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Conscious Gender Performance: Reappropriating Women's Bodies Through Performance

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Abstract

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By Maya L. Hubbard

Critics and theorists alike have raised several problems regarding female self-representation in the theater, which feminist artists have tried to address using strategies of body art, female language, performance art, cross-dressing, and Brechtian alienation. Following in this legacy, I created an interpretation of Franca Rame's *A Woman Alone* that aimed to address the treatment of women's bodies onstage, and as signifiers of violence, through the experimentation and use of these different techniques in performance. I found that the most valuable tools in doing so were a multi-media approach, the incorporation of explicit language and imagery, and a conscious gender performance. These methods, in conjunction with acts of replaying traditionally oppressive tactics on the female body in celebration of her gender and sexuality, can reclaim these bodies from meanings and significations that have historically been dictated by an outside, male gaze.

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PREFACE

In the second year of conservatory training at Stella Adler-NYU, we were allowed to take our first stab at classical text. There was one class in particular that was famous as both terrifying and inspiring, the sort of class you imagine when you think of acting conservatories. It was taught by one of the master teachers at the studio, an older stout gentleman with a historic resume and a bad case of gout; he walked with a cane that often doubled as a gavel to emphasize his speech. A classmate and I had been assigned to perform Act 1, scene 5 from *Twelfth Night* when Viola and Olivia meet for the first time. When he gave me the role of Olivia, I was a bit disappointed. Since arriving at NYU I had been cast in a long string of ingénues—Ann in *All My Sons*, Nora in *Doll's House*, Gwendolyn in *The Importance of Being Earnest*—and while acknowledging that I am obviously blessed to be able to play these iconic roles, and also that Olivia isn't a true ingénue (she is usually played by a seasoned actress), I was looking forward to a chance at playing one of the breeches roles, not another quintessentially “feminine” role. Regardless, I accepted that they were casting us in our types to try and prepare us for “the real world” where, if we hoped to work commercially, we would be constantly type cast and needed to be good at it. Anyway, I was far too terrified of the teacher to say anything.

We prepared for weeks, rehearsing every night in the basement of our apartment building, and finally scene day came. I arrived to class dressed in my floor length rehearsal skirt, a simple black blouse, and a veil, makeup-less as is my everyday norm. I was satisfied with my preparation and interpretation of the character, who, I had discovered in rehearsal process, is a staunchly independent woman in many ways which led to my choice to play her as a sort of Elizabethan feminist. After we finished the scene,

we sat down with our notebooks to receive his notes. The teacher gave Viola a slew of typical acting notes, and then turned to me for my turn. He paused for a moment before saying “You know, you could be quite beautiful if you put on a push-up bra and wore some lipstick. Come back and show me the scene again once you’ve done that.” And then he called for the next scene.

At first I was shocked, then embarrassed since all my classmates were sitting in the audience, then outraged that after all my preparation he didn’t give me any acting notes. As I reflected more though, I realized that perhaps this was a reality check that I needed. Clearly directors and actors were going to see me in a certain way, as an ingénue with the potential to be “quite beautiful,” and on top of that, I have chosen a profession where, commercially anyway, your job is to be the mouthpiece for someone else’s writing, and your body a signifier for a director’s vision. I began to wonder how as an actor I would be able to retain ownership of the signification of my body on stage while being type cast in these certain roles. This thesis arose out of my own need, as a young actor about to enter the professional world, to find a way of reclaiming ownership of my body on stage while still existing realistically in an industry that values your ability to appear conventionally beautiful and to truthfully portray, on your own body, someone else’s ideas entirely.

CHAPTER 1 ORIGINS OF FEMINIST PERFORMANCE ART

Self-representation by western women artists has a long history, beginning with the development of female self-portraiture as a distinctive genre originating in the Renaissance. However, for many years, women tended to be cautious in their self-portraiture, working with care and calculation to avoid any taboos in their work. As unadventurous and conservative as this work might seem, it is the *act* of female self-representation that was in itself revolutionary, more than the content of work itself. Nonetheless, it is not until the twentieth century, when women artists first gained admission to academic and artistic academies, that their self-representation began to expand and develop, ultimately forming a new feminist aesthetic that challenged dominant images of women by using their own bodies as an artistic medium.¹

Experimental Self-Portraiture

In Danielle Knafo's book *In Her Own Image*, she describes how women artists who work in self-portraiture and self-representation undermine the dominant, male-constructed images of women by treating themselves as both object and subject, both the signifier and the signified. In doing so, these women are finally able to impose their own meanings onto their own bodies and reclaim their bodies as objects that have historically acquired their meaning from a male gaze. Knafo also highlights the impulse of many of these female self-representers who arose in the twentieth century to combine fantasy and surrealist impulses alongside representations of their reality in a unique way that enables

¹ Knafo, Danielle. *In Her Own Image*. Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2009. Print, 16-87.

them to confront and handle their histories while simultaneously reclaiming their pasts and, ergo, themselves, from the status of objectified beings to that of deeper, more developed individuals.

The combination of the development of this distinctive movement of female self-portraitists alongside the male-dominated “bad-boy” avant-garde movements that emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century quickly paved the way for performance artists and solo female performers to develop the genre of feminist performance art.² Of course there were crucial female figures in the avant-garde movements that led to the development of early performance art--for example, the Dadaist Hannah Höch,³ or Lotte Lenya, whose rise to fame began in the cabaret-soaked end of the Weimar republic and who worked closely with Brecht for many years. However, these artists worked under the manifestos of their respective movements, and, although some, like Höch, advocated for emancipation and other feminist ideals, they didn’t identify primarily as feminists, and, also importantly, didn’t work in self-representation. As the transition was made towards a distinctly feminist aesthetic and movement, and as the importance of self-representation became one of the cruxes of the movement, female artists were criticized for being narcissistic when attempting to represent the same bodies as their male counterparts, who historically have used the female body as a neutral object and surface in their art for centuries.⁴

² Goldberg, RoseLee. *Performance art: from futurism to the present*. Rev. & expanded ed. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2001, 121-165.

³ Sanouillet, Michel, Anne Sanouillet, Michèle Humbert, and Sharmila Ganguly. *Dada in Paris*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009, 22-27.

⁴ Schneider, Rebecca. *The explicit body in performance*. London: Routledge, 1997.

Feminist Performance Art

Though departing from certain elements of the avant-garde movement, the feminist performance movement preserved the attitude of irreverence and the use of shock that their predecessors utilized. As Rebecca Schneider theorizes in her book *The Explicit Body in Performance*, one of the primary tools that many feminist performance artists use is the action of re-performing and re-playing the primitiveness associated with female bodies onto their own bodies. In doing so, these artists expose the cultural foundations of these notions and the significance of shock that woman engaging in acts of transgression has. This is, of course, normal in the male-dominated avant-garde movements, but is doubly shocking when used by women artists, especially when used in terms of their own bodies. It calls to mind the work of Karen Finley, one of the most well-known and central figures of feminist performance art at the end of the last century. Her series *Relaxation Room* featured graphic photographs of childbirth accompanied by an audio loop of screams of a woman in labor and resonates deeply with Schneider's ideas about re-playing the primitiveness associated with women's bodies and using shock as a tool of transgression. The gory photographs, which have been described by one critic as "the disconcerting sight [of] a baby being squeezed out of its mother's body like a hairy turd,"⁵ serve to undermine and challenge the conception of a woman's sex organs as they are so often thought of as objects of "fetish and fantasy of female sexual appeal,"⁶ and refocus on their biological and life-giving purposes.

⁵ Fineman, Mia. "Karen Finley at Fotouhi Cramer." artnet. <http://www.artnet.com/> (accessed December 9, 2013).

⁶ Ibid.

Another important idea that Schneider brings up in her book is that since “any body bearing female marking is. . . shadowed by the history of that body’s signification,” the moment a female body appears on stage, all of the stereotypes, ideas, and meanings associated with it inform the performance before it even begins. She also notes that feminist artists can illuminate the body as socially marked through these acts of re-playing and re-performing the traditional social roles that are designated for it. In doing so, it can highlight the historical, political, cultural, and economic issues that are involved in its marking. Some of the most successful of these performances are the ones that collapse the space between the audience and the stage, for example Marina Abramovic’s *Rhythm 0* (1974), where she sat for six hours in silence in front of an audience with a table with all sorts of objects on it, ranging from instruments of pleasure to those of violence. In an interview she describes how at first the audience was kind, doing nice things to her, like kissing her neck or feeding her, but how by the end of the performance people had cut her neck and sucked blood out, someone even held a pistol to her head, their finger resting on the trigger before another audience member could snatch it away.⁷

Another tool that many feminist theorists and theater artists are inclined to gravitate towards is the development of a kind of language unique to women. This argument is rooted in the post-Lacanian envisioning of a women’s language with its own inherent, rule-breaking properties that aim to dismantle the patriarchy through language.⁸ This will be discussed later on in Chapter 2.

⁷ Abramovic, Marina. "Marina Abramovic on Rhythm 0." Marina Abramovic Insitute. Web, <http://vimeo.com/71952791>

⁸ Goodman, Lizbeth, Jane Gay, and Jeanie K. Forte. "Women's Performance Art: Feminism and Postmodernism." In *The Routledge reader in gender and performance*. London: Routledge, 1998. 236-240.

Gender Performance

Much as in the way patriarchal values are inherited through the arbitrary construction of language, so too are gender roles learned, acquired, and passed down through our culture. This idea is a fundamental argument of Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. There, Butler explores the way in which gender is a social construct: a historically repeated performance, or "act" that enforces a reductive binary system of gender. Butler argues that gender itself is not an established identity, nor do the acts associated with it (the language, gestures, clothing, etc. that it employs) originate organically from biological sex. Rather, gender identity originates from the repetition of these "stylized acts." Because these acts are not generated internally, gender for Butler is merely a constructed identity, a "performative accomplishment" that the "social audience" comes to believe as true. Drag performance and cross-dressing are examples of tools that can serve to theatricalize gender norms and show that they are created, not inherent.⁹

Conceptual artist Adrian Piper utilized cross-dressing in her *Mythic Being* series (1973). *Mythic Being* is an identity that Piper would take on in some of her performance pieces from this series. He is what she identified as the stereotypical overly sexualized, hostile, masculine, aggressive black man of the 1970s. He wears his hair in an Afro, wears dark sunglasses and smokes a cigar. He has a giant handlebar mustache that reaches all the way down to where his neck starts. In much of her writing, she speaks about how both herself as a light skinned black woman, and the Mythic Being as an over-sexualized black man, incite the fear that white society has of miscegenation. She staged

⁹ Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constituion: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal*. no. 4 (1988): 591 531.

various pieces as the character of the *Mythic Being*. In one instance, *The Mythic Being Getting Back*, she got one of her white friends to pretend that the Mythic Being was mugging him. They staged it in an open public space, in what appears to be a public park of sorts, according to one of the most famous photographs documenting the performance.¹⁰ In another Mythic Being performance, entitled “*Mythic Being Cruising White Women*,” Piper sat on a stoop in Cambridge, dressed up and in character as the Mythic Being, leering at all the white women that walked by in this affluent neighborhood.¹¹ In her act of performing and theatricalizing race and gender in the Mythic Being performances, Piper successfully undermines the stereotypes surrounding race and gender identity in this country. She has removed the stereotypes from reality, illustrating clearly that they are performative constructions based in fear and systematic oppression of the white infrastructure, much as Butler advocates in the use of cross-dressing and drag as performative acts to undermine institutionalized gender binaries.

The Trap of Gender Binaries and Theatrical Realism

In another canonical text, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion Of Identity*, Butler makes the claim that a distinctively feminine identity, female persona, or feminist subject can actually be detrimental to feminist politics because it perpetuates the already-embedded formation of the subject that we see in feminist politics. Butler argues that woman is a complicated and multi-faceted subject, influenced deeply by issues outside of her gender, such as race and class. Therefore, boiling down all feminist issues

¹⁰ Piper, Adrian. *The Mythic Being: Getting Back #3*. 1973. Black and white photograph.

¹¹ Piper, Adrian. *The Mythic Being: Cruising White Women*. 1975. Black and white photograph.

to focus solely on the problems relating to existing as a gendered being of a “woman” reduces women and their issues to a specific sliver and serves to further cement gender binaries, which, since Butler believes gender is performative and therefore exists on a gradient, are certainly questionable. Likewise, she finds the distinction between sex and gender problematic in that gender has no basis to be tied to sex since it is merely a culturally constructed, performative act.¹² This has interesting implications for feminist theater artists, then. How do you confront feminist issues as a woman in the theater, in a place of re-playing and re-producing, without further reinforcing gender binaries and the notion of a singular female subject?

Feminist critic Elin Diamond offers an apparent solution to this problem in her essay “Mimesis, Mimicry, and the ‘True-Real’.” She claims that in order to fight against the temptation of theater artists to create theater that will reinforce the patriarchal structures that are already in place and simply reflect society as it is, we must turn away from the use of realism on our stages. She explains how realism specifically relies upon the solidity of the relationship between the signifier and the signified in order to convey the meaning of an “objective world” (a drawing room is always composed of the same elements to convey that it is a drawing room: an oil lamp, a scroll desk, etc.). But rather than this being a successful way of challenging the validity of our systems, it has the potential to inadvertently reinforce the way the world is, reflecting to the audience only the “truth” of the patriarchal and binary world in which we already live.¹³ Elaine Aston

¹² Butler, Judith. *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990.

¹³ Diamond, Elin. “Mimesis, Mimicry, and the ‘True-Real’.” *Modern Drama* 32.1 (1989): 58-72. Rpt. in *Acting Out: Feminist Performances*. Ed. Lynda Hart and Peggy Phelan. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1993. 363-382

further this rejection of realism in her book *An Introduction to Feminism and Theatre*, where she recounts the long history of feminist theater practitioners who consistently reject the Stanislavsky technique of realistic, “believable” acting. Aston goes so far as to criticize Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman* (a central text in the genre of social realism) and the character Linda Loman, who Aston sees as emblematic of the problem of the oppressive systems of realism: “the helper (handmaiden) in the ejaculatory narrative of the American Dream, which is not her narrative”¹⁴ and which retells and unquestioningly cements her place in this traditionally patriarchal narrative through the use of realism. Both Aston and Diamond, in her longer work, *Unmaking Mimesis: Essays on Feminism and Theater*, advocate for the use of Brechtian distancing techniques in feminist theater performance as a way of de-naturalizing, or alienating, gender performativity and allowing the audience to examine the action on stage without necessarily accepting it at face-value.¹⁵

In summary: female self-representation in the theater raises several problems that critics and theoreticians alike have provided answers to, including the strategies of body art, female language, performance art, cross-dressing, and Brechtian alienation. I will explore the use and effectiveness of these tactics in my own performance in the following chapters.

¹⁴ Aston, Elaine. *An introduction to feminism and theatre*. London: Routledge, 1995. 6, 38-40.

¹⁵ Diamond, Elin. *Unmaking mimesis: essays on feminism and theater*. London: Routledge, 1997.

CHAPTER 2

RAME AND KAHLO: OVERCOMING TRAUMA THROUGH SELF-
REPRESENTATION

One of the most prolific and pioneering theater artists in the second half of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first was actor/playwright Franca Rame (b. 1928 d. 2013). Sadly, she is often most well known as the wife of Italian playwright Dario Fo, whom she married in 1954, but, although they collaborated on many theatrical works, her legacy extends far beyond her association with her husband.

Rame's Body of Work

Rame was born to a dynasty of theater artists, one of the few families that can trace its theatrical lineage all the way back to the beginning of *commedia dell'arte* in Italy. She first appeared onstage when she was an infant only eight days old, and from that moment on never left the theater. In interviews, she has given accounts of what it was like being a woman in the Italian theater during her childhood. Despite the fact that the Rame troupe worked as a family and all the players had important roles on stage—a seemingly egalitarian environment—offstage, the women were relegated to perform all the traditional feminine roles, doing the laundry, sewing costumes, cleaning, and cooking for the players while on the road. Despite this, she learned the Italian theatrical tradition in a unique way, since she was one of the few actors lucky enough to be born into what was essentially Italian theater royalty. Fo gives Rame credit for a great deal of his theatrical knowledge and understanding of the Italian theatrical tradition. They both were both

staunch advocates for worker's rights and the right to organize. Rame became a member of PCI, the Italian Communist Party in 1967 and was even elected to the senate in 2006¹⁶.

The accounts of the theater artists who were lucky enough to work with Rame focus extensively on her interactions with her audience. They describe how during performances, it was not as if she was speaking *at* her audience, but rather *with* them. This resonates with the argument that she often made for the importance of the audience in a time, as she observes, that the theater behaves as if it could continue on without the audience altogether. One peer describes Rame's performance style by saying "it is [her] ability to combine, and sometimes confound, the roles of performer and listener that has, more than any aspect, distinguished her theater."¹⁶ She is described as being improvisational, her scripts having enough openness and leeway in them that she can easily break character to speak to her audience about what's going on onstage in the middle of her text, a technique that seems to resonate with some of the Brechtian distancing techniques that Aston and Diamond advocate for in the creation of a feminist performance aesthetic.

Rame's work is also unique in the construction of dialogue. She endows her language with a wandering, highly energized sort of chattering. Perhaps this comes partially as a result of the improvisational qualities of her shows, given that such an apparently loose structure would allow her the room to change the configuration or order of her piece, or even add something entirely new, without throwing off the show. It also allows for a creation of a new sort of dialogue distinctive to Rame, which perhaps is part

¹⁶ Lane, John. "Franca Rame obituary." The Guardian. <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2013/may/29/franca-rame> (accessed December 10, 2013).

of the reason why it's difficult to find a good translation her work that will play effectively in the United States, as well as why her work can often be a challenge for actors. The dialogue is messy—thick paragraphs frequently dotted in ellipses, switching back and forth between tones and direction within the space of a line, or even less, throwing around slang and vernacular (also likely part of the reason why it's difficult to translate) and generally pivoting between thoughts and subjects with little warning, lending itself to an incredibly speedy delivery. This unique dialogue helps Rame to create a world on stage that isn't defined in patriarchal constructions that we have learned to describe the world around us. Yes, her unique brand of dialogue and story telling can be a challenge for both the audience and actor, but it also removes us from the traditional ways we rely on language to communicate, which, if adhering to the Lacanian argument that we acquire patriarchal values through language, means that the language she has developed in her texts (which are already centered around the female body and sexuality) begins to dismantle, or at least circumvent patriarchal norms.

Aside from her unique brand of dialogue, Rame also firmly believes in the use of comedy and laughter as tools to denounce injustice and political corruption, and she is lauded by many as an artist who never sacrificed social justice issues, individual freedom, or personal dignity for the sake of her career¹⁷. This is evident in her body of work, which is for the most part highly intense one-woman shows that she wrote and performed herself and that deal with questions of a woman's sexuality and role in Italian society. The language is graphic, sometimes turning violent and explicit: for example, in her play *It Happens Tomorrow*, which tells the story of an attempted murder of a political

¹⁷ Valeri, Walter. *Franca Rame: a woman on stage*. West Lafayette, IN: Bordighera, 2000, 3-59.

prisoner,¹⁸ or *We all Have the Same Story* that details a violent sexual encounter that leads to an under-the-table and even more violent abortion from a chastising, pro-life doctor.¹⁹ Then, of course, there is *Medea*, Rame's retelling of the classic Greek myth about the mother who kills her children in revenge for her husband's infidelity, remarking to the audience before she commits the murder that it is "better to be remembered as a ferocious madwoman than forgotten like a docile goat."²⁰

Perhaps the most explicitly graphic of Rame's plays is *Lo Stupro (The Rape)*. It was adapted from a personal retelling of the time that Rame was abducted, held at gun point, raped, and slashed with razor blades by fascist members of Milan's division of the federal police. The piece first appeared in the magazine *Quotidiano Donna* and then, two months after the attack, Rame adapted the piece for the stage and began performing it. This piece is extremely brief, no more than a full page of text. The sentences are short, accurate, and to the point, slicing and penetrating in a way that echoes the content of the play. The lines are strikingly frank, devoid of the sort of chit-chatting, wandering dialogue that is common in much of the rest of Rame's work. It is also one of the few pieces she wrote that has a total absence of comedy,²¹ and is perhaps one of her most subtly performed pieces. She comes out on stage with a gracious smile on her face, finding her light as she receives audience applause. She stands with her shoulders back, nods her head and then begins with her customary introduction to the audience, telling

¹⁸ Rame, Franca. *It Happens Tomorrow. Orgasmo Adulto and Escapes from the Zoo*. New York: Broadway Play Publishing INC, 1985. 68-71. Print.

¹⁹ Rame, Franca. *We all have the Same Story. Orgasmo Adulto and Escapes from the Zoo*. New York: Broadway Play Publishing INC, 1985. 37-46

²⁰ Rame, Franca. *Medea. Orgasmo Adulto and Escapes from the Zoo*. New York: Broadway Play Publishing INC, 1985. 56-60. Print.

²¹ Rame, Franca. *Lo Stupro*. Translated by Ed Emery.
<http://www.geocities.ws/dariofoarchive/rape.html>

them about the context of the piece and explaining the state of affairs that Italy and “the terroristic ritual to which a woman is subjected by policemen, doctors, judges and prosecuting lawyers, when she has been raped.” With one simple movement then she places her water glass on the floor beside her and lays back into the chair in one precise movement, her legs lengthened out in front of her, one foot with her heel kicked up, the other flat on the floor. Her arms fall down, limp, from her rolled back shoulders and she cocks her head to a slight rightwards tilt. And then she begins to speak the play text, her voice almost tentative, soft and breathy. She moves only her shoulders up and down slightly, once in a while pulsating her fingers, or shifting slightly the tilt in her neck. The climax of the piece happens when she spreads her legs apart and tries to lift one of her feet up.²² The subtlety of the piece has a beautiful, almost haunting, effect, and it is also endows it, and her, with power. It would be easy to act the piece in near hysteria, but the vocal control and efficiency of movement serves to give her control over the entire piece and in turn, the situation that she confronts during it.

A Woman Alone

Rame’s piece *A Woman Alone* is perhaps her most frequently performed play. It tells the story of a woman who has been locked in her apartment by her husband, forced to stay at home, and take care of her baby and bed-ridden sexually abusing brother-in-law, ever since her suicide attempt following an affair with a boy who was giving her Italian lessons. The entire piece is addressed to the protagonist’s new neighbor, who she sees out of her window in the building across the way. Throughout the course of the play,

²² YouTube. "Franca Rame - Monologo "Lo Stupro"." YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzh7FmmNDAM> (accessed March 29, 2014).

we learn about the circumstances that have landed her in this situation, and, with the help of a series of annoyances (in the form unwelcome telephone calls and door-knocking intrusions from her husband's creditor, her former lover, a sexual aggressor, her abusive husband, and the father of her husband's young mistress), she becomes fed up to the point that by the end of the play, she almost kills herself, then pushes her brother-in-law's wheel chair down the stairs, shoots the "wanker" next door and, we assume, shoots her husband. Rame has endowed this character with the unique ability to dance along the line between sanity and insanity, ferocity and gentility, switching in an instant from graciously inviting to her neighbor to yelling profanities at her brother-in-law. It is easy to conceive of this character as typically and quintessentially feminine in all the conventional ways we are culturally taught, especially when we picture Rame, the blonde bombshell with always-impeccable wing-tipped eyeliner, playing her.²³

As Schnieder suggests, assumptions about the female body on stage presuppose social/gender performance and make us expect a certain kind of feminine character, especially when they look the way Rame does. In the case of *A Woman Alone*, the graphic language and intensity of performance material that comes out of her body on stage often seems to be in contradiction with the audience expectations, and this seems to be where a lot of the power and impact of her performance lies. In catching the audience off-guard, her performance leaves them vulnerable to the content and intention of her material while also breaking down the presuppositions that normally attend a woman's body when theatrically presented. This effect is doubled by the fact that Rame was a

²³ Rame, Franca. *A Woman Alone. Adult Orgasms and Escapes from the Zoo*. Translated by Estelle Parsons. New York: Broadway Play Publishing INC, 1985. 68-71. Print.

well-known victim of and advocate against sexual assault and gendered violence, and the audience also necessarily interprets her work through this lens. This lends an undeniable power and strength to Rame's work through her direct confrontation and, more importantly, her embrace of female sexuality as a victim of sexual violence.

Frida Kahlo and the Re-performance of Trauma

On reflection, we might say that the visual artist Frida Kahlo seemed to use her own femininity in a similar way. Similar to the powerful effect that the sexually explicit dialogue of Rame had when juxtaposed with her outward appearance (as mentioned in the previous chapter), Kahlo, writing and speaking in both Spanish and English, used as many curses and profanities as she could possibly jam into her sentences. Herrera describes how she liked the effect it had on her audience who were continually shocked that such nasty things could come from such a feminine and delicate appearing person. In fact, the conjunction of Kahlo and Rame makes for an illuminating comparison in many different lights: both lived in the shadows of their more famous husbands (Dario Fo and Diego Rivera, respectively) whose work deeply influenced each of the women, and, most importantly, both made art by displaying a female body that had been violated. In his seminal biography, *Frida, a Biography of Frida Kahlo*, Hayden Herrera describes how Kahlo's life was spent in and out of hospitals, undergoing countless surgeries ever since the brutal streetcar accident she found herself in at the age of 18. Alejandro Gómez Arias, her boyfriend at the time, recounts the awful accident:

The electric train with two cars approached the bus slowly. It hit the bus in the middle. Slowly the train pushed the bus... When the bus reached its maximal flexibility it burst into a thousand pieces, and the train kept moving. It ran over many people... Among the iron rods of the train, the handrail broke and went

through Frida from one side to the other at the level of the pelvis... Something strange had happened. Frida was totally nude. The collision had unfastened her clothes. Someone in the bus, probably a house painter, had been carrying a packet of powdered gold. This package broke, and the gold fell all over the bleeding body of Frida. When people saw her she cried, "*La Bailarina, la bailarina!*" With the gold on her red, bloody body, they thought she was a dancer.

From this description, the incident is painted as horrific, and yet strangely beautiful—similar to much of her life. The pain of the injury, the countless surgeries, and the psychological pain she faced from the resulting infertility and also from the series of infidelities on the part of her husband, manifest themselves in her numerous and beautiful self-portraits, which Herrera argues were painted by Kahlo as a way to control her world, since she so often felt out of control living in it.²⁴ In re-creating, or re-playing, the world around her, Kahlo, like Rame, reclaims her surroundings and uses art as a tool to process the traumatic events that have happened to her.

As Danielle Knafo points out, many female self-portraitists at the beginning of the twentieth century mixed fantasy and reality in their work in a way that allowed them to both confront, and, reframe their histories. This is evident in much of Kahlo's work—for example *Broken Column*, which was painted after Kahlo had spinal surgery. Knafo points out that, in the paintings, Kahlo's body is by all conventional standards perfect, except for the column that runs through the center of her body and rips it apart. Her face appears unmoving except for the sixteen tears perching on her eyelids and cheekbones. It is as if they don't match the rest of the expression, as if they were painted on as an afterthought, as if she forgot to show that she was sad. They are strikingly white, which also seems to add to the effect that they almost look like a mistake. Underneath, the rest of the face is

²⁴ Herrera, Hayden. *Frida, a biography of Frida Kahlo*. New York: Harper & Row, 1983, 1-76.

the same face that we see Kahlo give herself in all her self-portraits: strong, unflinching, dignified. The landscape behind her is barren and dry, and the column running through her makes it look almost as if she is a fixture of the same desolation as the landscape behind her.²⁵ She has portrayed the reality of the surgery, and the violence that it committed against her body, in the bloody gash along her torso, but she has also combined it with a fantastical landscape—arguably the fantasy of strength that Kahlo so often lacked. It dignifies her being, despite the performance of violence on her body and the desolation visited on her. It endows her with a certain grace and beauty, similar to Rame’s performances of her more violent texts.

Kahlo also went through periods of cross-dressing in her life, often corresponding to the times of Riveras’s infidelities. In *Self Portrait with Cropped Hair*, she sits amongst a pile of her shorn hair, the scissors still in hand. Her suit is baggy and she looks tiny and fragile in it, and yet her posture gives her strength. She looks out to the audience from the side, almost mischievously. This connects to Butler’s idea about and how cross-dressing can undermine traditional binary gender roles and highlight their performativity. Perhaps enacting gender in one way that is opposite to our norm also allows us to behave in ways that otherwise we might not, much like the power that Piper found as the Mythic Being to behave and exist in public in ways as a man that she never would have felt comfortable doing as a woman. For Kahlo, perhaps it was also a way to regain her individuality and

²⁵ Kahlo, Frida. *The Broken Column*. 1944. Oil on Masonite. 15 11/16” x12 1/6”. Collection Museo Dolores Olmedo, Xochimilco, Mexico City, Mexico.

strength after Diego's infidelity, since she often identified traditional femininity with weakness.²⁶

An especially unnerving piece by Kahlo is *Without Hope*. Kahlo painted this while she was being force-fed after undergoing a series of surgeries in quick succession and losing her appetite. It seems as if she's stuck under her bed covers, and it is difficult to tell if all the food and blood and carcasses are coming through the funnel into her mouth or if she's vomiting them up. The painting gives the audience the feeling of claustrophobia--she looks so small underneath the covers and is dwarfed by all the mass of the organic matter-blob that is hovering over her. The landscape is once again a cracked and dry desert, appearing oppressively hot with a giant red sun. The moon is also painted on the upper left quadrant of the painting, suggesting that perhaps she is stuck there, both day and night, underneath all of that festering material, and unable to move. This painting is a good reminder that Kahlo, like Rame, doesn't shy away from things that might make her audience uncomfortable; in fact she seizes upon them, presenting them in vivid colors and letting them dominate the frame and sometimes even her²⁷. And yet, in the vast majority of her self-portraits, she maintains the same regal pose, her unwavering gaze confronting her viewer and endowing her with a godly quality. This allows her to rise above and take control of whatever other misery might be surrounding

²⁶ Kahlo, Frida. *Self Portrait with Cropped Hair*. 1940. Oil on canvas. 40 x 28 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA. <http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/frida-kahlo/self-portrait-with-cropped-hair-1940> (accessed on October 1)

²⁷ Kahlo, Frida. *Without Hope*. 1945. Oil on masonite. 28 x 36 cm. Collection of Dolores Olmedo Mexico City, Mexico. <http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/frida-kahlo/without-hope-1945> (accessed October 1)

her in the painting, similar to the effect of Rame's subtle and minimalistic performance in *Lo Stupro*.

CHAPTER 3

IMAGINING VIOLENCE AS AN ACT OF RECLAMATION

Questioning Traditional Feminist Performance Theory as a Definitive Method

It is possible that the above description of Rame and Kahlo's work would seem, in some ways, to deviate away from the feminist performance techniques I mentioned in Chapter 1. There are certainly ways in which they *do* exemplify these techniques: on the one hand, Kahlo's often times surreal imagery and landscapes, her tendency to cross-dress in times when she was questioning her own femininity after Rivera's adulterous forays; on the other hand, Rame's development of her own language, her improvisation and breaking away from the text, which resonates with Aston and Diamond's advocacy of Brechtian ideals. Further, and most fundamentally, each artist engages in playing out her art on her own body. However, there are also certainly ways in which these artists would not seem like the traditional choices for the focus of a thesis such as this, given that neither artist identified primarily as a feminist performance artist. On first glance, they might not seem to exemplify the form as effectively as a more obvious choice—perhaps a Caryl Churchill or Eve Ensler play—might.

However, I see Rame and Kahlo as artists who challenge and deepen the crux of some feminist performance theory. The resistance to all forms of realism that Diamond and Aston articulated would seem to negate the technique and craft that both of these artists employ in their work. Though Kahlo did employ some fantasy and surrealist impulses in her paintings, and though Rame had a tendency towards the absurd, the work of both artists seem to be grounded in traditional, realistic training. In all of Kahlo's

portraits, even some of the more fantastical ones, she never alters the realism with which she paints her own face. Perhaps she exaggerated her unibrow and mustache in some of them, but even if they are falsified they are still extremely realistic in appearance. Rame, though trained in Italian theatrical tradition stemming from *commedia dell'arte*, which is a highly stylized and broad technique, is still a “realistic” actor, employing a certain restraint and control in her acting that fits with the realism in the characters and scripts she writes. This is especially evident in the extremely casual nature of her dialogue, as described in the previous chapter. And yet, the realism that both artists endow their work with helps them to solidify for themselves and for their audiences that it is their real, recognizable selves that are exacting the artistic control and the power over their surroundings and traumatic experiences.

As I furthered my research and exploration of the two artists, I also began to take specific issue with Butler’s thinking about gender performativity. As I explained in Chapter 1, Butler claims that, since gender roles are a learned repetition of stylized acts, they must be undermined and questioned by tools such as cross-dressing and drag performance so as to steer clear of the trap of gender binaries. However, I think it is limiting to say that performance of a traditionally feminine gender undermines the feminist agenda. Not only does it seem unrealistic and, frankly, difficult to remove all traces of traditional gender roles from a human being and to ask the audience to let go of them as well in their spectatorship but, more, I believe that there is strength in owning and re-performing your own gender and even gender stereotypes as a method of reclaiming and reappropriating them. Though I’m sure this was never Butler’s (or her peers’) intention, I worry, as a female young artist, that by negating gender roles, it is

possible to fall into a trap of negating a sense of womanhood. In examining the work of Rame and Kahlo, I've found that it is still possible to challenge gender roles whilst playing your own gender. There are other tools a theater artist has at her disposal besides merely presenting a body on stage--a script, music, scenic art, etc.--that can all challenge gender roles and make the audience question them in active spectatorship. This is the way I aim to create theater, and this is what inspired me to incorporate Rame and Kahlo into a multi-media piece to address some of these issues.

The Parallel Lives of Rame and Kahlo

At first, my proposal was challenged with questions: firstly, about why I would have chosen a Franca Rame play to perform, since she is not primarily identified as a feminist performance artists; and secondly, why, out of all of Rame's pieces,, I would have chosen this one to perform—after all, there are many others (like *Lo Stupro* for instance), that would have seemed a more obvious choice. However, as I discussed at the end of the previous chapter, one of the most powerful things that I discovered through a study of Kahlo and Rame's work is the control, strength, and subtlety that they portrayed themselves with in each of their respective traumatic situations through their use of strong craft and an exacting control over their bodies (Kahlo's seamless paintings and the mere physical control she must have had over her hands to execute them, Rame's efficiency of movement and vocal control, etc.) in executing their crafts.

The connection between Rame and Kahlo first occurred to me when I visited the *Frida & Diego* exhibit at the High Museum in Atlanta last February. As I walked through the gallery, reading the plaques and seeing her life played out in her own work and

juxtaposed with Rivera's in a way I'd never seen before, it began to trigger memories of *A Woman Alone*, which I had happened to read in class when I first arrived at Emory the previous fall. There was something about Kahlo's work and life, so passionate and striking, and yet so desolate in many ways, that reminded me of the life of Sharon in Rame's *A Woman Alone*.

Both Kahlo and the character Sharon are vivacious, colorful, strong women who were locked in their homes because of an external cause—Kahlo because of her injuries and the countless surgeries that left her bedridden for the majority of her adult life, and Sharon because of her husband's jealousy after discovering that she had an affair with another man. Both Rivera (Kahlo's husband) and Brian (Sharon's husband) have cheated on them, and both Kahlo and Sharon themselves have had affairs with other men. These women are deeply isolated in many ways, and deeply plagued by the men around them and the situations they have lived through. Though both women have had physical violence acted out on them by others (Kahlo by the streetcar that punctured her ovaries and Sharon by her abusive husband), they also both choose to enact violence onto themselves--it has been reported by Kahlo's doctors that she didn't necessarily need all of the surgeries she elected to have, and in her work she voluntarily painted violence on herself. Sharon chose to attempt suicide with the razor blade she found in the bathroom when her husband discovered her with the boy, and Rame as a victim of violence in her own life chose to write herself characters that experience sexual violence on stage.

In these comparisons, I began to see a parallel between Kahlo, Sharon and Rame--that perhaps these women depict and visit imaginative violence on themselves in their art as an act of control. Kahlo's, Sharon's, and Rame's lives were in many ways out of their

control because of the external trauma they all endured. But by playing acts of destruction out against their own bodies, they take back control and ownership of their bodies--the very same female bodies, as Knafo explained, that the patriarchal society we live in has been trying to control and regulate the meaning of through representation essentially for as long as art has existed. I believe that the violence, the explicitness that they act out on their own bodies is an act of reclamation. It was this discovery through the initial comparisons between the two artists that initiated my desire to perform *A Woman Alone* with reference to Frida Kahlo and feminist performance.

CHAPTER 4
DEVELOPMENT OF PERFORMANCE AND MULTI-MEDIA AS A RESTORATION
OF MEANING

Before I began rehearsals, I wasn't sure about the extent to which the project would be multi-media, but I did know that there were two integral multi-media aspects to my piece: an incorporation of Rame's *Lo Stupro*, and several Kahlo images that I felt were deeply connected to *A Woman Alone*.

Contextualizing performance through *Lo Stupro*

An incorporation of *Lo Stupro* was necessary to my performance because it frames Rame, and ergo the playtext of *A Woman Alone*, in the context of sexual violence. Though those familiar with Rame's work would probably know about her personal history and understand that her own rape experience informs much of the violence in her texts, my American, undergraduate audience might not know this about her. By incorporating the text of *Lo Stupro* into my performance of *A Woman Alone*, I would be able to add an element to the performance that would be missing otherwise, since my body is not marked by violence in the same way that Rame's is.

At first I considered performing *Lo Stupro* myself as a sort of prologue to *A Woman Alone*, or even splicing it into the play text at the moment when Sharon is about to attempt suicide for the first time in the play after her husband discovers with the boy. But upon reading through the text a few times I realized two things: 1.) My performance of this text doesn't convey the same meaning that Rame's performance does, and 2). I didn't feel that I necessarily had the right—or had earned the right—to speak this

language. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the power of *Lo Stupro* (and *A Woman Alone* for that matter) lies in the fact that it is Rame herself who is re-performing the traumatic experiences through the text, re-playing it out on her own body as a way of reclaiming her physical being and integrity from an event that compromised her control of her body and self. If I performed her text, it would lose this meaning, and I don't think that I, as someone who has thankfully never experienced sexual violence, am justified in performing a text that she wrote for herself as victim of this violence as a sort of cathartic exercise. This led me to the first major decision I made about the use of multi-media in my performance—instead of performing *Lo Stupro* myself, I chose to begin my performance of *A Woman Alone* with a video I found of Rame performing *Lo Stupro* in order to frame the performance from the outset in the context of an artist who had experienced sexual violence and in turn replays it on herself.

Paralyzing Reverence for the Text: Too Much of a Good Thing

The other part of the performance I was committed to from the very beginning stages was an incorporation of Kahlo. I always knew which of her pieces resonated the most with *A Woman Alone*, but I was unsure of how to integrate them into the piece. Within the first few weeks of conceiving my performance, I went through countless ideas of how to bring Kahlo into my piece. Should I try to recreate the setting of one of her paintings as the setting for my stage? Should I dress up as Kahlo myself and perform *A Woman Alone* as if the character of Sharon was actually Kahlo? Should I simply project the images behind me or have print outs of them hung up on the stage somehow?

However, as soon as I first began rehearsals I found that all my thinking about the incorporation of Kahlo shut down and I was afraid to incorporate too much that might alter the playtext. I think I was paralyzed by a reverence for the text that was taught to me during the conservatory training that I received while attending NYU for two years prior to my arrival at Emory. There we were taught that first and foremost it is the actor's job to serve the text. I caught myself trying to think of the least obtrusive ways to incorporate her images, and at one point I even asked myself what I was doing trying to incorporate it at all. "Rame was a talented playwright and text should speak for itself" is what I found myself saying over and over again.

But for the first two weeks of rehearsal, I was stuck in a rut with the text. I had the most difficult time memorizing the text and I thought at first that it was because I was trying to learn it before I had finished blocking it, but even after I blocked it, it still took me an abnormally long time to learn short sections of text. I blamed it on the nature of the script because of how quickly it jumped back and forth between lines and thoughts, and was frustrated that I couldn't make it seem "natural" or "real".

And then the memorization problems evolved into acting problems. There were key moments of the text that I knew weren't playing. I felt as if I was trying too hard, as if I was actively pretending to be someone I'm not—I felt like I was *acting*. I applied all the craft I have been taught to the text, trying desperately to internalize it and get rid of the exhausting forced feeling that left a bad taste in my mouth at the end of every rehearsal, but nothing seemed to work. There was one rehearsal in particular when I spent hours working on the moment in the script when Sharon recounts cutting herself in the boy's bathroom. The text of the script reads:

I hurtle into the bathroom and shut the door behind me, grab a razor blade and slash slash slash. I start slashing every vein I can lay hands on... I'm searching for them, here's another one... slash! Another one—slash! It was a bloody massacre! I never knew we had so many veins! I was even cutting them lengthwise so I'd die quicker! But my husband wanted to kill me personally, himself, so he put his shoulder to the door and broke it down... And when he saw me sitting there, covered in blood--it was so red... You know my blood really is bright red—he says to me: 'I'm not going to kill you anymore... I'm going to take you to the hospital.'

Every time I said the word 'slash' I felt that I was telling another lie. I tried to play it every way I could think of, whispering the lines onomatopoeically, slashing my wrists with a prop spoon as I said the lines to try to add an element of comedy, delivering the lines speedily and hyper-articulated as someone in utter desperation might if she were re-living the moment. It either played as melodramatic or under-acted, always untrue, and to make matters worse, this is one of the most important parts of the text, as it provides the actor onstage with an instance to inflict violence on herself through the text. I left rehearsal in tears, calling my best friend in a panic because I was certain that the only remaining reason why I couldn't get this section to play must be that I had forgotten how to act.

And then I took a step back and re-watched the video of Rame performing *Lo Stupro*, and I realized something very important. Yes, the text of *A Woman Alone* probably does speak for itself, but only when performed by Rame, because her body already has a certain signification that comes through her experiences with violence and trauma in her own life and the text becomes in some ways self-reflective and autobiographical. Having any other actress besides Rame, no matter how talented, perform these roles necessarily removes an important layer of meaning and the text alone

no longer suffices. It must be replaced by another theatrical element to re-add the lost meaning back into the performance.

From that point on I felt infinitely freer to work with the text. I re-translated and updated much of the script that I felt wouldn't play to 21st century American audiences, cutting out slang like "git" and "bloody hell" from the translation by the stage actress Estelle Parsons and fixing problematic syntaxes that were causing memorization problems. I even got to the point where I decided that having the script on stage would both alleviate anxiety about this memorization, and provide an important Brechtian element that I think Aston and Diamond would be proud of. With the script on stage, I was able to eliminate the forced feeling I kept experiencing. I realized that the only way to play *A Woman Alone* truthfully would be to play both Sharon and Rame herself, which is impossible, since obviously you can't fully play two people at one time. Though by the last few weeks of rehearsal I didn't need it for memorization, having the script on stage was a way for Rame's words to have a physical weight, not just coming out of my mouth. This gave her a tangible presence, which is crucial to the piece, since it is so dependent on her body as an implicit signifier of the experience of sexual violence. It freed me to experience the text in a way that no longer felt so forced and inauthentic, because it gave me the authenticity of Rame's marked presence on stage.

Inclusion of Kahlo

The inclusion of Kahlo's work in projections on stage also helped to lend authenticity to the performance, because of the similarities discussed in the previous chapter between her, Sharon, and Rame. Having her work, specifically her self-

representations, on the stage gave the presence of and voice to another woman who experienced violence and trauma in her life. I also think that having my body juxtaposed and even touching her body in the images projected behind me helped to endow my presence on stage with some of the signification of violence that her body is automatically marked with and which mine lacks.

I think the most effective of these moments was the juxtaposition at the end of the piece between Kahlo's *Broken Column* (described in Chapter II) and the moment when Sharon raises her rifle to her throat to kill herself. I stood downstage just barely out of the light, silhouetted against Kahlo's image behind me, and delivered the lines "I'm going to kill myself!! I'm going to kill myself" with the rifle pointed up vertically underneath my throat, echoing the column that runs through Kahlo's sternum in the painting. By mirroring her in this instant, I am supported by her physical presence and the signification of what her body means. All of a sudden it should become clear that my interpretation of *A Woman Alone* is a story about a woman who has had violence and trauma exacted against her body and is attempting to regain control of her body by replaying it on her own body by her own choice.

The image in *Broken Column* is one of strength and beauty; she is supported by the column, gazing outwards with confidence and dignity despite the gashes and nails sticking out of her body. I hoped the combination of strength from this image alongside the act of holding the rifle at the base of my throat would help to suggest the possible strength in the action of an artist on stage who replays violence onto herself. In the script, the stage direction after she puts the rifle up to her throat and threatens to kill herself reads:

(Total silence for a few seconds. The neighbor says something to her. The woman listens attentively.)

Yes...yes...

(She can hardly keep back the tears.)

Yes!

(She puts the rifle on the table.)

What was I thinking of? Oh God...Oh God... Thank you, love. . . Thank God you came to live opposite... Yes, I'll do it straight away. . . You give such good advice!

As you can see, it is the neighbor (the audience) who is supposed to plant the seed of doubt that causes Sharon to change her mind. But when I performed it, I chose to turn upstage while delivering the line “yes” and directed the next three lines to Kahlo as if it had been she who stopped the suicide. Kahlo and the column provided Sharon an alternative to the rifle and the suicide.

Incorporating Schneider and the Legacy of Explicit Feminist Performance

There were also several opportunities I found in the script to incorporate the work of other feminist performance artists, especially explicit performance artists, whose work, when juxtaposed with *A Woman Alone*, would open up new possibilities about the significance of the piece and how to play it. As mentioned in Chapter 1, drawing on Rebecca Schneider’s book *The Explicit Body in Performance*, feminist artists can use bodily explicit art as a tool for re-playing the primitiveness associated with female bodies onto their own living bodies, and exposing the cultural foundations and social markings of the body that these notions are based, through shock tactics and acts of transgression. These goals seem to mesh well with the beginning of *A Woman Alone*. From the first moment Sharon steps on stage and the audience notices that she is outfitted in a low-cut

negligee, it should suggest to them that the performance is framed within the context of a feminine sexuality.

In the first few minutes on stage, Sharon continually compares the female body to a piece of meat, discussing the way it's portrayed in the pornography she found in her brother-in-law's room. She goes on a tangent:

Yes, so he has to take his mind off it, he's always reading. He reads all the time... 'educating himself'... porno comics. His room is full of those disgusting magazines. You know, those ones with the naked women in weird positions!! They must be so uncomfortable! The poor girls! After one of those sessions, I bet they have to put them in plaster just like my brother-in-law! Those lumps of flesh... all blown up in full color—looks like a butcher's advert! One day I picked up one by accident and it put me right off my pork chops at lunchtime. I wanted to throw up.

This text is interesting because it displays Sharon's discomfort with her own body when she is confronted with the primitiveness of the female body as represented by men through the lens of the heterosexual pornography targeted towards males. I wanted to juxtapose this with the possibility of female-created explicitness and pornography that can serve to be empowering. I chose to use a photograph featuring porn star turned performance artist Annie Sprinkle from her performance piece *Public Cervix Announcement*, where she invited her audience to view her cervix with a flashlight and a speculum. It shows her splayed out onto the couch, her hand disappearing between her thighs, a gleeful smile on her lips as she speaks into a microphone. It looks as if she's holding court for the line of three young men who are waiting to look inside. I liked this image because it shows the opposite possibility of what Sharon observes in the

magazines. As an explicit photograph created by a woman who chooses to exert and own her own sexuality by working as a porn star and artist, she successfully replays the primitiveness of her own body, just as Schneider suggested. She highlights the cultural phenomenon of male voyeurism towards the female body and sexuality by permitting and inviting them to interact with her sexuality on her own terms by coming and looking inside of her. It is important for Sharon to confront this representation, as she spends much of the play trying to figure out the power and limits of her own sexuality. It also helped me as an actor to transition into the headspace of the next section of text when Sharon begins to talk explicitly about her own sexuality—it is as if Sprinkle’s image gave her the permission to open up about her own sexual experiences.

Schneider also talked about how some of the most successful instances of feminist performance art are the ones that collapse the space between the audience and the viewer. Inherently, Rame’s work fulfills this goal because of her constant interruption of the script to address the audience. In *A Woman Alone*, Sharon’s primary acting partner, the neighbor, is the audience. I wanted to begin the night of performance by coming out in costume to deliver my own curtain speech, to establishing before the show even began that there is not very much delineation between actor and spectator, and that being in the audience is not a safe, removed space. After the curtain speech, I made the choice to the audience to sit with them and watch *Lo Stupro* as a way of both making myself a spectator and the audience an actor in the piece.

Rap: The Final Feminist Frontier and A Model for Feminist Performance Art

When I was exploring different explicit feminist performance artists whose work I wanted to incorporate into my performance, I came across Karen Finley, one of the most iconic feminist performance artists of our time. It would have been impossible to create a performance that pays homage to the legacy of feminist performance art without including her in it. However instead of using the photographs of her performances that I assumed I would, I came across recordings of the explicit monologues she performed over disco beats at the nightclub she worked at in the late 80s. I thought they would be perfect to use as the “pigging phone pig”—the man that calls Sharon up a few times every day and says dirty, degrading, offensive things to her. Not only would it be easy to play as something that provokes Sharon, but on another layer, I think Finley’s words might be closer to what Sharon really wants to say to the phone pig, but might not be able to articulate.

Listening to Finley’s recordings made me think about a recent conversation I had with one of my friends about her personal choice to avoid using gendered words as derogatory language. This got me thinking about rap, and the use of gendered language, specifically words for female anatomy, as a synecdoche—objectifying the entirety of a woman by one of her body parts, most often a sex organ. It is impossible to limit the objectification of women to just one kind of music, but it arguably happens most explicitly in hip-hop, which, for being one of most ubiquitously listened to genres of music across the world, is disproportionately male dominated. In fact, of the twenty

highest grossing rappers in 2013, only one was a woman.²⁸ However, there is certainly a rare breed of female rappers across the world who are managing to break into the popular listening sphere and are doing so with autobiographical lyrics that exemplify Schneider's ideas about the value of explicit performance—reclaiming the language that has traditionally been used by their male counterpoints in hip-hop as an oppressive tool of objectification and turning it into an opportunity to exert their sexuality on their own terms all while performing lyrics that hold their own against their male peers in both the explicitness often expected in the hip-hop world and in technical ability.

In *A Woman Alone*, music is a central part of Sharon's life. At the beginning of the play she describes how needs to have it playing in every room to keep her company since she's locked up all alone. The first stage picture is Sharon "dancing frenetically" around her apartment in a low-cut negligee while doing the laundry. I decided this would be a perfect opportunity to nod to my favorite female rappers, Azealia Banks, Iggy Azalea, and Peaches, who are reclaiming their sexuality in the world of hip-hop and popular music through their own explicit lyrics.

Azealia Banks' most popular song, *212*, is remarkable for its bluntness, both musically and lyrically. In the first verse she refers to herself as a bitch four times, and then promptly describes the event of her relationship with another woman: "kick it with the bitch who comes from Parisian/She know where I get my from and the season/Now she wanna lick my plum in the evenin'/And fit that tongue tongue d-deep in/I guess that

²⁸ Greenburg, Zach O'Malley. "Cash Kings 2013: The World's Highest-Paid Hip-Hop Artists." *Forbes*. Forbes Magazine, 24 Sept. 2013. Web. 31 Mar. 2014. <<http://www.forbes.com/>>.

cunt gettin' eaten (x5)".²⁹ It occurred to me that the juxtaposition of Banks' blunt, almost nonchalant, assessment of her own sexuality against the projection of Rame's re-performance of her own rape that I was planning on opening the show with would be fruitful and challenging. I knew it would make the audience uncomfortable, blasting them with layers of sound, watching an older woman recreate her rape while listening to a young girl casually talking about her "cunt gettin' eaten".³⁰ I wanted to push them from audience complacency into a state of questioning and challenging, an active spectatorship, towards what they were about to see on stage.

212 is also celebratory—it's a hip shaking, head banging party anthem with pulsing bass that features an ascending horn part and sounds like the way a heart pulses while dancing. It'll stay stuck in your head for weeks. Banks' celebration of her sexuality is indicative of an important evolution from a second-wave feminists point of view about the elimination of gender and gendered language towards a third wave feminism that lauds the reclamation of female sexuality, gender, and language from the heterosexual lens with freshness and festivity.

I believe that young feminist artists need to follow in this spirit--creating relevant, challenging work that celebrates female sexuality and that is memorable enough to be stuck in your head for days. By performing gender consciously instead of attempting to erase it, women artists will have the opportunity to reclaim, rewrite, and refine the way their bodies have been defined through acts of self-representation—claiming control over

²⁹ Banks, Azealia. "212 ft. Lazy Jay". iTunes. 2012.

³⁰ Ibid.

their bodies, whose meanings and significations have historically been controlled by an outside, male gaze.

Looking Forward: Internalizing and Applying the Process in my Professional Life

It is this multimedia manipulation of the *mise-en-scène* and celebratory method of embracing gender that I believe answers the problem I set up in the preface: how to fulfill the traditional role of actor as a mouthpiece for the playwright and as a body on stage to be taken in by spectators' uncontrolled gazes while still maintaining agency over my body's and gender's signification. I needed to find a way to do the work I love while challenging the audience's gaze so they saw me as, and understood my performance in terms of, something other than the very threshold limit of my physical appearance.

The incorporation of multimedia that deals directly with representation of women is a way to complicate the straightforwardness with which my body, and particularly my gender, on stage is perceived. It begs for an active spectatorship from the audience, forcing them to acknowledge and problematize the way that they view my body on stage in the present moment, which in turn, problematizes the very act of a woman presenting herself on stage. Fully playing out my female gender on stage, especially when combined with material like *Rame's*, that automatically questions gender roles through its explicitness and re-playing of violence, is more fruitful, I think, than merely erasing gender with tactics such as cross dressing as Butler prescribes. Suggesting that wearing men's clothing is the solution to subverting the male gaze seems a disservice to feminism since it reinforces femininity, something that I have experienced as more innate than Butler suggests, as weak and insufficient. I believe we must reframe femininity instead of

covering it up, challenging the way the audience sees a female body onstage by recontextualizing it—through manipulations of the *mise-en-scène*, the text itself, or even perhaps with the actions an actor chooses.

I realize that in “the real world” it is most likely that if an actress is working commercially and professionally, most often she not have the option of controlling the scenery to incorporate a multimedia approach, which was the primary way I found to regain agency in this performance. However, I wonder if using these tools in rehearsal and internalizing them to inform the actions she chooses to play onto the text and her body might produce situations that can open the text and challenge it. If it leads her to a choice of action that initially seems at odds with the character or situation, perhaps it will force the audience to regard the words coming out of her mouth, and ergo her own signification on stage, differently than they might have before, and will force them to question their spectatorship of her body and gender on stage. This is something I would like to experiment with in my future work.

Another possible avenue that I aim to explore in furthering this line of thinking is sketch and standup comedy. These are two domains that are overwhelmingly dominated by men, and that women are widely discouraged from participating in (how many times have you heard someone say “women aren’t funny?”). And yet I’ve been passionate about these two genres, especially sketch comedy, ever since I can remember. Working on Rame’s dark comedy furthered these ambitions as I remembered the power a talented comedian yields over her audience. I believe that making an audience laugh means that the artist has connected with and manipulated something deep within them and within our collective social consciousness. In this sense, it seems that there are countless

possibilities for raising awareness and reflection about social issues through the use of comedy.

Standup and sketch are some of the few genres where explicitness is welcomed, encouraged, and even expected. In the process of putting up *A Woman Alone*, I realized how important explicitness is as a tool in the process of reclaiming women's bodies. I think that Rame's use of comedy gives her the leeway to fully capitalize on this because in comedy some degree of inappropriateness is expected. Therefore next logical step in my mind for me to take as an artist is to connect the two: replaying explicitness onto my own body as a way of reappropriating its signification in the realm of sketch and standup. I see myself advancing in my work by exploring this intersection to create comedy that is relevant, modern, challenging, and accessible while reperforming my own femininity in order to endow myself with the agency I desire as an artist and a young woman.

APPENDIX A: REHEARSAL JOURNAL

***Note: These journals were written informally in a stream-of-consciousness form to represent a record of thoughts (often unfinished) in the process of exploration and rehearsal. I have chosen to present a pared down version of the journal (selecting only the most relevant of the entries) and have chosen not to censor or rewrite them so as to share my process honestly.

1/28

Beginning to work on *A Woman Alone*. Am daunted by the number of pages. Working from the text from the book I found in the library that has a copy of the text along with a compilation of some of her other work, but I'm not crazy about the translation. It seems really dated in a lot of the language and also I think it must have been translated into British English not American English—insane number of times Sharon says “bloody hell”... Also, wanker? Git? Should I try to change these and adapt it to something more updated/American sounding or do I need to respect the purity of the text?

Another issue—I can barely even read the text as it's written now. I am going to have to go in and retype the whole thing. There are no paragraph breaks, it's literally one giant block of text and there are an absurd number of ellipses. Most of the punctuation makes no sense, actually. Going to have to change that if there's any hope of me being able to make sense of what happens in this play and attempt to make clear, playable beats. Right now I feel like everything kind of just comes across in a giant blob of hysteria—there's no shape→which is interesting because the text literally has no shape the way it's written on the page as a giant rectangular box of words. No good for acting.

I wonder what her original text looks like. I doubt that when she wrote it down in Italian she wrote it like this. But maybe she did because she already had a clear idea of what she wanted the shape of the piece to be since she is the one performing it. I wonder if this means she didn't intend the text to be performed by someone who's not herself.

Or it's just a bad translation. Will have to do some more research and see if I can find her text in Italian and perhaps a better English translation. Should maybe befriend someone who understands more Italian than I do...

1/31

Okay so I spent the down time at work today fixing the script. I retyped it all into a word document and formatted it in a way that made more sense to me—I took out the VAST majority of the ellipses, put stage directions onto their own lines, divided into more manageable paragraphs based loosely on the ideas that were being explored in each section. I also tried to separate it into a new paragraph every time the neighbor or another person (brother-in-law, the boy, the debt collector, the husband, etc.) every time someone else said something to her.

I need to go back into the script now and write in all their responses. It's important that I know what everyone else says to her so I can react and take in, not just act without taking in. Plus, I think it'll help to clarify what all the relationships mean to her

2/2

I am desperately intimidated by this text and having the worst time memorizing it. Maybe I just need to be more familiar with it, work it more on its feet and not try to memorize the parts I haven't blocked yet. Even though I've been trying to do that and it hasn't really helped very much....

It's hard because I don't want her to seem like a crazy woman and yet so much of it lends itself to a hysterical performance I think. But this is something I want to deviate away from—I don't want people to write her off as crazy cuz this is something that happens to women all the time.

Do you know what someone told me the other day? Hysteria comes from the Greek word for uterus. Not good.

2/7

But *why* does she keep switching her thought halfway through the line? I know Rame's style is improvisational and she liked to have room in her performances to change things up at the last minute, but really this is absurd. She hops totally from one moment to the next moment and then back to the first moment. It's also difficult to act. And to memorize. Michael said that at least it won't be too obvious when/if I lose my spot or mess up the lines. True. But seems like a cop out. Maybe I just need to be closer to being under the gun—it'll force me to learn the lines. Pressure's good. Deadlines are good. I'm going to look at my calendar and divide out the time til the performance. If I want to be off-book by a week before opening I should figure out how many pages I need to learn a day. That'll be helpful. I can't believe I'm freaking out about this so much.... Usually when people ask me after a show how I memorized "all those lines!" I tell them memorizing lines is the easiest part of performing... what's going on with me right now.

2/13

Maybe this was a bad choice of text to do. I have a feeling in my gut that this is what I wanted to perform and I know there was a reason I thought of it first when I decided what I wanted my thesis topic to be. People have been asking me how this clearly relates to my thesis and pressuring me to incorporate other works into it. But I'm not sure that I want to do that. I like the idea of keeping the text pure because I have faith in Rame's ability to write a good, self-contained play and I think that although the violence isn't necessarily

as explicit in this one, there are valuable parts, especially at beginning about women as meat.

And I do still want to incorporate *Lo Stupro* somehow. Last semester, I was originally talking about maybe performing it as a curtain piece, but I don't feel right doing that. So maybe I should do it instead as a recording? Like record my voice performing it and then have it play in the blackout before my show starts to frame my performance? I think it's crucial to have it somehow frame the piece. Or perhaps I could splice it in the middle somewhere and have it play over when I am talking about her cutting herself after Brian finds her in the bathroom? But I like the idea of having it at the beginning because it frames it for the audience at the very beginning and plants ideas in their heads about violence on the body that might not be there otherwise since my body doesn't carry that significance.

2/14

All I can think about is my dad coming to see this show. And brother. Eeeeeek. I can't believe I'm going to be saying this language in front of him. At least it'll help me act that part when she can't say the word orgasm... ha. It's weird, cuz she's explicit in a way that I'm not at all. How do all these actresses who ever do anything sexually explicit, or god forbid they are in a movie where they have a sex scene or something or what if you're Karen Finley! I wonder what their parents think about all this. I wonder if they let their parents see their work. I wonder if they would even want that.... I don't even own a negligee, I own oversized t-shirts. I guess I have to go to Ross. I think I'll wear my fuzzy purple slippers with the negligee I find. I feel like that's very Sharon. The softness and silliness juxtaposed with her sexuality.

It's interesting though too because it's not as if she's wearing for anyone else. She wears it to be comfortable, at least that's what she tells the wanker → "A woman can't even put on something comfortable to do a bit of ironing?" And yet the act of putting on a costume and wearing it in front of an audience is like the opposite of that, it is almost purely to convey meaning to the audience so they'll perceive your character in a certain light.

I guess that's not totally true though. We read that excerpt from Stanislavsky's book last semester in AesCrit where he talked about the actor who found the perfect coat (or hat or whatever) and it totally transformed their character. Maybe the costume will make the acting easier.

I just don't want people to see my body! I'm too shy! Why did I choose this topic to do my thesis on... I don't know if I'm brave enough. Oy.

2/19

I think it's a good thing I'm in an acting class right now. I keep hearing Tim's voice in my head as I rehearse. It's especially useful since his class is all about narrative story telling and basically this entire thing is one giant long story about what happened in the past.

Actually I guess that's not totally true. A lot of it does happen in the present, but it's all interacting with things that aren't onstage—people on the phone, imaginary people placed out in the audience (the wanker), the people behind the door. I am really my only acting partner at the moment which is a bit difficult.

Also, speaking of that I need to pin down actors for the brother-in-law and the boy (slash all the other people that knock on the door too). Going to have to find people who aren't involved in Freefall. It'll be infinitely easier to rehearse, especially the door part when there's a hand to interact with and I won't have to try to prop the door open with my shoulder. Also it's super lonely to rehearse all by yourself. Sometimes I find myself just sitting there in silence for 15 or 20 minutes at a time, just thinking. It's hard to not have an outside force to motivate you to keep on track and keep focusing—it's hard to even motivate myself to leave our apartment and come into Rich to rehearse. It's a good thing there's a sign up sheet so at least the piece of paper kind of holds you accountable. Plus it's just tiring to talk for so long all by yourself. I need to increase my vocal regimen, do more warm ups. It's out of shape anyways. I've been bad about that

2/21

I think I have forgotten how to act. I can't fucking figure out how to do this one part—the MOST IMPORTANT PART because it's the part that most explicitly deals with acting out violence onto yourself. It's the part when her husband walks in on her and the boy and then she runs into bathroom and starts cutting herself. She says the word "slash" over and over. It feels so wrong, so uncomfortable to do it. Today Kelly sat in on my rehearsal to give me a second set of eyes and when it got to that part I actually felt embarrassed that someone was watching. It felt like I was lying, like I was *acting*, which is the last thing that acting should feel like. I tried a billion different ways to do it. I don't know if I'm scared to do it? Like scared to act it wrong and not do it justice and disrespect the experience of people who have gone through an experience like that? I mean do I even have the right to perform that text? That's silly though because actors shouldn't have to go through everything their characters do in order to perform them. That would be very Strasberg. That sounded pretentious. But it'd be like that story that people tell about when Dustin Hoffman or someone was acting against Lawrence Olivier and had deprived himself of sleep for a couple nights to prepare himself for the role of someone who was also severely sleep deprived and then Olivier says "It's called acting, dear boy." They loved to tell that story at Adler. Maybe I should try some as ifs, or try to do some vivid imagination exercises. Lie on my bed and create a memory from imagination of this happening for Sharon. We used to that at Adler for things that were far removed from our own experiences. Although I wonder if it's wrong to be using Adler technique for a

feminist performance when so many theoreticians take issue with realism and associated techniques.

Also this is a little tiny thing, but it's really hard to say slash three times in a row. It takes a long time for your mouth to make that word and then get back to the starting place in time to say it again. It's like pursing your lips and then smiling and then pursing your lips again. By this rational, it seems like the text would suggest that it should be acted slowly, but who knows since it's translated from Italian and I don't know the word for slash. Maybe I should look it up. If it's faster to say in Italian then maybe that's a clue it should be delivered quicker. Maybe that's not a good way to approach acting the text, looking to the language for acting cues, since it's a translation. And not a great one, at that.

Any way, not sure I remember how to act. So this is great. Hopefully I'll magically be able to do it again. Who knows.

2/25

So I have all this goddamn research and I know it's affecting the way I see the piece, but I don't know if anyone else sees that. This might be a problem with doing the text straight. But I don't want to fuck with it too much.... It's written this way for a reason. Rame is a talented playwright and she knew what she was doing. But then again, she wasn't writing it to be performed as part of a research thesis that looks at the broader legacy of feminist performance art and violence. Michael says I need to not be so afraid of messing with the text. He's probably right, but I dunno. That feels so wrong. Probably because it's so against everything I was ever taught when I trained at Adler. We were supposed to be servants of the playwright basically, every word had to be perfect, even the punctuation was supposed to be respected. But I need to look outside of that technique since I know it was developed for a certain form of realism, which is not what I'm dealing with her. Sorry, Stella. I still love you.

2/27

Yup, I think that impulse I had the other day was right. Even though Rame is a more than competent playwright and *A Woman Alone* is a fully realized and carefully constructed play, I'm sure, I don't think I can be so reverent of the text because I need to make my own *woman alone*, as Michael says. I can't possibly do Rame's since I'm not her and my body doesn't mean the same thing as hers since it's not a well-known signifier of violence. Went back and watched *Lo Stupro* to realize this—basically I didn't want to do this play because I'm not her and I knew that I didn't have a right to deal with her very personal experience and even if I feel like I did, it wouldn't have the same effect as when Rame did it anyways. I have to figure out a way to compensate for this and make it my own. I think the use of multi media might help with this, if I display other peoples bodies that are marked with that violence behind me then it will help my body to have that significance just by being in the same general area as it on stage. Also, I'm going to have the text on stage. Yeah, part of it is cuz I'm freaking out about losing my place in the

middle of one of her confusing rants, but also I think it will help me to bring the weight of Rame to the stage. The script is her words, a part of her, and it is physically on my stage with me. Also I think it'll be a good Brechtian distancing element, making it clear that I am performing—this ties into the idea of gender performativity—everything is an intentional choice and performance that I'm putting onto my body consciously and voluntarily. I think it'll work. Gonna find other art I want to put in now.

.....
2/29

Rehearsal finally went well and I feel good about where I'm at. Have started to run ten pages at a time, working ten one day and then ten the other day. This seems to work well, and it's helping me to cement the transitions and understand the general shape to the piece. Understanding the shape also has really helped me with lines, I don't think I need the script anymore. I've chosen the pieces I want to incorporate. A few Kahlo, some Schneemann, Sprinkles, Mendieta. I'm going to have them projected behind me on stage. I think I want the projector to be dead center, pretty far down on the stage, so that the pieces are truly in my space and grounding everything I do.

I've also begun to think about music. I always want to create theater that uses music because I think that's such an important way for the audience to connect to the action on stage. It sets such a specific tone and I think people respond gutturally to it in a way that sometimes they don't with text. It's like you don't even really have to be fully listening, it'll just make an impression on you subconsciously and put you into a certain mood. It's also such an integral part of setting pacing. Also of my own technique as an actor. It is crucial for me to listen to the right music before or when rehearsing a scene so that I am in the right mindset.

I was talking to someone about language the other day and thinking about how they said they don't like gendered language. I think they probably meant they don't like gendered language when it's used in a derogatory context, but the way they said it was that they don't like it at all. It was an interesting conversation because it's so different than my own beliefs about that. I believe that if you're the group being historically oppressed by the language you have the precedent to re-appropriate it, and this can be a very powerful act. So the words that we were talking about (mostly cunt and bitch) I think need to be re-contextualized in a female language. Just so long as it's a conscious act. Even though I think it's impossible to ask everyone to do this as a conscious act because eventually it'll be internalized. REGARDLESS, it made me think about some of my favorite rap—Azealia Banks, Iggy Azalea, Peaches, MIA etc. I want to use them in my performance. I like that they represent a new, vital, third wave feminism that can be placed in contrast to Rame and some of the theory that I've been reading. Also, I think it'll be a good tone to set for the show. Going to use 212 as an opening mixed with *Lo Stupro*. They're kind of opposites, and I like the idea of mixing these two contrasting energies. I think it's gonna be volatile. I keep watching the combination over and over and it's super intense. Also like the idea of dancing on stage with Rame struggling in the background. Then end with MIA. "Bad Girls." Cuz Sharon shoots everyone. Haha.

.....

3/3

First day of tech in the BRB. So tired. Afraid I'm losing my voice—have to ask Claire about how she saves her voice when singing. Apple cider vinegar? I remember people used to drink that. Gross though.

Tech is tricky. It's so stop and go. It's nice to kind of have an audience though even if it's only India in the booth. I had Travis and Kelly come too tonight. The first time we were all trying it together. And Andrew and Vinnie came to watch. Q lab seemed to work well though so that's exciting. Just have to get the cues right, but I know that'll be fine. Vinnie had an interesting suggestion that I think is very important. He said that I should interact with the screen directly, not just have the images up behind me. He said that I need to formalize my relationship with the projections, literally standing upstage and facing them. I think that this is a very good idea. He also described how the table is one world, the world of a sort of domestic realism where I'm surrounded by my own real props, and do things like fold clothes. And iron. And talk on the phone. And then there's the world of the projections and all the space outside the table that is more surreal, formalized, not bound by realism. I think this is a good way to combine my desire for realism and a way to deal with the projections. I also like the idea of being upstage for the projections because I think that at some points it's important that my voice does get lost and for me to become subservient to the women on the screen. Okay, gonna sleep now. So tired. Have to be back at the BRB at 10am tomorrow

3/5

Tonight was the night. I did it! Yayy! It was so nice to have all the support and to see faculty and friends and especially my family. And I think I didn't scar Dad or Jesse too badly, so that's good. I was so scared all day I was going to lose my voice, I had that feeling you get in it when it's about to go. I tried not to speak very much and drank so much water. I wasn't sure it was a great idea to do a run right before the show as soon as I got out of the Bio exam, but I know that for me as an actor the second run through in a day is always better than the first. So that's what I did. The beginning of the first run through was rough but it got better as it went on and then I had to change and put on a little makeup and head backstage immediately. I got India to jump around and warm up back there with me a little bit which was nice. I was so fucking nervous though. All day, actually. And I thought I was going to die when I went out and did my curtain speech. It is so much harder to be yourself and not your character in front the audience. I think people could tell I was a little nervous, so that's not too good, but as soon as I got on stage and started performing as Sharon, I was fine. The performance went well. All the cues where on point, I was focused, the audience seemed to respond well to it and I didn't lose my voice. Except at the end it was a little bit awkward because the audience didn't really go anywhere... I think maybe they were expecting a talk back or something, but I didn't really want to do that. I wanted to let the performance speak for itself and them to

be able to think about it on their own terms and their own way, take from it what they wanted, not necessarily what I wanted them to see. I hope that was okay.

At dinner afterwards I was talking to my family about what they thought and Jesse had an interesting comment that some of the lines that seemed like they should have been more important were kind of throw away lines. Like the whole part about when she gets the phone call from the father of the girl who's having an affair with her husband saying the girl's pregnant. He said this whole part seemed so casual, but that this is how it was written. That's a good point. I wonder why she wrote it like that.

Also, Mom said that I should have cut the part about the age of the boy, because if he was 26 and I was fifteen years older than him, I'm pretty old. And there's no way I could believably play that old and it just kind of took them out of the performance. I thought about cutting that part in rehearsals but I just never did for some reason. If I ever do it again, I'll have to cut it. Anyway, that's that. I'm too tired, I need to sleep. Will start reflecting more for the written part of the thesis later. Hooray that I did this though!
Spring break whaddup

APPENDIX B: ANNOTATED SCRIPT

NOTE: All sound and light cues are written into the text in bold lettering. Acting notes that I wrote to myself are underlined. The dialogue of the offstage character that I wrote in are underlined and italicized.

The light comes up on a few pieces of set indicating the dining room of a lower middle class flat.

On stage, a long table on which are an iron, a radio, a basin and a brush – all in a chaotic jumble. In front of the table, a stool. Nearby, a small piece of furniture on top of which is a tray with plasters, bandages, ointments, surgical spirit. A rifle is hanging on the wall.

There are three entrances: the one at the back leads to the kitchen, the stage left to the bedroom, and the third one, stage right, is the front door.

CUE AZALEA BANKS AND LO STUPRO (sound both middle of first box, lights off)

AT RISE: (A woman enters holding a basket overflowing with garments to be ironed. She wears a low cut negligee. The radio is blaring rock music [212 mixed with Lo Stupro—all really loud, overwhelming]. The woman, dancing frenetically, puts the basket on the table. She grabs a man’s jacket out of the basket, and, still dancing, goes towards an imaginary window at the front of the stage. She shakes the jacket as if she’s trying to get the dust out of it. She stops, pleasantly surprised to find someone in the building opposite.)

Lights fade up at second 27 (38&39 @ 10 AND 25 @ 7)

WOMAN

(At the top of her voice, to get attention)

Hey! Hello there! Morning! How long have you been living over there? I didn’t even notice you moving in. I thought it was empty. I’m thrilled to bits.

(Almost shouting) *I’m Sorry I can’t hear you*

I was saying I’m thrilled to.... Can’t hear me? Oh yeah of course.... The radio... I’ll turn it off. **MUSIC OFF** I always have to have the radio going full blast when I’m at home on my own otherwise I feel like sticking my head in the oven. I’ve always got the stereo going on this room...

(Moves to stage right door. She opens the door. We hear music.)

CUE SOUND: FUCK THE PAIN AWAY (off when curtain closes)

Can you hear?

(Closes the door.)

And I’ve got the cassette machine in the kitchen...

(Same business at the kitchen door.)

CUE SOUND: PUSSY (off when curtain closes)

Can you hear?

(She closes the door.)

So whatever room I'm in, I've always got company.

(She goes over to the table and begins to work: she brushes the man's jacket, sews on buttons, etc.) *Even in the bedroom?*

No...Not in the bedroom, that'd be a bit over the top! No I've got the telly on in there... it's always on—I keep it turned right up! There's a church service on right now. They're singing. In Greek, I think. That's what Prince Philip talks, isn't it? What a weird language... it's all double dutch to me.

You only listen to music you can dance to?

Yeah I like music you *can't* dance to as well... anything so long as it's music. The sound keeps me company. What do you do for company?

Well, I have a son.

Oh you've got a son! Aren't you the lucky one! Come to think of it, I've got a son too! Actually, I've got two kids... Sorry, I got so excited talking to you, I forgot about the other one.

No, they don't keep me company. The big girl's grown up. You know how it is, she's got 'friends her own age'. The little boy's still with me, but he's no company.

Why not?

Well he's asleep all the time! He does nothing but sleep! He poos, he sleeps and he snores! Oh I'm not moaning, I'm really well-off here in my flat. **CUE IMG. WITHOUT HOPE** Turn upstage I've got everything I could ever want. My husband treats me like porcelain! I've got everything! I've got... O God, I've got so much... I've got a fridge, but

(Emphasizing this)

mine makes round ice cubes!! I've got a washing machine...twenty four programs! It washes *and* dries...oh you should see the way it dries! Sometimes I have to wet everything again so I can iron it, it comes out bone dry! I've got a non-stick slow cooker, a Magimix with all the attachments, music in every room. What more could I ask of life? I'm only a woman after all! **STOP ALL** turn back down to audience

Well, what about a cleaning lady?

Yes, I used to have a cleaning lady but she ran away; then I got another one and she ran away too—those women all run away from my house.

Because of you? What'd you do to them?

What? Oh no, not because of me.

(Embarrassed)

It's my brother-in-law... Well he gropes them! He feels them up! All women! He's a groper! He's sick.

What the hell, is he out of his mind?!

Out of his mind? I don't know if he's out of his mind. All I know is he wanted to do these things to those girls, and they weren't too keen—quite right too. You should see it, love. There you are, minding your own business, getting on with the housework, and suddenly oops! There's his hand right up your.... Gives you the creeps! And you should see my brother-in-law's hand! Thank God he's only got one!

What do you mean? What happened?

What happened to him? An accident. A car accident. Just imagine, so young, only thirty, and every bone in his body broken! He's in plaster from head to foot. They put him in the plaster sitting down so he'd be more comfortable. They just left him a little hole so he can eat and breathe. He can't really talk, he just mumbles something every now and again. You can't understand a word. His eyes were all right, so they didn't plaster over them. They left the eyes. And they left that damn wandering hand too—nothing wrong with that. And the other thing, that's all right too.

What other thing?

(She stops, embarrassed.)

I don't know how to put it, we've only just met. I wouldn't want you to think badly of me.

It's okay, just say it.

Well he's alright 'down there'. You have no idea how alright he is 'down there'! Much too alright! He's always wanting to... well you know what I mean...

I mean it must be awful though. I bet he gets bored stuck in that cast.

Yes, so he has to take his mind off it, he's always reading. He reads all the time... 'educating himself'... porno comics. **CUE ANNIE SPRINKLE** turn upstage His room is full of those disgusting magazines. You know, those ones with the naked women in weird positions!! They must be so uncomfortable! The poor girls! **CUE CAROLLEE SCHNEEMANN** After one of those sessions, I bet they have to put them in plaster just like my brother-in-law! Those lumps of flesh... all blown up in full color—looks like a butchers advert! **CUE ASK THE GODDESS** One day I picked up one by accident and it put me right off my pork chops at lunch time. I wanted to throw up. **STOP ALL** turn

back downstage Anyway, since all the cleaning women left I have to look after my brother-in-law myself. I do it for my husband's sake you know.

What do you mean?

Well, he is his brother.

Your husband doesn't mind?

What do you mean?

You know, that his brother feels you up? And that you just let it happen?

(indignant)

I should say not! He respects me! And how! Oh that'd be too much! He always asks permission first! Before he lays a finger on me, he always asks permission first!

CUE SOUND: telephone ring, STOP ALL at answer

Oh that must be my husband... He always phones around this time. Excuse me a minute.

(answering phone)

Hello?... **CUE SOUND: KAREN FINLEY** What?... Yes but what... Fuck off you bastard!

(she *bangs the receiver down* **MUSIC OFF**. She is furious. Beat. She smiles at the neighbor across the way as if you ask for forgiveness.)

Pardon my French. When you have to, you have to, don't you?

(she starts work again—nervously.)

Was it your husband?

No, no it wasn't my husband... whatever next!

No, I don't know who it was. Some pig who's always phoning me up--one of the dirty raincoat brigade. He phones once, twice, three times, a thousand times a day. He says filthy things to me. Words that aren't even in the dictionary. I went and looked them up, they're not in it.

He must be sick.

Sick? Listen, I've already got one sicko to deal with, I'm not going to start playing nursemaid to every dirty old man in the country!

(phone rings again.)

That'll be him again! He wants to know what I'm doing now. I won't even let him get a word in!

(picks up the receiver)

Hello pig! I'm warning you, the police have got this phone tapped and it...

(complete change of tone.)

Sharon?

Oh hello, dear...

(turns to neighbor, tapping the telephone with her hand)

It's my husband!

(speaks into the phone.)

Why are you getting ratty at me now?

No, I wasn't getting ratty at you dear...I thought you were...well there's this guy who's always phoning me...he asks about you...he says you owe him money...so to give him a fright I just drop the word 'police'...

Guy? Police? Where the hell are you? Are you home?

(complete change of tone. Amazed! And more amazed!)

Yes I'm at home...Bryan, I swear to you I'm at home! Look, I'm sorry, but what number did you dial?... And so if I pick up the phone where the hell do you think I am? I haven't gone out! How could I go out when you lock me in the flat?!

(turns to the neighbor)

What a husband, love!

(into the phone)

Who the hell are you talking to?

Hello....no I'm not talking to anyone.... Yes I said 'love'...I was talking to myself....every now and then, just to myself, I call myself 'love'... No, there's no one in the house... Yes, your brother's here but he's in the other room... yes the baby's asleep... Yes I fed him... Yes I put him on the potty...

(dry)

Yes, your brother as well!

(tries to control herself)

There you go, getting ratty again!

Who's getting ratty? I was only telling you you could put your mind at rest because everyone in the house has been on the potty....Bye... Yes Bryan, I'm happy...I'm very happy

(getting more agitated.)

I was just standing here doing the ironing roaring with laughter...

(shouting)

I'M H-A-A-A-APPY!!

(she slams the phone down. A shout of rage at the phone. After a moment the **phone rings**. She answers it, it is the husband.)

Bryan....what if he turns up here? The man man about the money?

What guy about the money?

(to herself)

What guy about the money? Oh the one who keeps phoning me up, yeah... I have to pretend I'm not in... turn off the radio, the stereo... the telly... OK whatever you say... Ready for orders, sir! I tell you what I'll do for you: I'll go into the toilet, stick my head down the bowl and then pull the chain... (to neighbor) now he's going berserk... Oh go hang yourself!

(she puts down the receiver. She is furious. She starts ironing again. Looks towards the neighbor and forces a smile. After a while she looks towards the back of the auditorium. Then she turns back to the neighbor.)

Pardon me a minute.

(At the top of her voice—she's looking above the neighbor.)

I can see you, pig! I can see your binoculars catching the sun!

(She looks for something to cover her breasts. She covers the left one with the bib she's been ironing and the right one with the iron.)

Oh my god!!

(To the neighbor.)

I've ironed my breast! UP there, you can't see him, it's the window above yours... that's all I needed today—that wanker! He stands up there and watches me. A poor woman can't even put on something comfortable to do a bit of ironing in her own home... What am I supposed to do? Put a trench coat on to do the ironing?

(Shouting at the Peeping Tom)

And a balaclava! And skis! I don't even know how to ski. I'd fall A over T and smash myself up like my brother-in-law!

(To the neighbor)

The police? No I can't call the police. What do you think would happen then? They'd get here and start giving me the third degree... 'Just how dressed or undressed were you at the time, Madam?'... 'Are you sure you weren't leading him on, Madam?'... 'Pardon me for saying so, but this sounds very much like a case of striptease...' And then it'd end up with them charging me with obscene behavior likely to cause a breach of the peace in my own home! No, no... I'll deal with him myself.

(takes the rifle off the wall and aims it at the Peeping Tom.

Shouting.)

Come on, pig! This'll put a curl in your tail!

(Disappointed)

Oh, he's gone! Show him a rifle and he does a bunk! Coward! Come on, come on, come out of your sty you blind git and bring your bloody binoculars with you!

(Puts the rifle on the table. To the neighbor.) sit.

Did I give you a good laugh? Do you think I'm off my trolley?

(Starts ironing again)

Better to be off my trolley than do what I was doing before... **CUE IMG: WITHOUT HOPE** You should've seen me. Walk upstage. Every couple of months I'd swallow a bottle of sleeping pills. I'd swallow anything, any round pills I could find in the

bathroom—the baby’s fluoride tablets, even the cat’s worm pills...I was so desperate! Or I’d cut my wrists—I did that three months ago.

You cut your wrists??

Yes my wrists. Look, look here, I’ve still got the scars. Can you see? **STOP ALL go back downstage**

Will you tell me what happened?

(shows her wrists)

No, I don’t think I can tell you that little tale. Well, it’s very private. Personal. I don’t feel...well we’ve known each other for such a short time.

(Complete change of tone.)

Shall I tell you? No, no. I’ve had a go at trusting people in your building! Oh well... Maybe it would do me a bit of good. Get it off my chest. It’s a sad story! All right then... It was all because of this boy. Gossipy. Fifteen years younger than me, and he looked even younger than he was... sort of shy and awkward...nice, soft...the sort of lad that if you went to bed with him you’d feel you were committing...incest! Incest! Well I did it!

Wait, what did you do exactly?

What did I do? Incest! I went to bed with the boy! And do you know what the worst thing was? I wasn’t even ashamed of myself. In fact I was on top of the world! I used to sing noon and night...well not at night. At night I used to cry... ‘You’re depraved,’ I’d say to myself...

(Sound of a trumpet blowing off-stage.)

Excuse me a moment. It’s my brother-in-law. He blows his trumpet to let me know he wants me. Don’t go away...I’ll be back in a tick.

(Putting her head around the stage right door. To brother-in-law:)

What is it dear? Be good for a bit will you, I’m having a chat with a friend of mine...

(Another ferocious blast drowns her words.)

Bastard!

(To the neighbor)

If only you knew the filthy things he was saying with that trumpet! I swear when they take the plaster off I’ll break and re-break every bone in his body! And I’ll do the same to my old man while I’m at it! Did you hear him now on the phone? He said that when he comes home he’s going to give me a good belt round the face! Me? My old man give me a slap round the face? Me? **CUE IMG: WILKE**

(starts ironing again.) Go upstage to face projector

He says he does it because he loves me. ‘I only do it because I adore you! You’re still just a little child and I’ve got to look after you’. His idea of looking after me is to beat me up! He beats me to Kingdom Come and then he wants to go to bed with me and he couldn’t care less about me... If I want to... I always have to be ready! Be prepared! Like the Girl

Scouts! Instant sex! Like Nescafe! Warm, washed always willing and waiting... but shtum! As long as I'm still breathing that's all he's worried about. Oh and I have to do a bit of moaning now and again so he thinks I'm really into it. Well to be quite honest, I'm not really into it... As a matter of fact I'm not into it at all... I don't feel anything. Not with my husband anyway. I can't...I can't... have...

(She is very embarrassed. She can't find the right word. The neighbor says it for her.) Pivot downstage centered in front of projector—slowly bring arms up

An orgasm?

Yes, that's it...that's the word! What a word! What a word! I never say it! Orgasm! Sounds like some horrible monster...a cross between a monkey and an open sandwich... orangutan and smorgasbord... I can see the headlines now: 'Fully grown orgasm escapes from London Zoo'...'Nun poisoned by salmonella infected orgasm in Danish resturant'...and you know when they say...'He reached orgasm'...well I always picture some poor old bloke tottering down the road and just managing to hop on a bus! **STOP ALL**

(she laughs)

Yes, exactly!

Same for you too?

~~O.R.G.A.S.M...!!! What a wo-o-o-rd! With all the names of things that are around, why couldn't they have called it something else? What about 'chair'? Yes, 'chair'. So you could just say, 'I had a chair'. For starters, no-one'd know you'd been doing dirty things...and also, when you got tired, you could have a sit down!~~

(she laughs, she is much amused.)

Where was I? sit. Sorry, all this stuff about orgasms made me lose my thread...I feel nothing with my husband! Nothing! Look, this is how I do it with him...

(she's sitting down. Remaining seated, she goes rigid: hands at her sides, legs straight out...like a soldier at attention.)

And when he's finished I say, 'At ease' No, not out loud, he might thump me...to myself. I'm always talking to myself. 'At ease!' and then I can relax and go to sleep. I don't know why I don't feel anything. Maybe it's because I feel...frozen...I feel as if I'm...

(she can't find the right definition. The neighbor suggests it to her. Complete change of tone.)

Taken for granted? Like an object?

Yes! How come it took you so long to move in over there? Now I come to think, there's another word...'USED'...Yes, I'm 'used', like an electric razor or a hairdryer. But you see the other thing is that I didn't have much experience when it came to sex. I only had two...with my husband, which doesn't count, and the other one when I was still a kid. I was ten and he was twelve. He was just a beginner! I hope he got better at it when he

grew up! We didn't know anything about all that stuff! All we knew was that babies come out of your stomach.

Did you feel anything when you did it?

No, I didn't feel anything...Not a thing! Just a terrible pain here.
(indicates her navel.)

Wait, your stomach??

Yes, here...my belly button. Yes well, you see we thought that's where you did it...so he was pushing at me with his thingie: pushing and pushing! I had a sore belly button for God knows how long afterwards...

(laughing)

My Mum thought I'd caught chicken pox again! I never told my husband the story about the belly button.

Why not? It's funny! You're not ashamed, are you?

Well no...

Then why?

Maybe ten years later he'd pick a fight over it: 'Shut your face! What about that business with the belly button...slut!!' No, no, I kept my mouth shut. I told the priest in confession. He told me not to do it again. Then I grew up...

And you never had sex again before your husband?

No I never had another sexual experience...

Why not?

Well I didn't get much out of that belly button stuff. I grew up. I got engaged and my girl friends explained everything to me... The day of the wedding I was beside myself...I was singing at the top of my voice...

I would have been embarrassed to be singing out loud like that in front of everyone.

No, no, not out loud...inside...I do everything inside. I was singing inside, 'Love is in the air...oho...mmn hmm...love is in the air...'

(complete change of tone. Disappointed.)

But no. It was my husband in the air!! Oh the 'first night' was awful, 'you've got to be kidding! Is that all there is to it?', I said to myself. Ooh that first night was awful...well so was the hundreth come to that.

So then how did you find out about orgasms and stuff?

Find out? Find out? Who was I supposed to ask? Then I started to read women's magazines and I did find something out!

(very self important.)

I found out that we women have erogenous zones! The spots where you feel the most when a man touches you!

Yeah, of course we do!

(Dissapointed.)

Oh you know already...you know a lot of things, don't you? Goddamn, can you believe the number of erogenous zones we've got! Go upstage to stand in front of projector. Indicate images with wooden spoon, kind of like a teacher at a chalk board. CUE IMG: ANA MENDIETA In this one magazine they had a picture of a naked woman cut up in four...you know, like one of those posters you see in the butcher's, with a cow cut up into joints like a map... **CUE IMG: WILKE** And all the erogenous zones were painted in the wildest colors depending on how sensitive they are... so the haunch was bright scarlet! And this bit here, behind your neck—what the butcher calls 'best end' was purple. And the fillet...

(Complete change of tone.) Pivot head downstage

Have you noticed how much fillet has gone up?

Finish your story!

Oh yeah, sorry...

(returns to previous tone)

Well the fillet was a tangerine color! And then there was the rump...Now there's a thing! Rump! Best of the lot! Extra special! The rump is almost as good as the 'loin'. Apparently if the man knows how to do it right, you'll get erotic shivers out of your loin... well it's enough to make you go 'pop'. Like being touched on your rib of beef, that's your 'sartorious' muscle... or in the other direction it's a crown roast! Go back downstage With my husband: **STOP ALL (turn sound down)** no rump, no loin, no fillet, no crown roast, no nothing...Nothing! I didn't feel anything at all! But in the end I stopped worrying about I because I thought all women felt the same as me...until I met the boy. Well this is what happened Drag chair downstage—confiding in audience, gossipy: my eldest was almost grown up, and I didn't have much to do, so I said to my husband: 'Listen, I'm sick of being a housewife. I want to do something that exercises my brain a bit. Learn a language. What about Italian. If we ever go to Italy it'd be useful because they never stop talking it over there!' So he said 'Fine!' And he brought home this young feller who was studying at the University. He was about twenty-six and he spoke wonderful Italian. So we'd been going about three weeks when it suddenly dawned on me that this young feller was madly in love with me!

How did you know?

How did I know? Well, when I was reciting a verb, if I was waving my arms round looking for the word and I accidentally brushed his hand, he'd start trembling all over! And stammering the Italian so badly I couldn't understand a single word of what he was saying! Well, I don't know anything about 'emotions'. All I knew was my brother-in-law fettering up my skirt, the telephone pig and my old man prodding about night after night... I started feeling these little explosions of love...whoosh...whoosh...in my stomach...Like a nervous tummy upset! So I said to myself: 'You're on the slippery slope to sin, my girl!' I stopped the Italian lessons! The boy took it ever so badly. I'd go down every morning to do the shopping and he'd be waiting for me in the hallway, terribly pale and sad and wearing a white coat. He was so handsome! He looked like a young Yul Bryner! He'd look at me with that blue eye of his—

Wait, he only had one eye??

No, no he had two eyes. That's just my way of speaking... blue eye. And I'd say to him
(in a low voice)

'Go away! I'm not the right woman for you! Go away! I'm almost old enough to be your mother! Go and find a girl your own age!'

(she's shouting.)

'GO AWAY!!'... That really put the wind up him! And then one day he did something—I'll never forget it—I came down to go shopping like every other day and he's not in the hallway! I felt terrible! 'Well it doesn't matter,' I said to myself, 'I'll just have to get used to it'... So I go out into the square, here down below, and something catches my eye. All the walls of the building were covered in writing... huge letters... in red paint... and they said 'I love you, Sharon'... Sharon, that's me. Actually he'd written '*Ti amo*' He'd written it in Italian, you see, so no one could understand it! I dashed back into the house... 'I've got to forget...I've just got to forget...' So to make me forget, I started to hit the bottle! Campari! It's bitter! Goddamn, that Campari's so bitter! Why do they make it so bitter? I was chucking it down like cough syrup... And there I was, all on my own, full of bitter thoughts and bitter booze!... The doorbell rings. Who is it? The boy's mother! How embarrassing! She says: 'Please don't think too badly of me, but I'm desperate! My son is dying for love of you... he won't eat, he won't sleep, he won't drink! Stand up quickly You've got to save him! The least you can do is come and see him.' What was I supposed to do? I'm a mother myself! So I go. He was in bed, pale, sad, and not wearing his coat... As soon as he sees me he bursts into tears too... Then his mother goes out. We're alone.

(She is very embarrassed)

He hugs me, I hug him. He kisses me, I kiss him... And then: 'Stop!!' That really shocked him. 'I've got to talk to you... I'm not ashamed of admitting that I like you a lot. As a matter of fact I love you.

(Her voice is getting louder and louder.)

I love you, I love you, I loo-o-oo-ve you!!' Oh I was shouting my head off! It was the Campari!!

(Still shouting)

'I loo-o-o-ove yo-o-o-ou!!'

(Change of tone.)

They told me later I was shouting so loudly that all the people in the other apartments were hanging out of their windows trying to see what was going on,

‘Who’s in love with who?’ low

‘Is it someone up on the fourth floor who’s in love?’ nasaly

‘No, not in my place. I’m not in love with anyone’ chesty

What a spectacle! Thank God no one knew who I was.

(shouting again.)

‘I love you. But I can’t go to bed with you. I’ve got two kids, a husband and a brother-in-law!’ So then he just jumps right out of bed—stark naked. Goddamn, was he ever naked! He grabs this knife and holds it up to his throat and says: ‘If you won’t go to bed with me, I’ll kill myself!’ hold up spoon to throat like knife. turn head depending on who was talking—like that old stand up comedy trick

(more embarrassed than ever)

Well I’m not a murderess, right? Sacrifice the life of this young man just to satisfy my own selfishness? I just couldn’t do it! So I ripped off all my clothes and I made...

(Change of tone. Very sweet.)

Oh it was lovely! Kisses... strokes... Oh you should have been there! Such kisses! Such caresses! God bless that knife! And that’s how I found out that love, LOVE, isn’t that joke with my husband... me underneath and him on top, BANG BANG BANG like a pile-driver! Love is gentle and sweet... so sweet!

I went back the next day and the next day and the day after that. Every day after every day after...

shakes head

Well, he was ill, after all, wasn’t he? And when I got back here to the flat, I’d be like, stunned...

Why?

What do you mean, ‘Why?’ To get to my age and discover something I thought only happened in the movies... when the old man saw me in such a daze he thought I’d taken the bottle in a big way. He locked the Campari away! What a fool! Then he began to get suspicious, so he had me followed... **CUE VID: YOKO ONO, SOUND FADE UP GRADUALLY** walk upstage to face projector, compete with sound level of video. I was in the boy’s bedroom one day... I was standing there naked too, and we were just saying hello to each other--‘How are you today?’ ‘I’m fine, thanks, how about you?’—when the door bursts open and there’s my husband—fully dressed! I didn’t know exactly what to say, so I said ‘Oh, hello, it’s you, is it?’ I mean it’s not exactly something that happens to you every day of the week is it? Standing stark naked beside a strange man who’s stark naked and your husband with his overcoat on! I wish I’d never opened my mouth! ‘Yes,

it's me-e-e-!! You peasant!'... He called me a peasant... I wouldn't have thought that was the right word. Anyway, then he started shouting like a lunatic, and he was trying to throttle the boy. And he was trying to throttle me at the same tie. But my husband's only got two hands and no matter how hard he squeezed, he couldn't do it, though I was trying to help him. I was squeezing my own throat against the boy's and I'd stopped breathing too. My mouth was shut tight... Oh God, I wanted to die! **STOP ALL, CUE IMG: ANA MENDIETA SELF PORTRAIT** Then suddenly my nose started breathing by itself... my nose has got a mind of its own! In rushed his mother, and then his sister and then his granny, and I'm still standing there as naked as the day I was born with my nose doing its own thing... I hurtle into the bathroom and shut the door behind me, grab a razor blade and slash slash slash. I start slashing every vein I can lay hands on... I'm searching for them, here's another one... slash! Another one—slash! It was a bloody massacre! I never knew we had so many veins! I was even cutting them lengthwise so I'd die quicker! But my husband wanted to kill me personally, himself, so he put his shoulder to the door and broke it down... **STOP ALL, CUE IMG: KAHLO** And when he saw me sitting there, covered in blood regard painting, touch it--it was so red... You know my blood really is bright red—he says to me: 'I'm not going to kill you anymore... I'm going to take you to the hospital.' Then he wrapped me up in a nice bedspread—because he didn't want to mess up the car. He took me to the hospital. Then he forgave me. **STOP ALL** come downstage back to table. He's been terribly kind. But ever since then he's kept me locked up in the flat. Solitary confinement. Laundry again.

You know it's illegal for him to lock you in here, right?

Of course I know it's illegal.

So then why don't you call the police?

Call the police? What's the matter with you? Got some sort of thing about calling the police? Got a relative in the force or something? I can't call the police. They'd get here and then the whole story of the boy would come out for sure. And then there'd have to be a legal separation. My husband would take the kids away from me for sure and all I'd be left with would be the brother-in-law and his wandering hand! No...No...Look, I...(appreciate your advice but it's not exactly helping)

(the phone rings. She picks up the receiver,)

Hello...

Sharon, it's me.

(In a low voice. Very emotional.)

Sweetheart, why are you phoning me?

(Shouting to the neighbor.)

It's the boy!

Sharon, I need to see you.

(The intimate tone again.)

Please... you mustn't phone me anymore! How can I see you when he keeps me locked up?...*I'll break in.* You're going to break in? *excited.* How?...*With a bent nail! I'll see you soon.* Don't you dare do any such... Hello...hello...

(to the neighbor.)

He's hung up! He's gone mad! He's out of his mind! He says he's going to come round and break in—with a bent nail!

Well that's not gonna work.

Of course I know he won't be able to do it, but what do you think it's going to look like if one of the neighbors passes by and sees him fiddling at my door with a bent nail!

(A knocking at the door.)

That's him! Goddamn, that was quick! *Fix negligee and hair. Pull up boobs.*

(She goes to the front door. She is terrified.)

Go away!! My husband will be here any minute!

(Change of tone.)

Mrs. Smith, is that you?

Who are you?

I called earlier, I'm here to collect the money.

Money? What money?

(to the neighbor)

This is a disaster! It's the man about the money! He says he's come to collect the debt!

(to the door)

There's no one at home...

Well you're here, aren't you?

Yes I know I'm at home, but...I'm the maid.

What about the husband you just mentioned?

Husband? Who mentioned a husband? Oh did I? Well...my husband's the cook here...

So then are Mr. and Mrs. Smith here?

No the master and mistress aren't at home.

Where are they then?

They've gone on a cruise... by car...

Hey look, can't you just let me in?

Look, I've got orders not to open the door and not to speak to anyone, and not to turn the radio or the stereo on. Anyway I couldn't open the door even if I wanted to, 'cos I haven't got a key...

(Aside)

Oh hell, what've I said...

Why don't you have a key? How do you even get in?

(to the creditor)

No, I haven't got the key because... they lock me in... the mistress things I steal things... so....

They lock you in?! Do you have enough food? You're going to starve to death.i

No, no don't worry I'm not going to starve to death. The larder's stuffed full of food.

This is abusrd. I'm calling the police.

Police? Why would you want to call the police?

(to herself)

He must be related to that woman across the way...

(to the creditor)

Hello!...Hey! Hello!

(coming to the window.)

He's gone! He's gone to call the police...I think he's bluffing. He just said that to give me a fright.

(more knocking at the front door.)

There's someone else knocking... who's it going to be this time? The debt collector, the police or the crazy boy? I'm not going to answer, whoever it is.

(Louder knocking)

What do you bet it's the police?

(louder shouting: 'Sharon...Sharon')

My husband!

(she goes to the door.)

Bryan! Why are you banging like that? I know the bell's broken, but you've got the keys. Why don't you open the door?

I've lost the keys.

Lost the keys? **CUE IMG: FRIDA WOUNDED TABLE** turn back towards door and lean on it, regarding the projected image as a sort of indication of what's to come. Oh

Jesus, now what'll happen to me? I'll starve to death, walled up alive like the Count of Monte Cristo. Walled up forever, me and the baby and the wandering hand...what a way to die! Oh my God, what a way to die! **STOP ALL (VOL. to 17.25)**

(to the husband)

Listen, your friend was here...

Yes, the one about the money... and he want to call the police...

You talked to him!?

No he didn't talk to me—I'm not a complete idiot—he talked to the maid.

What maid? We don't have a maid!

What maid? We haven't got a maid? Of course you've got a maid! A maid, a nurse, a baby sitter, a cleaning lady, do-all, wash-all, fucked up and fucked-over!

Calm down. You're hysterical. You're acting crazy.

I'm not hysterical... I haven't gone crazy...I'm thrilled the police are on their way and we can be finished with all this...finished once and for all.

What do you mean finished?! You're not gonna let me in?

Yes, get lost...and don't come back...ever!! You...

(she is beside herself. She is searching for a rude name to call her husband.)

dyslexic!!

(she realizes what she has said. She is mortified. She is mortified. To the neighbor.)

When I think of all the dirty words I know, and I have to go and call him 'dyslexic'!... and he reads perfectly! I made a complete fool of myself! I really gave it to him, though, didn't I?

CUE SOUND: baby crying

The baby's crying! Oh my God, what'll I do? He's never woken up like that—not since he was born!

(she runs to the stage right doorway.)

What the hell are you doing in my bedroom? Filthy brute... You woke the baby up just to get me in here. What are you up to now? Quit it in will you? Stop pulling me about like that! Let me go!

CUE SOUND: baby crying

Shush, ssshh, be good, sweetie pie.

CUE SOUND: phone ring

Bastard! You've ripped my negligee—and it's only just arrived from Littlewoods...

Whispering because of baby(to phone:) I'm coming, dammit... (back to brother:) I'll deal with you when your brother gets back, you wait and see...if he ever comes back.

(Goes to answer the phone.) **STOP ALL @ answer**

Hello...

CUE SOUND: KAREN FINELY

(she is furious)

Listen, enough is enough. If you don't stop all of this crap, one of these fine days I'll lose my mind... I'll put.. a bomb down the phone! I'll blow up your gums!! Bastard! You ought to be ashamed of yourself! I'm a mother! How would you like it if some dirty old man kept phoning your white haired old mother up? There she is, knitting quietly by the fire and some rotten pig is spewing all the filth at her that you spew at me... how would you like someone to treat your mother like that? **STOP ALL**

Ah, that shut him up! I've finally found something that appeals to his sense of decency!

I don't have a mother you bitch.

(pause. She puts the phone down.)

He's an orphan!

(she shouts abuse at the phone.)

Pig! Bastard! Swine!

(to the neighbor.)

Look what the brother in law's done to me, love...and he's woken the baby up... hello...

(calling)

Hello....

(CUE SOUND: baby cry the baby starts to cry again...she is

disappointed.)

Oh she's gone...

(Looks up.)

Oh the wanker's back though!

(Raises her voice to talk to the stage right door.)

Sweetie pie...

(picks up the rifle.)

Now Mommy's going to show you how to kill a wanker...

(there's a knocking at the front door.)

Don't move an inch... I'll come back and kill you in a couple of minutes.

(Goes to door.)

Who is it? *It's me!* For God's sake go away! My husband will be here any minute and so will the police and someone looking for money...

(There's something fiddling in the lock.)

Don't you touch my lock with that nail! Anyway, you'll never get in... I'm putting the chain on.

But baby!

(She does so.)

Help!

(Runs to the table.)

Hello!...Yoo hoo!...Oh thank God you've come back! It's the crazy boy! He's managed to open the door!

Well, is he in your apartment now?

No he can't get in because I've put the safety chain on.

Tell him to fuck off.

Yes I'll tell him now...

(Goes to the door. Stops dead at the sight of the boy's hand which is poking through the gap in the doorway.)

Get the hell out of my house with that hand of yours!

(The hand makes insistent signs that she should come closer.)

What do you want?... To shake my hand? Why can't you get it through your thick head—my husband's going to turn up any minute...

(He insists)

God you don't give up, do you?! All right then but hurry up.

(She gives him her hand. There is a moment where it's nice—lovely. The boy tries to pull her towards him.)

What are you pulling me for? I'll never get through that crack...

CUE SOUND: baby cry (the baby wails)

Let me go, there's the baby crying. I've got to feed him... hand free Go away now.

(she frees herself from the boy's grip and goes to the kitchen door.)

And lock that door behind you with your bend nail... Actually, leave it with the caretaker, will you, cos' my husband's lost his keys.

(To the baby)

Now then, sweetie pie, I'll get you something to eat.

(Going to the kitchen, she sees that the boy's hand has stayed where it was. She picks up a large plastic spoon.)

Go away... Look, I'm getting to the end of my tether. If you're not careful, I'm going to make you really sorry...

(threatening)

Watch out, I'm going to stab you with this spoon. I'll cut all your fingers off boy wags fingers defiantly... Don't believe me?

(she goes to the boy and slashes him hard on the hand with the spoon. He screams. She's appalled. Looks at the spoon and runs to the window.)

I've stabbed him with a spoon!! What shall I do?

(laughing) take out a patent...

Take out a patent? What are you talking about?!

Sorry, it was a joke. You'd better disinfect it.

Disinfect it? Yes of course, you're right, I'll have to disinfect it...

Do you have any Neosporin or anything?

Yes I've got some...my husband gives me everything.

(Picks up the surgical spirit which is on the tray and runs to the boy.)

Keep still...

Is it gonna hurt?

No it won't hurt. It's what they use on kids. Oh sweetheart, sweetheart... Look what I've done to you! I'm a murderess! Forgive me! Now go away...

Give me a kiss first!

A kiss? On the lips? No I'm not giving you anything on the lips!

Baby please, just take the chain off! Let me in!

No, I'm sorry, I'm not taking the chain off!

Then just reach your head around the corner for a minute.

But I couldn't get my head through the crack! What about my ears? Oh god, you really don't give up, do you!?

(She puts her head through the crack in the door.)

Let go now... let go... Oh bloody hell! My head! My head's stuck in the door! Push! Push! Not with your lips, you idiot! With your hand!

(she gets her head out of the door with great difficulty.)

Ooh that hurts!

(she takes a couple steps away from the door. The boy starts knocking frantically at the door.)

That's enough!! This is no time to start playing jazz!

(The boy tries to pull his arm out of the door. He can't.)

Go away! What's up now?...Oh goddammit!

(She runs to the window.)

Oh my God, he's got his arm stuck in the door! He'll be there for life! They'll have to deliver his pension to him in my doorway! My husband will slaughter me! What'll I do?

What about some water and soap?

Oh yes...water and soap... like you do with rings...

(Goes towards the Peeping Tom's window.)

Get lost!

(To the neighbor:)

I'll use hot water, that'll be better...

(she picks up the bowl on the table. To the Peeping Tom: She is exasperated.)

You lesbian shirtlifter!!! Rabid, whatever comes right of the top of her head.

(She's bustling about the room.)

Now then, a wave for the wanker, hot water for the wounded, mush for the baby...

(Trumpet blast from the brother-in-law)

And a grope for the groper...

CUE SOUND: phone ring (The phone rings,)

And a phone call from the pigging phone pig!

(She goes to the phone.)

Hello pig!

(Change of tone. She thinks it's the husband.)

Hi! Is this Mrs. Smith? What? Who are you?... I'm sorry, I thought you were my husband....Is he there? No my husband isn't here...if you'd like to tell me... Yes... Yes...

(She laughs to herself.)

Do you want to know what I think? Congratulations and I hope they're all boys!...Look, I think you must have the wrong number... Yes a man does live here, he happens to be my husband and the only person he gets pregnant is me!...No? He's got your daughter pregnant too? No he hasn't mentioned it to me...what a pig! How old is your daughter? Sixteen? Listen, if you ask me, I think you should keep your sixteen year old daughter locked up at home instead of letting her wander the streets getting pregnant by other women's husbands! My husband keeps me locked up... look how old I am and he still keeps me locked up... bastard!

(She hangs up. To the neighbor.)

He called me a tart! My husband gets his daughter pregnant and he calls me a tart!!

(The boy is knocking on the door.)

Leave me alone. I've got a family disaster on my hands! I've got a pregnant husband!

(She goes into the kitchen—returns with the bowl in one hand and the baby's food in the other.)

I'm coming, I'm coming... bloody hell, this stuff is scalding hot!

(Goes into the bedroom.)

Here I am, here I am sweetie pie...stay still you cretin...stop pulling at me...be careful, this is boiling hot!

(We hear a scream from the brother-in-law.)

Goddamn!

(She re-enters.)

You'll never guess what I've done, love...I poured the baby's boiling mush in his eyes...no not the baby's, my brother in law's!! What'll I do?

(Goes to the bedroom and brings the brother-in-law in. He is a dummy, completely covered in plaster and sitting in a wheel chair. To the neighbor:)

Put some germolene on it

Germolene?...Of course, yes, I'll put some Germolene on it... Yes, yes, of course I've got Germolene, my husband gives me everything...

(To the boy who's knocking on the door again:)
 Leave me alone! I've scalded my brother-in-law!
 (takes the ointment of the tray and runs to the wheelchair.)
 Here I am...oh dear, is it burning? Well you would go and do it! I warned you I was holding the baby's food... Give over with that hand...
 (The brother-in-law manages to pull her to him and holds on to her tightly.)
 Let go of me! Let go of me!
 (She tries to free herself without success. She is furious.)
 I'll throw this boiling water all over you!
 (The brother-in-law lets go.)
 Oh the penny's dropped at long last, has it?
 (She runs to the boy with the bowl.)
 Quick, put your hand in the bowl.

But it's boiling!

No, no it's not boiling... I only said that to frighten the brother-in-law...
 (The boy puts his hand in bowl. The water is boiling. He screams and quickly retracts his arm.)
 Oh it was boiling! Well at least you've got your arm back!...Now go away... You've scalded yourself? Well, put some of this ointment on it.
 (She passes the ointment to him through the door. We gather that the boy has grabbed her hand and is trying to masturbate with it. She tries to free herself but cannot. She is indignant.)
 What are you up to? Let go of me!! If anybody sees this we'll be carted off to the police station, door and all! Let go of me! You've got a bloody nerve! Show a bit of respect, will you...If you don't stop I'll make you sorry...I'll really make you sorry...Oh you don't believe me, huh? Well I'll show you!
 (Mimes pulling him violently towards her and then slams the door. Scream from the boy who runs off. The woman is in despair. She takes the chain off the door and opens it wide. Goes sadly to the table and starts to talk to the neighbor again.)
 I punished him...well he really let me down, that one. I thought he was LOVE, but he's not. He's a pig like the rest of them...
 (She is desperate.)
 I can't take anymore of this...
CUE sound: baby cry (She hears the baby crying.)
 I just can't take any more...My baby...I must go and see to the baby...he's the only one I really love... **CUE SOUND: phone ring**
 (She makes as if to go into the bedroom, but she's stopped by the phone ringing. And the brother-in-law has started to blow his trumpet again.)
INCREASE VOLUME to max Shut up! Shut up! You cretin! Shut it! Just bloody shut it!!

(CUE SOUND: baby cry and phone ring Baby screaming, phone ringing, brother-in-law trumpeting...all getting louder and louder in unison...She can no longer control herself.)

That's it! That's enough!

(Takes the rifle and points it at her throat, downstage center) **CUE**

IMG: BROKEN COLUMN

I'm going to kill myself!! **(ALL OFF)** I'm going to kill myself!!!...

(Total silence for a few seconds. The neighbor says something to her. The woman listens attentively.)

Yes...Turn upstage to broken column yes...

(She can hardly keep back the tears.)

Yes!

(She puts the rifle on the table.)

What was I thinking of? Oh God...Oh God... Thank you, love...Thank God you came to live opposite... Yes, I'll do it straight away...You give such good advice!

(A blast from the brother-in-law.)

Yes, chuck, I'm coming. I'm all yours! Come on!

(Happy trumpet.)

Come on then...

(She wheels the chair to the front door.)

Let's take you for a nice little sexy walk!

(She shoves him out of the door. Huge thump. Then a series of trumpeting and thumps.)

Mind the glass door! **CUE SOUND: window smash**

(The sound of glass smashing.)

One down!! **Vol. down to original, CUE SOUND: baby cry**

(wail from the baby. The woman goes towards the bedroom. She stops in the middle of the stage. Looks at the Peeping Tom. She smiles at him languidly. Greets him. Slowly goes to the table, moving very sexily...she blows him kisses. All of a sudden she snatches the rifle and fires at him.) **Vol. Max, GUNSHOT**

The wanker wanks no more! Two down!! **Vol. to down to original, CUE SOUND: phone ring**

(She is going to her son but she's stopped by the phone ringing. She answers in a voice like thunder.)

Hello!! **STOP ALL**

(Change of tone.)

Bryan?!

(Almost sweetly.)

Yes, I'm fine...yes, yes, everything's very peaceful up here...yes you can come up...I'm waiting for you...

(She hangs up. To the neighbor:)

No love, don't worry...I'm calm...I'm very calm...

(Leans on the table, pointing the rifle at the front door.)

I'm just waiting...very calmly....

Blackout.

Music—MIA Bad Girls.

APPENDIX C: CUE LIST WITH IMAGES AND LYRICS

1. Rame video of lo stupro (both audio and video playing) mixed with audio 212 by Azalea banks. The two tracks should play on top of each other, simultaneously.

Hey, I can be the answer
 I'm ready to dance when the vamp up
 And when I hit that dip get your camera
 You can see I been that bitch since the pamper
 And that I am that young sis the beacon
 The bitch who wants to compete and
 I can freak a fit that pump with the peep and
 You know what your bitch become when her weave in
 I just wanna sip that punch with your peeps and
 Sit in that lunch if you're treatin'
 Kick it with the bitch who comes from Parisian
 She know where I get mine from and the season
 Now she wanna lick my plum in the evenin'
 And fit that tongue tongue d-deep in
 I guess that cunt gettin' eaten
 I guess that cunt gettin' eaten
 I guess that cunt gettin' eaten
 I guess that cunt gettin' eaten
 I guess that cunt gettin'...

I was in the 212
 On the uptown A
 Nigga you know what's up
 Or don't you?
 Word to who made ya
 I'm a rude bitch nigga
 What are you made up of?
 I'm a eat your food up boo
 I could bust your 8
 I'm a do one too
 Fuck you gone do?
 I want you to make bucks
 I'm a look right nigga
 Bet you do want to fuck
 Fuck em like you do want to cum
 Your gay to get discovered in my 2 1 deuce
 Cock-a-lickin' in the water by the blue bayou
 Caught the warm goo
 In your doo-rag too son?
 Nigga you're a kool-aid dude
 Plus your bitch might lick it

Wonder who let you come to 1 2
 With your doo-doo crew son
 Fuck, are you into, huh?
 Niggas better ohh run-run
 You could get shot homie
 If you do want to put your guns up
 Tell your crew don't front
 I'm a hoodlum nigga
 You know you were too once
 Bitch I'm 'bout to blew up too
 I'm the one today
 I'm the new shit boo
 Young Rapunzel
 Who are you bitch, new lunch?
 I'm a ruin you cunt
 I'm a ruin you cunt
 I'm a ruin you cunt
 I'm a ruin you cunt

A-yo, A-yo,
 I heard you ridin' with the same tall, tall tale
 Tellin' em you made some
 Sayin' you runnin' but you ain't goin' no where
 Why you procrastinate girl?
 You got a lot but you just waste all yourself
 They'll forget your name soon
 And won't nobody be to blame but yourself, yeah

What you gone do when I appear?
 W-when I premier?
 Bitch the end of your life are near
 This shit been mine, mine
 What you gone do when I appear?
 W-when I premier?
 Bitch the end of your life are near
 This shit been mine, mine

Bitch I'm in the 212
 With the 5th cocked nigga
 It's the 2 1 zoo
 Fuck you gone do
 When your goons sprayed up
 Bet his bitch won't get em
 Betcha you won't do much
 See even if you do want to bust
 Your bitch'll get you cut and touch your crew up too

Pop you playin' with your butter
 Like your boo won't chew
 Cock the gun too
 Where you do eat poon hun
 I'm fuckin' with your cutie q
 What's your dick like homie?
 What are you into?
 What's the run dude?
 Where do you wake up?
 Tell your bitch keep hatin'
 I'm a new one too, huh?
 See I remember you when you were
 The young new face but you do like to
 Slumber don't you?
 Now your boo up too hun
 I'm a ruin you cunt

What you gone do when I appear?
 W-when I premier?
 Bitch the end of your lives are near
 This shit been mine, mine
 What you gone do when I appear?
 W-when I premier?
 Bitch the end of your lives are near
 This shit been mine, mine
 This shit been mine, mine
 This shit been mine, mine

2. Peaches Fuck the Pain Away

Sucking on my titties like you wanted me
 Calling me, all the time like Blondie
 Check out my chrissy behind
 It's fine all of the time
 Like sex on the beaches
 What else is in the teaches of peaches? Huh? What?

Sucking' on my titties like you wanted me
 Calling me, all the time like Blondie
 Check out my chrissy behind
 It's fine all of the time
 What else is in the teaches of peaches?
 Like sex on the beaches, Huh? What?

Huh? Right. What? Uhh

Huh? What? Right. Uhh

Huh? What? Right. Uhh
 Huh? What? Right. Uhh

SIS IUD, stay in school 'cause it's the best
 IUD SIS, stay in school 'cause it's the best
 IUD SIS, stay in school 'cause it's the best
 IUD SIS, stay in school 'cause it's the best

Sucking' on my titties like you wanted me
 Calling me, all the time like Blondie
 Check out my chrissy behind
 It's fine all of the time
 Like sex on the beaches
 What else is in the teaches of peaches? Huh? What?

Fuck the pain away. Fuck the pain away
 Fuck the pain away. Fuck the pain away
 Fuck the pain away. Fuck the pain away
 Fuck the pain away. Fuck the pain away
 Fuck the pain away. Fuck the pain away
 Fuck the pain away. Fuck the pain away
 Fuck the pain away. Fuck the pain away
 Fuck the pain away. Fuck the pain away
 Fuck the pain away. Fuck the pain away

Huh? What? Right. Uhh
 Huh? What? Right. Uhh
 What else in the teaches of peaches?
 Like sex on the beaches
 Huh? What? Right. Uhh

Fuck the pain away. Fuck the pain away
 Fuck the pain away. Fuck the pain away
 Fuck the pain away. Fuck the pain away
 Fuck the pain away. Fuck the pain away

3. Iggy Azalea—Pu\$\$y

[Verse 1]
 Iggy Iggy pussy illy
 Wetter than the Amazon
 Taste this kitty
 Silly Billy poppin' pilly's
 Smoke it like a swisher

Lick this philly
 Mold em ah! Soak em ah!
 Hook em like crack, after shock
 Molten ah! Lava drop
 This should be outlawed, call me Pac
 (Pu\$\$y pu\$\$y)
 The illest on the planet
 Better play ya cards right Mr. Gambit
 If you wanna hang here, ain't no Hammock
 Never, no better, law should ban it
 Never, no better, law should ban it
 I do it right, wit drugs understand it
 I do it right, now please sir pan it

[Hook]

Left right back to the middle
 Head on swivel neck till I quivel
 Open ya mouth
 Taste the rainbow taste my Skittles ah!
[x2]

Pu\$\$y pu\$\$y pu\$\$y
[x4]

[Verse 2]

You know bitches envy me
 Cause you won't get rid of me
 When you cum, I run
 This cat got you missin' me
 Bad Boys get a mouth full of pussy aka Listerine
 Here to make you lose your mind
 Gonna need a Sherlock Holmes
 To solve your mystery, I'm nasty
 Baby what you thinking? Aka Titanic
 So much wet will have yo ass sinking
 Treat that tongue like a bullet
 Give me head, Abe Lincoln
 This is so out this world
 But no you not dreamin'

[Hook]

Left right back to the middle
 Head on swivel neck till I quivel
 Open ya mouth
 Taste the rainbow, taste my Skittles ah!
[x2]

Pu\$\$y Pu\$\$y Pu\$\$y
[x4]

4. Frida Kahlo, *Without Hope*



5. Annie Sprinkle, *Public Cervix Announcement*



6. Carolee Schneemann, *Meat Joy*



7. Carolee Schneemann *Ask the Goddess*



8. Karen Finely, *Belgian Waffles*

you don't own me bastard
 you fuckin' asshole
 you wanna suck my pussy
 well let me suck your dick
 suck your dick bastard bitch
 ooh I wanna get your wiener in my ass
 well I've got your fuckin' cock

and it's in my twat good
 I'm not gonna give it up you piece a \$hit
 you can't own me like you have
 just start lickin' that little pussy juice
 and maybe I'll take that clit
 put it on your face bastard
 put it on your mind

ooh get me off
 get me off
 ooh get me off right now

let me tell you how I take the yams
 ooh I stick it up my granny's ass
 she's a real real nice granny
 ooh and I never touch her snatch
 'cause she's my granny
 ooh and I love her ass
 ooh I take those Belgian waffles
 ooh I smear it up her crack
 and I put it up her butthole
 'cause I love those Belgian waffles
 ooh and I take that Belgian beer
 ooh I'm comin' ooh I'm comin'
 get me off get me off get me off
 suck my nubs suck my nubs
 suck my tits
 suck my clit suck
 my dibs cud my dub boy oh Ah-yah I got it

ooh mama mama you are suckin' your granny
 ooh you are fuckin' your sister too
 and I've got those mulatto children
 that are sittin' under my dress
 ooh get me off get me off get me comin' boy
 I'll suck your wiener for you
 you don't know what it's like to be finger fucked
 you wish you could be a baby maker
 oh you wish you just wanna be fucked in your ass
 but you'll never know what it's like
 'cause I've got those multiple orgasms
 and I'm comin' every night

ooh boy
 just suck me off
 just suck my tits

just get me going right
 ooh make me a tit sandwich
 ooh get me going right
 I want my granny's ass
 I want me a dwarf
 I want your wiener in my mouth
 ooh I want those wieners in my cock
 ooh I got a cock too
 ooh it's called a clitoris and you never knew what
 ooh boy get me off off too

ooh I'm swimming in my piss
 and I'm gonna to shit in your ears
 ooh shit boy just shit in my mouth
 ooh fuck me you bastard bitch
 ooh you don't own me let me wipe your face
 let me piss in your mouth
 ooh boy I'm going to shit on you
 I'm gonna pull that cock
 I'm gonna to tug at those balls
 ooh let me suck those balls
 gonna take a big brown hot steamin' shit on you woman

ooh I'm gonna make you come
 ooh boy I'm on the subway with those bums
 and they're just drinkin' my piss
 ooh baby I just love you
 ooh baby get me off get me comin' get me comin' get me off get me off
 get me comin' suck me [reverb]
 get me off
 get me off
 get me off off off

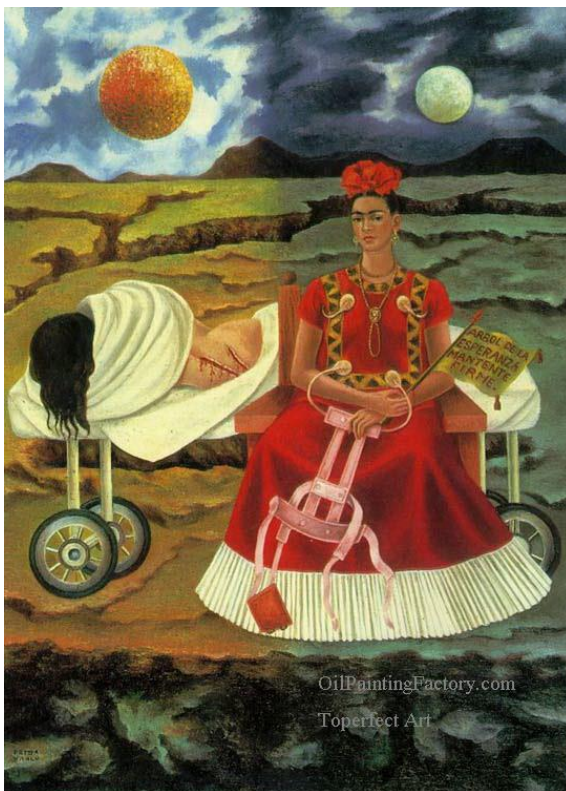
ooh I'm swimmin' in piss and suckin' my tits
 get me off granny granny
 suck me boy
 ooh you're fuckin' your granny and you're fuckin' your girl
 and you wish you had a clit but you only got cock
 ooh come boy come boy
 get me get me off get me ahhhhhhhoff

ooh get me off
 suck me boy
 got Belgian waffles in my twat
 I got beer up my pussy and you never knew what
 'cause I've got the clit

I've got the master action
 and boy you don't own me not one bit
 ooh I'll suck that cock
 I'll suck that wiener

well you just listen here Mr. Horse:
 you drop that ghetto blaster
 suck me off
 suck me off
 suck me off

9. Frida Kahlo, *Tree of Hope*



10. Hannah Wilke *Intra Venus Triptych*



11. Hannah Wilke *Venus Pareve*

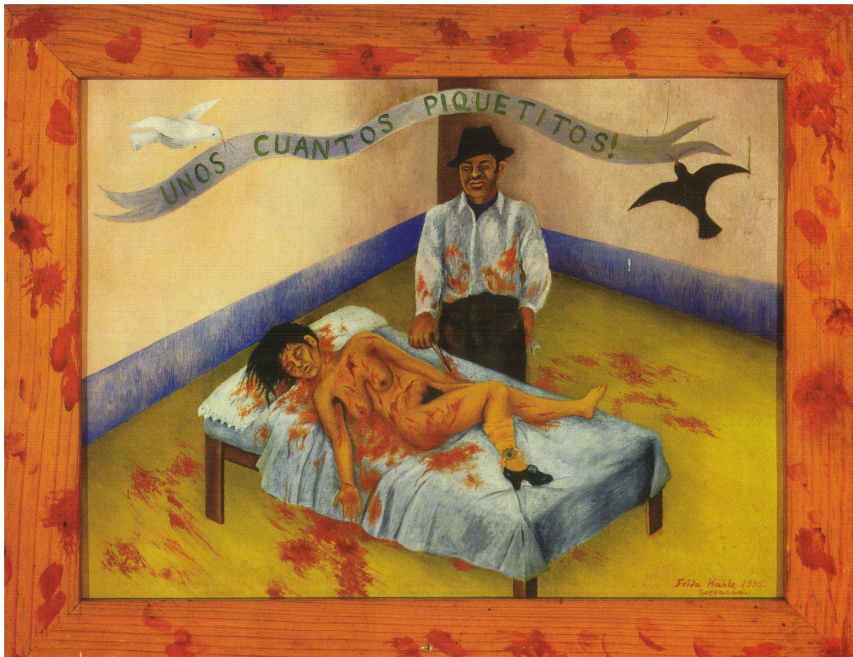


12. Yoko Ono *Cut Piece* video

13. Ana Mendieta *Self Portrait with Blood*



14. Frida Kahlo, *A Few Small Nips*



15. Frida Kahlo, *The Wounded Table*



16. Frida Kahlo, *Broken Column*



17. MIA, *Bad Girls*

Live fast, die young
Bad girls do it well
Live fast, die young
Bad girls do it well
[x2]

My chain hits my chest
When I'm banging on the dashboard
My chain hits my chest
When I'm banging on the radio

Get back, get down
Pull me closer if you think you can hang
Hands up, hands tied
Don't go screaming if I blow you with a bang

Suki Zuki
I'm coming in the Cherokee gasoline
There's steam on the window screen
Take it, take it
Wheels bouncing like a trampoline
When I get to where I'm going, gonna have you trembling

Live fast, die young
Bad girls do it well
Live fast, die young
Bad girls do it well
[x2]

My chain hits my chest
When I'm banging on the dashboard
My chain hits my chest
When I'm banging on the radio

Yeah back it, back it
Yeah pull up to the bumper game
Yeah with a signal
Cover me, cause I'm changing lanes

Had a handle on it
My life, I broke it
When I get to where I'm going, gonna have you saying it

Live fast, die young

Bad girls do it well
Live fast, die young
Bad girls do it well
[x2]

My chain hits my chest
When I'm banging on the dashboard
My chain hits my chest
When I'm banging on the radio
[x2]

Get back, get down
Pull me closer if you think you can hang
Hands up, hands tied
Don't go screaming if I blow you with a bang

Going out for beer child seat for a million
Accelerating fast I could do this in a second
Looking in the rear view swagger going swell
Leave them boys behind kisses leave em just to kill
Shift gear automatic damned if I do
Who's gonna stop me when I'm coming through
What we got left is just me and you
Boy if I go to bed baby can I take you?

Get back, get down
Pull me closer if you think you can hang
Hands up, hands tied
Don't go screaming if I blow you with a bang

Live fast, die young
Bad girls do it well
Live fast, die young
Bad girls do it well
[x4]

My chain hits my chest
When I'm banging on the dashboard
My chain hits my chest
When I'm banging on the radio
[x2]

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