Remembering Trans Remembrance

By Gina Maya

At a certain point, the playwright and actress had everybody in the palm of her hand. Jo Clifford, the evening's guest speaker, also a sort of benign cobra before us, mesmerizing, with her tales of directing theatre in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, of a life story of love, loss and artistic resurrection. She spoke of religion and the two versions of the myth of Adam and Eve, a familiar one of polarity, then another of androgyny. Somehow it was possible to be anything in that relaxed, reflective audience, atheist or religious, middle-class culture vulture or revolutionary. The event was trans remembrance, but it could have been simply about humanity.

We celebrated, then, and remembered. Avery Laquerriere read their brilliant poem about pride and alienation and shit-strewn hypocrisy. Jo Clifford spoke of her life and her career; she could have continued all night, one suspects, on any topic. We watched a movie, Tangerine, that became increasingly about fragile individuals falling between the cracks of social labels, trans women, married husbands, their families, prostitutes left outside bolted brothel doors. It was Christmas in the sun-swept urban sprawl of Los Angeles, with a big final scene of conflict in the plastic hollowness of a Donut Time restaurant.

Outside the room we broke for tea and pastries, while by candlelight stood a board with some eighty names of trans people, murdered in hate crimes this year, from all over the world. We celebrated trans identity, and remembered.

And bless us

For all the times we have been frozen in terror

Let’s remember we are not alone

Don’t let us,

Don’t let us ever forget,

For he is she

And she is he

And we are they

And they are we

And ever shall be

For ever

And for ever

And for ever

Jo Clifford

The Gospel According to Jesus Queen of Heaven