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Performing the Trans- Body Text:

Strategies for Productive Disruption in Identity-Based Performance

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I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Abstract

LBGTQ+[1] identity-based performance has a long history of presenting personal narratives to audiences. These works have been instrumental in making LGBTQ+ subjectivities "visible" in our cultures and have been positioned as some of the most important elements of our cultural production. However, these performances also run the risk of essentializing and normativising identities. Positioning trans as 'a set of embodied texts whose potential for productive disruption of structured sexualities and spectra of desire has yet to be explored' (Stone, 1991, para 44), this practice research has asked the question 'what can the/my trans- body 'text' do onstage when it does not explain or define the Trans identity'.

This practice research has taken the form of three performance laboratories in dialogue with post-structuralist, cinematic, transgender and queer theories. The first piece pushed off of Foucault's writings on 'confessional culture' (1989) to disrupt requirements of identity truth telling and found itself productively between the states of truth and lie. The in between was further cultivated in the second practice which brought autobiographical materials but neither truth nor lie onto a Deleuzoguattarian 'plane of immanence' (1980). This, while fruitful, did not work with the specificity of the trans- body identity. The third practice returned to the body and moved into

[1] Common current shorthand for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning and other non-heteronormative sex and gender identities

productive disruption by creating a tactic of 'identity visuality' to refuse and oscillate with identity visibility.

This project reveals transing as method for creating performance 'planes of immanence' opening spaces of productive disruption. Via the third practice I advance a new dialectical structure of "Identity Visuality" in contrast to "Identity Visibility" and a performance strategy that uses trans- identity to create oscillation between the two. I propose these interlinked and overlapping strategies as original contributions to existing trans- and performance theories with applications for making and thinking trans- (and) performance work.

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Chapter one: Introduction

I have been making public performances since I was a 14-year-old girl. These are words I often use as the first sentence of a biography and sometimes at the beginning of a lecture in order to ensure I am visible as a female-to-male (ftm) transmasculine, transgender, transsexual, person. I mark myself in this way because I am convinced, after a lifetime of performance practice and many years of formal and informal practice research, that when my trans identity is not included in my presentation opportunities for social and political engagement on gender, sex and identity are missed. My theatrical interest, however, has never been to offer my autobiography or any exploration or explanation of Trans Identity. Early on offering these stories in performance seemed to me to reduce them to variations on a single theme as follows: LGBTQ+[1] children grow up knowing that we are not normative. We struggle with that knowledge internally and externally until we come to a revelatory understanding of what it means to be LGBTQ+ and embrace it. We go on to struggle with the world until we successfully demand our place in it and have a relationship with the normative again, by a combination of embracing and expanding it to include us and/or becoming simultaneously accepted in it as opposite-to-normative. The cementing of this archetypal narrative restricts much of our theatre making to imparting a uniform message about the acceptance of understandable others and the importance of socio-cultural equality. From early on, both as a creator and an audience member, my interest in this narrative was limited and upon repetition that interest quickly faded towards nil. However, I remained and remain convinced that there is radical political potential in the outward/open/visible/defiant presence of the (transgender/transsexual), other onstage. Put simply, our bodies have the potential to challenge the pressure and oppressive force of normativity. The desire to explore, define and hone this potential is the driver of the last fifteen years of my performance practice and of the research that has led to this doctoral thesis.

Since the nineteen-seventies autobiographical identity-based performance has been an important form in which LGBTQ+ and other "othered" identities can become visible, share our stories and bring awareness to issues affecting our lives. These empowering performances simultaneously run the risk of essentializing identities, entrenching narratives and losing radical potency - particularly in our 21st century identity culture. In response to this, my practice research is driven by an imperative question: what are the uses of trans bodily identity onstage when it does not talk about the Trans experience? I take my jumping off point from trans theorist Sandy Stone when she suggests that the trans 'set of embodied texts' has potential as a force disruptive to normative notions of sexual and gender identities. (Stone 1991). In *The Empire Strikes Back: A Post Transsexual Manifesto* (1991) Stone suggests constituting trans '[…] as a genre—a set of embodied texts whose potential for productive disruption of structured sexualities and spectra of desire has yet to be explored.' (Para 44). More than twenty-five years later this potential remains 'yet to be explored'. In fact, many Trans people (as well as Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual people) in our neoliberal western cultures work against the idea of identity as a disruptive force and instead opt to attempt to fold into normative sexual and gendered structures, asking only that those structures stretch to include us rather than attempting to dismantle them. While this assimilation is important to our day to day existence, the adoption of this singular methodology in identity performance practices misses a trick on more than one level: from an identity politics angle, trans performances that refuse the normativising act have the still largely untapped potential for Stone's 'productive disruption' of 'structured sexualities and spectra of desire' (para 44) — to fundamentally disrupt normative structures and spectra, creating space for other ways of being in the (gendered and sexual) world. As performance methodology, activating this resistant and disruptive potential of our bodies in the space together in physical proximity to the audience is crucial to the continuing (political) relevance of the live theatrical form.

Having determined in my pre-PhD work that the refusal to narrate and describe the "truth" of the/my/our transgender identities coupled with the physical proximity of the naked trans body 'text' has this disruptive potential, my question became "how and in what ways can the form and content of works that do not directly explore my transgender identity story (while they do include my trans- body/identity) produce this disruption?" The practice research methodology I will offer here has its origins in my historical performance trial and error that informed the start of the PhD practice. From my pre-PhD performance work, I identified that offering transgender narratives (whether autobiographical, fictional or documentary) only and always led back to questions and discussion about normative gender and sexuality and the markers of these (questions such as "Who do you sleep with?" "Which bathroom do you use?" "What happened to your dick?" "Are you going to get a dick?" came after every show, no matter the context). Through my experience of these years of performing I came to understand that what seemed to be the "shock" of revealing my hybrid gendered body in the space (stripping) carried more disruptive weight than talking about any Trans or gender ideas or experience, but post performance conversations always ended up with the same questions about (my) gender and the (my) Trans experience. In order to unpick the experience of these post performance encounters and to move forward into my research question this thesis engaged in three iterations of practice research. The first experiment *The (Culture of) Confession Booth* was a one-to-one performance encounter set in adjoining shower stall "confessionals" in which, as we spoke to each other through the walls (via microphones) I encouraged my participants and myself to let go of the conditioned need to "confess" "truths" and instead to find a playful space of lying to each other and stripping while no one was watching. To theoretically underpin this first practice I drew on Foucauldian ideas of identity '"confession'" and the biopower of internal and external policing of identity and its narratives (Foucault 1979) and probed theories on the binary opposite of "the lie" from Friedrich Nietzsche, Jacques Derrida and Hannah Arendt in order to articulate the disruptive possibilities of this lying performance practice. This first practice research revealed that it was not the

substitution of “the lie” for “the truth” that offered productive disruption but the articulation of a Deleuzoguattarian “becoming- “space in between these two binary positions. This discovery seeded the second practice: the performance laboratory *minor chaos,* a fifty-minute improvisation using elements from my autobiography in which participants encountered and engaged with me as I worked to continually refuse any settling of identity “truths” or “lies”. Analyzing this second practice led me to the understanding that, while this practice was successful in creating and examining a Deleuzoguattarian ‘plane of immanence’ (Deleuze, 1980) on which narrative, performance, truth and lies acted as ’lines of flight’, constantly moving away from the binary (this “transing” of the binary will be elaborated throughout this writing), it did not utilize the transgender bodily identity as the primary tool for that disruption/disintegration. This outcome led me to the third practice, *Trans-O-Graphia/Dance Me to the End of Love.* This fifteen minute piece, the most traditionally “theatrical” of the three, invited audiences onto another “plane” in which they encountered large scale video of unexplained parts and pieces of my identity, physical and otherwise, followed by my live performance of a romantic “boylesque” style strip-to-naked piece that, instead of ending with the reveal (that seemed to leave audiences still desiring a binary explanation of my identity), becomes a physical encounter when I move out of the “stage” space of the black box studio and invite audience members first to partner dance with me and ultimately also with each other. The refusal of autobiographical narrative while engaging the audience with my physical autobiography produced further lines of flight that at once refused the desire for confessional explanation and kept the participants in a “becoming-” space between what I will later describe as “visual” and “visible” identity utilizing the/my naked trans body in performance. These three practices and contextualizing theories offer an interrogation the thesis’ primary research question.

Although transgender studies are a rapidly expanding field, there is still a dearth of writing on the transgender body in performance. This research hopes to offer ways in

which to encounter the performance of trans- (as a maker and as invited audience) in other than in assimilatory terms. It hopes that what has been found has larger applications for Trans experience, performance making and studies. The discoveries and revelations of this journey add to and enrich the fields of performance, media studies, Trans and gender studies. This research offers new formations of “trans-” and “transing” as powerful performance methods with relationships to and with queer and queering, and new applications of the philosophies of Michel Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari and Laura U. Marks, enriching the understanding of these.

This complimentary writing follows the timeline of my practice research thesis, presenting my travels through the three practices that comprise this journey. Each chapter begins with a brief interlude that illustrates and/or sets up the conditions, research and thinking that sparked that iteration. The subsequent writing works through the practice, its theoretical underpinnings and the answers it offered to my questions as well as the developing set of questions that led to the following practice.

Structure of this writing:

Chapter One:

In this introductory chapter I present an overview and background of the theories and practices with which this thesis engages and explore their interplay that inspires, grounds and shapes the work of this research project. I introduce the three thesis practices and then go on to define the terms I am using in the ever-shifting field of identity languages and provide a rationale for the term “trans-“(trans hyphen) as an ever-shifting prefix that can usefully perform hyphenated action on terms beyond gender. I present a brief reading of the history and practice of autobiographical performance in conjunction with the concurrent history of neoliberalism in the West and discuss the effect of the latter on the former, setting the stage for my use of

Foucauldian works on Western notions of truth and the 'Culture of Confession' (Foucault, 1979) and the ways in which that has contributed to and shaped autobiographical performances, whether on stage or in other media. I work into Foucault's assertion that 'confessing' our identities fixes them into binary relationship with what they are not, denuding these of radical force, and look to his unconfessed 'bodies and pleasures' as where the radical may be energized (157). I make the link between these 'bodies and pleasures' and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's work on identity-as-difference and the ideas of becomings- as 'the unfolding of difference in time' (May 2003) and find another key practice tool in the idea that difference itself, rather than named differences between us is the first term of our subjectivities. I then tie and weave this idea back to Susan Stryker and Finn Enke's work on trans- and offer "transing" as another highly useful processual term (Stryker 2016, Enke, 2013) for making this performance work. I work with this idea of trans- and transing as a new powerful relative of queer and queering, with its own particular, to this point underused, radical political properties and suggest how my performance work takes up and deploys these powerful tools. I conclude by defining my relationship to and with my audience, highlighting the way in which I use my body and my practice to open and offer a space in which performer and participant together affectively explore Stones' 'productive disruption of structured sexualities and spectra of desire'. (Stone, 1991, para 44)

Chapter Two

I work through the practice *The (Culture of) Confession Booth.* I begin by describing and exploring the conditioned desire for the coming out story onstage and connect that to the Foucauldian idea of confession (Foucault, 1979). I work with Deirdre Heddon's ideas on autobiographical theatre (Heddon, 2008) and make the argument, via Foucault (1979), Lisa Duggan(2004) and Dan Irving (2008) that in 2017 in our neoliberal culture, the power of confessional autobiographical theatre has diminished and now serves

primarily to assimilate LGBTQ+ subjects into a mainstream or into a binary opposition to that mainstream and that neither position retains potential for radical disruption of identity norms. I introduce my interest in and attempts to “queer” or “trans-” the conditioned desire for “truth” with its opposite and discuss the (lack of the) use of mendacity as a potentially radical practice. I discuss the lie and the liar via Kant, Nietzsche, Derrida and Arendt (all in Derrida, 2002). I then present the practice *The (Culture of) Confession Booth*, a one-to-one performance in which invited participants joined me in adjoining bathroom stall “confessionals” where they were encouraged to ask questions, listen to and tell lies and “strip” (or say they stripped) while no one was watching. I work through the experiences of the practice for myself and my participants and discuss the moments in which productive disruption occurred - not in the subversion of “truth” with “lies” but in the spaces that emerged as a becoming-: between, out of, into and around truth and lies; moments when the conditioned binary of truth/lie disappeared into a state of radical and productive indeterminacy. I finish the section discussing the ways in which the practice’s emerging properties of becoming- planted the seeds for the second practice, *minor chaos,* in which I would specifically look to open this radically indeterminate becoming- space, and trans- the Deleuzian Major of truth versus lie into the constant shifting relationships of the becoming-minor.

Chapter Three

I introduce and work through the practice *minor chaos.* This second practice and thinking explores and solidifies a transition from Foucault and Derrida as my primary drivers to Deleuze and Guattari. I introduce and develop links between this practice and some of the ideas Deleuze and Guattari develop in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980). I describe how these deepened my understanding of the outcomes of *The (Culture of) Confession Booth* and guided the creation of *minor chaos:* an improvised performance laboratory using physical and verbal autobiographical elements while refusing any and all possibilities for narratives to form, lying or truthful. I describe and discuss the ways

in which the practice's outcomes emerged as, in and through a Deleuzoguattarian *'*plane of immanence' where autobiographical 'intensities' prompted transing 'lines of flight' (1980). I work through moments of this practice that illustrate the emergence of multiple or elongated spaces of radical indeterminacy and posit that, while, as in *The (Culture of) Confession Booth*, this space is productively disruptive of confessional culture, the presence of the trans- identity is not strong enough to offer the potential for answers to the thesis' primary question/inquiry, (what can the trans-identity do onstage when it does not describe itself) and move from "becoming-" in the *(Culture of) Confession Booth*, to "becoming-minor" in minor chaos toward the double movement of becoming-trans- in the final practice.

Chapter Four

Taking the outcomes of these two practices back to the sight and site of the trans- body text, in Chapter Four I present the final work *Trans-O-Graphia/Dance Me to the End of Love*, a multimedia work that utilizes cinematic and live performance and offers intimate and disruptive encounters with the transing body without explanatory narrative. I look further into the construct and tactic of identity visibility and offer my own counter-tactic of identity "visuality" in identity performance. I define this visuality via Marks (2002) on the theories of the workings of haptic viewing and her construction of the "erotic" that emerges via ongoing oscillation between the optical and the haptic, between subject and object, between near and far - or as I am constructing them, between the "visible' and the "visual". I frame my own use of video in the final practice and describe how it enacts, along with the live practice, this ongoing "erotic" oscillation (also described in this chapter) that opens a radical space of bodies and pleasures to create 'productive disruption' via the visual (not-passing) trans- body. I present moments of the experience of *Dance Me to the End of Love/Trans-o-Graphia* and discuss the ways in which this practice activated and offered insights into the primary and overall research inquiry.

Chapter Five

I offer my concluding thoughts on the theories and practices I have worked through and explored in this doctoral research and discuss the outcomes, limitations and implications of my project and the potential impact these ideas may have for future trans- performance making and thinking.

Methodology

As noted above, my research methodology is grounded in the three practices, each driven by the need to interrogate a stage of the research question. Each research iteration offered insights that produced new directions of thought which in turn seeded the following practice. I intermingle this doing-thinking with primarily post-structuralist, queer and transgender philosophical texts which grounded, contextualized, sometimes led but primarily followed the practice. Post-structural philosophies contain much of the origins of queer theory. From Foucault on the genealogies of power, Derrida and Deleuze and Guattari on the deconstruction of ideas of self, to Kristeva and later Butler on the workings of gender and others, post-structuralism presents identity as created by cultures, languages and the structures and workings of power. These concepts offered LGBTQ+ theorists, activists and subjects ways of understanding and embracing or rejecting identities, giving us a concrete means to refuse the straitjacket of heteronormativity. While Butler and Foucault wrote about these structures in relatively linear ways, Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy, while contemporaneous with Foucault, was not a straight-line explanation of identity – or of anything. Theirs was messy and circuitous, creating a new metaphysics that looked at the world and/as its relationships, including its identities. To use Deleuze and Guattari's language, we might see the more linear thinking of Butler and Foucault as arborescent, however much gnarling there is in their roots and branches, while Deleuze

and Guattari's is of course rhizomatic: their concepts are nodes sending off roots and shoots in many directions that are all still part of the same plant system. And while Deleuze and Guattari's work is obviously its own rhizome, it has invited many grafts into its systems. Where its roots and shoots encounter those of Butler and Foucault there is overlap and intertwinement. In the conceptual systems of Deleuze and Guattari there are no beginnings or ends but simply middles - lines of flight that intersect and create meshworks. Therefore, to use this meshwork and rhizome as the grounding metaphor for my methodology does not mean that I am basing myself solely in Deleuzoguattarian theory, but that I am creating my own rhizomatic system and meshwork of practice, theories and theorists.

My practice is the first root, shoot and plant of this rhizome: It has stems in my thirty-plus year performing and making history, which shifted radically with my gender transition twenty-four years ago. My experiences of moving gender and then forefronting that trans-gender movement in my performance ultimately led me to this PhD thesis.

This practice exists at the intersections of theatrical performance art, club cabaret and political theatre and counts amongst its antecedents performance artists such as Carolee Schneeman and Ana Mendieta with their feminist works using the naked and fluidly gendered body; the comedic and multi-genre queer theatre and performance of social change created by Split Britches and other artists at WOW Cafe NYC, and the radically political club performance works of artists such as Ron Athey, Julie Tolentino and Vaginal Creme Davis. I investigate the potential of the trans- body, and most often my own naked trans- body onstage for socially engaged performance making and look perhaps for a specific angle on the feminist phrase "the personal is political". Because the field of transgender performance is still quite limited and narrows virtually to zero when looking for trans performers who work with their bodies in the way and for the reasons that I do, my active research inquiry can only be explored by engaging in

personal, political, performance-based work: hence the practice research nature of this thesis.

Robin Nelson offers a model of practice as research as a triangular relationship between 'know how' (procedural and/or embodied knowledge), 'know what' (mid process reflexive critical reflection) and 'know that' (critical frameworks) (2013, 41-45). This triangular and embodied methodology is at the heart of this project and the work of many queer, trans, disabled, women, POC and other "othered" artist-practitioners who explore questions inspired by our cultures, circumstances and identities. The "know how" that Nelson identifies is engendered by our lived experience outside the normative: experience that creates and is the research that predates entering the academy; that then informs, changes and deterritorializes the academy as we infiltrate it. Practice as research, as noted by Allyson Campbell and Stephen Farrier, can be vital to and for queer research as it makes space for 'tacit, quotidian, haptic and embodied knowledge' and 'a range of research methods inherently bound up with the researcher as an individual and the materiality of lived experience within research' (2015). Practice researcher Nando Messias has employed this methodology: his "Sissy Body" work articulates 'how heteronormative masculinities emerge in the body and how one might resist these processes' (Campbell, 2015, 85); 'performance artist and scholar' Martin O'Brien engages in durational and pain based performances that use his lived and living experience of cystic fibrosis 'to challenge common representations of illness and examine what it means to be born with a life threatening disease' (O'Brien, 2019) and scholar Lib Taylor performs 'research by practice' 'exploring issues of feminism, gender and the body, identity and subjectivity, space and spectatorship, sound and voice-over' (Taylor, 2019) via live and intermedia performance practices. As my own, these performance research practices are generated from, directed by, and both *are* and *become* the literal "body" of research. In the three practices of this thesis I work from an initial place of know-how garnered from my history as a practitioner and the embodied knowledge of the politics of gender, sexuality and identity that has informed

so much of my work. From this knowing-how and the critical frameworks I bring to bear, I create three performance practices with which to activate my inquiry. The knowing-how that came from the doing of each practice became the knowing-what and knowing-that that seeded each successive practice. I offer in this writing the accumulated "knowing that" that emerged from these processes.

This thesis' research began in a linear mode and through the practices became rhizomatic: I started with a rejection of autobiographical "truth telling," perhaps the most common trope of LGBTQ+ "visibility" performance making, and the political personal. I explored Foucauldian notions around confessional culture and created a practice that worked expressly with the binary opposite: lying. Researching lying led me to Derrida on the history of the lie *Prolegomena* (2002) (which was a lie in itself, as it offered no history), which sent me off to Nietzsche arguing that all truth is a lie (Nietzsche n.d.), and to Hannah Arendt on the liar as visionary (Derrida, 2002). These shoots aided in the design of the first practice (described in chapter two). While the tricksterism of Derrida and the revolutionary thinking of Arendt empowered the first practice, doing the practice research productively confounded what I recognized as my first reactionary binary tactic and led me toward messy multiplicity and difference. The experience sent me to Deleuze and Guattari as I attempted to understand the results of the practice, and also to further understand my ineluctable resistance to autobiographical performance and its usually definitive statements of identity.

The experience of the space that was simultaneously not-lie-and-not-truth of the first practice chimed with Deleuzoguattarian theories of the constant movement of difference and becoming and my sense of what transing could do in terms of becoming-trans-, expanding into a moving away from truth and lie. The second practice set out to experientially test this finding by creating a space in which autobiographical elements remained in play but would never settle into a space where they defined anything or where they could be named either "truth" or "lie". This created a productive

‘chaosmos’: a world of becoming- and change that could ‘never be fully completed as it always takes place in the midst of things. ‘(Beaulieu, 2016, 201). This chaosmic experience confirmed my growing sense that keeping identity in the theatrical frame while refusing to define or explain it had potential: the autobiographical elements of the piece found the audience in a constant space of trying to parse meanings. However, what I was looking for in terms of using my trans- identity to specifically question and confound normative thinking on and responses to gender and sexual identities was muted in the chaos of identity languages, objects, signifiers, signposts, deflections, lies, etc. There were, perhaps, too many intensities and lines of flight to navigate - and in the midst of all of them, the political power of the visible trans- identity was not activated. However, “visibility” is a highly coded word that includes narrative declaration. I wondered if what I was looking for was not to be “visible” but perhaps to be “visual” and found myself grafting Marks’ and Maiike Bleeker’s ideas of cinematic and theatrical visuality into my rhizome. In the third and final practice I created a piece of what I conceived to be a performance of identity ‘visuality’, both cinematic and theatrical, and which asked the audience to engage with my body ocularly and haptically, rather than with any narrative. This practice addressed the research question in the difference between what I identify as “identity visibility” and “identity visuality” and suggested/created a new tactic of Marksian “erotics” in performance oscillating between those two states and thereby engaging audiences with the space of temporal difference. This found me grafting haptic strategies of bodies, pleasures, desire and resistance into my rhizome.

Most of my theoretical grafts have precedent: from its beginnings many feminists, People of Colour (POC), Queer and Trans theorists have embraced the ideas of post-structuralism in order to remove LGBTQ+, POC and disabled subjectivities from essentialist hegemonic structures that insisted we were “biologically” and/or “naturally” less than what amounted to a hetero-gender-normative, normatively-abled white male “gold standard”. Over time criticisms have been levelled against post

structuralism (by the same groups) for what has been perceived as its inability or unwillingness to recognize material conditions and the political power of identity and/in community. Post-structuralists have been particularly criticized for what has at times seemed a willful ignorance of the fact that they often belong to that "gold standard" of privilege their theorizing is meant to dismantle and seem ignorant as well to the ways in which this privilege inflects, influences and helped to create this work. However, the post structural baby has not been thrown out with the privileged bathwater: feminist, POC, Trans and disability theorists, as well as later post-structuralists have grafted ideas of the "both-and" of materiality and post-structure into the philosophical rhizome, including very specifically political strategies such as Gayatri Spivak's 'strategic essentialism' (Danius, 1993) in which communities might adopt unified stances on their "essential" needs as tactic, temporarily forgoing or deferring a level of deconstruction in order to get those needs met.

Employing what J. Jack Halberstam marks as a queer methodological practice (2018), as Halberstam's, mine can be perhaps be seen as a 'scavenger' or 'disloyal' methodology (10) that makes and discovers connection and coherence through the doing and findings of the practice research rather than within the boundaries of a singular academic discipline. In my rhizome I have grafted cuttings of what could now be considered classic post-structuralist identity theories of Michel Foucault and Deleuze and Guattari to consider the workings of power on identity and the messy multiplicities of those identities and offer difference itself as a counter to this power. I have the backing of many later theorists for this strategy, from Rosi Braidotti (1991:1994) through Elizabeth Grosz (1995-2011) to Hannah Stark (2016) and Julian Gill-Peterson (2017). I look to pioneers of transgender studies Susan Stryker and Sandy Stone among others for ways to look at transgender as a literal experience of multiplicity and difference and I posit performance as an attempt to actualize and illustrate those becoming- qualities.

Original contribution to the field:

In the course of this thesis my overarching practice has emerged as the creation of performance 'planes of immanence:' worlds and situations that trans- the "transcendent" hegemonic to evoke states of productive disruption via performance-based designs and exchanges. This practice has potential uses for political theatre making outside of this thesis and beyond trans- and identity-based theatre and performance. On these planes materials and identifications remain present and part of each experiment as unexplained intensities that operate as transing and becoming-lines of flight. Applying Stone's "productive disruption" to the problematic as I have articulated it in this writing, I reveal a transing performance practice as method for creating these 'planes of immanence:' and opening spaces of radical indeterminacy.

Via the final practice I advance a new dialectical structure and performance practice of "Identity Visuality" in contrast to and oscillation with "Identity Visibility". In answer to my practice questions I offer a performance strategy that uses the bodily trans- identity to create an erotic oscillation between Visibility and Visuality. I offer this as a method for creating a productively disrupted and radically indeterminate space of difference and bodies and pleasures as political performance tactic and propose these interlinked and overlapping strategies as original contributions to existing trans and performance theories with applications for making and thinking about trans- performance work.

Transing:

I expand upon Finn Enke's description of Transing as moving away from gender assigned at birth and align that with Susan Stryker's formulation of trans- (trans hyphen) to allow the movement of the prefix trans- to take its anti-gender-essentialist motion and operate as anti-essentialist in other realms. Trans-/transing, then, as I am deploying it is

a performance strategy and critical positioning akin to queer and queering: Where the verb form of queer operates to subvert and twist the normative from a sexuality point of view, trans- and transing in performance would be the constant movement away from normativity from a gender point of view. As queer can never stop subverting lest is cease to (be) queer, trans- and transing can never stop moving, lest it cease to (be) trans-.

Visibility vs Visuality**:**

In answer to my primary research question: what the transing/trans- body can do in performance when it does not describe the Trans identity, through practice and theoretical research I create the concept of identity "Visuality," as opposed to the established idea of identity "Visibility". Visibility includes narrative and is an 'optical' or distant viewing (Marks, 2003). Identity Visuality, in contrast is a haptic viewing that includes no textual data or narrative to orient the viewer. This situates it as an up close, tactile viewing that moves the viewer to feel themselves rather than think the other. Through and in the practices, I found that performances that offer the "visuality" of the/my trans-/transing body can create temporal spaces of "erotic" oscillation between the haptic/visual and optic/visible in which the performer and participant experience themselves and identity as multiplicity, and of difference as the first term of identity: what we share rather than what separates us. I argue that this is movement toward what Foucault was calling for when he advocated the radicality of 'bodies and pleasures' over the confessional and binary idea of 'sex-desires' (Foucault 1979).

The three iterations of practice:

1. Becoming- *The (Culture of) Confession Booth*

Described in detail in chapter two, the first practice *The (Culture of) Confession Booth* took place in two adjoining shower stall "confessionals" and attempted to quite literally reject what I felt was the requirement placed on LBGTQ+ performers (and all subjects) to confess our identities in order to explain them to an inquiring public. My first attempt had me in a Deleuzoguattarian "Major" hegemonic and binary relationship to confession - as evidenced by the fact that I created shower stall "confessionals" to begin with- as I attempted to break the conditioned desire to hear and make confessions with the opposite, with lying. This was an enlightening experiment that pointed out just how difficult it is to resist our confessional culture. Breaking the confessing habit and getting to a lying practice took time for me and for each participant. The element of the/my trans-body "embodied text" existed in the potential for stripping naked that I included in a playful party game element of the practice (see chapter two), but became only a concept, reminiscent of the proverbial tree falling in a humanless forest, since neither of us could see if the other took their clothes off. The experiment yielded interesting experiences in terms of my hypotheses, the most relevant of which was that what I was looking for was in fact to find a way to be outside the binary equation of truth versus lies, and there were moments in the practice when my participants and I enjoyed the becoming- play between and around the truth and the lie - one of the many oscillations of the practices that also offered feelings of elation, fear, confusion, vulnerability, isolation, safety and curiosity as reported by my participants on the post-confessional tape recordings collected. Transing truth with lies opened up a productively disruptive and oscillating space of becoming- with and in-between truth and lie, offering moments of radical indeterminacy for myself and my participants. Without it being designed to be, this first practice was a kind of a confessional palate clearer for me and at the same time it revealed that the most satisfying moments were not to be found, as I had imagined, in the subversive pleasures of lying, but rather were in the space that opened up in between lies and truth: where information was present but unweighted and not allowed a place in normative narrative; where it was an element in an assemblage of

elements that created an experience of oscillation in which the oscillation itself was the preferred space.

2. Becoming-minor: *minor chaos*

Presented in chapter three, the second practice *minor chaos* was an experiment in having identity elements as intensities in the room: on and creating a plane of immanence that held the practice and then keeping those elements in movement and change in a space of Deleuzoguattarian becoming-minor. The practice was indeed a chaos for myself and participants, and it illustrated to me how uncomfortable it can be to stay in that space, without the anchor point of autobiographical narrative. Elements of identity were in constant play, but they did not offer any picture of a trans- identity, though there was certainly transing as the entire piece was a moving away from one identity element after another. The -gender aspect of trans- was minimal, however, so while the practice did create a plane in which nothing fixed, I cannot say that the practice illuminated what the transing-gender identity can offer to the plane of the practice. While the practice perhaps illuminated the idea that any destroying of hegemonic conventions of autobiographical performance is a questioning of those structures, it was not pointed enough towards non-normative LBGTQ+ identity to challenge major, normative ideas around gender or sexuality.

3. Becoming-trans-: Trans-O-Graphia/Dance Me to the End of Love

The third practice, *Trans-O-Graphia/Dance Me to the End of Love* put the physical presence of my trans- identity back into the room and brought together the elements of becoming, transing, bodies and pleasures, and the oscillation of an identity "visibility" with what I am terming identity "visuality" that creates an "erotics" (see chapter four) of both viewing and doing as the elements of video incorporated visuality tactics and my transing body in the two dimensional while I offered the live, three

dimensional experience in oscillation with the video. The themes of movement, oscillation, doubling and transing, as well as the experience of intimacy and touch, whether the cinematic via the video or the physical via my body in the space partnering with other bodies melded to offer a glimpse of what the experience of a performance of becoming- trans- "bodies and pleasures"- and present but non-defined identity can do: It can create an affective experience of the "erotic" oscillating space of difference.

Interlude - I Confess*:*

> *I watch female-to-male Trans porn star Buck Angel's documentary Mr. Angel; I watch clips from radical Trans performance artist Nina Arsenault's solo show The Silicone Diaries; I watch the conservative Kardashian family transwoman Caitlin Jenner's reality show I Am Cait. I read thousands of stories of Trans models, dancers, singers, politicians, clergy members, athletes and sex workers on thousands of websites. I skim through countless numbers of YouTube videos by Trans people speaking to the camera and their followers from living rooms and bedrooms, and while the production styles differ as well as the levels of sensationalism and the amount of control exhibited by the protagonists, all these presentations do the same thing: They tell the stories of how they came to understand who they are –confessing their non-heteronormative identities, their struggles to understand themselves and their journeys towards acceptance. In the radical porn and performance art of Arsenault and Angel, in the mainstream television of Jenner, in amateur bedrooms and all the rest, these performance and media presentations follow similar narratives of coming out and the transgender journey. On the conservative and mainstream side these stories are pitched to assimilate the tellers into the culture as it is, while those told by more "radical" subjects often focus on stretching the social membrane in order to create more space inside its confines, but the goal of discovering, naming and*

moving into one's identity forms the narrative structure that we offer and that is expected of us.

I began my transition from "female" to "male" in 1994. Before I did so, I had been working in a queer theatre company called "Greek Active". We produced subverted productions of classic theatre in which I, as a female bodied person, always played male roles. When I began being seen as male all the time rather than just playing men onstage, I could no longer play those roles with obvious subversive effect, and I had no interest in doing "reverse drag" and playing female roles, having made the choice to leave those behind. For six years I concentrated on directing. When I was ready to explore how I could use my new bodily configuration onstage I created a solo performance, and it quickly became clear that what was wanted was that I create the expected type of autobiographical show.

But I never wanted to make work that explained my identity, rather my intention was and is to make work that questions gender regimes and identity discourses in general. My audiences, however, asked for that story after every show I made.

Terminology

Gender

Susan Stryker asserts in a 2016 talk for the Interregnum podcast that:

> '"Gender is a social system that classifies and imparts meaning to our physically sexed bodies and to the experiences we have of living through those bodies. […] It is part of the cultural climate that the actions of our lives take place within.'" (Stryker, 2016)

While Stryker stakes out a definitive post-structural position here, it bears mention that there is no philosophical, cultural or medical consensus as to why some of us feel we cannot live in the gender system we were assigned to at birth. In both my personal politics and for the purposes of this PhD thesis and complimentary writing, I am not interested in working with an understanding of gender as in any way essential. While historically and currently there are arguments for biological approaches to understanding the elements of LGBTQ+ identities (Döhler, 1983, Gorski, 1985, Dabs, 1995, Coates, 2008 amongst others), Foucault asserts that radical potential is not found in naming these identities in any essential or fixed way as what he describes as 'sex-desires' (Foucault 1979). Radical potential might instead be found, he offers, in the unnamed and unfixed oscillating spaces of 'bodies and pleasures' (157) and that is where my focus lies.

Trans-

In the shifting language landscape of gender identity labels there is no stable term that I can use to talk about gender identity, my own included. Over the last twenty-four years I have called myself Transsexual, Transgender, FTM, F2M, transman, trans*, trans-, just Trans and also queer and none of these terms holds the same meaning or place in the current culture that they did when I first wore them. For the purposes of this PhD I am using trans- (trans hyphen), following Susan Stryker, who sees the use of the hyphen to forefront trans as a conceptual and moving ('across,' 'beyond,' or 'through' (dictionary.com, 2018)) operation of trans on gender that also allows for that operation to be performed on other things and ideas, and so lets us more easily think multi-modally (Stryker, 2016). Using trans- also aligns trans with the Deleuzoguattarian concept of becoming- acknowledging an always unfinished journeying of trans-gender identity and all gender identities. Trans- then forefronts movement and doing rather than being, Foucault's 'bodies and pleasures' rather than identities. Transing- as specifically elaborated by Finn Enke - can be seen as a 'moving away from' -gender

assigned at birth- (Enke, 2012), and as noted previously this transing operation can be performed on and with (or against) other things, making trans- and transing a verb with similar properties to the verb form of queer and queering. Throughout this writing, I use “trans- “to identify the politics and performance of my own and others trans-subjectivities. I use the term “Trans” when referring to non-gender-normative communities and the mainstream perception of such.

In 1991, Trans activist and scholar Sandy Stone suggested that the transgender subject had her own queering potential when she wrote:

> […We] may find the potential to map the refigured [trans-] body onto conventional gender discourse and thereby disrupt it, to take advantage of the dissonances created by such a juxtaposition to fragment and reconstitute the elements of gender in new and unexpected geometries. (Stone, 1991, para 44)

As I am using them, the ideas informing trans- and transing are ways to mark this potential for the dissonances and disruptions that the unfixed trans- identity can engender.

In analyzing this potential In *The Empire Strikes Back* (1991), Stone first offers writing from Butler on Lesbian “Butch” and “Femme” roles as an example of this dissonance, noting the disruptive play of masculinity on a “Butch” female body and pointing out that “Butch” and “Femme” both ‘recall the Heterosexual “scene”’ while simultaneously disrupting and displacing it (Stone 1991), indeed moving “across”, “beyond” and/or “through” and transing that “scene”. This disruption and fragmentation of heteronormative genders and sexualities creates an ‘erotic power’ via this dissonance (para 43). Stone goes on to suggest that the transsexual identity has a similar potential to ‘map the refigured (trans) body onto conventional gender discourse and thereby disrupt it’ (para 44). The transsexual body, by virtue of its material and identificatory past and present, recalls the scene of, and simultaneously displaces, normative gender and sexuality by being, in effect, in two (or more) places and times at once. Except for

subjects who are able and willing to adhere to a strict protocol of normative identification and renunciation of any non-normative history, the transsexual body "transes-:" moves simultaneously away from and towards heterosexuality, homosexuality, maleness and femaleness, sexual and gender identities. Stone suggests that to maximize these 'invocations of dissonance' we focus not on Trans as an assimilated 'class' of female or male, nor as a 'problematic "third gender:"'

> [B]ut rather as a genre—a set of embodied texts whose potential for productive disruption of structured sexualities and spectra of desire has yet to be explored" (Stone, 1991 para 44)

She continues that for this strategy to be productive transsexual people must choose not to "pass" or assimilate into the binary normative structures of gender, but instead we must continue transing- and work in dissonance, in the space of difference. The "passing" Trans person (who can and chooses to adhere to the protocols) disappears into fixed normative structures of gender and is dissonant no longer. This is at the heart of my own thinking and performance practice: the potential for trans- to offer this disruption comes directly from the encounter with the trans- identity that is not attempting to enter into and "pass" as a producing/consuming member of the normative sphere.

LGBTQ+ Autobiographical Performance:

The idea of identity "visibility" has become the fulcrum of our politics. LGBTQ+ people must be visible as viable members of our social and political structures in order to take a platform and to wield voting, spending and cultural power. "Visibility" is a 'struggle word' according to Butler (Hennessy, 1994), and is not solely based on 'the ocular dimension of vision, but rather [is] a production of representational presence' (Prentice, 2009, 326). To be visible is also to be "sayable", to be 'perceptible', 'intelligible' (Ruitenberg, 2010) and recognizable as a coherent subject in culture.

Visibility is not predicated solely on how we physically present but also on how we define ourselves via narrative: description, explanation and context. For some four decades now, particularly in North America, the UK and Europe, autobiographical performance has been a powerful tool in creating this narrative visibility and as such is positioned as one of the most important uses of the "personal as political".

For most people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer or other non-normative gender or sexual identity, the tradition of the "coming out story" is very strong. In any new relationship the moment comes when we tell our stories over dinner, drinks, drugs, in front of a fireplace, a campfire, or between sheets. When did you know, how did you know, what did you know, what did you feel, what happened to you, how did you cope – we have enjoyed and wanted to share these stories: they have created a sense of family, community and belonging. In our theatres, the public presentation and sharing of these identity origin stories is a primary example of the personal as political. Autobiographical theatres have a strong political history for LGBTQ+ and other marginalized identity communities. For groups of people struggling for governmental rights and societal acceptance in the face of physical and institutional violence and political and economic oppression, autobiographical performances can be polemical, they can bear witness, and they are 'performances of possibility' (Heddon, 2008), where the 'possible' suggests 'a movement culminating in creation and change'. (Madison in Heddon, 3). In autobiographical performances non-normative subjects 'move from margin to centre (stage)' (Bell in Heddon, 3). This centering of the autobiographical speaking subject in performance can create a direct relationship between performer and audience member, and this relationship has the potential to make the audience's need to listen, react, and take action on the social and political level more imperative (2008). The autobiographical performance audience is offered the socio-politics of the performer's story without the third person filter of "fourth wall" theatre; without the distance of a news item or the abstraction of a ballot measure.

This western autobiographical performance tradition comes out of political theatre making of the later 1960s and 1970s and can perhaps first be marked in the United States by the Lesbian Art Projects' performance entitled *An Oral Herstory of Lesbianism.* Presented in 1979 at the Los Angeles Women's Building Terry Wolverton and twelve performers created the piece over three months of workshops exploring their experience as lesbians and presented these stories of coming out, of 'life in bars and on the sports field [and] the challenges of relationships […] in the hopes of creating a new tapestry that reveals and expands the meaning of "lesbian"' (Wolverton, 2002). In the mid 1970s lesbian fourth wall playwrights and plays were slowly becoming visible (Jane Chambers' 1979 *Last Summer At Bluefish Cove* is among the most well-known) and *An Oral Herstory of Lesbianism* was one of the first performance pieces that broke that wall to tell first person lesbian stories from the performers' own lives, connecting with audiences on that imperative, autobiographical level.

Over the following decades the tradition of LGBTQ+ autobiographical performances grew into a rich field of artists and body of works: Tim Miller began making overtly political autobiographical shows focused on his identity and experience as a gay man in 1981 and continued into 2009, using his personal experiences to talk about social and structural homophobia and discrimination. Holly Hughes' *Clit Notes* (1993)*,* Susan Miller's *My Left Breast* (1994) Peggy Shaw's *You're Just Like My Father* (1994)*, Menopausal Gentleman* (1998), *To My Chagrin* (2001), and *Must—The Inside Story* (2007) are all autobiographical shows that presented lesbian experiences and sexuality and also focused on other personal-political issues such as the experience of growing up lesbian in small town America, facing breast cancer, ageing, menopause and grand-parenting. Luis Alfaro's *Downtown* (1994) Alec Mapa's *I Remember Mapa* (1996) and E. Patrick Johnson's *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South* (2010) offered socio-political methodologies for examining the intersections of homophobia and racism that grew out of the second wave feminist political personal. Autobiographical and solo Trans

performances have also taken up the tradition of their Lesbian and Gay antecedents and contemporaries and have been ground-breaking in offering challenges to notions of normative gender as well as community and ally building experiences. Kate Bornstein's *Virtually Yours* and David Harrison's *FTM* were two of the earliest autobiographical solo shows written and performed by Trans artists, both premiering in 1994. These were followed by many others throughout the West. Alexandra Billings' *Before I Disappear* (USA 1996), David Tolu's *One New Man* (Italy, 2004) Scott Tuner Schofield's *Becoming a Man in 127 EASY Steps* (USA 2007), Nina Arsenault's *The Silicone Diaries* (Canada 2012) and Sri Lankan performer D'Lo's *D'FaQTo Life* (USA 2014) are examples of historical and recent Trans autobiographical shows. For the last forty years LGBTQ+ performers have used our identities and stories to demand the space in which to become visible as "legitimate" subjects in our socio-cultural spheres.

Performances that use narrative visibility to demand and make space for societal acceptance and political rights of non-normative subjects can be powerful political tools. However, these autobiographical performances also have their own set of problems, risks and limitations. Autobiographical performances can be essentializing when they come to represent universal ideas of LGBTQ+ identity. Shows that offer narratives of not fitting into the societies we grow up in because of our non-normative behaviours, desires or both can run the risk of bringing about a 'truth' of essential identity - shoring up fixed narratives of what it means to identify as LGBTQ+. Common elements of these narratives such as being a "feminine boy" or a "masculine girl", whether leading to a realization of non-normative sexuality or gender or both, can be both affirming to audiences while also reifying normative notions around genders and sexualities.

While there are certainly exceptions such as such as British Queer performer David Hoyle who uses his identity and history as a queer man in his work as a primary and political element but constantly disrupts all narratives of self and theatrical structure,

the majority of autobiographical origin story performances by definition create fixed and descriptive senses of identity as audiences (or readers) expect to be given an "authentic" story of our lives. While a fixed and unified sense of LGBTQ+ identity may be a useful tool in enacting Gayatri Spivak's 'strategic essentialism' in which identity community groups pragmatically allow a unified sense of who we are to solidify and therefore can lobby collectively for what we want and need (Dourish, 2008), in the Foucauldian and Deleuzoguattarian frames that I am working with, the radical (as opposed to pragmatic) potential of these narratives is limited. The descriptive nature of autobiographical works puts them in the realm of the Deleuzian 'Major': fixed in a binary and deficient relationship to hegemonic structures of power (Deleuze, 1980). Perhaps crucially, these narrative descriptive performances can all too easily play into the current neoliberal structure that creates us as and requires us to be the productive private citizen Foucault called 'homo economicus', the 'entrepreneur of himself' (Read 2009).

By many historical accounts, identity politics had a more communal political emphasis coming out of the post-war West. In these years both the American civil rights movement and second wave feminism in the US and the UK emphasized identity as a political battleground on which racist and sexist opinions and laws, and economic and social inequalities were organized against and activists fought and lobbied for larger progressive change. The 1969 Stonewall riots in the United States are often marked as the flashpoint for radical identity politics for LGBTQ+ in the West and for a time, and often somewhat uneasily, progressive movements worked together toward mutual goals for social change for marginalized peoples. Over the interceding forty years while civil rights activism for marginalized identities has made many gains, simultaneously political and socio-economic ideas of neoliberalism have been introduced and have flourished, creating us all as privatized market actors.

Deirdre Heddon (2008) notes the possible pitfalls of autobiographical performance and speaks to the neoliberal individuation of identities. Without naming neoliberalism, she writes:

> In a society which predominantly focusses on the 'individual' […] the repetition of the soundbite 'the personal *is* political' [is] in some ways emptying out the relationship between the personal and the social (162) (Italics original).

Since the 1970's (the same period that marks the rise of the LGBTQ+ autobiographical solo performance) this 'emptying out' of the social from the personal (162) has been the ongoing task of neoliberalism, now in full dominant force. As noted by performance theorist Peggy Phelan, visibility has limitations as a political tactic: with being 'marked' can come 'surveillance and the law; [..] voyeurism, fetishism, the colonialist/imperial appetite for possession.' (Phelan, 1993, 6). Fixing an identity-visibility narrative can all too easily align that identity to the market, with greater or lesser value. Phelan continues:

> Visibility politics are compatible with capitalism's relentless appetite for new markets[.] The production and reproduction of visibility are part of the labor of the reproduction of capitalism. (11)

As both socio-personal politic and political performance tactic, refusing to (always) make ourselves "visible" may allow us to stay out of that equation. As Phelan notes: 'There is an important difference between willfully failing to appear and never being summoned.' (11).

Neoliberalism:

The overarching political system that permeates the west, neoliberalism is:

> [A] governing rationality through which everything is "economized" and in a very specific way: human beings become market actors and nothing but, every field of activity is seen as a market, and every entity (whether public or private, whether person, business, or state) is governed as a firm. […] [I]t casts people as human capital who must constantly tend to their own present and future value. (Brown, 2018, para 4)

Neoliberalism constructs identity politics as another market, reducing its function to engendering greater individual "sales" rather than stronger social/community groupings. LGBTQ+ identities and performance have not escaped this. As we all must become 'productive' and 'entrepreneurial' citizens (Irving, 2008) the dominant form of LBGTQ+ politics becomes assimilationist - the right to marry, (to create and pay for the perfect wedding) to serve in the military (to be the epitome of a productive "patriotic" soldier) and to achieve the perfect fit within the dominant narratives of youth, beauty and financial success.

Neoliberalism requires us to be both producer and product, and to be constantly maintaining or increasing our market value, whatever our identities. Autobiographical theatre, currently perhaps particularly Trans autobiographical theatre, runs the risk of playing into this trajectory - creating performances that describe a journey from an unproductive past describing the pain and confusion of our identities, to a productive present and future in which we have reached our goals (of coming out and/or transition) and now can fully contribute to and partake in (or near) the mainstream. With the current cultural fascination with Trans and the sympathetic media marketing of Trans people as, for instance, "brave" and "living their truth," this neoliberal positioning is on the rise: the stories mostly being centered on are those of Trans people successfully or unsuccessfully trying to move into the mainstream of gender and culture. Recent theatrical shows such as the Scottish double bill *Adam:* "a true story of a young trans man and his fight across borders and genders to find a place to call home," and *Eve: "* the story of a child raised as a boy, when she knew all along that was wrong." (What's On Glasgow, 2018) created for and with the National Theatre of

Scotland are part of this offering, while our current status as consumer and product are perhaps best exemplified by the growing numbers of media stories and photo spreads of Transmasculine bodybuilders and Transfeminine models. Inside neoliberal capitalism identity politics become "personal" matters to be tended to: we consume in order to increase in value, to create ourselves as maximally productive. Under the pressure of maintaining and increasing that value we can all too easily become artificially separated from the concerns of larger economic and other structural inequalities. The neoliberal identity project is one in which the political fight is for all identities to be represented in the correct numbers inside the successful mainstream. This positioning restricts the scope of LGBTQ+ political activism to the struggle for legalized gay marriage and the rights of transgender subjects to serve in the military rather than a politics in which, for instance, the implications of marriage and war (and who can and who must partake in these) are the also part and parcel of identity politics.

Trans politics and performance:

While there have already been several waves of (attempted and only partially successful) mainstreaming of Lesbian and Gay subject positions in the West, we can perhaps mark the first major appearance of the Trans subject in the larger popular culture[2] in 2015 when Caitlyn Jenner's Vanity Fair cover and photo spread appeared widely online and in print and her reality television show *I am Cait* garnered much attention, in part because of her previous fame as an Olympic athlete and Kardashian spouse. *I am Cait* joined other Trans themed and Trans featuring movies and shows

[2] Christine Jorgensen's appearance in 1952 with the headline "Ex-GI Becomes Blonde Beauty" (New York Daily News, 1952) perhaps had the equivalent exposure as Caitlyn Jenner's press. The intervening years of identity politics and media technology changes as well as the history of LGBTQ+ identity politics have made the reach and effect of Jenner's appearance mark an entirely (and arguably) different shift in culture than Jorgensen's did. The comparison of the two would be an interesting study, beyond the scope of this PhD.

such as *Transparent, Orange is the New Black,* teenager Jazz Jennings *I am Jazz,* documentaries *This Is Me, Becoming Us* and dozens of other Trans themed films produced by and for the mainstream. Books, television appearances and online and print magazine articles and spreads for Trans actors, models, activists, writers, athletes, musicians, boxing promoters, soldiers and ex-soldiers, while they have a decades long (intermittent and problematic) history, have proliferated since 2010. Like *I Am Cait* most of these recent presentations offer autobiographical stories that function as repetitions of an assimilationist and normativizing Trans narrative: Media audiences are presented with Trans subjects navigating the difficulties of living in and with an assigned gender experienced as "incorrect" (often with the narrative of being "born in the wrong body"), the processes of understanding and "correcting" bodies via hormones, surgery and personal and public identification. The subsequent adjustments to living in the desired gender position are told as a journey through trauma to (or at least toward) triumph and presented to a mainstream audience as people "just like you" but for this one gender mismatch. This perfect narrative of achievement (as well as the correlative-opposite narrative of failure to achieve the triumphant new gender largely experienced by Trans people of colour, Trans people who do not pass (and/or do not want to pass), Trans people who are disabled, among others) creates a neoliberal trans-normative. In the same vein as Lisa Duggan's analysis of the recent move in some sections of our communities toward a homo-normative in which the Gay and Lesbian identity has yielded its radical progressive nature to the project of neoliberal normative success (Duggan, 2002), the new trans-normative of "just like you" works to shore up conservative ideas of masculinity and femininity, maleness and femaleness for Trans and cisgender people as well as validating normative ideas on marriage, family and "citizenship" in general. It should not be forgotten that the Trans autobiography we are all familiar with has thick and deep roots in our collective history of having to tell the "correct" stories to the gatekeeping medical powers in order to be permitted to live as we want, and these roots are still apparent in all forms of Trans media. I join Sandy

Stone as she wonders in *The Empire Strikes Back* what the politics of Trans identity would be like if we had had control of our own stories from the outset (Stone 1990).

The normativization of identities that can be seen in the performing arts (especially the representations picked up by the mainstream media) with few exceptions bears little resemblance to the queer and Trans identity politics and political theatre that preceded it. Our outrage is now consumed as "outrageousness" such as can be seen on *RuPaul's Drag Race (LOGO TV).* In *Drag Race* and many if not most other cases it is not the work that has shifted substantially: RuPaul's persona and politic is materially the same as it was in the 1980's, presenting drag as defiantly fabulous gender bending gay performance. The LGBTQ+ demand for inclusion of our subject positions inside the neoliberal mainstream has meant that Western cultural space for the non-normative has expanded to include a cult mainstream status for *Drag Race* and other Drag (Queen)[3] performances. The Deleuzian deterritorializing effect the LGBTQ+ identity has had on hetero-normative cultures sees those cultures reterritorializing with us inside. This practice research thesis develops uses of transing and identity visuality to find new ways to deterritorialize these cultures and audiences. Understanding that there is no true "outside" of the (neoliberal) culture in which it resides It has no illusions that this practice will result in something that cannot be reterritorialized. I work here to develop transing and Identity Visuality in performance to create multiple insurrectionist interventions that offer slivers of space, time and experience in which new possibilities might appear.

Autobiographical Interlude 2:

[3] Since the 1980's there has been an ongoing question and some writing as to why Drag King performances have never been able to reach the cultural height of Drag Queen performances, a discussion that is beyond the scope of this PhD

I began making Queer Theatre in 1992 after majoring in theatre in high school and college but not performing in many productions because my "baby butch" (not-yet-trans), identity often made me too dissonant to cast in normative university dramatic productions. Temporarily leaving the theatre I found a home in music in my twenties, playing bass in "Dyke" bands (the word "Queer'" had not yet gained any traction). When I moved to Seattle, Washington at twenty-six I found myself in a burgeoning LGB-not yet T friendly city with a healthy alternative theatre scene. Not long after I arrived, I was asked to take part in starting the first "Queer" theatre company in the Pacific Northwest. "Greek Active" would put on queer cross-dressed parodies of classic plays. I played Jason, Creon and Ageus in Euripides' Medea; Macduff in Macbeth; and Antipholus of Syracuse in A Comedy of Errors before moving on to direct an all-female Romeo and Juliet reimagining the Montagues and Capulets as two rival softball teams meeting and competing in a Seattle Lesbian and Gay bar.

Queer and Trans Theory and Performance

Around the same time, I was queering classical theatre in Seattle, in 1990 the performance-activist group 'Queer Nation' surfaced to expand the remit of queer activism beyond ACT UP's HIV- and AIDS-specific focus. Queer political action gave queer theory traction outside academia and queer performance makers such as Split Britches, Carmelita Tropicana, Gay Sweatshop, Keith Hennessey and the performers who inhabited San Francisco's *848* were doing radical performance politics on alternative stages in North America, in the UK and parts of Western Europe.

Nineteen-ninety-two was named 'The Year of the Queer' by American Gay and Lesbian magazines *The Advocate* and *Gay Community News* (Nordquist, 2008) and identity politics seemed to be moving beyond and against the demand to be allowed into the

straight-white-western “old boys club” and instead was taking on the work of deconstructing the club itself and the culture that supported the conditions for it.

Queer Nation’s 1990 rallying cry “We’re here, we’re queer, get used to it!” seemed to have the possibility of fundamentally challenging the construction of heteronormativity and its intersections with gender, race, class and disability. Performances of that time were defiantly “out” about sex, sexuality, gender and other identity queerness. Many of these pieces offered the experience of realities beyond the heteronormative and performed challenges to homophobia and the stigma of the HIV/AIDS crisis and at times worked intersectionally on issues of sex, race, class and ableism as well. These out queer LGB - gradually also T - and autobiographical performances offered other LGBTQ+ people and their friends and allies the possibility of seeing a representation and celebration of at least some elements of their own lives onstage, but more than that, they were given the opportunity to question what identity was, what it meant and how they responded to and within it.

In the intervening twenty years trans-, gender and queer theoretical and political thinking in all of its manifestations has undoubtedly added to a general knowledge of the ideas of (anti)normativity and of gender as performative. Heightened visibility and greater acceptance are slowly (and in the current political climate not entirely surely) making LGBTQ+ people’s daily lived experience less emotionally and physically dangerous. However, in the face of neoliberal identity politics the 1990s radical potential of LGB&T autobiographical performance to do queering has diminished - and the specific potential of the trans- identity to ‘produce disruption of structured sexualities and spectra of desire’ (Stone, 1990, para 44) and destabilization of all gender and sexual identity (Stryker, 1994), seems to have diminishing purchase in the current normalizing trajectory of the Trans identity.

It is possible (though by no means certain) that lesbian and gay autobiography overall has done the specific radical job it set out to do - to show its audiences that non-heteronormative identities are here and must be gotten used to - but the first queer Trans autobiographical performances appeared fifteen years after the defining 1979 Lesbian Art Project's *Oral History.* Missing much of that fifteen years (in which activist performance making was experimented with and presented) may mean that a developmental step of political trans- performance has to this point been - and is - in danger of being glossed over.

The radicality of queer theory itself, of both queering and transing overall, by some accounts has only a brief history. By 2004, Susan Stryker wrote:

> [T]he queer revolution of the early 1990s yielded, at best, only fragile and tenuous forms of liberal progress in certain sectors and did not radically transform society—[Queer Theory] has not realized the (admittedly utopian) potential I (perhaps naively) sensed there for a radical restructuring of our understanding of gender, Particularly of minoritized and marginalized manifestations of gender, such as transsexuality (Stryker, 1996 213-214)

However, Stryker was perhaps premature in her 1996 assessment that queer theory didn't transform society: There is certainly a greater western cultural sense of gender diversity in 2018 than there was in 1996: on and in media at least there is increasing visibility of non-binary and fluid gender and sexual identities. And in fact, Stephen Whittle, also writing in 1996 maintained Queer Theory was responsible for

> [..]the real-life postmodernist practice of hearing (and listening to) many voices and the acknowledgement of their individual truisms, gender, sex and sexuality are facing not just deconstruction but also reconstruction in the practices of many individuals, and in the community's view of who can claim membership. (Whittle, 1996, 205)

In 2018 Western countries are slowly adding gender neutral choices to passports and driving licenses, non-binary, genderqueer and gender fluid identities are appearing in

our media, and gender-inclusive toilets are publicly on the rise in cities known for progressive politics. These moves and the increasing marketing of gender-neutral commodities of many kinds are arguably the results and artefacts of the project of 1990s queering. In some senses this can surely be seen as a radical change. However, radicality is fragile. As discussed above, the neoliberal identity project has pulled these new choices and positions into itself and remade them as producer, product and consumer, neutralizing any present ongoing sense of radicality. But this does not mean that queer theory has done its job and now must be 'dead' as cultural theorist James Penny declared it in 2014. As Jose Muñoz wrote in *Cruising Utopia: The There and Then of Queer Futurity* (2009), we have not yet been queer, and we will never be so – queer is always 'becoming' and will always be coming. Radical ideas once adopted into even the fringes of the mainstream are no longer radical, and at that moment no longer do queering. If queering is the project of refusing hegemony, as I believe it is, then we can never reach more than fleeting moments of queering in the present, that are similar to Hakim Bey's 'Temporary Autonomous Zone (TAZ)s' (Bey, 2011). Like the processes that create a TAZ, Queering is a form of insurrection that always works beyond its present.

Queerness is 'an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future' (Muñoz, 2009). Transing holds many of these same properties. In the same article, Stryker calls 'transgender studies' 'queer theory's evil twin:

> If queer theory was born of the union of sexuality studies and feminism, transgender studies can be considered queer theory's evil twin: it has the same parentage but willfully disrupts the privileged family narratives that favour sexual identity labels (like gay, lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual) over the gender categories (like man and woman) that enable desire to take shape and find its aim. (Stryker, 1996, 212)

Stryker goes on to say that 'queer theory' in politics in 1996 had moved away from radicality and was functioning as 'a more palatable LGBT civil rights movement' (214) and that transgender studies at that point had potential to disrupt gender categories

which would cut across all sexual identities. I agree with Stryker - however and again, in the intervening twenty-two years, that disruption and deterritorialization of gender is in the process of being reterritorialized and sold back to us. Like the project of queering, the project of how I am defining transing also must keep shifting in order to continue to disrupt. As queerness comes from the past, so does trans-ness – as it moves away from something, toward something else. Both refuse the idea of a static and finished present, existing instead in movement and potential, making the possibilities for both queering and transing ever- and never- present. This practice research and complimentary writing is perhaps reaching back toward Munoz' and Stryker's trans-queer future.

Interlude 3 "I CHANGED MY SEX!"

> *I transitioned from female-to-male in 1994, not too long after I directed an all-female softball dyke Romeo and Juliet. As a theatre maker my transition impacted my choices in a significant way. I could no longer "queer" theatre by being a butch lesbian playing dragged men's roles and I had no desire to double-reverse-queer it by playing dragged women's roles. For several years I avoided the issue by staying off the stage and directing queered parodies of films and absurdist cabarets. When I finally went back to performance, the only way I could see to keep things queer and transing was to include my transsexuality in my performances.*
>
> *However, I never had any interest in telling 'my story'. By the year 2000 when I decided it was time to see what my Trans identity could bring to the stage it seemed to me the world had seen enough autobiographical shows, (or perhaps simply I had) whether LGB or T.*

Not wanting to verbally narrate my identity or story, I started stripping to make my trans-ness visible. The point at first was that very narrative visibility – I sensed that any work I made would be seen very differently if people assumed I was a man with cis-gender acculturation and experiences. Revealing that I could not have had those, I suspected, would invite a re-evaluation of their assumptions and responses to me and my material. This was successful in terms of my onstage goals for a time, but I soon found that, while I could opt out of talking about transsexuality onstage, once I came offstage, the questions that had not been answered in performance reappeared. As soon as I was in the audience, or the foyer, or the club crowd, the response was nearly uniform: whether delighted or frightened, curiosity and confusion about my body and my identity inevitably became the topic of conversation. Questions about my sexuality, my use of pronouns, my gender itself and my physical body along with comments about how amazingly well I "pass" and congratulations to myself and/or my endocrinologists and surgeons would form the bulk of post-show conversations, as they struggled to re-regulate and explain me and themselves in the aftermath of the reveal of my body. I could understand and sympathize with their curiosity and the need to fit me into a recognizable paradigm. But I was sure that there was potential for the reveal of my transing self to do something other than explain either "trans" or "gender".

Deleuze and Guattari

It is in the writings of Deleuze and Guattari that I find specific sets of concepts that offer the opportunity to look at identity politics and/in performance beyond the common way of approaching the personal as political and to take a position that sidesteps and pushes off of, while not dismissing, those politics. All three of the thesis' practices will make extensive use of this Deleuzoguattarian sidestepping and push as part of the strategy to create productive disruption and spaces of radical indeterminacy.

I am not alone in finding these writings useful and productive, neither historically nor in the present: as noted above, Deleuze and Guattari have been employed extensively in queer, gender and performance theory beginning in the 1980s (Braidotti 1991:1994) (Grosz 1995-2011) (Cull, 2005) and continuing today (Linstead, 2006) (Gill-Peterson 2014) (Stark 2016), (Chu 2008). While they have often and correctly been criticized by some feminist scholars for a level of phallocentricity arising from their positions as heterosexual, white-western European men who did not themselves address material realities of gender, sexualities, race, disabilities and other minoritarian identities, their concepts have been problematized, unpicked, reworked and re/deployed by many queer, feminist, performance, critical race theorists and transgender theorists over the last thirty years.

One of the primary Deleuzoguattarian projects is to challenge the 'binary logics' of dichotomy and the hierarchy of the arboreal in favour of becomings-, multiplicities and rhizomes (1980). Applying these concepts of non-dualism and movement are fruitful (or perhaps "gingerful") for thinking genders and sexualities and are particularly useful in my work with these in performance. The practice methodology that emerged over the course of this thesis was rhizomatic: while I began in a binary of identity truths versus lies in the (Culture of) Confession Booth (described in detail in chapter two), the shoots off of and away from that binary that were found in that piece moved the practice into becomings and multiplicities that deepened, expanded and encompassed the inquiry.

In my thesis and throughout my history I work away from any visibility project that requires us to put our feet firmly down in one gender/sexuality camp or another. To this end I find the Deleuzoguattarian concept of multiplicity an important one: The rejection of the dual, fixed and vertical in favour of a multiple, horizontal and mutable 'chaosmos' (Beaulieu, 2016) in Deleuze and Guattari's major works challenges fundamental aspects of most phallocentric western/Cartesian colonialist power-knowledge constructions,

including those constructions of genders and sexualities. This becoming-, multiple "chaosmos" appeared in full in the second practice, minor chaos presented in detail in chapter three.

In my past works I found that performing the rejection of either identity visibility or binary identity always resulted in audiences coming to me with questions, and any refusal to answer left both myself and my questioners dissatisfied and stuck. This was the impetus for exploring the lie in the first PhD thesis practice, but I found there that the binary nature of truth versus lie was not the productive element. Transing (in the first practice between truth and lie) always moves away from something (in this instance truth), and toward something else that it does not reach lest it cease to trans-. It finds becoming and multiplicity in the space of movement rather than the places moved away from or toward.

Doing this transing work away from binary constructions of gender and sexuality on stage requires a nuanced framing. Asking an audience to let go of a fixed biological understanding of gender and offering in its place the binary opposite of gender as wholly a social construct cannot take into account the materiality of genders (or sexual identities) and the lived experience of these. Concepts and practices that allow answers of multiplicity leave room for body-mind connections and perhaps offer the possibility of embracing a both-and of social construction *and* bodily experience rather than an either-or. In one of the thesis' three transing experiments, presented in chapter four, a tactic of offering unexplained identity coupled with a moving, physical (partner dance) connection with my audience members at once activates and illustrates a transing out of the binary of "nature or nurture" and into an affective and pleasurable indeterminate space of the both-and where the desire for narrative understanding of "what gender is" is circumnavigated.

Stephen Linstead and Alison Pullen (2006) describe and work with genders as Deleuzoguattarian 'Multiplicities of difference and dispersion' (Linstead, 2006), and their concepts of becoming (Deleuze, 1980) to refuse both essentialist and constructivist notions of gender (binary or trinary (male/female/third)). Gender, they say:

> may be seen as itself a productive force of becoming rather than simply an outcome of the performativity of social practice and social construction. Gender identity then, is in constant becoming – rhizomatic, nomadic, a constant journey with no final destination. (Linstead, 2006, 1292)

And Julian Gill-Peterson (2014) uses the Deleuzoguattarian concept of the *Artisan* (1980) to theorize gender as not solely a hylomorphic and performative construction of gender form imposed onto passive body-matter, but as a process like that of the "artisan" woodworker: 'The artisan works on the wood, to be sure, but the wood also works on both itself and the artisan, affecting the resultant object.' (n.p.). The wood, or the materiality of the body, has its own haecceities, its inherent forms and textures, and these shape, guide, sometimes following and sometimes leading, the becoming- gender identity. Thinking gender identity as this kind of artisanal process, says Gill-Peterson, allows us to see our bodies not as

> passive material substrates governed by a consciousness, gendered or otherwise, but hav[ing] their own affects, their own singularities and implicit forms that intra-act with our intentional and unintentional work upon them (n.p.).

This concept of identity formation in a different way refuses the binary of gender as either essential or constructed, (and refuses any binary gender altogether) and offers us the notion that

> Like the artisan, we must all finds ways of surrendering to the activity of our bodies, to stop working against their affects and instead with them, and in so

> doing affirm our embodiment as a joyful process of creative evolution. (2014, n.p.)

These expansions of Deleuzoguattarian ideas by recent authors evidence the openness of the Deleuzoguattarian philosophical field to further interpretations and new shoots off their rhizome that also reckon with what have been seen as some of their post structuralist blind spots. My thesis project enunciates and offers further reconfiguration of some of these concepts through all three practices as I enmesh them in my own rhizomatic and "disloyal" thinking and doing. Further exposing and making a case for what could be seen as the "disloyalty" of my personal rejection of autobiographical narratives in identity-based theatre, I enlist the Deleuzoguattarian definition of philosophical systems and the use of creating new ones and apply these to my thinking and practice. For Deleuze and Guattari, philosophy is 'the practice of creating concepts' that synthesize into and on a 'plane of immanence' that holds and is the created concept (Deleuze, 1991, 41). In what can clearly be seen as a kind of transing, new concepts come together by pushing off, against and away from other concepts in order to create new systems of thought, using the ones they push against as both fodder and 'foil': the prompt for a change in thinking and the adversarial opposite with which to tangle in order to develop the change (May, 2003). I see the ideas of identity visibility politics and autobiographical theatre as fodder and 'foil' for a new 'plane of immanence' (141) for doing and thinking trans-performance. Rather than simply rejecting the ideas of identity visibility politics in theatre, to propose a shift in thinking and making what could perhaps be called "identity theatre" I am first transing (turning away from) the very idea that sexual and/or gender identities are the first terms of our subjecthood.

Turning on an angle from Linstead and Pullens' identification of gender as multiplicity (2006), I move toward the Deleuzoguattarian concept of difference itself, rather than gender, as the first term of identity (May, 2003) (discussed in detail below) and seek to apply this concept to thinking about and making performances that utilize the/my

trans- identity. This transing practice then functions as its own philosophical plane of immanence. While I trans- away from descriptive performances of identity "visibility" I do not claim to offer a "correct" way to think about identity politics and performance; rather I leave identity visibility based performance practices to rest in and on their own, already explored plane and offer a new way of doing and thinking about the/my/our trans- bodies in performance that hopefully is, (as Deleuze and Guattari offered as the only reason to do philosophy) something 'interesting', 'remarkable' and 'important.' (140). I submit here my own philosophical perspective, inter-conceptually related, from the foil and fodder of what came before in autobiographical performances: my own conceptual system or plane of immanence of and for trans- performance.

These primary intensities of transing, difference and bodies and pleasures have lines of flight that intersect in multiple locations to create the 'meshwork' (De Landa, 1999) that holds the overall practice research thesis. Each of the three performance practices of this thesis is itself an 'intensity' (an individual conceptual element or theory) that offers multiple lines of flight (the application and development of these). These intersect with the overarching lines of trans-, transing and Deleuze and Guattari as discussed above while they are supported by other lines of theory more tightly connected with each specific practice. Practice one, *The (Culture of) Confession Booth* intersects in its first term with Foucault on "confessional culture" and with theories on lies and lying and finds itself at its conclusion in a Deleuzoguattarian realm of becoming-. Practice two, *minor chaos* is specifically an experience of multiplicities and difference itself as Deleuzoguattarian becomings**:** 'the unfolding of difference in time' and becoming-minor (1980). In practice three the intensity that is *Trans-O-Graphia/Dance Me to the End of Love* interlaces with Marks' haptic visuality and uses my trans- body's visual identity to invoke an 'erotic' oscillation (2002) that works "artisanally" with the affects and activity of our bodies. In all three practices, the intersecting experiences of multiplicity and difference, bodies and pleasure and transing create the meshwork of this conceptual plane of immanence in which I can claim, without diminishing LGBTQ+ autobiographical

"visibility" performance, another way to approach the politics of the/my/our trans-performing bodies - that is 'interesting', 'remarkable' and 'important.' (May, 2003)

'Difference' and 'Becoming-'

In order to demand space and recognition inside our mainstream cultures, most autobiographical theatre stakes out a descriptive identity position from which to enact its politics. However, in the conceptual framework or 'plane of immanence' of my practice investigations and described here I develop a politics of performance that does not rest on descriptive identity as the first term of subjectivity. This performance research attempts to articulate an experience of difference itself as that first term via transing and becoming-. The Deleuzoguattarian concept of 'becoming- ', as 'the unfolding of difference through time' offers a way of understanding difference itself as this first term: not the ways in which we are different, but the fact or state of difference. It is here where the conceptual emphasis shifts somewhat from Linstead and Pullen's description of gender as multiplicity (2006). This shifting allows performance that still presents the autobiographical subject but opens lines of flight not reliant on any fixed understanding of (or identification with) the identity of that subject. In this section I work through this Deleuzoguattarian concept and draw connections with and between becoming-/difference, and transing as processes from which to create and experience the radical Foucauldian 'bodies and pleasures' of trans-performance.

Both Deleuze and Guattari and Foucault, among others, note that when we think or speak about who or what we are, the development of Western languages and hegemonic cultural constructs means that we are defining ourselves as what we are not (Foucault 1979, Deleuze and Guattari, 1980): If I define myself as gay, lesbian, bisexual or any other -sexual variation in actuality, since these terms were created to describe the not-hegemonic I am actually defining myself as "not-heterosexual"(itself a created

term meant to describe and shore up the idea of “normal” sexualities (Foucault, 1979)). The same holds true of any (not trans-) gender definition I might use. Whatever we are naming, the structure of language means that ‘we characteristically define difference negatively, as the not-sameness of two or more entities.’ (May, 2003, p).

With the sense of movement inside the prefix “trans-“ it is possible to argue that when we insist that prefix operates as a verb and do not allow it to slip into noun form (if I do not say “I am Trans (gender)” but rather say I trans- or I am transing (gender)) I am not marking myself based on what I “am”, instead I am saying what I “do”. In this moving structure trans-(ing) cannot act in opposition to any one identity position so cannot be named not-something-else unless that something else is simply not-trans-: i.e. not in movement. This figuration changes the power dynamic as it puts trans- on a different, differing, and non-hierarchical plane from the not/heteronormative, offering possibilities of staging differing interventions on that heteronormative. With this thesis’ research I activate effects and affects of doing transing (rather than “being Trans”) in my three performance practices.

Deleuzian difference occurs in and over time, and it is here that this concept takes shape. The logic of this difference is as follows: Language defines people and things as being “the same” or “not the same” as something else, but these definitions are constructed in and over time and shift and change over time. For a definition to be unchanging and not a tautological loop (a is not b because b is not a), there would have to be an original, fixed thing to identify all other things against. In gender terms that would mean an original, unchanging “man” existing before or separately from time against which all “other” gender could be measured. In other words, for an unchanging identity to be the first basis of subjectivity (or the first organizing “truth” of existence), hegemonic structures would have to be originary. That would require absolute truth, God and transcendence, the very kind of philosophy that Deleuze and Guattari work against (May, 2003). This kind of transcendence has historically been used to hold

power over those who are defined as “not the same” (and therefore deficient) in relationship to created hegemonies masquerading as original, as “truth”. Instead, Deleuze posited time on a plane of immanence, with nothing outside or preceding it. Deleuzian time is not linear but exists all at once: It is, as he described it via Bergson, a cone where the present is the concentrated point and the past shoots out from it in expansion and diffusion (May 2003). If one were to sample a position in the cone (moments of the past that Deleuze would call ‘virtual’ existence versus the present moment of “actual” existence (May, 2003)) each slice of “virtual” existence would present a screenshot of a moment in time, all of these screenshots together encompass time, and all exist at once. Each screenshot is a moment in the flux that doesn’t represent anything outside of the moment it is captured. One screenshot is as “true”, as original as the next one, and each one is different as they happen in the process of change which is time.

In defining identity, when we focus on any one of our slices or screenshots in time and say “this is who I am” for that to be unchangingly “true” we must attempt to move that definition out of time, to make it transcendent and therefore majoritarian, no longer a becoming- and no longer transing. As soon as the moment passes that attempt fails and that definition is no longer “true”. The changing cultural positions our identities might occupy and the changing language-scapes available for us to speak them changes our understanding of “who we are” in each moment.

A clear illustration of this can be seen in the fluctuations in language around trans-identity. As previously noted, in the twenty-plus years since I began transing, the language has shifted many times. Words that have been inclusive have become exclusive and vice-versa: “Transsexual”, “Transgender” and “Trans” have all at some points been umbrella terms, and at other points been used to describe specific subgroups. Words have been reclaimed and shunned, and those who persist in using them shunned as well. The word “Tranny” for a younger generation is currently

acquiring the status of “the N word,” when by many accounts of older Trans people (myself included) “Tranny” was an endearment and a colloquial inclusive umbrella term used by the community for the community, but which was co-opted by the porn industry and a transphobic larger culture ((Bornstein (2014), Serrano (2016)). Asserting a fixed “correctness” of today’s identity language denies previous identity positions and knowledges. Attempting to map today’s identity languages onto previous experiences of non-normativity erases the difference and specificity of those experiences and sets precedent for the same thing to happen to today’s definitions in future. These screenshots or slices of time at each moment capture what was clearly not a fixed truth of identity. Certainly, there is no originary Trans identity (or term for it). Each way of understanding non-normative gender identity was and is “politically correct” (or “incorrect”) in its time. Therefore, a transcendent “real” Trans identity cannot exist. Extrapolating from Deleuze and Guattari, then, the “real” Trans identity must somehow be found in all of the past, present and future Trans and gender identifications and the first term of Trans identity must lie in the experience of the difference of all of them, and of all difference in gender, past, present and future. This is not to say that being Trans is the experience of differing from not-trans. Deleuze and Guattari suggest looking at identity though a conceptual framework in which everything is differing from everything all the time, through time, so the first basis of everything is in difference itself - not in what it is different from (May, 2003).

This way of thinking opens up possibilities in performances that utilize trans-subjectivities not to describe fixed Trans identities but for transing hegemonic constructs; aligning difference and transing closely to Foucault’s ‘bodies and pleasures. As the underpinning of my thinking and practice research on the transing body in performance, the idea of difference as the first term of identity is important because it offers ways to approach identity that does not feed into hegemonic or essentialist ideas but that allows and accounts for lived experiences of identity. This thinking offers a freedom to me as performer to move the thesis practices through and beyond the

refusal of identity naming. In and with the practice *The (Culture of) Confession Booth* I look for freedom from the conditioned need to "confess" for both my participants and myself. The theorizing here gives me further conceptual bases for the jettisoning of fixed notions of identity. My practices then utilize this Deleuzoguattarian construction of identity-as-difference as part of a strategy to stage interventions (with Stone) on normative 'structured sexualities and spectra of desire' (1991),

When focusing on the idea of difference as the first term of all identity, there is no longer any claim for a "transcendent" identity. There are only the immanent possibilities of the transing body coming into contact with other bodies in performance (or in private) to offer a representation and/or experience, and/or an opening of the space of difference as the socio-personal collective meshwork of identity. Using this way of thinking identity as the basis for performance is a way of working that is processual rather than identificatory. The fixed way of working cannot be radical because it is married to everything around it - to the cultural moment, to that which it is defined against, to the socio-cultural fights du jour. It is often necessary to fight the fights du jour but doing so does not question the structural and temporal processes underneath either the "fights" or the "jour". To highlight difference itself as the basis of identity focusses on the processes of becoming- the unfolding of difference through time. When the focus is processual it cannot be, or at least is less likely to be, focused on the individual and their singular processes. With the rejecting of identity "visibility", If I do not offer a description of one of my specific slices of time and instead invite an audience into the realm of this unfolding with me, we engage in these processes together, our difference-times meet, and we are both changed in the process. Our screenshots are our own and each other's, intertwined, harnessing then the radical possibilities for the interaction of bodies and pleasures on that plane.

Transing and Foucault's 'Bodies and Pleasures'

> It is the agency of sex that we must break away from, if we aim-through a tactical reversal of the various mechanisms of sexuality- to counter the grips of power with the claims of bodies, pleasures and knowledges, in their multiplicity and their possibility of resistance. The rallying point for the counterattack against the deployment of sexuality ought not to be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasures. *The History of Sexuality Volume One* (Foucault 1979)

In my performance practices I look to working not with descriptive narratives of sexualities and genders, but with the experience of Foucault's 'bodies and pleasures' (McWhirter, 1999), and in this thesis and complimentary writing I posit that the naked trans- body in/and performance is uniquely able to access the radical potential in this Foucauldian structure. Leading up to this idea in order to understand the ways in which it is not confessed identities but bodies and pleasures that have radical potential, in *The History of Sexuality Volume One* (1979), Foucault describes a genealogy of sexual identity in the West. He locates much of the precursor to twentieth century Western sexual identity to the Victorian era in which a new science of sexuality and population control was introduced, and subjects were required to describe and then name their sexualities. This describing and naming created sexual identity categories, which were then policed, internally and externally. Subjects were meant to discover and understand themselves, especially their 'sex-desires' (157), with the goal of controlling these desires. The conditioned desire to name and explain our sexualities positioned us as subjects inside a sexual regime of power-knowledge -pleasure (11). Foucault used the term 'sex-desire' in order to highlight an epistemic mandate to think of sexuality emanating 'from sexed persons in the form of desire' (Butler 1999). The transing body, in its movement away from an identity as a "sexed person" belies the possibility of this epistemic frame.

This epistemic mandate is learned and inherited from our social environment. Human beings, according to Foucault, via Ladelle McWhorter, are developmental (McWhorter, 1999) – like children learning not to touch a hot stove in order to avoid pain, we learn to name our sex-desires and then control the outcomes based on pain and punishment, constructing ourselves along paths already cut for us of ways to be either a "good" (hetero- and gender-normative and controlled) or "bad" (anything else) desiring subject. This internal and external policing, according to both authors, cannot be a site for radical and open possibilities. Focusing instead on 'bodies and pleasures' however, takes the emphasis off *defining* our desire and puts it on *experiencing* our bodies through an open-ended and multiple development of pleasures-with-bodies, a tactic Foucault offers to resist the disciplinary regimes that create and police our sexualities (134) and that I develop, reconfigure and utilize in iterations of this practice research. Instead of the accepted rhetoric of Cartesian dualism in which the "higher" mind disciplines the supposedly separate sexual and sexed body, the radical can be found in the multiplicity of bodies, pleasure and physical "body-mind" experiences rather than in what purport to be strictly intellectual knowledges; in the experience of our existence (how I am constructing the "visual"), rather than in a description of our selves (how I am describing the "visible").

In *Revisiting Bodies and Pleasures* (1999) Butler raises many questions about Foucault's assertion that '[t]he rallying point for the counterattack against the deployment of sexuality ought not to be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasures.' (Butler 1999) She points out the binary opposition in Foucault's exhortation that 'sexuality *ought not* to be sex-desire, *but* bodies and pleasures,' (italics original) (16) and posits as noted earlier that the refusal of the naming of sexualities in favour of open-ended bodies and pleasures risks throwing away the agency that comes with naming as it removes potentially important categories of subjectivity (18). She rhetorically asks also whether in historical and current social constructs there is any body that has not been so completely

sexualized and determined as a sexual subject that acquiring (and therefore jettisoning) 'the status of a subject of sexuality' is a foreclosed possibility (19). While there was certainly plenty of writing on the transgender body in 1999 and Butler has written her fair share on transgender subjectivities, I believe her analysis of Foucault on bodies and pleasures does not take into account the specificity of the potential for the deployment of trans- "bodies and pleasures," particularly as political performance tactic.

This, for me, is where Stone's productive disruption comes into play along with Stryker's understanding of the specific potential of what I am calling the transing body, and where I activate this thesis' practice research as a testing ground for this potential. The lived reality of the trans- body in the culture does not escape enmeshment with discourses of medicine and power that attempt to demarcate, police and control the limits of the Trans Identity and the actions of the transing body. However, these discourses are not destiny and do not dictate how we deploy our identities in arts practices - it is perhaps here where Spivak's strategic essentialism can come into play at least as individual strategy: as a trans- subject in the world I can say what needs to be said to governmental powers in order to get and keep access to the medical and social structures that I require, but I can understand myself ultimately as the "artisan" of my own gender - that is molded and shaped from my materiality and the social processes of gendering - and I can use this understanding to shape my practice research performance interventions. What Stone was calling for, what Stryker recognized, is the potential for trans- to refuse buying into limiting and controlling powers; to refuse the necessity of "passing" and obscuring the multiplicity of gender identity. While the option to choose whether to pass or not is a privilege possessed only by some and not passing in daily life (whether by choice or not) is uncomfortable at best and has all too often been life threatening, the idea of *strategic* essentialism also means that trans- activists and performance makers can choose how and under what circumstances to enact this refusal as socio/political practice.

Developing these ideas further in order to identify the performance potentials of transing, as noted above according to Linstead and Pullen, all gender is multiplicity (2006). The outwardly transing body has the potential to forefront and represent this multiplicity and the refusal of binary understanding of genders, sexes and sexualities, on or off stage. Once the trans- subject begins to transition - to trans- and move away from the gender assigned at birth- if the subject does not claim one, that subject (at least for a time) cannot be marked with a gender or sexuality that can be placed in singular relationship to the heteronormative. The visibly hybrid-gendered transing body perhaps represents the Foucauldian idea of bodies and pleasures in the most obvious and specific ways. With this thesis I explore both obvious and oblique applications of transing 'bodies and pleasures' through the three iterations of practice. I begin with an experiment in transing the confession of 'sex-desires' in favour of the 'bodies and pleasures' of a public bathroom along with a practice of lying; I move through the body and through pleasure rejecting confession for the space of radical indeterminacy and I end with the pleasure of dancing with a (my) naked and transing body.

The transitioning trans- subject moves away from the gender marker applied at birth and does not move into an internally fixed gender position until and unless we make a decision (if not a choice) to identify with, name and patrol such a position. Sexuality ('sex-desire') naming follows, as only with binary gender naming can hegemonic sexual orientation naming occur. This leaves open the possibility, however dangerous, for the trans- subject to refuse the naming. What is my gender if I don't name it? What then is my sexual orientation if it does not reflect my gendered position? How does my unnamed (and unnamable) gender affect the sexualities of my partners? If I don't identify as male or female, but I display my body, my vulva, full beard and hairy chest? When we don't make a claim to specific gender or sexual identity, transing bodies,

particularly on stage, are uniquely placed to perform the resistance of 'bodies and pleasures' over 'sex-desires', and to use this tactic as part of Stone's productive disruption (1991).

While to date there are not many trans- artists who purposefully work with their non-passing trans- bodies and those that do, do not use their bodies with precisely the same purposes that I do, I find affinity with four contemporary trans-performance makers: Cassils, who 'works with the body as social sculpture' and 'performs transgender not as a crossing from one sex to another but rather as a continual process of becoming, a form of embodiment that works in a space of indeterminacy, spasm and slipperiness'(Cassils, 2018); boychild who performs surrealist and Butoh-esque movement, makeup and light-based pieces in clubs and galleries that defy gender and performance categorization, Nina Arsenault, who, particularly in her photographic works, offers images of her hybrid body as comment and critique of gender and power, and Rose Wood, self-proclaimed "Transgender Terrorist," who performs outrageous and darkly grotesque cabaret acts that break literal and figurative boundaries of the stage not only by weaponizing her hybrid transing body and identity (both as trans- and as Jewish), but also by weaponizing its fluids- often eating, drinking and flinging realistic but fake piss, shit and blood at her audiences. Her affective performances derail all questions about identity, especially in those pieces when she leaves the stage and becomes, in her words - 'A nightmare of a human being, naked, smeared with shit and lipstick, and bald, with tits and a penis walking towards this person like, "Come to Mama!"' (Walters, 2018). Each of these performers uses their bodily identities in service of something other than presenting or engendering any fixed 'sex-desires' to or in their audiences.

Butler asks near the end of her revisiting of 'bodies and pleasures',

> Is it that some sets of bodies and pleasures, some organization of bodies and pleasures emerges to counter the regulatory production of sex, or is it rather that the force of this countering is what is called 'bodies and pleasures' , and that the bodies and pleasures are not the source of this resistance, but simply the name that that resistance assumes? (Butler 1999, 16)

and I think that in some senses it is both: the trans- 'sets of bodies and pleasures emerge[..] to counter the regulatory production of sex' (16) and 'bodies and pleasures' is possibly also the name of the resistance - and the resistance is in the shifting emphasis from identity as the first term to the Deleuzoguattarian frame of the first term in the thinking of difference itself.

In this chapter

I have described the overall journey of this thesis, the primary background of the research question and the underpinnings of the practices. In the next three chapters, I work through the three iterations of practice research that comprise the thesis, situating each of them individually and inside the meshwork of the overall doctoral project. The first practice, the one-to-one performance *The (Culture of) Confession Booth* began with a specific Foucauldian emphasis on refusing confessional culture where this PhD journey began. While lying as subversive practice was the hypothesis and the motor for the (Culture of) Confession Booth, the primary productive outcomes of the practice were unconcerned with either truth or lie. Instead a performative transing of both truth and lie opened the practice into the realm of Deleuzian becomings-. This seeded the second practice, minor chaos which kept some "confessional" autobiographical elements in play but purposely worked with the transing of and between truth and lie. In the course of this practice, a space of radically indeterminate becoming-minor was revealed, and the experience congealed into and onto a plane of immanence. This chaosmos was a space of productive disruption but it

did not incorporate the trans- bodily identity, and so was not able to do the specific work of disrupting Stone's 'structured sexuality and spectra of desire' (1990). Specifically bringing forward the/my trans- body for the third practice, I utilized the Foucauldian and Deleuzoguattarian push against the binary identity models of "sex-desires" (Foucault) and the refusal of the "Major" (Deleuze and Guattari). I create and use a counter tactic to identity "Visibility" in identity "Visuality" and ultimately find the final (and arguably "most productive" in terms of my primary thesis inquiry) outcome in a transing oscillation between those two tactics that opens the space-time of productive disruption in a Marksian "erotics" of experience. All three practices took place as part of *Collisions*: the yearly practice research festival at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama set up for its doctoral candidates and invited presenters. *Collisions* is purpose built to cater for our experiments, offering positive conditions for the work. Strong support comes from the audiences who mostly come from inside the arts and academic bubble of the university. Participants arrive with particular backgrounds, knowledges, expectations of practice research and willingnesses to participate and think through the work. With each iteration of work, I endeavored to create conditions that would break their expectations, with varying degrees of success. Each practice was meant to invite them into a situation outside their ken, and in each one I sought to create the conditions which would foment productive disruption and spaces of radical indeterminacy.

CHAPTER 2 *The (Culture of) Confession Booth*

Preface*:*

> *12pm: I'm standing in the "Booth" waiting for the first participant. It is clammy and warm in the shower cubicle and I am nervous and excited. I have prepared a few questions and prompts in case they are needed, but there is no script. I will*

soon find that the challenge to answer questions about myself untruthfully is harder than I imagine. As a performer it should be easy for me to improvise lying as a form of acting, but it isn't. I'm not here to play a character that lies about himself, I'm here to lie about me.

There is an amount of safety in the fact that I cannot see my partner, nor be seen by them. I will not give myself away with a rueful smile or by refusing eye contact. Over the course of four hours I will tell (often embarrassing) truths that sound like lies and lies that sound like truths.

I will come to believe and disbelieve everyone who stands on the other side of the wall, and I will finish with a sense of freedom…. In the blur of truth and lies I will believe many things and simultaneously disbelieve them about my partners, and indeed myself….and the need to know which was which will be destroyed.

Introduction:

In the works I made before starting this practice research the reveal of my trans body without the spoken truth of my trans identity was effective during my performances, upsetting my audiences' expectations of (my) gender and leaving them in a disrupted space, but they worked to recover themselves by asking questions that I often answered out of my own sense of obligation to "confess" and "tell the truth" post-performance, closing down what I felt to be the most productive space. The requirement for this "truth," and the obligation to tell it seemed to me to be the problem. The need to know and the need to say were imperatives that acted to limit the possibilities of my body in the space in performance. The obvious first place to look for other options was in the opposite of this perceived requirement: in the use of lying in autobiographical performance.

In this chapter I work through the thesis' first iteration of practice, *The (Culture of) Confession Booth*. Following on from my understanding of the ways in which neoliberalism has reduced the power of identity-based and autobiographical performance as a force for radical change and looking for new political energy in transing performance, I present the design and execution of the practice *The (Culture of) Confession Booth*, a one-to-one participatory performance in which audience members were invited to join me in adjacent public shower stall "confessionals" where they were encouraged to ask questions, listen to and tell truths and lies, and "strip" while no one was watching.

I begin here by unpicking what I identify as the conditioned desire to hear and tell autobiographical "truth" onstage and connect that to Foucauldian ideas on 'confession' and 'confessional culture' (Foucault 1979). I then introduce my interest in and attempts to "trans-" (move away from) the conditioned desire for this autobiographical "truth" using its opposite, the "lie". I consider the lie and the liar via Friedrich Nietzsche, Jacques Derrida, Hannah Arendt and Emmanuel Kant in order to define lying and explore its possibilities. I describe the design and execution of the practice and the emerging discovery that while the back and forth between truth and lies was pleasurable it was not a binary substitution of one for the other that subverted the conditioned desire to "confess". I found instead a highly productive in-between space of truth and lies that did this work. This pleasurably disruptive space of becoming and transing left confession by the wayside and lead me toward the next practices of the thesis, in which I move further into the ideas of Deleuze and Guattari and the spaces of productive disruption and radical indeterminacy

The First Practice

> The aim of the liar is simply to charm, to delight, to give pleasure, He is the very basis of civilized society." Oscar Wilde (1998, 9)

There is little doubt that coming out and 'confessing' our identities has been important in making LGBTQ+ people and communities visible and perhaps comprehensible. As evidenced by a growing western acceptance for LGBTQ+ celebrities, pride celebrations, gay marriage, LGBTQ+ military service, gender neutral bathrooms and pronouns among other social and governmental changes, there is certainly reason to believe that this visibility and comprehension supports the growth of cultural acceptance and tolerance. Over the last forty years autobiographical theatre has certainly been '[..] a useful tool in the struggle for emancipation, equal rights, recognition, debate or simply the means to take (a) place' (Heddon, 2008, 20). However, the internal and external expectation that we confess and the cultural policing that can engender is still largely unacknowledged and unquestioned, in or out of performance. Foucault argues that the identification and/or claiming of a non-heteronormative sexual identity (as discussed previously, one's confessed 'sex-desires': the specifically sexed- subject of desire oriented toward other specifically sexed- subjects of desire) cannot act as a radical force as it fixes that subjectivity in specific, permanent and deficient relationship to its normative heterosexual opposite (Foucault, 1979). As discussed in detail in the introductory chapter, Foucault suggests that focusing instead on 'bodies and pleasures', on non-normative actions rather than identities, could be an arena in which the radical takes shape (157).

While coming out functions as political practice, personal empowerment *and* as a mechanism of normalizing confessional culture, in and as performance practice in recent years neoliberal individualism has shifted the emphasis to the latter. *The (Culture of) Confession Booth* finds its starting point in specifically transing the confessional in LGBTQ+ autobiographical theatre. With this practice I wanted to give both myself and

my participants the opportunity to oppose the pull of the confessional by activating a Wildean “charm, delight and pleasure” in a subversive experience of lying. Developing the methods for The (Culture of) Confession Booth I first had to interrogate the seemingly unquestioned value of offering truth narratives in LGBTQ+ lives and on LGBTQ+ stages.

Confessional Culture

As touched on previously the idea that telling and hearing the “truth” of our sexual and gender identities is a unilateral positive comes from what Foucault defined as ‘confessional culture’ (Foucault 1979). In *The History of Sexuality Volume One*, Foucault marks the western requirement to confess to a person or a power as beginning in the 13th century when the practice was instituted by the church to regulate the unruly desires of the populace. From early on controlling sexual urges was paramount – church confession worked to condition the penitents’ sexual desire into the desire to reject desire itself, creating self-regulating subjects in a manner far more effective than external policing could ever have been. Confessing sins was meant to cleanse the soul and create a sense of peace and oneness with a God whose rules were known, maintained and transmitted by the church authority. Over the course of five hundred years confession expanded from the church into psychoanalysis and into the controlling “study” of human sexuality. In the Victorian era institutions began cataloguing human sexual behaviour in order to encourage those behaviours that served the new concept of a population (reproductive sex, normative gender) while defining and discouraging non-normative gender expression and non-population expanding sexual practices. The concepts of “normal-sexuality” – a term used interchangeably with “heterosexuality” (Blank, 2012) - and “homosexuality” also appeared during the Victorian era and encouraging citizens to disclose or “confess” homosexuality or other non-“normal” sexuality was framed as gathering scientific data in an effort to understand the population and “help” the individual to regulate themselves (Foucault 1979). Eventually

(and incompletely) the rhetoric of therapeutically confessing one's "perversion" and "inversion" (and often being incarcerated and/or enduring the subsequent treatments for these) became that these "coming out" confessions were emancipatory, good for community and for individual health and self-esteem. Foucault's genealogy shows that these confessions over time created the discourses that solidify what it meant to be, for instance, homosexual and policed both by external factors (societal stereotype, stigma, anti-gay laws) and also to police oneself and others (internalized homophobia, codes of correct behaviour around one's own and others' gender presentation, sexual activity and attitudes toward women). Foucault maintains that it is this functioning of confessional culture (as it bears down on all non-normative sexualities) that makes the naming of our "sexual identities" a non-radical act that puts us in deficient relationship to the heteronormative.

According to Foucault this constant confessional habit engenders not a subject liberated from personally or publicly unacknowledged details of the self; rather it creates the shape and the parameters of the regulated subject itself via these confessions. He writes that this transformation of the outwardly compelled requirement to confess into the internal desire to do so 'masks and inverts our intuitions about the workings of power.' And that 'all confessions are coercive […], all truths produced through confessions are products of this power and thus not free' (97). To push against the conditioned desire to confess I designed *The (Culture of) Confession Booth* to subvert audience expectations for coming out stories in LGBTQ+ identity-based theatre. Instead, I invited participants to explore, play with and subvert their own felt obligation to tell and hear these "truths".

Though popular confessional culture is no longer church based, organized religion is still a powerful cultural force in LGBTQ+ lives. As evidenced by the media and in politics, much if not most discrimination against LGBTQ+ subjects is still justified with the invocation of "religious beliefs" and much internalized LGBTQ+ guilt and shame has

these roots, even for those LGBTQ+ subjects who do not identity as “religious”. Creating a performance metaphor for the culture of confession I simultaneously used and diffused the idea of the church confessional in the design. *The (Culture of) Confession Booth* would be a one-to-one performance that would take place in a pair of adjacent “confessional” “booths,” in which participants would act both as confessor and confessant. After some first work toward designing and building stand-alone booths that would function inside a black box studio at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (RCSSD) I understood that this setting would likely over-emphasize religious overtones and create a more theatrically charged experience than what I had in mind to comment on and push against cultural confession as societal, conditioned and pervasive. Thinking about the public-private nature of all confession as well as the presentation of self that is a prominent feature in most solo autobiographical performance, I moved *The (Culture of) Confession Booth* away from a more traditional performance space and into the existing booth-like world of a pair of shower cubicles in the men’s changing rooms at RCSSD. The choice of a public bathroom also played on an LGBTQ+ history of meetings in the public-private spaces that are LGBTQ+ bars and their bathrooms. The public bathroom was and is often a place in which one made the connections of bodies and pleasures that one “confessed” later as sex-desires, in church, therapeutically, or as celebration.

While subverting truth telling with lies was not ultimately where productive disruption lay in the practice, in this first experiment the task I set was to create and encourage a practice of lying in order to break the conditioned belief that “confession” is a unilateral positive. As my research developed on lies and lying, I ran up against the other side of that confessional truth telling unilateral positive. Lying has at least as strong strictures against it as confession has for it, and for many of the same reasons. If the confessant is controlled by the state and internally; required to confess and rewarded for doing so, the one who does not confess - who lies - is controlled and punished externally and internally. The goal for *The (Culture of) Confession Booth* was to break the internal

stricture against lying and instead to experiment with it as a mechanism to “charm, delight and give pleasure”- to refuse the power relations inherent to confessional culture.

Jacques Derrida quotes Hanna Arendt to say that ‘the imagination is the common root of the "ability to lie" and the "capacity to act.”’ And that therefore, ‘our ability to lie-but not necessarily to tell the truth-belongs among the few obvious, demonstrable data that confirm human freedom’ (Derrida 2012, 66), and this again harks us back to Foucault on confession: The truth-telling required by confessional culture cannot ‘confirm human freedom’ (66) when it constitutes us as subjects inside and controlled by the state. The lie, Derrida says, expanding on Arendt ‘is the future [-] to tell the truth is, on the contrary, to say what is or what will have been, and it would instead prefer the past’ (66). To understand what I was asking in and of *The (Culture of) Confession Booth* I had to break down the natures of (confessional) truth and lies.

“Truth”

Foucault and others identify that the “truths” of confessions are performative - they make us into what we are, especially as to how “what we are” relates to internal and external bio-political control (Foucault, 1979). “Truth” is produced from the performative utterance; the subject is created in the speaking (Butler, 1996). For Friederich Nietzsche (1989), because language does not name things but concepts of things, the truth is ‘a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms [and] anthropomorphisms’ (line 120). He offers an example in the word “leaf” which (in most Western languages) becomes representative of all leaves when there is no one singular “leaf” (line 103-109). “Telling the truth” is unmasked by Nietzsche as lying ‘according to a fixed convention, to lie with the herd and in a manner binding upon everyone’: the socio-cultural and semiotic agreement that my leaf is the same as your leaf (128). Connecting Nietzsche’s leaf to the linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure (and the concept of

difference in Deleuze and Guattari), language is synchronic: the meaning of every word we say is predicated on current associations with other words (which are predicated on associations with still other words, etc.), and it also diachronic – every word we utter is tied to the time we are in and also tangled up with all of its past meanings (1986).

Like that "leaf," If I name myself as transsexual in this formulation, I will have stepped into a socially agreed "lie" of what "transsexual" is, in a fixed and originary way. For Foucault I make myself and am made into a transsexual with my naming. I subject myself to that bio-political control and give myself over to Lupus Dragonowl's "spectral" identity: defined by outside forces that police their elements and boundaries, all "identities" are spectres that cannot represent or allow for actual individuals (2015). Foucault's (and Butler and Austin's) performative utterance occurs both historically and in the moment via invocation and reiteration, while Nietzsche's concept creation and agreement appears to occur largely before the speaking; otherwise these two constructs are not far apart.

"Lies"

The stricture against lying is almost absolute. It is difficult to find any neutral writing on lies and lying, Nietzsche's 'extra-moral' but lamentory definition of truth-as-lies notwithstanding (1989). But if Nietzsche's "truth" is lies then what are lies and what is lying?

Two primary philosophical ways to look at what constitutes a lie and how (or when) lies transgress are those of Emmanuel Kant and Jacques Derrida. As explicated in "The History of the Lie" from *Without Alibi* (2002)*,* Derrida interprets Kant as arguing that absolute truth exists and that there is an unquestionable duty to offer it. "Truth" is 'owed as soon as one addresses others' (Kant in Derrida, 2002, 32). In Kant's model the telling of any untruth is an offence to the nature of truth itself regardless of context or

purpose (Derrida, 2002). Derrida's own angle on the lie in *Without Alibi* is less rigid: A statement or behaviour must be going against an obligation to tell the truth in order to be a lie. The offence of this lie is a betrayal of trust (34). A lie that does not break this trust, Derrida says, quoting Rousseau, is not a lie at all, '"it is, he says, a "fiction." Such a "fiction" would no more be a lie, according to [Rousseau], than the dissimulation of a truth that one is not obligated to divulge' (32).

The introduction of "obligation" brings us back into dialogue with Foucault and the conditioned obligation to 'confess' the 'truth' of our identities. For Kant (via Derrida), truth is ''owed" as soon as there is verbal contact with another. When someone **'**deceives, even if he does not steal, he lies[.]' (Derrida, 2012, 32). Applying this Kantian standard to confessional culture turns not-confessing into a form of lying since Foucauldian confession obliges us to divulge these "truths" (Foucault, 1979).

Derrida further quotes Rousseau who was asked: when someone who does not "owe" truth to another tells them an inconsequential non-truth is he lying? Rousseau replies no '"for if he gives counterfeit money to a man to whom he owes nothing, he undoubtedly deceives this man, but he does not rob him."' (Derrida, 2012, 32). In terms of 'confessing' the 'truth' of identity, the concept of obligation and owing (and its correlative "debt") becomes a flashpoint: if I do not "confess" my trans identity in this construct perhaps I 'deceive' but I do not 'rob'. If I do not 'owe' my disclosure, there is no 'debt' to pay. However, the internal and external obligation to disclose conditioned by the culture of confession works to require all subjects to conform to it. It is this sense of obligation and owing that makes refusing confession into a unilateral negative and a "lie" (34).

As an improvised interaction between myself and my participants that allowed us to play back and forth between the roles of confessor and confessant, *The (Culture of) Confession Booth* was designed as much for me to break my own conditioned habit of

confession and find productive disruption in the Wildean space of the lie as it was for my participants. My pre-PhD performance audiences have almost invariably made it clear they wanted to know the "truth" of my identity, and by minimal extension of trans identity. I have felt the pull of these Kantian confessional ideas of obligation, owing and debt, and the consequent sense of lying - if not of outright betrayal than of disappointment and confusion - when I do not describe or explain my transness. I bring this back to Kant to surmise that revealing my hybrid-gendered naked body destroys a conditioned idea of the universal truth of gender (that men have penises and women have vulvas). In the aftermath of this destruction there is the sense of obligation, both from myself and from my audience: Having deceived my audience about (my) gender I now owe a new truth of (my) gender that can explain or at least contain what I have offered.

The Design

The (Culture of) Confession Booth was designed as a one-to-one performance that would be a back and forth confessional "game" between myself and my individual participants. While I would start our interaction (and lead as necessary to keep us playing), the bulk of the game would be equally led and decided by both myself and each player. The shifting between leader and follower was also a shifting between confessor and confessant.

The physically and visually sequestered setting of the two adjacent stalls linked only by microphones and speakers invoked the confessional space but also worked to minimize the self-editing we are all prone to when we can see and be seen. This is perhaps particularly true when we are viewed though a camera lens: to circumvent this there would be no visual contact of any kind during the experiment and only audio documentation would be collected. I created an information sheet for each participant

that explained the rules of the game and the measures in place for their comfort. On exiting the booth, they would be given a certificate entitled "Proclamation of Praise" that played with the notion of confessional absolution, offered some of my thinking on *The (Culture of) Confession Booth* practice processes and that finished with the statement "You are now absolved of any further need to confess". These materials and links can be found in the appendices.

The structure of the performance experiment was as follows: First, while I waited unseen in one of the two shower stall "booths", a volunteer host would give each guest the information sheet that explained how the experiment would work: in the "booth" our interaction would be audio only; we would not be able to see each other; no visual data would be recorded, shared or stored. It prodded them with the questions: did they believe that telling the truth is always the optimum course of action? In a perfect world, would every statement always be 'truthful?' Did they feel we needed to describe everything about ourselves in explicit detail? Was it important that they knew the truth about me, their confessor/confessant (see appendices)? Microphones and speakers linked the booths together to allow us to hear and speak to each other without raising our voices and which would allow me to record our spoken interactions for this research. These safeguards and parameters, as much for myself as for my participants, were put in place to reduce any worries about being caught out in any "lie" or "truth" telling.

The participants were given timed reservations and would arrive at the changing room individually, keeping this a private-public experience. Once a participant was settled in the Booth adjacent to mine over the microphone and speakers I would take them through the structure and rules of the Booth: once the game started they could ask whatever questions they wanted, and I would do the same and each of us would decide whether and how much to "confess," how much "truth" to tell, how many "lies." A party game aspect was taken from the strip elements of my previous performance

work: if my guests thought I was lying they were to take off an item of clothing. If I thought they were lying, I would do the same. Stripping added an awareness of our bodily identities and an element of sensuality and tease while it simultaneously played on and against the sense of obligation to explain that my previous use of nakedness had prompted. It was an equalizing of performer and participant roles that offered a playful physical action to add to what I intended as a playful verbal one.

While the sequestering in the *Booth* played with the ideas of the Catholic confessional it also created a space where, unlike in open stage audience participation that purposely exposes the participants, our vulnerability was limited: we could participate as much or as little as we liked without scrutiny. Without being able to see and verify information and without having to think about whether or not our own telling behaviours were obvious, everything we said or did could become a deception without a value, a fiction that played back and forth between “truth” and “lie”.

The game would be won when one of us told the other that we were naked or would be a draw if the fifteen-minute duration ended before any declaration of nudity. I would point out to them that because we wouldn’t be able to see each other it would be up to them to decide if they would follow the rules, strip, or lie. Since following the rules meant lying, they could follow the rules and lie, or say they followed the rules when they didn’t, which would be a lie and so also following the rules. I’d never know and there was no way for anyone to get “caught”. To gain some insight on what I hoped to be the subversion of truth with lies, after our interaction finished the participant would be asked to step into a third cubicle “booth” and record whatever they wanted to say into a portable tape recorder they would find there.

Both the rules and the playfulness of the interaction were strategies to destroy any sense of obligation to speak “truth” and to give participants the opportunity to become Arendt’s imaginative person of action. The only "obligation” was to deceive each other,

with either truth or lies. Once inside the booth the game was to judge the veracity or mendacity of what was being said and reciprocate only according to our pleasure and desire. I wrote the rules to be clear in form while contradictory in practice. Winning was stripping was lying was guessing was completely dependent on that desire - anyone could win the game at any point simply by declaring that they were naked. The only possible way to "lose" was if we didn't want to stop playing when fifteen minutes had elapsed.

Interlude: an explanation [or a scream into the void]

> *It feels important here to explain (and exclaim) that I began working with the idea of a lying strategy to confound confessional culture in a pre-Trump world. What I identified as useful pre-Trump was the celebratory, slippery and anti-hegemonic-power potential of lying onstage. As noted, Hannah Arendt called the liar an imaginative 'man of action', 'who wants to change the world' (Derrida, 2012) and, while Arendt was not championing lying but describing the dangerous affinity between politicians (like Trump) and lies, I was drawn to the freedom I read in these words. This is what I want my performance work (and all political performance work) to do - to change the world by imagining a (transing, queer, utopian, becoming-) future in which heteronormative expectations are breaking open and disintegrating. However, If I had started this doctoral research in our Trumpian post-truth world, I don't think lying would have even briefly seemed an ethical or interesting tactic. The lying that Trump is in the process of normalizing is world-shatteringly dangerous and much closer to the totalitarian politics that Arendt was explicating in her original text Truth and Politics (Arendt, 1967) than what I am proposing, as Derrida also points to (Derrida, 2012). In my "defense", however, my use of lying does not 'rob' anyone of anything, while Trumps lies work to rob everyone of everything.*

The experience:

Over the course of four hours twelve participants and I explored the boundaries between truth and lie and the expectations we placed, largely on ourselves, to confess a truth. While I had taken a few notes on what kinds of questions I might ask our interactions were completely improvised. I began the conversations with simple questions such as “how are you feeling” and then followed the lead of each guest. The mechanisms of the game were transparent - we discussed whether or not we thought the other was lying or stripping and teased and taunted each other to further strip or lie. I let the experience unfold for each participant as well as for myself, and we oscillated between leading and following each other. Questions such as “tell me the most embarrassing moment of your childhood”, and “What’s the worst thing you’ve ever done”, elicited outrageous and mundane stories that oscillated between seeming to be true and false, including my own.

The cultural significance of a ‘confessional’ created a specific frame around the experience. From our conversations it was clear that everyone came in with the expectation that they would “confess” the truth. For some participants lying was surprisingly difficult while others enjoyed and even seemed to revel in being encouraged to lie. In my experience as confessant, I was surprised at how much work it took to break the confessional truth-telling habit. From the beginning I found myself aware of the effort I felt in making up a story rather than simply going with the first factual information that would come to mind when I was asked a question. Even as the progenitor of a lying practice, my internal policing was hard to break out of.

Some participants purported to have the same trouble and told me that they were reverting to the truth. The set-up of the game meant that I could attribute lying to anything that was said - including about their ability to lie - and it was immediately pleasurable to imagine that participants might be much better at the game than I and

might be lying about lying. Once I lost any hold on whether they were telling the truth about lying I had to think that they might imagine that I might be telling the truth when I was actually attempting to lie and of course, vice versa. Reflecting on the experience while listening to myself lie on the documentation tapes, in a moment when I told a participant that most fun I had ever had in a shower was with a blowup doll, I thought - well, why not? This could be the truth. In the strata of time between doing the experiment and listening to the documentation some months later, even that lie somehow lost its stable position for me as a either truth or lie.

Listening to myself trying to come up with lies that sounded like truths and truths that sounded like lies I found myself using the (unstable) knowledge of which was which as a sort of forensics to examine what I heard on the other side of the wall. This created an oscillating experience of belief/disbelief and a constant transing of both truth and lies, making this transit the location of the play and the power. Participants had different reactions to being asked and prompted to lie in the booth. Several guests mentioned feeling an intimacy in our close proximity without being in the same space or being able to see each other. They experienced this in different ways: for some being separated made the lying easer. The dual experience of being isolated but intimately close allowed them to play with their identity as truthful people, as liars or as both. Some felt a difficulty to lie in the booth that stemmed from feeling of being “alone” there. The fact that they couldn’t see me focused the experience on themselves and made lying seem superfluous: they wondered who they were lying to. Being in the experience of encouraged lying and being in an intimate encounter with someone they didn’t know and couldn’t see in different ways and to different extents left participants in an in-between state, wondering “what the fuck is the truth? (participant number 10)” Along with my participants I experienced the blur and oscillation of expectations, truth and lies and found myself assuming things about each one –truth, lies, sexualities, levels of participation (stripping, lying, both, neither) and these were constantly confounded. (See appendices for sources).

Participant Number Ten

Participant Number Ten was playful; she allowed the leader/follower dynamic to shift back and forth. She asked and answered questions, and she surprised me both with things that I thought were "truth" and things I thought were "lies." At one point we had this exchange:

Number Ten: "Who are you attracted to?"
Me: "Athletic women."
Number Ten: "You lie! I know you are attracted to ideas! I am taking off my clothes now!'

I experienced an immediate transing from my response when number ten made her statement. In the moment I answered her question my impulse was to tell a "truth", but when number ten "called me out" as lying, since the game was using a binary structure of true and false what was an incomplete truth on my part immediately became a lie. I had suddenly lied and told the truth simultaneously, and I very clearly felt (and enjoyed) the in between state of difference and becoming as a suspension in transit between those two structural poles.

I asked who she was attracted to. Without hesitation she announced "boobs!" This filled out my in-between state – I knew number ten a little, I knew she was married to a non-trans- man, so I had an inbuilt assumption, given the rules of the game, that she was lying to me. However, in the playful nature of the game and the exchange and because of my own queer sexuality I enjoyed the thought that she might be telling the truth. The rules of *The (Culture of) Confession Booth* meant I could choose to believe that she was lying and strip off my clothes, or I could go with what I desired to be the truth and leave them on. Both choices were delicious – on the one hand, I could be

subversively stripping while catching her in a lie and 'winning' the game; on the other, my acquaintance might have revealed to me that she lives less of a normative life than I had assumed. At that moment, the *(Culture of) Confession Booth* experiment had achieved the goal: I, at least, had reached a state in which 'owing', 'debt' and the 'obligation' for "truth" had been refused and dismantled, replaced by a creative and intimate becoming- experience where the 'difference' is the preferred state and where "truths" and "lies" had equal possibility to create intimate, open, flexible connections.

As mentioned, after each person left the booth they were given a tape recorder and asked to record anything they wanted to say about the encounter. Those recordings along with my own experience have given me some ways to look at the outcome of this first experiment in lying as a productively disruptive performance practice. The transcript of her comments show that Number 10 had a similarly enjoyable experience:

"So absolutely utterly charming. Lots and lots of fun. Interesting to know who's leading, who's following; the deception or the truth. So, there's like a…winding narrative, but what's the thrust of the narrative, I don't know, I didn't even know when I thought I was in charge asking a question. That whether he lied or told the truth, was he in charge and taking it forward, and then is it the lies that creates the most truth or is it the truth that creates the most truth, and then what the fuck is truth?! (Appendices 137-138)

Reflecting on the practice it quickly became clear that the "charm, delight and pleasure" of the booth was not in learning how to lie rather than confess; rather it was in the breaking of and moving around between and among the structures of truths and lies, and so we found ourselves in the territory of Deleuzian becoming-. Rather than moving from point A truth to point B lies, we entered the subversive space of becoming-with truth and lies, in which one constantly became the other. Truth and lies exploded into commingling fragments sometimes sedimenting into what appeared to be truthfulness on either of our parts, but when either of us remembered the rules of

the game and realized that, no matter how true (or false) what a partner said sounded on the other side of the wall, there was no way to know, and every possibility that what sounded true was not, was seemed a lie was not – and that the partner might be getting naked. If becoming- is the movement out of the fixed, it moves not into anything but moves with and into the other side of its hyphen – in the classic example of becoming-wasp and becoming-orchid, each becomes with the other, waspness takes on orchidness and vice versa (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980, 10). Becoming is the commingling and moving spaces of waspness-and-orchidness, not the outcome of pollination. In *The (Culture of) Confession Booth*, the becoming-with of -truth and -lies created a space of lie-truths and truth-lies with no discernible differentiation between the two, and this was what we found as a space of pleasure. When participant two declared herself to be a criminal and offered details that sounded more than plausible, the experience of believing and disbelieving her at once was delightfully disorienting. This becoming- is also a transing: the process of transing is a continual moving away, perhaps like opposite polarity magnets, constantly being averted from contact with each other. In *The (Culture of) Confession Booth* the moving away from truth continually blurred into the moving away from lie in a continuous fast and slow-motion Ping-Pong… a transing moving away that doesn't arrive anywhere, as becoming- never arrives anywhere. This productive space worked to dismantle the obligation to confess by offering the alternative of a pleasurable confusion and perhaps a collusion between us in which obligations to tell truths acted as game pieces with the same values as the game pieces that were lies, and those that were stripping. As evidenced by the dialogues in the booth, the comments recorded afterwards and my own experiences, the (Culture of) Confession Booth was a productive and largely joyous experiment that moved the practice away from binary ideas of identity, confession, truth and lies.

A confession:

Participants brought their own relationship to truth, lies, bodies, pleasures and confessional culture to the *Booth,* as well as their own relationship to performance. One participant took the "Confessional" theme quite (subversively) seriously and offered me what amounted to a performed queer Catholic Confession.

Participant 6. 2:02 on Audio File 1:

Participant six tells me that she was "coveting" her (female) neighbours' wife; going into a level of detail about the coveting that made it sound true, but at the same time felt very performative, even performed. I found myself matching this and went into a kind of confessor mode, prompting her for more details, and she obliged. Because of the seediness of the shower stall and the sexuality of the confession, the interaction became flirtatious. The performance stemmed from her, and it seemed clear she was an actor, but because of the set-up of the game, there was still the doubt - could any of this - could all of it - be true?

Response Audio transcript

"I was holding the wall constantly throughout the whole interview. I don't feel I was ever forgiven; I didn't reach absolution. However, I did have some very sexualized fantasies as I held the wall and I was taking clothes off very quietly. But I only got as far as three garments and I'm not even sure you were aware of that. I was a bit disappointed you only took your waistcoat and your shirt off. And can I just complain about the quality of the curtaining, because I would have liked rubber, thank you. Anyway, it was a very sexualized experiment or experience on my behalf. Thanks for having me. Hail Mary full of grace…." [she continued to absolve herself before she exited the space].

Outcomes:

The (*Culture of) Confession Booth* emerged as the first performance-based exchange to evoke the states of productive disruption I am looking for. With the *Booth* I attempted to create an experience in which the hegemonic obligation to confess and hear "the truth" was lifted. This did not come easily: The cultural significance of the religious "confessional" was clearly strong: no matter how well guests understood the rules of the game, each came in with an inbuilt sense that they had a duty to "tell the truth". For each there was a sense of taboo in refusing that obligation, whether they enjoyed the process of being released from it or not.

The setting of the bathroom and its queer sex connotations played with this taboo and initiated the particular set of bodies and pleasures of the *Booth,* the unknown pleasure of lying, the intimacy of the space and our contacts within it: verbal with each other, physical with the walls and with the removal of clothing. These can perhaps be seen as examples of the 'new' pleasures Foucault was looking for in *Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity (*1984) that at the time he saw in BDSM: where different pleasures than eating, drinking and fucking were being explored, where new areas of the body were being recruited as sites and experiences of pleasure, and where strategic power relations were played with and eroticized, denuded of the actual oppressive power of those relationships inside institutions (Foucault, 2000). Foucault recognized that these would inevitably become reified pleasures and new ones would have to be found - and I identify potential moments of that here in the pleasure of consensual lying without consequence or punishment and intimacy without the need of confession in this space with its overtones of older queer sexualized spaces, a glory hole without a hole, where the sequestering of our physical bodies created a space in which we experienced pleasures of separation and connection at the same time: separated by the wall; connected by our voices and our shared subversive play with words and clothes; the

separation and connection from and to ourselves as we played around and crossed the boundaries between truth and lies and experienced the pleasures in doing so.

While there were several elements of *The (Culture of) Confession Booth* that worked to break the hold of confessional culture and challenged the nature of truth and lies it was not the substitution of lies for truth that did this work. What emerged was an experience of an oscillating space between not-truth and not-lies where everything became a question. In this practice we shared undifferentiated lying and truthful autobiographical texts and a sense of an intimate proximity of our transing bodies which will be expanded on specifically in the final thesis practice. On reflection it became clear that the practice as designed was relying on a theoretical binary rejection of truth for lies to create the productive disruption I search for, and in the light of further research and experimentation it is no surprise to me that the binary nature of my question was not in itself productive. The actual productive outcome was in the slipping through and leaking out of that binary and into the becoming- and transing space between and among truth and lies. *The (Culture of) Confession Booth* was in some ways a preliminary practice that allowed me to trans- my own obligations to tell the truth and to experience in practice what being in that disruptive space felt like. This lead directly to the second practice, designed to purposely create and attempt to sustain the state of becoming- and transing.

CHAPTER 3 *minor chaos*[4]

[4] As will be seen on the practice video the language I was using at the time of the *minor chaos* practice was different: I had identified what I thought was a cyclical structure of "SURR: Set up, Upset/Rupture, Recovery". As the overall thesis analysis developed my lens on the practices shifted: I understood that, while "productive disruption' was a primary element of what I was looking for, what I was exploring was not best described as a cyclical: that Set Up didn't

Preface - In the Studio:

I'm nervous - What the hell am I doing - I don't want to answer that question. This is boring, this is hard as hell - "Louder" Amy says, and I'm supposed to lie - and I'm stuck, what do I do - they really think I'm angry, they really think Deirdre is messing with my head - and she is - or is she? This is real/this is acting. This is real acting/acting real. I don't know how to get out of this. I am supposed to be responding to what is in the room and I don't know how not to "perform" my response, I am responding, but I am also performing, and this is a performance, we've invited people in a drama school to come observe and take part, so there's no getting around that: I have to perform. But it's so fake then - if they just see me performing it will be too easy and it will be over - but I can't stop and I'm really/acting frustrated and yelling now and are my collaborators worried? No, they don't care - or do they….? OK remember, you signed up for this, no one made you do it. Why do I do things like this to myself? This is boring. They are both being mean - I thought they were going to prompt me with stuff but I'm hanging out here all on my own - ah, that is them prompting me - thanks, thanks a lot… I hate this - oh look, the only recognizable possibly gender queer people are leaving - what does that mean? Is it bad, is it good? I guess they don't see themselves here: well I never promised that… the others want to know the rules, they want to know how to participate but we cannot tell them because we don't know ourselves. Does it matter that they don't know?

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necessarily lead to Upset/Rupture/Recovery in the way that I had originally hypothesized. Over the course of the practice analyses I developed a more accurate language for each element that allowed for deeper and more nuanced understanding. Set Ups were the 'planes of immanence' of each practice and situation. The idea of upset in which expectations were "ruptured" evolved into the theory and practice of transing and/via the associated 'lines of flight'. I reframed the idea of "recovery" into "reterritorialization," as "recovery" can imply a return to a previous state, where in "reterritorialization" "ruptures" are taken into and expand the social, physical and political "body" rather than experiences to be "healed" from.

The in-between space of truth and lies

While the experience of *The (Culture of) Confession Booth* had liberating and playful aspects for myself and my participants it was not the subversion of autobiographical truth by lying that yielded those results but the creation of space in-between and including truth and lies to the point where neither held any distinction. On reflection following Foucault it becomes clear that directly subverting telling truths about ourselves with the binary opposite of lying is unlikely to be a liberating act for the same reasons that the confession of binary sex-desires is not. As Derrida defines it, for a lie to be a lie, the liar must have the intention to deceive (Derrida, 2002). Lies that are believed, like identities that are stated, are held in a (however precarious) fixed "true" position. Lies in the *Booth* were not stated with any intention to be taken as truth, but rather to subvert the desire for said truth. Through the practice I found that when truth, lies and identities slip and change, when they repeatedly appear and disappear, both truth and lie move into a state of transing and becoming-. The practice of *The (Culture of) Confession Booth* in the end did find truth and lies to be elements of productively disruptive practice, however the disruptive quality was found not in truth versus lie, but in the Deleuzoguattarian space of becoming-, of difference; of the oscillations of the not-truth and the not-lie. These findings led me to the second iteration of research. In *minor chaos* I created a practice that would focus on this experience of becoming- and difference. It would disallow any narrative or structure- autobiographical or not, "true" or not, to form or settle. Instead, *minor chaos* put the participants in a situation or world with a "molecularized" autobiography that refused explanation. This second practice became- (on) a plane of immanence, a space and structure unto itself, with its own intensities, logics and affects. It activated a space of becoming-minor; using autobiographical elements to refuse autobiographical narrative.

The use of Deleuze and Guattari

As briefly discussed in the introduction as a tool for working with identity politics (and therefore political identity-based performance), Deleuzoguattarian becomings- have been taken up by many over the years (perhaps most extensively by Elizabeth Grosz *(1995-2011)* and most recently by Hanna Stark (2016) and Andrea Chu (2018)), criticized by others, and often left by the wayside in favour of more materialist thinking and politics. Feminist scholars Luce Irigary (1985), and Rosi Braidotti (1991; 1994) and others have over time raised concerns over what they saw as the potential erasure of marginalized subject positions in the Deleuzian becoming- (particularly the becoming-woman), and have written that it was too early in the feminist project to abandon the focus on equality for marginalized subjects in favour of doing away with the idea of recognized, intelligible subject positions.

While this idea still finds purchase in the current western iteration of the feminist project and Braidotti's 1996 point that "it is only those whose own place of enunciation as the subject is secured who can idealize the neutralization of expression in their own erasure" (in Katz, 1996, 121) is still salient, Peggy Phelan contemporaneously noted in her work *Unmarked* that 'There is an important difference between willfully failing to appear and never being summoned' (Phelan, 2006, 11). In 2016 Hannah Stark offers that

> abandoning recognition may appear, at first, to exude privilege. [But] the by-product of demanding the recognition of identity positions is that it contributes to consolidating macro categories such as 'woman' and 'human'. Moving beyond recognition and the fight for political representation as a group with a shared identity may in fact permit feminism much stranger and more vital encounters with alterity.' (2016: 104)

Cindi Katz has argued for the radical potential of this willful failure in the idea of performatively expressing one's own erasure. Katz names the potential political power of the becoming-minor when she says:

> I am not only refusing the position of outsider – glorified or ignored – but more to the point, my work is part of a broader project to change the nature and meaning of our academic "home". (Katz, 1996, 497)

Katz looks 'towards [the use of] a minor theory' inside academia, specifically in her subject of geography (1996), but the resonances do not diminish when I substitute the idea of "identity politics" or "identity-based performance" for her "academic home." Enacting the becoming-minor becomes a potential tool to change identity politics 'materially and metaphorically,' creating more space for those who work outside or against the normative performance structures as well as challenging those who work inside those structures to 'take stock' and 'be accountable' for what they 'produce in theory and in practice' (Katz, 1996).

In the concern over the too-soon-ness of the erasure of marginalized subject positions that the becoming-minor might engender it seems all too likely that neoliberalism has brought identity politics far enough into the capitalist status quo that the strategic essentialism of those identity politics serve a still necessary but no longer radical function. While acknowledging that the work of recognition politics is an important strategy inside the structures of power in which we live, I posit, along with Stark (2016) that feminism and other forms of politics that work against the notion of identity as in any way essential or fixed can find in becoming- a politics of 'acts rather than identities' that focusses on the 'spaces that connect all of us to one another and the world we inhabit' (111). In the contact between the becoming-minor and the Deleuzoguattarian

"major" (described below), each of those will osmose into the other and both will be changed. The major fight for normalized recognition and "diversity" may be re-invigorated by contact with the -minor which is always already too "diverse" (as ever-changing) to ever be any kind of "normal". If, as Elizabeth Grosz has written 'recognition is the force of conservatism, the tying of the new and the never conceived to that which is already cognized' (Grosz in Stark, 2016, 103)' then interactions between "recognition" or "visibility" politics and becoming-minor forms of activism might counteract the conservative and work in a more revolutionary register to engender those 'much stranger and more vital encounters with alterity.' (Stark: 104).

In this chapter:

In this chapter I present this second iteration of my thesis practice. To supplement the video documentation (see appendices) I describe the design and execution of the practice: a fifty-minute improvised encounter between myself, two collaborators and an audience of thirty in a black box studio at RCSSD. I contextualize and situate the performance in the Deleuzoguattarian becoming-minor on a 'plane of immanence' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980, 266) and work through this using his concepts of the major, minor, molar, molecular and 'lines of flight' (266), tying these to the concept of transing. I describe the ways in which *minor chaos* further opened a field of becoming- and transing for my participants and for myself as a performer and I reflect on the ways this molecularizing of autobiographical material and refusal of narrative created particular modes of productive disruption. I conclude with a discussion on the limitations of this second practice for addressing the primary practice research question of what the trans- identity can do onstage when it does not describe itself and examine the ways in which it pointed me towards the third and culminating practice.

The Design of *minor chaos*

After using *The (Culture of) Confession Booth* to test the limits of productive disruption of and by identity performance via lying It became clear that it was not the subversion of autobiographical truth telling with actions of lying that activated the disruption I was looking for but the constant and ongoing transing of truth and lies. Routing this outcome back to the larger thesis question and pursuing these strategies of productive disruption, in the second iteration of practice I looked specifically to activate this ruptural becoming- and transing- space. In the design of this practice, autobiographical truth and lies were still part of the research frame. By the outcome these had dissolved again into their becomings- leaving only particles and sediment on what I identified as the Deleuzoguattarian "plane of immanence" that emerged from and encompassed the practice. Given the nature of both becoming- and transing it was clear that all elements in this second thesis practice would have to be kept moving. In order to activate the primary research question, identity-based performance also had to be in the frame. Looking further into the Deleuzoguattarian ideas of becomings- and difference I designed *minor chaos* to be a fifty-minute improvised exploratory performance that would work to create a space of ongoing productive disruption and deterritorialization of both my own and my audience's expectation of and with autobiographical performance. This experiment was designed to facilitate the space of in-between/outside of the binary that I experienced in and defined through *The (Culture of) Confession Booth* and to examine the possibilities of purposefully creating and maintaining that space.

As the others, this practice was undertaken as part of the annual practice-research festival *Collisions* at RCSSD. As noted in the introductory chapter the audience for this festival is largely comprised of other researchers, students, faculty and friends: people who are aware of the conventions of practice and research in and of performance. In order to maximize the potential for the becoming- and transing state in this environment I attempted to circumvent expectations of theatrical practices as much as possible: I placed minor chaos in a small windowless black box rehearsal studio situated

through and behind the scene shop away from the more performative and classroom spaces. Unlike the explanatory, situating and congratulatory handouts I offered the participants of *The (Culture of) Confession Booth,* the audience was given no context for this work. At the appointed time a docent would lead the audience-participants through the workshop area and to and into our room. On entering they would encounter my two collaborators and myself already working in the space, forgoing a transcendent "beginning" of the experiment. In order to focus not on subjects but on relations I wrote no dialogue, narrative or trajectory into the work, setting up only the conditions and materials that would initiate the experiment. Nothing was planned, no decisions were made beforehand that might tend toward any formation of the autobiographical elements of the performance, whether material or textual. My two collaborators were provocateurs who would both witness and facilitate the experiment. The structure for the performance was as follows: Autobiographical materials in the room were the prompts. I was the main protagonist and my collaborators could prompt me, the audience could, or I could prompt myself. The rules for the three of us were that when anything I was doing or saying began to settle into a story or a style or a shape or an interaction or anything else that began to stabilize into narrative, one of us would do something to disrupt that. The time slot for the piece was sixty minutes and the experiment would either end on its own or when the hour had finished.

The black walled windowless studio created *minor chaos* as a world immanent to itself, becoming- and happening on what I have and will further define as a Deleuzoguatarrian 'plane of immanence' on which there are no 'forms', 'structures', or 'subjects', only 'relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness between unformed [or 'relatively unformed'] elements' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980, 266). For the duration of the practice the participants would watch, listen and interact with us and the materials in various ways or not at all while I improvised a series of interactions with and reactions to them, the materials in the room and my collaborators in order to keep the primary

rule of not allowing the elements of performance, biography, form, subject or structure to settle into any fixed pattern, narrative, or trajectory.

The Autobiographical Elements

The doing and text of the practice and the materials we used within it was a gathering of elements from my autobiographical history, from lies related to parts of my autobiography, and from ephemera that resonated with me along the way. Items were chosen that would softly announce their potential: cards on one wall with names of cities in the United States and areas in London were places that I had lived or places that were identified with my Jewish background. Thumbtacks and string with these could suggest mapping, oversized chalk sitting on the table offered possibilities of interacting with the black painted walls, a Haggadah (Jewish prayer book), a sports trophy, magazines and a board game next to these offered possible identity details that I would not allow to congeal into narrative. They would instead function together as an experiential assemblage in which each singular item became more and less than itself in the context of the plane of *minor chaos*.

Becoming- 'minor chaos'

> All becoming is precisely the undermining of a plan… Anupa Batra, 2012, 4

The title *minor chaos* refers to a further definition of becoming- in the Deleuzoguattarian idea of 'becoming-minor' (1980) As discussed in the introductory chapter, Deleuzoguattarian becomings- are 'the unfolding of difference through time' where there can be no transcendent before or final after; only difference, multiplicity,

and movement (May, 2003). Deleuze and Guattari define becoming- and becoming-minor in relationship (but not in opposition) to what they term the "major": the hegemonic normative structures and the power relationship inherent in them. The major represents the normative binary in which, for example, "Male", "Heterosexual," and "White," is the positive pole against which everything else is defined as (and in) the negative. The -minor is not synonymous with "minority": Once a subject has been identified in fixed opposition to male, heterosexual, white (for instance normative ("minority") constructions of woman, gay, lesbian, transgender, African-American or Black British) that subject is also positioned within the Deleuzoguattarian major as it is described in the terms of its hegemonic binary opposite. At this point of identification, the minority-major becomes closed off and expressive: no longer in movement or creation. "Minority" then describes finished identities locked in deficient relationship to and with the majority (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980). However, The Deleuzian idea of the -minor or minoritarian subject is not the opposite of the major: rather the minoritarian refuses the terms of the majoritarian (in fact transes it), and resists defining itself against a hegemonic what-it-is-not (Colebrook, 2002). The minor is 'fluid movements of creativity that subvert the dominant, i.e., majoritarian, identities our current arrangements bestow upon us' (May, 2003, 149). 'All becoming is precisely the undermining of a plan' (Batra, 2102, 4) and all becomings- for Deleuze and Guattari are becomings-minor. The becoming-minor creates and recreates itself on its own terms, undermining any plan to define "minority" identity. While *The (Culture of) Confession Booth* spent a lot of the time in the majoritarian "minority" position as it tried to subvert truth with lies, *minor chaos* was designed to move into a becoming-minor register and attempt to exist there.

Tying back to this thesis' primary concern with identifying strategies for identity politics in performance, the limitations in naming one's majoritarian- "minority" sexual identity are the same ones Foucault presents as attached to confessing one's 'sex-desires'. The work of the Deleuzoguattarian becoming-minor has a relationship to and with

Foucault's 'bodies and pleasures': both constructions focus on the radical nature of moving doings over fixed beings, on the energies of intensities and experimental and experiential lines of flight which cannot be named or related to the hegemonic.

The molar and the molecular in *minor chaos*

> …Those particles that are molecular escape any plan. (Batra, 2012, 4)

In *minor chaos* the autobiographical and performative intensities of the practice worked in what Deleuze and Guattari call 'molecular' rather than 'molar' terms (Parr, 2005). The molecular is a useful term for describing and understanding how the elements of practice worked to create and populate the overall plane of becoming-minor. The term "molar" describes the dense, bounded and complete structure of things or ideas, the "masses", or "wholes". Molar entities 'are well defined, often massive, and are affiliated with a governing apparatus' (177-178). The molar can be seen as akin to the fixed and hegemonic major subject position rather than to the movement of becoming-minor. What were chosen as autobiographical prompts in *minor chaos*: the index cards with names of my places I had lived, Jewish ritual items, a sports trophy, a Vanity Fair magazine in themselves were molar entities - elements from my history that outside the context of this practice had identifiable forms and specific, governing, representational qualities. The Haggadah was a representation of molar organized religion, "Vanity Fair" could be seen as a representation of molar heteronormativity, et cetera, however when these items were activated during *minor chaos* they became molecular intensities - when they prompted stories, lies, rants and fights that created no narrative but instead made the shape of the practice itself they moved into a molecular state of becoming-. The molecular are 'the particles that escape the sedimentation of these structures and escape any representation by the subject' (Batra, 2012, 2). The Haggadah, the trophy, the magazines and cards lost their integrated molar mass over the course of the performance experiment and became-minor. They dis-

integrated into their molecular structure, their 'parts and pieces' (Parr, 2015, 215), becoming intensities that influenced the internal course of the performance but lost any power of representation. When choosing the autobiographical materials that would be the becoming-minor, molecular elements of the practice I deliberately stayed away from physical items or narrative devices from LGBTQ+ identity discourses out of a concern that it would be too difficult to keep these heavily coded materials from solidifying into narrative and opted instead for the more oblique references mentioned previously. The resulting experience of the molecular and becoming-minor in the work acted as a refusal of hegemonic experiences of performance and of normative expectations that I would offer an autobiographical narrative or "coming out" story. Questions on what might have been missed out here in an effort to remain in oblique space will be addressed in the conclusion to this chapter.

The Plane of Immanence

> Immanence and transcendence are terms about the relations that hold at the heart of different metaphysics. Are the privileged relations in a philosophy of the form of a relation 'to' something, or of a relation 'in' something? If it is 'to' then it is philosophy of transcendence. If it is 'in' then it is immanence. Deleuze is radical about immanence, that is, his philosophy is to be thought strictly in terms of relations 'in'. (Parr, 2015, 128)

As noted in the introductory chapter, Deleuze and Guattari offer the idea of a 'plane of immanence' in their writing in *A Thousand Plateaus*, (1980) and *What is Philosophy* (1991). A primary driver of the Deleuzoguattarian project, immanence is a relational term that proposes that, rather than concepts or ideas being in relationship to something before, outside or apart from themselves, in immanence the relationships are located only within and between elements of a conceptual framework. A plane of

immanence is the 'indivisible milieu' (1991) that holds and at the same time is all of the concepts that create a philosophy. On the plane of immanence there are no "forms or developments of forms; nor are there subjects or the formation of subjects', there are only: 'relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness between unformed [or nearly unformed] elements, […] acuities, affects, [and] subjectless individuations that constitute collective assemblages.' (266). This second practice set out to create a space of becomings- and found itself on a plane of immanence.

On the plane of immanence, Deleuze and Guattari write:

> Nothing develops, but things arrive late or early, and form this or that assemblage depending on their compositions of speed. Nothing subjectifies, but haecceities form according to compositions of nonsubjectified powers or affects. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980, 266)

In the course of the fifty-minute experiment the enclosed black box of the space became a physical manifestation of a plane of immanence. The audience entered into a world of relationships that was complete and specific to this practice. As discussed above, beyond the boundaries of the scheduling of the space and the time of the showing there was little genesis to *minor chaos*. There was no marked beginning to the performance experiment and the end came without planning. There was no structure, no order in which events would happen. There was no development into narrative: elements were purposely brought in at times that were experienced as early and/or late and were dropped again out of any rhythmic pattern. The piece became an assemblage of elements that was specific to itself, a research plane that pushed against the fodder and foil of what had been found in *The (Culture of) Confession Booth* and my research and thinking on autobiographical and identity-based theatre. Each element - object, action, verbal or physical prompt, the atmosphere and design of the space - acted as an intensity: an 'intensive event' that 'pave[d], occup[ied], [and] populate[d]

the plane' of the performance (Deleuze, 1991, 36), the conceptual materials that formed an assemblage that populated (and were) the plane. As noted, these materials were largely autobiographical. In most autobiographical performances audience and makers use and expect a group of autobiographical concepts to create or congeal into some kind of story (often of identity) that transcends the performance itself (true, fixed or not), however *minor chaos* worked to refuse any relationship to my identity or history that would congeal into explanation of myself or describe anything beyond the performance, working instead with relationships within my identity and immanent to the performance. The plane appeared in *minor chaos* as the 'breath that suffuse[d] the separate parts' (36) of the practice. The movement from element to element through prompts meant the relationship in my identity was tangible but unlocatable and unnamable and the breath that suffused these was found in the chaotic movement between them - a suffusion of tension and energy that played on the edge of discomfort and failure and ultimately combined with the materials to illuminate the research frame.

Early in the performance, a participant brought me one of the cards from the wall that read "micropenis". The card functioned as a relatively unformed element on the plane: it was one of the ambiguous identity prompts I had included that referenced gender. I launched into a monologue that refigured my trans- identity into that of being extremely under-endowed and the experience and politics around that[5] [PRACTICE 2 MINOR CHAOS.MOV, 2:50]. When the monologue seemed to be developing as a serious confessional performance it was broken by a "truth or dare" prompt to perform a song and dance with an audience member. While this line of flight transed away from (lying) autobiography, it moved further into a molar experience of a static "performance" that

5 This statement was both a truth and a lie given the science that the penis and clitoris are different versions of the same scientific structure and the effects of testosterone on the medically transitioning transmasculine body

I then struggled with and ranted against by shouting in a corner, changing not the incontrovertible fact that the whole thing was a performance, but creating an assemblage of elements that radically deterritorialize the nature of this performance. Each improvised interaction I had became a line of flight that transed away from narrative and description. Only I (and sometimes my collaborators) knew which were the material truths and which were lies and we made no distinction between them, nor was there any distinction made between the moments of "storytelling", the moments of argument between myself and the collaborators, or between any of us and any of the participants, making difference and a constant becoming-minor the primary experience of the piece.

Deterritorialization and reterritorialization

The ground between the major and the minor, the molar and the molecular constantly shifted in *The (Culture of) Confession Booth,* as it did with *minor chaos*. However, it would be attaching to another binary to insist that one could be permanently "outside" the Major[6] - the majoritarian is a dominant and dominating force and everything tends toward it in language and in structures of power. Deleuze and Guattari write that becomings- (and I add transings) work in oscillation toward and away from the major and molar through processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. The lines of flight away from the molar and major crack open the territory, creating pathways in and out of it and new space inside of it, thereby deterritorializing those fixed spaces. These structures then assimilate the new information and re-form to it, they re-fix and close

[6] There are points late in the practice where I imply that one can be definitely outside the major. These in the moment, early iterations of thinking on my feet were incomplete, something I was aware of at the time.

over the breaks of that de-territorialization to re-territorialize, into the next iteration of the dominant hegemony that includes that which broke it open, and this too was evident in moments of the practice of *minor chaos.*

LIAR LIAR —

A primary experience of de-and re-territorialization on our plane of immanence can be seen in the attempt to play the board game *Liar Liar*; until minute eighteen a mostly ignored centerpiece on the table in the middle of the room that I had included in the design of the practice because of its title but, as with all the other elements, had not purposefully made any plan for its use. After a prolonged period of time in the practice during which I experienced a frustration at not being able to find a comfortable way to move inside the work, my dramaturg presented the option that I play the game. I responded that I wanted the audience to play it and she obliged. The rules of *Liar Liar* were so complex that no one could actually understand how to play, but several members of this audience of theatre researcher-practitioners, aware of my frustration and wanting perhaps either to try to help solve it or to find a stable moment for themselves in the midst of disruption, gathered around the table to concentrate on the exactly bounded molar space of the game: the physical limits of the table, of the coloured squares on the board , of the written instructions, the playing cards and the pieces that were to move in proscribed fashion from square to square on the board on rolls of dice. Difference and the plane of immanence passed quickly into a 'plane of organization' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980) with the rules of the game organizing everyone's attention and behaviour. At this point two areas formed in the room: an inner circle around the table that was playing the game, and an outer grouping who chose not to, where I wandered. The game solidified quickly and for ten minutes participants could not be moved out of it despite my attempts to break their focus: first

by taking off most of my clothing and then by trying to convince them that the game was uninteresting (and resisting the impulse to literally disrupt the game by pushing it off the table). On reflection the choice to include the board game created a particular problem in the practice. *Liar Liar* took on similar properties to the kinds of "heavily coded" identity narrative items I had chosen to leave out; board games are nothing if not an illustration of the normative as they can only function in the major and the molar. In nearly all board games there are set rules for any identity a player can assume, one path from beginning to end and one method or set of methods by which one can end up as the "winner". This heavily coded material for a time closed down the inner circle of the practice into the major: however, while frustrating ultimately this was a productive experience that seeded the final line of flight. After finally breaking through the game using a suggestion that I engage in a physical practice of connection via hugging audience members and prompted when I noted that a late moment of storytelling was "not the research", I was asked what the research was. The question resulted in a congealing of the entire journey into a ranting monologue that started with the metaphorical statement that the research was on how to destroy the game *Liar Liar:*

[PRACTICE 2 MINOR CHAOS.MOV 35:00]

> *What I'm trying to do is stop you wanting to play the fucking game rather than being disrupted, that's what I'm trying to do! This game is a fucking red herring, as soon as we started everybody we- "yeah yeah the game the game, tell us how to play the game," it's like , now "ok, I know what to do, I know what to do, I'm set, I'm playing, I just need to understand the rules and then I will play the game and everything will be ok, and whatever else the fuck is going on, this chaos, that's nothing- I don't care, I don't know, I don't have to know - I have my job." And what I'm trying to do is disrupt that moment because that's - and now I'm gonna do politics - Yay! - Because that's the moment that fucks us all up. Is when*

the only - when we have our job and our rules - you don't want me to hug you so you'd rather play the game so I'm gonna hug you and you don't want to dance with me so I'm going to dance with you and hug you, and take you away from the game [..] So the point is that, the set-up is this, it's the game, it's me as a "man", it's the Jewish story. The set-up is all these things where we might enjoy the ride but we know where the ride is taking us - We go on that ride and it might have an upset - where the story changes in a way you didn't expect - I might not have a micropenis, I might have a pussy, whatever, and the the rupture - "whoa - oh he has a micropenis that so sad, wow he's so brave, telling us this story - so brave - oh, wait he has a pussy, he was a girl - oh wait. Micropenis Ok, ok, oh, it's so sad, he's so brave I can accept him that's really brave of him he's really challenging masculinity, Oh he's got a pussy, ok, so he must have been born in the wrong body - ok trans people, I'm good with trans people, and , people with micropenises, ok" and then it's done, ok, you know more about micropenises and you know more about trans history but now you are done, now you are playing the game: now you have the rules, now you have the pieces, you know where you are supposed to be on the board, you know how to get it right, you know how not to get it right and then you go back into your life and you know a little bit better about trans people and micropenises and liar games but you - and you are changed - you are different, you are not the same as you were an hour ago but you are - I want you to leave— exploded. [..] I want to do that again and again and again because what I am looking for is to get to a space where the chaos - where the shape and the space and the time of chaotic… of chaos is longer - is prolonged, so that by the time - so that everything is called into question and we live in that question space rather than the rules of the Liar Liar game.

Outcomes

The design and execution of the performance practice *minor chaos* explored a plane of immanence that included elements of identity, of truth and lies, of transing the desire to allow narratives to form. Staying in the space with a constantly transing narrative in which we don't know what is going on, what is expected of us, who we are in relationship to where we are is challenging and uncomfortable. Being in a perpetual differing and deterritorializing mode requires a constant openness, a constant fighting against the internal and external desire to have it "make sense", to have rules, to be in safe, smooth and recognizable territory. Continual transing led me to an understanding of what that differing feels like, what its energies are, its ''relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness between unformed elements' (Deleuze, 1980, 266).

While the practice opened up moments of the productive disruption I am looking for and offered me further ways to think with and through both the practical and theoretical research, with chaotic unravelling as the primary outcome of *minor chaos*, questions arise: If what I am looking for is what identity-based performance can do, in this practice what effects did my autobiographical elements/intensities retain? Did the uniqueness and specificity of the elements, the haecceities of those autobiographical materials leave traces in/for the participants? While interacting with each autobiographical element set the practice on specific lines of flight, I conclude here that my identity had too little of its own "thisness" in the practice to leave any noticeable trace; that identity was in fact one more bit of debris left on the studio floor when the participants left. This outcome suggests that while this unfixed and oscillating space does the work of productive disruption, for it to be *identity* that disrupts and is disrupted these elements need a stronger position in the practice-research. Coming from a pre-PhD practice that was based on my visible trans identity and that led me to the primary research questions, in *The Culture of Confession Booth* I explored taking away all visual contact between myself and my participants and relied on a verbal lying practice to refuse the cultural confessional requirements. I found potential in the space not of lying but in the becoming- with truth and lies. In minor *chaos* I sought to work

purposely and further into a becoming-minor space, brought back a visual presence and worked to trans- solidifying narratives of any kind, including any of my trans identity. In this practice the written, spoken and representative pieces of my identity, whether they were true or not, were intensities that offered the inspiration for each line of flight, and each one functioned to continually deterritorialize the experience. However, these were not strong enough to do any part of the job of unravelling gender and identity and it was not the Transgender "embodied text" that was doing the work. From this experience I was prompted to look back toward the "text" of my body, but with a new sense of what it is that I am trying to effect or accomplish. This led me to the next and final practice that asks: when expectations for narrative coherence are constantly unraveled but the trans- body is still visually present, does the unravelling itself somehow adhere to identity?

Chapter 4: *Trans-O-Graphia/Dance Me to the End of Love*

Preface:

> *The audience enters into another darkened studio, much larger than the last with higher ceilings. Theatre lights dimly illuminate the space. On three of the large walls, the video Trans-O-Graphia plays, the images flicker and low volume white noise conditions the room. In the centre, I am sitting at a small table in light coloured loose trousers, shirt and waistcoat, cutting the petals off of flowers and again paying no attention to those who enter…*

Bodies and Pleasures:

I don't want to tell you the "truth" of who I am. I want you to be here with me.
I don't want you to contemplate me. I want you to feel yourself.
I don't want you to stand back and watch. I want you to look, to feel and to dance.
I don't want you to make space for me in your world. I want to envelop you in mine until it becomes ours.

I don't want to make work that says "fuck you", I want to make work that says "Let's fuck".

RECAP

In the second practice iteration, *minor chaos,* the emphasis in design was on creating the becoming-minor space. My intention was to keep the elements of identity subjectivity present and alive but to subvert the desire for fixed autobiographical "truths" (or lies). Transing these elements created a productive experience of ongoing disruption for myself and my participants that was instrumental in the thesis research. *minor chaos* was also the first practice iteration that I recognized as a world or situation 'performance plane of immanence' that I now understand to have emerged in all three practices. However, for the purposes of the larger research question I concluded that the autobiographical elements in *minor chaos* were not strong enough inside the disruption to leave much residue, so the/my trans- identity did not create or leave the affects, resonances or intensities I was looking for: intensities that might offer an experience of trans- bodies and pleasures. In this final practice, I bring back the specific use of my trans- identity, focusing not on my identity narrative but offering the experience of my trans- body in the space, connecting with other bodies in time.

In this chapter

I present the third and final thesis practice *Trans-O-Graphia/Dance Me to the End of Love*. Supplementing the video documentation links found in the appendices, I offer the design and performance of the practice: a fifteen-minute work presented to an audience of approximately thirty-five that mixed the video presentation *Trans-O-Graphia* with the performance piece *Dance Me to the End of Love* [See appendices]. I contextualize and situate the video and performance via the previous research and work into, through and away from the idea of identity "visibility" and its cultural force. In contrast to this "visibility" I create the concept and practice of identity "visuality", via Marks and others, and propose a productive "erotic oscillation" between these two experiences of subjectivity on stage. Thinking beyond this thesis I further consider the visuality of the trans- body and identity through the semiotic before offering my reflections and conclusions on this final practice, discussing the extent to which it offers answers to the primary practice inquiry.

The design of *Trans-O-Graphia/Dance Me to the End of Love*

For the design of the final practice I first returned to knowledge I acquired in the years of performance that led me to embark on the journey of this PhD. As discussed in chapter one, over the course of the previous ten years of my professional work I discovered that the reveal of the physical hybridity of my trans- body was partially successful in circumventing the expectation that as an LGBTQ+ performer I would explain my identity onstage. Crucially for the research now, I also discovered that my reveal had disruptive and deterritorializing properties. In these pre-PhD performances, however, I had not identified how this disruption was working or what it was doing, nor had I addressed the problem of the cultural demand for confession and tendency

toward reterritorialization that seemed invariably to shut down this disruption. Taking the outcomes of the PhD practice-research to this point contextualized and expanded by my theoretical sources, I designed the final practice *Trans-O-Graphia/Dance Me to the End of Love* to incorporate what I had identified as promising pre-PhD with my new modes of research and theorizing.

Visibility versus Visuality

In thinking about how to reincorporate the/my physical trans- body into the final practice, I returned to the notions of identity "visibility" narratives. As discussed in chapter one, when we forefront our descriptive identity stories or narratives, we work inside a "visibility" politic. This "visibility" is not only ocular but is also representational and all too often requires us to align our identities to the current cultural zeitgeist, whether in the larger culture or inside our identity groups. As also noted previously "visibility" has its limits both as lived requirement and as political strategy. In *Broken Symmetries*, Peggy Phelan argues for the need to examine "implicit assumptions about the connections between representational visibility and political power [.]" (Prentice, 2009, 325). As Rosemary Hennessey via Claudia W. Ruitenberg argues, this kind of visibility creates LGBTQ+ subjects as consumers, and we ought to ask who benefits from our consumption. She posits the likelihood that LGBTQ+ visibility as a market demographic will not translate to broader more political visibilities (Ruitenberg, 2010). Butler writes that LGBTQ+ subjects who focus on this "identity visibility" risk losing sight of any other politics - thinking that visibility is the primary or only goal, we will not then question the structures that create who or what can be visible or sayable (Butler in Hennessey, 1995). Judith Roof, in some ways coming full circle back to Deleuze and Guattari and Foucault says that visibility is the rectifying binary answer to the problem of invisibility, which is what creates the need for visibility in the first place: rather than challenging the structures that set up who is visible and who is invisible in hegemonic cultures, a sole politic of visibility reifies what and who can and cannot be

visible, and in what ways (Roof in Hennessy, 1995). Instead Roof looks to queer theory and activism to be 'interested in altering the standard of vision, the frame of reference of visibility, of what can be seen and known' (37).

Putting these problematics in further communication with Foucault in this culminating practice I look to activate that politic of 'bodies and pleasures' in which we experience our desiring bodies through an open-ended development of pleasures and connections in order to alter 'the standard of vision' and to expand the possibilities of 'what can be seen and known' (37). To this end, for this practice and further thinking I find it useful to trans- this 'visibility' and move toward a particular definition and use of the concept of 'visuality'.

Visuality

While the 'Visible' and the "Visual" are both modes of representation that include an idea of vision, Butler's definition of visibility requires narrative legibility. I work here instead with what I define as an "identity visuality" that refuses this requirement. I designed the final practice-research performance *Trans-O-Graphia/Dance Me to the End of Love* as a practice that would utilize the "visuality" of my trans- bodily identity.

Visuality as a larger field of study looks at 'the distinct historical manifestations of visual experience' (Bleeker, 2008, 2). For the purposes of this thesis and writing, rather than using "visuality" to describe a lens through which to look at iterations of cinema, performance and other artworks, I am using "visuality" primarily as a contrasting strategic term to "visibility" as I and others have previously defined it. If in "identity visibility" being "seen" is actually about how we define ourselves via narrative, description, explanation and context, I am defining here an idea of "identity visuality," which offers the sight (and perhaps the site) of my identity while refusing to offer narrative description of it. As this final practice and writing will show, when this

narrative is not offered but the trans- body is present, this "visuality" moves us away from the staking and validation of fixed and major identity claims and instead works to set us into a becoming- with our audience-participants. According to Maiike Bleeker, writing on visuality in theatre, visuality 'requires that we focus' not on understanding the story offered by the performer but 'on the relationship between the one seeing and what is seen' (2008, 2). This moving space between performer and participants 'expand[s] the possibilities of 'what can be seen and known' (Ruitenberg, 2010, 620).

> Seeing appears to alter the thing seen and to transform the one seeing, showing them to be profoundly intertwined in the event that is visuality (Bleeker 2).

While all performance to varying degrees creates this relationship between performer(s) and audience, I hypothesize here that using what I am framing as "identity visuality" performers have the opportunity to refuse the tendency to organize our work around fixed identity narratives and to foreground and heighten the experience of movement and intertwinement. As discussed previously, visibility based political performances have historically offered audiences the opportunity to encounter difference but (the power of) difference diminishes when diversity becomes the new normal. In the idea of a major/molar autobiographical structure, being visible in performance requires us to present a fixed subject position (at least in the moment of representation) that is expressive and explanatory; no longer in the act of creation. In contrast, I hypothesize here that being visual allows us to work with 'becoming- ', and process, offering minor, molecular and transing identities that cannot be described because they are constantly changing. The encounter with the molecular becoming-minor brings viewer (in)to spectator and spectator (in)to viewer. "In becoming one 'finds oneself before another who ends up being in oneself'" (Lawlor in Cull, 2009, 32). Both are changed by the contact and connection with and to the other. I designed

Trans-O-Graphia/Dance Me to the End of Love specifically to create and foster these encounters.

Trans-O-Graphia/Dance Me to the End of Love was also presented as part of the yearly *Collisions* festival at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. While the previous two practices took the form of performance laboratories that needed to work (as much as was possible in the setting available) outside of theatrical structures, the conceptual ideas of visuality and the incorporation of my previous theatrical performance practices meant that *Trans-O-Graphia/Dance Me to the End of Love* would be a theatrical and cinematic visual experience. This culminating practice was designed to be an experience of "identity visuality" both cinematically and in performance. To explore cinematic "visuality" I created video that experimented with the conceptual frames of the research by overlaying, repeating and distorting images of my body and clips from my body of work. This video would play on three walls of the performance space and would transition into the second section, *Dance Me to the End of Love,* a performance based on my previous body of live work, analyzed and evolved here via the previous thesis practices and developing theoretical research frames.

The Haptic (visuality) and the Optical (visibility)

To develop my concept of identity visuality in and for this practice I turn to Marks' writing in *Touch: sensuous theory and multi-sensory media (2002).* Here Marks describes two primary types of cinematic visuality: the Optical and the Haptic. In my configuration I am aligning her Optical with live "visibility" performance and her Haptic with the way I am thinking about visuality performance. Marks defines optical visuality (visibility) as a focal point viewing that 'requires a distance and a centre' (XVI). In cinematic terms optical visuality is created by the long shot in which the viewer can see and understand all of the elements on screen from the distance and centre of their

viewing position. Optical visuality is also in play in gallery arts when patrons create their own “long-shots”, standing back in order to take in the entirety of an artwork and then applying their own understanding and analyses of it. I frame the identity narratives that create “visibility” to be analogous to this long shot/standing back: viewers “take in” what is presented to them in performance from the distance of their own analyses and understanding, fixing their own position in relationship to that information. In autobiographical theatre this long shot perspective is created by the narrative information that is offered to the audience: what allows us to “take in” and “understand” the narrative details of identity. Haptic visuality does not have or allow this distance from which to identify, understand and evaluate. Cinematically, haptic visuality is the extreme close up that abstracts the image, restricting the information to what is on the surface and rendering it diffuse, perhaps how we see if we keep our eyes open when we kiss. ‘[In] haptic visuality the eyes themselves function like organs of touch’ (Marks, 2007, 162). When we are held at the visual surface, Marks tells us, our surfaces come into contact; we touch and feel through the eye and affectively, rather that intellectually, experience the other.

In the first section of this final research iteration I designed and edited seven minutes of video working concurrently with Marks’ haptic cinema and my own concept and formulation of identity visuality to create a doubly “visual” experience. Engaging with her description of the diffuse and surface contact and affective experience of the haptic in *Trans-o-Graphia* I utilized moving and still images from my previous work that focused on the materiality of my body. In order to experiment with removing narrative “visibility” many of the clips I incorporated were taken from the pseudo-documentary on my work *Fake Orgasm* (2010), lifted out of the “optical” narrative storytelling of that film. I intercut these fragments with still and moving images shot for this project as well as archival autobiographical stills. Exploring different ways to render these clips into a haptic mode I layered images over each other, cut them from their context and

repeated them, applied filters that would degrade and distort these images and, playing with multiple references I overlaid the length of the final video with a clip of a molar tooth that replicates the move from the optical to the haptic as the shot moves closer to and into the tooth, slowly dissolving into its molecular structure. Audio clips of white noise underscored the haptic images, offering the viewers, as Marks relates, a 'confusing immersion' rather than a 'clear distinction' and an ambiguous 'texture, taste, atmosphere' (Marks, 2016, n.p.) to the 'skin of the film' (Marks, 2007)

While Marks' writing specifically involves cinema viewers in an experience of the haptic-visual, In this final practice- and theoretical- research I extrapolate this to live performance and suggest that when the audience is not given narrative distance and is instead offered the unexplained "visual" transing body they come into haptic contact with our surfaces. Haptic contact, Marks writes, is 'Touching, not mastering.' (Marks 2002, xii). (Haptic) Visuality performance facilitates the space of touch and contact between audience and performer while deflecting any "mastering" of the material information of our bodies and identities. In these contacts 'close-range spaces are navigated not through reference to the abstractions of maps or compass, but by haptic perception, which attends to their particularity.' (Xii). The visual performance of T*rans-O-Graphia/Dance Me to the End of Love* was designed to offer no "map" of information of the subject, or "compass" to take an identity direction from. Instead I offer affective, haptic experiences, in which the "particularity"- the Deleuzian molecular particles - of (my) visual trans- identity - are 'attended' to; in fact, as in the elements on the plane of immanence of minor chaos these particles become- the transing identity and the performance itself.

The final practice then moves from cinematic to theatrical haptic visuality: from *Trans-o-Graphia* to *Dance Me to the End of Love*. In the performance practices that predate this piece I used the reveal of my body to work with the expectations of the strip (that

came with the expectations that I would offer my "visibility" narrative) and unsettled these with the reveal of my disruptive body. As mentioned, these expectations regularly resurfaced after performances. Most strip forms (including my own prior to *Dance Me to the End of Love*) present the same basic narrative: the performer will start with some amount of clothing on and proceed to some degree of nakedness that finishes the show. In modern burlesque there is also often a story or theme that holds and structures the strip. These elements create an "optical" viewing: most audiences know enough of the form (and of theatrical conventions in general) to masterfully apprehend the narrative of the strip itself and the plots that may be included. I suggest here ending a normative strip with the reveal of the/my non-normative trans- body ruptures this knowing, throwing audiences out of optical mastery just as the performance ends. Perhaps leaving spectators in this state of non-mastery without offering them anywhere else to go is one of the reasons they so often brought their questions to me after a performance: asking me to become visible again so that they might "stand back" from and evaluate what they had experienced. In *Dance Me to the End of Love* I circumvent this pattern and create instead a closeup, touching, haptic-visual experience for and relationship with my audience.

My supposition when I created *Dance Me to the End of Love* was that I needed to break the expectations of the strip and what I am now framing as the optical distance between performer and audience that both stage and strip constructions cement. I created the piece to begin as a normative tease-and-reveal burlesque performance in which over the course of several versions of the Leonard Cohen song of the same name I dance in partnership with a coat rack, dressing it in my clothing until it wears my suit and I am naked, hidden behind it. On the coda of one of the versions of the song I step out to reveal my trans- body referencing the burlesque trope (and the "coming out" narrative) in a false final image. As the music changes again, I step down into the audience and approach someone, making eye contact with that person until I feel the

contact between us soften, then moving on to someone else. When the music changes again to a partner-dance I take whoever is in front of me into my arms and lead them in our dance. After some moments together, I invite them to keep dancing with someone else, and I move on to another person, repeating this process until the music ends with the entire audience dancing in haptic contact with one another.

Erotic Oscillations of the Visible and the Visual

> […] Deleuze and Guattari do not understand the haptic [smooth space] and the optical [striated space] to be a dichotomy but insist that they slide into one another. (Marks, 2003, Xii)

To completely break the desire for the kind of knowledge and understanding that visibility narratives and optical viewing represent is neither possible nor desirable, and to fall into a binary of haptic versus optical, visual versus visible performance would be as reductive as any other such opposition. As audience members we write and assign narratives (consciously or not) as we watch or participate in all performances. There are gender narratives already written into the cultural understanding of all bodies, including the LGBTQ+. Marks writes that (like the oscillation Deleuze and Guattari note of the major-minor) the cinematic experience continually oscillates between haptic and optical modes of viewing (Marks, 3), between close feeling and distant knowing, and this same oscillation between the visible and the visual occurs in transing performance. I propose here that *Dance Me to the End of Love* works with an ongoing oscillation between modes of visibility and visuality, between the haptic and the optical for both performer and participant.

Marks writes about a pleasurable "objectification" that occurs in this oscillation between haptic and optical visuality (2002). She describes this as a shifting back and forth from being the touching-touched, acted upon object and the mastering subject, between having and relinquishing control. Marks writes that this subject/object oscillation - 'the ability to have your sense of self, your self-control, taken away and restored – and to do the same for another person' - is the definition of the erotic. '[A] lover's promise is to take the beloved to that point where he or she has no distance from the body – and then to let the beloved come back, into possession of language and personhood' (xvi). She expands this definition beyond sex and posits that the oscillation between haptic and optical visuality in cinema (therefore in my terms between visuality and visibility) creates an erotics of viewing in which the viewer oscillates between distance and closeness. In the closeness she/he gives up the visual control that comes from perspective and commingles with the image (13). In *Trans-O-Graphia/Dance Me to the End of Love* refusing a Trans narrative while offering a trans-experience engenders an "erotic" encounter between performer and participant, an encounter 'that delights in the fact of its alterity, rather than attempts to know it' (19). This erotic encountering creates not a Lacanian 'lack' of understanding, but a desirous openness to other connections, other, tactile, kinesthetic, proprioceptive and affective understandings.

Beginning in an optical-visible mode in its narrative progression of a strip, *Dance Me to the End of Love* works into this oscillatory haptic-optical/visual-visible mode when, after the false naked ending, I leave the stage to interact with my audience. Reflecting now on the experience of *Dance Me to the End of Love* for myself and my participants I identify that in both the eye gazing and the partner dance sections my trans- narrative, present via my body but unexplained, allows and encourages oscillation between the haptic bodily pleasure of the dance and what is an optical cerebral discomfort of dancing with a naked partner of unfamiliar gender and identity. When engaging various

audience members in the eye-gazing section I attempt to permeate the membrane that separates subject from object, audience member from performer; to draw participants inside the performative while at the same time drawing myself out of it to meet in an erotic oscillation that is the becoming-minor in-between. When I move from one person to another and invite each one of my previous partners to dance with another audience member a further oscillation occurs: The partner who has just danced with me briefly takes on the role of leader-performer as they begin to dance with a new partner. I continue and repeat this facilitation of pairing and erotic subject/object oscillation inviting participants to engage in a new touch with a new stranger with a new, unexplained "visual" identity, until finally everyone is moving in erotic oscillation between viewed and viewer, between visual and visible.

The Semiotic Trans Subject and Visuality

Exploring the larger possibilities and applications for this research, the relationship of the Trans subject and this construction of visuality bears further discussion. The Trans subject her/himself is not universally or automatically "visual". The clothed and/or "passing" trans subject, as the LGB subject, requires narrative to be "seen", and so stays in the realm of the "visible". In example, Trans actress and activist Laverne Cox is rendered "visible" on the cover of the June 2014 issue of *Time* magazine by virtue of the 'Transgender Tipping Point' headline (TIME, 2014). Chris Prentice writes that visibility 'is predicated on the representational relation of sign to referent [while visuality] is produced by the liberation of the sign from the referent. (2009, 322). In this semiotic formulation, if Cox's body is her sign and her referent (on the cover of *Time)* is the word "transgender" two things happen. Firstly, the referent (her identity label) precedes the sign and is the word 'transgender' with all of its spectral associations. Following Dragonowl (2015) what becomes "visible" here is The Transgender Subject,

not the individual who is Laverne Cox. Secondly, the sign that is attached to this referent is Laverne. Thinking visually, if the referent (the word "transgender") is removed, Cox ceases to be "visibly" Trans. The sign of her body is detached (Prentice's "liberation") from the "Transgender" referent and her visuality becomes that of a conventionally beautiful and successful actress of colour. Even in her *Allure Magazine* nude photo (Siegel, 2015), viewers are given the referent of her trans identity on the page in the fourth line of the article under the picture. Without it, the fact that only her breasts are visible means the sign of her body does not visibly represent Trans identity. The post- transitional clothed and/or passing Trans body, like the LGB body, is only "visible" with narrative. In this example, the "liberation" of Cox's referent from her sign would put her in the realm of passing. The political possibilities in this visual "liberation," however, come not from the passing, but in being liberated from the majoritarian properties of the fixed sign/referent relationship that identity "visibility" engenders. The "visual" transsexual body (that does not require external referent to appear) is the fully nude and/or non- 'passing' trans body. In *Trans-O-Graphia/Dance Me to the End of Love* participants come into contact with my surgically/hormonally hybrid and multiply gendered trans- body operating visually. Mine is a "differing", becoming-minor/becoming-trans- body that has the potential to refuse a majoritarian reading if I do not offer a referent of the Trans identity narrative to secure its place there. The same is true for trans- subjects who do not "pass" as their transitioned gender, whose clothed bodies also represent the multiple, the hybrid, the unassimilated, the unfinished. In hybridity and multiplicity, the non-passing/naked trans- body has the potential for both political affect and effect. In contrast to the sense that the performance of visibility is ripe for colonizing, visuality as a process of 'reification, abstraction, and expropriation' (Prentice, 2009, 322), has the possibility of inciting a 'radical decontextualization' (322) of genders, of sexualities, of identities in general. In deliberately refusing to link the sign (the trans- body) to the referent (the Trans cultural/neoliberal identity), in this final practice I use the visuality of my becoming-trans- body as a tool to haptically decontextualize the position of bodies,

genders, sexualities and subject positions. I posit that this decontextualization can be useful for expropriating genders and sexualities from the internal and external regulatory regimes of “confession” and “sex-desires”.

Returning to Sandy Stone:

> To foreground the practices of inscription and reading which are part of this deliberate invocation of dissonance, I suggest constituting transsexuals not as a class or problematic "third gender", but rather as a genre-- a set of embodied texts whose potential for productive disruption of structured sexualities and spectra of desire has yet to be explored.’ (Stone, 1991, para 44*).*

In this quote and throughout *The Empire Strikes Back (1991)* the trans ‘texts’ Stone names are not descriptors of identity nor claims for the kind of “visibility” I am suggesting has been the primary goal of much LGBTQ+ autobiographical performance. In her idea of a transsexual “set of embodied texts” I read the body as the “text” and her ‘inscription and reading’ is done by and held by our bodies without explanation. This is what I am marking as the basis of an identity “visuality” practice. Stone’s ‘practices of inscription and reading’ that would constitute a ‘deliberate invocation of dissonance’ are not those of the “coming out story” “confessional” practices that most visibility politics employ. They involve, as *The Empire Strikes Back* continues, a refusal to pass and disappear into normative culture. ‘Passing means the denial of mixture,’ Stone writes (12). In these terms effecting an identity “visuality” practice means actively presenting mixture and promoting dissonances, rather than attempting to hide, smooth over, or explain them away.

Outcomes:

Trans-O-Graphia

The video did not work as expected, the audience seemed primarily uninterested in it when they saw me sitting in the middle of the space in a performative mode: the stage lights were dim on me, but they were on, and it was clear that I would (or perhaps was already) performing. To a theatre conservatoire audience, this was a hard sign to break. Instead of being washed over by the video playing all around them, most chose to sit down in front of me and watch me in the dark cutting the flower petals. A few stood back and spoke to each other in low tones, but the video soon became wallpaper. For cinema to become affective and haptic, for the eyes to work as 'organs of touch' there seems to be an amount of focus required, and my theatrical audience chose to focus instead on the live performer. Where I to stage this again, I would create a smaller and more immersive space that would first have only the video for the audience to experience, preferably surrounding them more closely in order to envelope them in this haptic visual imagery.

Dance Me to the End of Love

As the video faded to black and the *Dance Me…* music began to play, the experiment came onto a more familiar ground with audience and spectator and I had their full attention. The first part of *Dance Me…*, a romantic dance with flowers, had the audience attentive and this attention felt distant, optical, part of the warming up and settling into a performance. The sense that my audience was "standing back" and evaluating the "artwork" from a distance came through in the traditional configuration of audience/watcher and performer/watched. This quality of attention followed me through the strip and included the moment of reveal, a low-key affair with this knowledgeable crowd that was mostly comprised of members of the LGBTQ+ community and arts and humanities academics.

Once naked and eye-gazing the atmosphere changed, the audience became implicated in the performance, were no longer distant and optical in their viewing but became both literally and figuratively haptically engaged with me – both those who I came into contact with and those who affectively witnessed these contacts were moved in the haptics of "touching and not mastering" in oscillation, I have no doubt, with optical and evaluating thoughts and feelings. I found myself in this oscillation as well, as I moved between audiences sometimes haptically and affectively drawn to the next person I would interact with, other times making decisions based on who looked like they wanted to be drawn in, who thought they were not going to be. By the end of the ten minutes everyone was dancing. The 'plane of immanence,' the enveloping world of *Trans-O-Graphia/Dance Me to the End of Love,* was productively populated with the intensities of the stages of the dance and the contact (and to a lesser extent the video) that created a palpable but gentle (compared to *minor chaos*) affective disruption. No "optical" information on the Trans Identity was given beyond the literal "optics" of my body. No confession of identity was asked for or given. My haptically visual transing body did the work of disruption

After learning to let go of the need to tell the truth in T*he (Culture of) Confession Booth* and finding the space of the becoming-minor in *minor chaos* I took these elements through and into the final practice and put the/my trans-bodily identity at the forefront of the frame in an attempt to activate its properties for 'productive disruption of structured sexualities and spectra of desire' (Stone 1991, para 44). The practice created a space of erotic oscillation of major and minor, haptic and optical. It used a transing visuality to create an undescribed space of identity in which intensities of bodies, pleasures, and affects interacted. The visual trans- body/identity, then, can activate an "erotic" space or 'encounter with an other that delights in the fact of its alterity, rather than attempts to know it.' (Marks, 2002, 18).

Marks continues:

> Visual erotics allows the object of vision to remain inscrutable. But it is not voyeurism, for individual erotics the looker is also implicated. By engaging with an object in a haptic way, I come to the surface of myself [.] (19)

The encounter with the trans- identity, Stones' 'set of embodied texts' when it does not conform to the cultural requirement either to "pass" as not itself, or to "pass" as part of the new explained majoritarian non-normative, has the possibility to implicate the viewer and disrupt, interrupt and create a transing experience with and of gender. It offers the potential for participants 'to come to the surface' of themselves and experience a joyously affective deconstruction of identity. Unlike in my pre-PhD work, for *Dance Me to the End of Love* post-performance audience members did not ask for my visibility narrative. Instead of wanting to know about my experience of being Trans they wanted to share their own experiences of viewing and participating, dancing or not, of the oscillation between wanting to be chosen and not, and of their own experience of the 'bodies and pleasures' of the performance. Their desire enhanced their capacities to come to their surfaces, leaving them open to the new connections between our bodies, to the other bodies in the space, and perhaps to remain for a time in the experience of this erotics of oscillation between the 'visible' and the 'visual'. In this outcome I begin to find an answer to what developed as the overarching question of the thesis: I am suggesting now that naked trans-bodies can provoke a productive disruption with the erotic oscillation between the experience of the narratively visible trans- performer and the kinesthetic visual experience of, with and via- our bodies.

Chapter 5 CONCLUSION:

Before undertaking this PhD in my twenty years of making identity-based performance, my experience was that these performances tended to situate LGBTQ+ and especially Trans performance makers almost exclusively as the proponents of an LGBTQ+ identity "visibility" that is designed to create us as coherent and recognizable subjects in order that we may find livable positions in and with normative cultures. The urgent ongoing need to forefront this "visibility" in order to ensure our rights as human beings has meant that much of our performances were and still are in a kind of "triage" mode, continually fighting against cultures that currently appear to be moving rightward to crush us.

However, as we move into consumer status and these performances are taken into our cultures and re/figured as products, the radical power to disrupt, challenge and potentially change our systems and cultures has been reduced. Rather than challenging the regime of the hegemonic, the singular narrative of LGBTQ+ "visibility" politic leaves us working from a point of deficit, where we are "visible" because of what we are not. Because the fact remains we *are* still in deficit in our cultures, this "triage" is still and increasingly necessary, but it seems clear that the overfamiliar tool of "visibility" as the only tactic cannot be the cure-all to this discrimination. The primary goal of this practice research thesis was to explore the potential of transing and the "visual" trans-body in performance as a productive force for disrupting hegemonic structures of genders and sexualities.

Deploying the triangular practice research methodology of Robin Nelson, the "know how" that I accumulated over twenty years of pre-PhD embodied work and experience created -and combined with- the "know what" that was my understanding and experience of the neoliberal identity project and/in audience responses to my work. This "how" and "what" generated the first "know that" - the critical framework that seeded this PhD journey. That pre-PhD "knowing" triangle consolidated into the "know

how" of the first iteration of PhD practice. This triangular cycle continued through the three iterations of practice that comprise the journey of this doctoral research.

This doctoral project has identified and created performance worlds and situations that refuse the "transcendent," fixed and hegemonic and offer experiences of transing (the constant moving away from the fixed) as a means of productive disruption. This practice research contributes multiple tools for political theatre making and thinking for and beyond trans- and identity-based theatre and performance. Reinvigorating Sandy Stone's 1991 articulation of the trans- potential for "productive disruption" and defining and deploying this as performance tactic, I reveal transing practices as method for creating performance "planes of immanence" and opening spaces of radical indeterminacy.

Through and with the final practice I advance a new dialectical structure of "Identity Visuality" (in which trans- identity is visually present without narratives of representation that "fix" it in place). I deploy this Identity Visuality in contrast to the understanding of "Identity Visibility" (that creates those narratively "coherent and recognizable subjects"). In answer to the research question what can the trans- body do when it does not offer an explanation of the Trans Identity, I offer a new performance strategy using the "Visual" (naked) trans- identity to create an erotic oscillation between representational Visibility and unexplained Visuality. I offer the resulting "know that" of this practice research project as method for opening the disrupted and indeterminate spaces of Deleuze and Guattari's "difference" and Foucault's "bodies and pleasures" as political performance tactic. I propose these interlinked and overlapping strategies of "transing" and the erotics of "visual identity" performances as original contributions to trans, performance, philosophical and cultural theories with applications for making and thinking about trans- and political performance work.

Inside the three thesis experiments I worked with practices and theories involving the unfixed radical nature of bodies and pleasures, becoming- and erotics, all of which circle around the ideas and the experiences of difference and movement. Activating the disruptive capabilities in Sandy Stone's call to define transsexuals not as "problematic third gender" but as "genre" – as "a set of embodied texts" and Michel Foucault's undefinable "bodies and pleasures" as well as looking to de-emphasize identity "visibility" and forefront Deleuzoguattarian "becomings-" were primary methodological tools employed to do this work. The concept of trans- and transing have played a large part in this practice research, as they have in my own life: transing as movement and change, transing that is about differing and difference. Transing as a moving away from, leaving open what the movement is toward; moving away not only from hegemonic gender, but also from the expectations of (identity-based) performance. In this transing we do not focus on where we are transing from or to, but on the temporal experience of transing itself.

Interacting with this practice and theoretical research the three practice iterations revealed an overall practice structure and method of creating performance 'planes of immanence:' worlds and situations that trans- the "transcendent" hegemonic to evoke states of productive disruption via performance-based designs and exchanges. Each one of the three designs and exchanges explored in this thesis approached the research question from a specific area, part or lens of the research. The practices started with a non-specific becoming- in which the experience of the space of difference between lie and truth, rather than the space of either lie or truth was what imbued the experience (what remained). That seeded the development of the next practice, which moved into a specific becoming-minor in our attempt to refuse any solidification into a major relationship with the biographical elements, and then to a becoming-trans-: a double movement away from gender narrative and toward affective experience - and a specific way of seeing, thinking and enacting visual trans- identity in the world.

In *The (Culture of) Confession Booth* participants were behind walls and were both safe and isolated and they knew what was expected of them and arranged their answers accordingly. In *minor chaos* I gave neither them or myself any kind of footing - they didn't know how to play the game because the rules were not explained - and the rules were opaque even to myself and my collaborators. In what might be the most politically fruitful practice in terms of identity politics and/in performance *Trans-O-Graphia/Dance Me to the End of Love* participants didn't ask for my narrative after this experience: instead of wanting to talk about me, or about Trans identity, they have wanted to talk about themselves and the ways in which they felt provoked, pleasured, confused, and changed.

LIMITATIONS:

My research for this thesis is limited to the use of trans- identity to challenge experiences of identity and subjecthood. While I believe the practice has potential for other applications, I did not put it to work with other types of political theatre/performance meaning making as, for instance, performance artist Cassils does using their transgender body in service of LBGTQ+ issue-based performance, or Nina Arsenault, who utilizes her transgender body specifically to critique cultural notions and standards of femininity. These subject layers in their work make it difficult to read it in terms of what I have been striving to productively disrupt. The affect and effects of their work cannot be separated from the import and clarity of the messages they impart. The subject matter of their work (issues of gender and sexual oppression and violence) is generally clearly stated whereas in the end the only "subject" of this practice research is what is carried by the experience of my body/identity in the space with other bodies/identities.

Likewise, this writing and research does not look into the affects of other queer body-works by artists such as Ron Athey, Dominic Johnson, Franko B, or Julie Tolentino, as the relatively normatively gendered naked queer (and not trans) body does not have the properties to visually signify oscillation between genders or sexualities. It would be interesting to repeat the final practice with normatively gendered bodies and experience the difference that can be felt there. It would also be interesting to explore how performers with non-normatively abled bodies would change this work. The disabled/"Crip" performing body would potentially evoke a similar oscillation as the participants moved in and out of feeling and thought around visual "Crip" identities. However, since the question I was asking was about ways in which these experiences might play with gender identity, the inclusion of "Crip" bodies was beyond the scope of this thesis. Both of these expansions of the experiment could offer rich fields for further exploration and play.

It should be stressed again that I do not mean to imply that the use of the narrative personal as political is no longer necessary. My findings should not be taken as a rejection of other kinds of autobiographical performance. The argument made by many, including Braidotti, Butler and Spivak that identity positions are important is still valid. As has been mentioned, these performances can be important for recognition of stable subjectivities that make for coherent and livable lives within our Western cultures. This research intends to add to the possibilities of identity-based performance, offering another angle from which to build political-personal performance. I offer this experience of productive disruption and becoming-trans- not to replace these traditions of "visibility" but to add another layer to the possibilities for creation, challenge and change. I suspect that all of us, practitioners and publics, are enlivened and enhanced by works that touch us in multiple ways.

There are, of course, specific issues attendant to the practices arising from the fact that I am a white, middle class, trans masculine person doing this work. The hegemonic

positions I occupy (outside of the fact that I (am) trans-) surely make it less controversial and less dangerous for me to engage in this naked and intimate work, than if I were a transmasculine or transfeminine person of colour, if I had a recognizable disability or if was part of any other marginalized social class. While I think the overarching idea of focusing on the experience of difference over that of identity as a strategy would still hold, the relationships between further 'othered' performers and the notions of erotics, haptics and bodies and pleasures, would take on different resonances and have different problematics than those I am qualified to write about.

Additionally, I am struck by the fact that what I feel to be the politically most productive iteration of research has not successfully managed to incorporate any text. While text was not a goal for the project, I am aware of the limitations for the application of these ideas for myself and my interest as a maker/writer as well as for others if doing the "identity visuality" work requires us to be mute. Language is so bounded that in my research all text either ended up devolving to being only about fixed gender and identity or ended up not holding gender and/or identity in its container at all. I am not necessarily a visual only artist and I want to think that this practice methodology does not preclude the use of language. Further research is needed to find where and how language might be able to disrupt identities on an affective level.

IMPLICATIONS

The research has implications for the ongoing and developing use of theatrical performance as political practice. Harnessing the potential in the overarching practice structure and the transing body, my experience and findings appear to support the argument that the trans- identity has a particular set of properties related to and overlapping with, yet distinct from, the Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual identity, a set of properties and potential not yet mined by us as we have followed the primary model of explanatory performance. My research suggests there is also the potential for a

particular area of power available to the identity based transing- performing artist: one in which the knowledge of who/what/how we are is the internal driver for the work, but not the subject matter: We can invite participants to experience a shared world rather than present a window through which to examine our own. When we enter each other's world and are made welcome they become parts of us.

In Closing

Before undertaking this PhD I had spent many years feeling the internal pull and external push towards creating identity-based theatre. I was never driven to make it, but I could not find what it was I would replace it with that would offer the sociopolitical and cultural challenges I wanted to engender. Much of this pull/push has been alleviated by what I found in the course of this research. Over the course of the doing, thinking, reading and writing of this thesis experience and series of practices my work and thinking has shifted. I started in a position of binary opposition to the kinds of autobiographical/identity-based theatre and performance that irked me: I had tired of seeing too many pieces that tell us what to think or feel about identity, our own or others'. My initial reaction was to create a binary refusal of such works but in the course of the PhD I moved away from rejection as the primary goal to a theoretical and embodied understanding of movement itself as that goal.

In positioning my work as I have against the neoliberalizing of identity I recognize that none of us can separate ourselves from the neoliberal capitalist systems we live in and these systems, as flawed as they are, also offer benefits. Rather It is a matter of living as best and as ethically as we can inside this construct and for me as a performance maker this means constantly questioning norms and powers, disallowing whenever possible the ones that damage, breaking open these systems for moments and staging insurrections against these wherever possible. In this thesis I found and staged some of these breaks: in confession when the blur of truth and lies became pleasure; in the

disorienting chaos when there was nothing but indeterminacy; in the haptic moments where we connected without explanation I perhaps opened cracks and flares of possibility that break inculcated ideas of "common sense", the historical and current voices from inside the machine that tell us "There Is No Alternative". If we can experience breaks in places where we previously believed there was no alternative then perhaps we can find -and demand- alternatives to other restrictive, hegemonic ideas.

For me theatre and performance is at its most powerful when it offers audiences the impulse to think and feel about ourselves, our world and the world, not when we are told what to think or how to feel. And while one might argue that there are no "new" stories to be told, I think we need a wider variety of (non-normalizing) stories and forms in identity-based theatre and performance. It is possible and possibly politically productive for some or many of us to stop asking for or demanding a place in the heteronormative world and instead to focus on creating works that do not teach, preach, demand, explain or apologize but rather invite our guests to enter worlds other than the hegemonic and leave them to pleasurably work out their own relationships with/in these worlds. These works are starting to appear: I have felt these kinds of invitations most recently coming from works made by queer people of colour: When I saw Australia's Hot Brown Honey in 2016, a show by a company of First Nations and indigenous women from Australia and New Zealand, I felt invited into a world that was not mine, utterly welcomed, absolutely not catered to, and left to enjoyably work it out on my own; likewise at the end of 2017, Rent Party by Manchester, UK's Black Gold Arts offered a similar invitation. It is no surprise that QPOC are leading the way here and will continue to do so. Through the course of this doctoral study I have come to understand what it is that I want to see and make in the theatre, and these two shows (and I hope my own works) offer it: I want to see and make theatre that opens and welcomes audience participants into a world, 'plane of immanence' or situation that is not part of normative hegemonic culture, and once they have entered, does not try to explain or make comfortable those audience members who are part of the norm, but lets them

and us work it out. Further, in my own work, the worlds I want to invite my audiences into is one of constant transing and radical indeterminacy: up to this point an identity indeterminacy of transing bodies and pleasures. Where else this could and will go is as yet still undetermined.

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Appendices (see also DVD of video and audio files provided)

Stills From *The (Culture of) Confession Booth*

(taken with open doors after the interaction was complete)







Welcome to *The (Culture of) Confession Booth* Experiment

October 4th, 2012

With Lazlo Pearlman

Instructions and Consent Form

The (Culture of) Confession Booth is an experiment in making contact with another person based only on the experience of that moment, a rollercoaster of experience in which the participants choose how much of the very fabric of it is truth, and how much lies. Part two-way confessional, part party game, with a little stripping thrown in for good measure, this one-to-one experiment is a performance, an interaction, a chance to explore an alternative to the coercion of our "Confessional Culture."

So, what are we going to do?

In a few moments I'll invite you into the confession booth. Once ensconced, through the microphone I'll explain to you that, as you are now reading, there will be no visual recording, only the audio will be captured. No one will ever be able to check the veracity of your answers – isn't that a great word, veracity? It sounds so…official. Even scientific… There's no lie detector, no one taking notes… we won't run your voice through a decoder and try to determine how much of what you said was bull – that's up to you – and to me, too.

So, this Culture of Confession we live in – do you believe that telling the truth is always the optimum course of action? In a perfect world, would every statement be 'truthful?' Do we need to describe everything about ourselves in explicit detail? Is that level of information necessary? To who? To anyone? To yourself? To me? Is it important that you know the truth about me, your confessor/confessant?

Inside the booth you can ask me anything you want. And I can ask you. We each decide whether and how much to 'confess,' how much 'truth' to tell, and how many lies. It's also a party game, and the action of the game is that if you think I am lying, you take off an item of clothing. If I think you're lying, I do the same. The game ends when one of us tells the other one that we are naked. Of course, I can't see you and you can't see me. So I'll never know if you are naked. I'll never know if you followed the rules. I'll never know if you lied about everything, or told the truth about everything, or took off all your clothes and kept the game going, or never even unbuttoned one button. And if following the rules means lying, then you may follow the rules and lie, or say you followed the rules when you didn't, which would be a lie and thereby following the rules. Or not. Your choice. I'll never know.

After one of us tells the other one we are naked, and you leave the booth (with your clothes on, please – back in the world of visual 'truth') I hope that before you leave you will take a few minutes to go into the next booth and record how or what you felt or thought about the experience, using the tape recorder that Tiana will hand to you. Just press the red button and speak when you see the red light. Hand it back to Tiana when you have recorded whatever you want to say.

Oh, and don't be afraid if the lights should go off – there is a motion sensor and Tiana is going to dance around in front of it to keep the lights on, but if the music doesn't inspire her for a while we may find ourselves in the dark for a moment or two. Don't worry, the lights will go back on shortly.

Now the consent part:

I have read and understood the nature of the experiment and I consent to the Audio portion of our interaction to be recorded for research purposes only

Print Name: _____ Signature: _____

Transcript of participants' comments for *The (Culture of) Confession Booth*

1. It made me really nervous at first! The notion of confessing is terrifying because I don't like telling the truth about myself - I'm not compelled to do it. When I was given the liberty to lie it was much more fun and easier to enjoy. I wanted more of your confession! It was uncomfortable and fun at the same time – that was a nice combination.

2. This was a real revelation. I was surprised at how hard it is for me to lie, and how hard it is to know when I was lying and not lying. I felt confusion about how to play games while staying in touch. I found myself fragmenting. It was really hard to experience the other person's authenticity – I lose touch of the other person while I am under self scrutiny due to the pressures of performance. Interesting. I know I am an exhibitionist – so this was a confirmation of something I already knew. It was fascinating and weird and uncomfortable and fun!

3. I perform so often that I am unaware of the lying that are a part of the fabric of me. Don't know therefore if they are lies or a version of the truth. I'm a good liar – trained to be. Learned how to have that not sabotage me, but always guilt associated. Nice to be encouraged and not feel guilty about something that is a part of me - that I am a virtuoso of something. There's something about the presence of an absent person and how they become what you want, and you read them accordingly. Not as overtly sexual as it became in the beginning because, maybe that's what I wanted… ok, I'll leave it there.

4. I found it to be quite funny, I found myself enjoying making up lies. I was unclear if I was also supposed to take my clothes off too, but it was kind of a really enjoyable conversation and it made me think that I could lie in the future and have a really good time with it if I ever wanted to just amuse myself on a boring evening.

5. I found it incredibly difficult to lie. So I didn't! It was illuminating everyone's relationship with truth and lies and the complexity of what – you know, is there objective truth in terms of how we perceive things and how we rationalize stuff. Because what I consider maybe the worse thing I've ever done – it's interesting because I've since thought of a number of things that – far more worse for other people, I think. So how do you even – truth can be *so* subjective depending on how you perceive the question, how you are the center of your own perceptual universe, that was interesting., Yeah, I generally think I learned that I generally perceive other people as being honest, and because of my own honesty, which may or may not obviously be happening. I think it reaffirmed

how I live my life in how I choose to be honest or not. It made me very happy about my level of honesty it's quite high really. interesting

6. I was holding the wall constantly throughout the whole interview. I don't feel I was ever forgiven, I didn't reach absolution. However, I did have some very sexualized fantasies as I held the wall and I was taking clothes off very quietly. But I only got as far aas three garments and I'm noit even sure you were aware of that. I was a bit disappointed you only took your waistcoat and your shirt off. And can I just complain about the quality of the curtaining, because I would have liked rubber, thank you. Anyway, it was a very sexualized experiment or experience on my behalf. Thanks for having me. "Hail Mary full of grace…"[participant continued to absolve herself].

7. So it was very interesting actually. It was very – it reminded me a lot of therapy sessions where you are actually focused so much on yourself because you don't see the other person and maybe this way, I found it very difficult to lie. I was like, what's the point to lie since I'm not seeing anyone, I can just say things. Maybe also because of thoughts that I have of […] and how Lazlo's research is associated with me and what interests me, so I found it difficult. But in general, I'm not lying – why – I dunno.

8. That was proper seedy toilet potential thing. And I think that you could have really used the water in the showers. To absolve people of their sins by whooshing the water when you thought someone was lying or not. I really enjoyed talking to you, and I really enjoyed playing to you between a wall – disembodied voice and that's all. Brilliant.

9. I felt like the not seeing you made the intimacy and conversation – that I didn't really want to lie, actually. And as I said to you, lying would be really fun to be in a playful face to face way, but I really enjoyed being given the space to not have to worry about my physicality also being taken in – it's like when you have your eyes shut its easier to listen, so I just kind of didn't want to make that much stuff up – maybe it's because I haven't seen you for a while so a conversation was a pleasure in itself. What else? I enjoyed the laughter and the playfulness, and I thought it was really funny, sometimes I was speaking a lie and I took my own clothes off. That was really funny

10. So, absolutely utterly charming. Lots and lots of fun. Interesting to know who's leading, who's following; the deception of(or?) the truth. So there's like a winding…winding narrative, but what the thrust of the narrative, I don't know, I didn't even know when I *thought* I was in charge asking a question. That whether he lied or told the truth was he in charge and taking it forward and

then is it the lies that creates the most truth or is it the truth that creates the most truth and then what the fuck is truth. So to have all that which would usually be something that I would feel quite unstable and nervous about be so much fun and joyous kind of returns me to the kind of thing you do when you're like 8 and 7 and you go like , "ok, now now now you're the bird and then no no no I'm the bird with the hat on, now but I've got the power of lightening and so you can just go from place to place and there's like an unfolding of ideas. And that it's somehow on the fulcrum of lie and truth make's it an element of danger, so hellishly fun – and charming.

11. I feel like that was a bit of a lost opportunity because of my own caginess. While I find it hard to lie, I also find it hard to think of interesting ways to make the most out of that little game. Good game, but perhaps there are ways to draw things out of people who are less forthcoming that others, like I was.

12. This space reminds me of being really stressed out at school. Where you had to get undressed in front of other people and at a time when people were growing and it was all very awkward. I think I found that experience when you have one on one – which normally I don't enjoy – quite enjoyable. I felt safe, which is probably the first time that that's happened. And that's probably the being in a room and trusting that I'm gonna be safe, and that's something that I wasn't expecting. The idea of one-to-one is more terrifying than the experience of it.

PROCLAMATION OF PRAISE:

This document confirms that you attended the (Culture of) Confession Booth Thursday, October 4th 2012

~~~You are now absolved of any further need to confess~~~

So…What Was The Point?

The (Culture of) Confession Booth is an experiment in making contact with another person based only on the experience of that moment, a rollercoaster of experience in which the participants choose how much of the very fabric of it is truth, and how much lies. Part two-way confessional, part party game, with a little stripping thrown in for good measure, this one-to-one experiment is a performance, an interaction, a chance to explore an alternative to the coercion of our "Confessional Culture.

I could lie – and I might be lying… The idea is to try to create a space in which the need for a 'truth' is destabilized. Both the need to tell it and the need to hear it. My hope is this was a space of enjoyable confusion, a space where everything was brought into question – including and perhaps especially all of the things we believe, we think we understand about speaking 'truth.' The truth, we are told, 'will set us free,' is 'better out than in;' that with enough truth we will understand the world; that there is one unchanging truth about anything, anywhere, anytime. I want to call into question the idea that we have a *RESPONSIBILITY* to tell the truth about ourselves, to 'set the record straight,' to represent our demographic, to be *COUNTED* as whatever we are – our age, gender, sexuality, nationality, religion, income, ability level, IQ, experience, anything, everything. There are ways in which being counted, being 'accounted for' is playing into the hands of political, economic and cultural 'systems,' ways in which accounting for ourselves is creating ourselves performatively – when we name ourselves, label ourselves as 'something,' we activate and repeat all of the culture's definitions of what that 'something' is, and so have that weight layered on and into us. when we make ourselves 'countable' we can be constrained as part of that count, that demographic – we become part of the statistic that governs decisions

made about us. Derrida said secrets could be acts of civil disobedience; secrets – lies – can keep us out of the locus of control. in this lying experiment I hope to give, and to have, an experience of euphoria in not being bound to telling or hearing truths – to create a space where internal rules lose their potency, and where there is nothing replacing them: where, in the space of 'nothing,' of confusion, all options, all paths become open again. That's what I hope happened, anyway. I'd love your feedback, if you have more: lazlopearlman@hotmail.com

~~~No claims are being made as to the veracity of your confessional behaviour~~~
*~~**No one knows** if you really got naked or not~~*

~Go On And Lie~

Thank you!!! Lazlo Ilya Pearlman