Elizabeth Glass

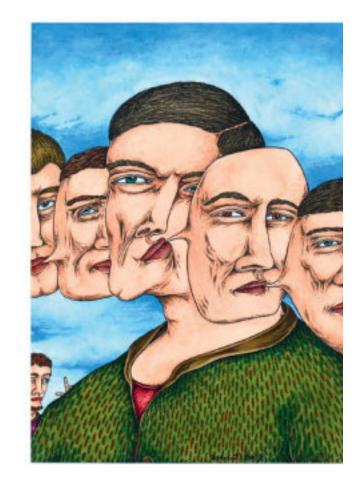
"One Woman Show"
Theatre and Politics, Ethics and Aesthetics
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My thesis is within the concentration of Politics, Ethics, and Aesthetics and Theatre. I plan to write, produce, and perform a one-person play for the stage drawn from the roots of American traditions of oral legend, myth, folklore and drama. The story will be told from multiple perspectives of characters in different circumstances though together they engage with the very same personal tragedy. The play will expose the characters personal accounts on a shared situation but on what will seem like a public level. The characters will piece the drama together by directly speaking of one another and of their conflicting positions with the drama at hand. The play will be about a theft that will serve as a metaphor for the robbery of our identity as a nation, in the effort to enact the subtleties of a large scale tragedy. I want to accentuate the joyous aspects of re-telling, to write an acute comedy using the victims of bad-luck to accentuate the closeness- not the distance- in a tragic occurrence.

American Folk Tradition tells and retells epistolaries of anguish and slavery, freedom, and liberty, these words that lose their meanings after the misuse of orality. Is it possible for the theatre to be performed, to be written (onstage or off) when it concerns itself with what is looked at as the "unbreakable" link between politics and emotions? The more that we emphasize what affects us, the more we are affected. Our histories are blurred by our Constitution which promotes "equality" and "freedom for all" though this promise is flimsy, and makes our suffering confusing, unavailable, and benign. Does democracy or our systems mode of thinking engage itself absolutely and inextricably

with our characters? How can we move away from regarding our sensuality as secondary or unimportant to our political ideologies? I want to revise American history within the one-woman play and uncover what exactly I am revising, study what do we (as a nation) have to hold on to (keep) and what must be let go of? How many times do we have to sing traditional songs in order to learn and internalize our history? What is this milieu, this thing we call being American?

I will push definitions and reclaim names for ourselves, write about hollow and shifting identities, and extend the perimeters of my mirror. I want to distract the fatal attention we, as a nation, give to mass media's representations of our people. What does American history mean or matter to me? What does American history mater to the audience? What does the theatre matter to the audience? How can these not be separated? What is the common link of the melting pot? What are we dreaming of a land of? What do our nations stories, songs, and pledges promote? What do we (in automatism) promote by singing and reciting? Do the audience (the people) or the deciders (the actors, writers, presidents, officials) have more power in our order of events? What constitutes a success of our country or of a play? How do we strive for this impossibly defined success and why? The theatre gives a blank page for the



discovery and rediscovery of our "teeming nation of nations." I hope to use this privilege of voice to its advantage, and let the historical patterns of war and suffer-age be retold in a way that gives rise to possibility of newness in the marks we make on our country, to acknowledge Americana folklore from a theatrical perspective that challenges both me and the audience to reassess their stories.

Acting in it and watching it will physicalize the difficulties of identifying and defining, and expose the multiplicity of human experience. The play will point out how we confuse the matter of identity for fear of confronting it. Our muddled behavioral origin of madness returns to our chaotic poetry, our awareness, our "subtle body." I believe that suffering is surmountable if I can stop thinking of myself as singular. My body is empty, my form is the filter for my attachments, so in order to break this singularity I propose changing my shape of awareness (my voice, my body) and engage with my form as not solid and formless by inhabiting the dimensions of these characters. My characters will stress issues of human sensual compulsions. By sensual compulsions I mean the authentic, living operation and emotional pulsation of politics and language, the dramatic phonetics of emotionality. No one is exempt from the possibility of connection. Not the poor. Not the suffering. Not the writer sitting in an open field. Politics are not "to be or not to be" or what we have been told we are or can be. Our images in this country have (yesterday and today) claimed to be at the liberty of our desire to encounter them. This play will attempt to encounter, tackle, and make new of the dissonance in conflict and drama that we all run from but that chases us.