

*The History of Sexuality: A Research-Creation Model for Generating Ethical Representations of  
Queerness through Verbatim Theatre*

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## ABSTRACT

*The History of Sexuality: A Research-Creation Model for Generating Ethical Representations of Queerness through Verbatim Theatre*

Dane Stewart

*The History of Sexuality* is a two-act play in the genre of fictionalized verbatim theatre. The play was developed through a collaborative research-creation project engaging members of Montreal's queer communities. Findings from the research-creation project suggest a methodological approach for creating queer fictionalized verbatim theatre which (1) exposes the inevitable impact of authorial subjectivity on processes of scholarly knowledge-production, and (2) suggests, through analysis of a research and playwrighting process, possibilities for ethical consideration in collaborating with and representing others in theatrical performance.

*I would like to acknowledge the contributions and support of my project coordinator, stage manager, and friend, Michelle Soicher, without whom this play would not exist.*

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*The main goal shifts at some point in everyone's life. The childhood goal is simple: have fun. Go out and play some ball! Have some fun! Then one day it changes. Life becomes about supporting each other. Cause everyone is always going through something. The summer after I finished university a good friend died. He had been at my house the night before, having some beers. He slept on my couch. I still remember, so clearly, I squeezed his neck when I said goodnight, and I remember the meat of his neck, warm on my palm. The day he died. That was the turning point for me, from there on out it's been about being there for each other. And maybe when I get better at this whole support thing, when I can hold myself up. Then maybe I can think about how it used to be.*

Madeleine, Act Two, Scene One, *The History of Sexuality*

### **Preface: Depressed, Anxious, and Obsessed with Foucault**

I first encountered Michel Foucault in January 2015 when assigned *Society Must be Defended* in a communications seminar centering on discourses of race and the body. Immediately hooked, I spent the rest of that year, followed by the remainder of my MA thesis, reading and unpacking Foucault's long winded and occasionally incomprehensible theories. Michel Foucault spread quickly into all spheres of my life, flowing with ease from my academic world, to my artistic world, to my social and personal worlds. The preconceived map I carried with myself into grad school, a map concerned with queerness and theatre and the ethics of representation, underwent a Foucauldian mutation not uncommon for someone early in their academic career. The end result of this mutation can be seen as a stain, blatantly vibrant: red wine on white cotton, shouting from the surface of not only my thesis work, but from the totality of my life while undertaking this project.

It is a complex problem to separate one's self from one's research and to locate the line between productive self-reflexivity and self-indulgence. When the self becomes autoethnographically represented in a scholarly-artistic process, these are the criticisms it face, for it is challenging to ensure that personal narrative is analyzed and criticized to a degree which can be considered scholarly. Tami Spry defines autoethnography as a "self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self with others in social contexts (710)." This thesis is a written analysis of a research-creation project I undertook in the winter and spring of 2016. The project involved organizing interviews and focus groups with queer folks in Montreal and using their words to create a collaborative play about queerness in the contemporary moment. However, the

thesis is also about me and my personal life at the time of its creation.

During my research-creation process I was suffering from short and long episodes of anxiety and depression. A number of factors may have contributed to this: working full-time while attending school, a mass exodus of my social network to other cities, a new emotionally manipulative BDSM relationship, etc. Though the play was intended to explore collaboration and ethics in the creation of verbatim theatre, the resulting script could just as easily be mobilized as a commentary on the effects of poor mental health on scholarly research. The play turned into an outlet for many thoughts and feelings, allowing me to work through emotions and also give them authority. The ability for me to represent my thoughts and feelings as real and meaningful were paramount to my dealing with certain situations in my life. The primary example of this can be read through one of the characters, named Craig. While Craig's narrative sutured aspects from a range of range of participants, his human pup play relationship with Martin, a Dom, was a reflection of my relationship at the time. Beginning in December 2015, I had been in a polyamorous BDSM relationship with two men where I took on the role of their dog. I see this relationship as producing two very distinct forms of anxiety in my life: (1) A sexual anxiety tied to my new identification in the BDSM sphere. Though well versed in sexual discourse, it is fair to expect some anxiety when admitting to yourself and to others an interest in "taboo" sexual practices. (2) A relationship anxiety tied to the way I was treated by my dominants. I will not delve into the details of this relationship, though they are overtly discussed in the play itself, but it will suffice to say that I was treated poorly. I frequently had my role as a submissive used to justify a lack of communication and had many of my attempts at open communication labelled as "over dramatic" which made me question my own sense of self. Navigating a relationship is hard enough, but there is no map for navigating a queer, polyamorous, BDSM relationship.

In writing *The History of Sexuality* I was able to represent both of these anxieties onstage. Though the act of writing these representations may have had some therapeutic elements, I believe the stronger benefit to have come from the reactions of others to these representations. By having others witness the representation of my own truth, I was able to assuage my anxieties. Foucault describes this process in a different way, "I will call truth act the part that may be defined (1) by the subject's role as operator of the alethurgy, (2) by the subject's role as spectator of it, and (3) by the subject's role as the object itself of the alethurgy. In other words, in the

procedure of manifestation of truth the subject may be the active agent thanks to which the truth comes to light (*On the Government* 81).” Consider for a moment, the representations I wrote as truth acts. Truth operates through its witnessing, and the witness of a truth act has an important role to play. The witness of a truth act can interact with that act in one of two ways: they can disavow this act, like my partners had done when I had voiced my concerns about our relationship; or, they can endorse this act. I believe it was this tacit endorsement of my own experiences which I was seeking through representing these anxieties in the play. Foucault states that in truth claim sites, the subject is integral to the production of truth. I would argue that the opposite is true as well: in the procedure of manifestation of truth, the truth claim may be the active agent thanks to which the subject comes to light. All three levels of subject: operator of truth claim, witness of truth claim, and object of truth claim, become subject through their interaction with the truth claim. I believe that this extends beyond my autoethnographic experience and that there exists a great deal of power in witnessing one’s own truth claim given space, weight, and importance onstage.

My thesis project, which will be dissected in detail through these chapters, was always supposed to be a theatrical play. It was always supposed to focus on queer identities and it was always supposed to examine how collaboration could be mobilized to generate ethical artistic representation. It was not, however, supposed to cast Michel Foucault as its ethereal protagonist and it was not supposed to be infused with my mental health woes. Yet, after months of research followed by months of script development, my play, aptly titled *The History of Sexuality*, autoethnographically centred on a graduate seminar studying the work of Michel Foucault.

This thesis is made up of four chapters providing a comprehensive analysis of my two-act thesis project, *The History of Sexuality*. I wrote the play in the winter of 2016 and presented it to the public in the form of a staged reading in May 2016. Chapter One locates verbatim and documentary theatre within the context of neoliberal globalization, specifically focusing on practices of artists working from the nineties to the present day. Chapter Two delineates my ethical considerations when embarking on this process. Chapter Three offers my reflections on the methodology used to create the play and suggests improvements for others seeking to create within similar forms. Chapter Four is a character and script analysis, examining what was learned about queer truths and queer identities through this research-creation project. This thesis

concludes with a brief reflection on the future of the piece and directions for continued research.

## Chapter One: Making Theatre in the Age of Anxiety

We live in an era wrought with anxiety. In the introduction to this thesis I made it clear that I suffer from anxiety at an individual level, thus my observation of global anxiety comes from the standpoint of an individual embedded within its throes. Outside of my subjective analysis there are many others who have observed this global manifestation of anxiety. In 2014, the Institute for Precarious Consciousness (IPC) published an online manifesto-style essay theorizing global anxiety to be the dominant affect of contemporary capitalism (“Six Theses on Anxiety”). The IPC argues that anxiety was formerly localized to certain facets of identity, sexuality for example. However, alongside global awareness and new technological imperatives of communication and surveillance, specifically social media, anxiety now permeates the entirety of the social field (“Six Theses on Anxiety”). My play, *The History of Sexuality*, can be easily read as an artistic response to the anxiety I experience on a near daily basis, but in order to fully understand *how* the play means, I believe it necessary to consider my position within the context of globalized anxiety. In this first chapter, I will examine documentary and verbatim theatre techniques from the nineties to the contemporary moment, specifically examining how these genres have been mobilized in response to global affects of the previous three decades. I argue that by situating the artistic trends of this genre within the context of neoliberal globalization we can understand what some theatre-makers are attempting to accomplish with documentary and verbatim techniques in the contemporary moment.

As a phenomenon, globalization, “a process of knitting together economic, political, and social systems across nations (Baines 30),” is neither good nor bad, but rather an inevitable progression in a world with ever-improving human technologies of travel, trade, and communication. However, the effects of globalization over the last three decades have been intrinsically wrapped up in dominant economic systems of the neoliberal era. As neoliberal tendencies for privatization of social services, previously available in the expanded post-WWII welfare states of many countries, occur alongside international expansions of corporate rights, globalization has resulted in “a concentration of economic, political, and social power in the hands of international corporations and those who benefit from the commercialization of everyday life (Baines 30).” These conditions have resulted in the increased oppression, through marginalization, exploitation, cultural imperialism, and violence, of many individuals, groups,

and entire geopolitical populations. Judith Butler defines this state as one of *precarity*, “that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death (“Performativity, Precarity” ii).” The IPC argues that precarity, or the state of being precarious, is synonymous with anxiety itself (“Six Theses on Anxiety”). As neoliberalism continues its global expansion, increasing numbers of people are pushed into states of precarity and an increasing number of people across the globe live anxiously. Verbatim and documentary theatre, in many ways, offer a response to this global anxiety, simply by offering the possibility for lived experiences of precarity to be validated through onstage representation.

*The History of Sexuality*, the play, is located within this lineage of verbatim and documentary theatre which has been used to stage minoritized representations of precarious experiences throughout the expansion of neoliberal globalization. For my purposes, documentary theatre refers to theatre which is, “created from a specific body of archived material: interviews, documents, hearings, records, video, film, photographs, and the like (Martin 17),” whereas verbatim theatre performs the recorded words of other people, often obtained through interviews, transcribed, and inserted into a script. Of course, journalistic theatre borne of archival materials has been present across the globe for, at the very least, the last century. Current events and political struggles were animated by Mikhail Pustynin and the Theatre of Revolutionary Satire in early 21st century revolutionary Russia (Leach 82). Subsequently, from 1935 through 1939 the Federal Theatre leveraged a similar tactic in their Living Newspapers (Matthews 62). However, I will be specifically examining the genres of documentary and verbatim theatre as they have been mobilized across the globe during recent decades to promote social awareness and cross-cultural consciousness. In Australia, no fewer than seven theatre-makers in the early aughts utilized interview-based theatre techniques to tell the stories of asylum seekers trapped in the government’s mandatory refugee detention centres (Wake 103). In the United Kingdom in 2006, Janelle Reinelt reflected on her experience of seeing Robin Soans’ *Talking to Terrorists*, a play based on interviews with those affected by terrorism, and its relation to a number of verbatim plays popping up in Britain at the time, “Everybody recognizes that we live in theatricalized times (Reinelt 69).” Even in Putin-era Russia, Mark Lipovetsky and Birgit Beumers reflect on the emergence of documentary theatre as a counter-cultural response to a national

commercialization and glamourization of Russian postmodernism (294). In each of these instances, documentary and verbatim techniques are mobilized to give face and voice to the marginalized in a way which exposes the lived realities of precarity across the globe. It is a return to the words of the individual in order to render visible a structural problem: as the asylum seeker tells his story, he sheds light on Australia's inhumane treatment of refugees.

As well, artists working in both Canada and the United States exemplify the use of verbatim and documentary theatre over the past two decades to stage minoritized representations and tell stories of lived precarity. Demonstrating the potential for commercially successful documentary theatre, the Tectonic Theatre Project's *The Laramie Project* offers perhaps the most well-known example of the genre in their piece exploring the reactions of the town of Laramie, Wyoming to the brutal, homophobic murder of Matthew Shepard in 1998. Documentary theatre has seen growing success in Canada as well: Annabel Soutar's work with *Porte Parole* has garnered national attention through her approach, mirroring many aspects of investigative journalism in the selection of interview subjects and the critical use of archived materials. Concurrently, Andrew Kushnir's playwrighting with the Toronto-based company, Project: Humanity, garnered public recognition and critical acclaim for a production of *The Middle Place*, which used verbatim techniques to tell the stories of homeless youth in an effort to "set in motion a communal response to the circumstances of poverty enveloping their lives (Gallagher et al, 28)." It is clear that theatre practitioners across the globe are turning to documentary and verbatim theatre in order to address the pressing social issues emerging in the era of global anxiety.

In identifying this trend in theatre practice, it becomes necessary to pause and consider the possible reasons why it may be occurring. As stated earlier, the above-mentioned uses of verbatim and documentary theatre techniques occurred alongside rapid globalization and the proliferation of new technologies of communication and surveillance. By mobilizing the voices and stories of individuals, whether through verbatim text or through documented archival materials, theatre-makers are able to interrupt the dominant discourse of globalization and foreground a momentary return to local memory. Telling the stories of others, often to serve emancipatory social or political agendas, is not revolutionary in theatre and a cursory glance at any chapter of theatre history will reveal this has been a function of the medium throughout its

existence. New scripts are hardly necessary in the deployment of theatre as a political weapon as any number of texts from theatre history are frequently brought to life to service contemporary political goals: one can imagine a production of *Medea* servicing an anti-immigrant agenda, or a well-timed production of *King Lear* hinting at the instability of a tyrannical world leader. Additionally, theatre has a long history of direct emancipatory use: from Brecht's *verfremdungseffekt* distancing audiences from what Brecht identified as the emotionally coercive nature of Aristotelian tragedy (Boal 92), to Boal's uses of theatre of the oppressed to give those on the margins the tools to dismantle their own structures of oppression (Boal 44). The genres of verbatim and documentary are not unique because of their focus on the individual nor because of their anti-oppressive tendencies, for these qualities have been present throughout theatre history.

While verbatim and documentary theatre tell individual stories, these genres are distinguishable from others in the medium by two qualities: first, the methods used to collect and disseminate these stories rely on the archive or the documentation of verbatim text. I use the term archive here to refer not only to the traditional archive, books, films, journals, etc., but also to broadly reference the means of documentation used to capture the verbatim words integrated into a piece of verbatim theatre. While I am sure an entire thesis could be written on the reason how and why theatre foregrounding archival material has been mobilized at the millennial turn, my focus is on the second quality which distinguishes verbatim and documentary theatre from other works in the medium: (2) Because of the necessity for the playwright(s) to consult an archive or observe an interview, the playwright(s) inevitably come(s) into contact with others when writing these pieces. Documentary and verbatim theatre become very useful genres for staging a self-other dialogue. It is this critical contact between self and other which allow both verbatim and documentary theatre to respond to the social issues caused by globalization. As Carol Martin explains, this becomes about more than enacting history, in that "documentary theatre also has the capacity to stage historiography (17)." This critical encounter between self and other is paramount in framing the process for creating *The History of Sexuality*. In fact, it echoes one of my central research questions established at the onset of the project: how do we ethically write the Other?

In developing my approach for generation of ethical artistic representation of the other, I find it first necessary to reflect on my philosophical influences, namely the effects of

postmodernism on the ethics of scholarly knowledge-production. Laurel Richardson offers a nuanced definition centring postmodernism: “The core of postmodernism is the *doubt* that any method or theory, discourse or genre, tradition or novelty, has a universal and general claim as the “right” or the privileged form of authoritative knowledge. Postmodernism *suspects* all truth claims of masking and serving particular interests in local, cultural, and political struggles (517).” Relating to my own ethical approach, the most valuable part of Richardson’s definition is the concept of truth-as-claim, which stands in opposition to positivist and essentialist understandings of truth-as-fact. In Richardson’s definition, truth is always servicing a particular struggle; truth is a technology of power. Even the scholarly researcher produces and disseminates knowledge with a specific agenda, in service of a particular struggle. Under this logic, it is impossible for the researcher to carry out objective research. However, it is possible for the researcher to acknowledge the possible influences their subjectivity has on their research. Scholarly knowledge-production and verbatim and documentary theatre both have the capacity to account for subjective influence, and it is the *how* of this subjective accountability which is paramount to my own development of an ethical framework for creating *The History of Sexuality*.

Following the postmodern imperative to expose truth, not as a fact, but as a claim, a number of strategies emerged for acknowledging the influence of the researcher’s subjectivity on their research. One such strategy is the legitimization and increased importance of emotions in intellectual communities, labelled by Deborah Gould as the *emotional turn*. Gould writes of the emotional turn emerging from communities of gay men and lesbians following the heartbreaking irrationality of the AIDS crisis, “This is the terrain on which an *emotional turn* in the study of social movements and other forms of contentious politics has occurred [...] research in the emotional turn understands all human beings to be both rational and emotional, having the ability to reason, to think strategically, to assess and pursue their interests, to feel, and to emote (17).” In the emotional turn, rather than attempting to eliminate emotion from research in order to work exclusively in rational terms, researchers and artists employ a logic which assumes that emotion and rationality influence one another. Emotion becomes a lens for observation which accounts for subjectivity and, as Gould reflects, it is impossible to analyze social and political movements without accounting for the effect of emotion. Allowing space for emotion in academic and

creative research also facilitates conversations between self and other, or researcher and subject, as the self no longer needs to feign researcher objectivity with the narratives they encounter when coming in contact with the other.

Returning to the idea that truth is active, that truth *claims*, I posit that all truth claims are wrapped up in complex webs of emotion. The producer, the disseminator, and the witness/receiver of a truth claim all have some degree of emotional investment in the active truth claim. The interlocutory spaces produced by truth claims become sites of struggle and exchange of both emotion and rationality. As emotional-rational interlocutory “truth claim” sites experience the transformative burden of neoliberal globalization, they integrate into the existing dominant systems of power. Agathangelou et al. call these systems “affective economies” referring to, “the circulation and mobilization of feelings of desire, pleasure, fear, and repulsion utilized to seduce all of us into the fold of the state--the various ways in which we become invested emotionally, libidinally, and erotically in global capitalism’s mirages of safety and inclusion (122).” Expanding on Agathangelou et al., I argue that it is not emotion itself, nor even appeals to emotion, which are able to shape public opinion. Public opinion is shaped by affective economies, the integration of emotion into systems of truth exchange and the capitalization on these systems by individuals with the resources to produce and disseminate truth claims, though these truth claims are not claims of objective facts, but rather competing claims which are at once emotional and rational. As makers of theatre, we have the resources to produce and disseminate such truth claims and many examples of documentary and verbatim theatre productions from the last three decades suggest that theatrical artists are utilizing their resources to create space for truths and truth claims from marginalized individuals and communities.

Annabel Soutar is an excellent example of an artist using documentary theatre to give voice and legitimacy to marginalized truth claims. In 2015, Soutar premiered her most recent theatrical project, a piece of verbatim theatre called *The Watershed*. The piece is documentarian, interrogating the 2012 decision by Canada’s Harper administration to defund the Experimental Lakes Area (ELA), a network of lakes encompassing a unique set of ecosystems used for scientific research. Soutar’s piece follows the traditional documentarian approach by layering verbatim testimony from scientists, politicians, and journalists. What makes Soutar’s approach unique is the foregrounding of herself, her own authorship, in the project. While *The Watershed*

upholds the journalistic ethos of presenting facts and arguments from all sides of the debate, Soutar also writes her own family into the piece. She includes arguments with her husband, her difficulty maintaining funding for the piece, the environmental philosophies posited by her young children, and one-on-one conversations between herself and her conservative father. *The Watershed* can only be about the political discourse surrounding the ELA insofar as it can be about Soutar's own subjectivity. She uses narratives of family, of the day-to-day emotional challenges of existing, in order to seduce the audience into paying attention to the drab and dry political and scientific discourses surrounding the defunding of the ELA. Her play performs the ambivalence of the emotional versus the rational and uses this to fold her audience into an affective economy.

When I saw the play at Montreal's Centaur Theatre in December 2016, I was struck by one scene representing a conversation between Soutar and her children during a cross-Canada road trip to visit the oil sands in Alberta. In the scene, Soutar is encouraging her children to go interview a couple sitting near them in a restaurant. Before the children run off to question the couple Soutar reviews interviewer ethics, having her young kids explain how leading questions and personal bias can affect the interviewees' response. This simple scene presents a facet of mother-child familial narrative, wherein the mother imparts knowledge to her children, but wrapped up within this is an explanation of how researcher subjectivity affects documentary output. By foregrounding her role as playwright, she exposes the unavoidable biases and subjectivities of authorship. Rather than positioning truth as objective, she exposes truth as *de facto* serving the interests of groups or individuals.

Soutar's method of suturing personal narrative with archival material echoes the genealogical method developed by the central figure of *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault. In *Two Lectures* Foucault explains his genealogical method as dependent on two different categories of knowledge. First, *erudite knowledge*, which he describes as "those blocs of historical knowledge which were present but disguised within the body of functionalist and systematising theory and which criticism—which obviously draws upon scholarship—has been able to reveal (82)." Arguably, as our conceptualization of the archive broadens and of methods for engaging with the archive expand, we as academics and artists are able to emancipate some forms of erudite knowledge from their former restrictive classifications within various archival

formations. Foucault's second category is *popular knowledge* which he describes as "a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity (82)." Though studies of the "popular" are becoming more present and more accepted in the academy, it cannot be denied that the university has historically and systematically framed popular knowledges as less important than scholarly knowledges.

Annabel Soutar serves as an excellent example for understanding how documentary and verbatim techniques mobilize Foucault's genealogical suturing of the erudite and the popular. In *The Watershed* she uses the personal narrative of her own family (popular narrative) in order to expose the political web of power surrounding the ELA defunding (erudite narrative). Soutar uses familial narrative to service political interests. What emerges as important in this example, is that narrative and story are essential to Soutar's method. Narrative and story are extraordinarily useful theatrical techniques because they can be mobilized to give face and voice to structural issues which may otherwise be skimmed over by simple virtue of being uninteresting.

Techniques of narrative and storytelling also respond to another challenge facing the academy: the problem of dissemination. The knowledge wrapped up in the academy is enough, such that, were it to be liberated from the confines of our classrooms, libraries, and archives, it would radically alter the reality in which we live. The difficulty which has faced academics for decades is how to disseminate our research, our hypotheses and data, our theories and philosophies. How do we enable knowledge to pass into the public sphere? The leftist language used to describe intersectional oppression is fraught with academic jargon, and while academic jargon is neither good nor bad, it is definitive in its public inaccessibility. While there are many methods for distilling academic theory and disseminating it publicly, one which is resoundingly relevant following the emotional turn is through mobilizing narrative and story. In creating *The History of Sexuality*, one of my goals was to disseminate academic knowledge to the public through a form which was more accessible than the traditional written thesis.

I have now laid out a number of the systems and contexts within which verbatim and documentary theatre have been mobilized over the last three decades and how these are situated within the broader context of neoliberal globalization. As soon as a theatre-maker begins

working in a context which brings them in contact with the other, some sort of ethical framework must be established in order to mitigate the relationship between the parties involved in the creation process. The following chapter will move this conversation from the socio-political realm into the pragmatic realm of approaches for establishing an ethical relationship between self and other in verbatim and documentary theatre processes.

## **Chapter Two: Considerations for Generating Ethical Artistic Representation**

### ***Section One: Locating the Ethics of Artistic Contemporaries***

It is possible, within a documentary theatre performance, to communicate the influence of one's inherent authorial subjectivity on the creation of a piece. In Chapter One I discussed the methods employed by Porte Parole's Annabel Soutar in *The Watershed*, where she centralizes her family and her own fallibility as playwright in the narrative of the play. This is a recurring technique in her work, having been similarly employed in her play *Seeds* which charts the legal battle between a Saskatchewan farmer accused of stealing the genetically modified super seeds of biotech agricultural giant Monsanto Inc. In *Seeds*, one may expect the protagonist to be the blue-collar farmer, Percy Schmeiser, which would easily feed the typical David and Goliath narrative where the audience roots for the little guy to overcome the near-invincible oppressor. I would argue that the real protagonist of *Seeds* is the character of the Playwright, based on Soutar herself. The Playwright attempts to understand all sides of the story and in doing so casts doubt on every character's claim to truth. Gyllian Raby reflects on this technique as creating a successful contract with audience members, at least in her experience seeing the show, where she felt the cast seduced the audience members into a critical fold from the moment they entered the theatre where the cast members, "interview us on the question 'What is life?'" they joke about what a clichéd, heavy question it is to ask strangers, but they treat all answers with respect (269)." In this first scene, as Raby reflects, the audience is confronted with Soutar's interview methodology and while jarring, it effectively communicates to the audience the complexity and the performative nature of an interview itself.

Another approach to exposing the nature of authorial subjectivity through documentary theatre comes from the American playwright, actor, and director, Anna Deveare Smith. In her career, Smith has developed an intense and immersive process for creating documentary theatre where she engages with communities divided by violence. Smith's *Fires in the Mirror* was created following an incident in Crown Heights, Brooklyn in 1991 where a young black boy was struck and killed by an automobile driven by a prominent member of the Jewish community. At the time, Crown Heights' geopolitical population included a significant black community and a significant Jewish community. Following the death of the young black boy, there were a number of instances of intimidation and violence towards the Jewish members of the community. Smith

entered the community and interviewed those directly involved in the conflict, including the father of the boy who was killed. She interviewed community members who were indirectly involved in the conflict simply by virtue of living there and she interviewed prominent figures around the country including politicians and religious figures, those kinds of people whose celebrity status enabled them to speak with some authority on the subject.

Smith presents *Fires in the Mirror* as a one-woman show, a series of monologues from her different interviews with subtle costume pieces distinguishing between characters. What enables Smith to create compelling narratives, to flesh out multiple opposing sides of an argument with such criticality and humanity, is her mastery of acting and her command of the interview process. In writing *Fires in the Mirror*, Smith stated that she was, “interested in the difficulty people have in talking about race and talking about difference (xli).” She is successful at interrogating this difficulty through the evocative nature of her interviews and her commitment to recognizing her interviewees as authorities in the authorship of the piece. “My goal was to create an atmosphere in which the interviewee would experience his/her own authorship. Speaking teaches us what our natural ‘literature’ is. In fact, everyone, in a given amount of time, will say something that is like poetry. The process of getting to that poetic moment is where ‘character’ lives (xxxii).” In her process, Smith focuses not only on the text and the script she’s transcribed, but she centralizes the totality of her interviewees’ presence: gesture, rhythm, and cadence. Smith’s intrinsic linking of text to gesture enables her to foreground the importance of the body in cultural performance, overcoming what Dwight Conquergood sees as the tendency for scriptocentrism and the privileging of words in both the theatre and the academy (95). Smith’s product emanates from her mastery of the craft of acting and her attention to the complexity of these violent divides. Capturing and reiterating the textual and gestural poesis of her interviewees is what enables her to perform multiple truths, each with their own authority.

The deployment of evocative narrative has roots in another genre which was paramount in the development of *The History of Sexuality*. Queer autobiographical performance was hugely inspirational to my own artistic growth and speaks directly to the content of the play. One of the figures who inspired me to further explore both theatre and the “dangerous” parts of my sexuality is queer performance artist Tim Miller. I remember the feeling of being turned on, disgusted, and enraptured when in 2013 I watched a video-recording of Miller’s *My Queer Body*.

In defiance of the abjection of homosexuality and sodomy in the late eighties, Miller's piece centralized his own identity as a queer man and deployed graphic descriptions of sexuality in order to claim truth for his own body. *My Queer Body* occurred before economies of affect systematized and initiated national projects of homonormalization, but the success of Miller's piece with gay audiences, paralleled by the disavowal of his work by the NEA, demonstrates the massive potential sex has to be deployed as a technology of power. Affective economies, as a model, are dependent on the production of visceral stimuli, which Miller used to abundance, "There is blood and spit and queer horndogginess with and about me. Between you and me. Between your butts and your seats (119)." Miller's piece demonstrates the capacity sex has to generate affective response in its audience.

While the one-man queer autobiographical theatre show is a cost effective way of telling stories about the queer community, I see my own artistic setbacks in three critiques of the form: (1) As a gay white cis-man, my story has been told many times. It seems to me, morally complex, to take up space for my own identity without trying to make space for those pushed further to the margins; (2) Autobiography solo performance frequently carries with it the ethos of truth, but without incorporating dialogue. Individuals are entitled to and deserve their own truths, but autobiographies run the risk of presenting monolithic representations of specific narratives and specific identity categories; (3) Because of its exhaustive use in the queer community, and frankly in the Fringe-festival circuit, over the last several decades the solo autobiographical storytelling form runs the risk of curtailing its audience through boredom. Is it possible to overcome these shortcomings? Of course, but it takes a strong performer with a unique story.

An excellent example of successful, and current, queer autobiographical performance is Canadian performance artist Nina Arsenault, whose autobiographical show *The Silicone Diaries* enjoyed an extremely successful run at Toronto's Buddies in Bad Times Theatre in 2009. Arsenault is an incredibly talented artist with a story so unique that she could breathe life into any number of deflated theatrical forms. Having undergone over 60 cosmetic surgeries during her transition, many funded through sex work, Arsenault's pursuit of beauty through exaggerated femininity is so unique that she deserves her own space onstage to tell it. Her approach, not only to this show but to her life in general, is one of "living self-portraiture," where the mere existence of her body in public space becomes an artistic intervention in conventions of gender

and beauty. In her manifesto, Arsenault argues that, “Self-portraiture communicates feelings and ideas, which cannot be satisfactorily communicated in fictionalized artistic forms. The viewer is never required to suspend disbelief, creating an immediate and compelling connection to the artistic works (64).” I disagree with Arsenault in her understanding of the ‘suspension of disbelief’ as something which limits connection to artistic works. While I do not deny that autobiographical representation allows an artist to communicate their subjective truth, I believe that the authenticity of the representation is only one means of connecting to an audience. What fictional forms lack in “authentic” representation, they are able to make up for in narrative.

I would like to, for a moment, deconstruct this notion of authentic representation in autobiographical performance. In arguing that autobiographical performance offers an authenticity in representation, there is a latent assertion that the self performed is authentic. This is problematic because it asserts the notion that the self is unified. It privileges the existence of the individual, something which Foucault considers symptomatic of biopolitical capitalism where the individual emerges as a technology of government (“The Subject and Power” 781). Returning to the project of acknowledging subjective authorship, autobiographical performance carries with it the risk of asserting that individuals performing their own truth are performing an objective truth. It is the equivalence of authenticity with objectivity and the privileging of individuality over intersubjectivity which can render autobiographical performance as hegemonic rather than subversive.

Mobilizing autobiographical theatre with the specific purpose of destabilizing the concept of authentic truth is Lazlo Pearlman in his 2014 solo show, *Strings Attached*. Utilizing what seems to be a similar autobiographical method as both Miller and Arsenault, Pearlman works in a self-described Foucauldian context (89). As a transman, he is wrapped up in the history of autobiography in communities of non-normative sexualities and gender identities, but he approaches his performance from a critical standpoint attempting to challenge that idea that “the primary goal of LGBTQIA, crip, POC and other theatre artists of marginalized identities is always to present and claim space for these identity ‘truths’ (Pearlman 89).” While the act of claiming space for these truths was a subversive act in the 80s, when the queer body and the abject body were inseparable, today we must not only take space, but create “a space not submitting to Foucauldian ‘regimes of power’ (Pearlman 90).” Pearlman understands queer

autobiographical performance to be acts of public confession working to produce truth for the disciplinary goal of its categorization and subsequent regulation. To counter the confessional nature of truth, he integrates a technique which he calls truth traps:

These traps are made up of texts, bodily and visual images, and ‘real’ and ‘theatrical’ situations, each of which appears to be ‘true’ or factual. Each individual ‘truth trap’ is a seemingly autobiographical story or act that leads the audience down a false path toward ‘understanding’ my non-heteronormative identity. Once the ‘authenticity’ of each segment is firmly established, each is then exposed as and exploded into a lie (90).

Working in his Foucauldian context, Pearlman uses his ‘truth trap’ method in order to expose the fallibility of truth. Though he is working within the form of autobiographical performance, his methodology suggests that while the form runs the risk of reinforcing hegemonic perceptions of truth as objective, the artist can deploy certain techniques to circumvent the manifestation of such risks.

When I step outside of the form of queer autobiographical theatre and move into an examination of collaborative practices in queer theatre, a range of other techniques emerge for destabilizing absolutist perceptions of truth while working within the structures of personal narrative. In the year-long development of their performance piece, *Lines in the Sand*, Kimberlee Perez and Dustin Bradley Goltz labelled the artistic negotiation of their identities as “collaborative personal narrative.” Speaking to the popularity of the autobiography, they posit that, “Personal narrative performance is primarily theorized, and criticized, as situated in a relational context between performer and audience (248).” In the development of their piece, they discovered that the conceptualization of the individual as unified and the risk personal narrative carries to invisibilize its own subjectivity, could be ruptured through collaboration. Collaborative personal narrative as a methodology, hinges upon dialogue between performers. As they self-identify themselves as BROWN-DYKE-GIRL and WHITE-JEW-GAY-GUY, it becomes clear that their dialogic elements occur at the vertices of difference on their intersectionally mapped identities. “In generating collaborative personal narratives, relations shift and potentially open up spaces for alternate imaginaries as we dialogue across points that divide and bring us together (250).” They refer to the potential for collaborative narratives to open spaces for alternate imaginaries. However, I believe that while these spaces may be imaginaries, they are firmly planted in the reality of lived experience. The dialogic elements of

collaborative narratives can expose difference in such a way to present a counter-truth to those truth claims that construct our own perceptions of reality. In other words, by viewing conflicting personal narratives, we can dismantle our perception of reality as true and can open up a space for progress as collaborative and multi-faceted, rather than linear and universal.

The theatre-maker who has worked in the vein most closely related to my own is Sheila Cavanagh, who transformed her ethnographic study on queer people in bathroom spaces into the theatrical performance *Queer Bathroom Monologues* (QBM). This research-turned-drama had a successful run at the 2011 Toronto Fringe Festival and subsequently played at several non- and semi-commercial venues across the country. Cavanagh undertook this project with an interest in how she might, “dramatize the interview for a larger, nonacademic audience,” with the intention to “give life and form to the affective dimensions of the interviewees’ stories (287).” Cavanagh’s approach drew from verbatim elements, but her script created fictional characters in order to allow for “multivocality” in representation and also to preserve the identities of those she interviewed. This technique, of interviewing, transcribing, and fictionalizing, is the approach I have discovered to most closely resemble my own. Cavanagh and I have obvious differences: *QBM* has an episodic narrative structure whereas *The History of Sexuality* has a relatively linear narrative structure, but her approach to ethnography and to the creation of theatre using queer academic research is beneficial for analyzing my own methodology.

As a maker of theatre, my work, my creative process emerges not out of my own ingenuity, but rather out of my relation and reaction to other artists trying to accomplish similar goals. From the verbatim theatre techniques of Annabel Soutar and Anna Deveare Smith I have learned the importance of rendering visible authorial subjectivity in the production of documentary and the rich poetic possibility of the evocative interview. From the queer autobiographical performance of Tim Miller and Nina Arsenault I have come to understand the relationship between the self-as-performer, the visceral potential of the sexual other, and the dissemination of personal truth. Finally, from the methodological techniques of Lazlo Pearlman, Kimberlee Perez, Dustin Goltz, and Sheila Cavanagh I have understood that there are many ways to dismantle the perceived objectivity of truth, through rupturing performer-audience relations and performer-performer relations.

## ***Section Two: Developing a Flexible Framework for Ethics***

In the work of each of the artists examined so far, we see different techniques for representation, from representing the self, to representing an ‘other’ through collaboration, to representing an ‘other’ through research and interviewing. Each of these artists mobilizes slightly different tactics which produce slightly different results. In the next portion of this chapter, I will discuss my own research-creation methodology and the ethical considerations in generating representation.

In fall of 2014 the New Yorker Festival hosted an LGBTQ TV panel featuring prominent voices from across mainstream television. During the panel conflicting opinions were voiced about the necessity of including writers from marginalized communities in order to write stories about said communities. The creator of Amazon’s series *Transparent*, Jill Soloway, argued on the necessity of inclusion, “In the same way where I wouldn't want a man to say, ‘I can have a writers' room full of men and we can write women just fine.’ I can't say that I can create a show about a trans woman and not have a trans woman writing for me. It's absolutely necessary and it's gonna change the show (Gan).” Soloway was rebutted by Jenji Kohan, the creator of Netflix’s *Orange is the New Black*, who responded, “What you are in life shouldn't automatically make you what you do in your art. It doesn't necessarily translate (Gan).” These panelists raise important questions regarding the ethics of representation, particularly in the contemporary struggle to dilute the saturation of normalized representations. Who has the right to represent the Other and how? And, in the wake of postmodern subjectivity, who and what is the Other? When the selfhood of subjects is defined through intersectional identity categories and intersubjective relationships, when does the Other become not only an inaccessible definition, but an alienating one? Both *Transparent* and *Orange is the New Black* have received critical acclaim for diversifying representation in popular media by including complex characters from subaltern positionalities. However, the disagreement between Soloway and Kohan demonstrates that there are multiple methods for successfully writing the Other, each with the potential for subversion and mass consumption. What is gained from inclusive writing within a community and what is gained through expert research coupled with refined artistry?

In establishing my ethical framework for *The History of Sexuality* I turned to the work of Dwight Conquergood, performance studies scholar and an early advocate for the field of

performance ethnography. Conquergood views all ethnographic research as the study of performance, expanding from the assertion that all cultures are inherently performative: “Ethnographers study the diversity and unity of cultural performance as a universal human resource for deepening and clarifying the meaningfulness of life (65).” His philosophy borders on the humanistic, and while humanism can be easily critiqued for its assimilationist tendencies, his work reflects the kind of productive humanism advocated by Edward Said, who prefers a self-aware and critical approach to humanism, “My intellectual approach has been to use humanistic critique to open up the fields of struggle, to introduce a longer sequence of thought and analysis to replace the short bursts of polemical thought-stopping fury that so imprison us in labels and antagonistic debate whose goal is a belligerent collective identity rather than understanding and intellectual exchange (xvii).” In establishing his own ethics, Conquergood assists performance ethnographers in Said’s project of opening up the fields of struggle and producing understanding and intellectual exchange rather than belligerent (or facile) collective identity. The goal, as put forward by Conquergood, is *dialogical performance* where the self and other question one another, “There is always enough appreciation for difference so that the text can interrogate, rather than dissolve into, the performer (75).” Dialogical performance, from an ethnographer’s standpoint, is about more than the theatrical performance itself, but extends into the interview method where the interview is also understood as performance. When the goal of the interview becomes dialogue, rather than extraction of knowledge, then the ethnographer can deconstruct, to some degree, the researcher-subject binary and establish some degree of collaborative knowledge-production.

Dialogic performance is an effective ethical tool in generating ethical artistic representation as it provides at once an ideal for the research process and the creative product, both of which should strive to render visible the intersubjective nature of relationships (between researcher-subject, self-other, performer-spectator, oppressor-oppressed, etc.). In Foucault’s genealogical method, he foregrounds the importance of uniting erudite knowledge with popular knowledge, often taking the form of local memory, in processes of knowledge-production (“Two Lectures” 83). However, as researchers in the field of ethnography, we must take heed of Foucault’s warning of the potential these subjugated knowledges carry for re-colonisation (“Two Lectures” 86). Conquergood’s dialogic performance is based on exchange, which, if carried out

properly, establishes the space for criticism and feedback from all those implicated in a performance, from the research stages onward. Considering this ethos of dialogue, I committed to the inclusion of mechanisms for participant feedback throughout my process. The creation of *The History of Sexuality* involved interviews and focus groups with 16 individuals from Montreal's queer community. Throughout the process, participants were invited to provide their own feedback which was incorporated into script edits. Participants were given multiple drafts of the script-in-progress, they were invited to table-reads of the script and to rehearsals, and they were invited to provide feedback on the play's public staged reading.

Closely related to the field of performance ethnography, Michael Frisch, who works primarily in the field of oral history, uses the term "shared authority" to suggest the dialogic relationship the oral historian should strive for with their subject. Like Conquergood, Frisch understands that sharing authority is not merely something that occurs within the interview, but that "a commitment to sharing authority is a beginning, not a destination—and the beginning of a necessarily complex, demanding process of social and self discovery (112)." Not only is sharing authority useful for the interview process, but it also becomes a productive concept in script generation. As will be evidenced in Chapter Four, *The History of Sexuality* is not driven by a single protagonist, but rather centralizes the narrative focus on a number of characters simultaneously. In generating the script, not only did I grapple with the challenges of undermining my own authority as playwright, but I also had to mitigate the sharing of authority between characters onstage.

Sharing authority in the realm of scholarly knowledge-production is an ideal for which we should strive, but it is likely impossible for authority to be distributed equally among all actors in a research project. An idealistic framework for dialogic research which shares authority is Viviane Namaste's model for indigenous knowledge-production. Namaste's model is specifically designed for work with aboriginal people, with special consideration for how white colonial research methods systematically oppress, erase, and/or appropriate indigenous communities. Her model contains three central principles: (1) Relevance: how is the knowledge relevant to the community being studied? (2) Equity in partnership: how can the community be integrated into defining research methods, gathering data, analyzing results, etc.? (3) Ownership: how is ownership of this knowledge transferred to the community being studied in a way which

preemptively avoids appropriation and commodification (Namaste 26)? Namaste's framework for indigenous knowledge-production renders visible the colonial impulses we, as researchers, frequently enact upon our subjects throughout our research. Now, while Namaste's model is worth considering when embarking on a research project, I believe that it is not a feasible model for many research projects with small allocations of time and resources. Namaste's model requires extensive resources which may be attainable in large-scale community health research projects focused on indigenous populations, but is not a reasonable expectation for a Master's thesis exploring queer identity. Rather than strive to mobilize Namaste's model exactly, instead I think it is useful as a reference point for considering how one's own research methods may be entrenched in colonial ideologies. For example, *The History of Sexuality* was not totally equitable in partnership. In Namaste's model equity in partnership means that "people about whom one writes have an equal say and an equal voice in all aspects of empirical research (26)," from research questions to data collection. Considering the challenges of simply setting a time for focus groups, it makes me anxious just thinking about arranging for all research subjects to participate in the process of audio transcription. However, having participants weigh in on central research questions is an extremely useful strategy. Throughout my interviews and focus groups, we had many discussions about the ethics of representation and the methodologies participants suggested for their generation.

In anthropological research, whether it be in the field of performance ethnography, oral history, or indigenous studies, there has been, historically, the construction of the "Other" in opposition to the self. While this dichotomy is important to recognize, because, as Stuart Hall suggests, the "West vs the rest" is the discursive reality still responsible for constructing much of "Western" society, it is also necessary to critically deconstruct this relationship (Hall 201). The category of the Other is frequently invoked to service political logic. Agathangelou et al. assert the existence of "enemy Others," who can be used to justify acts of violence, war, and genocide - the murderous black man, the terrorist Muslim - and the "other Others" whose lives are unintelligible and whose deaths go unnoticed (123). I will expand and offer that there is a third category of Other, the "tamable Other," who exists to serve the political and social logic of assimilation and normalization. The tamable other is the good immigrant, who can come to Canada and learn to respect Canadian values and become a productive contributor to our

economy. Working in a specifically queer context it is necessary for me to ask: How do we define the queer Other? Into which category do we fall?

Due to the elastic nature of queerness, it may not come as a surprise that the queer Other can be an enemy Other, an other Other, or a tamable Other, all depending on the logic at play. An example of this is the transwoman, whose existence historically and systematically falls in the category of other Other, allowing for the denial of access to healthcare and the lack of public response to the disproportional rates of assault, murder, and suicide. However, the transwoman is sometimes constructed and deployed as an enemy Other to service particular political goals. This is evident in the numerous legislative acts in the United States seeking to ban transwomen from restrooms matching their gender identity by arguing that they are perpetrators of sexual violence. In relating transwomen to the category of tamable Other, we must ask ourselves who among transwomen is able to access this category. I would argue that celebrity and ability to pass or conform to gendered beauty standards is a factor in this regard, with Caitlyn Jenner and Laverne Cox likely topping the list for public credibility. In choosing queerness as my subject of interest, I hope to unpack the complex ways in which queer people can travel between these categories: being at times dangerous, at times normal, and at times invisible. Also, in creating a piece of theatre about queer Others, I hope to render intelligibility to the lives of those queer Others whose other Other-ness leaves them in precarious positions of societal rejection and denied access.

There was an ethical consideration in choosing Montreal's queer community as the subject of my research. I self-identity as queer, more for my preference for certain kinky sexual behaviours and lifestyles than for my same-sex attraction. In identifying as queer, I have a personal investment and a degree of understanding for the community which I am studying. However, as a cis, white, male, there are many factions of the queer community with which I am unfamiliar. While incorporating my own identity into my research does skew any hopes of researcher objectivity, I believe I have repeatedly demonstrated that such an objectivity does not exist. Because *The History of Sexuality* was a work of collaborative theatre, it is useful for the principal researcher, producer, and director to have a deep understanding of and a vested interest in the community being studied.

In concluding the description of ethical considerations for this piece, it is important to

mention that Concordia University, like all Canadian universities, has its own ethics committee who approves a pre-determined plan for ethical concerns in student and faculty research projects. This institutionally mandated ethics review provides student researchers with a framework for basic ethical considerations which affect the subjects of research projects. The main ethical concerns with *The History of Sexuality* were related to confidentiality of research participants. All participants were consulted twice about their choice to remain anonymous. Before any focus group or interview, participants read through and signed the participant consent form which asked if they wished to be identifiable in the presentation of the research. Many participants chose to wait until they could consult the script for the project before deciding on having their participation acknowledged or maintaining their anonymity. An additional risk for participants was the misrepresentation of their testimony in the play. I mitigated this risk through the use of the aforementioned feedback mechanisms built into the research process. These mechanisms allowed participants to review their words in the script and provide feedback in advance of the performance. Chapter Three will discuss specific instances of participant feedback. The final risk communicated to research participants was the risk of encountering challenging material within the interview or focus group which would have the potential to be triggering or re-traumatizing. This risk is impossible to eliminate completely, as any material has the potential to be triggering for others; however, participants were informed that they could leave the interview or focus group at any time in order to take care of themselves. Interviewees and focus group participants were also given advance information about the general content for their session, so they had time to prepare for some of the material which could surface. Both myself, as the principal researcher, and my project coordinator and stage manager, Michelle Soicher, adhered closely to our mandated ethical protocols. To the best of my knowledge, there were no instances where any of the risk scenarios occurred, at least not with such magnitude that the concern was voiced to our research team.

Ethics in a collaborative artistic research-creation process can be difficult to plan in advance. We had varying levels of participants in the different stages of our research (interviewees, actors, designers, etc.) and all of these participants were given the opportunity to provide feedback and to influence the final artistic product. Engaging in a collaborative process demands that the principal researcher must relinquish autonomy over the research-creation

process and in losing autonomy the principal researcher makes the project vulnerable to possible unethical implications of other subjects. It is for this reason that the works of Conquergood, Frisch, and Namaste were vital to *The History of Sexuality*. Each of these scholars present techniques for ethics which are not as rigid as those imposed, perhaps, upon a medical or scientific study. In conducting qualitative, artistic, and collaborative research projects, the researcher must have an ethical framework which is able to *respond* to the influences of collaborators. Embarking on the research project with the philosophies of dialogic performance, sharing authority, and indigenous knowledge production, I felt prepared to respond to situations and complications as they arose and this preparation is vital to those working on projects of collaborative research-creation.

### Chapter Three: A Chronological Analysis of the Methodology for Creating *The History of Sexuality*

The creative process for *The History of Sexuality* was informed by 12-months of graduate study preceding the initiation of the project. This included research into the myriad topics covered throughout this thesis, including philosophy, methodology, ethics, queer theory, artistic process, etc. However, in writing about queerness in Montreal, there was also an immersive element of research. This is the research informed by lived experience, research which privileges the sensory stimulation of the body over the textual archive. I define my work on this piece as *fictionalized verbatim theatre*, that is to say, theatre which splices verbatim testimony into fictional characters and a fictional narrative in order to give the playwright greater choice in crafting a narrative. For fictionalized verbatim theatre this kind of engaged and embodied research is essential in that it allows the artist to better understand the sensory stimuli which affect their participants. Performance ethnography blends well with the method of participant-observation fieldwork as both recognize the body as a *site of knowing* (Conquergood 82).

Because queerness stretches across such a range of identity categories and communities, it can be observed in a number of contexts. I am a person with structural predispositions, I perceive meaning through categories and dichotomies, and it has only been through working in a Foucauldian context that I have trained myself to identify and unpack most of these categorizations and the grids of intelligibility they create for my perceptions. In observing queerness I felt my tendency for categorization could be put to productive use. I had two levels of observations of queerness, the first developed through an autoethnographic critical reflexivity in which I examined and analyzed how the performance of my own queerness shifted depending on my context. I felt the intellectual and political elements of queerness come to the foreground in academic settings. Queerness as sexuality and desire manifested in the queer party spaces which I occupied on a regular basis. I also observed marked differences in my performance in queer dance party spaces of the Mile End versus in BDSM party spaces of the Gay Village neighbourhood. I would define both of these spaces as queer party spaces, but even just my own shifting performance indicates that these spaces must be mobilizing different iterations of queerness. Observing context-dependent differences in my own identity made me more perceptive of how others around me performed their identities and how the context may have

affected their performances. I observed transformations in classmates as they moved from the seminar, where intellectual discourse must be produced as a means of proving oneself, to the bar where such intellectualism was frowned upon. I observed transformations in sex partners as they performed stereotypical traits of masculinity while in public, but allowed their effeminate gestures to emerge in private.

My intrigue with the effects of context on identity performance is what inspired the structure for my interview and focus group process and the partially predetermined structure for the play itself. I made the decision to structure each interview and focus group around one of four spatial categories: home life, school life, social life, and life in transit. Familiar categories to me, these were the spaces through which I observed a shift in behaviour in myself and those around me. The way one performs oneself in the classroom varies from the way one performs in their own home, and I believe there is something productive to be gleaned from examining the incongruence. In order to generate the script collaboratively, I organized three focus groups and three individual interviews as a means of collecting source material. The three focus groups gathered data for the scenes on school life, home life, and sex life, while the individual interviews were loosely arranged to generate the material for transit life. I was drawn to transit spaces because I see public transit spaces predominantly as spaces of mutual respect and coexistence. Public transit spaces sometimes blur levels of privilege because daily routes of transportation are often the moments when people from different social categories negotiate the sharing of space with one another. This, of course, ignores the broad classist and ableist contexts within which public transit exists, but as a microcosm, public transit offers rich opportunity for examining the performance of identity.

Before looking at the interviews and focus groups, I will reflect on the challenges of structuring a collaborative artwork before introducing the collaborators. In choosing to focus my play on the four quadrants listed above, I delineated a context within which all meaning from collaborators would be produced. Equity in partnership, one of the steps in Namaste's model for indigenous knowledge-production, describes the involvement of research participants in every stage of the research. By defining a partial structure in advance, I am preserving my own autonomy and authority over the research-creation process. This means that while my process involves collaborators and collaboration, it is intrinsically hierarchical. This is neither good nor

bad, but is something which must be analyzed. My role as the principal researcher brought with it a range of responsibilities as this project required input of time and resources. Working within a projected budget deficit, I was unable to financially compensate research participants, actors, or members of the creative team. It was my goal to demand as little uncompensated time and resources of my collaborators as possible, while still giving them the authority to affect the overall process and product. I did have the great privilege of introducing a co-researcher to the project: Michelle Soicher, who was in the final year of her undergraduate theatre degree at Concordia, agreed to participate in the research and production process as part of an independent study. While I was unable to compensate her for her time financially, we did manage to arrange for her to receive credit for her incredibly hard work on the project.

My three focus groups ranged in size with the largest having six participants and the smallest having four participants. I recruited some participants through preexisting connections in my life, social and artistic, and other participants were recruited using public posts across Facebook. I structured groups according to the principle of segmentation, defined by David Morgan as, “the decision to control the group composition to match carefully chosen categories of participants.” I selected focus group members on the basis of shared membership in a specific social location. All participants were recruited from within and around the queer community, either those who identified as queer or those who identified along the LGBTQ acronym. Additionally, the subject of each focus group defined a shared membership in a social location: for school life all participants had completed some form of graduate studies, for social life all participants had actively participated in Montreal's queer party scene, and sex life involved participants whose sexuality intersected with their labour. Within the sex life category some participants were sex workers, whereas others worked in specific contexts where their sexuality was foregrounded. While participants had shared characteristics, I strived to include representation from different ages, races, gender identities, and sexual orientations. My goal was intersectional segmentation both between and within focus groups; while comprehensive segmentation is impossible, there was enough variance to offer some insight into the (always already subjective) intersections of different identity categories.

The focus groups were arranged and organized through the months of January and February 2016. Each session greatly differed in content and form, but as they were organized in

an effort to generate subject material for a play, they were structured to elicit evocative material from the participants. A portion of each session was dedicated to narrative, where participants were encouraged to share memories or do a small act of improvisation. For example, each participant in the school life subject group was asked to prepare a 15-minute lecture on one chapter of Foucault's *The History of Sexuality: Volume One* and also to prepare a memory or experience that they connect to this chapter—only something they felt comfortable sharing with a group. When groups convened I always opened with information surrounding ethics, confidentiality, and an overview of safe(r) space practices. Safe(r) space practices acknowledge the idea that attacks on personal beliefs or values are not welcome. However, the “(r)” acknowledges that it is not possible to guarantee safety and instead these practices use a strategy of acknowledging and discussing moments of oppression or micro-aggression if they occur.

Reflecting on the interview sessions, I recognize that it was often times when I abandoned my predetermined plans which elicited in the most genuine and evocative material. This resulted in instances where, as Anna Deveare Smith would say, we witnessed participants' moment of poiesis. For example, in the first focus group on queerness, sex, and labour, one participant discussed her employment as a stripper. Responding to the energy of the group and my own impulses, I asked her to imagine that another woman had approached her and asked for advice on how to become a stripper. I asked her to improvise a scene responding to the woman's request for advice. The advice she gave was so genuine and so real that this improvisation became one of the central scenes in the play, which will be discussed in Chapter Four. Following the success of this moment, I used similar techniques in other focus groups, asking participants to improvise conversations where they give advice to their younger selves, or to their ex-partners, etc. It is important to note that these improvisations were not always successful, because for some people the notion of improvising is terrifying. My suggestion for others working in a similar context, is that the facilitator of such sessions must create an environment where participants feel comfortable saying no.

Another important lesson from facilitating these sessions is that as facilitator I had to be very careful about what material I introduced. For example, in each session I asked the group to discuss and define queerness. In the first focus group, I offered a few of my preferred definitions for the concept, including one which centralizes the importance of queerness as a spectrum and

as elastic. Following the introduction of these definitions, those words began surfacing throughout the responses of participants. While it is important to have vocabulary when exploring concepts, providing such vocabulary will affect the responses of participants. Again, there is some tension here as to whether providing vocabulary will allow the conversation to expand or whether it will funnel participants' responses into my own existing perceptions. In the context of artistic creation, I do not believe there is a single "right" way to mitigate this tension, though I would say there are several "wrong" ways. As the principal researcher I imagine my role in such scenarios as being aware of the possible influences I may have on participants, but trusting my own artistic impulses to facilitate and inspire evocative group discussion.

The single interviews, used for the "life in transit" portion of the script, were conducted one-on-one. Three participants were selected who identified as queer, or near it. Prior to the interview subjects were asked to choose a route of transit which held some importance to them. In some cases we met and took this route of transit together, allowing us the opportunity to get to know one another and giving me a small window into their everyday life. In other cases time was limited, so we met simply for the interview and the participant instead described the transit route. Each interview engaged with participants' experiences in shared social spaces and any challenges or successes in navigating their own identities within public spaces of co-existence. Participants were asked to respond to two questions they received in advance: (1) Can you talk about the route we took (or the route you chose) and its importance to you?; (2) Can you talk about a time that you felt judged or that you judged someone else based on gender, sexuality, or sexual practice? These interviews were open-ended and ranged from 20 to 40 minutes, with only the two above-mentioned questions planned in advance.

Emerging from the single interviews is my reflection that a one-on-one format is better suited for the discussion of personal evocative narratives. The two predetermined questions produced excellent source material, allowing interviewees to share descriptive and defining memories from their past. These memories easily snowballed into a discussion in all three interviews. In judging merits of the interview alongside those of the focus group my experience demonstrated that personal narrative is shared much more easily in a one-on-one interview, whereas focus groups demonstrated greater capacity for epiphany and discovery. It seems unlikely for a participant to change an opinion during an interview, especially if the interviewer

is remaining relatively neutral, but in a group discussion participants will encounter new theories, ideas, and frames of thinking, and it proved productive to capture these eureka moments.

The interview and focus group process wrapped up in late February 2016. Following this completion was the most grueling portion of interview-based verbatim theatre: transcription. I collected almost 15 hours of audio footage, with the combined focus groups and interviews. Based on distribution of time and resources, I made the decision to transcribe only portions of the interviews and focus groups. I listened to the audio, noting time markers for content I wanted to utilize, then proceeded to transcribe the selected portions. The transcription process inevitably overlaps with the creation of the narrative. I find it impossible to listen to audio clips and record text without imagining how it could be squeezed into the narrative of the play and the process of narrative brainstorming introduces a bit of productive tension. On one level, it was important to follow my artistic impulses and allow the voices of my participants to inspire a narrative arc. On another level, it was important to remain cognizant of my ethical philosophies. How did the narrative I was creating distribute authority among the many voices of my participants? How did the narrative I was creating inspire a critical dialogue where the nature of truth was exposed through participants' intersubjectivity?

Early in my writing process I decided to keep the narrative almost entirely linear. Choosing a linear narrative was a conscious decision I made to reflect the narrative aesthetic of most mass-consumed popular media. Cavanagh warns that, "too often ethnographic performances mimic normative aesthetic conventions, thereby disregarding queer and trans countercultural aesthetics (289)." I agree that as performance ethnographers working within a queer context we must be aware of the potential for our art to be weakened or recolonized through technologies of normalization, one of which may be aesthetic. However, my goal in using a linear narrative was to seduce audiences into the fold of the narrative, deploying Aristotle's "coercive system of tragedy" which Boal argues mobilizes empathy as a "terrible weapon (44)." Though the aesthetic of my linear narrative may draw on normative and popular conventions, I incorporated a series of other aesthetic formal techniques in order to preemptively avoid the possibility of normalization.

Cavanagh writes of the importance of multivocality in her composition of *QBM*, "The

intention is to provide a space for critical reflection instead of neat-and-tidy explanations; multiple, divergent, and contradictory stories instead of linear truth claims; uncertainty instead of certitude, and so forth (291).” I incorporated the concept of multivocality in *The History of Sexuality* through a technique my project coordinator, Michelle Soicher, termed as ‘doubling.’ Throughout the play, I staged multiple scenes as taking place simultaneously. This enabled the communication of multiple truths to the audience. By structuring the text in such a way that the doubling highlighted similarities and differences in experience, the technique exposed that what may be true for one character is not true for all characters. When applied to the characters’ relationships to queerness, sex, gender, mental health, and ability, the doubling technique serves to expose truth as subjective and to illustrate the intersectional categorization of identity as limited in its ability to describe a person’s lived reality. The example below comes from Act One, Scene Five and depicts two characters in separate apartments who are both experiencing an anxiety attack:

---

**Scene Five**

*GAYLE sits on the couch in the living room. MADELEINE is pacing in the stage right bedroom, borderline anxiety attack, trying to calm herself down.*

GAYLE

16 resumes.

MADELEINE

I'm falling apart, I'm falling apart.

GAYLE

16 resumes, 2 interviews. Lunches and dinners prepped.

MADELEINE

I'm falling apart, I'm falling apart.

GAYLE

Lunches and dinners prepped, dishes done, laundry in the dryer.

MADELEINE

I'm falling apart, I'm falling apart. No.

*MADELEINE sits on the edge of the bed, near hyperventilating.*

GAYLE

Laundry in the dryer. Receipts organized, taxes started.

MADELEINE

You are a good person, you are a good person.

GAYLE

Taxes started, can finish tomorrow. Fuck.

MADELEINE

You are a good person, you are a good person.

GAYLE

I need a job.

MADELEINE

Then why can't you find a job.

---

This scene presents the precarious reality of mental health problems for queer people where Madeleine and Gayle represent two different intersections of queerness. Madeleine is a twenty-something recent graduate who is seeking a job in an economy with few openings and the devaluing of university degrees. Gayle is in her late forties, a carpenter who has recently experienced a stroke, the mobility limitations of which make her unable to continue her previous line of work. While their lived realities have complex differences, they share similarities in their experience of anxiety and the pressure they feel from society's demand to input labour.

Another technique deployed to arrest the possibility of narrative normalization is the technique I call the "rupture." This is explained by the character of Marie DuPont in the first scene of Act Two, "Rupture. It's a break. A rift. An interruption that makes you pause and rethink everything [...] There's a structure through which we all move. But what happens when it ruptures, and you're jolted awake." Ruptures occur throughout the play: they are metatheatrical moments which puncture the purported suspension of disbelief. Many of them occur simply by breaking the fourth wall and having actors address the audience directly. Others occur when the characters render visible the theatrical structures around them. Returning to Act One, Scene Five, a rupture occurs when Madeleine and Gayle become aware of one another, though they are in separate apartments:

---

MADELEINE

Then why can't you find a job.

MADELEINE *lets out a small cry*. GAYLE *looks up from the couch, they make eye contact*.

MADELEINE & GAYLE

Who are you? You're me.

GAYLE

Twenty years ago.

MADELEINE

In the future.

MADELEINE & GAYLE

I feel the world pressing down on me.

---

The rupture technique, in this moment, is leveraged in combination with doubling in order to allow a moment of connection and education between the two characters who otherwise never see one another in the world of the play. Rupturing and doubling can be incredibly potent theatrical tools for illustrating subjectivity and exposing truth claims.

These are a handful of the tools I consciously employed when writing the script for *The History of Sexuality*. Before moving into a deeper analysis of the script, I would like to highlight the necessity and productivity offered by incorporating feedback mechanisms for participants to suggest changes for the script. The first draft was complete in March of 2016 and the public staged reading was presented for two evening performances in late-May 2016. Between the first draft of the script and the public staged reading, three drafts of the script were circulated to participants to provide feedback. It is worth noting that participants had a low rate of reading the script and providing feedback, though it did happen in some cases. The most productive feedback came from was a table-read of the first draft of the script. All participants were invited and just under half of them attended. The table-read was a relaxed environment including the sharing of food and drinks, which I believe was one of the reasons participants attended.

Following the table-read participants did have feedback and response to the words and

narratives they saw represented and I worked to incorporate all feedback as best I could. There is one salient example which demonstrates why it is vital to incorporate such feedback mechanisms into a fictionalized verbatim theatre piece. In one focus group a female participant shared a memory of a sexual assault. I was affected by her experience and I believe in the importance of sharing stories and supporting survivors of sexual assault so I incorporated her experience into the play. Talia, a character who begins working as a stripper part way through Act One, is assaulted by one of the male patrons in a backroom at the club where she works. In my first draft I wrote a monologue of poetic metaphor where Talia reflects on the experience:

---

TALIA

There's a tree that grows in a clearing where a stand of old growth used to thrive. Its bark is the colour of dusk. Branches gnarled and twisted. It grows dislocated at an angle. If it were a person they would be in pain. The soil in the clearing is a charcoal painting. The black & white instagram filter you never choose. It's been years and still the ashes haven't washed away. But somehow, the tree's roots found life in the grey cinder soil, nurtured by the smoke-laden earth, veins running thick with creosote.

In a forest fire, the pinecones spring from the trees, seeking the cool solace of the forest floor. Heat rises, burnt flesh reeks. This fire was set by a man. A man at a club who paid a woman, no, a girl, to light the match. The longer she held the burning match, the more he said he'd give, but be careful not to get burned or—ouch—you might drop it and the whole forest will incinerate. And, then what's the point, you're the one who lit the match. She always is.

The needles on the tree are sharp. Protective. I imagine the same needles pushing up and out my skin. I don't regret anything that I did with my body. I do regret my body though. Push pine needles through my skin and make my dusk hued bark gnarled and raw. Dislocated me. Pump my heart with creosote and tar. Still want to touch?

---

After the table read, the female participant approached me to voice her opinion about this monologue. She pointed out the fact that while the rest of the play was written in a style of naturalistic realism, I had chosen to turn the sexual assault into a poem. She asked why, in a play that speaks so openly about sex work, BDSM, and depression, why did a woman's sexual assault have to be filtered through a poetic lens? After some discussion, we arranged to do an additional interview, this time one-on-one. In this emotionally charged interview, lasting about one hour, she described in full detail the chronological order of events on the night of her sexual assault. The poetic scene was replaced with a near-verbatim testimony describing her experiences and

her challenges navigating survivorship. I changed important contextual details in order to preserve her anonymity and the final version was sent to her for approval before the staged reading. I use this example to reiterate that feedback mechanisms are a vital tool for dialogical performance ethics in collaborative verbatim theatre techniques.

While this thesis does not examine any events occurring after the public staged reading, it is important to note that the reading was not the end of the project. After accumulating feedback and taking time to step back from the project, I will return to incorporate additional edits and will mount a full public production for two weeks in September 2017. While I am proud of certain narratives in the play, Talia's narrative as an example, I will return to the narratives of a few other characters, arrange a few more one-on-one follow up interviews, and attempt to give the same depth to these characters as was afforded to Talia.

The nature of collaboration and the nature of dialogic performance are such that the work never has to finish. The conversation can continue and the project can change and evolve, but no matter what changes occur in the future, *The History of Sexuality* is textually preserved through the various iterations of the script. The final chapter will examine sections of the script which were used for the public staged reading.

#### Chapter Four: *The History of Sexuality* - A Queer Reading of a Queer Script

*“I propose that the central image for “validity” for postmodernist texts is not the triangle—a rigid, fixed, two-dimensional object. Rather, the central image is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach [...] Crystallization, without losing structure, deconstructs the traditional idea of “validity” (we feel how there is no single truth, we see how texts validate themselves); and crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial, understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know (Richardson 522).”*

Laurel Richardson’s reimagining of the crystal as the central image of postmodern texts’ validity offers those of us engaged in collaborative work a strong justification for what we do. Collaboration demands the infusion of multiple voices and multiple approaches into a single project. Richardson attests to the capacity of crystallization to provide us with a deep, complex, and partial understanding of a topic. *The History of Sexuality* is highly influenced by Richardson’s model of crystallization. An interrogation of queerness, the play offers multiple truth claims *around* the idea of queerness, but resists the temptation to offer a singular, unified definition of queer. In a typically postmodern fashion, *The History of Sexuality* renders the concept of queerness visible by relating meaning *around it*. This meaning comes from the testimonies of multiple characters, testimonies which conflict with one another, arriving at a complex, but definitively partial, understanding of what it means to be queer.

Thomas Waugh offers a double-meaning of the word queer which resonates with the metaphor of the crystal, first in a fixed sense as a grid, “a network of discrete sexual identities, social constituencies, and strategic political agendas” and second in a fluid sense which troubles traditional understanding of gender, sexuality, and the identity politics deeply embedded in their histories (8). This research-creation process revealed a productive tension between queerness and intersectionality insofar as queerness reacts, almost as a catalyst, with different individuals in different ways. The ability of queerness to stretch and travel gives it great freedom to mean differently, though we see its meaning sedimenting in certain locations and spaces and aesthetics. This is best illustrated in Act Two, Scene Three, when following an attempted Foucault séance, Alissa reflects on her relationship with queerness, “A queer normativity. Like queerness is supposed to disrupt the norm. But then you see here in Montreal it's like oh! It crystallizes—

Foucault would like that—it crystallizes into this sort of check list: like you gotta have short hair, you gotta be poly, that sort of thing. Oh! It's like an essentialized queerness.” Already providing a contentious definition of queerness, Alissa’s truth claim is immediately destabilized when Darr adds her experiences, “I guess I'm realizing that like umbrella terms erase a lot of things and like queerness as a reclaimed term I think is reclaimed for certain people in a certain way. There's a saying in the trans community that the T in LGBT is silent. Umm and I really see that (58).” Queerness as a concept can be debated across academic disciplines and around the conference circuit, but to expose *how queerness means* scholars must introduce the voices and perspectives of those within the community.

One of the goals of *The History of Sexuality* was to examine this idea: how queerness means at different intersections and in different spaces. In speaking of her approach to acting, Anna Devere Smith writes, “I had not controlled the words. I had presented myself as an empty vessel, a repeater, and they had shown their power (xxv).” This image applies not only to the actor, but surely to the playwright and the performance ethnographer. From the segmented composition of the focus groups, to the geospatial quadrants predetermined for the play’s structure, I presented a number of vessels and the research-creation process was built on examining how these vessels were filled by queerness.

The characters themselves, like the focus groups, were crafted and experienced their genesis as intersections. Based on the participants I had and the testimony I had created, I made blunt choices where queerness intersected with other categories: I wanted to represent disability, I wanted to represent a transwoman, I wanted to represent sex work from a racialized and a white perspective and from a male and female perspective, I wanted to discuss depression, anxiety, BDSM, and I wanted a straight, white, cis-male character to act as a foil. Perez and Goltz describe a similar beginning to their collaborative narrative, “We begin as WHITE-JEW-GAY-GUY and BROWN-DYKE-GIRL. We mark ourselves in these politicized positions to emphasize the important, yet often divisive, declarations of identity. We cannot ever divorce ourselves completely from these strategic and stifling identities, nor collapse or erase the difference ways we inhabit history, privilege, and space (250).” Yet, in the sharing of their personal narratives, they state that “queer alignment grounds our search for a politicized us.” My characters broke away from their caricature-esque intersections through the integration of personal testimony.

Their points of intersection were fleshed out, expanded, and rendered genuine through the insertion of verbatim text. The characters in the play started their lives as nodes on a grid, but these nodes were Smith's vessels, filled and reshaped by the verbatim testimonies of queer experience.

It is important, for a moment, to return to the overarching project outlined in Chapter One. The goal of this thesis is to present a method for generating ethical representations of the other. The thesis accomplishes this largely through the juxtaposition, sometimes simultaneous, of characters' lives and experiences of queerness against one another. It amplifies its potential to reach audiences by utilizing a linear and normalized narrative structure, combined with the production of visceral sexual stimuli. Finally, the play incorporates a number of classroom scenes where students explicitly discuss Foucauldian theories of truth and power, in this way unifying the popular knowledge of verbatim testimony with the erudite knowledges of Foucault. In this chapter I will be presenting a script analysis of *The History of Sexuality* in an attempt to connect the theatrical material to the overarching goals of the thesis.

*The History of Sexuality* is a play written for nine actors. The play follows a mostly linear structure with occasional departures from linearity either through moments of metatheatricity or through the use of flashbacks. Eight of the actors play single characters, who either self-identify as queer or self-identify near queerness. The ninth character, intentionally given the generic name John, plays a recurring student in the graduate seminar scenes, but also plays all of the straight male characters in the play. This section will reflect on the various ways in which verbatim text was inserted into specific characters.

I want to begin by unpacking the character of John. The use of John as a stand-in for all straight male characters, in an almost caricature-esque fashion, is intended to be an inversion of the typical use of POC and women as fluff stereotypical characters who serve to advance plotlines without any complex development. While John serves this function, I intentionally embedded a single moment of complexity to his character, when in Act Two, Scene Six, he leaves the classroom in tears following a phone call with an unknown person. Before he leaves, John calls out Alissa on her often aggressive behaviour towards him, "You know, that just because you're queer, it doesn't mean that you're an expert on everyone okay. We've all got shit going on. I just don't spew mine out every class." It is briefly hinted, very early in the play, that

John's sister is in the hospital, likely for mental health problems. There was some debate among participants and cast members as to whether or not John's character should be granted this humanizing moment. Some thought that the straight, cis-, white man did not deserve such salvation, but I chose to include the moment in the hopes that it would make the piece more accessible for straight, cis-, white men, who could likely learn far more from the piece than someone already in the folds of queerness. This tactic was borrowed from the David Diamond's systems theory approach to theatre of the oppressed. Diamond argues that there are oppressors in every audience and that in dismantling oppressive cycles, "we have a responsibility to create theatre that rings with authenticity for the diversity of the people in attendance. That is, theatre in which both the oppressed and the oppressors see themselves on stage as real people and legitimate members of the community, who are engaged in their own complex struggles (34)." While some would argue that the straight, cis-, white man does not deserve to be humanized, the question is not juridical, it is pedagogical. It is not, "What does he deserve?" but rather, "What is the best way to teach him?"

Throughout the play, in addition to playing himself in the classroom scenes, John also plays the character of "Man" at a series of scenes at a bus stop. These scenes occur throughout the play and feature the interaction of one or more characters with the prototypical straight, white, cis-male at the bus stop. The bus stop scenes serve the function of exposing how the characters' identities are performed in public space. Almost every other scene occurs within the privacy of the classroom or an apartment, so the public nature of the bus stop exposes the challenges faced by different identity categories in their navigation of public space. For example, in Act One, Scene Four, Gayle, who has recently suffered a stroke, is standing at the bus stop supporting herself with her cane. Man comes to the bus stop and gazes at the cane, he holds his gaze to the point of discomfort and the lights fade out. This connotes the subtle nature of the bus stop scenes. There is no overt oppression, but the simple use of gaze emphasizes the way in which stigmas of disability are perpetuated through the actions of individuals. In another bus stop scene Man walks by Talia who is waiting for the bus, just as he exits the stage he calls out, "You should smile." Again, this scene is not complex and could even be considered cliché with its use of popular feminist tropes, but it offers a simple example of how men frequently, and sometimes unintentionally, police women's performance of their own gender.

The bus stop scenes serve to make differences in privilege visible within the queer community as well, specifically when Man encounters Craig at the bus stop. A kinky sex-worker, Craig firmly plants his own identity within the queer community, but in public space he passes as, or *can be read as*, a typical straight dude. This based on the latent cultural assumption that any cis-male white body performing traits of masculinity is assumed, by heteronormative logic, to be straight. In his bus stop scene, Man walks by Craig, makes brief eye-contact and extends the invitation of camaraderie through bro-speak, “What’s up?” which Craig accepts through his own, “What’s up?” Though short and subtle, my intention with this scene is for the audience to perceive the ease with which Craig is able to occupy public space, specifically in juxtaposition to the queer women and transwoman in the play.

The theatrical device of the bus stops emerged from the conceptualization of the one-on-one interviews I arranged with queer folks where we discussed their experiences in transit. In one interview, which was later spliced into the character of Darr in Act Two, Scene Three, a participant recalled a memory of being clocked and berated on public transit, “That’s like a transwoman’s rite of passage. It happens, there’s just a period where it happens [...] And I remember thinking, this is funny, like, ‘Oh, it’s real, like I can definitely claim trans-ness now. I’m definitely a transwoman because I’ve been oppressed.’” As the researcher and playwright, I felt this passage had to be explored. The bus stop scenes offered a means of not only representing the reality of this lived experience, but also reflecting and juxtaposing it to serve the didactic function of educating those who move through public space with ease. While the bus stop scenes were mostly realistic illustrations of public space and privilege, I did include one scene at the end with the full intention of representing “feel good” cathartic retribution:

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**Act Two, Scene Eight**

TALIA, ALISSA, and DARR are waiting at the bus stop together. MAN crosses the stage. He stops and looks at DARR.

MAN

(to DARR) Nice boob job, dude.

MAN starts walking away.

DARR

Hey asshole!

MAN *turns*.

DARR & TALIA & ALISSA

Fuck you!

*All three give MAN the finger.*

---

While I resisted the impulse to allow any conflicts in the play to resolve with happy, normative narrative techniques, I do enjoy this one celebratory moment where the women took ownership of public space.

The bus stop techniques use juxtaposition to present a multiplicity of realities in public space and to suggest possible connections between certain identity categories and the privilege carried in public space interactions. While this technique does serve to destabilize the notion of truth through experience, the technique is not enough. I wanted to mobilize a technique which would force audience members to confront the subjectivity of truth by juxtaposing truths *simultaneously*. From the beginning of Act One, Scene One, doubling is used to present multiple scenes onstage simultaneously. Dialogue in multiple scenes overlaps, converging and differing, with the simultaneity of the dialogue exposing the subjectivity of any truth claims. The overlap of dialogue in the doubling scenes occurs with varying frequency depending on the scene. The scene with the most frequent overlap of dialogue is Act One, Scene Four, which our cast and crew labelled as “the duologue.”

The duologue occurs just after one of the classroom scenes has finished. The scene focuses on the characters of Craig and Alissa, who are both sex workers to a certain degree. Craig is an escort, working out of his own apartment, and Alissa is a stripper at a club downtown. In the preceding classroom scene, both Craig and Alissa reveal their professions to their classmates. This prompts Darr and Talia to approach Craig and Alissa, respectively, after the class has wrapped up. The following is an excerpt from the duologue, which occurs when Darr and Talia ask for advice for how to get into sex work:

TALIA	DARR
Someone who's never done it before, how do you get through it?	Someone who's never done it before, how do you get --

<p>ALISSA</p> <p>Sit down. <i>(breath)</i> So, you wanna become a stripper that's great. I work at a club</p> <p>So in terms of space, I'm going into someone else's territory,</p> <p>Always And like the thing that works the most for me, you have to think that you're always bringing</p> <p>The party, you're always bringing the party</p> <p>These people are coming because they want to find something they're not able to find somewhere else</p> <p>You have no filter Because these guys just come from the bars</p> <p>You don't get to approve them</p> <p>You really have to love yourself and that's a process You have to have compassion with yourself</p> <p>You're gonna do stuff that maybe you're not comfortable with And you just have to drop it and just live</p> <p>So, you wanna become a stripper? Why? I would give you a list of things to bring An extra thong</p> <p>Advil</p> <p>A gallon of make-up remover</p> <p>Wetwipes</p>	<p>get into it, I guess?</p> <p>CRAIG</p> <p>Sit down. <i>(breath)</i> So, you wanna become an escort, that's great.</p> <p>I work from my house. So in terms of space,</p> <p>They are coming into my territory, Always And like the thing that works the most for me, you have to think that you are always bringing yourself</p> <p>It's just you These people are coming because they want to find something they're not able to find somewhere else You have a filter though</p> <p>Because these guys see your profile online they contact you and you get to approve them</p> <p>I'd say like You really have to love yourself</p> <p>You have to have compassion with yourself And like, you're gonna fuck up</p> <p>And you just have to drop it And just learn So, you wanna become an escort? Why? I would give you a list of things to have on hand</p> <p>Condoms</p> <p>PrEP</p> <p>A gallon of lube Wetwipes</p>
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Towels	You're gonna wanna go out and buy a bunch of towels
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This technique of overlapping dialogue draws attention to the convergences and differences between the characters' truth claims. In Sheila Cavanagh's defense of multivocality, she advocates for "multiple, divergent, and contradictory stories instead of linear truth claims (291)." The doubling technique not only facilitates multivocality, it demands it. Returning to the project of exposing truth as subjective and as a technology of power, doubling allows the playwright and director to achieve this goal in several ways at once. First, this technique allows real marginalized voices to be represented onstage and to speak their own subjective truth. Second, because the characters are united through collective queerness, this technique allows us to tease out the intricacies of how queerness affects different identity intersections. In the duologue, the text suggests some differences in experience which may stem from the differences in gender between Craig and Alissa, or perhaps from their choice of venue: Alissa working in a club and Craig working at home.

Following this scene both Darr and Talia take up escorting and stripping, retrospectively. Darr's character subtly opens up throughout the rest of the play, inferring that she has a positive relationship with sex work, though this is never overtly stated. In contrast, Talia's work at the strip club is what leads to her eventual sexual assault. Of the four characters: Craig, Alissa, Darr, and Talia, Craig and Alissa are specified as white roles, Darr's race is unspecified, and Talia is specified as a black woman. Though it plays into a stereotype to have the racialized woman be the victim of sexual assault, I wanted to nod to the statistical realities of oppression. Within the narrative of the play I struggled to conform to stereotypes as a means of social commentary, or to break characters free from the stereotypes ascribed to their identity category. There is a productive tension in this struggle and I firmly believe that it is participant feedback which should ultimately inform the choice between representing or dismantling narratives of statistical reality.

As discussed in Chapter Three, Talia's sexual assault monologue was developed in collaboration with a participant who shared her own experience of assault. Beginning as a poem, using a forest fire as a metaphor for assault, the participant's feedback eventually lead to a nearly verbatim scene. The following is an excerpt from the beginning Talia's monologue in Act Two,

Scene Two:

---

*TALIA enters. All others exit except for ALISSA. During the following scene ALISSA does a long strip tease in the background.*

TALIA

I guess rupture would be one way to describe it. A memory. Of an experience that happened to me a few nights ago. Over the next three years I will come to define it as a rape. Every rape narrative I've read, every rape memoir I've read starts with the date. October 29<sup>th</sup>.

I was in one of the saddest periods I'd ever experienced. Cause my first love had left me in this really terrible way. That's the beginning. I'm working at the club. It's my second week. I'm wearing this outfit, lots of lace. Black. I have on these leather heels. They're not tall but they're powerful. I've learned that a lot of guys like that.

He's a regular. Friends with the owner. He's very attractive. A thick jaw. And he pays well, or so I'd been told. And it starts with a lap dance. In the middle of it he stops me. And he asks if I'll go to one of the private rooms with him. He says he'll pay. A lot. It's a thing that happens, especially with the guys who know the owners, the inner circle. And I say yes.

We go down the hall, through the curtain into this room and he kicks someone out and we start making out. Oh! A detail that's important is that on our walk I said, "I don't want you to fuck me." I wanted an "everything but" kind of thing. And he said, "yeah yeah yeah". And we're making out. He starts taking it a little bit further, I start letting it go a little bit further. You know, he feels me up and then he takes it a bit further than that and I say "No, I don't want to sleep with you." And we got back to making out, and this just happens over and over and over again. He keeps trying to make a move like I can feel his erection against me, like part of it's okay and good and part of it's not so much. And he did it so many times and I was so tired that finally I was like, "Fine, like, fine, let's have sex." Umm and I just remember it was happening and I'd said yes, trying to kind of get into it and I like moaned or something and then I heard someone mockingly moan back and there was someone else in the room, someone has come in, and I was kind of like "what the fuck" and it snapped me out of it—and, like, I really feel like I didn't consent to having sex with this guy, but I kind of did say yes and I did take his money. He shouldn't have made me say yes, but I know I didn't consent to having someone else in that room and I just felt so disgusting.

And it was kind of crazy, like the situation had been so bad and then I just got up and walked away from it. And it was a paradox because I felt like no one had forced me into anything.

---

I believe this scene is effective and important for a number of reasons. First, because it gives the survivor the agency to represent her own rape onstage in a way that serves her interests. As has been discussed at length, a truth claim always serves the interest of a particular group or

individual. Something I discussed with this participant was her discomfort with male screen writers and directors using rape scenes to shock the viewer. I believe that facilitating and encouraging survivors to be involved in the representation of rape is vital to educating about and overcoming rape culture. In Chapter Two I mentioned Michael Frisch's concept of shared authority in oral history projects: in these representations I believe it is necessary to attempt to give as much authority as possible to the survivor.

The second reason this scene is notable is due to its content. The sexual activities in the scene represent a grey area in public understandings of consent. In fact, I had a woman speak to me after one show, telling me that she did not empathize with Talia in this scene. As Talia says, "I kind of did say yes and I did take his money." For many people, this statement suffices as consent, whereas many with a more nuanced understanding of consent would argue that Talia is coerced into saying yes. Sadly, the reality is that a number of women with whom I spoke regarding this scene had their own stories of sexual encounters which fall in this grey area. Though my opinion is fully formed and unwaveringly in support of survivors, I understand that the grids of intelligibility which render consent visible vary from person to person. This scene speaks back to Agathangelou et al.'s affective economies, wherein I believe the pedagogical function of the scene can be achieved through evoking affective responses in audience members. This scene requires vocalization, gesture, and emotion, and through these factors it can, hopefully, alter the perceptions of some audience members.

For a moment, I would like to refer back to one of the initial philosophical models for this project: Foucault's genealogical method. The Foucauldian genealogy is dependent on the union of erudite and popular knowledges. While these case studies have amply demonstrated the means through which popular knowledge, in the form of local memory, was inserted into the play, I would like to give an example of the insertion of erudite knowledge. *The History of Sexuality* is structured so that each act contains three classroom scenes. These scenes host discussions of Foucauldian and related theories which emerged in the focus group centred on school life. These classroom scenes are, frankly, bluntly didactic and will likely undergo a large round of edits prior to the next public production of the piece. However, didacticism can be a productive tool and did serve its purpose throughout the play. The classroom scenes function to introduce a theory or philosophy which would affect the way the following scene(s) would be interpreted. In

a sense, the classroom scenes construct the audience's grids of intelligibility to a certain degree.

One example of this can be seen in the classroom scene which precedes Talia's sexual assault monologue, Act Two, Scene Two. In this classroom scene John makes the argument that "There are certain things that are biologically different in men and women. Like, men are, on average, bigger and stronger than women." This positivist assertion snowballs into a discussion where Alissa and Darr lecture John on the concepts of essentialism and anti-essentialism. The scene ends with Alissa asking John if he understands how positivist discourse can sediment into lived reality, "It's like what you inferred about men being stronger than women. You can see that ideology underpinning, giving excuse to so much oppression, so much violence, rape, sexual assault, and harassment and stuff. Yes?" This is the last line before Talia's sexual assault monologue begins and it offers a clear frame for interpretation. While the audience watches Talia's personal, individual memory, the previous scene serves to remind audiences to consider sexual assault as occurring at multiple levels and see how discourse can construct a patriarchal logic.

Another instance of the classroom scene framing perception for the following scene occurs in Act One, Scene Six, the class discusses the Foucauldian understanding of confession as a means of categorizing and controlling sexual behaviour. Alissa contributes, "The thing about us confessing all the dirty things we do, is that it's then categorized and his conclusion is that we can't really come up with our own sexuality outside of these categories, so we may allow ourselves to go towards sexualities that are less normal, or more queer, but we are never making up a sexuality for ourselves." This line brings with it a certain irony alongside a double-bind, as the following scene, Act One, Scene Seven, is a nine-person sex scene, intended to represent forms of sexuality which are not commonly represented on their own and surely not together. The Foucauldian paradox is that by staging these representations, I am not merely complicit, but am actively and ironically participating in the confession and subsequent categorization of sexuality.

Act One, Scene Seven, slowly introduces all the characters in pairs, except for Darr who has a solo scene masturbating centre stage. Utilizing the technique of doubling, the scenes begin to overlap and grow in intensity. In the final moments Martin is flogging Craig one hundred times, as Craig counts the hits out loud all characters climax simultaneously. This scene is

intended to serve two specific and related functions. The first function is largely didactic: it is intended to represent forms of sexuality that audience members might not be used to, whether that be lesbianism, pup play, BDSM, or just the sexual display of a trans body. The second function is stimulatory: it is intended to be hypererotic, ideally turning the audience on to some degree. These two functions, of course, speak to the deployment of visceral stimuli which agitate the body to produce affect and this affect can be mobilized to seduce one into the fold of an affective economy. In other words, this is an erotic pedagogy: teach people about queerness by turning them on with queer sex. In academic research, there are few disciplines which study the erotic and fewer still which mobilize it as a pedagogical tool for dissemination. I would argue, though, that similar to Annabel Soutar's suturing of scientific and political discourse with her familial narrative, *The History of Sexuality* has the capacity to educate a large audience through its suturing of the erotic with the philosophical.

## **In Conclusion**

*The History of Sexuality* is a project which has taken up much of my time and artistic energies over the past two years. I would like to conclude by acknowledging that while the project has produced a wealth of knowledge and has led me, as both an artist and an academic, to consider new possibilities in creating community-engaged works of theatre, the project is hardly finished. While this thesis has summarized much of the knowledge gleaned from the process of researching and writing *The History of Sexuality*, my research has not yet adequately explored the implications of performing the work. Specifically, this thesis lays the groundwork for a process of workshops and performances to study the consequences of having actors perform the text in the script and analyze the ways in which the work can be interpreted by audiences. Rather than considering this thesis as the conclusion to a research-creation project, I would prefer it be understood as a roadmap for further research into performance.

As I write this thesis in April of 2017, I feel it is prudent to mention the immediate timeline for further development of the project. *The History of Sexuality* will undergo a series of workshops in July 2017, primarily examining the response of research participants and members of the public to certain representations and narratives in the play when they are performed onstage. Following the workshops, the play will be produced in September 2017 for a semi-professional production lasting two weeks at Montreal's MainLine Theatre. I anticipate that only through workshops and public performance I will be able to better understand whether the play succeeds in achieving many of my goals in creating such a work.

The closing lines of the play, at least in the current draft of the piece, are borne from the introduction section of Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge* where he writes, "I am no doubt not the only one who writes in order to have no face. Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same: leave it to our bureaucrats and our police to see that our papers are in order (17)." Any playwright who writes themselves into their work clearly cannot claim to write in order to have no face, though perhaps we can claim to write in order to *have control* over the face we show to the world. I have been asked in the past, by friends, family members, and fellow queers, why it is that I do what I do. A few years ago I heard a friend use a very simple phrase to describe our responsibility as privileged folks living in the world today. This phrase has since become a sort of motto that I repeat to myself throughout my endeavors, "take space to make

space”. I hope that in pursuing the collaborative work which I have illustrated throughout this project, I will be able to provide folks from minoritized communities with empowering representations and fulfilling artistic opportunities.

## Afterword.

It falls in the realm of categorical cliché to begin any chapter of academic writing with such sensational phrases as “now more than ever,” or “in the contemporary political moment,” or “the future of society lies uncertain,” however, as I sit down to write these words, I cannot shake the chilling irony of theorizing about truth and power as I watch these theories being exposed, manipulated, and deployed by political figures and manifest in the events of our dark day-to-day. When I sat down to write this paragraph in early-February 2017, one week after the election of US President Donald Trump, there were several events occurring which shook the global psyche: the US implementation of a travel ban for citizens from seven majority Muslim countries, the confirmation of former Exxon Mobil CEO, Rex Tillerson, as the US Secretary of State, the fatal shooting of 6 individuals at a Quebec City mosque which was instigated by a white male terrorist, the continued proliferation and defense of “alternative facts” by Senior Advisors in the Trump administration, and the decision by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s Liberal government to back out of their campaign promise to pursue efforts for electoral reform. Now more than ever, at least in my lifetime, our contemporary political moment is gripped by vast instability and bathed in cool uncertainty, so much so that the future of society lies uncertain.

The pace at which the world is moving in the era of President Donald Trump may offer few assurances about the future, but I am certain that the events I have referenced, this week’s technologies of power and his administration’s deployment of truth, will be quickly overshadowed by those events of next week and next month and next year, as this chess match, fascism vs the people, moves into its next sequence. I imagine that by the time this paper is ready for publication, the events I referenced in my opening statements will fit into an alarming and irreversible retrospective logic but I believe it is important to preserve, however subjective, my intellectual anxieties and terrified affect as an aspiring scholar in this specific moment in time.

The first chapter of this thesis reflected on the merits of mobilizing verbatim and documentary theatre genres in the era of neoliberal globalization. These forms force us to bring ourselves in contact with the other and render the other visible not through reactionary political yelling matches or social media echo chambers, but through dialogical performance which enables the self and other to *productively* engage with one another. *The History of Sexuality* was a significant portion of my life. I poured extensive amounts of myself into creating and

producing the piece and its lifespan is in no way close to its end. However, this thesis is only one small drop in the bucket of actions that need to be taken to overcome the horizontal violence bred and perpetuated by global technologies of capitalism. It is the time to listen with open hearts and to fight oppression with raw fervour.

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**The History of Sexuality  
(working draft)**

by Dane Stewart

Presented as an Appendix  
For Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of  
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## **Dramatis Personae**

**Alissa** – Mid-twenties. Queer woman. Stripper. Subscribes to queer politics as much as she does to queer sexuality. White.

**Madeleine** – Late-twenties. Lesbian. Struggling to find her path in life. Learning how to evaluate self-worth outside of one's productivity.

**John/Man** – Prototypical straight bro. Mid-twenties. Very intelligent. Product of an extremely normal family. Also plays every extra man in the play. White.

**Craig** – Mid-twenties. Young, submissive, gay, kinky. Sex worker. Graduate student working on documentaries of queer folks. White.

**Marie DuPont** – Mid-fifties. Tenured professor in communications and cultural studies. Grounded in herself. Sick of the university institution, but too tired or comfortable to do anything about it.

**Darr** – Early twenties. Intelligent, curious, shy. Transgender woman.

**Talia** – Mid-twenties. Escaped from a career at Starbucks by entering into a master's program. Experienced in queer politics, inexperienced in queer sex. Black.

**Martin** – Early thirties. Dominant gay man.

**Gayle** – Late forties. Previously worked refinishing doors, but had to stop after her mobility was limited. Trying to discover herself outside of her job and to find where sexuality resides in relation to her disability.

**SETTING:** The play takes place in Montreal in the current year, or close. Two raised platforms sit on stage right and stage left. Each contains a bed. One platform holds a pole which is used as a coat rack in the bedroom, later in the play this pole will double as the pole in the strip club. Between these two platforms rests a living room set: couches, chairs, small tables. Nothing too eccentric as this furniture will represent the living area of several different apartments. A flippable whiteboard sits at the back of the stage. One side of this whiteboard will be used in the classroom as a literal whiteboard. When flipped over, the whiteboard provides a surface for projection. Different projections will be used to indicate a change in setting. Six chairs and a collapsable table rest just offstage, and will be brought onstage for classroom scenes.

**ACT ONE**  
**Scene One**

*Lights up, dim, one by one to reveal each of the following characters. Four morning rituals are happening simultaneously. GAYLE sits on an armchair in the living room, scrolling through her laptop; in front of her are two mugs of coffee and two english muffins. CRAIG is revealed in the stage right bedroom, packing a bag for the day and checking his laptop which is sitting on his bed. ALISSA and MADELEINE are making out on the couch. JOHN is revealed laying in the bed stage left with a Macbook resting next to him. After a moment of typing and scrolling he begins watching porn, full volume, and jerking off under the covers. This continues underneath the entire first scene.*

ALISSA

I have to go.

MADELEINE

No you don't.

ALISSA

Yes I do. I mean, I don't want to but--

MADELEINE

Stay. Fuck class.

ALISSA

Mmmm. Fuck you. *(gets up off the couch)*

MADELEINE

Are you gonna just leave me here?

ALISSA

I have to catch the 9:32 bus or I'll be late. Did you take all the coffee?

MARIE

*(shouting from offstage, to GAYLE)* Did you take all the coffee?

MADELEINE

Maybe.

GAYLE

No, yours is out here!

ALISSA

I will kill you.

MARIE

*(entering)* Oh god I was going to kill you. Thank you.

MADELEINE

There's some left in the french press.

ALISSA

Thank god. *(exits to procure coffee)*

GAYLE

That's yours too. *(indicating the english muffin)*

MARIE

Thank you. *(takes a sip, sighs)* I think I'm ready.

GAYLE

Of course you are. It's Foucault. You love your post-structuralists.

MARIE

I do. I do love my post-structuralists. You like him too.

GAYLE

No. I'm a structural girl living in a post-structural world.

ALISSA & MARIE

*(Alissa shouts from offstage)* Are you sending out resumes today?

*Both GAYLE and MADELEINE have the same physical reaction. Annoyed intake of breath and emotional sigh.*

MADELEINE

*(shouting to offstage)* No!

GAYLE

I'm following up with a few places. Don't worry.

ALISSA

*(still offstage)* What?

MADELEINE

I said no!

GAYLE

Go teach. Have fun. You're gonna miss the bus. Love you!

MARIE

Love you too! *(chugs the rest of her coffee)* Oh god this coffee. I'm going to pass a bowel movement on the bus.

MARIE *exits.*

ALISSA

*(Enters chugging her coffee)* Fuck this coffee, I'm like definitely gonna have to shit on the bus. You said no?

MADELEINE

I have a busy day planned... It'll probably take me like 2 hours to get over the emotional depression of you leaving me here alone. Then I'll need a couple hours to scroll through reddit, by then it'll probably be time for, you know, for my daily anxiety attack and by the time that's done with the day will be pretty much over.

ALISSA

*(laying down on top of MADELEINE)* Oh my god. *(kiss)* You. *(kiss)* Are. *(kiss)* The worst. *(kiss, stands up)*. Go take a ritalin and send out some apps. I love you.

MADELEINE

Yes Sir! I love you too.

ALISSA

*(as she exits)* I'll be back for a bit before work! Bye!

CRAIG

*(on the phone)* Hi, is this Jay? *(pause)* Hi Jay, this is Craig from RentMen. Yeah, I'm good, yeah. No I just like to chat before a first time, easier to make sure things are legit on the phone, you know. Yeah. Yeah, great, no worries. So, it's like I said, like \$200 for the session, cash and I need it upfront before anything happens. *(laughs)* Yeah, you know, just gotta like cover my bases. Yeah, yeah, you can fuck me no problem. Yeah, ummm *(pause)* well, I mean, like I'm not gonna say no to that now, let's see how I'm feeling later... It'll definitely cost you extra though. Yeah, we'll figure it out. Okay great. I'll see you at 3 then. And, just to be clear, I play safe only. I'm on PrEP and I was tested like two months ago. Cool. Sweet, I'll see you then, just text if anything changes. Later.

*CRAIG exits. On his way he moves the whiteboard from the back of the living room to the front. A projection slowly fades up: a bus station. Meanwhile, JOHN cums, cleans himself off with a towel and exits.*

*Enter DARR and TALIA to stand in front of the bus stop. MAN crosses the stage in a hoodie (he is portraying another male character at this point). He slows down and checks out TALIA, making brief eye contact. After he passes her he yells back.*

MAN

*(to TALIA)* You should smile.

TALIA takes a step towards him, glares, but says nothing. DARR sighs and flips the whiteboard. Projection off. The other side of the whiteboard is revealed with the words "THE HISTORY OF SEXUALITY" scrawled across the middle. This serves as the transition into the classroom for scene 2.

## Scene Two

*Classroom. 6 chairs surround a folding table, the whiteboard at the back. ALISSA, TALIA, JOHN, CRAIG, MARIE and DARR are seated. MARIE is smoking a vape e-cigarette.*

MARIE

*(vaping throughout)* Foucault. Foucault. Even his name sounds sexy. Fouc... Oh! Michel Foucault. This course is called "The History of Sexuality," named after his book by the same name. A book we'll be studying in depth this semester. But sexuality, for Foucault, was about so much more than this book. Foucault was a kinky man. He spent the 70's cruising sex clubs in San Francisco. And producing some of the world's most revelatory academic research Oh, Foucault. He died in 1984. AIDS related. But not before he produced a canon of literature. The kind of writing that makes you question yourself as an academic, how could you ever compete? The kind of writing that, maybe, turns you on. Is that why you're here? The History of Sexuality. Discipline and Punish. Madness and Civilization. Foucault writes about power. And power can be a very sexy subject. My name is Marie DuPont, for those of you who don't know me, and we are going to spend the next 4 months learning the ins and the outs of sex and power through the writings of the revolutionary french philosopher Michel Foucault. The father of post-structuralism. Though he never would have said that. He hated labels.

JOHN

Was he a hipster?

MARIE

Hipster jokes? A little passé, no? Maybe. A sex crazed hipster. Now, we have a lot to get through, but we can't talk about sex if we don't know one another so I'd like you each to give an introduction. Why are you here? What drew you to this class? This city? This lifestyle? Why don't you start?

CRAIG

I'm Craig. I'm in the second year of a master's in the film department, but I wanted to take this class even though it's in communications. I moved to Montreal about 3 years ago.

*The introductions now shift to other places and times. We are introduced to each of the characters at different moments in their lives.*

*In a bar. CRAIG and MARTIN meeting for the first time.*

MARTIN

You just moved here?

CRAIG

Just over two weeks ago, yeah.

MARTIN

And you're already out and about meeting kinksters, eh?

CRAIG

That was never really an option where I'm from. And I want to explore this side of me, so, yes.

MARTIN

Why me?

CRAIG

Your profile. You seem so masculine. And powerful. And just really fucking hot. The kind of guy I wanna submit to.

MARTIN

Honesty. Good trait for a pup. So you want to submit?

CRAIG

Yes.

MARTIN

Yes what?

CRAIG

Yes... Sir?

MARTIN

Good. Let's get you a drink.

*Shift to ALISSA and MADELEINE at a bar celebrating ALISSA's acceptance into grad school.*

MADELEINE

Could I get another drink for her please? A toast! To my amazing girlfriend, Alissa, who was just accepted to grad school!

ALL

Cheers! / Santé! / Congrats!

Speech! Speech! Speech! Speech!

ALISSA

Okay, okay, okay. *(to MADELEINE)* I hate you. *(to ALL)* Thanks you guys for coming out tonight. Oh god, I'm very drunk. I got into Concordia Communications on a full scholarship!!!

ALL

Wooooooo!

ALISSA

And I owe so much to my amazing, beautiful, sexy-as-fuck, stud of a girlfriend... Madeleine! Can someone please get her a drink?

*Shift to Starbucks where TALIA is working behind the counter.*

TALIA

And what'll you be drinking today?

JOHN

Grande chai latte.

TALIA

Great. Your name?

JOHN

John.

TALIA

Great. That'll be \$5.05 please.

JOHN

Doesn't it seem a little unfair?

TALIA

What?

JOHN

That you get to know my name, but I don't know yours?

TALIA

It's Talia.

JOHN

Got the name, how about the number?

TALIA

Your drink will be ready over there. *(sarcasm)* Have a *great* day. *(to herself)* Three weeks left.

*Shift to JOHN at the hospital waiting room. MARTIN plays the doctor here, he doesn't speak but simply blocks JOHN's path.*

JOHN

*(as though MARTIN keeps interjecting)* It's a chai latte. It's for my sister. She's in room 208. I told you this already. My name is John Anderson. I'm here to see my sister, Colby Anderson. She was brought in last night. Really late. That doesn't make sense. I'm her brother, why wouldn't she want to see me? Whatever. I said whatever. Can you at least give her this? *(hands over the latte)*

*Shift to DARR at the DMV. She is speaking to a clerk who is played by GAYLE.*

DARR

Why can't you just give me the license? I have all the right documents.

GAYLE

Your documents don't match up with what we have on file.

DARR

That's because some things have, umm, changed since last time.

GAYLE

The documents don't match up.

DARR

Here. Birth certificate. SIN card. Health card. Passport. I need my new licence. I start school next week.

GAYLE

The documents don't match up. I'm not sure you're telling the truth.

DARR

I *am* telling the truth.

*Snap back to the CLASSROOM.*

MARIE

Truth. That's where we're starting. Can someone please define truth for us?

JOHN

Sure. It's something you know for sure. It's fact. It's two plus two equals four.

MARIE

Wrong.

JOHN

Two plus two doesn't equal four?

MARIE

Maybe it does. Maybe it doesn't. Maybe it equals five.

ALISSA

Big Brother is watching us.

MARIE

Alissa. Why don't you tell us what truth is?

ALISSA

It's fallible. The idea that certain things are completely and utterly true is a dangerous idea. That's what post-modernism is all about. Challenging this idea that certain things are absolutely true.

MARIE

You didn't tell us what truth is.

TALIA

It's power.

MARIE

Yes. Expand.

TALIA

Who decides what's true? Who gets to speak the truth? A police officer shoots a black man. The officer speaks the truth. A woman gets raped when she's drunk. She will always be lying.

JOHN

Okay, but like, certain things are fact.

TALIA

Who gets to create these facts? How are these facts used? The scientific method has a particular identity attached to its history.

JOHN

It's still science.

MARIE

And my goal, Foucault's goal, is to make you question what that means and why everyone clings to the so called, sciences.

*All exit except for DARR.*

*Projection cue: Bus Stop.*

DARR is now alone at the bus stop. MAN enters and stands next to her. MAN looks at DARR, for just slightly too long and looks away. DARR gives a quick glance at MAN. After a second MAN glances back at DARR, eyes specifically hovering on her chest, again for too long. DARR half glances back, half eye rolls, bends down to re-tie a shoelace, giving MAN a full view down her neck line.

*Projection and lights fade, but overlap with the first line of the next scene.*

### Scene Three

*The scene is set once again in several areas. DARR sits on the bed stage left, on her laptop. CRAIG and MARTIN occupy the stage right bedroom, MARTIN is in the bed and CRAIG lays next to the bed. ALISSA is in the living area, touching her boobs.*

CRAIG

Permission to come in the bed Sir?

MARTIN

Do you think you earned that, pup?

CRAIG

Yes Sir.

MARTIN

How do you think?

CRAIG

I made you cum *twice* Sir, plus I packed all your meals for tomorrow and I finished all my readings for class.

MARTIN

Yeay yeah yeah, get in the bed pup.

*CRAIG crawls into the bed next to MARTIN.*

*During the next parts DARR reads off the titles of Craigslist ads she's looking at. JOHN enters just below her platform and looks out towards the audience. He voices the ads that were written by men.*

*Projection Cue: Craigslist, video showing a search for "trans".*

DARR

"Looking for a CD or trans for some nice fun"

JOHN

“Hi, I am a 29 years old latino. I loved my experiences with CDs and trans, eating them up, feel that yummy hole on my tongue. I am looking for some fun, I got 420 and I can host. I got pics if needed. Hit me up and let's Netflix and chill.”

ALISSA

*(shouting to offstage)* My boobs are so sore.

MADELEINE

*(shouting from offstage)* What?

ALISSA

*(shouting)* My boobs are sore!

MADELEINE

*(entering)* From work?

ALISSA *nods.*

MADELEINE

What happened?

ALISSA

Well, I had a weird night.

MADELEINE

Do you wanna share? Or process now and talk about it later?

ALISSA

Well, it was very off put—it was very vulnerable, like I was vulnerable. *(Pause)* So, like, I had this woman show up. And she was probably queer, she presented very very butch, really masculine you know, like full suit and all that, but. Well, she also had huge boobs, which like you know...

MADELEINE

Makes you uncomfortable because of your first time, when Huge Boobs Butch called you mosquito bites mid-sex.

ALISSA

Exactly. Fucking HBB. But, and maybe that was a part of it, but with this woman I saw a chance for, making it more vulnerable. And like usually when I'm giving a lap dance, I'm providing my sexuality and I'm providing their sexuality, it's a full give. But in this experience with her I was asking for something back, and she didn't give back to me, she—what shocked me or what shook me is that she gave me the same response that my usual male client would. She pushed the rules a little bit and maybe I was expecting her to, I dunno respect me, or *see* me more as a woman because she—well but she just

put up the same walls as every guy.

MADELEINE

Right. There is like, a vulnerability there.

ALISSA

And it made me wonder if I should keep doing this job BUT THEN I had a beautiful experience on the way home! Where—I just remembered this—I was so upset and then at a certain intersection this van pulled up next to my bike, and someone yelled “Alissa” and “Alissa I love you!” and I have no idea who it was and I was like oh thank god, they were just like “Alissa, Alissa I love you!”

MADELEINE

That's amazing! That's like right out of a movie.

*Pause.*

ALISSA

At least we'll never be boring. Thank you. For listening.

DARR

“First experience with a trans / Premiere experience avec un trans!”

JOHN

“Hello there, 22 years-old student looking for a first experience with a trans (I am 100% straight but very curious for trans). I am tall, skinny and well hung (8 inches dick). I'd describe myself as someone that is open-minded, curious and thoughtful. Je parle français aussi!”

MARTIN

How was your client today pup?

CRAIG

He was good Sir. It was really interesting actually. This dude whose boyfriend is like in a wheelchair or something, so every once in awhile they have this deal where this guy gets to go get fucked by someone.

MARTIN

You fucked him?

CRAIG

Yes Sir.

MARTIN

Did it feel as good as me, pup?

CRAIG

Sir, none of my clients are ever as good as you. I haven't seen you that much recently Sir. I'd like to see you more than once in a while.

MARTIN

Out of the bed, pup. Clothes off, arms up against the wall.

CRAIG

Sir?

MARTIN

Now, pup. I want you to cry before bed. You'll sleep better.

CRAIG

Yes Sir.

*CRAIG gets up and takes off his shirt.*

MARTIN

Cane or belt? You can choose tonight, pup.

CRAIG

Belt, Sir.

MARTIN

Good puppy. You know I love you?

CRAIG

I love you too Sir.

DARR

“Looking for an awesome trans man”

JOHN

“Hey reader. I've recently met and had an amazing experience with a Trans guy. I am looking to reconnect that kind of feeling in something more romantic. Whether you've got the surgery going or not is fine. It's not a fetish thing, I just felt I connected so much better with a hybrid of both worlds, rather fascinated and awe'd, wishing to be an added support to your journey. And if I am not what YOU are looking for, then hey. Don't give up bro. Your chica is around here somewhere!”

MADELEINE

I mean, the scary thing isn't that all I do is lay around and fucking watch *Friends* all day. It's that sometimes I feel like that's all I *can* do. Does that make sense?

ALISSA

Yeah, yeah no it totally does.

MADELEINE

I spent 2 hours today googling “how to deal with symptoms of mild depression”.

ALISSA

And?

MADELEINE

I found this like 6-step listicle of like “6 ways to deal with mild depression” and one of them was like set really really small goals. Like, don't say like “I'm gonna clean the apartment today” instead say like “I'm gonna clean that one crusty ass glass that's been in the sink for 3-weeks” and then like at least that's something.

ALISSA

Okay, no, but seriously, I'm so glad you washed that glass. I get it though, I know how you feel.

MADELEINE

*(sigh)* But. I mean, you do so many things everyday. You know you do classes and you exercise and you work this crazy job that's so shitty but also takes so much like courage, you know. I guess, it's hard in contrast sometimes.

ALISSA

Yeah. No that makes sense.

MADELEINE

I love you.

ALISSA

I love you too.

DARR

“Want to hook up with a trans girl? If the thought of hooking up with a mtf turns you on you're on the right ad. I'm a young and cute pre-op trans girl here to help you get off in complete discretion. All I ask for from you is safety, respect and good hygiene. Pictures and rates available upon request.”

#### **Scene Four**

*The classroom. MARIE, TALIA, ALISSA, CRAIG, DARR, and JOHN are present.*

MARIE

So this is from page 49, the end of chapter two. He's talking about the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Victorians: “It is said that no society has been more prudish [...] as if they were determined to have nothing to do with it.” With sex that is. “But it is the opposite that has become apparent, at least after a general review of the facts.”

Would somebody like to speak to this?

TALIA

It's the repressive hypothesis.

MARIE

Explain.

TALIA

Well, it's this idea—sorry, did you want to—okay, it's the idea that 200 years ago we stopped talking about sex, right? That everyone became a prude. That maybe sex happened in private but it wasn't talked about at all in public. But now, sex is everywhere, it's all we talk about, right?

JOHN

But that's true. Sex is everywhere.

TALIA

Yeah, but Foucault challenges that right? He does this thing which is challenging that linear narrative that like the in Victorian era, right? That we were sort of sexually repressed and now since the 1960s we're sexually liberated.

CRAIG

Yeah, but John's right. We are sexually liberated now. Like, I never could have been gay back then like I am now.

ALISSA

You're missing the point. It's not whether or not we've been sexually liberated but why we say with so much passion that we used to be repressed which I think is sort of like this very kind of like witty Foucault way of talking about power.

TALIA

Professing our sexual liberation is a way of thinking that we're outside of power, right? But we're really still wrapped up in it all the same.

MARIE

Because even in our liberation. We still only talk about sex in certain ways, at certain times.

TALIA

Yeah! Yeah yeah yeah yeah. And he cites the example of child sexuality right? The school and separating children according to gender right? So they weren't mingling with one another—but—that segregation assumes that children sort of have sexuality or that if they were grouped together they would sort of be engaging in sexual behaviour right? It's this way of talking about sexuality by *not* talking about sexuality.

DARR

It's like Sia.

JOHN

Sia? Like *(singing)* *Party girls don't get hurt, can't do anything, when will I learn--*

DARR

Umm. Like the video, Elastic Heart. With Shia Laboeuf and that really really young girl. Ummm the relationship was between the dancer and Shia Laboeuf confused people. People thought there might be pedophilic tendencies it was really interesting because people kept trying to categorize their relationship as siblings, as brother and sister maybe, because if they were family then it couldn't be sexual. Umm not talking about child sexuality is still talking about it.

JOHN

Yeah, but that's because pedophilia is wrong.

MARIE

Why?

JOHN

Are you trying to say that pedophilia's not wrong?

MARIE

I'm trying to question why you think it's wrong.

JOHN

Because! It's a kid, it's just, it's wrong--

ALISSA

Consent. Pedophilia is wrong because it is impossible for a child to consent to sex.

MARIE

But when a child turns 18 they suddenly become fully capable of consent?

*A scene plays out behind the classroom, between GAYLE, MADELEINE, and MARTIN.*

MARTIN

*(to Madeleine)* Hey babe. How old are you?

MADELEINE

17.

MARTIN

Oh god.

GAYLE

Happy birthday!

MADELEINE

Thanks, mom!

MARTIN

Hey what's up?

MADELEINE

Hi...

MARTIN

You 18?

MADELEINE

Yeah...

MARTIN

How about I buy you a drink?

*End of interlude scene.*

ALISSA

Like just because people can't act on it, it doesn't exclude the fact that a 17 year old is a sexual person.

TALIA

We want what we can't have, right? I remember in undergrad all the straight bros wanted to hook up with these 17 and 18 year olds, right?

JOHN

Don't look at me when you say that.

TALIA

I wasn't--

MARIE

Discourses of innocence. There is a discourse of innocence that surrounds the ways in which we talk about children. Is this what makes children desirable? In some ways at the same time, for particular people. You can connect it as well to the idea of the virgin, the pure, innocent virgin who is so frequently fetishized and desired.

ALISSA

Yes! And! Who gets to be innocent? Or has to be? Girls. Boys aren't supposed to be innocent. They're supposed to cause trouble and be rough and play dirty. Girls are the only ones who make it through childhood with their innocence still intact.

DARR

Some girls do. But some are excluded, or lose their innocence like the moment they have sex.

*Another scene plays out behind with GAYLE, MADELEINE, and MARTIN. In the style of a public service announcement.*

MARTIN / GAYLE / MADELEINE

How to tell if your partner's a slut!

GAYLE

In three simple questions:

MARTIN

Is your partner male?

MADELEINE

Not a slut! Congrats! But remember what Spiderman said. With great privilege, comes great responsibility.

MARTIN

Or is your partner female?

GAYLE

Proceed to question two.

MARTIN

Has she had sex with more than one person? If you answered yes:

MADELEINE

She's a slut! Better dump her and move on, bro. But make sure first you get laid. If she's not down, buy her a drink first.

MARTIN

If you answered no:

GAYLE

Proceed to question three.

MARTIN

Has she had sex outside of wedlock?

*Scene is interrupted by the classroom.*

JOHN

This is stupid and outdated. Yes. Slut shaming is definitely a thing. I'm not arguing with that. But there are entire social movements aimed against it. It's reductive to simplify it to some sort of checklist.

ALISSA

It might be reductive, but it's the reality for some people. And guys are into it. One of the girls who strips at the club with me does this whole young girl, innocent thing and she makes bank.

TALIA

Slut shaming comes back to this discourse of innocence though. Innocence automatically assumes a power imbalance right? In the politics of desirability we are always in power relationships. So as a woman interested in a man I am probably in some ways attracted to someone who has more power than I do. Also as a racialized woman, at least for a time, and I still deal with this, but I fetishize white men for this power, their inherent power.

CRAIG

That's really cool! Wait, I'm sorry, it's not cool. Let me try again: that makes me think of my own life. Also FYI I go full disclosure pretty fast. So, I'm in this long term BDSM relationship with this guy and it is fully based on him assuming more power than me. But! In contrast, I also work as an escort, which is great money, but the moment someone pays you for something, there's a very complicated power dynamic.

JOHN

I dunno. I'm having trouble reducing all of this down to power.

MARIE

Well it's because to talk about sex in terms of power is not a reduction, it's very much an expansion.

JOHN

And I feel like I just lack a lot of the experiences you guys have. I... I dunno.

MARIE

We can continue talking about this next week: chapter three. But, it's couples night at Cinema l'Amour so I have to run. *(pause.)* That was a joke.

MARIE *exits.*

JOHN

God this fucking Foucault. It's too confusing.

CRAIG

But, do you feel like he kind of really gets you? I feel like if I was around in the 70's I would have fucked the shit out of Foucault. Literally.

ALISSA

You should make a really intense Foucault themed sex tape. I think I might be in love with Marie. She

might actually be insane.

JOHN

You guys are crazy.

TALIA

*(as JOHN exits)* Watch your microaggressions, John!

ALISSA

Is it mean that some part of me really gets off on making him uncomfortable?

TALIA

Nah, it's good to make the straight guy squirm every once in awhile.

ALISSA

Okay, see you folks next week!

*ALISSA exits.*

TALIA

Bye! See you both next week!

*TALIA follows ALISSA out.*

DARR

Hey Craig?

CRAIG

Yeah?

DARR

I'm wondering if I could maybe, ask you something personal?

CRAIG

Yeah.

*ALISSA crosses the back of the stage, closely followed by TALIA. Their interaction is presumably taking place in the hallway just outside of the classroom.*

TALIA

*(calling out)* Hey Alissa!

ALISSA

*(stopping and turning back)* Hey! What's up?

<p>TALIA I'm wondering, I have something kind of personal I'd like to ask you about.</p>	
<p>ALISSA Go for it.</p>	<p>DARR Umm... It's about, how you...</p>
<p>TALIA You mentioned that you're a stripper</p>	<p>CRAIG How I?</p>
<p>ALISSA Yeah.</p>	<p>DARR You mentioned that you're Umm... an escort?</p>
<p>TALIA <del>Could I ask you about that?</del></p>	<p>CRAIG Yeah.</p>
<p>ALISSA <del>Of course.</del></p>	<p>DARR <del>Could I ask you about that?</del></p>
<p>TALIA I want to do that.</p>	<p>CRAIG I mean, sure.</p>
<p>ALISSA You want to be a stripper?</p>	<p>DARR I want to do that.</p>
<p>TALIA I want to do it I know I could do it well.</p>	<p>CRAIG You want to be an escort?</p>
<p>ALISSA Sure. I mean, it's not the easiest job <del>Why do you want to?</del> <del>If you know.</del></p>	<p>DARR I want to do it to try at least.</p>
<p>TALIA</p>	<p>CRAIG Sure. Is there a reason?  If you know.</p>
<p>TALIA</p>	<p>DARR</p>

<p>I want to feel in control financially, you know</p> <p>And I think it could be so Empowering?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ALISSA</p> <p>That's not the best word for it. The job can be really demeaning</p> <p>at times, especially for a woman</p> <p style="text-align: center;">TALIA</p> <p>I know. I can deal with that.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ALISSA</p> <p><del>Are you sure?</del></p> <p style="text-align: center;">TALIA</p> <p><del>Yes.</del></p> <p style="text-align: center;">ALISSA</p> <p>I mean, I'm not one to judge, obviously.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">TALIA</p> <p><del>I need advice.</del></p> <p style="text-align: center;">ALISSA</p> <p><del>Advice like what?</del></p> <p style="text-align: center;">TALIA</p> <p><del>Well, I just</del></p> <p>Someone who's never done it before, how do you get through it?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ALISSA</p> <p>Sit down. (breath)</p>	<p>I want to feel in control, umm</p> <p>Of my body</p> <p>You said it can be Empowering?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CRAIG</p> <p>That's not the best word for it. The job can be really</p> <p>dangerous</p> <p>at times, especially for a woman</p> <p style="text-align: center;">DARR</p> <p>I know. But I want that.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CRAIG</p> <p><del>Are you sure?</del></p> <p style="text-align: center;">DARR</p> <p><del>Yes.</del></p> <p style="text-align: center;">CRAIG</p> <p>I mean, I'm not gonna tell you no.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">DARR</p> <p><del>I need advice.</del></p> <p style="text-align: center;">CRAIG</p> <p><del>Advice like what? For what?</del></p> <p style="text-align: center;">DARR</p> <p>Umm</p> <p>Someone who's never done it before, how do you get -- get into it, I guess?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CRAIG</p> <p>Sit down. (breath)</p>
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<p>So, you wanna become a stripper that's great. <del>This is a great way to make money and you make money really quickly.</del>  I work at a club</p> <p>So in terms of space, I'm going into someone else's territory,</p> <p>Always  And like the thing that works the most for me, you have to think that you're always bringing</p> <p>The party, you're always bringing the party</p> <p>These people are coming because they want to find something they're not able to find somewhere else  You have no filter</p> <p>Because these guys just come from the bars</p> <p>You don't get to approve them</p> <p>You really have to love yourself and that's a process  You have to have compassion with yourself</p> <p>You're gonna do stuff that maybe you're not comfortable with  And you just have to drop it and just live</p> <p>So, you wanna become a stripper?  Why?  I would give you a list of things to bring  An extra thong</p> <p>Advil</p> <p>A gallon of make-up remover</p> <p>Wetwipes  Towels</p>	<p>So, you wanna become an escort, that's great. <del>This is a great way to make money and you make money really quickly.</del></p> <p>I work from my house.  So in terms of space,</p> <p>They are coming into my territory,  Always  And like the thing that works the most for me, you have to think that you are always bringing yourself</p> <p>It's just you  These people are coming because they want to find something they're not able to find somewhere else</p> <p>You have a filter though</p> <p>Because these guys see your profile online they contact you and you get to approve them</p> <p>I'd say like  You really have to love yourself</p> <p>You have to have compassion with yourself  And like, you're gonna fuck up</p> <p>And you just have to drop it  And just learn  So, you wanna become an escort?  Why?  I would give you a list of things to have on hand</p> <p>Condoms</p> <p>PrEP</p> <p>A gallon of lube  Wetwipes</p> <p>You're gonna wanna go out and buy a bunch of</p>
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<p>Wear clothes that make you feel a look, like you're presenting an aesthetic, they're looking for categories: big tits, blonde hair, or whatever look you can bring that's been garnered for the male gaze</p> <p>I bring the doll femme catsuit look. That's what I go for.</p> <p>And then once you're there, it's like a show, you're always performing</p> <p>Always move in slow motion. They need time to drink you in. And the slower you move, the more money you make, <del>because you want to take up their time, you want them to get lost in your fantasy.</del></p> <p>I like to think of it as doing a little bit of contact dance with their aura And if they're able to be present</p> <p>Then we can really get lost in something</p> <p>I'm a pragmatic person. I believe that everyone has needs, and if I can fulfill those needs and keep myself safe, then why not?</p> <p>You have to cut yourself off. Give your look a</p>	<p>towels And wear clothes that make you feel like yourself</p> <p>Maybe they're looking for a category, but that's why they chose your profile, your ad; the category's been picked so just be you</p> <p>I bring the jock look. That's what they go for.</p> <p>You don't want to feel like you're performing. In the beginning I found that I had these internalized hierarchies of who's attractive, and when I invoked that inside of myself and had sex with somebody lower down, that's what hurt me.</p> <p>So I try to see myself inside of them. See how, in another life, I could have been this person. I like to think of it as doing a little bit of contact dance with their aura</p> <p>If I can be present Then we can really get lost in something I'm a spiritual person. I believe everything and everyone is connected. The world is like the force in Star Wars</p> <p><del>And basically the thing is like you realize you're like this drop of water but you're also the sea,</del> you're like the universe, all the atoms in the universe is like the same stuff that's inside of you. You need to see yourself in your client</p>
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<p>name and go with it. You're always performing and you're always wearing a mask. <del>You might be letting down all these physical boundaries, but</del> you need to put up walls, keep you out of it.</p> <p>It's not easy But it can be worth it. Does that make sense?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">TALIA</p> <p>Yes. <del>Could I ask you one more thing?</del></p> <p style="text-align: center;">ALISSA</p> <p><del>Yeah.</del></p> <p style="text-align: center;">TALIA</p> <p>Where do you do it?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ALISSA</p> <p>I work at this club downtown.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ALISSA</p> <p>It's owned by these older douchebros who call all the women "girls". But I mean like <del>Do you have a bit of time now?</del></p> <p style="text-align: center;">TALIA</p> <p><del>Yeah.</del></p> <p style="text-align: center;">ALISSA</p> <p>Why don't I show you? I've got a bit of time.</p> <p>If the owners are around they might even hire you on the spot.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">TALIA</p> <p>Oh my god, thank you so much.</p>	<p>You have to break down all your walls It's not easy, but it can be beautiful</p> <p>Does that make sense?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">DARR</p> <p>Ummm, yeah, I think so.</p> <p><del>Could I ask you one more thing?</del></p> <p style="text-align: center;">CRAIG</p> <p><del>Yeah.</del></p> <p style="text-align: center;">DARR</p> <p>Where do you do it?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CRAIG</p> <p>I use this site called Rent Men. But, I know there's like a similar one for girls.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CRAIG</p> <p><del>Do you have a bit of time now?</del></p> <p style="text-align: center;">DARR</p> <p><del>Yeah.</del></p> <p style="text-align: center;">CRAIG</p> <p>Why don't I show you? It's gonna be easier to figure out and probably way safer if you have someone who knows what they're doing.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">DARR</p> <p>Thank you.</p>
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ALISSA But just, be sure you wanna do this.	CRAIG But just Be sure you know what you're getting into
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TALIA, ALISSA, DARR, *and* CRAIG *exit*.

*Projection cue: bus stop. GAYLE and MADELEINE are at the bus stop, GAYLE is leaning on her cane. MAN enters and stands next to her, he looks at her cane and doesn't look away as the projection slowly fades down.*

### Scene Five

GAYLE *sits on the couch in the living room. MADELEINE is pacing in the stage right bedroom, borderline anxiety attack, trying to calm herself down.*

GAYLE

16 resumes.

MADELEINE

I'm falling apart, I'm falling apart.

GAYLE

16 resumes, 2 interviews. Lunches and dinners prepped.

MADELEINE

I'm falling apart, I'm falling apart.

GAYLE

Lunches and dinners prepped, dishes done, laundry in the dryer.

MADELEINE

I'm falling apart, I'm falling apart. No.

*MADELEINE sits on the edge of the bed, near hyperventilating.*

GAYLE

Laundry in the dryer. Receipts organized, taxes started.

MADELEINE

You are a good person, you are a good person.

GAYLE

Taxes started, can finish tomorrow. Fuck.

MADELEINE

You are a good person, you are a good person.

GAYLE

I need a job.

MADELEINE

Then why can't you find a job.

*MADELEINE lets out a small cry. GAYLE looks up from the couch, they make eye contact.*

MADELEINE & GAYLE

Who are you? You're me.

GAYLE

Twenty years ago.

MADELEINE

In the future.

MADELEINE & GAYLE

I feel the world pressing down on me.

MADELEINE

A hole in my stomach.

GAYLE

A pain down my neck.

MADELEINE & GAYLE

How did it get this way?

MADELEINE

I'm supposed to be okay. I'm supposed to have a life by now.

GAYLE

You have time. It's too late for me to start over.

MADELEINE & GAYLE

What am I supposed to do?

GAYLE

I'm not one of those regular people.

MADELEINE

I don't want that kind of life. I don't want the kids and the family and the white picket whatever.

GAYLE

And now it's too late.

MADELEINE & GAYLE

I should be so much more than a job.

MADELEINE

Why do I feel useless all the time?

GAYLE

You only matter as much as your labour.

MADELEINE & GAYLE

I don't want to sell out.

GAYLE

I could get one of those domestic jobs.

MADELEINE

Babysitting. Cleaning. Cooking.

MADELEINE & GAYLE

Feminized labour.

GAYLE

I want to do things with my hands.

MADELEINE

I want to make things. Something from nothing. I spent 5 nights in the past 3 weeks crying on the kitchen floor. I told myself that if it happens again I have to go to therapy.

GAYLE

I spent 5 days in the past two weeks in the house, because I couldn't go through the trouble of getting around in public.

MADELEINE & GAYLE

I need something.

*Enter ALISSA.*

ALISSA

Maddy?

MADELEINE

I'm here!

ALISSA

*(very excited)* Maddy. How are you? I had such a good day. God. I tore apart this sexist bro in class and then I took this girl to get a job at the club and she killed it. And I've been reading this book by Lauren Berlant and I'm just so into it. I feel like I'm finally in love with school and with academia again. God. I love you.

MADELEINE

I love you too.

ALISSA

We should go out tonight. We should go dancing. At a straight club. And every time a gross guy grinds up on us we can make out like right in front of him.

*Enter* MARIE.

MARIE

Gayle?

GAYLE

I'm here!

MADELEINE

I don't know if I'm up for dancing tonight.

ALISSA

Come on! You need to dance it off. I'm gonna make you a drink.

*ALISSA exits.*

MARIE

How are you?

*GAYLE sighs.*

MARIE

What do you need? Do you wanna drink some wine and watch *The Good Wife*?

GAYLE

That's exactly what I want.

MARIE

Okay. I'll make it happen. I love you.

MARIE *and* GAYLE *kiss*.

GAYLE

I love you too.

GAYLE *and* MADELEINE *share one final moment as the lights fade out*.

### Scene Six

*The classroom. ALISSA, MARIE, TALIA, DARR, CRAIG and JOHN are onstage.*

MARIE

Confession. It's a powerful thing. To whom do we tell our sexual desires? And why? And what does this say about how power works? Someone speak to this.

TALIA

Foucault talks about the historical lineage of the confession. He goes back to the church forcing people, on a moral basis, to confess their sexualities.

*Scene begins behind, illustrating the historical lineage of the confession.*

MARTIN

*(confessing to a priest)* Father forgive me for I have sinned. The night before last I spent the better part the night imagining myself naked with an actress I saw at the theatre. In breeches. The whole time my wife lay next to me. Asleep she never knew.

TALIA

Then he talks about how, in the Victorian era, the confession moved into the medical institution. It became more about individual health.

MADELEINE

*(confessing to a doctor)* Doctor. I don't know how to deal with it. When he comes near me, it's as though I feel this heat, this itch. I want to lie down and let him take me. But I don't want this, I don't *really* want any of this.

TALIA

And now post-1960's, after the sexual revolution, we talk about sex everywhere.

GAYLE

*(stand up comedian)* Thank you so much for having me Just For Laughs—how's everyone doing tonight? Great, great. So here's the thing about me: I love anal sex. Let me say that again: I. Love. Anal. Sex. That's right gentlemen, hit me up after the show!

ALISSA

The thing about us confessing all the dirty things we do, is that it's then categorized and his conclusion is that we can't really come up with our own sexuality outside of these categories, so we may allow ourselves to go towards sexualities that are less normal, or more queer, but we are never making up a sexuality for ourselves.

JOHN

That's what he says though, we can never make up our own sexuality. That's how power works.

MARIE

15 years ago. I was invited to a conference to present a lecture. I called it "Lesbian Sex". And this was a lecture about queer and feminist philosophy in the 90's. At the end every hand in the room shot up and one of the girls said "I thought you were going to tell us how to have lesbian sex" and that was the question that the whole room had. But that's the beauty of lesbian sex, people haven't told you through these discourses how to have it, so you get to decide what sex is.

DARR

Foucault sort of speaks to that though. When he talks about initiation. He says ummm, initiation "which remained essentially a silent practice which the act of enlightenment or deflowering is rendered laughable or violent" so umm he's also saying that when we lose our virginity we're not actually talking. When we're *talking* about sex we're not actually *doing* it and then when we're *doing* it that's the moment we're not *talking*.

TALIA

Right? I remember losing my virginity and I felt like I was almost being folded into a sexuality that was his, it wasn't mine, but then all of a sudden it became mine.

JOHN

What? I mean, when I have sex with someone I'm not trying to take over their body, or fold them into me or whatever you're trying to pin.

TALIA

I mean, I'm not saying it's your fault.

ALISSA

Yeah, it's just all men. That's how patriarchy works.

JOHN

Don't try to second-wave me. Have a little class, Alissa, you're better than that.

ALISSA

Ouch. The man bites back. So--

JOHN

Unexpected?

ALISSA  
Typical.

CRAIG  
Uh, to bring it back a little bit...

MARIE  
Yes, Craig.

CRAIG  
*(throughout this monologue everyone EXITS except for CRAIG and MARTIN)*  
I'm thinking about this in terms of the relationship I'm in right now. Because like I'm navigating this like kink world and this poly world and this like gay escort world, whatever, it's so many things intersecting and my impulse is to go online and look up articles that tell me how to deal with it. But I can't find anything that's written about it. And a part of me wishes that the representation of sex we saw in the media showed us all this stuff instead of just talking about it. I want to see the dirt and the grunge and the sex that we fantasize about but we're too afraid to act upon. It's like, give me some rules, give me rules and tell me what to do!

*No pause into the first line of the next scene. Lighting cue exposes MARTIN at the back of the stage. Everyone exits except for CRAIG and MARTIN.*

### Scene 7 – THE SEX SCENE

MARTIN  
Pup. Come here and heel.

CRAIG  
Yes Sir.

MARTIN  
Strip, pup.

CRAIG  
Yes Sir.

*CRAIG strips off all his clothes.*

MARTIN  
Kneel next to your Sir.

CRAIG  
Yes Sir.

MARTIN

Kiss my boots, pup.

CRAIG

Yes Sir, thank you, Sir.

MARTIN

Good boy. On all fours, head down, do not move until I come back.

CRAIG

Yes Sir.

*MARTIN exits. Lights up to reveal GAYLE and MARIE in the stage right bedroom.*

MARIE

So, I did something a little crazy today.

GAYLE

Oh god, what did you do?

*MARIE pulls out a joint.*

GAYLE

Is that?

MARIE

I thought we could have a little fun tonight. Like we used to.

GAYLE

You're a bad influence.

*GAYLE takes the joint and lights it, inhaling deeply.*

*Lights fade back to CRAIG and MARTIN. The coffee table is now filled with several objects. A glass of yellow liquid with a sock in it. A roll of duct tape\*. A leather flogger. A pup hood. Lube. Poppers. Condoms. An assortment of dildos and butt plugs. Maybe a gas mask?*

*\*Note that this has to be the right kind of tape. Not actual duct tape or anything that could rip off the skin. When in doubt, check with an expert!!*

MARTIN

*(picking up the glass of yellow liquid)* You know what this is pup?

CRAIG

Yes Sir.

MARTIN

What is it pup?

CRAIG

It's your piss, Sir.

MARTIN

And do you like my piss, pup?

CRAIG

Yes Sir.

MARTIN

So?

CRAIG

So, thank you for saving your piss for me Sir.

MARTIN

Good boy. And do you know what else is in here?

CRAIG

No Sir.

MARTIN

It's my gym socks, pup. Kneel, face me, and open your mouth.

CRAIG

Yes Sir.

*MARTIN removes the sock from the liquid and stuffs it in CRAIG's mouth. Then he duct tapes over the mouth. Then he takes the rubber pup hood and puts it over CRAIG's head.*

MARTIN

Do you like that pup?

CRAIG

*(very muffled)* Yes Sir!

*Lights shift to reveal MADELEINE and ALISSA lying on one of the couches. ALISSA is weirdly kneading MADELEINE's shoulder with her jaw.*

MADELEINE

What are you doing?

ALISSA

I'm creating our own sexuality. It's like, I'm a baby lion and you're a dead antelope.

MADELEINE

What?

ALISSA

I just want to do something different. Something that's never been done, or like something in a way that's never been done.

MADELEINE

I'm an antelope?

ALISSA

Yeah. And I'm a lion.

MADELEINE

A dead antelope?

ALISSA

I mean...

*They are cut off by the laughter of GAYLE and MARIE.*

MARIE

We used to be so... fun?

GAYLE

We're still fun. Just not so, uh, self-destructive.

MARIE

What are you thinking about?

GAYLE

I miss the doors.

MARIE

Tell me about it.

GAYLE

It was 20 years. Of my life. Spent working on doors. Wood finishing. Such a long time. And I am great at it.

MARIE

I know you are. Tell me a story about it I don't know.

GAYLE

Mmmm like what?

MARIE

What?

GAYLE

Like what? Story?

MARIE

Story? Doors. Tell me what you miss about it.

GAYLE

Mmmm. Well, you got to get into some of the most amazing places in the city that people—that regular people—don't get to go in. The Mount Royal Club. Churches, Saint Paul and Saint Andrew, Westmount High School, Westmount Park United Church.

MARIE

Tell me more about the Mount Royal Club.

GAYLE

It's at Stanley and Sherbrooke. The cement building with the big Oak doors. Right on the north east corner. And right next to it is the MacDonald Stewart Foundation and with those beautiful quarter sawn Oak doors. I mean these two places, just so rich in history. And when I first started working there, there were no women members. Brian Mulroney was a member, he wasn't prime minister at the time, he was an ex-Prime Minister, so he would go there and do lunch and I remember once I was up on a 10-foot ladder, the doors are like 15 feet up in the air, and I'm up on a ladder and the doors swing open and these people come out cause he always has body guards right "Doing a good job there, eh?" he says to me right?

MARIE

That's a good story.

GAYLE

Well I've got a few. And that's what I loved about it—the access part. The historical value. The artistic value. You get to touch neat things. But you get to put your mark on it. You beautify it and retain it even if you will. (*picks up her cane*) And then this happens and all the doors closed. Literally.

MARIE

And metaphorically.

*They laugh. Lights shift back to CRAIG and MARTIN.*

MARTIN

Okay, pup, stand up, hands above your head and against the wall.

CRAIG

*(very very muffled)* Yes Sir.

MARTIN *picks up the flogger from the table and begins hitting it against the palm of his hand.*

MARTIN

How many hits do you think you deserve tonight, pup?

CRAIG *gives an inaudible muffled response.*

MARTIN

I'm sorry pup, I can't understand you. What was that?

*Another muffled response.*

MARTIN

20? No... 50? No... How about 100, pup? Sound good?

*Muffled agreement.*

MARTIN

Get ready pup.

MARTIN *begins delivering blows, the flogging continues during the rest of the scene. Lights come up on ALISSA and MADELEINE.*

ALISSA

Pretend that I'm an island.

MADELEINE

What?

ALISSA

Pretend that I'm an island that no one's ever found before. Pretend that you're an explorer, a European explorer in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Pretend that you found me and you landed your ship on my shore. Claim me as yours, colonize me.

MADELEINE

Colonize you?

ALISSA

Yes.

MADELEINE

I don't know--

ALISSA

Shhh. Shhhhhh. Don't think about it. You can't think about it. You can't talk about it. You just have to do it.

*MADELEINE pauses and inhales. She starts at the feet and slowly works her way up ALISSA's entire body. This action continues as the lights come up on DARR in the stage left bedroom.*

DARR

*(on the phone)* Hi, Lincoln? Yes, this is Darr. I wanted to call to confirm for tomorrow. No, I can't do 2, we have to do it at 4. Yes. Come to my apartment, call me when you arrive, the buzzer is broken. Yes. I do. You can suck me off. Yes. And I need the money upfront, cash, before we do anything. Ummm yes. I only ever have sex protected, I'm on PrEP and I was tested last week. Yes. Wait, one more thing. Just so you know, I have a friend call and check up on me after the hour's up, if she can't get ahold of me she'll call the cops. Good.

*DARR puts down the phone and lies on her bed. She grabs a copy of "The History of Sexuality" from her nightstand and opens to the page where she keeps her money hidden. She counts the money in ecstasy then puts it down next to her and begins feeling herself up overtop of her clothes. Throughout the rest of the scene she has a full masturbation session.*

*Lights fade out on DARR and fade up on GAYLE and MARIE. MARIE has picked up GAYLE's cane and is running it between her legs.*

GAYLE

What are you doing?

MARIE

I wanna have sex.

GAYLE

With my cane?

MARIE

I want to--

GAYLE

I just can't move, or feel the same way as--

MARIE

Then don't move. Don't move. And don't worry if it doesn't feel the same. We can find a way to make it feel good.

GAYLE

Give that to me.

*MARIE passes GAYLE the cane. GAYLE throws off the side of the bed. She grabs MARIE by the hand and pulls her on top. They continue romping around for the rest of the scene.*

*Lights up on JOHN sitting in a chair downstage. TALIA emerges. They're at the strip club. TALIA approaches JOHN's chair.*

TALIA

How are you tonight?

JOHN

Good.

TALIA

I'm Tessa.

JOHN

Where are you from, babe?

TALIA

I'm from here, a nice homegrown girl.

JOHN

No, but where are you from?

TALIA

Whatever tropical paradise you want, honey.

*JOHN takes out the cash for a lap dance and TALIA gets to work.*

*Lights up on CRAIG and MARTIN. MARTIN pauses his hits for a minute. He pulls CRAIG close and holds him tight while he takes off the hood and removes the tape and the gag.*

MARTIN

You're doing so good, puppy. You love your Sir, puppy?

CRAIG

Yes Sir.

MARTIN

How many hits are we at, pup?

CRAIG

83, Sir.

MARTIN

Good boy. After this I'm going to give you a long bath, pup. I'm proud of you.

CRAIG

Thank you Sir.

MARTIN

Count the rest out loud, pup.

CRAIG

Yes Sir.

*Through the remaining flogging, all 5 scenes come to some sort of climax. Not necessarily orgasm oriented.*

CRAIG

84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100. Thank you Sir.

*Lights fade down on everyone except for MADELEINE and ALISSA.*

ALISSA

That was good.

MADELEINE

Yeah.

ALISSA

That was really good.

MADELEINE

Yeah. *(pause)* I have to leave. You. I mean. I have to leave you.

ALISSA

That was good.

MADELEINE

Maybe not for ever, but I have to leave for awhile. I'm sorry.

ALISSA

I know.

*End of Act One.*

**ACT TWO**

**Scene One**

*CRAIG is lying next to the bed, stage right. In a sleepsack, or tied up. GAYLE and MARIE are laying in bed, this is immediately following the end of the last act.*

MARIE

Was that good for you?

GAYLE

Ughhh, god it's so hard.

MARIE

What?

GAYLE

I don't know. It just—it wasn't the same. Maybe it was the weed. My leg kept twinging and I don't know if—it wasn't bad. It was different.

MARIE

Okay.

GAYLE

I'm gonna go to sleep. Thank you. By the way. For trying.

MARIE

*(breaks the fourth wall, in character)* Rupture. It's a break. A rift. An interruption that makes you pause and rethink everything. Foucault writes of the regime of truth. In the world there are certain things we can and cannot say. That's the regime of truth. Any person who speaks outside of this regime is disqualified. They're categorized: insane, criminal, childishy ignorant. There's a structure through which we all move. But what happens when it ruptures, and you're jolted awake.

*MADELEINE is centre stage, breaking the fourth wall.*

MADELEINE

Let's play a game. I want you to think of all the people in your life. Think about all your closest friends, think about your work colleagues, your family, your exes, don't think about your children because they will win this game. Always. The way the game works is that you have to choose the person you know who is the happiest. This should take a minute. Go through one by one. You should be able to rule out a good 80 percent right off the bat. But narrow it down to a few people. What is it about them that makes you think they're so happy? Is it a successful career? A stable relationship? A family? Do they spend their time doing something they're passionate about? Do they spend their time doing a person they're passionate about? Happiness is one of those things that's hard to define. I can only figure out what it means to me by looking at where I see it in other people. It comes in moments for me, they used to

happen all the time. Sometimes I think it's because I did too much MDMA in undergrad. Do you think you really know that person? Can you say for sure that they're happy? They're just trying to get through another day.

The main goal shifts at some point in everyone's life. The childhood goal is simple: have fun. Go out and play some ball! Have some fun! Then one day it changes. Life becomes about supporting each other. Cause everyone is always going through something. The summer after I finished university a good friend died. He had been at my house the night before, having some beers. He slept on my couch. I still remember, so clearly, I squeezed his neck when I said goodnight, and I remember the meat of his neck, warm on my palm. The day he died. That was the turning point for me, from there on out it's been about being there for each other. And maybe when I get better at this whole support thing, when I can hold myself up. Then maybe I can think about how it used to be.

CRAIG

*(from the sleepsack)* That's why I do this.

MADELEINE

What are you doing there?

CRAIG

Martin left me here after the sex scene.

MADELEINE

Who?

CRAIG

Martin. The guy I call Sir. I guess we didn't get around to saying his name in the last act.

MADELEINE

Are you a part of this intro now?

CRAIG

I guess so. I just wanted to say that that's why I do this. Pup play and BDSM and all that. Being a submissive, it turns your brain off. You put someone else in charge. You talked about moments of happiness, and I don't know if I'd call it happiness, but it's definitely a moment of calm. Which sounds funny when you're talking about getting beaten with a belt.

MADELEINE

Who's the happiest person you know?

CRAIG

Like, from my whole life, or like from this play? Should I choose someone from the play so they can follow along?

MADELEINE

Can I unzip you? This is really weird. Someone from the play.

CRAIG

No, sorry, Martin will get really angry. Alissa. Or, maybe John, he *is* straight.

MADELEINE

Alissa's not that happy. She's accomplished. She's successful. But she's not that happy.

CRAIG

Yeah, ambition tends to sabotage that a little bit.

MADELEINE

I would have said you.

CRAIG

Oh that's sweet, our characters haven't even talked to each other. I'm stable. Not happy. I do get laid a lot. But I dunno if that numbs me in my other relationships or what... Anyway. Should we get back to it?

MADELEINE

Yeah. One last thing: about life, it just sort of keeps on moving, there's no resolution.

MARTIN *enters and unzips or unties* CRAIG.

CRAIG

Permission to speak freely Sir?

MARTIN

Speak, pup.

CRAIG

I've only seen you once in the past two weeks. And it scares me. And I know we have so much shit going on that's so hard to navigate. I know I see all these clients and you have other pups and you're so busy, but you're the one I'm in love with.

MARTIN

I know, pup.

CRAIG

With the polyamory and the escorting and me being submissive, it's hard for me to speak up or to know what I want to say. But, I need to see you more, Sir. I just—I need more attention Sir. I don't like feeling like an afterthought.

MARTIN

You know that you're loved, puppy?

CRAIG

Yes Sir, I know.

*They both exit.*

*Projection cue: Bus Stop at night. TALIA stands at the bus stop, still wearing some make-up from the club. Her coat is bundled around her body and she's hugging herself tightly. She begins to quietly sob. MAN enters and crosses the stage, he sees her crying, pauses briefly, and then continues crossing.*

### Scene Two

*The classroom. MARIE, ALISSA, CRAIG, DARR, and JOHN are present. Notably, TALIA is absent.*

JOHN

Okay, but here's the thing. There are certain things that are biologically different in men and women. Like, men are, on average, bigger and stronger than women. You can't argue with that.

CRAIG

Like, yes you can. I think what Foucault would say, is that knowledge and facts don't exist in a vacuum. So, when you say "on average, men are bigger than woman" we can't just look at the truth of that statement. But we have to look why you're making this statement at all. And what it boils down to, is the perceived physical superiority of men in society.

JOHN

But, I'm not saying this as a superiority thing, I'm saying this as a fact. Look around, dude. Look around.

ALISSA

Okay, John, you're just like, wrong. Plus you can't speak to the intentionality of that truth, you can't say "oh, it's not a superiority thing" just because you don't feel that way.

JOHN

I don't think you can argue with science.

CRAIG

Have you read the book? That is *literally* what Foucault is doing. Foucault is *literally* anti-science.

DARR

There's also--

JOHN

*(interrupting)* No one is purely anti-science.

CRAIG

*(fast)* Critical of the perceived absolute truth produced by the scientific method, then.

MARIE

Darr, did you have something to add?

DARR

Yes, thank you. The other thing, John, is, umm, the fact that men are stronger than women, it's assuming that all people who are born biologically female, are women. That's essentialism.

MARIE

Can you explain essentialism?

DARR

Umm probably. So essentialism is kind of the belief that there is something *inherent to*. So you have a female body and therefore you are a woman, that would be an essentialist belief. And then, all of like the femininity stuff about, umm, woman-ness that's then inside this female body is an essentialist idea.

*Another scene plays out behind this one. MADELEINE reading, as if from a dating profile.*

GAYLE

Welcome to OKCupid. You're viewing the profile of SandraOhLover\_taco. Here's how she describes herself. What I'm doing with my life:

MADELEINE

I'm working on a degree in English lit!

GAYLE

On a typical Friday night I'm:

MADELEINE

At home. Gourmet cooking. Bottle of red wine. Grey's Anatomy re-runs.

GAYLE

The most private thing I'm willing to admit:

MADELEINE

I really hate hockey. Sorry habs fans!

DARR

And so Foucault, he, umm, he works in the anti-essentialist school of thought. So, to keep it in the example of womanhood, but this isn't just about gender, anti-essentialism would be like Simone de Beauvoir's claim, "one is not born, but rather becomes woman" so this idea that we are socialized into these essentialist things.

MADELEINE

I'm working on a degree in English lit.

GAYLE

Her grade 6 science teacher once said that boys are better at math and science.

MADELEINE

On Friday night I'll be at home gourmet cooking.

GAYLE

Tag: feminine.

MADELEINE

Bottle of red wine.

GAYLE

Tag: feminine.

MADELEINE

Watching Grey's Anatomy re-runs.

GAYLE

She used to watch Cops, but her dad told her it was too violent.

MADELEINE

I really don't like hockey. Sorry habs fans!

GAYLE

She played hockey until grade 9 when another girl called her a dyke.

MADELEINE

Can you stop? This is actually how I feel.

GAYLE

I never said it wasn't.

*End of mini scene.*

DARR

And that's not to say that they're not real, they are real, they do exist. But they're sedimented into us.

JOHN

Okay. Okay. One of the things that I find frustrating about this book is that it's all so philosophical. It doesn't feel like it's connected to the real world and then when he does connect it to something real it to

some obscure example of like some painting from like 400 years ago.

MARIE

Mmmm we're moving into Foucault criticism. My children are finally learning.

CRAIG

He also does this annoying thing where he's like, "so, power definitely isn't this" and then he spends like a whole chapter telling you what power isn't. Like, fuck, Foucault, just tell us what power is already?

ALISSA

He does though!

CRAIG

What?

ALISSA

He does! He gives a definition for power. I'm sure because I was just as surprised as you look right now. Ummmm... Okay, give me one sec. Okay, here, it's on page 92. *(this should be delivered in one breath, aim for comedy)* "It seems to me that power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies."

*Pause.*

JOHN

What?

MARIE

Yes, I'm sorry could you—what page was that again?

ALISSA

It's page 92. But here. Let me draw it out for you. I swear it makes sense.

*ALISSA moves to the whiteboard and throughout the next bit draws a sketch of something resembling several atoms forming a molecule. Lots of lines ending with arrows to denote the "force relations".*

So look. Power is like this: it's sort of like an atom. And each atom has all its little whirring bits.

JOHN

Electrons.

ALISSA

Whirring bits that are in constant motion. And these little whirring bits interact with the other little whirring bits—fine, electrons, on other atoms. And all the atoms become sort of connected. Like in a molecule. But even though they're connected, they're never stationary, like the electrons are constantly moving and effecting the other atoms. So, step back for a second, and then instead of atoms, imagine that these are people. And instead of electrons, these are Foucault's force relations, they're power. And the more of these atoms, or people, are connected, the stronger the force relations are; so eventually they build up and form a community. A community of thought with a specific ideology. And as these communities link up, they do what Foucault calls, crystallization. Where these ideologies are cemented into institutional apparatuses, like the legal institution, the medical institution, even academic institutions; because even here certain types of knowledge are valued more than others. Does that makes sense?

DARR

Ummm.

MARIE

I've never had someone pull that quote before.

ALISSA

But you can see. Right? You can see how like these little assumptions that you make aren't just you know breaking safe space or whatever, they have real world consequences. It's like what you inferred about men being stronger than women. You can see that ideology underpinning, giving excuse to so much oppression, so much violence, rape, sexual assault, and harassment and stuff. Yes?

CRAIG

(to JOHN) Oh John. If it makes any difference, you're my favorite straight bro.

JOHN

Whatever.

*TALIA enters. All others exit except for ALISSA. During the following scene ALISSA does a long strip tease in the background.*

TALIA

I guess rupture would be one way to describe it. A memory. Of an experience that happened to me a few nights ago. Over the next three years I will come to define it as a rape. Every rape narrative I've read, every rape memoir I've read starts with the date. October 29<sup>th</sup>.

I was in one of the saddest periods I'd ever experienced. Cause my first love had left me in this really terrible way. That's the beginning. I'm working at the club. It's my second week. I'm wearing this outfit, lots of lace. Black. I have on these leather heels. They're not tall but they're powerful. I've learned that a

lot of guys like that.

He's a regular. Friends with the owner. He's very attractive. A thick jaw. And he pays well, or so I'd been told. And it starts with a lap dance. In the middle of it he stops me. And he asks if I'll go to one of the private rooms with him. He says he'll pay. A lot. It's a thing that happens, especially with the guys who know the owners, the inner circle. And I say yes.

We go down the hall, through the curtain into this room and he kicks someone out and we start making out. Oh! A detail that's important is that on our walk I said, "I don't want you to fuck me." I wanted an "everything but" kind of thing. And he said, "yeah yeah yeah". And we're making out. He starts taking it a little bit further, I start letting it go a little bit further. You know, he feels me up and then he takes it a bit further than that and I say "No, I don't want to sleep with you." And we got back to making out, and this just happens over and over and over again. He keeps trying to make a move like I can feel his erection against me, like part of it's okay and good and part of it's not so much. And he did it so many times and I was so tired that finally I was like, "Fine, like, fine, let's have sex." Umm and I just remember it was happening and I'd said yes, trying to kind of get into it and I like moaned or something and then I heard someone mockingly moan back and there was someone else in the room, someone has come in, and I was kind of like "what the fuck" and it snapped me out of it—and, like, I really feel like I didn't consent to having sex with this guy, but I kind of did say yes and I did take his money. He shouldn't have made me say yes, but I know I didn't consent to having someone else in that room and I just felt so disgusting.

And it was kind of crazy, like the situation had been so bad and then I just got up and walked away from it. And it was a paradox because I felt like no one had forced me into anything.

*Enter MADELEINE.*

And as I was in the change room, one of the girls asked,

MADELEINE

"Did you sleep with him?"

TALIA

And I said, "yes, but I wish it hadn't happened." And sometimes though in my memory, I say, "yes, but I wish I hadn't." And I'm not actually really sure what I said, like it seems more natural to say, "yes but I wish I hadn't." That's a regret statement. And she replied by saying:

MADELEINE

"I'm sorry that happened to you."

TALIA

Which is why I think maybe I said, "yes, but I wish it hadn't happened" but then she said:

MADELEINE

“At least he's good looking.”

TALIA

There's a lot of fear to call yourself a survivor if you didn't have the worst possible thing happen to you, because you know that no one is going to get justice so don't water it down.

MADELEINE

I once, for points at a frosh event, at a frat house where I already had to check my shirt at the door. I was also blackout, I was in second year, and I had done a 13 stop pub crawl. And the committee, the frosh committee, said “we'll give you bonus points if you go in that closet” which I did. And inside that closet was a guy who proceeded to take my bra off and luckily someone on my team was like “What the fuck?” And went in after me and like grabbed me away and like redressed me. And like never would I ever call myself a survivor in that scenario. Ever. But that's obviously so fucked up right? And the next day carnival committee, like the two head people came and apologized to me and when they apologized they said:

*Enter DARR.*

DARR

“I'm sorry that our friend, like, raped you yesterday.”

MADELEINE

And I said, “It's okay.”

TALIA

It's only a rape if it's a stranger in a balaclava in a dark alley where they force, with violence, sex upon this slutty woman in the wrong place at the wrong time.

MADELEINE

It's only a rape if you're not that slutty woman. If you're this virginal woman who was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

DARR

We were drunk and I told him, “you can't fuck me without a condom on.” And so we did everything else and then we went to sleep. And then I woke up and he was trying to fuck me in the ass. And I said, “you can't fuck me without a condom on” and we went back to sleep. And I woke up 3 more times to the feeling of his dick pushing against my asshole. And every time I said “you can't fuck me without a condom on.” In the morning I let him fuck me, with a condom, then he drove me home. It was a nice night.

TALIA

I don't think you get over it. You learn how to cope, maybe. I intellectualize it a lot. Which puts up an interesting barrier because I'm so well armed with knowledge that if I identify myself as a survivor no one can counter me because I have every feminist scholar—Andrea Dworkin

MADELEINE

Donna Haraway.

DARR

Judith Butler.

TALIA

I have an army of brilliant women to back me up. But that doesn't help me get over it. Cope, maybe. Foucault argued that in the legal system, rape should be seen as a regular assault, he wanted to desexualize it. I don't know why everyone loves Foucault so much.

TALIA *exits.*

### Scene Three

*DARR and CRAIG are drinking at ALISSA's apartment. They are preparing for a Foucault seance. They are drunk.*

ALISSA

*(reading off her phone)* Okay okay okay okay. I found a wiki how page. "How to perform a seance: 15 steps (with pictures)."

CRAIG

Oh my god. We are going to talk to Foucault. Marie would be saw prawd.

DARR

I cannot believe we're doing this.

ALISSA

No, Darr. No!

DARR

What?

ALISSA

Step one: create a spirit friendly atmosphere. You have to believe in spirits. Do you believe in spirits Darr?

CRAIG

I do.

DARR

I mean. Yes, fine okay, yes.

ALISSA

Step two: ask the sitters to prepare questions. Do you have questions?

CRAIG

Best and worst sex you've ever had. BAM!

ALISSA

Okay, good enough. Step three: consider having a medium conduct the seance. Nooo. Step four: choose a quiet room to use. Yesssss. Step five: set the table with candles.

DARR

Do you have candles?

ALISSA

No.

DARR & CRAIG

No?

ALISSA

Wait!

CRAIG

Yes?

ALISSA

Yes.

DARR

Yes!

ALISSA

Sort of. *(she pulls out a few of the electric battery operated candles)* I have these.

CRAIG

Good enough.

ALISSA

Okay okay okay. Step six: consider using equipment to make contact with spirits. It says like any symbolic object or anything...

DARR

Oh! *(she pulls out a copy of "The History of Sexuality")* This!

CRAIG

Yes that's perfect!

ALISSA

Great! On the table. Step seven: begin the seance near midnight. Hey! We're pretty good on that one. Step eight: have everyone hush and turn off their electronic devices. Okay we have to turn off our phones.

*CRAIG and DARR turn off their phones. Then look at ALISSA.*

ALISSA

I don't know... We might have to keep this one on.

CRAIG

Fairrrrrrr. It'll still work. Next step.

ALISSA

Step eight: be seated in a circle and light the candles.

*They do so.*

ALISSA

Great. Step nine: summon the spirits to join you. Ummm. "There's no set script for beginning a seance."

DARR

I feel like this is the most important part.

CRAIG

I rate that shit one star out of five, Wiki How, one star out of five.

ALISSA

Okay, Craig, you do it.

CRAIG

Me?

ALISSA

Yes.

CRAIG

Why?

DARR

Because you're crazy. Just do it.

CRAIG

Okay. Umm. Everyone ready. Let's take a deep breath. Umm. *(starts summoning)* Foucault! You sexy beast of a man. We are all in love with you. We all wanna chat with you. We promise we won't ask you about boring academic shit, we just wanna hear about your sex life. Umm. In the name of truth and power, we call you forth from the afterlife. Come speak to us. Ummm. Maybe let's all say his name a few times.

ALL THREE

Foucault. Foucault. Foucault. Foucault. Foucault.

CRAIG

Please give us a sign you're here.

*Pause. The three burst out laughing.*

ALISSA

Fuck yes. God, we should have gotten drunk together earlier in the term. You guys are great.

DARR

I cannot believe that we just tried to Wiki How a Foucault seance.

CRAIG

Okay! I'm taking initiative, no more Foucault talk for the rest of the night. Veto.

ALISSA

There is no veto power in our conversations.

CRAIG

*(mocking)* “We are a non-hierarchical social organization”

DARR

I just think it would be cool if we brought Foucault back from the dead. I wanna hear Foucault talk about queer theory.

ALISSA

I used to have such a problem with the word queer.

DARR

Really?

CRAIG

I do not believe that. Literally do not believe.

ALISSA

I mean like I live in the Mile End and like 4 years ago every party poster was like “queer friendly” and

for me I was like “well, yeah, of course it is, why do we need to advertise that” but I think that's also my own ignorance of not realizing that all parties are not queer friendly, but just seeing it plastered everywhere in my neighbourhood I was just like well I don't know where I fit into queer culture.

CRAIG

Yeah, well like that makes sense. Like the queer community and like the queer dance party scene, like it's super rad and stuff, but it's still really ummm prescriptive?

ALISSA

Oooo that's a good word.

CRAIG

Which is like, people need those spaces I guess.

ALISSA

Well and at the time I was just starting to experiment with women. I didn't identify as a lesbian, I didn't identify as bisexual, so queer seemed to be like, okay I guess I'll go with that, but I don't know that it's-- It was more a default I guess.

DARR

That's cool though, I feel like a lot of people go the other way... Start off as gay then umm progress to queer.

ALISSA

Like yeah, there is this kind of like, I dunno, like, it's, like.

CRAIG

Yes?

ALISSA

Fuck.

CRAIG

Another drink?

ALISSA

Yes.

CRAIG *hands ALISSA whatever the drink of choice is.*

ALISSA

A queer normativity. Like queerness is supposed to disrupt the norm. But then you see here in Montreal it's like oh! It crystallizes—Foucault would like that—

CRAIG

Respect the veto!

ALISSA

--it crystallizes into this sort of check list: like you gotta have short hair, you gotta be poly, that sort of thing. Oh! It's like an essentialized queerness.

DARR

Which is funny cause that's the sort of stuff that gets you kicked in the face in other places.

CRAIG

Is that the way people fight now? They like, kick you in the face? I feel like, like you know, your face is up here and like your foot is down here. Like, why not like, punch in the face or like kick in the kneecap.

ALISSA

Listen up, Darr, he knows what he's talking about, he's been in all of like half of a fight in his life.

CRAIG

Fuck off, ho.

ALISSA

I'm not a ho.

CRAIG

No, but like it's like a reclamation, like we're like reclaiming it.

DARR

Except. We're all actual hoes. Ho means prostitute right? We're all like actual hoes.

CRAIG

Oh my god.

DARR

Ho my god!

CRAIG

Minus 4 points.

ALISSA

Does your mom know you escort?

CRAIG

Me?

ALISSA

Yeah.

CRAIG

No. She knows I'm gay though. She's pretty good with it. I mean like, I guess I'm like lucky cause I have two older sisters and they're both gay too. So it was easy for me.

DARR

You have two gay sisters? Your whole family is gay?

CRAIG

Yeah. I mean, I guess my mom's not gay. (*joking*) If she was I hope she woulda felt comfortable enough to like come out by now. But I mean, she's interesting cause like she like lives in like a pretty conservative community and has three gay children umm she struggles with the idea of like not being able to like when people ask her like “oh, does your daughter have a boyfriend”--

DARR

He's french!

CRAIG

What?

DARR

Foucault! He's french. I bet that's why it didn't work. We have to do it again in french.

ALISSA

You're fucking brilliant.

DARR

Thanks, ho.

CRAIG

Okay, but like we're not doing that tonight. Intentional mid-conversation subject change: Darr! Are you queer?

DARR

Ummm maybe.

ALISSA

(*imitating MARIE*) Could you expand on that please?

CRAIG

Was that Marie?

ALISSA

Yes.

CRAIG

That was really good. Have you ever thought about acting?

DARR

I guess I'm realizing that like umbrella terms erase a lot of things and like queerness as a reclaimed term I think is reclaimed for certain people in a certain way. There's a saying in the trans community that the T in LGBT is silent. Umm and I really see that.

ALISSA

Yeah. Yeah that makes sense.

DARR

Your turn: does your family know you strip?

ALISSA

My sister does.

DARR

That's it?

ALISSA

That's it.

CRAIG

*(rhyming)* That's shit! Sorry.

ALISSA

Rest of my family really doesn't have to know. I'm fine with that.

CRAIG

My grandmother unfriended me on facebook.

DARR

Really?

CRAIG

Well, actually she didn't, she's not very good at computers so instead of actually deleting me she just wrote a status that said "Craig Helmack unfriend." And then she liked it. Narcissistic bitch.

DARR

Okay. I have to go home soon.

CRAIG

Yeah. I need a poutine and a bed.

ALISSA

Well the 80 runs at night so you'll be fine.

DARR

I might actually umm take a cab, if you wanna split one?

CRAIG

Mmmm yeah okay.

ALISSA

Big spender.

DARR

I don't really like the busses umm at night. I had not a great experience once.

ALISSA

Oh shit. I'm sorry.

DARR

No don't worry about it. That's like a trans woman's rite of passage. It happens, there's just a period where it happens. I mean, maybe some people don't go through it, I would love that. And I remember thinking, this is funny, like, "oh, it's real, like I can definitely claim trans-ness now" I'm definitely a trans-woman because I've been oppressed.

ALISSA

Shit.

CRAIG

That's real, bro.

DARR

Anyway, thanks for having us—let's do this again after the semester's done.

ALISSA

No, I'd prefer we slowly drift apart, as classmates are wont to do.

CRAIG

Y'ain't no ho of mine.

ALISSA

Get the fuck out of my house.

CRAIG

Oh hey, have you heard from your ex-girl?

ALISSA  
Have you heard from emotionally distant Sir?

CRAIG  
Agree to not ask each other?

ALISSA  
Agree. Now go!

DARR  
Bye!

CRAIG  
Byeeeeeeeeeeeeee!

ALISSA  
Fucking lunatic man.

*ALISSA sits for a moment on the couch reflecting. Her phone rings, she answers.*

ALISSA  
Hello? Yeah. Is everything alright? Okay, okay, that's fine, that's totally fine. Here I'm gonna buzz you up. *(she does)* Okay, see you in a second.

*TALIA enters.*

ALISSA  
Hey!

*ALISSA hugs TALIA who half-heartedly returns the embrace.*

ALISSA  
What's wrong?

TALIA  
Something happened at the club.

ALISSA  
What?

TALIA  
Not that. Nothing that bad. I mean it was bad for me. But...

ALISSA  
You don't wanna talk about it?

TALIA

No. *(pause)* My roommate is out of town though, and I just needed... Can I sleep on your couch? Just tonight.

ALISSA

Yeah, yeah, of course. Anytime. *(pause)* What else do you need?

TALIA

They keep calling me.

ALISSA

Who?

TALIA

The club. I was supposed to work tonight. They called me.

ALISSA

Do you want—if you want I can call and let them know that you can't make it?

TALIA

Yeah.

ALISSA

No problem. Do you want a glass of wine or a beer or something?

TALIA

Wine would be great.

ALISSA

Done.

*ALISSA exits. Lights out.*

#### **Scene Four**

*Projection cue: Bus Stop. CRAIG is standing at the bus stop. MAN crosses the stage.*

MAN

What's up?

CRAIG

What's up?

*Projection fades, transition to classroom. MARIE, ALISSA, DARR, CRAIG, TALIA, and*

JOHN *are present. Close to the end of class.*

MARIE

Biopower. Perhaps Foucault's most famous concept. "Bio" meaning life. The power of life. An overarching explanation of how power operates in a capitalist society. He starts by looking back at the role of the king. The power of the sovereign. Historically, the king had the power to "take life, or let live".

GAYLE

*(as the king)* Off with his head!

MARIE

Power was concentrated in one person at the top. Enter: industrialism. Suddenly, capital can be accrued through productivity. The middle class emerges. The labour force. And with the labour force, the very idea of the population. The healthier, the stronger, the more reproductive a population, the more bodies available for labour. Instead of power concentrated at the top, it becomes diffuse. Institutions like the medical are brought to the foreground. Doctors establish rules to prolong the life of the population. Individuals are trained to follow these rules. Able-bodiedness, strength and bodily discipline are engrained in the individual from a young age.

TALIA

There's a quote for that, "this biopower was without question an indispensable element in the development of capitalism; the latter would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes."

MARIE

Distance running. How many adults aged forty-sixty do you know who have taken up distance running?

MADELEINE

*(as a runner, annoyingly cheerful)* Finished my first half-marathon this spring. I'm training for another one in the fall. I'm glad I found running though, I needed something to keep me active, inspired, you know.

MARIE

You hear people say. I "found" running. But no one "finds" it. We're trained to think about how productive our bodies can be. And this isn't to discount running, or to say that it's a bad thing, but running makes people healthier, healthier people mean a more productive labour force. So it's about making those people live.

JOHN

Nope. This isn't about power, it's about free-will. It's existentialist philosophy. If you say no one "finds" running, you mean no one chooses to run. I like to just run sometimes. I just want to do it.

ALISSA

Nobody does anything just because they want to do it. To “want” something that something has to first have been made desirable to a person. Look at instagram or facebook or anything at this whole gym fitness culture. It's there, it's like obviously there.

MARTIN

*(posting a photo to instagram)* “Just finished crushing delts at the gym. Some people make excuses, other people make masterpieces. #shoulders #boulders #bouldersshoulders #fitness #fitfam #fitspo #fitfreak #fit #broscience”

JOHN

This makes me feel so, out of control, like I don't wanna be just some cog in a machine.

CRAIG

Yeah, I love Foucault. But this shit depresses me. It's like what's the point then?

TALIA

I wanted to mention something else too. He talks about how biopower creates a normalizing society. So there are certain kinds of people who can give more value right? Able-bodied people can contribute labour more easily, heterosexual people can reproduce, right? Anyone who doesn't fit that is... at risk, I guess.

MARIE

At risk for what exactly?

ALISSA

It's more dangerous—harder to walk the path, I think is what Talia was going for.

DARR

Ummm... can I add something?

TALIA

Yeah.

DARR

Thanks, yeah, I totally agree. Ummm and to give an example of that is for me when we start thinking about this kind of double-binary that trans communities exist in at the moment. When you think about the categorization of gender dysphoria inside the DSM-5. Some people would argue for a psychiatric categorization of gender dysphoria just cause it allows a gateway into the medical system where you can access support and resources. But that also kind of undermines the ability for individuals to be who they are, because you're assuming that who they are is a medically classified perversion. Which I think speaks to a process of biopower and of population regulation where the way that you control difference is by setting up these systems to be classified within the demographic to be provided the resources that you need to be able to be re-integrated back into normal-ness.

MARIE

Very good work, Darr. We're out of time. I don't want you feeling like cogs in a machine, but I do want you questioning why we move through the world the way we do. Presentations are next week. Craig, do you have a cigarette?

CRAIG

For you?

MARIE

Obviously.

CRAIG

But, you just vaped for like the past three hours.

MARIE

Craig. Smoking is a transgressive act. It's the deliberate sabotage of one's body against the desires of the labour force.

CRAIG

You don't believe that.

MARIE

Give me a smoke and I'll give you an A.

*He gives her a smoke.*

MARIE

My fingers were crossed. See you next week!

MARIE *exits.*

CRAIG

*(calling after her)* Are you like six years old? What... I like probably won't be that sad.

ALISSA

What?

CRAIG

To not have to read more Foucault. Not because I won't be seeing you guys. I might even miss you John.

JOHN

So sweet. *(JOHN's phone rings)* Oh shit.

*During the rest of the scene JOHN steps to the back of the classroom, back facing the audience,*

*talking quietly on the phone.*

MARIE

See you all next week. Good luck with the end of term!

CRAIG & DARR & ALISSA

Thanks / Bye / See you next week / You too / Etc.

CRAIG

You guys wanna drink and try out the seance in french?

DARR

How can you say that? Do you not have 1000 things to do?

CRAIG

No, second year, baby, it's all about the reduced course load.

ALISSA

Yeah, I can't, I'm working later.

CRAIG

Oh well, next week I think we can convince Marie to come out with us. I think she'd be really fun drunk.

DARR

Or... terrifying. Bye, ho!

ALISSA

Bye, ho!

DARR *and* CRAIG *exit.*

JOHN *finishes his phone call but is still standing at the back of the room.*

ALISSA

*(calling across the room)* Hey John. I just wanted to say, I'm sorry I'm hard on you sometimes, I don't mean to but it's just the radical feminist in me. *(no response)* Are you okay? Is there something (I can do)?

JOHN *turns and is crying or on the verge of crying or something.*

JOHN

You know, that just because you're queer, it doesn't mean that you're an expert on everyone okay. We've all got shit going on. I just don't spew mine out every class.

JOHN exits. *Lights dim as ALISSA exits.*

### Scene Five

GAYLE is sitting in the living room. MARIE comes in the apartment.

(from offstage) Hello?

MARIE

I'm here!

GAYLE

MARIE enters.

MARIE

So, how was it?

GAYLE

(sighs) Uh, it was good, well fine I guess.

MARIE

First days can be rough.

GAYLE

It wasn't that bad. But data-entry, you just sit in front of a screen all day. Typing away.

MARIE

Right.

GAYLE

Nice people, though.

MARIE

Well you know what, give it a try and if it doesn't work it doesn't work. You can always find something else.

GAYLE

It's nice to work again though. Feels like I'm doing something at least. How was your day?

MARIE

It was good, you know, really good.

GAYLE

I'm glad to hear.

MARIE

I actually thought about you today.

GAYLE

Okay?

MARIE

I thought about you because I was reading something, by Judith Butler--

GAYLE

Your old gal pal.

MARIE

She is my second wife, more or less. But I was reading an article she wrote about interdependence. About how we're taught to think as we move through life that we're completely independent. You know, it's something we're supposed to strive for, this ability to just take care of ourselves.

GAYLE

Okay?

MARIE

But, in reality, we're all interdependent. We're dependent on each other and we're dependent on technology. We so frequently equate able-bodied-ness with independence, but it's not like that.

GAYLE

Okay, so then you thought about me.

MARIE

Well she uses examples, so like she mentions shoes, we all wear shoes to get around the world but we don't think twice about the fact that shoes are a technology that help us move through our environment. Or glasses—fan adaptive technology that people rely on to get through their daily life.

GAYLE

And so my cane is just like a pair of glasses.

MARIE

Well, that's what I thought at first. But, stigma is a real thing and I don't think you can just ignore that.

GAYLE

I mean, *I can't. (laughs)*

MARIE

But this is what I thought. I hope I phrase this right. So, your cane helps you move through your day, and through your life. It keeps you steady, it, you know, holds you from falling, it helps you climb the

steep hills.

GAYLE

And?

MARIE

I think you're my cane. You do all those things for me. You're the thing that I need to help me move through life. I'm interdependent on you.

GAYLE

I'm your cane?

MARIE

You're my cane.

*Lights fade out.*

### Scene Six

*ALISSA is sitting in her bedroom, CRAIG is sitting in his living room. The sound of the apartment door opening is heard. ALISSA and CRAIG react.*

ALISSA

Hello?

CRAIG

Hello?

ALISSA & CRAIG

Is someone there?

*MADELEINE enters. She's carrying a guitar-case. MARTIN also enters.*

CRAIG

Sir, you came.

MARTIN

I'm here, pup.

ALISSA

Maddy... what?

MADELEINE

Don't get mad, okay, just don't get mad right now please.

ALISSA

Maddy, what are you doing here? I haven't seen you--

CRAIG

I haven't seen you in over a week.

MADELEINE

It's been 9 weeks, 3 days, and like 11 hours. I know I counted. We haven't texted in 2 weeks, 5 days, and 4 hours. I know.

MARTIN

I'm here now, pup.

ALISSA

You can't just come...

MADELEINE

Yeah, but I did and I'm here and you have to let me explain.

ALISSA

You should have told me you were coming.

MADELEINE

I have to tell you everything that happened though.

ALISSA

You still should have told me.

CRAIG

You should sit, Sir.

MARTIN *sits.*

MADELEINE

Stop. Sit for a minute.

ALISSA

Don't tell me to sit.

MADELEINE

I'm not telling you to sit. I'm asking you to sit. I'm asking you to listen. Okay? Just for a minute.

ALISSA *sits.*

CRAIG

Martin. I need to say this right.

MARTIN

It's okay, pup.

MADELEINE

I was depressed. I'm probably still kind of depressed, but not as much. And it sucks because some people have good reasons for their depression but I didn't, mine just sort of happened and it didn't just happen to me, it happened to you too, or maybe like, on you. And I couldn't be around all your ambition, it was just like, making it worse and so I just had to go.

ALISSA

I know this already.

CRAIG

I can't feel like your afterthought. I worship you. There's something about total submission that breeds in me this kind of worship. I adore you. And so I let you get away with more than I should. But you can't just abandon me for so long.

MADELEINE

I stayed with Yuri for the first bit. And the first two weeks were hard. That's when I called you that night and--

ALISSA

I know what happened.

MARTIN

I know how you feel.

CRAIG

No, you don't, Martin.

MARTIN

You know I love you, pup. Come here.

*CRAIG follows his order. MARTIN holds him and strokes his head throughout the next monologue.*

MADELEINE

Anyway, like, two weeks in I decided I needed to do something, just get out of the house. So I walked, and I listened to Sufjan and I cried and it was all very dramatic. And I ended up near that bar we used to go to Divan? Anyway, there were like some people inside, like not so many that I'd feel claustrophobic but enough that like, I wouldn't feel lonely. So I went in. And I saw this girl play. And she was really young, well she's twenty, I found that out later. But like, she was just playing guitar and singing and it

was bringing up all these feelings. But, I felt so, I dunno, I felt so young or so alive.

CRAIG

I feel alive when I'm with you. I feel small and safe. But when you leave me, it makes me feel so sad.

MADELEINE

You know the difference between that sadness that makes you feel human, versus the kind that makes you feel small. I felt like a person. And I stayed. And she played this one song that just, you know, like touched me, so much. And I after the show she was outside smoking, so I used your trick. I pretended to forget my lighter so I had an excuse to talk to her. You taught me that, remember? “Tricks for dealing with social anxiety.” And she was really nice, full of that like ignorance that university students have before they go through that suffering cocoon phase? Except her's didn't make me want to punch her... Anyway, we chatted for a while and I told her I liked that one song and she asked me if I sang, and I told her I always wanted to, you know, like sing and play the guitar. And then it was like we hit it off. We were friends and I would go to her place and she would teach me guitar and we would drink and it was like it was like I could feel myself coming back into myself. She has a boyfriend by the way, in case, you know... But she taught me the guitar and she taught me how to play that song and I've been playing it non-stop and then tonight, I realized, that the song is for you. That this song is meant for you. *(starts opening the guitar case)* Because look. I made a mistake, but I was in a bad place. And now, I'm not fixed, but I'm better. And I need to show you that, because I'm ready to come back, or to start over, or whatever. Okay, just listen.

*Motel Raphaël's “Little Letter”*

MADELEINE

*(sung)*

*Heard through the grapevine,  
That you're dabbling in troubled waters,  
Sinking trying to swim, to the surface,  
The silver lining, through the shore, of the island.*

*(Guitar continues underneath)*

CRAIG

I don't want to give up on this. But I need you to give more.

MARTIN

I can do that. You know I love you, pup.

CRAIG

But you can't just say that, you always say that. This is it. You have to back it up this time.

MARTIN

Yes, pup. I understand. I love you, puppy.

CRAIG

I love you too, Sir.

MADELEINE

*(still sung)*

*But I can't lose you don't you dare lose yourself, love  
And I'll hold your hand through it if you think that could be enough.*

MADELEINE

*(spoken)*

That's it.

ALISSA

No.

MADELEINE

What?

ALISSA

Just, no.

*Lights fade out. Both exit.*

### Scene Seven

*CRAIG and DARR are onstage. CRAIG is setting up a videocamera. He's filming DARR for the "Queer Voices" project.*

DARR

We're so predictable, we're fucking predictable. And then we're just gonna move to Toronto. We're gonna get like yuppie jobs in like the arts or healthcare or like social services and make less money than our parents did, but enough money to be comfortable hopefully.

TALIA

That narrative comforts me.

DARR

I really just wanna have comfort in my life right now. I think that's just the age we're at right now.

TALIA

Which is fine.

DARR

I think we can be ethically comfortable.

TALIA

Okay, so thanks again for doing this.

DARR

No problem.

TALIA

Just to go over the project one more time. It's called "Queer Voices". Basically, I'm filming interviews with different people who identify as queer. I'm looking to collect stories, like personal stories, that show the range of queer experiences. So this should last like anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour and then I'll be editing it down to like 5 to 10 minutes.

DARR

Ummm, okay, sounds good.

TALIA

Great. And then all the interviews will be put online, on an interactive website.

DARR

This is a cool project.

TALIA

Thanks, yeah, well, like it's stressing me out a lot actually. Like, I find it really stressful to do a project that's coming out and saying like "here is queer experience". And like I wish there was a way for people to know how limited it is, you know, like how maybe I can't capture the whole experience and about how like my mood—what I'm going through—on any given day, or week, or month will change how I interview, it'll colour the piece... It has to.

DARR

Ummm, but representation is never perfect.

CRAIG

Right. Thanks. Okay, so, let's get started, I'm gonna turn the camera on, but don't let it stress you out. We can always cut stuff. Ready: 3, 2, 1, go.

*Lights out. Both exit.*

**\*\*THIS IS WHERE THE POTENTIAL DARR RUPTURE MONOLOGUE COULD OCCUR\*\***

### **Scene Eight**

*Projection cue: Bus Stop. TALIA, ALISSA, and DARR are waiting at the bus stop together. MAN crosses the stage. He stops and looks at DARR.*

MAN

*(to DARR)* Nice boob job, dude.

MAN *starts walking away.*

DARR

Hey asshole!

MAN *turns.*

DARR & TALIA & ALISSA

Fuck you!

*All three give MAN the finger.*

*Transition to the classroom. MARIE, TALIA, ALISSA, DARR, CRAIG, and JOHN are all present. DARR is walking back to her seat having just finished her presentation.*

MARIE

Good work everyone. It's near time to say goodbye to Foucault. For now, at least. I thought in celebration of our last class, we could rupture to dominant order just a little bit. *(she reaches into her bag and pulls out a bottle of tequila).* Tequila, anyone?

JOHN

We're in the middle of finals!

MARIE

Is that a no?

JOHN

That's a definitely.

DARR

I don't actually do tequila. It was my high school drink.

MARIE

That's okay, that's okay. *(reaching into her bag)* We've also got whiskey. And rum. And vodka. Oh! And one of these cute little half bottles of white wine.

CRAIG

Who are you?

MARIE

Okay, okay. Someone help me get this poured out. While you're doing that. One final Foucault quote. Take this one with you, all you writers. "I am no doubt not the only one who writes in order to have no

face. Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same: leave it to our bureaucrats and our police to see that our papers are in order.” Anyone know what that means?

CRAIG

Not a fucking clue.

MARIE

Okay, then let's drink. To Foucault!

ALL

To Foucault!  
Cheers! / Santé / Thank you

*Light awkward applause.*

MARIE

And now, before we get caught in here with a full bar, let's move this into the lounge!

MARIE, DARR, CRAIG, *and* JOHN *begin to exit.*

ALISSA

Hey Talia, I haven't really had a chance to talk to you since that night. I just want to check in and see how you're doing, if you need anything, you know?

CRAIG

I am no doubt not the only one who writes in order to have no face. *(exits)*

DARR

Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same. *(exits)*

JOHN

Leave it to our bureaucrats and our police to see that our papers are in order. *(exits)*

TALIA

It's fine. I'm—I'll be fine.

**THE END.**