

MAD GIRL'S LOVE SONG: Visibility Through Theatre Creation

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Abstract

The following thesis chronicles the process of creating, developing, rehearsing, and performing a solo theatre piece entitled *MAD GIRL'S LOVE SONG*. The aim of this research is to create a solo performance of non-linear vignettes using poetic and gestural language that addresses my fear of being seen as a creator. By doing so, I hope to challenge theatre practices that impede bisexual visibility. The research focuses on the history of queer Canadian theatre and its use of non-linear narrative structure as a queering of the hero's journey. The development of a one-woman theatrical event entitled *MAD GIRL'S LOVE SONG* has arisen in response and relationship to the research, which borrows structures from other art forms, such as modernist poetry. *MAD GIRL'S LOVE SONG* is a three-dimensional poem that uses a direct address performance style inspired by autobiographical source material. By prioritizing the organization of theatrical time over linear story chronology, the theatrical event uses a queering of linear form to underscore the autobiographical queer content. As theatrical narrative has primarily been occupied by heterosexual voices, *MAD GIRL'S LOVE SONG* is an exploration of how an alternative theatrical timeline may support bisexual content, and therefore visibility, on stage.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iii
Artistic Challenge Research Document	1
Performance Research Document	12
Conclusion	18
Works Cited	22
Appendices.....	24
Appendix A: <i>MAD GIRL'S LOVE SONG</i>	24
Appendix B: Support Materials	29
Appendix C: Selected Journals	33

Statement of Artistic Challenge

I just can't stand the idea of being mediocre... (Plath, Letters of Sylvia Plath 212)

We can understand queerness itself as being filled with the intention to be lost. Queerness is illegible and therefore lost in relation to the straight minds' mapping of space. Queerness is lost in space or lost in relation to the space of heteronormativity... To be lost is not to hide in a closet or perform a simple (ontological) disappearing act; it is to veer away from heterosexuality's path. (Muñoz 87)

Since 2013 my work as a theatre practitioner has been devoted to making space for queer narratives within the canon of classical theatre. I have done this from the vantage point of director, with a focus on Shakespeare. In moving from the role of director to that of performer/creator I have identified my artistic challenge as hesitancy to allow my voice, body, and identity to be fully seen in my work. In the roles of director and performer I feel confident. My challenge lies in a fearful creator who does not trust her voice. I believe this challenge stems from a longstanding fear of mediocrity combined with a deeply entrenched shame I harbour toward my queer identity. My research in the studio has been an examination of the intersection of those two impediments. In the studio, I am engaged in a deeply personal investigation of how my queer shame is fed by my fear of mediocrity to create a negative cycle. I am often creatively paralyzed by cultural expectations of the right-kind-of-woman. My queer identity does not categorically fit into that box, and therefore I have often hidden it in a Sisyphean pursuit of female excellence as demanded by Canadian androcentric theatrical expectations.

As a bisexual creator, I tend to evade explicitly bisexual characters, and gravitate towards lesbian identifying or straight identifying narratives. My research seeks to identify how a lack of bisexual representation in Canadian theatre, including Canadian theatre intended for the queer community, contributes to my personal fear of being seen on stage. As Laine Zisman Newman acknowledges in her essay "Proudly Welcoming: Is Diversity in the Queer Theatre Community

By Invitation Only?”, “queer theatre is implicated in the erasure of multiple identities and experiences through the universalization and neutralization of patriarchy, whiteness, and settler colonialism” (Dickinson 214). Within the queer community, a hierarchy exists where cisgender white gay men have dominance. In my four years in Toronto, only once can I recall seeing a bisexual storyline explored onstage. This was *I Cook, He Does the Dishes* written and directed by Sky Gilbert and based on the life of John Cage. While this was a heartening experience, I still felt like an outsider observing an investigation of male sexuality, told from the perspective of men. Bisexual erasure is defined by GLAAD as "a pervasive problem in which the existence or legitimacy of bisexuality is questioned or denied outright" (GLAAD). My artistic challenge requires me to examine how questioning, denying, and hiding my identity in my art perpetuates my own erasure.

This leads me to question why such a glaring lack of bisexual representation exists onstage. Where are the bisexual stories? Where are the bisexual storytellers? Is the deafening silence systemic? Or are bisexual creators simply using other vehicles for their art besides playwriting and theatre creation? Is it possible to stage bisexuality in a way that accurately embodies my lived experience? The purpose of the research is to identify the correlation between queer content and queer form. In her 2016 essay “Re Form: (An Informal Set List Of Considerations)” Evalyn Parry states, “In my own artistic and queer formation – which were and remain deeply intertwined – formal exploration was foundational. Form is content, content is form” (Dickinson 208). I, too, have experienced a connection between my artistic and queer formation, which have been impossible to disentangle. I am challenging myself to identify if engaging a non-linear theatrical form can support and inform bisexual visibility on stage. The notion of queerness as “contrary” (Dickinson 208), “the intention to be lost” or a perpetual

arriving is explored thoroughly by José Esteban Muñoz in *Cruising Utopia: the Then and There of Queer Futurity*, as Newman notes:

Both Ahmed's description of the path, and Muñoz's notion of getting lost, define queerness as walking on nonlinear and unpaved trails. How aptly this applies to queer women and non-binary folks within the queer world. The trails and maps that queerness leaves behind, no matter how tangled and messy, tend to be marked by the footprints of cisgender white queer men. (Newman)

As a queer woman in theatre, the "trails" and "maps" have often confused me, misled me, or blatantly excluded me. I have entered into a search for my own substitute to the well-made play, an alternative theatrical storytelling structure built specifically to reinforce my queer hero's journey. My queer hero's journey must embrace multiplicity, getting lost, and roots that reach deep into the potentiality of the future.

However, accepted homonormative activities are only viewed as acceptable when they conform to particular ideological expectations. In the context of performance and theatre popularity on Canadian stages, the under-representation and lack of acknowledgement of marginalized queer artists in Canada complicates the vision of acceptance and inclusivity the country purports to possess. (Dickinson 213)

I am oversaturated by queer theatre that purports to represent me but reinforces "accepted homonormative activities" by only engaging the narratives of cisgender white gay men. I am seeking a method with which to tell my story, because I am exhausted with feeling unreal.

Queerness and Theatre

As queer makers, is all our work necessarily queer by virtue of extension of the maker's identity? Even when it's not exploring an explicitly queer topic? Is it the "what" that makes the queer or the "who"? Or the "how"? (Dickinson 209)

Contemporary theatre in Canada has been dominated by western principles of storytelling. Western theatrical tradition involves linear chronological narrative. I am challenging myself to explore differing theatrical structures that will allow my identity and creative voice to come out of hiding. By choosing to work outside the traditional linear narrative structure of a

well-made play, a kind of “queering” inherently begins to take place. Again, “Form is content. Content is form” (Dickinson 208). My research engages how marginalized queer voices may find platforms in the current climate of Canadian theatre. I am focused on how narrative structure can assist in magnifying or silencing these voices. This research was catapulted in October 2018 by my participation in the Indigenous Storytelling Workshop led by Muriel Miguel of Spiderwoman Theater and hosted by York University. Over the course of three days Miguel, a queer Indigenous artist, invited us to engage with a creation process she calls storyweaving. I was immediately drawn by the complexity that arises when interconnecting the layers of a story, as opposed to simple straightforward storytelling. As a new creator searching for my individual method, this allowed me permission to dismiss plot as a driving force of communicating. I began my exploration of repetition, movement, and circular narrative that continued to resonate throughout the creation of my thesis.

Two of the cornerstones of Canadian Theatre – the Stratford Festival and the Shaw Festival – were founded to foster the works of Shakespeare and George Bernard Shaw. From inception, the stories these institutions prioritize have been canonical white cisgender male playwrights. In recent years, these major institutions have embraced and cultivated conversations surrounding diversity in theatre. However, the effort is primarily geared at a diversity of performers rather than diverse voices and storytelling methods. One example is the 2017 Stratford Festival production of *The Breathing Hole*. While providing opportunities for indigenous actors, the playwriting commission went to a white woman. Onstage diversification is an essential improvement, but on its own provides only the optics of diversity if not accompanied by relief from the stranglehold cisgender white men have on theatrical space. The glorification of

the western theatrical canon reinforces a mainstream audience's heteronormative expectation, relegating bisexuality, and other marginalized narratives, to the suburbs of Canadian theatre.

In my experience, there is an unfair expectation that, in order to be bisexual, you must act in a way that provides legitimacy to that sexual identity. I often feel it is not enough to simply *be* bisexual, if I am not consistently engaged in romantic relationships with people of all genders. I am often plagued with the fear of “not being queer enough” to take up queer spaces or claim the bisexual label for my own. Similarly, acting is frequently described as doing instead of showing or telling. An audience wants characters, especially bisexual characters, to *do* something that categorically proves their identity. Unless the audience sees the character actively engaged in relationships with all genders throughout the course of the play, the bisexual identity of the character is challenged. Society's heteronormative assumptions insidiously direct an audience to believe all characters are straight until proven otherwise. In this way, acting as *doing* is inherently contrary to the state of *being* bisexual. The duality of bisexuality is inherently counter to the well-made play. A well-made play mirrors heterosexual monogamy because it relies on classical resolution. In his seminal text *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell describes the hero's journey:

We shall have only to follow... a multitude of heroic figures through the classic stages of the universal adventure in order to see again what has always been revealed. This will help us to understand not only the meaning of those images for contemporary life, but also the singleness of the human spirit in its aspirations, powers, vicissitudes, and wisdom (Campbell 33)

Bisexuality is not fixed or characterized by a singleness of the human spirit. It implies a “problem” or a story outside of the world of the play. Whatever choices a character makes, their bisexual identity suggests a parallel plane of a life not lived. Therefore, it becomes difficult for

traditional playwrights to create a well-made play around bisexuality, because bisexuality resists resolution.

Poetry and Facelessness

*Measuring the flour, cutting off the surplus,
Adhering to rules, to rules, to rules. (Plath, Collected Poems)*

Yet I suddenly envied him very much – for the life he leads. Boys live so much harder than girls, and they know so much more about life. Learning the limitations of a woman’s sphere is no fun at all. (Plath, Letters 361)

In narrowing my field of poetic research to one movement I chose modernism because of its rejection of linear form, “For artists and writers the Modernist project was a re-evaluation of the assumptions and aesthetic values of their predecessors” (Poetry Foundation). Furthermore, the modernist movement coincided with the surfacing of bisexual as a queer identity. In the 20th century, the meaning of the word bisexual shifted from “hermaphroditic” to a person who has both male and female sexual partners. Famously, Edna St. Vincent Millay was one of the first people to openly identify as bisexual. I examined themes and forms used by Millay and other female identifying bisexual poets and writers of the 20th century such as H.D., Elizabeth Bishop, and Virginia Woolf.

And I see myself, flat, ridiculous, a cut-paper shadow
Between the eye of the sun and the eye of the tulips,
And I have no face, I have wanted to efface myself.
The vivid tulips eat my oxygen. (Plath, Collected Poems)

“But here I am nobody. I have no face. This great company, all dressed in brown serge, has robbed me of my identity. We are all callous, unfriended” (Woolf, *The Waves* 33).

Virginia Woolf wrote, “I have no face” thirty years before Sylvia Plath would make the same assertion. As a queer woman in the 21st century, I continue to grapple with a feeling of facelessness in a society that has little regard for my sexual autonomy, reproductive health, or physical and emotional safety. In a letter to his father T.S. Eliot, a leading poet of the 21st century

proclaimed it best, “to keep the writing as much as possible in Male hands, as I distrust the feminine in literature.” In our androcentric society, where we still have bookstores with sections titled “women’s fiction”, women have been forced to erase the feminine from their work in order to be considered legitimate, often hiding behind vague initials and male pseudonyms. The options presented to us are clear: assume facelessness or be relegated to the margins of society. This is also how I view bisexual erasure, a kind of facelessness. I have excluded the feminine and the queer from my work because “I have wanted to efface myself” in a desperate attempt for legitimacy and approval from a patriarchal power structure.

Ultimately, I chose to narrow my focus to Sylvia Plath’s life and work as a launching point for this research. I specifically chose not to use a bisexual poet. Instead, I chose a poet who did abide by the heteronormative structures of her orbit, and still suffered mentally and emotionally. About herself she wrote in a letter to her mother, “I am the ideal girl, you see – a dream construction or something – oh, so sweet, even if unreal” (Plath, Letters 500). Sylvia Plath was preoccupied with gender roles, as was common in her time period. She digested much of the internal misogyny of her zeitgeist. Speaking of herself and her friend Marcia, she wrote to her mother, “Both of us hate women en masse. But individually they are nice” (Plath, Letters 278). Plath was also, in many ways, the prototype of the right-kind-of-woman, and yet society failed her much in the way it continues to fail women. I have borrowed imagery from her life, letters, journals, and poetry as foundational elements for my image based exploration and performance. While the piece does not include any text written by Sylvia Plath, it does lean heavily on her late poetry for rhythm, diction, shape, and imagery.

Sylvia Plath was afflicted with many of the same issues that occupy my time and energy: a crippling fear of mediocrity, a simultaneous compulsion towards and repulsion from men, a

rigid notion of what a woman ought to be, and a complex relationship with her parents and authority. It is through a thorough study of her life and writings that I seek to better understand, and ultimately conquer, my own personal and artistic challenges.

Practical Research

My practical research began by seeking out performances in Toronto that explore alternative structures, physical theatre, queer narratives, and poetic text. Two formative experiences were *Black Boys* by Saga Collectif and *Mouthpiece* by Quote Unquote Collective. Thomas Olajide describes the process of developing *Black Boys*, “We started each day with improvised movement which we called “jam sessions”. Out of these physical improvisations arose textual scenes that were later transcribed and incorporated into the piece” (“Black Boys: An Interview with Thomas Olajide”). In the case of *Mouthpiece*, which was created and performed by two women, they describe their process as a looking inward and at every step of development asking themselves, “Is this honest? No, but really? Have I censored this, or molded it to fit into my pre-existing ideas of what is ‘good’ which have inherently been crafted by some dead, white man?” (Nostbakken). I began collecting information about other female and queer artists’ processes as soil for the development of a process of my own.

Over the summer session, my practical research consisted of development and production of two theatre projects commissioned and produced by Rising Tide Theatre in Trinity, Newfoundland: *On the Radio* by Grant Tilly and *The Blue Castle* by Meghan Greeley. Both of these projects were new scripts in development, and as director, I worked closely with the playwrights on structure, relationship, and story. Throughout these processes I examined how linear vs. non-linear narrative manipulated, supported, or obfuscated the content of the play. In *On The Radio* we experimented with music, jumps in time, and multiple character perspectives

of the same event. In the case of *The Blue Castle*, the relationship between poetry and memory is a prevalent theme as the audience follows the life story of the Newfoundland poet Phebe Florence Miller. We experimented with subjective flashbacks from the memory of one character, and poetry as the main method of storytelling transportation. Working with a straight male playwright and a queer female playwright simultaneously allowed me to examine their ideas of form. The straight male playwright was partial to realism and linear chronology and possessed a rigid idea of what is “right” and “wrong” on-stage. The queer female playwright was more interested in subtext, collaboration, rewriting, and surrealism. Again, I saw queerness as a desire to be lost and the feminine as a map for being lost. From these experiences I have drawn new tools with which to examine theatrical structure as it relates to my creative processes and products.

From May through August I embarked on a personal pilgrimage to walk 1000km of Newfoundland. This included designated coastal hiking trails, dirt roads, and overgrown mountain paths to abandoned and resettled communities; a trip to Random Island to find my great-great grandparents resting place. I spent this time in contemplation with the roots of my queer shame, and finding ways to heal by connecting with my island, my ancestors, and my body. I walked mostly alone, but with a partner on some of the more dangerous or lengthy trails. I often meditated on one phrase of poetry for an entire hike. I walked, ran, skipped, danced, and stood painfully still. Many times I had to retrace my steps and embrace the circularity of the journey. However, the routes were often strikingly linear. I would set out with a destination in mind and take the logical route to arrive there. Even if the path was winding, I was moving from point A to point B with a dogmatic methodology. I began to ask myself if trying to untangle these natural tendencies toward a linear route was my way of making simple things difficult for

difficulty's sake. As I deliberately chose convoluted journeys I wondered whether the route mattered if ultimately I ended up at point B. This has led me to question, not only the trajectory of my thesis piece, but also the foundational building blocks. What happens in the absence of a point B? What if the audience starts at point D and travels backward to point F? As of my calculations, I walked over 1050km throughout this time.

Process and Methodology

The only quiet woman is a dead one. (Plath, Letters 293)

In the studio I have been researching where my fear of mediocrity and queer shame manifest tension and habits in my body. How does the shame of an entire community wreak havoc on the body of an individual member? The practice of identifying and unlearning these tensions and habits has been tedious, emotional, and often indirect. In an attempt to find a way of working that alleviates these issues I tried on methods of working employed by queer theatre makers. For example, I began exploring a process of improvised movement through which text was born impulsively, similar to that described by Thomas Olajide of *Black Boys*. I noticed that I was struggling to integrate my movement into my full body and was relying heavily on my upper body with a relatively disengaged lower torso and legs. I chose to investigate further by taking specific gestural language I had already developed and extending these gestures through my full body. I discovered I carry tension in my hips and legs, and by leaning into that tension I was able to release into these areas of my body emotional energy that previously had been locked.

After analyzing various poetic structures, with a focus on Sylvia Plath's late poetry, I have engaged in an exploration of how these structures may take a three-dimensional shape in the theatrical event. Sample questions I have presented in the rehearsal studio include: How does

the shape of a Millay sonnet manifest in the shape of a body in space? What is the equivalent of Plath's repetition of the word "flat" in the specific gestural language I have been developing?

Outcomes

Can something be "theatre" but not "a play"? (Parry in Dickinson 209)

This process has resulted in the creation and performance of a one-woman theatrical event entitled *MAD GIRL'S LOVE SONG*. *MAD GIRL'S LOVE SONG* engages a performance style I define as three-dimensional poetry. It is image based work that communicates poetry through a fully embodied gestural language. It is inspired by poetic structure and is a direct address performance from autobiographical source material. I have taken to calling this piece a theatrical event instead of a play. At first, I asked myself if this was a method of silencing myself, of being wary of taking up too much space and therefore diminishing the scope of my work. However, I am interested in a derivation from "play" for its proximity to the heteronormative. As bell hooks states in *The Will To Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love*, "The root of the word "respect" means "to look at." (177). This process has been one of learning to respect myself by learning to see myself. It has also been a process of demanding respect from others by allowing them to look at me in my art. I reject the idea that there is a legitimate and an illegitimate way to make theatre. I reject the idea that some identities are more legitimate than others. I refuse to allow the queer and the feminine in my work to be shuffled away and hid for shame in pursuit of an arbitrary standard of legitimacy. The feminine is legitimate. The queer is legitimate.

Performance Research Document

Inside My Oven

The piece chronicles two characters, WOMAN and SILLY GIRL, in their quest to come to terms with their gender identity, bisexuality, fear of mediocrity, and dependency on men for validation, and self-worth. WOMAN is directly informed by the life and writing of Sylvia Plath. She communicates in a dark, rhythmic, heightened poetry and a specific physical gestural language. SILLY GIRL is drawn from autobiographical sources. She uses a more pedantic and flippant speech in direct address with the audience. She tries repeatedly to make a pie for “Daddy”, referring to a pair of men’s dress shoes that occupy the stage with her. She uses whatever ingredients are at her disposal: flour, water, cherries, and long strands of blonde hair. She fails spectacularly and repeatedly, and is left trying to clean up a colossal mess. These characters investigate what it means to love men, and women, from a feminist standpoint within an androcentric culture. As the protagonist comes to terms with how she is complicit in perpetuating her own erasure, she begins to untangle how the insidious male gaze has also influenced her relationships to other women. The show takes place in an oven as both characters, or two facets of the same character, gradually and unknowingly allow themselves/herself to be baked alive.

While the piece avoids traditional narrative structure, there remains story in the form of non-linear vignettes. In the studio, instead of prioritizing plot, I have isolated the events of the play and continue to add, subtract, and reorganize them. Some of the major events of the play are: SILLY GIRL sneezes and her water breaks, WOMAN’s hair is lit on fire by a passenger while she’s driving, SILLY GIRL becomes a briefcase at her boyfriend’s friend’s house,

WOMAN aggressively eats cherries, there is a video of a woman drowning in molasses, there is a video of a woman smoking a cigarette.

Sylvia Plath: Mining Imagery from her Life and Writing

Since her death in 1963, and the subsequent posthumous publishing of her most famous book of poetry, *Ariel*, Sylvia Plath's suicide has been foregrounded by critics as a way of undermining her work. The methodological way Sylvia Plath committed suicide has haunted and fascinated many readers, weaving her tragedy into a romantic mythology and problematically binding her mental illness to her genius. In her final hours, Plath notoriously made her infant children a snack, rolled wet towels under the doors of their bedrooms, placed her head in the oven, and turned on the gas. This act of revolt against "good girl" conditioning has enshrined Plath as the patron saint of angst-ridden teenage girls. Although Plath was actively seeking a divorce at the time of her death, her husband Ted Hughes,

... cast himself, for the rest of his life, as the gatekeeper of Plath's work: a snarling, sexy Cerberus. Permission to quote from Plath's texts was next to impossible to secure, with the estate refusing the right if they disagreed with anything the author wrote; some Plath biographies from the time rely almost entirely on paraphrasing. Hughes made it clear in multiple letters to scholars and friends, some of which were published in newspapers at the time, that his was the definitive stance on Sylvia's life and work.

(Duyne, Lithub)

In the studio, as I strove to locate Sylvia in my body, I continued to bump up against the fact that everything I know about her has been carefully curated through the lens of Ted Hughes. I dug deeper into questions such as: Who are the gatekeepers of my body? Of my art? Of my story? Have I given them this power, or have they taken it without my knowing? How do I reclaim the

filter of my narrative? I use my art to revolt against my own “good girl” conditioning? Is it possible to do so in a way that is healing instead of destructive, like Plath?

Weapons of Domesticity

Second wave feminist art is rife with subversions of the ubiquitous housewife. The oven as a symbol of oppression was a recurring provocation for many femme artists of the 20th century. Kate Zambreno modeled the form of her text *Book of Mutter* on the *Cells* sculptures of Louise Bourgeois (see figure 4 of Support Materials). In this treatise to her mother’s death she reminisces,

My mother used to tell me that she would iron her hair to straighten it as a teenager, and I would picture her folded over an ironing board in the basement with the iron she used to press my father’s shirts. My mother always in my mind surrounded by these weapons of domesticity. (Zambreno 63)

I pay attention to the relationship between the words “domesticity” and “domesticated”. The Oxford English Dictionary defines domesticity as, “home or family life”. Three definitions of domesticated emerge, “1. (of an animal) tame and kept as a pet or on a farm. 2. (of a plant) cultivated for food; naturalized. 3. *humorous* (especially of a man) fond of home life and housework.”

I began a pursuit of femme artists who have used domestic, primarily kitchen oriented, imagery as a location for their art. I came across the work of Birgit Jürgenssen (see figure 5 of Support Materials), and Gertrude Abercrombie (see figure 3 of Support Materials). Plath and Jürgenssen are my artistic ancestors, and resulted in me choosing the inside of an oven as the locale of the piece. Abercrombie’s *Split Personality* became a visual mantra for me. The duality of the image reflects the duality of my sexual experience, and ultimately the decision to split the

solo show into a portrayal of two separate characters. I used *Split Personality* as a model for form in the same way Zambreno used Bourgeois' *Cells*. The disembodied fragments create a whole, if you shine a light from the right angle.

Final Thesis Execution and Life After

As of December 2018, a rehearsal draft for the performance has been completed. The piece is a solo show in which I will be performing. My estimate is that the show runs at 45-minutes. The first two weeks of January 2019 I will be participating in workshops of the material with potential collaborators, in an attempt to find the right outside eye. Until this point, I have worked in the studio solo, and at this juncture I am seeking a female identifying dramaturg. In this vein, I have begun workshop sessions with performer and creator Hannah Wayne-Phillips to assess whether this is an appropriate artistic match for this project. Throughout January and February 2019, we will be rehearsing four days a week on the York University Keele Campus. I am enrolled in a Playwriting and Dramaturgy course at Tarragon Theatre led by Brian Quirt of Nightswimming Theatre that runs from January 2019 until March 2019. My intention is to use this course as an opportunity to revise the language and physical dramaturgy of the piece. The final thesis performance is scheduled for February 28th, 2019 and March 1st, 2019. *MAD GIRL'S LOVE SONG* will premiere downtown Toronto as part of the YESFest microfestival at the Incubator space in the Theatre Centre from April 22nd-28th, 2019. The festival has been sponsored in part by York University.

The target audience for this piece is queer youth in rural communities in Canada, specifically Newfoundland and Labrador, my home province. I am in discussion with Persistence Theatre, a feminist theatre company based out of St. John's, Newfoundland about the future of this piece and the potential for collaboration with the St. John's Pride. We are aiming for an

August 2019 workshop that will be focused on modifying *MAD GIRL'S LOVE SONG* specifically for a young audience, as well as developing an accompanying creative workshop in which the audience could participate. We are aiming for a school tour throughout the Avalon Peninsula for the Spring of 2020.

TIMELINE AT A GLANCE

2019

- January through March – Development through the Tarragon Playwriting and Dramaturgy Course with Brian Quirt of Nightswimming Theatre
- February 5th – Script Finalization Deadline (for thesis iteration)
- February 5th-February 28th – Rehearse 4 days a week for 4 hours on York University Campus
- February 28th and March 1st – Thesis Presentations
- March – Rewrites and further developments
- April 1st – Script Finalization Deadline (for Theatre Centre iteration)
- April 22nd – 28th – YesFest Performance at the Theatre Centre
- August – workshop with Persistence Theatre to be hosted in Newfoundland
- September 15th – Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council Grant Deadline (Submitted by Persistence Theatre)

2020

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- January through May – Adaptation geared toward youth, specifically targeting high school students
- March 15th – Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council Grant Deadline (Submitted by Persistence Theatre)
- Late May/Early June – School tour presented by Persistence Theatre in conjunction with St. John's Pride to high schools on the Avalon Peninsula of Newfoundland

BIOS OF ARTISTS

Mallory Fisher (Creator/Director/Performer)

Mallory Fisher is a Toronto-based theatre creator, director, songwriter, and gin drinker from Newfoundland. She holds a BFA in Musical Theatre Performance from the Boston

Conservatory. She is currently pursuing an MFA in Theatre Performance/Creation at York University where she is developing a one-woman show based on the writings of Sylvia Plath.

Select directing credits include: *Blue Castle*, *On the Radio* (Rising Tide Theatre); *Three Sisters*,

Richard III (Wolf Manor Theatre Collective); Kingdom (CONTRA); A Doll's House, Twelfth Night, Salt-Water Moon (The Foundry).

VENUE SPECIFICATIONS

This piece takes place in the round and requires raked seating on four sides. The first image of the play is a dress hanging from the ceiling, with me hanging in it. I let myself out, but the dress must remain hung from the grid for the duration of the performance.

Diary writing and letter writing are considered at best minor, and at worst illegitimate forms in the canon of literature. This is in part due to the fact that women writers primarily employ these two forms. My piece is a celebration and reclamation of girliness, in all its messy, personal, emotional, shrill, facetiousness. I deliberately engage autobiographical material and imperfect forms to challenge the audience that these can be the site and vehicle for high art. In the technological age, modern equivalents of diary writing used by lots of girls and women are blogs and YouTube channels. Therefore, my performance uses a projector and an iPad to include raw cell phone videos of my body that interact with the live performer in space. The performance involves flour, broken eggs, cherries, and water, therefore a shopvac and mop will be required for the end of every performances.

General Funding Overview

EXPENSES	REVENUE	IN KIND
Space Rental - \$2000	Indiegogo Campaign - \$1300 ÷ 5 = \$260	York University (Rehearsal Space) - \$2000
Artist Fees - \$500		Provided on lend by donors (Projection Equipment/Technology) - \$1000
Props - \$100		Personal Donation by Mallory Fisher - \$340
Projection Equipment/Technology - \$1000		
Total: \$3600		Total: \$260 + \$3340 = \$3600

Conclusion

“To be a woman is to be an actress. Being feminine is a kind of theater, with its appropriate costumes, décor, lighting, and stylized gestures.” – Susan Sontag

Throughout the creation process I have been calling *MAD GIRL’S LOVE SONG* a three-dimensional poem. Often, I have called it a theatrical event in avoidance of the daunting seriousness associated with calling it A Play. These monikers accurately describe a piece whose artistic ancestors hail from poetic literature, and whose creation process has not followed traditional playwrighting methods. However, I have also used this proclamation of weirdness, at best, as a safety net, and at worst, as a way of delegitimizing my work. After performing this piece twice in front of an audience, I say with confidence that it is a play. It deserves categorization amongst the vast bodies of plays in the Canadian theatre tradition.

I have been reflecting on the first time I shared material from this world with an audience: our end of term showing in December 2017. I feel like a different body inside the piece. At that juncture, I was afraid to give my direct address to the audience, fearing the vulnerability encompassed in a held gaze. I had little faith in the inherent rhythm of the poetry and rushed through the journey, eagerly galloping toward the end so I could resume my unassuming position among the masses. This stemmed from a sense of imposter syndrome. Having never created before, let alone performed my own work, I doubted my worthiness to take up an audience’s time, space, and mental real estate with my story. In this iteration, I felt comfortable looking the audience in the eyes and breathing with them. I was able to ride the rhythm and pace of the piece. I felt less as though I was clawing at the door of a theatrical athenaeum, in constant apology for existing on stage. Undeniably, I am a fundamentally different woman than I was at the beginning of this process. I am no longer in a position where the autobiographical content feels like an urgent emotional surgery performed for the pleasure of a

live audience. Therefore, the piece contains much more humour than in any previous iteration. I am able to poke fun at myself, making light of the more ridiculous aspects of the anecdotes I am sharing.

In creating this piece, I built isolated vignettes and then stitched them together with a dramaturgical logic born from my body and internal poetic rhythm. Something I learned in this public sharing is that some seams are shoddier and more visible than others. For example, the transition from the hair vignette to the molasses vignette is lacking a logical foothold, and my performer-self suffered from this blind spot. There were some happy accidents in performance which gave me new information about the efficacy of the structure of the piece. In both performances there were issues with the projector, and the second video, the one I have entitled “molasses” was never properly displayed. Thankfully the audio functioned and the poetry from that section wasn’t lost. I learned that the visual of the video is inessential to the storytelling. The poetry contains the important information that must be communicated to the audience in that moment. As a creator, I must weave the projections more thoroughly, or perhaps lose them altogether. I question whether using the videos was a subliminal attempt to hide in plain sight, by putting difficult text in the mouth of a disembodied, past version of myself. I let the shame convey itself through a Mallory built of light that cannot be affected by the judgement, approval, or disapproval of the audience.

Did I succeed in staging bisexuality? Perhaps not. I remain skeptical that staging bisexuality in a way that evades heteronormative and homonormative assumptions is possible. However, I accurately staged the ambiguity of sexual identity – the fact that sexuality isn’t a fixed body and is constantly in flux. No one is required to prescribe to one sexuality appellation – gay, straight, bisexual – for their entire time on earth. Sexuality is a complex web, which the

structure of *MAD GIRL'S LOVE SONG* honours. I achieved an illumination of the perpetuity of the coming out process, successfully challenging the myth of the “in the closet/out of the closet” binary. I am varying levels of “out” in different circles of my life based on concern for my emotional and physical safety. I have this privilege of choice because I am a straight passing woman. Furthermore, as a straight passing woman, my sexuality is rarely inferred correctly and requires me to verbally come out on a regular basis. This is its own kind of emotional labour, one that working on this piece alleviated for me. *MAD GIRL'S LOVE SONG* mirrors the circularity of the coming out process with the non-linear vignettes, each vignette being its own kind of “coming out”. These coming outs are sometimes voluntary, sometimes enforced by others. They are met with everything from surprise to joy to indifference to violence. It is a process that never ends. Staging bisexuality is a paradox I will continue to grapple with in the further development of this piece and in the continuation of my artistic and academic pursuits. We each have one essential story which we strive to tell in different ways over the course of our lives. We dress it up in different costumes, hoping an ephemeral, kaleidoscopic sequin will catch the stage light. We hope this light will burn our eyes with a deeper understanding of our position in the fabric of society. An understanding that continues to evade us, left in a backstage darkness. At the intersection of femme existence and bisexuality lurks my perennial story.

The vastness of my research, both personal and external, overwhelms me. This piece occupies an internal landscape so wide that it cannot possibly be contained and communicated in one forty-minute play. There is a truth to be uncovered in the liminal space between my romantic relationship to the play and its corporeal existence. It is both less and more than my imaginative wanderings. I am both less and more than the sum of these vignettes. I am worthy of being seen,

and I will continue to wrestle with the impediments, both systemic and self-imposed, to my visibility. *MAD GIRL'S LOVE SONG* is an invaluable weapon.

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Appendix A

Script Sample

The following is a dramatization of my experience as a white, Canadian, cis-gendered, bisexual woman over the period of a year. It is based on personal diary entries and engagement with the diaries and letters of my queer/femme literary ancestors. Diaries and letters are mostly written by women and therefore considered ‘illegitimate’ or ‘minor’ forms of literature. The piece you are about to dialogue with is messy, non-linear, confessional, selfish, shrill, girlish, juvenile, incomplete, tragic, hyperbolic, creative non-fiction. I believe this can be the stuff of legitimate, feminist, high art. Where “. . .” is indicated means script sections have been omitted.

Mad Girl’s Love Song

WOMAN: I have never been afraid of the dark. I feel safe in the dark, limitless.
All the colour in the room plays hide and seek in my stomach.

(VIDEO appears, smoking a cigarette)

The air lies even and still. Without the chaotic disruption of sight.
Lying next to her in the dark a cold glass screen drops between us,
demanding attention.

I want to roll over and press my face into it – the drafty window
separating us.

My fear and confidence leak through the cracks and join her oxygen
orbit.

I say, I am governed by you, as undeniably as the moon bound sea.
Can you hear me? Can you hear me through the nerve-plated glass?
I hope it is ok. I hope it is ok I have made you my tied and tireless root.
I can feel her slide away from me as quickly as a bow down a fiddle.
Gone.

SILLY GIRL: When I was born I was 9lbs 10oz.

...

I’m going to make a pie!!!

(lights up, there is a dress with an apron hanging from the ceiling. WOMAN is hanging in the dress and manages to climb out. As she hits the floor, movement sequence.)

(WOMAN is lying on the ground looking at a pair of black men's dress shoes)

WOMAN: The oven is ready. I haven't even started baking. I've been staring at these shoes for... 24 minutes. I've been staring at them so long one of my front teeth went a little crooked, see?
Hey, do you know what my Daddy looks like? It's okay if you don't, I forget too and it's only been 24 minutes. I've been trying to build him back up in my imagination, brick by brick.
Maybe if you look really closely into my eyes you'll see his reflection. If you do will you let me know? Cause I want to get him right.

...

WOMAN: Daddy says I'm not supposed to move from this spot.
I'm supposed to stay in this spot to keep my mind from wandering. My mind wanders a lot.
Daddy and I have excellent conversation in my wanderings, and I always win.
Can you win a conversation or does that make it an argument?
In these conversations I expand like liquid in a jar – to the peripheries. I am tall and wide and heavy and clear.
And Daddy is the lid that keeps me safe even when the words are so strong they knock me upside down—I'm going to make a pie!
Cherry pie is Daddy's favourite.
One time I made a cherry pie and Daddy said I was very very very talented.
But I'm not supposed to move from this spot so if I veer too far let me know, okay?
I don't want to get carried away.
Should I touch them?

(as her fingers almost make contact with the shoes she breaks)

SILLY GIRL: Lauren once made a list of things that she said "prove I am satanic". The list went something like this:
1) Hates dogs (hates all animals actually, which is forgivable but DOGS???)
2) Drinks bad coffee (likes the bitterness)
3) Prefers cold weather to hot weather
It was longer but I can't remember. When she first jokingly showed it to me I remember thinking that this was a list of things that normal

people liked. Normal people love dogs. Normal people don't like bitter coffee. Normal people take all-inclusive vacations to Mexico in the winter not Finland. If the things that make me satanic are my preferences, which are not the common experience, and the opposite of satanic is godly, does that mean the common experience is godliness? So society is god? I see where we stand now.

(she returns to the shoes)

WOMAN: Should I touch them? If I touch them Daddy will punish me and that's too easy because everybody wants to be punished. I can feel my temperature rising so I try to be sososososo still. But the words bubble up from the pit of my stomach, burning my throat as I cccccccccchoke them out *(spits)*. Like bad acid reflux. Cherries give me acid reflux. Do you know what it's like to be on fire? I do. The blue roof of the sky turns orange, and I can't reach it to turn it off. And I don't know how to glue my feet to earth that scorches the skin of my soles to ash. So I fail and I fail and I fail and I fail and I'm begging for somebody to turn it off – please. Put me out. PUT ME OUT. Fire is a lot like words. If I could just hold it in my hands...

...

WOMAN: I think I pull my hair out in my sleep. Look how blonde I am! I have blonde hair I have blonde hair I have blonde hair. Daddy says I have the bluest eyes he's ever seen. LOOK! I have blonde hair and blue eyes I have blonde hair and blue eyes I have blonde hair and blue eyes. And I know what my hair smells like when it's burning.

(Movement sequence: In this scene WOMAN depicts an instance where a man lit her hair on fire as she was driving. When the hair catches the molasses video comes on...)

VIDEO: Let me sit at the table, eye to eye with God, and learn to ask her better questions. The sun, like love, gets tarnished with overuse. Fairly or unfairly I am afraid to touch you because I have mythologized you into the sun. The sun, like love, gets tarnished with overuse. Fairly or unfairly I am afraid to touch you because I have mythologized you into the sun. Never letting my eyes linger too long for fear of going blind.

There are parts of her skin I have never laid eyes on. As close as we have been I am drinking new information from her body. She is still foreign to me. This is a flaw in the boundaries of friendship: we must always remain in some way strangers.

The sun, like love, gets tarnished with overuse.

I've become infatuated with the moon because it lets us look at it in a way the sun never does. Looking at the moon, in fact, is the closest we can get to looking at the sun: it's the sun's light reflected. It is the closest we can get to staring God directly in the face.

The sun, like love, gets tarnished with overuse.

...

How am I to surgically remove myself without bleeding out onto the table?

I am half-born. And with this half-birth comes a half-life. I long to hold my wailing life in my arms.

Let me sit at the table, eye to eye with God, and learn to ask her better questions.

I am a pagan lover. I revel in filth.

The sun, like loves, gets tarnished with overuse.

(Gets up and retrieves white t-shirt and cherries)

WOMAN:

We are on a picnic. She is a golden-haired Gemini with an Irish name. We stayed in the park until the depths of all the things we didn't know froze our bones. We rubbed our brains together til they caught and danced in the glow of the blaze. I say, I am loving you. She can't tell the difference between terror and longing. I say, teach me how to love you, tentatively or all at once – I am adaptable. Her eyes land on me and twist me inside out. *(spits out cherries)* She sucks all the air out of the sky and slams the door of her face. The look on her face teaches me how to feel ashamed of myself. My love is repulsive. I am aching to be known. I am still loving her. Do you believe me?

(She slips into the t-shirt... notices no one is coming to clean up the mess... does so)

SILLY GIRL:

This part is a little bit angry and may contain language not suitable for the sensitive ears of men and young children, so boys feel free to talk amongst yourselves.

...

(Hides the cherries in the cubby behind the apron)

...

WOMAN: I learned unruliness on the journey from her hand to her mouth. On the journey down her lungs and back up again. She turned poison into the clouds of heaven. My body/Her body.

...

WOMAN: I have been here before. Afraid of my becoming.
Waiting for my long hair to strangle me in my sleep.
Ripping it out by the root.
Poking holes in my face to give my thoughts room to breathe.
Wandering through thrift stores, hoarding other people's clothes.
I am not enough to fill them out.
But still, I crave someone else's shelter.
I call for myself, but no one answers.
To want a child we must erase ourselves. How is this fair?
I am begging to be conquered.
Motherhood must be the loneliest place in the world, we both agree.
Daddy will never be a mother. Daddy can barely understand me as I am.
I am right, Daddy says. I say... nothing.
My throat is dry thoughts shrivel and die. (drinks)
I am right, Daddy says. I am a mirror of his majestic mediocrity. And so remain marginal.
In men it's genius. In women it's madness.
In men it's existential. In women it's frivolous.
In men it's universal. In women it's personal.
I protect our love for each other by being evasive.
"I could not run without having to run forever."
It's exhausting trying to be a ferocious & feminist & free & empowered & liberated & powerful & strong & self-respecting & mature woman.
What if I want to be frivolous & facetious & frantic & solipsistic & pithy & selfish & petty & pathetic & silly girl.
My queerness is not a transgression. It's not on purpose. And it's not hurting you.

(Puts on the DADDY shoes)

Maybe the best we can hope for is not to destroy each other. Maybe the first order of love is keeping yourself intact.

(Cuts the apron down)

Blackout.

End of Play.

Support Materials

Police, Kin Fear Smith Girl Suicide

Wellesley Police Chief Robert B. MacVey expressed fear today that pretty Sylvia Plath, 20, brilliant Smith College student who vanished mysteriously from her Elmwood st., Wellesley, home, may have committed suicide.

The chief said the girl's mother, Mrs. Aurelia S. Plath, Boston University professor, and several of her closest friends whom he had questioned all agreed that Sylvia was depressed and "that it was very apparent that suicide was on her mind."

MacVey said the student was a patient of Dr. Kenneth J. Tolson, a psychiatrist, and that on Monday morning, a few hours before she was found, she had filled a prescription for 50 capsules of a sodium-base sedative which she had obtained from the doctor.

The girl's mother gave her two pills Monday noon and put the bottle with the other 48 capsules under lock and key," the chief reported. "Her mother left for Boston early in the afternoon leaving Sylvia at home with her maternal grandparents."

When Mrs. Plath returned home about 4 p. m., the grandparents said they had been sitting outside all afternoon and had not seen Sylvia. Then the mother found Sylvia's note, saying she had gone for a long bike and would return the next day. It wasn't until much later that Mrs. Plath found the "bottle of pills was missing."

FEB'S 'MAD GIRL' POEM
Sylvia's mother said she believed her daughter's actions were brought on by a temporary nervous affliction induced by her intensive literary work. Sylvia was a guest editor of the current issue of the magazine "Mademoiselle" which prints a digest of her brilliant scholastic achievements and her latest poem, entitled, "Mad Girl's Love Song." The poem is reprinted on this page.

Police today concentrated their search for Sylvia in the dense woodlands at the dead end of Elmwood st., not far from her home. Officers believe she could not have gone any great distance because she had little, if any, money with her, and she took no extra clothing.

"Only a week ago, Sylvia visited a close friend and spent considerable time in a discussion of suicide," Chief MacVey

said. "The girl mentioned nothing about suicide, especially, but talked about the subject generally."

The chief said his discovery of the incident, the mother's fears and the fact that the bottle of pills was missing, all increased his further puzzled by failure to find any neighbors who reported seeing the girl walk toward the woods on the afternoon she vanished.

Sylvia's mother said she feared the girl's intense application to her studies and her literary endeavors had caused her depressed attitude.

"She recently felt she was unworthy of the confidence held in her by the people who knew," said Mrs. Plath. "For some time, she has been unable to write either fiction or her more recent love poetry."

"Instead of regarding this as just an arid period such as every writer faces at times, she believed something had happened to her mind, that it was unable to produce creatively any more."

"Although her doctor assured us this was simply due to nervous exhaustion, Sylvia was constantly seeking ways in which to blame herself for the failure, and became increasingly dependent."

Mrs. Plath was at first hopeful that her daughter might try to communicate with her sponsor, Mrs. Olive Higgins Prouty, authoress who wrote "Stella Dallas" and other books, but learned that Mrs. Prouty is vacationing in Maine from her Brookline home.

The girl, daughter of the late R. U. Prof. Otto Plath, won two college poetry awards and had stories and poems published in several leading national magazines.

Mad Girl's Love Song

By SYLVIA PLATH
Smith College, '54

Reprinted from August, 1953, issue Mademoiselle by permission.

*I shut my eyes and all the world drops dead;
I lift my lids and all is born again.
(I think I made you up inside my head.)*

*The stars go scuffling out in blue and red,
And arbitrary blackness gallops in:
I shut my eyes and all the world drops dead.*

*I dreamed that you bewitched me into bed,
And sang me moon-struck, kissed me quite insane.
(I think I made you up inside my head.)*

*God topples from the sky, hell's fires fade:
Exit seraphim and Satan's man:
I shut my eyes and all the world drops dead.*

*I fancied you'd return the way you said,
But I grew old and I forget your name.
(I think I made you up inside my head.)*

*I should have loved a thunderbird instead
At least when spring comes they roar back again,
I shut my eyes and all the world drops dead,
(I think I made you up inside my head.)*

The Little Woman Is Excited About LUCKY BUCKS

By LUCKY HUNT

WHEN I got home the Little Woman was wearing an expression like the cake fell, the Joneses had a new Caddy and she'd found out about that horse I had—the one that finally won. Oh, oh, here we go, I said to myself.

"What's this money game you're starting in the paper Monday?" she demanded.

"Lucky Buck Treasure Hunt," I said with relief. "I told you about it."

"I didn't pay attention," she said, "but all the neighbors are talking about it. How does it work?"

"Simple. We take the serial numbers from a flock of \$1 bills, put those bills in circulation, print the lucky numbers and folks look at their bills and maybe come up with a Lucky Buck."

"Then what?"

"Then they just cash in their Lucky Buck with us—it may be worth \$200 or \$100 or \$50 or a measly little \$25."

"Imagine that," she sniffed, "a measly little \$25 for all that work?"

"What work?" I said.

"That tiresome, tedious drudgery of looking at the numbers on dollar bills. And you're going to put new Lucky Bucks in circulation every day?"

"RIGHT you are, Hon. The Record will put nine into circulation daily and print the numbers showing the cash-in value of each. Then The AMERICAN puts a half dozen more into circulation each day and prints those lucky numbers along with the Record's list, and so on. Then the Sunday Advertiser comes along with 10 more new numbers."

"So in a week's time there'll be Lucky Bucks all over the place."

"All over the place—\$600 worth every day."

"And I might pick one up?"

"Oh, oh, I thought. Here's the joker.

"Look, Hon," I said. "We can't play it. I work for the paper and no families of those who work for the paper can play the game. No Lucky Bucks for us."

"That's just what I figured," she said icily. "I knew it would be something like that. Everybody else in town gets to join in the fun and the money and we stand on the sidelines—cheering I suppose."

"I'm sorry, dear. I just can't do anything about it."

"You could if you wanted to," she said.

"How could I? What could I do?"

"You could give up your job. You could go to work on some other paper."

"I'm thinking that one over when the door opens and the five-year-old comes in bawling."

"What's the trouble, Timmy, you hurt?"

"'Naw," he said. "I wanna play Lucky Buck. Mom says I can't play Lucky Buck."

DAILY ALMANAC

Fair tonight, lowest temperature in middle 60s. Tomorrow fair, hot. Moderate southwesterly winds.

BOSTON TEMPERATURES			
8 p. m.	67	4 a. m.	65
9 p. m.	65	5 a. m.	65
10 p. m.	69	6 a. m.	65
11 p. m.	67	7 a. m.	65
12 mid.	67	8 a. m.	65
1 a. m.	66	9 a. m.	70
2 a. m.	66	10 a. m.	74
3 a. m.	68	11 a. m.	80

OTHER TEMPERATURES			
Chicago	64	Montreal	64
Cleveland	64	Philadelphia	64
Concord, N.H.	63	New Orleans	72
Detroit	64	New York	64
Duluth	67	Old Town	64
Hartford	64	Pittsburgh	64
Kansas City	64	Portia	64
Little Rock	64	St. Louis	64
Minneapolis	61	St. Francisco	70
St. Paul	61	Washington	61

INDEX TO FEATURES	
Classified	40-43 Parsons 26
Comics	32, 33 Pegler 25
Crossword	16 Radio, TV 30
Deaths	40 Society 30
Dison	25 Sokolsky 25
Dorling	24 Sports 34-40, 44
Frazier	18 Theaters 26-29
Letters	24 Vets' Friend 19
Kilgallen	14 Women 20, 31
Mayfield	16

a WORD from
The Publisher
about
THIS SUNDAY'S
ADVERTISER
FEATURES

★ OUR FIGHT for OUR CAPTIVE CHILDREN

The story of a naturalized American family whose children are held hostages by Roman Communists... a heart-breaking decision between loyalty to country and paternal love. In the AMERICAN WEEKLY.

★ WHEN TO STEP ASIDE

A bit of advice to elders who refuse to give younger men a chance... by former Metropolitan Opera star Giovanni Martinelli. In the AMERICAN WEEKLY.

★ IN PICTORIAL REVIEW

A two-page spread of story and pictures about zany Marie Wilson, the "Irma" of TV fame. She drives her husband cuckoo, too. And another TV "personality" yawn about rubber-faced Larry Storch.

★ TV PREVUE

Boston's biggest, oldest-to-read program lineup of all New England's TV stations... featuring news, pictures and programs for every day of the week!

★ ANTHONY LA CAMERA

One of America's best-read columnists on TV... its programs, its personalities, what's right and what's wrong. Don't miss it!

★ RUTH MUGGLEBEE

With the big WOMEN'S SECTION telling the girls what's with whom on FASHION, BEAUTY, HOMEMAKING, FOOD for HAPPY, HEALTHY FAMILIES!

★ STAR COLUMNISTS

- AUSTINE ● MAYFIELD
- DURLING ● CLARKE
- FEGLER ● FRAZER
- PARSONS ● VETTER'S FRIEND

★ On THE SPORTS SIDE

- EGAN ● LAKE
- BROOKS ● CASHMAN

★ 26 COLOR COMICS in TWO BIG SECTIONS!

NEW ENGLAND'S BIGGEST WEEK-END READING TREAT
THE BOSTON
SUNDAY ADVERTISER
ON SALE in Your Community SATURDAY NIGHT

1. Newspaper article of Plath's first suicide attempt, including her poem MAD GIRL'S LOVE SONG (1952)

2. Daddy (excerpt)
BY SYLVIA PLATH

You do not do, you do not do
Any more, black shoe
In which I have lived like a foot
For thirty years, poor and white,
Barely daring to breathe or Achoo.

Daddy, I have had to kill you.
You died before I had time——
Marble-heavy, a bag full of God,
Ghastly statue with one gray toe
Big as a Frisco seal

And a head in the freakish Atlantic
Where it pours bean green over blue
In the waters off beautiful Nauset.
I used to pray to recover you.
Ach, du.



3. Split Personality by Gertrude Abercrombie



4. *Cell Choisy* by Louise Bourgeois



5. Hausfrauen – Küchenschürze / Housewives' Kitchen Apron by Birgit Jürgenssen, 1975

Appendix C

Rehearsal Journals

February 4, 2019

Gwenyth, Erika, and PC class present. Testing new material, *Father of Bees* text, that was developed conventionally (i.e. pen and paper) as opposed to my usual way of generating material which is on my feet. Desirée noticed that the *tone* of this writing and character are slightly different from my existing vignettes. It is important for me to start getting the work deeper into my performer body at this stage, and to stop popping in and out to give context. A big impediment to consistency in rehearsal is that the piece involves making such a mess. I think it is okay to use less messy stand ins for the props just to get a sense of performance continuity. Moving forward I need to: clarify and solidify the script, establish rules surrounding the screens, create a running document of the video/text for the screens that can operate independently of me. These things need to happen *outside* of my studio time. I prefer to work on tech aspects and development things than actually rehearse (my bias toward director brain over performer brain). I have to stop procrastinating and really live inside

the piece. I think I am partially avoiding it because the world of my piece is an emotional livewire and my personal life is undergoing some major shifts which I have numbed myself to for sheer survival purposes. I don't have time to process feelings and I am fearful of the vulnerability this work demands. Presently I am exhausted with my hyper sensitivity and I am taking a break from carrying the weight of other people's expectations. This show demands I carry the weight of my world.

February 7th, 2019

THINGS I AM OBSESSED WITH TODAY:

- Annemarie Schwarzenbach
- Marianne Breslauer's self-portrait
- The history of beauty
- The power dynamics of size
- My weight and what I'm eating... this fucking winter will be the death of my waistline
- Why the FLYING FUCK am I caring about my WAISTLINE?
- Nightmares/Anagrams/Unica Zürn
- Double-language (father-vampire, tongue-thick)
- How the architecture of space can be a weapon of war
- THE ZERO-SUM CURRENCY OF BEING YOUNG/A GIRL
- The desire to know someone as a denial of their existence as a separate human from you and an entity you depend on
- The absence of a person – the mold left behind
- Coco Chanel was a Nazi
- Anna Karina
- Gender-friendliness – gender as a source of joy

February 9, 2019

I am sitting at Balzac's in Stratford editing my script and I can't help but eavesdrop on the conversation of 4 people next to me spit such transphobic rhetoric. I want to cry and scream and throw up. I want to push my piece even farther through the line of sacred/profane into an unapologetic, subversive filth. I am full of rage and must must must rehearse today as an act of resistance. I want to stand on the table and scream myself into existence.

February 11th, 2019

Worked for an hour on incorporating the *Father of Bees* text into the existing script. Desirée is right that the tone of this piece is different, and I think actually belongs in a different play. The character sits in a different centre of gravity in my body – more groin, less head/heart – and has less naivety or general "innocence". I love the convention of the definitions but there are already so many existing threads being interwoven, that to interweave this new one as well would be overkill.

February 13th, 2019

Took Paul's note about the molasses video section to try and make it live. The consequence of this is that the smoking video becomes the only

instance of video and therefore more weighted. I think this is okay because it is clearly mother-fetus in that instance. Circling the Daddy shoes in molasses gave them a clear untouchable boundary but it also made the molasses speech about the Daddy character, which is wrong. Trying to find a way to keep the water/flour/molasses from running into each other and creating an impossible mess without separating them entirely and losing the sense of chaos. Will memorize for next rehearsal and try doing it live *and* with the video.

- February 15th, 2019 Saw a French production of Twelfth Night at the Comédie Française and it reminded me how North American theatre lives in a strait jacket. It is the first time in a very long time that I was reminded Shakespeare actually *can* be relevant. Also, the closes I've ever come to pissing myself in a play – so funny. The power of humour and absurdity. We don't *need* realism to care about characters. How can I push my piece toward the absurd? Lean into the comedy as a way to deepen the tragedy.
- February 18th, 2019 The unpredictability of the mess is causing me stress. I need to make sure the text is in my body fully so that I can improv if need be. It is impossible for me to memorize without also working through the piece in three dimensions. I am noticing that I am afraid of silence and “dead time” on stage – I think this is linked to feeling like I have to be “interesting”. Some of the moments are rushed because of this. I'm trying to ground myself and maintain steady contact with an item in the room as I deliver certain vignettes. Maintaining eye contact is difficult for me in real life – again a fear of being seen – and I am trying to remind myself that I have the mask of this character to protect my vulnerability.
- February 20th, 2019 The first image of the play... Thought about making a pool of flour and molasses to situate the props in but I think it is important there is no mess at all. Did a dress rehearsal and recorded it and as soon as I started watching it back, I realized I need to slow the fuck down still. Each moment can be 3 times slower than what I think is too slow. THE FRIVOLOUS SILLY MESS OF GIRLHOOD. Being silly is a serious business.
- February 22nd, 2019 I forgot this piece is *funny*. I am in a silly mood today. Worked the cherries section for comedic timing. Trying to ensure clarity of speech while still shoving all those cherries in my mouth. Eating them with the flour on them is... literally disgusting. Also, I think I am addicted to sugar because of all the molasses... The shape of the piece is serious – banana gags – serious. I'm wondering if I should add some more comedy to the top of the show, so the audience knows they have permission to laugh. That's what I've tried to do with the “holiday ham” bit, but there needs to be two jokes back to back for it to be clear.

February 28th, 2019

After first performance: some of the sections are still rushed and therefore not all the beats landed (water splash at the beginning). Still feel like I'm talking *at* the audience and not actually *to* them. Need to really speak to them – expect a response. Essential that I get on top of the rhythm – feels like I'm riding slightly under. There's an element of the WOMAN text (poetic/heightened) that is disembodied. I don't know if this is necessarily a bad thing. I gravitate toward humour and as a performer it is a stronger area for me. Therefore, the SILLY GIRL text lives more fully in my body. I can almost feel the audience breathe a sigh of relief when I give them permission to laugh with the pedantic text. The feedback I'm getting from the audience is that they really hear those sections (boyfriend, therapy, general store) and the poetic stuff seems to wash over them. I need to let more air exist in the text, so the audience has time to process and doesn't feel like I'm leaving them behind. The poetry is dense, and I have to remember it's in my blood stream, but they are hearing it for the first time. The shape is a mountain – somber, silly, somber. It's the inverse of development, climax, denouement. Climax, chaos, climax.