

Circles of Light

Part One Topography: The Landscape of my Soul

I ache to write something that will rush through my fingers and pour onto the page like an ocean, each wave a surprise, the whole thing a loud, pushy mess that goes spectacular as it reaches further towards the sun, before it crashes to disperse into sand.

By Temi (Brodkey) Rose 2002

(additional dialogue by Joel Baird, Elena Bayrock, Lloyd Goodman, and Marshall Berman)



Shy Spring by Amy Scherer-Huddleston

Circles of Light is an examination of mind; a realistically portrayed representation of consciousness and the memory of action. The play takes place during Halloween, celebrating summer's end; A return of the dark, the veil between the world of the living and the world of the dead is thin and the cyclicity of time is tangible.

Circles of Light is the first part of *Topography: The Landscape of my Soul*.

Part Two Topography: Shadow Tag: an evening of disturbance.

Part Three Topography: Sympathy: a simple, tender, grace of the heart.

Once upon a time, a long, long time ago, the world was in flux. Everything was changing. People were changing. The air was changing. The sky was changing. And everyone was going to the moon. In this disturbing time, we wonder: how can we forgive those who trespass against us? Inquiring minds want to know. Can we forever endure abuse from hierarchical pryncedoms whose only purpose and desire is to make life better for themselves? How long before we realize that our greatest enemies are ourselves? People want to know.

And days came. And nights were traversed. And loneliness was endemic, pandemic. People who seemed to have everything they could ever need were asking, "Why am I lonely? From whence my despair?"

And days came and nights were traversed. And all the world rejoiced to turn and then suddenly, without any warning, the prince of darkness leapt the barrier, two towers came down and a nation of hope and struggle rose like a phoenix from the ashes.

The original cast, for the first workshop production at the Ensemble Studio Theatre in June, 2003:

Lilly: *Alison Saltz*

Michael: *Craig Rising**

Barbara: *Marina Lutz*

Marianne: *Michele Fulves*

Joshua: *Lloyd Goodman*

Art History Professor: *Joel Baird*

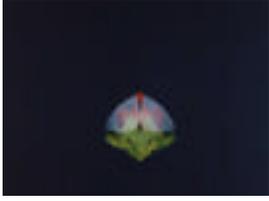
Mime: *Elena Bayrock*

**appeared courtesy of Actors' Equity Association*

The lighting designer was *Geoffrey Dunbar*

The fight choreographer was *Meron Langsner*

Stage Manager: *Christopher Halpin*



Cadence by Carla Aurich, was the subject of Joel Baird's art history lecture. This painting was one of three paintings of Ms. Aurich's that were destroyed in the galleries of the world trade center towers when they were bombarded on September 11th, 2001.

Introduction

I wrote this play to begin again. I wrote this play to honor two of my best friends who died too young. I missed them like a fever in my bones. Writing them gave me solace, brought their voices to my consciousness. Neither of my friends had died in the World Trade Center but another friend of mine, very much alive, had lost three of her paintings that day in the conflagration. And somehow, in the topography of my soul, these losses became intertwined.

The question of what to wear masks the deeper anxiety of how to keep on living when the people and worlds we have loved come crashing down. Trying to create an intra-psychic whole out of the fragments of my shattered self and consciousness, I entered this trilogy hoping for release, exoneration, a renewal of faith and the strength to continue to struggle for the peace and freedom that I feel are meant to be the purpose and methodology of our country – not the vile greed and interpersonal violence that seem to have inhabited our spirits and changed the way we dress ourselves. Can we once again be a country of heroes? Of heroines – heart warriors who can battle the insidious cruelty of fascist simulacrum of sameness? Can we create truth and still love one another in communities of flawed humanist activity?

The preferred *Production style* for *Circles of Light* is carnivalesque, performance art, free-wheeling, musical, balletique... if there is any money to spend on the show, backdrops made of light indicating the city skyline can be used to ornament the set which is otherwise simple, functional platforms. In the third act, all set pieces should be removed, leaving nothing onstage but actors and circles of light.

SPACE/TIME

Halloween week in Manhattan, about a month after the World Trade Centers collapsed.

SET

The production should feel as if we were outside, exposed. The first act perhaps taking place on a somewhat furnished rooftop. The second act in a park or on a riverwalk. The third in the night sky itself slowly returning back to the rooftop.

The characters are all heroes: heroes are amazingly brave. In the face of insurmountable odds, they will fight for what they believe in, even though they have fatal flaws that can sometimes be the death of them. The actors can be any size or shape, they can be beautiful or not but they must not all be beautiful or odd in the same way or style. When the audience looks from one to the other, there ought to be a sense of changing worlds. It is fine if each character displays a different ethnicity. Ages are flexible.

CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

LILLY	Childish, a pothead, extremely verbal and somewhat hyper. Very private and intense. She is a computer network administrator. (18-50)
BARBARA	Kinetic and drinks too much. She makes her living taking people into the wilderness. She collects plants and animals and lovers. She reads all the time and quotes verse from memory when it suits her. She is a ghost. (35-70)
MICHAEL	A writer and a heterosexual transvestite. He has an excellent sense of humor. He is direct, dignified and warm hearted. (18-50)
MARIANNE	Earthy, she has a generous laugh, a wide smile. She is poetic and tactile. She is an alternative healer and a performance artist. (35-70)

PERFORMANCE ARTISTS

(in order of appearance)

ART PROFESSOR	Someone with a firm and affecting voice.
MIME	She performs Rainbow Brightly.

JOSHUA

An African-American actor.

Act One Feather Dusting

Scene 1 Overture
Scene 2 Art History

Act Two Power Struggles

Scene 1 A Gallery Performance
Scene 2 Discussion

Act Three American Hunger

Scene 1 A Peculiar Sweetart
Scene 2 Bird's Nest Soup
Scene 3 A Trifle for Afters

Act I
Feather Dusting
Manhattan, October 2001

Scene 1: Overture

The clown walks in the theatre aisles, tossing flower petals as if at a wedding. She is quietly singing. When the mime is finished, lights come up on Lilly, smoking a joint and trying on costumes that she pulls from a big old trunk. There is a long enough silence to allow the first song's sounds to fade from the mind's ear. Then...

LILLY

(sings) Put your arms around me, like a circle round the sun. You know I love you, daddy, when my easy ridin's done. You don't believe I love you, look at the fool I've been. You don't believe I'm sinkin'? Look at the hole I'm in. Stealin', ste-ea-lin', pretty papa don'tcha tell on me - cuz I'm stealin' back to my same old used-to-be ... *(speaks)* In a manner of speaking, one could say that I am the daughter of Dracula, birthed to eternal life – a life of the mind. A life with practically no fucking tangible realities. Very little touching. Very little touches me. I never touch anymore. But I have big effects.

BARBARA

He was stunning.

LILLY

Like Aladdin's princess, I have escaped my father's palace. And I wander, like Jesus and Moses before him, in the wilderness...looking... Wait a minute! Where's my role model for wandering in the wilderness? Free to search for my spirit, free from social and political oppression? The female Henry David Thoreau? Where is she? Have you seen her anywhere? There's Jody Foster's Nell. A brave woman, abandoned, alone, forced to create her own unique incomprehensible language. Yeah. Well, I speak the same language you do, baby.

MICHAEL

Eros. Thanatos. Thanatos. Eros. Eros. Thanatos. *(he continues in this vein while Lilly sings)*

LILLY

(sings) Meet me in St. Louis, Louie, meet me at the fair. Don't tell me the lights are shining, any place but there. We will dance the hoochie-koochie. I will be your tootsie-wootsie. *(pause)* if you will meet me - in St. Louis, Louie - *(half way 'tween speaking and singing)* meet me and -

MICHAEL *(sitting at his desk, or lying on the ground, or in any posture that induces inspiration for writing. He is holding a pen or pencil because at this stage of his creative process he writes with a pen or a pencil, not a keyboard. He is dressed in casual clothes but with a cloak, a robe, a wrap of some kind that reminds one of a wizard or an oxford don)*

Thanatos is a projection of the adolescent's desire to kill the child. The child's basic need for love and sustenance threatens to impinge upon the adolescent's devouring need for social approval. The adolescent, therefore, is easily convinced to kill the child, a handy sacrifice, a tidy disposition that satisfies both extrinsic and intrinsic drives to power.

BARBARA

We had this *thing*, this *fling* thing.

LILLY *(spoken like Bacall in the 40's or Davis in the 50's: Heavy with grief and sarcasm)*

Kiss the sky for me, won't you darling?

BARBARA

As a creature, as a man he was a veteran of foreign wars -

MICHAEL

Thanatos is a pathology. A pathology of limitations. The conscious mind, under a Thanatosian spell, is aware of only one natural limitation - death. Not mercy, patience, curiosity or respect. Death.

BARBARA

Gary Cooper in the Dietrich film Morocco. Cooper is in the French Foreign Legion and he has that funny hat, strangely attractive - and so ridiculous.

MICHAEL

Thanatosian addictions predetermine that the ends, the end result of all activity, hence the purpose, is death, annihilation of the living. Thus, the means, the ways, the how-we-do-things are forced irrevocably towards violence. Or perhaps you haven't you noticed this yet? Ok, well, then let me be the first to point it out to you.

BARBARA

Someone who could wear a hat like that might make an interesting lover: He might not be averse to genuine exploration. He might not be lazy.

MARIANNE

I am a dancer in the sun's moonlight, a dervish whirling in pure chai-tea delight, paralyzed with fright at the sight of people pressing, devouring meaning, excreting imbecilities like greed, torture, and other forms of suicidal, murderous mind-fucks.

BARBARA (in a floor-length gown, sequined if possible or Ginger Rogersesque, something Rogers would have worn to dance with Astaire in a ballroom - wineglass in hand, Barbara recites Paulina's speech (Shakespeare's) The Winter's Tale, with a few additions, subtractions, and substitutions of her own)

Oh, cut my lace lest my heart, cracking it, break too -- in two or et tu? Or just too-too? -- What studied torments tyrant, hast thou for me? What wheels? What racks? What fires? What flaying? Boiling in lead or oil? What old or newer torture must I receive for what I am about to say? I could vanquish you with my will but I will confound ignorance with love.

MARIANNE

My children were not supportive when I became interested in the healing arts. They were entirely concerned with my availability; that nothing interfere with, or diminish their ability to avail themselves of me. I have never understood my invisibility or why I even bother with bourgeois concepts of personality. Anyway, when I told my meditation teacher that I was having trouble concentrating at home - I had five children at the time, a day job and at night I did upholstery in my garage. When I'd sit down to meditate, my kids could sense I was a sitting duck. My teacher said, ahhhh, something like Sherlock Holmes solving a mystery. He said I should meditate with a semi-circle of shoes in front of me. Ok, I thought, I totally see the significance of this. This is good. This is my new life. This is me standing on my own two feet. This is me walking into my future. A future requiring many different shoes, not as many as Imelda Marcos of course, but many

pathways none the less. Me grounded in my shoes on the floor as my spirit soars towards her salvation.

BARBARA(*in this part of Paulina's speech, Barbara varies from an ultra-reasonable, shrink-like tone all the way to the edge of hysteria and back (and forth a few times if the actress is so inclined and capable of such emotional dexterity), beginning and ending calm and reasonable*)

O think what your tyranny inspired by your jealousies has done, and then run mad indeed. Stark mad. Because your bygone bullshit was a drop in the bucket to this. Who the fuck do you think you are? Othello? No. No, you couldn't be Othello. Because - other than being a total weak-kneed "I love my ass kissed, Iago. Deeper, baby. Deeper!" Othello wasn't such a bad guy; He had some socially redeeming qualities like heroism in foreign wars and good generalissimo-type governance. But you? You betrayed your best friend. I guess that makes you more the Iago type, doesn't it? And you don't even have Macbeth's weeny balls: you are fucking Lady Macbeth, a lowly manipulator with fantasies of unlikely grandeur. What evil have you done to your wife who loved (perforce still loves) you truly?

MARIANNE

So I go home, do my regular million and one life supporting errands and chores, you don't want to know. And then I tell the kids the usual: I just need forty five minutes to myself. *I'll be right out. Don't come in. You can take care of yourselves. You really can.* In I go, surround myself with a circle of my shoes. Hmmm. Knock, knock, knock. *Yes?* Door opens, a child's head peeks through, *Go away!* I say, eyes still closed. *But mom....* *Go away,* I say again, eyes cracked in mean little slits. *Mo-ohm* - I pick up a shoe and I throw it at my child, eyes wide open. The door slammed in time. My shoe hit the door. Back to meditation. *Mmmm.* Knock, knock, knock. And so on. Many interruptions. All essentially the same. Sorry, Tolstoy, you were wrong on several points. For instance: all families, happy or sad are archetypically determined to some degree, else communication would not exist. But individuals don't *have* to connect to that reality very often. Not really.

The following four statements overlap so tightly that they seem to be spoken simultaneously.

BARBARA

O when I cry, "Woe! the Queen. The Queen - the sweetest, dearest creature - is dead" -

MARIANNE

You live in your own personal vernacular and yet you must participate to some degree in an officially sanctioned reality.

LILLY

(sings) Janie's got a gun, pa dum, Janie's got a gun, pa dum, the whole world's come undone... *(she continues til the song is over)*

BARBARA

O tyrant, betake thee to nothing but despair.

MARIANNE

I used up all the shoes. I got so I could throw shoes without opening my eyes. and they got used to leaving me alone for forty-five minutes. *(she basks her flower self in sunlight which becomes brighter on her, which makes her smile contentedly).*

BARBARA

A thousand knees then a thousand years together, naked, fasting upon a barren mountain in storm perpetual could not make the gods look on you, where you are, on what you are: the enormity of your greed eclipsing even the vast barrenness of your soul.

MICHAEL *(he begins lightly, with great ease, and joyfully - ending mournfully)*

You know, *apropos* of nothing, I was wondering what the original character description for Mickey Mouse was: Was he "Everyman?" or "The Idiot?" Is every man a fool? What was Walt's intention? Is Disneyworld a work of populist art? Walt Disney therefore, the North American Diego Rivera? Gold and Ivory Athenas made of plastic and roboticized. A large, well-built plastic woman, very shiny, very large and you can plug her in. This Disneyland gives my Robert Crumb a severe hard on.

MARIANNE *(overlapping Michael's last words, "hard on")*

What if I told you that I can hear the wind breathe?

MICHAEL

Maybe we can understand ancient greek art as the origination of mass manipulation, advertising unattainable perfections. Nirvana is - People selling everything, everywhere. Anyplace, anytime shopping! Soap box orators to soap operas. People always sell themselves. Sometimes out of sheer exuberance. One wants to give oneself to another.

An ability to imagine horror is called paranoia or post-traumatic stress syndrome. But an ability to imagine the depth of horror that awaits us is not a necessarily a bad thing. A small failure of imagination and suddenly there you are, in a black shirt making vile salutes to a ravenous beast.

BARBARA

There are more kinds of impotence than the whole penis getting it up and holding it thing, scenario. Fascination with endurance. Endurance? You want to learn about endurance? You want to be able to endure? Oh, sorry, no, you don't want to learn it or earn it. You want to buy it. Viagra. Stick anything in your mouth rather than study the fine example of sustaining life that women, maybe not all women, but many women, and some men too... have been exercising, providing, contributing, since the beginning of time. The unsung heroines, heroes, heroines, gentle godzillas without whom there would be nothing left to exploit, everyone having become an exploiter themselves. Gobbling up all the little fishes. Gobble, gobble, gobble, gobble.

MARIANNE

Affection is like sperm: the more you give, the more you have to give. You gotta lose it to gain it. The life force thing. The life force is all about letting go. And the baby – that's all about letting go. Life is about interdependent independence. Life is all about creating new forms of independence that can function interdependently. We are aware of a constantly varying state of *interdependency* with a universe that, according to latest reports, is very large and unimaginably diverse. Love dwells in her pulsing, animating her earthly frame.

BARBARA

People kept telling me that I was a complete failure. All I wanted was connection. I wasn't a complete failure. I couldn't manufacture the lie. Outside it, looking, seeing how it's done but incapable - fucking unable - to do it myself.

MARIANNE

Those of us, myself included, who like to wander naked among the dunes, plunging merrily into frothy water, we, me, I am less likely to appreciate the value of forty hours of repetitive industry for the benefit of those who wish nothing better than to see me invisible or dead.

LILLY_(suddenly, from a yoga pose, a query to the air)

What constitutes the unbearable? You tell me. Because, I look around and I see people bearing the unbearable every day.

MARIANNE

The working class has its sensitivities too, you know. We are not simply characterless embodiments of economic history in action.

BARBARA:

There are more kinds of potency than getting it up and keeping it up, spraying chemistry at somebody.

MARIANNE

Cut us, do we not bleed? (*she emerges from the flower*)

BARBARA

Really. Lots of power available besides ejaculatory powers. Ka-booming, ka-shooing, lickety-splitting sticky sperm - everywhere. No, not really. Just there. A little clump really. Or a biggish clump. Mostly white or runny yellowish. Greasy in a weird kind of way. And sticky. Tacky. Life is sticky: Stick with it. Stick to it. Stick-in-the-mud. Stick 'em up. Stick it to them. Don't make this sticky. Stick with me babe. A stick in time saves nine. Christmas stickings (*amused, mischievous*) just checking to see if you're paying attention. Sticks and stones will break my bones but words can never hurt me.

MARIANNE

I think it's that excess of estrogenic compounds on the planet that's making people nuts.

Now, for the first time the characters talk to each other, acknowledge each other and respond to each other as if in the same space/time. The effect is of a sudden break in their individual isolation. Up until now each actor/actress has been addressing the audience. Everyone has been in monologue. From now til the art history lecture commences, they are speaking to, and enjoying one another.

MICHAEL

Yeah, that's a weird phenomenon.

BARBARA:

They suck. The compounds. They suck.

MARIANNE:

They do a lot of damage. Norwegian male bears with big breasts.

MICHAEL

The most serious consequence is that males are becoming less male.

MARIANNE

Excuse me?

MICHAEL

Sperm counts are dropping.

LILLY

We get endometriosis, cancer; we go crazy with hormone nuttiness. We have too many children or none at all. But too much estrogen in the atmosphere does the most damage to MEN????

MICHAEL

What's the difference if you get more estrogen? Your breasts get bigger, you get more moody maybe...

MARIANNE

It's difficult to imagine YOU more moody.

BARBARA

And I think you should know that if my breasts get any bigger I may have to commit suicide.

MARIANNE

Isn't there a limit to how big you want your penis to be? (*he shakes his head*) I mean realistically.

LILLY

There is the point where no one will fuck you because your penis would come out of their ear or something.

MICHAEL

But estrogenic compounds are not threatening to make my penis bigger. Though viagra accomplishes the same thing on a time plane rather than on a space plane.

LILLY

You're the one on a space plane. Why is gender so important anyway? (*Michael laughs*)
I'm not being funny.

MARIANNE

Once upon a time, a long, long time ago...

LILLY(*with contempt for this pre-relativity stance*)

Starting in the past...

MICHAEL

Stories have to begin in the past. It has to do with the function of storytime. Stories force us to imagine a future, even if that future is in relation to an absurd or imaginary past. The future exists. It comes after the present. It is the space in which the story promises to rest in an ending that comes a breath before the beginning of a new story. Transgressions transmogrify, morph into a future that almost immediately transgresses the desires from which it sprang and more futures emerge. Inexhaustible.

MARIANNE

The eternal flame.

MICHAEL

Rushdie called it the sea of stories. Life emerges from an infinite sea of stories. This was the essence of his thought-crime: his assertion that there is an infinite sea of stories available to us at all times. That freedom of thought is anathema to dogma.

LILLY

Sometimes I need to be right.

MICHAEL

Fundamentalism fixes a story in an entropic structure, a repetitive pattern from which life and possibility flee until all that is left is dust, stardust, the sands of the Sahara, uninhabitable spaces. (*shivers*) Gimme shelter.

MARIANNE

There lived a swan and her family of swans. They were very happy swans. In a unique sense, not in a Tolstoy sense.

BARBARA

They lived in a lake, by a castle in the mountains. And they were taken care of by -

LILLY

- very nice caretakers who had been taking care of the castle for a long time. Because the owners were -

MICHAEL

- off fighting wars, conquering a whole lot of territory and then they had to -

MARIANNE

- administer their holdings and then of course there was -

BARBARA

- decorating and –

LILLY

- a little subtle or not so subtle –

MICHAEL

- plundering of natural resources.

MARIANNE

At any rate, the king and queen were out of town when –

LILLY

- suddenly –

BARBARA

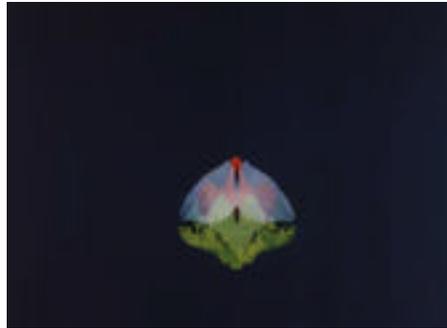
- out of the sky –

*Barbara looks at the ground while the other look skyward,
shocked and miserable to see planes flying into the WTC.*

*Burst of light then
– Blackout*

Scene 2: Art History

This lecture was written by Joel Baird regarding the paintings of Carla Aurich that were lost in conflagration of 911.



ART PROFESSOR

The sun and all visible stars in the sky make up less than one percent of the universe - almost all the rest is dark matter and dark energy. Unknown forces that puzzle astronomers.

Observations in recent years have changed the basic understanding of how the universe evolved and emphasize for astronomers how little is known about the major forces and substances that shape our world. Astronomers now know that luminous matter, stars, planets and hot gas account for only about .4 percent of the universe, non-luminous components such as black holes and intergalactic gas make up 3.6 percent the rest is either dark matter, about 23 percent or dark energy about 73 percent.

Here we find a work that did not survive the early part of the 21st century. A good example of the artistic interests of the period. Here is a layered combinations involving science and speculation, emotion and objectivity. Hope and dread, possibility and loss, ambition and resignation. Pinpointed, beautiful and trapped like a butterfly. The imagery you see reproduced was reproduced from a reproduction of an impression of what is known to psychology as a rorschach pattern. The pattern was designed to reveal the inner psychology of the visually stimulated viewer.

These works revel in a femininity that strongly suggest a fecund creativity on an elemental biological level. The brash outline of a keyhole promises a view through to the forbidden side of a silky black void titillating the unanswerable hysteria of a striking vaginal question mark exclaiming from the center of the painting's ground. Perhaps this is a parting glance of the unforgiving birth canal from which we came, an anxious nostalgia cheated by sensitive fronds of receptors blocking the passage; twin fronds of delicate clitorises and vulnerable penises, a lonely reproductive miasma with an almost brutal acceptance of the invasion of blood, a passageway of promise frustrated by horticultural genitalia that summon the likeness of the very insects which may feed on them.

For the rational viewer, this visual drama will inspire fear. For the intrepid viewer who knows the secrets of swaggering bravado, the imagery will inspire lust. Yet the frank sexual excitement of the work is cruelly anchored by the suggestion of dark menstrual streams hiding mysterious and angry internal organs. An experienced viewer can easily overcome any immediate repulsion with a surpassing humanistic understanding, accepting the delicate tragedy of a red rose rubbed raw by admiration.

As lone viewers, there is no therapist to interpret our aesthetic response, to assure us of our psychological health. We are left on our own, confronted with stimulating, associative imagery with no apparent social or medical topography to soothe our echoing scientifically irritated isolation. The pungency of the image finds its source in the intimate and uncomfortable intersection of sexuality and biology. Does the artist invite us to become a tea-time guest of a playful mortician, serving up cadaverous delicacies as hallucinogenic eye candy? Is the mystery of life a friend or an enemy?

Slow fade to black at the close of the slide show/lecture.

LILLY

(sings in the dark) Well I got me a fella, 'bout my size and height. He's a married fella, so you know he treats me right. You don't believe I love you, look at the fool I've been. You don't believe I'm sinkin', look at the hole I'm in.

Blackout

ACT II Power Struggles

Scene 1: A Gallery Performance

Lilly, Michael, Marianne are sitting in the audience waiting for an art gallery presentation of a piece of performance art. Barbara is walking around or perched here and there, always with her bottle and glass. Everyone is dressed up except for Barbara who is in sweats or jeans, something casual though, even then, she is elegant. Michael is in drag. His outfit and makeup are not outrageous but neither are they particularly conservative. He does not wear a wig. And when he watches the show he wears his normal eyeglasses that do not really match his feminine outfit.

MIME

(sings from a high place) I dreamed last night I got on a boat to heaven, and by some chance I had brought my dice along.

MARIANNE

Marshall said that, "Fundamentalism is a very modern idea... He said "[Fundamentalism] takes traditions that are thousands of years old ... rejects almost all of them, conceptualiz[es] a few of them and put[s] them into a system. .. then [all of life is judged] according to that [simplified] system." *(pause)* He made me see how I was holding onto simplifications. I had imprisoned myself inside my own private Alcatraz.

BARBARA

I had a dream. I'm not sure what it was about. There were lots - lots - of really good looking Asian guys. I was surrounded. *(shivers with pleasure)* Black t-shirts. Tight pants. Kung-fu kicks - and twirls in mid-air. The twirls were the best. Then they approach and I tremble with anticipation. All at once they reach me. We explode into light that takes the form of a mushroom cloud. Miniscule red-orange, radioactive sprinkles pour from the mushroom's cap, trickle down and transform into black and white, shadowy images of shrunken bodies piled into pits. Then, still in the dream, I think I wake up and my bedside lamp is an Asian skull with a lampshade made of gay, lesbian, gypsy, jewish, and Jehovah's Witness skin. The lamp is extremely haunting and beautiful, delicate, subtle,

deliberate and it's shedding orange light. Suddenly I remember I'm dead, vanished, nothing.

Lights change and the performance begins.

The End of the Rainbow by Elena Bayrock:

Rainbow Brightly's costume is a collage of multi-colored stripes. She is wearing: top hat; scarf; long-sleeved t-shirt; tank top (worn over long-sleeved t-shirt); loose overshirt; fingerless gloves; underwear; loose pants; second pair of underwear over pants; leg warmers. The stripes of the costume echo the stripes of the painting.

*Rainbow Brightly enters and walks behind the painting. She is upset, as if she has just lost her job, and is staring at her top hat, which she holds in her hands. When she notices the painting, she stops in her tracks. The painting is fascinating to her. She walks over to the painting and, after studying it for a moment, realizes that the stripes on her clothes match the stripes of the painting. This discovery cheers her. She puts the hat on her head and experiments with matching herself to the painting. She holds up an arm, then a leg to the painting. She becomes more and more excited. Finally she places her whole body in front of the painting. She rubs her body against the painting, making love to it. She jumps and turns around to face the audience, smiling, the music (Lisa Loeb's *Falling Down*, complete lyrics at the end of the play) begins. But, when Rainbow Brightly leans forward and is blocked by an invisible window/wall. She feels around and realizes that she is trapped, framed into the painting. She mimes the shape of the frame and the feeling of being trapped inside the frame.*

*Rainbow Brightly is scared, but as she tries to break free, she becomes angry and frustrated. As her frustration reaches its peak, Rainbow Brightly grabs her top hat and flings it off her head [**one hit me in the head**]. The hat flies through the frame and the force of the throw takes Rainbow*

*Brightly with it; She is free. She falls forward onto the floor
[and I fell down, down, down]*

*Rainbow Brightly is shocked by the fall but still angry at the painting for trapping her. She slides to the right on the floor to get away from the painting and stands up, turning away from the painting in a huff. Looking at her clothes Rainbow Brightly realizes that it isn't just the painting that trapped her, it was also her clothes. This makes her sad. She begins to take off her scarf [**When all the stars were falling/ They fell from above**]*

*The scarf is like a dear old friend but Rainbow Brightly knows that it has betrayed her and she can't wear it anymore. For a moment she is torn but finally she runs across the stage and throws the scarf away forcefully [**And then I thought of love**]*

*The force of the throw and the pain of losing such a dear friend forces Rainbow Brightly to contract as if punched in the gut. She is thrown backward to center stage. She notices her gloves, and with pain and anger, she peels them off her skin. She throws one glove at the audience. The other she throws down with such force that she falls backward and lands on her back, center stage [**And I fell down, down, down/ I fell down, down**]*

*Rainbow Brightly breathes a small sigh of relief, enjoying laying on the floor. She arches her back to sit up. The overshirt falls off her shoulders and she takes her arms out of the sleeves. [**And I've learned how to dance from a Vincent van Gogh**]*

*Rainbow Brightly spins around on her bottom but stops, facing the audience, when she realizes that she isn't free yet. [**And the nights were wrapped in a white sheet**] She's going to have to remove the tank top. She reaches over her head and grabs the shirt, as if she is grabbing the scruff of her neck. [**And now no one even says hello**]*

*Rainbow Brightly pulls off the shirt, pulling herself up onto her feet at the same time. She walks backward and pulls the shirt over her head [**'cause I couldn't stand on my two feet**]*

*A huge weight has been lifted and Rainbow Brightly feels freer. She spins around the stage until the spin is out of control and, once again she falls on her back center stage [**Down, down, down, down, down**]*

*Now Rainbow Brightly has to take off her pants. While lying on the floor she lifts up her bottom and starts trying to remove the pants. This is a very ungraceful and humorous moment. It takes a while to pull the pants off and during the struggle Rainbow Brightly is lifting her bottom in the air and wiggling it increasingly violently. [**Now the peace you will find on your own you've found/ lights of the city are the stars on the ground/ I may not be a quaalude living in a speed zone**]*

*Finally Rainbow Brightly successfully removes her pants. She is relieved and takes a moment to catch her breath. She stands up and begins walking upstage [**but I could be restful, I could be someone's home**]*

Rainbow Brightly stops walking because she has to decide whether to remove the long-sleeved t-shirt. If she does she will be very exposed, but she has come so far and she really wants to be free of the clothes that trapped her inside the painting.

*She removes her shirt, her back to the audience. She holds the shirt in her hand for a moment. Finally she lets go and drops the shirt. She walks toward an upstage bench [**I fell down/ and I fell down, down**]*

The stage lights have faded and as Rainbow Brightly steps onto the bench, the stars in the sky above her are visible

and the stage lights go to black. The rest of the act is presented in starlight.

*Rainbow Brightly steps onto the bench from behind, knowing that she is exposing herself. She also knows that she is still wearing the underwear and the leg warmers, but this is okay. Even though wearing all the clothes that she loved so dearly trapped her inside the painting, keeping some of the clothes is part of her identity and does not need to trap her [**now all the stars have fallen**]*

This is the first time Rainbow Brightly looks directly at the audience, the rest of the time it has been like they do not exist. Now she has to decide how to present herself now that she is free of the clothes. In the end she holds up her arms and is proud, strong, and unapologetic.

When the show is over, the audience applauds, the mime bows and exits.

Scene 2: Discussion

Lights come up. Lilly, Michael and Marianne discuss what they have seen.

LILLY

Well, well, well...

MICHAEL

Invisible woman.

LILLY

Invisible women: Women who run with wolves.

MICHAEL

Women on the verge of - everything -

LILLY

- including (but not limited to) nervous breakdowns.

MICHAEL

But what do women want?

LILLY

A date that flows the way Michael Jordan plays basketball. What do men want?

MICHAEL

You mean besides power?

BARBARA

(eavesdropping she responds to the conversation. No one hears her nor do they recognize her existence)

We have to talk about men. Women have to talk about men. Don't ask me why. We talk about cleaning but not as often and the discussions aren't as complex or as long as the ones we have about men. We might discuss who said what or who did what or combine the two. Often, these conversations are about values that can't be articulated but are deeply felt. We indicate when we can't articulate. I don't know. Sometimes we just go right ahead and admit what we want -

MARIANNE

-- openness, trust, physical closeness, nurturing, clean teeth, help with the dishes, someone who will clean toilets and change tires but not protect us too much. Because too much protection is a form of slavery.

Michael and Lilly are walking outside in the city. They pass by shops and people. Projections of the city appear larger than life on screens surrounding the stage. They sit by the Hudson River, dance under the trees in a park, under the night sky itself filled with dancing stars.

MICHAEL

Yet?

LILLY

Not yet.

BARBARA (*having been ignored, she speaks to herself, remembering*)

Have you ever had a really good blow job?

MICHAEL

Just a little bit of analysis?

LILLY

Just a little.

MARIANNE

Marshall said that, "The World Trade Center [had] isolated itself -- [that] it gave off hostility." There are so many people like that - isolated and giving off hostility - and they are creating the world in their own image.

MICHAEL

That piece could never have been done by a man.

LILLY

Because?

MICHAEL

Because men want to stand out, recognized and rewarded for their individuality. No blending.

LILLY

Wow. Sometimes you are so wrong it scares me. Everyone wants to blend in on some level.

MICHAEL

Womansong.

LILLY

Riverdance.

MICHAEL

(sings) The long and winding road - *(that leads to your door)*

LILLY

(sings) Up, up and away in my beautiful, my beautiful balloon - *(the world's a nicer place in my beautiful balloon)*

MICHAEL

(very formal) Excuse me, diva dear, inquiring minds want to know: what do women want?

LILLY

(sings) Girls just want to have fun -

MICHAEL

But women, what do -

BARBARA

I have given some really spectacular blow jobs.

LILLY

(sings) The music, the moment, don't let it go -

BARBARA *(quoting from Euripides' Medea)*

But on me has fallen an unforeseen disaster; this has sapped my life.

MICHAEL

I think we want to distinguish between blending in to hide, blending in as a form of camouflage; and blending in as the result of human engineering insidiously undermining individual autonomy.

LILLY

Go on.

BARBARA

I am ruined. I long to resign the boon of existence and die, for he who was all the world to me has turned out to be the worst of men.

MICHAEL (*pacing, rhythmically*)

Society is, by definition, the group that mandates the conformity for ritual, commerce and communal safety.

BARBARA

Of all the things that have life and sense, we women are the most hopeless creatures; first we must obtain a husband - at this endeavor we spare no cost to sense or sensibility - and then we place this husband over us, a tyrant to rule us - mind, body, and soul.

MICHAEL

Commercial propaganda *is* progress because it developed out of things like torture, and public hangings as a means of social control.

BARBARA

And divorce is not honourable to women.

MICHAEL

So, compared to crucifixion, advertising every morning on tvs placed in school rooms by successful corporations, isn't so bad.

BARBARA (*quoting Man of La Mancha, Sancho to Don Quixote*)

And you know what they say? Whether the pitcher hits the stone or the stone hits the pitcher, (*Barbara makes an abrupt crashing noise to indicate the shattering of the pitcher on the stone*) it's gonna be bad for the pitcher.

LILLY

Ok. I get it. Your argument is that a) society must form individuals - that's its role; and b) that we are better off with a society that manipulates us into conformity rather than a society that uses force, terror and other methods of overt subjugation to secure its elite their privileges.

MICHAEL (*as Lilly rarely agrees with him, he is quite pleased with himself*)

Exactly.

BARBARA

In the church I grew up in, the priests don't marry. They reject women because we are so full of life, we might pull them back into the stream that they are trying so hard to swim out of -

LILLY

But what I think you forget is the possibility of a completely new pattern of social harmony being introduced into this cultural *progression* of yours.

BARBARA

Can't you tell a cover story when you hear one? Those cowards didn't reject women: Women rejected them first. Protecting their fragile narcissism was the founding premise for the creation of their sado-masochistic religion. Twisted, mental buttfuckers.

LILLY

This evolution of violence may only ever lead to more violence unless we take a leap - not to forget that a violent path exists but abandoning it because it can only lead to more subtle and facile forms of interpersonal cruelty.

BARBARA (*to Michael who doesn't seem to hear her*)

Women want a man who will protect us in this battle for dominance that rages everywhere, that permeates the atmosphere.

LILLY

But don't you see that it's just another kind of annihilation? What is a person without their ability to experience for themselves the wonders of their consciousness meeting the world new each moment?

MARIANNE

Because for free people there is at least a possibility of averting disaster. But slaves are simply fodder no matter how you slice it.

BARBARA

The fury when you step outside your door in the morning is enough to knock you over. (*past tense:*) You read Salman Rushdie. Read him again. We want a man who will be the biggest gorilla on the block. There's always a bigger fish.

LILLY

Strange new attractors appear all the time, but I think we have to choose to be attracted by them.

BARBARA

We keep this system alive with our sexual favors, our proclivities, our desire to be fucked by the biggest, meanest bull so we can brag to our friends about how much we have.

LILLY

Our minds are so poisoned we can only experience pleasure when it's filtered through someone else's commercial interests. What happened to, (*sings*) "the best things in life are free"?

MARIANNE (*Marianne sees Barbara and begins to speak to her. Barbara doesn't yet realize that Marianne can hear her*)

I know it's just fashion, but I saw this thing on tv where the commentator contrasted women in Muslim countries (all covered up) with the beauty pageant girls (strolling around in bathing suits). That was the image of freedom that the commentator presented - the Miss America Contest. He got all mushy and said that he felt clearer now about what we were fighting for. I couldn't believe it. From my point of view, he was comparing which form of execution was preferable, electronic or chemical, but, hey, what do I know? I'm just a plebe.

BARBARA

So you grasp the penis like this and lick it. Now different men and different moods change the way you suck. But most guys don't like you to become frantic. No one likes their skin sucked raw so don't overdo it. A little teasing is always good. Relax and enjoy it because even if you aren't very good at it, most men are not going to complain about getting even a half-assed blow job.

MICHAEL

Why do we hate ourselves?

LILLY

Religion teaches us to be ashamed.

MICHAEL

No. I think shame comes before religion. We invent religion to cope with shame. We repress or project our shame and become aggressive. Or, we wallow in our shame and become passive-aggressive and invent religion. Shame is a normal reaction to the awareness of existential inferiority.

LILLY

Let me get this right: Religion is a passive-aggressive cultural act? A vengeful, frightened response to feelings of existential inferiority?

MICHAEL

Exactly. We're ashamed of our powerlessness in the face of nature, of our inferiority in relation to a universe so enormous that individuality is dwarfed in comparison. We contemplate enormity. Then we invent God: a huge ME who can comfortably inhabit the enormity.

LILLY

God is social insecurity projected onto the enormity of the cosmic dream screen.

MICHAEL

Precisely. Anxiety is the engine that drives the whole thing. If early cave people could have acquired Prozac, they would never have invented religion.

LILLY

And, without religion holding us back, we could have skipped directly to pornography and football? Do not pass go. Collect unemployment.

MARIANNE

Marshall said that the paradox of self-deception lies right inside the question: Who ... is ... doing the "deceiving"? If [we are deceiving ourselves] in what sense is it meaningful to say that [we are] "deceived"? [And] how... can [we] undo [this]? How can we "undeceive" [ourselves]?

MICHAEL

As we begin to articulate the things that make us feel ashamed we make laws and injunctions to guard against this ever-growing feeling of inferiority in relation to the world and its events.

MARIANNE

I think it's important to distinguish between the physical and the spiritual especially since they are so completely inter-animate. Rather than simply lumping emotional with physical and spiritual with mental, I think it's more useful to see that the spiritual grows out of the physical and that the mind grows out from emotion, sensate and sensual.

MICHAEL

Then - (and this was a stroke of genius. someone made this up but we will never be able to credit them and their extraordinary achievement) then, someone realized that they could replace the enormity of the universe with human authority. We could make people ashamed with each other! We created the illusion that people can be inferior to other people. This brilliant evolutionary leap in illusionism then justified social/political hierarchy, satisfied our need to project our fear, and relieved our most basic anxiety, our smallness in relation to the universe, replacing it with something far more psychologically manageable, our supposed inferiority to each other.

MARIANNE

The mind cannot perceive anything directly. It must first take in information through the senses and sensations are perceived, first and foremost, emotionally and this emotional thought is eventually brought to cognition or, what we think of as awareness. But only after the data has been interpreted and developed sensually, and then emotionally.

LILLY

But religion doesn't always increase anxiety. Lots of people find freedom from anxiety in religion, in spirituality.

MICHAEL

Of course. Freedom is in everything. It's constitutive. You can find it in practically everything. Like carbon. We are carbon-based, freedom-forms. But, in any case, religion trades in anxiety, giving and relieving it.

BARBARA

I like to please men, to see their faces dissolve, melt into bliss.

MICHAEL

Ok. What if we weren't ashamed?

LILLY

I'm trying to imagine it.

MICHAEL

What if we eject shame as an emotional dinosaur? Let it go: Hie, Shame! Hie you unto the land of culturally rejected rituals like spitting into spittoons (*he pretends to spit into a spittoon like Popeye. His imitation includes both the ping sound as the pretend spit hits the pretend spittoon and a look of pleasure from making an accurate shot*). Let's organize a 21st century retrospective on shame. Maybe the Met will be interested. Or MOMA.

LILLY

Ok. But then someone kills someone and is not ashamed because shame is old-fashioned. Or, someone rapes someone and they're not ashamed because they're spiritually above shame? I'm not good with this.

MICHAEL

Yeah, you're right, that's not what I meant (*pause, somewhat dejected*).

LILLY

(*kindly*) You meant that there is a moment when one has eliminated enough of their basic-level karma to move on to participate in more subtle forms of terror and manipulation. And, for these higher level spiritual warriors, shame would not be a useful trait. Yeah. I see it. But I don't agree with it. I think what you are describing is a rationalization for ethical vacuity and spiritual strife.

MARIANNE

Even our attitude towards disease is warlike, ignoring the fact that we are part of everything and so must work in harmony with as much as we can.

LILLY

Michael, why are you dressed like that?

MARIANNE

People get sick and they think: I'm being attacked.

MICHAEL

I thought you liked it.

MARIANNE

And then: I am being invaded.

LILLY

Sometimes it's interesting.

MARIANNE

Then: I must kill this disease. We even do this with mental illness. The emotional factors are completely ignored. The intellect is understood as electric pulses that can be controlled with shock or chemical medication.

MICHAEL

Reasons converge, combine into a force, a motive power... a theme, a life theme I guess.

BARBARA

You have to enjoy something to be considered really good at it.

MARIANNE

These tactics merely cause the personality to become even more alienated from itself.

MICHAEL

Shall we dedicate a moment to my narcissism then?

MARIANNE

And without the being working in harmony, there is very little chance of the body being able to heal itself.

MICHAEL

Ok. I look in the mirror and I see that cartoon of the ape morphing into a brute then into a man, not just any man, but modern, 20th century middle class man, that's our standard developmental level?

MARIANNE

It's just like fundamentalism: People take perfectly good ideas, strip out irony, complexity, subtle inference...

MICHAEL

I only have my one life.

MARIANNE

... what remains, a sort of distillation, a vinegary mix of truth and the will to power, coalesces into a fetid, soggy dogma whose schema is so narrowing that organic growth is restricted at best but often completely destroyed.

BARBARA

There is an element of losing yourself that is absolutely necessary.

MICHAEL

My books belong to the publisher, or, on my less cynical days, to my readers. My books aren't me. My books are not my life but they fill up my life while I raise them and then they grow up and disappear. I work ceaselessly so my life is fully focused on developing the identities of others. Doesn't that sound pathetic?

MARIANNE

When I worked at the battered women's shelter, the most critical step was to show women who had been so brutalized how they are fundamentally capable, in charge of their own lives, no matter how much the evidence seemed to prove quite the opposite.

MICHAEL

Then I had a realization: people around me were not interested in me as much as in keeping my talent flowing so that they could benefit. This realization of the nature of other people's attention caused me injury. An internal haemorrhage. A broken heart. I couldn't breathe when I was around people. Withdrawing worked for awhile but the clothes work better because I get out of the house more. And emptiness is devastating. Loneliness. Loneliness is really the reason I do everything I think.

LILLY

Well, it *is* Halloween.

MICHAEL

How politic of you. We're all in costume, sometimes even when we're naked. False tits, false dicks, false hearts, false hopes...

LILLY

But you're wearing women's clothes.

MICHAEL

Do you know: I see myself as a warrior.

LILLY

You're kidding?

MICHAEL

Nope.

LILLY

Wonder woman?

MICHAEL

A romantic idealist.

LILLY

A wise man.

MICHAEL

A fool.

LILLY

A sailor.

MICHAEL

A soldier.

LILLY

A tinker.

MICHAEL

A tailor.

LILLY

A hunter.

MICHAEL

A fisherman.

LILLY

A farmer.

MICHAEL

A lover.

LILLY

A husband.

MICHAEL

A vanishing act.

MICHAEL

And you, diva darling? Divissima mia, aren't you wearing the costume of the cynical, male-identified, post-modern, lonely, liberated woman?

LILLY

You're kidding?

MICHAEL

Nope.

LILLY

If you are a warrior, and you are a man, why don't you dress like a man-warrior?

MICHAEL

I don't really know why I do what I do. Does anybody? But if I had to take a guess based on knowing myself for awhile, I'd say that it's probably for a reason similar to why you dress like a man. *(pause, then gently)* We are heart warriors. I think it's a philosophical stance and an aesthetic and I thought that's why we were friends. I thought we were the same that way. Heart warriors: dedicated to the liberation of love, experts in the fruitful deployment of the most potent weapons on earth: truth, beauty and love.

LILLY

A wise woman.

MICHAEL

A bimbo.

An executive.

LILLY

A fool.

MICHAEL

A mother.

LILLY

A whore.

MICHAEL

A politician.

LILLY

A patriarch.

MICHAEL

LILLY

A paternalistic bore. There is a feminist historical perspective that describes the prehistoric fall of matriarchy as beginning when men took over religion. Men took over social and political power by masquerading as priestesses. Evidence: priests wear dresses!

MICHAEL (*speaking slowly and deliberately, trying not to act angry and make things even worse but really angry and needing to defend himself in some way*)

Et tu?

Excuse me?

LILLY

The way you dress?

MICHAEL

LILLY

It's not the same. I've been thinking that, on a cultural level, everyone is a battered wife of commercialism.

MARIANNE

Somehow we have to encourage ourselves to find a larger perspective, one in which we can remember that we actively participate in creating our lives. That we have choices more profound than where to buy something and how much to pay for it.

MICHAEL (*warming up to his revenge*)

You know, Lilly, I don't think I've ever seen you in a dress? You do have knees?

BARBARA

Blow jobs are interesting.

LILLY

I don't feel our likeness.

BARBARA

It's physicality, control and psychology. You lick and suck a fine, blue-veined line between exstasy and repulsion. And deep down, way down inside that very fine thin line, drama lies in wait, ready to pounce and capture us in nets of iridescent storytime.

LILLY

I think you are scared of being powerful. I think you hide behind the image of womanhood to avoid the responsibilities of being a man. I think I am absolutely terrified of being trapped inside the image of womanhood. We aren't exploring. We're hiding. Trading places is safer than taking on the challenge of reinventing ourselves.

MICHAEL

Perpendicular.

LILLY

What?

MICHAEL

Perpendicular.

LILLY

Scimitar.

Gargantuan.

MICHAEL

Chaos

LILLY

They exchange looks.

Cornucopia.

MICHAEL

Transubstantiation.

LILLY

I have to go.

MICHAEL

I know.

LILLY

What do women want?

MICHAEL

I don't know.

LILLY

Lilly.

MICHAEL (*reaching out*)

Please don't touch me.

LILLY

BARBARA (*trying to get Lilly and Michael to freeze in time*)

Stop, stop, stop, stop. Stop!

When the couple freezes, Barbara collapses, sitting down, head in hands. She looks up when she has felt that there is someone sitting next to her.

MARIANNE

Are you ok?

BARBARA

Are you talking to me?

MARIANNE

Are you ok?

BARBARA

I'm dead.

MARIANNE

Un-hunh. A lot of my friends are dead.

BARBARA

Why can't people get along?

MARIANNE (*shrugs to indicate "I don't know," then*)

If I could start time all over again I'd keep the dinosaurs, just to keep things in perspective.

BARBARA (*shakes her head to indicate, "I am so frustrated," then*)

I missed my cue.

Marianne nods. Barbara slumps back and stares into space as if she will be able to see the solution in the sky. Marianne does exactly as Barbara has done. They sit, slumped, looking and feeling dejected.

BARBARA:

What can I do? I can't make time go backwards like Superman did in that movie when he saved Lois' life.

MARIANNE

That was good wasn't it? Like Samantha's nose in Bewitched. Wiggle your nose and make it better.

BARBARA

I can't make it better.

MARIANNE

If I were going to start all over again I'd make all berries edible. No more poisonous berries.

BARBARA

If I could start everything over, I'd make religions that didn't punish people for being people. I'd invent a religion that would show people how to enjoy being alive.

MARIANNE

I don't think you missed your cue.

BARBARA

If I could start over, I'd be able to love him better. My love would have real power. My love would BE power.

MARIANNE

I think when it's your cue you know what to say.

BARBARA

People would trade in love, compete to see who could love the most, who was the most generous. Who gave the most. Who had the best effect.

MARIANNE

Your cue hasn't come yet.

BARBARA

Kindness. We would value kindness.

MARIANNE

I think you better let them get on with it.

BARBARA

Let them fight?

MARIANNE

How long can you protect them from themselves? And isn't that why we're here, to get to know ourselves better?

BARBARA

I don't know. I want to know. But I don't - know. I don't know.

Barbara clicks her fingers but she is unsure and has trouble watching what happens next. Periodically Barbara groans as Lilly and Michael's mutual understanding deteriorates. While Marianne softly sings, as if singing a lullaby, Gimme Shelter, til the end of the act.

LILLY

I need a man.

MICHAEL

I am a man.

LILLY

I need a real man.

MICHAEL

I am a real man.

LILLY

Not dressed like that you're not.

MICHAEL

But what about you?

LILLY

For me its different.

MICHAEL

Of course.

LILLY

No, you don't understand. No matter what men have done or not done, they are real. There's nothing real about the feminine image. It's so unreal, even enormous female accomplishments can't stick to the historical imagination without an image to stick them onto. The image of the accomplished woman. What is that? Can you see what she looks like? I can't. And you. You're like an Uncle Tom. Oh, I don't have the right words for this.

MICHAEL

I can't believe this is happening. I can't believe that you can't see the love, the beauty, the appreciation -- that you, of all people are blinded by a dress.

Michael and Lilly stare at each other, angry and frustrated.

LILLY

The outward and visible sign of inward invisible backward looking that would promote as desirable everything that imprisons me in a gender nightmare. Look at you. The image of woman as a decorative object, a collectible item. You're a fucking Barbie Doll. Don't forget to keep the box; you'll be worth a lot of money someday. If you wore a swastika as a joke, would that be funny?

Michael gets up to leave.

LILLY

See? There you go. I messed up your aesthetically perfect evening, didn't I? I wasn't decorative enough. And you weren't man enough to stay here and have it out with me. (*as Michael exits*) Coward. Thief. Me, a hypocrite? You. You are the one who thinks you can just appropriate everything. (*looks down at her clothes, jeans and a t-shirt, pulls at them in frustration. Michael is out of sight, she yells after him.*) I don't dress to be a man. I don't want to be a madman pumped full of testosterone-induced, destructive madness. I don't want to look like a man or a woman. I don't want to be the Victor *or* the Victim, Victor or Victoria, with or without Albert, with or without a secret. I want to be comfortable. (*sinking with the hopelessness of fulfilling her desires*) I just want to be myself.

Lights fade and Marianne is singing her Gimme Shelter lullaby in darkness.

Act III
American Hunger

Scene 1: A Peculiar Sweetart

MIME

I know that I have to live my life as a member of an oppressed gender. But I am not yet convinced that I have to live my life as an oppressed individual. (*flirtatious, teasing*) But of course you can always try and convince me if you want, the door is always open.

LILLY

The pros and cons of invisibility and other superpowers.

MARIANNE

I am floating on a sea of forgiveness...

BARBARA

Everything I like is bad.

MARIANNE

...angels dance in fairy bodies...

BARBARA

Everything I love is worse.

MARIANNE

... elegant in the pure light of imagination...

MICHAEL

(*musings*) There aren't any naturally occurring straight lines. Or are there? (*rises to practice another speech. He has been practicing making a speech to Lilly*)

MARIANNE

... fantasies dance ...

LILLY

I am tired of being insignificant.

MARIANNE

... glow in robes of pure light. A lightenment. Inside, a lightening: A lightening-up-ment. A lightenment.

BARBARA (*a hint of desperation*)

What about darkness? What's good about darkness?

LILLY

All hallow's eve. Everything is sacred tonight.

MICHAEL

That shadow substance that alchemists fall all over themselves trying to transform from dross to gold, is the hardness of their own heads - impermeable, impregnable, impenetrable. The philosopher's stone is the rocks in my head that long to be transubstantiated back into the stardust of shimmering awareness, the stardust they came from in the first place.

Scene 2: Bird's Nest Soup

Enter Joshua, distracted.

JOSHUA

Hey.

LILLY

Hey.

JOSHUA

How's it going?

LILLY

Not bad I guess.

JOSHUA

You busy?

LILLY

Kinda. Yeah.

JOSHUA

(disappointed) Oh.

LILLY

What's up? *(no response from Joshua)* How are your rehearsals going?

JOSHUA

Not bad.

LILLY

Not good?

JOSHUA

Not good *(short pause)* What is this shit about the real world? Is somebody's world more real than somebody else's? Than mine? *(during the following sequence*

they both pretend to speak to someone they don't much admire) Tell me what you feel in your real world.

LILLY

Tell me how people live in your real world.

JOSHUA

Do you find your world mo' bettah? Mo' bettah than mine?

LILLY

What is this shit about the real world?

JOSHUA

I'll tell you what I feel in my real world. Tell me what you see in your real world.

LILLY

I'll tell you how the people are in my real world. It's the same fucking world as your world. Did you think you made this shit up all by yourself? I guess you fuck yourself all by yourself too, in your real world? No such thing as hungry or lonely nights in your real world? No howling at the moon? No werewolves? No vampires?

JOSHUA

Tell me what you see.

LILLY

I'll tell you what I see in my real world. It's nightmare in helltown. People live like zombies intent on winning games they lost long ago. Taught to win at all costs, stuck with visions that make Armageddon look like a theme park, they repeat their deathly dance, life oozing slowly out of their toes until they find themselves standing in a pool of their own stagnant shit. Tell me how you feel. Tell me what you see.

I Remember You, by Lloyd Goodman.

JOSHUA:

God bless the dead it's such a sad day,
I speak of people on drugs, passed away.
I speak somewhere in a hallway lit.
There's a junkie taking out his last hit
With every bit of dope that flows through his veins.

He's hoping that his next life - won't be no pain.
Now he falls slumped up against the wall
Lying right in the middle of a rat infested hall.
There goes the call to 911.
I don't know who he is but he's somebody's son.
Now the cops come two minutes too long
Cause the young man is dead and gone
With no one to mourn him no family or friends
And no funeral to attend.
Those of us who are real, we know the deal -
His body will end up in potters field.
Just another addict deceased,
I pray the lord that your soul finds peace.

*Even though you left this world sad and blue
I want you to know
I remember you (repeat)*

Who's gonna cry for an addict when she dies
Cause she overdosed on her own supply?
She used to be shy, couldn't stop getting high
Took a hit and thought she could fly.
And when she hit the ground all I heard was the sound
Of blood flowing from her nightgown.
In another part of town, two friends on a binge
Shooting up dope sharing a syringe.
And what about the alcoholic in the grip of his disease
With a pint of gin hidden up his sleeves?
He really did believe that he didn't need help.
Now he's on the corner talking to himself.
Living in bad health, walking around with a cane
Insane on the train, begging passengers for change.
He might sing a song that he learned in his past.
And the people just laugh and they treat him like trash.
To some he's just a drunk knocking on death's door
But to me he was the saddest soul that I ever saw.
And that's how they found him on the corner facedown.
I pray to God you're in a better place now

*Who's gonna cry for an addict
Who's gonna cry
Who's gonna cry
Who's gonna cry for an addict
When they die.*

MICHAEL

What's he doing here?

LILLY

Excuse me?

MICHAEL

Well, I mean, what's he doing in the play?

LILLY

He's part of me.

MICHAEL

No, he's not.

LILLY

Well, not in the same way you are.

MICHAEL

I should certainly hope not. *(pause)* What part is he?

LILLY

He's the embodiment of the influence that good-hearted people have had on my understanding of what it means to be alive.

MICHAEL

Oh.

MARIANNE *(goes over to introduce herself to Joshua.
Holding out her hand to shake)*

I'm her feeling self. I play her feeling self.

MICHAEL

We all know who you are. What about our play?

LILLY

I think he makes our play a lot better.

JOSHUA

Thank you.

LILLY

You're welcome.

BARBARA

It was interesting. The things you said. They were interesting. Important.

JOSHUA

Thank you.

BARBARA

You're welcome.

JOSHUA (*shaking Barbara's hand*)

I'm Joshua.

BARBARA

Pleased to meet you. I'm Barbara.

LILLY (*referring to Barbara*)

She's my body.

JOSHUA

Oh, ok.

MICHAEL (*Michael is very jealous of Joshua*)

Oh my god.

LILLY (*referring to Michael*)

And that's my mind. Or my animus, if you want to take a freudian viewpoint. He's always mad about something lately.

JOSHUA

I see.

BARBARA

Maybe Joshua would like to sit down -

MARIANNE

- and talk to us some more.

JOSHUA

Ok, sure. It's a question of whether your hunger is for life or your principal appetite is for death. In either case, life is lived in the midst of death, death all around. This is the defining quality of what it means to experience life defined by its end parameter, death. Or... that is how we're *taught* to define it. We could just as easily define it by its opposite parameter, birth. Nevermind, that's a whole other subject. *Save it for a rainy day.* People who believe that life is nothing but a not-death experience will become addicted to death. And death has one huge advantage over life: death can be brought on. I can create death any time I want to but it's much more difficult to create life: first you gotta make the call. Then fit into each other's schedule. Find a reason to meet and a place and a time. Synchronize. And maybe, one thing will lead to another; and you could find yourself making some life. A new story. A new possibility.

But I can kill you right now. I can kill you, more or less, any time I want to. I can kill myself too. It's all up to me. Death will come if I call hard enough. So... if you're looking for immediate gratification, then death is the way to go. But, if you're looking for soul revelation then you will need life education. Death is a faithful dog. Catwoman-life is a willful, promiscuous beast. She has her own desires, mysteries that can only come out slowly. With trust. And care. And she is never going to relax if death doesn't back off and give her some fucking room to breathe.

Now...most of us, we define death as the absence of life, empty, meaningless. In this view, life is full, abundant, all-giving but extremely disturbing and death is empty, black, feminine, soft, accepting. But what if death is full, abundant, all giving but extremely disturbing and life is empty, black, feminine, soft, accepting. *How do you like them apples?* The all absorbing, passive, yin vs the all powerful, aggressive yang. The battle of the ages is not a battle at all, it's only pootietang cycling the universe around and around and around..

Well, you know it's all bullshit. Any actual experience of life is not all bright and shiny. And death, I am told, is not all that bad. Each one has its advantages. We hunger to know, to feel, that's all. Boundaries challenge us, sirens call us to join them on the edge. Sure, death is a real boundary. But so is birth and it's call is just as wild, more unpredictable and vastly more beguiling than dogboy death howling his ambiguities at the moon.

Concentrate your mind. Think what it is to be alive. Let death come in its time, don't fuckin' chase it like it's a bitch in heat. Life holds within itself the promise that you will have death, and plenty of it. But if your favorite pet is dog-boy death, then catwoman-life is gonna sashay her sweet ass down the street, away from your ass and find herself a real man. (*Joshua exits. Returning briefly to kiss Lilly and leave once again*)

MARIANNE

(*sings*) Twinkle, twinkle, little star how I wonder what you are (*she continues singing the song quietly in the background for awhile.*)

LILLY

Continuing without knowing why – typical.

BARBARA

Redeeming the moments by forgiving ourselves our trespasses.

MICHAEL

I want resonance, but I appreciate my own thingness. I don't mind being objectified. Why are women so against objectification? Our physical forms are as soulful as our souls are tangible.

LILLY

Loving without knowing how – typical.

BARBARA

The human race is a disgrace.

MICHAEL

A wizardry curriculum should include lessons in cosmic design: not just the cosmic design of planets and galaxies, but designing outfits that will produce results. A Feng Shui Fashion manual, that's what I need.

BARBARA (*to Michael*)

Don't you want to be understood?

MICHAEL

You weren't listening. You never listen to me, do you?

BARBARA

I'm your mother.

MICHAEL

Yeah, I know. And you never listen to me. How do you think I got like this?

BARBARA

I'm dead.

MICHAEL

That is not an excuse. You're not going to do anything because you're dead. When you were alive you couldn't do anything because you were too busy being alive. Now you're too busy being dead. God.

BARBARA:

You need to be loveable before someone can love you.

MICHAEL

Well, fuck you too, mother. Great. I can't decide, maybe I don't really give a shit whether or not anyone likes me - sometimes I think all that matters is doing good work; whether or not it's recognized is irrelevant. Other times I think that the only thing that matters is love between people - shared, exchanged, communicated - the kind of love that transforms the world into a reasonably habitable place. A meaningful world would be so because someone's meaning is integrated with mine. But right now I have to decide what to wear.

BARBARA

You're making me tired

MICHAEL

I'm making you tired? What is the good of being dead if you aren't going to make an effort. Didn't you see *It's a Wonderful Life*? You did, I know you did because we saw it together. Can't you access heavenly choirs or something?

BARBARA

To help you get dressed?

MICHAEL

See? That's what I am trying to tell you. I try to share my life with you and you just want to see it the way you see it, you don't even try to see it from my perspective.

BARBARA

I want to share something with you, an image. Eons from now when there are no more people on earth, when we have evolved beyond anything we can imagine, our planet will dissolve into the memory of a place in time. And this memory will be enshrouded inside light particles traversing space. Each particle of this memory-light will contain a record, a song, of love given and received. The largest particles will be the ones holding the memory of true intimacies. The memory of us, even though you want to think we are all bad, even though I want to think I am all bad, our memory will be a magnificent light show because we do love each other. This is what love looks like. It's messy. Love. Love is messy. This *is* love.

MICHAEL

I have a very different vision of love: Love is an opportunity, not an opportunistic opportunity, not something that produces anything at all but a potential waiting, waiting for us to make it real. I am an object of your greed. I fulfil your dreams of a son, of uniquely pure manhood. And you alternate between trying to get me to use that manhood in the service of your ideals or to emasculate me. You know how you know something sometimes, but you don't know how you know it? Well I know that the desecration of women's bodies is only the tip of the iceberg to what is perpetrated on men by other men *and* by women. Let's parade our big weapons, mother, let's hunt the big score. Greed makes a mockery of everything it craves. When a man has money women are always interested. They flock. What is that? The irony is that the more completely heinous people act in order to satisfy their cravings, the more the quality of everyone's life is debased. (sings) Love, Reign o'er me/Love, Reign o'er me, rain on me./Only love/Can bring the rain/ Love, Reign o'er me/Love! What is a real man in a world filled with moneymad fanatics racing to be the fastest sperm in the bunch? What about the Woody Allen sperm, the one who isn't so sure he wants to die in the line of duty? What is a real man?

MARIANNE

I am absolutely not a part of anything. I decided a long time ago not to belong to any club. Nothing makes sense without feeling real in your own body. When people own you, even with their eyes, nothing is available for the act of creation.

BARBARA

The thing about horror is that it's bottomless. Once it starts you can't help thinking - this can't go on much longer because it's just so horrible. So you don't act in time. You are being reasonable and horror has no such allegiance. Horror seeds itself deeply and its reach is very wide. Its effects are called terror. The cycle is horror and terror. Horror engenders terror.

MARIANNE

I want to be known.

BARBARA

Once you have experienced horror, you are easily drawn into a world in which terror makes a lot of sense - regardless of its devastating effect on everything you love - you perform a small act of terror, someone else is horrified. Once the cycle starts it's almost impossible to make it stop.

MARIANNE

I think the biblical reference, you know, they *knew* each other, that was about women wanting to be known and men still having something inside that could be known.

BARBARA

Feuds.

MARIANNE

I think the greatest loss of the modern era is our refusal to know each other. We make everyone a stranger, a potential competitor, predator or prey.

BARBARA

Feuds are feudal and tied to the same set of values that created serfdom, castles, crusades, romantic poetry, pointy hats and chastity belts.

MARIANNE

Denying someone a mutual experience of loving makes life on earth hell.

BARBARA

If you are in a feud, if there is a knock on the door and the angel Gabriel himself is standing there, you are not going to answer because even if you see him with your own eyes, through the peephole, your experience of horror will have taught you that this angel you see before you is likely to be a Trojan angel, a wooden wolf in sheep's clothing filled with very stiff, hot, crabby, metal-clad men. Or you could think that Gabriel is an angel who's lost it and gone on a killing spree. You know for a fact because you read it often in the news, that perfectly good and reasonable people transform into murderous monsters. Why would angels be immune from this ghastly random transformation? Apparently even dolphins get more violent when they hang around humans long enough. There must be something you could do to an angel that would turn her into a vengeance killer. So you don't open the door. You leave Gabriel standing out there. Alone. In the hall. His feet hurt. He needs a cup of tea, a warm welcome –

MICHAEL (*he starts trying to stop Barbara when she gets to, "leave Gabriel"*)

Ok, ok! Mom. Stop. Please. Mother, stop. I get it. Je suis terroriste. Mais je voudrai laisser tout maintenant. Laisse-moi. Laisse tout.

MARIANNE

Beauty is only the outward and visible sign of creative, substantive existence. No one can explain themselves. There is no justification for being who we are - the accidental creature is a gift that space and time have conferred on itself. Loving yourself isn't something that you can do alone (*looking deeply into the eyes of the audience*) because it is only in the eyes of another that we can become who we are.

MICHAEL

The way it goes is this; someone fucks up, then there are endless choices, infinite possibilities, a storyteller faces the infinite every day, like an astronomer.

BARBARA

I don't usually get up early, I'm not an early riser. I like to take my time in the morning. Brush my teeth, put the coffee grinds in the strainer, smell the coffee as the steam brings out the magic inside the bean, coffee made, drink the coffee, smoke the occasional joint, listen to news or music if the news is too (*pause, can't think of a word*) too. I never expected that I was going to be the news, to conflagrate in public, a sacrificial lamb whose slaughter has marked the lives of millions. Now and then, when an affair would go particularly, brutally wrong, your father would come home using hellish words, words calculated to paralyze the opposition (that would be me) with rage. Ok, that's probably

irrelevant. Anyway, that day I had a meeting, an appointment, a destiny to fulfil in a tall building downtown. And I got there early. Can you believe it? I'm never even on time. And I wept coming up from the subway because the sun was in my eyes and I remember thinking that it was odd to be crying so early in the morning. I was up very high when the plane came in.

MARIANNE(*as if ordering this darkness to vanish*)

Vile volition fly.

BARBARA

There was a lot of screaming. Rage, terror, confusion, panic, they each have their own scream and each has infinite variations. And we were a very international bunch. Our screams were in many languages. I don't forgive anything. I don't forgive you for being alive. And I don't forgive myself for being there. What did I need so early in the morning inside a global economic epicenter during a time of violent international upheaval? I can't remember.

LILLY

There is a reason they call it the dominant culture. I mean, if it were benign but in the majority they would call it something like "the prevailing culture." But, no, it's not prevailing, it's dominant.

MARIANNE

I don't have to understand life but I want to at least live it, taste the deliciousness of it.

LILLY

Dominance is the dominant culture.

MARIANNE

Infinitesimal operations of ego -

LILLY

-- a voracious conscientiousness to never be wrong devouring the world with aggressive, puritan indifference to joy -

MICHAEL

-- invisible firmament, resonant, prescient, fecund -

BARBARA

-- but not innocent -

MARIANNE

-- containing all there ever was to know -

MICHAEL

-- knowing all there ever was to contain -

MARIANNE

-- refreshing emollient -

MICHAEL

-- demulcent effluvium -

LILLY

-- pour your peace on me.

Blackout

Scene Three: A Trifle for Afters

LILLY (*alone onstage*)

I want to scream (*very quietly*) a scream that will throw itself up through the center of my spine and crack the universe open with my will to live. What gods should I worship? Unkempt and terribly shy, I hide myself in shabby garments, fashionable only to the blind. I call out for you to see me as I am. (*she throws off her Dracula cloak revealing herself to be attired in warfare gear, ideally a mix of eras in her outfit but clearly attired for battle - armed and dangerous*) Am I all alone here? I call out for you to see me as I am.

Michael enters and comes to Lilly's side, he is dressed as a wizard, a very striking, powerful image is projected

MICHAEL

I'm coming, I'm coming. Go ahead: Say something.

LILLY

Trick - or - treat?

Blackout

FIN

Songs:

Will the Circle be Unbroken?

Words by Ada Ruth Habershon, 1908. Music by Charles Hutchinson Gabriel

There are loved ones in the glory,
Whose dear forms you often miss;
When you close your earthly story,
Will you join them in their bliss?

Will the circle be unbroken
By and by, by and by?
In a better home waiting
In the sky, in the sky?

You can picture happy gatherings
Round the fireside long ago,
And you think of tearful partings,
When they left you here below.

Will the circle be unbroken
By and by, by and by?
In a better home waiting
In the sky, in the sky?

One by one their seats were emptied,
One by one they went away;
Here the circle has been broken.
Will it be complete one day?

When all the Stars were Falling by Lisa Loeb

When all the stars were falling
I reached up like you said
All the stars were falling, one hit me in the head
And I fell down, down, down, I fell down, down

When all the stars were falling, they fell from above
And I thought of hate, and I thought of hate and then I thought of love
And I fell down, down, down, I fell down, down

And I've learned how to dance from a Vincent Van Gogh
And the nights were wrapped in a white sheet
And now no one even says hello, 'cause I couldn't stand on my two feet

I fell down, I fell down
Down, down, down

Now the peace you will find, in your own you have found
The lights of the city are the stars on the ground
I may not be a quaalude living in a speed zone,
But I could be restful, I could be someone's home if I fell down

And I fell down, down
Now all the stars have fallen

Gimme Shelter by Mick Jagger and Keith Richards

Oh, a storm is threatening
My very life today
If I don't get some shelter
Oh yeah, I'm gonna fade away

War, children, its just a shot away
Its just a shot away
War, children, its just a shot away
Its just a shot away

Ooh, see the fire is sweeping
Our very street today
Burns like a red coal carpet
Mad bull lost its way

War, children, its just a shot away
Its just a shot away
War, children, its just a shot away
Its just a shot away

Rape, murder!
Its just a shot away
Its just a shot away

Rape, murder!
Its just a shot away
Its just a shot away

Rape, murder!
Its just a shot away
Its just a shot away

The floods is threatening
My very life today
Gimme, gimme shelter
Or I'm gonna fade away

War, children, its just a shot away
I tell you love, sister, its just a kiss away
Kiss away, kiss away