An Incantation in Three Parts

CAST
Josef
Rafael Sánchez
Yakov
Flako Jimenez
Rachel
Angeli Sion
Leah
Deirdrea Hamid

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
Molly Zimmelman

LIVE MUSIC BY
Paula Matthesun & Anthony Dean

CHOREOGRAPHY
Greg Zuccolo

COSTUMES
Nancy Stella Soto

CULT GARMENTS
Hannah Tornudd

A RITUAL PERFORMANCE AT DAVID LEWIS GALLERY IN ANTICIPATION OF THE FOURTH ARRIVAL OF ‘THE METHOD’ ON FEBRUARY 22-24, 2017 AT THE KITCHEN.
The idle uterus, to Plato, was the root cause of hysteria—like a rat caught in plumbing, he believed, it would grow restless and wander around the body, obstructing its functions, wreaking havoc. Virgins, homes to wayward wombs, are not by this logic fully agentive. But the women of Salpetriere invented hysteria when they learned how to perform it for Charcot’s camera—how to grammatize it. Ecstasy, agony, epiphany, duress; with each image, Augustine, these women, were implicated in their own subjugation. There was agency there. Hysteria feigned or hysteria-infected, it is historically a feminine symptom, a feminized word. Julia Kristeva wrote of the temporality of hysteria. Nonlinear, it is rather a “heterogeneous semiotic space”—of hallucinations and meaninglessness—in which production irrupts the symbolic order. The gestures and expressions of hysteria, vermin in the body of language, obstruct its functions.

Ritual, on the other hand—the refrain—marks space. Like a braid, it orders things. As Deleuze had it, one evokes a refrain as protection, a reminder of the systems and territories to which they belong. Ritual, the refrain, these are forms within which the self and society alike reassemble themselves over time, forms that can serve, too, oppressively.

_Mandra Gora, Mandra Gora / Agnus Castus, Agnus Castus_—the first chant invokes the aphrodisiac mandrake root, the second the “chaste tree.” Together, these trochees pit sexuality against celibacy, as though they were a binary. This imaginary binary is also the imaginary that houses that slippery symptom of hysteria. Here, their incantation foils a virginal sacrifice meant to bring about a “Spontaneous Opening of Expanded Awareness”—this contrived spontaneity the true contradiction. What if we think of hysteria as a rejoinder to ritual, to phallogocentrism, to linear time? A hysteric dance-off to off the need to feign hysteria?

---

You have to tell a story many times to get it right. At first the parts don’t go together right. It doesn’t say what a story is supposed to say. So you have to keep practicing on it. You have to get it right, so that it says what you know it says, but it doesn’t say yet.

—Robert Ashley, _Dust_, 1998

—Annie Godfrey Larmon