a developing social agenda around rights and responsibilities.

Significantly less work has been done, however, to take account of and comment upon, transgender histories and experiences in the United Kingdom,

although since the 1990s there has been an increase of activity in areas such as the law, health and social care. Publications emerging include Stephen Whittle's *Engendered Penalties: Transgender and Transsexual People's Experiences of Inequality and Discrimination* (Whittle et al. 2007), the Department of Health's series of publications including *Bereavement: A Guide for Transsexual, Transgender People and Their Loved Ones* (Whittle & Turner 2007) and *A Guide for Young Trans People in the UK* (Gendered Intelligence and GALYIC 2007) and Sally Hines' *TransForming Gender: Transgender Practices of Identity, Intimacy and Care* (2007).

The transgender movement began to campaign for the right to respect and equality in the early 1990s and societal attitudes have gradually shifted. The Gender Recognition Act came into force in 2004 (an Act to make provision for and in connection with change of gender). This Act supports people's rights within the workplace and other public sectors and has come into being during the process of this doctoral research project. Within academia and the socio-legal field, theoretical work around transgender lives, written by transgender and non-transgender people, continues to increase.

When we look specifically at how performance manifests and how trans identities are articulated within performance, however, again the majority of the work takes account of performance venues, spaces and cultures in the United States. David Valentine's *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category* (2007) is based in New York and talks about predominantly male-to-female transsexuals, trans women and female-born people, and contexts such as drag balls and trans bars. Some work has been carried out in relation to drag-king performance work in London (Halberstam 1998). A broad research focus could

include queer performance art that may or may not explore gender, gender-queer and gender-variant identities, but the boundaries of this research are tighter in focus. Judith Halberstam suggests that ‘the more intellectual records we have of a queer culture, the more we contribute to the project of claiming for the subculture the radical cultural work that either gets absorbed into or claimed by mainstream media’ (2008: 33). Little has been done to document the work of trans performers working and performing in the UK, or work with people from trans communities in the UK which utilise the arts and more specifically, performance. That omission is something this thesis will seek to redress.

1.3 Theoretically speaking about gender

Wrong-body/right-body distinctions are common within trans theory and in narratives in works of fiction such as Leslie Feinberg’s *Stone Butch Blues* (1993), in autobiographical work such as Mario Martino’s *Emergence: A Transsexual Autobiography* (1977), and in performance pieces such as David Harrison’s *FTM* (2003). These concerns about transgender bodies contribute to debates around biological determinism, essentialism and gender binaries as social constructs and this research project seeks to challenge the dichotomy that exists between gender as a social construct, or transsexuality as an essentialist condition.

Trans bodies and lived experiences do not fit neatly into one or other of these ways of thinking and a more complex approach is necessary. In her 1994 essay ‘F2M: The Making of Female Masculinity’, Judith Halberstam asked ‘why, in this age of gender transitivity, when many queers and feminists have

agreed that gender is a social construct, is transsexuality a widespread phenomenon?’ (Halberstam 1998: 146). She is upholding the dichotomy here by setting transsexuality against the notion that gender is not about biology. In discussing the nature of the work of various performance practices which engage transgender identity, this thesis will employ a slightly altered notion of ‘uninhabitable/ habitable bodies’, which looks beyond an extreme oppositional dichotomy of a sexed body changing (implying that it ever was one thing, and that it is now another thing). Instead, this idea of an un/inhabitable body offers insight into the complex processual experience of seeking a masculinity that suits the individual in a particular place and time; of constantly becoming and doing one’s gendered self over time, rather than buying a ticket to a mythical, universal, or monolithic manhood. Different models of thinking about or theorising gender come into use throughout, in relation to the various artists and participants’ work which leads to the production of an interactive model of gender where gender and sex are both born and made, interacting in complex and multiple ways for different people.

A sense of living within an uninhabitable body is not necessarily or solely the domain of transsexual people. A sense of living with or in an uninhabitable body is not confined to certain sets of individuals or to a gendered identity in particular. *Gender dysphoria* though, or acute unhappiness or hopelessness relating to one’s gendered self, emerged in the 1970s as the medical profession’s ‘preferred term’ (Ekins and King 1996: 96) to describe people who collectively identified as having a variety of difficulties surrounding gender identification.

Gender and biological sex are two of the primary characteristics of human existence and within the context of the practices explored in this thesis,

identity is gendered and it is sexed. For example, during the planning phase of the Transvoices project (Chapter 5), a number of FTM (female-to-male transgender) people were expressing a need to address the voice as an aspect of their physical selves. The voice remained a source of dissatisfaction for those who had transitioned some time ago, and a source of anxiety for those about to begin hormone treatment and thus encounter a 'break' in the voice. If the aetiology of transsexuality finds that people are born a biological sex that they do not feel is 'correct', and the correlation between sex and gender is a primary aspect of human identity, it would seem logical that where a perceived error has occurred, a solution will be sought: the body will be made more habitable.

The diverse and complex historical and contemporary debates surrounding gender offer perspectives and positions from which to view this notion of the uninhabitable gendered body. Suzanne Kessler and Wendy McKenna acknowledged that 'gender may be too pervasive and permanent to be considered a role and may be better thought of as a status or identity' (1978: 19). Morag Shiach (1994) analysed the concept of 'gender' and its emergence as a category of cultural analysis, acknowledging 'the longstanding complexity of the semantic field associated with this term' (p. 27). The tensions that are key to the debate around, and the histories of, gender and sexuality clearly shift as a result of social change and, indeed, according to whose history we are hearing. Medical literature and sexological studies such as Havelock Ellis's in the late nineteenth century, for example, identified the 'invert' as temperamentally and physically male, which seemingly explained her attraction to feminine women (Halberstam 1998). This gender identity paradigm emerged and developed through the work of medical practitioners and researchers such as John Money, Anke Ehrhardt and

Robert Stoller in the 1950s and 1960s (Hausman 1995: 73–4). Robert Stoller's conception of pluralistic, rather than unitary identity led to the notion that gender was one aspect of a person, though 'the integration of the personality as a whole was largely focused on the sense of being a male or a female' (Connell 2002: 88).

From the 1960s onwards, a range of ideas was produced on identity and difference. Of specific relevance here is J.L. Austin's philosophical linguistic analysis of the notion of a performative 'speech act' which has since been developed by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003) and Judith Butler (1993; 1998; 1999) who apply Austin's ideas on speech to notions of the body, materiality and queerness. Austin argued that speech itself is a form of action, where what people say and what is accomplished through the saying are related but not necessarily the same. He proposed that all utterances have an illocutionary force, and therefore enact a doing, whether performative or constative (Austin 1975: 134). Performative utterances were distinguished from the constative by Austin (at least initially) in that they

- (a) do not 'describe' or 'report' or constate anything at all, are not 'true or false' and
- (b) the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action ... (Austin 1975: 5).

Here, saying is doing or enacting. The act is accomplished in the words uttered: 'the meaning of a performative act is to be found in this apparent coincidence of signifying and enacting' (Butler 1993: 44).

Derrida offers critical commentary on what Austin suggests are important differences between the 'ordinary circumstances' of the happy performative (the

one spoken in the appropriate circumstances and which happily or successfully performs its actions) and the 'theatrical' unhappy performative (that which is an abuse, or a misfire, when the performative fails at some level – not false, but 'unhappy') in 'Signature Event Context' in *Margins of Philosophy* (1982). The presence of the 'author' as the source or origin, or person who does the uttering is key for Derrida (as is the author of the written utterance, which Austin suggests is present through a signature, and use of the word 'hereby' in signing for something).

Sedgwick talks about queer performativity as 'a strategy for the production of meaning and being' (2003: 61) and Butler's work through the 1990s put the concept of the performative firmly into queer and feminist discourses. The fundamental idea that gender, as much as speech, is performative will be expanded in Chapter 2 to begin to unpick some of the ways that theatre can be a vehicle for the performativity of gender through use of devising with personal narrative and autobiography. Judith Butler uses the concept of performativity to support her arguments about gender and sex as cultural formations, so gender is a performative act: the effect of gender is enacted through repetition of conventional gestures and actions. Feminist theory and feminist literary criticism sought (and still seeks) to change both individual and institutional awareness concerning the cultural and social role of the gender 'woman' (Showalter 1986), though not always, and perhaps, rarely in connection with female bodied people who identify as 'not woman'.

Janice Raymond (1980), Catherine Millot (1990) and Sheila Jeffreys (2003) are key commentators from a feminist academic position. Raymond considers transsexuality to be a behavioural desire and argues that transsexual

people never become men or women, but remain the man or woman of their birth sex, so remain 'constructed' men or women, thus undermining the very existence of the experiences of the transsexual person. This insistent undermining is clear in each writer's use of personal pronouns, where trans men are discussed as 'she' and 'her'. FTM transsexualism is declared as an 'emergency for lesbian politics' (Jeffreys 2003:122) in that it is viewed as a method 'being used to get rid of lesbians' (ibid.). This radical feminist perspective is committed to one side of the polarity between the social and the biological to which Halberstam alludes, and the antagonism that emerges from their writing is a consequence of the logic of the theoretical view that gender is a problematic and hierarchical category altogether and furthermore, a category that transsexuality supports.

Trans-theorist critiques of this perspective are vehement. Carol Riddell says 'Janice Raymond's book is an example of hatred and exclusion. An academic intellectual, she has been infested by another aspect of the patriarchal she professes to attack' (Ekins and King 1996: 186). While there is an implication here about the hegemonic nature of academia, the key point is that Raymond's rhetoric has been accused of being anti-feminist. A significant issue here is the way that acknowledgement of the rules that govern the usage and application of the concepts and categories of male/female, man/woman have shifted over time, and within different theoretical positions. Raymond is correct in her assertion that transsexuals cannot undo their histories: a female-born person will always have been born female. However, in her reluctance to acknowledge that female-bodied FTMs possess maleness, she strictly applies narrow rules that govern the usage of the term 'male' which conflict with a shift in the societally created and maintained perception of the possession of

masculinity: 'truth' in this sense is what a society accepts. Rather than denying that transsexuals are really the men or women that they avow to be, Raymond simply cites a moral apprehension in extending the rules of a concept. Such an extension of the 'gender rules' need not be dependent on biological proof if we are happy to recognise that behavioural masculinity and femininity are proper components of maleness and femaleness. The language used in asserting a radical feminist position in relation to transsexuality and transgenderism becomes hostile because these are not simply theoretical arguments. In denying trans as a concept, theorists are denying people their sense of self and thus the theoretical conceits become difficult to engage with productively.

Post-structuralist and queer theories of gender assert that a body becomes sexed through a performative 'becoming'. In *Gender Trouble* (1990; 1999) and *Bodies that Matter* (1993), Judith Butler argues that the body (which of course includes the brain, endocrines, hormones and genitals) is not sexed prior to being in the world. The world, or culture, generates the sexed, gendered body as there is no existence without cultural inscription. There is a movement within trans lives and Trans Studies which is turning away from this notion of the constructed being and bringing back in the biological. Joan Roughgarden argues that:

Too many sociologists don't accept transgendered people at their word, perhaps because doing so would admit that there is some truth to the biological account. Instead, these sociologists cling to the belief that vestidas and other transsexuals have 'chosen' to live as a different sex... Transgendered people don't choose their sex, or gender, any more or less than nontransgendered people do. (Roughgarden 2004: 384)

Investigating gender as though it is a fixed foundation that proper examination of a person's behaviour can uncover is a mistake. 'Gender' is better understood as a referential term to facilitate a generalising about how we might classify a person's behaviour as masculine or feminine. It is a mistake to try to determine a person's gender in a scientifically rigorous way, as the behaviours that might be classified as belonging rightly and conclusively to one or the other depend on our complex contextual understandings not just 'that' a behaviour is male or female type, but of 'how' behaviours are so classified. The problem occurs in our inability to identify behaviours that can conclusively be identified as masculine or feminine. We cannot properly try to 'test' whether a person correctly belongs to one or other category.

We might regard gender, then, as something that an individual possesses along with a biological sex, or as a conceptual tool that we can use to generalise about how feminine or masculine we find a person or ourselves to be. Butler's argument is that there is no fixed foundation of gender as such but that gender is performative, 'because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender creates the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all' (Butler 1998a: 522). Discourse produces that which it names, thus by saying 'I am a man', I am not describing a state inscribed by nature but I am engaging in a practice of 'manning' that ascribes gendered meaning to my body. Butler asserts that biological sex, as a concept rather than physical fact, cannot logically exist outside of human understanding or interpretation. In the same way that a table's physicality (its dimensions and so forth) is an objective fact but its 'tableness' (our conceptual understanding of it) is only created by our shared human acknowledgement of it as such. It *becomes* a table. Butler is not necessarily

arguing that maleness or femaleness, masculinity or femininity in an unborn child is not seeded in the foetus's genetic make-up, but that our recognition of both its biological and yet to be expressed behavioural propensity to maleness/femaleness, relate to concepts that are shared, negotiated and social.

Lacan claimed the subject 'finds itself, or it is "sutured" to the subject positions made available in language and wider cultural codes through the operation of the unconscious' (du Gay, Evans and Redman 2000: 10). Connell speaks of the 'main stake in contemporary gender politics', described as the patriarchal dividend. The idea here is that while this economy-driven imbalance of power functions as a 'benefit to men *as a group* ... specific groups of men may be excluded collectively from parts of the patriarchal dividend' (2002: 142).

Connell specifically discusses the ways that gay men are effectively excluded and it seems logical to understand the social status of transsexuality as an identity category in similar terms. There are benefits to those in power to retain the powerful positions they inhabit. Where is the value in enabling people from the 'other' side to jump ship? Particular schools of feminist thought still publish and disseminate theories asserting that FTMs are misguided women who are trying to claim masculinity; that FTMs are dangerous and threaten the category 'woman'. The lack of progress of medical technology and support throughout the transition process for FTMs might stem from a phallographic refusal to allow those women 'in'. These are fundamentally problematic ideas as their coherence requires FTMs to be seen and defined as women. Most female-born trans men would describe themselves as having had a female body until some point in their history, but that they are not female.

Emerging as a man is significant. If we think about trans men having experienced gendered interactions where parents, teachers, friends and lovers read them as female throughout childhood (including multiplicities of femaleness which acknowledges tomboyish expressions etc.), there are various new and different kinds of interactions to be explored as one begins to move about the world as a man. Feeling oneself to be more male than one once was after testosterone treatment begins or surgery happens, or being assumed to be male rather than female by other people, contributes to a multiplicity of experience, pre-transition. Society still works to a bi-gendered model, however, and understandings of instances where people transition from female to male are sometimes limited and the process is misconstrued. The idea of making a 'sex-change' or changing from one gender to the other does not fit particularly neatly with the reality of a more subtle processual shift. However, categorisation and inhabitation of categories need not be perceived as inflexible notions. In specific relation to the term or category 'transgender', Rubin asserts that:

Socio-cultural categories of experience are subject to alteration as individuals try to place themselves within those categories. The newly consolidated FTM category is already being challenged by individuals with unorthodox experiences attempting to inhabit it ... these categories are in a perpetual dialectical motion with no final end.
(2003: 142)

Inhabiting bodies and categories are the complex projects that this research project grapples with, as are some of the ways that performance contributes to the dialectical motion of such bodies and categories.

1.4 Visibility and coherence through the arts

When people make use of the arts as a medium for expression, the ways that identities and bodies are presented and re-presented become politicised. The reasons for presenting aspects of one's self through artistic means and the politics of this action are critical to the analysis of the artists and their work in the forthcoming chapters. By way of beginning to explore these ideas about making one's transgender masculinity visible through the arts, we can consider the FTM London Photography Project Exhibition which took place at Swiss Cottage Library in North-West London and was the end-result of a project that was carried out as part of the 10th anniversary of FTM London (a social and support group for those who identify as female-to-male transgender, or think they might be).

The exhibition was open for one week, from 25 February 2008. Funding was received from the LGBT Camden Forum and members of FTM London were invited to use a disposable camera and take shots that represent their lives, their selves and their surroundings. One image was to be used from each person who returned the camera and an exhibition of the images, curated and displayed in the East Foyer of the public library for a week as part of LGBT History Month 2008. The Private View was on Monday, 25 February and the exhibition contained 38 images, from 38 different contributors.

The collection can be loosely themed into three areas: bodies, environments and objects, although the exhibition was not structured in this way and images were hung in a more random arrangement. The images all had a commentary, so the 'personal' here is very strong. As a viewer, one sees the

body, the environment or a meaningful object within the image and reads a first-person explanation of what can be seen, or rather what the artist-subject wants us to see and read in the image. Using autobiography in this way, by having people be responsible for their own images and construct a commentary about their image, suggests that the 'subject' is mediating the presentation of their image in a direct way as opposed to being part of a collection of images where the shots were all taken by an 'outside eye'.

The subjects that artists chose to capture and present were diverse. To concentrate on two photographs as examples, among the bodies-related images, Angel's is a picture of himself taken by himself in a hospital bed after a hysterectomy operation. The image shows Angel at a strange angle and his form is somewhat blurred as he held the camera at arm's length therefore not looking through the viewfinder to create the image. He looks pale. His commentary asks, 'Will she still love me tomorrow? Uncertainty worries me, truck loads.' Jay's image is of an embrace. Because of the angle of the camera, the shot is predominantly of a white pillow, but in the top right of the image, there is his closed eye as he holds another person – of whom all we see is the back of the head as she is held by him. He talks about touch and the way that his physical interactions with others (not just his partner) have developed since his transition.

Celebrating queer bodies by exhibiting visual images of transgender men in a public library is a radical act. Judith Halberstam talked about modes of representation at Chelsea College of Art and Design (17.05.05). She was arguing that the 'queer as body', or queerness represented through the body is not a redundant practice but she was promoting an alternative mode of representation, as well as continuing a discussion about readership of queer art. Representations

of transness/queerness without bodies is interesting and Halberstam was suggesting that they are more confrontational, or 'useful' because we are equipped to read the body as an icon more easily than we can read abstraction. The body can still be challenging though in that the images of trans men as seen in the FTM London exhibition might be as confrontational for some viewers as viewing an abstract piece. The visual shock of seeing two genders in the same body or being confronted with the notion of the uninhabitable body having been made more habitable are common concepts within representations of the trans body and they are concepts which develop throughout the thesis. Performer Lazlo Pearlman, for example, and some of the young people who exhibited work as part of the Sci:identity trans youth arts project discussed in Chapter 4, use their own bodies to offer a kind of 'truth' of an unusual body – a body that confounds normative expectations and understandings of what bodies look like.

Halberstam again acknowledges that there is still a wealth of exploration of representations of queer bodies to be enjoyed among the queer community. She was, however, pushing the question of what a representation of trans would be without the body, arguing that there are liabilities in making transgenderism reliant on the body (such as hierarchising particular 'types' of trans, or perpetuating notions of the 'universal', thereby excluding non-white male identities). Within live performance, the body is key. As performance is reliant on the body, I am looking at how those potential liabilities are refuted or enacted. By accepting and capitalising on the centrality of the body, is the performance of transgender masculinities always already exclusive when it places some bodies on the stage and not others? The range of performances at the centre of this research includes multiple identities in terms of age, nationality, relationship to

the category trans, and particular expressions of masculinity though there is a minority of non-white masculinities. This issue of range and representation of the multiplicities will be fully discussed in each chapter.

Analysis of the nature of community and belonging in relation to transgender masculinities and performance will contribute to this discussion. The notion of being visible to specific people, in order to belong as part of a community, or being visible to the whole of society as a trans person and using the arts, and performance specifically to insert oneself into the text a societal framework is vital to the production of transgender masculinities. Notions of community that connect with transgender identities can be marked out as different. In order to 'count' as part of a community, one has to be visible or identifiable in some way, to other people who form that community or conversely, to people who are outside of that community. Yet identification is important. Transsexuality is generally acknowledged as being under-reported, and other categories of trans identity that are less formally monitored result in an invisibility of trans.

The statistics that Randi Ettner (1999) collates on the incidence and prevalence of 'gender-variant persons' in her book *Gender Loving Care: A Guide to Counselling Gender-Variant Clients*, relate primarily to transsexuals who declare themselves to the medical profession. Self-declaration for the purposes of seeking medical intervention has been described as 'part of what constructs the subject as a transsexual: it is the mechanism through which transsexuals come to identify themselves under the sign of transsexualism and construct themselves as its subjects' (Hausman 1995: 110). The significance of the developments in medical technology through the twentieth century in relation

to the increase in prevalence of transsexuality is clear and if a community is to be generated through individuals' self-identification, this active declaration and engagement with the medical system is significant though not all trans people are ready or willing to begin a medical process related to their gender expression.

Criteria for definition and diagnostic procedures obfuscate data collection, making it difficult to really understand the size and range of transgender populations. Ettner (1999) presents studies from Sweden, the Netherlands, Singapore, Germany, France and the United States that suggest the availability of sex-reassignment surgery and the legal and societal factors in Northern Europe and North America lead to high prevalence rates (for example, 1:30,400 for FTMs in the Netherlands and 1:8,300 in Singapore). Ettner adds that 'most studies document transsexualism as appearing, on average, three times as often in natal males as in females' (p. 26), though studies in Turkey and Poland provided reverse results. There are no studies concerning mainland China and just one case of sex reassignment surgery in Hungary has been reported. The trans community in London, and more broadly the various communities located across the United Kingdom, are among the largest in the world with the organisation FTM London having approximately 80 members. Over a 12-month period, for example, 26 men accessed the Transvoices project. In the space of four months, 18 young self-identified trans people attended the Sci:identity project. These communities are real, despite the range of the extent of formal identification of transgender status of its constituent members.

Some of the work addressed in this thesis (primarily that discussed in Chapters 4 and 5) was created by a group, rather than an individual. This implies that there were things that the individuals in the groups shared or had in common

and, further, that they would benefit from a collective experience of exploration or a communal learning process engaging with some of those common things. Shane Phelan's notion of 'non-ascriptive' community asserts that identity is about group identification rather than primordial essence and people consciously choose to join a community rather than community forming around identities such as gender. She suggests that non-ascriptive communities are 'most often formed in order to create and maintain non-hegemonic or non-hetero-normative identities and lifestyles' (in Sullivan 2003: 139). This implies that conscious self-identification is straightforward, which is a complex and problematic idea but interesting in relation to a concept of transgendered community within which a project such as Transvoices or the trans youth arts work is implemented and evolves. Phelan conceptualises community as process, saying 'in the process of community, personalities are created. Persons do not simply "join" communities; they become microcosms of their communities, and their communities change with their entrance' (p. 87). A. P. Cohen supports this dynamic definition of community and suggests that the reality of community lies in its members' perception of the vitality of its culture: 'people construct community symbolically, making it a resource and repository of meaning, and a referent of their identity' (Cohen 1985: 118).

Catherine Graham (2005) suggests that rather than asking what community is, we ask instead when it is that people start to use the word. She wonders if it might be when people consider the 'thing' or matter of focus to be unimportant such that it would not be discussed in public life where public life is concerned with 'larger' issues. Rather it is a thing of concern within the private sphere. Nikki Sullivan goes further with this notion that community is a personal

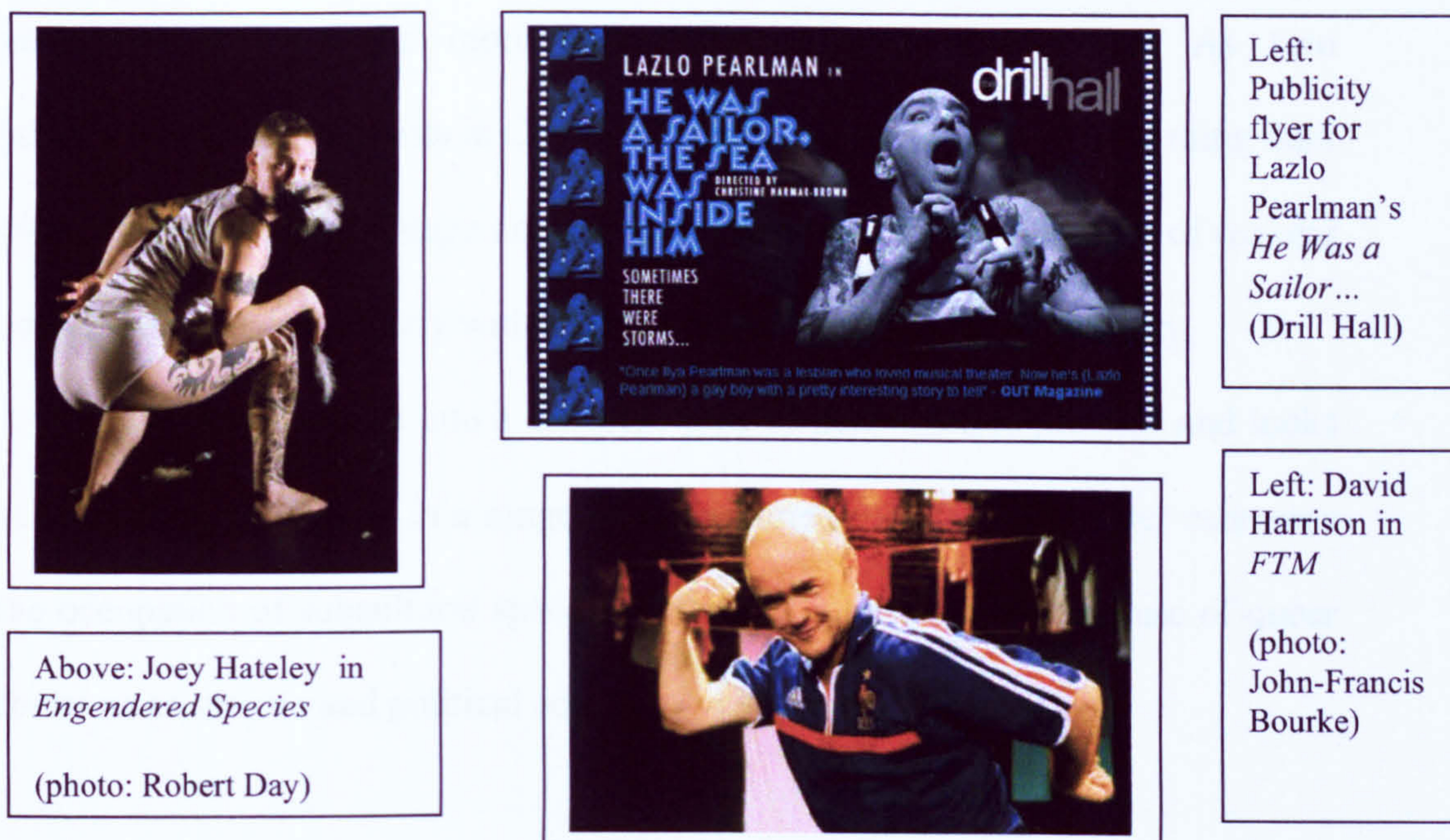
or private practice and references Merleau-Ponty in considering the notion that the body-subject

is constituted by mimesis and transitivity: by identification with and against others, and by the imitation of gestures, actions, and so on... the other is the medium through which the body-subject achieves an awareness of itself as self (2003: 93).

The production of self is ineluctably connected to the subcultural contexts described in this chapter, where the doing of one's own body in the company of others enables those present to further become themselves.

1.5 The trajectory

Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 each take a particular set of people and particular forms of practice as a focus in order to map out different ways that transgender masculinities are produced through performance. Chapter 2 takes specific performances written, devised and performed by transgender artists that have been staged in theatres between 1999 and 2007. These artists are Joey Hateley (Oval House Theatre, London, 2004 and The Drill Hall, London, 2007), David Harrison (Pyramid Theatre, New York, 2003) and Lazlo Pearlman (The Drill Hall, London, 2007).



Above: Joey Hateley in *Engendered Species*
(photo: Robert Day)

Left: Publicity flyer for Lazlo Pearlman's *He Was a Sailor...* (Drill Hall)

Left: David Harrison in *FTM*

(photo: John-Francis Bourke)

Figure 1.1 Hateley, Harrison and Pearlman.

Their work is considered within frameworks of trans, queer and performance-based theoretical perspectives. Within academic and critical studies, analyses of the representation of transgender masculinities in mainstream films are more common than those that take live performance as their focus. While there are several resonances between filmic and theatrical portrayals of identity, much trans film theory concentrates on portrayals of trans characters, most often performed by non-trans actors, discussing iconic examples such as *The Crying Game* (dir. Neil Jordan, 1993), *Boys Don't Cry* (dir. Kimberly Peirce, 1999) and *TransAmerica* (dir. Duncan Tucker, 2005). These aspects of the filmic representations of transgender identities do not serve this research into performances of transgender masculinities by transgender people. What is specific about the artists analysed in Chapter 2 is that they each construct the narrative of their own work as well as perform the pieces themselves.

Autobiography is a key component of the work, which distinguishes these performances from the more commonly analysed film works. As solo performers, the three artists in Chapter 2 are, to varying extents, performing their own trans identities on stage and I explore the ways that the process of making performance aligns directly with one's own lived experience in this way.

Chapter 3 moves into a different area of performance practice and looks at work that takes place in a range of subcultural spaces. This chapter examines the occupation of subcultural space as a form of resistance, and the use of queer forms as an artistic and political act.



Figure 1.2 Performers using subcultural spaces to perform gender.

The examples of work include the forms of cabaret, drag and freak-show as they manifest at queer venues and events. I discuss various individuals working under the umbrella of the Transfabulous collective, including four trans men who performed the 'FTM Full Monty' as well as a number of performers who have appeared as part of the Transfabulous International Festival of Transgender Arts in either 2006 or 2007. I also discuss trans man and drag king

Indy Turan (as seen in the film *Indy*, dir. Zemirah Moffat, 2002) and circus/freak-show performer Jennifer Miller (Hoxton Hall, London, 1999). I ask why queer-identified people choose and use queer, alternative or marginal forms within their creative practice, and I look at the relationship between the performer and the spectator within the less formal dynamic of the bar, club or community arts venue.

Chapter 4 draws on the particular experiences of the young people and practitioners who worked on the Sci:identity Project, based at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London from March 2006 to March 2007. It focuses on the issues raised by the personal and collective journeys taken in the process of engaging with the science of sex and gender within the project. By offering accounts of the personal narratives explored by the young participants during the life of the project and beyond, this chapter debates the role of creativity and pedagogy in relation to emergent transgender masculinities. I ask, for example, how personal stories are told through performance as part of a journey in which young transgender men develop their understandings of their own identity.

The question ‘What is the science of sex and gender?’ was key to all stages of the project. Every person involved in the project was engaged in asking this question and exploring a range of responses to it. There were two main phases: firstly a series of arts workshops were provided for a group of 18 young transgender and transsexual people aged between 15 and 22 who were living their sex and gender with a degree of complexity, and secondly, a series of 16 outreach workshops in various settings. The outreach workshops reached a variety of audiences including school and college students, trainee drama teachers, young people including LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and

Transgender) youth, teachers, youth workers, arts practitioners, educationalists, activists and those working in the area of equalities and diversity policy and delivery. A documentary film about the arts workshops was shown in the outreach workshops with the aim of communicating the lessons of the project and the life experiences of the participants to a wide range of people who were most often coming across the notion and the lived reality of transgender for the first time. The latter workshops involved predominantly (but not exclusively) non-trans young people from all over the United Kingdom.



Figure 1.3 Sci:identity project workshop, 2006 (photo: Stan Kujawala).

The project as a whole focused on bio-scientific and medical explanations of sex and gender differences, such as differences in the brain or hormones and their effect on behaviour; chromosomes and their function; and hormonal and surgical sex reassignment.⁴ Moral and ethical issues were also considered, such

⁴ In a ground-breaking article, J.N. Zhou, M.A. Hofman, L.J. Gooren and D.F. Swaab (1995) talked about sex differences in the brain, and the relationship to transsexuality. A follow-up brain

as those that are raised by accepting a young person's assertion that they think they might be identifying as trans and taking steps to provide treatment such as sex reassignment. The aim was to question the authority of this science and medicine, and make use of new knowledge through art by exploring how sex and gender are understood by both transsexual and transgender people and in society more broadly. Transsexual people live in a world where there are commonsense understandings of what makes a man or woman. Biological sex at birth is commonly perceived to be the thing that makes sex and gender 'real' and concrete. These understandings of the authenticity of biology tend to marginalise transsexual and transgender people, trivialise their self-understandings and undermine their struggles for recognition. The Sci:identity project gave young trans people an opportunity to share their experiences, to experiment and critically explore their own and societal understandings of gender, and used the arts as the medium. The project opened up a space to critique gender norms and the apparent scientific certainties of sex, in the complex context of young trans people's lives as they were being lived every day. Chapter 4 analyses the ways that this project created a space to explore gendered and creative expression, scientific and popular cultural narratives of sex and gender, and enabled young trans people to re-imagine and re-tell their life narrative beyond simplistic accounts of being 'in the wrong body'.

study was reported on by F.P.M. Kruijver, J.N. Zhou, C.W. Pool, M.A. Hofman, L.J.G. Gooren and D.F. Swaab where they presented findings associated with the discovery of female neurons in the limbic nucleus of male-to-female transsexual brains. Joan Roughgarden, evolutionary biologist and transsexual scholar critiques these studies (in Chapter 13) and tackles other aspects of bio-scientific and medical discourse around gender in her book *Evolution's Rainbow: Diversity, Gender and Sexuality in Nature and People* (2004).

Chapter 5 explores how intervention in voice production can contribute to, or affirm, a sense of identity among individuals from a particular community through reference to the Transvoices project.



Figure 1.4 Transvoices Project workshop 2007 (humming against the wall for resonance) (photo: Catherine McNamara).

This was a project which began in June 2004, and initially aimed to create an opportunity for people involved in gender reassignment to work with their voices and understand the ways that vocal tone, register and range are affected by hormone treatment. The project sought to explore ideas and underpinning theories through literally ‘doing’ trans identity and looking at the notion of embodying masculinities, using the voice as the primary site for experimentation. My role from the inception was Project Co-ordinator. The project evolved over two years and from 2006 to 2007, continued as *Trans Men’s*

Voices (TMV), managed and delivered by voice and speech specialist John Tucker, who began working alongside me as a collaborator.

The extent to which voice is perceived to be a significant factor in the presentation of self in society generally, and specifically here for FTM transsexual or transgender individuals is key to the work of the project. The chapter looks at how the Transvoices project has facilitated an exploration of FTM transgender voices, and the ways in which the voice work of this project is connected with issues of gender identity and transgender masculinity. By drawing out critical moments as perceived and recounted, retold and reported by participants, as well as my own observations, a story is told in Chapter 5. The story is a partial account of the lived experiences of those involved in the project. The chapter begins with an outline of the underlying set of ideas and principles that provided the basis for the project. There is further consideration of notions of subjectivity and issues of masculinity for those transitioning from female to male in this chapter, as well as a development of theories and practices of community in relation to ideas of belonging or marginalisation from society that I open up in previous chapters. I present examples from the work of the sessions using specific frameworks for analysis such as the use of character and role as a vehicle for experimentation with maleness, and the notion of the iterative act as constitutive. The chapter then opens up to discuss the tensions around essentialist and relativist positions when engaging with representations of trans masculinity in the everyday. Reassigning bodily gender leads to a process of re-inhabiting a previously uninhabitable body and I conclude Chapter 5 by suggesting that interventions in voice production are an important and, at present, under-developed aspect of emergent masculine identities for the trans community.

The sixth and final chapter focuses on establishing clearly the key findings of the research and exploring how they are relevant to the central thesis question of how performance constitutes transgender masculinity and broader constituencies. Chapter 6 also outlines future directions for the research, now that this project is complete.

1.6 Methodology

Given that this research is about bodies, identities and communities that are sometimes difficult to classify, certain methods were more appropriate within the process of conducting fieldwork. The performance practices at the centre of the research are hard to archive 'because they are lived experiences, and the cultural traces that they leave are frequently inadequate to the task of documentation ... their lack of conventional archive so often makes them seem not to exist' (Cvetkovich 2003: 9). The existence of trans performance practice, and responses to it remain ephemeral and are generally not archived. The specificities of the contexts of the research mean that a range of performance-related work that usually leaves very little of these 'cultural traces' has been documented and analysed, thereby creating a corpus. This documentation is a useful function of the research in that this work does not ordinarily make its way into formal discourses and is not usually commented upon or critiqued within academic writing, for example

The acknowledgement, inclusion and treatment of the practices referenced in this thesis will produce knowledge about transgendered masculinities, and their relationship to performance and the ways that a range of transgender identities, expressions and experiences are constituted through performance of various kinds. The performance work at the heart of this thesis does not normally get discussed. It is theatre practice that is experienced by small numbers of people, whether it is a production in a fringe venue in a capital city, or an applied theatre project run with a specific group of participants. The research is a way of taking account of those practices and mapping this understudied area of performance, documenting emergent practices.

This research process has involved seeing audiences grow over time, so in 2003 I sat in an auditorium among an audience of less than 12 to see David Harrison's *FTM* and in 2007, among an audience of 150 at the Transfabulous International Festival of Transgender Arts. Part of the value of researching this area is being able to comment upon smaller-scale work, and to contribute to building knowledge about a particular body of work within the context of transgender practices as the wider field develops and gains weight. The performances and practices include avant-garde work and innovation within models of project work. As a result of carrying out this research, I am now more able to comment on the capacity of this work to advance knowledge of cultural and performance practice.

One issue of concern within the research is that by making the practices and the lived experiences of specific individual people involved visible rather than invisible and unacknowledged, I must ask whether I have a right to extract those individuals and those experiences out of the contexts within which they

originate and re-present them on the page. I have the right to think and draw on my own experience, even where that intersects with that of another. But I might not have the right to make her/his experience visible to anyone else, beyond the point at which it became visible to me. So for example, a performer stands on stage in front of a hundred people in a club in East London and I am there. I have experienced this event. I can think and talk about that event from my perspective as much as I like but the performer might well object if I try to re-present a version of the event in a form that differs from its original – on paper with a couple of photographs beside the text, for example. That performer could object because that is not how the original work was intended to be experienced. It was intended to be an ephemeral event for the people in the room. The meaning was made there and then. I may choose to make my own meaning and share that long after the event, but I must choose to do this with care and consideration. Connected to this issue is that of visual documentation within the thesis. There is a limited range of visual images and in a thesis which purports to provide representation of under-represented work, the visual is a potentially valuable medium. However, many of the performers and participants in the works under discussion did not consent to having their image in the public domain. I discuss this issue in depth in Chapter 4, for example, where issues of anonymity were critical for young transgender participants. The performers in the FTM Full Monty are another example where individuals requested that their image be used selectively and in specific ways, so I offer one image of that performance in way that accords with the performer's request.

Through each of the chapters in the thesis I will focus on various people whose life and/or work will contribute to the discussion of how and when

performance constitutes transgender masculinities. In Chapter 2, the focus is on the work of three performers who have staged their work in theatre venues. Chapter 3 looks at two individuals and one collective of transgender and queer performers who perform in less orthodox venues such as parks, nightclubs, community centres and bars. In Chapters 4 and 5, two projects that involved approximately 200 people (trans and non-trans) are the subject of analysis.

The fact that these involve public performances in one way or another would suggest that analysing performance practice in this way would be legitimate and not present any ethical concerns. However, the idea of looking at performance practice where the person as much as the performance brings meaning to bear and where the performance connects closely with a performer's own lived experience means that this becomes a different kind of investigation. We are not simply looking at the work as 'text'.

In considering gendered performances and this idea of the relationship between the work and the artist or performer, I refer to the performance of transgender masculinity by Hilary Swank playing Brandon Teena or to Katherine Hunter playing Hamlet, for example. These performances of masculinity and maleness appear to exist within a different sphere to those of trans men, performing themselves but we may look at these women's work and them as artists and discover a complex relationship to gender just as there is with a self-identified transgender actor or a young person involved in a playwriting project. There's no such thing as 'simple' where gender is concerned. Once a person makes work, and the work is in the public domain (whatever the scale) the work becomes available for analysis, as does the person who made it or performed it and the performance of gender becomes part of that analysis, whatever the

subjectivity of the actor. The extent to which that person participates or collaborates in the analysis of their personal investment in the work is what will vary. I will return to the function of cross-gender role-playing in mainstream theatre and film later, but the point here is an ethical one.

The logic behind the choices I made in terms of whose performance work I chose to concentrate on, and which projects would be the focus of my research, shifted at an early point in the process of research. In the initial stages of the research, I was ready to map out the range of performance work that was in existence at that point and look for potentially interesting comparative studies that would enable me to develop a sense of what made good practice in performance and in participatory project work when gender was the focus. This was relatively straightforward when looking for examples of performance practice, though there was not much happening at any one time.

For example, in 2003 when I began actively researching, there was no sign of any artists being engaged in a research and development phase. There was nobody who was ready to stage a piece of work specifically based on transgender identity so as well as looking back retrospectively on work that I had seen previously and performance work that appears on film, I went to New York to meet and see the work of David Harrison, a self-identified FTM (female-to-male trans person). Not long after that trip, I came to hear about Joey Hateley, a genderqueer artist working in Manchester and began to communicate with him. There was then a period when there did not appear to be any work like theirs appearing in theatre venues, though I was seeing more performance on the stages and in the corners of queer bars and nightclubs. Thus it became clear that these two categories were emerging – work staged in theatre building, with all of the

contextual associations, and work staged in bars, clubs and community arts venues with all of the contextual associations attached to both types.

This research work can be situated at different points on the spectrum of 'performance' and this is where project work became a clear focus. Again, as I began to map the activity around arts practices that connected with gender exploration and expression, there was a distinct lack of provision for people who might choose to identify as transgender. In fact, I found that as well as there being a lack of specific provision for trans people, trans people were talking about the barriers that existed for them in terms of accessing mainstream or even LGBT provision. For several people, 'LGBT' usually meant lesbian, gay and bisexual, and it was felt that the understanding and awareness of their experiences or needs and requirements were lacking too.

For example, a young trans person who wanted to engage in the arts was not thriving in a mainstream school environment and attributed this to a hostile and, at times, threatening learning environment which led to his absenting himself from school. The young person attended an LGBT Youth Group, in order to seek a more positive peer-group environment. He found that there was little or no awareness about how to treat him respectfully as a trans person, such that the young people in the group refused to use the pronoun 'he' and repeatedly commented on his appearance and his gender expression in a way that made him uncomfortable.

As a practitioner I wanted to provide something that could enable young people who have a complex relationship to gender to engage in creative arts practice (as they might at school) within a group of peers who were not hostile, uninformed or ignorant but who were positive about gender diversity,

constructive and respectful of each others' differences. To my knowledge, there has not been any other project work with young transgender people in the UK and my being research-active was an opportunity for me to address that circumstance directly.

In a sense, I am the locality for all of this performance-related practice. I am significant in the research. This thesis is not based on a grand empirical study, or a sociological mapping exercise of trans-related performance practice, though I will discuss the 'map' of the terrain throughout. The research stems from my 'field' and is local to me. There are things that I think make the findings relevant and interesting to people outside of my field (geographically, theoretically and practically) but it is important to say that the primary research comes from my 'world'. Alan Read asserts that:

the local and particular are as demanding of consideration now as the cosmopolitan. They are closet to the everyday, are less easy to extrapolate from their context and less easy to bring 'home' to be studied... 'being there' and 'being here' are no longer so easy to define . Being here and critical is as urgent a project as looking elsewhere, though does not deny those who are elsewhere. (Read 1995: 8)

In researching people within these particular social contexts, I look to ethnography for a model. I did not come from 'outside', to look at what transgender people do when they devise solo performance work, or how young transgender people use drama to develop their knowledge and understanding of themselves. Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson's interpretation of the term 'ethnography' refers to a particular set of methods which can involve

the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research (1995: 1).

I looked at my own communities when conducting fieldwork, and turned up to venues I ordinarily frequented. I planned projects and workshops for groups of people I knew or had access to through my professional practice, as a process of contributing my skills and experiences. Kathleen Gallagher points out that '[T]he new ethnography, as Denzin (1997) describes it, has crossed that liminal space that separates the scholarly text from its subjects; we are all co-performers in our own and others' stories' (in Ackroyd 2006: 65). I tackle the issue of my own identity or location in relation to others' identities and communities within the different chapters, so talk about my non-transgender status in Chapter 3, and my position as a practitioner-researcher in Chapter 5, for example. This approach to investigating people and performance has been a key methodological approach.

Gender, and specifically transgender masculinity in performance occurs globally within forms such as Japanese Takarazuka.⁵ However, London is where I live and work. London is a capital city and one that has a vibrant arts scene, including a very broad range of practices. It also has a large LGBT population. Not all of the artists and participants that feature here are from London though – there is one performer from Manchester and one from the West Coast of America, for example. In Chapters 2 and 3, I talk about work that on the whole

⁵ In *Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan* (1998), Jennifer Robertson discusses the figure of the *otokoyaku* in the Takarazuka Revue, a Japanese all-female theatre and dance troupe that formed in 1913. *Otokoyaku* means 'male role' and the female performers of the troupe play either male or female roles in performance, according to their specialist training.

was staged in London, though several of the performers have an international profile and in one instance, I saw a production by an artist staged in his home town of New York. The participatory projects which form the core of Chapters 4 and 5 included people from London and beyond. The point is that London is the geographical boundary that best describes the locality within which the research has been carried out, although I will make reference to certain other performance practices that have occurred in places other than London for the purposes of contextualising, comparing and contrasting different examples.

I conducted semi-structured and unstructured interviews with the performers in Chapter 2. The interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes and took place in person, over the telephone and, in one case, by email. The performers referenced in Chapter 3 were less accessible on the whole in that I saw them perform in a bar or club and was not able to develop a relationship with them where I felt it was appropriate to interview them or discuss their work in relation to my research questions.

I also spoke to audience members at particular performances where it was appropriate. Within the project-work of Chapters 4 and 5, evaluation, reflection and opportunity for participants to talk about their experiences within and without the projects was built into the work. This was done through reflective journals, conversation with project staff specifically engaged in evaluation under my co-ordination, project evaluation forms, participant questionnaires, a weblog and email interaction outside of project sessions. Much of this material forms the appendices to the thesis along with other key material that further documents the ephemeral practice, though where I took handwritten notes after a very brief

interview there is no transcript and I simply use the quotation I took down within the body of the text.

I also undertook content analysis of video-recorded sessions from both the Sci:identity trans youth arts project and the Transvoices project, and this included documentation of the processes and the outputs such as a public exhibition and performance. Again, footage from these projects is in the appendices and within each chapter, I will further detail the methods of enquiry used in relation to the particular aspect of the research being discussed.

The social model of otherness and individual difference, rather than the medical model, is the one that underpins this research. Social structures, institutions and attitudes disable rather than enable. Where someone has a non-normative gender identity or expression, barriers, challenges within society are perceived and therefore exist, as real and concrete. The research is based on an impulse that seeks to undermine those barriers and challenges through understanding identity and the ways that it is generated, formed and developed and its connection with the ways that the arts function in people's lives. A spectrum of performance is taken account of, which includes theatre productions staged in theatre venues, performances that take place in non-theatre buildings such as bars and clubs, drama and performance work done by young people and structured voice workshops undertaken by trans men. In all these areas, performance was the key focus rather than the study of theatre per se.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the paradoxes and intellectual problems that I see within the ways that transgender identities and performance practices coalesce. I have pointed out that this topic illuminates a worthwhile field of study and it covers a specific historical period as well as a specific locality. I have established that this thesis will look at the multiple ways that gender legitimacy is sought and gained through the performance of one's gendered self, the strategies employed in creative processes, and the implications of particular instances of discourse for the contestation of gender representation in performance practice. The significance of community, audience and the impact of performance practice on the 'performer' and the 'spectator' are key aspects in analysing the practices.

One key issue in the research is an investigation of the notion of masculinity as a spectrum or matrix, and masculinity as part of an intersectional framework where it connects with other aspects of identity and personhood such as ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, class, educational background, physicality, physical ability and other such elements that are inflected by individual difference. Whether the focus is female masculinity (Halberstam 1998) or butchness in women (Case 1993; de Lauretis 1993), emergent sexed and gendered identities of primary school children (DePalma and Atkinson 2008) or bodily masculinity in white men as presented in popular fictions, specifically films (Dyer in Carrigan, Connell and Lee 2002), when gender expressions operate outside of the 'regulatory fiction' of gender they reveal that regulatory fiction for what it is: a system, a framework, a set of rules, a game. However it is a very serious game, with high, high stakes where gendered and sexed bodies refute binary categorisation, and non-normative identities are produced.

Transgender masculinities have a place within the conceptualisation and practice of being male, thereby occupying a place within the 'framework' of gender. Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the rhizome as an alternative structural form to the spectrum offers another way to imagine gender, masculinity and forms of expression:

In contrast to centered (even polycentric) systems with hierarchical modes of communication and preestablished path, the rhizome is an acentered non-hierarchical, nonsignifying system without a General and without an organising memory or central automaton, defined solely by a circulation of states. (1998: 21)

The idea of rhizomatic structures is useful within this research into the experiences of individuals who produce, exhibit, inhabit, strive for, nurture, enjoy and celebrate transgender masculinity in multiple and infinite ways.

The second key issue of the research is the exploration of performativity in this context where performativity is the notion based in philosophies of language that has been developed by, for example, Judith Butler (1997) in relation to the iterability of the constitution of gender. In asking how performance constitutes transgender masculinities I am exploring the ways that performing can be a performative act or the ways that performing gender on stage and in the everyday can contribute to the 'illusion of an abiding gendered self' (Butler 1999: 179). Acting a character that is based on aspects of one's self, before an audience, is a significantly personal and political act. Using the medium of performance is performative here. The self is further constituted. Transgender masculinities emerge, develop and become consolidated through these public iterations, though the research demonstrates that the constitutive

function of performance in this context is ascetic. Whether performance is taking place in the everyday or on a stage, or within embodied pedagogy such as the applied arts or theatre practices that form part of the research, there are productive opportunities and possibilities for the body, the self and the practice when the body in performance is transgender:

Ascesis is an experience of immanence, a practice that begins from that which exists, yet elicits the unexpected, the unforeseen, from the plane of immanence. It is this experience that Foucault, echoing Deleuze, identifies as queer's potential for the activation and actualization of virtualities. (Tuhkanen 2006)

The next chapter looks at four specific performance events staged between 1999 and 2007 and explores the significance of the constitutive potential of performing transgendered masculinities within those events. The performance practices under discussion all took place in theatre venues that are classed mainstream fringe theatre venues. Each of the works has been created and performed by a person who self-identifies as, or could be described as, existing within a transgender framework of identity. Each piece invites discussion of the issues of representation and perception of trans, the various uses made of autobiography in generating a narrative for performance, and of the artists themselves who have chosen to perform themselves. These pieces of work are instances of discourse within the broader subject of this study on performances of transgendered masculinities. The performers under discussion in Chapter 2 are Joey Hateley (Oval House Theatre, 2004 and The Drill Hall, 2007), David Harrison (Pyramid Theatre, 2003), and Lazlo Pearlman (The Drill Hall, 2007).

Chapter 2

Transgender Masculinities in Performance: Inside Theatres

The transsexual performer has a trump card to play ... the disrobing of the transsexual excelled the usual sartorial markers of gender as a performance enhancement ... the transsexual, by taking the irreversible step, has somehow put gender identity in question in a more decisive way than cross-dressing possibly can. (Senelick 2000: 495)

2.1 Introduction

In the final chapter of *The Changing Room: Sex, Drag and Theatre*, Laurence Senelick establishes a relationship between transformation manifested through costume as a device in performance, and bodily change undertaken by a transsexual or transgendered performer. The implication attached to this binary is that naked transsexuals will 'upstage' any other performative semiotic device in terms of exploring gender, and that the trump card of a hormonally and/or surgically altered body beats plain cross-dressing and impersonation. I suggest that this distinction is not particularly useful in that putting gender into question is central to each of the pieces of theatre under discussion in this chapter, but there is more to transgender bodies on stage than the playing of a card. Senelick foregrounds irreversibility as being more credible or 'decisive' than a reversible

act, and the disrobing of a transsexual body as the key catalyst for marking gender on stage.

Through analysing a range of performance practice this chapter looks at the ways transgender bodies have been variously presented, constructed and displayed within live performance. Each of the performers identifies themselves as other than 'woman' in one sense or another, and sometimes several senses. In examining these four specific performance events (Joey Hateley (Oval House Theatre, 2004 and The Drill Hall, 2007), David Harrison (Pyramid Theatre, 2003), and Lazlo Pearlman (The Drill Hall, 2007)), this chapter explores the constitutive potential of performing transgender masculinities when using theatre as a medium. Consideration of cross-dressing, male impersonation, female-to-male cross-gender living and transsexuality within performance history contributes to the discussion of representations and receptions of trans bodies on stage. In Chapter 3, the focus is on performance practices taking place in clubs, bars and other somewhat unorthodox sites. In this chapter, though, the performance practices under discussion all took place in theatre venues classed as fringe theatre venues.¹

The body, and specifically the naked body, features in this chapter. A more comprehensive analysis of the ways that nudity functions within performance when the nude body is a transgendered one takes place in Chapter

¹ Fringe theatre in the United Kingdom refers to theatre that is produced in smaller venues, often literally on the fringes of the area(s) where the mainstream theatre venues are situated. For example, London's fringe theatres include Oval House Theatre in the south, the Bush Theatre and the Gate Theatre in the west, the King's Head and the Tricycle Theatre in North London and the Hackney Empire in the east. Fringe theatre is often produced as part of festivals, which provide opportunities for new works, new writers, practitioners and younger companies to stage their work. 'Fringe' theatres or companies are often independent and the work staged, described as 'alternative'.

3, but here the discussion is opened up in relation to Lazlo Pearlman's work, where his body is used and revealed for particular reasons:

[D]esire is evoked at the moment of revelation, or prior to it, or when what is revealed is snatched away and again hidden from view. Our attention is aroused by the suspense of these threshold experiences more than a state of total nakedness (Howell 1999: 20).

This chapter will analyse the ways that a trans body is revealed on stage, and how these notions of desire, arousal of attention and Senelick's idea that this revelation puts gender into question, play out and are manifested among spectators. The analysis of performance will take account of the physical body and its impact on the social encounters between performer and spectator.

Lesbian and gay coming-out stories parallel narratives of transsexual and transgender individuals in some ways. Deirdre Heddon discusses Barbara Ponse's empirical research into identity formation in the 1970s, which suggested that the self comes into being through a five-step trajectory (2004: 223). Heddon agrees that this narrative or 'gay trajectory' is evident in many gay plays, autobiographies and 'wider-held narratives of taking a journey, suffering and finding a home'. Ponse's five-step trajectory has been taken up by Henry Rubin in *Self Made Man: Identity and Embodiment among Transsexual Men* as a structure applicable to transition for transsexual people. I use his appropriation within Chapter 4 in a discussion of the process of bodily change that a transgendered male undergoes when he embarks on hormone and/or surgical intervention and the place that interventions in voice production have in that process. In this chapter though, the coming-out story as an operational part of a

trans narrative, or part of this five-step trajectory for a trans person, is another consideration in the analysis of the content and structure of the artists' work.

As each artist or example of performance practice is discussed, links will be made to the style and political context of the work. Reference will be made to other performances in order to identify possible generic trends by way of further explicating the performances at the heart of this research. As I analyse performance practices, I think about a set of particular things as being embodied in both the bodies of the performers and in the narratives they enact. Auslander (1997) advises consideration of questions of subjectivity (who is speaking and acting), location (in what sites and spaces this is happening), audience (who is watching), commodification (who is in control) and issues of politics (the ideological or social positions that are being reinforced or contested). Without undergoing a relentlessly methodical system of scrutiny, these elements will be taken into consideration within reflections on the performance work discussed in this chapter, serving as a useful flexible framework for analysis.

For example, the nature of the spaces in which these performances take place is significant. London's Drill Hall and Oval House theatres, and New York's Pyramid Theatre are three buildings with certain codes of behaviour and certain dynamics among their audiences. The venues are fringe venues and, to varying extents, have a reputation for hosting, producing and nurturing new work and queer theatre, though the fact remains that they are theatre venues and access to these places is not universally or equally available. The audiences at these performances were quite different to the audiences present at the performance events in bars and clubs that will be discussed in Chapter 3, and were also different from each other. The ways that venues' specificities and the respective

audiences responded to the performance work to which they bore witness is a critical aspect of this chapter.

The chapter will present key findings related to autobiography as a tool for performance-making by solo transgender male artists, which includes particular common features such as the use of non-linear structure, multiple characters and mixed form, as well as some key distinctions between the pieces. This chapter begins to document work as part of the project of the thesis: to identify a particular corpus of performance practice. In the next section, there is contextualisation of the field of (trans)genderism in performance, consideration of ways of categorising the various strategies for challenging gender that have been employed by queer artists through history, and consideration of the use of autobiography as a vehicle through which to generate narrative for performance. An explication of the three performers and specific examples of their work follows. The chapter then opens up to discuss solo performance as an artistic choice for these trans artists and the multiple ways that gender legitimacy is sought and gained through the performance of one's gendered self within theatre.

2.2 Theatre performance and (trans)gender identities

In *Post-War British Drama: Looking Back in Gender*, Michelene Wandor asks questions about the nature of sexed identities and gendered social roles, and ways of being in the worlds of each decade of the twentieth century. More specifically, she talks about the 'imperative of gender' as a framework within which to critique the theatre of the post-war, post-censorship era and asks 'what is it to be a "man"? What is it to be a "woman"? Who is asking the questions,

and how does their perspective (male or female) affect the play and its dilemmas?’ (2001: 37).

It has been suggested that theatre in this new century is in crisis and that:

Identity politics has splintered artists to such a degree that a certain kind of voicelessness has begun to subsume the role an artist can play in society. It is as if the claiming of identity that was so much a part of the 1980s and early 1990s has left artists exhausted of the further possibilities that its claiming can bring. (Delgado and Svich 2002:16)

The acts of claiming identity through theatre and of being a gendered performer or spectator are key to this chapter and the transgender artists under discussion, as well as to the thesis as a whole. The suggestion that artists are no longer engaged in identity politics in the same dynamic ways they once were needs to be investigated. This section begins with a broad contextual discussion of theatre history, specifically related to gender, and a mapping of various theories and practices of performance from the Renaissance period to the work of the 2000s that I will focus on later in the chapter. This will connect with the diverse ways of reading experimentation with gender in performance, and the various relationships between performance and masculinity that are manifested in the work.

2.3 Contextualising the field of (trans)genderism in performance

The politicisation of the domestic in feminist theatre of the late 1970s and 1980s, and the increasingly provocative style of work in theatres in the 1990s, look perhaps to be shifting once more. It has been suggested that the confrontational, brutally sexualised portrayals of gender within late 1990s British theatre, specifically in the work of writers such as Ravenhill, Kane and Neilson etc., are over. Aleks Sierz asserts that 'by 2000, there were signs that the heady days of outrage were numbered ... that the tide was turning and that an era of confrontation had come to an end' (2001: 249). I am interested in these cultural shifts and in the ways they relate to female masculinity and more specifically, FTM and transgendered identities and how their manifestations are reflected or rejected as we move further into the second millennium.

Cross-dressing, or transvestite theatre, has flourished during historical periods when attitudes to sexuality and the position of women have been challenged – during the Restoration, through the nineteenth century when the industrial revolution altered the face of urban and family life, and in certain respects in today's theatre. (Wandor 1986: 25)

Twenty years on from Wandor's tentative assertion that transvestism was having a revival, I suggest that attitudes to gender and identity and specifically the position of female bodied or female-born transgendered individuals is more conspicuous in the 2000s than has historically been the case. As new gender politics (to borrow Judith Butler's term) and the discipline of Trans Studies

develops, we might look back on the beginning of the new millennium as a point when discourse around cross-dressing proliferated and issues of female masculinity and transgendering in performance flourished. While this discussion concerns transgender male performers on the contemporary stage, acknowledging the point in history when women formally entered the performance space in the 1660s, and the roles they played, including male impersonation, is a significant step in tracing the emergence, appearance and recognition of transgendered representations in British theatre.

After the Renaissance tradition of casting boys and young men in female roles, the Restoration period's long delayed recognition and encouragement of women performing on stage under Charles II came about after an 18-year gap in theatre production during Interregnum. Public and royal support for the professionalising of female performers was strong and a 'shift in attitude can be linked to a wider change in how relationships between the sexes were defined' (Howe 1992: 21). Few cultures permitted women to perform earlier than the 1600s, though there are a small number of examples within private courtly theatres or unregulated travelling companies such as Italy's Isabella Andreini (1562–1604) (Goodman & de Gay 1998: 25).

The shift in attitude was slow to come about. Women actors were regarded with suspicion well into the seventeenth century although by the eighteenth century women were taking up administrative responsibilities for small theatre groups and becoming involved in management: 'Several actresses took up managing to showcase their own talents, frustrated with the male actor-managers who denied them prominent roles: Eliza Vestris (1797–1856) managed three important London theatres' (Goodman & de Gay 1998: 27). This strategic move

to enable greater autonomy is not dissimilar to the contemporary solo artists discussed later in this chapter, where devising and writing one's own material, and taking control of other aspects of creating work, are undertaken by the performer.

By the nineteenth century male impersonation was part of several actresses' repertoire, as well as the playing of male roles, such as Sarah Bernhardt's Zanetto in Copée's *Le Passant* in 1869 and later, Hamlet in 1899. Bessie Bonehill and Vesta Tilley are acknowledged as successful male impersonators, though 'Tilley was the one male impersonator of the period to be mythologised and endlessly replicated: her icon all but obliterates her competition, and her well-turned-out striplings are stamped out of the mould well into the 1930s' (Senelick 2000: 336). Just as feminist historians have embarked upon a project to reclaim women's position and presence in the world, so might Trans Studies investigate the possibilities of re-visioning and reclaiming some of the narratives as told.

In re-reading the lives, actions and work of individuals described as women and as lesbians in an effort to interrogate 'assumptions based on gynocentrism or androcentrism, using biological deterministic arguments, and subsuming relationships under the rubric of lesbianism' (Cromwell 1999a: 58), we might consider Charles Hindle, the 1860s British-born music-hall performer and male impersonator (called Annie at an early stage in his career). Senelick discusses Hindle as being a lesbian. He talks about the male impersonating becoming more 'veristic' from the point of separation from 'Annie's' husband of a few months: 'her physique thickened, her voice deepened, and she took to shaving regularly,

so that the down on her upper lip bloomed into a moustache and her chin sprouted the stubble of a beard' (2000: 329).

Where verism specifically pertains to strict realism or naturalism in art and literature, this choice of vocabulary, and Senelick's choice of personal pronoun in reference to Charles Hindle, could be said to be misleading. If Hindle lived full-time as a man, he surely conducted himself not with the appearance of truth or realness (verisimilitude), but with veritas. Accounts of history suggest that Hindle's life choices, which he affected in the everyday, were not a masquerade. Regardless of what the content of his stage performance was, his maleness was a lived experience off the stage in addition to the stage persona he presented in performance. Ways of reading the work of this performer and of others who challenge gender categorisation extends beyond describing them as male-impersonators or as lesbian women. After looking at some of the ways that masculinity and femininity have been represented historically through performance, I will consider more deeply some of the various ways that bodies and performances can be read as a way to contextualise the three performers I will be discussing in this chapter and beyond.

2.4 Categorisation of strategies for challenging gender

When encountering a performer or a piece of performance where the body, masculinity and identity are central to the meaning of the piece, it is useful to consider the different ways that constructs of gender can be challenged. This is not a bid to generate a rigid form of characterisation or categorisation but when a

quality or strategy as potent as masculinity is being deployed on stage an exploration of the nuances between certain types of expression can facilitate the analysis, such as when performance is self-consciously a 'performance', or when a person is engaged in recognisable transvestism as in Charles Hindle's living full-time as a man.

In plotting a range of ways that challenges to gender can occur, Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic framework model offers a way of imagining a range of possibilities (1998). At one point in the structure we might position a purposefully unconvincing performance of an 'opposite' gender such as a comically bad drag queen. In this example, a male-identified person is using high-femme markers of femininity such as a flamboyant dress, high-heeled shoes and bright face make-up to highlight rather than conceal his maleness. An audience is usually fully confident that this performer is male and the challenge to, or playing with gender is usually a comical form of entertainment. At another point in the non-hierarchical structure, another unconvincing performance sits, although this time the unconvincing nature is not purposeful but in fact, the performer is trying to be convincing. This example is so-called 'bad' or 'unsuccessful' transvestism where the individual does not pass successfully as their chosen gender. This performance of gender is not comical in the same ways as the 'bad' drag queen, and though the performer can still be the focus of laughter, that laughter comes from a place of ridicule rather than as the result of purposeful comic effect.

Moving to another point within the structure, and to performances that are convincing, successful transvestism or transgender expression done in order to be taken as or perceived by others as a chosen gender rather than as a sex that

one has been ascribed from birth results in passing as that chosen gender successfully. Here, the challenge to gender blends in to gender conformity and becomes purposefully convincing and therefore invisible. As such, this outcome is powerful. With this example of a convincing challenge to gender, a person is not impersonating another gender but has perhaps long since transitioned, so there is a having-become at work in their presentation of self. Whether or not an individual lives their transgenderedness in stealth or is public about their relationship to gender is irrelevant in that an 'audience' is convinced and does not question the image they are presented with. Significantly different again is a convincing performance of a gender that is not a chosen gender. A performance of masculinity for a butch woman for example, is not purposeful in the same way as the person who successfully passes as male. In the case of a non-purposeful convincing performance of masculinity, a masculine woman is in fact being mistaken for male. This is the woman who gets called 'Sir' in a social setting, when she would not choose that social title.

Uncertainty arises when an image of masculinity is critiqued by those who are reading the image, though not all readers of the image will question in the same way, to the same extent, or will even question at all. What is convincing or successful to one spectator may not be so for others, but all readings and multiplicities of expression contribute to the wider discourses around the performance of gender identity, whether on stage or as part of the everyday. In privileging the self-consciousness of a performance, in Solomon's terms (1997: 165–78), where the performance builds into it some element of failure, of an inability to convince in order to demonstrate the construction of gender, expressions of gender that happen to convince, and expressions of gender that do

not trigger any recognition of fissure between the image that is presented and some other facet of the gendered person bound up in that image, are denied. This is a disastrous disavowal or denial of knowledge of the potency of the plurality of potential modes of behaviour that challenge gender.

There are multiple ways of pushing the boundaries of the category of gender. For the three performers in this chapter, two identify as female-to-male transsexual. One identifies differently at different points as transgendered female, as a gender joker and transgendered boi² butch. All three of them create narrative based on transition, processes of discovery, facing challenges related to becoming, and to being different. The narrative in each piece of theatre varies in terms of how explicitly the theme and character(s) are transgender though. If we move on to look at narrative and its connection to the gender system, in examining four performance pieces from trans-identified people, a theme emerges in the narratives of gendered subjectivity where there is no unified image of masculine identity. There are collisions of past and present, and there is a flouting of narrative structure where narrative is broken and non-linear. In each piece, though they are very different in many ways, fragmentation is common.

This use of unconventional narrative structure was deployed such that shifts between geographical location and character took place (Harrison's *FTM*), as well as a blending of abstract and realistic temporal dimensions (Hateley's *Engendered Species*) and mixed-form enabled song to break action in order to communicate meaning (Pearlman's *He Was a Sailor...*). All of these performers and performances are concerned with how to tell a good story, but what

² Boi' is a term used by some people, often genderqueer masculine women, or trans-identified men, which plays with or queers the label 'boy'.

characterises a trans narrative? If identity politics have exhausted the artist, perhaps the audience are tired of it too. As each piece is analysed, I am asking whether the form, structure and content can facilitate a dynamic presentation of the complexity of gender.

2.5 Autobiography as a medium of expression

Each performer is influenced by social, economic and historical circumstances, of which the theatre event, theatre history and tendencies in autobiographical writing are part. The particular cultural moments that produced the autobiographical performances discussed in this chapter (and in the thesis as a whole) produce a matrix of factors. As Viv Gardner describes ‘the volume of biographical and autobiographical material published about or by late-nineteenth- and early twentieth-century performers, whether in newspapers, journals, or books, attests to the public’s appetite for “knowledge” of the private stories of actors’ lives’ (Gale and Gardner 2004: 10).

The range of practices that are connected within autobiographical practice is broad and far-reaching, and I am specifically interested in ways that the confessional model takes up societal roles and seeks to destabilise assumptions, as well as locating the construction of self and construction of community identity through performance for the transgender performers in this chapter. Richard Kearney argues that narrative provides people with one of the most viable forms of individual and communal identity within a postmodern era of fragmentation and fracture (2002: 4). Deirdre Heddon talks specifically about autobiography’s function within a contemporary culture of intolerance. This idea

is useful as a context for trans-identified performers, in that contemporary as well as historical cultures generate the need for community through marginalisation, and for a marginalised individual's insistence on the right-to-be as a gendered being:

Communities, as most often conceived, operate through a process of inclusion/exclusion. In order to have a community, there must be a boundary separating those who belong from those who do not (and the former relies on the latter). Shared narratives are one process of erecting and maintaining a boundary. (2004: 221–2)

The showing of real stories, lived experiences and talking back is a general theme for all chapters and performance practice in this thesis. As stated in the introductory chapter, autobiography is a popular and familiar form for trans people who choose to tell their stories, whether in fiction, on film or, much less often, on stage. Stephen Whittle asserts that transgender people 'have built upon the tradition the community has of autobiographical writing to give a voice to their self-acknowledged subjectivity' (1996: 208). He is talking here about numerous ways that a sense of an organised community of transgender people emerged in the 1990s, and the parallel increase in the number of trans people who began to contribute to theoretical discourse on transgender lives and identities. He sees the use of autobiography as a key tool in reclaiming the voice previously discredited by the medical and academic establishments. He uses Kate Bornstein's *Gender Outlaw* (1995) and Loren Cameron's *Self Portrait* (1993) as examples and adds:

Challenging their own sense of self, looking inwards to find who they are, using the process of autobiography that they know so well, is producing some very interesting answers which challenge, not only the structured world that queer theory inhabits but the very binary structure of the complacent world in which gender was invented, and by which it has become obsessed. (p. 210)

Dean Spade talks about the strategic deployment of self-narrative in relation to trans people's necessity to construct an 'appropriate biography' as they enter the medical system and begin the process of seeking treatment for gender reassignment (2006). Stories told by self-identified trans men are politically crucial whether the 'layman's' story challenges the 'expert's' story, offering a critique of medical and scientific discourses, as well as religion's discourse of sin and unnatural behaviour. This is acutely significant for the young participants of the Sci:identity project discussed in Chapter 4 as well as the performers in Chapters 2 and 3: 'Through their stories, then, the storytellers not only claim identities for themselves, but they may also attempt to rewrite what those identities mean ... The act of writing enacts the writer, bringing [her] in to existence as matter' (Heddon 2004: 221).

David Valentine comments on the ways that identity and personal narrative connect with institutions such as the medical or legal system too, saying, 'identity is not something that simply arises from the self and its experiences but is the product of an ongoing process of meaning-making which draws on, and is drawn into institutionalised categories of selfhood' (p. 223). He talks specifically about the ways that the self is narrated in relation to the state in order to make sense of violence, where a person harnesses the power of narrative force for political ends to appeal to particular agencies in order that transphobic

violence gets addressed. He acknowledges that the negative side to this is that in order to operate in this way, one has to narrate oneself through those institutional frameworks, sometimes at the expense of other aspects of the self such as race, class and sexual orientation.

Narratives constructed from autobiographical storytelling, which tell of having a trans type of gender, actively work against appealing for inclusion in the dominant narrative of having 'a' gender, but rather, challenging that dominant narrative. This notion differs from Heddon's concept of the relationship of gay narratives to the dominant narrative of sexuality because there she suggests that people are specifically appealing for inclusion, using the idea that they too have a sexuality as well as heterosexual people. These performers, by constructing a narrative that draws on experiences of being other in terms of gender, acknowledge their own involvement in the construction of their identity and moreover, their own use of discourses including medical and scientific ones.

Within the context of the performers discussed here, identity is gendered and is sexed. This is something of the landscape within which I locate the documentation and discussion of particular female-born transgender bodies on the contemporary stage. In considering gender transgression into masculinity, we might look to examples of controversial cross-casting such as Fiona Shaw in male role as Richard II at the Royal National Theatre in 1995. In this production director Deborah Warner realises her perspective of Richard as gender ambiguous, in that she bestows upon him a sense that he imagines himself to be above such earthly things as notions of man and woman – 'a creature beyond gender' (Shaw in Goodman and de Gay 1998: xxiii).

Alternatively, we might analyse transgender representations offered by characters such as Grace in Sarah Kane's *Cleansed* (Royal Court Theatre, 1998; Arcola Theatre, 2005). Here there are parallels with *Twelfth Night's* use of the motif of disguise where

in *Cleansed* this use of disguise is not done for theatrical or comic effect. Grace adopts the clothing and mannerisms of her brother in an attempt to actually become her brother ... demands to be seen as such by others: 'I look like him. Say you thought I was a man' [3:114]. (Saunders 2002: 95)

The performance of Brandon Teena by Hilary Swank³ is a useful example of a mainstream representation of transgender masculinity. Performing a gender that is not one's own is clearly, in this instance, a conscious effort to produce effective results i.e. passing successfully as someone who was passing successfully as male. The extent to which the actor's additional 'layer' of consciousness, or stage in a process of striving to become in relation to a gendered performance seems to be different to a non-actor's process of becoming. Swank's embodiment and performance of transgender masculinity is different to a trans-identified person's embodiment of and performance of trans. Both acts require a concentration on and rehearsing of physicality and vocal skills in order to play a role that is different in some way to one's own, or to develop a gender role that is different to that which one has been socialised into from birth. These acts are also, in albeit limited senses, similar:

³ *Boys Don't Cry* (1999) is based on the true story of a young person who was violently sexually assaulted and murdered in Nebraska, United States of America in 1993. Brandon Teena was passing as male. He moved to the town of Falls City and was attacked after two young men who were residents of the town, and had befriended him initially, found out he was transgender.

I mean there was something that was happening in my transformation in my going out on the street as a boy. I was constantly reading people's eyes. What they would believe, what don't they believe, how am I passing? You're constantly looking into people – almost as a mirror – like how are they seeing me. That's definitely something that Brandon went through. Nevertheless, for me it was just an acting thing ... for her or for him, however you want to say it, it's life, or death and that's kind of a scary comment on our society. (Swank www.crankycritic.com, accessed 21.06.06)

Consideration of the politics of representing and embodying transgender takes the discussion into a more productive sphere. Judith Butler cites Dustin Hoffman's performance in *Tootsie* (dir. Sidney Pollack, 1982) as an example of 'high het entertainment' (1993: 126).⁴ She suggests that the film, and specifically Hoffman's role, reinforces existing distinctions between binaries male/female, masculine/feminine etc. and that the trans-gender act is far from subversive. While aspects of this performance may be of interest in relation to an exploration of the notion of a gendered voice, for example,⁵ as a piece of art, or a performance practice, the extent to which the film and Hoffman in particular is making a productive contribution to discourse around gender is limited.

⁴ Hoffman plays Michael Dorsey, a father and actor who passes as female in order to get a part and then continue to play a female character on a high-profile soap opera. His intention is to earn a decent salary so that he is able to prove to his estranged wife that he is responsible, and keep his family together. The film is a comedy and the representation of transvestism is problematic when, for example, Dorsey's son discovers he is dressing as a woman and feels uncomfortable at the idea of hugging his father, reinforcing the idea that a parent with a trans identity will have a negative impact on a child.

⁵ In her text *S/he*, Claudine Griggs makes reference to speech therapist Lillian Glass who coached Dustin Hoffman in preparation for his role as Tootsie: 'Glass landed this role when a producer heard rumours that she "taught men to talk like women". She reports that raising the voice is only one aspect of achieving a feminine speech pattern ... their oral communication is punctuated by greater facial expression, especially the smile; and women try to look others more directly in the eyes when speaking. Without the appropriate mannerisms, the male-to-female transsexual, even with a voice that has been surgically raised to approximate a natural female, may be mistaken for a man, i.e., she will "be read" in public' (1999: 9).

There are multiple ways to explore the ways that gender is challenged within theatre but this thesis is concerned specifically with transgender masculinities and this chapter looks at the practice of performing aspects of oneself and narratives from one's own life story and explores the differences between making and performing autobiographical solo devised work, and performing a character when it is 'just an acting thing' (Swank 21.06.06). The next section looks to the specific instances of trans as observed on these stages in very recent years and begins with an artist who uses autobiography as a framework for making performance.

2.6 'Are you a tranny or a queer?'

This section will look more closely at the ways that autobiography has been used to inspire a fictional narrative in performance. This is the focus of the whole chapter, and here, I will draw on two productions by the same artist by way of beginning to explore a theatre-maker's creative processes, the concrete outputs and various responses to that work. The artist is Joey Hateley, whose gender expression has shifted and altered over the time I have been researching his work. In simple terms, in early 2004, Hateley was identifying as female and in 2007 as male. Within the writing of this chapter, I will use the male pronouns 'he', 'him' and 'his' in relation to the artist unless I am quoting other people and female pronouns have been used. This occurs most often in connection with his earlier piece, *A:Gender* both when Hateley is talking about his own work or identity and when others are reviewing the work.

2.6.1 Solo devising for the theatre

There's never enough time to hear everyone in queer 'ghetto' settings, and I think I need to focus on my professional development. And there's the academic world, the theatre world, the political queer scene, the non-political queer scene – I performed at Duckie and there was this heckling, drunk woman who couldn't listen, couldn't hear...or couldn't really pay attention 'cos the environment just isn't conducive... that's not where I want my work to go now. There's something about a theatre, where you can take people on a journey in a different way. (Interview with the author 13.08.07, Appendix A)

Just as there are differences between performing in a theatre and performing in a bar (differences that will be unravelled through this chapter and the next one), so there are differences between working as a solo artist, as opposed to being part of a company or a duo where creativity is as much about teamwork as about the individual's own ideas. Being led or directed by someone else can be frustrating and disappointing. Working alone provides the opportunity to produce one's own work, rather like a painter does. One's own ideas and levels of commitment to oneself and one's working methods are quite different limitations within the creative process to those of another person. Positioning one's self as chief creator of projects when working alone has advantages in terms of autonomy and artistic control. However, on being a solo artist, Hateley feels it would now be difficult for him to get work as a 'regular' actor in that he does not have an agent, nor does he have any career history of acting or performing in productions other than his own. He feels that casting directors and agents do not see him as a

professional performer as a result of the type of solo devised work in which he has been primarily engaged. He also acknowledges a point of tension that he perceives around the nature of employment within the theatre industry and gender identity. He suggests that a genderqueer person such as himself, who is not straightforwardly categorisable by the industry, would have problems being cast for parts. He says of himself, 'I'd be better being an actor and getting male parts', but he does not feel he wants to pursue this route and present himself as male, rather than genderqueer.

Financially, a solo artist has self-employed status as a freelancer and makes their own work by securing their own funding. Ideally, all work produced would feed into an overall ethos of practice, even where there are different facets to the portfolio of work such as performer of solo devised work, speaker at events, workshop facilitator for various community groups etc. Practically and logistically, solo work is simpler as things get done when the individual can (or wants to) work, and when there are numerous projects going on, one sets one's own agenda or timescale for achieving and producing material. Again though, there is a downside to this financial independence. Hateley says:

there is never much money to pay me after all else has been paid for. ACE [Arts Council England] doesn't subsidise touring and I end up not getting paid properly either for that – and it's LODZ of work. It's all about there being no money and it being difficult for me to survive. I'm supposed to do marketing and tour booking and admin and write and produce and perform everything and I get exhausted and demoralised doing everything. (email to the author, 12.08.07)

Solo artistry is often 'more than a hobby but less than a profession' until a culture builds up around a particular artist such as has happened with Bobby Baker and her work, for example.⁶

Choices and decisions about whom to collaborate with and when are strategic, depending on the artistic direction the artist wants to go in, or on a project that needs particular expertise. Joey Hateley talks about career development, and collaboration serves as a vehicle for progression when one is not working within an organisational infrastructure which usually would offer opportunities for that professional progression. Hateley directed himself when working on *A:Gender*, but later chose to work with a director. I asked how he perceives the relationship with a director and, more broadly, how things work for him when someone else joins his projects if he is used to working alone on material that is very personal and rooted in autobiography. He says:

Processes vary from project to project, but what I do best and love is to devise work. I do this with young people sometimes to create shows. But unfortunately I can't pay experienced artists to do that with, especially as it's a long process. It's hard to stay motivated and inspired by myself all the time, working alone. But I can rely on me not to disappear in the middle of something and that I will be able to commit to tour dates four years down the line etc. I've worked with so many people who have let me down over the years ... this becomes about money/commitment.

(email to the author, 12.08.07)

⁶ Bobby Baker's career spans approximately 35 years and her work has been produced by Artsadmin (a producing organisation for contemporary artists working in theatre, live arts, dance, visual arts and mixed media) since 1990. 'In 1993 following a number of years of campaigning Bobby Baker was awarded a regular funding agreement from the Arts Council England. This award allowed for some ongoing research and development and administration by Artsadmin on behalf of the Company including the legal formation of Daily Life Ltd. Daily Life Ltd now benefits from additional research and development time for Bobby Baker and a range of administrative support, expertise and skill from Artsadmin beyond its core funding including two members of staff based within Artsadmin offices' (www.BobbyBakersDailyLife.com).

His experience of being writer, director, dramaturge, performer, voice coach, choreographer, costume designer, set designer, screen actor, media artist and film-maker within his own theatre company is positive in that he does not need to secure as much funding to pay collaborators and rely on commitment from other people but by 2006 he was keen to broaden his creative horizons:

I need to have input and develop as an artist. If it was about my professional development as an artist, why don't I learn from the experts and invest in my own process as an artist. I haven't had that before ... to stay with Peggy and complete this with her, or I could work with Starving Artists, who've said they're interested in working with me. Or there's Claire Dowie. Who might take the piece and write it. I devise. That's what I do but it's hard doing that on your own. (Interview with the author, 13.08.07, Appendix A)

2.6.2 *A:Gender*



Photography: Jason Lees



Photography: Paula Hateley



Photography: Jason Lees

Figure 2.1 Hateley as the 'gender joker', in a movement piece, and as Professor L. Gooner.

Joey Hateley's solo performance piece *A:Gender*, directed by Natalie Wilson, explores the binary gender system from a masculine female perspective and uses mixed form, multiple characters and film. The production played for 12 nights at Oval House Theatre's Theatre Upstairs, a fringe venue with an auditorium which seats approximately 60. I am referencing the performance at Oval House Theatre on 1 April 2004. Hateley seeks to refute gender and identity categorisation within the performance and does this in discussion and interviews too, claiming to be a 'gender terrorist'. When asked to describe her own gender, she said, 'I identify as a transgendered female ... I'm proud to be a woman' (www.gaydarradio.com 15.07.04). In conversation after one performance, she spoke about her audience and expressed pleasure at the idea of men coming to see the show after presuming she was a gay boy from looking at promotional material. Reviews of the production emerged primarily and interestingly, from lesbian websites though nowhere does the publicity claim *A:Gender* as 'lesbian theatre', suggesting that she was also being read as a lesbian and masculine woman. London lesbian guide *GingerBeer.com*'s Roz Rural decides that

the script is well written and accessible and has the power to appeal to a diverse audience. It works on a grassroots level to lure in newcomers to gender issues but contains enough theory to tickle the attention of the hardened gender menace, without it feeling spoon-fed ... [it] boldly challenges assumptions made within exclusive gender binaries and creates an alternative arena: a beautiful, tender and peaceful place.

Dykesdiary.com describes the work as 'bold', 'striking' and 'a searing, heartfelt piece of performance'.

The production's form uses a montage of characters and scenes, some one-off vignettes and some that were part of a sequence or thread, recurring throughout. One example of how the distinct episodes served to explore the various perspectives on gender draws on what was a principle character or protagonist who provided a through-line. A voiceover introduces the audience to the main character as 'our deviant bathroom user', who enters the female public toilets. With four toilet scenes, this thread is woven throughout the performance. The voice adds comment within each, assessing the 'performance' of the character in terms of how effectively she managed the situations she encounters. The voice is American-accented; the vocabulary and tone suggest analysis similar to that of a behavioural psychologist, or perhaps a documentary narrator, evaluating what they see for the benefit of the viewer. In the first encounter, we see the character check under each cubicle, looking for the feet of other bathroom users. The cubicles, the toilet and the sinks are implied through mime rather than real, and a sense of relief that the character is alone and therefore likely to avoid any difficult interactions is clear.

Hateley's physicality here is strong and bold. As she moves across the stage, around the public bathroom, she is self-assured. Costumed in jeans, heavy work boots and a dark, loose t-shirt, the mannerisms and short, cropped hair all combine to offer a clear, unambiguous representation of a masculine woman. While in the cubicle, she hears someone enter the bathroom, so braces herself for a potential problem as she leaves. She is met with the recorded voice of a woman saying, 'Er ... this is the lady's toilet, young man.' The voice is that of a caricatured middle-class woman. While washing her hands, the main character says, 'Yes. I did know that. But did you know the middle-class toilets are

situated down the corridor and up your own arse?’ The laughter that this evoked from the audience would seem to stem from recognition of the scenario, and pleasure at the blunt response one wishes one could give in such a confrontational, awkward social interaction.

In the second toilet scene, a security guard, represented by a recorded voice, tries to intervene after another bathroom user has complained about the ‘man’ in this women-only space by confronting the main character. The guard is confused when he hears the character speak from inside the cubicle. With no visual signifiers of gender, he hears a ‘female’ voice and comedy is used again as the character articulates her irritation. The character is hassled by a young woman next, who begins with, ‘Oi You! Get out of the women’s toilets’, but then tries to engage in conversation. She asks what type of woman the protagonist goes for, and then invites her to party. Hateley’s physicality indicates that the woman moves into the character’s personal space and begins to flirt and again, laughter is the response as the audience recognise the situation.

Later still, a more aggressive encounter involves a woman, represented again by a voice-over, with a deeper voice and Northern accent asking, ‘What are you doin’ in ‘ere? Are you a tranny or a queer? Trannies are the biggest fuck ups that ever walked this earth.’ The main character is physically pushed hard enough for her to stumble and she tries to counter the abusive comments with a remark about the woman’s own masculinity, saying, ‘You’re more of a man than I could ever be’, before turning and running from the bathroom to the woman shouting, ‘You little fucker!’

By this point, the repeated joke about gender ambiguity in public bathrooms is familiar, so the implicit notion that the threat of violence can quickly become actual is made explicit through the use of language.

Taboo words such as 'fuck' or 'cunt', work because we give them a magical power, which makes them more than simple signs ... the swearword aims to compact more than one hatred, becoming a verbal act of aggression, a slap in the mouth. (Sierz 2001: 8).

This set of scenes tells the audience that an androgynous or gender-complex person suffers repeatedly from the confusion that other people feel when they encounter that complexity.

Hateley uses mediatised images throughout the piece. An example from early in the performance centres on an action figure that becomes a 'real' companion to a young girl. The opening shot is a close-up on the slightly smiling, inanimate face of an Action-Man-style figure, clothed in army fatigues. The camera pans out and we see the figure is being held by a young girl of about four years old, costumed in a deep purple party dress. The shot cuts to the girl holding the Action Man as she climbs on a playground activity frame and then focuses in as she holds the figure out as if it were about to slide down a fireman's pole. She drops the doll and we see it fall towards the ground in slow motion and the camera fixes on the figure lying face down and motionless on the ground. The audio track that plays throughout is sombre, with a single brass instrument playing melancholic notes. The tune is reminiscent of a war-film soundtrack at the point where the battle is over but most of the men do not return home. The girl is seen looking down at the Action Man as he lies still inanimate on the

ground, and then away into the distance. She moves her hair out of her eyes and then fixes her gaze on something.

The shot cuts to a live and life-size Action Man (Hateley) costumed in fatigues just as the doll was, but this time he is running through the woods towards the girl. An image of his smiling face echoes the opening close-up shot, adding a warmth and openness through the facial expression. The pair reach for each other's hands so that Action Man can help the girl to jump down from the climbing frame and they then run together, the girl leading, apparently on an adventure, deeper into the woods. An abrupt cross-cut then shows the two characters in the process of exchanging costume so Action Man now wears a deep purple long ball dress, and the girl is putting the army clothes on to cover her dress. The girl is being assisted to get rid of her dress, and to become more like the action hero figure. The transition from childhood to adulthood here is from girl to man, and moreover, from feminine girl to macho man, and the transition is taking place in a private world without interruption or challenge from critical outsiders.

Alisa Solomon talks about radical lesbian feminist performance practice not being concerned with issues that are to be agonised over or resolved. She cites much of the work staged at the WOW Café in New York and specifically Split Britches' work as operating outside normative systems of gender representation and as plays that 'take lesbianism as a given' (Solomon 1997: 156). Whether lesbianism ever really has been subsumed as the norm at the WOW Café is one issue, but in terms of transgender performance practice, I suggest that performers and spectators are not yet at a point when trans can be taken as a given because of the extent to which transgender people still encounter

misunderstanding from a broad range of people, including members of the LGBT community and at times, from other people within the transgender community. The implication from Solomon is that where an issue is agonised over or 'debated, say between a mother and daughter, as its central agon', much as transgender identity is debated by the protagonist and his mother in David Harrison's *FTM* which will be discussed in the next section, this results in unsophisticated performance work (ibid.). I would agree that the more explicitly a message is hammered home, the less complex the piece is and therefore less interesting and perhaps transness is not taken up as an issue to be debated so directly in the more interesting pieces of work I am analysing. Where a piece is less subtle, and particularly where the spectator is trans, or is reading the piece through a trans gaze, the work is then potentially alienating through its over-familiar nature.

There is a parallel here with a didactic lesbian politic within theatre in that a lesbian spectator engages with the work and its debates, the agonising and the resolutions going on onstage, and she does not necessarily engage with the content in any way other than to agree and bemoan and compare her attempts at resolution. Or perhaps she will disagree, saying, 'That's not how it is for me.' In this way, a reader or spectator reading through a trans gaze would view Hateley's *A: Gender* and say, 'Yeah, I think that way about gender too', or 'Yeah, it's really frustrating that my identity isn't allowed for in the world', or 'Yeah, I say "fuck gender" too, just like you do there, up on the stage.'

Deirdre Heddon poses the question of whether this piece (as well as much of the work she discusses in *Autobiography and Performance*) is preaching to the converted. She acknowledges that there is no unified 'we' but does suggest that

audience members who feel ‘other’ to Hateley are invited to ‘recognise moments of identification’ and ‘spectators who easily identify with Hateley may very well also find themselves “othered” as the “normative”’ (2008: 52). I would go further here and suggest that what Hateley is saying in *A:Gender* is highly problematic for some audience members who identify as transgender and that identifying with another person who is expressing gender variance through performance is potentially elusive.

The piece opens with ‘mad professor’ Professor L. Gooner (pictured in Figure 2.1), surely a word-play on Professor L. Gooren who was one of the people involved in the renowned and controversial study of the brains of transsexuals referred to in Chapter 1. This character talks in a highly stylised, exaggeratedly intense manner about medical discourses of transsexuality and gender variance, and the high cost of gender reassignment as though touting for business. This can be read as a humorous take on the medical establishment, the individual choice to transition from ‘woman’ to ‘man’ (rather than occupying an anti-binariated position) and a criticism of the manipulative aspect of private treatment, but for those who choose gender reassignment, and choose to avoid the slow process of National Health Service treatment, this is not necessarily a laughing matter. A review titled ‘A:Gender is an O:ffender’ offers this critique:

The show started perhaps most offensively with an ambiguously regionalised pseudo-psychiatrist who was advertising sex changes – two for the price of one. I’m not even sure what this person was saying – not only because it was hard to detect beneath the awful cod accents – but the question begs: what is this character actually doing, saying and meaning? [We] discussed afterwards whether it made light of transsexualism in favour of a more gender queer identity – perhaps a little

controversial, even antagonistic. My point would be that even if he wants to posit some of this, if only it were done better it may generate more fruitful and dynamic debate ... It seems the Drill Hall are keen to support gender play and plays about gender as they are renowned for their commitment to minority communities, feminism, queerness and generally intervening in heterosexism – all politically interesting stuff. But what they got here was nothing more than a tap dancing routine and a mediocre one at that. (Stewart 2007: 8–9)

Even for those who enjoy and are stimulated by work such as this, there are narrow limits to the extent of agreeing with what is onstage, and feeling affirmed in this way and limited value to that affirmation. However, where a piece does seem to be moving towards taking trans as given, and is exploring other themes and lived experiences like those found in Pearlman's story of Salty Bugger, the sailor who is adrift at sea or Hateley's character Crunch in the next piece under discussion, a small city-dwelling bird who struggles to survive and dreams of being a falcon when he is older, a spectator can engage in more layered, interesting tangential ideas and inflections of meaning, still caught up in gendered experiences of life.

2.6.3 *Engendered Species*



Peggy made me feel naked on stage and asked me to do things that were counter-intuitive all the time i.e. nothing negative, dark, nothing political, nothing trans, feminist – which was hard but necessary to get me out my comfort zone challenge and pushing me to new ground which I needed as I felt stuck. I needed input after outputting all these years. It was more like learning from a great expert/teacher than a collaboration (email to the author, 12.08.07).

Figure 2.2 *Engendered Species* poster (The Drill Hall Theatre)

Following on from the one-person show *A:Gender* (April 2004), Joey Hateley presented a new piece of work entitled *Engendered Species* with performances on 28 and 29 April 2007 at The Drill Hall Theatre, London. The piece was presented as a new work-in-progress created by Hateley, developed with and directed by Peggy Shaw (Split Britches Theatre Company). The piece is described as a

quest for identity beyond borders. A celebration of searching, being lost, found and everything in between ... Fly with globetrotting falcons, abseil with albatrosses, drink honey with hummingbirds or even swim with penguins in tropical waterfalls. *Engendered Species* invites you to witness a world where I can be who ever I want to be on a quest to find my ancestors. (<http://www.artsline.org.uk/event/1403> 1.07.07)

The piece has been performed at the Gay Games in Belgium, and at the Fresh Fruit Festival in New York, both in 2007. This piece of work is about non-normativity, identity, and the constraints and struggles of finding a place in the world. During the period preceding the Drill Hall development phase, the Contact Theatre in Manchester donated space in-kind and funding of £600 to Hateley's company, TransAction Theatre Company to work with a director to research and develop what was to be a new solo show (*Dis' Passionate STATE*) in May 2006.

Hateley later embarked on a practical exploration with director Peggy Shaw to develop and understand the themes behind *Dis' Passionate STATE*. They began to create new material but it became clear to them both that if Shaw and Hateley were to continue working together, they needed to establish a more

collaborative devising process and put the script and ideas for *Dis' Passionate STATE* to one side. Hateley collated the material that was devised in that week at the Contact Theatre and used it as a springboard from which to continue writing, researching and developing the new solo show that became *Engendered Species*:

From Nov 06 until March 07 Peggy acted as a dramaturge, responding to my writing by setting me tasks that continued to develop the piece. Peggy asked me to write about different things in different ways and guided me in how to generate new styles of writing. Peggy and I both gave our time to work together in London on the 19th of Feb. with a first draft, in space donated in-kind at Queen Mary's University London. After many months of writing and email discussion, a show began to emerge from vast quantities of material. (Arts Council England Feedback Form, 2007)

Hateley talks about the fact that Shaw felt both the theme and the form that had been developing in connection with the *Dis' Passionate STATE* piece were not appropriate for the way she wanted to work. Thematically, the piece was about white privilege, and its form took on the structure of the kind of children's book where two options are given at the end of each chapter, with the story continuing on different pages, according to the option the reader took. Hateley's idea was that the audience would shape the show and engage in participative, interactive ways during the performance.

It was hard to begin again. I get stuck. In my ideas. I can't think outside the boxes. Academia has structured the way I think and write and I was having to break down my internalised editing system to write new material. So for example, Peggy was throwing questions at me and doing this visualisation. These were exercises that got

me writing for live performance. It's about a language for performance as opposed to more poetic writing. It was about opposites, and doing things in an entirely opposite way to the ways I'm used to. (Interview with the author 13.08.07, Appendix A)

Crunch is the main protagonist of *Engendered Species* and is a bird-boy character that is foregrounded in a loose narrative and at points, fades while more abstract scenes cut in. The themes of restlessness, inquisitiveness and resistance to others' expectations were the cohering elements of the non-linear structure of the text and fragmented form of the production. For example, the use of space was one strategy used to communicate the theme of disorientation and restlessness, so the spatial boundaries of the auditorium were explored by Hateley occupying less ordinarily utilised areas such as the space-by-the-exit, the space-above-the-lighting-rig and the space-among-and-between-the-audience-seating. One of the more effective moments was the opening, where Hateley (as Crunch) was positioned up on the rig, lying back in a relaxed posture before dropping a rope to the floor and climbing down to the stage area. He did appear to be nervous about using the rope, but this idea could be developed beyond the work-in-progress to a point where perhaps he would throw himself off in a more dynamic fashion, giving people a shock and communicating the edgy energy of the character more strongly.

The idea here seemed to be about contributing to the active energy of the bird-character, which came through at later points but here, Hateley's apparent tentative physicality as he climbed down from the lighting rig hampered that intention. Throughout this sequence, which included the song 'I Wanna Be Like You' (from the 1967 animated feature film *The Jungle Book*), the boy-with-

wings gobo (identical to the poster image shown at the start of this section) was used on a roaming spotlight, 'swooping' around the auditorium as the character talks about being in a rainforest at some point in the past before heading towards a city, of which he says:

It feels different, dangerous. A different world with different rules. *(Joey sniffs audience)* I fly around the city and see the rats, the road kill; easy trash food. I get smaller to survive more like a hawk. *(Joey sniffs audience)* Now I'm here I can't get back. Kids try to kill me. I swoop up & down and sit on windows and balconies. I adjust fast. I take the food out of peoples' hands and shit on businessmen ... I think I can go back to being a falcon when I'm older. That's when I realized. That's when I became Crunch. (Draft script, emailed to the author)

Once the audience have encountered Crunch in this way, there is a succession of different 'scenes' or episodes including a physical piece where Hateley lies on the ground, facing the audience using his two hands like characters or puppets, grabbing and playing with his face, pulling at his eyes, caressing his cheeks, pulling something out of his mouth, and gently holding his chin. This sequence is interrupted by the sound of gunshots and geese calling as they fly off, perhaps in a flock although Hateley rolls over, as if showing us a shot-down, dead goose. From this, we return to Crunch and in a fast paced monologue, we hear about Crunch meeting Perry with whom he establishes a relationship: 'this bird ... I've never seen that kind of bird before. She looked at me. I froze.'

From this monologue, Hateley moves into another more abstract piece about space, silence and a link to an ancestor, delivered at high monotone pitch

and high speed, accompanied by audio sounds that invoke a rainforest environment. This rapid succession of different episodes contributes to the frenetic energy of the main character. The thematic links are not directly obvious though in that there is a general thread to do with birds as a species (geese, crunch the city bird – perhaps a pigeon, and the falcon as a possible ancestor) and the theme of fighting to establish some kind of order and calmness within the whirlwind of life. A lighting change then shifts the dynamic again so that we see a corridor of light running from stage-left to stage-right. At one end is a microphone mounted on a dolly. The microphone is slowly wheeled along the pathway of light in a faltering way, pulled from offstage by a long rope. Hateley climbs onto the dolly, so he is uncomfortably clinging to the microphone stand, moving across the stage. The microphone is also at an awkward height, so he has to stoop to speak into it, and as he does so, he says (in a steady, even and controlled voice):

My great great grandfather is innocent and wise, insecure and strong; full of laughter and compassion. His mind is sharp, his tongue poignant. His inside is on the outside. He's an old little girl. He sparkles and giggles with infectious excitement. Sometimes he builds. He never loses, but sometimes he turns round; so you can see her for a moment; that little girl. She melts and he returns in an instant. He makes me smile. He gives me no refuge. Around him there's no space for breath. (draft script, emailed to the author)

Here the line between the character of Crunch, the narrator, and a persona that is more 'Joey Hateley' than anything else more defined is unclear. The autobiographical nature of the text is different to *A:Gender* but still very much

drawing from personal experience, as Hateley makes clear. He says that for him ‘the difference between performance and reality is blurred. Self-esteem is so related to performance. What’s real and what’s performed ... there’s no difference almost. I feel completely stripped and completely naked in *Engendered Species*’ (Interview 13.08.07). First memories and experience of the world when being born are articulated in what was again, a blurring of Crunch and Hateley, or a human boy who may or may not be Hateley:

I was pulled out by forceps in a mood. A breeched boy turned around at the last minute. Crying screaming little piglet runt with a face like a slapped arse, forced into being. Mommy had my life wrenched out of her in an RAF camp. I was nearly blinded by the forceps in one eye. The first thing I saw was a cold military environment. Every sheet, every button, every shape and pattern was a bird. The same bird. My first experience of this world was an invasion, a violation, being grabbed across the head until my skull squashed and I’m yanked inside out by such an unbelievable tremendous force ... I split mommy open. They took me away to teach me a lesson. I was caged at birth. I was spawned. I am Crunch, the curse of the village; I’m a hybrid beast lab experiment. (draft script, emailed to the author)

In a later section, memories of walking to school are recalled in a much less abstract and more straightforward manner, with the character feeling both conspicuous and invisible. This piece was spoken in a Midlands accent as if to indicate that the character was once a person, from a particular place rather than a bird character, and that changes and shifts have occurred for this person since those schooldays. The character talks of ‘my life as a white boy’ who has a history that is complex though flight and escapism have still been significant parts of that history. When the text moves into this register, talking about

binaries and gender identities, my own enjoyment of the narrative (challenging as it is) stops as this feels too much like a didactic piece of work where I, as an audience member, am meant to be thinking and learning. At these points, the text returns to the overly prescriptive style of *A:Gender*. and this material leaves no room for imagination; as a spectator I felt I was less free to draw my own inferences and link them with what is being offered.

As with *A:Gender*, perhaps this piece is suitable for an audience who have not thought much about gender before. The strength of the more overt gender theory-influenced writing is that for people who have not yet thought, read or talked about these ideas to a significant degree, it is new and interesting and the writing does leave gaps and spaces for that kind of thinking and reflection. As a work in progress, the promise lies in the metaphorical aspects of his piece, the characters and the multiple narratives, rather than the dialectic on gender and identity.

2.7 Solo devised autobiographically inspired fiction

As discussed in the previous section, Joey Hateley's autobiographically inspired devised work uses personal history to construct the narrative. Kate Bornstein has declared that 'the best of the as-yet untold tales of the queer underground still belong to the FTMs' (<http://www.geocities.com> 19.03.04) and similar work is being devised and staged in the United States. Before looking closely at FTM performer David Harrison's work I offer a brief description of three other transgender performers who are working in America and producing and

performing solo devised work on the subject of being FTM. From looking at these three examples, some of the key features of the structure, form and content of their work resemble those in Joey Hateley's work.

As outlined in the introductory chapter, the United States and in particular the East and West Coasts, are a primary producer of queer and transgender art as well as theoretical work. Performers are most usually based in major cities, but tour across the country, using their work to educate and raise awareness of gender identity, the ways that lived experience differs for those who have a complex relationship to gender, and some of the prejudicial and hostile attitudes exhibited towards trans people. Though this thesis concentrates on work performed in the United Kingdom, David Harrison's piece *FTM* was the first performance I saw as part of the research in December 2003 and, as I began to describe in Chapter 1, the US context is significant to the rest of the research undertaken.

2.8 Trans performance in the United States

Ignacio Rivera self-identifies as 'Black-Boricua, Trans-Entity, Multi-gender, Queer activist/mother/pretty-boi/poet/sexual liberationist/sex worker' and says on his website (www.ignaciorivera.com 02.11.08) that he is interested in looking at the stage as a space for articulating trans experiences and at portrayals of trans people and representations of trans in performance. His work is autobiographically inspired, an articulation of the self, with and for 'our' communities. His show *Dancer* premiered in summer 2006 in New York and

Rivera performed the piece at the Transfabulous International Festival of Transgender Arts in June 2008. *Dancer* is a tale about a 'dyke' in the midst of transitioning who finds herself/himself in a stranded, impoverished situation. The only way to survive is to be a dancer, or sex worker. This production touches on issues of gender expression, social constructs of gender, sex work and internalised oppression.

B4T (Before Testosterone) is a solo one act piece, written and performed by Imani Henry, and directed variously by Diane Beckett and Maureen Shea over the duration of the project. Henry has toured the piece since 2003 at venues such as the Highways Performance Space in Santa Monica, California. *B4T* is a multi-media theatre piece that explores race, sexuality and gender expression through the lives of three Black, masculine, female-bodied people. The three characters that Henry plays open up trans male identities over three generations and portray some ways that three different trans men try to understand each other's perspectives and lived experiences. They are LaShawnda 'Shawn', Keith and Imani. LaShawnda appears through video instalments and communicates something of what it is like to live in a butch body, experiencing everyday struggles such as making decisions about which public toilets to use and the confusion of others as they address the character variously as 'Miss' and 'Sir'. Keith passes as male and has done since childhood. This character describes the acceptance of his family and friends, and the realities of racism and transphobia for him. Imani's family rejects him because his gender expression doesn't fit their norm. The piece has been performed many times at events such as Theater Offensive's 12th annual 'Out on the Edge' Festival of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual

and Transgender Theatre at the Boston Center for the Arts in September 2003

where it was described as:

Destroying the mainstream media's depiction of the gay community — bourgeoisie, white and male — 'B4T' begins with a slideshow of butch lesbian and FTM transgender people of color, compiled by Henry. Through a series of film clips and live monologues, the show tells the stories of three black, masculine, female-bodied people — all portrayed by Henry — and their unique individual experiences in a society that ranges from accepting to uncomfortable to openly hostile. (Pabst 09.18.03)

Scott Turner Schofield is a performance artist from Atlanta who identifies as female-to-male transsexual with a queer, transgender identity. He created two original solo performances in 2000 (*Underground Transit* and *Debutante Balls*) and toured colleges, festivals and theatres in Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco and New York among other places. Curt Holman suggests that Schofield has

made the ambiguity of his gender an explicit part of his art. You get a sense that he finds being a man less exotic than being a mysterious individual who transcends rigid social constructs and keeps a foot in both camps. (Holman 2006).

Underground Transit shows its audiences a young person's emergent trans identity with a protagonist who is 'coming to terms with his own identity and the slippery concepts of sex and gender, with a recurring metaphor of the New York subway system' (ibid.). *Debutante Balls* is a theatrical stand-up comedy dance through the fascinating culture of the Southern Debutante Ball and some of the

ways Schofield 'came out' as a lesbian, radical feminist, and finally, as a transgender man, into Southern society.

Becoming a Man in 127 EASY Steps is the last instalment of an autobiographical performance trilogy, staged in August 2008 at the 7 Stages Theatre in Atlanta. This piece is also a solo work combining aerial acrobatics and multimedia storytelling. Since 2006, Schofield has received three Community Fund Grants from the National Performance Network to raise community awareness of gender and sexuality through art and he is youngest-ever recipient of a Tanne Foundation Award for commitment to Artistic Excellence. In 2007, Schofield became the first openly trans artist to be commissioned by the National Performance Network for his forthcoming solo show. These awards and commissions might be seen as recognition of the value of work such as Schofield's, although he acknowledges a similar concern to Hateley in relation to developing a career as an actor saying:

as an actor, will I get male roles, or will people always want to cast me as trans guys, or women who are hot in a masculine way? Would I trade the really fun part of being trans and getting people to think differently, just to be a normal guy? The value of that is not to be underestimated. (Holman 2006: 1)

All of these productions ran in, or have been running since, 2003, and there is very little such work profiled prior to that year. On 12 December 2003, *Next Magazine's* listings described David Harrison's production *FTM* as a 'one-man drama [which] explores his transsexual journey from female to male based on his own personal experiences' (p. 39). The piece, seen at the Pyramid Theatre, New York (14.12.03) has been running since 1994 and focussed on self-image and

perception of self, interpersonal relationships with friends, lovers and family, and the impact of gender re-assignment on everyday life. The next section looks more closely at this specific example of performance.

2.8.1 *FTM*: Form and meaning

The main vehicle for the exploration of the theme of transition from childhood to adulthood as a transgendered person is the relationship between the protagonist and his mother. Harrison alternates between portrayals of both characters throughout, and within the narrative, a parallel is established whereby Timothy, a trans man, is taking testosterone as part of the process of transitioning and his mother is receiving testosterone as part of her cancer treatment. The two positions and attitudes to the radical step of altering one's hormonal state are juxtaposed to generate new insights into both experiences. This narrative provides a cohesive framework for the exploration of the facets of life as a transgendered person where a situation contains and surrounds the actions of the central character. Halberstam suggests that 'the transgender man expresses his desire for a manhood that will on some level always elude him' (2005: 52). Jay Prosser's affirmative stance suggests that transsexuals become real through authorship: 'narrative *composes* the self. Conforming the life into narrative coheres both "lives" on either side of transition into an identity plot. This is not simply to remark autobiography as healing ... but autobiography as constitutive' (Prosser 1998: 120).

In analysing this work and the artist's intentions, a critical perspective that connects to Sandy Stone's notion of a 'true, effective and representational counter-discourse' (p. 11) is useful. Within the multiple discourses of the theory of gender, Stone suggests that the people who have no voice in this theorising are trans people themselves, and I am interested in the idea that performance might serve as a form of counter-discourse. If this were viable, might the performer utilise form and style that are outside convention to operate consciously in a subversive way? Alternatively, might convention aptly facilitate expression of a trans identity? Stone suggests that a re-articulation of a transgendered position would require an individual to 'speak from outside the boundaries of gender, beyond the constructed oppositional nodes which have been predefined as the only positions from which discourse is possible' (ibid.). Is contemporary trans performer David Harrison performing from outside the boundaries of both gender and form?

Just as funding was significant to Joey Hateley, so it appears to be a major factor influencing Harrison's work. This is not a revelatory idea in that Kate Bornstein documents conversations from the First International Lesbian and Gay Theatre Conference and Festival (1989) where artists were discussing the recent announcement by John Frohnmeyer, then Chairman of the National Endowment of the Arts, that grants would be rescinded for some of the queer artists present. 'Censorship became the buzzword, and nearly, but not quite, the entire focus of the conference. We tried to figure out ways to get the work done – in spite of the efforts to silence us' (p. 155).

Artists such as Holly Hughes agonised over the fact that without funding they would be unable to work and without performing they and what they chose

to represent would become invisible. I asked Harrison about funding and his response was: 'What's that? (*laughing*)' He had not researched the possibility of seeking grants and though he had been advised that he should by various people, he commented that it seemed like a lot of work and had no faith in the system. Funding for *FTM* came from his own pocket partly, as he says, because 'it's just me and self-producing is a lot of work'. This low-budget constraint had a clear impact on the visual aesthetic of the piece. The mise-en-scene was sparse and symbolic. This, and the small black box space with its end-on stage, contributed to an intimate proxemic. A washing line had been strung across the back of the stage and decorated with various items of clothing: stage left was a well-worn pink bathrobe and stage right, a football shirt. This simple device contributed to the convention of there being two 'worlds' within the performance space, one for Timothy and the other for his mother. Harrison physically moved from one to the other as he assumed and shed the two roles and the corresponding representative garments.

In interview, Harrison talks about his decision-making behind the aesthetics of the work, describing how *FTM* was designed as a touring production so while he enjoys the aesthetics of a minimal set, he needs to be able to travel with everything:

We'll see what's there at a new venue and what will work or won't work and what we can use that's there. In Normal, Illinois, I couldn't use the clothes line but there was a dry-wipe board so I hung the clothes on their hangers and hung them off the board!

He comments that The Pyramid Theatre is the smallest venue he has ever performed in and that he has often worked in huge auditoriums or lecture halls. While I would not assert that financial constraints are solely the transgendered performer's domain, in this instance, the 'poor theatre' nature of Harrison's work seems to have dictated, or at least heavily influenced, many of the artistic choices rather than the artist being in a position to make unhindered creative choices. Of course, this issue is one that affects a broader profile of artists, in such categories as 'women playwrights'. A key factor remains that the individuals who make decisions about which theatre work to fund, make their selections according to what they perceive as 'popular' and most often, hinge on whether the work will, once produced, bring financial dividends. Harrison's choice to operate self-sufficiently seems to stem from a cynicism in that system.

FTM employs the convention of monologue with the use of multiple roles. This form suits autobiographical narrative. The *Saskatoon StarPhoenix* commented that 'the experience wavers between theatrical performance and therapy. Audience members are often painfully aware they're not merely being entertained and informed: they're watching someone bare his soul' (08.08.95). Harrison himself says:

people say it's autobiographical. It is and it isn't. I took a lot of dramatic licence with that piece (*laughs*). There are people who are not in it ... people ask me why so-and-so isn't in it because 'she was around when that happened' ... My mother isn't Scottish! It's about other things – it's autobiographically inspired fiction.
(Interview with the author, Appendix B)

These conflicting perspectives on precisely how personal and revealing the piece is are an indication of the way an audience receives work of this nature that is not dissimilar to the 'public's appetite for ... the private stories of actors' lives' referenced previously (Gale & Gardner 2004: 10). A trans narrative, or a transgender person with a lived experience of gender that is different to that of a non-transgender person, has a seductive potential simply because of its unusualness. This brings us back to the idea that there is craft required when creating and presenting a trans narrative rather than simply playing the trans 'card'.

Harrison started actor training in 1977 at the University of Saskatoon, Canada and he also spent a year at the Drama Studio with British and American teachers. He recalls how Peter Leyton, the executive director, would be there at the school and his influence on the training led to what Harrison describes as 'the British style'. Leyton is remembered by Harrison as telling the students, 'if you're not getting work, go out and make your own'. The training at the Studio was for students who had had previous training and the focus was very much on getting work. He later worked with Peter Seyd (Red Ladder Theatre Company) for five years, three of which were before his transition and two years after what he sees as the key point at which he became David. Harrison states that Seyd was instrumental in his professional life in that Seyd introduced him to the people who would be his dramaturge and director for *FTM*. I asked about the decision to devise and whether Harrison could identify any particular style or practitioner's work that had influenced him:

I've been rebellious about that! I wanted to do my own thing and didn't want to follow someone else's style ... I didn't write it [*FTM*] to be a conventional play.

The form of it is actually an expression of the content if that makes any sense. Form and content are interlinked. (ibid.)

2.8.2 *FTM*: personal and political

In interview, we talked about the politicised space that a performer inhabits by choosing to make and perform work such as *FTM*. As outlined in Chapter 1, Stephen Whittle described the dichotomy of being trans in that the more ‘successful’ a trans person you are, the less visibly transsexual you will be and the less ‘successful’ you are, the more visible a transsexual you are. Whittle goes on to ask whether a trans person can retain a political identity after the initial steps of transition are over, where activism and visibility bring with them burdens of representation of a community (2004). I asked David Harrison if he was comfortable with the ‘burdens’ of inhabiting a political sphere. He said:

I’m at an interesting point in my life right now. I’m known as David Harrison, the transsexual playwright and performer blah blah blah but I’m really tired of being in a box ... I feel like I’m an actor first ... One thing that’s uncomfortable for me is that there’s this idea that I’m aligned with a community and the truth is I never felt part of any community – as a lesbian, as a man now in the gay community, the transsexual community. I feel completely out of place in those terms. The piece does educate but I don’t like to be labelled ... identity politics can be good up to a point but the difficulty is, it can leave someone in a box.

Harrison is featured on an American website which profiles ‘Successful Trans People’ (Lynnconway.com), where his career and personal life are

celebrated and his photograph appears (see Figure 2.3); he also has own website (<http://www.peterpants.net>).

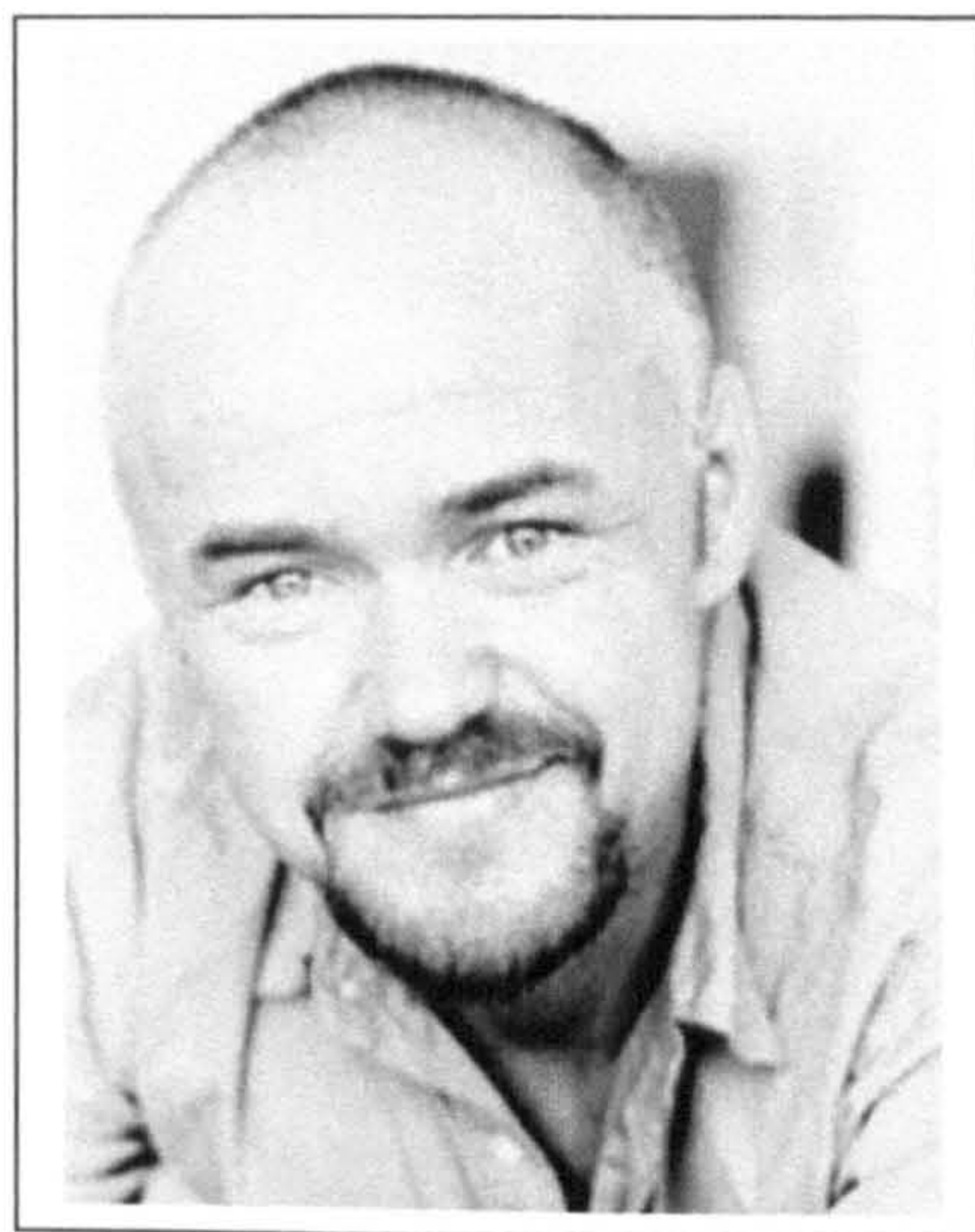


Figure 2.3 David Harrison (<http://www.peterpants.net/>)

The image's presence on this public Internet site generates meaning over and above its simple visual representation of the person: it tells the viewer that this is a person who passes successfully when he chooses to. Whittle (2004) suggests that while invisibility has widespread negative connotations, visibility as a result of publicising oneself as trans carries its own burdens. He described his own sense of 'always becoming', of being in a state of 'perpetual adolescence' and not holding full membership in society and speaks of these feelings arising as a result of the public nature of his existence. Despite these tensions, he suggests that

being out is the only healthy way to live as a trans person. Not being leads to a life of fear, anxiety and stress ... if you're not out, relationships (sexual or not) cannot have any depth at all. Depth is simply not on your agenda.

Perhaps the tension for Harrison lies between being ‘read’ as a flag-bearer or representative of a group and being seen and accepted as a person who happens to be trans. In recent months, Harrison has concentrated on developing his professional skills, taking classes in clowning and acting for the camera. Just before our interview he had participated in several NYU student films and was working on creating a reel to show agents. He still has a booking agent for *FTM* and intends to perform the piece if payment is forthcoming but commented:

I wrote the piece because it was pushing me. I always did want to do original stuff but I need to work on other things – character roles – and come back to making theatre afresh. The piece isn’t feeding me anymore so now I’m shaking off another identity.

2.9 Non-literal autobiography: Lazlo Pearlman

This section will look further at the various ways that autobiography has been used to inspire a fictional narrative in performance by drawing on the work of trans artist Lazlo Pearlman, exploring this theatre-maker’s creative processes through a performance of *He Was a Sailor, the Sea was Inside Him* (Drill Hall, London, 2007). The analysis of the piece will pick up on the significance of the body for this artist, and the sexed and gendered body as a signifier within performance. Emphasis on the body is strong in this work, and nudity is employed as a tool to bring the focus on to the flesh, to physicality, musculature, genitalia and non-normativity. Pearlman consciously utilises his body as a

vehicle for communication and expression in a way that is different to the performers discussed thus far in this chapter. His motivations, and the reception of his naked body by spectators of the work, will be explored here.

2.9.1 Artistry and autobiography

Lazlo Pearlman makes a clear distinction between being a trans person and being a trans performer. For him, artistry and experience as a performer are vital if one is to use theatre and performance effectively, whether it be for work based on personal identity or otherwise. Pearlman's production of *He Was a Sailor...* is the most interesting of all of the examples in this chapter in terms of the ways the narrative is drawn from transgender lived experience but uses allegorical characters and story to talk about themes of difference, polyphonic identity and transitional change, using a cabaret/music-theatre style. During a discussion between the artists and the film-maker involved in the film *Mirror Mirror* (dir. Zemirah Moffat, 2006), Pearlman talks about the notion of presenting oneself as an artist, when artistry is what is important:

When I was coming out there was just no good queer performance of any sort because it was so young, the community was so young and most people who do identity-based performance, weren't performers before they discovered their identities so it takes them at least 5 years to become performers, if they actually are performers if they're not just queer people who feel the need to tell their story. First we get the documentaries and the trashies. First we have to say how awful it is to garner sympathy to make it ok to do what we do: "Here, understand me! Understand me! Understand me!" see how bad my life has been so you will let me do whatever it is I need to do in order to have a good life. And it's not empowerment to do that. I would not go on a talk show to talk about being

transgendered. I would go on a talk show to talk about being a transgendered performer.

Pearlman's attitude is that all personal stories and lived experiences are, to some degree, difficult and for him being trans is no more or less difficult than someone else's circumstances. He brings a perspective to performance-making that draws on his experience as a trans man, his experience of transcending the body he was born with and of inhabiting the body that he does, and looks for ways to open that up in creative ways which connect to a broader range of people.

Pearlman says "Since my transition, I have been considering how one makes work about the queer and the transgendered experience that is not rooted in literal autobiography, and work that speaks both about the overall human experience that is not rooted in literal autobiography, and work that speaks both about the overall human experience, and the gender/queer specific one. In creating this show, one of the things I am looking for is a metaphor for the big and tricky moments of upheaval and change that we all go through, some of us in and around our experience of gender and/ or identity." (Programme notes, *He Was a Sailor...* 24.05.07)

He Was a Sailor, the Sea was Inside Him was directed by Christine Harmar-Brown and performed by Lazlo Pearlman on 24 May 2007. The piece was developed as part of The Drill Hall's Under Construction Programme. As part of this programme, The Drill Hall's team offers support and expertise in areas of artistic, financial, technical, managerial and marketing aspects of theatre making as well as the space to rehearse for four weeks leading up to the run and

on this occasion, the run was for ten nights. I saw the production on the second night and will be making reference to that performance. Excerpts from the piece (primarily the 1930s novelty songs and Busby Berkley-inspired dance numbers) have also been performed at a cabaret performance event titled 'Anchors A-Gay' in New York on July 28 2006 and at a vaudeville/cabaret night called 'Meow Mix' in Montreal. These two performances took place while the work was in development. The variety of spaces, cultural contexts and forms within which Pearlman performs is wide-ranging. He made a short film titled *Unhung Heroes*, which he describes as a 'tranny-boy comedy about not having a dick', which has played to international film festivals for the last six years. Other examples of his burlesque, live art and fetish performance work could easily feature in the next chapter on performance in subcultural spaces such as bar and clubs, but here I am concentrating on this artist who has a profile on the live art scene but also performs in theatre venues with more substantial pieces. For this project, Pearlman worked with a director and similarly to Joey Hateley, he says of this collaboration:

I wanted someone to push me and set targets and tasks and internal deadlines and she did that to a certain extent. She didn't have a history of working on trans-related themes, which was useful, and she wasn't prescriptive or cautious about how to 'do' trans through performance. We were aesthetically close enough to work together and she made me listen to myself. So in working alone you sometimes dismiss ideas too soon – and working with others too maybe. But here I didn't do that. I listened to myself more. (Interview with the author, 24.08.07)

He comments that there is a range of input from other people during the production process but generally he feels that these individuals do not run with ideas as much as he would like when he collaborates, rather than just paying people to do what he imagines. He talks about there being lots of ‘checking back’ with him from the choreographer and designer and, in his view, money seems to be a factor in limiting the quality of exchange. Pearlman states that he is very attracted to the Robert Lepage model of collaboration and over time he sees himself directing more than performing if his career develops as he wants it to. At this stage, though, Pearlman is the sole performer and has devised most of the material himself prior to the rehearsal period.

2.9.2 *He Was a Sailor, the Sea was Inside Him*

The piece opens with Pearlman as Salty Bugger, standing up-stage left on a small plinth, encased in a sack, closed around his neck with only his bald head sticking out. He is still but not frozen, looking interestedly around at the audience entering the auditorium, as though waiting for something – anything – to happen. He is lit by a soft spotlight and is close to the audience in the small 50-seat studio space. For this production the seating is arranged around small tables, in a cabaret-style formation and the effect of this character standing calmly and so close as we enter and choose our seats adds to the intimacy of the space.

During the first ‘episode’, two characters are encountered, both played by Pearlman using a straightforwardly simple shift in position, physicality and vocal delivery. There is a high-energy Master of Ceremonies figure with a stock cheesy vocal delivery lit by a pink focussed wash, who introduces us to Salty Bugger, lit

by a darker, tighter spotlight. This character has a harsher voice, questioning everything in a rapid, relentless fashion.

This questioning uses contemporary song lyrics as its text, so for example Salty asks: 'Do you know where you're going to? Do you like the things that life is showing you? How did you get here? This is not your beautiful house!' This character also problematises by challenging everything around him and does so in an almost stream-of-consciousness style. So we are told that a sailor who is adrift at sea needs to eat citrus fruit at regular intervals in order to stay healthy, at which point Salty Bugger asks what the difference is between tangerines, clementine oranges and mandarins. This question links into a thought on difference, and what makes one thing different to another thing, and what makes similar things similar. He is thinking out loud about the ways that category and classification are decided.

Pearlman then crosses the stage to a small fabric sailboat, set down-stage left. This is made from a horizontal wooden pole as the mast, suspended from the ceiling, which is released from the lighting rig and connected to a wooden two-dimensional shape serving to represent the hull of the small boat. Lapping waves are created through a layer of appliqué fabric attached to the hull. Behind this structure is a small wooden stool and when Pearlman sits here, the image of the character sitting aboard the boat is created. As he crosses the stage and assumes his position on the boat, he takes a rope in hand and 'hoists' the sails, sitting on the stool with his face poking through to address the audience. In this scene, Pearlman speaks in the third person and we hear that Salty Bugger is confused:

'She's confused. Maybe she could ... maybe he could ... he she it was impossible ... he, she, it must be classified.'

Through this scene and the monologues of Salty Bugger, repetition and urgent pace characterise the delivery, with panic and a state of anxiety building up. Pearlman says of this character, ‘Salty Bugger as a character is a big part of me – the anxiety element, the “do I do this or do I do that?”’ thing and he uses the character’s indecisiveness and his will to understand in order to develop the theme of classification, with Salty pondering the sea and the moon, asking what makes a sea a sea and not an ocean, and, if all seas look the same, how do we know they are different? The frantic tone suggests that the character is trying to figure out answers to his own questions and is repeatedly interrupted by the tolling of a bell. The bell indicates to Salty that he must eat another citrus fruit. He stops speaking, hurriedly peels a fruit and eats it, cramming it into his mouth so he can continue speaking. Each time he stops to eat, he calms down a little but begins again and the tension builds once more.

This character is not at ease. He is a fish out of water. He talks of anatomy, genealogy, sexology and physiology in trying to identify who he is the same as. He asks for example, ‘Who am I the same as ... follically?’ and moves to position himself next to and as close as possible to a similarly bald-headed person in the audience. He asks, ‘Who am I the same as ... ethnically?’ and moves himself next to and as close as possible to a white person. He asks, ‘Who am I the same as ... intellectually?’ and moves himself next to and as close as possible to a person in glasses, implying that this person looks clever. Through this scene, Salty Bugger is trying to sort and categorise, while at the same time emphasising the banality of classifying.

Pearlman makes use of language play in this piece, so as well as the material on classification and descriptive terms for various things, there is also a

playing with bi-lingualism. Since *He Was a Sailor*, Pearlman has taken this idea further in *Madame Pierre's Other Tongue*, but in this piece travelling between languages is used as a metaphor for binary or oppositional gender and the use of French and English gendered language emphasises what for Pearlman, is the ridiculousness of the way that language is so binary in its structures. For example, in a scene where Pearlman is speaking as a narrator (rather than Salty Bugger), he plays with the French language grammatical articles *le, la, un* and *une*, using visual jokes for comic effect. So he talks about '*le vagine*', with a sage nod of the head, adding '*oui, le vagine*' (when in French the correct construction would be *la vagine* because the noun '*vagine*' is feminine) reinforcing the fact that Salty/Pearlman's body has a vagina, but is also male. He adds to this word-play related to his physical body by talking about '*la dick*' (in a high voice, with an action suggesting masturbation). '*Oui... la*' is accompanied by a wink of collusion to the audience, telling us that this body has a dick but it is somehow not male and he adds '*une petite dick*'.

The emphasis on the body, specifically genitalia and moreover the genitalia of Pearlman who stands before the audience, is strong and as Philip Auslander comments,

In performance, physical presence, the body itself, is the locus at which the workings of ideological codes are perhaps the most insidious and also the most difficult to analyze, for the performing body is always both a vehicle for representation and, simply, itself. (1997: 90)

While the other two performers I have discussed in this chapter were of course physically present on stage, Pearlman reveals his body in more overt

ways. This calls to mind the quotation from Laurence Senelick that opened the chapter, about a transsexual performer disrobing as the ultimate strategy for putting gender identity into question. While I take issue with that sentiment, Lazlo Pearlman has views on the function of using his body in performance.

2.9.3 The naked trans body

Pearlman says he used to employ nudity as a ‘wow-factor’ at the end of a performance piece but that this has changed over time. He references his cabaret act *La Grand Bouffe*, where Pearlman lays out various foods as if for a ‘big buffet’ and then strips out of his smart suit and dinner jacket to reveal first his tattooed torso, then his back and behind before he turns to reveal his genitalia which usually surprises the audience (depending on where he is performing) as he does not have what would generally be described as a penis. He suggestively smears the spaghetti, chocolate cakes, whipped cream and champagne all over his naked body, eating some of it off the table and himself, ending by lighting a cigarette in a parody of the archetypal post-coital image.

Now in *He Was a Sailor*, nudity is not the central feature but it is still something Pearlman feels has power on stage. He says:

I’m not interested in telling you I’m a trans man. For one thing, you won’t believe me, and you’ll read me as a bio, possibly gay guy. The question is how do you make trans visible in a body that’s not visible as trans? Displaying my body locates me inside my work. I also do *want* to use my body to represent the explosion of binary gender. (Interview with the author, 24-08-07).

In a sequence where the performer transitions back into the character of Salty Bugger, he pokes a pair of semaphore flags out of the opening of the sack around his neck, and then bursts out of the sack, performing 'embarrassment' as his body is naked. He inches across the stage, holding the semaphore flags over parts of his anatomy: his face, to hide his blushes, his chest to hide his nipples and his groin to hide his genitalia. This episode is played for comedy, as Pearlman variously conceals and reveals parts of his body, in a manner reminiscent of titillation. He moves upstage right, to a white Captain's outfit displayed on a tailor's dummy. He takes each item of the outfit and dresses himself, leaving the trousers until last, thereby leaving his bottom half naked until the last moment to sustain the subject of the revelation through to the point at which he fully becomes Salty Bugger. I suggest that, the revelation brings the focus of the spectator back to Lazlo Pearlman and away from the narrative of the piece being unravelled on stage. Where Pearlman talks about creating more complex metaphors through which to talk about trans as one version of change and upheaval, turning to the body seems to remove some of that complexity in that a disjuncture comes about between the imagination (stimulated by the textual dexterity and intricate characters) and the visual image (the flesh and the genitals of the performer). However, for Pearlman, because his body is complex he asserts that his body is enhancing and extending the layers of meaning offered to the audience. As Anthony Howell says of the naked body in performance art,

nudity allows almost as many readings as does being dressed ... nudity can imply a rebirth. It can be some ultimate reduction ... [B]ut then nudity can be used to

identify the body as a lure. Vulnerability, availability, lack of dignity or obscenity can be read into it. (1999: 19–20).

At the close of *He Was a Sailor...* the storm that has perhaps been looming throughout, arrives with full force. As the storm builds to a crescendo, Pearlman lip synchs to a recorded ‘stormy’ operatic song delivered by a deep bass voice while changing into a white suit, with high-heeled shoes. He takes the suit off a female mannequin, applies lipstick, and says, ‘That’s where we leave Salty Bugger ... Do you have an answer? (*laughs*) I doubt it.’ The questions about life, gender, categorisation and bodies remain unanswered, though this is a provocation to the audience to think for themselves, and interestingly, we are not asked for *the* answer, but just *an* answer.

The representation of trans masculinities within theatrical modes of expression is examined further in conclusions to this chapter, in the light of the findings from the research into the performances discussed thus far. I will return to some of the underlying sets of principles and ideas raised at the beginning of the chapter in order to discuss the distinctive uses of autobiography as a strategy within trans narratives and conclusions are drawn in terms of the efficacy of the practice of telling one’s personal story through theatre. I go on to look more closely at the choices involved with working primarily as a solo artist, and devising performance as opposed to performing text work and being directed by someone else. This will connect with ideas around gender legitimacy and its implications about visibility when using the theatre and the stage as a literal platform and a conceptual forum for expression of non-normative identities.

2.10 Artistic practices as a vehicle for transgender expression

Having looked closely at the work of three performers who identify as trans, I want to draw out some of the common aspects of the processes of making within their work and some of the implications of their work being performed in theatres, the first of which is the importance of telling the story and taking trans narratives to audiences, however didactic they may or may not be. Each of the performers is driven to articulate their lived experience through theatre as a way of connecting with other people and inserting their identity and trans identities more generally, into discourse. Mainstream presence and getting these stories out into the world have multiple functions, such as making other trans people aware that they are not the only person who experiences the world in a complex way in terms of gender, and making non-trans people aware that the world does not accommodate every body, and that moreover, this is a problematic, oppressive situation that needs to be recognised and addressed.

The representation of diversity in the public domain is not strong in relation to transgender identities. Television offers documentaries on trans people, and ‘trash’ chat-shows which encourage a perception of difference as freakish (Gamson 1998). In theatre, representation of diversity is perhaps better, though not in mainstream London West End theatre houses. At fringe venues such as the Drill Hall and Oval House, theatre programmers often have a specific remit to nurture certain work and these are the places we are more likely to see trans stories on stage, and sit alongside audiences who are interested in such stories.

But what about the nature of these stories? Each of the pieces offers multiple perspectives on queer subjectivities. In *A:Gender*, we hear from the

protagonist and also a range of other people who inhabit the protagonist's world; in *Engendered Species* we hear from the protagonist Crunch, and a range of persona who are not quite that character. We hear a familial relationship with a grandfather figure, as well as a romantic relationship with Perry. There is an array of characters and perspectives in both of these pieces, with all of them being presented by one performer. We see a transition in a more contained, bounded way from the character David's perspective and from his mother's too in *FTM*. We learn about Salty Bugger's experiences of otherness and confusion, journeys on the sea through storms of change and thoughts of 'home' through the lenses of Salty himself, of the narrator and the figures that were still under development in the performance I saw such as the Edwardian, colonial woman and the character Lineus.

The sense of autobiography is strong in all three performers' work. The extent of the explicit transparency of whether these are the performers' own personal stories varies and shifts within the pieces of work themselves. All three individuals talk about fictionality, based on their own experiences of living as transgendered people. They all draw directly on that aspect of their lived experience, and decide to tell stories about gender, and the complexity of living with a non-normative gender identity and/or non-normative sexed body but they also talk about being playful with the boundaries of truth and fact, in order to develop what they each see as interesting, well-constructed plots, characters and narratives that have the potential to engage audiences.

So David Harrison said his mother was not Scottish, whereas she is in the play, but he is a transsexual man and he wanted to explore the idea of a trans man's relationship with his mother as a result of having had a complex

relationship with his own. Lazlo says he wanted to use the framework of the piece's fictional world to talk about gender and transsexuality through the metaphor of the storm of change and the moment of tension before making a decision to step forward towards change. It is this fictionalising of the autobiographical that has the potential for creative expression: 'I maintain that the challenge for all autobiographical performance is to harness the dialogic potential afforded by the medium, using it in the service of difference rather than sameness' (Heddon 2004: 238, n. 53)

There are significant differences between the pieces too, such as the ways that the venues' specificities and the respective audiences responded to the performance work to which they bore witness. The space and the relationship between the venue's building, location, its style and image and the demographic of the audiences who patronise those theatres is one that I see as significant in terms of analysing the cultural context and impact of telling these stories, and further, the relationship between these things to the performance events themselves. There are a number of factors which come to bear on a potential audience demographic. They include issues such as: who can afford to pay for the tickets; who feels confident to access the theatre as a form of cultural activity in the first place; who might feel excluded from the act of attending the theatre because they have never been before and may have specific negative expectations of what it will be like, or will be put off because it costs £15.

Once in the building, having purchased a ticket, there are varying levels of prior experience or knowledge of certain codes, signs and signifiers in operation within a piece of theatre which impacts on the extent to which an individual would feel competent at understanding what is happening on stage or

around them in the foyer or the auditorium. My experience of attending David Harrison's performance was that being one of approximately seven audience members in a very small venue in New York City was 'cool': as a British woman living in London, I felt like I really knew my stuff, in order to have tracked down Harrison's performance at the Pyramid Theatre on Avenue A. My partner at the time was a trans man in the early stages of his transition and he was keen to see this piece, though he would not necessarily have made this much effort himself as he was not a particularly avid fringe theatre patron. A friend who accompanied us was a colleague, and a gay man with an academic interest in performance and queer theory. He too was interested to see this piece, though he knew nothing about the artist prior to the evening of the performance. I had orchestrated this experience, and as we ordered drinks at the bar (paying with our American dollars with a gentle and pleasant sense of novelty), we were the only three people in the bar. There was an edge to the feeling of being a 'cool' adventurer who had tracked down an obscure production, as we sat wondering why there were not more people arriving. A sense of self-doubt crept in as I wondered whether I had brought people to see something so obscure, it would be terrible.

Several years later, turning up at the Drill Hall in London with tickets already in my possession because I had been to another show by a queer artist three weeks earlier and had bought all the tickets at once on the Internet, the feeling was very different. There were many more people in the bar, most of whom were going to a live recording of a music event to be broadcast on the radio but several of whom (approximately 35) were also seeing Lazlo Pearlman's show. I was among a mixed bunch of people, some of whom I recognised and the

Drill Hall is a familiar venue to me. While I had not needed to make as much effort to get to the centre of London as I had to Manhattan, New York, there is still a strong sense that there are some people who go to the theatre so see work like this, and many, many others who simply do not.

2.11 Conclusion

To conclude, I return to the idea of the various strategies utilised to challenge gender, and their different manifestations. These preceded the analysis of the ways that three different performers experiment with gender differently and the ways the body, and costume as a device in performance, are the tools deployed – as opposed to bodily change undertaken by a transsexual or transgendered performer where costume, clothing and the body and flesh are the tools deployed. The act of articulating an expression of transgender relies on playing with what you ‘are’ and what you ‘are not’, and calling those boundaries into question, calling the boundaries of woman and man into question, and not necessarily exchanging one thing for another, or refusing one, and choosing to use another. This is about the calling into question of boundaries and categories. Pearlman does this in an overt, direct way through the text and through his body, Hateley and Harrison through narrative and character.

This chapter has presented the findings from research into performances of trans masculinities that have taken place in theatre buildings that can be described as sitting within the mainstream (albeit on the fringes), rather than the subcultural sphere. Within the work of the three performers under discussion, multiple ways of seeking and gaining gender legitimacy through the performance

of one's gendered self are manifested. A broad range of strategies are employed in creative processes. The diversity of readings that are available for the challenging of gender in performance, and the various relationships between performance and masculinity that are manifested in this work feed into autobiography as a medium of expression for artists who are experimenting with gender in performance.

The next chapter takes a further set of performances as its focus, and explores the nature of work that takes place in places and spaces that are not theatre buildings. These spaces are more often the corners of bars and clubs, and sometimes the stages of community arts centres and halls. This work is that performed in a different climate or environment to the ticketed, regulated theatre environment. These works tend to have a less polished aesthetic and tend to be performed to a less expectant audience, but an audience who is perhaps more intelligent about gender than about the discipline of theatre and performance. The next chapter will explore what happens when trans identities are performed in subcultural spaces.

Chapter 3

Transgender Masculinities Performed beyond the Mainstream

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the constitutive potential of performing transgendered masculinities within spaces that could be considered as subcultural, or off the mainstream, and considers the significance of these performances for the larger issues explored within this dissertation. The performance work discussed in this chapter can be contextualised by looking at avant-garde performance practices, as distinct from the more orthodox forms of theatre making and performance discussed in Chapter 2. This chapter is a consideration of the ways that cabaret, drag, circus and sideshow contribute to a discussion of subcultural and marginal representations and receptions of trans bodies on stage.

The first section of this chapter begins with a broader discussion of queerness and subcultures, and a mapping of various queer performance practices that become the focus later in the chapter as I move through the examples of performance work. This will connect with ideas about the infinitely diverse ways we can read gender variance and transgender in performance and the various relationships between performance and masculinity that are manifested in the examples offered.

The chapter then extends to focus specifically on drag king performance, and in particular, on a short film titled *Indy* (dir. Z. Moffat, 2002). The film is a biographical piece about Indy Turan, who identifies as transgender, and his

reflections on gender and identity during the early stages of his process of transition are documented. In the film, Turan is seen performing in a drag-king contest and the way he engages with this performance genre is interestingly complex. There are aspects of the way his masculinity is constituted through the events seen on film, and through the act of being documented on camera by this particular film-maker that contribute to the discussions of trans performance and trans performativity.

Secondly, the chapter looks at various performance works produced by the transgender arts and activism organisation Transfabulous. These include the *FTM Full Monty*, staged as part of *A Night of Tall Women and Short Men* (The Pleasure Unit, 2005) and the 2007 International Festival of Transgender Arts. There are a number of artists associated with Transfabulous, who could be described as a loose 'collective'. These artists perform regularly at the annual international festivals and other associated Transfabulous events across London using eclectic modes of performance to explore, present, deconstruct and constitute transgendered and queer masculinities.

Thirdly, the chapter moves on to take account of the forms of circus and sideshow as queer, and specifically, to an analysis of Jennifer Miller, self-titled 'Lady with a Beard' (Hoxton Hall, 1999) who works within these forms. Miller was born and raised a girl, and identifies as female. Miller's relationship to maleness and masculinity is worthy of note within the context of this chapter. She might be described as transgender, though in quite a different way to the performers discussed in the previous chapter and differently to the performers discussed alongside her in this chapter. In focusing on a performer who deliberately reclaims the genre of freak-show, there is perhaps a danger of

slippage in that the other performers in this chapter might also be re-framed as 'freakish' but that is not the intention. The emphasis in this chapter is on Miller's use of performance and the way that her occupation of certain spaces for performances of gender moves the discussion on in terms of thinking about transgender masculinity as an ever-broader spectrum of otherness and the ways that alternative spaces and forms of performance provide opportunities for alternative identities to be constituted.

The chapter looks, then, at masculinity as the transient product of a potentially endless process of identity formation, and at moments of performance as transitive markers of the exploration and construction of transgender identities, which operate with fluidity and movement themselves. This chapter picks up from the previous one and goes further in terms of exploring the politics of the body in postmodern performance and in the layers of signification that surround bodies.

As stated in Chapter 1, an aim of this thesis is not to expose a 'true' body or to pin down transgender bodies in order to categorise or classify but rather to identify and analyse the multiplicity of the 'sedimented layers of signification themselves' (Schneider 1997: 2). In analysing performance by transgender artists and considering the politics of their bodies, it is possible to consider the potential of seeing the performing body as a tool of resistance or of counter-hegemonic action, not only related to gender but to the myriad facets of identity. Contemporary performance practice sits within discourses of materiality. Queer performance practice is supported by discourses of difference, or a critique of normalcy. Reflecting on the materiality of transgender bodies and the layers of

signification and meaning produced by those bodies is a key theme of this chapter:

A mass of orifices and appendages, details and tactile surfaces, the explicit body in representation is foremost a site of social markings, physical parts and gestural signatures of gender, race, class, age, sexuality – all of which bear ghosts of historical meaning, markings delineating social hierarchies of privilege and disprivilege. (Schneider 1997: 2)

In the previous chapter for example, the naked body of Lazlo Pearlman opened up a discussion of the function of the body on stage, and nudity as a signifier. Pearlman's body instigates contradictions of perception, expectation and assumption. Several of the performers described in this chapter are using their body to call for this challenge to assumptions and expectations that arise from gender normativity. Performance that utilises a non-normative body in strategic and sometimes explicit ways is, then, a resistant, political act.

Vivian M Patraka talks about 'binary terror' within feminist performance, saying this notion names a 'terror released at the prospect of undoing binaries by those who have the most to gain from their undoing' (1992: 176). By undoing the binaries of male and female, and of masculine and feminine through live performance, a lived experience of the social system that is gender is articulated. At the same time, we might say that binary terror is invoked when a viewer sees a body with male and female signifiers, such as a penis-less man, a drag-king performer, or a woman with a beard. This terror, or instability that comes about as a result of being faced with something that undoes 'order', is seen repeatedly in everyday life in relation to expressions of transgender identity because, to

quote PatraKa once more, 'terror results because, before the undoing, what's there after it seems so uncertain and chaotic. And it is the fear of unlearning the policing habit of fear' (p. 177). The artists in this chapter choose to use performance as a mode through which to comment on, and challenge this policing.

Chapter 1 began to set out a specific theoretical framework relating to gender and identity, and some of the main debates around selfhood and subjectivity that are key to this thesis. Chapter 2 focused on the ways that identity and agency are integral to devised solo performances, with their employment of personal narrative and story. In this chapter, I am looking at what is being done, created and performed by those who use specific, less conventional forms, and put their work into less conventional spaces. I ask what is different to the work discussed in Chapter 2, and look at what motivates these particular artists to make the work they make and what impact their work has on their audiences. On one level, this work simply sits at a different point on a spectrum of performances of transgender masculinity, but I suggest that there are specific political and artistic reasons why people choose cabaret, drag or freak-show-esque modes, and choose bars, clubs and festivals as venues, with large groups of (often) alcohol-fuelled spectators as their audiences. This chapter looks closely at what those reasons are and what happens when these performances take place in these particular subcultural spaces.

3.2 Staging transgender identities in subterranean spaces

The categories 'trans' and 'queer' are not synonymous, though at times they may both be used by one person to describe their own subjectivity. The relationship between trans and queer is an intricate one. As established in the introduction, trans and its related synonyms are categories with a relatively short history that extends back to the medical model of gender identity of the 1950s, through liberal personal political movements of the 1970s, towards and beyond academic discourse of the 1990s. Queer, as a reclaimed, positive term of self-identification, and adjective or noun, also has a relatively short history beginning in the latter half of the twentieth century. Like trans, the category queer has an associated area of academic studies and central to that field is the analytical standpoint, Queer Theory.

Just as the gender identity paradigm (as outlined in Chapter 1) was emerging and developing in the 1950s and 1960s with Stoller's notion of the pluralistic identity, so post-modernity's social and political innovations, and re-evaluation of Western cultural systems and values were unfolding. Post-modernity can be described then as the 'parent' of such subcultural movements as queer and trans, when marginalised individuals and groups found ways to articulate and mobilise themselves as the grand narratives and truths of hegemonic order were undone. This undoing has been part of subcultural practices among minority cultures such as youth and classed cultures. Consideration of some of the ways that transgender and queer identities operate to mobilise and develop narratives in relation to hegemonic order will establish a more defined context for the analysis of trans and queer performance practice.

Subcultural theory, developed in the 1970s, provides some useful concepts and arguments for the contextualisation of transgender performance. In 'Sub-cultural Conflict and Working Class Community' (1972) Phil Cohen defines subculture as a 'compromise solution between two contradictory needs: the need to create and express autonomy and difference from parents ... and the need to maintain the parental identification' (cited in Hebdige 1979: 77). Dick Hebdige problematises this notion, saying 'if we emphasise integration and coherence at the expense of dissonance and discontinuity, we are in danger of denying the very manner in which the subcultural form is made to crystallise, objectify and communicate group experience' (p. 79). Considerations of how we might look upon trans and queer communities as subcultural, if we apply Cohen's theory, would suggest that the trans/queer community would be compromising between expressing autonomy and maintaining some connection to heteronormative culture.

Hebdige's problematisation of Cohen's emphasis on the links between youth and parent cultures is useful in that there is not a significant or explicit retrieval of the socially cohesive elements that have been destroyed in the 'parent' culture within queer/trans culture. We might say that models of queer family echo the practices of heteronormative family, or more specifically for example, that civil partnerships are mirroring heterosexual marriage. But Halberstam calls for a challenge to the very notion of theorising subcultures in relation to queer lives, as opposed to class or youth. In accounting for queerness and trans identities when theorising the dynamics or systems of a subculture, she says:

We need to alter our understandings of subcultures in several important ways in order to address the specificities of queer subcultures and queer subcultural sites ... most subcultural theories are created to describe and account for male heterosexual adolescent activity and they are adjusted only when female heterosexual adolescent activity comes into focus. New queer subcultural theory will have to account for non-heterosexual, non-exclusively male, non-white and non-adolescent subcultural production in all its specificity. (Halberstam 2003: 3)

If theories of subcultural behaviour have concentrated on psychoanalytical, heteronormative and phallogentric notions of parent–child power relationships, and queer theory has been criticised for the way it holds such high regard for discourse at the expense of consideration of lived experience,¹ perhaps neither theoretical framework nor perspective is finally adequate in understanding the dynamics of trans identities and spaces. However queer theory and practice do allow for multiple understandings and applications:

queer could be understood as an adjective that acts as a performative, that has the force of a verb. David Halperin sees queer as a ‘horizon of possibility’ and the queer subject as occupying an ‘eccentric positionality’ in relation to the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick suggests that calling oneself queer involves ‘understanding particular, performative acts of experimental self-perception and filiation’. (Spargo 1999: 64)

This multiplicity within the category is what defines queer. Much as the fundamental principle of queer is about non-definition or refusal of the impulse

¹ Surya Monro asserts that ‘[A] poststructuralist theory of transgender disassociates sex and gender, models both as constructed, and emphasizes the technologisation and commodification of the body. Poststructuralist accounts can, however, entail denial of bodily limitations, erase transgender people’s subjective experience, and overlook social and political factors, such as the importance of gender categories as a basis for identity politics’ (2005: 3).

to define, as Alan McKee states, 'Queer is not an entirely empty signifier, in the face of a resolved and insistent unknowability, it remains clear that Queer *means*' (1999: 237). Queer people are people with relational identities to other people who are more easily categorised as 'normal', and queer-identified people figure themselves to be living in opposition to the mainstream. These are the queer subcultures and subcultural spaces, events and identities with which I am engaging, where people are enacting queer ways of life and ways of doing liveness, including practices of all kinds, behaviours and ways of doing one's body.

3.2.1 Queer performance and performing queer

From its beginnings in the 1880s, cabaret flourished in major cities across Europe, offering its habitués new styles of informal performance and anti-establishment satire. It drew a specialised audience, and its venues were not large theatres but drinking establishments. But its entertainment was in variety format; and the freedom and vigour of variety was retained and cultivated, for this was very much what attracted the clientele. Cabaret was a sharp, funny, free-and-easy alternative to the formalities of theatre-going, licensed by its marginality to direct its satire far and wide. (Drain 1995: 156)

Richard Drain could be describing all of the performance work to come in this chapter here, with its less formal 'rules', and the social context or types of events that take place in bars, clubs and festival venues. Chapter 2 referenced Sarah Bernhardt, Bessie Bonehill, Vesta Tilley and Charles Hindle, all of whom performed in the mid to late 1800s in male roles, or performed male impersonation on and/or off stage as the historical context was established. Impersonation of the 'opposite' sex was a feature of this early cabaret, including

male impersonation, campy or 'drag' in more contemporary terms. Anti-establishment cabaret of the 1800s with its satirical humour which was less formal than other genres could be thought of as part of the historical context for what we now call 'queer' performance.

This chapter is about performing masculinity, performing queerness, using performance queerly to critique heteronormativity, and using popular forms of entertainment such as cabaret, strip-tease, stand-up, drag shows, queer burlesque, circus and side-show to do these things. When revealing one's transgender body as part of a cabaret act, or performing one's transgender narrative live on stage, there is a manipulation or disruption of the gender performative. One is using the notion of performativity, and consciously carrying out a performative act, repeating the repetition or iteration in order to comment on the way gender is constructed as one understands the 'force and power that characterise the social relations among speaking bodies' (Loxley 2007: 121), i.e. in constituting oneself as trans. The Derridean deconstruction that is a female-bodied person passing as male, where the surface appearance appears to be something, and the more complex deeper details of the body and psyche of the person challenge that appearance, is in itself exerting pressure on the idea of coherent or stable gender identity. Butler's often quoted (and sometimes misapplied) example of the way that a performance of gender, as opposed to the theorising of gender, is an intervention into the performative is drag. In the introduction to the 1999 edition of *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, she addresses the issues that had been raised by her critics in relation to this point, saying:

if we shift the example from drag to transsexuality, then it is no longer possible to derive a judgement about stable anatomy from the clothes that cover and articulate

the body. That body may be preoperative, transitional, or postoperative; even 'seeing' the body may not answer the question: *for what are the categories through which one sees?* (p. xxii, italics in original)

Presumed coherence is undone. And in a theatrical performance by transgender artists, this is no different. Without wishing to blur the clarity that Butler offers around the fact that performativity is not about performance per se, Joey Hateley, David Harrison and Lazlo Pearlman are undoing presumed and assumed coherent understandings of sex and gender, as are the performers in this chapter as they draw on and appropriate popular forms, whether this is the blurring of the boundaries of drag in Indy Turan's performance in a drag king competition, the cabaret performances within the Transfabulous International Festival of Transgender Arts or Jennifer Miller's 'freak-show' piece 'Lady with a Beard'.

3.3 Drag as a transgender strategy

The notions and realities that are femininity and femaleness, masculinity and maleness have been, to some extent, separated over four decades of theorising about gender, within feminist theory, masculinity studies and more recently trans studies. The notion that biology, or anatomy is destiny has been rigorously contested, as discussed in previous chapters. However, ambiguous gender, non-normative gender, complex gender, are all named as such because 'gender's very flexibility and seeming fluidity is precisely what allows dimorphic gender to hold swap' (Halberstam 1998: 20). Theorising a butch aesthetic, producing discourse around femme identities, documenting the impersonation of male or female

characters off or on stage, all contribute to undoing notions of truth, the real and the idea of the authentic male or female. In this section I am looking more closely at drag as a form, at drag queens and the emergence of drag king culture, the history of the form and the way that drag manifests itself now in contemporary queer culture, specifically in the spaces in which the performers of this chapter appear.

Drag kingery separates the doing of masculinity from 'being male', though not in a neat, straightforward or universal way. A femme pretender will do it one way,² and a trans-identified king will do it another way. The extent to which one can say that the femme pretender 'actually is' a woman or the trans man 'actually is' a man with a particular dynamic in relation to their performances of masculinity is what is up for debate. Marking masculinity upon the body in particular ways is not an activity or practice restricted to drag kings, though various categories of people appear to deploy masculinity differently, and with different purposes. The types of masculinity that exist for men-born men, or for women-born people who are engaged in the exercise of doing masculinity are not the same. How people choose to mark a particular type of masculinity onto a particular body differs according to what lies behind their subject position, and choices. There are specific types of masculinity that get held up for mimicry, with the obnoxious, rude, sexist homophobic bigot being a theatrical figure, whether played by mainstream comedian Al Murray, The Pub Landlord, or by drag king, Murray Hill:

² Femme pretender is a category of king where the performer merges femininity and masculinity; so, for example, she would wear 1970s male clothing with a shirt unbuttoned, revealing a lacy bra underneath. She may also wear make-up on her face to enhance feminine features as well as use fake facial hair to create a moustache (Halberstam & Volcano 1999).



Figure 3.1 (Left) Al Murray. The Pub Landlord. (Picture from blogs.manchestereveningnews.co.uk). (Right) Murray Hill, drag king. (Photo by Angela Jimenez/Getty Images, www.jamd.com/image/g/2421033).

There are less overtly extreme masculinities, or ‘characters’ within the drag-king genre, and there are performers who choose to perform their masculinity in specific ways. In a short film about Indy Turan, a transgender man at the beginning of his process of transition, Indy describes himself as ‘human, man, FTM, drag king’. By looking at how a person can be all of these things simultaneously, I will explore the ways that transgender masculinities and masculinity through drag intersect.

3.3.1 Drag kingery and female masculinity

Elizabeth Gilbert undertook to pass as a man in public for one week, working with Diane Torr³ on her appearance, clothing, demeanour and behaviour, and she writes about it in the *GQ Magazine* article ‘My Life as a Man’ (2001). She adopted the persona of Luke, a young man ten years younger than herself, feeling

³ Diane Torr is a performance artist, writer and director. She developed her career in New York over 25 years and now lives and works in Glasgow. She claims to have created the Drag King Workshop concept in 1989 and her solo performances often involve the impersonation of male characters (www.dianetorr.com).

that she would pass more successfully as a young boyish man, given her 5ft 10in height and 140lb body size. The piece of advice that seemed to resonate most strongly with Gilbert is this from Torr: 'Try to get the feeling that your gaze originates from two inches behind the surface of your eyeballs, from where your optical nerves begin in your brain. Keep it right there' (Gilbert 2001: 152). Gilbert describes the process of acting on this advice:

I pull my gaze back. I don't know how I appear from the outside, but the internal effect is appalling. I feel – for the first time in my life – a dense barrier rise before my vision, keeping me at a palpable distance from the world, roping me off from the people in the room. I feel dead eyed. I feel like a reptile. I feel my whole face change, settling into a hard mask. (p. 152)

This is a projection of the idea of maleness and masculinity. It comes from Torr and is taken on by the journalist who accepts it wholeheartedly as fitting her imagined idea of what typifies the way a man 'sees' and looks and exists in the world. Gilbert incorporates that imagined masculinity into her version of the man she is choosing to create. A dramatic gulf is created between the persona of Luke, and the person that is Elizabeth Gilbert to the point where the journalist articulates the difficulties she has in stopping the performance at the end of the week:

Undoing it all takes a few days ... I go to yoga class and reawaken the idea of movement in my body. I cannot wait to get rid of this gender, which I have not enjoyed. But it's a tricky process ... in fact, I don't really get my inner Liz back until the next weekend. It's not until the next Saturday night ... that I really come back into myself. (p. 190)

Transgender masculinity seems to imply a permanence of sorts, or sometimes irreversible change of some sort, whereas drag kingery is about temporary and more easily reversible change, although Gilbert's perception of that temporality is attached to an idea that gender had taken hold of her and somehow subsumed her 'inner' femaleness.

This chapter explores the boundary between performing a type of masculinity within a drag-king performance and performing a type of masculinity as part of being a person, and when the two merge. In exploring the complexities and multiplicities of drag kingery, it is rather too simplistic to rely fully on the binary of the drag queen for comparison but it is useful to look at the figure of the queen in select ways to see how parodies of masculinity emerged in similar or contrasting ways to the parodying of femininity. Esther Newton's ethnographic study of female impersonators, *Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America* (1979), was the first major study of a gay community published in the United States. Newton continued to research in this vein and *Cherry Grove, Fire Island: Sixty Years in America's First Lesbian and Gay Town* was published by Beacon Press, Boston in 1993 and was a historical reminiscence of the lesbian and gay holiday community Cherry Grove, on Fire Island in New York. Not long after this publication came the article "'Dick(less) Tracy" and the Homecoming Queen' (Newton 2000) which concentrates on lesbians who did drag performance as part of the Cherry Grove community from the 1930s until the 1994 season.

The participation of lesbians, or perhaps more accurately, people who were not identified as gay men, in community events which had been dominated

by gay men was a radical disruption to traditions and behaviours in the community. The year of publication of this article was the year after the book about Cherry Grove was published, and was also the year that, controversially, Joan Van Ness won the homecoming queen contest, which had traditionally been entered by and won by gay men. In the article, Newton highlights the occasions where the predominantly gay male camp and drag activities were echoed by lesbian drag. Newton is asking whether this act of dressing up and entering the contest, when performed by a woman, is indeed camp. She suggests that it is not necessarily so and puts forward several examples of lesbian women (butches on the whole, and often in high-femme costumes a la gay male drag) taking to the stage. She says of the mixed audience responses they received: 'As a rule, lesbians either found a way to participate on the edges of queen-centered camp or they could appreciate it as spectators; they could not alter the basic schema' (Newton 2000: 76).

At this point and within this context women were not reversing the logic of drag and donning 'high-masc' costumes to create a parody of masculinity, but were integrating themselves into the status quo. This point in the history of a particular community is significant in relation to research on the emergence of drag kingery as a form, and also to the ways that drag kingery and transgender masculinity intersect. Adaptation and modification of drag by lesbian women, butch and masculine women and transgender men have been received with controversy and hostility over time, as well as with joy and celebration and looking to Newton's analysis of the social context of the Cherry Grove community provides insight into the complexities of change where gendered expression through drag performance is concerned.

Esther Newton cites two major themes of gay male sensibility and political action as being 'drag queen-centered camp that highlights theatricality and humor, and the other is an egalitarian anarchism that foregrounds authenticity and realism' (2000: 65). Here she is talking about the ways that camp style has always centred around the figure of the queen, something that was not easily appropriated by lesbians. However, when thinking about the relationships between butchness and drag, between femme and camp, and between transgender expressions and acts of drag, notions of mimicry, parody, truth and fiction are critical. Newton is exploring the ways that lesbians used drag and camp in the context of gay male predominance within the summer resort community of Cherry Grove during the summer of 1994. This was the summer when the first-ever lesbian Homecoming Queen was elected, an occurrence that she identifies as having disrupted tradition and called into question the nature of camp.

Newton is rejecting Sue-Ellen Case's assimilation of butch-femme aesthetics with gay male drag/camp as an over-simplification of the function that non-normative gender expressions can have. She says 'both camp and butch-femme do tend to dislodge gender from biology, but the purpose and effect are not to eliminate gender – a hopeless project, in any case – but rather to multiply and elaborate gender's meanings' (Newton 2000: 190). Newton asserts that Joan Van Ness was doing drag, and was camp because she was mimicking a drag queen (not a woman), but also because in wearing a huge dress, wig and make-up, she was wearing the clothes of her opposite gay gender, her butch self. This should mean that men could do drag if they either mimicked a drag king or wore the clothes of their opposite (gay, or presumably straight) gender.

There is not necessarily a concrete parallel to be made here in that men parodying men are not commonly described as doing drag but, in a more nuanced point which is more useful in contemplating the ways that masculinity is deployed within a strategy for subversion, Newton suggests that there are two categories of street and stage impersonators. Street impersonators are those who are 'never off stage', and stage impersonators are more invested in the professionalism so, for example, might be very articulate about the history of vaudeville and drag as an artistic medium. Sara Maitland asserts that this division cannot be drawn for male-impersonators, suggesting that there is no 'street life' for women who impersonate men and there never has been. She says:

For male-impersonators to survive, they have to find a supportive community of men; they cannot hold those men up to the ridicule that it is possible for men to hold women up to because they are dependant on them. Often this dependence is economic or emotional; always it is based on the fact that male values and cultural determinants are dominant. (Maitland 1986: 101)

Maitland wrote this in 1986, and though drag king culture had yet to fully emerge, her view was flawed. Of course there is an equivalent of 'street' impersonators for those female-bodied people who pass as male 'off stage' instead of, or as well as on stage. To make the statement that women who impersonate men are economically or emotionally dependent on men may have been more applicable to the 1890s in England's vaudeville and music-hall circuits (though not always) but it is an overly simplistic statement nonetheless. Certainly in the context of Newton's work, and the performances of masculinity that form this chapter, the categories of 'street' and 'stage' impersonator hold

true, and are indeed useful as we consider the various ways that performers deploy and blend their gender expression. For example, the way a trans man performs a satirical version of stiff upper-class masculinity on stage is a different performance of masculinity to that of his own drag-king act, which he performed years before he began to transition.

The nuances of the individual are tied up in the expression of masculinity in performance, particularly where an audience 'knows' the performer, whether this is Vesta Tilley, known and adored by thousands in her day, or a trans man performing in a community fundraiser among friends and peers. The street/stage binary becomes more of a spectrum or matrix within which people shift and change. If we look at the evolution of the drag-king genre, with its roots in male impersonation and its connections to campy, this includes a spectrum of people, and is not simply about opposites (women acting as men), but a blurring of what it is to be a woman in the first place, and what it is to 'be' a man within drag king performance. We can look, for example at when a female-born, masculine, male-identified person is no longer doing drag when performing a male persona, i.e. when he is 'off stage'.

Passing as male for a day as part of a Drag King for a Day workshop such as those led by Diane Torr focuses on intention as an element of performance along with costume, stance, vocal intonation etc. The intention is to experiment on several levels, during a finite period of time but this is not the same thing as longer term projects in gender norm subversion, with irreversible change, where the intention is steadily progressive maleness. The site of disruption here is different. Doing gender in a specific way and then retracting, so temporarily performing a male persona while in drag then 'relaxing' back to 'normal',

presents a particular kind of disruption to gender. There is also a disruption happening when a trans man performs on stage and reveals his naked body to be that of a penis-less man as Lazlo Pearlman did in *He Was a Sailor, the Sea was Inside Him*. The disruption occurs when people are prompted to look again and to think about what they thought they knew but that confusion impacts differently when one passes temporarily because a disguise was effective, or when one is a physical embodiment of a gender dis-order which invokes binary terror.

To exemplify this point, two instances of stripping in performance to reveal a 'truth' to different ends are useful. Dr Jane's performance at the Transfabulous International Festival of Transgender Arts (2007) gave us Officer Clarence, whose job is policing gender irregularities. He introduced himself as a member of the Gender Police, by entering the stage declaring the nature of his character and job, and wearing a smart and detailed militaristic uniform. He then stripped down to nudity before exiting with faux modesty, covering his genitalia with his hands. By unpeeling the layers of the uniform, this act highlighted the constructedness of gender and maleness. Beginning with a strong image of repressed masculinity, the performer then reveals her body and bares her breasts as she 'defiantly peels off pieces of clothing that embody layers of protection against the oppression and rejection' (Patraka cited in Hart and Phelan 1993: 218).

A different way of performing and reading this peeling off of clothing or layers comes from the second example of Jewels, an FTM drag king performer. In his performance, he strips his clothing to reveal another layer of male attire. Here, there is no 'real', just another set of codes (Halberstam 1998: 262) or

rather there is a 'real', and then there is another 'real' that is different to the first one. Jewels was the drag king persona of Jason Barker, now co-producer of the Transfabulous Festivals and later in this chapter, his more current performance practice will be explored more closely. For now, the focus remains drag kingery as performed by trans men, and this idea that there is no 'real' or truth to gender but that performance enables people to articulate their own version of gendered reality.

3.3.2 Human, man, FTM, drag king: Indy Turan

Indy is a documentary-style short film featuring Indy Turan, a 34-year-old FTM in the early stages of his transition, sharing his thoughts on a variety of aspects of his life. The piece presents moments in the subject's life interspersed with gently provocative images of the city such as a billboard poster's outsize statement 'The Land of the Free'. The footage is drawn from a trip to the mountains, Indy's visit to a clinic for his first testosterone injection appointment, conversations with friends about his decision to commence the treatment and backstage preparations for Indy's participation in San Francisco's seventh annual Drag King Contest in 2002. Film-maker Zemirah Moffat captures face-to-camera comments about Indy's relationship with his mother, his childhood and his view on men and women and their roles in society. The trajectory of the film is linear but the editing uses montage in its gathering together and juxtaposition of moments and conversations. There are contradictions and tensions as well as affirmative points, which are presented as a series of insights into one person's situation in dealing with their own gender identity and the perspectives of those around him.

A significant element of the film is that relating to Indy's performance at a drag-king event. While there are no rules as to who may or may not perform as a drag king, the notion that masculinity is being performed by a female body, usually with some element of pastiche or parody, is predominant. One question, which the film provokes, might be why a self-identified male should seek to enter into this space, an event hosted by Fairy Butch, who is associated with lesbian club nights in San Francisco, a space most often inhabited by women. A friend who is a fellow drag performer asks Indy whether he is going to be a drag king pretending to be a butch. He replies, 'I'm a human being playing a man playing an FTM playing a drag king.' Moffat suggests that Indy chose to perform the trans-male body to make a comment related to identity and community (interview with the author). Indy is billed by the MC of the contest as a 'new trans man' whose act in the event (an upper body strip to the comic tune 'Supercalifrajasticexpialidocious') 'pokes just a little bit of fun at those gender roles that some of us take a little too seriously'.

Response to his performance as captured on film is extremely positive. A femme spectator with a goatee beard stops him outside the venue to let him know how 'intense' she found the act. She found herself, at the point when Indy took his shirt off with his testosterone boosted muscular back to the audience and then turned to face them, with bare breasts and a smiling face, saying to a friend, 'I don't know what I'm seeing.' Her friend responded, 'Isn't it amazing!' This affirmative response acknowledges the complexity of the spectacle of Indy's transgendered body and moreover its theatrical presentation, and celebrates it as other. Indy also reports a comment made to him by a 'bio man', who congratulated Indy on his performance and added that he felt Indy should have

won the contest. The subject's pleasure at acceptance as demonstrated by encouraging comments from spectators is clear.

A more diverse range of people than is commonly the case at a drag-king event seems to inhabit this specific environment. Halberstam and Volcano detail the differences in drag king scenes in San Francisco, New York and London in their text *The Drag King Book*. In short, they identify West Coast kings as a less unified group:

partly because San Francisco is home to one of the most lively queer scenes in the country ... butch and transgender/ transsexual cultures are also alive and well there and for this reason its drag scene is rather butch and transgender oriented. (1999: 75)

One claim made for drag kingery by those who championed its emergence as a form in the 1980s, and more significantly in the 1990s, is that it was passed over as not serious, as not worthy of attention and respect, even in relation to drag queenery. This issue will be picked up on later in the chapter in a discussion about drag kingery, and specifically by analysing one individual's relationship to this form, but in order to make the point a little context is useful here. A drag king has been defined as 'a female (usually) who dresses up in recognizably male costume and performs theatrically in that costume' (Halberstam 1998: 232). Drag kings have been a part of lesbian subculture throughout the twentieth century, in European and American cities such as Paris, Berlin and New York. Within this form of cabaret drag performance, there are parallels with the complexities of drag queen performances around femininity and femaleness as performers

articulate various masculinities. Particular parodies of maleness are also performed with varying relationships to the real:

There are a small but significant percentage of Kings who acknowledge that their Drag King personas are more than a stage act. An even smaller percentage have passed through the Drag King scene and now identify as transgender, transsexual, intersexual or simply gender variant. For some of us, what started out as a performance or an experiment, became the reality of choice. Being a King for me was part of the process I call 'intentional mutation'. (Halberstam and Volcano 1999: 27)

This 'intentional mutation', or process of change happening in relation to performing masculinity on stage, is at the heart of this thesis. Indy Turan is a transgendered man at the beginning of physical transition and by performing his masculinity within a queer setting such as the drag-king scene in San Francisco he is in a sense asserting his position in the community and his presence as masculine and male. In conversation with a friend on screen, Indy talks about his experiences of hanging out with butches as having been negative. He is asked what kind of solidarity he might have with men as he begins his transition and seeks a place outside of the butch lesbian community that he does not feel a part of. He says:

My shit has to be protected, I have to be protected ... I can't have this shit on my shoulders and fucking carry this shit all the time, you know? I took ... for 34 years I've been doing the 'rights for masculine women' shit, you know? I can't do that any more. I gotta take care of me.

There are numerous implications throughout the film that Turan does not feel he fits into either a male or female identity or set of social constructs, nor, as a self-identified man, does he identify with the lesbian community. From the shot of Indy walking in the opposite direction to a one-way street sign, to his musings on the way that men operate, he makes clear his position as other:

Men impose their bullshit on people like, as a habit, just totally taking for granted the whole fucking thing ... it's like they take for granted their power, their privilege, everything. It's not even conscious, they're not even conscious of it ... you need to be born in a woman's body *obviously!*

The masculinity that Turan presents, both in his drag-king performance, within the short film and perhaps as an individual in his everyday life, might be said to be a transient product of a potentially endless process or a marker of the construction/exploration of the self.

3.3.3 Trans-identified drag kingery: when is a parody not a parody?

When is a trans-identified performer 'in drag' and when is he (or she, in the case of Jennifer Miller) doing a different type of masculinity in a different kind of way? When is the performer parodying masculinity and when is he doing himself, without parody? Is such a thing possible, or are we really always only ever a parody of versions of gender? Are we always in drag? In order to sustain these questions about ways of employing drag as a strategy for constituting

transgender masculinity, a contrasting comparison of two other drag-king performers offers an alternative model of constitution to that outlined above.

Hilda Eusébio performed 'Jack the Drag King in Evolution' as part of the Tee/Hee Comedy Night, an evening of stand-up comedy, and also performed at the Transfabulous after-party for *Beautiful Daughters* (dir. Josh Aronson and Ariel Orr Jordan, 2006)⁴ at the London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival (LLGFF) 2008, hosted at the National Film Theatre (NFT) on the South Bank.⁵ This event in 2008 was different to the drag-king competition that Indy appeared at in 2002 in that six years had elapsed and drag kingery is more widely practiced and recognised, particularly within the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender social scene. The Transfabulous party was not a competition, there was a much smaller number of people in attendance and the atmosphere at the NFT (as opposed to a nightclub) was more intimate and less raucous. Live comedy performances from Eusébio as Jack the Drag King and two other performers provided the only live entertainment.



Figure 3.2 Hilda Eusébio, whose alter-ego 'Jack the Drag King in Evolution' began his journey at Pas de Piaf Cabaret and has gone on to perform for Best of Bar Wotever, Rococo Cabaret and the Bethnal Green Working Men's Club Karaoke Night. (<http://www.transfabulous.co.uk>)

⁴ *Beautiful Daughters* is a film about the first all transgender performance of the *Vagina Monologues*. Deep Stealth productions' Calpernia Addams and Andrea James produced this version of Eve Ensler's monologues in collaboration with Eve and a group of trans women from across the USA.

⁵ Hilda Eusébio originates from Toronto and, as a performance artist, has performed in Lisbon for Ávila Costa's GTL Theatre Company, founded and performed with Focus Theatre Company and now, in London, she works with Mapping4D in such productions as *Little English*, *Vertigo*, *The Pink Bits and Slender*.

Jack was up first and began by telling us that he is not a very good drag king, but that he is trying hard to get better. He asks the audience to raise their hand if they think he passes as a man. Interestingly, at the comedy night as part of the arts festival, the majority of the audience raised their hands and cheered, encouraging and gently approving of Jack's efforts at masculinity. At the NFT, the majority of the audience did not raise their hands. Eusébio's body is small, in both height and physique, so not a typically masculine body. Jack went through a sequence of questions asking, 'Can you see my tits?' and 'Can you see my dick? Is my dick not big?' and unzipped his trousers to reveal a pink, sparkly, fluffy home-made penis. One spectator called out, 'You're a boy, not a man', perhaps alluding to Jack being so eager to 'prove' his masculinity and not finding the irony of being a failed, or not yet 'good' impersonation of a man as funny. In contrast, Indy's performance, with the strip initially revealing his back and by the end, his large prosthetic penis, which protruded from his trousers, was much more about presenting markers of hyper-masculinity to an audience who applauded specifically those things.

Jack's routine included anecdotes about feminist women's attitudes to Jack as a drag persona, and here there is a blurring between Jack and Hilda as the stories are narrated. There was the woman who coerced Hilda into a meditative chant which repeated 'I love being a woman' in order to save her from her male persona, and the feminist film-maker friend who offered women's tea, screamed like a baby, and cried 'Why doesn't anyone understand me' when Hilda didn't want to engage in conversation. Both of these anecdotes rely on complicity from the audience, around a certain stereotype of feminism. The political narrative

here was about the ways that mainstream film and popular culture pressure men as much as women, that suicide rates among men are on the rise as a result of that pressure. The point was also being made that anger is not a wholly negative emotion because it can result in action, and action can lead to changes in legislation and to more healthy representations of minority groups within mainstream culture.

A critique of essentialist feminist positions that deny Hilda, or any 'woman' the right to express masculinity or to adopt a male persona or to transition from female to male is productive, but in my view, this act does not work. Whereas Indy claimed a place on the stage and presented his pre-surgical intervention body in order to assert his presence as a transgender man, without words or verbal explanation, the text of Hilda's piece was central to the act. The rhythm and pace of delivery were poor, petering out at what felt like climactic moments where the audience were not responsive, nor did those watching and listening respond to the style of humour with its anger and extreme, loud aggression, which seemed misplaced. Indy Turan was employing drag as a strategy for constituting transgender masculinity whereas Eusébio seems to be exploring the wider issue of how feminist politics can accommodate transgender expression.

The second example presents something of a combination of both intentions. As well as the solo devised theatre work such as that discussed in Chapter 1, Lazlo Pearlman does what he describes as fetish/cabaret/vaudeville/burlesque performance:



Figure 3.3 Lazlo Pearlman as Jenda Lucious

Pearlman performed Jenda Lucious, at an early Club Wotever⁶ night in 2003, in wig, make-up, gloves, and sparkly black dress. These items of clothing come off, in strip-tease style to reveal bra, white briefs, stilettos and Lazlo's tattooed body. The wig then comes off to reveal Lazlo's bald/shaved head. The bra comes off, and the briefs come off to reveal black pants, which come off to reveal a jock strap and then a banana comes out of the pants with a flourish, to the lyric 'he's my man!' Pearlman talks about challenging accepted notions of gender and sexuality when describing his work, though one comment on the Guardian arts blog interestingly reads

This is standard-issue queer performance art jargon. It's old hat and tired. What are 'accepted notions of gender, sexuality' anymore? Outside of conservative religious and political circles – the only people who'd be 'troubled' by this stuff, and they're hardly the audience for it – no one is fazed by these sex/gender parlor tricks (M. Szalwinska,

www.blogs.guardian.co.uk/theatre/2007/10/stripping_away_the_myths_of_bu.html
accessed on 10.04.08).

⁶ Club Wotever is a club night, run as part of Wotever World by Ingo Andersson. The club welcomes a diverse range of trans, queer, lesbian, gay, and bisexual people and often has live performances as part of the night. The club is usually based in London but has also taken place in different cities in the UK and Europe. See <http://woteverworld.co.uk/index.php/clubs/clubwotever>.

Whether troubling, challenging or mere sex-gender parlor tricks, queerness and transsexuality collide in Indy Turan's performance at the drag king competition, and his embodied subjectivity, just as queerness and trans collide in the other performance artists I will continue to reference in this chapter.

3.4 The Transfabulous collective

3.4.1 The collective and its history

Transfabulous is an umbrella organisation based in East London, which aims to support, promote, exhibit and encourage transgender arts and artists. It was established by Jason Barker and Serge Nicholson around 2005 and the key events produced have included the International Festival of Transgender Arts in 2006, 2007 and 2008, as well as several single-evening events, all seeking to develop an audience for transgender performers, film-makers, storytellers, musicians and comedians. The producers also organise London's marking of the International Transgender Day of Remembrance and an annual Picnic for Change (a fundraising event for Press for Change).⁷ This chapter focuses specifically on one particular fundraising event in 2005 and on the second annual festival in June 2007, exploring the way the collective functions as a vehicle of

⁷ Press for Change is a voluntary organisation formed in 1992, which campaigns to achieve equal civil rights and liberties for all trans people in the United Kingdom, through legislation and social change. Their website at www.pfc.org.uk hosts news on legislative developments and judicial case law, support and research on the ways the law impacts upon trans people's daily existence.

artistic and personal expression, as well as community cohesion for transgender people and those who consider themselves part of the transgender community.

Barker and Nicholson's definition of 'Transgender Community' is an inclusive one. They welcome any transgender person or those questioning their gender, their families, friends, colleagues and supporters.⁸ Transfabulous provides the opportunity for the transgender community to celebrate their artists and to participate in the creation of art. Within this inclusive ethos, there is a distinct 'queerness' to the organisation and the work it hosts and promotes. The emphasis is on diversity of gender identity and sexual orientation, and the people that gravitate towards Transfabulous (performers, artists and audiences) reflect a broad range of expressions, including (but not limited to) transsexual, transgender and genderqueer people. The first International Festival of Transgender Arts in June 2006 was intended be an event showcasing a selection of transgender performers and artists through an exhibition of contemporary work by transgender photographers, painters, cartoonists and visual artists. The exhibition provided a starting point for panel discussions and artists presentations as well as film screenings, live performance and participative workshops.

Before moving in to the main discussion of this section, providing some cultural context for these queer practices will orientate the work. Transfabulous (specifically Barker and Nicholson) are Associate Artists at Oxford House. The Associate Artist Scheme is a support initiative to assist artists of all genres who are in their first three years of professional development or more established artists changing direction. The organisation says:

⁸ See www.transfabulous.co.uk for information on Transfabulous events and publicity.

The scheme creates a practical base for local artists, and, importantly, a forum for team work, peer learning and opportunity. We provide Associate Artists with the opportunity to exhibit and perform in our spaces, providing artists with professional experience of showing their work as well as discounted rates on the range of space & facilities at Oxford House. (<http://www.oxfordhouse.org.uk>)

Oxford House is a community organisation, established in 1884. The arts are a primary area of work for Oxford House (as well as youth work and advocacy) and the venue has a specific remit to develop Somali Arts working with Somali artists and the substantial Somali minority in Tower Hamlets. More broadly, the three main aims for the arts at Oxford House are to produce professional artwork in a community context, thereby raising the standard expected of community arts and requiring professionals to engage with what Oxford House does, and to foster collaboration between different art forms, ethnic groups and other sectors through programming with a yearly theme. The premises include a theatre, a dance studio, a gallery (which is free to the public and open seven days a week with a different exhibition every month) and several other studio spaces, classrooms, meeting rooms and offices. The locale became the home for the annual festivals and this is significant to the way that people experienced the work hosted there. The building is a four-minute walk from Bethnal Green underground station, along the bustling, noisy Bethnal Green High Road. This is an urban residential area in the borough of Tower Hamlets.⁹ The area is diverse in myriad ways, with a multitude of faiths, ages, ranges of economic privilege, educational background, types of family, and people of varying sexual

⁹ Tower Hamlets is the sixth most densely populated borough in Britain and it 'has one of the largest Asian communities in Britain, with 33.4% of the population self-described as being of Bangladeshi origin, and has the highest concentration of Muslims anywhere in England and Wales (36.4% of the resident population are Muslim)' (Metropolitan Police, 2007).

orientation and gender identity live and work side by side in this borough, as much as any other in London.

There is a difference between walking down Bethnal Green High Road to be part of a transgender festival, to walking through Soho or going to the Drill Hall Theatre. Oxford House's mission is to 'encourage a sense of community in a diverse society and to work in partnership with groups and individuals to develop their potential' (ibid.) and being situated within this geographical and cultural location was both refreshing in its difference but also unsettling in that the 150 or more queer patrons of the festival were invading the area and were therefore noticeably different themselves. Using Oxford House as a base then, Transfabulous have developed their profile, the range of their work and the scale and nature of the impact that their practice has on trans communities in the UK.

I will make reference to particular Transfabulous events throughout this chapter, but will now move on to discuss the first example of their work.

3.4.2 Cabaret nights for tall women and short men

Halberstam critiques *The Full Monty* (dir. Peter Cattaneo, 1997), calling it an English Abject Masculinity film, built around the surprising vulnerabilities of the English male body and psyche (2005: 127). She talks about the affiliation between the dominant and the marginal, identifying a relationship between the subcultural performance genre of drag kings and this film's focus on alternative masculinities and she acknowledges Hebdige's notion of subcultures as marginalised cultures, which get quickly absorbed by capitalism and then robbed of their oppositional power. By extending Halberstam's critique of the

contemporary film *The Full Monty* the focus of the following analysis of transgender performance shifts to that of a subcultural reclamation of the appropriation of marginal masculinity. A cultural phenomenon is traced back to its source as this performance piece is analysed, in order to ‘restore a different kind of prestige to the subculture and honour its creativity in the process’ (Halberstam 2005: 127).

This is the story of *A Night of Tall Women and Short Men* (2 July 2005), and specifically my story of the event. The Pleasure Unit, Bethnal Green, London is a small, intimate nightclub space which hosts monthly nights such as *Unskinny Bop*, attended by queer-identified people, and was the venue for an event organised by Jason Barker and Serge Nicholson as a fundraiser for the then forthcoming 2006 Transfabulous International Festival of Transgender Art.



Figure 3.4 Flyer for *A Night of Tall Women and Short Men* (Jason Barker)

This particular event included an act billed as the *FTM Full Monty*. Jason, Serge and a third trans man, Jay, imagined the act as the main dance/strip sequence from the film, with themselves as performers. Jason and Serge fully anticipated being able to back out, as word spread and other people volunteered to participate. However, they were joined by only one other person (Hamish) and the troupe was established as the four of them. Rehearsals took place. A sequence was choreographed and the strip routine practised. Discussions about costume led to an array of construction worker apparel with hard hats and fully equipped tool belts.

The night came and punters gathered, heading to the bar and filling the space. Prior to the act, myself and another female companion were asked to move to the front in order to cheer and scream as the strip began, in case the audience reaction was lacking in enthusiasm. The four performers left to get changed and prepare themselves (out in the street) while we manoeuvred to the front. There seemed to be a hitch over by the door, causing a delay but then the music was cut and Jason announced the act. Versions of the story of what had gone on outside included neighbouring residents complaining of seeing flashers and police asking the four men what they were doing, changing their clothes in the street. Jason simply told the crowd that the act had to be done quickly before someone from the council arrived to stop it, but that the act was about to happen. The four men made their way through the crowd and took the stage. Four fully costumed construction workers assumed their stances as Joe Cocker's version of Randy Newman's 'You Can Leave Your Hat On' began. Each of the performers worked the crowd with their part in the sequence so innuendos were played out as Jay pulled a big screwdriver from his carpenter's belt and looked at it with an

anxious expression, then pulled out a very small screwdriver and had a look of recognition on his face.

The stripping began. Ben, a fellow-spectator, talks about the act of stripping in this context as being brave. These men are not professional strippers and not used to being naked in public. There was a risk inherent in displaying themselves as the performers were exposing themselves literally and those selves might be considered to be lacking, in a mainstream context. Here though, in a subcultural space, the vulnerable position of being naked was also a powerful position. In conversation after the event, Ben said:

In that moment, they weren't just themselves. They were all of us, and we were all of them. As I was watching the strip, which is a sexual performance, and this *was* a sexual thing, I was also thinking, where's my body in relation to this? There was something self-reflexive going on. I was having a really good look at four naked people, their movements, the dancing and the ways they were using their bodies but because we were all inside the moment, it wasn't exploitative. It was kind of innocent.

The politics of stripping are altered here, where transgendered men are the objects of a pluralistic audience constituted of multiple gendered and sexed identities. Viewed in relation to women as object, or women's objectification of professional performers in acts such as *The Chippendales*, or women looking at their own men (husbands, fathers, brothers, friends etc.) as in *The Full Monty*, the cultural specificity of the *FTM Full Monty* as a subcultural phenomenon means that the voyeurs here are a queer bunch. The gaze is queered. Hard hats were used strategically to build suspense, with a clear tease-moment where the

four men turned away from the audience and raised their hats above their heads. Fully naked, we got a good view of their behinds to tantalise but as they turned back, the hats were replaced. The final crescendo was the 'money-shot', with four naked trans men displaying their bodies, inviting our eyes to look, enjoy, compare, appreciate, judge, envy, wonder. Jason Barker said:

Our FTM *Full Monty* was nearly stopped after a warning to the club from Tower Hamlets Council. Oops, I forgot all about strip licenses! I kept pleading 'but we're FTMs!' as if that was a defence. It worked though. We won a reprieve and so, at midnight, four transmen stood on the stage dressed in construction worker gear ready to do the world's first FTM Full Monty. All I remember is that the crowd went absolutely wild. It was like Beatlemania! There was a wall of noise, friends said later that they'd screamed themselves hoarse. When we stood in a line and lifted our strategically placed builder's helmets so revealing our four tranny bodies, naked in front of everyone, it was as if we were rock stars. We felt like the kings of the world! (www.transfabulous.co.uk)

Halberstam's analysis of the final shot in the film suggests that

it refuses to make the visibility of the phallus into the totality of maleness; the finale of the strip show is filmed from the back of the stage, and a freeze-frame captures the six naked men from behind and the crowd of screaming women full on. The *full monty*, then, is this shot that includes the female voyeur looking and the male body on display (2005: 141).

Here, we did get the *full monty*, in terms of full frontal nudity (my understanding of what the phrase alludes to) but again, and in a different way, the visibility of the phallus is not the totality of maleness.

This performance and the context within which it took place are constitutive. The performers, in reciting inter-textual gestures, signs, choreographed steps and specific images that 'are drawn from a shared cultural reservoir that comes from before and exceeds the performer' (Sullivan 2003: 90) further constitute the multiple subjects present in the space – themselves and those spectating. Lucas, another fellow-spectator who is FTM, described looking at the aesthetic of each performer's chest. He talked about seeing what might be possible for himself and his own body, as he was about to embark on chest surgery. He was seeing, on the bodies of the performers, what he wanted for himself. We might say there is a 'fast-track' constitution going on here, where the literal exposure of the flesh, of four different transgendered bodies, are juxtaposed on stage, seen by an audience which is constituted by the trans community, creating an intensity whereby many individuals are engaged in the constitutive moment.

3.4.3 Transfabulous International Festival of Transgender Arts

Jason Barker has also performed solo stand-up comedy routines at various Transfabulous events such as the Genderqueer Playhouse (an evening of comedy as part of the 2007 International Festival of Transgender Art) where he presented a piece titled 'Using Men's Changing Rooms When You Haven't Got a Penis'. The evening of performance promised to be 'a veritable cornucopia of lounge-like, cabaret-esque, burlesq-ish gender-kaleidoscopic talent' (Festival Programme). The diversity of trans identities within this range of artists is rich and complex, and though less broad, there are a range of races, faiths and

ethnicities represented too. For 'Using Men's Changing Rooms When You Haven't Got a Penis', Barker enters the stage in swimming shorts and goggles, with a backpack containing a towel and other accoutrements he needs when swimming. Jason's half-naked body is key to the comic nature of this entrance. He is a little overweight, very pale skinned and has two scars from bilateral chest surgery. He presents an imperfect masculine figure that is both 'normal' and non-normative in one body. His physique is in some ways very common of a man in his late thirties and yet his scars are the scars of a transgender man, thereby marking him as unusual. As soon as he is centre stage by the microphone, he swaps his goggles for spectacles. This action, performed by a semi-naked overweight man, further endears him to this audience in that he uses the goggles to let us know what the act would be about, creating a comical image of a goggled swimmer, out of place in the theatre-space but as he can't actually see without glasses, he breaks the 'joke' in order to continue. A joke, in itself.

The act, as the title suggests, is an observation on the ways that men and women's changing rooms are two totally different cultures and Barker shares his perspective as someone who has used both during his life experience. He offers a comic reflection on what it is like to use the men's changing rooms of a swimming pool when you don't have a penis. He talks about the problem of what to put in the netting part of swimming shorts, in place of a penis. He tells us about his 'sponge penis' and his anxieties about it floating free of his shorts as he swims – his imagined horrors of seeing it bobbing about in the fast lane, and of the lifeguard fishing it out of the pool. He then demonstrates how he undresses under a towel, so as not to expose his genitalia to other users of the changing room. As he takes his shorts off under the towel, he pauses momentarily, a lone

figure on stage and whispers with a mixture of shocked realisation and glee, to the audience of 150 people, 'I'm naked! All those dreams I've had ... where everyone's looking at me ...!' He again plays on the image of the vulnerable emasculated figure but points beyond, to the liberatory potential of nakedness.

Barker then describes an awkward interaction with a fellow man, also changing, who comments, 'I know you're a tit man 'cos you're trying to grow your own.'

At the 2006 Festival, Jason performed the piece 'Moobs', which was a comic reflection on 'man-boobs' and specifically on his own body. He has had chest surgery to remove breasts although he talks about getting older, and gradually decreasing his dose of testosterone and therefore having a re-growth of breasts as a man. The joke within the swimming pool scene is darker and relies on what feels like a threatening comment made by someone else in that context. The humour comes when he tells us he doesn't know what to say, asking, 'You know when you get home after something like that, and all these witty lines come into your mind? Well, I still have none ... and it was two years ago.' The humour is sad, and the thoughts that are provoked press home the fact that Jason risks personal attack when he enters a public space, just because his body carries the marks of his surgery and his version of maleness doesn't fit with images and ideas of normalcy.

Revealing the body is more common as a device in these performances than in those referenced in Chapter 2. The body in these performers' works is used to problematise the constraints of a fixity of identity, to blur the boundaries of masculine / not masculine, man/woman, male/female, penis/penis-less, to reveal the body through impersonation, drag, queer-drag, and parody of

masculinity. Next, we move on to further consider the blurred boundaries of masculinity and maleness as markers on the body on and off stage.

3.5 'Is that a man or a woman?'

'I live in a very liminal place,' Ms. Miller says. "Liminal" means an "in-between place," she explains. 'It means "in a doorway, a dawn or a dusk." It's a lovely place. In the theatre, it's when the lights go out. And before the performance begins.' (Smith 1995: 1)

Performance artist Jennifer Miller's work fits squarely into the genre of the human freak show, a form of performance that has been described as queer by disability theorist Robert McRuer in *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* (2006) among others. Freak show is a form with a history and a contemporary manifestation. Historically, the travelling freak shows were surrounded by stigma, profiling people with bodily differences. Artists were not always willing participants in the shows, although being a freak show artist was paid work and occasionally brought fame and fortune.¹⁰ Performers were required to just 'be' rather than 'act'. Their bodies and the specific differences they possessed were the spectacle for audiences in the mid-1800s into the 1940s, particularly in the United States. The body was central, and the genre of the freak show has been heavily critiqued since for its objectification of people with disabilities.

¹⁰ Gregory Gilbert talks about Hubert's Museum, a freak show in New York that opened in 1926. He says 'there would always be fresh acts for the people. Hubert's was the only freak show that was open year-round, and the only such show in New York City ... news of job openings was regularly exchanged [between the acts]. Their relationships were collegial, professional. They considered themselves performers, not freaks' (Gibson 2008: 29).

In the nineteenth century, one venue for the exoticization of minorities was the North American travelling medicine show ... [the] manager would gather up a group of exotics – usually people of non-white races, or people with physical anomalies (including hermaphrodites) – publicise the attributes of these ‘freaks’, and then charge admission for the general public to come into some tent to look at them ... In this century, there’s a similar venue: the television talk show. (Bornstein 1995: 128)

McRuer talks about television talk-shows and reality television shows as ‘latter-day freak shows’ (McRuer 2006: 58), and the seemingly insatiable appetite that the television-watching population has for staring at unusual people. In the United Kingdom, one clear example of this can be seen in the *Bodyshock* series aired on Channel 4 and into its 13th series in 2007. The series is a ‘long-running documentary strand that investigates extraordinary and moving real-life stories about the extremes of the human body’ (www.channel4.com/programmes/bodyshock) and includes programmes such as ‘Half Ton Mum’, ‘The World’s Biggest Boy’, ‘The Girl with 8 Limbs’, ‘Megatumour’ and ‘I am the Elephant Man’. One contemporary live-performance iteration of this genre can be seen on Coney Island in New York, where Jennifer Miller features sometimes, performing a reclamation of the figure of the bearded lady. In this next section, I will talk about Miller’s relationship to masculinity and the ways that she utilises her body in strategic, personal and professionally political ways.

3.5.1 The Coney Island Sideshow and Circus Amok

As the founder of Circus Amok, a political community theatre company, Jennifer Miller performs in their productions, which tour city parks and outdoor venues in New York. She has also performed as part of Dick Zigun's Coney Island Sideshows by the Seashore and tours her solo sideshow act *Zenobia: The Amazing Lady with the Beard* to a diverse range of venues and continents.

Within this act she

confronts her audience head-on as a 'bearded lady,' in an amalgam of old-time vaudeville and feminist theatre. 'I am a woman with a beard!' she says, tugging at it to prove it is real. Her voice is playful, insinuating, with the exaggerated delivery of sideshow entertainers. 'A woman with a beard, not "the bearded lady!"' she says.

(Smith 1995: 1)

Miller is a woman with a beard when she is performing on stage and in her everyday life. Her beard is part of her appearance and whether she is performing her solo act, with its emphasis on this physical attribute, or performing with a circus troupe, this marker of masculinity is ever present and has an impact on the people who read her. Miller has described her performance work as political and as feminist.

Circus Amok is a circus company based in New York City that devise entertainment that explores contemporary controversies relevant to the lives of New Yorkers such as police brutality, jaywalking laws, budget cuts and anti-immigrant proposition 187.¹¹ Their form could be said to be queer in as much as

¹¹ Proposition 187 (1994) is aimed to deny health and education services for illegal immigrants and encouraged state employees to report undocumented aliens to the authorities. The proposition was approved by US voters but overturned by state courts.

it synthesises elements of traditional circus with aspects of parody, camp and cross-dressing. They provide free performances for the public, addressing contemporary issues of social justice. The group has been together since 1989, bringing

funny, queer, caustic and sexy, political one-ring spectacles to diverse neighborhoods from East New York to the East Village ... The performers in the ring are trained in traditional circus skills – tight rope walking, juggling, acrobatics, stilt walking, clowning – as well as experimental dance, theater, and gender-bending performance art and improvisational techniques. (www.circusamok.org)

Although expressions of gender identity are not the focus of the content of Circus Amok's shows, Miller's beard is a constant source of fascination for many of the spectators: 'Is that a man or a woman?' a woman in the audience whispers. 'She's a woman with the beard glued on' a boy sitting next to the woman says (Smith). It is often children who will ask most openly if Miller is a woman or man and with them, she is direct, telling them that she is a woman with a beard and it is there because it grows there.

Sometimes people in the street accost her, asking her what she is. 'I try to make them be explicit, make them see they already know the answer' (ibid.). While in one sense she insists that she is many things other than / as well as a woman with facial hair, this one detail, in its unusualness, pervades her life and work. She has said that she does not mind this continual questioning but also adds, 'It's hard for me to keep having fresh thinking about it' (Carr 1998: 1). Her facial hair has been a part of her body since she was in her early twenties. She is

not sure what made it grow and, with a few exceptions in the last twenties, has not felt the need to remove it. She states:

I don't think of it as a problem, so I'm not looking for a cause ... But if I didn't keep my beard it would be a statement of hopelessness. Keeping secrets requires energy that's debilitating, especially when it's out of shame or fear. (Smith 1995: 1).

Miller's appearance can be interpreted as the performative queering of norms of gender and sexuality, while reactions to her reveal the force of normalisation that pulls us towards conventional understandings of bodies and identities. In Foucauldian terms, Miller is an embodiment of resistance, perhaps. Smith asks the question if she sees her beard as normal, why perform as a freak in circuses and sideshows? Miller replies, 'it's a strong, feminist piece of theatre. Ten times a day, I address in the strongest, most forthright terms feminist issues of appearance and dress. I use the platform of the sideshow to defreakify.' (ibid.)

3.5.2 Zenobia: the woman with a beard

Miller's solo work is closely connected with the Coney Island Circus Sideshow, one of the attractions at the not-for-profit corporation based at the amusement park area of the Coney Island neighbourhood of Brooklyn, New York which seeks to revive a genre of performance and cultural history:

Through an imaginative and innovative approach combining the performing and visual arts, Coney Island USA seeks to revitalize the community from which it takes its name, attracting international recognition and visitors while providing low-

cost services to a mass, working class New York City audience, including the young and the old, the art and the family oriented. Coney Island USA interprets the past and experiments with the future of American popular culture and offers a growing panoply of arts events and exhibitions rooted in the traditions of P.T. Barnum, vaudeville and Coney Island itself. (www.coneyisland.com)

In an interview with Ari M. Roussimoff, director of *Freaks Uncensored*, a documentary film about the history of the relationship between people with specific physical differences and the show-casing of them in performances (1999), Brian Childs asks 'do you think there is a place for "born freak" performers in the American sideshow today?' Roussimoff responds, saying:

As Jeanie Tomaini said, if people want to perform this way, who is going to stop them? Who are they harming? They are doing something they want to do. At a certain point, you cannot forget the individual. On one hand, people think they are doing things that somehow benefit these people, but in reality there is no such thing as "these people." There are people who want to perform and there are people who do not and both of them should have the right to do what they want.

(http://coneyislandreport.blogspot.com/2007_04_01_archive.html)

Miller's sideshow act as Zenobia, a woman with a beard, not a bearded lady, focuses specifically on the idea of the freak or the exhibiting of human oddities. She subverts the nineteenth-century notion of the bearded lady as passive victim, epitome of femininity and model of Victorian domesticity. Instead she presents herself 'as simply a possible way of being a woman' (Fraser 1997: E2). Making reference to an extract of her performance during this interview with Smith, Miller says

The world is full of women with beards ... or at least they have the potential to have a beard ... instead of spending the time, and the money, on the waxing, and the shaving, and the electrolysis and the plucking. We all know someone who plucks. Pluck, pluck, pluck, as if these women were chickens! (Smith 1995: 1)

The production played at Hoxton Hall in East London in 1999, a small alternative venue described as a Victorian music-hall theatre space. The audience numbered approximately forty and though the staging was proscenium arch, a relatively intimate relationship between the solo performer and the spectators was created as a result of the size of the theatre space. The interaction between performer and spectators here constitutes a vastly different dynamic to that of playing to hundreds in St Mary's Park, South Bronx as happens with Miller's Circus Amok performances, but whether she builds a much more direct relationship with a smaller audience or not, she

tries to educate people about where their ideas of gender difference come from. She wants the man on the street, the people in the sideshow, and all the viewers at home to really think about the ways we define each other. She challenges us to recognise the extent to which our own self-images are dictated by societal norms. (Howard 1999: 2)

The interplay between the spectator and the performer (whether on or off stage) fluctuates in Miller's case and seems to be something that Miller courts.

'My daily life is a mundane thing. The beard rarely exists except when I talk about it.' Ms. Miller turned. 'I'm seeing this as a performance project,' she says, 'talking to you.' (Smith 1995: 1).

Miller is the subject of filmmakers' work in pieces such as *Juggling Gender* (dir. Tami Gold, 1992) and *Un Cirque de New York* (dir. Frédérique Pressman, 2002).

She performs herself as flirtatious in interview or during face-to-camera sections of film or as direct and open with children as she prepares for a performance in a park. Miller's portrayal of Jennifer Miller changes according to interactions with people around her, depending on the context. Her gender indeterminacy is visual and bodily in that it is her beard that disrupts a reading of her. Others construct her and perceive illusion while she seeks to sustain the actuality of her body:

Treated like a man, she becomes manlike. It is not her beard but rather people's reaction to its mark that has altered her gender ... their gaze is her gender mirror. Like their gaze, her gender is both multifaceted and culturally specific; thus it disrupts unified concepts of gender. (Straayer 1997: 152–3)

In her text *Re-Dressing the Canon: Essays on Theatre and Gender*, Alisa Solomon explores performances of Jewish identities and more specifically, 'what happens then, when Jews stage themselves within the formal artifice of the theatre' (1997: 97). She sets this discussion in the context of assimilation of Jewish people into Western Europe and America, and the related anti-Semitic rhetoric of difference, a paradigm within which Solomon asserts 'the Jew is always already acting ... for the performance of the Jew on the stage of the modern West always plays on the tension between disappearance and difference' (ibid.). Solomon references Sarah Bernhardt and playwrights such as Sholem Asch, and in a late twentieth-century context looks to queer feminist Jewish artists, one of whom is Jennifer Miller. She revisits the notion of Jewish difference in a cultural setting such as New York City in the United States, where integration appears to be relatively multi-faceted and significant. She suggests that it is queer women who are the individuals who are still posing challenges to

notions of Jewishness and gender by performing ‘womanhood gone awry’ (p. 122). Of Miller’s solo performance act she says:

In my favourite schtick, she juggles machetes – pretending almost to drop them on the folks in the front row – while discoursing on the history of bearded ladies. Describing her own empowering choice to join their ranks by refusing to continue electrolysis treatments, she challenges the audience with machete-like sharpness to consider the parts of themselves that they hide in the closet. (p. 125)

Solomon reports that Miller says she has been accepted in the Hasidic neighbourhood of Brooklyn where she lives, and speaks of moving among women who cover their heads with wigs and men who let their beards grow long. This does not get fully to the matter of ‘acceptance’ though, in terms of whether her neighbours accept Miller as different, or as the same. What is not clear is whether Miller passes as male with her beard, thereby blending into the local landscape, or is known and fully accepted by those in her Hasidic community as Jennifer Miller, the woman with the beard.

George Bernard Shaw said of Bernhardt that she substitutes herself for the role, instead of entering into the role (in Shaw’s *Dramatic Criticism* (1895–98)), and Solomon suggests that performance artist Jennifer Miller does this too. That because she is working in the form that she chooses: ‘a form that is not only written on, but by means of, the performer’s body’ (p. 122) she is challenging assumptions, preconceptions and expectations, whoever her audience. Miller has been described as a feminine, soft woman. She describes herself as simply ‘a woman with a beard’. However, her refusal to ‘mutilate’ her own body by shaving or undergoing electrolysis leads to her possession of one of the most visible indicators of maleness. This fact alone is cause enough for the spectators

present within the daily life and at performances by Jennifer Miller, to react and, furthermore, to feel they have a right to voice their opinions about this one aspect of her appearance. These reactions vary of course, from confusion, admiration, outright lack of comprehension and straightforward acknowledgement. There is a sense, at times, from reading the many interviews given by Miller that this confrontation is tiring, or at least the repetition of the narrative she is asked to tell: that Miller cannot escape the attention she attracts as a result of the rejection of the act of 'conforming to the tyrannical imperative of binary gender' (Halberstam & Volcano 1999: 16).

Miller's relationship to gender and masculinity differs from that of Indy Turan and the other artists discussed in the first part of this chapter. Each individual though has chosen performance as a vehicle through which to upset and challenge. Since the 1899 performance of Hamlet by a female-identified actor, a great deal has changed but people who contravene normative gender and sex ideologies are still perceived to be threatening or 'disturbing'. This is still an inevitable response to difference and the question is why does gendered difference still pertain? It is this question that moves us on into Chapter 4, which focuses on the experiences of sex and gender for young people, both trans and non-trans. In the remainder of this chapter, I will continue to explore the ways in which transgender masculinity is constituted through performance before looking at the significance of this practice for adolescents whose gender identities are emergent in the next chapter.

3.6 Representation and reception in alternative spaces

Trans performance work still gets left out of academic discourse about performance studies. Engaging with trans art, trans artists and trans viewers of trans art, brings very specific readings into the public domain. The work discussed here is variously trans through the biography of the artist, the context in which it is produced, the mode of aesthetic presentation and the spectatorship, readership and the deconstruction of the image using a trans gaze. Indy Turan, the performers of *The FTM Full Monty*, Jason Barker in particular, and Jennifer Miller identify differently in terms of trans but they are each offering a challenge to gender as a construct or category and using performance languages to their audiences – audiences that include queer people, transgender-identified people, transsexual people and many more.

The task in Chapters 2 and 3 has been to construct a ‘history’ or map of transgender masculinities that appear and are represented on stage and in performance spaces that I have accessed through my research. These masculinities are mainly white and mainly British, with the exception of two North American performers, one of whom appeared on stage in London. In mapping the artists’ work, a compilation of activity is generated that ordinarily goes unrecorded because of when and where it takes place, and because of the subjectivities at its core. Through this research I am creating a record of ephemeral practices that has not hitherto existed. With the exception of Jennifer Miller, the artists under discussion in this thesis are almost wholly uncited and undocumented in academic writing. This record of performance that takes place beyond the mainstream brings transgender performance practice into academic discourse. Its prior absence does not mean it is insignificant work. It means that

the work and the artists have not been recognised because of the marginal nature of their identities and practices.

The focus on performance offers an alternative and more person-centered mode of analysis, as opposed to the anthropological and medical accounts and studies that have historically catalogued transgender lived experience. The analysis of the use of performance in the constitution of transgender masculinities offers insight into the performance practices of solo devised, autobiographically inspired narrative, of live art and of avant-garde cabaret, vaudeville and freak show. This research also offers insight into the lived experiences of identity formation as articulated by the artists I document. While these particular lived experiences are singular and specific, when brought together and considered through the framework of performance analysis, the richness and multiplicity of transgender identities are highlighted in a different way to that of a transsexual narrative offered in an autobiographical text or in a medical case study of a patient. The scope and range of ethnographic studies such as Devor's *FTM* are usually broader than this research, and are in a sense, more comprehensive in that they gather accounts of a considerable number of lived experiences from numerous individuals and seeks to thematise those experiences. But analysing and documenting transgender masculinities in performance and the social contexts within which those performances take place provide depth and detail of the interactions that create the experiences, as well as merely taking account of individual perspectives on gender because the individuals involved (the audiences and the performers) are in the experience together. Transgender masculinities are constituted through the transactions that occur:

the theatre continually functions as a particular kind of social space; the performance space is not merely representational – it is also transactional. It demands and depends upon an imaginative contract between the performers and the audience, a collaboration between the sender and the receiver of the dramatic message, which enables the conventions of theatrical narrative to be understood. (Mangan 2003: 20)

I propose that transgenderism itself is also transactional. It too depends on an imaginative contract between the ‘performer’ and the ‘audience’ that enables the conventions of identity narrative to be understood.

3.6.1 *Mirror Mirror*: queer performance community as possible utopia

The film *Mirror Mirror* (dir. Zemirah Moffat, 2006) is a useful piece of work in terms of further consideration of representations and receptions of otherness in queer spaces. The film focuses on five performers based in London, one of whom is Lazlo Pearlman. These queer-identified performers are part of a group of people who regularly perform at Club Wotever and the narrative of the film concentrates on the ‘community’ that is created by them and the social spaces they inhabit. There are parallels between this group of people and the other performers and social spaces discussed in this chapter. The film suggests that queer and trans identified artists might create alternative or subcultural spaces because ‘normal’ spaces do not accommodate them sufficiently. This film claims its audience ‘will get a glimpse of a possible utopia where gender and sexualities do not matter’. Director Zemirah Moffat says:

I wanted to get the 'truth technologies' of gender and of documentary to play together. I see gender as a fable. I don't believe that any person is essentially male or female – it's a glorious mix-and-match of natural and cultural combinations. It is the same for documentary, which is a type of film that uses 'devices' to convince the viewer that what they are seeing is true and real ... I wanted to work with people who could challenge the camera's desire and use it creatively. (Programme Notes, 21st London Lesbian & Gay Film Festival 2007)

As the film begins, the camera is positioned behind rows of audience seated and chatting quietly in an auditorium before a performance/film begins. Gentle diegetic piano music is heard as Josephine walks down the aisle, looking calmly left and right at the audience and up onto the stage. As she assumes position and begins a dance piece, the music shifts into a more electronic sound, with a heavy drum-beat and steady, relatively slow rhythm. The movement is very physical at first, in the style of a martial art with lots of jumps, kicks and sharp dynamics. The piece synthesises qualities of masculinity and femininity in subtle ways, using styles of movement that could be associated with gendered traits such as balletic grace and physical theatre's fast-paced aggression. Josephine says of this piece (also performed at the 2006 Transfabulous Festival, as well as at Stockholm Pride, in July 2004):

I choreographed in response to what I saw as the aesthetisation (if that is a word) of violence in popular culture at the time. Responding to the images brought to us by films like *The Matrix* (which was considered beautiful and uncontroversial) and *Fight Club* (which was considered ugly and very controversial) I chose to comment on the ways in which violence was being shown to be balletic and graceful and

without physical consequence. The piece moves from highly choreographed, tight, graceful movement into ever degrading mess, until it is just bloody and crass ... how it is to be subject to violence as a gendered person (specifically a transgendered person in my case, but I don't limit the interpretation) ... It is now presented in three parts which broadly follows my responses to violence and how it has made me feel. (www.josephineallison.com)

This scene then cross-fades into a scene in a viewing room, with the cast arriving to see a rough cut of the film they are in – the film we are about to see. This self-referential device makes sure we know this is a film about the process of making a film, and also that it is to some degree, a process which takes account of those who are subjects within it. There follows a series of short scenes during which we meet each of the characters, some of whom I have discussed in this and the previous chapter. We see Maria Mojo, also known as Dyke Marilyn, donning her blonde wig in a stark dressing room before a performance. Then there is Jacq Tamlyn, dressing for a performance outing in Hyde Park. Ingo Andersson is seen getting ready for a performance as Red Viking, talking about trusting the filmmaker and feeling inhibited about speaking and acting freely on camera. Josephine Wilson is dancing in a rehearsal room and talking about wearing her tits while she's working in the studio. She says, 'Yes they might be uncomfortable but they're part of who I am ...like tits are, I'm led to believe.' Lazlo Pearlman does not appear in these introductions, though he is one of the five artists profiled in the film.

During the scene where the performers are at the screening of an early edit of the film, Lazlo Pearlman says that he is not happy about the performances in the film, but he is happy for them to be shown as part of the film. He feels his

presentation on screen does not match how he thinks he comes across in live performance. The artists are seen making choices about the construction of their self-image and presentation of self. For example, playing with the domestic Josephine is filmed cooking in her kitchen, ironing and then specifically saying they chose to do these shots because they codify in a way that suits what she wants her appearance in the film to say. There are repeated moments too of revealing the artifice through behind-the-scenes shots of rehearsals, putting on costumes, preparing back stage, making-up etc.:

This film is as much about the process of making a film as it is about the queer people within it. I did not want to make a typical patronising documentary about queer people that harps on about how difficult life is and ultimately plays into viewer's expectations of the poor, misunderstood freak. (Programme Notes, 21st London Lesbian & Gay Film Festival 2007)

Jacq Tamlyn's characteristic trademarks for his drag king character Trevor 4Ever are a Polyester walrus moustache and endless hapless crushes and idealistic attitudes. In the film Trevor's character, and Jacq Tamlyn as an individual, feeds a narrative about the various performers' interactions with the world, which serves as a micro-cosmic example of queer people's relationships with society. We see Jacq in role as Trevor at Speaker's Corner, being challenged by people. A young American woman asks why he is dressed as a guy and an older man challenges Trevor to take off the false moustache and wig. Jacq talks later directly to the camera about the elements of risk inherent when performing in a club, saying that you will be funny to your audience, but in the outside world, he

feels that things are more risky: 'The streets of London can be a bit volatile and stuff is just bubbling under the surface.'



Figure 3.5 Trevor4Ever has been performing since May 2001 in Melbourne, Australia and he has twice been voted Pride Melbourne Drag King of the Year, 2002–3 and 2003–4.

Later in the film, we see the film being screened at Bar Wotever and Jacq introduces the film and his part in it saying he offers himself 'as somebody performing gender in my own particular way, and someone on the end of a few queer bashings'. This sequence ends with Jacq coming out of Bar Wotever after the screening is over, into a dark rainy night shot walking off alone around the corner as Moffat points us to the darker side of gender play.

The ending has a sudden and more explicit comment about the threat of, as well as the actual violence directed at, trans and queer people. Moffat asks in a voice-over if we, the spectator, would like to know that the next time Josephine performed she was thrown down a fire escape by some 'insecure' bouncers, and the next time Maria performed she was slammed up against a wall. The film closes on a darker note about violence. This serves as a sharp reminder that all is not rosy in the 'world outside', or perhaps it points, in a rather problematic way, to the fact that even though 'Wotever World' creates a safe haven where queerness is celebrated, the real world still sees queer as deviant and will punish

non-normativity. Butler talks again here about functioning within a social gender system:

the very formation of subjects, the very formations of persons, presupposes gender in a certain way – [that] gender is not to be chosen and that performativity is not radical choice and its not voluntarism ... Performativity has to do with repetition, very often repetition of oppressive and painful gender norms to force them to resignify. This is not freedom, but a question of how to work the trap that one is inevitably in. (Butler & Kotz 1992: 83–4)

In other words, she acknowledges a kind of struggle to exist within a heteronormative matrix that resonates with the tone of Moffat's film. Working the trap may involve identifying a space, or a community where the struggle eases but the trap is inescapable.

3.7 Conclusion

The performers in this chapter are articulating expressions of non-normative gender in a social and political environment that tends towards hostility in the face of difference. Subcultural spaces are made and sustained as places of complicity and tolerance. Drag-king shows call for assorted people to offer their performances of masculinity up to entertain where the only threat is people not laughing, if a performer is not funny or skilled in their presentation. The more complex and creative the masculine persona, the more praise and applause a performer is likely to receive; Transfabulous consciously seek to create spaces

for trans and queer people to gather in real space and time, and to experience and participate in arts practices.

These spaces are not trans/queer-only, and in that sense are not exclusive of family or friends, though despite this emphasis on multiplicity, there is still a danger of hierarchising when thinking about queer practices and theory in that 'queer is as susceptible as any other term to recuperation into a hierarchy of the queer and the just-not-queer-enough' (Edie 1994: 248). The queer community can be (or can be perceived to be) exclusive, rather like a clique for some people to belong to and not others. The spaces or venues that are discussed in this chapter can echo that exclusivity in terms of the audiences they attract, and the range of performers who gravitate to, or are chosen to perform at, the particular venues and events.

In creating a very specific community, there are borders. There are some people who would not belong 'inside' the Transfabulous community and some people who feel they might not belong for all that the organisers do to promote an open and welcoming ethos. Though there are down sides, the benefit of this coherence is that the space or the subculture is dynamic and strong for those who are part of it. More amorphous is the subcultural space created by Jennifer Miller. In a sense, Miller puts herself into distinctly un-queer or trans-oriented spaces: the large open parks that Circus Amok perform in, or the Coney Island Sideshow venue where hundreds of people from broad spectrums of the social strata, very often tourists, will congregate or converge. However, by inserting herself into these spaces, the space is queered. It is transgendered. A subculture is revealed to people who might not ordinarily experience it, and through the uses of popular forms this experiential process of participating or collaborating in

a queer or transgender moment with the performer comes about in a cunning and smooth way. Of course when Miller performs her solo piece at Hoxton Hall to a small audience who are there because they know her work and are interested in it, the subcultural space with its complicity and celebration of queer is clear. Perhaps the binary opposite of dystopia as an imagined reality is generated by a community in order to cohere it.

The performers discussed here use theatre and performance as a strategy. Performers invite readings of their bodies by positioning themselves in the public sphere of the stage. This notion does not necessarily sit well with the reality that transsexuality may be about achieving a desired state of being which will result in a kind of disappearance. Laura Mulvey's notion of the active male gaze and passive female gaze is interesting in this context in that my witnessing of *Zenobia: The Amazing Lady with the Beard*, *A: Gender* and *The FTM Full Monty* generated a practice of seeing and reading where the male/female binary is complicated and we have something like 'trans body as image, non-trans woman as bearer of the look'. There were of course transsexual women, non-trans men, transsexual men, people of various transgendered identities and sexualities – a long list of alternatives to the original 'bearer of the look' (Mulvey in Goodman and de Gay 1998: 274) at work in the performance and reception of the various transgendered identities on stage. The critical thing is that the bodies are trans, and multiple in their transness and whoever the performer exchanges with, in terms of spectators, the transgender bodies on stage make direct reference (sometimes explicit, sometimes not) to discourses around gender normativity:

the body in some postmodern performance can be understood as a body that exposes the ideological discourses producing it, through performance that insists on

the body's status as a historical and cultural construct and that asserts the body's materiality. (Auslander 1997: 92)

The next chapter takes a third set of performances as its focus, and explores the nature of work that took place as part of an arts project with young people who identify as transgender. Live performance and short film were the mediums used to articulate understandings about sexed and gendered bodies and identities with young people who have a complicated relationship to gender. The chapter will look at the ways that personal narratives synthesise with bio-medical narratives of trans, and the ways that the young people's understandings and experiences of transness were manifested in the art they produced.

Chapter 4

Transgender Young People Performing Masculinities



Figure 4.1 The Live Performance group in the planning stage (Sci:identity project) and the *Brief Encounters* writers.

4.1 Introduction

‘From the pedagogy of theatre to the performer’s obituary, via the critic and the arts mandarin, there is continual negotiation of what constitutes an “acceptable standard”’ (Read 1995: 3). Alan Read suggests that we question the traditional foundation of our conditions of recognition of quality in theatre ‘and the way such conditions determine public opinion outside their own limited domain’. He is talking in *Theatre and Everyday Life: An Ethics of Performance* about innovative, experimental theatre that happens in the ‘shadows’ of theatre buildings – ‘a theatre resistant to official views of reality’ (p. 4) that cannot be described with the language of that officialdom. In order to measure the success and quality of the work under discussion in this chapter, negotiation of what the acceptable standard might be, comes from the young participants who engaged with the projects, and from the audiences who received their work. Assessing what the projects and their participants produced and achieved against what they

had planned is part of the process of making work in the context of this chapter. Modes of critical evaluation and critical reflection were embedded into the practice.

For example, a list of ‘hopes for the play’ emerged in the closing exercise of the first script-writing session of *Brief Encounters*, a queer youth theatre project in London, May 2008. These hopes for what the play would provoke in its audiences included ‘recognition, dialogue, change, understanding, respect and empathy’ (session transcript, 03.05.08, Appendix C). There was a clear sense at the outset of this project that most if not all participants were united in a general intention to educate audiences in the schools this play was to be performed in by developing understanding and awareness about gender diversity. There were several indicators six weeks later throughout the tour that audiences were indeed thinking about subject matter that they had not fully considered previously. They reported having learned new vocabulary around identity and considered behaviours and attitudes to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer-identified people – their own and other peoples, including the idea that any individual can take responsibility for tackling other people’s homophobic or transphobic behaviour. Simply put, the aims of this project as negotiated by the participants were achieved.

However, there was a clash during this particular project which is emblematic of the wider context of participatory arts work with young people. The clash was between the desire to create ‘good art’ and the desire to educate, or for the theatre piece to have a pedagogic drive, and it existed for those participants who were also students of applied theatre. These students had opted to participate in the project as part of a module on their Masters programme.

They were among a group of 50 who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender (LGBT), queer or as straight allies that formed to create a play based on queer identities. On one hand the students had anxieties about this being a weak play that would bang people over the head with overly moralistic messages and cause audiences to switch off and disengage. On the other hand, they (along with the non-student participants) felt that it was important and productive to use theatre to talk about gender and marginal identities in school settings. The point of tension was about how to accomplish the latter, without somehow accidentally doing the former.

There is a general sense that ‘good art’ or good theatre will, in some sense, always be educational. When we go to the theatre, we expect to learn something new – to come away with new knowledge about something, whether it is about a particular subject or about the human condition more broadly. However, when theatre is produced by a company working together as a community group and particularly when most individuals in the group are under 25 years of age, there is a tendency to conclude that aesthetic values and ‘quality’ will be reduced. Of another project, Lowell Swortzell says ‘[A]rt, of course cannot be created by committee, a fact that became particularly apparent in the task of scripting, where artistic merit suffered the most’ (cited in Jackson 1993). Educational theatre is sometimes not considered good art because it is presumed to be moralising or so primarily concerned with the transmission of information, that the complexity of the narrative and characters will be lost. Good (educational) theatre balances the ‘art’ with the ‘education’ such that these two elements are mutually dependent.

Having opened with a reference to a project which worked predominantly

with LGBT young people which I project-managed in 2008, this chapter will open out to draw primarily on the particular experiences of the young people and practitioners who worked on the Sci:identity project, based at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London from March 2006 to March 2007. It focuses on the issues raised by the personal and collective journeys taken in the process of engaging with the science of sex and gender within the project. By offering accounts of the personal narratives explored by the young participants during the life of the project and beyond, I will debate the role of creativity and pedagogy when working with young transgender people.

As the project co-ordinator of this and other queer youth arts projects, part of my role as practitioner-researcher was to ask why and how those personal stories are told as part of a journey in which young people develop their understandings of their own identity as trans people, specifically young trans men, and this question is central to the chapter. I will consider the extent to which the research into the Sci:identity project has implications and resonances more broadly with wider trans communities and with people who work with young people.

Key to the discussion in this chapter is the notion that by creating opportunities for young people who have a complex relationship to gender and are identifying as transgender, transsexual, queer, or are questioning the way the world is failing to accommodate them as gendered beings, these forms of individual-gendered subjectivity are able to flourish. The place of the arts in relation to that recognition of the importance of opportunity for young trans people and, moreover, the function of community and collaboration are significant to identity formation because the arts provide a vehicle and a platform

for exploration and articulation within a structured process. Young people meet other young people who have similar and different experiences of gender and through the creative process of writing a play or devising monologues for performance they make themselves the subject of their own story, rather than being the subject of others' stories, or feeling entirely invisible as a subject.

This chapter focuses on the use of personal testimony and story within performance-making processes with young transgender people. I seek to develop an understanding of the intrinsic connections between the aesthetic and ethical responsibilities at play within this kind of performance work. In looking at the practice of working with young transgender people, this chapter examines who it is that tells the stories and to whom, as well as why those personal stories are told within the projects. I will continue to engage with the theoretical concerns that have been established thus far in the thesis, as the focus shifts to the work that younger people generate in response to the call to discuss and debate gender, and in particular, the ways that transgender masculinities are produced. This chapter will also draw on discourses surrounding contemporary policy and legislation such as that which guides and supports learning in statutory settings in order to explore the ways that bureaucratic aspects of social life make negotiating gender so fundamentally challenging for young transgender people.

In interrogating the politics of telling and witnessing narratives, this chapter will explore the quality of the cultural exchange that takes place through sharing lived experiences with 'outsiders'. I look at the ways that the stories of the marginalised counter or reproduce dominant narratives. The chapter begins with a contextualisation of the field of Applied Theatre practice. I move on to map out the Sci:identity project's beginnings and initial collaborations before presenting an

analysis of some work of the creative engagement phase which consisted of arts workshops and a public exhibition. Towards the latter half of the chapter, I look at the outreach phase of the project, which took place in mainstream and LGBT youth settings. I then focus back on the notion of gender legitimacy that emerged through this project with young transgender people.

4.2 Models of practice in working with young transgender people

4.2.1 Contextualising the field of applied theatre practice

Storytelling is a tried, tested and contested applied theatre practice. Richard Kearney in *On Stories* outlines the way in which people tell stories to make sense of the incongruent parts of their lives – that telling tales makes our experiences comprehensible and that ‘In this way, storytelling may be said to humanise time by transforming it from an impersonal passing of fragmented moments into a pattern, a plot’ (2002: 4). This ability for storytelling to humanise and make sense of experiences makes it a regular feature of a variety of applied theatre practices. However, we are also warned to be mindful of the ethical implications of asking people to disclose personal stories:

The form itself must become the subject of an enquiry questioning the ethics of theatre practice. Without extreme care theatre projects that dig up narratives, experiences and remembrances can blame, enact revenge and foster animosity as much as they develop dialogue, respect or comfort. (Thompson 2005: 25–6)

The general argument against the use of this practice is that asking participants to share personal stories as part of developing narrative content can, in theory, be problematic. Some people have a need to be listened to, and in applied theatre work, some people may happily opt in and make use of the opportunity to talk about their emotions and complex personal situations with others, only to regret doing so later, thereby ending up with a new set of negative and difficult emotions. In the *Brief Encounters* playwriting project the intention was to create autobiographical work in a large group, so very publicly ‘digging up stories’. I would assert that ‘extreme care’ was taken in structuring and facilitating the process, though the idea of what that care should involve was a significant part of the negotiation between the project partners. The way personal stories were elicited from the participants and the way those stories were deployed were strategies implemented for specific purposes, within a structured process. The stories were gathered in the first session, so within an hour of meeting, people were divulging personal experiences or things they have seen or heard happen to people they know. The construct used was a request that participants offer a story or anecdote to the (very large) circle of 37 people in that first session, with a view to these stories being used in a play – the play that we were all there to write together. We literally went around the circle speaking a story aloud to the group, and into a Dictaphone for later transcription. This construct worked to make people aware that they could and should self-select stories, and share what they were happy to share and furthermore, stories they felt might be appropriate in a play for school audiences. The group was also made aware that they should try and offer stories that they would be happy to see developed by the group if the group felt the story merited development. The dynamic in the room was fairly brisk and

not one that invited slow, emotion-wracked storytelling. The lead facilitator of this phase of the project, Norma Bowles (from Fringe Benefits Theatre Company¹) acknowledges the potential risk that this exercise holds for participants:

We're not trying to lead therapy sessions, so we've got to make sure that we're not inviting people to think of us as therapists. And even though the stories are being shared as part of an artistic process, and we'll eventually all need to decide which stories to include in the play and which to leave out, the moment when someone is sharing can be very, very delicate – not the time to pass judgment, but not the time to be completely detached either. (Armstrong & Juhl 2007: 294)

Bowles asserts that the structures and strategies she builds into the writing process work to make the environment a productive and functional one. Once collected, the stories were picked up and 're-told' or performed in improvisation as the script developed and later in the touring performances by different people to the original teller. Sometimes the stories remained whole but sometimes they were very much changed. Bowles again says:

It's crucial for people to understand that when they contribute stories, ideas, or suggestions to a collaboratively developed play, it's as if they're contributing tomatoes to a community feast! Depending on the group's dramaturgical decisions regarding the form and content of the community feast, your 'tomato' might appear in a salad and be quite clearly recognized as your tomato, or it might be pureed and become an indistinguishable element of a soup, gumbo, or ratatouille ... what's

¹ Fringe Benefits Theatre Company are based in Los Angeles in the United States. They seek to affect social justice and are funded by the Queer Youth Fund. Three of its theatre practitioners who regularly deliver theatre-making projects with young lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people led the writing phase of this project in London. See <http://www.cootieshots.org>.

yours and what's someone else's may not be apparent at all. (Armstrong & Juhl 2007: 302)

Fringe Benefits Theatre Company and myself are in agreement that drawing on personal stories as a way of generating script is not dangerous per se, but is something to be utilised in conscious and structured ways. To dwell a little longer on this example, what happens to the stories as they transmogrify into live performance is another matter that deserves attention. There is a shift away from building and shaping a narrative together, and towards a process that involved only a quarter of the original participants. As the script was realised in rehearsal, not only did the original stories begin to resemble a 'community feast' but also, the characters who are the vehicle for sharing the stories with audiences were being embodied by nine performers. Nine members of the group spoke on behalf of the 41 other group members who were not performing, and the issue of faithfulness to the whole groups was one borne in mind during the script-development process. Every suggested change to a plot line or a line of dialogue was put to the vote, with debate for particularly sensitive or significant change.

Approximately thirty stories were told in the first session and of those that survived and made it into the script, Claudia's story of coming out to her mother as transgender was adopted and adapted as the main narrative thread. I will use another story – Jennifer's – as an example to demonstrate one of the different ways the stories were utilised through the process. This story is more directly lifted than others and though the character morphed somewhat in that the storyteller became Emma, a youth group leader, the scene in the play was all about sharing stories within an LGBT youth group. This scene parodies such settings and provides the 'comic relief' with light humour, which shifts to darker humour as

Emma tells the story about her experience at school when another pupil found her bicycle helmet and urinated in it as a way to ostracise and intimidate her. Listening to Jennifer tell her story the first time was a poignant moment. The response from the rest of the group was tangible. In translating that story into performance, it was made more theatrical and it was embedded within a scene that served to make a point about the existence of support groups for young queer-identified people, and enabled us to re-tell several stories about discrimination. The response was very similar in performance, when the audiences heard the flip-side of what was once a nasty practical joke. The school students wanted to know if that story in particular was 'real', it having struck them as significant.

The young participants' own understandings of the complexity of gender and non-normative gender identities challenges popular conceptions, such as those found in television documentaries and the 'freak show' presentations popular in the contemporary talk-show genre I have referred to in previous chapters. Instead, this group of young people, and ultimately the play, aimed to portray the consequences of living in relation to the stigma that young trans people encounter due to those popular misconceptions. By entering into mainstream settings to challenge this populist view, there is an insistence on demonstrating the right-to-be as a gendered being. Just as the performers in Chapters 2 and 3 were making themselves the subject of their own stories, so too are the young people engaged in arts projects which invite them to articulate their emergent identities and communicate that articulation to audiences.

Applied theatre puts a person or group of people at the centre of the work, developing a theatrically grounded practice around the needs of that person or group in order to benefit individuals and potentially society. 'At its most

generous and altruistic, theatre practice encourages [just such] collective forms of social citizenship, a process of self-identification with others' (Nicholson 2005: 33). Applied theatre can be said to operate from a core principle of knowledge production that relates specifically to the notion of transgender identities: the application of particular theatre or drama practices, in the context of a group of young transgender individuals for example, to a negotiated issue or idea, or a more concrete skills-based exploration such as writing and devising for performance. In making a distinction between theatre practice and applied theatre practice, the differing values underpinning therapeutic, rehabilitative, educational, or transformative interventions are brought to the fore. The context of an intervention, whether it is a school, prison, or a group of young transgender people, plays an important part in the practice. The interrelation between aesthetic choices, the particular medium or approach (whether it be playwriting, site specific performance or a series of workshops) and the particular community for whom the work is presented is key. To complete the use of example, I return to whether or not the *Brief Encounters* project achieved its aim, and in doing so, create 'good art'. Audience feedback centres on the use of 'real' stories, the 'genuine' and 'authentic' characters and narrative. This comes from the fact that the script is compiled from a lacework of stories from within the group. The audiences and workshop participants responded to the knowledge that the nine cast members were part of a 50-strong group, and these 'real' stories have been lived experiences for somebody in the writing group. That is what impressed them, and what created an impression in each space that the piece was performed and discussed in.

Success, for this project and other applied theatre project work that I involve myself in, is based on the ability of the final performance piece to 'effect' the desired impact on the target audience, or its educative ability. The dramatisation of the personal stories may for some of the audience have provided new information but the strength of the work is cited in the dramatisations' ability to augment knowledge with evocative and tangible examples which are transformative because of the artistic experience. Talking about the way that art and knowledge function in relation to one another, John Dewey says 'in both production and enjoyed perception of works of art, knowledge is transformed; it becomes something more than knowledge because it is merged with non-intellectual elements to form an experience worthwhile as an experience' (1980: 302). The target audience experiences moments and stories from the lives of the writing community and the learning was almost a by-product that resulted from the unexpected direct disclosure, of often concealed or re-figured experiences. Swortzell's assertion that art cannot be created by committee does not stand up here. This was good theatre *because* it was devised by committee. This was its strength. The project met its aims in that the school audiences responded with empathy and engaged in the dialogue that the participants in session one of the writing workshops hoped for. There was not a 100% extreme change in understanding for every single one of the 430 school students that saw the play, but there was a clear indication that they learned something new about gender, from the meaning of words like trans and genderqueer, to the ways that some people live their gender identity.

Issues around difference, representation and intervention underpin critical understandings of applied theatre practice and help to shape future practice in the

field. There are differing agendas, principles and assumptions behind the full range of applied theatre work. The relationship between such agendas and the styles and forms of drama illuminate the potential of such work: understanding the relationship between the intention of applied theatre, the art form and the community in which it takes place is vital. In considering how access to the arts and in relation to the focus of this chapter, devising and performance skills can enable, the praxis of facilitation, the design and leadership of projects and strategies for delivery are important factors. As the project co-ordinator and a facilitator, I was primarily concerned with the negotiation of the art form and the politics of speaking *with, by, about, or for* the community of young trans people in this project, and how voice, authority and ownership were to be negotiated.

In his recent work for young people Edward Bond's commitment to theatre as an agent of social change and that children are the instruments for this change is clear. His belief is that the imagination is a device through which young people can learn to take responsibility for themselves and so the world. He states:

Imagination is needed to ask why. Imagination and not reason makes us human. We are self-conscious. Imagination and self-consciousness cannot exist without each other, they are aspects of each other ... Reason seeks the rational, imagination seeks the logical – either as fate or freedom ... If we are to be human there is a logical practice of imagination. More, the logic of imagination requires us to be human.

(Bond 2000: 113)

Therefore through performance it is possible to explore what it is to be human and recreate ourselves. I am interested in a praxis that supports and strives for reciprocity within negotiated working processes for participants and facilitators

in the Sci:identity project. These processes enable exploration of the relationships between lived experiences of gendered identity, and scientific and medical discourses of sex and gender. Knowledge, in this context, is situated within, and outside of bodies; intelligence is gendered and bodily. As a facilitator, working with other practitioners and with a diverse set of individuals for the first time on this project, I was grappling with putting the notion of transgenderism as an act of collaboration or transaction between a trans person and their presentation of self and the reader(s) of that act into practice. The young participants' identities in the context of the Sci:identity project, had been previously unreadable, or unmappable to talk in Butlerian terms. The consequence of this was that as narratives were fixed onto bodies, or constructed in relation to bodies when we began to collaborate, a process of undoing and redoing identity ensued within a shifting mutual negotiation between learning, knowledge and power.

4.2.2 Initial collaborations: The Sci:identity project

Myself and two other people (film-maker Jay Stewart and sociologist Dr Alison Rooke, who would become the evaluation officer) developed the concept of the Sci:identity project and submitted a bid for Wellcome Trust funding in October 2005. Two main phases were planned: firstly a series of arts workshops for a group of 18 young transgender and transsexual people aged between 15 and 22 who were living their sex and gender with a degree of complexity, and secondly, a series of 16 outreach workshops in various settings. The outreach workshops were intended to reach a variety of audiences including school and college students, trainee drama teachers, young people including LGBT youth,

secondary school teachers, youth workers, arts practitioners, educationalists, activists and those working in the area of equalities and diversity policy and delivery. We planned to make a documentary film about the arts workshops, which would be shown in the outreach phase with the aim of communicating the content and model of the project, and the life experiences of the participants to a wide range of people who were most often coming across the notion and the lived reality of transgender for the first time.²

One key function of this film was to re-present the experiences of the group as they explored the ways that the science of sex and gender impacts (or does not) on their lives as young transgender individuals. The film incorporates images created by the participants (film pieces & photographs), interviews that they carried out with medical professionals and older members of the trans community, and footage recorded throughout the workshops as part of the documentation of the project. The project as a whole drew on scientific explanations of sex and gender differences such as differences in the brain, hormones and their effect on behaviour, chromosomes and their function, and hormonal and surgical sex reassignment, as well as the moral and ethical issues that are raised by sex reassignment.

The bid for funds was successful and a lead-in phase began in February 2006. This involved recruiting participants for the project and approaching professionals who would be willing to participate by offering science lessons, facilitation of arts workshops discussion sessions, or by being interviewed by the young people. The creative engagement phase of the *Sci:identity* project ran

² The documentary is called *Sci:identity – What's the Science of Sex and Gender?* and is usually screened as part of an accompanying workshop or presentation from one of the original project team members. It was not widely released because of issues of confidentiality for the young participants. Since its initial screening, three of the participants have requested that their image be anonymised and we are still responsive to those requests. See Appendix D.

between March and June 2006 and culminated in a multimedia and performance art exhibition of the young people's art work. From the outset the project had four specific aims:

1. To increase public engagement with medical and biochemical knowledge of what male/female "sex" is and how sex is assigned, i.e. chromosomally, hormonally etc.
2. To develop and extend creativity and expression through an interdisciplinary arts project with young people in order to engage with complex ideas of sexed and gendered identities.
3. To establish a forum for discussion around bioethical concerns related to issues of sex determinism.
4. To carry out embedded, participative evaluation.

The project worked with young transgender and transsexual people learning about science in relation to their own sexed and gendered identities. The sex which one is assigned at birth, sets us on a course for life. The biological shifts that take place during adolescence in relation to sex and gender are critical. This project was established with the aim of opening up discussion of this aspect of biomedical science. Historically society understands sexed identity through a medical and biological framework. Gender, on the other hand, as has already been established, considers the cultural phenomena or life experiences of how

people attribute masculine and feminine characteristics to themselves and others. This project initially engaged a group of trans youth in an exploration of how sex and gender are defined. Sex is defined in various ways. Medical professionals for example, do not consider the biological karyotype when assigning a newborn baby with its sexed identity. If we appear male, i.e. have male genitalia, we are labelled 'male' but the participants were keen to ask whether this is 'science'. Biochemical sex is defined by the absence of the Y chromosome. The main sex hormones are testosterone and oestrogen. A transsexual person may be born with XY chromosomes, have female genitalia, but will *feel* male. As a result of this, he will take hormone therapy and/or have surgery in order that the body be aligned with the feeling so one question under investigation was whether chemicals make us who we are.

Evaluation was a key part of the project and the strategy was broad and adaptive in its scope, encompassing evaluation of the processes, the outcomes and the impacts. A framework was used to document the extent to which the project was achieving its aims and objectives on an ongoing basis (as opposed to a retrospective evaluation). This framework also identified the impact of the project on individual participants, including the young transgender people of the first phase through to the audiences and workshop participants of the later phase. The process of evaluating the project was participative and embedded. One of the criticisms of evaluation practice is that where an 'outsider' evaluates a project or programme she may bring little understanding with her of the realities of people's lives, only ask the questions that she has decided to ask, and interpret the answers using her own perceptions. James Thompson unpicks this problem in specific relation to applied theatre practice, suggesting that '[W]e are only ever

visitors within the disciplines into which we apply our theatre ... We may be familiar with the theoretical debates that inform the practices in these places but we exercise that knowledge from a particular position' (2003: 20). In addition the experience of 'being evaluated' or researched can feel dis-empowering so at the heart of the participatory evaluation of the Sci:identity project was an understanding that the evaluation would be part of the processes and an opportunity for practitioners and participants to reflect together, learn from that reflection and take that learning into subsequent phases of the work. This recognises that staff and participants had the knowledge that is crucial in the development of models of good practice for working with transgender young people in the areas of arts and science education, and more broadly for pedagogic practice. Through workshops and discussions the participants and staff team agree the terms of the evaluation together. Practitioners discussed the potential impacts of the project and agreed ways of measuring those impacts, while the young people, in workshops and in online spaces, discussed what they felt the strengths and successes of each session of the workshops were, as well as the weaknesses.

In building on early experiences to enhance the learning of all participants and inform the delivery of the project, we also facilitated reflection workshops which were used to inform evaluation, and footage of those sessions was included in the subsequent documentary. Multiple methods were employed in the evaluation process with the evaluation team attending and taking part throughout the whole project. Other methods included maintenance of log books during the arts workshops phase to record reflections, creative ideas, questions and observations, the use of a weblog and dialogue with parents and carers of

participants.

4.2.3 The participants come into the frame

Before looking at the work of specific individuals, I will outline the process of gathering a group of young trans people and provide an insight into the range of the participants in the project.

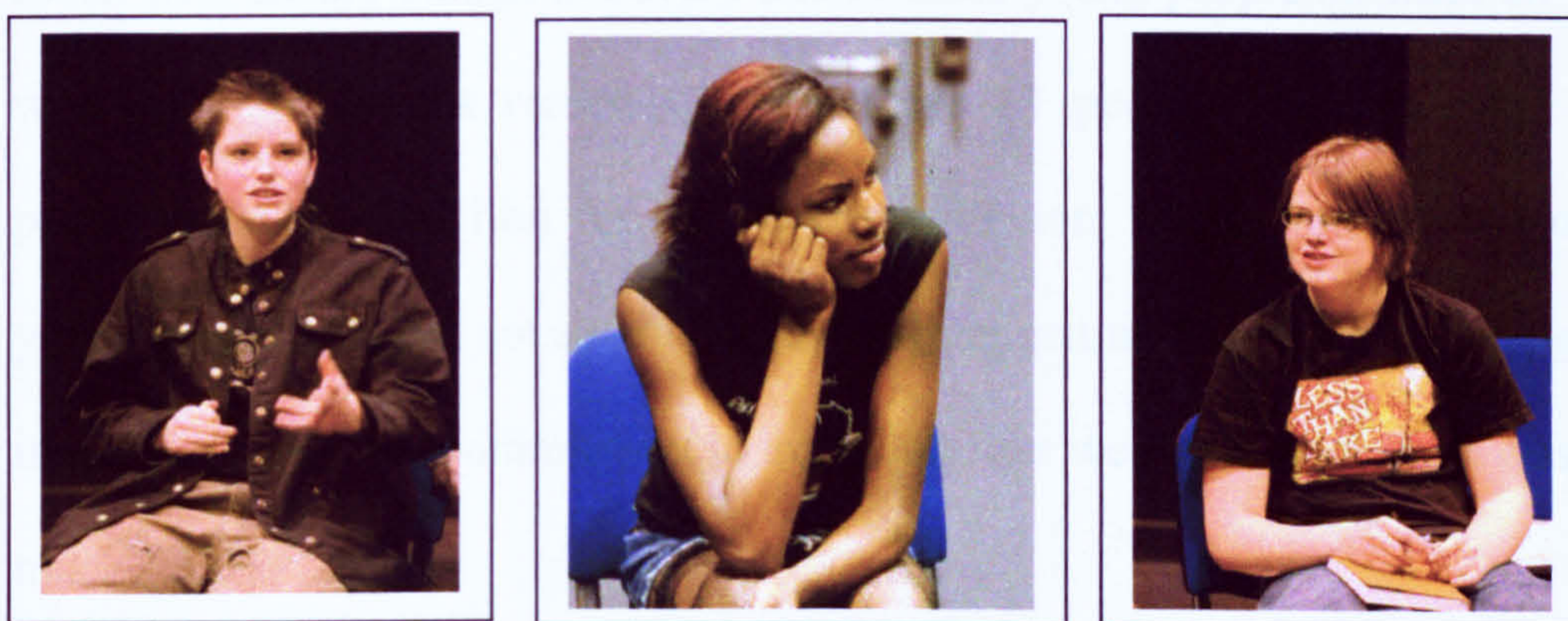


Figure 4.2 From left: Cedrik, Charline and Pig, participants in the Sci:identity project.

Of the 18 young people attending the workshops in total, 10 were self-identifying as male, 2 as genderqueer and 6 as female; 7 were from London, and the other 11 came from Manchester, the South West, County Down, Merseyside, Lincoln, Halifax, Essex, Leeds and Wales. There was a period prior to the first weekend of workshops which involved publicising the project in several ways. This included direct communication with the young people who attended FTM London (a social and support network for people who are FTM, or think they might be), when Ricky, Nic, Ethan and Finn all registered their interest.

Word-of-mouth and communication through various web-based discussion and network groups led to Cedrik, Pig, Sam, Benji, Zoya and Ollie making contact with us through email. We circulated information about the

project to a range of organisations that worked with young people, and one fruitful source of interest came from the care system. Care workers made contact with us and after providing information about the project team, the project's focus and the arrangements for accommodation provision over the weekends, Vienna, Leone, Michaela and Dana were set to join the group. Youth workers involved in various LGBT youth groups put Charline, Jay, James and Rathen in touch with us and though not every one of these young people attended all four weekends for various reasons, it was these 18 people who generated live performance, art and film for the project exhibition. There were several other young people who did not attend the project after getting in touch and finding out more. For some, the commitment to attend all four weekend workshops was too much.

Email was the main mode of communication during the weeks leading up to the first workshops on 22 and 23 April 2006. This was to provide more information once a young person or worker got in touch after seeing the initial e-flyer, and then to engage in conversation where an individual had questions. The young people's questions were about whether we would perceive them to be 'right' for the project, whether we could accommodate their specific needs in terms of travel, accommodation, and about people needing reassurance where they were apprehensive about attending a group arts project (whether this was due to their own lack of confidence around being in a group or more specifically related to a lack of experience in the arts). These initial approaches were useful in helping the project team to gauge the range of individuals who were likely to arrive at the first session and given that we had never embarked on such a project

before and were not aware that anyone else had, these indications were invaluable:

i'm a 17 year old FTM and would really like to get involved in this project. it is possible that i can make all the workshops. i have a lot to say about being trans and am looking forward to expressing myself and meeting other transpeople my age, as i only know a couple! please keep me posted on this. (Participant R)

On my case load I have a young person who is 22 years old. She would have been closed to me but I have been allowed to work with her longer due to the fact that this year she will under go Gender Re-alignment surgery, Your project sounds wonderful and something I know she would have loved to participate in, is it possible to inc 22 year olds? (Leaving Care Worker X, Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service)

I have a cunt and (small) breasts and am biologically female. I'm not 'going anywhere' (i.e. I'm not transitioning via surgery) as I explain to other queers, but I identify more as a pansexual genderqueer boi, because I don't feel 'bi' fits me as I'm attracted to people outside of 'male' and 'female' identities. I don't feel feminine in a female way, more in a faggy prettyboy way, and I don't see myself as a butch dyke either. I like fooling around with gender, I don't really feel like gender applies to me, I don't see myself as a strictly gendered / sexualitied person when relating to homosexual and heterosexual males and females. I go through life with probably 80-90% of people who meet me for the first time or casually (bus, shop, bar etc) think I'm a straight bio boy. I'm just 'Pig' to my mates (it's not offensive, it's been my nickname for about 10 years now) and I think the likelihood of me being transsexual would probably be higher if the surgical results were decent, but I'd rather be sexually happy in a girl body than having a somewhat male body and feeling more awkward with (potential) sexual partners...I also find that when in the past when I was say 14-19 years old that bouts of self harming and anorexic type behaviour would go hand in hand with 'trans' feelings...but I feel like society 'transes' me, when I'm actually ok with my physicality and don't want a flat hairy chest particularly. But if by some weird magic I woke up as a boy one day it wouldn't change anything about me, other than how I piss and fuck.

Sorry to be so graphic but there's no point sugar coating it is there?

(Participant P)

Hi. I'm fifteen and FtM transgendered. I heard from a friend about the Scidentity project. I was wondering whether there was any space left on it. Also, I live in Somerset, so if I went to the workshops I would have to stay overnight there. If you provided accommodation, where and who would I be staying with? (Participant C)

These individuals were among those who did arrive for session one as well as Ollie, who was using a girl's name at the first weekend. By the second weekend, he re-introduced himself to the group as Ollie and asked that we use the male pronoun 'he' when referring to him. One of the initial exercises on weekend one was to talk about names and pronouns and make it clear that in this group, we would all agree to use names and pronouns of choice. Young people who were identifying as trans, or thought they might be, as Ollie did, yet were usually addressed by their birth name and pronoun, were able to make clear their wishes and the group would respect those wishes. Ordinarily, when a young person begins to talk about being trans and asking people to address them using a different pronoun or name, this can become a point of tension for friends and family and we wanted the participants to be able to assert their preferences within the space of the workshops and not be undermined or refused. Ollie chose not to return after the second weekend and told us that exams and some tension with his parents were the reasons. Ollie did not give much information at that point but did email later to say that she felt that she was not trans but was identifying as a lesbian, and she was sorry if she wasted anyone's time. Email communication continued for a while between this young person and myself as the project coordinator, to reassure her that she had not wasted anybody's time

and that she was most welcome at the exhibition and at the screenings of the rushes when we moved into the second phase of the project. She also kept in touch with the facilitators who led the live performance group and the material she generated in the sessions she did attend was taken up by other young people and used in the exhibition with her consent.

To mention specifically two more participants, Ethan participated fully, attending all four weekends. He was 19 and at art college at the time of the project and was a member of FTM London. Ethan's parents were supportive of him, attending the exhibition in June and the documentary screening in November. Ethan was good friends with Nic and the two of them attended more than one LGBT youth group in London. They were active in terms of telling other young trans and queer-identified people about the project. Ethan started taking testosterone around December 2006, so shortly after this first phase of the project. Nic also began hormone treatment, in March 2007. Finn was another participant who began transitioning and, having seen his GP around May 2006, he made his experiences with the National Health Service the focus of his film work on the project.

Michaela did not attend the first two weekends because she found out about the project relatively late. She was one of the participants who got in contact through the care service in Merseyside and she was 15 years of age so needed two care workers to travel with her to London if she was to attend at all. This was arranged and funded as part of the project in time for her to attend the second two weekends, and the exhibition. Interestingly, in the liaison prior to meeting her, her care workers were using a boy's name and the pronoun 'he' when we spoke on the telephone. Given the context of all of the other

communication I had had with other people, this led me to expect a young trans man at our first meeting. I assumed that the care workers were working with this young person, who they happily acknowledged was trans and by he-ing him, they would be relating to him in his chosen gender. However, my expectations were challenged and though the care workers did still use a male name and pronoun, Michaela introduced herself to the group on Saturday morning by telling them she didn't mind which pronoun they used and they could call her Michael or Michaela. By the Sunday, she was Michaela and her involvement and response to being part of the project that weekend brought the issue of the participants moving from this environment back into their everyday lives into view most sharply. Michaela had not been to London before, nor had she stayed in a hotel. Nor had she met any other young people who identified as trans. She spoke about not being able to wait for the next weekend of workshops and said she did not want to go home. This sentiment was similar for other participants. James continued to say that the events that brought the group together from the workshops from April to June 2006, to the final outreach session which he attended in March 2007, were the things he looked forward to and 'kept him going'.

This issue of involvement in an exclusive project will be addressed in the next section, as part of the analysis of the function of arts projects for young people in relation to their emergent gender identities. Creating a place that brought young transgender people together to talk about gender and begin to articulate their understandings and new knowledge as generated during the project, affords the participants a visibility and a status that they say they do not ordinarily have. This chapter argues the value of both enabling those things

within a trans-safe environment, and then drawing on the experiences and products of that environment, making trans more visible and putting transgender identity more firmly on the agenda in mainstream settings.

4.3 Working within the community: The Creative Engagement Workshops

4.3.1 Re-presenting the invisible

The nature of education, learning environments and curricula connect with the conversations, debates and activities that took place within the Sci:identity project. Conversations about gender diversity are not happening in schools. In a group interview carried out as part of a later piece of research with some of the same young people into transphobic bullying in schools, the following comments were made:

Our school pretends to be all inclusive and everything 'cause we had a lesson on sex and relationships and all that sort of thing. The only thing we got was a reassurance that homosexuals aren't paedophiles. That's as close as it was. I've still got the piece of paper and it says it. (Participant E. Interview, 05.05.07, Appendix E).

I've gotta say, that if this was done in sex education in year 6, and in year 9 and all that, people would understand it more, and therefore they wouldn't be as afraid of it. Therefore there'd be less bullying. But, transsexualism, and homosexuality, are just seemingly pushed under the carpet. And it's you know, sex education is just 'men have willies, women have fannies' and ... and that's how babies are made (Participant R. Interview, 05.05.07, Appendix E)

It was the view of the young participants that school-based learning and teaching related to gender was limited, conservative and hetero-normative. Discussion about human biology which includes a more complex range of gendered bodies could be built into the Biology curriculum but currently is not. This subject could be located in the Citizenship or the Personal, Social and Health Education curricula but it is not. Consequently, a range of negative impacts emerge within social spaces which are largely uninformed when it comes to gender, such as bullying, harassment and discrimination. Young gender variant people testify to withdrawing from the learning process because they feel their lived experiences are not reflected or represented within the curriculum and they are therefore marginalised in the school environment. Trans young people articulate their perceptions of the limits of a curriculum that does not do justice to their experience and perpetuates ignorance about trans lives.³ The Sci:identity project offered a learning environment similar to a mainstream school setting, in that it was structured, with clear session aims and objectives. The science and arts 'curriculum' of this project directly engaged with the participants as learners in a way that enabled them to see themselves as part of the discourses explored. The young people and the project, through the public exhibition of work, the documentary film screenings and the phase two outreach sessions, demonstrated that it *is* possible to represent and explore complex gendered identities and that

³ Current research carried out by Stephen Whittle et al. (2007) (*Engendered Penalties: Transgendered Peoples Experience of Inequality and Discrimination*) shows that young trans people are suffering high levels of violence and abuse. This report, which reviews existing research on trans peoples' experiences, found that 48% of respondents had been victims of assault, including sexual assault and rape, and 78% had experienced verbal harassment. Whittle's research shows that many of those people working with young trans people such as school teachers, school psychologists and social workers have not received training in trans awareness and perpetuate negative attitudes and transphobia.

non-trans young people in education are interested in debating and making sense of gender normativity as much as those who might identify as transgender.

During the outreach sessions, non-trans young people in schools demonstrated a sophisticated awareness of the cultural work that gender norms do, and some of the ways that they too find them difficult to negotiate while, at the same time, expressing the fact that this subject was not something they ever talked about. The outreach sessions drew parallels between these experiences and those of the trans young people foregrounded in the documentary in order to deepen understandings of trans. The experiences of the young trans participants in phase one clearly demonstrates that they ordinarily feel marginalised and excluded from mainstream statutory settings in an educational climate which does not provide learning opportunities related to trans identities, gender complexity or awareness-raising regarding phobic behaviour connected to gender. This should not be something that is put in place solely to support the minority of trans identified young people but should be part of a general education which teaches respect, diversity and difference:

Schools don't teach about being transgendered or transsexual. Schools don't even talk about being gay. How much happier I would have been if I could have known earlier? How much easier would it make it for so many children and young people if they could know they weren't alone? How many lives might have been saved if only, if only, someone in authority would acknowledge the necessity for young people to know that it's okay to be different, to be gender variant? How many people are still searching for an answer and not finding it? How many will never find it? (Participant N. Contribution to project 'Zine)

The staff team worked to ensure that the workshop space was one in which the participants could discuss and explore their gender identity with safety

and creativity from the outset. A main priority was that young transgender people would be able to gather and work productively in an environment free from discrimination. This was attended to in the first session when the group along with the practitioners established a working contract that set out the ground rules for the rest of the time spent as part of the project. The first response to the request for suggestions for rules and boundary-setting was that we discuss pronouns. As mentioned previously, each member of the group then stated their name and the pronoun they preferred the group to use. This is indicative of the strategies employed to develop a gender-safe space. Some participants were using a name and pronoun in their preferred gender for the first time and some chose to change their name and choice of pronoun throughout the life of the project as they tried one thing and then another in a public domain. Rather than adhere to names and pronouns given at birth, this was an opportunity to claim the right to be treated respectfully as the gendered beings the young people felt themselves to be, even when that identity shifted. Invisibility was a factor for these individuals as they lived their lives every day, and it manifested itself in another way as several of them commented that they had never met another trans person before coming to this project. Many said they had seen television programmes or films where trans people or characters were portrayed, but most knew only one or two other people, or none at all, other than through on-line virtual groups. The fact of gathering people in relatively large numbers, in real space and time contributed to the creation of a gender-rich and therefore 'safe' environment:

Probably the most challenging thing for me was that it was the first time I'd met other trans people, and that I met, what, 15 of you at once, but I

also think that was a really good way to be introduced because there was such an overwhelming variety of people, all with their own opinions and ideas and styles ... it completely shatters all the stereotypes that people have about trans people because everyone there was just so different.

(Blog Entry (Cedrik), also recorded in Rooke & Gooch 2006: 23)

One of the key features of the Sci:identity project was the way in which the Sci:identity participants engaged in scientific creativity. Rather than being passive recipients of science education, science and art were things that they did and things they made use of in the workshop space, and beyond. At the heart of this process was a biographical narrating of being transsexual and transgendered, which often contrasted with the current medical diagnostic version of transsexuality. In this process, the participants were able to communicate the far-reaching consequences and difficulties of living as a young trans person whilst simultaneously developing individual and collective critiques of the science and medicinal practices which reproduce the coherence of sex and gender. This was exemplified through some of the artwork. Early discussions about the exhibition lead to the creation of the 'grey area' which was an area in the exhibition that worked to undo gender binaries. Installations in this space included a large toilet cubicle with the walls covered in comments that the participants had heard when seen to be entering the 'wrong' toilet, a collage 'buying into gender' showing gendered consumer goods, a video installation showing two participants playing with clothes and gender stereotypes, and a sculpture of gender-stereotypical clothes which had been subject to some modification. The artistic space opened up an alternative to scientific paradigms. Rather than sex being a matter of certainty found in verifiable evidence of scientific facts, art offered the opportunity to communicate the humanity of trans with dignity and pathos.

Participants drew on their own life stories to communicate the experience of being young and trans. The themes of the exhibition reflected the young people's concerns and passions. These included 'passing', relationships with family and friends, coming out, feeling different from the 'norm' and negotiating places such as clubs, bars, toilets and trains.

The use of autobiography in the artwork produced nuanced representations of trans. While the medical paradigm for understanding transsexuality (enshrined in the *Harry Benjamin Guidelines on the Treatment of Transsexuals*) as a fixed way of being with a predetermined treatment route and life path the art work focussed on the participants' own experience of transsexual and transgender identities as a variety of different journeys and potentialities.

I want to analyse two specific contributions to the exhibition, which was open to an invited audience. Approximately 100 people attended the exhibition of work at the end of the creative engagement phase, and the audience comprised professionals from a range of LGBT organisations such as: Schools Out!; the Gender Identity, Research and Education Society; Mermaids (a support group for young trans people and their families); Care Support teams connected with some of the participants; medical professionals who are involved in the treatment and care of transsexual and transgender people; members of the trans community and friends and family of the participants and staff team.

4.3.2 Exhibiting oneself: Finn and digital media

The critique of popular and medical conceptions of trans is perhaps best illustrated in some of the vignettes that make up the short film titled *Trans*

Journeys (Appendix F). In the autobiographical films, the participants offer their own accounts of their journeys. These are journeys which do not necessarily follow an A to B trajectory and which embrace being trans, i.e. that trans is an identity in and of itself, in a way which intelligently and playfully challenges the popular understandings of the temporality of trans lives. This was demonstrated throughout the project but illustrated in Finn's work clearly. Four young people formed the film group. They used a structure whereby three individual 'stories' are told in three very different ways within the one piece. Finn also chose to exhibit a series of photographic portraits of himself. They are shown here to offer a visual representation of this participant and the images have a thematic link to his film.



Figure 4.3 Finn (photography exhibit). Photographs by Sam Nightingale.

Finn was 21 when the project began. At the start of the process, after the first weekend, Finn expressed a clear response about the scientific information

presented and discussed. He wrote the following on the weblog: 'the most challenging aspect of the weekend for me, was the science talk and the thoughts and feelings it always evokes in me when biology is mentioned' (24.04.06, also recorded in Rooke & Gooch 2006: 18). However, by the end of the creative engagement phase he had used these feelings to make a film based on an encounter with medical understandings of sex and gender when he approached his GP to ask to be referred to a gender identity clinic. His explanation of what happened follows:

My doctor called it the 'gender determination department'. When I said to him no it's the gender identity clinic, and he didn't know any of the doctors names, so later on I wrote 'To Dr Richard Green' on it.

He describes his experience of the appointment:

So I talked to him about things and he immediately turned away from me and listened to me, but pretended to fiddle about on his computer and stuff, and then eventually he wrote this: *'This 22 yrs old asked me to refer her as she has not been feeling fully female, has felt more male gender in her physical and mental activities. Her menarche started late 14, and her sexual organs showed reasonable development. She denies any hirsutism, would you kindly see her for further investigations'*

Finn had negative and frustrating experience with this initial approach to his GP. From the content of the letter, it seems that the GP had no knowledge of transsexualism and may have referred Finn for investigations into whether he was intersex. Finn then took this letter with the intention of reworking it until it made sense to him, as he explains here:

I'm gonna read [the letter his GP wrote] out and change it and change it and change it until it's completely relevant to who I am, not to how my doctor with his ignorance had to write it. I'm going to adapt it and change it 3 or 4 times, each time changing it a bit more to suit. There will be a progression; cause that's what a transition is; from what's not acceptable/not real to a better place. [...]

There's going to be a voice over with imagery; shaving on a beard then plucking it off. I'll be playing with gender visually. A close up of me is enough to make people question gender. If that's on there as a visual, the letter isn't isolated. It will be with visuals; that's important because if I'm in the video shaving you can be more challenging.

Finn's concept shows a tension in types of knowledge. On the one hand there is an articulation of a dominant hegemony through a repetitive reading of medical notes, whilst through this repetition (which becomes an adaptation) another articulation comes into play – that of self-actualised processual change which uses the acts of shaving/removing/applying the male secondary sex characteristic, facial hair. This 'other' knowledge is framed for a non-trans (as well as trans) audience, so it articulates within the terms of a binaried gender system with its codes and structures. At the same time it shows a more fully embodied expression of the experience of negotiating that system for Finn who, at the point of making the film, had yet to commence hormone treatment.

4.3.3 Exhibiting oneself: Luca and live performance

Secondly, I want to talk about a monologue delivered by Luca, who was 14 at the time of his engagement with the project and he travelled to London from Bangor, County Down in Northern Ireland for the residential weekends. He is a female-

bodied young man. This work comes from the live performance group, which came to develop several autobiographical pieces. The drama facilitators were responsive to the participants during the first weekend of sessions in terms of their interests, skills and the possible forms that could be explored. Prior to meeting the group, the team planned for potential modes of working and skills delivery to include devising, directing, acting techniques, and puppet or object theatre. It transpired that personal narratives were what the group wanted to base their self-expression around, and this sub-group was the most transient in terms of participant attendance so devising short scenes and monologues allowed the most flexibility. New participants could be accommodated when they joined the project after the first weekend, which Luca did.

The monologue was titled *Life through Distorted Mirrors*. In performance Luca sat centre-stage and spoke into a microphone. He has a soft voice and his delivery of the monologue was very simple. He spoke directly to the audience, beginning by telling them ‘I’m just going to tell you my story.’ He talked about being the only boy in an all girls’ school, and how he thought all little girls wanted to be boys – that he didn’t know there was anything different about him when he was young. He talked about meeting a girl through Gay Youth UK (now the Queer Youth Network, The UK's National LGBT Youth Organisation) who identified as transsexual. This led him to come out to her as trans, and over time come out to his mother. He said he was worried about that but did not need to be because ‘mum doesn’t judge’. He closed with the statement, ‘People who judge you for what’s between your legs and not what’s in your heart, I say more fool them.’ Luca’s monologue allowed the audience an insight into the process of coming to know himself as transgender, and the way

that meeting other people played a fundamental role in his own identity formation.

Meeting and knowing other people and discovering their experiences of gender provides a set of realities and possibilities for oneself. Just as the spectators of the *FTM Full Monty* as discussed in Chapter 3 were looking at the range of bodies displayed on stage and figuring themselves into the scene, imagining how their body could become, these young people are drawing from what they learn as they encounter people in their everyday and virtual lives, and in the project workshops. There was a moment in a rehearsal where another young participant, Michaela, was having trouble remembering her lines, and one of the facilitators was trying everything to get her to relax. She suggested that Michaela think about the idea that performing this monologue might be like chatting – just chatting to a friend, in order to move her away from the sense of performing to an audience being a daunting prospect (as she'd never performed on a stage before this project). Michaela objected strongly to the idea that her words were 'just chat'. She spoke about the fact that for her, this monologue is not dealing with frivolous, fun subject matter, but with how a person feels and how they negotiate the world when the world is not accommodating them. Michaela, Luca and the other young people in the live performance group were committed to the idea that their part in the exhibition would communicate their understandings of sex and gender and the way that society has dis-abled them, rather than enabled them and 'allowed' for them as legitimate beings.

It was the coming together, and the critical masse of young people with something to say, that made this work significant. Following Dwight Conquergood's (2002) argument about the position of knowledge in research we

can articulate the corporeal knowledges of the young people in the Sci:identity project. Not only in these performances is there a sharing of a particular perspective on being in the world, but also a sharing of a bodily praxis with a community who may be more able to *feel* this knowledge, as Conquergood says:

The state of emergency under which many people live demands that we pay attention to messages that are coded and encrypted; to indirect, nonverbal, and extralinguistic modes of communication where subversive meanings and utopian yearnings can be sheltered and shielded from surveillance. (Conquergood 2002:148)

Conquergood is speaking here of the surveillance of the 'dominant' (and specifically the anthropologist). The performances serve not only as a way of articulating a particular moment of trans but that it also demonstrates a kind of knowledge or a way of knowing and showing (Conquergood 2002: 152). Through this kind of 'coming together' that these performances bring about there develops a kind of fringe hegemony – one that has the potential to foreclose identity. However, equally, in the case of these performances such hegemony enables participants in the community to articulate a particular experience of the world within the terms set out by the community and they do this not just with words, but through bodies. To refer back to the descriptions I gave above, of Finn and Luca, through the notion of 'the reveal', not only in terms of the knowledge that it served for the community – through perhaps an affirmation – but at the moment of revealing bodies by their physical presence on stage, there was a public announcement of a legibility that is most often not articulated in such a direct public manner. Through this articulation of legibility, a legitimacy

of a private corporeal praxis emerged in a celebration of the visible public trans bodies of the young people.

Helen Nicholson suggests there can be a 'productive consonance' between what some arts practitioners separate out as a product/process binary or division, e.g. the processes of making meaning are as creative, interesting and productive as the point at which a piece of work is shown (2005: 4). There was a clear sense of the compulsion to tell one's story among the group of young people working on the project and the telling of stories was part of the process of coming to an understanding. The act of articulating an account of personal experience to another, produced meaning and understanding for the individuals involved, which then led into the production of artistic work. So this was a multiple process. As a staff team, we understood that the act of storytelling within sessions is not straightforward: not *everyone* wants to tell theirs, or feels the compulsion to make their personal experience public. We were interested in finding ways for individuals to mediate the extent to which the synthesis of scientific discourses and personal experiences became 'public', either within the sessions among their peers or as part of an exhibition of work derived from these explorations.

Our responsibility as arts practitioners was to provide choices in terms of methods of exploration, modes of expression and media of communication such that participants were able to use autobiography and draw on personal stories, but in a way that would not expose their vulnerability, or even lead them to perform something they may later regret in terms of revealing the personal in a public space. In this project, for example, it is likely that a participant's relationship to their image as it appears within the documentary film will shift and change over

time – the consent they gave during the project must be flexible enough to accommodate a change of mind, were one of the young people to ‘go stealth’ in future and object to their being shown as transgendered. I will return to this point more fully in the next section in relation to appearing as trans within mainstream settings.

That the workshops were focused on making art for an exhibition was made clear from the outset. We were all working towards that event and its audience. We talked about the exhibition in the pre-project publicity and from day one of the workshops. However, there were individuals in the group who only fully understood at a late stage that the ‘audience’ would be other people, not just us as a group, viewing each other’s work. Some of the participants were working in a more insular, processual way, exploring their own stories in the company of others, as distinct from selecting aspects of their personal narrative to create work as a way to say something to an audience. There are differences here, and while on the whole a ‘productive consonance’ was evident, we surely restricted or stifled certain processes too. Understanding the complexity of the process of joining a group and exploring a question rooted in the discipline of science, using the arts as a medium of expression for one’s personal responses to that question and mediating those responses for audiences were critical to the quality of the participants’ engagement with this project.

4.4 Engaging beyond the community: The Outreach

Workshops

Phase two of the Sci:identity project involved moving beyond the exclusive group of transgender young people and into a wider context to continue debate and discussion with young people in school settings and LGBT youth groups. Here, I offer reflection on individual sessions and unpick the stages of the outreach phase, drawing out some of the key developments of the practice of working with different groups of young people who often know very little about transgender people's lived experiences. The intention was to deliver approximately half of the outreach workshops with LGBT youth groups and the other half in educational settings (schools and colleges). However, only two workshops took place in schools and this section investigates that circumstance, looking at statutory education settings and the barriers that existed when seeking to gain access with this project. The issue of the current lack of support for professionals who work with young people in the area of transgender and other non-normative gender expressions emerged through this phase of the project, and is also addressed in this chapter.

4.4.1 Planning and delivery of the workshops

The original young transgender participants took a much more involved role in the outreach phase than was anticipated at the point of writing the original bid. I had expected most if not all of the young people to cease a sustained involvement with the project after the creative engagement phase due to other commitments. The outreach workshops were scheduled to run from September

2006 and several young people were due to start university courses, for example. However, continued engagement with several of these individuals was unexpectedly good practice, in that having representation of their perspectives not only through the documented art work they had created but also through their literal presence as part of the workshop facilitation teams enhanced the scope of the discussion and the nature of the new participants' engagement in schools and youth groups.

The staff facilitators' role and presence were critical to providing structure and form for the workshops but young people were able to speak with other young people without mediation through adult facilitators. This contribution has been documented through the project evaluation as a longitudinal individual impact of being involved in the earlier creative workshops where being involved in enterprising and risk-taking activity, expanding cultural horizons, increased confidence, and being able to adapt to group situations increased social and cultural capitals.⁴

Planning for the outreach sessions considered the triple focus of the outreach activities in terms of the intended contexts we were aiming to enter. These were LGBT youth groups, and the Citizenship and Biology curricula in schools. One strategy to stimulate ideas in the first of these two meetings was to open up a conversation about the documentary film. At this point, the rushes had been screened once to the participants (with a second screening scheduled), so as a staff group we were able to discuss their comments, and the ways they seemed to be engaging with the various stages of the production of the film as well as its content and potential impact on an audience. We developed the main aims of the

⁴ Project reports (parts 1 and 2) both available at <http://www.goldsmiths.ac.uk/cucr/publications.php>

workshops and wanted to talk about gendered identity as appearing everywhere in the world, to gather experiences of gender among these groups and to explore the notion of the 'binary' as a term and concept. We wanted to use original participants' work from the arts workshops as a stimulus. This included the main documentary film, the film-group's short (*Trans Journeys*), the 'zine and examples of their art work. Not all of this material was used in every session. We wanted to make links to art, and gendered representation in images, and explicitly use 'binary' as a term to leave with groups, as a new way to think about gender. Where we had longer sessions, so with youth group Gay and Lesbian Youth in Caulderdale (Galyic), for example, we explicitly asked the question about the relationship between the arts and people's sense of self in relation to gender. Artistry was commented upon by individual participants as being a productive vehicle through which to communicate (Durham Young Gay Men's group), and when we used the 11-minute film group's piece, the three different forms and styles was a focus of discussion.

Over the intervening weeks, the Venn Diagram exercise was developed and became a key feature of every workshop, regardless of the setting. This exercise served as a benchmarking activity, for us as facilitators to gauge the range of existing knowledge and understanding of the three key terms of the project/workshop (sex, gender and science). The sugar paper diagrams, sometimes completed in small groups and discussed as a whole group, sometimes completed as a whole group with one of us scribing, provided a written record of this starter activity. We did do more than just capture existing levels of understanding and awareness here though in that we began to expand people's understanding within this first exercise because it is of course, logical to

question, challenge and extend individual contributions at every opportunity within a one-off session. So the sugar-paper diagrams as artefacts represent and document this synthesis of processes.

We also used a teen magazine style 'gender quiz', which became known as the Gender Matrix (see Appendix G). The principle behind the exploration of gender stereotyping developed into this game, though the original idea for this was to use a fictitious character within a more active and participatory drama-based exercise. By using this method, we would have been providing a layer of distance between notions of gender expression and some of the tensions and challenges that can arise for young people. We talked through several scenarios where the separation from direct personalisation would be beneficial, so for example, in a mainstream school classroom where one young person is already the victim of low-level phobic behaviour and attitudes. However, we decided this exercise in looking at the workshop participants' own relationships to and experiences of gender should be direct and should ask them to consider themselves rather than an abstract 'character'.

After having seen other people's experiences of gender on film, we wanted to shift the focus more firmly. How the workshop participants then brought those personal experiences into a group discussion or follow-up activity was carefully structured such that greater or lesser public sharing was possible. The significance needed to be the initial private contemplation of personal experience.

Workshop plans were developed for the first three sessions (for an example, see Appendix H). From then on, each session was adapted using these as a basic template, and any specific requests from youth workers or teachers,

and our own perceptions of the needs of the groups and the time allocated for the session were factors in that planning. Experience also led to shifts and changes; so, for example, as we tried the Gender Matrix game each session, I honed the instructions, the guiding questions and the framework for analysis so that we got closer to the level of reflection and consideration of the social construction of 'man', 'woman', 'male' and 'female' that we wanted to see in the sessions. We made decisions about which terms and concepts we wanted to introduce to participants.

Language and ways of thinking were key strategies for us and we wanted to encourage participants to experiment with new words. We had talked about the age or stage when each of us as facilitators had first become aware of the complexity of gender, and first came to understand and use terms to help us communicate what we were learning about our selves and the world around us. We felt if these workshops could provide a way in, in this respect, for some of the young people we worked with, it would be a successful (but difficult to measure) outcome. In fact, many of the end-of-session evaluation cards demonstrate that the terms 'gender binary' and 'gender spectrum' were enjoyed and retained. We were continually surprised, though, by the differences in each group's responses, the extent to which they wanted to dwell upon certain points and the level at which they engaged with the simple and complex concepts with the session, which I will now move on to discuss.

4.4.2 A change of direction

With the outreach programme, we intended to take workshops into approximately 16 groups, each time working with an average of 20 young

people. We felt that the nature of the work necessitated a relatively low facilitator/participant ratio, but we planned to bring the work of the project to approximately 300 individuals overall. During a four-month period from October 2006 to February 2007, the project team delivered sessions across the UK in places such as Yorkshire, Durham, Brighton, Manchester, Portsmouth and various boroughs in London, e.g. Lambeth, Lewisham and Harrow. The workshops took place in a range of youth groups within community and educational settings such as secondary schools and LGBT youth groups and organisations. We did work with 16 groups and the nature of the groups was more varied than anticipated. For example, we worked with a group of 38 trainee Drama teachers from the Central School of Speech and Drama (University of London).

While this workshop did not directly engage young people under 22, it emerged that professionals who work with young people were keen to develop their awareness of the issues at the heart of the Sci:identity project, with a view to them becoming better informed and better able to actively promote a respectful attitude to gender diversity. We also ran a workshop as part of the London LGBT Youth Council launch event in 2007 where the participants included young people, youth workers and Police Liaison Officers. These participants selected to attend the session because of the specific focus on transgender identity, again with a view to developing their knowledge and understanding of this identity category.

Each workshop had core elements and activities as well as range of additional specific components that were structured into the session depending on the context we entered. The core elements were closely connected to the

central question we ask throughout the Sci:identity project (What's the science of sex and gender?), so we continuously come back to questions of birth-assigned sex, gender roles and gendered expression as socially conditioned modes of being, and the relationship of these things to science and the medical world. This framework gave the sessions a clear focus, and whether the participants were young people of school age or trainee teachers or youth workers, we explored the key questions and ideas. In order to make the offer of a free workshop clear to prospective groups, a 'menu' of options was provided such that an institution or group could select the most appropriate focus for their needs. Debate and dialogue around the themes and issues of sexed and gendered identities and its relationship to biomedical science were connected to Edexcel A Level Biology and Biology (Human) Modules 5B & 5H (Genetics, evolution and biodiversity), where students look at gene expression and sex determination in humans, understand and interpret karyotypes, and discuss some of the social, ethical and legal implications of such genetic testing. We also offered direct engagement with elements of Edexcel AS Social Science: Citizenship module The Citizen, Society and the Community. This module requires that students study the impact of socialisation in creating differently empowered individuals, life chances and inequality, with a focus on anti-discrimination legislation and the citizen in the community, where forms of local action are explored, such as the notion of self-support groups who seek to enhance social inclusion.

The Department for Education and Skills (now the Department for Children, Schools and Families) issued guidelines for the delivery of Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) in July 2000 in accordance with the revised National Curriculum of September 1999. According to these guidelines the

purpose of SRE is to provide knowledge about 'loving relationships and the nature of sexuality as well as the processes of human reproduction, loyalty and fidelity' (<http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk>). It clearly states that sex education 'must not be value free'. It goes on to state that the provision should be geared to the needs of the whole class and that prioritising parental wishes is mandatory. The SRE guidelines are clear that classes are not to involve the promoting of sexual orientation as this would be 'inappropriate'. However there is strong emphasis on stressing that the value of family life should be promoted. The promotion of family life as the safe and secure normalised ideal is an interesting concept. Yet one of the three main elements of the government guidelines for the delivery of SRE addresses attitudes and values and includes 'learning the value of family life, marriage and stable and loving relationships for the nurture of children'. The guidance does recognise 'that there are strong and mutually supportive relationships outside of marriage'. And that 'all pupils need to feel that SRE is sensitive to their needs. It is also clear that teachers should be able to deal honestly and sensitively with sexual orientation, answer appropriate questions and offer support' although 'there should be no direct promotion of sexual orientation'. This is of course providing that parents have not withdrawn their offspring from the classes.

Children's rights will continue to be denied unless contemporary constructions of childhood are contested and there is a cultural shift that challenges dominant ideologies of childhood and its institutionalisation. By looking at the institutional context of children's education and rights we can see (especially through Sex and Relationship Education) that what is taught is in the service of dominant modes of gendered subjectivity. That is, while we are

reading the relationship between children and the state in education, there is a silencing of the non-normative and a reinscription of the normal. It is almost as if a child who does not or will not cohere to normative modes of subjectivity is invisible to Whitehall.

Approximately 20 teachers of Citizenship, Biology and Drama (which often delivers the Citizenship and/or Personal, Social and Health Education curricula) were approached in the first instance, and it became immediately apparent that response was very weak from all subject teachers. One Biology teacher responded and engaged in initial email discussion about the workshop but this was not sustained. No Citizenship teachers responded. Three Drama teachers responded, and from this, two workshops were booked. The two Drama departments who did host a session were at Deptford Green High School, in South East London and Haydon School in Pinner, Middlesex. In both instances, the subject teachers were interested in the issue of gender identity and were keen that their students experience the subject matter. Core elements such as the Venn-diagram exercise and the Gender Matrix quiz game were used with these groups, as with any other.

The first example and analysis of how learning around gender took place is with the Year 11 Drama students at Deptford Green High School. We began the session by re-capping the main themes, characters and plot of a play text they had studied the previous term. The group had worked on Olwyn Wymark's *Find Me*, which concentrates on mental health issues. The main protagonist is Verity, a young girl who feels increasingly alienated from her family and friends and becomes drawn into the medical system via psychiatric care. She experiences a lack of understanding from doctors, her parents and peers. Connections here with

the challenges young people can face when dealing with their emergent identity, particularly where that identity is variant in some way, were clear. We focused on the ways that the character in the play was treated by the medical profession and the care system that she entered. The parallel was drawn with treatment for gender identity disorders, gender's position within psychiatry and the options available to young people who identify as transgender or transsexual. From there, the core elements followed.

Deptford Green High School has over 1200 pupils. Students come from very diverse backgrounds, socially, economically and ethnically. The school is genuinely comprehensive in terms of students' abilities from those with special educational needs to those who are gifted and talented. Deptford Green is a specialist Humanities school with English, Drama and Citizenship as their lead subjects. One of the School Aims is to 'to provide students with an ability to understand and interpret the complex world in which they live, to confront honestly the moral choices that will face them, and to enjoy throughout their life creative, aesthetic and sporting activities' (www.deptfordgreen.lewisham.sch.uk). They claim to have gained a national reputation for their work in Citizenship, though in this instance we went in to the Drama department, and there was no connection made to the Citizenship department. We worked with Chris Da Veiga, a drama teacher, Ami Stott, a PGCE drama trainee, based at Central School of Speech and Drama and 15 students from year 11, aged 15 and 16. The teacher identified as age 40, and as a white African gay man. He was heavily invested in maintaining a culture of order within his drama studio as a way to support learning. I made this contact at the Central School of Speech and Drama's PGCE Drama Partnership in Practice

day, where school-based PGCE mentors come for training (this training was run at the time by a colleague and myself).

Chris expressed an interest in the Sci:identity project, and spoke about the fact that the school and his department do a lot of work around anti-homophobic bullying, and a workshop on gender would be well received. One of the students in the class was Kingsley, who identified as 15 years old, and as a mixed-race British heterosexual male. Kingsley was closely monitored and 'policed' by the teacher, with specific targeted encouragement to listen well, engage etc., and though he showed some signs of having a limited attention-span (being intrigued by the screensaver on the laptop, rather than the conversation at times), his contribution was strong in terms of his questions and comments throughout. His comments on the evaluation form and his apparent shift in opinion in terms of sexed and gendered identity categories were a strong indication of his level of engagement. He wanted to shake the trans male facilitator's hand at the end of the session, to demonstrate his appreciation of the workshop and the facilitator's honesty with the group. He commented that he had learned how to accept people, and that 'you don't need a penis to be a man' (monitoring form).

Christine and Alex (white heterosexual females, aged 16 and 15 respectively) were very quiet during the session and did not contribute vocally unless targeted. For example, I asked one of them to give me one signifier of maleness, letting her know I would come to her in one minute, thus giving her time to think. I was not sure if she was disengaged, disinterested or just quiet. She was able to give me an answer though and her monitoring form says she enjoyed 'learning about views and experiences and opinion from other people' and she learned 'about how the process of becoming a trans gender person

happens'. Alex's sheet is almost identical, though she says she learnt why transgender people change sex (rather than how). These two did not ask any question at all in the whole two hours but they were certainly listening.

At one point, there was a round of applause for the two facilitators who were both FTM and had spoken about their trans identities. The group vocalised their awareness that the facilitators were being open and talking about their personal experiences in a candid way, in an effort to give the group an understanding of the complexities of gender. The moment when Jay explicitly said he was assigned female at birth was interesting. The processing of that statement was tangible, and two or three students repeated what he had said for their own clarification. This was a critical moment that shifted into looking at the question of how a person moves from being a girl to being a man. Our instinct at this point was to allow plenty of time for discussion, as the group were genuinely interested and enquiring. We chose to dwell upon the clip of Richard Curtis (the GP and gender specialist that the trans young people had interviewed as part of the project) and two specific extracts of the *Trans Journeys* film rather than move into the practical devising exercise which would usually move the thinking closer to the students' own experiences because they were so full of questions and curiosity. This does mean though, that we connected to the curriculum in a somewhat tenuous way. Access to schools and finding a place where this workshop connected were straightforward at the planning stage but seemed to be things that were more difficult to put into practice.

The second example of the way young people experienced transgender within a statutory setting is with Year 12 Theatre Studies students in a workshop that ran from 8.40am to 10.20am at Haydon School in Pinner (for workshop

plan, see Appendix H). Finn, Jay and I facilitated again and evaluation officer Ben Gooch was also present. We connected the session with AS Theatre Studies and the students' prior learning in Drama by taking the style of the short *Trans Journeys* film and linking narrative structure and the telling of personal stories to the theatre practitioner Bertolt Brecht. During the first exercise (the sex, gender, science Venn diagram) one small group contained a student who was taking Sociology and Biology A Levels as well as Theatre Studies. Her contributions were strong, and she spoke about how 'mad' it was to bring all three subjects together in one discussion, so she was able to learn about sex chromosomes in men, women and intersex conditions, about the age at which socialisation in relation to awareness of gender roles develops, and about the significance of primary and secondary sex characteristics.

In connecting with the form of the short film, we explored the devices that the film-makers had variously used within their pieces of work (such as non-linear, non-chronological sequencing, narration, titling, music etc.) and looked at the ways these techniques communicated meaning and engaged the viewer with what it means to be transgender. The main activity was for the students to select one or two moments from their own lives where they have experienced the power or significance of gender expression, and present that 'story' using techniques such as those they identified as being effective in the film. One group put together a sequence of three incidents. This included: first, a young child asking a girl whether she was a boy because her voice was low; secondly, a scene with a daughter being encouraged to take up two different pastimes by her father (coming to a football match with him) and her mother (going to ballet classes) and feeling pulled and pressured in opposite directions; thirdly, a scene

where a young man was thinking to himself as he sat alone, about his own sexed identity. He wondered if he would rather have been born and lived as a girl.

The piece began with a still image of the whole group, all looking at the audience, asking in unison 'who am I?' and ended again in the whole-group composition, saying in canon/overlapping speech, 'I'm me'. They wanted to use multiple characters to communicate their understanding of the individuality of lived experience of sexed and gendered identity, but start and end as a group to try and portray a sense of shared experiences of the ways that gender is policed and constructed in the world. Individuals in this group talked in the closing ten minutes about their sense of never having thought about sexed and gendered identities before, in this much depth.

4.4.3 Workshops with LGBT youth groups

There were several sessions with LGBT youth groups. Here I will refer to three by way of detailing the development of quality of the practice, and the wider impacts the sessions had both on youth workers and on the original trans young men who joined the facilitation team. There were three workers at the Metro youth group workshop, which took place on the afternoon of Sunday, 22 October and approximately ten members of the group. This was a challenging session for many reasons. It was the first one, and the facilitation team included three young trans people (Nic, Ethan and Leone) and Jay who at that point had very little experience of facilitation. They all preferred to take a back seat for this session.

It being the first session, the planning was put into practice for the first time after which there were opportunities to re-evaluate timings, efficacy of

activities etc. The facilitation team's professional experiences generated a strong plan, with a range of activities, aspects of differentiation, variety in grouping configurations and teaching and learning styles, but not until we occupied the space, did we even begin to understand the dynamics, the space and the psychology of participation and the impacts of those things on the delivery. This principle is a given for me, and I expected to have a fairly rough ride in terms of timing, or smoothness of transitions between tasks in this session and as a facilitator, my expectations of myself take all of this into account.

There were already things I knew I would adapt while mid-way through an activity such as the Gender Matrix, or the discussion in response to the film. Reflection-in-action is part of my practice, as well as reflection-on-action, after the event. It struck me for example, that the documentary film was too long for this setting. We also decided to take out an exercise based on art images in order to give each of the other activities more time. It seemed that in delivery, the shift into looking at media representations of gendered bodies took the young people away from their own experiences, albeit into an interesting area of consideration, but too far away from individual experiences.

Leading the session myself gave me things to reflect on in terms of the ways we wanted to work effectively as a team, as we became more familiar with the contexts into which we were to take these workshops. I was aware, for example, that I had developed a particular persona as a teacher or facilitator over twelve years of experience, but that co-facilitating was a choice we made in terms of delivery of the Sci:identity workshops. We made this choice, along with bringing original participants into the facilitation team, in order to draw on a range of perspectives and skills. So having Nic (a young trans man) present, and

working with him to structure the ways he was to contribute would enhance the new participants' experiences. Meeting and engaging with several individuals' points of view and lived experiences within one workshop were for me more valuable for young people than working with just one facilitator. This is not always the case, and having a facilitation team rather than one individual generates a complex set of issues if it is to be done well.

Up to the point of the outreach workshops, we had been striving to work collaboratively with the original participants in specific ways, but there was still a clear and functional distinction between 'them' and 'us' for much of the time. In the outreach workshops we were looking to re-consider the relationships and move into a different way of working as 'we' (the wider Sci:identity team) began to work with another 'them' (the school and youth group participants). Despite this principle, in the first workshop, having Nic say he wanted to blend into the Metro group for various reasons, and see how people respond, and the other members of our team feeling variously reluctant, apprehensive or nervous meant I took on the delivery. The negative consequence of this was that I then closed 'gaps', by which I mean that in order for me to feel in control of the trajectory of the session, I did not leave adequate space for others to contribute, through an anxiety that I would be putting them on the spot if I spontaneously drew them in.

Planning for the second workshop (Step Forward youth group, East London) involved a very simple look at which activities both facilitators would lead, having been through that first workshop, so that delivery was shared, and we began to capitalise more on the option of being able to put teams together for this phase of the project. Maria was one of the workers present at this session, having also been at the Metro workshop two days previously. Working with her

was one of the most interesting interactions here in that she engaged very actively and asked several questions that she did not ask at the first session which varied from specific ones about bodies and biology such as ‘what’s menarche and hirsutism’, to more conceptual questions about gender expression. There were two other workers present, and just two young people, so including the facilitation team, we were a group of nine. The discussion was very different as a result of this group configuration, and we allowed more time for that discussion to unfold. We also took a new two-minute piece of film into this session, which collates some of the ‘science’ information in the documentary and looks at the moment of birth, when the sex of a baby is declared. One of the members picked up on a point made in this film short, that transsexuality is a psychiatric disorder, and related this to the history of homosexuality as a disorder. Scott, one of the workers, asked specifically about the history of trans, picking up on Andrew Levy’s comments about there only having been information and research around since the 1960s with the Harry Benjamin Guidelines (Levy was the endocrinologist interviewed by the original participants).

Maria used the female pronoun when talking with Nic, both at this session and the previous one where he was usually a member. This connects to his having articulated the ways he was feeling more and more uncomfortable at the Metro youth group. He had said that he felt unsupported by workers, and bullied by members so while Maria was engaged and seemingly very keen to develop her understandings of trans, there were unresolved issues around the ways that Nic expected and wanted to be able to present himself among his peers and those adults who were employed to facilitate his experience.

Youth groups constituted by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people and workers presented us with challenges and unexpected situations such as a lack of young people to work with. Trans Youth Manchester had recently acquired £11,000 of funding from Youth Opportunity scheme connected to Manchester City council to run a regional trans youth group. They had previously been trying to establish a group but doing so on a voluntary basis. I facilitated a workshop with this group, along with trans youth participants Finn, Pig and James. Attendees at the session were workers Tomboy, Lou Bailey plus one other worker who did not speak or participate, and two other people as participants, neither of whom were under 25 years of age, which was our remit. This session was a screening and discussion rather than a structured, facilitated workshop and Lou and Tomboy were very quiet throughout the discussion. The two of them were keen to meet with me after the session and this was perhaps the most useful outcome of the workshop, in terms of supporting them as workers. Their situation of having received funding but being relatively new to running a youth group, and neither of them being youth workers in a formal sense, led to their asking about how we made contact with our participants, how we had sustained contact with our group and developed the numbers, what we thought about their space and the lack of 'safety' because other young people could just walk into the centre at any time, and often did so.

I would not claim to have provided any particularly useful 'answers' but Lou commented that lots of doors had been opened to him, and that he was very glad we came to the group and showed the film despite the lack of young people in attendance. Finn shared the facilitation of the discussion, and was becoming more and more comfortable in this role at picking up on people's comments and

contributions, even where they were challenging in terms of immediate relevance and connection to the documentary and the project's themes. Pig and James were relatively quiet and their attendance was more about them being part of a Sci:identity event several months after the creative engagement phase ended, than their taking any particular responsibility within the session. However, Lou (the worker) commented that it was a bonus having three participants present, and he felt it really made it possible for people to feel they could ask questions.

Pig's contributions brought gender-queer into the discussions, which was particularly useful in that having three of the young people present communicated something of the diversity of gender expressions within the Sci:identity group. James was living near Manchester at the time and having him join us for the session was of personal benefit to him in that he tried to contact the group previously and had his email bounce back. Being there and meeting the workers and visiting the space made him feel more confident about accessing Trans Youth Manchester as an additional source of support in future. Once again, being present as a part of the facilitation teams had positive benefits for the young trans people, in part because they were at times in a position of being an 'expert' on the subject of gender and they were imparting their own experiences of thinking about sex and gendered identities with other young people. There were instances where a young trans participant was less vocal and experienced an outreach session with some discomfort, particularly the first one they attended, but each person had spoken of the positive benefits of participating in this way, for themselves and their own sense of their agency and also for the benefit of the other young people present:

The longitudinal impact of that raised confidence is evidenced in the ways in which they have continued to be involved in gender politics, whether on a micro-intersubjective level, through creative activities, or formal learning, and in the range of activities that participants have gone on to become involved in. (Rooke 2007: 21)

4.5 Conclusions

The distinctive educative force of theatre [however] – its dialectics – invites us to take up points of intersection and confrontation, so that our dramatic explorations do not simply calcify cultural and ethnic boundaries and limit our own and our students' abilities to affiliate with multiple cultural identities, productively maneuver across borders, and develop capacities for functioning in diverse situations. (Gallagher & Booth 2003: 11–12)

To invoke Kathleen Gallagher by way of final consideration of the creative collaborations within the Sci:identity project, the structure of the 12-month project enabled new creative encounters across multiple cultures because of the matrix of subjectivities present. As a result, both the end product and the process were facilitated via a border pedagogy that was 'attentive to developing a democratic public philosophy that respects the notion of difference as part of a common struggle to extend the quality of public life' (Giroux 2005: 20). During this pedagogical experience the original participants became 'border crossers in order to understand otherness in its own terms' (ibid.), and in turn, enabled the school audiences also to start crossing borders by offering the opportunity for them to engage by reading and critiquing new cultural experiences and languages which construct narratives and histories. This otherness is explored through a

notion of the possibility of a gendered intelligence, a form of intelligence akin to Howard Gardner's eight intelligences espoused in his theoretical work of 1983. Where Gardner suggested that people possess a range of different areas of potential such as spatial, musical or interpersonal intelligence, within the Sci:identity project, the suggestion is that a young person's primary experience of the world might be connected to gender, making them more acutely gender-aware, or more attuned to gendered expressions in the world. The manifestation of this would be an increased capacity for understanding one's own and others' signifiers with regard to gender expression. This recognition or privileging of a particular strength within the young people is then part of the process of their participation and engagement. By acknowledging the intelligence about gender that resides within the individuals in the group, those aspects of their selves are regarded positively and with value rather than with derision. Judith Butler reminds us that

[T]he critique of gender norms must be situated within the context of lives as they are lived and must be guided by the questions of what maximises the possibilities for a livable life, what minimises the possibility of an unbearable life, or indeed, social or literal death. (1999: 8)

The Sci:identity project opened up a space to critique gender norms and the apparent scientific certainties of sex which were situated in the complex context of young trans people's lives as they are lived everyday. The Sci:identity project offered a temporary space and time where young trans participants could experience support and respect and the possibility of a 'livable life'. It created a space to explore gendered and creative expression, scientific and popular

cultural narratives of sex, gender, and the meanings of transsexuality and transgender and to re-imagine and re-tell one's life narrative beyond simplistic accounts of being 'in the wrong body'.

Since the end of the project, participants have continued to be involved in gender pedagogy, whether on a personal level with their families, friends and associates, through creative activities producing music, 'zines, paintings, pamphlets, or as part of formal learning or political activity, being engaged in grassroots trans organisations. Four Sci:identity youth, together with two of the Sci:identity team became involved with the Department of Health's Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Advisory Group (SOGIAG). This group was established as part of the Department of Health's Equality and Human Rights team, which seeks to make healthcare in the UK more accessible to LGBT people and this link has resulted in the publication of *A Guide for Young Trans People in the UK* (2007). Gender is everywhere. Everyone has a personal relationship to gender and expresses gender in complex ways. In this project, multiple stories were explored and articulated by trans and non-trans young people and those engaged in working with them in a variety of settings by way of cultivating more intelligent approaches to gender diversity.

Chapter 5

Re-inhabiting an Uninhabitable Body: Interventions in Voice Production with Transsexual Men

If you've lived as a girl and lived with a girl's voice for so long, that completely destabilises you. That's a long-term thing to overcome ... it's kind of an emotional time for me ... I'm going to try really hard, I'm gonna conquer fear. (Jay, voice classes participant, 09.06.05)



Figure 5.1 Resonating against a wall, freeing up tension in the back and using text in voice workshops

I haven't ever felt like John had decided how I should speak. It has been a voyage of discovery which I think is still ongoing. The new techniques have been about learning about how my body and voice engage, how I restrict my voice by going too low or too fast ... and the ways that men talk differently from women. I think that many FTMs get stuck in their voice placement and the tension from surviving gets trapped in their voices. (Joe, voice classes participant, 26.06.05)

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores how intervention in voice production can contribute to, or affirm, a sense of identity among individuals from a particular community. Looking at the physical voice, voice as a theoretical concept, and voice as performative tool related to gender, I will develop an argument based on research findings generated by the Transvoices project. This was a 12-month project which initially aimed to create an opportunity for people involved in gender reassignment to work with their voices and understand the ways that vocal tone, register and range are affected by hormone treatment.

The extent to which voice is perceived to be a significant factor in the presentation of self in society generally, and specifically here for female-to-male transsexual or transgender individuals, is key to the work of the project. The chapter looks at how the project has facilitated an exploration of FTM transgender voices, and the ways in which the voice work of this project is connected with issues of gender identity and masculinity in relation to transgender masculinities and transsexual maleness. After an initial one-off trial session in June 2004, the content of an initial series of six voice workshops was negotiated in collaboration with a small group of FTM participants, voice and speech specialist, John Tucker and myself. A second and third series with three of the original participants followed. The project was developed to include a series for two new groups of 'beginner' participants in September 2005.

The theoretical assumption of the voice workshops was that with an increased physical and conceptual understanding of physiology and the relationship between voice, masculinity and expression, there could be the potential for participants to develop their relationship with their voice and body. I

sought primarily to explore the physical and intellectual aspects of voice with a view to developing knowledge and understanding and therefore, control of the range, pitch and tone of the voice. Over the duration of the project, experiences of masculinity and gender legitimacy were explored, both within and beyond the studio spaces we worked in.

The two participants whose words open this chapter speak of feeling 'destabilised' by living with a female body prior to transition and of living as a trans man, equating somehow to 'surviving'. Sandy Stone's 'The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto' (www.sandystone.com/empire-strikes-back 1991) suggests that trans people need 'to begin to rearticulate their lives ... as a political action begun by re-appropriating difference and reclaiming the power of the refigured and re-inscribed body' (p. 13). This raises questions about why or when lived experience for a trans person needs to be rearticulated and what the nature of this 'reclamation' of power over an altered body is. We might look at whether power over a body which hosts these senses of experience is indeed being re-claimed or re-articulated, or actually claimed in the first instance, through the act of embarking upon transition. I am suggesting that a structured exploration of one's voice could be said to contribute to the fifth stop on Henry Rubin's five-step trajectory for transsexuals which, for him, is 'making transition choices'. This stop, or point of choice-making requires support in order for people transitioning from female to male to manage, understand and own their 'refigured' voices and articulate that experience as part of the process of change.

Stone's use of the prefix 're' implies a beginning-again of such actions as articulating lives, appropriating difference and claiming power. One hypothesis that drove the planning for this project is that support throughout physical

change, and reflexivity within the process, might contribute to Jay overcoming his sense of instability. This supported process might help to avoid the tension that Joe speaks about – tension that can get ‘trapped’ in the voice – and furthermore, might enable a move towards a claiming of power and an articulation of one’s self that had previously been hampered. In this project and in this chapter, the focus is the ways that transgender masculinities and a spectrum of maleness are being negotiated. The voice is an aspect of a gendered identity and here, identities are being constituted as the participants investigate their vocal range, the things that are preventing a broader use of range as testosterone literally changes their anatomy and their vocal potential as individuals.

In the next section, there is further consideration of the notions of gendered identity, subjectivity and issues of masculinity for those transitioning from female to male that were initially raised in Chapter 1 as they relate to the participants of this project. Various notions of non-geographical community in relation to ideas of belonging to or feeling marginalised from society are opened up because of the nature of participation in this project. The methodology underpinning the project is presented. An explication of the three phases of the project then follows, with a focus on specific moments, incidents or exercises which communicate an aspect of the ideologies and principles of the work within the trial session, the initial collaborations in Series 1 and the later work of Series 2 and 3. Two key frameworks for analysis of the practical work are the use of character and role as a vehicle for experimentation with maleness, and Judith Butler’s treatment of the notion of the iterative act. The chapter then opens up to discuss the pluralism of representations of trans masculinity.

5.2 Transmale masculinities

I use three terms within this discussion of voice work and trans men. I will continue to use the term 'transgender', in its sense as an umbrella term for those within a political and social community who choose to identify with it, 'because they cross-dress some of the time, because they cross-gender live much of the time, because they undergo gender reassignment, or just because their gender identity or gender role is not conventional' (Whittle 2000: 16). I also continue to use the term 'transsexual', and use it in relation to individuals who self-identify as such. Most commonly though, I use the term 'trans men' when referring to the participants in the voice project. The men were a diverse group, with varying experiences of transition, subjectivity, identity and uses of language with which to self-identify. Within the context of a project designed and delivered with and for them, though, certain aspects of gender identity and masculinity emerged as significant among the group and across the community.

Voice work, and as a consequence, explorations of masculinity in this context of work with transgender and transsexual men, might be described as experimentation and 'rehearsal' within the studio in preparation for the performance or expression of the self in everyday life. This section begins with a discussion of the concept of gender, specifically the FTM subject position, sustaining the theoretical and experiential narratives initially raised in Chapter 1, but moving on to look at the ways that the participants in this project experience subjectivity on an everyday level. In that introductory chapter, I began to map various notions of community in relation to ideas of belonging to or being marginalised from society and concentrated on this in Chapter 4 when talking about the experience of the young trans participants of the Sci:identity project. I

will demonstrate the ways that the concepts and practices of ‘community’ are significant to the voice project, and link to notions of invisibility and ‘passing’, problematising the complexities of these terms.

Interventions in voice production throughout the project at the core of this chapter have contributed to the process of seeking a more habitable body for the participants involved. The chapter as a whole will explore the relationship between the desire to make one’s body a more appropriate body to live within, and the idea of a normative body, asking how we can avoid reproductions of gender and sex-normative behaviours and ideologies while supporting bodily change.

5.2.1 Trans male voices

Patsy Rodenburg talks about the differences she has perceived during her years as a voice and speech practitioner, referring to the ways that bodies, speech and voices are differently constricted, inhibited and controlled through gendered behaviours. Her examples include the tension required for a woman to sit with her legs together, as opposed to the relaxation present for a man who sits with his thighs open and his legs spread. She is acknowledging and describing what she reads as common trends, and she attributes these trends in part to social, historical and cultural contexts. Her comments are drawn from her experiences of working with a broad range of people of different nationalities, classes, ages and other categories. She makes one comment about transsexual people in *The Right to Speak: Working with the Voice*:

Many transsexuals try, mostly in vain, to alter the pitch of their voices to sound 'female' but usually have to resort to habits as a means of so doing. Our belief in a drag act, for instance, is as much reinforced by the high-pitched qualities in the female impersonator's voice as by the wigs and clothing. (1992: 74)

This set of assertions does not make sense. Firstly, all of the transsexual people Rodenburg is making reference to here are women, and her analysis does not consider FTM trans people's use of voice. Secondly she asserts that these women are trying to sound female, implying that they are 'really' men, thereby firmly supporting the idea that the body and voice are clear and distinct binarised entities and that gender is fixed – that a trans person never becomes their chosen gender. This does not take account of biology or of culturally altered bodies. Rodenburg does not accommodate a spectrum of gendered voice where a trans woman may have had a larynx and vocal tract that we would ascribe as 'male' at some point in history though she may also have had a tracheal shave and surgery to shorten her vocal chords as well as regularly injecting female hormones. These factors will affect her voice so while she may be trying to alter the pitch of her voice, a trans woman's voice will be more than just the result of resorting to habits.

My third objection to Rodenburg's comment is that a drag act here is clearly a drag queen, and to use a drag queen's performance as an example of a non-normative voice is illogical in that a drag-queen may or may not be a transsexual woman, but is not necessarily so. Many drag queens consciously use a deep, resonant voice, in part because it juxtaposes with the high-femme aesthetic produced through wigs and clothing. Most drag queens do not even use a 'high-pitched' voice. So while Rodenburg offers nothing productive in

theorising the transgendered voice, her call for 'the right to breathe, the right to be physically unashamed, to fully vocalise, to need, choose and make contact with a word, to release a word into space – the right to speak' (p. 3) is a call that I would echo within the parameters of this voice project with trans men.

In the introductory chapter, I talked about making visible people's work, and people's lived experiences through the act of documenting them. I also opened up the ideas of being visible to specific people, in order to belong with them as part of a community, or being visible to the whole of society as a trans person. By being seen on stage, by being read through one's naked transgender body on a stage in a bar, by being heard when you speak your story through a self-devised monologue, or in fact, by being part of the research processes involved in this thesis, the trans subjectivities at the heart of this research can be said to have come further into existence on their own terms. The issue of identifying people as trans, or making their transness a key and predominant factor of their being, over and above their being an artist, performer, young person or person with an emergent masculinity who has come to attend a voice class in order to 'group' or categorise the practice, has an impact on the practice and the individuals being looked at.

By concentrating on or foregrounding their trans identity by way of analysing various activities, I am doing something particular. Some of the performers and participants who feature in this research were out as trans and therefore visible as trans to whoever cared to see that facet of their personhood. Some people were not out, or were at an early stage in their transness when I was concentrating on them for the purposes of the research. The trans men who participated in the voice project were all involved in foregrounding their trans

identities as we investigated the impact of interventions in voice production together. The voice work they undertook is performance of a different kind to that discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. This performance work is not done on a stage in a theatre venue or as part of a cabaret act in a club, but rather it is performance in a more everyday context.

This chapter will look at how this kind of performance facilitates an exploration and constitution of masculinity as much as the kind of performance done by Lazlo Pearlman or Jason Barker. When the performance moves to the streets the connection with issues of safety, passing and visibility becomes ever more critical. Is a man striving for something that makes him feel more confident and comfortable such as a voice that is less recognisable as 'female', simply striving for a more normative presentation of self in a bid to pass successfully? Halberstam and Volcano suggest that

on the one hand, transgenderism expresses the detachment of new forms of embodiment; on the other hand however, as many transgender men begin hormones and start to live as men, transgenderism seems to confirm the dominance of gender binarism (1999: 128).

One might ask what can be done to avoid the reproduction of normative body ideologies within voice work with trans men but I would suggest that the trans men who participated in this project have a right to normativity when and where they want to access it. If they want to make their voices sound more masculine because it means they will speak out more in seminars for the course they are part of, or because they will be ridiculed less by people they encounter in public spaces or because people on the telephone will perceive them as male

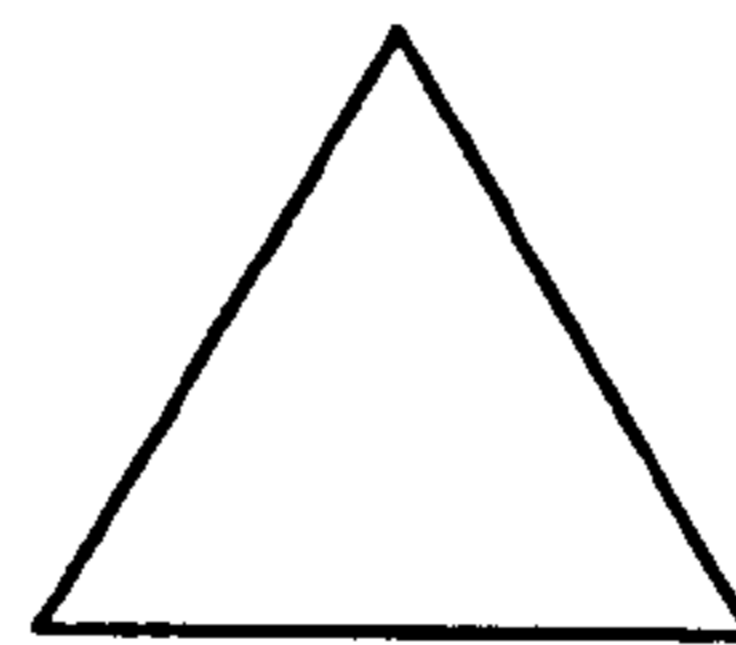
rather than female, which will cause them much less discomfort, to critique normativity as a lived experience, rather than simply as a concept becomes a more complex act.

5.2.2 Methodology

In investigating the questions that underpin the voice project, mixed-mode qualitative research methods have allowed for a range of approaches. My meta-theoretical predisposition, as well as personal and professional interests have formed, and continue to form, the basis for my initial and subsequent questions, comparisons and reflections. The primary methodological approach is ethnography though I have also drawn on Robin Nelson's notion of the triangulation of data sets where data comes from different aspects of the work in instances when practice forms some aspect of the research (seminar, 16.11.04):

Performer (participant) knowledge

Those doing the work and their tacit body knowledge;
Phenomenological 'inside' experience / 'know how'



Critical reflections

Locate work in a genealogy/ lineage/ tradition
Audience research – useful anecdotal level;
Practitioner 'action research' as you
make the work you make

Conceptual frameworks

traditional theoretical
knowledge;
cognitive;
spectatorship study
'know that'

Figure 5.2 Triangulation of data (Robin Nelson)

Nelson suggests triangulation of data as part of the process of dissemination and authentication of Practice as Research manifested through, for example, a DVD and complementary writing. He argues that this triangulation would take account of performer or participant knowledge, a conceptual framework and critical reflection. In the Transvoices project, the methods used to take account of 'performer knowledge' are ethnographic. Ethnography is an approach that enables an understanding of how the 'other' sees themselves, their experiences of life and their means of self-identification. Further, 'the image of the researcher is brought into parallel with that of the people studied, as actively making sense of the world, yet without undermining the commitment of research to realism' (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995: 19). In researching the ways that interventions in trans men's voice production can facilitate explorations of masculinity, I am bringing my world-view and my own history to the setting:

all ethnographers, regardless of their disciplinary grounding, actually approach even the most concrete, empirical description with a set of implicit questions that structure and schedule their investigations ... to ignore them is to 'write the researcher out' of the story being told and to present, as a consequence, an incomplete portrait of the group under study. (LeCompte & Preissle 1993: 125)

I have been a participant in events within and beyond the voice classes, where an ethnographic framework made it possible to observe the social world and interpret social realities of the settings, particularly in the rehearsal studio and the pub, after each weekly session. I 'participate, overtly or covertly, in people's lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is

said, asking questions' (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995: 1). As a researcher employing an ethnographic methodology, I ask myself what my responsibility is to my participants, both as a researcher and as a member of their and my community. I am seeking to represent the experiences of the participants as richly as possible, and from their point of view but also to describe their experiences fairly and with a certain degree of dispassionate 'objectivity'. The voice sessions were a physical, sensory, bodily experience for those involved and this made participant observation an appropriate method of enquiry. If certain kinds of knowledge can only be learned through embodiment, it seemed necessary for me to attempt to physically engage in the process. This would not mean that the way I experienced the work would lead me to how it was that others were experiencing the work, but we would all share the common experience of particular exercises, pieces of text and discussions of the work. This shared experience would also provide a frame of reference for evaluation and reflection.

Hammersley and Atkinson discuss the personal characteristics of the researcher within a chapter on field relations. As 'people in the field will seek to place or locate the ethnographer within their experience' (p. 80), certain aspects of a person's being, will have specific implications. To consider the suggestions that 'women may come up against the male "fraternity", from which they are excluded ... they may be cast in the role of the "go-fer" runner of errands, or may be adopted as a sort of mascot' (p. 94), each of these possibilities had interesting manifestations for me. Though I was the only woman among a group of male participants and a male voice teacher, I was also the person who brought the voice workshops project into being. The sessions were delivered at my place

of work and participants were aware of my job as a university lecturer there. I knew two of the participants prior to the project and had lived with one of them for a period of time, several years before. So while there was a semblance of a 'fraternity' among the men, this seemed to me to arise more from their having joined the group because of their trans status.

As far as being cast in the role of the 'runner of errands', where this did occur (and it did), I cast myself in the role rather than it being a role enforced upon me. Throughout the first series of sessions, I participated fully in each class, being as much a participant as anyone else. There were several purposes for this, which will be detailed in the following section, but my participation became less functional towards the end of the series so I took the role of observer from the beginning of Series 2. From this point I stopped sharing in the process of learning within the practical voice classes and took up a position in the corner of the room, watching, note-taking and filming as well as making sure the audio-visual equipment was set up prior to the sessions and making drinks for the participants at the break. These things contributed to a sense of my caretaking, but in a functional way rather than an exploitative way.

The idea of being 'adopted' as a mascot is perhaps the most interesting here in that the same three men attended the three series over a period of a year. Several additional men attended the trial session and the first series and as a way to publicise the work, I attended FTM London monthly meetings on several occasions, meeting more trans men each time. I am not a trans person, so under the 'rules' of community, I might be kept outside of the boundaries. I was invited to join FTM London when the organisation decided to invite such membership from non-transgendered people and I am now an associate member of the

organisation. This may be read as a signifier or an acknowledgement of the mutual respect that has developed over the duration of the project, so I find Hammersley and Atkinson's terms of adoption as a 'mascot' extraneous: the notion of the relationship between me as an individual and the community within which the project took place altered over time.

Through the project I sought to explore ideas and underpinning theories through literally 'doing' trans identity and voice work and looking at this notion of embodying masculinities, using the voice as the primary site for experimentation. This has been a performative exploration of a set of theoretical ideas. The next section documents the trial session and the collaborative negotiations that fed into planning for the first series of sessions.

5.3 Initial collaborations

A trial voice workshop run by voice teacher John Tucker, for a group of five female-to-male trans people took place in early June 2004 and was intended to offer a one-off experience, exploring aspects of anatomy and physiology relevant to the voice and one's own vocal range. Feedback was positive and suggested that there was scope to develop the project further. Through the first workshop, and within the ensuing series of six sessions, people did and would continue to develop their perception of what the male voice is on a fundamental level. Not every male voice is a bass. The male voice does have a lower fundamental frequency though, and there is less functional intonation, range and pitch. Barbara Houseman's work has influenced the approach taken in that she advocated that resonance adds depth and that any voice is capable of a wider range than that with which it operates on a daily basis. In seeking a lower voice,

accessing vocal strength, richness and complexity are the key. This section will present detail regarding the content and outcomes of the trial session and the key points which fed into planning for the second phase of the project. I will draw on and make reference to the DVD (Appendix I) as well as incorporating participants' responses and evaluation into the discussion

5.3.1 The trial session

The two-hour session was split into two parts, beginning with an introduction to key concepts and terms such as breath, resonance and energy. Physical activities with the function of freeing up the rib cage and chest led into us focussing on the idea of letting breath into our lungs as opposed to consciously taking breath. John's purposefully 'hands-on' style of teaching invites participants to literally feel the effect of an exercise such as exploring the extension of the rib cage when the breath is dropping in to the body, or the importance of the sacrum and the surrounding muscular structures in terms of centring the body and supporting the breath.

The second section of the workshop enabled John to work individually with each of us and for us to observe the effects of particular experiments as we watched one another. David for example, feels for resonance by placing his finger tips on John's neck, and then his own as he voices. The rich sound of what John described as a baritone voice, with tenorial qualities, developed markedly through the exercises. Charlie developed his awareness of the jaw and mouth. He was initially restricting resonance as he sang scales and as John demonstrated the way the jaw functions, using objects, he dropped his jaw and released that

tension. We heard resonance increase as a direct result of Charlie's alteration of technique. We moved on to apply the ideas we had explored within exercises, to a piece of text by working through various steps planned to release tension and maintain good use of breath to encourage a freer voice. The thought processes required to speak can inhibit the relaxed body, thus restricting the good use of voice, so this was a key element of the workshop in beginning to move us forward, beyond the studio.

The tension held in the body that restricts the voice working was the focus of the session throughout. A key aspect of this work is the participant's attitude about their voice and it is one of the most important factors in terms of any level of perceived 'success'. The principal objective of the workshops was to encourage a sense of security with one's voice and a development of the perception of one's own and others' vocal qualities. Whether or not the participants are, for example, taking hormone treatment was and continues to be irrelevant for the purpose of these sessions. Physical effects of testosterone will not enhance or inhibit someone's ability or desire to release the natural voice and strive for what they feel is a more 'convincing' sound. John stresses that:

It is important there's an acceptance that the new vocal posture won't feel authentic, as everything will be strange at first, and part of the ongoing process of change that you can consciously accept ... if an individual believes his new voice is pleasant and acceptable he must trust that he will eventually be able to adopt the new voice as his own but that it is a process of change. (Interview with the author, 17.07.04)

One participant's response came from David, who emailed after the class. It reflects something of the negotiated process that we as a group engaged in to develop a series of sessions. He wrote:

I agree and understand completely about [John's] view that working on grounding the voice is the basic thing from which all other specific requirements may develop, be they singing, speaking on the telephone or [talking] in a noisy room etc... I take the approach that the voice is an instrument and I just want to use it to see what I can make of it. In my art practice I am interested in the 'process', not in pre-determining the result... the lessons learned [in the workshop] apply to all areas of voice use - even ordering a pint. (David Muzo, email, 17.07.04)

Judith Challoner outlines her research findings in a chapter titled 'The Voice of the Transsexual' in Fawcuss and Freeman's *Voice Disorders and Their Management*. Though the title of Challoner's chapter implies a broad scope, which might feasibly make reference to both trans men and women, she in fact draws solely on work done with pre-operative Male to Female transsexuals (MTF) over a number of years as a speech therapist. She led 12-week blocks of sessions, which involved individual voice work, role-play and general communication skills. She developed a 'practical guide' for other therapists based on her own empirical observation. It is interesting to note Challoner's use of male pronouns as she discusses the MTF women she worked with. By deferring to the biological sex of the individual rather than their perceived gender in discussing voice and the transsexual, the self-identification of the individual(s) is negated. The therapy plan is divided into ten categories such as relaxation, elimination of chest resonance, intonation, peaking and lilt, and she suggests that these categories be used more or less as appropriate, after the

therapist has conducted an 'assessment'. She gives her criteria, which include questions such as 'is it [the voice] unmistakably masculine?' It is suggested that notes be made about how the client presents and again, guidance comes in the form of advice: 'One needs to record how he presents as a person, how intelligent he appears to be, his size, age, and appropriateness of his clothes and make-up' (2000: 234).

If I relate Challoner's questions or snippets of advice to my recent work with the FTMs, there are some problematic inherent value judgements in her framework. People come to a voice class for a variety of reasons, at a variety of stages in their transition, or indeed, choose not to come at all. I am not there to pontificate on their choice of clothing or their physique. I am not there to decide how masculine or feminine their voice sounds to me. I am there to facilitate their exploration of voice as a tool and their perception of voice (their own, and others). They have an autonomous individuality and each come to get something specific from me, and from the workshop. They may leave the session with something else, more or less than their expectations led them to want. They may have an unproductive session. They may have been challenged. They may have had fun. There may have been an emphasis on success criteria for Challoner as a speech therapist, as these professionals are often associated with a hospital. Her framework and method of 'assessment' and 'measurement' may be influenced by a requirement to be accountable – the need to record, monitor, report to a larger organisation in line with performance targets. I have fortunately been free from those particular constraints. I have been able to maximise the benefits of that situation and consciously work in a participant-centred way from the trial

session and subsequently, throughout the project. Their perceptions are the ones that count in terms of the work done in sessions.

5.3.2 Participant feedback

Two excerpts from a ten-minute discussion on how we might shape future sessions as we planned a follow up to the trial follow. The key points in discussion surround the suggestion of working on how people might speak on the telephone, particularly at work, where they are frequently 'heard' as women, an interest in male intonation patterns and the idea of the sessions offering an opportunity to engage in a process of learning to relax.

Charlie: I'd like to progress it further really, especially like, telephone work, cos like, you know, I might get a job and be on the phone quite a lot and people have said in the past that I've got a monotone voice which isn't very good for telephone work, you know, on the phone I sound a bit depressed or what ever.

CM: So more specific... kind of/

Charlie: /Well that's just one idea, doing telephone work and what you said earlier about projection, yeah...

JT: Mmmm

CM: For the pub thing?

JT: That's right! (*laughs*) to get your last orders in!

Charlie: It's terrible when they keep saying pardon and you keep saying it again and again...

CM: Mmmm

Casey: Maybe also, how to practice more of a male inflection. And that way of speaking because I think I've still got so many bad habits from when I was female.

CM: So in terms of intonation and...

Casey: Yeah, and going up and down at the end of the sentence. I notice women going up at the end of the sentence.

JT: Yep. Yep. That's a very good point because the use of inflection and voice pattern is quite different between men and women, but I would suggest that's actually again like projection itself, it's quite detailed work and what we would need is more ground work, opening the voice up and when you've got the resonance working, then you can start thinking I think more in terms of where you're putting inflection because it's possible that by going into inflection too soon, that you close the voice back down again because you're thinking to the end, but from the start you want to create that open resonance but that's a very good point. That is something to look at.

[*And towards the end:*]

JT: I mean... this is work I'd love to get involved in 'cos I think where there's a need, er, it needs support in way because you're not just dealing with a voice which needs help 'cos there's some constriction or something that one's not aware of, but voices are changing as well. You need support in a way to assist that and to keep that open and I think also, you were saying yourself, by being aware of how you're using your voice, you can actually allow change to be easier and allow change to open and develop in ways that you want it to as well. But again what's interesting is what Catherine's saying, about whether, I don't know whether that need is actually there - I mean that's what we're really asking, whether you feel that's something that's valid for you or something that you're looking for.

David: Well I/

Jack: /I mean if you could magic up a couple of lessons so that at the end I can walk out and I'm like (*in a mock deep voice*) 'well then, that was very good, wasn't it', you know, that would be wonderful (*people laugh*), you know, but (*in a mock high voice*) 'this horrible voice that I've got at the moment' ...(*laughs*)

David: I mean personally I'm kind of interested in the voice as erm, as a kind of... I don't really care about what I say or where I'm saying it, in what context, it's... I feel like the voice is kind of a sort of, I don't know, a kind of instrument or something I can develop in some way. You know, the idea of making noises that I didn't make before, kind of, you know, I think that if you go through that process of learning you have to let go and relax, then you can do any thing and make any noise with your voice and also you can speak in the right situation or whatever you want to do, so I'm kind of for more of the just learning to let go and use... make a noise, it doesn't matter what the noise is really.

JT: I think it's important to say that even after six weeks, your work won't stop, and the voice is for life, actually, er, and it's an instrument that changes, as you get older I mean as you go through the different stages in your life, the voice changes. It becomes a different instrument, so one is always addressing it.

Jack's use of humour and self-mockery in relation to his perception of his own voice is interesting and he specifically talks about wanting a 'magic' solution rather than a long-term experience. Perception of masculinity as expressed vocally seems to be of an exaggerated caricature. Jack's voice is not unusually restricted though his perception of his own voice is negative. John's interest, from a voice specialist perspective, is in the groundwork he sees as necessary with all voice work, particularly in developing resonance and changing habitual patterns over a sustained period of time. While some of the participants expressed a desire for classes that offered specific techniques for adopting a more masculine speech pattern, the sense that focused work on the voice needs time, repetition and sustained attention for genuine developments to occur, led to the imagining of a longer-term programme.

5.3.3 Collaborative planning

A six-week series of two-hour classes was planned, to build upon the work done in the trial session, initially re-visiting the basic anatomy, physiology, diagnostic work which was covered with those who attended, and introduced as new for those who did not. Over a longer period of time we planned to further facilitate the use of the body and the breath, the development of a more discriminating ear for hearing pitch and tone, and exploration of the perception of self and 'man' in relation to the voice. In direct response to the participants' feedback within and after the trial session, the series of classes intended also to focus on male speaking patterns such as the use of more directive and affirmative tones and the use of fewer qualifiers when speaking, a shallower expressive range and less rising intonation and less breathy voice qualities without the voice becoming hard. Articulation and resonance were key foci in attempting to explore lower tones.

The work of the Transvoices project is not to coach participants to speak 'like men', but rather to understand voice and speech in more comprehensive and complex ways. Lowering the voice, if we equate masculinity with lower tones, is something that participants want and through understanding the way sound resonates within the body and the ways fundamental frequency can be maximised, lower tones can be developed. Socialised interaction and non-verbal body language such as the mannerisms described above lead us into the broader terrain of gendered behaviour and a therapeutic approach which seems to seek to support assimilation. That speech therapist Lillian Glass (discussed in the introductory chapter in relation to the ways that mainstream performers perform roles of their 'opposite gender') conflates the voice and behaviour might be

indicative of her position as therapist, the role of the therapist being to treat voices which have been diagnosed with 'problems'. The Transvoices project employed a voice tutor, with an emphasis on technique and vocal practice. There is no overt therapeutic intention. However, it is widely acknowledged that

[e]xercises developed to open and free the voice can make anyone – male or female – suddenly vulnerable, tender and unguarded, rather like a snail without a shell. Work on this level can be intensely frank and personal. Human potential of any sort, once massaged and tapped can be powerfully revealing. (Rodenburg 1992: 17)

Rodenburg's passing distinction between men and women implies that it may be surprising that men as well as women can have emotional responses during voice work. This is a distinction that would surely contribute to a working environment where men feel more vulnerable and inappropriate if they do display or reveal, rather than undo that social expectation. The basic assertion that working with the voice is a personal and potentially emotional endeavour is one that I would agree with; however, I would also call for care and thoughtfulness in relation to the way that gender is theorised by practitioners.

It is suggested in Green and Mathieson's *The Voice and its Disorders* (1989) that hormone treatment for FTMs will automatically bring about changes in the voice which do not need any support. A drop in vocal pitch, whether it comes about as a result of being induced by choice or otherwise, is an unfamiliar bodily function and, as such, needs to be understood. A trans man whose voice 'breaks' needs to understand how to adjust to such a change before he can speak with assurance and confidence. An adolescent male has the right to utter the occasional sudden drop or rise in pitch as this is accepted as a characteristic of

pubertal voice change. As the voice is one of the key signifiers of gender (Griggs 1999: 3), a trans man is less likely to be forgiven this shifting pitch as he is in the process of finding his new 'adult male' voice. Rather, it is likely that he will be categorised as a woman as and when this unpredictable shift occurs in a public situation. The hesitance and reluctance to speak in public that participants have articulated so clearly is a result of worrying about this unpredictable voice.

The next section discusses the initial set of six sessions on the Transvoices project, where the model of practice was established and the planning process began to be embodied.

5.4 Resonance, discord and succession: Series 1

In this section I offer a detailed account of session 1 of Series 1 in order to establish the model and methods of practice. Significant exercises are explicated to demonstrate how they were employed as we began to work as a group, physically and in unfamiliar ways. Key moments where the studio work and the ways the participants took the work out into their everyday lives are highlighted and by way of an introduction, I begin by presenting a brief description of the six participants in order to provide a context for this work. All six men are white and of mixed nationalities including South African, Greek and British:

David – David attended the trial session and went on to attend the three 6-week series. At the beginning of the sessions, he was approximately eight years into his life as a man, having been taking testosterone throughout that time and

undergoing top surgery. He identifies as a gay man and was 47 when the sessions began.

Joseph – We first met when he began to participate in the first 6-week series. He had taken his first testosterone injection just under two weeks prior to our first session. He was in his late 40s at that point. He continued with all three series. He identifies as a gay man.

Jay – We first met at the 6th International Conference for Sex and Gender Diversity in Manchester, September 2004. He heard a paper I gave which presented the trial workshop. We stayed in touch and he then participated in all three 6-week series. He is Chair of FTM London, a social group for transmen in and around London that meets once a month. He identifies as heterosexual and was 29 when the sessions began.

Fraser – Fraser was contacted at the last minute, through Jay. He participated in the first series but only the first four sessions. He is South African and was scheduled to fly home mid-way through the series but we, and he, were keen that he take up a place that had become free due to someone having to pull out. At the time of the sessions, he was approximately two years into his life as a man and 28 years of age. He had undergone top surgery 18 months before these sessions and had further surgery (hysterectomy) scheduled. He identifies as heterosexual.

Casey – Casey came to the trial session and was interested in his voice specifically because he had no imminent prospect of beginning hormone

treatment and wanted to explore ways of accessing a more masculine voice through technique. He went on to participate in the six-week series. He identifies as heterosexual and his partner is a trans woman.

Alex – Alex attended the trial session and stayed in touch between June and November when the six-week series began. He is Greek. We met up at the 6th International Conference for Sex and Gender Diversity in Manchester, September 2004 where he and I both gave papers. He missed the first session of the series due to a range of personal matters such as illness etc. He attended the second session but then decided not to return.

5.4.1 Establishing the model of practice: session 1 (3 November 2004)

We started with walking around in the space, noticing how our bodies connected with the floor and how each part of our body felt as we walked. This is an intentionally simple activity to focus each participant and avoid a prolonged seated and passive introductory period. Physically moving in the space was intended to get people to inhabit the unfamiliar space as quickly as possible as well as introduce them to the activity of becoming aware of the body and its state of relaxation and tension. The participants in these sessions are not usually engaged in drama/theatre related activity. Two people in the first series had experience at practising yoga but on the whole there was a sense of anticipation and nervousness about what people would be expected to do. This nervousness manifested itself in people being physically tense and hesitant at the beginning of the initial trial session, and was not eased by our leading an opening, which saw

John and I speaking for an overly long period of time. The stress participants experienced over starting a new activity was something we wanted to seek to dissolve from the outset of this series.

John gave an overview of what the session would involve, this being an introductory look at flexibility and ease with the body, an initial consideration of breath flow and ease in controlling breath, leading towards resonating which is how we will come to understand 'good' voice use. This notion of voice use being qualitatively 'good' as opposed to bad is about working with people as they understand their own voice as being the voice they have always had; the voice that their body, such as it is, is capable of producing. This means understanding whatever tensions and habits they have developed, and the ways that those factors can inhibit the voice and produce an aching or sore throat, for example. Specifically in this project, understanding 'good' voice use will also be about understanding the impact of change on the body and the voice. Whether this is change that comes from moving from Glasgow to Cornwall as a child and hearing different accents or change that comes from injecting male hormones every fortnight, part of the practice here will be to understand the physiological shifts that come about as a result of such change. This first session then, was to set us up for looking at lower tones in the second session. We felt it was important that participants had a sense of progression from week to week and were able to see how feedback from those who attended the trial session had fed into the content of the series.

We began by considering our own physical alignment and the head-neck relationship as a key factor we needed to become familiar with. We felt our own necks and experimented with how they supported our heads. John asked us to put

our hand on his neck to feel the common constriction that can be felt when we subconsciously tense up throughout our daily lives. John used Jay as an example of someone who thought he was demonstrating a 'good' head-neck relationship but actually was not. He did this in order to communicate the fact that this is not a simple habit to break and that actually, our perceptions of our own posture are often inaccurate. Spine curls were then explained as an exercise and carried out to free the tension in the arms, neck, spine and muscles of the back and shoulders. We were led through out breaths, or a controlled series of breaths out, without breathing in before then 'un-torquing' the rib cage to get an idea of letting breath in rather than taking breath. Then we moved on to try a continual breath stream. Each of us did this in turn so John could see and listen to the release of breath. He was watching for weakening or inconsistent streams of breath in order to push us to sustain a stronger, more even stream.

Vigorous massage in pairs develops the awareness of tension and its release, tapping the back, the chest, the arms, the bottom and the legs while your partner hums to resonate. Bounce and response from the body is what we are aiming for as we massage to release tension. A major exercise that will enable us to find resonance and release the voice is humming into the wall. It was introduced in this session, and as with the other exercises, became part of a voice toolbox that we would be encouraged to use independently as we became more familiar and comfortable with it. We cupped our hands around the face and mouth and hum into the space that is created when one presses one's face/forehead into the wall. The exercise is intended to heighten the sensation of resonance by containing it. We then connected the strength of the previous breath stream exercise to the strength with which we need to fill the space with our

humming. We then moved away from the wall and voice a 'one two three four five', maintaining the sensation of resonance through the forehead and between the body and the wall, first in contact with the wall, and then as you walk backwards away from the wall. A good source of projection will be cultivated from revisiting this exercise each week. Individuals did this one at a time to enable John to identify specific habits that we are exhibiting so we can then focus on altering and improving them as we progress. David, for example, was advised that he could focus on elongating his neck so it doesn't close down the voice, resonance and breath stream. John commented that David's vocal tones had changed since the June workshop and that he may be dropping from a tenor to a baritone.

In the final activity of this session, newspapers were distributed and we looked through them until something triggers a response or comment, which we wanted to speak aloud. Joseph commented on the reported killings in Iraq. John went to him and asked him to repeat what he was saying and focused on certain actions (slapping his thigh as he emphasises a point etc.), which keep the voice open and encourages engagement. The intention here was that we use our bodies and language as we respond to the world we inhabit, in order for the modifications in voice production to be produced in direct relation to ordinarily occurring speech. In later sessions participants also use and speak text that is unfamiliar or 'real', such as poetry and play script.

5.4.2 Resonance and discordance (clip 1, Appendix I)

Many of the exercises from week 1 were repeated as we generate the 'toolbox'. One key activity in this session though was to work with three poems by Vikram Seth. We worked on the floor, voicing simultaneously while John moved around to each of us, giving advice and listening to the ways we were using our voices. This activity was an extended exercise which moved from breathing and voicing over various vowel sounds, to speaking the poetry. The emphasis was not on making a beautiful sound, but on exploring resonance while the body was in contact with the floor, as well as allowing time for the body to respond to the exercise and feel the effect of the activity on the sound being produced. As a participant, using language and words, repeated over and over again over a period of about 30 minutes led to a genuine sense of awareness of physicality and breath. The words became so familiar and their meaning was explored through the first few repetitions. Various shifts in concentration and focus took place so, for example, I used a lower range to explore the different places and ways my voice would resonate, I focused on the changing muscular tension that I experienced and I returned to the meaning of the language and how I heard the words I spoke, rather than what my interpretation of the words was as I read/spoke them the first few time.

Peer evaluation was encouraged from the outset of the series but participants were hesitant to comment on their own and each other's voices at this early stage. After the simultaneous voicing exercise, we each spoke the poem we had been using while the group listened and then responded to what they heard. There was a sense that we had a limited vocabulary to use when describing and were worried about getting our responses wrong. Perception of

the voice in a general and specific sense was newly developing and confidence at owning the language with which to describe or discuss was low. The rate of 'teacher talk' was incredibly high during these early sessions, where John was providing participants with new information and also supporting and nurturing contributions and analysis by extending and building on comments or responses, which at this point, were tentative and minimal.

Alex attended this session. He attended the trial class four months earlier and kept in touch in the interim period and returned for the series. He and I both presented conference papers on the transsexual voice at the 6th International Congress for Sex and Gender Identity in Manchester, September 2004. However, during this particular session, his conduct, manner and contributions were interesting and somewhat problematic. As he had missed the first class of the series, strategies were employed in order to welcome him and introduce him to the other five participants, as well as to reference exercises from that previous class so that he was clear about why certain activities were happening in this one. He positioned himself at the edge of the group during each of the exercises, and sometimes outside of the group, walking around the edge of the space when, for example, time was given to write in the reflective notebooks. He added comment within and after each instruction and explanation given by John, as if he had a need to demonstrate his own knowledge of anatomy and voice technique.

Communication with him after the class via email suggested that he felt the sessions were pitched at a level that was inappropriate for him; that the work was too basic and his level of experience had not been acknowledged. It seemed he felt he was under-valued. I was disappointed in this response as I felt we had been lucky to have worked with Alex within the trial session and our continued

contact meant John and myself did have an understanding about Alex's needs as a participant. Planning for the sessions included specific differentiation for Alex and his voice and the ethos of the work which emphasises the benefits of listening and perception in working with other group members was something we felt would be useful and interesting to Alex. He did not return to the project, however, and it is clear that his individual needs were not met. Neither John nor myself expect each trans man who engages with the Transvoices project to find the specific nature of the work relevant or useful to them and choosing not to attend or making use of exit strategies is an absolute right for each person, but in this instance what was frustrating was that I was unable to ascertain clear reasons why we had not provided what this participant wanted.

5.4.3 Simulation and actuality

The 'toolbox' is revisited during our physical warm-up in session three. Articulation (or consonant work) and calling and projecting, as opposed to shouting was the main focus. We consider the ways that low frequencies need time to resonate while higher frequencies need less space in the air and in our bodies to register in our ear. Generally, because the participants are consciously seeking to find lower frequencies, they are trying to speak at too low a pitch. This results in a forced sound which lacks resonance, having the opposite effect to that which they desire. At higher volumes, the voice cracks under this pressure and this unpredictable cracking or sudden high pitch can prevent the men from speaking at all. It is the voice that is liable to 'betray' or call maleness into question:

When we have drawn back, the voice will often be quieter and less expressive. Articulation will often be less firm and clear. The voice may lack support and resonance. There may be a sense of the voice being swallowed or trapped in the throat. Where we have overcompensated, the voice may be strident, and perhaps shrill or tight when emotional...although it may seem a strong voice it may still lack support and resonance and instead be pushed from the throat causing, in time, vocal strain. (Houseman 2002: xv)

This session focused on optimum pitch, described as the middle range of our individual voices, where we function best in order to capitalise on resonance. The challenge of ordering drinks in a noisy space had been identified as a difficult one for the participants during the trial session in June 2004 and much of the thinking behind the planning of activities was that they should be rooted in real life actions and scenarios. We practised calling out given lines we might speak when ordering drinks in a bar ('three pints please' and 'a packet of peanuts'), taking the time to remind the body of alignment, open and supported breath and engaged muscle structures (clip 2, Appendix I).

Towards the end of the session, we went out into the world to try these lines for real, leaving the studio and moving to a local pub. As we were about to leave, stage fright was raised as an issue of concern. Jay talked about having 'performance anxiety' at the idea of experimenting publicly and the risk that was involved in 'failing' at the task. Joseph commented on the level of self-assurance he felt he needed to call on during this exercise, which also focused on physical proximity. He acknowledged an awareness of his own experiments with assertiveness and a tentative exploration of a confidence to be present and

occupy physical and aural space within the exercise and again, more strongly, at the bar once leaning over towards the bar staff and projecting his order for drinks. Out of the negotiation of hegemonic masculinities and alternative masculinities, a new masculinity might emerge through the iterative acts carried out for each trans man: Joe is produced as a result of the acts and repetitions he engages with.

This challenge of using new knowledge in a tangible way once away from the learning environment arose again when Fraser agreed to answer some questions about his experience of the sessions up to this point. He was due to leave the country and would miss the remaining two weeks so we spoke briefly during the break of session four and I asked him several unplanned questions. He had experienced eight hours of the work and I wanted to know how that experience had been for him:

[This is a slightly 'cleaned up' transcription of the conversation which links Fraser's comments and edits out some of my interruptions, prompts and agreements. The original footage is on the DVD (clip 3, Appendix I)]

CM: *Tell me what's been good about the workshops.*

Fraser: First of all, it's been fun! It's not been like a boring thing of - you don't feel you're making an arse of yourself... I was quite nervous about coming to it, you know I thought I don't want to stand there making an idiot of myself but he does make you feel at ease - because everybody has to do it, it's not so much of a big deal. You get to know your voice

potential. I always tried to speak deeper but if you speak higher, it's louder. You learn a lot more about...

CM: Do you think even in the four weeks, you can get to know that?

Fraser: I've learnt a lot about my voice in four weeks, yeah, definitely. You learn what you can do and what you can't do, what you can get away with and what you can't. It's been very interesting - and entertaining!
(laughs)

CM: So what have you learnt about your voice?

Fraser: I didn't know that if I spoke at a higher pitch, which is my voice level or whatever, it would be louder and more resonant. I always thought if I tried to speak deeper, it would be louder so I found that out and erm, I knew I was a tenor secretly but I didn't want to admit it! *(laughs)*

I knew a little bit about the male speech pattern... what else? Erm... another thing is breathing and standing. Since then I've always kind of *(stands taller and aligns his body)*. When I've been talking to someone I've noticed myself *(moves around with an extreme 'good' head/ neck relationship)* I was talking to my boss the other day and he was sort of getting a bit arsey and wanting to have a go at me and I thought, hang on a minute *(adjusts posture, raises head, loud, resonant voice)* 'Alright Alf, so anyway, what I was saying was I'm just not doing that job'. I thought hey, there you go! That's better than *(head down, quiet voice)* 'hey, I'm not doing that' *(laughs)*.

CM: So your attention has been drawn to standing and posture?

Fraser: /Posture, and breathing and soft jaw. Every time I'm somewhere and I'm doing something, I keep thinking, hang on man, my voice - my jaw's not soft *(drops the jaw in an exaggerated manner)*, like on the tube - instead of standing like this *(tenses jaw, frowns, hands deep in jeans pockets, shoulders high)* like that and then push the jaw back *(accentuates the tension even more)*

CM: You say that you knew some stuff about speech patterns before?

Fraser: I knew men talk from here - the stomach, strong sort of...women speak much more erm, how would you say, articulate. Women are more articulate. I think that men have lazy speech. Women are more articulate. I think they're just, I dunno...(shaking his head a little and smiling) women are more tidy and they do everything tidily.

CM: *What does coming to something like this do that just plain observation can't really do?*

Fraser: It teaches you more about your own voice - what you can't get through observation - when you observe people you don't learn anything about yourself cos that's their voice and that's what they're doing.

What might be described as the 'performative' or demonstrative nature of Fraser's mode of communication is interesting. He gesticulates as he speaks but beyond this, he is 'acting out' moments when thoughts have occurred to him as a result of the workshops, how he was physically, in conversation with people at work or travelling alone on the underground. There is a strong sense that Fraser's understanding of key physical exercises has been taken away from the studio and brought into his everyday thoughts and actions. There is one brief but interesting comment in response to a question about Fraser's prior knowledge of speech patterns. He had said he knew a little about this area of voice work before and here and he gives his perception of gendered speech in terms of physical habits in that he describes a male/female binary as being lazy/articulate. He then connects this reading of gendered speech to a broader notion of women's 'nature' as being tidy, suggesting that women do everything tidily – including speaking. Learning from the world, or gleaning clues about behaviour is frequently identified as a primary strategy in identity formation:

most FTMs have already developed masculine speech patterns before they begin sex reassignment – more staccato in meter, less modulation, even tones, louder, and with more expressive body movement combined with less facial expression.

(Griggs 1999: 34)

What is interesting here is the return to default assumptions underpinning the perception of voice and speech surrounding gendered behaviour and what it is to be a woman or a man, and speak ‘like’ a woman or a man. Where participants in the voice workshops live full-time as men, transitioning physically from female to male, they surely conduct themselves not with verisimilitude, with the appearance of truth or realness, but with veritas. Maleness here is not a masquerade or a fiction but an actuality. The problem occurs in our inability to identify behaviours that can conclusively be identified as masculine or feminine. If we take aggression, often seen as the primary territory of men and the rubric of masculinity, must we say that a female identified woman who commonly expresses aggressive behaviour may really be male? Although in Shakespeare’s *Taming of the Shrew*, Katherina is cured of her aggression by her husband, her gender identity does not shift. Or if one wishes to argue that it does, one does just that – *argues* the point. Whilst we can debate over the behavioural ‘contents’ of gender or gendered vocal habits, we cannot properly try to ‘test’ whether a person correctly belongs to one or other category.

Series 1 of the Transvoices project set out to establish a ‘toolkit’ of basic exercises and principles such as the head–neck relationship, letting the breath in to the body, resonance and engagement. The aim was that by the end of the sixth session, the participants would understand aspects of anatomy, and be able to

practise a variety of exercises independently. The physical and unfamiliar methods of working challenged the group and one person's needs were not met, causing him to exit the project. Other participants expressed feelings that they were on a steep learning curve and that the relationship between what was done in sessions, and how they functioned out in the public, 'real' world, was a fascinating and interesting one. Three of the participants chose to continue into a second series. Fraser had left the country and Casey moved away from London, so Jay, Joseph and David were the people who are the focus of the next section.

5.5 Into uncharted territory: Series 2 and 3

The second series for Jay, Joseph and David aimed to build vocal strength, develop resonance and range, and expand knowledge of the theories and related practices that assert that particular speaking patterns are more masculine, or male, thus consolidating and building on the work of Series 1. In addition, we intended to explore text in more strategic ways in Series 2. This enables the participants and myself to examine the relationship between text as message, and voice as medium. As part of the work of moving from Series 1 into another stage of the project, I asked Jay and Joseph why they initially came to Series 1 of the voice workshops, what they felt they had got out of the first series and why they wanted to continue:

Joseph: I came because the timing just seemed perfect and erm, because I just started T¹ and erm, my voice is going to be moving so the timing just felt fine and... and that it was, erm... I'd heard people really raving about

¹ 'T' is a shorthand expression for Testosterone, the masculinising hormone.

the one day that you'd had earlier in the year and how good John was and erm, and also because it offered a social possibility as well and erm, still not knowing very many other people, you know, it was really good to have a chance just to spend more time with people.

I've learnt a lot although I'm finding it really difficult to remember how to do it outside so to go on with this work for me is really interesting because I want to be able to do it more... kind of naturally you know without having to remember what it is I'm supposed to be doing.

Jay: I came because I've always wanted to do some voice work and erm, I think for FTMs, even though the voice, the voice goes through a profound change, it's not really quite nurtured or erm, even investigated really and I think there's lots of opportunity to do that because only through the knowledge of what actually happens and what kind of erm, well what it can be capable of doing, can you kind of erm, have the power to have that choice. To set a course and to say right you've got six weeks, this is the opportunity, we're gonna bring up very basic things that you can kind of like take away with you, I think is really good. The point that John makes is all about like, muscle memory and you like, have certain habits and one of the things about transition is that we want to kind of re-inhabit our bodies, to kind of, you know, to change some of the things we don't like about our bodies, it's crucial really, the voice is so, so you know, so much a part of that really that's why I think it's so important and I mean I think it's a long term thing as well. I mean for me, I'm definitely up for doing more because I think I've got like, a long term project with my voice you know, I think I've got a long way to go with it, to release certain tension and stuff... I think we've been silenced for so long, you know, we're just used to like just being quiet and stuff. I can't like, shout across a room. I'd like to have that choice. Probably I won't want to (*he laughs*). If I call out, my voice just dies in the space, you know?

CM: What would you hope to get out of the next six weeks?

Joseph: [John] saying about being able to read more complicated texts. I've never had a chance to learn this stuff you know, and so often I stumble over what I'm reading out loud just because I haven't learned to do it... and yes, to just, to get the muscles so that it's more natural and to follow my voice down as well would be great you know, because it's still early days. And also, you learn an awful lot from watching the others as

well and because we all know each other outside of this too, it's like we can, we're learning about each other's voices so actually we'll be able to support each other outside the workshops too

Jay: It's about listening as well if you're on a one to one you can't really listen to yourself, but I could listen to you for example (*refers to Joe*) and then realise and recognise myself in that.

Jay's comment about individuals feeling silenced as a result of their lack of confidence and assurance in the use of the voice remains strong, with indication that the work done in Series 1 had opened up possibilities and provided experiences which participants wanted the opportunity to practise further. There is also a clear sense that the participants agree that this work is developmental and gradual, and that the sessions in the studio enable a focus on the awareness of habitual bodily function. The idea that this might be a 'rehearsal' for stronger voice in one's everyday life is a difficult and challenging one to implement though and both participants speak of trying to 'remember' what they do in sessions, wanting to develop 'muscle memory' and to consciously develop new habits over the next few weeks. The benefits of the project's collective experiences and peer support are interesting in that the group was due to reduce to three members, which would clearly bring a new dynamic as Series 2 began. Joseph touches on the point about text-use in the sessions in relation to his interest in expanding his ability to confidently handle a broad range of text, an area I shall discuss now.

5.5.1 Playing Romeo (clip 4, Appendix I)

In response to the enjoyment of using text within the exercises of Series 1, John introduced excerpts of script with the words of the archetypal romantic hero, Romeo into the first session of Series 2 and this character is returned to throughout. Initially, taking one or two lines at a time, iambic meter was used to experiment with the ways that rhythm can help with projection. The text was then spoken through as a whole group to discover the stresses in each line and then we moved into movement with a rhythmic walk to encourage engagement. Speaking the text then allowed the voice to bounce off the floor of the studio and resonate in the space. Exercises like these led to an increasing familiarisation with the words, rhythms, inflections and sounds of some of Romeo's lines. Previously, the use of text had included poems and this was the first time we were using character language, or text, written to be spoken in role.

Mid-way through Series 2, the men play Romeo in an exercise that brought engagement and resonance together with physical action. Each person is asked to rush to the seemingly dead Juliet (played by me!) and speak the line 'Eyes, look your last!' with an open and supported voice. This exercise was one that Joseph commented on specifically as being enjoyable as well as useful. After the session, he said he'd always wanted to speak these particular words and speaking Romeo's words as a man was an incredibly positive experience. While the primary objective of the exercise was to develop the technique of engagement when doing more than standing in or walking around a studio space, Joseph's enjoyment of temporarily assuming the role and having us witness his masculinity through that performance, connects to the idea that the voice and the (masculine) self are inseparable.

CM: *You spoke Romeo's words during one activity. Did this have any significance for you? If so, could you say a bit about that?*

Joseph: Several of the works we have read have involved love and loss and it is especially nice to read words written for men. I have known and loved *Romeo and Juliet* long before I started reading plays. At school we were shown the film (was it made in the sixties or early seventies) and for years, my special birthday treat was to be taken to *Romeo and Juliet* at Covent Garden by my mother. I once even saw Nureyev dance it! I don't think my mother realised one of my primary reasons for loving the ballet was all those wonderful male arses - the other was of course the wonderful music. Last time I heard the suite at a concert I cried all the way through (this was pre 'T' but the music still moves me a lot). I think the tragedy and sheer bad luck of the story has always touched me as well.

Jay: I realised that playing a male part is open to me now, whereas when I was at school and college I only got to play female parts, which I always found (and still do) completely absurd and heart breaking that so much of the world is closed off in these terms. Playing out a part taps into and expresses an inner fantasy world and of course in my fantasies I actually AM Romeo. It felt nice to be Romeo *for real* but also incredibly inhibiting because it was so secretly profound and fantastic.

(post-series questions, email, June 2005, Appendices J and K)

My question here was about the significance of speaking Romeo's words rather than what the participants' felt their voices did when speaking these words, but in reflecting on this question, neither Jay nor Joseph talk about the technical aspects of their voices despite this having been the predominant focus of the workshops thus far. Their responses are much more about their emotional and personal feelings connected to gender and maleness and speaking words 'written for men'.

5.5.2 Churchill's men

Mid-way through this series, we also worked with extracts from two of Caryl Churchill's texts, *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* (Star and Briggs in Act 2: 'Briggs writes a Letter') and *Cloud Nine* (Harry and Clive in Act 1, Scene 4). Richard Eyre and Nicholas Wright describe the form and content of *Cloud Nine* as 'adventures in the gender game' (2000: 297). John was keen to use Churchill's writing of men's dialogue and in planning sessions, he spoke about the use of language in these plays, including short sentences and a pace that he felt allows characters to 'get to the point' or to speak in a more succinct way, using literally less words. For John, this presented a chance to engage with some of the ideas around elements of male speech we had been focussing on in Series 1, using text as a framework. A duologue between the two characters, Harry and Clive focuses on male identity.

According to Churchill's casting, a male actor plays Clive (who later plays Cathy, a five-year-old child), with a male actor playing his wife Betty in Act 1. Betty is then played by a woman in Act 2, set 25 years later – the same woman who played Edward, Clive's son in Act 1.

The stagecraft of the piece plays very clear games with our perceptions of the signs of gender – the male or female body, the deep voiced man playing a little girl, the woman playing a gay man, black versus white – and each appearance, as it lulls us into a suspension of disbelief as we engage in the relationships and actions, asks us implicitly to question what these 'roles' are. (Wandor 2001: 183)

Using this particular example of play script and the characters of Harry and Clive offered a medium through which to re-examine some of the theories of gendered voice and speech that had underpinned the exercises and activities of the

workshops in a way that acknowledged the complexity of the idea of gender roles. Churchill's intelligent experiments with gender in this text gave us opportunities to avoid using simplistic, reductive stereotypes or caricatures of gendered language. This strategy complemented the sessions that drew on participants' own sense of rhythm and pace, by asking them to articulate and embody an unfamiliar set of words and sentence structures. Churchill specifically employs language within these pieces to point to relational representations of maleness and femaleness, and different masculinities. Here, where the 'actors' are transsexual men, inhabiting these two characters and playing with issues of gender, sexuality, speech patterns, rhythm and pace, the structure and form of the text created opportunities to experiment. The script's dialogues and exchanges of words provide a vehicle within which to speak, to make sounds and to 'act' in ways that are unusual to the individual. Speaking in a way that is different to the way one ordinarily speaks within these exercises presents alternatives and makes them concrete and available for use. Participants are developing their understanding and knowledge of ways of communicating, of patterns and forms of speech and of the control one can assert over one's vocal delivery. They are coming to a greater understanding of the fact that the voice is a tool which can be utilised, rather than a fixed structure of the body.

5.5.3 Learning and listening (clip 5, Appendix I)

Peer evaluation has been a strategy employed throughout each of the series in the project, with progressive levels of success and value for the participants. In Series 2, during the text work on *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire*, one person

watched while two people used the scene to experiment with technique. For example, Jay observes David and Joseph and uses a framework generated by John, to comment on the specific aspects of speech and voice as he sees them in action. John affirms, supports and, at times, engages in discussion with the points raised, often extending the point into advice or direction for each person speaking the text. Jay is looking for speech-related elements as he observes, such as body posture, the head–neck relationship, the jaw and tongue, resonance, pitch, rhythm, pace, loudness, and engagement. At one point, David is advised by Jay to break out of the pace and rhythm of the longer speeches and use engagement and a more dynamic resonance and loudness, perhaps selecting one word per sentence for loud stress.

The level of confidence here is vastly different from the hesitant evaluations of the early sessions of Series 1. Jay is demonstrating a competence in terms of owning the language and vocabulary and receives affirmation from John rather than John relying on a large amount of ‘teacher talk’ as he did in Series 1. This strategy is paired with peer teaching in Series 3. This was predominantly as a teaching and learning tool within the sessions but also with a view to considering the sustainability of the project. Funding had been secured at this point for a new beginners’ series but it had been decided that this group would disband at the end of Series 3. Each of the participants was expressing an interest in continuing to practise voice work in some way and peer teaching enabled them to experiment with the communication of their knowledge and understanding. Jay said of Series 3:

This series has been in some ways quite tricky. The session's ambitions laid out were for us to heighten our awareness of voice - not just our own but others - and make suggestions for shifting or controlling the voice. An emphasis on listening to the subtle differences was challenging work for the ear and is something I would like to go further with, which is one of the reasons I've decided to take up the guitar.

Adding to this listening, though, I found that even when you recognised what was happening it was even more tricky to make recommendations. This 'teacher' role brought a lot of things home to me as it is a position I have ambivalent feelings about. It made me appreciate John's expertise in this area and not take for granted the work that he was doing, whilst looking so effortless and glamorous.

Over the period of twelve months, the Transvoices project moved in directions we had not considered or conceived of in the original planning stages. What began as a set of classes based on physiology and physical technique evolved to encompass a range of stimulus material and alternative strategies for developing understanding of the voice. Beginning to use characters and text work as vehicles for an extended investigation into what might constitute a male speech pattern or set of vocal traits, and using peer teaching as a tool to support participants' awareness of body, voice and technique are two of these paths. Working so closely with the members of the group was really informing the nature of the work and the rate of progression for each of us. Collective and continuous reflection was consolidating the learning for all participants, where John and I were participants in the project, as much as the trans men we were working with. The project continues to develop, diversify and respond to each new group that begins to consider FTM voices, physicalities and masculinities.

A beginners' group that started in October 2005 included a number of men who were expressly keen to explore their singing, as well as speaking voices. A monthly group established to widen participation, included individuals from a

broad geographical spread who travelled to London once a month. Here we mailed out a DVD of each session, with a set of guidelines so that the individuals could revisit the exercises, instructions and explanations in the interim periods between classes. Several of the original participants remained involved at that point. Joseph acted as a teaching assistant at monthly sessions, where the group was large. He supported John, working with individuals, clarifying instruction and feeding back to people after exercises. Jay attended the beginners' weekly classes and found this experience of working within a new group gave him a different perspective and awareness of the work. In an email after the first of these classes he says he was:

glad to be there again and feel a part of something so, so special... the agency for change, self empowerment, self understanding... perhaps it was because I was more 'objective' than the other guys (and it is nice to witness myself having 'moved on' in terms of inhibitions and reservation) but when I was there last Wednesday my stomach was churning and my heart racing in the realisation of what is happening in the room.
(16.10.05)

The next section returns to some of the underlying sets of principles and ideas raised at the beginning of the chapter in order to discuss the pluralism of the representations of (trans) masculinity. The significance of voice, speech and identity for those transitioning from female to male is examined further in the light of the presentation of findings from the Transvoices project, and conclusions are drawn in terms of the approaches used to support the acquisition of gender legitimacy through voice classes.

5.6 A cartography of trans masculinity

[t]o choose a gender is to interpret received gender norms in a way that organises them anew. Less a radical act of creation, gender is a tacit project to renew one's cultural history in one's own terms. This is not a prescriptive task, we must endeavour to do but one in which we have been endeavouring always. (Butler 1988: 34)

A teleological approach to transsexuality is not particularly valuable in evaluating the findings of the Transvoices project and the 'tacit project' that is the gendered identities and lived experiences of those who participate in it. Just as FTM existence cannot be aligned or compared with MTF existence in a meaningful, productive way, nor can it be said that there is one prevailing or dominant version of FTM existence. The positions from which the Transvoices project has been encountered are multiple and diverse. The gender politics of transitioning from female to male are critical and ineluctable to this discussion in that the change in social status experienced by a trans man who passes is a significant aspect of his emergent masculinity. Where he is a white trans man, and more specifically, a white middle-class heterosexual trans man, as opposed to a white gay trans man, a black heterosexual trans man, a white working-class heterosexual trans man, subjectivity is context-specific. Add to this the trans men who choose to be 'out', and trans men whose masculinity and maleness is questioned, and experience differs such that a multi-faceted model of experience begins to transpire. These are some of the self-identified subject positions within the project. This section will focus on some of the theoretical issues related to the act of transition from female to male. The interconnected entities of voice, body

and speech are discussed as I extend the assertion that gender legitimacy is cultivated through voice work with trans men.

5.6.1 Transitioning voice and identity

The Trans studies discipline not only examines the trans community itself as a minority community but also takes on wider interrogations of how gender, identities, subjectivities and personhood get produced and debated. Trans studies is both integral to, and effective in, problematising the projects of feminism, gay and lesbian studies, queer theory and the Intersex Movement, all of which offer a broad contextual framework in what has become known as new gender politics (social movements concerned with feminist, and queer politics, transgenderism, intersex and transsexuality) (Butler 1999). Queer Theory offered and continues to offer a shift from Lesbian and Gay Studies and Feminism as it queries and upsets the boundaries of gender binaries. Queer Theory sees gendered subjectivities as performative and always in flux. Here the trans body serves as an icon or trope. However the everyday realities of trans expression, identity or trans communities and kinships are not always served well by Queer discourses as I outlined in the introduction. The inherent instability of notions of identity and identity categories, the discursive categories or communities of identity and communities of choice are vital to trans identity. However this perspective is itself open to question. A fixity of a trans-identity category is valued by some, where shared interpretations of experience can lead to a deep sense of belonging. In the post-workshops questionnaire (Appendices J & K) I asked this question of Jay and Joe:

CM: *To what extent (and how) would you say that voice work we have been engaged with over the past few months has directly impacted on your sense of yourself? How much is this to do with your identity as a trans man?*

Jay: Being a trans man forces you into a hyper sensitive state of one's Self in the world. Finding movement and resonance in my voice has definitely enriched my life, not only in terms of doing my masculinity 'successfully' (which is nice) but also in the deeper sense, which offers hope and the ability to change and not get stuck in a rut with 'bad' habits.

Joe responds and talks about learning to be a gay trans man as he works alongside others who he reads as having a stronger or clearer, or more developed identity. He implies that he does his learning by experiencing life alongside other gay men, that he becomes himself through co-existing with others:

Joe: The classes have been a major social contact for me, both for being with FTMs and a gay man and for learning about going to the pub (that sounds a bit sad...). I have not had to worry about my voice changing because John has been taking care of that for me. And with so much else changing, that has been really good. The work on engagement has coincided with me learning about my changing body and it has reinforced the work I have been doing in physiotherapy so that has been great. I have learnt a lot about being FTM from other FTMs and so being in a class with others every week has been wonderful.

This sense of self, being constituted as a result of connection to a group has been a recurring sentiment throughout the Transvoices project.

On occasion or at such times members experience a centred and bounded entity that includes the self as such; they engage in exchanges and sharing that are personalized; the orientation to each other and to the whole engages the person and, as some are tempted to put it, his or her soul. It is from such occasions that 'the spirit of community' or 'sense of community' is achieved. (Frazer 1999: 83)

Transitioning from female to male in the company of others involved in their own similar, but different, experience of transition not only provides peer-support but actually contributes to the formation of identity. The co-presence of another participant, who will witness one's progress and collaborate in it, is critical to the experience.

In her preface, Fawcus alludes to the inclusion of Challoner's work with transsexuals in a collection purporting to discuss voice disorders. She says:

we may indeed challenge the concept of a voice *disorder*, since the vocal pitch (the only aspect of the voice with which the transsexual is normally concerned) may be entirely in keeping with the physical constraints of the laryngeal structure. There is however, a mismatch between the modal range and the desired gender which the transsexual wishes to convey. (p. 3)

MTFs are routinely referred to speech therapists as part of the transition process. This is developing as common practice within the National Health Service (Charing Cross Hospital's Gender Identity Clinic) and private health care. Opinion is varied and includes this idea that physiology is male and the MTF desires a voice she cannot have. During one FTM's consultation with psychiatrist Dr Russell Reid in 2005, reference was made to the break that would occur in the voice within three to six months of commencing a course of testosterone injections. The client was advised that he would sound like an adolescent boy for some time but that the voice would drop naturally (20.01.05). My observations throughout the Transvoices project suggest that while transmen may or may not speak with particular inflections and intonations that could be

ascribed as male, what is made to sound like a simple switch in terms of a drop in pitch or deepening brought on well enough by hormone treatment alone by many commentators is far from simple in actuality.

One might suppose that voices will be the product of a physiological female or male body, so vocal chords, folds, larynx, the angle of thyroid cartilage etc. will be either 'male' or 'female' and generate what others would perceive to be a masculine or feminine voice. Bodies are, of course, not that simple. Neither are voices. It cannot be stated that FTMs were at one stage biologically women. There are a proportion of female-born people who have neat and tidy chromosomes and can be termed genetically female. Some of these individuals will identify as transsexual. Many will not. However, there are also a proportion of female-born people who possess one or more 'anomalies' such as ambiguous genitalia, unusual levels of male hormone etc. Some of these people may be transsexual. Many will not be. There is a void within the disciplines of voice and speech work in this area, which denies a range of individual needs. Where Margaret Fawcus proposes we question the concept of the voice as disordered here, rather than elevating the practice of voice work with this particular client group, she is denying that medical and health care professionals have a role to play. She places responsibility for the problem of the 'mismatch' between voice and identity with the individual.

5.6.2 Gender legitimacy through voice work

The Transvoices project has explored embodied knowledge. Participating in practical work and engaging in the development of embodied knowledge lead to

Chapter 6

Conclusions

6.1 Introduction

The crux of all aspects of this research has been that the process of creating performance is also a process of creating a gender identity. The research undertaken within this project involved extensive fieldwork, which took account of a range of performance work in a variety of settings. It also involved two considerable practice-based projects with groups of participants who identified as transgender. Creating an identity through the use of performance comes about as a result of the co-presence of other people and the collaborative nature of being seen. This is performance's contribution to identity formation, or more specifically in the context of this research, to a transgender masculinity coming into existence.

6.2 An archive of the ephemeral

In drawing together such a range of work, this thesis has presented a corpus of performance work and, in doing so, contributes to the archiving of transgender live performance practice that has thus far been relatively undocumented. As Judith Halberstam asserts,

we need to theorise the concept of the archive and consider new models of queer memory and queer history capable of recording and tracing subterranean scenes, fly-by-night clubs, and fleeting trends; we need, in José Muñoz's words, 'an archive of the ephemeral'. (2008: 35).

By interpreting the performances and drawing on the self-interpretation of the artists, by executing project work and drawing on participants' perspectives on the work, this thesis is a record of some of the ways that transgender masculinities have been constituted in performance.

This dissertation has analysed different kinds of performance in theatres, clubs, bars, community arts centres, workshop spaces and also on the streets as part of everyday life. The nature of the performance material generated for an audience is performance that calls attention to gender. The majority of the performers documented here, from Joey Hateley, David Harrison and Lazlo Pearlman who devise work and stage it in theatre venues, to the young people who created film and live performance as part of the Sci:identity project, were using performance as a mode of expression in order to comment upon and provoke thinking about the complexities of gender and the social systems that produce gendered identity. Peggy Phelan tells us that:

Identity emerges in the failure of the body to express being fully and the failure of the signifier to convey meaning exactly. Identity is perceptible only through a relation to an other – which is to say, it is a form of both resisting and claiming the other, declaring the boundary where the self diverges from and merges with the other. In that declaration of identity and identification, there is always loss, the loss

of not-being the other and yet remaining dependant on that other for self-seeing, self-being. (1993: 13)

The subcultural spaces where performance takes place, such as festivals of transgender art, small club nights and exclusive rehearsal rooms open only to transgender men, demonstrate the notions of community and the coming together in real time and space as critical to the production of self. Human interaction with people in a place and space that is supportive of the individuals who gather there is vital to the constitution of transgender masculinities. The opportunity to perform one's artistic work, to watch a group of trans men as they celebrate their bodies or to work alongside other men on voice, is something that people can find valuable and useful to their sense of self, whether their trans masculinity is established and secure or whether it is emergent. There is a social potential in participating in the act of performance, whether one's involvement is as performer on stage, a participant in a voice workshop or as an audience member seeing young people articulate their perspective on the complexity of gender. That social potential arises from the collaborative and reciprocal nature of an exchange between 'performer' and 'reader' of the performance, and the experience that both individuals have as a result of being present in the exchange.

After an introductory chapter outlining the research question, a range of immediately relevant literature and the trajectory of the thesis, Chapter 2 presented findings from research into performances of trans masculinities that have taken place in fringe theatre. Within the work of the three performers under discussion, multiple ways of seeking and gaining gender legitimacy through the performance of one's gendered self are manifested and a broad range of strategies are employed in creative processes. The performers in both Chapters 2

and 3 are articulating expressions of non-normative gender in a social and political environment that tends towards hostility in the face of difference, whether this is evidenced by violence or prejudicial attitudes on the streets, or the complexities of legal and medical systems for trans people.

Theatre auditoriums, however, can be described as places of complicity and tolerance. People go to see performance work that they want to see and, on the whole, already agree with. There is not much in the way of persuasion going on in these venues. This notion of the sympathetic audience attitude is perhaps most clearly seen within documentary theatre, with liberal left-wing spectators buying tickets to productions such as Jonathon Holmes's *Fallujah: Eyewitness Testimony from Iraq's Besieged City* (Old Truman Brewery, 2007) or Victoria Brittain and Gillian Slovo's *Guantanamo: Honor Bound to Defend Freedom* (The Tricycle Theatre, 2004). These pieces engage in complex narratives based on interviews and accounts from people who have lived through the social situations depicted, and

investigate and recreate a wide range of personal and public stories and events – often political and controversial, but sometimes local and mundane – that strike a chord with at least a section of society: gay identity, the saga of the railways, and most notably the turmoil in Iraq and terrorism (Young 2009: 72).

It would be unusual for a spectator to be anti-theme at one of these productions – for a homophobic person to buy a ticket to see *The Laramie Project* by Moisés Kaufman and members of the Tectonic Theater Project about the violent murder of gay student Matthew Shepard. These productions have been the focus of protests by particular groups who object to the way the

narratives are depicted, but generally audiences are already sympathetic to the political nature of the work. In a subcultural space such as a bar, club or community-organised event, people have also consciously gathered to be in that space with other people who deem themselves to belong in that space. As discussed in Chapter 3 the film *Mirror Mirror* focused on the threat of violence that queer and trans performers can face from the world outside the safer confines of the community and its spaces. The performers discussed in these two chapters use theatre and performance as a strategy to promote and achieve legitimacy as a gendered person, and the extent to which that intention reaches those who deny legitimacy to a transgender person, and the extent to which the discussion of gender complexity contributes to discourse when it is housed within this range of spaces was also explored.

As well as working to challenge dominant heteronormative ideals, another function of these performances is to celebrate trans and queer bodies and identities. In particular, the artists in Chapter 3 operate within contexts where entertainment of queer communities, comedy and fun is as much a part of what they do and say through performance as the comments they make on gender diversity and difference. The subcultural environments that host these kinds of performance are conducive to the celebratory quality of the event as a result of the informal nature of the space and venues, the fact that the venues are usually licensed premises such as bars and clubs, and the audience are drinking while watching at a later hour than a more traditional theatre performance.

The Sci:identity project enabled an exploration of the possibility of there being such a thing as a gendered intelligence. This concept is connected to Gardner's theory that there is a set of multiple intelligences that people possess

to varying degrees, and I am extending that idea to introduce an intelligence that is gendered in its nature which would identify a young person's primary experience of the world as being strongly connected to gender and therefore inform the way they perceive the world and their place within it. In this project, multiple stories were explored and articulated by trans and non-trans young people and those engaged in working with them by way of cultivating more intelligent approaches to gender diversity. Moving into spaces such as school classrooms and youth groups opens the debates up with a broader range of individual perspectives on gender, not all of which are sympathetic, or gender-intelligent. Chapter 5 presented the findings from a project that aimed to explore how intervention in voice production can contribute to, or affirm, a sense of identity among individuals from a particular community. Explorations of gendered identity, and the politics of transition for trans men who were performing their trans masculinities in relation to other people in the everyday, took place far from the confines of a fringe studio theatre or queer-friendly event.

6.3 Performance as a mode of legitimating

The performances and projects that have formed this research are about developing languages that accommodate that which tends to go unnamed. These projects also respect, incorporate and value the body, so language here is not just about a relationship to text as written text (text as logos), but language or 'text', undone, redone and untangled. The making and unmaking of people through the form of the work is what creates the language through which they can communicate, whether this is the cacophony of 'voices' within the Sci:identity

exhibition or the range of perspectives at play when performance takes place within a transgender community context.

Text and language here are a web of meaning and a collaborative act between the reader or spectator – without a reader, there would be nothing to read. We come into existence as a result of being seen/read by others and those others have attitudes and knowledges about reading and seeing that are implanted in notions of gender and gender expression. As outlined in the introductory chapter, making transgender masculinity more visible through theatre and performance does not necessarily lead to transgender men gaining more agency, or a more respected social position in that ‘gaining visibility for the physically under-represented without scrutinising the power of who is required to display what to whom wants to see what is an impoverished agenda’ (Phelan 1993: 26). The performers I have discussed have been able to insert themselves into the complex social ‘text’ through the use of the public act of performance. Being out as transgender, and being articulate about the complexity of gender identity through a presentation of diversity and multiplicity, appears to be usefully challenging the powerful refusal of legitimacy and credibility that surrounds transgender identities and expressions of gender non-conformity.

To make a distinction between the theatre practice discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, and the applied theatre practice of Chapters 4 and 5, it is the latter model of performance in the area of gender identity and expression, with people who are not necessarily trained or experienced performers, that is to be a significant area of future research. Accessing performance as a mode of expression is not necessarily universally open to all, and, as discussed in Chapter 4, there are standards of acceptability and quality that surround performance and theatre and

shape the way this kind of work is perceived and received. Janet Wolff proposes a dialogic approach to value and judgement in art, which is 'premised on the belief that out of dialogue, negotiation, and debate agreement can be reached and new, perhaps composite, aesthetic judgements and regimes produced' (2008: 37). She is careful to draw attention to the idea that the nature of dialogue is contextual and often 'produced unequal voices and unequal access to the power of persuasion' (ibid.) but where this is taken into account within the negotiated process of making value judgements, the dialogic approach is one that I subscribe to within theatre and performance-making. Sets of norms based on a less reflexive, contextual way of thinking regulate, to a certain extent, who or what can legitimately appear in the arena of the theatre. This thesis has documented a range of types of performance and a range of types of people who are performing their transgender masculinities in various ways. Some of the performers have had training and/or several years of experience of live performance. In the projects, though, the participants executing the acts were un-actorly bodies, so presenting rather than re-presenting in the way that theatre re-presents, but re-presenting a constructed narrative none the less.

The practice of applied theatre is defined as a reflexive knowledge-making practice that works to construct, interpret and re-interpret social narratives, histories and contexts (Thompson 2003: 172; Taylor 2003: 110; Nicholson 2005: 166). The capacity for pro-actively working with a multiplicity of narratives, with a group of people which contains within it multiple perspectives on gender and diversely gendered subject positions is what attracts me to this mode of theatre practice and the questions it provokes. Towards the end of the Sci:identity project in 2006–7, I co-founded the organisation Gendered

Intelligence which delivers arts projects and creative workshops to trans youth from across the UK, facilitated workshops to all young people within schools, colleges and other settings to generate discussion and debate around gender and the ways in which it presents challenges in our everyday lives, and professional development and trans awareness training for people who work with young people.

The arts projects vary in focus according to the interests of the small team but also depending on which organisations we collaborate with and where funding comes from. So the *Brief Encounters* project discussed early in Chapter 4 is one example where collaboration with a theatre company led to a set of playwriting workshops. From this, a 40-minute script was produced and subsequently taken into schools and youth groups. A partnership with the Anti-bullying Alliance in 2007 led to a one-day event that used the arts to explore young trans people's experiences in schools and colleges. The material generated during the workshops (such as visual 'timelines' documenting key points in people's experiences, a manifesto of good practice on dealing with gender for school staff and a set of poster designs that could be displayed in schools to promote gender diversity and non-stereotypical attitudes) was used to draw up a written report with a set of recommendations which the Anti-bullying Alliance took forward to the then Department for Education and Skills with the intention of influencing policy development on anti-transphobic behaviour in schools. The practice provokes questions about the use of personal narrative within performance practice which seeks to further understandings of sex, gender and identity, and about the ways that young people's experiences have the potential to directly feed into governmental discussion on policy change. I am interested in

the ways that young transgender people, in particular, can engage with performance and the arts to explore and present their identities and experiences, and the ways that this engagement can contribute to identity formation in a personal sense, and in a public sense in terms of the ways that particular identities are recognised and understood.

6.4 Legislating the normalisation of gendered identities

Chapter 4 opened up some of the ways that young people's gender identities connect with socio-legal, as well as medical, discourses of transgender through, for example, policy and practice for responsibly educating every child in statutory school settings. Here, I go further in looking at the ways that the law in the United Kingdom impacts directly on the lived experiences of transgender masculinity. One way that normalisation of gender identities is enacted is through legislature, and recent progress with the Gender Recognition Act 2004 has led to a rejuvenation of the debates in the legitimisation of trans. The Act has come into being during the time I have been researching this doctoral project and the impact of the Act on people's everyday lives and on the larger issue of sex, gender and transgender identity as a category has yet to be seen. As I continue to research, I am interested to investigate the ways that legislature related to gender identity relates to lived experience, and how that impact influences the arts and performance.

The Gender Recognition Act (GRA) was passed in August 2004. Prior to this Act transgender people were not recognised in their acquired gender (however it was expressed) under the law of any part of the United Kingdom.

The GRA was the culmination of many years of activist work, and the process of its coming into law involved considerable debate, much of which is documented in academic articles within the legal and critical studies fields (Sandland 2005, 2007; Sharpe 2007; Whittle & Turner 2007; Jeffrey 2008). As has been established, transsexuality and transgenderism are modes of being which are characterised by movement and transition. Trans people are engaged in decision-making processes about what becomes visible and what remains invisible to others, what is 'public' and what is 'private' in terms of their identity and expression of self. For supporters of the GRA, social integration was one of the greatest benefits of the bill since its enactment would stop trans people being in 'limbo', or being neither one gender nor the other.

The Act addresses some aspects of social life, which can make negotiating gender challenging for trans people. In positioning a trans person 'for all intents and purposes... as being of the acquired gender [male or female]' (explanatory notes, 8.2), the Act confers the same rights to marriage, parenthood, benefits and pensions, discrimination, and inheritance as non-trans people. In awarding gender recognition certificates (which allows details on a Birth Certificate to be altered) disclosure of information relating to the application for gender recognition and the gender history of successful applicants is prohibited. The GRA has the power therefore, to make trans people's private life fully private. It has been suggested that the GRA goes further than effecting this technical change to the rights of trans people, and it in fact demobilises the sex/gender distinction in productive ways. The terminology of the Act talks about sex and gender in different ways to prior legal and other 'serious' discourses: it is gender identity that defines sex (as opposed to sex being deemed

to be biological and prior to, or more 'real' than gender). Legal recognition in an individual's acquired gender does not require surgery, which is a development that goes beyond other country's legislation on gender recognition, therefore under UK law, sex/gender shifts are disembodied (Whittle & Turner 2007: para 1.5) and an acquired gender determines what legal sex is attributed to a person.

In the context of a politics of trans visibility, the GRA is seen by some, however, as being too limited in its scope for recognising and legitimating those with a complex relationship to gender in that for example, the criteria an applicant must be able to meet still subscribe to the mental health model of conceiving of transgender lived experience (Sandland 2007: 39). The requirement for evidence to prove that the applicant 'has or has had gender dysphoria' (GRA 2004, Section 2(1)(a)) necessitates that a report from a medical practitioner that includes a diagnosis of gender dysphoria (a category within the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (4th edn, 1995)) be provided. Thus legal recognition is dependent on a person being characterised as mentally ill:

This is problematic in the instrumental sense that assertions of rationality serve to undermine the prospect of legal recognition. It is also objectionable in terms of the broader discourse that it fosters in which transgender people, as a class, are stripped of their rationality and therefore their autonomy. (Sandland 2007: 38)

There is not a neat binary between those who are pro-GRA and those who are anti-GRA, and Ralph Sandland, for example, does acknowledge the remarkable nature of the Act in terms of the fact that recognition of acquired gender is not dependent on compulsory sterilisation (as it is in Germany, Denmark, Sweden

and the Netherlands), nor does it look to members of the applicant's community to provide evidence that a person has or has not been accepted by them in their acquired gender.¹ Further criticism of the Act though, suggests that by making people 'male' or 'female' their potentialities to be 'trans men' or 'trans women' are disavowed. In the film *Lovers and Fighters Convention* (2009) Jason Barker of Transfabulous comments on the opportunities the GRA presents for people, saying:

this is fantastic. This is great and it's great that people have the option but it's also then very easy for that kind of transness to just slip away. You know, people can transition and then it's like the history can be erased and we were thinking well let's make something so that this history isn't erased, and so that stories are still being told so we actually have a culture, which is what we wanted – a culture of transness.

Barker is keen to use the arts as a vehicle through which a range of individual expressions and identities can be recognised and celebrated, which is in addition to and, perhaps for some, in opposition to the way that this legislation has the potential to recognise their gender. There is an insistence on permanence in the Act, and while this need not necessarily be an irreversible surgical alteration to the body, there is certainly a requirement to promise to 'continue to live in the acquired gender until death' (GRA 2004, Section 2(1)(c)). On this point, Andrew N. Sharpe argues that 'the Act clearly aims to reproduce a binary gender order' by insisting that people do not continue to change from one gender to another.

¹ Sandland (2007) and Sharpe (2007) recount the legal case *Re Kevin and Jennifer v Attorney-General for the Commonwealth* [2001] FamCA 1074, where 'the court placed considerable emphasis on evidence that Kevin had been accepted as a man by his community. This approach threatens to undermine the autonomy of future transgender litigants who lack the environment of a supportive community' (Sandland 2007: 36). For Sandland, this amounts to the community being called upon to act as regulatory gate-keepers.

Nevertheless, the Act as it stands does allow for ‘legal women who have a penis, and (more commonly because of the limitations of surgery to make a penis) men who have a vagina’ (Whittle & Turner 2007b: para 6.10), a fact that radical feminist theorist Sheila Jeffreys finds problematic. Though she does not explain why she views this notion as problematic, she outlines the fact that ‘the legislation creates a new situation in which someone legally male may give birth and raise a child as the “father”’ (2008: 336). Jeffreys undermines the very notion of an acquired gender consistently in her writings as pointed out in Chapter 1 of this thesis (and which is done here by using quotation marks around the word father, as if to say this father is not a father, but is really a mother). Her objection to the GRA is based on her objection to the very notion of transgenderism on the basis that for her, accepting that transgenderism exists means accepting that gender exists as a useful category, which for her, it does not.

The young participants in the Sci:identity project questioned popular conceptions, such as those found in television documentaries, of transsexuality being a process of having a ‘sex change’ or making a journey from one sex to another. The men involved in the voice project were engaged with ideas about ‘male’ voices. The performers and artists in the earlier chapters were presenting questions about normalisation, gender binaries and hetero-normativity. These are ideas that have come about and are perpetuated within contemporary culture, and to deny them would be futile. To engage with them, and, where they are deemed to be problematic, to challenge them is a more productive act. Where the process of changing one’s sex or gender is understood as having a distinct beginning, middle and end, the trans person is often constructed as being someone in the

'wrong body', who, in the process of undergoing psychiatry will be diagnosed as gender dysphoric, undergo hormonal treatment, have surgery and arrive at the destination of their new sex: a construction of trans that seems to accord with the Gender Recognition Act 2004. These representations and life narratives do not leave room for the possibility of *being* transgendered, of identifying as neither male nor female, or both male and female, and the possibility of stopping at a point between a and b. The young people's response to the 'authority' of scientific knowledge and legal frameworks for transgender was clearly communicated in the Sci:dentity project exhibition, which showed the ways in which trans people are human, working against both a medical model of trans and the more sensational representations of trans people in the media. For all of the performance work discussed in this thesis, the arts have offered a space where meaning is produced through creative practices and meaning can be ambiguous. This ambiguity was utilised to produce nuanced representations of transgender masculinities.

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Appendices

- A)** Joey Hateley Interview (13.08.07)
- B)** David Harrison telephone interview questions (03.02.04)
- C)** Brief Encounters session transcript (03.05.08)
- D)** Sci:identity documentary
- E)** Transcription of Anti-bullying Alliance group interview (05.05.07)
- F)** Trans Journeys DVD
- G)** Gender Matrix exercise
- H)** Sample workshop plan (Sci:identity Project outreach)
- I)** DVD of Transvoices Project
- J)** Voice workshop questionnaire (Jay Stewart)
- K)** Voice workshop questionnaire (Joseph Swift)

* DVDs within the appendix will play on a domestic DVD player, Mac or PC (using Windows Media Player and PowerDVD)

Appendix A

Joey Hateley Interview 13.08.07:

Interview conducted on the telephone. This set of notes includes some direct quotations.

Recently performed at the Gay Games in Belgium, and at the Fresh Fruit Festival in New York (at Cherry Lane Theatre, closing nights but after 2 weeks of shows, often 6 per day so technicians were knackered & get ins/ outs were mad)

“I’m changing my perspective on being one of the big fish in a small pond. There’s never enough time to hear everyone in queer ‘ghetto’ settings, and I think I need to focus on my professional development. And there’s the academic world, the theatre world, the political queer scene, the non-political queer scene – I performed at Duckie and there was this heckling, drunk woman who couldn’t listen, couldn’t hear...or couldn’t really pay attention ‘cos the environment just isn’t conducive... that’s not where I want my work to go now. There’s something about a theatre, where you can take people on a journey in a different way. It’s that sacred space thing...the Peter Brook thing...”

He talked about the way that he used Dis’ *Passionate State* initially, planning to re-work the piece, but he & Shaw came to a decision to put it to one side. Shaw felt that both theme and form were not appropriate for the way she wanted to work. Thematically, the piece was about white privilege, and its form took on the structure of the kind of children’s books where two options are given at the end of each chapter, with the story continuing on different pages, according to the option the reader took. So Hateley’s idea was that the audience would shape the show and engage in participative, interactive ways during the performance.

Something here about politics of allegiance too... that this was part of the theme?

The pair made the decision to start again in making *Engendered Species*, and leave these ideas, though this initially caused Hateley some challenge:

“It was hard to begin again. I get stuck. In my ideas. I can’t think outside the boxes. Academia has structured the way I think and write and I was having to break down my internalised editing system to write new material. So for example, Peggy was throwing questions at me and do this visualisation. These were exercises that got me writing for live performance. It’s about a language for performance as opposed to more poetic writing. It was about opposites, and doing things in an entirely opposite way to the ways I’m used to”

“The Arts Council want me to do experimental theatre, not political theatre. They’re looking for a more experimental, advanced aesthetic. This is innovative ‘cos it’s pushing at the boundaries, so it fits the Research & Development remit. This show is like, the complete opposite – this dreamlike quality and ephemeral thing. It has these different threads... Peggy sent me instruction to write only happy memories from my childhood. That’s not normal for me! In *A:Gender*, it

was “I’m angry, I’m fighting” and I kind of don’ want to fight anymore. This is a piece about my ancestors. There’s a kind of healing aspect, spiritual aspects, as well as the social construction academic stuff. I’m inverting Joey systems! I don’t want to fight any more...”

“When you start working creatively on this stuff, other things come out that speak to people on lots of different levels. I did fly regularly in my dreams. I still fly off in boring meetings. It’s about political and social consciousness, and the different points of connection between people. It’s the I in you that connects to the I in me. *Engendered Species* is about the universe and death. About being born and dying.”

I asked Hateley to say something about what he perceives to the relationship between his real self and his performance self. He said:

“That’s a perfect question to talk about the differences between the two pieces. *A:Gender* is such a massive part of who I am. I wasn’t allowed to perform me in *Engendered Species*. Peggy banned me from acting.”

“The difference between performance and reality is blurred. Self-esteem is so related to performance. What’s real and what’s performed...there’s no difference almost. I feel completely stripped and completely naked in ES. I’m taking the piss out of myself – like with the batman music, and the bat cave, ‘green lights and Joey systems. It’s like I’m up there, without being cool. The stakes are high – wanting Peggy to be pleased with the work, wanting the Drill Hall to commission the piece. I was genuinely terrified. I felt so vulnerable, especially on the first night.”

On being a solo artist:

It’d be really hard for me to get work. He’s not got an agent, nor does he have any career history of acting or performing in productions other than his own, so feels that casting directors and agents don’t see him as professional.

And the gender thing...I’d be better being an actor and getting male parts...

“I need to have input and develop as an artist. If it was about my professional development as an artist, why don’t I learn from the experts and invest in my own process as an artist. I haven’t had that before...to stay with Peggy and complete this with her, or I could work with Starving Artists, who’s said they’re interested in working with me. Or there’s Claire Dowie. Who might take the piece and write it. I devise. That’s what I do but it’s hard doing that on your own.”

Appendix B

David Harrison telephone interview 03.02.04

Questions

- You talked about having studied at the Drama Studio, Berkley, California when we met. Can you tell me about that actor training and other training you have had?
- What might you say are the major influences on your work – such as practitioners, theories and styles of performance?
- The piece was first performed in 1994. What are the most significant changes to it over time and what led to those changes?
- Can I ask you about funding?
- This is a very broad question but why do you choose to make theatre?
- You inhabit a politicised space by making theatre and using performance as your medium. What do you feel about that?

Notes were taken while talking, with direct quotes appearing in the body of the text.

Appendix C

Brief Encounters session transcript (03.05.08), transcript taken from audio recording.

CSSD and Fringe Benefits Theatre for Social Justice Institute May 3-to-May 13, 2008

Collaborating Artist Activists Who Attended Day #1:

Anees, Claudia, Lindsey Barlag, Julie Bates, Norma Bowles, Selina Busby, Lily Cooper, Kyle Crossett, Meg Deere, Amanda Jane Dunne, Kerry Elston, Dewi Evans, Alice Field, Phil Gibbons, Natalie Grahame, Carly Halse, Jay, Johnny, Cat Jones, Chin Min Liang, Lorna, Catherine McNamara, Shiraz Mehra, Jennifer Murray, Rachael, Shabsi, Rebecca Root, Jacob Smith, Elmo Spoon, Jay Stewart, Victoria Storey, Erasmo Tacconelli, Michelle Toner, Rhoda Villegas, Samantha "Sam" Jayne Wilkinson, Jana Zeineddine and Tanya Zybutz.

Day #1 Notes

Extract pages 17-18: DISCRIMINATORY BEHAVIOR STORIES

JENNIFER: One thing I forgot to mention is that on the last day of school, my lovely classmates decided to leave me a present. It was during the final examines, the GSSE, and I was using a motorcycle to uh get back and forth between class, and it was the easiest way to get around. And uh umm now I had just lost my locker key, and I uh just had come in for exams and had no place to put my helmet. So I had to tie it up next to my bike, because the box was too small for it. And so I came back, it was a sunny day, and for some reason the, it was wet, and it turned out that some one had actually peed in my helmet. And there was this woman just there, who offered to let me use her outside tap to clean this out, and sort of wash this out. But I still had to drive back because I couldn't get my bike back another way.

EL: This is going back on the whole sibling thing. In high school I had two friends, that were identical twins and they were both gay. So the rumors just really flew that they were gay together, yeah. And so like the one came out first, and it took a while for his parent to get used to it and everything. But then the other one came out, and then they stopped talking to the first one that come out, because they told him that he had made the other one gay and it was just like they tried to influence him and all this sort of stuff and the school sort of knew that everything, that all this was going on. But they saw it as sort of childish banter and stuff, so

they just completely ignored it. And he ends up leaving school in the end. I think the one was going to stay but just decided against it.

CLAUDIA: This is sort of my coming out story as a trans female. And I think it was mainly my mom, it was very difficult. The way she found out was when I left a dress on my bed, and I had went out and forgot to put it away. And um I think she had come back, and I had come back later, and I thought, “Oh shit I left a dress out. She is going to find out.” So actually that same day she got a phone call from my doctor, that I had gotten to start the process of gender reassignment and everything. And my mom was like “why is he calling, what’s going on?” And so I thought “Oh I am going to have to tell her now.” And you know she was shocked and she was screaming at me and saying “Why are you putting this on me, I have got so many other issues in my life.” You know “Get the shit out of my house, I don’t want to see you again.” and that sort of thing. I suppose you know, I suppose in hindsight I didn’t realize the shock from my parent’s point of view. But from my side it was like talking to a brick wall, trying to tell her what the actual issue was. I think, yeah, the main thing was, it was ignorance, sort of having to apologize for having only grown up with your sister and your mom, and only seeing your dad on weekends. It was like “Oh yeah I knew you were gay when you were young” and I am like “I am not gay” and that sort of thing. I think yeah, it was just like that for a long time. And she said you not going dressing like that around here ‘cuz we are going to get shit, get our house burnt down. So that was basically moved out, someplace near the university. And it was only about a year later when she sort of um she has come round to it a bit more and is much better about it now. I suppose it is because she sees how much happier I am now, and I am not this sort of this freak in her eyes or that she is worried about me becoming or something. So yeah I think a lot of it is ignorance and sort of equating you know being trans or being gay, yeah things like that and also sort of apologization of you are mentally ill because of this or because you were abused when you were younger and all this sort of thing.

Appendix D

***Sci:identity: What's the Science of Sex & Gender* documentary (38mins)**

Please see DVD attached to back cover

things making a different kind of sense. In this voice work, participants engage in a process where something – masculinity – is made tangible. Through embodiment, masculinity is realised in a tangible form. Knowledge here is lived rather than abstract:

I believe in muscle memory, that it is habits and repetition which creates one's voice as 'natural'. Therefore through control and manipulation one can move one's voice to a place where one wants to take it. There is also something to be said here though, that one must accept one's voice, love it and embrace it rather than deny it. So there is not a longing for a voice one can never have but a more playful venture where one can go *with* the limits of being in a body, any body. (Jay, voice classes participant)

Where Halberstam suggests that 'the transgender man expresses his desire for a manhood that will on some level always elude him' (2005: 52), Prosser's affirmative stance suggests that transsexuals become real through authorship. If authorship here means the process of generation or establishment of the self, the voice workshops can be described as constitutive. The multiple subjects present in the space (the participants, the tutor, the observer) are all involved in formations of the self. We might say there is a 'fast-track' constitution going on here, where the repetition of specific actions, exercises and moves, and the witnessing and looking that occurs, creates an intensity whereby many individuals are engaged in the constitutive moment.

If we reverse Butler's notion and see a trans man as an 'original with no copy', the problem here is that echoes of history and future do contribute to one's production of self so the notion of 'originality' is questionable. However, out of the negotiation of hegemonic masculinities and alternative masculinities, a new masculinity emerges through the iterative acts for each trans man. Though Butler

reminds us there is no doer behind the deed, so it is not Joe who is behind the production of his masculinity, but Joe is produced as a result of the acts and repetitions he performs. The deed produces a 'doer'. In drawing on some of the theoretical issues related to the act of transition from female to male and considering the extent to which gender legitimacy has been cultivated through voice work with trans men, the Transvoices project can be viewed as an instance of discourse.

The next section concludes the chapter, and considers the ethics of work of the Transvoices project within a broader context.

5.7 Conclusions

This chapter has presented the findings from a 12-month project which aimed to explore how intervention in voice production can contribute to, or affirm, a sense of identity among individuals from a particular community. The project was set up to explore ideas and underpinning theories through literally 'doing' trans identity and voice work and looking at the notion of embodying masculinities, using the voice as the primary site for experimentation. This has been a performative exploration of a set of theoretical ideas. The first series of sessions of Transvoices project, where the model of practice was established and the planning process began to be embodied, set out to establish a 'toolkit' of basic exercises and principles such as the head-neck relationship, letting the breath into the body, resonance and engagement.

Issues of representation and the connections to the restoring or constructing of identities by FTMs engaging in their own process through voice

work are multi-faceted. The ethics and values underpinning transformative interventions of any kind are critical to the practice, as are the aesthetic choices made in relation to any 'outcome'. The voice workshops focus on process rather than any performative outcome. I am viewing Applied Theatre as a broader term, which can encompass this type of project such that it can

make a contribution to building a more generous and multi-faceted world by making a creative space in which fixed and inequitable oppositions between the local and the global, self and other, fiction and reality, identity and difference, might be disrupted and challenged. (Nicholson 2005: 167)

The model of practice must be ethical. The praxis of facilitation, the design of the project and strategies for delivery are important factors in this regard as the project develops. Jacob Hale offers this advice on writing and thinking trans experience:

Don't imagine that you can write about the trope of transsexuality, the figure of the transsexual, transsexual discourse/s, or transsexual subject positions without writing about transsexual subjectivities, lives, experiences, embodiments. Ask yourself: what relations hold between these categorical constructions, thus what implications hold between what you write about one and what you don't write about another (rule no.13). (Hale 1997)

This chapter does not suggest that what has occurred within the Transvoices project has been the same experience for all participants, nor will the particular experiences be repeated by new participants joining the project in the future. By drawing out critical moments as perceived and recounted, retold and reported by

participants, as well as my own observations, a story has been told. The story is a partial account of the lived experiences of those involved in the project.

The next chapter will focus on what the research outlined in this thesis has evidenced, and the ways in which the thesis contributes to discourses on performance and gender. It will also detail the ways the research will progress beyond this piece of work.

Appendix E

Transcription of Anti-bullying Alliance research group interview (05.05.07), extracts of the transcript taken from audio recording

Key:

B – Ben
C – Catherine (interviewer)
Cl – Claudia
E – El
Et - Ethan
F – Finn
J – Jay (interviewer)
Je - Jessica
Ju – Julian
N – Nic
P – Pig
R – Ricky
W – William
X - Xaria

(taken from pp. 1-5 of full transcript)

J: ...Anyone wants to talk about whether they've come out at school, and how that was for them.

C: Or college.

J: Who's out at college? Okay. Let's go round then.

Cl: I transitioned 4 months ago at my university so people knew me pre-transition as well. It's really been a quite positive experience, because the staff made the effort to have a diversity advisor come in to explain what the nature of my transition was, what it would entail, so...

J: Who did they explain it to?

Cl: The classes I was in. And everyone has been really positive about it and I think the worst reaction if there is one is people not quite understanding why I was doing it... but I've had no sort of negative reactions.

J: And the diversity officer, did she or he understand what 'trans' was?

Cl: Yeah, 'cause she's dealt with several cases of it.

J: Okay, that's really good.

W: Erm well I was at college last year but I dropped out because I didn't like my course, but I came back this year and I went full time male then. I actually get

less hassle now than I did back then 'cause now people can kind of see that the personality and who I am kind of matches who people say I am, instead of last year people got very confused about my identity and you know, people referred to me in such a way and I acted different, and that got more hassle than being who I am now.

C: Okay. Great

X: I transitioned between first and second year of university, I'm currently in my third year. End of first year I tried to warn people what I was going to do, but most people decided I was an attention seeker so I gave up on that... and just sort of came back at the start of second year without really explaining it to anyone. I told the university and everything but the diversity officer didn't tell anyone they just sent an email to all the teachers. Unlike Claudia I've had quite a lot of negative reactions, I've had abuse, I even had to get the police involved with one person who was giving me crap through the internet from the university. Even in first year before I came out, ironically I was known as the 'scary weird bi guy' and apparently I frightened people with my masculine energy.

C: Did people say that to you or, how did you come to know that?

X: I was just told by someone else

C: Right

X: It was probably something to do with me being tall, very long hair, a beard, and constantly wore black and scowled a lot... I wonder why I scowled a lot [laughter].

C: Okay. As we go through our questions we'll come back to kind of specific incidences 'cause it's really good to get in to some of that detail. Good for now though.

R: I'm not currently out at college but I have been in the past, is that still relevant?

J & C: Yeah. Tell us about it.

R: Alright well, in Winchester where I don't live anymore I went to a 6th form college where there were a load of people who didn't know me, but there were people from my high school there who'd known me as a girl. So, obviously they outed me to other people, which I didn't want. But they were either quite understanding or really horrible about it. But then I left that college because I hated it anyway.

C: Was that a reason why you left?

R: It was actually yeah.

C: Okay. And now you're not out at the college you're at?

R: No, I've told a couple of close friends at my current college but I'm not out, no I'm stealth.

C: Okay, who was next?

P: I've just been looking like me and getting hassle since I was a kid really. So I know it's sort of what I (inaudible), it's just how life is to be honest. Erm. What's the specific question?

C: I guess about being out, so you, it sounds like you're saying, yeah I am, people give me hassle, and I've toughened up to it basically.

P: Yeah, I mean, as a kid it was worse 'cause I didn't have the words to explain myself, I didn't have the comeback from it, I just looked like a freak and couldn't explain anything. And had no reason why I was being a freak basically.

C: So the more you kind of understood about yourself...

P: The more I understood myself rather than explain to other people and erm get no reaction from them 'cause I can actually say 'this is me, there's words for it, there's websites where you can read about 'people like me'' and therefore, it's been a lot easier the older I've got. I mean you still get people being arseholes but people are just arseholes aren't they?

C: Okay. Are you out and if so tell us a bit about that?

B: Me? I'm out to a couple of friends in my school but I still go to an all girls' school, so... I mainly get hassled for the way I look, as opposed to being hassled 'cause they know I'm not the same as everyone else. Well, they know that but that's not why I just get hassled 'cause I've got short hair and I look like a dyke basically.

C: So they choose their reason?

B: Yeah. The trans words have been like, the trans abuse has been thrown around a bit, and they seem to think it only goes one way though, they think there's only male to females, they don't know there's the other way round so they don't identify me as that so much.

Ju: I'm not out at college. I sort of thought about it but the general atmosphere at my college doesn't make it seem like it would be a good idea at the moment. Erm, yeah, I do get hassled for being weird and I have had, well there's one guy at college who's a complete twat, and he's said a couple of times 'oh do you think you're a man, do you wanna be a boy?' and I just sit there and go 'I'm not gonna answer that, I'm just going to walk away.'

C: So avoidance for now?

Ju: Yeah.

C: Okay.

Je: I've got two sort of relevant experiences, erm, I transitioned at university but I was on medical leave at the time so I wasn't attending classes. But I was still socialising around my friends and stuff. I was pretty much just, out, to anyone. And well, you could pretty much for both my friends and strangers, split it half and half between whether people received it positively or negatively. Some people were really brilliant and really supportive and others didn't, like I had problems with bar staff who didn't understand at the time so things had to be explained. But that was resolved. But similar to Xaria's situation I've had just, random strangers giving me hassle. But one person just kept harassing me so I had to get the police involved on that. And the really annoying thing on that is both the university, well, while the police were really supportive, the university and students union couldn't give a toss. They said they'd do something about it but then didn't follow up. They even refused to hand over the CCTV tapes at one time.

C: So they were not helpful and they were actually obstructive as well.

Je: Yeah.

F: Whereabouts is that?

Je: Swansea.

X: The same thing happened to me with the university, I gave them all the same information I gave to the police to them, and they said that they'd get the guy and you know, deal with him in the university and they didn't do shit.

C: Do you know of, this is to everyone, what policies around kind of protecting people are? So if it's an anti-bullying policy or an equal opportunities policy whatever the kind of structures are that staff or other students or whoever it is could rely on. Have you got an awareness of what they are and have you ever had to get to know that policy? Like with a member of staff or just reading it to yourself. Have you got involved in that?

P: Never been told where to find them.

C: You've never..?

N: My college had one.

C: Okay.

N: It just included race, sexuality, stuff like that. It didn't have anything about, well obviously, it included sex in terms of like, sexism, but there was nothing about gender or gender identity and expression in it.

Cl: Our University actually did but it was actually just for staff and recruitment, you know discrimination in those terms. There wasn't one specifically for students.

C: Okay.

B: My school, well, it's, the only thing they cover is religion, 'cause it's in Northern Ireland, sectarianism. And race. That's the only thing it covers. Anything else they just say 'oh we'll talk to them'. And then they just say, 'so and so has told us this about you', and then it just gets worse. And that's the only thing the school does.

C: Right. Okay.

F: Yeah, as far as policies that are in place to stop any of this happening or protect when it does. They're not, no one's aware of them, and I think that like, unless, the way you phrased the question, you *have* to find out about it, or you *have* to make yourself knowledgeable about it, you're not, as an overview, regardless of what you have or what you haven't got in place, there's only sexuality or race maybe, or there's only this, no one, the whole student body should be told that this is there to protect them. And that's like, you know, standard first day at school procedure.

N: My college actually did something like that. Obviously it didn't include trans stuff, but it had, when you started, you had to sign a form basically saying you would not do any of this and these were all things that could not be acceptable by the college, and various stuff like that. But it obviously didn't cover anything. Like erm, also my high school had something very similar, they were very kind of 'equal opportunities', but it was also mostly race and sex based and nothing else.

C: Right. Okay.

Ju: My college did sort of, say, there is an equal opportunities thing in place, but we didn't get told anything about it. And it's not in our student handbook either. But erm, my secondary school only got homophobia put on it 'cause I sort of went and lobbied the head teacher and deputy head, and was like 'you know your policy doesn't mention this, and erm, that's bad'. You know, it was during LGBT history month and I was just like being a little one-person activist. And I got it put on the PSHE syllabus as well which made me rather happy. But yeah, my school is rather backward.

C: But you made a difference, that's quite good.

Ju: Yeah but I don't know whether it actually filtered through. It's physically there but I don't know if it's being used at all.

C: Okay. Let's get a bit more specific then. Let's be positive first of all, and look again around the circle, and ask about experiences where you've been supported by, like positively supported, by the school generally. So whether it's a teacher

who's been particularly supportive, or it might be a policy that's helped you. So you're talking about a diversity advisor who's formally been doing some work there. Where has it been a positive experience? Where and how has school or college or university been positive and supportive?

.... [discussion followed on aspects of school life, including Physical Education and the problems young trans people encountered]

(taken from pp. 18-21 of full transcript)

C: Okay. In other subjects, lets think about subjects where you might talk about kind of difference, diversity, or different people, blah blah blah, more consciously than you would in others. So I'm thinking of things like citizenship now. Sex and relationships education now, PSHE, some of you might know it as.

B: What's PSHE?

C: PSHE is personal, social and health education. You've got health studies at yours haven't you?

B: Life skills.

C: Life skills. So some of that general stuff that kind of, the curriculum is there to say, 'let's look at the world and all of the people that are in it' and you might touch on sexuality, you might touch on race and ethnicity, you might touch on things. Does, has transgenderedness come up ever, formally, ever?

Cl: Not at all.

N: Should you even be asking that?

Cl: The greatest extent that we had in terms of PSHE was homosexuality I think. And that was only in college. 'Cause I went to 6th form. And it was only in college, that was year 12, year 13, that we had any sort of information about that.

Ju: We sort of had 'gay people exist'. Full stop. They're out there in their little colony, they never enter into the lives of normal people.

C: Yeah, they're not in this room right now.

N: I don't actually remember a single occasion where, high school, anything LGBT was ever mentioned in a way other than 'oh you fucking gay' or something. That was the only time anyone would ever bring it up.

C: So never in a curriculum, proper way by, you know, like done well or anything?

N: No! And there was this one like, person, who was apparently gay in my school. And everyone would say all these rumours about him and how he'd look under the toilet door while you were on the toilet and perv on you and stuff. And

the teachers always heard all this stuff but they never did anything about it. But if someone said anything about someone's race they were on it like a shot, but nothing else. It was like, ridiculous.

E: Our school pretends to be all inclusive and everything 'cause we had a lesson on sex and relationships and all that sort of thing. The only thing we got was a reassurance that homosexuals aren't paedophiles. That's as close as it was. I've still got the piece of paper and it says it.

C: It's almost, that's the assumption.

E: Yeah, nothing about transgenderism at all.

W: The only time that transgender issues were ever mentioned in my college was at the beginning of the year when you read through the thing in your homework diary that the make you do. There's a teacher who's explaining, you know, someone asked 'what's the difference between sex and gender?' 'Cause they must have been stupid and not known what the word gender meant. And the teachers explanation was that they replaced the word 'sex' with 'gender' in the equality thing because, she just said something really offensive about there being some people who assume that the sex of their body doesn't equate to who they are. Basically she made a joke out of it and she laughed it off as if, you know, this is something stupid, but the schools gunna have to put up with, just 'cause people want to be too politically correct or something.

C: Which for her was just, again, something out there, maybe there's a random person out there, but no one in this room would ever have...

W: Yeah, 'cause I wasn't out at that time. But I was sitting in the class and I argued against her and we got in to a big argument, and she hasn't spoken to me since, so. She doesn't like me anymore.

X: Maybe she's just embarrassed.

Cl: I must say actually, in my French classes, A level. We did actually have a unit, not on transgenderism but quite a large unit on homosexuality and prejudice and that sort of thing, which was actually quite encouraging.

C: In French?

Cl: Yeah. As sort of a general topic, yeah.

C: Wow. That's interesting.

Cl: And we did like, gay marriages, that sort of thing. But no transgendered stuff. It wasn't even heard of.

C: Okay.

X: I can't remember anything about any LGBT things but then again, I'm like, 24, so Section 28 would have still been in.

C: Right, okay.

Je: Just 'cause of err, a sort of up to the minute perspective. I'm a kind of activist and legislation geek. About literally a year ago I was working, studying the sex and relationships education and the PSE policies of my local council all the schools in it. And yeah, again, completely zip, nothing. You even had some schools who were still flatly not doing sex education beyond the catholic churches opinion, i.e. not using condoms.

X: The missionary position is the only position!

Je: And, when you actually look at how it's all set up, with the guidance policy. Nothings mandated. It's all just suggesting. It's all wishy washy and vague. It's like they don't even, in any of the official guidance from UK or Welsh governments, mention bisexuality existing. They only mention homosexuality. And complete denial that people have a sexual orientation below 16. So you're gunna have a massive task, because they've got all these things written down and it just doesn't work, so we're gunna need even more. And it's all gunna be really hard. Like, if the school does *not* do this, then they will have funds withdrawn. As opposed to just 'You should do this'.

C: Yeah, more clear guidance. I agree with you. Unless somebody takes it upon themselves to develop a broad curriculum that touches on a range of things, it won't get done.

X: If they go past the guidelines and say you have to do this, then the right wing lunatics are going to start making complaints.

C: Mm, tricky. Okay, let's keep going with, has anything come up ever in any subject about transness? Any lessons, any subjects where people mentioned transsexuality, transgenderedness?

R: In philosophy and the ethics of religion, which is an AS subject I did, we were doing sexual ethics. And it was one of the topics that got mentioned as 'we might discuss this' but actually we didn't. But they spelt it wrong, with one s. Just tran – s- exual. Which was annoying. I've gotta say, that if this was done in sex education in year 6, and in year 9 and all that, people would understand it more, and therefore they wouldn't be as afraid of it. Therefore there'd be less bullying. But, transsexualism, and homosexuality, are just seemingly pushed under the carpet. And it's you know, sex education is just 'men have willies, women have fannies' and err, then they had a special cuddle, and that's how babies are made.

Ju: Did you get the really disturbing close up video of the birth?

R: There's just... yeah, Mr Rabbit meets Mrs Rabbit and, yeah. Anyway. It's just nothing about transsexuality so people are probably getting to year 9 or 10 before they even hear about it, and know what it is. And I think they should just know.

Ju: They hear about it from daytime TV like Trisha, like 'oh no, my sister is a man!' type thing.

R: Yeah!

P: Hang on, I know somebody who's been on Jeremy Kyle.

C: That's another story for another day.

Appendix F

***Trans Journeys* short film (11mins) made by four young trans participants during the Sci:identity project**

Please see DVD attached to back cover

Appendix G

Gender Matrix exercise conducted during Sci:identity project outreach workshops

Sci:identity Project Workshop The Gender Matrix

Circle the numbers against the statements you AGREE with:

- 1) I can grow a beard when I want to
- 2) I have a deep voice
- 3) I often listen to other people's problems
- 4) When I'm in a new place, I have a good sense of direction and get my bearings quickly
- 5) I have periods
- 6) I have quite long hair
- 7) I tend to worry that my bum's too big
- 8) I usually keep my hair really short
- 9) I've got quite a few bras, in a variety of colours
- 10) I paint my nails
- 11) I play football
- 12) I am taller than 5' 6"
- 13) I know how to knit
- 14) My body produces semen
- 15) I have more oestrogen in my body than testosterone
- 16) I tend to cry from time to time
- 17) I have a tendency to get into fights with people
- 18) I tend to be open about how I'm feeling

- 19) I see myself as a logical rational person, rather than an emotional one
- 20) I enjoy talking about my personal life to my friends
- 21) I don't mind hurting people's feelings in order to get something done
- 22) People often find me insensitive to their feelings
- 23) I have breasts
- 24) I can beat most girls at arm wrestling
- 25) I believe I have the capacity to become pregnant
- 26) I have small hands
- 27) I never wear skirts
- 28) I buy my clothes from Topman rather than Topshop

Now, circle the numbers you agreed with...

Male	Female	Masculine	Feminine
1	5	4	3
2	7	8	6
12	15	11	9
14	16	17	10
19	23	21	13
22	25	27	18
24	26	28	20

Totals
In each
column: _____

Appendix H

Sample workshop plan (Sci:identity project outreach phase)

School: Haydon School, Pinner, Middlesex (AS Drama Students, Year 12) 8.40 - 10.20am 31.10.06

8.40	9.05	9.20	9.35	10.10
<p>Welcome & Opener 5 mins CM</p> <p>Intro me & project</p> <p>Names around the circle & rest of team say who they are.</p> <p>Structure of session & grouping for 1st exercise</p> <p>Start unpicking key terms (WG): JS 15 mins</p> <p>Sex; Gender; Science into venn diagram</p> <p>What's your understanding of the key terms?</p> <p>Each group sum up</p> <p>Show 2 min clip & talk a bit more in response to it.</p>	<p>Gender Matrix 15 mins CM</p> <p>Male/ Female (sex) Masculine/ Feminine (gender)</p> <p>Group come up with the 'criteria' in initial discussion about what makes men/ women</p> <p>Questionnaire distributed & completed</p> <p>JS: Discuss outcomes aiming to get the group to go deeper with ideas of sexed & gendered identities AND TRANS</p> <p>Aiming to get them to think about trans: - Birth sex - Hormonal &/ or surgical intervention (Finn to contribute)</p>	<p>Show <i>Trans Journeys</i> film FG 20mins</p> <p>Move into: Young trans people's experiences of gender & sexed identities & what 3 participants from the group put together ...</p> <p>FILM</p> <p>And discuss: How did the form(s) or techniques tell the story?</p> <p>List the forms e.g. Still images Repetition Use of music Animation Narration/ voice-over Metaphor (train)</p>	<p>Devising exercise: 35 mins</p> <p>Small group task (4/5s):</p> <p>Back to YOUR experiences/ thoughts around Sex, Gender, Science</p> <p>Decide on a key 'moment' eg. Younger brother's relationship to older brother & how masculinity is produced within family eg. Biology of the body 'happens' quite apart from your psychological readiness eg. Puberty/ menopause</p> <p>USE: some of these (Brechtian) devices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - still images - direct address - placards - non-linearity <p>9.55am (all to chat) See each group's piece & reflect, sustaining the focus on the significance of sex & gender in the world</p>	<p>Close 10mins CM</p> <p>Complete monitoring forms</p> <p>Plus: 1 thing you most enjoyed 1 thing you understand more about 1 think you'd like to know more about</p> <p>Close Thank the group; Exec Summary Report; Future project ideas; Contact details</p>

Appendix I

DVD of Transvoices Project (11mins)

Clip 1: FTM Voice Workshops – Resonance and Discordance

Clip 2: Rehearsal for Performance

Clip 3: Fraser’s feedback

Clip 4: Playing Romeo

Clip 5: Peer Analysis

Please see DVD attached to back cover

Appendix J

Voice workshop questionnaire (Jay Stewart), completed June 2005 after 3 sets of sessions

Here are a few questions about the voice workshops you've been part of over the last few months.

Your responses will help us plan for future work and evaluate the work we've all done together.

Feel free to answer as fully/ briefly as you want, and using this as an electronic form or printing it off & writing on it. Either is fine!

There are 9 questions. By all means add further comment where you feel you want to.

.....

1) As you come to the end of series three, could you give a comment which communicates your feelings/ views about this series of 6 sessions and how much it has been a development from series 2 for you:

This series has been in some ways quite tricky. The session's ambitions laid out were for us to heighten our awareness of voice – not just our own but others – and make suggestions for shifting or controlling the voice. An emphasis on listening to the subtle differences was challenging work for the ear and is something I would like to go further with, which is one of the reasons I've decided to take up the guitar.

Adding to this listening, though, I found that even when you recognised what was happening it was even more tricky to make recommendations.

This "teacher" role brought a lot of things home to me as it is a position I have ambivalent feelings about. It made me appreciate John's expertise in this area and not take for granted the work that he was doing, whilst looking so effortless and glamorous.

The series also started out quite physical which appealed to me, but I found the energy dipped a bit towards the last three sessions, which disappointed me. There was also I felt less clarity for me than series 2, and more repetition in exercises. I felt less "pushed" in terms of experimenting with my voice but definitely "pushed" within this notion of listening and concentrating.... This positioned us quite passively and is probably why the energy became quite low.

2) Can you say a little about the experience of working in a group with other men on your voice?

Group work can be difficult as well as highly satisfying when put in a position of exposure and vulnerability. Losing inhibitions in the group was a marvel in itself and could only have come about through a sensitivity on the part by Catherine and John and a kindness and generosity by my fellow participants.

I found a group of three a difficult number though, living it with more intensity.

At the same time though, sometimes it seemed like we were actually three individuals and not a group, each waiting our turn to “get a go” with John, and sometimes I wondered if my time would have been better spent doing 30 minutes solo with John but I’m sure I underestimate the importance of listening to each other’s voice.

In terms of your question being about the group being “men” I don’t know if you are implying how would I feel if it were a mixed gendered group? It was important I think that we pretty much all wanted similar things to be happening to our voice.

3) How has my presence, either within the sessions in series 1 or as an observer in series 2 & 3 affected your experience?

I think I would have been less inhibited if there weren’t a camera recording everything. I also felt like I made a lot more jokes and was a bit more frivolous, when I would have liked to have concentrated more and “gone for it” even more.

I didn’t feel your actual presence was negative in any way.

4) Much of the emphasis has been on learning new techniques of breathing and functioning. How much emphasis would you put on the idea that developing your voice literally helps to develop your confidence to speak/ speak more?

All the emphasis in the world. Naturally.

5) Wednesday evenings have become something of a social event. Can you say something about how this has or has not been an aspect of your continuing with the sessions over three series?

My main commitment to the Wednesday nights was to the workshops and to developing my voice. But the social aspect, for me, was simply a bonus. I also think we were lucky that most of the time we all went to the pub, but it can be problematic these things when not everyone goes to the pub and so “bonding” happens to some of the group members but not all of them.

6) Do you feel like you have been allowing your natural voice to develop, or adopting new techniques to give you a more male voice over the past few

months? Please comment on which might fit most closely with how you feel and why.

I believe in muscle memory, that it is habits and repetition which creates one's voice as "natural". Therefore through control and manipulation one can move one's voice to a place where one wants to take it. There is also something to be said here though that one must accept one's voice, love it and embrace it rather than deny it. So there is not a longing for a voice one can never have but a more playful venture where one can *go with* the limits of being in a body, any body.

7) You spoke Romeo's words during one activity. Did this have any significance for you? If so, could you say a bit about that?

I realised that playing a male part is open to me now, where as when I was at school and college I only got to play female parts, which I always found (and still do) completely absurd and heart breaking that so much of the world is closed off in these terms. Playing out a part taps into and expresses an inner fantasy world and of course in my fantasies I actually AM Romeo. It felt nice to be Romeo *for real* but also incredibly inhibiting because it was so secretly profound and fantastic.

8) To what extent (and how) would you say that voice work we have been engaged with over the past few months has directly impacted on your sense of yourself? How much is this to do with your identity as a trans man?

Being a trans man forces you into a hyper sensitive state of one's Self in the world. Finding movement and resonance in my voice has definitely enriched my life, not only in terms of doing my masculinity "successfully" (which is nice) but also in the deeper sense which offers hope and the ability to change and not get stuck in a rut with "bad" habits.

9) How might we proceed? What would you like to do next in terms of you and your voice? Would you be interested in being present at either the monthly Saturday sessions from Sept or the beginners' series to support John?

I'm hoping to take my voice further and work on some of the issues that are specific to me, for example my engagement. I want to take my voice into my body more. I want to develop abdominal strength and think about the support mechanisms for my voice. I also want to look at my suppleness.

It might be good for me to have sessions with John on an individual basis next I think perhaps after the summer break.

I'm happy to get involved with supporting the both of you, and the beginners, in September where I can.

Appendix K

Voice workshop questionnaire (Joseph Swift) completed June 2005 after 3 sets of sessions

Here are a few questions about the voice workshops you've been part of over the last few months.

Your responses will help us plan for future work and evaluate the work we've all done together.

Feel free to answer as fully/ briefly as you want, and using this as an electronic form or printing it off & writing on it. Either is fine!

There are 9 questions. By all means add further comment where you feel you want to.

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1) As you come to the end of series three, could you give a comment which communicates your feelings/ views about this series of 6 sessions and how much it has been a development from series 2 for you:

This series has been very physical. And it has felt more experimental. Experimental because John has encouraged us to mentor each other in classes which has improved our listening and watching skills. Also experimental in the exercises that John has been doing with us. We have learnt some more about the structure of the voice and more ways of engaging with our voices. It is hard for me to see the improvement because I think I am quite a 'now' person and I tend to get hooked on what I feel I can't do. It will be interesting to see the film some day.

2) Can you say a little about the experience of working in a group with other men on your voice?

As you know, one of my primary reasons for doing the voice work originally was to have another chance to be with trans men. And David and Jay have become good friends because of the classes and the pub sessions afterwards. I have had solo sessions with John and I find them almost too intense. I don't think my concentration is very good and I get tense when I feel I don't understand. Being in a group takes the pressure off and I think I learn just as much from watching them trying to do the same thing as me. I have loved reading the poems (once the initial shyness went away) and the exerts from plays. And since I am learning what it is to be a gay man, it has been lovely to spend so much time with John!

3) How has my presence, either within the sessions in series 1 or as an observer in series 2 & 3 affected your experience?

I'm sorry to say that during the sessions I forget you are there. I guess when I remember the camera, I sort of remember you. I certainly don't feel you are an intrusion. It was fun having you in the group in the first series and although I can understand John's reasoning, I missed your presence in the second series. It is always lovely to see you and it has been great to get to know you a bit in our chats.

4) Much of the emphasis has been on learning new techniques of breathing and functioning. How much emphasis would you put on the idea that developing your voice literally helps to develop your confidence to speak/ speak more?

I still really struggle to speak in public and my voice can still come out in a squeak. When I am talking socially, it all seems to happen so fast that I don't even think about doing the techniques John has taught us. I think all this is going to take time. A year ago I was almost totally isolated and now I have a life. I think the things I have learnt will hang around and I as I grow (I hope) in confidence. Maybe it will feel like there is more time to think about how I am standing/sitting, the shape of my pharynx, engagement, talking more slowly and with rhythm and all those other things. Then it may well start to have a feedback into more confidence.

5) Wednesday evenings have become something of a social event. Can you say something about how this has or has not been an aspect of your continuing with the sessions over three series?

As I mentioned above, the social aspect of the course has always been important to me. I love hanging out with David, Jay, John and you. You have been some of my first friends on this journey. I think many ftms share a lack of chances to be with other ftms and ftm friendly people and I think you should mention the social possibility in your advertising for the group.

6) Do you feel like you have been allowing your natural voice to develop, or adopting new techniques to give you a more male voice over the past few months? Please comment on which might fit most closely with how you feel and why.

I think it has definitely been the former. I haven't ever felt like John had decided how I should speak. It has been a voyage of discovery which I think is still ongoing. The new techniques have been about learning about how my body and voice engage, how I restrict my voice by going too low or too fast, how I fluff my consonants (although I still can't hear this at all!) and the ways that men talk differently from women. I think that many ftms get stuck in their voice placement and the tension from surviving gets trapped in their voices. This course has been great for finding out what my voice can be and hopefully one day I will be able to use it at its best all of the time.

7) You spoke Romeo's words during one activity. Did this have any significance for you? If so, could you say a bit about that?

Several of the works we have read have involved love and loss and it is especially nice to read words written for men. I have known and loved Romeo and Juliet long before I started reading plays. At school we were shown the film (was it made in the sixties or early seventies) and for years, my special birthday treat was to be taken to Romeo and Juliet at Covent Garden by my mother. I once even saw Nureyev (sp) dance it! I don't think my mother realised one of my primary reasons for loving the ballet was all those wonderful male arses – the other was of course the wonderful music. Last time I heard the suite at a concert I cried all the way through (this was pre t but the music still moves me a lot). I think the tragedy and sheer bad luck of the story has always touched me as well.

8) To what extent (and how) would you say that voice work we have been engaged with over the past few months has directly impacted on your sense of yourself? How much is this to do with your identity as a trans man?

I have been changing so much over the last few months that it is hard to know how much has been to do with the classes. Certainly the classes have been a major social contact for me, both for being with ftms and a gay man and for learning about going to the pub (that sounds a bit sad...). I have not had to worry about my voice changing because John has been taking care of that for me. And with so much else changing, that has been really good. The work on engagement has coincided with me learning about my changing body and it has reinforced the work I have been doing in physiotherapy so that has been great. I have learnt a lot about being ftm from other ftms and so being in a class with others every week has been wonderful.

9) How might we proceed? What would you like to do next in terms of you and your voice? Would you be interested in being present at either the monthly Saturday sessions from Sept or the beginners' series to support John?

I would like to be involved with one of these groups but probably not both. I definitely do not feel skilled enough to take very much of an active role but I would enjoy doing the classes again as I know the more I do it, the more my body will remember the skills. I should finish my THT training courses by the end of July and I will then be able to sort out shifts etc. So if you can wait until then, I can give you a firmer answer.

In terms of my voice, I have enjoyed doing the work with John, both in the group and solo, but I am not good at homework. I found this when I tried singing classes about four years ago. I have too much going on at the moment to commit to practising every day and I don't think I want to start trying to sing again yet. I might in a while but not now. If John would like to continue to record my voice for a bit, I would enjoy doing that. I have really appreciated the one on one time he has given me and I wish I had been able to make better use of the teaching.

Thanks for taking the time to think back over the past few months! Catherine.

Thank you for all the work and time you have put into organising these classes for us, and for the unfailing good vibes and cups of tea!

**Joseph
20/06/05**