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Conceptualizing Female Punk in the Theatre: The Riot Grrrl Revolution as a Radical Force to Inspire a Devised Solo Performance

Summit J. Starr

The College of Wooster, [sstarr16@wooster.edu](mailto:ssarr16@wooster.edu)

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The College of Wooster

Conceptualizing Female Punk in the Theatre: The Riot Grrrl Revolution as a Radical
Force to Inspire a Devised Solo Performance

by

Summit J. Starr

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Senior Independent Study Requirement
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Advised by

Jimmy A. Noriega

Department of Theatre & Dance

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Abstract

My Independent Study focuses on the technique and aesthetic of the Riot Grrrl Revolution, and how those elements effectively continued the 90s underground punk scene. The movement was a response to masculine domination of the punk sound and space. Through zines and music, Riot Grrrl provided girls and young women a medium of reclaiming the punk scene, finding a community, and discovering an avenue of female empowerment. I have researched these techniques and aesthetics and devised a one-woman performance to continue the ideals of Riot Grrrl.

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Lastly, I want to thank those who provided negative influence in my life; those who thought they could use me and get away with it; those who attempted to stand in the way of my success and accomplishments or use them for their own benefits. I thank you immensely, for you have unleashed the riot grrrl that has been suppressed inside of me for months, perhaps years. Thank you for clarity, and allowing me to turn something so ugly into something so beautiful.

Introduction and Literature Review.

For my Independent Study, I will answer the following critical question: How did the Riot Grrrl Revolution challenge the masculine dominant culture, and how might research into its aesthetics and techniques be utilized to devise a solo performance?

Before diving into the question, an introduction to specific terminology and the history of the movement itself needs to be addressed. What exactly is a riot grrrl? This is what it takes: you must be loud, passionate, fearless, and ready to fight. A riot grrrl is just like it sounds—a feminist rebel using her voice (speaking, singing and *screaming*) to fight for feminist issues against patriarchal standards. It is a part of the third-wave feminist movement which focused more on the identity and perception of women in society. In order to fully deconstruct the idea of what a woman is and what her place is in the male dominated society, she must know what she is capable of—she must know the identity that she's fighting for. As a riot grrrl, one's own voice was created.

The Riot Grrrl Revolution was a response to a prior moment in history: in the late 1970s, punk rock emerged as the dissonance to mainstream rock. Bands such as the Ramones, the Sex Pistols, and the Clash took to popular punk culture. And as most things in our patriarchal society, it was severely male dominated. Punk became a masculine culture into which women were hardly accepted—both as concert audience members and as band performers. And instead of passively sitting back and accepting defeat, women found ways to fight back. In

doing so, they not only fought for stage space and crowd space, but used it as a platform to speak about feminist issues; such as sexual/ domestic abuse, racism, sexism, and sexual identity. They did this in their music, but also participated in political activism and became a supportive community to girls in their teens and early 20s.

Feminism was not necessarily a new idea here. So what was so special about the area of punk music used to drive this movement? The concept of punk is said best by Daniel Sinker of the magazine *Punk Planet*:

Punk is always about asking ‘why’ and then doing something about it. It’s about picking up a guitar and asking, ‘Why can’t I play this?’ It’s about picking up a type-writer and asking, ‘Why don’t my opinions count?’ It’s about looking at the world and asking, ‘Why are things as fucked up as they are?’ And then it’s about looking inwards at yourself and asking ‘Why aren’t I doing anything about this?’ (n.p.)

This definition of punk that Sinker provides sounds inclusive, however the fact of girls and women were being diluted out of the genre shows that this simply is not applicable. Therefore, women reclaimed the concept of punk to fuel their inclusion—thus created riot grrrls and the Riot Grrrl Revolution.

It is nearly impossible to speak about riot grrrls and not mention the name Kathleen Hanna. She was first a spoken word artist, then turned to music to be her outlet of political and social action. The band that kept her fame was Bikini

Kill. She attended school in Olympia, Washington during the late 80s, and had a great interest in feminist issues after her college education and working at women's centers. Through music, she could give a loud voice to gender politics to a large community, and eventually found other people who had similar political agendas expressed through punk music. Joining forces with these women and female driven bands, they had toured across the US and found themselves creating a second home in Washington D.C. in the early 90s. Band members of Bikini Kill and Bratmobile spent summers here to expand their community, reach out to girls wanting to make change, and participate in political activism on the streets. Olympia was a great way to establish their music scene. D.C. help solidify their politics.

One of the resources that I will concentrate heavily on in my I.S. is the communication between riot grrrls and conceptualizing the technique and aesthetic they created with zines. Zines are self-published, smaller versions of magazines. They range from being a page to several. They were both personal and extremely politically charged. Most often, they were handwritten, drawn, and photocopied—it is a journalistic art that is a true tangible form of what makes up a riot grrrl.

The sources I will use to dive into my understanding of the importance of the Riot Grrrl Revolution are listed here. Materials that are not listed that will continue to appear throughout my written Independent Study will be more personal and political zines, journal entries and notations from community

meetings and videos capturing concerts. These sources will be accessible to me through The Fales Library in New York City, owned by the New York University. The collection is preserved by Lisa Darms and I received Copeland Funding to visit this library.

My discovery of the Fales Library was found through an article written by Lisa Darms, titled “Preserving Contradiction: The Riot Grrrl Collection at the Fales Library.” Documentation of the political strain and cultural meaning became a tricky concept when trying to preserve the Riot Grrrl Revolution. Although the community was seen as a solid conglomeration of girls across the United States, the different forms of media made it difficult to pull together a cohesive collection that rightfully represented the culture. Archivist Lisa Darms expanded upon Marvin J. Taylor’s Downtown Collection that covered a vast amount of art in New York during the 1970-1990s. By doing so, she included “personal papers of musicians, writers, artists, and activists involved in the movement’s early years” (337). Darms expresses the importance of these personal written works, as it shows an accurate window to how people viewed and thought about the world. Zines are not the only primary sources included. Much is included, except for proof of riot grrrl meetings (Darms 338). The confidentiality of the meetings made it unlikely for it to be documented.

Lisa Darms wanted to make clear that although these documents, video and audio recordings are within an archive, it does not mean it is a “fixed entity” (340). The intent of putting so much effort in preserving these tangible objects is

to also accurately preserve the ideologies and cultural expressions so we can actively relate them to how we live our life now. The way that Riot Grrrl utilized feminisms to subvert patriarchal norms should not be packed away and passively looked at as a historical event—rather, we must actively look back at it, learn from it, and add it to our ever-changing and challenging lens to view the world. The idea Darms presents here is exactly the direction I want my performance to go. I am eager to look at what Riot Grrrl has done, and relate it to our eager-to-challenge-and-change generation. Knowing the direct intention of my performance and reason for research, I will need a solid intellectual look on the riot grrrl culture. I hope to find this in many of my sources.

“‘We Are the Revolution’: Riot Grrrl Press, Girl Empowerment, and DIY Self-Publishing” written by Kevin Dunn and May Summer Farnsworth provides a brief overview of the birth of punk and how a community of “riot grrrls” made their own place within the musical culture. Starting primarily in Washington, DC, Riot Grrrls were able to communicate their ideas of feminism, political activism, and personal stories about where they fit in in the boy-run world of punk rock with “zines.” A zine is essentially a do-it-yourself (DIY) magazine. They were personally pasted, printed and handwritten by young girls in their late teens and early twenties, and then sent all over the United States via Riot Grrrl Press. Topics that were discussed included “sexual identity, self-preservation, racism awareness, [and] surviving sexual abuse” (Dunn & Farnsworth 139). Because this was before the internet became a primary tool for

communication amongst young people, zines became an important way to keep these girls connected. It was said best by Kathleen Hanna of “Bikini Kill”: “With this whole Riot Grrrl thing, we are not trying to make money or get famous; we’re trying to do something important, to network with grrrls all over, to make changes in our lives and the lives of other grrrls” (cited in Dunn & Farnsworth 140). The Riot Grrrl movement was aimed at creating a change within oneself and causing a personal fire to ignite, exposing the young generation to a world that they can tangibly see and fight for, with a large a powerful community behind them, the movement shows them that they do not have to conform into being an integral piece of the patriarchy. In other words, women can be more than what they have suppressed into believing.

After zines picked up speed in the underground, in 1992 larger magazine distributors started to report on the Riot Grrrls—much to their dismay: what would seem to be beneficial for an underground society to be published in magazines that had a wider audience, ended up portraying the riot grrrls in a way they did not intend to be seen (Dunn & Farnsworth 141-142). Riot grrrls became too much of this, too little of that. They emerged as the extreme or the opposite of what they were. For example, Bikini Kill stated collectively in their zine *Jigsaw #5 1/2*, “They write about us authoritatively, as if they understand us better than we understand our own ideas, tactics and significance. They largely miss the point of everything about us because they have no idea what our context is/ has been” (Dunn & Farnsworth 142). Instead of a comfortable sphere

for women/ girls to reach out and find community, they were suddenly overtly radical—something to look at from afar. On the flip side, their powerful, personal, and passionate intention muddled down into mainstream pop. Some ideas were thrown out, while others were commercialized; this ultimately led to the creation of the Riot Grrrl Press in the spring of 1993 (Dunn & Farnsworth 142). Riot Grrrl Press kept the true voices of the revolution safe and untampered with.

Dunn and Farnsworth continues to express the importance of DIY punk, as it is a combination of disalienation and antiestablishment (143).

“Disalienation” provided an avenue for young people to become involved in understanding their society, and “antiestablishment” inspired them to challenge it—with these two things in mind, one can hold themselves accountable for contributing to the changing world. Because riot grrrl was originally planted through music, it is important to analyze it specifically in this art form. Riot grrrls wanted a place in masculine dominated scenes—including the underground punk rock space. Like most movements that are meant to inspire equality, stereotypes and labeling can get in the way that puts the minority back as not being a part of what they were fighting for. Catherine Strong discusses this notion in “Grunge, Riot Grrrl and the Forgetting of Women in Popular Culture.”

While preservations of history like The Riot Grrrl Collection in the Fales Library is essential, there is a mental preservation that is not happening for women in history. As we grow up and live in a patriarchal society, our memory

does not often preserve important women in any area of academic or entertainment contribution. More often than not, masculine figures are at the forefront of our minds. Catherine Strong talks about the erasure of women in history through music, specifically grunge, and how the Riot Grrrl movement seemed to be a compartment where women bands are thrown into, regardless of being a part of the grunge vein rather than girl punk rock. The word “grunge” is saved for male bands with a male sound (although many addressed feminist issues).

Strong explains the possible reasons this erasure is happening: failing of record keeping, not guarding legacy, and music is too easily accessible and well-catalogued (the information is available; it is just too far embedded in between other male written work) (401). Women in music are often sexualized or tokenized anyway, rather than being one of the music of genre. Additionally, female bands are grouped together, as they are pulled apart from the original genre of music they define themselves under: “sharing the same gender is enough to make all female artists the same in a way that male artists are not” (Strong 402). This happens when looking back at the bands that emerged during this era. In the moment when female bands are lionized, they are thrown on the pedestal of being the “first,” even though a history of female bands back them up (Strong 402). A step had been taken in the direction of shedding light on feminist issues—including race and LGBTQ rights—however the media would not allow women to forefront these issues due to their lumping together or pedestaled for

the wrong reasons. Things that would in theory help the exposure of women's rights ended up being compartmentalized in a non-threatening way.

Catherine Strong continues to define what a Riot Grrrl is: "The Riot Grrrls focused on the support females can receive from one another, and problematized the female body by talking about female desires, body parts and more taboo subjects such as incest and rape in an up-front and confrontational manner" (Strong 404). She talks about how this idea of the Riot Grrrl overlaps with the emergence of grunge music. They have many similarities, but a crucial difference is how the bands choose to market themselves. Female driven bands that define themselves as grunge are working within the white male canon of music. Riot Grrrl puts emphasis on the female body and purposely draws attention to it. Still, their intentions are blotted out by poor documentation and memory. What does this mean for women of today? Will they be compartmentalized in wrongful boxes or simply erased all together? Because riot grrrl is so personal to so many people, it is important to understand what riot grrrl means to those who are not necessarily scholars. One must look to the women who utilized the techniques of riot grrrl and were along for the ride of the movement.

Jessica Rosenberg and Gitana Garofalo gave voice to several women with their article "Riot Grrrl: Revolutions from Within." Rosenberg and Garofalo provide one of the most honest and straightforward sources on what it means to be a Riot Grrrl, and the purpose, challenges and successes of the Riot Grrrl Revolution. The interviews were taken in the spring of 1998. Those apart of the

discussion are Lailah Hanit Bragin (16 years old from New York City), Kim M. Garcia (16 years old, gay, half-asian and half-chicana), Jake Greenberg (18 years old, writer and lyricist, zine writer for *Queer Fish*), Jessica Farris (zine writer for *Ballroom Etiquette* and *Reject Gene*), Madhu Krishnan (Indian, zine writer for *soiled princess, kittybrat, and secret language*), Erin A. McCarley (18 years old, zine writer for *Glamour Queen, Room Double Zero, Rome Wasn't Built in a Day* and *Racecar*, musician with own record label), Lindsay Oxford (17 years old, and musician), Jamie E. Rubin (16 years old, zine writer for *Babyfat, Spitshine, Pressure Points* and *Kiss and Make Up* and musician in Pavlov's Dogs), and Tamra Spivey (musician, editor of zines *Lucid Nation, Tvi,* and *Eracism*) (Rosenberg and Garofalo 813-816). These girls and women answer the cold questions of Riot Grrrl. I find it most interesting to see them agree on very general issues, yet have extremely different ways of coming to that same conclusion. They all seemed to get involved in different ways—whether it was through music, or stumbling upon a meeting, or with the zines. Self-expression from the girl world point of view became an act of feminism, as said best by Madhu: “Something can be a technical mess but full of emotion, and it's the most wonderful thing. Meaning and validity go hand in hand” (as cited in Rosenberg and Garofalo 824).

A strong aesthetic was fabricated among this community under the initial push of punk rock, even if the girls involved were not necessarily turned on by the idea of punk music. The idea was there. Jessica Farris stated, “Punk had so many of the same ideals as Riot Grrrl. Rebellng against wat you're supposed to

do and how you're supposed to act" (as cited in Rosenberg 831). However, media involvement started to commercialize rebelling, which took away from the true meaning of Riot Grrrl—yet, the community still stayed strong with the personal zine touch, fliers, and word of mouth (Rosenberg and Garofalo 828). The endless creation of girl punk band after girl punk band really kept the aesthetic true. While the general (boy) public seemed to criticize the girl band sound, which was inherently raw and not technical, Riot Grrrl supporters challenged that the sounds they were creating were *real* and therefore still valid (Roseberg 832).

Because nearly all of the girls at the interview were involved with zine editing or writing, they were very vocal about the DIY aesthetic. This was a solid ground where most of the girls agreed. Equally, the girls agreed wholeheartedly on the conversation about boys being a part of the Riot Grrrl meetings and conventions. It is not that they did not want their involvement, they just want their understanding. They want their space. This is a clear and honest look into how women view men, and executing their feminist ideas. There is not meant to be a division between the sexes—the mission is, after all, equality and understanding from everyone. Media tends to latch on to the aggressiveness of the Riot Grrrl aesthetic, and transfers it to hatred against men. These women completely destroy that image. Hate was never a part of the equation.

Throughout the discussion, many connections were made with the women's movements that occurred in the 1970s. The girls seemed to truly

connect with their mother's generation of feminism, and modernized their ideas to how they saw they were applicable to their generation: "Now we have their anger" (Rosenberg 839). But what seemed to be a more general political stance that the 70s produced, Riot Grrrls of the late 80s and early 90s found personal revolutions.

All of this history and research will inform my process and ideas as I work on my devised performance. As I proceed to the creation of my performance, I have a very specific path in mind. I am going to be using the riot grrrl aesthetic and technique to create a Brechtian episodic structure with 2-5 minute scenes—just as a punk band in a concert would play 2-5 minute songs. Some of these scenes will include music (live and pre-recorded) and others will include movement/ dialogue. Throughout my writing process, I will refer to Bertolt Brecht's theory and devices, as his theory well fits my pre-formulated construction of my devised piece. The source I will be referencing as my foundation for understanding Brechtian theory is *Brecht Sourcebook* edited by Carol Martin and Henry Bial. The essays I will be referencing throughout my essay are "An Epic Theatre Catechism" by Mordecai Gorelik and "Brechtian Theory and American Feminist Theatre" by Karen Laughlin.

The ultimate purpose of the production is to kick-start a modern Riot Grrrl Revolution. I want to study the history of riot grrrls—what was accomplished, and what they failed to accomplish—because I solely believe this girl-style revolution can be tailored to our generation of feminists and activists of

social issues. I think it is appealing to the younger generation, and is a proper medium to express personal issues in a way to help all girls everywhere.

Chapter 1: Technique and Aesthetics.

While the Riot Grrrl Revolution provides a tasteful explosion of artistic potential, the best resource where I will devise a concrete yet varied image of what my production shall encompass is in the form of zines. Zines were an integral part of the Riot Grrrl Revolution, and includes clear representation of riot grrrl technique and aesthetic. Understanding the history and significance of zines is essential to my research and devising process in order to stay true to the Revolution and the girls involved.

Arguably, zines could be traced as far back as when the printing press was invented, and when people were distributing current events through newspapers. They were small self-published written works that were often politically charged and spoke about radical ideas; any sort of revolt against a large systematic influence (Zobl). But the earliest emergence of zines that are more closely related published zines to the riot grrrl aesthetic were from the 70s. At this time, they were mostly “fanzines” when supporters of a band would talk about their favorite bands or performers (Block 8). It was a way of networking personal love/ obsessions and opinions about musicians with a personal touch. They were created with hand written words and photocopied pictures. They were all self-published and sold for a few cents, or given out for free. It was a celebration for the music and the musicians with the highly accessible DIY technique. Without an established form or content, people began using this medium of expression for different intentions.

In a short documentary called *Don't Need You: The Herstory of Riot Grrrl*, Kathleen Hanna of Bikini Kill and Le Tigre recounts the original name of “riot grrrl.” To no surprise, it was from a zine. Allison Wolfe and Molly Newman were writing for a zine called RIOT GRRRL that caught on to many girl-zine feminist writers (*Don't Need*). Then on, obtaining the title of Riot Grrrl became a means of identifying with the feminist ideas being screamed in these zines. Zines became a powerful visual representation to create the identity—the technique to create the aesthetic for Riot Grrrl came from this medium of communication.

The zine aesthetic targeted to riot grrrls and made by riot grrrls have a non-apologetic, personal way of communicating. The techniques used to create this aesthetic are as follows: the colors are bright and contrasting—anything that pulls away from normal and universal and is true to the emotion of the work. Images and words are spliced together in a way that is jarring. It appeals to youth because of its playful, yet satirical visual representation. Expletives and other crude phrases are loud—meaning, they are bold, upfront, and the first thing you see. There is power and passion behind these pages that scream silently as one reads them.

Many images are drawn free-hand by the zine writer or photocopied and spliced together; sometimes they are in the form of comics where they are able to tell a specific, linear story. Other times it is just one image filling an entire page. Both have their strengths in getting their message across: with a story, there is intent of sharing an experience with cause and effect. With these moments

illustrated, they have the opportunity to be more relatable to outside human life—as it is set up in constant cause and effect. The example of comic zine style shown in Zine Scene: the do it yourself guide to zines was from Jeff Guarino’s “The Rumbling Underneath” where he tells the story of his relationship with his grandfather (see fig. 1).



Fig 1. Excerpts from piece in THE RUMBLING UNDERNEATH #2

(Block 5).

With pictures and a direction of moving our focus on the page, the reader is absorbed into the story. It is succinct enough to want to reread, analyze and find nuances that one would miss in a live performance. The previous point supports the singular image even more so. With one scene, person, object, or perhaps a word highlighted and enlarged on a page, we are intrigued to make sense as to why this image.

Another example from the Zine Scene is from Stephanie Kuhnert's "Hospital Gown" (Block 16). There is a photocopied picture of a woman in a black leotard about to do a pirouette, surrounded by and written words that reads "Maybe you can make me cry, / you can make me scared / you can make me angry / you can make me hate myself / you can make me hate the world / you can make me scream / But you can never stop me from dancing. / (and this is a sign that I'll get it all back)" (see fig. 2).

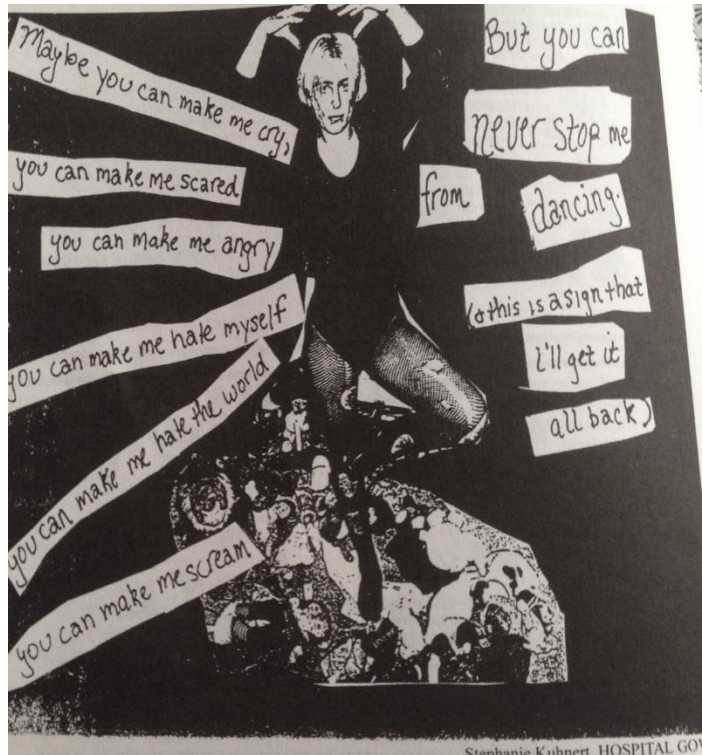


Fig 2. Stephanie Kuhnert, HOSPITAL GOWN (Block 16).

As one associates the narration with the picture, her facial expression carries more weight. It is stern and confident; and her eyes are focused out at the viewer. She is strictly speaking to anyone listening, or everyone regardless if they are looking or not. Now, one begins to see the juxtaposition of the feminine figure and position against the stern face and forward words. In addition to the leotard, the woman is also wearing fishnet tights with holes. Fishnets are a loaded feminine clothing; those wearing them obtain sex appeal, promiscuity, and unintended label of “look-at-me” from the male gaze. The fishnets are also torn in this case—“trashy” comes to mind, or the indication that they have a lower economic status.

As one takes all of these elements into consideration (holey fishnets, feminine body, stern face, ballet pose, and handwritten words), an aesthetic is created. With the photocopied picture meshed with the handwritten words adds a personalized understanding of what Kuhnert is attempting to get across. She is making a statement to her readers—she is fighting silently, yet her pictures scream passion.

The technique of free drawing an image (like in the comic example) and the technique of splicing an image that already exists are commonly used in riot grrrl zines. They usually run under the same theme, but both techniques provide separate paths to achieve their aesthetic. Free drawing images allows the zine creator to control the image in every aspect—whether it is done with pencil, pen, Sharpie, water colors—the options are limitless. It is also a window into the artist’s perspective; even if the subject being drawn is a common object. Lauren Martin provides an example in her zine “You Might As Well Live;” Martin illustrates different pieces of clothing that she has “grown an affinity for!” (see fig. 3).



Fig 3. Lauren Martin, YOU MIGHT AS WELL LIVE #3 (Block 63).

All of the images have depth; they are well drawn, although they still feel like sketches. The best feeling associated with it that is truly of the overall riot grrrl aesthetic, is that anyone could draw these images. The drawings are not complex pieces of art—I could imagine she drew them all in one sitting without too much consideration on making them look “perfect” or “flawless.” Instead of bolded lines, an indication of one line is represented by a few scribbled lines. There is less of a feeling that this artist is highly talented and is attempted to “show-off” her work. Instead, it is as if a friend is sharing their casual thoughts with the reader. A personal connection is made. Martin’s intent is very clear that she would not have been able to accomplish with pre-made, photocopied images.

That is not to say photocopied images are the only way to relate to the reader. Subverting images adds an element of wit and irony that take us to a new reality lead by the artist. Lisa Oppedyk’s “Bitch Dyke Whore” displays this idea of taking an image from a separate magazine out of context to drive a new point; Oppedyk begins the page with a small paragraph about how she believes she is a “survivor” rather than a “victim” of rape (see fig 4).

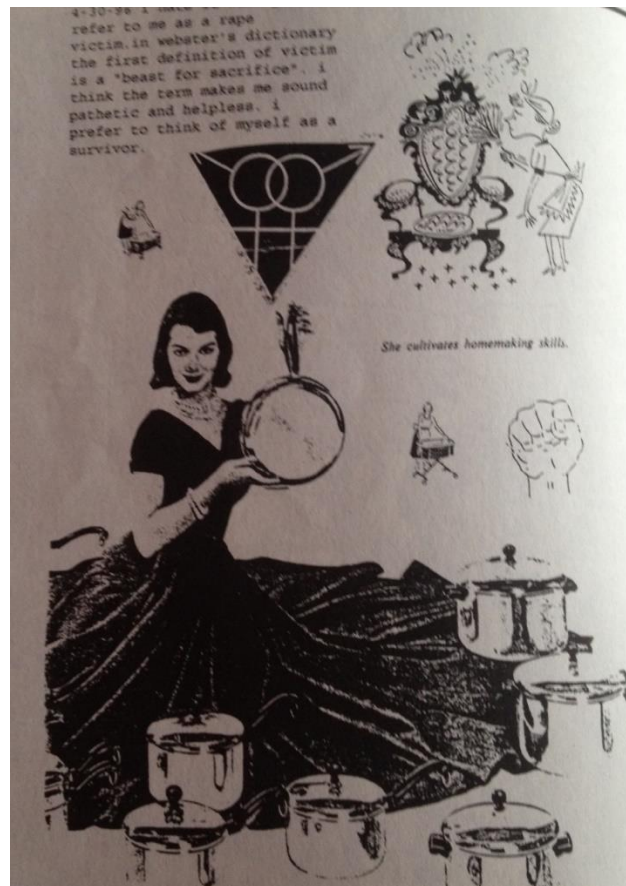


Fig. 4. Lisa Oppedyk, BITCH DYKE WHORE #1 (Block 74)

In addition, she has a male/ female triangle symbol, a fist, and a few pictures of women doing household chores. The largest one is of the female surrounded by pots and holding a pan. The text reads next to her: “She cultivates

homemaking skills” (Block 74). The reader is playing with our visualization of a female rape victim by bombarding us with the “good housewife” version of females. These images are also playful; the women holding the pan is looking out at the observer as if selling a product (this picture was more often than not conducted from an advertisement). The textual information is dark and to the point. The commercialized woman who is supposed to be light, happy, and energetic about pans cultivates more than homemaking skills—she has created a depth to her character, whether it is understood that these words are coming from that figure or not. Beyond this image and story, we might be able to detect darkness behind the painted lips of women playing stereotypical games or otherwise manipulated by the patriarchy to enhance the roles of women.

Zines are a tangible foundation of the Riot Grrrl’s politics to “remain devoted to assertive feminism and activism” (Zobl). Take that notion to the theatre, and one has Bertolt Brecht by their side. By nature of the content of zines, their transfer or resonance with the theatre is through the focus on social political issues. Brecht believed his theatre should be “politically engaged, economically viable, and aesthetically ‘entertaining’” to keep his audience actively participating and engaged in their seats (Martin 2). Both mediums are meant to create change and induce conversation. The purpose of Brecht’s theory and the intention of zines do not stay on the page, or stay in the theatre. It is a reference point for activity for the audience member’s or zine receiver’s lives. In

my devising process, Brecht's theory and application to American feminist theatre will be kept in consideration.

What people often forget is we have our own canvases that we paint each morning: our bodies. Riot grrrl style followed the typical punk aesthetic, but within the bands themselves who were often the modeling examples of the fashion, had incredible variety. Clothing had the same DIY style as the zines; they were personal, jarring, in-yer-face, and political. They were cut, drawn on, worn, or haphazardly thrown together despite it matching or being overtly masculine or feminine. Everyone had their own aesthetic and seemed to touch several aspects of a feminist touch. As an actor on the stage, emitting this visual style will be crucial to my performance.

Apart from clothing style, literal writing on the body is another artistic expression that riot grrrls utilized. Feona Attwood's "Sluts and Riot Grrrls: Female Identity and Sexual Agency" discusses the terminology that describing women's sexuality in an ultimately derogatory fashion. She writes, "the practice of writing 'slut' on the body is a gesture that parallels the celebrated myth of bra-burning associated with second-wave feminism, and provides an interesting demonstration of the different strategies used by women to challenge dominant notions of femininity" (240). The body, here treated as a canvas, can be a walking, living, breathing representation of reclaiming. Kathleen Hanna is famously or perhaps infamously known for writing SLUT in bold on her stomach for her concerts. She takes a loaded word that is meant to attack and

uses it as a sense of pride. She takes the word out of other people's mouths before they even have the thought to say it—to make them ask why.

Another form of artistic expression that bridges this technique to the theatre is performance art, specifically articulated by Marina Abramović. When she was a young artist, she turned to painting and drawing. However, she found the medium of art to be compromising. She felt limited by the two dimensional creations and needed to turn elsewhere to fully express the weight of her message. Abramović says, “The moment I started using the body, it was such enormous satisfaction that I had and that I can communicate with the public, that I could never do anything else” (The Museum). The ownership of the expression is immediate. With paintings as well as zines, the separation of the living thing—the artist—could leave the art without humanness, therefore credibility. The creator is welcome to hide behind an unknown face or far off in the distance. When the art or text or motion is used with the living body, there is risk. “I could never go back to the seclusion of the studio,” Abramović continues, “and be protected by the space there” (The Museum). This is a powerful notion, especially for figures like Kathleen Hanna, because hostility in the concert space was hardly ever space for her. Instigating more controversy by using her own body during her concert performances is a brave and risk filled act.

The DIY (Do-It-Yourself) ethic is the primary tool behind punk rock, as well as the feminist movement that took over the music scene. It is the technique that creates the entire aesthetic Riot Grrrl has used to broadcast their message.

The emergence of the DIY ethic was done by Guy Debord of the Situationist International in 1957, whose action was to “revolt against dominant discourses, images and ideas of capitalist consumer culture, known as the Spectacle, and sought to incite a revolution by employing cultural tactics that exposed contradiction and openly criticized society” (Monem 13). When one recognizes a forced silence upon a large group of people, a medium to turn up the volume of the silenced voices will inevitably appear. Because the resources are often limited for these smaller/ lesser groups of people, they often have to carve their own way—they do it themselves.

DIY and devising my performance fall well within the same universe under my concentration of study. The entire idea of doing something yourself is what drove me to decide to do a one woman show in the first place. The play will be written, performed, and directed by myself using most of my own resources—as “haphazardly” thrown together as the zines that I have encountered so far.

Each page of a zine oozes with sound, movement, and expression. If each issue is a script, each panel or page translates as a directing unit—here is where I will find zines transfer into a theatrical space. Most often, a zine publisher will tackle a general issue that is personally related to them—just as a playwright will focus on a message or story. The scenes written, whether they follow a linear timeline or not, support and deconstruct the message of the playwright with specific words, images, or actions. And as a director would extract a concept by

immersing themselves in the script, I will do the same by immersing myself in the research prior to writing the script. William Ball explains this process in his book *A Sense of Direction*, “He becomes aware of the author’s use of leitmotif, symbolism, detail, humor, social attitudes, spiritual values. He also becomes aware of what messages the author considers important and what vision the author is striving to reveal” (95). In my case, the “author” I will be referring to are the many zine writers that I will have access to currently, as well as those stored at the Fales Library in New York City. Thus far the zines are so rich in content, character, and attitude that my devising work to pulling these ideologies to the theatre will proceed smoothly.

Chapter 2: Devising Concept.

The following is the devising concept I constructed in November of 2015. All of this was written after doing preliminary research before I was able to visit the Fales Library in New York City with Copeland Funding. Each element listed below completed my vision of the show before a strict through line of purpose was developed, but it served as a perfect jumping off point of the aesthetic derived from my research.

IS Detailed Directing/ Devising Overall Concept:

“Riot grrrl” is by no means a mainstream concept. Most of the bands that backed up the revolution like Bratmobile and Bikini Kill hardly ring a bell for the average person; the closest indication of familiarity for the underground revolution might be Kathleen Hanna’s name as the front girl of contemporary electro rock band Le Tigre. Even then, many would still be unaware of their feminist agenda and support for LGBTQ+ rights. Talking about the bands are, again, only scratch the surface of what the riot grrrl revolution carried. My goal for this performance is to rekindle the flame that deserves to heat up the discussions of feminist issues today through the power of the younger generation. Julia Downes’ article *The Expansion of Punk Rock: Riot Grrrl Challenges to Gender Power Relations in British Indie Music Subcultures* succinctly states the objective, or otherwise mission statement of riot grrrl that I will follow closely in the planning of my performance: “riot grrrl articulated a punk-feminist subculture that sought to rehabilitate feminine signifiers, encourage young

women's cultural productivity, and facilitate connection between young women and girls involved in alternative cultures" (209). "Rehabilitate," "encourage," and "facilitate" stand out to me as basic conceptual terms to carry the performance.

The passion of young feminists is a force to be feared and reckoned with; all they need is a proper medium to do it. The 90's riot grrrl revolution provided a framework worth revising to fit this generation of young artists, activists, and active feminists and will no doubt make a difference in this world. I will refer back to what riot grrrl had done in the past by talking about their failures and issues, and yet continue to propel their intentions—because I solely believe this girl-style revolution could successfully empower young women today. And I wish to reach out to a community that will take this message and spread it even further.

In doing so, I will create original characters that will help embody the spirit of riot grrrl, as well as enrich the production with my personal experiences. By exposing personal stories/ experiences, I will be participating in what Jan Coehen Cruz articulates in her book *Engaging Performance: Theatre as Call and Response*. The third section titled "Self-Representing: Testimonial performance" she emphasizes the impact of articulating truthful experiences using primarily Marty Pottenger's *home land security (hls)*. Pottenger believes in Arch Bishop Desmond Tutu's "*ubuntu botho*: a way of being human that recognizes equally the humanity of others" (Cruz 68). Being the expert on my own humanness, I know that this is my authentic and genuine connection I will have with my

audience—despite race, sexual orientation, gender, etc. It is also important for me to keep in mind that although I am one person with one story, I have validity in my experiences because it conducts a narrative that will “contribute slowly to *culture* change” even if it does not immediately contribute to “*policy* change” (Cruz 71). Although it would be under Brecht’s intention for people to leave the theatre and create instant change, realistically people do not follow those parameters. Change happens slowly.

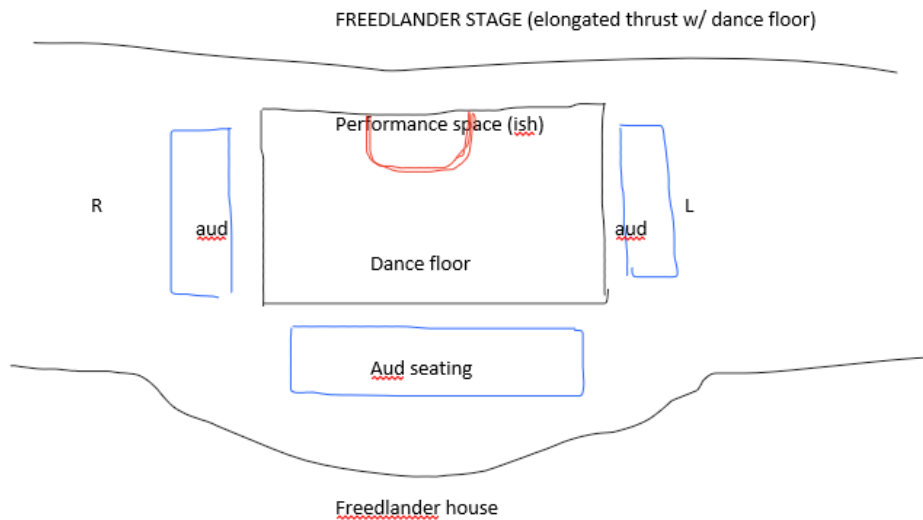
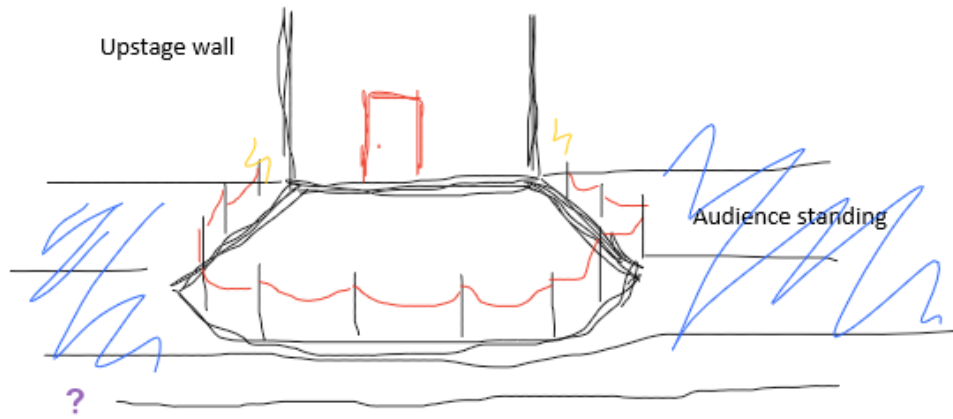
With my focus on an encompassing idea of technique and aesthetic in my research, I will aim to create a performance that captures the heart of what Riot Grrrl was since an issue with their movement was not having a strict definitive platform of identity (not unlike the ongoing discussions of what “feminism” is today). Authenticity is a toxic word thrown around riot grrrl music and community because what most people believe to be “authentic” can be arbitrary and subjective (Strong 402). When one does not view something to be credible, it is erased. Through a personal voice, an authentic truth is created and puts the subject matter into the “oral history” or “popular memory”—testimonial performances are centralized around those “voices that might otherwise be ‘hidden’ from history” (Cruz 76). I am aware that most of what Cruz articulates in her chapter of testimonial performance includes a larger representation of a community, and therefore is more impactful and holds a wider (perhaps more accurate) perspective on the subject matter being articulated (81). My performance is simply a piece, or an installment, of something that I foresee to be

a part of something much bigger beyond my Independent Study. I hope to collaborate with girls and women in the future that may follow the structure of my performance.

Set:

The set is not a specific place—it is a space that can be used to quickly shift between different spaces very quickly (most of those indications will be done with dialogue and props). But to continue the conceptual form of the production, I will create an atmosphere that feels like a rock concert. The audience will stand as if standing at a concert, with a rope to block off a stage area. My purpose behind this is to recreate a space that would “engage the audience, forge community” with the overall intent to “agitate social change” as described in live concert performances specifically with Huggy Bear and Bikini Kill (Downes 213). Within close proximity, the audience members will always be in view of each other and therefore aware of their own existence. They will not be lost in the material, and will subconsciously connecting themselves to what they see. There will be two flats on both stage right and stage left for necessary exits and entrances.

The following drawings are preliminary sketches of how I imagine the space to look, drawn in November 2015 on Freedlander stage with Marley dance floor:

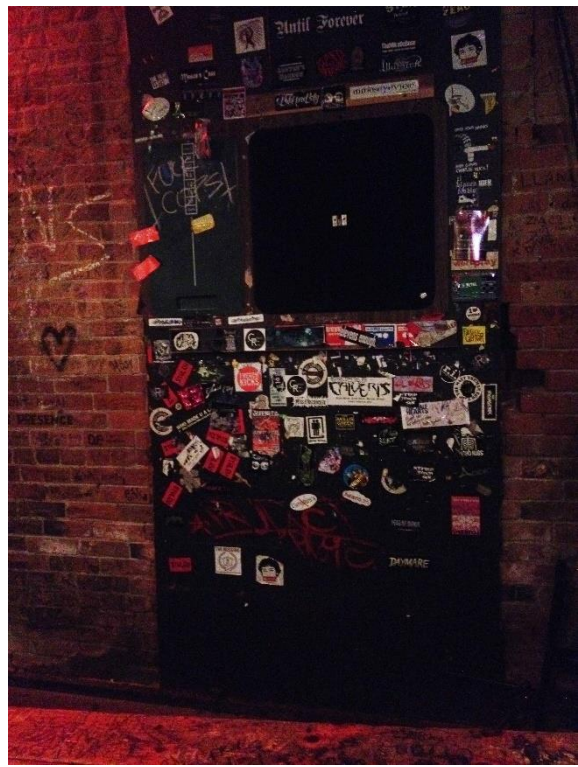


I want to recreate a dangerous space; an overused, rather dirty, and colorful basement area. A place where bands have come and gone—a place that can be taken up by anyone. The dangerous space is necessary because of the reclaiming aspect of riot grrrl. Punk concerts were dangerous for girls—there was a violent atmosphere that was encouraged for a masculine audience that forced women to stand in the back holding their boyfriend’s coats. The possibility of physical and sexual assault were high; it was not a safe space for

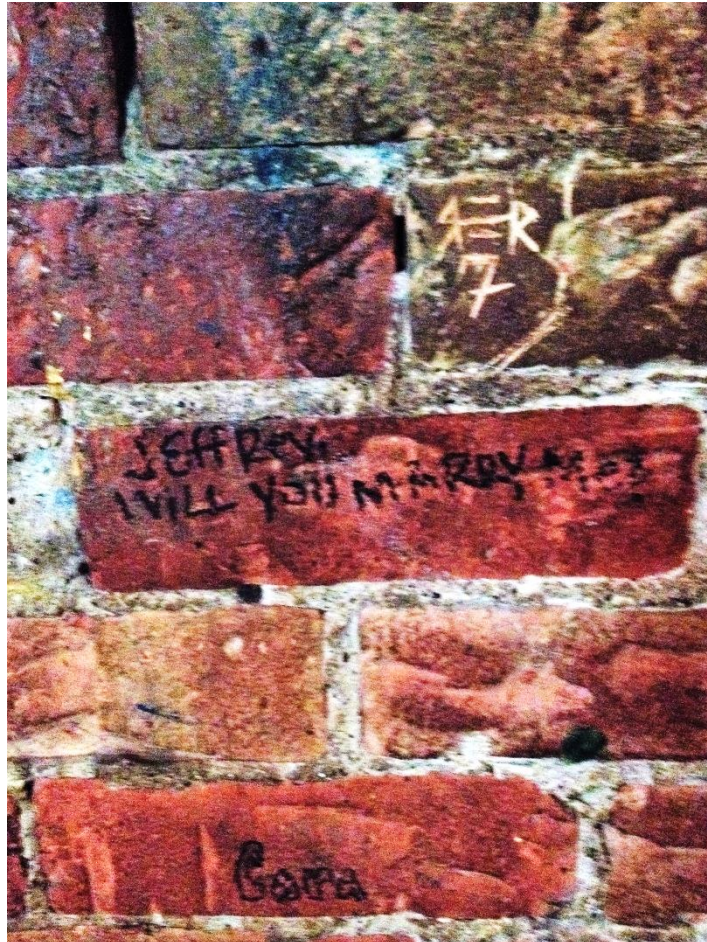
women even though women had as much of a right to be there enjoying the music as the men. This was seen primarily in mosh pits: “men tend to dominate the pit and engage in homosocial strategies of moshing and stagediving that effectively marginalize the full participation of women through fear of physical and/ or sexual assault” (Krenske and McKay; Roman as cited in Downes 219). When female bands would play, a lot of girls would have to hold back their interest and excitement among the presence of men. It was ridiculed and “uncool” and served a possibility of more backlash against girls. These underground, dark-lit “dangerous” spaces were unfit for women. As an act of reclaiming, I will recreate this space and have no men physically on the stage, or in picture format. The only human that will obtain the space is a single woman, which socially is “asking for trouble.” It will be a visual sense of empowerment for women to take over these spaces that would have originally kicked them out.

Personally, I have had similar experiences at Howard’s Club H in Bowling Green, Ohio. Because of this connection, I had visited the bar during hours when it was empty so I could take photos for inspiration for the set.

The following are pictures I had taken at Howard's Club H in Bowling Green, Ohio, December 2015:



I am paying special attention to the colors used, the haphazard conglomeration of stickers and how worn they are. Each sticker is from a band that had played in the space previously.



Despite the dark and dirty atmosphere, I found this photo to be important. It seems to be a scrap of romanticism in an atmosphere of dirt. I think this plainly shows the emotional freeness of dangerous spaces. Love and relationships are highlighted, perhaps recreated, and imagined. These small romantic scribbles exemplify the vulnerability people can have in these darker places, and the need for emotional connection.

Lighting:

To continue the punk concert feel of the production, I want lighting instruments that are behind the stage that shine into the audience—“blindners.” They will be utilized during portions of the production where there is music. This is a selfish request. To fit my idea of what a concert is, audience blinders is what comes to mind for me personally. Larger, mainstream concerts I have been to in the past have had this type of lighting. Since I will be pulling material from my own life, I feel comfortable extracting this selfish idea in my performance.

Other portions of the play will be lit traditionally from the grid. Specific colors and other effects regarding lighting will come naturally as the scenes develop, but I will state that any colors used to create a mood will be done with solid colors with no lighter or darker fades of that pure color. I can imagine red, blue, and yellow to stand out the most. They are primary colors that are the foundation for all other shades and combinations. A lot of what makes up riot grrrl is the idea of starting from scratch: the DIY ethic allows to take the plainest object, or the simplest idea and explode it into a large statement or meaning for protest.

To continue the “dangerous” atmosphere idea, I have this photo from Howard’s Club H that displays a stark glowing red “Budwiser” light:



This photo provides more of an idea of atmosphere than a literal representation of what I want on stage. This harsh red will be essential.

Most of the concerts described in the British tour of Huggy Bear and Bikini Kill were “pretty nakedly presented” and did not have too much of a flashy performance space (Downes 221). Although, because I may venture into ephemeral or metaphorical spaces or concepts, I will pull away from that literal representation yet not diverge too much from the atmosphere.

Costume:

Costumes will be better determined after visiting the Fales Library, because my current resources as to “riot grrrl fashion” via the internet provide a mix of “authentic” clothing that the punk rockers of riot grrrl wore, as well as a commercialized version from a mass clothing industry. Theoretically, there should not be a designated or specific style of what riot grrrl is; although the clothes that tend to gain the most political attention are ones with words or

phrases on them. These were all done by the performers/ activists themselves; therefore, I will create my own clothing. Anything I wear in the show will be clothes that I already own, or if anything is recently bought, it will be recreated with my own stylistic touch. I am not proficient in remaking clothes, however, there are many DIY step-by-step instructions online that I will utilize. Having complete control of my look will be a representation of how one personally relates to the issues riot grrrls fight for is key.

Makeup:

Make-up does not serve a heavily weighted purpose in this production; that is, there is no research that I have done on riot grrrl where make up felt like the best way to push an idea or concept thus far. I will state, however, that this category will also fall under props because the application and taking-off of makeup will be done in front of the audience. It is a very “feminine” object that means something to me personally—regarding the way I personally feel empowered with or without makeup. It is also a way of drawing on oneself, in a sense. I foresee a stage image where putting on eyeliner will shift into drawing literal words on the skin (slut, bitch, cunt, etc.). This one was of the techniques riot grrrls used to reclaim language and other visual stigmas that were originally used to detriment women or femininity, because “the body becomes the explicit site of complexity” (Attwood 236). An image of a female body is already so

loaded; when text is added upon it, it further defines the intricate semiotics at work on a very attainable, and very clear surface.

Sound:

The performance will be filled with music. Bands that will without a doubt make an appearance include Bikini Kill, Le Tigre, Bratmobile, Babes in Toyland, L7 and Skating Polly. In opposition to their music, I will also include bands like Nirvana and Hole. Other music will be done by my own instrumentation of a violin, bass guitar, and ukulele. The bass guitar will require an amp, but the violin and ukulele will rely on their own acoustic sound. I will also use a microphone for both singing and any other performative speech (spoken word). Other than the music, no other prominent sound cues will be used in the performance.

Props:

Props that I have decided that I need thus far either serve a specific scene that I have in mind, or they are simply apart of a nebulous idea that will be implemented in a more concrete way later. Properties that I have previously discussed in other technical elements include clothes (costumes), instruments (sound), and makeup. Beyond these props, I will use a dry erase board and markers specifically for a teaching segment in the show—a sort of “feminism for dummies” display. It is also useful for a large scale representation of drawing

something in front of an audience, as zinesters would illustrate for their printed issues. A simple clothes basket will suffice for holding the clothes onstage, and plastic drawers for the make-up.

A realistic looking gun would be ideal for a scene I have in mind. I wish to talk about the controversial issue of trigger warnings, and having a legitimate trigger displayed in its most violent way on stage would complete the image and the metaphor. However, a gun that is plastic perhaps would suffice. Admittedly, I wish to instill a great deal of fear/ uncomfortableness in the audience for this scene. A real gun would be preferable for this affect.

Special Effects:

I have no desire for any other effects in the performance, other than possibly a fog machine. I think it would certainly amp up the idea of a rock concert as a performance, and would be a fun and interesting element to play around with.

Script:

Script development will be a series of self-workshopping. There will be times where I will be sitting quietly in a corner writing as a typical playwright would, and other times where I will be video-taping or audio recording sessions of myself experimenting different sounds and movements. Thus far, I have a few scenes in mind. First, there will be an introduction to the music. Most people

involved in riot grrrl were first drawn to the music, so that is exactly how I will draw in my audience as well. Following that, there will be scenes depicted a young girl's aspirations to change the world from her bedroom—but not exactly knowing how. There will be a scene talking about the basics of feminism, and where the riot grrrl movement falls under that spectrum. There will be a history of riot grrrl, and an overview of their ambitions, goals, but most of all, mistakes. At some point there will be a scene addressing these mistakes and ways to remedy them for future riot grrrls. There will be a scene recreating clothing and taking off and putting on makeup. Naturally, there will be scenes of music—both of my own and covers of other riot grrrl songs. And, an issue that I wish to personally address using this medium of revolution, is the idea of the victim and trigger warnings. These are basic ideas of scenes, and more are certainly to come. All will be devised by myself—written in solitude, physically worked within a performance space, and shared among a select few for feedback.

The content will represent the research I have done concerning riot grrrl using their aesthetic and technique—the best form that will nicely frame the content will be using a Brechtian Episodic approach. Bertolt Brecht's theory for theatre attracts me the most because its need to distance the audience in order for them to think critically about the information that is being presented to them. “The idea is to get the audience to think, to reflect, as well as to feel; to judge the characters and the action of the play rather than to sit on the edge of their chairs with excitement” (Martin 29). I intend to represent this theory using short 2-5

minute scenes. Each scene will hold the purpose of the performance without a strict through story line. There will be no deep and intensified suspense/ climax that the audience will get lost into, as that would distract the audience from the message (Martin 30). The trick to not being too discursive with my play would be to choose a large scope theme, and compress it dramatically (Martin 32).

This theory works well in the universe I am creating because of the parallels it would have with a punk rock concert. Punk songs are often short, about 2-5 minutes. They each have their own story, or experience, and sound that is still supportive of the overall message of their band or image. I will do the same thing with short theatrical scenes (some including songs), instead of punk song after punk song. Furthermore, I want each scene to be taken in as someone would take in a page of a zine. Short and to the point—but still well within the agenda of the person who had put the zine together.

Chapter 3. Reflection.

After an excruciating devised process, I managed to formulate a script and production of the awaited one-woman performance, formally named: *This is not a play//this is a GRRRL REVOLUTION!* With four nightly performances on the first week of February, I can truly call the show a success with positive reception and fulfillment of my applied research. Visiting the Fales Library in New York City at the Riot Grrrl Special Collections enhanced my project greatly; I will dictate those experiences I had. Then, discuss the changes I made from my original concept, to what became of my solo performance. And finally, I will analyze critical moments in my script and speak of the reflections of the performance.

Many elements that deviated from my original concept were the result of visiting the Fales Library, where I pulled several zines, fliers, and videos that came out of the era of Riot Grrrl. To stay within a single universe out of the several people and bands I could have followed, I stuck mainly with Kathleen Hanna and her band Bikini Kill. Her zines, music, and interviews provided the best influence to the final project of my show.

Visiting the Fales Library & Special Collections, New York University

Beyond the exciting experience of holding the zines and fliers that were pasted together by the hands of these girls and women, there were many things I learned by just being in the presence of these documents. I felt intimate with this work. I felt included. I felt as though I was stepping into the writer's world—and

that atmosphere needed to be present in my play. This was an idea I was aware of before attending the library, but holding the zines in my hands made me realize why.

Kathleen Hanna's zine "My Life With Evan Dando Popstar" impacted me the most. She wrote within a grotesque fantasy of being in love with Evan Dando, a rock star front man of The Lemonheads. He was a target; his lifestyle and attitude represented the issues that Kathleen felt towards many aspects of the patriarchy. She discussed her surreal fascination and disgust with this figure—within a paragraph of text confessing why she fell in love, thus was also included: "I fell in love with Evan because I wanted him to die and thought if I could get him to love me I would show him what a broken heart really was" (Hanna: My Life). It was inspiring to be in the presence of such darkness; a darkness that no girl would ever admit to have inside of them. Cryptically, on a page that sarcastically praises Dando, Hanna pastes "I must/ kill you" on the page, hidden and fragmented (Hanna: My Life). There was no holding back her raw emotion toward this figure—the hate and the passion. She owned her contradictions without a trace of an apologetic attitude.

The vulnerability and courage it took to create such a loaded zine was terrifying to me. And personally, I feared a scene or production pulled in this dark direction would alienate my audience too far. This zine was an example that should only be held in the hands of someone who has either experienced similar pain or thoughts, and not to those who might be the target. I know

aggregating change is essential—but I do not want to instill anger within my varied audience. However, my fear of being labeled the “angry” feminist certainly inhibited my potential.

Bikini Kill’s second zine issue included two images that I wrote in my notes as opposites of the spectrum of directions I could go with my production. The first was a drawing of a naked woman in a box tied to restraints with robotic arms and whips about to engage with her; the text surrounded the photo read, “I THINK WOMEN ARE PARANOID” and along the perimeter of the page were smaller photographs of several women in restraints in pornographic settings, one including a police officer (Hanna: Zine #2). The second drawing was of two women dressed as superheroes, one brushing the other’s hair; the text that surrounded them was “STOP the J word jealousy from killing girl LOVE / encourage IN the face of insecurity” (Hanna: Zine #2). Both are drawn in similar fashion, both with a very distinct message. They are using the same technique and aesthetic yet have a unique angle. The former is critical, and the latter is empowering. Both I believe are essential to riot grrrl, but my mind vacillated constantly of what would be best supported on stage with a live audience. The result was a sly combination of the two ideas.

Another impactful experience I had at the Fales Library that greatly influenced my performance was a videotape recorded by Lucy Thane. After Bikini Kill performed at Bull & Gate in Kentish Town, London on April 3rd, 1993, Thane recorded a conversation of different women in their late teens, early 20s

discussion the performance and what it means to be a riot grrrl/ feminist. Their main discussion centered on make-up. One woman in the bathroom said “if you wear make-up, then you’re not a feminist” which erupted into a huge discussion (mostly because many of the women were in the bathroom to not only use the toilet, but to also check and reapply their make-up) (Thane: Bull and Gate). The counter made by several other women was the fact that they enjoyed wearing make-up, and they do it for themselves and not for other men—to which the first women would challenge them and make them think about the first time they tried it, or if they really did only do it for themselves (Thane: Bull and Gate). The discussion was heated and passionate between all the women that were participating, and watching it unfold was very stimulating. Everyone had wonderful critiques about standards of women, choices, identity, and what it means to be a woman and a feminist. However, what really stung was the frustration that showed on these women’s faces when they felt like their opinion was not being taken seriously, or the incredulous doubt that they had in anyone else. This was a light example of “girl-on-girl” hate, and a strange entitlement to one’s personal belief of “woman-ness” without giving anyone else the same respect.

After mulling over what I had seen, I recognized myself in those conversations. My personal relationship with make-up and why I wear it exists as an internal struggle in my head—because my first interaction with it simply was to fit in as a girl in society, even though I did not personally like it. Now I

recognize I was conditioned into wearing it, and I do feel a sense of empowerment when I wear it (even though it is just for me and no one else). In junior high, I quickly transitioned from the girl who would call girls wearing excessive eye make-up “raccoons” to wearing it every day in high school because someone told me I looked pretty with it. Am I less of a feminist for being aware of my past? Should it matter?

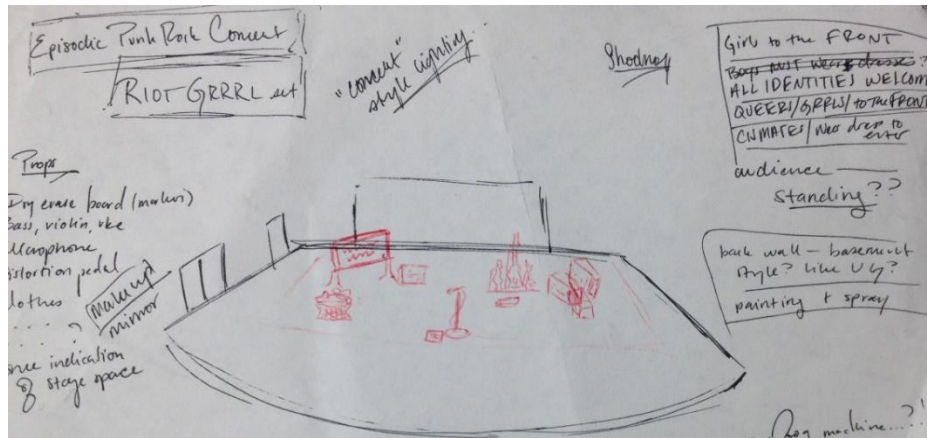
Additionally, I learned something extremely important that made me change a large aspect of my writing—instead of characters, I wanted to emphasize attitudes. Each “character” for each scene is not a character at all—it does not exemplify a real person nor is it supposed to be a three dimensional person represented upon the stage. Instead, I wanted to pull various attitudes from myself—which in turn are attitudes found within all people—and personify it.

Although it took four drafts to get there, female empowerment with an underlining story of girl vs. girl filled the heart of my performance.

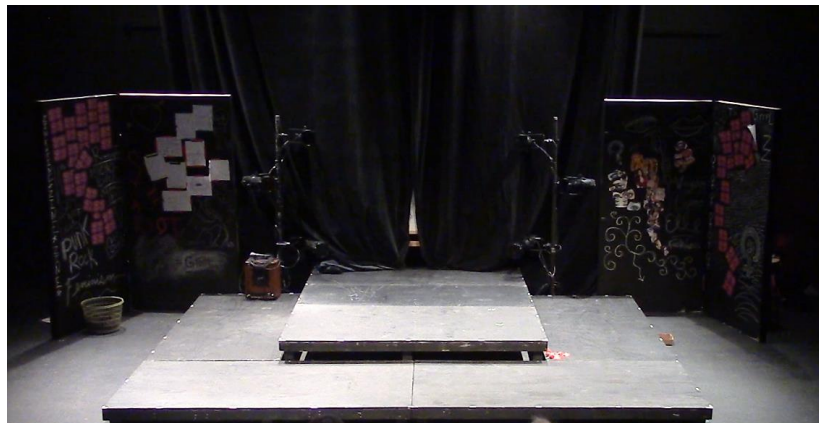
Major changes from original concept to production.

I made several changes along the way, but the first one to note is the space. As I wrote more, I realized I needed more space to work with. I also had more opportunity for space and lighting because we had decided to perform in Shoolroy black-box. The small space I had drawn before represented more of an “open-mic” than a punk concert, anyway. It was a mistake in trying to limit

myself and cutting off greater stage imagery. Therefore, in the middle of writing my first draft, I had drawn this:



The decision for my audience to stand during my performance was still in effect, I admit, stubbornly. I had kept referring to it as a challenge to make sure that my audience would not *want* to sit down; that my performance would be engaging enough that it would feel like there would be no time to sit down. However, I had to face the fact that I was still in a theatre space and I was preceded by performances where the audience would be sitting, regardless. I sacrificed this idea which led me to making better theatrical choices in my final drafts. The space in its final form is as follows:



Originally when I had asked for flats, I had no intention of using them other than to hide props or other means of exits and entrances. However, in the new edits of my script, I had left out specific mention of zines. I was confident in my decision to not mention zines specifically, however, their contribution to my production was so great that not having some sort of presence of them on stage was almost emptying. Therefore, while still considering the pictures that I took in Howard's Club H that December, I made a tribute to the style of zines.

Stage right panels:



Stage left panels:



In some ways I find these creations to be successful, and a failure in others. The first panel I completed was the second stage left panel. On it is a piece of the Riot Grrrl Manifesto which is posted online, referred to in all if not most riot grrrl coverage, and was originally written in Bikini Kill's second published zine. When doing preliminary research on my topic, the Manifesto was one of the first things I encountered; it serves to be the backbone as to *why* the movement exists. It needed a place in my show.

The pink fliers taped to the panel are small versions of my poster. This was a last minute decision in response to a last minute addition to the final scene of my production. I decided to bring the production full circle by saying this

show was, in many ways, for her. The flier is a picture of my younger sister at the age of four, wearing tap shoes and a leotard. She stares into the camera with an expression of pure sass. Because it is so important to me, and referenced at the end, I wanted the poster present for the entire production.

To frame the space, I added more of the posters on the stage right first panel. This was a simple way of enclosing the universe I created. Additionally however, I named a few zines that had “sexy” titles that fit well within the material I was presenting such as “Psycho-Bitch,” “Riottemptress,” “Out Damn Spot,” and “Clit-core.” Even though they were not specifically referenced in the show, their presence fueled mine.

The two onstage panels on each side of the stage were more specific to the production. The inner stage right panel is representative of the GRRRL’s room, which could very well be a wall from my room growing up. The papers on the panel have little sketches and drawings that I had done over break while devising, a little poetry, and some personal thoughts. I have a personal fascination of dragons and I served a small tribute to my late childhood dog Shadow by drawing him in the corner. “STARRIOT” was a fake band name I imagined myself having if I started a riot-grrrl style band. All of these things are very personal to me—and to stay true to telling a genuine, personal story, I wanted a small slice of my room to accompany my GRRRL character in “her” room.

Finally, the inner panel on the stage left side served as a metaphoric panel of representations of women in mainstream media. Accompanied by words of popular fashion magazines, I took front cover pictures of the actresses and models and cut them out and pasted them together. The drawing next to them represents how prepubescent girls, who have yet to grow into their bodies and faces, take in these images as what they are supposed to be. The scene with the white mask represents this struggle.

My preliminary thoughts on costume were more or less correct. My attempt at looking for patterns among the different riot grrrls, I discovered there was no consistency in style. Kathleen Hanna and other performers perhaps had the most commercially punk styled clothes, but other than that there were no overarching patterns that tore away from typical 90s style. The clothes I wore for my production were pretty typical to what I would wear in real life. Jeans and a tank top. I had played with idea of having my different characters have small changes in costume, but it became too muddled and complicated. To keep the effect of the short Brechtian episodic structure, I could not sacrifice time. There were two select moments of costume change—Shia and transition into the punk concert.

Conceptually, sound went through the biggest transition. My intention of having mostly live sounds did not hold true. I had discovered that sound cues were the quickest way to signal the audience of a change of pace or character.

And naturally, due to time, I had limited myself to only singing and playing one instrument—the ukulele.

The central idea behind the use of props held true—almost everything came from my closet. The gun did not make the final cut of the script because my idea for it originally was forced. There was no avenue that I had discovered that could showcase a real looking gun to make a pun about trigger warnings, without making a dark social commentary that would pull away from the point of my production. Stripping this detail was freeing—it was a selfish thought that had no place in this particular project.

Performance reflection.

The final script is comprised of ten vignettes with five different character/ attitudes. Each vignettes carries one purpose with the overall encompassing notion of “grrrl empowerment.” Contradictions arise with cultural commentary on women in society, taboos in terminology, and girl vs. girl hate. The production had been written and performed with the technique and aesthetic of the Riot Grrrl Revolution after a month-long devising process.

One of the first things I drew in my devising journal was a triple Venn diagram with the three titles, “means something to ME (truth),” “totally RIOT GRRRL! (history),” and “actually sounds kinda good (theatre).”

I do not think I had referred to anything more often early in my devising process. I had originally drawn it to decided what songs I wanted to sing in the

performance (at the time it was going to start the show), and because of Riot Grrrl being so centralized around music I knew it needed to be perfect. I wrote a list of “riot grrrl” bands, including those that were not central to the 90s movement and perhaps came along later: Bikini Kill, Bratmobile, L7, Sleater Kinny, Heavens to Betsy, Skating Polly, Babes in Toyland, Huggy Bear and Le Tigre. I also listed a number of bands and artists that I grew up with and admire: Paramore, Fall Out Boy, Wolfmother, Tove Lo, Regina Spektor, Metric, Amy Winehouse, Sia, and The Kills... there was hardly any overlap. Of course, I felt more drawn to choose a song that I simply sound the best in order to please my audience, and many of those bands are from the second list. It was easy to ignore the riot grrrl bands that inspired my research and find a clever way of justifying any song I just happen to love to sing. I refused to decide on a song for a long time: I needed a solid point/ message of my play before I picked the perfect song to introduce to the audience.

“Black Sheep” by Metric ended up in the final cut because it fit the attitude of the character singing, foreshadowed her actions to follow, and felt like an “opener” for a set. Most people know this song for being the show-stopper, jaw dropping number performed by Envy Adams (played by Brie Larson) in *Scott Pilgrim Vs. The World*. Envy is the lead singer of “The Clash at Demonhead” which gained a lot of fame and popularity in the Scott Pilgrim universe. Envy and Scott used to date, but in the comics/ film she is posed as *the* ex-girlfriend after changing herself to gain attention and sex appeal. She is an instigator of

drama and past regret without much closure for their relationship. This film came out in 2010—about six years ago, yet nostalgic enough to have the feeling of “throw-back” in my generation. Just as “Black Sheep” introduced the negative-sexy energy of Envy, I wanted an underlining danger/ wonderment that my GRRRL character is built to become.

It was also a way of deceiving the audience—which was entirely purposeful. To say that there are “No tricks, no gimmicks” in the show to follow is a straight up lie since “Black Sheep” is hardly of the Riot Grrrl genre whatsoever. The casual lies are to set up the unapologetic nature of the performance. The fourth wall has already been totally obliterated and the beginning monologue was delivered with edgy-friendliness—or in other words, the anti-hero. This choice was done naturally by my own writing voice. I personally have a tendency to have the “I-don’t-give-a-fuck” tone of voice to my casual writing, therefore this side of me that I decided to share with the audience was an excellent way of easing them into the performance. Because of its structure, I needed to make friends quick. I knew laughter was my way in, and in particular with my Wooster audience, self-deprecating humor was even more effective when discussing our theatre’s stigmas.

I was fearful that the introduction monologue was too long, but I found that as long as I had high energy, the audience would not tune out. After I instigate their greetings in the beginning, they become aware that their participation is not only appreciated, but would help the play move along

considerably. In that respect, they were given a responsibility as an audience member which forced their engagement further. This was not something I had thought about or intended when originally writing the script. I did not realize how much power I could gain in a performance until I had the entire audience slapping their thighs not even a second after I announced I need a drum-roll.

This was a success. Very early on, I was able to create a community in the room. Each night varied in how quick the audience came together and how hard they grasped onto the performance, but I never failed to bring them together. I can confidently say this in reference to scene three—at no point in my rehearsal process did I expect this audience reaction. To my surprise, the audience felt compelled to sing the echoed line in “Do Re Mi” from *The Sound of Music*. In the character, I looked at the audience as if I was expecting them to sing, but it was a shock to actually hear them do it. Knowing now that I had more control than I had anticipated, I failed the opportunity to include more interactive moments. As I pulled my play away from having a standing audience and pushed them back into a traditional seating position, I lost my drive to be more playful to the audience.

There were many attitudes displayed in the show—the actress has the chip-on-your-shoulder edge, the GRRRL provides an innocent spunk, and Shia with her overabundance of care for the world. Each of these three main personas are all apart of myself, and had surfaced after personal journaling. An example of this is shown in my devising journal, but also in previous drafts of my play.

However, as I continued to imagine these rants being performed on stage, I came to see that it was preachy and screaming insecurity. The final result of Shia is backwardly representative of this idea. Although I managed to still write with the fury of a non-apologetic “angry grrrl” I had again and again apologized for my race and lack of knowledge in these first few drafts. I kept limiting myself and censoring myself to certain things that I could and could not say that I would end up looking at the draft and see that I had made zero change. It was an oversensitive attempt at being an activist—it was something I had to get out of my system. Shia’s introduction in scene seven embellishes the problems of trigger-warnings, and how it can halt a conversation before it has begun—one way that I was limiting myself. And in my personal experience, the use of trigger warnings have been so exploited that they are now working against those who believe are doing good. Riot grrrl did not have time for apologies.

Furthermore, I found it unnecessary to mention the words “riot grrrl” or any clear mention of the Riot Grrrl Revolution. I did not include Kathleen Hanna’s name, her band, or other female punk rockers and activists. I did not mention feminism. I regret feeling like I erased the potential to plainly share the history, but it felt like overkill. To take a notion like girl empowerment and give it a name that people will automatically commercialize will hurt more than it will help. My mission was to make the issues as present as possible, and as relatable as possible. The semiotics of the rewriting of “grrrl” on the dry erase board at the beginning of the show was more than enough to represent the harsh attitude

with a “feminine” word such as girl. However, I am extremely curious to know if there was a lasting impact on the audience. Due to my own insecurity, I avoided most people after the show. Although, those who I did have the privilege to speak to (mostly young women) had said they had felt energized—*empowered*. That is a strong success I was relieved to discover.

Now, I wish to highlight the mother character because it was one of the most complicated aspects in devising my production. This is a prime example of myself wanting to include an element in the play because it resonated with me personally, versus the consideration of audience perception. The mom voice over in the performance grew out of my own complex relationship with my mother, yet in the final script, it served more as a comedic happenstance. Originally, the mother yelling at her daughter to turn down the loud music was to be mirrored again at the end of the show after the girl had gone through a sexual assault experience. Therefore, I would have the juxtaposition of the girl playfully jumping around to music against the image of the same girl needing it for catharsis. The decision to remove the situation of the assault at the end of the play was made very close to the opening of the performance. These events that I wanted to portray on stage were close to me—perhaps too close for the nature of my performance. While a conversation of sexual assault/ rape may have been well received by the audience, it was problematic that the scene was placed at end. If I had ended the play as such with a preach-oriented bow of how important girl-power is, the audience would have left thinking that that was the

endgame to be avoided. There would not be a conversation on the deception the GRRRL had experienced from Nick. It would be Nick the Rapist and GRRRL the Victim. Coming to terms with this fact was not easy, but was a battle won in the end.

The open letter to my little sister was a last minute addition—and yet, the most genuine and truthful scene in the production. Originally, I wanted to be an open letter to my mother—again, wanting that cathartic moment for myself to come to terms with our complex relationship. But it was wrong, because the show was not for her. For it to be a successful production, it had to be for someone it would benefit the most: Iris, my little sister. And as I had stated in the letter, she is the “girliest girl ever” and I always secretly held it against her. It was my own version of girl vs. girl hate that ruins any positive movement in feminism. It may not be the most earth shattering, dramatic story told in the theatre. But it is mine, and done in the riot grrrl way.

Conclusion.

“Not every girl is a Riot Grrrl,” Kathleen Hanna said. “Not everyone has to be into it. They can hate it, and hate it so much that they create something else that’s great” (Brodeur).

I always admired Kathleen Hanna for encouraging critique. Now that she is older and can look back at Riot Grrrl with a more mature eye, I believe she is aware that it is not perfect. However, that should not discredit the importance it had to her and many other women at the time. What I love about Riot Grrrl is also something that made it difficult to research—it is personal and incredibly accessible. The variety of art and point of views can create contradictions within the movement, and therefore everyone has their own idea of what it means to be a riot grrrl. Additionally, the discussions of whether it is good to be a riot grrrl are not are just as important. If we continue to challenge each other, then the greatest avenue of change can emerge. We just have to find a way to continuously support our various ideas.

And although my research did not focus on it, it is important to note that out of the Riot Grrrl Revolution there was more than just zines and music. Support groups and activist rallies were included in the movement. It was a way of binding a community together physically than just through the networking of

zines. This is a backbone of riot grrrl that I did not focus on, but should not be ignored in a general discussion of the movement.

My performance should only be seen as an installment. I hope to take this solo work, and bring it to a community. I wish to network with other performance artists and present my one-woman show as perhaps a template of devising a solo work. I will share my method and work with others to help them devise their own shows as well. And someday, I hope girls and young woman will find this style of art accessible to them. I foresee the possibility of multiple performances in an evening that are all encompassing to girl empowerment, or other uplifting themes that Riot Grrrl has provided us.

One can research as much as they want into a theory or movement, but still may never really *get* it. And even though I became fascinated and extremely passionate about all things riot grrrl, I did not get the essence of it until I thought my feminist drive was stolen away from me from very personal events. And now, as I see the pain scribbled on these zines and screamed out in the riot grrrl punk music, I realize that their pain is not unlike mine—and I have the ability to move forward and overcome everyone and everything that has been tearing me down since day one due to my sex as female and gender as girl.

All girls should know they have the same power. And we can continue the RIOT GRRRL REVOLUTION!

a girl comes home from school...
in tears \approx "Sum? Can you turn
that music down?"
Your little sister's trying to
go to bed —

(Full) Yeah, ok.

put on head phone.

hypnotizing aggressively.

us/this
feels

\approx three bands ??? ? is it poss.

materialist liberal cultural
XXXXXX XXXXX XXXXX

(entering the bedroom) * same girl

walks in - plays uke.

- writes.
- puts on diff. clothes
- gives.

me - writes / creates

give \leftarrow girl's heart.

giving conversations
talking out loud

alternate egos • narrator (???)
• the girl

not of nigger warnings

H - before I go into this next song -
I just have a few things to
say —

the last time I put out a song
~~got a better~~ someone posted on
my fb status that I didn't put
out a warning that there would
be some content that might offend
or ~~was~~ so, here we go.
(pulls out sticky note)

nigger warning for ~~the~~
sexual content, +

the key of E major that might
switch to C minor by ~~the~~ the
since it's hard for uke to stay
in tune, poss. interpretation of making
a sound a boy made with his
shoes when he said you looked
fat about seven years ago
the word triggers
and the word warning
as well as the words
"well" "the" "and" "words" and "word"

uh yeah (I love that band)

name calling

word music can still happen!!!

the band "at/low/nomadic"

notation of trigger

~~notation~~

this performance may contain

and may result in

if ~~that~~ ~~that~~ ~~the~~

you experience any of these symptoms

please leave the performance immediately

and rant about it on FB or yell

at anyone.

my mind is bigger than my body

intro song
notation
girl in room - simple | pop music (?)

geniusism = common sense

Hi everyone! That you so - much for coming! My home is Summit Star and so many of you know it can properly assume, I am a Theatre/Dance major and this performance is in part of my independent study.



~~know~~ So importantly here I think the fresher her some strange things. My friends' acquaintances and the like have this idea that was the theatre we do here is sad and abstract and comparable to a weird-as modern dance piece (no offence dancers), ~~but~~ ~~to~~ memorable!!! I argue well we do theatre that matters, theatre that truly mirrors the human condition without putting talent above content, or bells and whistles as the

on strong on pain and being told
 they are "not allowed to
 feel this pain or not just feel
 because someone is saying they
 are "too privileged" to feel
 pain - WTF kind of privilege
 is that.

LIKEWISE - people will
 say almost exactly what
 I just said, and then it
 go one step further
 "not understanding how much
 it is people like me that
 are pissing them off
 idiots."

You know I think with every
 feminist/social justice
 cause they should also
 teach statistics. Because there's
 a lot of shit + you can do
 with it.

Let me know my story
 with you →

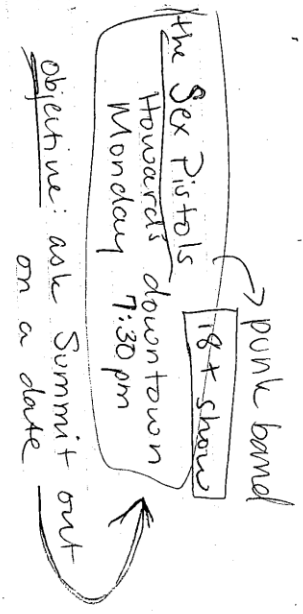
a girl ~~sk~~

① ~~D: "beginning instead."~~
 ② ~~Science] - more/strong~~
 land w/ a lot of
 more words / fun it down

there



C Hey hi - what's up - how are you?
 I Oh hi - *laughs* I'm ok, you?
 C Oh nothing - I mean ok too!
 I Yeah
 C Um he?
 I OK so what's up?
 C Look. I got tickets to see ~~and oh, I considered~~
 I ~~if you would want to go~~ -
~~that's seriously~~ Oh - make
 I (earrings) I'd love to
 C Really? ~~Oh cool~~ ~~aw phish!~~
 I Do you like ~~the~~ ~~music~~ ~~anyways~~?
 I ~~What~~ would I like to
 I what?
 C What? - no - the band?
 I Band?
 C The Sex Pistols - it's a band -
 I Oh right yeah that's
 I Oh not what I thought



Character info:
 age: 18 male "cool guy"

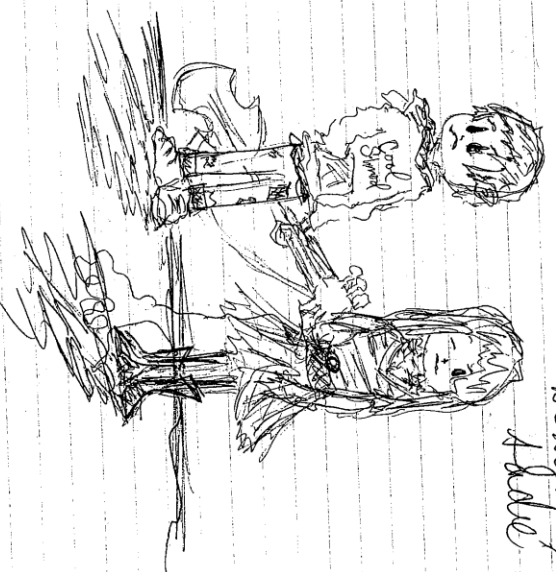
What you know about me:

age: not sure, younger
 female
~~you got my number~~
 I got from one of my
 friends who secretly
 told you I thought
 you were hot

any other character
 choice is up to
 your discretion.



Big social history
 "cool Schwarz" Foxxy
 "blue"

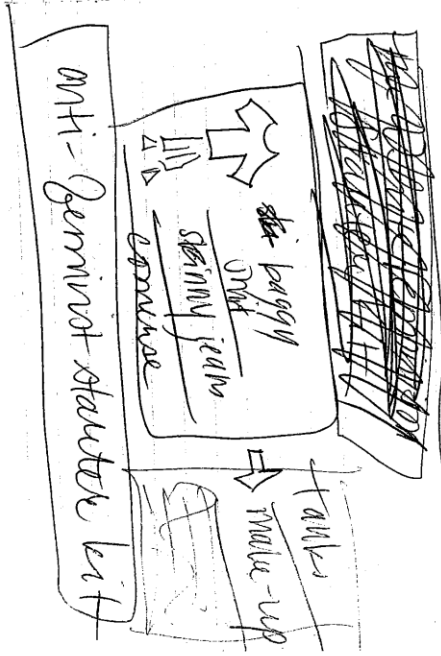


respect meters
 shock meters
 research



introduction

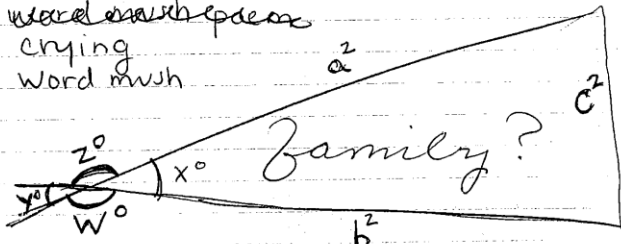
gumming the 4th wheel
 megamillions
 math girls



Song
introduction
girl in room / magazines
Feminism lecture
zine lecture
word mash

phone call
concert date
2 dresses coat hanger
"bitch"

~~washed~~
crying
word mash



email copeland funding

Hello-
my name is Summit Starr and I have
received copeland funding
to visit the Fales Library in NYC -
because I was ~~short~~ about
half of the amount I request,
I had to make some changes
regarding

transfer crying girl into
monologue - whying give
"does it matter?"
There's a girl crying in
her room alone and
there's no one to go to
not a boy - you're too emotional
not a father -
not a mother - learn to keep it in
does it matter?
A girl is still crying"

my mom and dad
I used to compare them
to my friends a lot - a lot
and like most teenage girls,
I loathed my mother -
I know know it was being
we were too similar -
and when friends would
ask me about my parents
I would say something
like -
they're totally different.
to put in perspective -
yknow yokes are
Mom loves her
Dad loves her

:D...
BUT GRR

Protogen gives is so fuckin
When is your dream
Prinids
they didn't get killed
they got killed for
my relationship
by my mom
girl on girl
hate us.

Bilini Kill open zone
a gang band
New Post
aestio Brown
March 15th 1981
Waters
argue more montage
"Rebel Girl"
is in

Happy up, we're gonna be late -
I'm working, Gull (shoulda said we
worn these shoes -

Can you picture believe that?
Why the fuck did she even
come back if she's not
gonna picture dance?
What kind of girl
are you if you don't
run with the boys?

"get the fuck off me
wus the hell do
you think you are
out of my way"
"Mike? Mike?!"

- Balls down -
- Fuck -

* applause *
peevy men - girl to the front
BK audio -

"(Liam) let's get out of here"

"What? What?"

"Reverse bitches work!"

"WTF are you doing up here?"

* You're gonna get picture killed -
* ~~fuck~~ get the fuck back
pound back

- Fuck you - I can handle myself
- no you can't

- yes I can

- are you a picture idiot?

- you're being such a stubborn
BITCH.

- Bitch?

- get back there

pulled back - light on coat hanger

look slowly at hanger

look slowly out

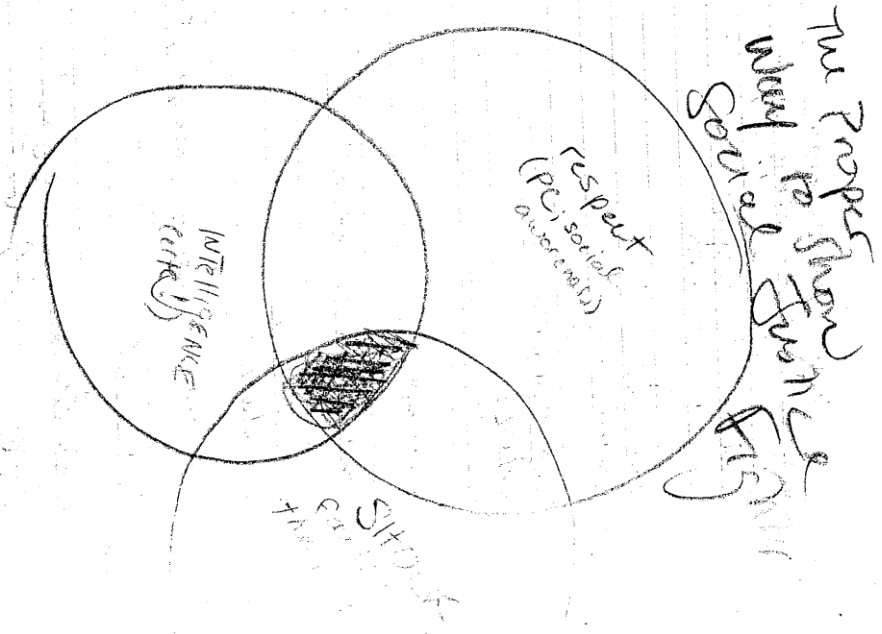
"Reverse girl! Rebel girl!
Rebel girl you and the!"
queen of my world.

on the way there I realized
I wasn't the only one
invited - you girl's buddies
and his girl's friends... she was doing
and the only one sober.

showing still will have is important because I like one of the ~~weakest~~ ^{weakest} aspects of geminism and strongest is that there are many diff. means and ways to achieve to geminism — liberal/mod. / practical which can be used and modified — and here I present PROSPER as another, perhaps more directed toward youth

Having a billion different means is great — but it can end if people don't know how to have a conversation to discuss those disagreements —

there really isn't an end all definition of geminism — and there shouldn't be. the world is changing — ideologies must be flexible as well.



5) KKKL REVOLUTION

~~Notes for production meeting~~
costumes

Scene One - narrator
JAFB pink tank top ✓
black jeans ✓
bty shoes ✓
high ponytail

Flower hat
simple black skirt

Two - punk Grrrl
black shirt tank sunglasses ✓
" "
hair down

Three - teacher
pointer (prop)
hair bun
top hat (prop)

Seven - Shira
Flower hat

Eight - grrrl
shirt
fishnets
heels
jacket

Four - soldier
nothing

Five - Grrrl
hair down

Nine - grrrl
white sheet

Six - narrator
pink JAFB shirt

Ten - narrator
pink tank
high pony

pre show
music

Prop

One - x

Two - microphone + stand

back pack

Three - painter's hat

Four - red confetti, red streamers

Five - hair pack, cell phone

compact mirror

make up bag / shoe box

"eyeliner", black marker, paint

"lipstick", purple marker, paint

"blush", red paint, powder

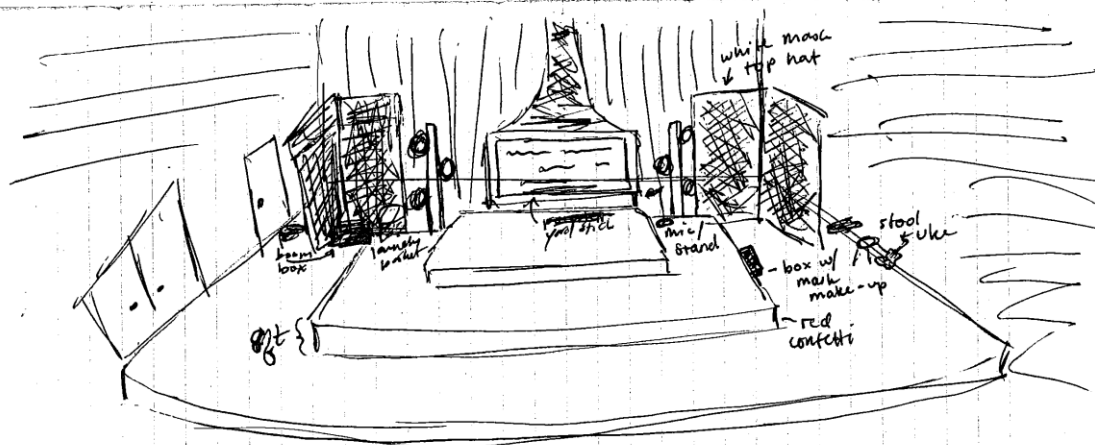
Six - x

Seven - steel mic + stand

Eight - clothes basket

Cost Manager

Nine - stereo



talk downhair

podlet
mirror
phone
blue marker

send you my
love on a wire
and tell you
up anytime...

~~Dear mom~~
I don't believe
that makes me
a strange person

Dear mom -
I'm sorry I was a
selfish bastard in high school
I'm sorry I told people
you were psycho

Thank you for raising
me better than I
could do and giving
me what
I wanted.
Thank you for being
on board when I
said I wanted to be
a music major and then

Thank you for
letting me be a
boy, a girl, a tiger,
a dinosaur, a mutant

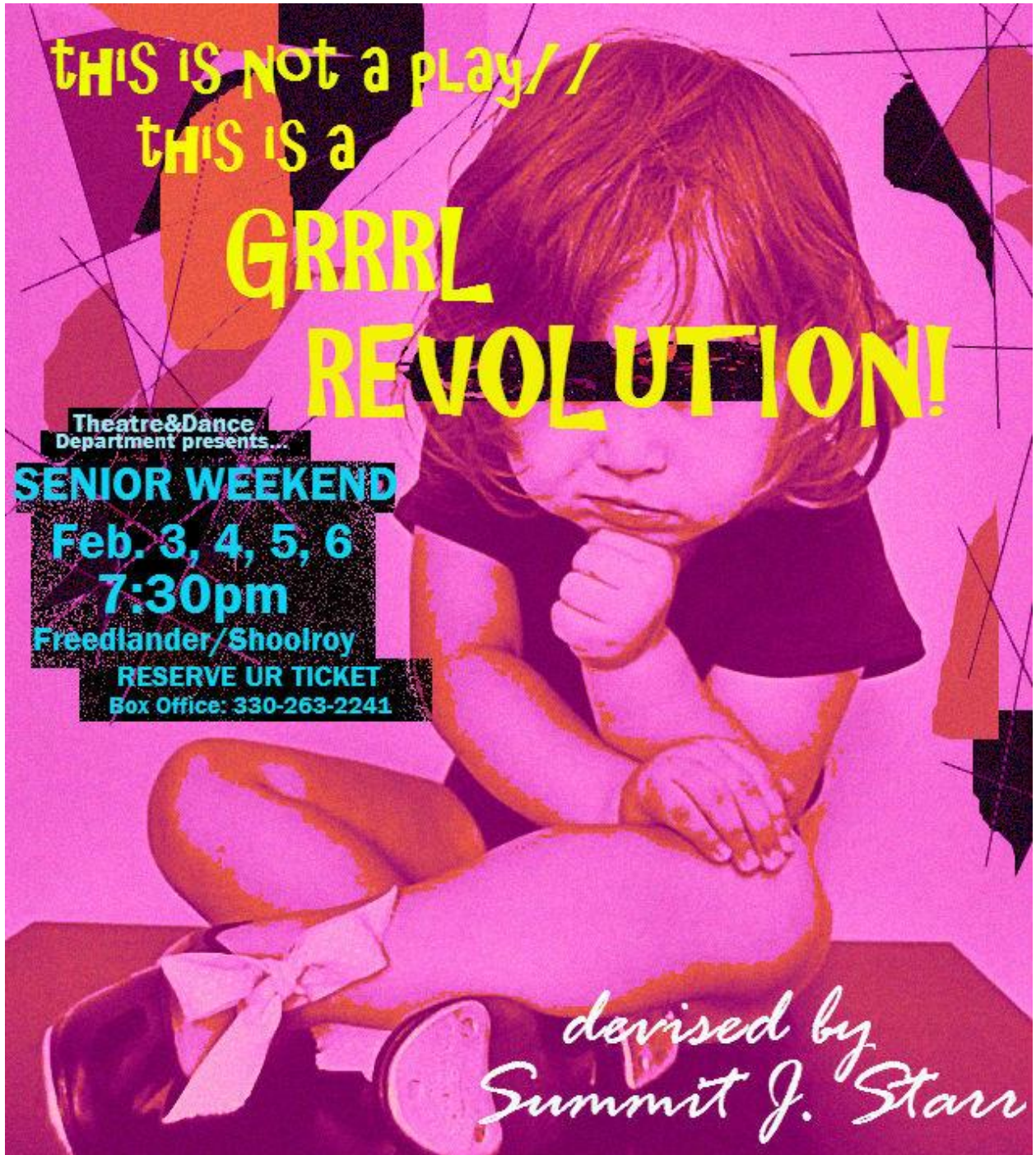
you for talking me to
my first audition
for the year for
letting me be ~~me~~
soccer player
and taking me to
cheerleader
camp and volleyball
camp and making
me a cheerleader
and
go to soccer
go to taking me to
P&G to feed my soul
and letting my dream
my mom was
P107 GPRP
be there I never
knew what it was

even though they won't
see this I show
it to my little
sisters and brothers

b/c they need to know
how fucking twisted
some of this shit is.

So maybe with your
mature ass minds
you can deconstruct
your attitude
and make some
kind of diff.

Production Poster:



THIS IS NOT a play/ / THIS IS a

grrrrL

revolution.

Devised by SUMMIT J. Starr

When audience is generally settled and has a moment to look through their programs, the ACTRESS enters from the audience entrance. She surveys the audience for a moment. Then, she travels on stage and takes another moment to look at the audience.

ONE

ACTRESS: Y'know, usually when I walk into a room with a bunch of people, at least *someone* says hello.

If someone greets, the ACTRESS will respond to them and then go on.

If no one greets, the line "Alright, I suppose I will go first—" will be added.

Hi, everyone. Thank you so much for coming—I couldn't have asked for a better audience. As many of you know, or can now probably assume, I am a theatre and dance major and this little performance is in part of my Independent Study—I know, I know, don't freak out, I'm on stage and I'm acknowledging you, I get it, it's weird. I mean, I can imagine, you thought I was gonna come up here and play a bunch of characters, and yes, while that is true for some of the performance, I just wanted to warm ya'll up for a minute, yeah? A genuine talkin' to, how does that sound? Now.

Casually walks into the audience.

I don't want you guys, for any reason whatsoever, to forget that all of this shit super attainable.

I am just like you. I walked into the door just like you. I was conceived by male sperm and popped out of a vagina, yes just like you, I'm afraid of spiders, death, public speaking, which are all very common fears that a lot of us fear, AND I'm still searching for my purpose in life—all that universal human crap that makes us all existential and shit and we're all one or whatever, but most importantly,

for this evening, for this half hour, I am a girl. And this show, is for girls. Or for anyone out there who gives a shit about girls. This is for us.

Crosses back to audience entrance, and indicates to it.

And frankly if you don't give shit about women, then yeah, go ahead and walk out that door because frankly then, I don't give a shit about you. And there's no way in hell you're going to enjoy this performance. So here's your chance. Get the fuck out. No?

Pauses. Then slams door closed.

Great, I'm so glad you all decided to stay.

Returns to the stage, continuing to address audience.

The theatre around has some strange-ass stigmas I wish to quickly address. If you go to college here or you're staff or faculty you'll know exactly what I'm talking about. I can't tell you how many times I've invited people to come see a show here in this space or in Freedlander and retort with "is it sad?" with that concerning look of i-don't-have-the-emotional-capacity-to-sit-through-two-and-a-half-hours-of-reality-can't-ya'll-just-do-a-musical-for-once-how-about-mame? To which I'll smile and giggle and be like, "heh-heh... yeahhh, it's sad." When really I'm thinking, "I'm sorry you don't have the intelligible reasoning to see a performance unless it makes you forget what we're trying to make you remember, reimagine, and react to the crumbling and beautiful world around you thanks for ridiculing my personal love for the theatre"...So this is what I'm going to do for you. No tricks. No gimmicks. Any staged metaphor I promise won't be some modern-abstract-grain-of-salt-representing-the-pit-of-despair-of-humanity—I swear. Pinky promise. Here I'll—

Approaches audience member in the front row.

Excuse me—Do you mind representing the audience here—is everyone here okay with that? Yes? Pinky promise? Okay! There! We have an agreement. Let's continue.

House lights go dark, typical theatrical stage lighting.

Now let me tell you why we're all here. Drum roll, please!

Seriously, can I get a drumroll?

If audience drumrolls, "Nah that's not good enough—" A CTRESS snaps for drumroll sound cue.

If audience does nothing, "No? That's okay, I brought a back-up sound cue."

ACTRESS snaps for drumroll sound cue.

The ACTRESS pulls back upstage curtain to reveal a dry erase board with the words GRRRL EMPOWERMENT written in bold.

Girl empowerment! That's why we're here. That's what I'm fucking talking about. It's about being yourself in the loudest, proudest, I-don't-give-a-fuck-about-your-cookie-cutter-image-of-what-women-are-supposed-to-be-attitude. In your face. Fuck you. Have a nice day. You're about to see scenes of a reflection, a true reflection, of our twisted reality us girls have to go through.

Karaoke track of "Black Sheep" by Metric begins to play. Lights begin to transition.

Little things that make us who we are.

Tools to revolt,

A movement—

A GRRRL REVOLUTION!

TWO

ACTRESS transforms into THE GRRRL—puts on sun glasses and brings out a microphone and amplifier.

THE GRRRL (sung, lyrics):

Hello again, friend of a friend

I knew you when

Our common goal was waiting for the world to end

Now that the truth is just a rule that you can bend

You crack the whip

Shape-shift and trick

The past again

I'll send you my love on a wire

Lift you up every time

Everyone, ooh

Pulls away, ooh

From y—

V.O. MOM: SUMMIT!

Sound fades out, THE GRRRL takes off her glasses.

GRRRL: ...yeah...

V.O. MOM: Stop jumping around, you're making the house shake!

GRRRL: ...k.

V.O. MOM: Let's go, you don't wanna be late to school!

THREE

The GRRRL groans and picks up her backpack and runs off stage.

Lights transition, and there are sounds of young children playing and laughing.

TEACHER enters, bubbly and sweet. She addresses the audience as her students.

TEACHER: Settle down boys and girls, settle down! Now class, we're at that age! Boys don't those girls excite you. And girls, don't you blush from those rascal little boys! Well here's a little lesson so we keep everything on the playground fair game. Now boys, girls are an anomaly. Sometimes it's just so hard to figure out what are in those little cute brains of theirs. So here's a little tool kit of words you can describe girls and women in an easy productive way, so you boys don't get confused! And girls—don't be so sad and alarmed if you get called one of these names

Sometimes it's a compliment. Sometimes, they're just right.

But you know what they say:

BOYS WILL BE BOYS.

The TEACHER sings a capella, a la "Do Re Mi" from the Sound of Music.

Let's start at the very beginning

A very good place to start

When we read we begin with

ABC

And when we systemize women through gender that often insults their sexual activity or lack thereof

We begin with

BITCH, CUNT, SLUT.

BITCH, CUNT, SLUT.

BITCH CUNT SLUT PRUDE WHORE PUSSY MILF—

She pauses.

TEACHER (spoken): Let's make this a little easier for you all.

The TEACHER travels upstage to reveal the dry erase board, which has BITCH, CUNT, SLUT, PRUDE, WHORE, PUSSY, MILF written in bold. She continues singing a capella, a la "Do Re Mi"

TEACHER (sung):

Bitch, a dog a female dog

Cunt, anatomy in vain

Slut, a girl who sleeps around

Prude, you won't get to second base!

Whore, got all the STDs

Pussy, a kitty who's afraid

MILF, a mom I'd like to fuck!

Which brings us back to—

The TEACHER suddenly has a top hat and cane, and continues singing in a flashy, vaudeville manner, she sings more frantically, losing control.

Bitch, a dog a female dog

Cunt, anatomy in vain

Slut, a girl who sleeps around

Prude, you won't get to second base!

Whore, got all the STDs

Pussy, a kitty who's afraid

MILF, a mom I'd like to fuck!

Which brings us back to—!

FOUR

Lights change abruptly, sounds of gun shots and other WWII—style sounds of war. The TEACHER transforms into SOLDIER. She falls after being riddled with bullets and throws pretty red confetti out towards the audience, screaming in pain.

SOLDIER: OH GOD, I'VE BEEN SHOT, I'VE BEEN SHOT!

I'M BLEEDING OUT, SOMEBODY, HELP! ANYBODY!

Oh god... Please... tell my family I love them... my husband... my children... I can see the light... Oh god, so much blood—oh... oh fuck, and I've started my period?!

Sudden sound of glass shatter. Children saying "eeeeewwww."

SOLDIER: Wh—what? Seriously? Oh, fucking grow up. It's just blood—

The lights go out on the SOLDIER. Transition.

FIVE

GRRRL comes home from school, drops her backpack down on the ground. Phone buzzes: text message. She pulls out her phone.

GRRRL (somewhat inaudible, quietly to herself): Just call him... just call him.

Just fucking do it... Okay.

She dials the number and calls.

GRRRL: Hey! What's up—oh this is Summit. Haha yeah. Oh well, I just wanted to ask you, um. Well, okay, tomorrow night there's this concert at Howards, and I have an extra ticket—I was wondering if you wanted to come with me---... Oh you're already going. That's cool so I'll see you there! Oh, with... Shia? I didn't know you guys were dating. Okay, well. Yeah... Okay I'll um, see you tomorrow then. Okay. Bye.

The GRRRL puts her phone away. She contemplates to herself silently. She pulls out a compact mirror from her pocket and looks at herself for a moment. She touches her face; disappointed. She closes the compact, and returns it to her pocket. Sound cue. She slowly travels to a flat panel with models from magazines pasted on the wall. She puts on a white mask. She slowly applies excessive make up to the mask. Black marker: eye lashes/mascara. Purple marker: lipstick. Red paint: blush. Blue marker: dashes and X's to insinuate surgical markings. She pulls up her shirt. She makes X marks on her stomach. She drops the marker. She approaches an audience member.

GRRRL: Am I beautiful yet?

She takes off the mask and gestures it to the audience member.

GRRRL: Here. You can be beautiful too.

Black out.

Silent transition.

SIX

Lights up on ACTRESS sitting on the stage.

ACTRESS: Did that freak you out? Sorry for lying about the whole metaphoric staging shit... Mmm. Yeah. No. I'm not sorry.

Black out.

Transition, song.

SEVEN

Lights up on SHIA holding a UKE at a microphone, sitting on a stool. Sounds of light clapping.

SHIA: Thank you, thank you so much. It's been so much fun to play for you guys here at Café Havana. I am so humbled to be asked back to play—oh, and a special shout out to all my Tumblr followers, *love you guys*. So for my next song, there's just a few things I wanted to say—after checking my privilege and really listening to the world around me, I realize there's a lot of things out there that need a little preface and warning so people don't get offended. So here are a few trigger warnings that I would like to announce just in case you need to excuse yourself from the premises.

She pulls out a pad of sticky notes and reads:

Trigger warning: possible insinuation of nostalgia, which may cause PTSD, for those with a childhood containing abuse (mental/ sexual/ emotional/ or otherwise), the live body, sounds over 30 decibels with vibrations caused by vocal chords, which may cause mental images of functioning inner muscles, which may lead to thoughts of self-harm, suicidal ideation, and depression, iatrophobia, or more specifically fear of doctors, pediatricians, otolaryngologists, dermatologists, herpetologists, or any other specializations in reptilian forms, the color gray, which may lead to thoughts of voids, in which if you have

tryphobia, you have been warned, any unintended racism, sexism, ableism, or hatred to any particular culture/ ethnicity that differ from my white cultured ass have been thoughtfully avoided but may be missed due to my clouded lens of privilege, *thank you*.

She begins to play the uke.

You are my sunshine
My only sunshine
You make me happy
When skies are gray
I'll have you know dear
How much I love you
Please don't take my sunshine away.

Aw thank you, thank you so much. You just never know what kind of material will hit people in a way you don't expect. Coddling is the new cool.

She winks to the audience, sound cue, DING! Transition.

EIGHT

Music, sound building.

GRRRL: *That* is Shia? That prudish, ray of fucking sunshine prissy ass princess? Are you fucking kidding me? He's going to the punk concert with *her*? No, no, fuck that shit!

GRRRL gets a basket clothes and starts dressing herself.

This bitch doesn't deserve him. Just you wait, just you fucking wait, I'm gonna bring a goddamn hurricane.

Style-change: musical theatre.

GRRRL (sung):

If there's one thing I know

I know I can do

It's to manipulate

Doesn't take very long

To plant the thoughts in his head

And infatuate

Legs out for show

Shirt down to here

Will let them know the message's clear

Run with the guys

A handy skill

Until they have to flex their

Oh so chivalrous muscles, to save miss damsel in distress, to love, and abuse her.

She laughs and exits. Transitions to PUNK CONCERT.

Dark underground concert lighting, spotlight on a coat hanger with SHIA's costume piece draped upon it, and a large jacket.

GRRRL: Look... It's fucking Shia. Standing in the back, holding her boyfriend's coat like a fucking coat rack. This is going to be way easier than I thought.

GRRRL (sung):

With those big fat doe eyes
So fragile she stands
A baby lost in fright

Oh so prudent and scared
Makes an easier fight
Against this girly-girl

When he sees me
Reclaim the scene
I'll be the girl of his wet dreams

We'll fall in love
Or if we don't
I'll have the upper hand and
Have that motherfucker wrapped around my finger, so tight, it'll fall off...

GRRRL fights through crowd, pantomiming pushing people aside, weaving through a crowd.

GRRRL: Nick? *Nick*. Nick, where are you.

NICK: ...Summit?

GRRRL: Hey!

NICK: Uh... hey! What the fuck are you doing up here?

GRRRL: I was looking for you.

NICK: You look...

GRRRL: Whatever.

NICK: Right... yeah.

GRRRL: I saw Shia in the back.

NICK: Who? Oh, Shia.

GRRRL: Yeah... poor Shia.

NICK: What do you mean *poor Shia*?

GRRRL: You know what I mean.

NICK: ...I know what you mean.

GRRRL: Meet me out back when you take her home.

The GRRRL is about to exit, and she pauses to look at the coat rack. They are both in spotlight. She surveys her, shrugs, takes the jacket off of it, and then leaves.

Transition.

NINE

Lights up on GRRRL covered in a bed sheet.

GRRRL: He called me “sexy.” He called me “hot.” He said I was better. I feel... good. It’s rebellious. Forbidden. I like it better this way.

I saw him texting her this morning—like I give a fuck. But when he was in the shower I looked through his text messages all the way back before Nick and I even met, and she sent him a nude picture and thank god I’m hotter... He’s going to break up with her eventually. I’ll wait. Because he lies to her and tells me the truth. Right? Right?! ...*Right?*

Transition.

TEN

Lights up on the ACTRESS sitting center stage with a notebook.

ACTRESS: (reading from notebook)

“dear Iris,
you’ll never see this performance because you’re too young, and mom probably
doesn’t want you learning the word fuck from me
but I hope you don’t mind that I used an old picture of you for my posters.
You just looked super sassy and kind of baddass
which totally encompasses what I mean by girl power
I think you were like 3 or 4 in that picture. Now you’re seven.
As time goes on...
You’re going to get pushed in a direction where you might lose some of that —
that power.
due to a lot of shit—media, other people, blah blah blah
but you’ll fight against it
and you can totally be whoever the fuck you want to be.
you’re the girliest girl ever
which I used to think was so lame
since I grew up as such a tomboy
and yet somehow we’re sisters
but you gotta know
when I had writer’s block putting together the words for this show
someone told me that the greatest inspiration was right in front of me
and you were playing with a BB-8 necklace across the kitchen table.”

She sets down the notebook and addresses the audience.

Girls have a lot more power than they think they do. They just have to unleash it.
I figured that out pretty quick. Because.
Usually... when someone fucks with me... I fuck with them back.

But not always in the way of physical retaliation. Some people have Facebook, some people take to the streets, or hashtags, that shit.

I used IS, a kickass production team, and saying fuck a lot.

As a girl, for girls, and for anyone who gives a shit about girls.

The ACTRESS raises her hand, pulls the trigger.

Black out.

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