

Trans Performance Ethnography: *Queer Bathroom Stories* as Case Study

Keynote given at the Sexuality Studies Association meeting of SSHRC Congress,
June 3, 2015, University of Ottawa, Canada.

By Sheila L. Cavanagh

In this keynote I focus on trans performance ethnography, education and politics. Questions of LGBTQ representation and audience reception are central. The queer pedagogy of performance enacted in *Queer Bathroom Stories (QBS)* focuses on LGBT life stories. The play invites us to consider how sex segregated designs discipline ways of being gendered at odds with heteronormative and cisgender (non trans) body-politics. It also provides an opportunity for queer and trans-counter cultural politics. The stories in my play feature an array of LGBTQ experiences in bathrooms ranging from the sublime to the tragic, the mundane to the curious, the passionate to the ignorant and so on. Today I am going to focus on trans-specific excommunication in the Canadian context linked to what Viviane Namaste calls transsexual invisibility and erasure.

The play is inspired by 100 interviews I completed for my book titled *Queering Bathrooms: Gender, Sexuality, and the Hygienic Imagination* (UTP, 2010). My research assistants and I interviewed people in major Canadian and American cities about how they experience gendered toilets in public space. I will henceforth use trans* to include those identifying as transgender, transsexual, two-spirit, genderqueer and non-binary, along with other gender variant designations in formation. This talk will focus on a relationship between trans* activism and arts-based research, fact and fiction in the enactment of trans stories and audience reception. More specifically, I consider how audiences engage, refuse, query, contest, affectively respond to, and ignore, dimensions of my research having to do with trans material.

Performance ethnography involves a dramatic staging of one's ethnographical notes, often including interviews, testimonies and memoirs, speeches, archival materials, photographs, maps, policy and government documents along with other primary and secondary source materials. But critical performance ethnography is something more than an assemblage of researcher notes. Performance ethnography dramatizes the complexity of a research question, issue, or topic of investigation and gives it a human face; thereby entering into the terrain of the human subject, taking emotion and affect as significant to the research (and not as variables to be controlled). It dramatizes the phenomenon under investigation so as to capture visual and acoustic dimensions for a live audience.

While having little experience in arts-based methods or performance studies, I was haunted by a vision, coming from a trans interviewee, about how she wanted the research to be used. The interviewee said:

I've actually been imagining...that [this project] would become an installation in a gallery, that it would be an experience...[not] just...a paper...few people get to read it. I really feel that this needs to be a public exercise...something that's experiential, that engages people in conversation and I want to see a traveling exhibition of some sort. People's stories being told and represented through...film or audio or through re-enactment or theatre. I would love to know and be connected to bathroom queering activities, if there are such people.

I had only ever published my scholarship in textual formats but I began to wonder about how I might dramatize the interviews for a larger non-academic audience.

I had a nagging feeling that something was missing after having published *Queering Bathrooms* the book. Something escaped the printed page and I worried about how to do convey the affective dimensions of the interviews. A myriad of stories were told excavating a rich emotional landscape. Sadly, only short sound-bites and pithy quotes made it into the book. The detailed stories were cut during the editorial process. Not wanting to let them go I kept an archive of these stories. I titled the Word file “Cut with Regret.” I know a book can’t do everything. I also see value in the protocols of scholarly publishing. But I became intrigued by expositional and performance-based writing (for the stage, radio, and so on) that might capture what I would like to call the affective residue of trans experience permeating the stories. I wondered how I might write a performance ethnography that could give life and form to the affective dimensions of transphobia. Affect is too often lost or sidelined in social scientific research: it is nominally referenced at best and regarded as an irritant, a variable to be controlled, at worst. Social scientific researchers turning to performance ethnography are often drawn to the atmosphere of the theatre and its capacity to stage the spatial complexities of emotion and intersubjectivity. Performance ethnography is a pedagogically exciting methodological form because it can emotionally engage audiences in topics they would normally avoid.

The interview style, relying as it does on first person accounts, enables characters with radically different backgrounds and ways of thinking to find themselves in conversation with one another. Performance ethnography enables characters with “multiple opinions, identities, versions of history, and methods of storytelling” to be set up in dialogue. Interview-based theatrical productions like Eve Ensler’s *The Vagina Monologues* (2001) and Moises Kaufman and the Tectonic Theatre Project’s *The Laramie Projects* (2001) follow the aesthetic conventions of the interview to stage taboo or controversial subjects and stories --- in these two plays, vaginas and homosexuality respectively.

There is, of course, a rich cultural history of queers, drag kings, drag queens, trans and gender-queers making good use of the stage to render the complexities of gender visible and to unsettle (subvert and rework) bi-gendered systems, heteronormativity and race (Muñoz, *Disidentifications*). I would like to quickly mention two extraordinary performance artists in the Canadian context: Nina Arsenault who wrote and performed *The Silicone Diaries* and Mirha-Soleil Ross’s show *Yapping Out Loud: Contagious Thoughts from an Unrepentant Whore* – both transsexual performers who have staged their work at Buddies and elsewhere to incredible pedagogical effect. Despite the power of trans cultural production outside academe, performance ethnographers in academe have been slow to embrace trans (or even queer) themes. While there are some examples of trans activism in the Canadian context using arts-based mediums (most often documentary film), theatre has been under-utilized as a means to generate trans-positive education, discussion and debate.

The neglect as I see it is due to a false binary between fact and fiction. The problem is with respect to the status of truth and the real in academic research. What counts as real matters but truth defies capture before our empirically grounded eyes. There is always something in excess of our research. Let me explain the paradox as I see it. Many trans* participants reported harassment and forceful removal by security guards and male vigilantes in toilets. This finding is not only substantiated by my research but documented by trans organizations in Toronto and throughout Canada and the United States who lobby for gender neutral toilet options. For example, the Trans Needs Assessment Report published by the Canadian AIDS Society in 2014 recommended that “...single-user washrooms [be converted] to all-gender washrooms (change

the signage), and consider doing the same for multi-user washrooms” (ix). They found that 74% of trans respondents said they avoid public toilets --- 73% said they avoid gymnasiums (including public pools). Indeed, of all public spaces listed, bathrooms and gyms were most often avoided due to trans status. But the question of what it means to be excommunicated in public space, notably toilets, is immeasurable and taps into the realm of affect.

Social scientists and activists alike have trouble accounting for what defies linguistic signification. Emotion and affect are difficult to quantify, let alone inscribe. What is publishable in a social scientific journal does not always fly on stage and vice versa. Aesthetics and dramatics are governed by logics other than those authenticated by social scientific methods. Dani Snyder-Young (2010) notes that “kinesthetic knowledge, experienced in the gut, can provide the possibility of radical transformation --- of real changes of perspective and real shifts in understanding” (Snyder-Young 2010, 887). Shit, vomit, excrement, tears, piss and ejaculate and so forth are all gut-wrenching. Little is published about bodily fluids along with the messy underbelly of gender and sexuality. It is perhaps not surprising that the toilet – overlaid by talk about the profane and objectionable – is quietly ignored (or censored) in academic research. The toilet --- a repository for the grotesque, the queer and the underworld --- has been sanitized by gender normativity and heterosexist spatial designs. It must, however, be remembered that the room has a rich etymological history. There is no end to the vile, comical, and genteel words given to the toilet including:

the head, the privy, the garderobe, the commode, the latrine, the pissoir, the lavatory, the dunny, the john, the throne, the loo, the holy of holies, the bog, the crapper, the biffy, the netty, the shitter, the shot-tower, the can, the thunder box, The House of Lords, The House of Commons, The House of Ease, the bank and the queer head.

The toilet is a repository for human excess and as such signifies nothing. Or, as Philip Kuberski (2004) notes in his discussion of Stanley Kubrick films, the toilet

...signifies too much...the toilet is the entrance into a labyrinthine abyss of unsuspected unities: an underworld of sewage pipes, channels of deposit, and estuaries of human waste hustled into a great unseen pool, a vast abjection in hidden contrast to the egoic desire for a freeing independence from the necessities that encumber organic existence (Kuberski, 141-142).

There is something unspeakable about the toilet --- something traumatic that has everything to do with gender and sexuality --- but I am getting ahead of myself.

I decided to embark on the work of writing a play titled *Queer Bathroom Stories*. I staged it as an amateur production at the Toronto Fringe Festival in Toronto in July, 2011, and later as a professional production at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre (the world’s oldest and longest running queer theatre) in Toronto for their 2014 World Pride program. I created three dramatic personae: FEMALE, MALE, and TRANS to represent the binary poles of male-masculinity, female-femininity, along with a third identificatory sign, designated “Trans.” My intention was to animate the otherwise generic, one-dimensional stick-figures and to give them a voice. FEMALE is played by Hallie Burt. MALE is played by Chy Ryan Spain. TRANS is played by Tyson James. It was filmed during the Buddies production by Kami Chisholm – whose film on *Homonationalism and the Future of Queer Politics* was screened yesterday. Megan Watson directed the play and I had a large production team assisting me with the dramaturgy, set, choreography, lights, sound, costume design, etc.

I fictionalized each monologue enacted in the play. While maintaining true to the spirit of individual stories or, in some cases, to multiple stories sewn into one overarching narrative

voice, I changed names, demographics, places and dates. The dramatic climax in each monologue is taken from an actual interview or a combination of interviews, but the scenes are fictitious. While fiction affords interpretive license often shunned by positivist research methodologists, it can animate an affect truth more poignantly than a quantifiable fact. There are often grains of un-authorized truth in a good work of fiction. A carefully crafted fiction can tell us something in excess of the words transcribed. A quotable sound-bite doesn't tell all. Critical fictions are powerful when they formulate engaging questions. Audiences are moved by a story, an actor, a gesture or communication when a curious, erotic, and affective connection is made to the material. Fiction also allows me to respect interviewee confidentiality and to maintain anonymity.

Today, I will feature four trans monologues filmed during the professional production at Buddies last year for World Pride in Toronto.

PLAY Molly's story: Molly: <https://vimeo.com/105314564> or <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwrHbMZUU5Rqa2RxM1NnMkJIUk0/edit?usp=sharing>

1: MOLLY

Molly is a white trans woman living in Toronto who struggles financially and is living on disability payments. She devotes much time to trans activist organizations and lives in Toronto community housing. I chose what I took to be the most viscerally compelling vignette in Molly's interview – specifically her experience at a Toronto swimming pool. Many trans people in Toronto avoid community pools and gymnasiums. I continue to be moved by Molly's courage to use the women's change room and aquatic facilities. Not only did she venture in to use the pool but she filed a human rights complaint with the YMCA board of directors. My director worked with the actors to perform confusion and consternation on the part of the YMCA board members—their very inability to understand her complaint—to illustrate the difficulties trans interviewees have making their experiences of social exclusion, erasure, and invisibility intelligible.

Molly's vignette appears early on in the play and is meant to prompt audiences to question their assumptions about who counts as a 'woman.' Although Molly's experience before the board was traumatic she continued to pursue her right to use the women's change room through the Mayor's office. Thanks to Molly (along with the advocacy of many other trans groups and organizations in Toronto), the YMCA now has gender inclusive policies in place – although the degree to which this policy is actualized is variable. There are now trans-only swim times at the University of Toronto pool which, I believe, is a first in Canada. But I continue to wonder about how to represent the emotional dimensions of Molly's story.

Despite Molly's considerable impact in the Toronto trans community, the affective remains of trans-specific erasure lingers. The affect is immeasurable and too often ignored. In her article titled '*Trauma, Authenticity and the Limits of Verbatim*' [theatre], Amanda Stuart Fisher writes:

The 'truth' of the traumatic event is arguably not transparent, knowable or even communicable. Rather, trauma is, by definition, that which 'resists simple comprehension (Caruth 1996, 6) and can perhaps best be understood as a radical break or rupture in our understanding of what it means to be in the world (2011, 112).

The traumatic moments in Molly's interview were not evident in what Molly actually said. I felt her pain in her linguistic omissions, stutters, in the way she abruptly changes the subject or veers off topic – this happens just as she is about to broach the arc of a story. The affect was also transmitted in non-verbal ways, by bodily cues and gestures.

Trauma defies signification and is about being thrust into a liminal or transitional space where one's possibilities as a subject collapse. The traumatic breach which, in this case, involves transsexual erasure involves a collapse of subjectivity anchoring the self in time, body, culture, and place. While verbatim theatre can't fully capture an experiential breach because it relies on 'direct communicable experience' it can, nevertheless, gesture to that which escapes signification – the words to say it.

PLAY Leslie's story Leslie: <https://vimeo.com/105412176> or <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwrHbMZUU5RqUC1RY1U4S0JCMmc/edit?usp=sharing>

2: LESLIE

In staging Leslie Morgan's story, I wanted the audience to understand how a trans-feminine presence on the assembly line is felt to be anomalous to the culture of working class, cisgender hetero-masculinity on the factory floor – especially when one is subject to trans-specific persecution.

I didn't interview Leslie, but read about her story in the newspaper. She resigned from her job at a small-town Ontario Siemen's VDO plant in 2005 following intensive transphobic harassment. As enacted in the play, a special toilet was assigned to her which was "fouled up by urine – on the tank, seat and surrounding area." Her co-workers also, as dramatized in the play, sent hate notes down the assembly line to her work station. Morgan filed a complaint with the Ontario Human Rights Commission and I was unable to find out how her case ended. While most instances of transphobia in the workplace aren't subject to litigation or formal investigations, a president setting case in May 2013 ruled in favor of trans employee subject to transphobia. The Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario ruled in favor of Maria Vanderputten, a trans employee at the Seydaco Packaging Corporation in Mississauga who was fired while undergoing transition. The main point of contention seems to have been the employer's refusal to let Vanderputten use the women's toilet. Along with the employer's failure to accommodate her needs she was subject to trans-specific discrimination.

As illustrated in the two real-life cases involving Leslie and Vanderputten, trans positive policies, education and training are needed in the workplace. But such work must carefully navigate the fact of workplace harassment with the fiction of the super productive and independent trans worker. Dan Irving, a member of the SSA executive and who has made significant contributions to trans studies, offers an astute critique of how trans bodies are legitimated when they are properly productive and normalized within capitalist and neo-liberal economies. He warns us that the discourse of the "self-made" trans man gains currency to the extent that it fits into economic discourses of individualism, competition, self-sufficiency and self-determination. Thus some white, able-bodied, middle- and upper class trans men can adopt a position in relation to capitalist accumulation and profit, while other trans people --- lacking cultural capital and claims to independent living --- are marginalized, ignored and erased. The fantasy of the self-made trans man also taps into hegemonic discourses of white, hetero-masculinity critiqued, in the Canadian context, by Bobby Noble in his book *Masculinities Without Men* and *Sons of the Movement* among others.

Who can buy-in to the fiction of the self-made trans man or, I would add, the self-made trans woman? As much as I adore people like Laverne Cox we can't all achieve her status, fame and seamless beauty. What critical fictions about trans-ness must one harness to get medical coverage, to get and keep a job, to live in the world as an intelligible subject? What if the fiction (or story) one tells about a gender journey is, as Irving claims, reminiscent of a hegemonic bargain sought to make life economically sustainable and livable?

PLAY Jamie's story <https://vimeo.com/105314552> or <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwrHbMZUU5Rqd1lsdGVZWDZOTEk/edit?usp=sharing>

3: JAMIE

An ongoing challenge in creating the monologues was to give life, form, and texture to geo-cultural and racial differences in Canada, a settler society, without being stereotypical or inadvertently producing a racialized caricature. In rehearsals the cast, director, and I wrestled with how best to acknowledge class-based demographics having to do with housing and under-employment, age, disability, race and aboriginal status. We all agreed that characters must not be reducible to identity-based prototypes. Complex characters reflect the intricacies and contradictions of the human subject as they are also, in everyday life, interpolated into identity-based coordinates.

Jamie's monologue was not difficult to narrate on stage because they clearly indicates that they are Ojibway and two-spirit. They speak about poverty and various iterations of the Indian Acts along with the difficulties of living in northern Manitoba -- where there is a large First Nations population struggling with poverty, chronic underfunding by the federal government, police brutality, the legacy of residential schools, racism and settler colonialism. Jamie is young and regularly under-housed and under employed. In crafting Jamie's monologue I took care to emphasize the acoustic rupture between First Nations vocal cadences (which are often in time and step with the embodied emotion of the story-teller) and the amplification of sound enabled by the microphone which de-centers the speaker. The constable is fictitious. But Jamie's narration of events leading-up to the arrest is verbatim. The scene is designed to underscore how difficult it can be to explain the interrelated effects of racism against First Nations, transphobia and poverty. The RCMP has a long and disturbing history of racism against aboriginals, intolerance of trans people and sex workers.

The speed by which Jamie is introduced, politely dismissed and escorted out of the room mirrors the time and tempo of the lavatory --- in and out --- along with the crude and regimented tempo of modern judicial authority. The constable swiftly (if uncomfortably) changes the subject to SLUT WALK Toronto: a feminist and sex-positive movement that began at York University. As we know, officer, Michael Sanguinetti, advised women -- at a campus safety-information session no less -- not to dress like sluts to avoid sexual assault. The fictitious constable cast in the play (not unlike the real life officer at York), fails to see the inter-relationship between victim blaming, violence and sex work. In the play, I tried to enact a link between violence against two-spirit peoples and intolerance of sex workers that is, again, a traumatic nexus of power, intolerance and hate.

It is worth noting that trans people of color in Toronto and throughout North America experience racial profiling and police brutality and this is, of course, exacerbated by class and the way trans people are often portrayed as being dishonest about their sex and gender identity. In the Black Lives Matter movement in the US the lives of black trans women like Mya Hall in

Baltimore (who was shot by police and ultimately died) receive significantly less media attention than cisgender black men like Mike Brown, Eric Garner and Freddie Gray. The scant media attention given to Hall was not only transphobic – referring to her as a ‘man dressed as a woman’ – but it reveals deep-seated racism against black trans sex-workers. Gesturing to the presence of black trans women on the street Hall worked, a writer for the *Washington Post* wrote that it was a ‘choreography of clichés.’

PLAY Sue-Ellen’s story <https://vimeo.com/105314561> or <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwrHbMZUU5RqVldZZ29TYkc2X00/edit?usp=sharing>

4: SUE-ELLEN

Sue-Ellen’s monologue must be situated in the geo-cultural and political context of the southern states but is complicated by time, memory, migration and transition. She currently lives in the San Francisco bay area. At the time of the interview she was a trans woman but transitioned back four years after the interview. Sue-Ellen is the oldest participants in the study. She is exceptionally articulate and one of the only white interviewees to talk about race, particularly as it pertains to her experience of gender identity, whiteness and transphobia. As I listened to Sue-Ellen I felt transported to another place and time. Her story is interspersed with childhood memories of Klan meetings, racially segregated toilets, and the difficulty of travel across the US and Canadian border (as a trans woman).

Sue-Ellen’s monologue reads like a redemptive oral history about civil rights with a trans specific twist. Difficulties with police, security guards and vigilantes are exacerbated when trans subjects are racialized. Even the most progressive discourses on hate-crime do not grasp the nuances of bio-political power spurned on by trans and racial prejudice in settler colonial contexts.

Audience Reception

The question of audience reception is complicated. What audiences do with trans life-stories is not transparent or straight-forward. While some audience members who I perceived to be queer or trans (broadly defined) enjoyed the play and liked the monologues, others who weren’t LGBTQ had ambivalent and dissident responses. We won the Audience Pick Award at the Toronto Fringe Festival in 2011 which, I believe, is a first for a trans performance ethnography at the Fringe. Reviews of the production were good but audiences unaffiliated with trans life worlds seemed to be uncomfortable. Fringe-audiences seemed to disidentify with the characters. Others were put-off because they were uncertain about the actual sex and gender identity of actors. I organized talk-backs following the productions when possible. Along with the cast and director, I answered questions about the play, the interviews and the *Queering Bathrooms* project. Audiences needed to give voice to their confusions about gender variance, to their ambivalent feelings about certain monologues, and to their difficulties with the abject topic of the toilet. Some Fringe Festival patrons were unsympathetic to trans bathroom access issues. I struggle to understand what I take to be a lack of compassion and an unwillingness to engage with trans monologues. I speculated that the monologues may be dismissed by some because they are heard to be “foreign” or at odds with dominant cisgender body politics. Others may not know how to respond. Some people find accounts of transphobia difficult to hear because they feel culpable. It is not easy to know that one’s thinking about gender is restrictive and that it functions to excommunicate and harm others. Some audience members could not relax and

enjoy the show until their confusion about the gender identity of particular characters was alleviated.

I, along with some cast members, were privy to transphobic interpretations of the play. One audience member complained that in order to follow the story-line she had to participate in the gendered delusions of the characters. My partner who is a masculine trans-butcht was using a restroom in the theatre before a mid-week show when she was told by a patron that she was in the wrong bathroom! Slightly stunned, Tracey asked: “*Are you kidding me? You just paid ten bucks to see a play called **Queer Bathroom Monologues** and now you’re telling me I’m in the **wrong bathroom**???*” After the show, the woman in the toilet apologized profusely to Tracey while extolling the virtues of her women’s studies degree. I told myself that the time of learning doesn’t correspond to the time of the production and that difficult knowledge is belated – acquired after the fact.

One man accused me of being a pedophile on the patio outside the Factory Theatre while I was handing out promotional cards. I asked him if he’d seen the play and he responded that he didn’t need to -- insinuating that there was something sinister and morally suspect about the production. REAL (Realistic, Equal, Active, for Life) women, a conservative lobby group in Canada formed in 1983 to advocate for traditional family values, lambasted the play and the government of Canada for funding it through SSHRC. They referred to me (and my project partner, Helen Kennedy, the executive director of EGALÉ, a national organization committed to LGBTQ rights in Canada) as part of the left-wing feminist homosexual agenda. They forgot ‘trans’ in their list of indictments.

Although there were negative responses there were also pedagogically promising moments. A South-Asian member of the socialist party of Canada came to see the show and asked me thoughtful questions about trans access issues afterward (which I was happy to answer). He promised to include trans issues in his work on a labour relations board. Several trans colleagues, students and friends came to see the show offered thoughtful feedback and criticism which I welcomed. Audience response is, of course, more complicated when the interviewees are in the audience. One participant whose monologue I featured prominently in the play wanted to know why I didn’t use any of her stories. I guessed that I over fictionalized her monologue. But I also wondered how it could be that she, only three years after the original interview, didn’t recognize her own narration. Another trans interviewee thanked me profusely for including his story. I told him he was welcome as I stood guiltily with the knowledge that I hadn’t included his interview in the script. I further mediated on the tension between fact and fiction in data collection and publication, interviewee stories and memory, researcher interpretation and verbatim transcription.

The actors and production team were similarly affected by the polemics of audience reception. My director’s father refused to see the show because he was uncomfortable with the content. My own mother came. But she gasped (loadly) when one of the actors reached into the toilet bowl to retrieve a roll of toilet paper. My father was perplexed and asked me (*three times*): “Did you write this?”

The question of identification, dis-identification and recognition is complex. I feel ill-equipped to understand the multidirectional projections from interviewee to actor, from playwright to interviewee (and actor), from actor to audience, from audience to production and back again. The stage felt like a house of mirrors. Fiction and reality began to blur. I began to wonder what was true about the stories, what was fiction, if and how the distinction on stage mattered. Where did I, in my dual role as researcher and playwright, fit into what, increasingly,

felt like a strange merger of fact and fiction, truth and distortion, false objectivity and subjective truth?

I also wonder about my choice of the toilet as metaphor and space to perform trans exclusion. The silence surrounding the toilet along with the homoeroticism and gender normativity inherent to it mirrors public and academic discomfort with all that is socially coded as illogical or abject. The toilet, for me as playwright, was intended to represent that which is traumatic and unspeakable. It also represents that which is uncanny, and comes back to haunt us. The proverbial shit that happens in our research and in everyday life is symbolized by the toilet. The toilet is also an iconic in gay male public sex cultures and a prominent feature in the set designs of many gay male theatrical productions. The 'bathroom problem' also punctures everyday trans discourse and activism. The Gender Identity Bill, C 279, written to include gender identity and gender expression as prohibited grounds for discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act and Criminal Code, was un-affectionately dubbed the Bathroom Bill. The conservative party of Canada is now trying to develop legislation to prevent trans patrons from using toilets consistent with their gender identity -- a terrible set-back to trans human rights gains in the last decade. The toilet stands-in to represent a point of incomprehension manifest in the trouble cisgender folks have with gender variance.

In his discussion of Freudian dreams and their relation to theatricality, Samuel Weber notes that the "model of intelligibility and meaningfulness specific to waking, conscious thought, is that of a coherent, consistent, self-contained story, whereas the contrary model of unconscious articulation is that of 'chunks of content piled up' without any discernible form or purpose" (41). The play did have a dream like quality to it. I used shit to stand-in for that which cisgender folks don't understand, can't articulate or resolve about gender --- a transphobic pile up. Part of the white, cisgender sanitary impulse is to clean-up the heterogeneity of sex embodiment and to preserve bi-gender classifications. Much like the function of dreams, according to Freud, is to preserve sleep, gender purity in the bathroom enables cisgenders to keep their own psychically invested troubles with gender dormant and inert. Differences between "men" and "women" must be made visible and verifiable if the cisgender slumber --- a stagnant, yet willful repose --- is to remain unmoved. Hygiene becomes a question of linguistic classification and architectural compartmentalization in everyday life. The clean body of the nation state is a plumbed body. It is also an able body -- one that is class and racially specific sexed body. Genitals are subject to geo-political mapping on lavatory doors. To mess with this logic I ended the play with a dream sequence. I now read directly from the script:

TRANS: I had a dream that everyone was engaged in queer toilet talk. Talk about shit was given free reign. The Marquis de Sade ate feces like chocolate while sitting on the throne. Everyone's shit was turning to gold. The plumbers were rich and the custodians were held in high esteem. Things were turning upside down and people sat around telling stories about urine and feces and sex and no one was in their proper place. Men were ladies and ladies were men and transsexuality was a way of life. Women stood at the urinals and men sat as if needing a day of rest. The Pope removed his heavy robes to take a purifying bath. Amid the rising suds his followers embraced the crude, the grotesque, the profane, and relished in toilet humor. Everyone had his or her own receptacle and wore it like a garment. The toilet bowls were lavishly designed like dishes befitting the Queen, the urinals were sprouting ferns and figs and goldfish swam free. The room began to morph into a den of inequity and then I woke up...

THE END

Sound of flushing.