

**Seductive Manoeuvres: an analysis of the use of feminist performance strategies
as a means of staging alternative sexualities in two dance theatre works.**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Rhodes University

By
Joni Barnard
June 2010

**Seductive Manoeuvres: an analysis of the use of feminist performance strategies
as a means of staging alternative sexualities in two dance theatre works.**

Abstract

Located within the discipline of Performance Studies, this thesis seeks to validate performance and theatre, specifically dance theatre, as legitimate fields of research and enquiry that can enrich the polemics surrounding discourse, representation, the body and identity. Within this thesis I explore and analyse the creative processes and performance strategies used in two dance theatres works: Acty Tang's *Chaste* (2007) and my own work entitled *Displayed and Framed* (2008) and how these strategies support the staging of alternative sexualities. I argue that the staging of alternative sexualities calls for an alternative approach to the performance strategies utilised in the production of space, the representations of the body and the use of text in both works. Each work offers a particular exploration of gender and sexuality in the attempt to represent alternative identities, alternative bodies and alternative sexualities. In this thesis I identify the endeavour to stage 'otherness' as a feminist endeavour and thus identify the performance strategies utilised in each work as feminist performance strategies. Through my analysis I wish to highlight the ways in which a feminist approach can contribute to and enrich both the staging of and understanding of alternative sexualities. In both *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008), the choreographers of each work are also performers in their own work in an endeavour to explore and represent their own identity. The analysis of my own work requires that I play the multiple roles of choreographer, performer and researcher. In this analysis I provide accounts of my own experiences, processes and struggles of creating *Displayed and Framed* (2008) which are analysed in conjunction with my readings of *Chaste* (2007) and Tang's personal experiences in creating the work. Thus this thesis explores the value of reflection and self reflectivity in the processes of creating performance.

Acknowledgements.

I would like to thank the Rhodes University Dean of Research office and Post Graduate Financial Aid office, as well as the administrators of the Andrew Mellon scholarship and the Jane Osborne scholarship, for their financial support.

Gary Gordon and the staff of the Rhodes University drama department.

My supervisor, Alex Sutherland, for her academic and personal support, input, guidance, compassion... and her immense capacity for patience. Thank you!

Juanita Finestone - Praeg, for never turning me away when I knocked on her door, for her willingness to exchange ideas and for constantly questioning and encouraging me.

Acty Tang, Heike Gehring, Lexi de Coning, Robin Williams and Awelani Moyo for their input and cooperation.

Suzette Engelbrecht, for her editorial input and advice.

Candice Cruse, for her undying love, support and faith in me.

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction and Methodology

Introduction.....	3
Methodological Approach.....	6
Methodology.....	10

Chapter 2: Analytical and Artistic Context

Theatrical and Artistic Context.....	13
Gender and Sexuality in dance theatre.....	17
Background to two works under analysis.....	20
Seductive Manoeuvres.....	23

Chapter 3: Approaching Space.

Displacing space: site - specific dance theatre and the disruption of the <i>male gaze</i>	26
<i>Displayed and Framed</i> (2008).....	29
<i>Chaste</i> (2007).....	30
Displacing space/disrupting the male gaze.....	33

Chapter 4: Questioning Bodies.

Questioning Bodies: Creating a kinaesthetics of homosexuality.....	47
Allowing the body to speak.....	49
Creating a poetic feminine text.....	51
Approaching the self.....	53
(Re)framing the nude.....	54
(Re)presenting the feminine body.....	60
Choreographing desire.....	68
Creating a lesbian chora.....	72

Conclusion	80
-------------------------	----

References	85
-------------------------	----

List of Images

Images One and Two: Joni Barnard, <i>Displayed and Framed</i> (2008)....	Page 30
Images Three and Four: Acty Tang, <i>Chaste</i> (2007).....	Page 31, 32
Image Five: Joni Barnard, Lebo Phakedi, Lexi de Coning.....	Page 42
Images Six and Seven: Robin Williams, Joni Barnard.....	Page 42, 43
Images Eight to Ten: Joni Barnard.....	Page 56.
Image Eleven: Joni Barnard.....	Page 57
Image Twelve: Lexi de Coning, Lebo Phakedi.....	Page 57
Image Thirteen: Robin Williams.....	Page 58
Image Fourteen: Acty Tang, Hieke Gehring.....	Page 61
Image Fifteen: Acty Tang.....	Page 61
Image Sixteen: Acty Tang and Sifiso Majola.....	Page 61
Images Seventeen to Twenty: Robin Williams.....	Page 65
Image Twenty One: Lebo Phakedi, Lexi de Coning, Awelani Moyo....	Page 74
Images Twenty Two to Thirty One: Lexi de Coning, Awelani Moyo..	Page 75, 76, 78

Chapter One: Introduction and Methodology.

Introduction

The focus of this thesis is specifically on how, within a Western framework, contemporary feminist principles can be both applied to, and produced by dance theatre. More specifically, how feminist performance strategies can be used as a means of staging alternative sexualities within two dance theatre works. I use the term 'alternative sexualities' throughout this research as I wish to be consistent with the concept that there are many positions with regards to sexuality. While researching within the framework of heterosexuality/homosexuality, I wish to contest the binary distinctions of either/or and highlight that there is not **one** homosexual position or identity, but a number of homosexual positions and identities, just as there are a number of heterosexual positions and identities. However, it is important to acknowledge that the dominant heterosexual framework of society purports woman's sexuality as passive and submissive. In the context of this research, I represent, analyse and venerate female sexual desire as active and assertive. For a woman to be sexually assertive is for her to assume an alternative position and thus generate 'alternative sexualities'.

As a woman, I have always felt deeply connected to contemporary feminist principles and the creation of a platform where gender power and the commodification of women are rigorously challenged and the empowerment of feminine positions thoroughly endorsed. However, as a lesbian woman, artist, performer and choreographer, who is seeking to find ways in which to represent and empower the 'othered', I found that a large amount of feminist theories are established within a heterosexual framework which cannot account for a homosexual position.

Feminism is in itself a hugely vast and highly contested theoretical domain. Given the historical complexity of feminisms and the unresolved debates within feminist theories, a detailed exposition of the birth, principles and characteristics of feminism are not within the scope of this study. Nonetheless it is important to highlight that countless feminist frameworks both support and sustain a heterosexual structure and the binary oppositions it creates. Thus some feminist principles have the

potential to be counterproductive. For example, radical feminisms¹ almost completely obliterate masculine identity, by aligning it wholly with that of the oppressor, and instead of breaking the power structure of ‘dominant male/submissive female’, radical feminisms seek to reverse the binary and instil a different structure of power: dominant female/submissive male. While I strongly agree that it is critical to challenge the power structures instilled by patriarchy and even more critical to empower female positions, one cannot empower the ‘other’ by creating ‘others’ as the entire endeavour becomes redundant. I strongly believe that the male order denotes a system that is oppressive to both men and woman. However, as a lesbian woman, issues concerning female positions resonate more strongly with me.

In her attempt to pursue a feminist endeavour that resists a heterosexual framework, Judith Butler claims that:

the binary between ‘men’ and ‘women’ seemed not only to be a constant presupposition within feminist work, but was elevated to the theological status of the “irrefutable” within some French Feminism. The implicit compulsory presumption of heterosexuality supported the normativity and irreversibility of that binary and posited relations of complementarity or asymmetry between its terms in ways that only shored up, without marking, the heterosexist assumptions of the paradigm. As I wrote against such moves, I meant to open up another possibility for feminist thought, one that would overcome its complicity in heterosexist presuppositions, and mark an alliance with lesbian and gay struggles. That the work was taken as a queer departure from feminism signalled to me how deeply identified feminism is with those very heterosexist assumptions (Butler, 1997:2)².

Butler’s argument struck a cord in me and thus I was moved to align this study with contemporary feminist theories. Contemporary feminist theories resonate strongly with me because these theories diverge from a narrow view of ‘gender’, ‘race’ and ‘woman’ which is based on an either/or system of classification: a vehement binary approach of man/woman, white/black, dominant/submissive. This binary approach is supported by and proliferates heteronormative systems of representation. The limited lens of first wave and second wave feminist theories cannot account for alternative

¹The radical feminist theorists referred to are ones such as Shulamith Firestone (1970), Catherine Mackinnon (1989) and Andrea Dworkin (1987).

² Butler’s argument highlights a tension between feminism and queer theory, which will be further discussed in Chapter Two.

positions with regards to sexual identity. Contemporary feminist theories approach issues of gender, race and power from a more holistic stance in an attempt to engage with feminist based identity politics in a collective and inclusive manner. This approach diverges from previous forms of feminist theories and notions of identity politics that are derived from these theories. Contemporary feminisms³ provide a theoretical platform for the exploration and analysis of alternative sexualities.

Identifying myself as a feminist, as a woman and as a homosexual woman, issues of gender and sexual difference are both primary and fundamental to my everyday context. In believing that the personal is political, I acknowledge that the polemics of our time are those of gender and sexual difference. It is feminisms' endeavour to challenge gender and sexual inequality that excites me. In the attempt to challenge the norm feminist theories offer a platform for the theorisation and representation of alternative positions and alternative identities. My central concern in this thesis is how a representation of alternative sexualities in dance theatre calls for the utilisation of alternative performance strategies, which I identify as feminist performance strategies. In representing alternative sexualities, both *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) employ a homosexual subject matter. The validation of a study of homosexual representation to a study of dance theatre poses some pertinent questions:

What happens to the considerations of queer theory and to gay and lesbian studies when a dancing body takes centre stage? What happens to the writing of dance history and criticism when issues of sexuality and sexual identity become central? What do we see that we didn't see before? What questions do we ask that were heretofore unspeakable, unnameable, or unthinkable? What analytical tools will we need to formulate these questions and to develop provisional answers? In what ways might these initiations reshape our readings of past histories and give rise to new ones? (Desmond, 2001:1).

The analysis of the use of feminist performance strategies in *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) as a means of staging sexualities is an analysis born from such inquiries. As my analysis focuses on the performance strategies utilised in the above mentioned works, so I have located this research within the discipline of Performance Studies.

³The contemporary feminist theorist that I refer to include Judith Butler (1991), Elizabeth Weed (1997), Gayle Rubin (2003) and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1991).

Methodological Approach

The world no longer appeared as a book to be read, but as a performance to participate in (Schechner 2002: 19).

Performance Studies emerges at the meeting of ideas drawn from social scientific disciplines, including sociology, anthropology and psychology. These share the common notion that performance is a mode of communication that occurs within everyday life: “that people in groups - whether of two, three or dozens - in some ways ‘ritualize’ their behaviours; ‘present’ themselves rather than just be” (Schechner 1973:3). Consequently Performance Studies utilises the idea of performance as both the primary analytical concept as well as the object of inquiry. Performance Studies acknowledges the increasing interdisciplinary and intertextual nature of both performance practice and the theorised study of performance.

In acknowledging performance practice, so Performance Studies acknowledges the strategies, the practical elements, utilised in creating a performance. Within my analysis of *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) I focus on each choreographer’s strategies and choices made with specific focus on the construction of performance *space* and the physical representations of *gender and desire*. In doing so this analysis focuses on the notion of reflection and how the self reflexivity of the artists, choreographers and performers provides specific insight into and understandings of the processes of creating performance. Thus this thesis combines theory, practice and personal experience in an attempt to gain insight into the process/s of staging alternative sexualities.

Performance Studies is inherently interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary and does not support the discovery of one primary performance theory. It is in constant search of new theories that offer innovative and different ways of viewing and interpreting performance. Performance Studies is theory; “it is the myriad conceptual tools used to ‘see’ performance” (Auslander, 2008: 1). In the context of this research, I will draw specifically on Judith Butler’s (1990) theory of *gender performativity* and Jean Baudrillard’s (1990) notion of *seduction* in order to frame the analysis of *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008). In welcoming theoretical and intellectual influence from varying disciplines, Performance Studies resists hierarchies of binary divisions, and their subsequent delegations of power, and purports a change in the

production and circulation of knowledge, promoting different modes of thinking and knowing.

In embracing different modes of thinking, Performance Studies challenges the organisation of knowledge within the academy. The dominant mode of thinking within the academy is that of objective knowledge that is fortified in text: Western systems of knowledge that are “anchored in paradigm and secured in print” (Conquergood, 1998:312). The problem lies not in valuing textual modes of thought, but in valuing it to the exclusion of any other mode of thinking. It is the supremacy of the text, of science and reason that excludes and undervalues other modes of knowledge. This supremacy represses a knowing that is embodied; that is co-experienced, communicated through bodies instead of words, through delicately nuanced gestures, grounded in the intimate, in the visceral: knowledge that is experiential.

Employing the body as the primary medium of expression and communication, dance promotes the production of an experiential knowledge, one that is not represented and understood in words, but created and understood corporeally: in the body. Dance is an *embodied performative art* that produces and validates a corporeal mode of knowing. In creating this knowledge, dance creates its own language. Within the context of dance theatre and choreography the term ‘language’ is used to refer to the movements, gestures, images, and mood created with the body. Creating a dance language, that exists outside of the linguistic, generates a mode of communication that promotes a physical awareness and a physical intelligence. A mode of communication that manifests in, through, and between bodies. This knowledge is created in an immediate experience that cannot be reproduced in words. So dance theatre acknowledges the inadequacy of language to represent immediate experience and subsequently validates the experiential as a mode of knowing. Thus the principles of enquiry proposed by Performance Studies correspond with, and are implicit within, a study of Dance Theatre.

Under the supremacy of the text, experiential knowledge is eliminated as a valid form of knowledge because it exists as active bodies of meaning outside the dominion of the legible: it is a knowledge that cannot be spelled out, boxed, or binarised. In being marginalised, these systems of knowledge lack representation within the academy and within culture at large: “These are the ‘non-serious’ ways of knowing that dominant culture neglects, excludes, represses, or simply fails to

recognise” (Conquergood, 1998: 312). In validating and seeking to include experiential knowledge within the academy and within culture, Performance Studies challenges and undermines the hegemony of existing discourses. Consequently Performance Studies offers different modes of thought that are solicitous towards the experiences of those who have been marginalised and repressed:

Performance Studies is sympathetic to the avant-garde, the marginal, the offbeat, the minoritarian, the subversive, the twisted, the queer, people of colour, and the formerly colonised (Schechner, 2002:19).

Thus the realm of performance offers a platform for the validation of experiential knowledge and the representation of the repressed. In this study, this has particular relevance due to the nature of the works under discussion. In employing a homosexual subject matter, both *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) challenge dominant discourses surrounding sex, gender and sexuality and endeavour to represent the unrepresented, giving voice to the marginalised and repressed.

Performance Studies promotes a de-emphasising of literary text based criticism in favour of performance based analysis. It seeks to develop the relationships between analysis and action; paradigms and practices, theory and theatricality, critical reflection and creative accomplishment (Conquergood, 1998: 318). The nature of such developments embraces a definite shift of focus from the finished cultural *product* to the insistence and endorsement of the *process*. This endorsement births the emergence of praxis: the active meditation of theory and practice and the validation of practice and/or practice led research.

Performance Studies encourages a dialogue between *process* and *product* and does not assume that one is of more importance than the other. Performance Studies highlights the question of *how*, not only *what*, and asserts the importance of experiential knowledge and thus of self reflexivity: the focus shifts from the objective to the subjective and the experience of the researcher becomes crucial to the research. Dance Theatre and performance constitute a ‘live act’, experienced by those who perform and those who observe. So the notion of self-reflexivity becomes integral to the processes of understanding *what* is presented and *how* and *why* it is presented. In the study of my own work entitled *Displayed and Framed* (2008) the multiple roles I engage in as choreographer, performer and researcher of this work require a high level

of reflexivity. Thus my task as a Performance Studies researcher is to “articulate the ‘deep structure’ of meaning disclosed by instances of performance and the processual means of its coming to expression” (Shepherd & Wallis, 2004: 102).

Utilising a Performance Studies approach the research of this paper focuses on my analysis of the feminist⁴ performance strategies utilised in two contemporary dance theatre performances, Acty Tang’s *Chaste* (2007) and my own work entitled *Displayed and Framed* (2008), and the means by which these strategies can provide a reading of alternative sexualities within the two works. In analysing feminist performance strategies, this research supports the assertion, empowerment and production of feminist modes of thought and knowledge. Thus a feminist approach to dance analysis is employed within this study.

Daly (1991) argues that two decades after the 1960’s and 1970’s burst of social and academic feminisms, namely “Women’s Lib”, both feminist theories and the framework for feminist analysis of the arts has changed radically. With the turn of the century, this change is still in process. Today feminist analysis of the arts incorporates the use of semiotics into its discourse. Semiotics is the theorisation of the study of the systems of signs and their symbolic signification, the theory of sign and sign use. The study of semiotics is based on the notion that human culture and human interaction consists of the production, exchange and interpretation of signs in order to create meaning:

The core of semiotic theory is the definition of the factors involved in the permanent practice of sign making and interpreting, and the development of conceptual tools that help us to grasp that process as it goes on in various arenas of cultural activity (Bal & Bryson, 1991:174).

Theatre is one such arena, creating its own language, its own system of signs and symbols and thus the theory of semiotics has been directly applied to an analysis of theatre. The theory of theatre as a sign system emerged through the development of the notion that everything on stage is a sign:

⁴ My understanding of feminisms and feminine as well as the employment of a feminist approach to the analysis of dance theatre will be more acutely discussed in Chapter Two.

That everything within the theatrical frame is a sign, that within that frame, each of these signs acquires significance *as* a sign that it does not have in everyday life (Knowles, 2004: 16).

The signs and significations produced by theatre can be understood as a “materialist semiotics” (Knowles, 2004: 9). That is to say that, within the realm of theatre and performance, it must be highlighted that theatre semiotics has developed away from linguistic understandings of semiotic systems, that theatre semiotics explores the iconic relationship between theatre and the material life it represents (Knowles, 2004).

Theatre semiotics looks at “how artists create visual, aural, and kinetic images of a kind that can be recognised, within a culture, as meaning something” (Preston-Dunlop & Sanchez-Coleburg, 2001:101). Within the context of this research and my adoption of a feminist approach to dance analysis, the theory of semiotics is pivotal to the ways in which feminism understands gender to be a system of socially constructed signs that signify either masculine or feminine and the ways in which dance theatre utilises, incorporates and critiques these signs. In the employment of homosexual subject matter, both *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) challenge the male/female unit and the masculine/feminine dichotomy it produces. In doing so, gender, gendered spaces and gender signs are explored and subverted in both works in order to challenge the binary construction of gender instilled by heterosexuality. In analysing the use of feminist performance strategies, so this study analyses the means by which the materialistic semiotics created within *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) can come to be read as representing alternative sexualities.

Methodology

An analysis of performances strategies thus involves an analysis of the visual, aural and kinaesthetic images that are embodied in performance praxis. This analysis does not only investigate the approach and methods of this creation, but the space in which this creation takes place: performance strategies refer not only to *what* is created, but *how* and *where* it is created. This study will involve an examination of video footage of both works in order to engage critically with the visual, aural and kinetic images that materialise in the work. While acknowledging that a *performance* cannot exist without an *audience*, the principal goal of this research is to investigate

the creative processes that manifest in the expression of the works and how these strategies are capable of providing representations of alternative sexualities.

In my analysis of *Chaste* (2007), two interviews conducted in June 2008 and September 2009 with the choreographer, Acty Tang, are also included and provide an appreciation of the conceptual choreographic strategies that are employed within the work. Interviews conducted with the performers of both *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) in September and November 2009, as well as April 2010, are included in this research and provide first hand accounts of the experience of the performances under discussion.

As aforementioned, Performance Studies advocates the validation of experiential knowledge and that of praxis. Investigations and analyses of one's own work engage specifically with the notion of the subjective process of creating and integrating analysis: action, theory and theatricality, critical reflection and creative accomplishment (Conquergood, 1998). In my analysis of *Displayed and Framed* (2008) I draw from my own experiences as the choreographer of the work and as a performer within the work. I make reference to a journal that I kept for the duration of the rehearsal period of *Displayed and Framed* (2008). Journals, such as this one, provide direct documentation of a process and are utilised as a self-reflective device. In this journal I documented the rehearsal process and the strategies I used in creating a work that seeks to represent a homosexual identity. Thus the journal reflects my own ideas of gender and sexuality as well as the choreographic and theatrical devices I used in order to stage these notions. A dance theatre work is always in a complex process of becoming, of being embodied, and thus the journal plots my journey of creation and my reflections on this journey. Journals such as these are discernibly valuable as they provide a source of information that is depicted through a subjective and authorial voice. The information gathered in a self-reflexive journal can locate a layering of different reflexivities. This journal supports and facilitates the multiple roles I assume as performer, choreographer and researcher as it allows an interplay of these roles: for example between a first person descriptive voice and a more distanced theoretical reflective voice. This interplay of multiple roles is pivotal in the structure of praxis. This information is examined in order to articulate the conceptual choreographic strategies that are employed within my work. These readings are informed by an understanding of the constructed nature of discourse, identity, the body, and texts which resonate with ideas of feminism and feminist theory.

The following section explores the relationship between feminism and homosexual identity and the tension between feminist theory and queer theory. The conclusions drawn from this exploration provide the theatrical and artistic context of this research.

Chapter Two: Analytical and Artistic Context.

Theatrical and Artistic Context

Nowhere can it be assumed that we can speak outside of a gendered framework
(Bosch, 2006: 25).

In researching as well as in writing I am constantly aware that to speak of *woman* and *man*, of the *feminine* and the *masculine*, of the *homosexual* and *heterosexual* is to engage in a complex set of ideologies caught up in age old determinations. It is these determinations that establish systems of difference which subsequently dictate who has access to power and who is excluded from it. Within the context of phallogentric heterosexual Western culture, power is in the realm of the masculine and the power of the feminine is evaded or undermined: the male dominates at the exclusion of the female. As power and knowledge directly imply one another, to challenge systems of power is to subsequently challenge dominant modes of knowledge:

There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not constitute at the same time power relations (Foucault, 1977: 128-129).

In analysing the feminist performance strategies utilised in two dance theatre works, this research supports the assertion of and empowerment of the feminine⁵ and the production of feminist modes of thought and knowledge.

In employing a feminist approach to dance analysis, I wish to highlight that dance theatre does not only represent given gender and sexual identities or reproduce existing ideologies of masculinity and femininity, but participates in the questioning of and the construction of these identities. In her endorsement of feminist approaches to dance analysis, Daly (1991:2) argues that as a field that “perpetuates some of our culture’s most potent symbols of femininity, Western theatrical dance provides feminist analysis with it’s potentially richest material.” Similarly, Carter (1996:2)

⁵ I acknowledge *feminine* as a significantly loaded term. Within a heterosexual framework, *feminine* is used to describe that which is *female* and associated with *woman*. Within this study, *feminine* is used in its traditional sense, but is simultaneously challenged as a fixed and rigid term. If that which is *masculine* constitutes the norm, then *feminine*, in my understanding of the term, refers to that which is othered or made aberrant by society and societal norms. Subsequently this study challenges the binary construction of heterosexuality and in so doing aims to challenge the essentialist idea that the *feminine* is limited to that category of *woman* and the *masculine* to the category of *man*.

argues that a feminist approach to dance analysis can appreciate the ways in which ideas of femininity are formed. It also offers “in aspects of methodology, if not motivation, an understanding of how gender in all its cultural manifestations and stereotypes is produced and circulated by dance.” Thus dance theatre is “a crucial arena for the contestation of the social arrangement of gender” and, I would add, sexuality (Wolff, 1990:1).

To adopt a feminist approach to the analysis of two dance works that employ a homosexual subject matter, is to develop a relationship between feminist and queer theories. In attempting to represent the ‘othered’, the so called ‘queer’, you can imagine how pleased I was when I discovered the transgressive territory of Queer Theory. Here was a platform that offered a theoretical position for the lost, the unheard and the repressed. *Queer* is a term strongly associated with the offensive naming of homosexuals: “thirty years ago, maybe even twenty or fifteen, ‘queer’ was considered as a profoundly frightening, derogatory and injurious term” (Butler & Salih, 2004: 351). With the recent development of queer theory, queer has been used as part of an affirmative practice that transforms queer stigmatisation into something more celebratory. Queer theory explores the polemics surrounding queer identity and seeks to create a queer discourse. Queer theory has no point of reference in the theorisation of queer identity because queer identity is considered taboo within Western phallogentric culture and homosexual behaviour categorised as deviant and sinful. That is to say that Western phallogentric culture often stereotypes gay men as highly effeminate philandering AIDS propagators and lesbians, if such a thing even exists, as butch biker dykes trying to be men. Thus the nature of queer identity is one that is in a constant state of flux, attempting to discover itself outside the derogatory perceptions of social norms in order to formulate its own history, its own culture.

Consequently queer theory is transgressive in nature. In resisting the norm, queer theory questions and disrupts dominant notions of gender and sexuality as well as contesting binary notions of masculinity and femininity that are purported by, and work to sustain, ‘heteronormativity’. The binary view of woman and man, of gender, gender roles and sexual differentiation are created within the dominant discourse of heteronormativity, which can be defined as “the institutions, modes of understanding, norms and discourses that treat heterosexuality as natural to humanity” (Warner, 1991:27). It is heteronormativity that renders both the queer and the feminine as subordinate.

Feminist theories are set against the dominant norm of heteronormativity and the means by which the feminine is defined by the masculine. Thus feminist theories seek to challenge the stereotyping of both woman and the feminine in order to discover alternative readings, versions, representations and understandings of feminine positions. Thus feminist theories and queer theory are closely connected because they share common concerns. Weed (1997) argues that when feminism meets queer theory no introduction seems necessary as both fields are

interdisciplinary modes of inquiry [and] both constitute themselves in critical relation to a set of hegemonic social and cultural formations. Indeed, the two are connected not only by commonalities but by affiliations (Weed, 1997: vii).

While both feminist and queer theory have acknowledged this relationship, queer theory highlighting its intellectual debts to feminist theories and feminist theories recognising the influence of queer theory (Weed, 1997), it would be naïve to assume, as articulated by Butler earlier, that these two modes and movements are compatible merely because they correlate. Many feminist theorists critique queer theory for its representation of feminism and its separatist view of gender and sexuality.

One of the principle arguments of queer theory is that notions of sex and sexuality cannot be contained by the category of gender. It is this argument that causes a rupture between feminist theory and queer theory for it assumes that issues of gender are situated within feminist theory and issues of sex and sexuality are positioned elsewhere. This may be true of radical feminism that is heterosexist in its vehement hatred towards men and thus works to maintain binary understandings of men and women as well as sexuality. Radical feminism cannot account for queer identity because its very nature negates any attempt at transgression.

However, many feminists reject radical feminism and it is a truism within feminist theory today that there are many feminisms (Hollidge & Tompkins, 2000: 5). I wish to engage with a contemporary feminism that contests binary modes of thought and representation and endeavours to find alternative understandings of gender and sexuality that induce “a space beyond gender difference [...] where the evils of sexual stereotyping and gender differentiation might be transcended” (Whitford, 1991: 128).

Thus I wish to engage with feminist understandings that include both feminine and masculine identity.

While feminism maintains that sexual identity is conditioned on gender identity, gender is no longer understood as a static binary and thus sexuality is rendered as fluid. Thus issues of sex and sexuality are equally fundamental to feminist theory as they are to queer theory.

Queer theory has been further critiqued for its failure to account for issues of non-heteronormativity to women and subsequently the evasion of lesbian identity and experience. Many feminist theorists are of the opinion that “most queer theory is male homosexual theory in disguise” (Feuer, 2001: 385). As I plunged into the pool of queer theory and dance scholarship and all the promises it held, I was equally disappointed and kept asking myself: Where are the women? A vast amount of research has been done in order to account for a male homosexual position and the ways in which choreographers stage male homosexuality. But where are the lesbian voices hollering their opinions? Where are the vast examples of lesbian representation in dance theatre? Where is the account of the many ways in which choreographers explore the complex task of staging lesbian identity and desire? In utilising queer theory as a means to theorise representations of homosexuality within dance theatre, Desmond (2001: 17) argues that “once again lesbians would be rendered invisible both on stage and now in scholarly discourse”. In the transgressive realm of the queer, the masculine continues to dominate at the subordination of the feminine.

My understanding of the term queer is one that refers to any minority group that is ‘othered’ by virtue of their sexuality and thus considered aberrant by society. However, many homosexuals reject ‘queer’ as a term and queer theory as a means of theorising their identity and position in society. While I disagree with a number of its characteristics, I do not wish to reject queer theory. On the contrary, as previously mentioned, I wish to develop a relationship between feminist and queer theory. In incorporating queer theory into this study I endeavour to account for a lesbian and feminist position. The point of departure that I wish to take in this study is one that views gender, sex and sexuality as intrinsically linked. Both *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) highlight this relationship by first exploring notions of gender and subsequently exploring notions of sexuality, thus using gender as a means to explore sexuality.

Gender and sexuality in dance theatre

Gender is the most rigid source of social differentiation in its constructions of femininity and masculinity. It is important to highlight that while sexuality is constituted by gender, sex (as biological) is neither constituted by nor constitutes gender. Sex is the anatomical physiological characteristics which signify biological femaleness and maleness whereas gender is socially constructed notions of femininity and masculinity (Jackson & Scott, 2002). Thus gender is not intrinsic to the human subject, but is a notion that is acquired: gender is not an innate embodied quality but a rehearsed, routine, methodical and repeated act which becomes embodied through this repetition. Thus gender is something that is done, enacted. If the subject does not ‘do’ their gender properly, as society dictates, they fall under discrimination and ridicule: “the doing of gender is undertaken by women and men where competence as members of society are hostage to its production” (West & Zimmerman, 1991: 42). Gender is embedded in social institutions and social practices and dictates the ways in which men and women function in society and interact with each other. All aspects of social life are gendered.

The world we inhabit is always already ordered by gender, yet gender is also embodied and lived by men and women [...] and is experienced is central to individual identities (Jackson & Scott, 2002: 1-2).

The world we inhabit is dominated by heteronormativity, and thus the world is ordered by a binary understanding of gender, gender roles and gender power. In Western thought, gender, sex and sexuality exist in relation to each other. Notions of sexuality and desire are determined by notions of gender: there is a definite heteronormative presumption that men must desire woman and woman must desire to be desired by men⁶. Thus gender becomes a trap that confines notions of sexuality to binary categories of gender. In attempting to challenge heteronormative discourses, it is essential to subvert binary views of gender in order to explore alternative sexualities. The binary definitions of woman and man confine femininity to the

⁶ This heteronormative presumption works to domesticate desire and thus heterosexual desire and sexuality become the social norm. As a norm, heterosexuality is unquestionably perpetuated. The domestication of desire thus works to repress alternative sexualities and homosexuality. Identifying as a homosexual involves a process of ‘coming out’ which implies a process of extricating oneself from preconceived and domesticated notions of desire and sexuality. This highlights the notion that heterosexual assumptions of gender and sexuality trap and repress alternative identities.

category of woman and masculinity to the category of man. As the masculine dominates, so woman and the feminine are determinedly subordinate. As gender is embodied, so the subordination of woman is equated with concerns of her body and the subordination of femininity with that of the feminine body.

Gender is a bodily expression of identity and a notion constructed on the body, on its movements and reactions: the manner in which you move, walk, talk, gesticulate, sit or cross your legs communicates your gender. Gender and sexuality are notions that orientate the body (Howson, 2005): in creating an identity, we speak of gender and sexual orientations which materialise within the body and are expressed through the physical. Similarly sexuality is a bodily expression and sex is a physical act.

Dance, gender and sexuality are intrinsically linked through their shared epistemological emphasis on the physical body, its processes of representation, of expression, of being and becoming. As aforementioned, dance is an embodied performative art which focuses on the body as the locus of communication and as a tool of expression. The assertion of the physical emphasises the processes of a corporeal mode of knowing, a knowing that is made in the flesh, embodied and experiential. Gender and sexuality exist within the corporeal. Corporeality declares a turn towards the body, to experience and subjectivity and thus to “theory that privileges the theme of sexual difference as the centrepiece of feminist scholarship” (Howson, 2005:99).

As a form of material symbolic bodily practice, dance theatre provides a “privileged arena for the body’s enactment of sexual semiotics” (Desmond, 2001:3) as the body becomes the site upon which social ideals of gender and sexuality can be placed⁷. In her call to make the *invisible visible*, Desmond (2001) argues that there is a lack of engagement between lesbian/gay studies, queer theory and dance studies. Dance, she argues, is strongly connected with the idea of the spectacle, of placing bodies on display. She argues that

dance lets us look at bodies for pleasure, indeed, it demands that we do. This has the potential to link bodies with desire and dancing with the visible manifestation or elicitation of desire (Desmond, 2001: 5).

⁷The processes of the body in performance and the body’s enactment of sexual semiotics will be further discussed in Chapter Four.

As desire is a key signifier of sexuality, so a physical manifestation of desire becomes a representation of sexuality. Thus dance, as Desmond argues, has the potential to interrogate and explore alternative notions of desire, sexuality and identity and thus challenge the dominant discourse of heteronormativity.

Thus the physical representations of gender and desire within *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) become crucial in the staging of alternative sexualities and identities. In my analysis of *Chaste* (2007), I explore the ways in which Tang utilises the feminine position as a means of exploring and accepting a form of masculinity that exists outside of the patriarchal and masculine order. As aforementioned, a large amount of research has been done with regards to male homosexuality in dance theatre, and again we have to ask, where are the women and more specifically, where are the lesbian women as scholars, performers and choreographers?

Within Western phallogentrism, lesbian identity and representation is unspeakable, unnameable or unthinkable.

There are a vast number of ways in which lesbianism in particular is understood as precisely that which cannot and dare not *be*...Here oppression works through the production of a domain of unthinkability and unnameability. Lesbianism is not explicitly prohibited in part because it has not even made its way into the thinkable, the imaginable... How then to be a lesbian in a political context in which the lesbian does not exist? (Butler, 1991: 351).

Displayed and Framed (2008) is a piece that constitutes the exploration, representation and celebration of lesbian identity and feminine sexuality. In representing lesbian identity, this piece challenges heteronormative views of women and women's sexuality and becomes an occasion that provides a space in which the lesbian and lesbian identity can be represented and validated. In analysing the feminist performance strategies utilised in *Displayed and Framed* (2008) I wish to analyse and account for a feminine and lesbian representation in dance theatre. Within my analysis of *Chaste* (2007) I wish to explore the ways in which a male choreographer can represent the feminine as well as utilise a feminine position as a means of exploring a masculinity that exists outside the framework of phallogentric heteronormativity.

Background to the two works under analysis

In employing a homosexual subject matter *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008), are part of a wider context of South African dance and performance works that explore homosexual identity, namely Gregory Maqoma's *Miss Thandi* (2002), Pj Sabbagha's *Petra* (2005), Athena Mazarakis's *Coming To* (2007) as well as the work of performance artist Steven Cohen, such as *Faggot* (1998), *Tradition* (1999) and *Limping into the African Renaissance* (2000). Again the issue of the lack of lesbian representation in dance theatre must be highlighted. Within this list of choreographers, Mazarakis is the only woman. Again I am compelled to ask where are the lesbian women as scholars, artists, performers and choreographers?

In exploring homosexual identity, the above mentioned choreographers, performers and works interrogate the traditional binary notions of gender and sexuality, instilled by compulsory heteronormativity, by representing the unrepresented, by giving voice to the silenced and expressing that which is repressed and hidden, by offering alternatives to that which is considered as the norm and challenging existing taboos surrounding gender and homosexuality.

Having won the 2006 Standard Bank Young Artist of the year award for dance and choreography, Acty Tang was commissioned to create a work for the following year. *Chaste* (2007) is the dance theatre piece that was created under this commission. At the 2007 National Arts Festival in Grahamstown, *Chaste* (2007) was performed in the recess of the Rhodes University Theatre, in what is known as 'backstage'. *Chaste* (2007) is a reworking and (re)presentation of Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*⁸. The role of Salomé is portrayed by multiple performers, one of which is Tang. In portraying Salomé, a role written for and conventionally played by a woman, Tang questions and explores representations of 'woman' and of the feminine and inverts Salomé's desire for the prophet Jokanaan into one of homosexual desire.

⁸Oscar Wilde's *Salomé* was originally written in 1891 in French, and subsequently published in English three years later. The play is a tragedy that depicts the biblical story of Salomé, the stepdaughter of treacherous Herod Antipus. In the play, Herod has an overtly affectionate eye for Salomé and continuously encourages and asks her to dance for him. Salomé is not interested in Herod's advances. Rather she is intrigued by the prophet Iokanaan/Jokanaan (John the Baptist) whom Herod has imprisoned. Salomé falls in love with Iokanaan and as a result, Herod has the prophet beheaded. To Herod's disgust and to Herodias' (Salomé's mother) delight, Salomé requests the head of Iokanaan on a silver platter. Herod states that he will oblige her request if she dances the 'Dance of the Seven Veils' for him. Salomé dances for Herod and as she receives the head of the prophet, she kisses Iokanaan. Herod is mortified at Salomé's behaviour and commands his guards to kill her.

As part of the 2008 Theatre in Motion program hosted by Rhodes University Drama Department, *Displayed and Framed* (2008) was performed in the Green Gallery in the Albany Natural History Museum. This piece formed part of my final practical submission for my Masters coursework. *Displayed and Framed* (2008) is a work that explores notions of female nudity and the displaying and framing of the feminine body and the feminine homosexual body. Performed in the recess of a theatre and in a gallery space, both *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) utilise unconventional performance spaces. In doing so, both works become *site-specific* works: works that are not performed in established conventional theatre spaces. Thus *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) invert conventional understandings of dance and performance through the utilisation of space. In challenging traditional notions of what constitutes the feminine and in employing a homosexual subject matter, *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) allow for a reading of feminine performance strategies and invert conventional understandings of gender and sexuality and the homosexual body. Both works engage in a particular understanding of the notion of the feminine and employ similar performance strategies. Therefore I believe that these two works can be usefully analysed along side one another.

Within the analysis of dance theatre, it is logically impossible to separate an analysis of space from the visual, aural or kinaesthetic images created in the work, that is to say from representations of the body and the use of text, as these elements constantly influence, interact and intertwine with each other. As Carter (1996: 46-47) notes:

Whilst it is in one sense not logically possible to consider the artistic product outside the contextual framework of its production, performance [...] analysis of the separate components of the dance work can be considered in order to illuminate the totality. It must be stressed that, as with any analytical project, this apparently atomistic approach serves to enhance, not destroy, the holistic experience. It is the interrelationship of these components in space and through time which constitutes the dance itself.

The following section provides an introduction to a particular notion of seduction, how this notion is linked to a feminine economy and feminist strategies and how it operates within the framework of performance. Subsequently I will analyse the

specific employment of seduction within the performance strategies of *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) with regards to the production of space, the physical representations of gender and desire and the construction and use of text.

Seductive Manoeuvres

The notion of seduction has continuously been located within the framework of sex and sexuality: to seduce is to sexually entice, to lead on, to tempt. Claid (2006) argues that in Western culture seduction has signified

a variety of elements relevant to sexual desire without being the sexual act itself. It has included flirtation, temptation, artifice, superficiality, allure, capture (Claid, 2006:7).

Thus seduction relies on an element of uncertainty, on the enticement of the unfamiliar and the promise of the unknown. Seduction, within Western culture, has been traditionally associated with the term ‘to lead astray’, and thus with deviant characteristics. ‘Deviant’ in this sense does not necessarily refer to that which is bad or evil, but that which is atypical and abnormal, for the power of seduction lies in the unknown: the seducer entices their object of desire to be drawn to the unknown, to alternative states or positions. This becomes particularly relevant in the staging of alternative sexualities, sexualities that have been labelled as deviant, atypical and abnormal. In aligning the notion of seduction to an analysis of *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) I will draw specifically from Emilyn Claid’s (2006) notion of *seductive ambiguity* in dance, and Jean Baudrillard’s (1990) notion of *seduction*.

It is important to highlight that seduction is a verb, an exchange that takes place between two parties. Claid (2006) aligns this exchange with that which takes place between performer and spectator, what she describes as one of ‘ambiguous and seductive tension’.

This moment, just as the performance begins, is a fraction of time that expands and suspends, allowing performers and spectators to experience the fully alive action of performing and watching [...] For there, in the meeting between the two, between the looking out and looking in, is the ambiguous and seductive tension of performance presence - the moment of engagement - that enlivens performer-spectator relations. Performing presence is not fixed to either body but is sparked by both. It is something intangible, where receiving and giving is mixed up, thrown back and forth, and moves in the gap between performer and spectator, enacted by one another. Performing presence refuses to be fixed. It is always becoming something else (Claid, 2006: 2-3).

Seduction is ultimately structured upon the question of desire as it is desire that seduction arouses. The seductive tension that Claid (2006) describes is one that is induced by this arousal. As a performer, you rely on the strategy of seduction as your desire, in certain instances, is to maintain the spectator's engagement. If this manoeuvre is successful then the spectator too will be seduced by the desire to watch, to know, to see the outcome. It is this interaction that creates performance and it is performing presence that allows for moments of seduction to occur.

Performing presence is in a constant state of flux and thus does not allow for a fixed and decisive meaning. As a result, performing presence generates ambiguity. The ambiguous is that which is uncertain. Without one fixed meaning, everything becomes uncertain, but to say there is no one fixed meaning is not to say that there is no meaning at all. Rather, there is the possibility for multiple meanings. In the attempt to challenge gender binaries and offer multiple options with regard to gender and sexuality, both feminist and queer dance culture thrive on a multiplicity of meanings in performance (Claid, 2006).

In her theorisation of seductive ambiguity, Claid (2006) draws directly from the work of Jean Baudrillard (1990). To relate seduction to the notion of feminist performance strategies, I will now turn to Baudrillard's (1990) notion of seduction. Jean Baudrillard's notion of seduction is one that purports the employment of feminine strategies in order to disrupt the dominant masculine order. Thus his notion of seduction can be directly applied to the employment of feminist performance strategies and subsequently to the creation of feminine sexuality and alternative sexualities.

Baudrillard argues that the dominance of a masculine libido cannot be denied and societal structures which hold the masculine as dominant cannot be overturned without ceasing to exist.

There is but one sexuality, one libido and it is masculine [...] there is no use dreaming of some non-phallic, unlocked, unmarked sexuality. There is no use seeking from within this structure, to have the feminine pass through to the other side, or to cross terms. Either the structure remains the same, with the female being entirely absorbed by the male, or else it collapses and there is no longer either female or male (Baudrillard, 1990: 6).

While the masculine remains and dominates, “the feminine [as other] is and always has been somewhere else” (*ibid*). Thus the feminine is in constant search of location, of placement (Wilcox, 1990). It is the mystique and uncertainty of this unknown realm that gives the feminine its seductive quality.

The feminine is that which exists beneath the construct of the masculine libido and so the feminine asserts itself through its ability to embody ambiguity and employ seduction. Therefore seduction is not something that is represented, but enacted and the feminine is not a binary; not an entity that opposes the masculine, but exists in the strategy which seduces the masculine, “as the strength of the feminine is that of seduction” (Baudrillard, 1990:7).

Baudrillard’s notion of seduction does not merely purport a form of sexual coercion, but is maintained in psychoanalysis to be “the liberation of desire” (Baudrillard, 1990:1). In this sense: desire being the inclination to want; the liberation of desire allowing for the possibility of multiple ‘wants’. Therefore seduction is the infinite potentiality of desire. Thus seduction allows for the expectations of gender, sexuality and desire to be rendered fluid by the feminine subject, and so a multiplicity of possibilities with regard to gender and sexuality become possible. Subsequently, Baudrillard states that as seduction liberates desire, so it becomes “an ironic alternative form that breaks with the referentiality of sex and provides a space, not of desire, but of play and defiance” (Butler: 1999:6). Through employing a strategy of play and defiance, so seduction generates ambiguity and ambiguity generates seduction.

This notion of play and defiance can be best understood by contextualising it within *Displayed and Framed* (2008) and *Chaste* (2007). Both works provide spaces of play and defiance in terms of their use of space as well as the ambiguous visual, aural, and kinaesthetic images they provide. This will be analysed in the following chapters and provides the framework for the analysis of the aforementioned works.

Chapter Three: Approaching Space.

Displacing space: site - specific dance theatre and the disruption of the *male gaze*

If walls and perimeters have a concrete existence and a practical purpose, they also divide space symbolically, partitioning the world according to the criteria which are cultural. This has particular relevance for performance founded as it is on specific perceptions of space (Counsell & Wolf, 2001:155).

The location of a performance, the space in which it occurs, plays a pivotal role in the framing and containing of a performance and contributes to the particular ways in which audiences read and understand theatrical productions. The term 'theatre' is derived from the Greek term 'theatron', which means 'viewing place'. Thus theatre can be defined as that which takes place between spectator and performer, an event that occurs with the presupposition of an onlooker, a 'watcher'. Thus performance is "ultimately a contract based practice" (Freeman, 2007:62) that exists within the relationship between those who perform and those who watch. It is the space of a performance that constructs and defines this relationship. Western traditional and conventional notions of the audience/performer relationship are established on distinct categories of placement and position within space: the proscenium arch frames the performance that occurs on stage and creates a definite divide between the space occupied by the audience and the space occupied by the performer/s. Subsequently audience members sit quietly in the raked seats of the auditorium and look down upon the action that takes place on the stage. Within this context, little is required of the audience. The codes and ground rules established by traditional theatre etiquette assert that an audience member must sit quietly and watch: "spectators sitting in their serried ranks in the darkness [are] discouraged from all but the most stage-managed interactions with one another or the performers" (McAuley, 1999: 281). The placement of audience in relation to the performance signifies a certain way of looking and viewing. This form of viewing privileges the gaze as the primary medium of interpretation:

More than the other senses, the eye objectifies and masters. It sets at a distance, maintains that distance. In our culture, the predominance of the look over smell, taste, touch and hearing has bought about an impoverishment of bodily relations. The moment the look dominates, the body loses its materiality (Irigaray, 1985:70).

In the safety of their seats and in the dark, the spectators are not physically challenged or provoked and have the power to choose what to look at and when. They indeed are not obligated to look at all. In my own experience as a performer and an audience member, I cannot count the number of times I have seen people sleep in their seats throughout an entire performance. The proscenium arch creates a physical and psychological distance between spectator and performer. As the spectators look down upon the action, so they are placed in a privileged position where they have the power to construct the representation on stage in any way they please. This form of looking has been widely theorised as the *male gaze*⁹. Daly (1991) argues that although this term may have become tiresome and somewhat ‘over used’ within feminist analysis, it remains a crucial and fundamental concept. Theories of the male gaze argue that the symbolic space of theatre denotes a way of looking that is gendered, that in Western culture,

the one who sees and the one who is seen are gendered positions, despite the actual sex of the participants. The one who is looked at - the performer who puts her/himself on display for the spectator - is in a passive, traditionally female position. The spectator, again regardless of his/her actual sex, is the one who looks - who consumes, who possesses - the image on display (Daly, 1991: 2).

Thus the spectator is placed in a position of power which is traditionally a masculine position. The male gaze creates a tension between the exchange that takes place between audience and performer. Ideally this exchange is thought to be shared by both audience and performer on equal grounds. However gendered positions denote binary and hierarchical structures of power and thus the ‘other’ in this case the performer, will always be objectified and disempowered by the male gaze. McAuley (1999:281) argues that in order to break the structure of power instilled by the male gaze, the performance space needs to be “designed and ordered in such a way that a

⁹ The theory of the male gaze was first posited by Laura Mulvey in her highly influential text entitled *Visual pleasure and Narrative Cinema*. Mulvey deals with the notion of scopophilia: the pleasure of looking, and places gender identity at the centre of her discussion. She argues that “in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy on to the female figure, which is styled accordingly” (Mulvey, 1975: 188). Thus notions of the male gaze situate power within the realm of the active/male who holds the privileged position of the gaze.

genuine exchange can take place between the human beings on stage and those in the auditorium”. It is often site-specific work that offers such a space.

Site-specific theatre denotes a performance that occurs outside of traditional theatre spaces. This is not to say that one can merely create a performance and subsequently place the performance in a site. Site-specific work is created with an awareness of the specific site in which it is created and performed.

A dance is site-specific when the choreographer receives her spatial dictation, directions for audience placement and theatrical inspiration from the site itself; in turn, the site becomes the framework for or map of the dance (LeFevre, 2005:2).

Both *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2007) are site-specific dance theatre works and disrupt traditional spectator expectations by dislocating the audience/performer relationship: in both works, the audience do not sit passively and watch, but physically move through the performance space, sometimes led by the performers. The audience members physically interact with the performers and occupy the same space as the performers. These two site-specific works disrupt traditional notions of spectatorship and the viewing of the work (which is embedded in the experiential, the physical) consciously disrupts the potential power of the male gaze.

Site-specific work can be understood as the “the exchanges between a work of art and the places in which its meanings are defined” (Kaye, 2000: 1). As a result site-specific work can only be read within the context that is produced: “to move the work is to destroy the work” (Kaye, 2000: 2). Thus site-specific theatre establishes itself outside the dominant norms of theatrical convention.

To state that established theatrical conventions dominate expectations of space is to legitimate these conventions as being masculine:

the traditions and conventions of mainstream theatre dance are formed by and reinforce a normative, heterosexual, male point of view, marginalizing and suppressing alternative sexualities (Burt, 1995: 8).

There is a definite and dominant phallogentric code that supersedes other modes of signification. To contest and attempt to dispute against such codes and conventions is to engage in a feminist endeavour and thus site-specific work has the potential to

engage with feminist performance strategies¹⁰. It is not viable to utilise masculine constructs and codes of representation to represent a feminine subject. In the same regard, if I wish to create an adequate representation of homosexual identity, I cannot use the codes and constructs of heteronormative representation. In disrupting traditional theatrical notions of space, site-specific work offers a platform for the representation of both the feminine subject and the homosexual subject.

In challenging accepted notions of performance space, site-specific theatre disrupts the audience/performer relationship and the physical position of the spectator and offers a “displacement of the viewer’s attention and gaze” (Kaye, 2000: 2). In so doing site-specific work attempts to create alternative ways of seeing and viewing performance. *Chaste* (2007) is performed in the recess of the Rhodes University Theatre and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) in the Blue Gallery in the Albany Natural History Museum. Thus both works are site-specific works. This chapter articulates how the above mentioned works create performance spaces that work to disrupt the privileged position of the male gaze. To challenge and disrupt the power dynamics of the male gaze and the attempt to create an alternative exchange between the performer and the audience is to engage in a feminist endeavour. I will argue that these works employ feminist performance strategies in their construction of particular performance spaces. Subsequently I will argue that a feminist approach to the production of space allows for the facilitation of specific moments of seduction within each work. This in turn assists in the representation of alternative sexualities. To begin this analysis, I will provide a description of the opening images and atmosphere created by each work and an introduction to the principle questions that drove my analysis of the construction of space in these two site - specific dance theatre works.

Displayed and Framed (2008)

Upon entering the Albany Natural History Museum, an audience of fifty people are instructed to follow a trail of woman’s underwear. This trail leads up a flight of stairs and into a white gallery. In the entrance to the gallery a topless woman in black tights sits on a blue box, a blue bra strapped around her neck and legs forces

¹⁰ I am not suggesting that all site-specific work is feminist, rather I will argue that in their effort to represent alternative sexualities and challenge the power dynamics of the male gaze, both *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) utilise a feminist approach to their specific construction of space.

her knees to her face (see images below). Framed in the archway of this entrance, her hair covering her face, she is struggling in this astringent position, her movements scrupulous and slow. The audience is instructed to enter the gallery space and stand or sit where they please, but to do so they must walk past this woman, her hands and feet reaching out and softly touching them as they do so. In the quiet space of the gallery another three women stand together, leaning on an adjacent wall. Two are topless, with their bare backs facing the audience, their black bras strapped around their knees; the other has her arms trapped under her black T-shirt, her back against the wall while she watches the woman with the blue bra struggling in the archway. Two large black wooden frames hang in the space, empty. To the left sits an artist. In charcoal, she writes on her drawing pad, *Displayed and Framed*. A live feed captures her movements and the contents of her drawing pad are projected onto the back wall. Nothing can be heard but the breath of the performers, the uncomfortable shifting of the audience and the sound of charcoal moving on paper.



Image One



Image Two

Displayed and Framed (2008) is a piece that explores, as its title indicates, the displaying and framing of women's bodies, of the feminine body and of the lesbian body. When initially conceptualising the piece, I wanted to explore the problems of woman's representation and status within Western society¹¹ and more specifically that

¹¹ By 'Western society' I refer to Western South African society which predominantly denotes white South African society. In choreographing this piece from my own personal perspective as a white lesbian South African woman, my frame of reference is white Western South African societal mindset. *Displayed and Framed* (2008) is influenced by this mindset and my own personal response to the limitations and discriminations of that mindset and culture. There are three white females, two black

of lesbian representation and status. There is a definite connection between “the status of woman in Western thought and the status of woman in Western society” (Whitford, 1991:102).

In exploring and challenging preconceived notions of the representation of women, the feminine and the lesbian, so I endeavoured to challenge Western modes of thought. The fundamental questions that intrigued me and impelled my exploration were:

- How does one create an artistic and theatrical representation of lesbian desire in a culture where woman’s bodies are consistently consumed and objectified?
- Is it possible to create a performance space where lesbian desire can be depicted outside of the constructs of heteronormativity and without the threat of the male gaze?

Chaste (2007)

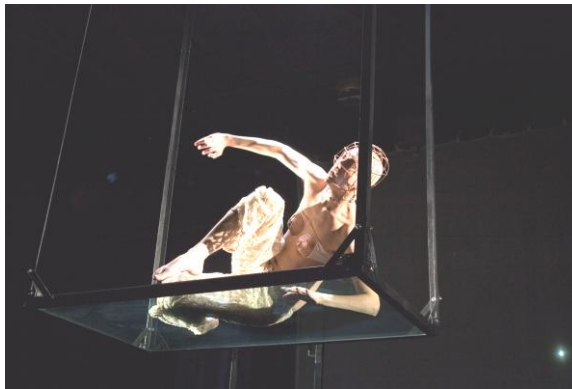


Image Three

From amidst the tender sounds of feminine voices singing softly comes a woman’s voice, “Bid her rise from her tomb/ Beautiful Salomé, let not your dance be veiled” (Chaste, 2007: [DVD]). Warm light illuminates a figure moving meticulous and slowly, moaning in low rhythmic tones. It is

a figure awakening from a tomb; a tomb that is not buried below the ground, but suspended from the ceiling. A rectangular metal structure and a glass plate support this suspended figure, providing a window into the tomb (see images three and four). The figure moves, clothed in soft silk pants. Thick elastic material wrapped once around the torso supports two brass breasts. The figure speaks and betrays the

females and one coloured male in *Displayed in Framed* (2008). Issues of race are explored in the third section of the piece entitled ‘Melanin’. This research acknowledges that race, gender and power exist in relation to each other, but it is gender that is highlighted within the scope of this thesis.

image: it is a man with the signs of a woman on his body.



Image Four

Presented at the National Arts Festival 2007, Acty Tang's *Chaste* (2007) has been described as an "iconoclastic reworking" (Meersman, 2007:1) of Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*. *Salomé* is a *femme fatale* figure and thus the story of *Salomé* is one that is loaded with seduction. *Chaste* (2007) arises from Tang's engagement with Oscar Wilde's *Salomé* "my personal emotional response and memory of it, and contemporary experiences that seem to link to what Wilde is saying [...] For me definitely *Salomé*...it's a woman but it's also about homosexual desire. *Salomé* is a figure for desire" (Tang, A., personal communication, June 6, 2008). With the opening image of the work, Tang offers a play on gender expectations and thus creates a work that seeks to disrupt the binary construction of gender and sexuality in order to represent homosexual identity. This endeavour resonates directly with my own endeavour to represent lesbian desire and directly with the feminist theory that is aligned with this analysis.

In identifying the homosexual subject as a feminine subject so I was compelled to ask in my analysis of *Chaste* (2007):

- In what ways can a man create a feminine performance space?
- In what ways can a man portray and execute feminist performance endeavours?

The performance space of both *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) facilitates an audience of fifty people. This was a choice made for logistical reasons, in terms of the physical capacity of each space, but more so to highlight and create an intimate relationship between the performers and the audience.

I want a small audience, maybe forty people, fifty at a push. I don't want any audience member to be able to hide behind another person. I want to be able to see each person and look them in the eye. I want them to feel like they too are being watched... that in the gallery space they are also being framed and are also on display for the performers and for each other (Barnard, J., rehearsal journal, 22 August 2008).

Both *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) begin with an image of a feminine body that challenges traditional notions of what constitutes and what is understood as a feminine body. In so doing, each work challenges the notion of gender and inevitably the male/female binary it creates. As sex/gender/sexuality exist in the same relation, to challenge the one is to challenge the others. Thus both works challenge constructions of gender in order to explore alternative sexualities and ultimately represent homosexual identity.

Displacing space/disrupting the male gaze

Heteronormativity dominates by the exclusion of homosexuality, by instilling homophobia. Homophobia and heterosexism are forces which function in part to “prevent alternatives, to negate them and to ruminate on how to destroy them (Grosz, 1995:216). Grosz continues to argue that

gay and lesbian sexualities and lifestyles can be seen as innovative, inventive, productive, and thus active in so far as they aim at their own pleasures, their own distributions, their own free expansion (Grosz: 1995: 216).

In creating *Displayed and Framed* (2008) I aimed to create a space for an innovative, inventive and productive representation of lesbian desire and in so doing create a piece that would aid in the free expansion of lesbian identity. In analysing *Displayed and Framed* (2008) I do not aim to provide answers to the above stated questions, instead I wish to highlight and explore possible performance strategies for lesbian representation and the performance space in which this representation can occur.

In exploring the commodification of the female body, I was specifically drawn to the notion of 'the nude'. As images of the female body prevail in Western art, so the female nude, more than any other subject, denotes 'Art'. The nude is a particularly significant motif within Western art and aesthetics:

The representation of the female body within the forms and frames of high art is a metaphor for the value and significance of art generally. It symbolises the transformation of the base matter of nature into the elevated forms of culture and the spirit. The female nude can thus be understood as a means of containing femininity and female sexuality (Nead, 1992:2).

The image of the female nude not only purports particular definitions and constructs of the female body but also sets in place "specific norms of viewing and viewers" (Nead 1992:2). Similarly Berger (1972) argues that the nude does not only refer to a tangible painting, but constructs a specific way of seeing and viewing. This way of seeing is constructed on the traditional relationship between the male artist and the female nude he depicts.

The principle protagonist is never painted. He is the spectator in front of the picture and he is presumed to be a man. Everything is addressed to him. Everything must appear to be as a result of him being there. It is for him that the figures have assumed their nudity (Berger, 1972: 54).

To view is thus the privileged position of the male. To be looked at is the function of the female.

In utilising the nude as a source for exploration, I wanted to explore ways in which to empower the nude and (re)present the feminine subject and female sexuality that was not trapped in the confinements of masculine control. As the female nude is traditionally framed and displayed in a gallery I decided to utilise the gallery space as a site.

Performed in the Blue Gallery¹² at Albany Natural History Museum, the performance space created in *Displayed and Framed* (2008) is one that challenges traditional theatrical notions of space. Kaye (2000:30) argues that traditionally the gallery space is a space which presents itself as “the place for looking”, but this looking takes place predominantly in stillness. Similarly Freeman (2007: 60) states that “gallery-goers can gaze forever at the dried out stillness of paint”. The paintings/sculptures/objects displayed in a gallery are traditionally static, they are exhibited in stillness and are placed accordingly for the gallery attendants to look upon at their own leisure. The gallery space allows for the freedom of the viewer to move where she pleases, but always quietly so as not to disrupt the neutrality of the space. It is the viewer that moves, not the object being looked at. To choreograph a work in a gallery space is to break both conventional notions of theatrical space as well as the gallery’s traditional and dominant notion of stillness.

Baudrillard argues that the production of space is established by the location of artefact; the placement of signs within the space (Baudrillard, 1990: 61). Therefore space as a negative entity - seen as ‘nothingness’ - is defined by the objects which appear in and inhabit it. This is specifically applicable to the concept of a gallery space. Presented as a neutral, static space, the gallery space is defined by the objects on display, the objects that inhabit the space. By manipulating and defying established theatrical conventions as well as established gallery conventions, I aimed to create a space of risk and ambiguity, a space that would challenge the way in which the audience viewed and experienced the work and allow for the enactment of seduction.

Performed in the recess of the Rhodes University Theatre, Tang similarly utilises an established theatre space in a completely unconventional way. The recess of the theatre is literally ‘backstage’, a space that traditionally contains the ‘behind the scenes’ action of a theatre space and is an illegitimate space for the audience. When interviewing Heike Gehring, one of the performers in *Chaste* (2007), she described the recess as the “womb of the theatre” (Gehring, H., personal communication, September 21, 2009). In this sense, she refers to the recess as a feminine space, a space of the uncertain, the unknown and a space of nurture, protection and development, a space that contains something that is yet to be born.

¹² The Blue Gallery is not often used for museum exhibits. Rather, it is a space often used by visual artists to exhibit their work, particularly Fine Art students from Rhodes University.

In utilising this space, Tang challenges and disrupts the limits of the stage that limit the ways in which a theatre performance can be read as “sight lines hem us in, forcing our gaze down channels no wider than that the wooden boards. If what we see is what we get, then [traditional] theatre-based performance rarely gives us as much as we need” (Freeman, 2007: 61). The inversion and unsettling of this theatre space denotes *Chaste* (2007) as a site - specific work.

The audience, consisting (once again) of fifty people, where the Rhodes Theatre can seat more than three hundred people, is led through the dock into the recess of the theatre and instructed by the performers where to stand and sit. The stage curtain is closed and provides a black backdrop. As aforementioned, a metal construction and a glass plate create a tomb suspended from the recess ceiling (see image on pages 29 and 30). Nine pieces of white cloth, approximately two metres wide, hang full length from the fly bars in different areas of the stage and at different angles, several of which are brought down or taken up at certain intervals during the piece. The cloths sustain the idea of ‘chaste’; white, pure, while simultaneously providing screens on which certain projections are placed, presenting alternative backdrops of images. The cloths demarcate other spaces within the space: the performers and audience move within overtly demarcated areas as well as behind the cloths and through the gaps between the cloths. This demarcation creates different sites within the site. While this strategy is used to further disrupt the space, I would argue that it is slightly problematic because it jars the action. That is to say that while the constant shifting from place to place and the action taking place above and around you works to engulf you in the experience, it is also at times a sensory overload. I found that at times I was lost amongst it all and had trouble linking the sites to each other as well as to the narrative taking place. However, with the closing image of *Chaste* (2007), the stage curtain opens and the audience looks out onto an empty auditorium. Here Tang maximises on the space’s capacity to subvert traditional notions of theatre and performance space. This moment, as the audience looks out onto an empty auditorium where they traditionally *should* be sitting, reiterates their own complete displacement and their own performative engagement with the work.

With the space utilised in this manner, the audience is once again physically forced to view the piece in an unconventional manner: instead of comfortably sitting back and looking down upon the action, the audience must look up and view the action above them, must look through the white cloth to view the action around them

and finally look out at a distant image. In creating a site-specific work, Tang argues that he endeavours to defy traditional theories of spectatorship that offer a “masculine cone of vision” (Tang, A., personal communication, September 30, 2009) and create a space that allows for a “more tactile, more experiential [...] more embodied and encompassing way of seeing” (Tang, A., personal communication, September 30, 2009). In doing so, Tang creates a space that endeavours to disrupt audience/performer relationship and subsequently notions of the male gaze. To disrupt notions of the male gaze is a feminist endeavour and thus Tang utilises feminist performance strategies in his approach to the construction of space.

Tang states that by having the audience dislodged from their conventional seating (and placed ‘up close’ and into the intimate space of performance) places the audience and the performer on a more equal footing thus breaking traditional understandings of the performer/spectator relationship. It is not only the performers that are vulnerable under the gaze of the audience, but the audience experiences that same sense of vulnerability by being physically dislocated and falling under the direct gaze of the performers, as well as each other. As Tang states:

If I have control over the space that I can perform in, then I do want to have the audience look at it, look at what we are presenting in a different way so that it accesses their experiences and memories and emotions in a different way as well. Because the sitting back in the conventional way makes them [the audience] judge; makes them think “please me, entertain me, pleasure me or make me think”, whereas by getting them in the space they are already thinking and feeling and it makes the audience more vulnerable (Tang, A., personal communication, June 6, 2008).

Throughout the piece, the performers guide the audience around the space. Thus the audience members become part of the action, physically moving through the performance space and physically interacting with the performers. This creates a dynamic of uncertainty as well as a

palpable actual sense of risk; a sense of them [the audience] being in something different, something new - something risky. So that becomes a part of the overall experience of the piece and hopefully there is more engagement - a more live sense of engaging with what is being presented (Tang, A., personal communication, June 6, 2008).

Here again the conventional boundaries between spectator and performer are eliminated and thus conventional notions of the differentiation between what is seen as audience space and what is seen as performance space are challenged and rendered ambiguous. By manipulating and defying established theatrical conventions to create a space of risk and ambiguity, so Tang creates a space that allows for the enactment of specific moments of seduction.

Within this gallery space of *Displayed and Framed* (2008) traditional notions of the performer/spectator relationship are similarly challenged. As aforementioned, the audience enters the gallery and are instructed to sit or stand where they please, *but to do so they must walk past the woman in the archway, her hands and feet reaching out and softly touching them as they do so*. From the outset of the piece, I, as the performer in the archway as well as the choreographer of the piece, wanted to challenge traditional notions of the performer/spectator relationship. The entrance to the gallery, this archway, provided an additional frame in which I could perform as well as the most opportune space for this challenge.

As I sat on the box in the middle of the archway, the audience members had to squeeze past me in order to get into the gallery space. As I moved on the box, I could block their entry by extending my leg, shifting my arm, tilting my head. As I did so, the audience would push past me and to do so, they had to touch me. As an alternative to merely blocking their path, I would reach out and hold their hands, elbows, shoulders or legs until they moved my hand or hands away. Again this initiated touch which immediately eradicates the traditional distance between the performer and spectator.

To touch something is a physical act, a tangible experience that creates a connection between you and the object you are touching: “to touch something is to situate oneself in relation to it. We never look just at things; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves” (Berger, 1972: 8-9). To touch a performer is to touch the object on display as well as make a physical connection with the body that is performing. I aimed to open the work with a moment that would compel the spectator to immediately situate herself in relation to the performer and thus be consciously aware of the space she occupied and her role as spectator. The elimination of the distance between the spectator and performer challenges notions of the male gaze. The spectators now occupy the same space as the performers and can

no longer sit back and passively observe the action from a distance because they are now physically positioned within the action.

To defy conventional codes and expectations of the performer/spectator relationship, I disrupted the space between the performer and spectator. In doing so I aimed to initiate a dynamic of uncertainty. When I reached out to touch the audience members, I was uncertain of how they would respond and react. Some responded by gently moving my limbs and my body so that they could get past, others responded with shock by quickly pulling their hands or arms out of my grip. I remember one of the first audience members gasped when I reached out and grabbed hold of her elbow. This moment highlighted for me that she did not expect me to touch her, to make that physical contact with her, even though we were in such close proximity. Other audience members reacted with uncertainty and it seemed as though they did not know how to respond: they hesitated to walk past me, probably because they could see that I was touching other audience members and knew they were next. Some audience members responded with what I interpreted as affection or compassion by gently squeezing my hand as I held theirs or patting my hand as it rested on their shoulder. One audience member went so far as to gently place their hand on my head and I felt both surprised and comforted by this gesture¹³.

What is the appropriate response when a semi - nude performer looks at and reaches out to touch an audience member? The element of nudity was an additional factor in the dynamic of uncertainty. Here I set up the image of the nude within a frame. This nude is not static and posed, but moving and physically engaging with the spectators. Subsequently, the spectators are not passively viewing the nude at the own leisure and for their own pleasure, but are confronted by the nude, by her gaze and her body reaching out to touch them. Here the norms of viewing and viewers, of who is watching whom, are uncertain and rendered ambiguous. If seductive ambiguity exists within the relationship between performer and spectator, between the looking out and looking in (Claid 2006), it is heightened in this moment, in the immediacy of this interaction where boundaries are blurred and roles reversed. Thus seduction works as a subversive strategy that challenges traditional and dominant notions of audience/performer relationship and creates a space where an alternative exchange

¹³ This reading of the audience member's responses and reactions is formulated through my experience of this performance, and my own reflections of my performance that are documented in my rehearsal journal.

between performer and audience can occur. This subversive strategy works to challenge the dominance of the male gaze and is thus a feminist performance strategy.

The strategy of touch is similarly employed in Tang's work. *Chaste* (2007) is a scripted dance theatre work that consists of thirteen scenes which are divided into three main sections. At the end of the second section, entitled *The sorrows of the world; searching for healing*, Tang and the other four female performers approach audience members and invite the audience members to touch parts of their bodies¹⁴.

The performers do not merely hold hands with the spectators, but gently take the spectators hands and place them on their bodies, on their foreheads, necks, chests, abdomens and hips. This moment is a significantly intimate moment between the spectators and the performers. Here the audience tangibly engage with the physical bodies of the performers and thus the distance between spectator and performer is, in this moment, completely eradicated.

Here the performers cannot anticipate the spectator's reaction and so this moment creates a dynamic of risk and uncertainty. Tang states that the spectator reactions were different with each audience: some audience members were extremely moved, while others were extremely uncomfortable and refused to participate in the action. With this moment Tang states that his intention was to expose the repressed and othered body as a human body and have this body intimately engage with the bodies of the spectators. This action resonates with the theme of the section within the performance, to expose the sorrow of repression and the attempt to find healing between the oppressor and the repressed. In so doing Tang states that a moment of seduction can have an alternative function. This moment of seduction is not only signified in ambiguity, uncertainty and risk, but perhaps seduction is a means to finding a common connection.

Seduction is rooted in an interaction between two individuals, but it's also about how can one seductively approach oppressive dominating hegemonic discourses and ideas about people [...] perhaps it could be a story about me seducing, desiring or wanting some kind of engagement or contact with, for example, friends I might have made in my church days, who have very different thoughts about gay people. Is there a possibility of seduction, some sort of engagement or contact where the power is not totally on their side? (Tang, A., personal communication, September 30, 2009)

¹⁴ See extract on *Chaste* DVD: Time: 37min 30 seconds to 39 min 20 seconds.

It is the performance space of *Chaste* (2007) that allows for such an interaction to occur. By creating a space in which moments of seduction can occur and by directly challenging the male gaze, Tang creates an alternative interaction between audience and performer. In reiterating that one cannot use traditional codes and conventions in order to represent otherness, this moment, in turn, assists in the representation of alternative identities and that of homosexual identity.

With the opening moment of *Displayed and Framed* (2008) I aimed to set up a relationship of play and defiance, between spectator and performer that would continue throughout the piece: a play on the roles and expectations of the viewer and the viewed that would continually defy traditional notions of spectatorship: the male gaze. Seduction is thus the enactment of this play and defiance that exists within these specific interactions between spectator and performer where, as aforementioned, the boundaries are blurred and the roles are reversed. It is the spaces that the audience occupy throughout the piece that allow for these moments of seduction to occur.

As it happened on each night of performance the audience sat on the floor between the archway and the frames; the archway behind them, the frames in front of them, the three women leaning on the wall to their right, the artist to their left. In retrospect, and in studying the video footage of *Displayed and Framed* (2008), if I were to recreate this work, again I would utilise the space more thoroughly. For example, an idea that came to me was to initially set the space up as a traditional gallery space: I would place more frames in the space and have more performers in these frames posed in still images so as to reference still objects, sculptures or paintings. I would initially have the audience walk around the space and engage with these images at their own leisure. Once that relationship between audience and performer had been established, I would then instigate a complete turn over and subversion of this relationships though specific choreography and the movement of the performers, and by disrupting the audience space and the relationship between audience and performer. However, with the space utilised in the manner that it is, the audience is still physically forced to view the piece in a completely different way: instead of comfortably sitting back and looking down upon the action as they would do in a traditional theatre space. The audience must look behind them and around them in order to view the action (see image five below).



Image Five



Image Six



Image Seven

Having the audience dislodged from their conventional seating, and placed ‘up close’ and in the intimate space of performance, places the audience and the performer on a more equal footing, thus breaking traditional understandings of the performer/spectator relationship. After the second vignette of the work entitled *Episcene: Portrait in Two*,¹⁵ myself and a male performer, Robin Williams, move into the audience, take audience member’s hands and lead them through the black frames that hang in the space (see images six and seven above) and down another flight of stairs into a hidden gallery space below. This space is hidden and thus is a space of the unknown, the uncertain and the mysterious. Within the context of this piece, I used the nature of this space as a means of creating a realm of the feminine¹⁶.

With the physical interaction between performers and audience, the conventional boundaries between audience and performer are eliminated and thus conventional notions of the differentiation between what is seen as audience space and what is seen as performance space are subverted. Simultaneously the boundaries between who is performing and who is watching are challenged: as Robin and I take the hands of the audience members a sense of risk is implemented in the fact that they

¹⁵ This vignette will be further discussed in the Chapter Four. To view this vignette see DVD: Close up - 18min 35sec to 26mins, Wide angle – 17 min 50 sec to 25min 30 sec.

¹⁶ It is within this space that I attempt to create an adequate depiction of lesbian desire and in so doing explore the possibility of creating a performance space where lesbian desire can be depicted outside of the constructs of heteronormativity and without the threat of the male gaze. This depiction will be further discussed in Chapter Four.

immediately become the 'watched'. Again the position of performer and the position of audience, of who is watching and who is being watched, are rendered ambiguous.

Here site-specificity occurs in the displacement of the viewer's attention toward the space which both she and the performer occupy. This forces a "self-conscious perception in which the viewer confronts her own acting out of the gallery's function as the place for viewing" (Kaye, 2000: 2). It is not only the performers that are vulnerable under the gaze of the audience, but the audience experiences a similar sense of vulnerability by being physically dislocated and falling under the direct gaze of the performers, as well as each other. Davy (1986) argues that a motif within lesbian theatre is to explore the numerous ways in which "lesbian performers position themselves in relation to spectators" (Davy, 1986:2). In *Displayed and Framed* (2008), my approach to space was one that aimed to position the performers in the direct and intimate space of the audience. This strategy aims to disrupt the performer/spectator relationship and thus the male gaze as the viewer is subsequently placed on display. This renders the object of the gaze ambiguous: as an audience member you are watching the performers watching you, watching other audience members watching you being watched. It is, again, through this ambiguity that moments of seduction are employed.

This approach to the creation of performance space subverts the privileged position of the male gaze and provides an alternative cone of vision, an alternative approach to viewing the work. In altering the space of the spectator, I aimed to alter the way in which the work was viewed. In altering both the space and the gaze, I aimed to create an alternative space, a space where lesbian desire could be depicted outside of the constructs of heteronormativity and the male gaze. It is in the second gallery space that I utilise a spatial construction to resist the commodification of the female form. This space will be further discussed in Chapter Four.

Within this physical interplay between performer and spectator as well as spectators with each other, the distinction between those who view and those who are viewed is rendered ambiguous. As an audience member you are no longer able to make a "comfortable distinction between those who do and those who watch" (Freeman, 2007: 56). Thus Tang and myself create an *inclusive* rather than *exclusive* space, a space where the traditional boundaries between audience and performer are eradicated and where both are placed on equal footing. In *Chaste* (2007) Tang creates a space that resists traditional and conservative notions of theatre space. To create and

perform a work in the recess of the theatre is to employ an alternative approach to performance space. By placing the audience within this performance space as well as the space of the performers, Tang subsequently challenges traditional notions of spectators space and the performer/audience relationship. By creating an alternative space, Tang challenges the dominance of the male gaze. He creates an interaction and exchange that exists outside of the notion that pleasure in looking is a privilege for active male while and passive female fulfils the role of the object to be consumed. Thus Tang creates a feminine alternative to the masculine order and employs a feminist performance strategy.

It is in this inclusive space, where the spectators and the performers are physically placed on equal footing, that these specific roles are confronted. This challenges the dominance of the male gaze and alters the ways in which the audience views the work. Thus the feminist endeavour is to not only resist dominant forms of viewing and reading, but to “cause a rupture in the organising principle of reading itself and thereby affect a change in the rules that make representation intelligible to us” (Davy, 1986: 44). To alter the spectator’s position is to alter what is viewed through the act of viewing and “where we view from – no less than what we view - is determinant in this” (Freeman, 2007: 55). Thus both Tang and myself utilise feminist performance strategies in order to create an alternative space where an alternative interaction to a patriarchal order can occur and which can house the representation of alternative sexualities.

Kaye (2000:1) states that site-specific refers to practices and strategies that articulate an interaction between the work and the place/s in which its meanings are defined:

If one accepts the proposition that the meanings of utterances, actions and events are affected by their ‘local position’, by the *situation* of which they are part, then a work of art, too, will be defined in relation to its place and position (Kaye, 2001:1).

Given that *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) are located within a space that allows for moments of seduction through creating an alternative relationship between audience and performer, so too will the images created within the piece come to be read in this context because, pertaining to theories of semiotics, reading implies ‘location’:

To 'read' the sign is to *have located* the signifier, to have recognised its place within the semiotic system. [...] The location, in reading, of an image, object, or event, its positioning in relation to political, aesthetic, geographical, institutional, or other discourses, all inform what 'it' can be said to *be* (Kaye, 2000:1).

If there is a feminist approach to the construction of space, then the images and signs, the material semiotics within that space will unequivocally purport the same approach. Within this context, the endeavour is to challenge and subvert traditional notions of gender and desire in order to represent otherness and ultimately homosexual identity. The processes and strategies utilised for the creation of material semiotics and the representation of alternative sexualities will be further discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter Four: Questioning Bodies.

Questioning Bodies: Creating a kinaesthetics of homosexuality

Dancing, perhaps the most highly complex and codified of kinaesthetic practices is one of the most important arenas of public physical enactment. With its linkage to sex, sexiness, and sexuality, dance provides a dense and fecund field for investigating how sexualities are inscribed, learned, rendered, and continually resigned through bodily actions. Analyzing dance can help us understand how sexuality is literally inhabited, embodied, and experienced. It can open the way to a new arena of investigations: a kinaesthetics of sexuality (Desmond, 2001:7).

By performing particularized bodies (often highly marked in terms of race, gender, sexuality and/or class) artists may dramatically unveil the processes by which non-normative subjects are conventionally excluded from the canonical narratives of art history (Jones & Stephenson, 1999:6).

In employing a homosexual subject matter both *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) engage in the representation of homosexual desire, identity and the homosexual body. Depicting the homosexual body and homosexual identity in dance theatre constitutes the inclusion of what Carol Brown (1998) has termed the *previously disenfranchised body*:

The incorporation of the previously disenfranchised body [...] the staging of bodily identities with different stories to tell from the ones which have traditionally occupied the stage incorporates difference and opens the performing frame to multiple spectator positions (Brown, 1998:15).

In depicting homosexual bodies, both works under discussion allow for a return of the repressed, marginalised and denied body. This challenges spectators to see these ‘others’ as bodies that are also available for visual consumption and signification (*ibid*).

Displayed and Framed (2008) is a work that constitutes my personal artistic attempt to make the invisible visible: to display and frame the lesbian body, to create a representation of lesbian sexuality and desire. It is a complex task to represent a woman’s body on stage as her performing body is always in the process of being re-marked. In Western culture, “the male is marked with value and the female is unmarked, lacking measure, value and meaning” (Phelan, 1993:5). In being unmarked, a woman’s body is a site rather than a subject of desire. To represent a woman’s body on stage is to attempt to re-mark her body and re-mark her with value,

measure and meaning, to re-mark that body as a subject of desire. To represent the lesbian body proved to be a far more complex task. Again, the fundamental questions that intrigued me and impelled my exploration were:

- How does one create an artistic and aesthetic representation of a lesbian body and lesbian desire in a culture where woman's bodies are consistently consumed and objectified?
- Is it possible to artistically represent a lesbian body within a culture that renders this body, if acknowledged at all, deviant, perverse and unnatural?
- How can my depictions of a lesbian body work to empower both lesbians and woman?
- In what way can I artistically depict lesbian desire so that the bodies of desire resist commodification?

Similarly, *Chaste* (2007) is a work that attempts to deal with “both the repression against women and the repression of homophobia” (Tang, A., personal communication, June 6, 2008). In my analysis of *Chaste* (2007) and in my interviews with Acty Tang, I was continually drawn to the fact that Tang utilises a strong feminist approach in the depiction of gay male desire.

In my mind I was working specifically with Oscar Wilde's sexuality, with men who desire men, men who want to have sex with men and how that is invested in the figure of Salomé. But also how Salomé is a woman. One does not have to necessarily read Salomé as a figure for Wilde or of homosexual desire. One could see her also as a woman who is oppressed within a patriarchal system. So I was very aware when I made *Chaste* (2007) of those two currents and how they both have a theme of oppression, of being silenced and othered, but that I can't just conflate the two. Hopefully that shows in the choice of performers with Heike Gehring (as the narrator) and me as the performer. Based on our identities really, Heike comes much more strongly from a feminist perspective, where I would come from a more gay liberation perspective (Tang, A., personal communication, September 30, 2009).

Both myself and Tang attempt to create a dialogue between a feminist and queer position. My analysis of *Chaste* (2007) thus became an example of the inclusion of

male identity within a contemporary feminist framework. Thus the questions that compelled my analysis of the kinaesthetic images of *Chaste* (2007) were:

- How can a man represent a feminine body through theatrical performance? Within this performance, how can a man represent feminine desire?
- In so doing, how can a man utilise feminist performance strategies in order to represent a masculine identity?

As discussed in the previous chapter, both *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) adopt a feminist approach to the construction of space. Thus the images and signs, the kinaesthetics, the material semiotics created within that space will purport the same approach. In analysing the material semiotics within both works, I will focus on the kinaesthetic images that are represented by, on, and through the dancing body as well as between dancing bodies. I will analyse the ways in which both *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) challenge traditional understandings of the feminine and feminised body. Additionally I will analyse how both works explore gender and desire and attempt to break the binary understanding of gender in order to depict alternative identities and desires. In so doing, both works create and explore a *kinaesthetics of sexuality* in order to represent the homosexual body and thus homosexual identity.

Allowing the body to speak.

It is important to acknowledge that both *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) make use of text when creating a kinaesthetics of homosexuality. That is to say that in some instances, text is used whilst a physical and aesthetic image is created. The problematical nature of language as a medium of representation has become a major critical issue within feminist theory. It is language that creates a binary system of representation and instils a system of power where the feminine subject is rendered subordinate, where 'she' is rendered as the 'other'. Thus language is formed by and informs a phallogocentric male order that purports the notion of the mind/body split. The mind/body split that is so embedded in Western thought works to further purport the masculine/feminine system of power: language, the realm of the mind is associated

with a masculine economy whilst the body, the realm of the physical is associated with a feminine economy. Thus the mind dominates at the subordination of the body.

As previously discussed, it is not viable to utilise masculine constructs and codes of representation to represent a feminine subject. In the same regard, if I wish to create an adequate representation of homosexual identity, I cannot use the codes and constructs of heteronormative representation. This logic applies also to language and the construction of text: it is not viable to attempt to represent homosexuality within the traditional codes and constructs of language, as it is language that first and foremost creates the 'other'. With terms such as *man*, *woman*, *black*, *white*, *straight*, *gay*, language denotes a binary system which in turn denotes a system of value and a system of power. It is this notion that Peggy Phelan (1993) refers to when she states

Western Culture creates distinctions and evaluations across two terms. One term of the binary is marked with value and the other is unmarked. The male is marked with value and the female is unmarked, lacking measure, value and meaning (Phelan, 1993:5).

However, we cannot escape language and it is language, discourse and power that constitute identity: I use the terms *female*, *woman* and *lesbian* to mark my own identity and thus to position my self in society. These terms fall into the category of the unmarked and lack value in the hegemonic system of language. If the subject is an effect of language, discourse and power, then how can it act to alter the conditions of its own subordination? (Lloyd, 2007). How can the feminine and the homosexual subject use language to represent their position?

The particular use of text in the *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) works to subvert the mind/body split. The concurrent use of a corporeal mode of communication with text works to disrupt language as the dominant mode of expression and communication. Language is one element that supports the creation of a kinaesthetic image. Here, text is spoken while bodies move, sometimes by the same bodies that are moving, sometimes by other bodies that are watching the moving bodies. Text becomes a physical movement and thus the moving bodies are not passive or silenced bodies, but bodies that begin to speak. In utilising text in this manner, both works create a dialogue between the verbal and the physical, between mind and body and thus work to subvert the mind/body split that is embedded in heteronormative thought. Here, language does not dominate at the subordination of the physical, but a dialogue between language and the body is created. It is this move

towards the body that highlights a feminist approach to the use of text. It is the nature of the text which additionally highlights the employment of feminist principles in order to subvert the dominance of a language. Both *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) adopt a feminist approach to the use of text by employing a distinct poetic mode in the construction of text.

Creating a poetic feminine text

The text for both *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) were written by Awelani Moyo. Though the text of *Chaste* (2007) is very different to that of *Displayed and Framed* (2008), the former consisting of thirteen episodes, and the latter comprising of a segment of text that is used in two specific vignettes, both contain a specific poetic quality. Moyo states that in her writing, she is highly influenced by the poetic mode.

I am not sure if I can identify a particular style but I think I am definitely influenced by the poetic mode. I began writing because of a love of poetry and spoken word so the poetic form definitely informs my writing style. I also tend to work a lot with stream-of-consciousness as a starting point for the texts, which I then develop through playing with rhythm and sound or whatever the thematic concerns for that particular piece. I think *Chaste* and *Displayed and Framed* called for a non-linear, more expressive logic to which the poetic style was suited. In both texts I was playing with the fluidity of language and the idea of multiple meanings, a kind of resistance to set ideas and forms, a dream-logic rather than a narrative one (Moyo, A., personal communication, April 13, 2010).

Moyo articulates clearly that in the writing of the text for both works, she focused on a poetic style as a means of resisting dominant ideas and forms and exploring multiple meanings. Similarly, Hélène Cixous' theories on the politics of poetic writing offer an alternative approach to language and text that can account for a feminine position. She argues that a poetic text challenges the rigidity of language and the writing of such text has the potential to liberate the feminine subject from its subordination.

Writing is an act of liberation from social censorship and personal inhibitions. The poetic text is the privileged place of the inscription of the female imaginary and unconscious (Wilcox, 1990: 35).

For Cixous, this feminine imaginary is directly related to the body and the feminine libidinal economy. She argues that the commodification of the feminine body works to censor that body. Censoring in this sense does not mean to hide, but rather to inhibit and restrict. The feminine body is positioned and defined within a masculine economy and is commodified for masculine gain and purposes. Thus the feminine body, as object of desire, is restricted in the position of the 'other'. To censor the body is to censor the breath and speech. Thus Cixous calls for woman to write and to write themselves, to write subjectively: "write yourself, your body must make itself heard. Then the huge resources of the unconscious will burst out. Finally the inexhaustible feminine imaginary will be deployed" (Cixous, 1986: 97). This principle is similarly articulated by Moyo.

My writing is necessarily and deliberately subjective. I am definitely influenced by feminist ideas. I have not chosen a particular approach for the outright purpose of being subversive, but I think that being a woman and being concerned by gender issues definitely comes through in my writing. (Moyo, A., personal communication. April 13, 2010).

It is the employment of a poetic style of text and the physical movement of text within the creation of the kinaesthetic images which highlight the employment of feminist strategies in both *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008). It is this employment that allows the performing bodies to speak.

Bodies are never neutral. The body is always previously marked, loaded with ideologies, histories and experiences which are held within the body and marked on the body. The performing body on display represents a duality: that of the body of the performer, and the performing body: the juxtaposition of the body which is signified, performed, with the real, signifying body of the performer (Counsel & Wolff, 2001: 125). This highlights the complexity of the body in performance, more specifically the dancing body in performance as "dance brings bodies to life: quivering with the political, gendered, social, racial, sexual, and aesthetic resonances of which bodily

motion is capable” (Foster, 1996: xi). In depicting ‘otherness’ and representing the homosexual body, both Tang and myself (as choreographer and performer) turn initially to our own bodies as site for the exploration of alternative sexualities.

Approaching the self.

Self identity needs to be continually reproduced and reassured, precisely because it [...] cannot rely on a verifiably continuous history. The formation of the “I” can not be witnessed by the “eye” (Phelan, 1993:4-5).

In attempting to represent lesbian identity, I turned to my own identity as a source. Identity can be understood as “the way in which we self-consciously locate ourselves in the social world” (Preston: 1997: 43). Locating, like orientating, entails positioning, which entails a placement of self. At the most basic level, this placement is a placement of one’s body in the social world. In exploring gender and sexuality, I turn to my own body and my own physical experiences of these notions. When initially brain-storming the concept for *Displayed and Framed* (2008) an early entry in my journal reads:

Coming out, to date, is the hardest thing I have ever had to do! Not so much in terms of how other people will act, what my family will think or how I will be viewed by society (even though these things are very important to me and have simultaneously plagued my mind). Rather, it has been a struggle and a fight in the acceptance of self, a reassessment and rediscovery of my own identity, my own gender, my own sexuality and my own way of viewing the world, while at the same time trying to understand the drives of my own desire, of my own body, trying not to repress those drives and to just trust my gut, to go with my gut and my instincts! I want to create a piece in which I can explore lesbianism and depict my understanding of this identity, my personal engagement with my lesbian identity - in some way making the private public, making the unknown known. What does it mean to be a lesbian? How does lesbianism affect society’s view of woman, of the female, of femininity? In what ways does the female/female unit question notions of gender and power dynamics? I want to create a safe space for this exploration. I want to align *lesbian desire* with a *human need* for connection, affection, touch, desire, compassion, love (Barnard, J., rehearsal journal, July 26, 2008).

In my initial motivations for creating *Displayed and Framed* (2008) I can reflect that I wanted to contribute to a larger process of ‘coming out’, a process that acknowledges

the oppression inflicted on individuals as a result of their sexuality. Anodea Judith (2004: 160) advocates that

it is unfortunate that our culture tries to separate sexuality from the rest of life. As the cosmic force of connection leading toward union and expansion, it is paradoxical that we remove sexuality from the conversation and activity of the rest of our lives. In so doing we have encouraged sexual wounds to go acknowledged and unhealed, hidden by guilt and shame.

In attempting to locate myself as a lesbian woman, I am constantly aware that it is the physical experiences of my body that enact this location. I am simultaneously aware that my identity is excluded from, marginalised and rendered subordinate by dominant discourses and that this exclusion is endorsed on my body. It is this subordination and forced repression of the homosexual body that can create sexual wounds. In exploring homosexuality I mark my own personal attempt at a healing from oppression and repression that was inflicted as a result of my sexual preference¹⁷. I thus turn to my own body in creating the opening image of *Displayed and Framed* (2008). In marking a return to my body, I highlight the employment of feminist performance strategies as the subordination of woman is equated with concerns of her body and the subordination of lesbian identity with that of the lesbian body (as well as femininity with that of the feminine body).

(Re)framing the nude.

As previously discussed, I was specifically drawn to the nude in my exploration of and attempt to challenge the commodification of the female body. Although there are depictions of male nudes, the overwhelming dominance of the female nude within Western art creates a direct association of the nude with the female body. It is in the process of dropping the gendered prefix, “the moment when the female nude becomes simply ‘the nude’ that the male identity of artist and connoisseur, creator and consumer of the female body, is fully installed” (Nead, 1992: 13). To engage with the

¹⁷ A search for healing from oppression is a theme that resonates with both *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008). Within *Chaste*, this theme is overtly explored in the episode entitled, “Sorrrows of the World: searching for healing” which is analysed and discussed in Chapter Four.

nude, specifically in art, is to engage directly with the economy of the feminine and the female body.

In Western art the dominance of the male artist is undeniable. Female artists are rendered invisible within the history of Western art as women are merely objects to depict, to consume. Female nudes have been traditionally painted, drawn, photographed and depicted by men. Thus the nude is a symbol of the commodification of the female body and in the nudes of Western depiction, we can discover some of the criteria and conventions by which a woman has been seen and judged, most particularly, as “an object of vision: a sight” (Berger, 1972: 47). In utilising the nude as a source for exploration, I wanted to explore ways in which to empower the nude and represent a femininity and female sexuality that was not suppressed in the confinements and frames of masculine control. I wanted to challenge the notion of the nude woman as a static sight who exists solely for men to *gawk* at. In *Displayed and Framed* (2008), the objects on exhibition are the sentient performer’s bodies: semi-nude (topless), moving, breathing, sweating, speaking, and looking back at the audience, challenging their gaze.

As previously described, the opening image of *Displayed and Framed* (2008) depicts *a topless woman in black tights sitting on a blue box, a blue bra strapped around her neck and legs forces her knees to her face. Framed in the archway of this entrance, her hair covering her face, she is struggling in this astringent position, her movements scrupulous and slow* (see image one and two on page 28).

Choreographing this scene proved to be a challenging task. I wanted the opening image to be strong and provocative. I wanted a woman in a frame and I wanted her to resist being framed. I wanted to emphasise that she was a woman and a lesbian woman and that she was trapped in the frame, trapped by gender, trapped in the binary. While theoretically I knew what I wanted, I found it difficult to articulate my idea in practice. Initially, I attempted to perform this opening image behind one of the black wooden frames hanging in the space. After one particular rehearsal, an entry from my journal reads:

Opening image: NEEDS WORK! Does she have to be nude? What does that nudity signify? What can I use as a feminine sign? A skirt, maybe emphasise long hair, maybe a bra? How do I show entrapment when the frames are unstable and swinging all over the place when I touch them? RETHINK FRAMES: maybe they mustn’t hang from the

ceiling. Maybe they must be solid, on stands, solid on the ground? How can I make it less abstract and more literal? How do I show desire? How do I reiterate sexuality? (Barnard, J., rehearsal journal, October 2, 2008).

The solution to the spatial problem of this opening image came to me in a subsequent rehearsal when I was restructuring the spacing of the entire piece. I kept walking in and out of the archway to try and visualise and establish the first image that the audience would see when they walked into that space. As I walked under the arch I realised that it too was a frame and a frame with solid walls. In opting for nudity in the opening image, in choosing to be topless, I exposed my body as my body, as Joni's semi-nude lesbian body framed and on display, available for visual consumption and scrutiny (see images eight to ten below).



Image Nine



Image Eight



Image Ten

In this sense I understood my nudity to be an act of exposure that made the private public, the unknown known. Subsequently in employing nudity, I wanted to initiate an exploration of sexuality as “it is quite clear that the nude also relates to lived sexuality” (Berger, 1972: 53). With this opening scene I aimed to initiate an

exploration of the sex/gender/sexuality relation. While creating and performing this image, I was consistently aware that there is a danger in employing nudity as this focus has the potential to be subsumed and consumed by a masculine economy. My nude body has the definite potential to satisfy a heterosexual gaze and heterosexual desire. Phelan (1993) argues that visibility is a trap and there is a real power in remaining unmarked. “There are serious limitations to visual representations as a political goal” (Phelan, 1993:9). However, this work marks my own attempt to explore the possibility of making the invisible visible and I aimed to counteract the possibility of my body being consumed for heterosexual pleasure by firstly displacing the audience (as discussed in the previous chapter) and secondly by creating a homosexual dialogue between myself and the other performers.

In reworking this image and the choreography of this image in the arch, I began to explore movements that articulated resistance, entrapment and struggle. Within this opening sequence I pull at the bra, stretch it, and snap it. I crouch, thrust my hands down between my legs, between the bra and grab my head, I slowly move my hands through my hair pulling it as I do so. These movements are repeated sequentially with slight shifts in rhythm and are performed with a sense of pressure: I create a quality of pressure within and through my body and its movements. The gestures I perform, pulling, pushing and tugging represent gestures of struggle. With the solid walls surrounding me, these movements could be translated from my own body and onto the walls of the arch. As I move, I begin to explore the arch in which I am framed and the frame in which I am trapped, first gently with my fingers reaching out and exploring the wall, then more violently, pushing against the frame to both sides of me and above me, driving my entire weight into the action (see image nine above). The image depicts a framed nude, attempting to break the boundaries in which she is trapped.

A particular motif is created in the opening sequence that occurs throughout the piece and is performed by all four performers (see images eleven to thirteen).

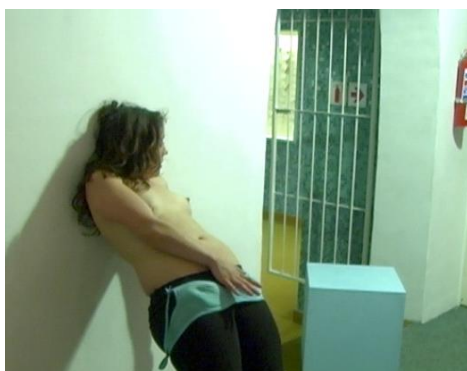


Image Eleven

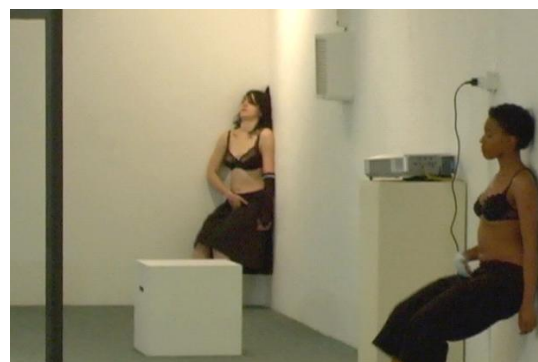


Image Twelve

With my back to the wall I walk my feet away from the wall and I push my pelvis forward so that only my shoulders, neck and head are leaning against the wall. I sweep my right arm across my thigh and up into the air directly above my groin. As my hand slowly floats down to rest on my groin, I slowly push my pelvis down so that my back touches the wall, keeping my hand between



Image Thirteen

my legs. This movement refers directly to the genitals which signify the libidinal and thus sexuality.

As the previous description of the opening image states: *In the quiet space of the gallery another three women stand together, leaning on an adjacent wall. Two are topless, with their bare backs facing the audience, their black bras strapped around their knees; the other has her arms trapped under her black T-shirt, her back against the wall while she watches the woman with the blue bra struggling in the archway.*

As I try to step off of the box and out of the frame, the woman with her hands trapped under her T-shirt, the performer Awelani Moyo¹⁸, begins to speak, “Wait, wait, she, I, I wait, breathe, slip, slip and trip, she her and I, I trip and slip, effortlessly enchanted by the sense of her” (*Displayed and Framed*, 2008: [DVD]). As she begins to speak, the other two nude women against the wall begin to move, repeating and mimicking my movement in the frame and constantly making direct reference to their groin areas: pushing the pelvis forward, a slight upward caress of the thigh, the hand lingering between the legs. With the combination of the text and the movement I wanted to emphasise sexuality and particularly feminine sexuality and a feminine libidinal energy. In watching the video footage of the piece and in seeing myself

¹⁸ Awelani Moyo wrote the text for *Displayed and Framed* (2008) as well as *Chaste* (2007).

perform this action (as well as the other performers), I am both uneasy and intrigued. For me, the image is highly provocative. How often does one see a woman touching her groin or genitals outside the context of pornography? However, the image is not violently sexual or sexualised but rather a more subtle and gentle reference. The fact that the performers are not completely naked adds to the subtlety of this gesture. With this motif, I was attempting to engage with the notion that the explicit body (in this case, the semi-nude body) in performance has the ability to create a representational economy for the feminine and for woman. Woman's bodies and experiences have become a commodity, located and defined through a masculine economy. In creating this image, I wanted to utilise a sexually specific body to re-mark woman's bodies and experiences and more specifically the lesbian body and experience¹⁹.

Throughout the performance of my solo, I instructed Moyo to only watch me, her gaze directed at my body. As I move I switch between watching her and watching the audience. The text which she speaks is subsequently directed at me, the nude woman dancing in the frame. Moyo speaks again, "She is women watching women, wanting" (*Displayed and Framed*, 2008: [DVD]). As Moyo speaks, she watches me, as I move, I watch her and so we create a dialogue between speaker and mover, between text and body. This dialogue works to heighten the audience's sense of displacement: Moyo is speaking on the wall to the right of the audience while I move in the archway behind the audience; to capture the action they must look both to their side and behind them. The text repeatedly speaks of a woman watching and wanting woman. Baudrillard states that "desire too is sustained only by want" (Baudrillard, 1990:5). In creating this dialogue so I aimed to create a sense of desire, both through the text and through the action of watching: watching each other and watching the audience. The displacement of the audience, in space and under the direct gaze of the performers, allows for moments of seduction to occur, as Claid (2006:2) states that the meeting between the two, between the looking in of the audience and the looking out of the performers, creates an ambiguous and seductive tension.

As Moyo continues to speak she begins to take off the black shirt under which her arms have been trapped. As she takes the shirt off, she reveals that she is wearing a blue bra. This act of exposure, of the 'taking -off' of clothing as well as the semi-nudity of the woman in the archway and the two women on the wall, heightens the

¹⁹ This re-marking is more deeply explored in the final vignette of the piece entitled *Melanin*, which will be discussed later in this chapter in the section entitled *Creating a lesbian chora*.

sense of risk and the sense desire: not only are two women watching each other, the one speaking of wanting, but as they do so they are exposing underwear, breasts, flesh. A return to the flesh signifies a return to the threatening freedom of sexual liberty (Bataille 1987:92). This image and the relationship created between myself and Moyo allows for the insinuation and introduction of homosexual desire.

My reflection on this opening image highlights my role as choreographer, performer and researcher. To provide both academic and self-reflexive approaches to the creation of choreography is essential in countering the ephemeral nature of movement and dance. Providing a personal and theoretical account of identity as well as the position of feminine identity and the identity of the 'other', is an unquestioned endeavour of both feminist and queer theory.

(Re)presenting the feminine body.

In the opening scene of *Chaste* (2007), Tang also places himself within a frame. As previously mentioned and illustrated, the piece opens with *warm light illuminating a figure moving meticulous and slow; moaning in low rhythmic tones. It is a figure awakening from a tomb; a tomb that is not buried below the ground, but suspended from the ceiling. A rectangular metal structure and a glass plate support this suspended figure, providing a window into the tomb.* As Tang begins to move, the female narrator, Heike Gehring, begins to speak,

Bid her rise from her tomb! Beautiful Salomé, let not your dance be veiled. From beneath the shields of Herod, your shattered skin shall be retrieved, and your tears of longing shall be collected to tell your tale (Chaste, 2007: [DVD]).

This opening image establishes a strong female voice calling for the resurrection of Salomé, a female character. Tang is lying with his back against the glass plate (see image three and four on page 29 and 30). As he moves we, as audience, assume that this character is female as the signs from the text and the narrator indicate. The image additionally displaces the audience: as they stand in the recess, they must look up, above their heads in order to observe the action. As Tang moves, he begins to speak and betrays the image: it is a man with the signs of a woman on his body.

Tang wears soft silk pants and as he moves the light catches the material in such a way that these pants can be mistaken for a skirt. His torso is bare, nude, save

for the thick white elastic around his chest which supports two brass breasts. The head dress that he wears in the opening image, is only worn in scenes where he returns to the tomb-like structure. It is the brass breasts in particular that provide an overt feminine sign and through his costuming, his depiction and playing of the character of Salomé, Tang both imitates and simulates the feminine (see images fourteen to sixteen below). In doing so, Tang engages with what Judith Butler has termed gender performativity.



Image Fourteen



Image Fifteen



Image Sixteen

Butler's theory of gender performativity (Butler, 1990) is based on the premise that gender identity is constructed through a series of rehearsed bodily actions and behaviours that are made compulsory by societal norms. Like many feminist theorists, whose concerns are articulated in relation to a politics of identity and the body, Butler forces an interrogation of the relationship between biological and cultural bodily constructions. She sustains the notion that biological sex does not constitute gender and that the relationship between gender and identity is something that is actively constructed, in addition to being both variable and historically contingent. She argues that bodies become gendered. Through a continual construction and a continual performance of either masculinity or femininity, that gender is something that is done, rehearsed, enacted, pasted on with lipstick and stockings: "a stylized repetition of acts" (Butler, 1990: 141).

Butler's argument is manifest in the principal of socialising: how we dress up to go out and undress to come in, how we hold and move our bodies in ways that generate and communicate either feminine or masculine mannerisms. Gender is understood as a contemporary means of "organising past and future cultural norms, a way of situating oneself in and through those norms [...] an active style of living one's body in the world" (Butler 1993: 24). Within a heteronormative framework, a body must fall into either one category or the other: a man's body or a woman's body.

Butler further investigates the increasing instability of the notion *woman* as a category within feminist theory. *Woman*, she argues, needs to be understood as a term subject to processes of regulation and restrained by structures of power (Butler, 1997). This dynamic of gender representation is not *woman* as a sign but *femininity* as simulation (Skeggs, 1997). Simulation in this context being a strategy of replication, of performance. Simulation confirms femininity to be constituted by a number of feminine signs that are placed on the body. In the same regard, Baudrillard views the body as a "mass grave of signs" (Baudrillard, 1993: 105), signs which are regulated by structures of power to simulate certain meanings i.e. long hair, high heels, lipstick and skirts are feminine, a shaved head, a tie and a suit are masculine. Simulation is an enactment and so gender becomes performative.

To highlight gender in performance, to theatrically perform gender, is to expose the performative nature of gender. If I act masculine, or simulate the masculine in performance, I highlight the ability to perform gender and subsequently the notion that gender is performative. In this context, theatrical performance

deliberately interrupts the performative. To expose the performative nature of gender is to acknowledge gender as a fluid notion. To render gender as fluid is to collapse the binary distinctions that limit femininity to the category of woman and masculinity to the category of man. Therefore, the feminine body is not necessarily a woman's body and the masculine body not necessarily a man's body: bodies have the ability to possess both masculine and feminine qualities.

Gender is an enactment of social constructions that occur not only within bodies, but between bodies. Subsequently, how a body moves and how it moves in relation to other bodies constitutes a public enactment of gender and sexuality (Desmond, 2001). To engage in the polemics of the representation and enactment of gender and sexuality is to inevitably engage with gender performativity. In playing and performing the role of Salomé, Tang implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself: while dressed and acting if he were a woman, Tang reveals how acting or imitating gender simultaneously constitutes the 'fabrication' of gender identity (McDonald, 1999). However, as previously stated, Tang does not only imitate femininity, but simulates femininity.

To simulate is to "feign to have what one hasn't" (Poster, 1987: 167). By their presence, the brass breasts represent an absence, a lack, because we, as audience, come to realise that the breasts are only in place because Tang does not possess any of his own. However to simulate is not merely to feign:

someone who feigns an illness can simply go to bed and pretend he is ill. Someone who simulates an illness produces in himself some the symptoms (*ibid*).

How then does one differentiate between the illness and the simulated symptoms? Here the notion of gender performativity is in play as gender becomes a simulacrum: by simulating the feminine, Tang reveals that he can possess feminine qualities. One can argue that Tang only appears to be feminine, but appearance is the seduction of images (*ibid*). As Tang suggests:

The costume and the ways in which I move within that costume create ambiguity. It's the seduction of the audience because they constantly questioning, because they can't tell what I am and what I'm not and that is a claiming of agency and desire that I think Baudrillard is referring to (Tang, A., personal communication, September 30, 2009).

This questioning works to further displace the audience as “to doubt the subject seized by the *eye* is to doubt the subjectivity of the seeing *I*” (Phelan, 1993: 5). Through the interstices between skin and clothing, Tang’s gender is rendered ambiguous. In so doing, Tang utilises feminist performance strategies in order to rupture the heterosexual binary understanding of gender. Similarly in *Displayed and Framed* (2008), I employ gender performativity and a play on feminine signs as a means of illustrating that gender is fluid rather than fixed.

The title of the first vignette of *Displayed and Framed* (2008) is *Boy Blue*. The title is a play on an oil painting by Thomas Gainsborough entitled *Blue Boy* (1770). The idea for the title was conceived by the visual artist in the piece, Kate Arthur. I chose to use the colour blue throughout the piece as blue is stereotypically associated with being a ‘boy’s colour’ and lesbian women have often been ridiculed as ‘girls trying to be boys’. During the rehearsal process, which focused largely on collaboration between choreographer, artist, musician and performers, Kate suggested this title. The suggestion was made as she explained that *Blue Boy* (1770) was one of the first portraits of its kind: utilising predominantly blue colours (which had rarely been done before) the painting merged with the colour theme of the bras and blue boxes. *Blue Boy* (1770) is also a classical and traditional representation of a young boy in his formal attire. *Boy Blue* provides a play on the notion of traditional attire as it presents a boy dancing in a bra.

Boy Blue begins with the introduction of music to the piece²⁰. As the track starts the fifth performer, Robin Williams, the only male performer in the piece, appears from behind a white structure²¹. With Robin’s solo I aimed to choreograph a sequence of phrases that had a slightly ‘cheeky’ feel. I use the word ‘cheeky’ in its slang form implying ‘to poke fun at’. With Robin’s solo I begin to explore the notion of gender performativity and aim to challenge and ‘poke fun at’ preconceived notions of what constitutes a feminine body.

Another blue bra rests on the structure in the corner where Robin is performing. First only his hands appear from behind the structure and point and touch

²⁰ The music for *Displayed and Framed* (2008) was composed by Shaun Acker. Keeping with the minimalist theme of the piece Acker’s score is composed of two bars of music that are repeated over and over with slight variations in sequence. Using predominantly the piano, the score has a flirtatious somewhat risky feel to it.

²¹ This white rectangular structure is about a metre high, five metres long and three metres wide. It is this structure that hides the staircase to a gallery below and serves as an object in the space that the performers play with and hide behind, peek over and stand on throughout the piece.

the blue bra, then he sneaks a peek at the bra, popping his head out from behind the structure, then both hands and head appear in a repeated sequence until he jumps and sits on the structure, picks up the blue bra and puts it on back to front, the cups of the bra resting on his back (see images seventeen to twenty).



Image Seventeen



Image Eighteen



Image Nineteen

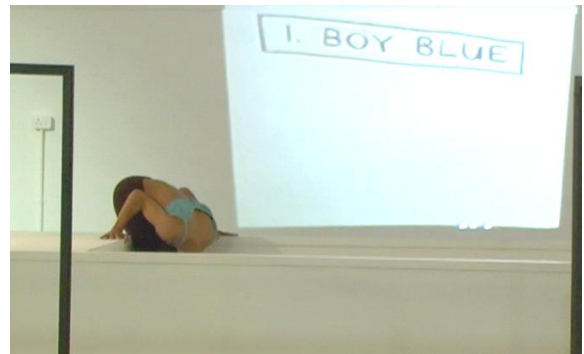


Image Twenty

It is with this image that the ambiguity of gender is in play. Here the audience sees a boy with a blue bra on his back. I chose Robin for this piece because the frame of his body, although very boyish, has a soft feminine aspect to it. With the bra on his back, this feminine aspect is manifest. As Robin stated:

The piece was very personal for me as I am very concerned with gender politics and myself as wanting to embrace both male and female qualities. So I think it was quite appropriate that you chose me to perform this role. I also enjoyed the idea of working with one piece of clothing to invert gender roles [...] its so simple, in this case, with the bra as a feminine sign. [...] I just found it really cool that we were speaking to the idea that gender is blurred, that its not how it is, or not the way that we think it is, the way society has made us believe that it is (Williams, R., personal communication, November 6, 2009).

The image displays a woman, but the body moves like a boy. As he moves Robin explores the bra, pulling at it, putting his hands in and around it, snapping the straps. Although he is not comfortable in the bra, the feminine image still persists: the image of a nude.

Personally, I'm very uncomfortable, even just with baring my chest. I have performed nude, well, topless before, but in context of the bra, in the beginning I felt exposed and watched, you could even say objectified. For me, my reaction was also interesting because it showed a tension between being comfortable with your own body (because what other boy would seriously put on a bra) and how that effects your performing body (Williams, R., personal communication, November 6, 2009).

Robin's reaction is also point of interest to me as it highlights both the performative nature of gender as well as the definite power roles and status that gender implies. His reaction also highlights that for him, nudity was an act of exposure, of making the private public.

It is the ambiguity of this image that works to subvert masculinity and so Robin's body is rendered androgynous: both masculine and feminine. The image created here is a boy with the signs of a woman on his body. With this sign I aimed to simulate the feminine and illustrate that the feminine body is not necessarily a woman's body.

In challenging preconceived notions of what constitutes a feminine body, both *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) disrupt the binary construction of gender. Both works expose the fluidity of gender and highlight that a body can possess both masculine and feminine qualities. Butler argues that sex, gender and sexuality exist in the same relation and are similarly discursively constituted. This necessitates

interrogating how sex is implicated in gender, how desire is implicated in gender, how desire is implicated in sex, how subjectivity is implicated in sex, gender and desire and how all are implicated in heterosexual necessity (Lloyd, 2007: 25).

Gender is thus seen as regulating sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality (Counsell & Wolff, 2001). Within this frame, the feminine subject is one that is made 'other' and positioned as inferior. Thus the

homosexual is a feminine subject as patriarchy obliterates both feminine and homosexual desire, sexuality and identity.

Butler's theory of gender performativity can be located within a reading of feminine performance strategies and correlates directly with Performance Studies through a shared focus on the performative, and directly with the study of dance through a mutual focus on the body. The performing bodies encountered in *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) are bodies that challenge and question traditional notions of gender and sexuality. Tang's depiction of his own feminine body works to locate the homosexual as feminine. In simulating the feminine, Tang creates a depiction of an alternative feminine body and highlights that a man can create a representation of the feminine body. In rendering the male homosexual subject as a feminine subject, Tang concurrently explores an alternative masculinity, a masculinity that exists outside patriarchal constructs. In choreographing desire, which will be discussed in the following sections, Tang explores a masculine desire that exists outside the realm of patriarchy. In *Displayed and Framed* (2008) I turned to my own body to depict lesbian desire. In choosing to be semi-nude, I aimed to emphasise a female body, a feminine body and a feminine sexuality. In creating a homosexual dialogue between myself and the performers, I marked my own body as a homosexual body. Again it is the intimate space of this depiction, with the audience placed in a position of vulnerability, that allows for a representation of lesbian desire that resists commodification. This notion is manifest in the final vignette of the piece, which will be further discussed in the section *Creating a lesbian Chora*.

In their explorations of gender and attempt to expose gender as fluid and unfixed, both works employ feminist performance strategies. Both myself and Tang explored and attempted to deconstruct the binary of gender. Both works employ gender performativity in performance as a point of departure: as a means of collapsing and deconstructing binary categories and understandings of gender to open a platform for the exploration of alternative desires and alternative sexualities, which will be discussed in the following sections.

Choreographing desire

To engage with a representation of desire is to engage with the libidinal. Both dance theatre works engage with the notion of a *feminine libidinal economy*²² as a means of exploring alternative views, positions, desires and identities. In portraying Salomé in *Chaste* (2007) Tang immediately engages with the notion of desire as Salomé is a figure for desire, a *femme fatale*, and a seductress. Conceptualised in European art and literature of the late nineteenth century, the *femme fatale* is a male conception of female desire. In nineteenth century art women are seen almost exclusively through the eyes of men. The *femme fatale* is born from

a deep rooted misogyny that was common among many young artists since the beginning of the century. [...] The belief was widespread that women sapped creativity and were incapable of elevated feelings or of understanding art (Bade, 1979:6).

The *femme fatale* is thus the deviant female, full of perverse desires: malignant, threatening, destructive and fascinating (*ibid*: 9). After the publication and subsequent banning of Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*, the figure of Salomé was widely depicted in European art and literature and Salomé was elevated to the status of the archetype of the *femme fatale*. Thus the role of Salomé is loaded with connotations of seduction and feminine desire.

In portraying the role of Salomé, in employing and embodying seduction, Tang redirects the connotations of seduction and deviant feminine desire onto his own body and his own homosexual desire and thus confirms the male homosexual as a feminine subject. In exploring the subordination of both the feminine and the homosexual subject, Tang highlights an active and performed dialogue between feminism and queer theory. As previously stated, within *Chaste* (2007) Tang is attempting to deal both with the repression against women and that of homophobia. Tang makes extensive use of text and in the reworking of Oscar Wilde's text, (re)written by Tang and Moyo, stories of the repression against woman, against the transgendered and against homosexuals are included. Scene six of *Chaste* (2007)

²² The feminine libidinal economy is a theory propounded by feminist theorist Hélène Cixous in her explanation and understanding of sexual differentiation. Cixous' principle theoretical point deals with the question of the difference between the feminine libidinal economy and the masculine libidinal economy. Libidinal economies refer to "the system of energy of the body which may be pulsional. It has to do with the drive of the body towards something. It has to do with the economy of desire" (Wilcox, 1994:37).

entitled: *The sorrows of the world; searching for healing* is an example of the representation of repression against woman. Tang dances while the female narrator speaks:

It used to be in Pakistan that if a woman had not four witnesses to verify that she had been adulterated, she should be charged with adultery. So she is the perpetrator of the same crime committed against her (Chaste, 2007: [DVD]).

As Tang moves the other dancer in *Chaste* (2007), Sifiso Majola, paces around, slowly, with an air of contained vigour. As Salomé comes to represent the feminine position, so Majola represents the masculine (the character of Iokanaan/John the Baptist in Oscar Wilde's Text). Majola represents the object of Salomé's desire. Wearing only white linen pants, Majola's strong athletic body exudes masculinity. Tang continues to dance, the movement of which is tentative and quietly reluctant; the head moving up, around, underneath - looking, searching, Tang's arms reaching out and pulling back, continuously retreating.

In this sequence Salomé is lost and fearful. Sharp jerks of Tang's torso generate the convulsions of fear as weight is shifted from left to right, right to left and back again. In analysing this sequence, I read the movement as an attempt to find balance: the balancing act of unwanted unease. As Tang moves so Majola moves around him, demarcating and restricting Tang's use of space with a shift of weight; a sudden throw of an arm. Tang directs his movement towards this oppressive figure, trying to engage with him by reaching out and trying to touch him. Each time Tang reaches out, Majola quickly moves away with what seems an accustomed indifference.

Tang occupies the feminine position while Majola occupies the masculine. Tang's movements are soft and slight and are juxtaposed against the bold movement of Majola. Majola, as the figure of masculinity, restricts and dominates the space in which Tang can move. There is a definite power struggle in play caused by the tension between the two bodies moving in close proximity to one another; one body searching, desiring to move freely, the other body blocking the path, obstructing.

The narrator continues: "She hangs in the balance as she lives by the law. She hangs in the balance until she drops like a stone to the floor" (Chaste, 2007: [DVD]). Tang falls and a sharply pitched scream escapes one of the female performers. Here

again the image created is ambiguous: it appears that one person is dominating another; that a man is dominating a woman; that a man is dominating a man; that two men are dancing in close proximity to one another - one exuding masculinity, the other femininity.

Given that the feminine position is not limited to the category of woman, it can be surmised that feminine sexuality is not limited to the category of woman either, or to that of heterosexuality. If the feminine position is one that falls beneath the order of the masculine, feminine sexuality will occupy the same space and so feminine desire will be ‘othered’; repressed. Tang’s simulation of the feminine within the context of seduction allows for the examination of what Baudrillard terms the “liberation of desire” (Baudrillard, 1990:1). In representing the figure of Salomé, Tang comes to represent the figure of desire, of feminine desire, of homosexual desire, of repressed desire. It is desire, the repression of desire and the notion of the liberation of desire, that *Chaste* (2007) attempts to explore.

Part of the difficulty and the challenge and the excitement is that I’m trying to deal with both [the feminine and the homosexual] and not separate them out; because some sort of theoretical purist would say “no, this is not queer”, but there *are* links and queer studies came out of feminism. I was trying not to compartmentalise it, because I don’t think Oscar Wilde’s play compartmentalises it either. It could speak about women, but it speaks strongly of gay men as well (Tang, A., personal communication, June 6, 2008).

The term ‘queer’ refers not only to ‘homosexual’, but to that which is ‘othered’; that which is marginalised; that which works against normative structures of representation. So the feminine and the homosexual can be explored in the same context of repression. Here Tang creates a dialogue between the feminine and the queer position and attempts to liberate both feminine and queer desire.

A provocative duet between Tang and Majola comes to represent homosexual desire²³. Again the female narrator speaks as the duet takes place:

In each hand he holds a breast, teases me with compassion, silences me with this distraction, promises the aroma’s of his famous flesh. How can I refuse? He sucks the very breath out of my lungs (Chaste, 2007: [DVD]).

²³ See excerpt from *Chaste* (2007) DVD: 32minutes 12 seconds to 35 minutes 45 seconds.

Majola dances, repeating quick lifts of the leg and impact kicks to the floor, bold extensions of the arms consume the space around him. Once again exuding masculinity he hits his chest, once, twice while his feet beat out a rhythm on the floor. Tang approaches leisurely and gently places his hand on Majola's face, running this hand down the neck and the chest. Majola's hand finds Tang's shoulder, smoothes its way down the length of Tang's torso, repeating the gesture. Hands clasp and Majola pulls Tang towards him, lifting him slightly of the ground, once, twice, three times, all the while hands touching faces, touching necks; torsos, abdomens - an indisputable display of intimacy.

The two dancing bodies part and Tang stops moving, silent, still. Majola approaches and slowly places his hands on Tang's arms, one on the left and then the right. As his hands grasp, Tang's entire body tenses, convulses and is lifted off the ground, suspended then gently returned. Majola and Tang now stand face to face, Majola places both hands on Tang's head, Tang's hands find Majola's shoulders. In what seems to be the most provocative gesture of the duet, Majola slowly pushes Tang's head down towards his pelvis. As Tang's head lowers so his hands run down the length of Majola's bare torso. Tang's face lingers for a second by Majola's crotch before Tang throws himself up and over Majola's shoulder. Tang speaks: "I squeeze the seed from him, pull his flesh apart, thumb embedded, nail digging. I've sliced through his dread and taken his core" (Chaste, 2007: [DVD]). Commenting on this duet, Brent Meersman stated that:

The choreography is gentle, mostly concentrating on small, expressive gestures [...] Majola's style is eclectic, incorporating the classical *jeté* and movements from traditional African dance. Tang is referencing traditional notions of masculinity, and the sexual desire between John and Salomé is being acted out by two men (Meersman, 2007: 1).

This duet is undeniably homoerotic and thus allows for the illustration of a desire that is not restricted to the binaries of man and woman nor the limits of heterosexuality. An illustration of the liberation of desire. Here Tang, as a male, has sufficiently utilised feminist performance strategies to depict alternative sexualities. If we look back at Phelan's notion of the marked and unmarked, the male body is marked as having value and meaning and is seen as the norm. It is this norm of male morphology that dominates the economy of representation. This domination boxes

masculine identity and the 'masculine body' into a fixed heterosexual category that excludes alternative bodies, alternative sexualities and alternative identities. This male body cannot be re-marked as he is established as the norm: "he who is marked with value is left unre-marked in discourse, paradigms and visual fields. He is the norm and therefore unremarkable" (Phelan 1993: 5). Therefore Tang establishes himself as feminine, as the unmarked, in order to re-mark a masculine identity and masculine desire that exists outside the constructs of patriarchy and the heterosexist male order. I identify the attempt to theatrically re-mark, (re)present and validate a previously disenfranchised body as a feminist performance strategy. In marking himself as feminine, Tang acknowledges an exploration of the feminine subject, which is undeniably a feminist endeavour. Furthermore, in identifying the utilisation of feminist objectives to identify alternative masculine identity, I highlight the contemporary feminisms' inclusion of the exploration of masculine identity.

Creating a lesbian chora.

In *Displayed and Framed* (2008) the illustration of the liberation of desire is explored in the final vignette of the piece. In creating this vignette I had to ask yet again: how do I create a representation of a lesbian body and lesbian desire in a culture where woman's bodies are consistently consumed and objectified?

It is in *Melanin* that the element of space plays a significant role. In creating this vignette, I knew that I needed to be very careful of where I placed the audience in relation to the performers and I needed to maximise on the spectators' sense of displacement so that the performers and spectators were placed on as much of an equal footing as possible.

Melanin was performed in a second gallery within the space, the gallery that is hidden below. As previously mentioned the audience is lead down a flight of stairs into this hidden and unknown space. It the structure of this space, as mysterious and yet to be discovered, that resonates with a feminine position. In her understanding of the significance of this space, Lexi de Coning, one of the performers states that

Architecture on a general level is so indicative of our physical and mental space, as space literally excludes or includes people. This second gallery space is the womb, down there, the hidden, the

unknown, for me a metaphor for the vagina (De Coning, L., personal communications, November 6, 2009).

This gallery space is significantly smaller than the gallery above and thus allows for an atmosphere of intimacy and thus what de Coning refers to as an inclusive space. In this space I attempted to create what Grosz (1995) refers to as a *chora*. A *chora* is a space that provides an

opportunity to return woman to those places from which they have been dis- or re-placed or expelled, to occupy those positions – especially those which are not acknowledged as positions – partly in order to show men’s invasion and occupancy of the whole of space, of space as their own and thus the constriction of spaces available to women, and partly in order to be able to experiment with and produce the possibility of occupying, dwelling or living in new spaces, which in their turn help generate new perspectives, new bodies, new ways of inhabiting (Grosz 1995: 101).

In creating a lesbian *chora*, so I attempted to experiment with the ways in which one can represent lesbian desire and attempt to represent this desire outside of a masculine culture where woman’s bodies are consistently consumed and objectified.

As the audience members enter this space, they are met by the image of two women, Lexi de Coning and Awelani Moyo, who are seated in a highly intimate and personal position (see image twenty one). As Moyo sits on the box, de Coning sits on her lap, hugs her and straddles her, wrapping her legs around Moyo’s back, and gently caressing Moyo’s back with her hands. The audience are led in and form a circle around the boxes and around the image.

As de Coning is a white woman and Moyo a black woman, I called the duet *Melanin*. *Melanin* constitutes a representation of both the white lesbian body and the black lesbian body. My motivation for this was that I feel that race, gender and power exist in relation to one another and that to speak of the one is to speak of the others. Thus I wanted to explore the notion of otherness and exclusion on multiple levels. Within Western culture, that others feminine and homosexual identity, there is too a hegemonic system of ‘otherness’. Western culture marks *white*, *masculine* and *heterosexual* as having value. *White*, *feminine* and *homosexual* is unmarked and *black*, *feminine* and *homosexual* even more so.

Existing representations of lesbian identity in dance rely heavily on images of the monstrous feminine: lesbian subjects were depicted as grotesque, butch and hyper-masculine in order to assert their agency and sexuality (Desmond, 2001). However, most depictions of lesbian experience within the queer theory that I have engaged with almost only focus on white woman.



Image Twenty One

Furthermore my own sensibility and understanding of lesbian sexuality is one that leans away from the notion of the hyper-masculine lesbian subject, away from the idea that in order to claim agency and be acknowledged, all lesbians need to exude their masculinity. In creating a representation of lesbian desire, I wanted to challenge the stereotype of the masculine lesbian and explore representations of atypical lesbian bodies. This endeavour becomes important in highlighting a move away from a hegemonic and *white* lesbian experiences to a more inclusive representation of feminine sexuality and desire. For me, the contrast of black skin on white skin is one that is highly provocative and at the same time exceptionally aesthetically pleasing. The image for me was initially saturated in the depiction of alternative identities, in terms of race, gender and sexuality.

However, in retrospect, and in watching the DVD of my work, there is definitely room for a deeper exploration of race and homosexuality. Indeed I think



Image Twenty Two



Image Twenty Three



Image Twenty Four

there is a need for it. In *Melanin*, my depiction of race is extremely one dimensional as I almost placed the notion of race entirely on the pigmentation of one's skin.

I do not believe the notion of race to be as simple as race too denotes yet another system of representation and a hierarchy of power. In the duet, both de Coning and Moyo act and react towards one another in a similar manner, that is to say their desire for one another and their experience is depicted as the same. This has the potential danger of homogenising lesbian experience, which is counteractive to my entire endeavour. I wish to explore alternative sexualities and I believe that within homosexuality a vast number of alternative sexualities exist. Although I believe there is room for further exploration within this duet, I also believe that the image is provocative and serves to depict a representation of homosexual desire that exists without the threat and consumption of the male gaze.



Image Twenty Five



Image Twenty Six



Image Twenty Seven

The duet takes place around the two boxes that the two performers sit on. This is a duet of seduction and play. I wanted to depict a representation of lesbian desire that was highly sexual, but also extremely intimate and affectionate. I wanted to highlight a human need for physical closeness and affection. The vocabulary for the movement involves a series of gentle and intimate caresses that were repeated and the more they were repeated, the more intimate and more sexual they became. Amidst the game of seduction, Moyo and de Coning engage in intimate hugs and caresses, sometimes cradling each other, sometimes tickling, sometimes slowly running a hand up the other's skirt, caressing the other's stomach. Throughout the duet, I instructed Moyo and de Coning to only focus on each other and not to engage with the audience at all. (See images twenty two to thirty one).

In reflecting on the experience of this piece, Moyo states that

I think the performance was challenging because it was a different kind of intimacy than what I had explored in my own work which was always mostly solo. I had to firstly get over my insecurities about my own body but the focus seemed to shift naturally because I had to focus on creating the connection between Lexi and myself. It's different exposing parts of yourself to an audience than it is exposing the intimacy of a 'relationship' [...] also because in this piece, specifically in *Melanin* there was less of a veil of theatricality to divide the space between us and the audience, physically because they were standing so close but also atmospherically. I was also aware of how difficult it was for us to maintain this intimacy and that quality of voyeurism in the room without it becoming 'porn'. As a performer I think I definitely felt more vulnerable, and had to give in to that vulnerability, but at the same time there was a sense of control/power which I quite enjoyed when the audience was present because although they were so close and so much a part of the action, they were also excluded. In a sense this double dynamic was happening, which as I understood it was part of what the entire piece was about. It was also interesting that it felt like the audience created this sense of secrecy themselves, as if we didn't really have to try to create that as performers because they did it (Moyo, A., personal communication, April 13, 2010).

This double dynamic that Moyo refers to is for me the double dynamic of making the private public as well as representing lesbian desire. The image of two women being sexually intimate with each other is an image that has become such a commodity for the pleasure of the male gaze that to re-mark it and re-present it proves to be a difficult and double sided endeavor: on one hand the image is inviting because it has been so widely spread as a pornographic image, but on the other hand, the intimacy and connection created between Moyo and de Coning is one that represents a private relationship, a private connection and an extremely personal experience.

These intimate and caressing movements are enacted in a specific sequence and amidst the repetition of this sequence de Coning gently takes Moyo's bra off and Moyo does the same to de Coning. Here nudity supports the representation of lesbian desire as the sequence has established a sequence of intimacy and seduction that is now being played out by two semi-nude women.



Image Twenty Eight



Image Twenty Nine



Image Thirty



Image Thirty One

When questioned on her experiences of this vignette, de Coning stated:

What for me was quite fun, was taking something private, like nudity and a kind of sexual energy, a sexual experience, a very personal experience and putting it into a public space and into a space that is for displaying things, so we were displaying something that technically should not be displayed (De Coning, L., personal communications, November 6, 2009).

Once again I employed nudity as a strategy to make the private public, to make the personal political, to make the invisible visible. In this final vignette I attempted to create an avid representation of lesbian desire: the wanting of woman by woman. In

so doing I aimed to challenge the lack of engagement with and exploration of lesbian experience and lesbian identity within the context of dance theatre.

Conclusion:

The main objective of this thesis was to highlight that the staging of alternative sexualities calls for an alternative approach to the performance strategies utilised when creating a dance theatre work. Through my research, I found that both *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) employed similar strategies when attempting to represent alternative sexualities. These include

- an alternative approach to the construction of theatrical space in the creation of site –specific work, which deliberately and physically displaces the audience.
- an alternative construction of the spectator/performer relationship through the construction of space. In this way, the nature of site-specific work contributes to the use of feminist performance strategies as there is a conscious disruption of the nature of male gaze by the reconfiguration of the spectator/performer relationship. This reconfiguration places an embodied physical demand on the spectators as they physically occupy the same space as the performers. This compels a performative engagement of the spectators with the performers as the spectators are forced to acknowledge their active role as ‘watcher’. This performative engagement is further highlighted through the direct eradication of the distance between the spectator and the performer through the utilisation of touch.
- a direct attempt to alter what is viewed in the act of viewing, to invert the dominance of the male gaze and provide an alternative approach to viewing and looking.
- an alternative approach to the construction and of gender: there is predominant attempt to break the binary of gender in order to render gender as fluid and thus create a space in which alternative sexualities can be explored. The disruption of the binary notion of gender in order to subvert gender roles (and the power associated with these roles) and represent the ‘other’ marks the employment of a feminist mode of thought and thus a feminist performance strategy.
- a feminist approach to the use of text by employing a distinct poetic mode in the construction of text.

- a concurrent use of a corporeal mode of communication with text which works to disrupt language as the dominant mode of expression and communication. Here, text becomes a physical movement and thus the moving bodies are not passive or silenced bodies, but bodies that begin to speak.

These alternative strategies create a more inclusive theatrical experience in the attempt to represent the other and alternative identities. Through my research and analysis, I identified these strategies as feminist and aimed to illustrate how feminist principles can be both applied to and produced by dance theatre. In employing a homosexual subject matter, both *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) seek to explore and represent homosexual identity and the homosexual subject. In researching two works that employ feminist strategies in order to stage alternative sexualities, I wanted to create a dialogue between feminism and queer theory. In so doing I wanted to create an account of lesbian experience and identity within the framework of queer theory, and of male experience and masculine identity within the framework of feminism.

Within my analysis I found Baudrillard's notion of seduction particularly effective and particularly embodied within both works. Seduction allows for a subversive feminine strategy which I feel is essential when representing lesbian identity and homosexual identity. In a culture where feminine desire and sexuality is subsumed by the male gaze, a representation of an alternative feminine desire cannot be anything but subversive. Subsequently, the notion of seduction is directly related to the notion of desire, and it is an alternative desire that both Tang and myself aimed to represent. In reflecting on this research, I feel that there is an adequate and sound engagement with the exploration and representation of alternative sexualities in both works and by both Tang and myself. There is an apparent scrutiny of gender and employment of Judith Butler's notion of gender performativity, which works to disrupt the binary understanding of sex, gender and sexuality and allow for an exploration of alternative sexualities. If I had to recreate *Displayed and Framed* (2008), I would defiantly explore the notion of race more deeply. I feel that the race/sexuality and race/homosexuality relation provides a rich platform of body and identity politics and is a platform in need of discourse.

In concluding, I turn to my introduction, to my initial research goals and aspirations to reflect on the conclusions that I have come to at the end of this research

process. My analysis of *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008) was motivated by the following questions.

What happens to the considerations of queer theory and to gay and lesbian studies when a dancing body takes centre stage? What happens to the writing of dance history and criticism when issues of sexuality and sexual identity become central? What do we see that we didn't see before? What questions do we ask that were heretofore unspeakable, unnameable, or unthinkable? What analytical tools will we need to formulate these questions and to develop provisional answers? In what ways might these initiations reshape our readings of past histories and give rise to new ones? (Desmond, 2001:1).

When a dancing body takes centre stage and is marked as a homosexual body in a work that employs a homosexual subject matter, it highlights the body as a medium of communication and a site upon which notions of sexuality are understood and enacted. The body becomes the locus of sexual identity and identification as notions of desire are embodied and enacted through and on the body. This in turn highlights that dance provides a privileged arena for the exploration of sexuality and should be included with the explorations of queer theory and gay and lesbian studies. In the context of this research, this body also creates a dialogue between queer theory, and feminist theory.

In documenting, researching and analysing two dance theatre works that explore homosexuality, I wanted to add to a homosexual archive, a homosexual body of knowledge. In creating a performance one creates an event, an occurrence, a space where marginalised identities can be represented and validated. The researching and documenting of this performance constitutes this event/occurrence as having the ability to become a historised event, an archive. Thus in creating and researching a piece that seeks to explore and validate alternative sexualities, I wish to contribute to a wider body of knowledge that acknowledges the politics of otherness and difference and seeks to give voice to the marginalised and repressed. As this research was conducted within the context of performance and dance theatre, so the conclusions of this research contribute to the wider field of dance criticism. This research highlights, as aforementioned, that in order to stage alternative sexualities in dance theatre, an alternative approach to the creation of the work and alternative strategies need to be employed. In staging alternative identity, an alternative approach is needed in creation

of the work, in the viewing of the work, and in analysis of the work. The discipline of Performance Studies provided the analytical tools needed for such an analysis.

Performance Studies encourages a dialogue between *process* and *product* and does not assume that one is of more importance than the other. Performance Studies highlights the question of *how*, not only *what*, and asserts the importance of experiential knowledge and thus of self reflectivity: the focus shifts from the objective to the subjective and the experience of the researcher becomes crucial to the research. The process of creating these two dance theatre works was explored in the research aspect of this thesis. However, in writing this thesis, I focused more on the product and the strategies employed in the actual performances of each work. The importance of the process must not be sidelined. Without an alternative approach to the process, there can be no alternative strategies employed in performance. Thus the endorsement of both process and product by Performance Studies was most essential to this thesis.

Dance Theatre and performance constitute a ‘live act’, experienced by those who perform and those who observe. So the notion of self-reflexivity becomes integral to the processes of understanding *what* is presented and *how* and *why* it is presented. Within the process of this, research, and in reading this thesis, I discovered the importance of self reflexivity. I utilised the self reflection of the creators, choreographers and performers in the work in order to “articulate the ‘deep structure’ of meaning disclosed by instances of performance and the processual means of it’s coming to expression” (Shepherd & Wallis, 2004: 102).

The multiple roles I engaged in as choreographer, performer and researcher of this work necessitates a high level of reflexivity. Indeed in reading this research I am aware that self reflection offers intricate insights and understandings of the process of creating dance theatre that stages sexuality. In fulfilling these roles, I found that self reflexivity is an extremely useful tool when creating and attempting to understand one’s own thoughts, impulses and choices when making a work. As a performer within the work that one is creating, it is often difficult to place yourself outside the work. When the subject matter is highly personal, I found it even more difficult to place myself outside the work. Thus I found my rehearsal journal and my moments of self-reflexivity extremely useful when I had to play the role of researcher because here I was able to scrutinize my own choices and attempt to understand the artistic motivations behind those choices. Through this process, as an artist and researcher, I have learnt that there is a definitive need for an artistic representation and an artistic

expression of lesbian identity and experience. The unevenness of a lesbian portrayal in theatre and more particularly in dance theatre, when compared to that of male homosexual portrayals, is overwhelming.

Furthermore, in analysing my own work, I became aware of how difficult it is to attempt to artistically represent lesbian desire. There is always the danger of having these images consumed by the dominant gaze and thus rendered purely as images of pleasure. Simultaneously I ask myself, in what other ways can I depict lesbian identity if not through desire? *Displayed and Framed* (2008) marks my first attempt at a representation and exploration of lesbian desire and the process of analysing and researching my own work has moved me to continue to ask more questions and find more ways to represent those who have been marginalised and repressed.

Choosing to research within the discipline of Performance Studies and analyse two dance theatre works that seek to stage alternative sexualities, highlights my belief that art, creativity and performance have the ability to provoke change within the world. Performance has the power to evoke change firstly within individual people and I believe that if you can move somebody to view something differently, to think differently or begin to understand something that they didn't before, then you have planted a seed of change within a wider social field. This marks my belief that intimate interactions between people are a microcosm for intimate interactions between people in society and the world. With the predominant focus on the body as the locus of communication, dance provides a fecund and most opportune platform for the exploration of a physical intimacy, sexuality and alternative sexualities. I feel that this platform should be more widely exercised and utilised particularly for a more complex exploration of lesbian desire and sexuality.

Reference List and Bibliography:

- AUSLANDER, P. (2008). *Theory for Performance Studies: a Student's Guide*. London: Routledge.
- BADE, P. (1979). *Femme Fatale: Images of Evil and Fascinating Woman*. London: Smithmark Publishers.
- BAIL, H. (Ed.) (2004). *The Performance Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge.
- BAL, M. & BRYSON, N. (1991). Semiotics and Art History. *The Art Bulletin*, LXXIII, (2), 174-188.
- BARNARD, J. (2008, June, 6). [Interview with Acty Tang, Rhodes University, Grahamstown]. Unpublished interview.
- BARNARD, J. (2010, September 30). [Interview with Acty Tang, Rhodes University, Grahamstown]. Unpublished interview.
- BARNARD, J. (2010, September, 30). [Interview with Heike Gehring, Rhodes University, Grahamstown]. Unpublished interview.
- BARNARD, J.(2009, November, 6). [Interview with Lexi de Coning and Robin Williams, Rhodes University, Grahamstown]. Unpublished interview.
- BARNARD, J.(2010, April, 13). [Interview with Awelani Moyo, via e-mail communication]. Unpublished interview.
- BARNARD, J. (2008). *Rehearsal Journal*. Unpublished Journal.
- BATAILLE, G. (1987). *Eroticism: death and sensuality*. California: City Lights.
- BAUDRILLARD, J. (1990). *Seduction*. New York: St Martin's Press.
- BAUDRILLARD, J. (1993). *Symbolic Exchange and Death*. London: Sage Publications.
- BAUDRILLARD, J. (1994). TURNER, C. (trans.) *The Illusion of the End*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- BERGER, J. (1972). *Ways of seeing*. U.S.A: Pelican Books.
- BLYTH, I. & SELLERS, S. (2004). *Hélène Cixous: live theory*. London: Continuum.
- BOSCH, M. (2006). *Telling tales, allowing the body to speak: redefining the art of the flesh in feminist performance art*. University of Kwazulu Natal. Unpublished Masters Thesis.
- BROWN, C. (1998). Unpacking the body. *Dance Theatre Journal*, 14(4), 12-15.
- BURT, R. (1995). *The Male Dancer: Bodies, Spectacles, Sexualities*. New York: Routledge.
- BUTLER, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble*. London: Routledge.
- BUTLER, J. (1990). Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: an essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory. *Theatre Journal*, 40(4), 519-531.
- BUTLER, J. (1991). Imitation and Gender Insubordination. In J. DESMOND. (Ed), *Dancing Desires: Choreographing sexualities on and off stage* (pp.17). USA: the University of Wisconsin Press.
- BUTLER, J. (1993). *Bodies that matter: On the discursive Limits of 'Sex'*. London: Routledge.
- BUTLER, J. (1997). *The Psychic life of Power: theories of Subjection*. U.S.A: Stanford University Press.
- BUTLER, J. (1997). Against proper objects. In E.WEED & S. SCHOR (Eds), *Feminism meets queer theory* (pp. 1-30). USA: Indiana University Press.
- BUTLER, J. & SALIH, S. (Eds.) (2004). *The Judith Butler Reader*. USA: Blackwell.
- BUTLER, R. (1999). *Jean Baudrillard: the Defence of the Real*. London: Sage Publications.
- CARTER, A. (1996). Bodies of Knowledge: dance and feminist analysis. In

- P.CAMPELL. (Ed), *Analysing Performance: a Critical Reader* (pp. 43-55). U.K.: Manchester University Press.
- CLAID, E. (2006). *Yes? No! Maybe: Seductive Ambiguity in Dance*. London and New York: Routledge.
- CIXOUS, H. (1986). *The Newly Born Woman*. London: IB Taurus & Co Ltd.
- CONLEY, V. (1992). *Hélène Cixous*. North America: University of Toronto Press.
- CONQUERGOOD, D. (1998). Performance Studies: Interventions and radical research. In H.BAIL. (Ed), *The Performance Studies Reader* (pp. 311 - 322). New York: Routledge.
- COUNSELL, C. & WOLF, L. (Eds.) (2001). *Performance analysis: an introductory Coursebook*. London: Routledge.
- DALY, A. (1991). Unlimited Partnership: Dance and Feminist Analysis. *Dance Theatre Journal*, 23(1), 2-5.
- DESMOND, J. (Ed.) (2001). *Dancing Desires: Choreographing sexualities on and off stage*. USA: the University of Wisconsin Press.
- DWORKIN, A. (1987). *Intercourse*. New York: Basic Books.
- ED CORBER, R.J.& VALOCCHI, S. (Eds). (2003). *Queer Studies: an interdisciplinary reader*.USA: Blackwell Publishing.
- FEUER, J. (2001). A Mistress Never a Master. In J.DESMOND. (Ed), *Dancing Desires: Choreographing sexualities on and off stage* (pp. 385 – 390). USA: the University of Wisconsin Press.
- FIRESTONE, S. (1970). *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- FOSTER, S. (Ed.) (1996). *Corporealities*. London: Routledge
- FOUCALT, M. (1977). Discipline and Punish: The birth of the Prison. In C.COUNSELL.& L. WOLFF. (Eds), *Performance analysis: an introductory coursebook*. (pp.127-132). London: Routledge.
- FREEMAN, J. (2007). *New Performance/New Writing*. New York: Pallgrave Macmillan.
- GROSZ, E. (1995). *Space, Time and perversions: Essays on the Politics of Bodies*. New York: Routledge.
- HOLLEDGE, J. & TOMPKINS, J. (Eds.) (2000). *Women's Intercultura Performance*. London: Routledge.
- HOWSON, A. (2005). *Embodying Gender*. London: Sage.
- IRIGARAY, L. (1985). *The sex which is not one*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- JACKSON, S. & SCOTT, S. (Eds.) (2002). *Gender: a Sociological Reader*. London:Routledge.
- JONES, A. & STEPHENSON, A. (Eds.) (1999). *Performing the body/Performing the text*. New York: Routledge.
- JUDITH, A. (2004). *Eastern Body Western Mind: Psychology and the Chakra System as a path to the self*. California: Celestial Arts.
- KAYE, N. (2000). *Site-specific Art: performance, place and documentation*. London: Routledge.
- KNOWLES, R. (2004). *Reading the Material Theatre*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- LEFEVRE, C. (2005). *Visible Fringe: What is "Site – Specific"?* Available from <http://www.mnartists.org/article.do?Rid=761110> (Accessed 14/08/09).
- LLOYD, M. (2007). *Key Contemporary Thinkers: Judith Butler*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

- MACKINNON, C. (1989). *Towards a Feminist Theory of the State*. U.S.A.: Harvard University Press.
- MCAULEY, G. (1999). *Space in Performance: making meaning in theatre*. U.S.A.: University of Michigan Press.
- MCDONALD, H. (1999). *Erotic Ambiguities: the female nude in art*. London: Routledge.
- MEERSMAN, B. (2007). Review of *Chaste* (2007): Available from <http://cue.ru.ac.za/dance/2007/tangs-show-subverts-salome.html> (Accessed 23/09/08).
- MEERSMAN, B. (2008). <http://www.chico.mweb.co.za/art/2007/2007jul/070706-broken.html>. (Accessed 23/09/08).
- MULVEY, L. (1989). *Visual and other pleasures*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- NEAD, L. (1992). *Female Nude: art, obscenity and sexuality*. London: Routledge.
- PHELAN, P. (1993). *Unmarked: the politics of performance*. London: Routledge.
- POSTER, M. (1988). *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- PRESTON, P.W. (1997). *Political/Cultural Identity: Citizens and Nations in a global Era*. London: Sage.
- PRESTON-DUNLOP, V. & SANCHEZ-COLEBURG, A. (2001). *Dance and the Performative*. London: Verve.
- SCHECHNER, R. (1973). Performance and the Social Sciences: Introduction, *The Drama Review* 17(3), 1-5.
- SCHECHNER, R. (2002). *Performance Studies: an introduction*. London: Routledge.
- SHEPHARD, S. & WALLIS, M. (2004). *Drama/Theatre/Performance: the New Critical Idiom*. London: Routledge.
- SKEGGS, B. (1997). *Formulations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable*. London: Sage
- VAN ZYL, M. & STEYN, M. (Eds.) (2005). *Performing Queer: Shaping Sexualities 1994-2004*. South Africa: Kwela Books.
- WARNER, M. (1993). *Fear of a Queer Planet: queer politics and social theory*. USA: University of Minnesota Press.
- WEED, E. & SCHOR, S. (Eds.) (1997). *Feminism meets queer theory*. USA: Indiana University Press.
- WEED, E. (1997). [Preface]. *Feminism meets queer theory* (pp. vii-xiii), USA: Indiana University Press.
- WEST, C. & ZIMMERMAN, D.H. (1991). *Doing gender*. In S. JACKSON. & S. SCOTT. (Eds), *Gender: a Sociological Reader* (pp. 42-47). London: Routledge.
- WHITFORD, M. (1991). *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the feminine*. London & New York: Routledge.
- WILCOX, H. (1990). *The body and the text: Hélène Cixous, reading and teaching*. New York: St Martin's Press.
- WOLFF, J. (1990). Feminine sentences: Essays on Women and Culture. In P.CAMPBELL. (Ed), *Analysing Performance: a Critical Reader*. (pp. 44). UK: Manchester University Press.

DVDS: *Chaste* (2007) and *Displayed and Framed* (2008).

Please note: Both pieces were filmed by amateur photographers for research purposes. As a result the quality is not of a professional standard.