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SEEDS: The Literary Journal of the Sisters of Color

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Authors

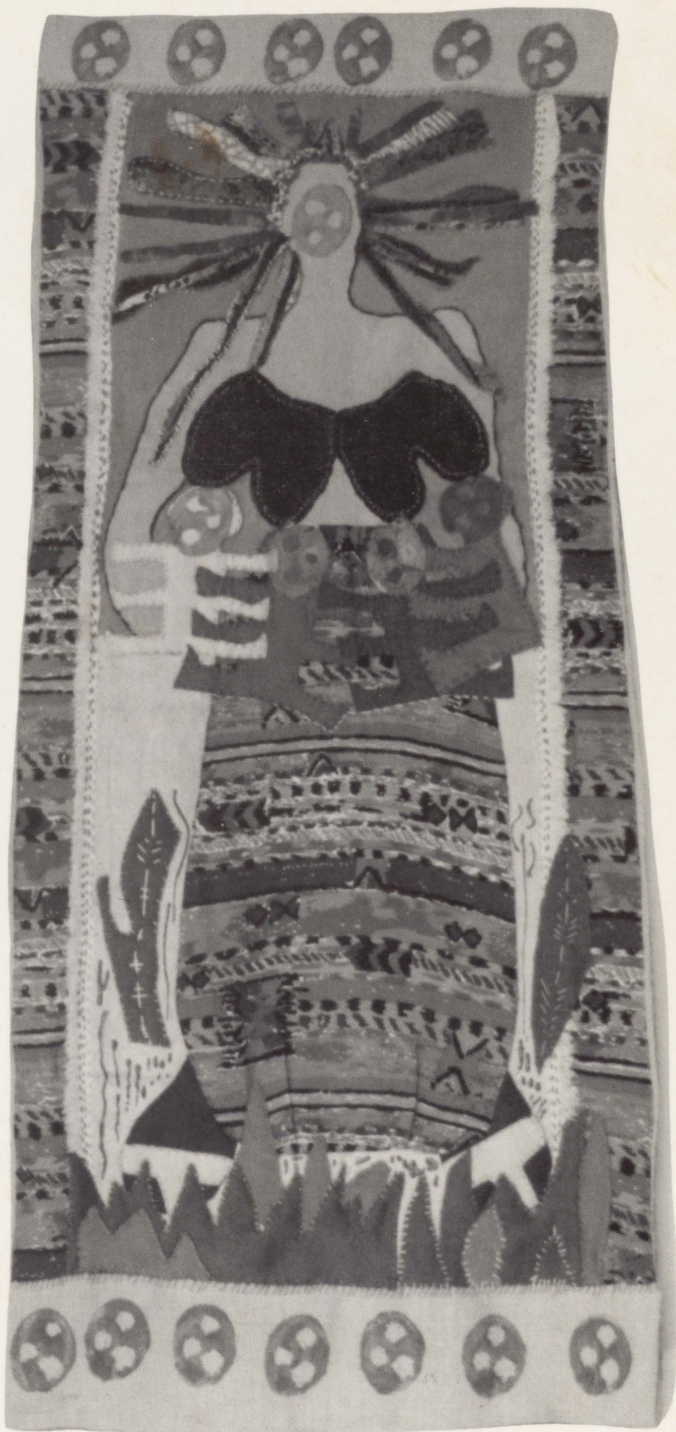
SEEDS: The Literary Journal of the Sisters of Color, Darolyn Williams Brown, Marsha Carruthers, Esperanza Cintrón, Aurora Harris, Regina Harris, Efa Korantema, Wanda Olugbala, Sonya Pouncy, Regina Reid, Leslie Reese, Semaj Sampson, Ella Singer, Sachiko Woods, and Helena Yago

**Healing:
Everything
Considered,
a
choreopoem**

SEEDS

The
Biannual
Literary
Journal
of
The Sisters
of Color

Volume 5,
Winter 1998-99
Special Edition



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Editor's Note

Healing, Everything Considered is a choreopoem written in a tradition that was developed by the Greeks and whose evolution was furthered by artists such as Ntozake Shange. This choreopoem is a unique chorus of poetry, dialogue and movement. It is the result of an ensemble of sister artists attempting to illuminate the inner core of women's lives.

Healing: Everything Considered examines the ongoing process of healing from the myriad of concerns that plague us as human beings, personally and collectively, including invisibility, sexual abuse, racism and the rigid confines of class. This choreopoem surveys the various stages of healing and the effect they have on the individual. An abstraction, as often is the healing process, this play and its women furtively try to recognize and deconstruct their pain, learning to claim only what is theirs, what they can effectively change, while giving themselves permission to shut down, to take the time and space needed to ultimately discard, walk out on that which has been the cause of their pain and is not their burden to carry. The final stage of this process is, of course, self-acceptance, an affirmation, a recognition of their beauty, their potential, a movement towards wholeness. There is not a healing of forgiveness, it is one of change, and sadly, not all achieve this. Finally there is no great gust of epiphany, but there is a strong current of hope.

This script is, in part, the result of a series of "healing sessions" we, the women who call ourselves The Sisters of Color, held in the summer of 1997. We met in my backyard under a relentless sun and tried to discover the healing process and, in so doing, discovered many of our vulnerabilities and strengths. In writing this choreopoem, which is the fruit of that struggle, we have gone through a number of difficult stages ourselves, and have had to confront the demons of self-doubt, deception, envy, and the residual effects of our individual pain. It has not been an easy journey, and even though we are sending out this choreopoem as a completed work, our journey towards healing, toward wholeness, is an on-going process. Yet, this work has served to launch us on the path of healing and we hope that it may have that same effect on you.

Esperanza M. Cintron
Founding Member and Editor

Cover Art: "Universal Mother" by fabric artist, Ella Singer.

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Credits

This choreopoem is a fusion of poetry, dialogue, movement, rhythm and light. It was collectively written by The Sisters of Color under the direction of founding member, Esperanza Cintron. The play includes the original poetry, emotions and/or ideas of all of its members who are as follows: (*in alphabetical order*)

Darolyn Williams Brown

Marsha Carruthers

Esperanza Cintron

Aurora Harris

Regina Harris

Efua Korantema

Wanda Olugbala

Sonya Pouncy

Regina Reid

Leslie Reese

Semaj Sampson

Ella Singer

Sachiko Woods

Helena Yago

Title and authors of individual poems are listed in italics at the end of the respective works.

Project Director and Journal Editor

Esperanza M. Cintron

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Healing: Everything Considered

a choreopoem written by The Sisters of Color

The Setting: Today, anywhere in the U.S.

Sets may, of course vary, depending on resources, but the original performance was designed with a large cloth draped across the back wall of the stage that boasted a stylized "cracked" vulva in an array of colors. Center stage is an altar that can simply be a waist- high box or something more elaborate depending on the taste and budget of the producers. It may have gilded edges, or be painted in varying hues of blue, or be lit by an array of candles of varying sizes and shapes, or be draped in fabrics: red velvet, batik, lace, etc., but, it should tasteful, not showy and give an aura of peace and resolution. The stage is otherwise be bare.

Lighting is crucial to this presentation's overall effect as spotlights will assist in "scene" and mood changes as the characters trade-off. Note stage directions throughout the scenes for particular types of lighting and cues. If technology is restricted due to equipment or personnel, a good spotlight and two or three colored gels should suffice.

The Characters:

MUSLIM SISTER - Dressed in ankle-length skirt and matching tunic, she has a stately bearing. (This is the "evolved" sister who is the product of late twentieth century "self-awareness," i.e., the renaissance black woman and can be alternately portrayed by the Earth Mother who is fortyish, post hippie, and wears the "crunchy" (nuts & berries) attire, natural fibers, comfort with hints of mysticism: shells, bells & cymbals.

The RAPPER/College girl - Roughneck in oversized or jeans ensemble. This character represents the youth culture and can be alternately portrayed by the College Student who wears jeans, sweater or T-shirt or the Slacker or Punk Sister in resale shop chic or black leather and ripped tights, respectively.

The BUPPIE - In business suit and the appropriately practical/conservative hair do of the day, this sister is always pulled together, immaculate in her pill-sized earrings.

The HOOCHIE - This Fly Girl wears whatever spandex, cleavage exposed, high-heeled, overtly sexual garb that is in fashion. Her accessories, like her makeup, are excessive: glittery and gaudy. In particular, she wears very large gold earrings.

The CHURCH LADY - Her big hat and pocketbook are color coordinated with her skirt which is just below her knees because too far below, or above, would suggest deviation.

Everybody's MOMMA - MOMMA is of indeterminate age and is somewhat unkempt, not sloppy, but thrown together in haste. She may wear leggings and an oversized pullover or a comparable skirt & blouse. She is about six or seven months pregnant.

The Eternal LITTLE GIRL - Her hair parted in the middle into two pigtailed, she wears Mary Janes with anklets and a dress, bowed in the back. (This character who, of course, represents unresolved issues, doubles as **The SHADOW** by slipping into a sleek- fitting, hooded black robe.)

Scene Changes:

Although the scenes are listed as one, two, three, etc., they should melt and fold into each other in a continuous flow of light, movement, and sound.

Scene One:	Jumping rope
Scene Two:	Psycho Babble
Scene Three:	Little Sally Walker
Scene Four:	Birth Control
Scene Five:	"Plastic"
Scene Six:	Purgatory
Scene Seven:	All Praises to Allah

Suggested Intermission

Scene Eight:	Butterfly Eyes
Scene Nine:	"scrubbing myself"
Scene Ten:	"The Incantation"
Scene Eleven:	More Birth Control
Scene Twelve:	"Sister, Sister"
Scene Thirteen:	"This is who I am."
Scene Fourteen:	This is the last scene.

Props:

Although optional, props alluded to in various scenes include: a large hand held mirror; a small rag doll; a "5 X 7" photograph of women; a shoe box painted black with the legend UNCLE; briefcase with papers; several boxes of old-fashioned sanitary napkins (without adhesive); a large pair of scissors; a large black magic marker; candles & matches; a clipboard and pen; a hooded, black blanket; seven scarves; a wicker laundry basket; a Bible; and a box of female condoms.

The Opening:

Five minutes before the lights go up the sounds of lullabies, singing games, jump rope and hand games, in general, girls' street-games can be heard. The rhymes can begin with a pre-recorded tape with some of the following songs. (Note: Both the voices and laughter of children and women should be included. The singing games are listed here in a somewhat chronological order with regard to the age of the children who would "ordinarily" perform them to hint at a progression.) The tape should ultimately blend into the live voices of the women/performers.

London Bridge is falling down
Falling down, falling down
London Bridge is falling down
My fair lady

Take the key and lock her up,
Lock her up, lock her up,
Take the key and lock her up,
My fair lady

(1973 version)

I had a little teddy bear, her name was Tina Trim.
I put her in the bathtub to see if she could swim.
She drank up all the water, she ate up all the soap,
She died in the morning with a bubble in her throat.
In came the doctor, in came the nurse,
In came the lady with the alligator purse.
"Penicillin," said the doctor. "Penicillin," said the nurse.
"Penicillin," said the lady with the alligator purse.
Out walked the doctor, out walked the nurse,
Out walked the lady with the alligator purse.

Two little chillin fightin in bed
One fell out, the other mos dead
Call the doctor, the doctor said
Feed them chillin shortenin bread
MOMMA's little baby love shortenin, shortenin,
MOMMA's little baby love shortenin bread

(version probably circa 1950's)

You've got a gal and I've got none,
Lil Liza Jane
Come, my love and be my one,
Lil Liza Jane,
O, Lil' Liza Jane, Lil' Liza Jane
O, Lil' Liza Jane, Lil' Liza Jane

I got a house in Baltimo'
Lil Liza Jane,
Street cars runnin by my do'
Lil Liza Jane,
O, Lil' Liza Jane, Lil' Liza Jane
O, Lil' Liza Jane, Lil' Liza Jane

Brussels carpets on my flo'
Lil' Liza Jane.
Silver name plate on my do'
Lil' Liza Jane.
O, Lil' Liza Jane, Lil' Liza Jane
O, Lil' Liza Jane, Lil' Liza Jane

Come my love and marry me
Lil' Liza Jane
I will take good care of thee,
Lil' Liza Jane
O, Lil' Liza Jane, Lil' Liza Jane
O, Lil' Liza Jane, Lil' Liza Jane

(The South, 1944)

Little Sallie Ann
Sittin in the san'
Cryin an a-weepin'
For a precious little man.

Rise, Sallie, rise,
Wipe your weepin eyes.
Fly to the east,
Fly to the west,
Fly to the one
You love the best.
Turn to the one with the lan',
Turn to the one with the money.
Kiss him and call him "Honey."
Rise, Sugar, Rise.

(The South, 1944)

We gonna rock to the tree top all day long
Huffin and a puffin and a singin that song
All the little birdies on Jay Bird street
Love to hear the Robins go tweet, tweet, tweet
Rockin Robin, tweet tweet a leet
Rockin Robin, tweet tweet a leet

MOMMA's in the kitchen stirrin that rice
Daddy's in the corner shootin that dice
Brother's in jail ringin that bell
Sister in the corner sellin fruit cocktail
Rockin Robin, tweet tweet a leet
Rockin Robin, tweet tweet a leet

Down by the ocean, down by the sea
Johnny broke a bottle, blamed it on me
I told MOMMA, MOMMA told poppa
Poppa told grandma, grandma told grandpa
Rockin Robin, tweet tweet a leet
Rockin Robin, tweet tweet a leet

("Rock'n Robin," Detroit, as of 1998)

Oh, you never went to college,
You never went to school,
but when its time to boogie,
You can boogie like a fool!

You could do the split toe
You could do the flip
You could do the boogie woogie,
just like this.

You gonna raise your dress up
above your knees
You gonna show your thighs to who you please
boy, girl, boy, girl

(1950-60's)

(Sang to the accompaniment of rhythmic hand-clapping)

Shame, shame, shame
I don't wanna go to Hollywood
no more, more, more
There's a big fat Michael Jackson
at the door, door, door
He'll grab you by the hips
Make you kiss his lips
I don't want to go to Hollywood
no more, more, more

(Detroit, 1998)

SCENE ONE

Jelly in a the dish
Makes me sick
A wiggle and a woggle
And a two forty six
Not because you're dirty,
Not because you're clean
It's just because you kissed a boy
Behind a magazine.

The jump rope song is being sung by the women who are on already on stage as the lights brighten as the thud, thud, thud of the jump rope resounds. The **HOOCHIE** is at one end turning an imaginary jump rope, the **RAPPER** is at the other end. They are all laughing and singing the song. The other women are lined up awaiting their turns while the **MUSLIM SISTER** lifts her skirts high around her calves, jumping with relish. She is followed by the **BUPPIE** who effects a stylized vogue, fully aware of her sarcasm, as she jumps feigning faces of repose which quickly dissolve into the pleasure of abandonment. Each woman takes her turn bringing her distinctive style to her jumping and interpretation of the song.

The **LITTLE GIRL** jumps into the imaginary turn ropes. The **HOOCHIE** and **RAPPER** are turning Double Dutch, rhythmically, with both hands.

The **LITTLE GIRL**

(jumping, intensely)

Jelly in the dish
Makes me sick
A wiggle and a woggle,
And a two forty six.
Not because you're dirty,
Not because you're clean;
It's just because you kissed a boy
Behind a magazine.
How many kisses do you want?
"5" 1 2 3 4

(She stumbles before completing her turn and, head down in shame, heads to the end of the line.)

BUPPIE

(Jumping, stylishly)

Jelly in the dish
Makes me sick
A wiggle and a woggle,
And a two forty six.
Not because you're dirty
Not because you're clean
It's just because you can't go to
the men's latrine
How many kisses do you want?
1-2-3-4-5

(She jumps safely out and goes back to the end of the line. The women clap in appreciation and egg the next sister on. The **MUSLIM SISTER** hikes her skirts up to knees and jumps into the rope.)

MUSLIM SISTER

(Jumps seriously, but with dignity)

Jelly in the dish

Makes me sick

A wiggle and a wobble,

And a two forty six.

Not because you're black

Not because you're slack

It's just because you're not a member
of the alley pack

How many kisses do you want?

1-2-3-4-5

(**MUSLIM SISTER** completes her turn and heads to the back of the line. The women clap in appreciation and egg the next sister on. The **CHURCH LADY** jumps in.)

CHURCH LADY

(She holds her hat, otherwise, she jumps with complete abandonment)

Jelly in the dish

Makes me sick

A wiggle and a wobble,

And a two forty six.

Not because you're crazy

Not because you're lazy

It's just because this life you live
is much too hazy

How many kisses do you want?

1-2-3-4-5

(She jumps out, having completed her jump, but is still jumping a stylized, yet, underplayed holy ghost as she makes her way to the back of the line. **MOMMA** advances, urged on by the other women: "Gon' girl," "She can do it," "Yeah," "O.K., O.K." "Get ready, now.")

MOMMA

(She begins her jump tentatively)

Jelly in the dish

Makes me sick

A wiggle and a wobble,

And a two forty six.

Not because you're mean

Not because you preen

It's just because you spend you life
in elbow deep chlorine

How many kisses do you want

(She's getting happy now and jumping faster because she sees success.)

1-2- —3

(With 3, she stumbles, falls and lands on her behind. Unable to recover, she becomes tangled in the ropes as she tries to rise. The rope turners continue to turn the rope and **MOMMA** shields her face with her arms from the sting of the rope. At first she is apologetic, her mouth opens, on the verge of apologizing, but when the rope continues to turn she becomes angry. She steps outside of the rope and stops.)

MOMMA

Look, this wasn't my idea anyway. Just a waste of time. Out here with this childish shit. Who got time for this shit anyway?

(The rope turners put the rope down and head for the rear of the stage followed by all the other women except **MOMMA**. They form a semicircle in front, facing the audience, in front of the altar. Their retreat, away from the light, has left **MOMMA** alone in the spotlight while they have formed a dark hovering semicircle, watching, silent.)

MOMMA

I gave myself to you freely
 I gave
 you drank of me
 from small cups
 devouring me with large gulps.

I gave myself to you you did not ask that would have been an unnecessary request.

I came to you voluntarily.

Your hands unceremoniously placed on hips moved to encase my breasts claiming me.

Most certainly I am your own.

I gave myself to you.

I gave you asked nothing not of me not about me
 but you took me myself
 even from most un expectantly.

I gave laughing eyes
 singing thighs
 dancing loins
 piercing tongue.
 It was pleasurable you said.
 I brought you delight.

Now I'm wanting.

Now I'm seeing all the pleasure you take.

Now I'm knowing it was not giving at all.

(from "It's A Womb Thang" by wanda olugbala)

(Head down, forlorn, she walks back toward the group taking the light with her. The light brightens around the group.)

SCENE TWO

The RAPPER and the CHURCH LADY snicker and chuckle as MOMMA nears. On stage are: **RAPPER, MUSLIM SISTER, BUPPIE, HOOCHIE, CHURCH LADY and MOMMA.** The **LITTLE GIRL** has left, stage left, unseen during the previous scene. They begin clapping and stomping their feet in the steady rhythm of army-cadence songs. The rhythm is sing-song and they are loud. At first MOMMA ignores them and although she stands with the ragtag group, it is clear that she is somewhere else. Eventually, she too, joins in.

RAPPER

I left my man back home in Minnesota

Group (All except MOMMA)

I left my man back home in Minnesota

RAPPER

And I know he's back there waiting for me.

Group

And I know he's back there waiting for me

RAPPER

He's motivated.

Group

Motivated.

RAPPER

Educated.

Group (By now MOMMA has joined in. She has been slowly drawn in.)

Educated.

RAPPER

Oh yeah!

Group

Oh yeah!

RAPPER

Oh yeah!

Group

Oh Yeah!

HOOCHIE

I- I -I left my man back home in Tennessee

Group

I left my man back home in Tennessee

HOOCHIE

And I know he's back there waitin for me

Group

And I know he's back there waitin for me

HOOCHIE

He's so fine.

Group

He's fine

HOOCHIE

And he's mine

Group

He's mine.

HOOCHIE

Oh yeah!

Group

Oh yeah!

CHURCH LADY

I left my girl back home in California.

Group (looks at her funny, but continue the song)

I left my girl back home in California

CHURCH LADY

And I know she's back there waitin for me.

Group

And I know she's back there waiting for me.

CHURCH LADY

She's bright and sunny.

Group

Bright and sunny.

CHURCH LADY

She's my honey.

Group

She's my honey.

(They all crack up at this point. Laughing.)

RAPPER

(Pushes CHURCH LADY playfully)

Girl, you crazy.

(The **LITTLE GIRL** in the guise of the **SHADOW** walks in quickly, high heels clicking loudly against the floor. She is carrying a clipboard with pen. The group sulks a bit, examines fingernails, touches hair, stares at feet, and other idiosyncrasies peculiar to fear and uncertainty, but the women resume their semicircle. **BUPIE** stands off a bit as though trying to distance herself.)

SHADOW

Its time, ladies.

MUSLIM SISTER

When do we get out of here?

SHADOW

This isn't a prison, and you are fortunate to have this opportunity.

MOMMA

We're never getting out.

CHURCH LADY

It's all right, there are ways. If not now, then. . .

RAPPER

In the afterlife. (She is at first solemn, almost funereal, when she says it, then she bursts into laughter and runs around **CHURCH LADY** while bugging her eyes and waving her outstretched hands at the sides of her head, mimicking Topsy or some such minstrel character.)

CHURCH LADY

She broke the line. She broke the line. You can't let her do that. (To Shadow) Do something. Punish her. No. No. I didn't mean that. (She turns away in shame.)

RAPPER

(Looks at **CHURCH LADY**) But you did mean it. (She shakes her head sadly.)

BUPIE

Why are we here?

RAPPER

You really mean why are *you* here. You don't give a shit about the rest of us.

BUPIE (Scowls at **RAPPER**, but otherwise ignores her. She addresses Shadow directly.) I asked, why are we here?

SHADOW

Why do *you* think you're here?

MUSLIM SISTER

Don't start that psycho babble again. The sister asked an honest question. The least she deserves, we deserve, is an honest and direct answer.

SHADOW

Well, let's begin where we left off the last time.

MUSLIM SISTER

The sister asked you why we're here?

(The Shadow looks toward the MUSLIM SISTER and writes something down on her clip board.)

SHADOW

Might I remind you that you called me out. But if you insist. You are here because you said you wanted to heal, but as we discussed in our earlier sessions, you must first identify your pain.

BUPPIE

(Crosses her arms and turns her back to the group.)
Psycho babble.

HOOCHIE

Which pain?

MOMMA

(Laughs, and begins a descending staccato which is caught and continued by the other women.)
Pain. Pick-a-pain.

HOOCHIE

(Knowingly)
Pick-a-pain.

BUPPIE

(Almost to herself.)
Pick-a-pain.

RAPPER

Being born black.

MOMMA

And broke.

BUPPIE

And a woman who ain't Barbie.

RAPPER

(The staccato ends abruptly as the RAPPER assumes a preacherly stance.) Woe is the daughter of Ham born in the U.S.A. without enough dough to buy blue contact lenses.

(The group laughs, BUPPIE scowls at RAPPER again, and the Shadow writes something else down on her clipboard.)

SHADOW

(Goes to stand near CHURCH LADY who clutches her bible and pocketbook closer to herself as the woman draws near.)

You, you haven't said anything. What is you pain?

CHURCH LADY

Lady, I'm just strugglin to stay sane in an insane society. Just tryin to hold on. To my faith. To me. To. . .

RAPPER

(Walks over to CHURCH LADY laughing and pulls playfully at her Bible which CHURCH LADY moves just out of her reach.)

She's got everything she need right here. And the Lord shall provide, the meek shall inherit the earth . . . what's left of it after the strong have had their fill and moved on to greener pastures, so sayeth the book of open yo' eyes lady.

HOOCHIE

Leave her alone.

RAPPER

Marx, idealist that he was, never said a truer word. Dope so old, been stepped on so many times seem like it would 'a lost its kick by now. (She shakes her head and walks back to her spot.)

SHADOW

(Looks to Hoochie.)

And your pain?

HOOCHIE

These men.

RAPPER

Sounds like a self-esteem problem.

HOOCHIE

You know so much. Running round here blaming the white man, the church, slavery, the fuckin space program and everybody damn body else cause yo ass is broke. Betta get you a job.

RAPPER

I see you already got one. Which corner is it? I want to make sure I don't get within smellin distance.

BUPPIE

Ghetto. (She rolls her eyes and turns away in disgust.)

MOMMA

Fellas, fellas let's not give them fuel. You know they're watching us. They're always watching us. (Shadow writes something down.) And taking notes.

(There is silence for a moment. Then CHURCH LADY looks to.)

CHURCH LADY

Why do you dress like that? You know, the womb is sacred and shouldn't be displayed like some garnished piece of meat in the butcher's glass.

HOOCHIE

(She laughs, but not ha, ha, rather in a knowing way.)

Sister, the pussy in the black community has no value. It ain't nothin' but some man's "property" and regardless of whether that man is your husband, your father, your brother, the milkman, his cousin or the garbage man, it's something they see and *know* they can have. Every single one of us is on a perpetual auction block being bought and sold every single day. Most don't even know they standing on the block, don't even know who the bidders are until its too late. I'm just trying to have some say in who gets this, (she points to her crotch) trying to increase the value and maximize my return.

BUPPIE

(Shakes her head and smiles, knowingly.)

MUSLIM SISTER

Oh, no sister. It is not like that.

HOOCHIE

The clitoris is the only organ on the human body, either of them, that is made strictly for pleasure and throughout time people have been trying to control it.

MUSLIM SISTER

I don't believe that it's made strictly for pleasure. There is a vibratory frequency within the clitoris that connects us to all other vibratory frequencies. It's like a satellite to the world.

RAPPER

I'll go with that. Yes! Speak sister.

MOMMA

That's right sis, and they realize upon entering that it leads to the Black Hole.

Group

(Some laugh, some chuckle, but all are curious.)

MUSLIM SISTER

(Laughs in agreement.)

That's right, you're right.

MOMMA

The experience men have, when a woman shares her body with him, is that fear, the fear of God. Just look at the expressions on their faces, the idea that this is, this woman, is a source, a place of pure energy. They enter and they fear God because they are coming into the Black Hole, that is the universe, that is represented by my body.

RAPPER

That's why they keep coming back, trying to face down that fear. Trying to control it.

(CHURCH LADY fans herself rapidly.)

MUSLIM SISTER

It is true. For a woman to exalt herself spiritually and understand that she is God, she only needs to go inside herself. But for a man to understand that he is God, in order to go inside, he's got to go back through a woman. He can't do it on his own. He has to go back through his lover, or his mother, through the consciousness of a woman, or the woman that's inside of him. He has to go back through a woman. And we need to understand that, so we don't *sell* ourselves because we've forgotten our power and grown accustomed to giving it away. (She whispers, as though telling a cherished secret.) We must not sell ourselves anymore, period.

HOOCHIE

I ain't no ho'.

SHADOW

I don't believe she's speaking literally.

RAPPER

(laughs)

HOOCHIE

(To MUSLIM SISTER)

I ain't no ho'. Just because I like to look good don't make me no ho'. Just because I want something out of life, don't make me no ho'.

RAPPER

She don't mean just your pussy.

HOOCHIE

You just jealous, in them baggy ass clothes.

RAPPER

Too bad yo' brain ain't big as them damn earrings.

HOOCHIE

(Ignores RAPPER and is speaking, in earnest, to MUSLIM SISTER who looks

on encouraging, but incredulous and to CHURCH LADY who has her arms crossed sternly across her breast and her jaw set.) Yeah, I like to catch a man's eye, be appreciated, get a couple compliments. What's the harm in that?

You doin' me like white people do *all* of us. Judgin me on surfaces and stereotypes. Just 'cause a black woman's got a big ass don't mean she loose. It just mean that God blessed her a little more than other women and its alright to look at it and admire it, but that don't mean you get to touch it.

See, white people figure if it's there, especially if it's stickin out, it's meant for them so they can just claim it. But it don't have nothing to do with them. We can't afford to be like them. To assume that just because it's there it's ripe for the takin and that the first person who "discovers" it can have it. I ain't like that. I'm very particular about who I choose to be with.

BUPPIE

She wasn't just talking about your body.

HOOCHIE

(Glaring at BUPPIE)

Neither am I. I ain't no ho'. An if I am, then everybody in here is a ho'. (She points at the audience.) Cause all I want is somebody to love me and treat me right and help me to get the things that make life comfortable. And I don't mind fixin myself up and makin myself look good so I can catch that one somebody's eye that might fit the bill. (She turns her back, stubbornly away from the other women.)

(Fade to black.)

SCENE THREE

The lights come up. All the women (except **BUPPIE**) are in a circle laughing, dancing and singing according to the rhyme. They walk slowly in a circle around the woman in the middle. Hand on hip, they are shaking *it* in earnest and in the fashion of each individual character's persona. They, on occasion, and when warranted, point gleefully at the woman in the center of the group.

Little Sally Walker
Sittin in a saucer
Rise Sally Rise
Wipe your weepin' eyes
Put your hands on your hips
And let your backbone flip
All shake it to the east,
All shake it to the west,
All shake it to the very one
That you love the best.

(The circle opens up to reveal **BUPPIE** on her knees buffing the floor with a

sanitary napkin. She stands up. As she stands the other women move out of the light, just behind her and seat themselves in a semicircle. She straightens her clothes and begins to examine the pad. Immaculate in her business suit and heels, she addresses the audience.)

BUPPIE

My grandma used to do day work for a living. She said that there was this one woman who made her use sanitary napkins to buff the floors. (She is toying with and examining the pad as she talks.) Grandma said it left a nice, smooth, sheen. There must be a million and one uses for these things, other than their intended purpose, of course. They'd be great for stuffing cracks in windows and doors to block the wind, or for blotting lipstick, for instance.

When I was little, after we'd gotten our hair straightened, we used to pin them to our heads at night before we went to sleep in order to keep the bangs and the kitchen flattened and in place. (She reaches into the large box of napkins on the floor beside her and demonstrates the procedure for the audience, minus the bobby pins.) They'd make excellent bandages for large wounds. (She presses one to her side and feigns a pain.) And great replacement shoulder pads when you realize that the cleaners has lost one. (She pretends to shove it into her jacket's sleeve.) And for the girl who nature has slyghted. (She holds them up to her breasts and examines the effect.) They might have to be cut down a bit.

Scissors expand the possibilities considerably. (She picks up a large pair of scissors and begins to cut circles.) Let's see, we can have eyes pads to relieve end-of-the-day eye stress and foot pads for those aching arches. (She points the pad at her foot which is clad in a neat pump.) And, oh yeah, underarm pads to protect that expensive jogging suit from "unsightly" sweat stains. Or maybe, if you have children, you could paint eyes and mouths and hair on them and make little dolls. You could call them Koties or Sanis. (She pulls a thick magic marker from the bag and draws a face with large smiling features on another pad.

Admiring her work, she begins to chuckle to herself. She shows her handiwork to the audience.) And people say I don't have a sense of humor.

(She nods her head in the direction of the other women who sit in darkness and silence.) They say I'm cold, don't know who I am, trying to be white. I just believe in taking care of business. I refuse to get caught up and left behind. I will not be a statistic. I believe in free will and in *exercising* it. My ancestors were slaves too, and sharecroppers, and they had to sit on the back of the bus after cleaning white peoples' houses all day, but I'm aiming for something a bit more lucrative. And unlike *some* people, I'm not sitting on my haunches using their plight as an excuse to fail. (She glares back at the darkness.) Yeah, I said it. (She looks at them waiting for a response. When there is none, she continues.) It makes me angry that some people don't try harder and they get mad at or jealous of me because I do.

It is a struggle competing all day in a white, male world and not being able to seek some solace in your community or worse yet, being used, seen as a free ride by those closest to you. I work hard struggling against the current, against all the labels and stereotypes that plague my people. I read all the manuals, twice. If the work day begins at 8:30, I'm there at 8:00 and I adhere to the office protocol with regard to dress and demeanor in both my professional and private life because I will not be caught unaware. It's a fucking 24- hour gig.

Angry! Yeah, I'm angry because I'm getting it from both ends. Damned if I do, damned if I don't. Look, you want some of these to make Koties and Sanis for your kids. Here. (She begins throwing pads arbitrarily into the audience.) Look, they're Free. Americans love free things. Black, white, red, yellow, too bad the good life ain't free. Leading marketing specialists agree that the word FREE placed in conjunction with any product ignites the salivary glands of most Americans. See here, FREE, FREE, FR . . .EEE, F. R...EEEE.

(The lights go down as she is throwing pads into the audience.)

SCENE FOUR

Spotlight pops up and wanders aimlessly around the stage catching women engrossed in various actions, i.e., **CHURCH LADY** digging in her pocketbook, **BUPPIE** searching fervently for something in a briefcase, **MOMMA** rubbing her belly, **LITTLE GIRL** hugging her shoe box and rocking herself, **MUSLIM SISTER** praying, and **HOOCHIE** polishing her nails. Lights settle on the **RAPPER** who is now the **COLLEGE STUDENT**, having taken off the jeans jacket and donned a pullover sweater. She is reading the directions on the back of a box of female condoms.

COLLEGE STUDENT

The female condom is intended to be worn by women during sex. It can help prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

Although studies show that the female condom provides protection against pregnancy, the estimated one-year pregnancy rate for this brand ranges from 18% to 25%. This means that about one in four women who use this female condom may become pregnant during a year.

It should be removed after sex *and* before you stand up. It is for one time use only. Reuse of this product can severely hamper its effectiveness. Other concerns that have been reported are minor irritation, discomfort, breakage, and some women have complained that the penis slipped to the side of the condom upon entering the vagina thereby completely bypassing the device. These problems occur rarely and are usually the result of improper insertion.

(She pulls the condom packet out of the box. Looks briefly at the packet then resumes reading.)

To open packet locate arrow at tear notch on upper right hand corner and tear open. (She does so with some difficulty, resorting to tearing the package with her teeth. Then resumes reading.)

Take out condom and look at it closely. (She smirks, in collusion with the audience.) Rub the outside of the pouch together to be sure the lubrication is evenly spread inside the pouch from the bottom to the top.

To add more lubricant, simply give one quick squeeze of the extra lubricant. Try different amounts to see what's best for you and your partner. Try starting with two drops. (She holds up the condom, lets it fall out to its full length. Looks down at her crotch, skeptically, then back at the condom, then out at the audience. The lights lingers on the dangling piece of latex then moves on.)

SCENE FIVE

Light wanders around again, and finally lands on COLLEGE STUDENT/RAPPER who is putting on her oversized jean jacket and HOOCHIE, both of whom move center stage to stand, back to back. RAPPER has her arms folded angrily across her chest and HOOCHIE has one hand on her hip and the other hand, palm vertical, facing the audience in a "Speak to the Hand" pose. They face each other, circling in a sparring pose. Then they face off.

RAPPER

You spend your whole income
So you can drive a Mazarati
Bill Gates has a private jet
He don't wear no damn Versace

Downtown wearing minks
Time to floss, put on a show
Hoping that cute guy ain't followin you
Back home to the ghetto

No need for an education
Time for you to have some fun
Chasin' down your baby's daddy
A fugitive on the run

Jumpin' from man to man
Anybody's watchin your kids
Lookin for a father figure
No one wants to place their bid

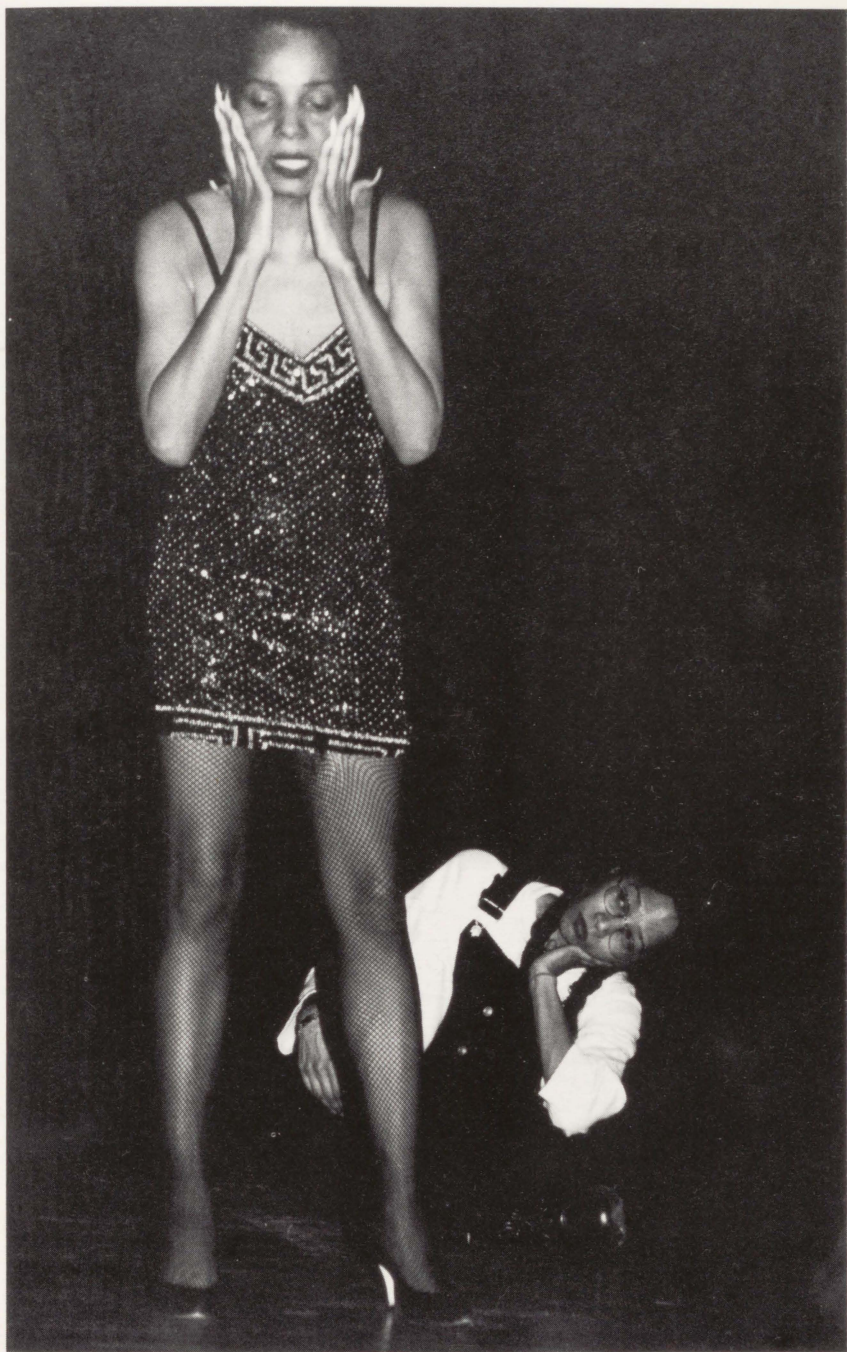
Wearin' Guess on your ass
Sportin' diamonds on your fingers
Takin' shit from a man
Who's gonna put you thru a ringer

In this world that we live in
You don't even have a cause
Only thing you worried about
Is the name that's on your drawers

Can't go nowhere alone
Always hangin with a crowd
Gotta make a big ass scene
Wantin attention, talkin loud

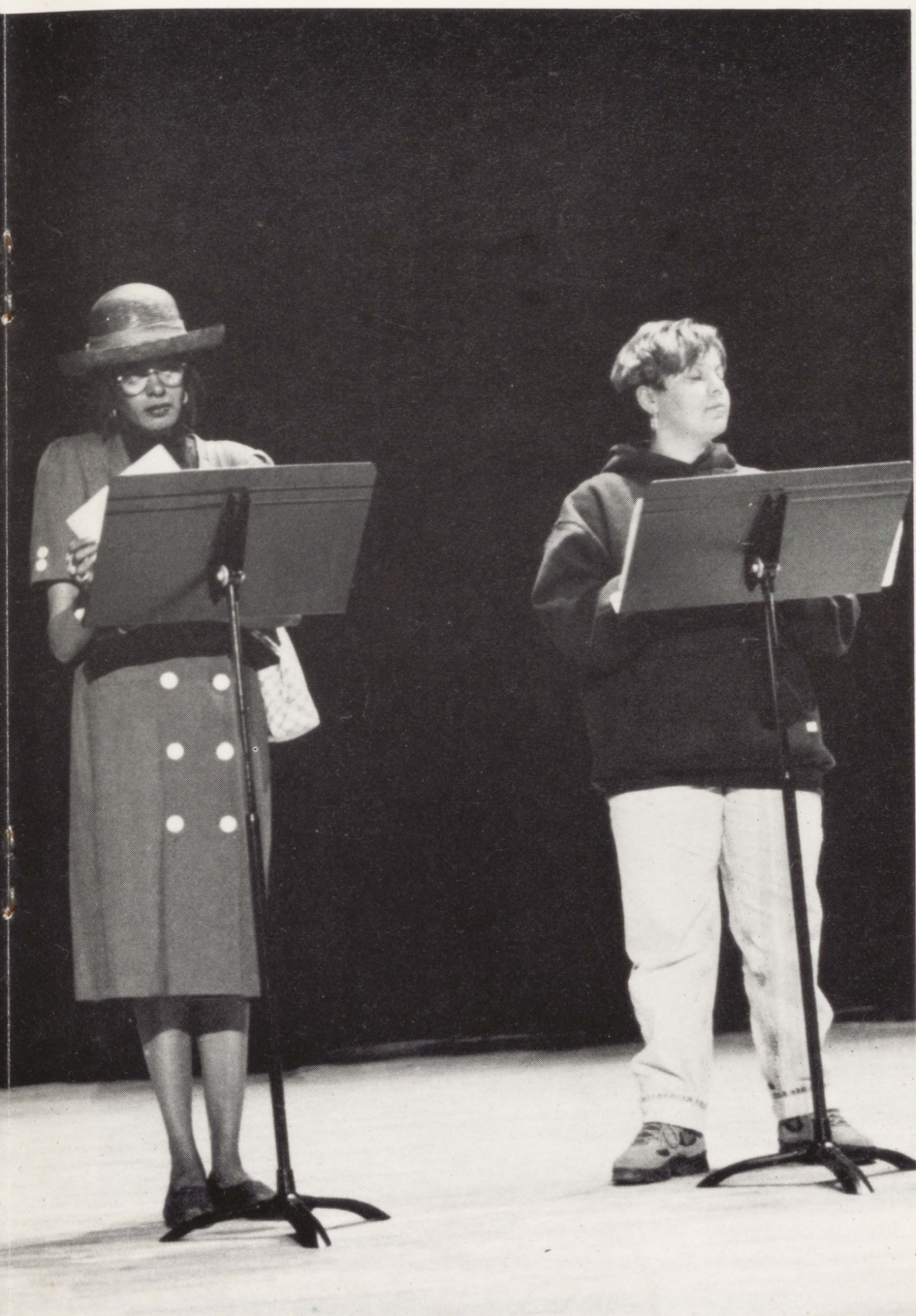
Spendin all your valuable time
Talkin 'bout other folk's business
You wasn't even there
The judge can't call you as no witness

Sit back and think about
Trying to get you own life
It ain't no future involved
In being a drug dealer's wife



From Scene Ten: "The Incantation" Hoochie (standing) and Little Girl (seated), played by Marsha Carruthers and Aurora Harris (respectively).





From Scene Nine: "Scrubbing Myself" From left to right: Buppie (Sonya Pouncy), Muslim Sister (Semaj Sampson), Church Lady (Ella Singer), and Rapper (Helena Yago).



From Scene Seven: "All Praises to Allah" Hoochie (left) and Muslim Sister (right), played by Marsha Carruthers and Semaj Sampson (respectively).

Pages 23-26 are scenes from the first presentation of *Healing* which was done as an interpretative reading with some blocked and choreographed segments.

Photographs by Willie Williams

Times gettin' hard
It's gettin' tough, gettin' drastic
Check your purse for some knowledge
This world ain't takin no damn plastic.

(*"Plastic"* by Helena Yago)

HOOCHIE smirks, turns her back on **RAPPER**, then stands guilelessly looking out over the audience (Twenty second Miles Davis Bluenote segue).

HOOCHIE

(softly and slowly)

mystical monsoon
windy cyclones
thrust debris
into my eyes
as i trip
hitting my head
on a rock
unconscious i lay
awakened
to the chilly
seasonal rain
that washes clean
my face,
but
a hole now exists
where
dreams
can
escape.

(*"cyclical ruins"* by Sachiko Woods)

(Light lingers, then, slowly, moves on.)

SCENE SIX

The light comes up again to reveal the women in their semicircle. They are again, somewhat withdrawn, contemplative. **HOOCHIE** is center stage and has her back to the audience, hand on hip, wide legged stance and **SHADOW** is "examining" her.

SHADOW

Why is there so much animosity towards this one?

BUPPIE

Because she gives us all a bad name. Lives down to the stereotypes that confine us.

CHURCH LADY

Because she is Eve, a weak servant of the devil who willingly surrenders to her own desire.

RAPPER

I don't know about all that, but the sister could use a wake up call. She need to recognize. . . I mean it's hard work breaking free from the shackles society puts on us and she just want to lay down and take it.

MOMMA

She taking the easy road, putting on the yoke and blinders and shuffling along.

RAPPER (eyes MOMMA)

You should talk, baby maker.

MOMMA rolls her eyes at **RAPPER**.

SHADOW

Do you envy her?

RAPPER

Ignorance ain't bliss, baby. It's purgatory.

SHADOW

And knowledge?

MUSLIM SISTER

Is hell. (The other women look toward her, startled by her voice and the statement.) There is pain in knowing.

SHADOW

(Turns to **MUSLIM SISTER**.)

So you envy her ignorance?

BUPPIE

Buddy are you off?

(**SHADOW** turns to **BUPPIE**.)

SHADOW

Then you fear her because she is you? You. . .

BUPPIE

(Attempts to cut **SHADOW** off, but she continues.)

More psycho babble.

SHADOW

. . . have created her and through her you have become. . .

MUSLIM SISTER

I, we haven't created her. Society has. By starving and denying her.

BUPPIE

Don't go perpetrating that victim crap. Oh, whoa is me. (She feigns fear.)

MUSLIM SISTER (to **BUPPIE**)

She, we have been victimized. You don't deny that?

BUPIE

It's that "victim mentality" that keeps individuals from achieving.

CHURCH LADY

She right, you know, folks always got an excuse as to why they can't do right.

MOMMA

I don't know what you're talking about, but I don't want her around my children

CHURCH LADY

But she *is* your child. The Bible teaches you that much.

MOMMA

(Crosses her arms over her stomach.)

Humph! She ain't none of mine.

SHADOW

If you look deep within her, you will see your reflection. She's a crucial part of you.

MUSLIM SISTER

A part that needs to be purged.

BUPIE

Disinfected.

CHURCH LADY

Saved.

SHADOW

Isn't she your. . . your *sister*, a *sisterwoman*? Like you, she bleeds and rides the current of the moon.

RAPPER

I ain't into that women's lib stuff? That's for white women and lesbians.

Talking about the mystic qualities of the menstrual cycle and shit when it ain't nothing but a monthly pain in the butt.

BUPIE

I don't know. I think there's something to this menstrual awareness. It is our initiation into womaness and we all have our initiation stories.

RAPPER

Get a grip girl. It's biological function.

MUSLIM SISTER

There are those that believe that the period preceding a woman's cycle is when she is at her most powerful, capable of great feats even physic phenomena, and that suppressing those powers results in the pain and discomfort men have labeled PMS.

RAPPER

Y'all trippin.

MUSLIM SISTER

it started when I was twelve
this oneness with Moon

cycle of lunacy
and the issuing of majestic
purple on porcelain
 stains to be washed
 down a construct

(**CHURCH LADY** chimes in. They join left hands, hold them high and face the audience, smiling in some sort of Victorian dance movement.)

MUSLIM SISTER and CHURCH LADY

 I am labeled unclean
like the blessed first Whore
Creatress Mem-Aleph
Mother of bloody clay
soaking earth with the
spring of her loin

RAPPER

Its contagious!

MUSLIM SISTER, CHURCH LADY and HOOCHIE

(Keeps speaking uninterrupted)

I now walk
Moonwise
in step
with my sisters
together
measuring time

(excerpted from "Womb-one" by Sonya Pouncy)

HOOCHIE

(Steps forward)
uncomfortably
and not w/o fear
mami used to brag
to her sisters
when a daughter
began to bleed
her earnest attempts
to will us free
to enjoy our bodies
resulted in frantic searches
for tampons
lost in virgin caverns

MOMMA

(Chimes in and MOMMA looks back to her smiling in agreement.)
in loud talks and laughter
over kitchen chrome and formica
tales of seduction
about hairy places, shaved clean
of men's tastes and women's pleasures

BUPPIE

(Remorseful)
countered by the anguish of childbirth
the endless weight of children,
a perpetual paring knife,
held at the base of
every wanton clitoris

RAPPER

and wearied reminders
against wearing white,
taking baths or walking
too far
admidst urgent warnings
to wad each "soiled" napkin
in thick sheaths of newspaper
to be burned
in tin cans
out back

HOOCHIE

before the smell
could give us away.

(excerpted from *"Warrior Woman's Wounderous Flow"* by Esperanza Cintron)

MUSLIM SISTER

(Looks to BUPPIE)
the scent of our wanting
flowers the earth in ten months
each bloom mirrors our past
expands the boundary
of our eternity
(*"Womb-one"* by Sonya Pouncy)

RAPPER

Enough of this bleeding shit. It ain't even about that. Sisters have to be responsible for their own actions too. Just like everybody else. And when one of them represents themselves in a fucked up way or tries to fuck over me, they go by the way side just like the next motherfucker.

SHADOW

Scapegoat?

RAPPER

No. It's just that she makes me look bad, makes people think I'm like her, caters to the stereotype.

MOMMA

And you don't, with your baggy FuBu Coogie wearing self.

RAPPER (to MOMMA)
Baby maker, Aunt Jemima.

MUSLIM SISTER
And me? Veil wearing, brain washed slave to some man.

BUPPIE
And me? Oreo, white girl, sell out, female Clarence Thomas.

CHURCH LADY
Jesus freak, crazy Bible toter, hymn singing hick.

The women look to each other and begin to laugh, loud, hard, knee smacking hard. Still laughing, they begin calling each other names: slut, ho', bitch, red bone, tar baby, witch, dyke, butch, hag, hussy, wench, harlot, spinster, housewife, mammy, secretary, janitress, ballbuster, strumpet, cheerleader, etc. circling in mock antagonism, but laughing, hugging and collapsing on each other as they run out of names eventually calling each other totally unrelated words like book, chair, nose, shoe, eye, chin, leaf, bicycle, paper clip.

SHADOW sits on the side lines, just outside of the circle of women, slips her hood off revealing that she is also the **LITTLE GIRL**, studying, marveling at the women. As the women finally collapse, laughing, exhausted and relieved, the **LITTLE GIRL/SHADOW** rises to face the audience.

SHADOW/LITTLE GIRL

One lost its music
Stuck on a lo-o-o-w note
Hurling angry stones
whipping ensemble sounds to silence.
One lost her music
fell in a vat of attitude
cried bitter tears cascading
 on her sisters.
Listening in solitude
she heard the scattling
on the tongues of the ones
who heard her despair
She scatted
and scatted
and scatted
and found her music.
Her tongue lifted,
joined the chorus of her sisters
Who had heard the tongue
of the one
who lost her music.

(*"Tongues"* by Efua Korantema)

SCENE SEVEN

The women are all on stage engaged in various tasks. **BUPPIE**, reading some papers, paces as she reads. **MOMMA** is folding scarves that are bundled into a clothes basket. **RAPPER**, counting some money, goes back and forth across the stage as though she is looking for something, maybe a bus or a friend, and **CHURCH LADY** peers into her pocketbook. The all seem focused on what they are doing. The **SHADOW** has her clipboard taking notes. The **MUSLIM SISTER** is talking intently to **HOOCHIE**. **HOOCHIE** listens, shakes her head, no. Sometimes they gesticulate animatedly. **MUSLIM SISTER** takes **HOOCHIE**'s hand and walks with her to the front of the stage. **HOOCHIE** is reluctant, but follows.

MUSLIM SISTER

(To **HOOCHIE**)

There i was a North American ice sculpture made stark like a weathered statue. Eroded justice beating torrents of hail against my skin like sandstone particles swept into a holocaust of wind.

(**HOOCHIE** and the **MUSLIM SISTER** embrace. **HOOCHIE** looks to watch, then goes off stage.)

MUSLIM SISTER

There i was an excavation of polar ends ether mined then reduced to neopolymers, new plastic mummies-onyx touch experimentation

There i was looking into myself with zero visibility. The frost from King James' version as blinding as vapors of liquid nitrogen. (**MOMMA** drapes scarves on altar.)

i was a synthetic element on the periodic table of new world politics, the black snow queen-atomic mass unit equaling 400 years of winter. a walking mausoleum, aching to remember my name (Each woman picks up a scarf and drapes it over her shoulders.)

There i was trying to shatter the sound zone of silence that scratches across a landscape of colonized amoebas. i was a colonized amoebae, an isolated cell of thought, a concept frozen in the memory of global wails. (The women begin to move stretching arms in slow motion, washing themselves.)

There i was listening into myself resenting the howl of empty sets, bellowing through these vast urban tundras

SHADOW

(Call to prayer.) Alla It-u-Ak bar. . .

(The other women line up in two diagonal rows, with body-length spaces between them, and put scarves on heads. They listen attentively. The lights dim, become muted, a space above the women, golden. The shadow remains still.)

MUSLIM SISTER

i turned to the sun (Women look to the “golden” spotlight and raise their hands toward it.) it gave me what no man or religion could, the taste of myself melting into a liquid bath of praise

SHADOW

(Call to prayer.) Allah-u-Akbar. . .

(When the women hear the word east, they do a military pivot to the right to face the audience. After the pivot, the **HOOCHIE** dances on to stage in the guise of the long-necked bird. When her dance is complete, she remains on stage and takes her position in the prayer line.)

MUSLIM SISTER

And so five times a day with a solar hand of peace i make resolutions **east** like an unsteady ballerina and do the dance of a **long neck bird** who tucks her throat into herself for a circle of completion.

SHADOW

Allah-u-Akbar. (Call to prayer.)

MUSLIM SISTER

The call to prayer was an unfamiliar seduction. Behind closed eyelids, (The other women close their eyes and place their hands across their upper waists.) meeting the number **1** with my head kissed to the earth i was winged and flying into a galaxy of midnights greeted by bowing stars, flashing submission of what i have yet to know

ALL WOMEN

Allah-u-Ak bar

(They lift their thumbs behind ears, hands on each side of their heads, out stretched. Sisters drop to kneeling position with those in the front row, going down first, creating a wave. As the **MUSLIM SISTER** speaks they touch their heads to the floor and remain until she completes her prayer with, “where it all began.”)

MUSLIM SISTER

and with the kneel of a prostrating circus mammal i returned to the consummation of unity between head and earth and traveled the rewind of history upon the prayers of Abraham and African deities to the number **1** where it all began

All sisters

Allah-ur-Akbar (They rise, thumbs behind their ears, hands on floor at their sides.)

MUSLIM SISTER

like a geometric tone, point or dot
playing into my pupil

(The sisters, still on their knees, lean to the right or left, whichever is applicable, staring into the eyes of an adjacent sister.)

like staring into myself

facing the capacity of Allah

In the 1/1 meter
meter of angels
where the downbeat is a flame
i am condensed into an atom of light
an ultimate photon
where head and earth merge
into a shape of radiant godness

(Sisters rise, say As Sa laam A lai kum, embrace one another, cheek to cheek, Wa lai kum Sa laam, and remove scarves dropping them into the laundry basket near the altar.)

(*"Why Islam?"* by Semaj)

THE HOUSE LIGHT COMES UP FOR THE INTERMISSION.

SCENE EIGHT

A whimpering is heard in the background and the light searches the stage for the sound. It finds the **LITTLE GIRL** huddled on the floor clutching a blanket and a black shoe box with **UNCLE** painted on its side. "The Inflated Tear" by Roland Kirk begins to play as the child rises.

LITTLE GIRL

They asked about my pain and I told them about how I couldn't get anything right. I couldn't do anything right. My life was mapped out, how I was supposed to act, what I was supposed to be when I grew up. The only person who ever asked me what I really wanted was Uncle. He asked me what I wanted to be. He wasn't like the others, he always had time for me. But I had to escape. I always felt dirty.

So I escaped into big books with pictures. Art books. Seascapes. The sounds of the neighbor fixing the roof. There was always music. Music that was beautiful, music that was ugly, that was wild, that made sense and didn't. Music that covered up sadness like a big warm hug or a giant blue blanket of sleeping pills.

You see, I had to split myself. I mean, I was a child, and "children speak when spoken to and should be seen and not heard." You know, I couldn't talk to anyone.

He would come into the room and my heart would jump from fear and . . . and bounce across the floor. He would put me on his lap and say, "You have butterfly eyes," and hug me and then, "Give Uncle a kiss." I would kiss him on the cheek. (She dips her hand into the box and pulls out face paint and begins to paint her face white. She continues to apply makeup throughout the remaining monologue until one side of her face looks like a doll.)

One day he grabbed my face and stuck his nasty, fat tongue into my mouth. I remember running and spitting and gagging. I felt dirty. Then one day Mommy and Daddy left me with him and he split me in two with his fingers. (She pulls a pair of blood splattered latex gloves from the box and puts them on.)

He always liked slow music. I was a **LITTLE GIRL**. He came into the room and said I was good girl, that I was his favorite and we were going to play dress up and doctor. He stroked my hair and unbraided it. (She unbraids one of her braids.) He said I was as beautiful as any woman in the house and he

wouldn't tell Mommy if I put on her lipstick. He ran his hands over my chest and said I'd be big enough to wear Mommy's underthings soon.

Then he said, "Let's dance." I stood on his shoes and wrapped my arms around his legs while we did a two step.

Then he painted my mouth. (She applies lipstick, angrily.) I hated his touch. He ran his big sweaty hands over my legs and I was crying, God knows I was shaking so bad. I was crying and kept saying, "Please don't hurt me." And he held me down on the couch, his fist tight on the collar of my dress and he smelled thick, like whiskey and smoke, the smell that fills up the room at big people's birthday parties. He was kneeling next to the couch and his mouth went down *there* and he said, "Now we're gonna play doctor." And he split me in two with his fingers and my head separated from my body and my body crumbled and time disappeared and disappeared and Mommy and Daddy came home and a fight broke out.

(She lays on the floor and covers herself with the blanket.) I was so ashamed and embarrassed and Mommy was crying and screaming at me and I just wanted to hide and to die. (She pulls the cover up over her shoulders and head and assumes the fetal position.)

Lights go down, but not out.

SCENE NINE

The LITTLE GIRL climbs out from under the blanket and leaves it center stage, front. It resembles a small, dark body. As she joins the other women who are spread across the stage in a broad and somewhat staggered semicircle. The lights come up.

LITTLE GIRL

hearing only tears
dropping like bath water
cleansing only that which
no other can cleanse

and tho i am sterile

i can still run my fingers

over the dirty parts of me

i re-create the images
causing as much pain as he

and after scrubbing myself
more raw than the last time

i let the dirty water out
and start again. . .

(*"and afterward. . .the bathing"* by Sonya Pouncy)

HOOCHIE

On my way here
I passed a dead cat
striped gray fur
squished in the road
my effort to avoid him
only added a wet
red tire tract to its flank
and I thought of the pain
I've endured knowing you

(*"3/17/97"* by Esperanza Cintron)

MUSLIM SISTER

Lashes flutter over ocular flame
I see you, eye of the moon
watching me bathe in
midnight's milky stickiness
rolling in

Move closer to the chimneys
and lend me your ear.
I have many secrets
to tell about this place.

I speak in crystalline tongues.

Don't float your crossed soul
away from me.
I haven't yawned in
the charred black of night.

Moon? Moon?

Are you listening

to me?

(*"Talking in Fog"* by Aurora Harris)

RAPPER

it started when I was twelve
this oneness with Moon
cycle of lunacy
and the issuing of majestic
purple on porcelain
 stains to be washed
 down a construct

I am labeled unclean
like the blessed first Whore
Creatress Mem-Aleph
Mother of bloody clay
soaking earth with the
spring of her loin

I now walk
Moonwise

in step
with my sisters
together
measuring time
we Bitch Goddesses with
thirteen faces and
desecrated temples

having naked heads
we enter
holy places
boldly
bringing soma ambrosia
this divine drink
this nectar-a gift
of Cunti and Ma-nu

we-original triad
three sided mystery
and strongest of structures
balance earth delicately
on the tips
of our clitorae

the scent of our wanting
flowers the earth in ten months
each bloom-
a mirror of our past
the reaching boundary
of our eternity

(*"Womb-one"* by Sonya Pouncy)

BUPPIE

after you drive your truck through me
I will not settle peacefully like dust on a road

I will not
be a bioengineering experiment
my dummy head thrashing the windshields
of european cars

I will not
be turned into a future find for an archaeologist
students pondering the holes in my fossilized cranium

I will not
shrink into a bowl of scarlet sauce
and pretend that it is not my blood

I will not

forgive you for grinding the skeletons
of small boned women

I will not
play good morning heartache

I will not
be patient as the prayer plant that
awaits the shine of justice

I will not
carry the pain of exaggerated expressions in
a papoose of bitterness

I will not
sacrifice one regret when the spirit of
crazy horse rises in me and I ride
jihad style across town
to your favorite bar

I will not
hesitate or quiver
while you stare cross-eyed
into a phallic symbol
of exploding bullets

I will not
hesitate or quiver when your face transforms
comedy to tragedy as you realize
that the taste of ale is your last supper

I will not
settle peacefully like dust on a road
after you have driven a truck through me

I will not

(*"I Will"* by Semaj)

CHURCH LADY

into/your/arms/i/run
the/rhythm/of/you/surrounds/me

i/am/made/whole/i/am/made/whole
in/your/midst

barefoot/healed/angry/women
cover/me/with/your/rage

let/me/consume/it/as/delicacies
and/drink/lavishly/of/the/love/you

save/only/for/children/you/wish/unborn

barefoot/healed/angry/women
let/me/love/in/whole/parts
let/me/be/sister/and/friend

barefoot/healed/angry/women
let/us/begin/a/new/revolution
that/begins/with/the/uncovering/of
truth

barefoot/healed/angry/women
beauty/is/in/your/midst

barefoot
healed
angry
women

(*"barefoot/angry/healed/women"* by wanda olugbala)

MOMMA

In homage to the healing of the night skies,
and to stars brought close enough to kiss and
touch, stars - to store our dreams
into words
as soothing and satiating appendages
of our spirits,
to words
that bring us home. . .
as we spin,
as we spin,
as we spin, as we spin
turning into this, our far most
difficult journey,
turning into knowledge of ourselves
as music,
moving a little closer into
our own magic. . .

(from *"Magic"* by Marsha Carruthers)

The lights go out suddenly at the word "magic" and the soft sounds of a kalimba and a rainmaker permeate the air and bleed into the soft hum of a choir of female voices (no words just sounds, melodic, not shrill) which taper to one lone voice.

SCENE TEN

The sound of humming is heard amidst the smattering of words. "My grandma and yo' grandma sittin' by the fire. My grandma told yo grandma gonna set yo . . . talkin 'bout hey nah, hey nah. . ." A soft blue light lands on HOOCHIE who is sitting on the floor braiding the LITTLE GIRL's hair. The girl snuggles between the woman's legs contentedly, sporadically humming and singing along with HOOCHIE. She completes the braid she is working on and stands, slowly, with difficulty. The LITTLE GIRL looks on silently and with great interest. (Hugs or pats girl's head. The sound of the rainmaker and the kalimba permeate this piece. The sound is slow and rhythmic.)

HOOCHIE

Ahwahyee
Awahyee
Ahwahwheehaha

is the dark hand of glass
drop of sorghums
Cesaire's cana fistulas
sad haired
knots of twine

Ahwahyeh-haha

muscle pummel Alabama
heartbeats soft and troubled
warrior arms and peach tree charms
landscapes dusted with grains of

Oooshaayey
Oooshaayey

come see: yey!
come stay: yey!
come touch: yey!
(some such): yey.

Ahwayeh-haha
Ahwahyeh-haha
Oooshaayey
Oooshaayey

toothache break day
sorghum soul say hey
turtle shell engraved wid seed
sorghum soul mix dat and bleed
bleed oo drop-lets dive in deep
hurt my head and interrupt sleep
sorghum soul I hear you weep
Ooom lay yeh hey
Ooom lay yeh

see back dere sing deep in me
backwater tongue mix it up deep
stir dat stew and fan de steam

fill up nostril, blow it out free
cast you prayer, tendril dat need
sweat dat body, make de hands bleed
hasten dat bread wid underground speed

Ahwahyee
Ahwahyee
Ahwahwheehaha

sorghum soul got plenty o tears
chastening rod of suff'ring years
ghostwater tide rush mountains of fears
moisten dat mouf from lock-back cheers
mend my child coz she' so dear
git dat rag fo to wipe she eyes clear.

Oom lay yeh hey
Ooom lay hey.

(*"The Incantation"* by Leslie Reese)

The **LITTLE GIRL** rises resuming the humming and begins to pull long colored ribbons from the waist and shoulders of **HOOCHIE**. The **BUPPIE** and **MOMMA** join her. The three dance around her like a may pole careful not to entangle her, then they begin a big thick braid with **HOOCHIE**, smiling, at the crown. The braiding dance is graceful, playful and is a joyful release. The soft sounds of a kalimba can be heard as the women dance toward the altar and drape the braid around its base. With that they laugh and hug each other and the spotlight wanders reluctantly away.

SCENE ELEVEN

Spotlight finds the **College student** still holding the condom box in one hand and the condom (rather gingerly) in the other. She reads:

COLLEGE STUDENT

To insert the female condom, find a comfortable position. Try standing with one foot up on a chair, or sit with knees apart, or squat down. (She simulates some of these positions, briefly, testing.) If you wish, add extra lubricant. (She looks to audience.)

Step three. Hold the pouch with the open end hanging down. While holding the outside of the pouch, squeeze the inner ring with your thumb and middle finger. Place your index finger between the thumb and middle finger and keep squeezing the inner ring. Still squeezing the condom with your three fingers, with your other hand, spread the lips and insert the squeezed ring as in Fig. D. If the condom is too slippery to insert, start over. (She examines the condom, presses the ring together, testing its flexibility, then continues reading.)

Now push the inner ring and the pouch the rest of the way up. (She is slowly squeezing her legs together.) You will feel the pubic. . . (The spotlight wanders away leaving her reading intently.) bone by curving your index finger inside the vagina. Take your time and push the condom up, up, up until you can feel the bone. Make sure it is inserted straight, not twisted.

Lights go down.

SCENE TWELVE

The spotlight finds **CHURCH LADY** (front, stage left) with her back to the audience. She has been watching the scene and as the light begins to focus on her it begins with the crown of her hat. Shaking her head, she moves to the altar, places her Bible on it and then reaches into her pocketbook and pulls out a rag doll. She caresses it lovingly and then props it up against the Bible. After making sure that her offering is secure, she turns to face the audience.

CHURCH LADY

I don't hold with pagan beliefs. Candles. Incantations. Smudges and incense. But I don't know. Who really knows? That **RAPPER** girl talking about Christianity is a tool of our oppressors and that I ought to be looking to the orisas for my spirituality, that I need to search for my foremothers. Well, maybe, but my grandma introduced me to the church. Read to me from the Bible. In those days everybody read from the Bible. . . What the church did for me? At first, it was the music, that *healing* music. My **MOMMA** used to say, "choir sho' make me feel good, but so do Sam Cook." (she laughs) Grandma would shake her head and purse her lips, and **MOMMA** would whisper in my ear, "Honey, it's the same thing. . . amen." (The other women gives her an "Amen" from the darkness. She laughs a good one, stops, then ponders the audience for minute.) Sister, sister. (She shakes her head.)

Been kneeling all my life
and still don't know how to pray,
mouthing ritual and repetition
to appease demons,"
my hands grasp air
vainly shaping my ragged road.
With stern back and eyes wide
she says she knows
her spiritual self
being the fruit of many wombs
a mesh of beliefs and
rites and histories and pasts
of candles and altars
saints strewn with chicken blood
all neatly melded
into a smooth round stone
an amulet resting on her breasts
for safe-keeping,
I envy her, but know
it isn't true
the words too easily spoken
as though rehearsed
ritual and repetition
to appease demons
and she, too young
a me some time ago
staring uncertainty down.

Then the fervor was enough
to convince me
and most of those who heard.
"Been kneeling all my life,"
I repeat,
"And still I'm searching
haints riding me
while I dream of ancestors
vile and kind, naive and knowing
whispering their changing names
for comfort
demanding guidance
yet, fearing they're demand
cowering, but driven
by hope
still searching
for solace
for the right way to pray

(from "Sister, Sister" by Esperanza Cintron)

(She turns back to take a long last look at her rag doll. The light ponders her for a minute then moves on leaving her in darkness.)

SCENE THIRTEEN

The sound of a drum and a rainmaker rises, softly, but persistently. The light slides to **MOMMA** (no longer pregnant in this scene) and **BUPPIE** who gaze into the mirror, intently. **MOMMA** smiles at the mirror then back at **BUPPIE** who looks a little puzzled. **MOMMA** stands and does an "I'm so pretty," cross between *West Side* story and Katherine Dunham twirl, still holding the hand mirror. **BUPPIE** stands and watches somewhat amused, but encouraging. **MOMMA** smiles at the other women who are seated in a cluster near the altar. She looks into the mirror, nods, then shows the face of the mirror to the seated women. She goes to **BUPPIE** and pulls her by the hand, but she resists.

BUPPIE

(Gesturing toward the seated women.)

They are
my sisters. Some were raised that way
to be good girls, wives, Westernized
whores, saints and Madonnas, the cleaners,
the cooks, snot wipers, supporters.
I've seen them around
worn corn brooms
leaning against walls
they wear the latest eye catching colors
bright yellows, blues, reds
of softeners and detergents.
Their husbands cheat
and their boyfriends leave them.

MOMMA

They are my friends. They leave themselves
as whole cigarettes burning without
another drag. . . .

BUPPIE

They are fine indicators of
space interrupted. Their legs are arms and
mouths of men, babies and toddlers caught
in limbo of wanting and wanting.

MOMMA

I've seen them sob over bones of past lives
their faces the color of pinched cheek red.

BUPPIE

(eagerly)
Sometimes they are
blue vases of sunflowers
necks bent from the weight of
unfulfilled yearning. Their tethers are skillets,
dirty plates and tumblers. Another
sink full, another spoon.
They harvest creation and
store it in corners.
They dip fingers in paint or ink
Their dresses are canvas or unbleached paper.
They become sunset
They become trees
They become oils, acrylic and gesso.
They turn into peacocks
Needles and glass beads.
a line
a line
a metaphor
a stanza

MOMMA

a stanza
a stanza
a sonnet or two.
We are.

(excerpted from "*They Are*" by Aurora Harris)

(MOMMA nods knowingly to BUPPIE who steps back leaving the floor to
MOMMA. She goes to sit with the other women. Then, she goes to the audi-
ence, looks again into the mirror and smiles and smiles to the audience, showing
them the mirror. The mirror is facing the audience when she says:)

MOMMA

This is who I am. See.

(The sound of the drum and the rainmaker rise as the women dance and spin, not fervently but sprightly and with the abandon of children.)

MOMMA

The drum washes over me
like the wind and the ocean
I am aquiver w/green growth
cool leaves sprout from beneath
 my armpits
and tickle the crevices btwn my
 fingers and toes
My daughters spin around me
drop then spring
up and around
my body wide
spread by time and living
the flesh, yet firm
flutters and ripples
in the rhythms
that flow around us
like warm water
the scent of seaweed and algae
we laugh
at the wonder that is life

("On Becoming Whole" by Esperanza Cintron)

(She prances a bit more, moves over to the altar and, lovingly places the mirror in the center of the altar. Then she sits down in front of the altar, facing the audience and hugs herself heartily.)

THIS IS THE LAST SCENE

The music stops suddenly and the women who are scattered across the stage move forward to stand facing the audience. The stage is lit intermittently giving the faces of the women a glow.

BUPPIE

Its unscientific and it makes a girl cry.

LITTLE GIRL

I dreamed I was God bearing light

CHURCH LADY

I dream myself righteous unafraid and unbound

HOOCHIE

Heathen and black I sat perched for sound

MUSLIM SISTER

for the sound of my mothers bearing children and scars

MOMMA

for the sound of my fathers pulling dreams out of stars

BUPPIE

for the sound of my kindred making art, making change

RAPPER

for the sound of the earth rearrange

CHURCH LADY

rearrange

LITTLE GIRL

rearrange

MOMMA

rearrange

CHURCH LADY

rearrange itself mightily through gospels and dance

RAPPER

rearrange itself thoroughly through talk's happenstance
rearrange itself feelingly to inhabit the spirit

LITTLE GIRL

but waiting was sacrilege/won't nothing come near it

Group

won't nothing come near it
won't nothing come near it

HOOCHIE

won't nothing come near it cos its fresher than fine
won't nothing come near it cos its drunker than wine

MUSLIM SISTER

won't nothing come near it/its too big for one's eye

BUPPIE

its unscientific and it makes a girl cry

Group

it makes a girl cry

HOOCHIE

it makes a girl cry (to be) salty without water

MOMMA

it makes a girl cry to be a relentless daughter

CHURCH LADY

it makes a girl cry to be ignorant and weak
plodding nightly and daily to learn how to speak

LITTLE GIRL

how to speak

HOOCHIE

how to speak

MOMMA

how to speak

MUSLIM SISTER

how to speak with a tongue unfettered by complaint

RAPPER

how to speak like a child splashing paint

BUPPIE

how to speak soft love unashamed, unafraid

Group

trying to whip up some music that's never been played.

(Text of the last scene is "*Its unscientific and it makes a girl cry*" by Leslie Reese)

(With this, the women throw magic dust, ribbons and confetti out onto the audience.)

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