

"THE HYSTERICON"

By

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AT RISE:

(Three figures are limned by backlights as the audience enters. Only one looks out at us...

The houselights fade to **blackout**. We hear a disembodied VOICE, clearly that of an older male:)

VOICE

Ladies and gentlemen: this is the Hystericon, a swollen darkness at the heart of a great asylum. There are 5000 souls here, women and girls, the mad and the sick and the residue of the marrowless evening of the century. The viewing today will be a case-study in hysteria, a living museum of pathology, which as been curated or perhaps curretted by your humble hosts. We hope you enjoy the performance. Ladies: take it away.

SCENE 1 - OVERTURE.

(**Music.** Lights up on a cell at the Salpêtrière women's asylum, Paris, circa 1880. There is a crude hospital bed, a single; perhaps a lamp next to it. There is a makeshift screen fashioned from a bedsheet and bits of metal or wood. Unless specific slides are mentioned, on the screen is projected the title of each scene.

DUMBSHOW: As the music plays, AUGUSTINE, BLANCHE, and GENEVIÈVE enter, one by one. They assume positions laterally across the stage. They perform a highly choreographed introduction modelled on the "Attitudes Passionelles."

As the music ends, the light settles.
SLIDE 1: Patient Histories.)

AUGUSTINE

Many years ago, Plato wrote of the illnesses of women:

BLANCHE

(As Plato.)

"The womb desires procreation, and after remaining unfruitful for some time, grows bored, agitated, angry, sets to wandering every direction throughout the body, obstructing breathing, causing tremors."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GENEVIEVE

This was the dawning of the Wandering Womb Theory of Hysteria, in which the hysteric is the victim of her own dislodged uterus.

(**Lazzi:** BLANCHE begins to seize and tremble, dance, and wriggle, as though her uterus were crawling around inside her body like an insect.)

(The other two assume roles as doctor [AUGUSTINE] and nurse [GENEVIEVE], struggling to keep BLANCHE still and capture her Wandering Womb.)

GENEVIEVE

(Struggling with BLANCHE.)

In 1651, the British physician William Harvey wrote:

AUGUSTINE

(As William Harvey.)

..."When the uterus...is...out of place - how dreadful then are the mental aberrations, the delirium, the melancholy, the paroxysms of frenzy, as if the affected person were under the domination of spells!"

(BLANCHE wriggles free, again but they restrain her. Eventually the nurse triumphantly manages to isolate the Wandering Womb. The doctor prepares to cut it out.)

GENEVIEVE

For obvious reasons, "hysteria" and "hysterectomy" share the same Greek root.

(Surgery begins - BLANCHE cries out. The nurse goes to wash her hands.)

AUGUSTINE (cont'd)

Fortunately, the Wandering Womb theory was officially debunked in 1761 by the Italian physician Giovanni Battista Morgagni in his classic text, The Seats and Causes of Diseases Investigated by Anatomy.

(A bloodied BLANCHE sits up and glares at AUGUSTINE, who gives an embarrassed shrug.)

BLANCHE

It was Thomas Sydenham who suggested that Hysteria was a neurological, not somataform disorder.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AUGUSTINE

Treatments include:

ALL

(Singing, like a skip-rope
song.)

Strychnine, quinine, laudanum, morphine...

BLANCHE

Injections of ice water into the rectum --

GENEVIÈVE

The leeching of the cervix and the labia --

AUGUSTINE

Hypnosis.

BLANCHE & GENEVIEVE

Ooooh....

GENEVIÈVE

Nous vous saluons, Reine, Mere de misericorde, notre vie,
notre joie, notre esperance, salut. Enfants d'Eve, nous
crions vers vous de fond de notre exil. Nous soupirons vers
vous, gemissant et pleurant dans cette vallee de larmes.

(Underneath:)

BLANCHE

On August 10th --

BLANCHE & AUGUSTINE

-- 1792 --

AUGUSTINE

-- an angry mob in --

BLANCHE & AUGUSTINE

-- the streets of Paris --

BLANCHE

-- breaks down the doors of the city's largest insane --

AUGUSTINE

-- asylum for women --

BLANCHE & AUGUSTINE

-- L'hôpital de la Salpêtrière.

AUGUSTINE

The madwomen inside it are --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

-- dragged by their --
 BLANCHE
 -- chains into the --
 BLANCHE & AUGUSTINE
 -- streets where they --
 BLANCHE
 -- are beaten --
 AUGUSTINE
 -- raped and hung --
 BLANCHE & AUGUSTINE
 -- up to die.
 BLANCHE
 -- 1795 --
 BLANCHE & AUGUSTINE
 -- Philippe Pinel becomes head --
 AUGUSTINE
 -- physician at --
 BLANCHE & AUGUSTINE
 -- la Salpêtrière. He is known --
 BLANCHE
 -- as the --
 AUGUSTINE
 -- liberator of --
 BLANCHE & AUGUSTINE
 -- the madwomen.
 BLANCHE
 1862 --
 BLANCHE & AUGUSTINE
 -- Jean Martin Charcot --
 AUGUSTINE
 -- "The Consoler" --
 ALL
 -- assumes --
 AUGUSTINE
 -- control of the --
 BLANCHE

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GENEVIEVE
-- hospital.

AUGUSTINE
He begins to investigate --

BLANCHE
-- the nature --

ALL
-- of Hysteria.

GENEVIÈVE
1864. A troubled orphan woman named Geneviève is admitted.
She believes she possessed by demons.

AUGUSTINE
1875. Louise Augustine Gleizes is admitted. She is to become
Charcot's most famous patient.

BLANCHE
1877. Marie "Blanche" Wittman is admitted. She will become
known as the "Queen of Hysterics," the star performer in
Charcot's public lectures.

AUGUSTINE
Ladies and Gentlemen --

ALL
This is the Hystericon --

AUGUSTINE
And my name is Augustine --

GENEVIÈVE
Geneviève.

BLANCHE
Blanche. Marie. Blanche.

AUGUSTINE
Though sometimes we're just called X. Or A, or L. Or "her."
"She". "The Patient."

BLANCHE
Quote unquote.

AUGUSTINE
And we're --

BLANCHE & GENEVIÈVE
Sick.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AUGUSTINE

But beautifully so.

GENEVIÈVE

Exemplarily so.

BLANCHE

We exhibit every symptom --

AUGUSTINE

And we're as regular as a thunderclap after a lightning flash.

GENEVIÈVE

A cold night after a long day.

BLANCHE

A bead of blood after a pricked fingertip.

AUGUSTINE

And: we look good in photographs.

GENEVIÈVE

My eyes!

AUGUSTINE

My hair!

BLANCHE

You were expecting the saggy-titted nag with the four tawny teeth?

GENEVIÈVE

The madwoman with the hunchback and the p-p-p-p-p-alsy?

AUGUSTINE

We are not mad.

BLANCHE & GENEVIÈVE

No.

AUGUSTINE

We are the hysterical patients of Dr. Jean Martin Charcot --

BLANCHE & GENEVIÈVE

"The Consoler."

AUGUSTINE

-- at L'hôpital de la Salpêtrière, in Paris, France, here to present to you an hysterical masque, a cabaret --

BLANCHE

-- une Comédie en vaudeville, if you will.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GENEVIÈVE

Hysteria is theatrical by nature.

AUGUSTINE

Paraclesus, after all, called hysteria "chorea lasciva": the choreography of lechery. And make no mistake --

BLANCHE

There will be lechery.

GENEVIÈVE

And love.

BLANCHE

And gnashing teeth.

AUGUSTINE

And at the very end there will be --

ALL

An escape.

AUGUSTINE

Because what is theatre if not an escape, right?

(**Music.**)

AUGUSTINE (cont'd)

To begin in the middle --

GENEVIÈVE

In medias res!

BLANCHE

An August morning at L'hôpital de la Salpêtrière, an entrance ex nihilo --

GENEVIÈVE

From the darkness into the light --

AUGUSTINE

Or at any rate from stage left.

BLANCHE

And like everything else --

AUGUSTINE

It all begins with an image.

SCENE 2 - INTAKE.

(Spot on AUGUSTINE, center. Behind her,
SLIDE 2: Augustine's portrait.

From offstage, the VOICE:)

VOICE

Are you frightened?

AUGUSTINE

Yes.

VOICE

Of what are you frightened?

(Beat.)

VOICE (cont'd)

I can promise that you have nothing to be frightened of, Augustine. We are healers. We only want to help you get better. You do want to get better, don't you?

AUGUSTINE

Yes.

VOICE

You would like to stop having fits?

AUGUSTINE

Yes.

VOICE

How old are you, Augustine?

AUGUSTINE

Fifteen.

VOICE

Fifteen?

AUGUSTINE

And a half.

VOICE

Fifteen and a half. You're a very pretty girl, Augustine.

AUGUSTINE

No, I'm not.

VOICE

Can you stand up for me please, Augustine?

(She does so.)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VOICE (cont'd)

Very good. Now if you could please lift your arm, and hold it all the way out...

(She begins to lift her left arm.)

VOICE (cont'd)

Excellent, excellent, you're doing very well, Augustine. Now the right, please.

AUGUSTINE

I can't.

VOICE

You can't lift your right arm?

AUGUSTINE

Sometimes...it...

VOICE

It trembles?

AUGUSTINE

It freezes.

VOICE

I see, quite alright. Can you just try for us, Augustine?

(AUGUSTINE lifts her right arm, slowly.)

VOICE (cont'd)

Wonderful, now just rest your head on your fingertips, just lightly, please.

(AUGUSTINE does so.)

AUGUSTINE

Like this?

VOICE

Yes, now turn your head, just a little...This is Monsieur Paul Regnard, he is a doctor working with me and he is going to take your photograph. Have you ever had your photograph taken before, Augustine?

AUGUSTINE

No...

VOICE

Well, a first time for everything, no? Monsieur Regnard--

AUGUSTINE

Wait.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

(AUGUSTINE fixes her hair. She leans back slowly in her seat. She smiles coquettishly at the camera.)

AUGUSTINE (cont'd)

Okay.

VOICE

Very good. This will take some time, the plates are slow to expose. This isn't so bad, is it Augustine?

AUGUSTINE

(Smiling, shaking her head.)

No.

VOICE

Ah ah -- try not to move. When Monsieur Regnard is finished, I'll ask you to please undress so that we may examine you.

SCENE 3 - MADemoiselle Modesty.

(Lights return.)

GENEVIÈVE

Dieu me garde, we're not how long in and already someone's being undressed!

BLANCHE

Oh, poor baby! A finger goes northward beneath a skirt and Mademoiselle Modesty begins to...pant...heavily...

GENEVIÈVE

That's not funny, Blanche.

AUGUSTINE

(Underneath, simultaneously.)

Geneviève...

BLANCHE

It's a little funny.

GENEVIÈVE

And what was that earlier, "gnashing of teeth," quote-unquote?

BLANCHE

(Underneath, overlapping.)

Je m'en fou...

AUGUSTINE

(Underneath, overlapping.)

Geneviève...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GENEVIÈVE

(Continuing.)

Not every scene has to be so bloody dark.

BLANCHE

(Underneath, overlapping.)

Ah, here she goes, Geneviève la Pucelle --

GENEVIÈVE

"Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise."

AUGUSTINE

(Overlapping.)

That's enough, Geneviève.

BLANCHE

Walls are Salvation and the gates Praise and yet even she has tried to escape the Salpêtrière...

GENEVIÈVE

I don't want to be remembered as --

BLANCHE

Butter wouldn't melt...

GENEVIÈVE

Fuck you, Blanche.

BLANCHE

HA!

AUGUSTINE

Ladies.

(Beat.)

AUGUSTINE (cont'd)

(To audience.)

I apologize. We're not here to frighten you, I promise. We're here to charm. And I'm sorry, but there's a little darkness is in everything. We wish that it weren't but it just is.

GENEVIÈVE

Like corn syrup.

BLANCHE

Corn syrup, or bed bugs.

AUGUSTINE

Or madness.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALL
(Wistfully.)
Madness!

SCENE 4 - MONSIEUR INSPECTOR

(**SLIDE. 3: Map of the Salpetriere.**
They assumes the demeanor of a
professor/physician talking to a
government inspector; they are
parodying Charcot.)

ALL
Bonjour Monsieur Inspector!

BLANCHE
Aaaaah, we call it "metric neurosis."

GENEVIÈVE
Or sometimes "metralgia."

AUGUSTINE
Dr. Jordan sometimes calls it "suffocation de la mere":
suffocation of the mother, don't really know why.

BLANCHE
I guess that's what some people call a "Freudian slit!"

ALL
HA HA HA!

GENEVIÈVE
We are joking of course.

ALL
Personally?

AUGUSTINE
Ah, well, I prefer the more parochial term "women's asthma,"
though that sometimes gets confusing --

BLANCHE
-- since there are women here with asthma --

GENEVIÈVE
-- and then women with women's asthma --

AUGUSTINE
Then there are some women with asthma and women's asthma --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALL

-- and JUST TRY getting your nurses to sort out which prescription is which!

BLANCHE

We had one incident not so long ago when one of our nurses --

GENEVIÈVE

-- she's no longer with us --

BLANCHE

-- she took one of our patients --

AUGUSTINE

-- real nutcase this one, what we call a "demented hysterical" --

BLANCHE

-- she took this patient out.

GENEVIÈVE

For a walk!

ALL

In the middle of the day!

AUGUSTINE

You see this is far too much excitement for a demented hysteric--

GENEVIÈVE

-- especially one at an advanced age --

BLANCHE

-- I mean, the olfactory stimulants alone...

AUGUSTINE

Anyway, so naturally the patient begins to seize.

BLANCHE

And so the nurse is struggling to make sure the patient doesn't swallow her own goddamn tongue, except somehow the poor woman --

GENEVIÈVE

-- the nurse that is --

BLANCHE

-- manages to get her whole little finger bitten --

ALL

-- clean off!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BLANCHE

So then the nurse is rolling around, bleeding and screaming,
and the patient is on the ground --

AUGUSTINE

-- you know, seizing --

BLANCHE

-- and soon the whole damn courtyard starts to notice the
blood --

AUGUSTINE

-- and the screaming --

GENEVIÈVE

-- and before you know it --

ALL

ALL HELL HAS BROKEN LOOSE.

AUGUSTINE

And patients are having fits left, right and centre --

GENEVIÈVE

-- throwing things, hitting themselves --

AUGUSTINE

-- shitting their pants, and Monsieur Bourneville and
Babinski and Tourette and the nurses are scrambling around --

BLANCHE

-- like madwomen themselves, just trying to get everyone
under control.

GENEVIÈVE

And meanwhile this poor nurse is just crawling on all fours
looking for her finger --

BLANCHE

-- and her whites are just soaked in all this blood --

AUGUSTINE

-- and someone yells to her --

GENEVIÈVE

"What did ya bring 'er outside for?"

AUGUSTINE

And she says:

ALL

"Fresh air: for her asthma!" HA HA HA --

(Beat. They recompose.)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AUGUSTINE

Uh, yes, pardon us, sir --

GENEVIÈVE

We digress.

BLANCHE

Well, ah, let's see, we have 4 383 people, 580 of which are employees.

AUGUSTINE

As far as patients go, we have about 2 780 of what we call "administered women," those are the simpler cases, yeah?

GENEVIÈVE

Paupers, or old maids, or women off the street, general nuisances, you know?

AUGUSTINE

And then of course 853 "demented women" --

BLANCHE

-- which would seem to be your interest --

AUGUSTINE

-- and 103 children.

ALL

We don't work with the children, though.

GENEVIÈVE

Small hands --

AUGUSTINE

Smell like hors d'oeuvres.

BLANCHE

Cheap hors d'oeuvres.

ALL

Cures?

AUGUSTINE

Well, last report shows 9.72 percent of patients cured.

GENEVIÈVE

That's almost one in ten, Monsieur Inspector.

BLANCHE

Won't find that kind of rating anywhere else.

ALL

Eh? Deaths?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AUGUSTINE

Monsieur Inspector, I find the question --

BLANCHE

Okay, yes, we have our share of deaths.

GENEVIÈVE

Not sure of the precise figure...

AUGUSTINE

(Producing a list.)

Well, we have a list here, of, of causes...

GENEVIÈVE

Ah, let us see...We've got a case of scrofula here --

BLANCHE

-- erotomania, debauchery, rape --

ALL

Ahem.

AUGUSTINE

This one here says "bad reading habits," don't know what that...

BLANCHE

-- nostalgia, misery --

GENEVIÈVE

-- and we have a section, "unknown causes" --

AUGUSTINE

-- that's for when the cause of death is, uh, unknown.

ALL

Say! Monsieur Inspector! Would you like to see our new piano?

SCENE 5 - OUR NEW PIANO.

(**SLIDE 4: *Vierge's Courtyard for Women at the Salpetriere.*** Jaunty, cheery piano music plays. The three women dance a kind of silly, choreographed dance, like seniors at an old-folks home, marionettes operated by children. It is without joy.)

SCENE 6 - BEGINNING OF THE ATTACK.

(SLIDE 5: AUGUSTINE, "Onset of the Attack: the Cry." Spot on GENEVIEVE, downstage right. She is breathing very heavily, and clutching her chest.)

VOICE

And now, friends, patient G. will demonstrate the onset of the hysterical attack. G., will you step forward please?

(GENEVIEVE steps forward.)

VOICE (cont'd)

How are you feeling today?

(GENEVIEVE curtseys.)

VOICE (cont'd)

Excellent. Now, although we are confident in our methods, matters relating to the biological are not as easily precise as the mechanical. You will have heard it said that experiments on animals are often not as successful when performed in public as they are in the laboratory. We thank you, friends, for your understanding in this matter. G., are you ready? Prepare yourself...

(GENEVIEVE prepares herself, focusing. The fit begins to take her.)

VOICE (cont'd)

As you can see, ladies and gentlemen, the patient's eyes begin to flutter, her breathing is irregular. This is the very beginning of the hysterical episode, the aura.

GENEVIEVE

It's hard...to breathe...I...won't...be sick...NO...I don't want...the drugs...

VOICE

The belly heaves and the mandibles chew, nostrils distend and forehead crumbles. Of a sudden, the gaze fixes, pupils dilate. Observe her: soundless and yet so full of noise, like the quiet before a thunderstorm --

(With a sound, GENEVIEVE loses consciousness.)

VOICE (cont'd)

The patient has lost consciousness.

SCENE 7 - GENEVIEVE.

(**SLIDE 5: Regnard, "Onset of the Attack" (Photo of Genevieve)**)

AUGUSTINE & BLANCHE

A few words about our friend, Geneviève.

AUGUSTINE

Geneviève has a poor constitution.

BLANCHE

Geneviève is prone to fits.

AUGUSTINE

Geneviève is not nice to be around when she has a fit.

BLANCHE

Geneviève was born in Loudon, the first town in France to become famous for demonic possession.

AUGUSTINE

Geneviève is an orphan.

BLANCHE

Geneviève was abandoned.

AUGUSTINE

Geneviève fell in love with a boy when she was fourteen.

BLANCHE

Geneviève nearly went batty when he died.

AUGUSTINE

Geneviève tried to throw herself into his grave.

BLANCHE

Geneviève likes to talk.

AUGUSTINE

Geneviève avoids certain subjects.

BLANCHE

Geneviève avoids, for instance, discussing the time she cut her own left nipple off with a pair of kitchen scissors.

AUGUSTINE

Geneviève gets agitated when this is brought up.

BLANCHE

Geneviève sometimes has fits when she gets agitated.

AUGUSTINE & BLANCHE

Geneviève is not nice to be around when she has a fit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AUGUSTINE

Geneviève has been known to walk outside in the pouring rain.

BLANCHE

Geneviève has been known to talk to God.

AUGUSTINE

Geneviève believes that God talks back.

BLANCHE

Geneviève believes her fits are manifestations of demonic possession.

AUGUSTINE

Geneviève is treated for these fits with very powerful drugs.

BLANCHE

Geneviève hates the drugs.

AUGUSTINE

Geneviève has dreams when they give her the drugs.

BLANCHE

Geneviève only has dreams when they give her the drugs.

AUGUSTINE

Geneviève is told that the drugs are for the nausea.

BLANCHE

Geneviève tells them she doesn't feel nauseated.

AUGUSTINE

Geneviève feels a sharp pain in her lower abdomen.

BLANCHE

Geneviève tells them that this is not nausea.

AUGUSTINE

Geneviève is first given a shot of morphine.

BLANCHE

Geneviève does not sleep.

AUGUSTINE

Geneviève is given a cloth soaked in chloroform.

BLANCHE

Geneviève tells them that she doesn't feel nauseated.

AUGUSTINE

Geneviève is injected with anesthesia on each side her genital opening.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BLANCHE

Geneviève vomits.

AUGUSTINE

Geneviève is given more chloroform to treat her nausea.

BLANCHE

Geneviève passes out.

AUGUSTINE

Geneviève has her arms bound and she is secured to her bed when she awakes.

BLANCHE

Geneviève is numb below the waist but she can tell she isn't wearing anything.

AUGUSTINE

Geneviève begins to have a fit.

AUGUSTINE & BLANCHE

Geneviève isn't nice to be around when she has a fit.

(Lights shift. GENEVIEVE sits bolt upright.)

GENEVIÈVE

Am I -- ? Do you smell that?

(They all inhale deeply.)

BLANCHE

Is that -- ?

AUGUSTINE

Gasoline?

BLANCHE

Alcohol?

(They inhale again. Now they're worried.)

BLANCHE (cont'd)

It's --

AUGUSTINE

Yes.

GENEVIÈVE

Does that mean -- ?

AUGUSTINE

Mmmhmm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GENEVIÈVE

How much longer?

AUGUSTINE

A few seconds...

BLANCHE

Ladies and gentlemen, that faint acrid reek is the stench of ether --

AUGUSTINE

It means the show might take a turn for the strange from here on out --

GENEVIÈVE

You see they give us ether so that we'll remember things...

BLANCHE

Things we'd rather not remember...

AUGUSTINE

Just please just try not to breathe too deeply --

GENEVIÈVE

-- and whatever you do --

ALL

-- don't get too close to the stage!

(The light crashes dramatically.)

SCENE 8 - A DREAM FROM AUGUSTINE'S PAST.

(**Blackout.** The VOICE is heard:)

VOICE

We have found it useful in the past to recount the hallucinations experienced by hysterics while under the influence of ether. The following was related to us by patient X...

(**Music** plays, as if from a demented Chaplin movie.)

DUMBSHOW: AUGUSTINE enters as a clown. She acknowledges the audience. She has a broom and begins to coquettishly sweep the floor.

BLANCHE enters, also a clown. She wears men's trousers with an enormous bulge and a fake moustache.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She also acknowledges the audience. She notices AUGUSTINE, who has not seen her. BLANCHE indicates that AUGUSTINE is sexy. She saunters over to her, all casual-like.

A brief lazzi involving the broom. Finally, AUGUSTINE notices the bulge in BLANCHE's pants. She points at first horrified, then tantalized. She giggles. She goes a little closer, her curiosity is roused...

BLANCHE unzips her fly and a massive snake pops out. Then BLANCHE produces a knife. AUGUSTINE, slowly, sadly, lifts up her skirt. BLANCHE chases her off.)

SCENE 9 - MADONNA/WHORE.

(GENEVIEVE rushes on. She is out of breath, confused.)

GENEVIEVE

(To audience.)

Have you seen the others? Where did they go? We've gone completely off script now, I don't know what comes next...Time here is elastic, you see, it folds over and back on itself, and sometimes it'll leap forward a hundred years into the future.

(BLANCHE enters, carrying her costume from the previous scene.)

GENEVIEVE (cont'd)

There you are!

BLANCHE

(Folding her costume, putting it away.)

What?

GENEVIEVE

What scene are we in?

BLANCHE

Do I look like I know?

GENEVIEVE

Where's Augustine?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BLANCHE

(Mordantly.)

Having a cigarette, I expect.

GENEVIÈVE

Blanche!

BLANCHE

What?

GENEVIÈVE

(Gesturing to the audience.)

What am I supposed to do?

BLANCHE

I don't know. Entertain them. Sing a song. Wiggle your ears. Do something. For Christ's sake. Why must I do everything?

GENEVIÈVE

Please Blanche, I'm not a performer like you, my talents are...

(To audience.)

I have a knack for escaping from strait jackets, Monsieur Charcot says --

BLANCHE

(Snorting.)

He says a lot of things.

GENEVIÈVE

Oh would you like to...?

(BLANCHE shrugs, "No.")

GENEVIÈVE (cont'd)

(To audience.)

Monsieur Charcot says --

BLANCHE

Many, many things.

GENEVIÈVE

Oh, here we go.

BLANCHE

What, this is entertainment to you, tell them about Monsieur Charcot? Nothing you have to say about the man is interesting and we only have value so long as we're interesting.

GENEVIÈVE

I don't think your opinion of him is interesting.

BLANCHE

Yes you do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GENEVIÈVE

Most women wouldn't even --

BLANCHE

I am NOT "most women".

GENEVIÈVE

That's always been the problem, hasn't it?

BLANCHE

What?

GENEVIÈVE

Being...noticed.

BLANCHE

Being noticed, or being noticeable?

GENEVIÈVE

Being noticed.

BLANCHE

I rather liked being noticed.

GENEVIÈVE

So, we all did. For a while.

BLANCHE

For a while, ah? And when Monsieur Regnard has his camera on you, and when you see your photographs in his little books? You strike the poses same as me. The attention is --

GENEVIÈVE

Nice.

BLANCHE

Everything.

GENEVIÈVE

It makes me feel --

BLANCHE

Pretty?

GENEVIÈVE

Useful. You wouldn't understand.

BLANCHE

Oh no? Please. Enlighten. Illuminate. RAVISH ME with your acumen.

GENEVIÈVE

Ravish you. My, aren't we obsessed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BLANCHE

What does that mean?

GENEVIÈVE

It means you're a whore, Blanche.

BLANCHE

A whore? And that makes you what, Mademoiselle Modesty?

GENEVIÈVE

It makes me --

BLANCHE

Envious.

GENEVIÈVE

Sick.

BLANCHE

We're all sick. It's just a matter of degree.

GENEVIÈVE

It's a matter of pathology.

BLANCHE

Pathology? And what was your pathology, Mademoiselle Modesty -
- when you were released from the hospital, all but cured,
what a miracle, only she turns up on the front stoop a year
later, with a baby in her arms, not three months out in the
world and la Pucelle gets herself knocked up --

GENEVIÈVE

(Overlapping)

And what was yours when you fucked Monsieur Babinski, and
when you sat here in this cell and let Monsieur Regnard take
pictures of your tits, when you parade around in the lecture
hall, swooning, fudding yourself stupid --

BLANCHE

(Overlapping.)

Geneviève, Geneviève, how you love to hate me, Geneviève.

(BLANCHE approaches GENEVIÈVE.)

BLANCHE (cont'd)

Because mine is a hysteria of pleasure, and yours is a
hysteria of pain.

(GENEVIÈVE has begun to breath
heavily.)

BLANCHE (cont'd)

Your self-mutilations, your weeks without food...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GENEVIÈVE

Saint Agatha of Sicily had her breasts cut off at the hands
of the Romans --

BLANCHE

Ahh, the lives of the saints....

GENEVIÈVE

Mary Magdalene de'Pazzi wore a corset inlaid with iron nails.
Blessed Clare of Rimini would have herself bound and
whipped...

BLANCHE

(To audience, re: Geneviève.)

The benefits of a religious upbringing.

GENEVIÈVE

(Breathing very heavily,
furious.)

You laugh, you --

BLANCHE

Where is your daughter [today/tonight], Geneviève? Ou est
Désirée?

GENEVIÈVE

OH YOU -- !

(BLANCHE laughs. AUGUSTINE enters.)

AUGUSTINE

Blanche?

(BLANCHE looks at her questioningly.)

AUGUSTINE (cont'd)

I alert you to her breathing.

(BLANCHE notices, and releases
GENEVIÈVE like something hot.)

AUGUSTINE (cont'd)

Let's refrain from bickering anymore, ladies. Do you need a
moment, Geneviève?

GENEVIÈVE

I'm fine.

AUGUSTINE

Are you sure?

GENEVIÈVE

I'm fine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BLANCHE

She's fine.

AUGUSTINE

Good. We're not the only ones here, ladies, please remember that. Now, let's try to get back on script.

BLANCHE

Works for me.

GENEVIÈVE

Where are we?

AUGUSTINE

I don't know, we'll have to improvise. Let's just pick a scene.

BLANCHE

Which one?

AUGUSTINE

Photography.

(Lights shift.)

SCENE 10 - THE CAMERA LOVES YOU.

(Behind them, **SLIDE 6: "Lethargy: Artificial Contracture).**

AUGUSTINE

(To audience)

What a little attention can do to a gal. Our second career, as hysterics, as models, as saints and actresses, brings with it certain pleasures, but also certain pressures.

(**SLIDE 7: "Lethargy: Muscular Hyperexcitability)**

AUGUSTINE (cont'd)

Monsieur Charcot began taking photographs of each of us on the first day of our residence, but it was some time before we were his favorites. There was this bitch Louise, whom he adored, took her to the lectures, had her picture published, et cetera, but of course now she barely even has fits anymore and half the time she does she's faking and you can tell. She's hardly even a patient - she's an employee for god's sake, frumpy old thing, sweeps the floors - SHE HAS A BEARD.

(They giggle.)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AUGUSTINE (cont'd)

Good god, photography...photography is...

GENEVIÈVE

Magic.

BLANCHE

(Snorting.)

Magic.

AUGUSTINE

You see yourself, not like in a mirror, but like in a world dipped in quicksilver. As if you're drowning in mercury.

BLANCHE

Drowning. Yes. Or dancing, yeah? Jean-Martin Charcot's special little puppets.

AUGUSTINE

Better his puppets than his patients.

BLANCHE

HA!

GENEVIÈVE

Puppets then. But - where are the strings?

AUGUSTINE

Ah, the strings. Please, ladies and gentlemen, observe, Exhibit A.

(The screen now shows **SLIDE 8: Regnard, "Procedure for Producing Catalepsy".**)

GENEVIÈVE

(Gesturing to the screen, à la Vanna White.)

Exhibit A.

BLANCHE

Exhibit A shows Monsieur Charcot engaged with a patient, doing what he does best.

GENEVIÈVE

That is to say:

AUGUSTINE

Hypnotism. I am extremely receptive to hypnotism, I can even sometimes hypnotize myself if I want, if he asks nicely enough. When you are hypnotized everything becomes very unfamiliar, you don't quite know where you are, and you have the strangest feeling of something hard and round, like an apple, growing out of the nape of your neck. When you are hypnotized--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BLANCHE

The general idea is obedience.

AUGUSTINE

Yes, my darling Blanche. The general idea is obedience.

GENEVIÈVE

Which brings us to Exhibit B.

**(SLIDE 9: Regnard, "Lethargy.
Contraction of the sterno-mastoidan
frontal muscles")**

GENEVIÈVE (cont'd)

As you can see, Exhibit B shows Monsieur Charcot with an electrified stylus, with which he can stimulate whichever muscle interests him most.

BLANCHE

By so doing, he can make all kinds of expressions. Exhibit C.

**(SLIDE 10: Londe, "Excitation of facial
muscles during hypnotic lethargy")**

(They react visibly to the slide.)

AUGUSTINE

Not all photography is glamorous. Our job is not to be pretty, although we are pretty. Our job is not to titillate, although we do that too.

**(SLIDES 11 & 12: Luys, "Emotions"
induced by olfactory simulations.)**

AUGUSTINE (cont'd)

Our job is to be touched, to be staged, to be the performers of our sickness. Beauty, theatre, hysteria. Are you fascinated?

GENEVIÈVE

How could you not be?

BLANCHE

And a little aroused?

AUGUSTINE

We won't tell.

BLANCHE

Speaking of which --

AUGUSTINE & GENEVIÈVE

(Reluctantly.)

Exhibit D...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BLANCHE

The theatre.

AUGUSTINE

I guess I'm playing Charcot this time?

GENEVIÈVE

Can't watch this...

BLANCHE

If you wouldn't mind, Augustine.

AUGUSTINE

(Dejectedly.)

Start it up...

GENEVIÈVE

Sorry, I'd love to help, but this is a little --

BLANCHE

Sensational?

GENEVIÈVE

Gross.

(BLANCHE laughs.)

GENEVIÈVE (cont'd)

(To audience)

Bon chance.

SCENE 11 - CHARCOT'S TUESDAY LECTURES (ACT 1).

(Drum roll.)

BLANCHE

That sound, madames et messieurs, signifies precisely 10:30 AM, Tuesday November 10th, 1885. That mean's it's TIME FOR:

BLANCHE & VOICE

A HUMAN ODDITY!

VOICE

Laaaadies and gentleman! L'hôpital de la Salpêtrière and Dr. Jean-Martin Charcot are proud to present, for you viewing pleasure, the Queen of Hysterics! Please, put your hands together for BLAAAAANCHE WIIIIITMAAAN!

(Thunderous applause. BLANCHE takes centre stage.)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BLANCHE

I enter, a locus of sensuousness and vigor. I am side-lit, silhouetted, hair up, breasts out --

(Ad-lib, to a particular audience member.)

Ooh la la, sir aren't you happy you took a seat in the first row? Don't worry, I'm not contagious...at least, not highly [etc.]...

(Back on script.)

I gasp, I lunge, I swoon before my assembled audience, my cogent and adoring public, the brightest of men's minds in la belle epoque. Behind me, the handsome Joseph Babinski, his strong surgeons hands touching me around the waist, just so, above the hip bones there, like that, yes, just like that, and before me stands the one and only Jean Martin Charcot the Consoler.

(AUGUSTINE appears as a solemn Charcot.)

BLANCHE (cont'd)

My body thrums with anticipation. Is it to be Deleuze's method of hypnotism, or Faria's today? The Consoler lifts a small object between a forefinger and thumb --

VOICE

(AUGUSTINE mouths along.)

I will now induce the somnambular state.

BLANCHE

-- he says, and suddenly I'm not in the room at all.

(Light shifts.)

BLANCHE (cont'd)

I'm soaring, high above the courtyards and barracks of the Salpêtrière, above the streets and quays along the Seine. I am divided across space and time, I am the muse of physicians young and old, the Americans, Germans, French, Poles; I inhabit the novels of Jules Claretie, the dinnertime talk of Maupassant; Monsieur Durkheim how are you, Monsieur de Banville are your hands as "funambulesque" as your poetry? I sit whole nights crouching naked in the mind of Alphonse Daudet as he writes his Evangelist. My talent is not only admired, it is beloved: Sarah Bernhardt herself studies my technique as she prepares to play Adrienne Lecrouvreur. I am the inspiration of Scribe and of Lorde, the books of Flaubert, Zola, Huysmans; my reviews are posted in le Temps and they glow brighter than a Versailles chandelier; I cartwheel through the halls of the Paris Commune, it is my blood running through the cobblestones and the gutters and the pulse of Paris, I am this time, this place, this air you breathe, this epoque is the epoque de l'hysterie et je suis la reine de l'hysterie, ceci mon temps --

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BLANCHE (cont'd)

JE SUIS LA TROISIEME REPUBLIQUE.
 JE SUIS LA TROISIEME REPUBLIQUE.
 JE SUIS LA TROISIEME REPUBLIQUE.

(BLANCHE spasms, grows rigid,
 cataleptic.)

SCENE 12 - INTERLUDE.

(AUGUSTINE reappears.)

AUGUSTINE

(To audience.)

There are reasons I don't like to play Charcot, particularly.
 We forget, sometimes, where the theatre ends and the sickness
 begins. What is performance and what pathology. Blanche in
 particular...

VOICE

Augustine.

(Lights shift, spot on AUGUSTINE.)

AUGUSTINE

Monsieur. I was wondering where you'd gone.

VOICE

I'm always with you, Augustine, you know that.

AUGUSTINE

(Quietly, not wishing to be
 heard.)

If you could hear yourself...

VOICE

What did you say?

AUGUSTINE

Nothing.

VOICE

Augustine...

AUGUSTINE

Monsieur, I perform at your pleasure, I am, after all, under
 your care --

VOICE

Augustine?

AUGUSTINE

Monsieur? I wish you would stop repeating my name like that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VOICE

Why?

AUGUSTINE

Because. You'll corrode it's meaning with your endless repetition, Augustine Augustine Augustine, who is Augustine, is she this photograph, is she the model, I can't tell, who, what, I don't know, so enough of that please.

VOICE

Why have you stopped the action?

AUGUSTINE

My head is still cloudy, the ether --

VOICE

But people have come to see you.

AUGUSTINE

I know.

VOICE

Don't you think you owe them?

AUGUSTINE

Owe them? What do I owe them?

VOICE

"The Hystericon," "con" from the Greek "eikon" meaning "image" --

AUGUSTINE

(Simultaneously.)

-- "image," yes I know.

VOICE

Hystericon. Hysterical icon, icon of hysteria as in "pop icon," "fashion icon," "Icon of our Lady of Guadalupe," brings us back to --

AUGUSTINE

(Simultaneously.)

-- brings us back to --

VOICE

-- you. The Hystericon. Icons exist only in so far as there is someone to be witness to them. That is what I provide -- Augustine?

AUGUSTINE

What?

VOICE

That is what they provide you. So please: finish the scene.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AUGUSTINE

Mmhhh, sorry which was that?

(**SLIDE 13: Brouillet's Painting**
appears.)

AUGUSTINE (cont'd)

Ah yes. That one. Remind me how it ends?

VOICE

Get on with it, please.

AUGUSTINE

I hate what you make me do to her.

VOICE

Blanche is sick. This is part of her treatment --

AUGUSTINE

(Simultaneously.)

...part of her treatment. That's awfully clever of you,
Monsieur.

VOICE

It is also part of your compact with the audience. Look:

(Every stage light is brought up to
maximum. AUGUSTINE shields her eyes,
blinded by the light.)

VOICE (cont'd)

Do you see a way out?

(AUGUSTINE approaches the edge of the
stage. She reaches, tentatively, out
through the fourth wall into the
audience. She notices BLANCHE, frozen.
Goes to her.)

AUGUSTINE

I notice you never speak to her directly.

(Lights restore.)

AUGUSTINE (cont'd)

Ah, have you gone?

(Nothing.)

AUGUSTINE (cont'd)

As I say, there are reasons I don't like to play Charcot,
particularly.

SCENE 13 - CHARCOT'S TUESDAY LECTURES (ACT 2)

(Music restarts. BLANCHE reanimates,
and performs the following:)

AUGUSTINE

Under the influence of hypnosis the hysteric's mind is severed straight down the middle, one side humming distantly in the past, the other submerged beneath the waters of a suggested present. She is wholly the marionette of her hypnotist and can be induced to inhale ammonia fumes when told it's rosewater, or eat a shard of charcoal if told it's chocolate. She can be debased and primitivized -- with a snap of fingers, is sent barking along the floor like a mad dog, and with another, is now a pigeon flapping her pathetic, flightless wings, and yet again with another and her own arm is now a serpent coiling around her pretty, white neck.
BLANCHE!

(BLANCHE ceases flapping and stares,
awaiting instruction.)

(GENEVIÈVE enters.)

SCENE 14 - BLANCHE.

(**SLIDE 13 - Photograph of Blanche
Wittmann.**)

GENEVIÈVE

Stop this. I can't stand it.

AUGUSTINE

Geneviève, not now.

GENEVIÈVE

It's horrible, she's in no condition to --

AUGUSTINE

This is her choice.

GENEVIÈVE

But she doesn't even know.

AUGUSTINE

Maybe she does, maybe she doesn't. What do you care anyway, I see how she bullies you.

GENEVIÈVE

Bullies me, yes she bullies me, so what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AUGUSTINE

So nothing, we're doing the show, just drop it.

GENEVIÈVE

But --

AUGUSTINE

Geneviève, this is the way they want it. So they get it. What are else are we here for?

GENEVIÈVE

I thought we were here to get better.

AUGUSTINE

(Overlapping.)

"Get better," what for?

GENEVIÈVE

Augustine --

AUGUSTINE

Do you have to save my name all the time.

GENEVIÈVE

What?

AUGUSTINE

Nothing, nevermind, just let's continue please.

GENEVIÈVE

But --

AUGUSTINE

Take it up with them. Not me.

GENEVIÈVE

But how is this going to end?

AUGUSTINE

You know how it ends. It ends the same way every night.

GENEVIÈVE

Can't we take a break, intermission or -- ?

AUGUSTINE

To do what? To go where?

GENEVIÈVE

Listen to me. We have to show them that we're not --

AUGUSTINE

We are. We're sick.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GENEVIÈVE

We're still people!

AUGUSTINE

You're either going to help me with this or you're not.

GENEVIÈVE

We've just been titillating them with ugliness, I want them to see us!

AUGUSTINE

Oh, I'm finished with being seen, these endless performances -
-

GENEVIÈVE

Augustine --

AUGUSTINE

-- sick to death of it, Charcot's little showgirls --

GENEVIÈVE

Augustine --

AUGUSTINE

Stop saying my name.

(Beat.)

BLANCHE

(Very softly...)

...for obtaining the metal radium we have used the methods described by M. Guntz for preparing barium metal some preliminary experiments were made on barium --

AUGUSTINE

(Over BLANCHE.)

What is she saying?

GENEVIÈVE

(Over BLANCHE.)

I can't hear.

(They lean in to listen.)

BLANCHE

(Very softly...)

-- with a very small amount of material making operations very delicate these experiments were used to establish the procedure used for the preparation of radium --

(BLANCHE snaps out of it.)

BLANCHE (cont'd)

Ah. Hmm. What's -- sorry, what are we doing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GENEVIÈVE
What were you saying just then?

BLANCHE
I wasn't saying anything.

AUGUSTINE
You were muttering something.

BLANCHE
Well, I don't know.

GENEVIÈVE
Something, radium?

BLANCHE
I don't know, I wasn't saying anything.

GENEVIÈVE
You were, you...

BLANCHE
Mon dieu, my head...

VOICE
Excuse me.

(They startle, and await instruction.)

VOICE (cont'd)
The ladies and gentlemen were promised sixty minutes. You have some time left to fill. I'll ask you to stop this bickering and please get on with things.

(BLANCHE gets up. AUGUSTINE & GENEVIÈVE look at each other and silently consent on how to proceed.)

AUGUSTINE & GENEVIÈVE
A few brief words about our friend, Blanche.

GENEVIÈVE
Blanche was not always pretty.

AUGUSTINE
Blanche suffered as a child, from sores that seeped at the corner of her eyes.

BLANCHE
(Underneath.)
What are you doing?

GENEVIÈVE
Blanche is pretty, now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AUGUSTINE

Blanche is very pretty, now.

BLANCHE

(Underneath.)

I don't have the head to do this right now...

GENEVIEVE

Blanche was born in Paris.

AUGUSTINE

Blanche loves Paris.

GENEVIÈVE

Blanche had eight siblings, once.

AUGUSTINE

Blanche has three siblings, now.

BLANCHE

(Underneath.)

Stop it, both of you.

GENEVIEVE

Blanche's father tried to throw her out of a window --

AUGUSTINE

Blanche is prone to fits.

BLANCHE

(Underneath.)

Augustine.

GENEVIÈVE

Blanche once tried to run away.

AUGUSTINE

Blanche was locked in the mental ward for seven months.

GENEVIÈVE

Blanche was not quite --

BLANCHE

(Interrupting.)

Shut up, shut up, shut up, both of you.

(The three of them stand, unsure of what to do.)

BLANCHE (cont'd)

I'm sorry, I can't listen to that.

AUGUSTINE

Well, I don't know what else to do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BLANCHE

There are plenty of scenes in the repertoire, let's do the lovers bit, or --

AUGUSTINE

(Overlapping.)

I don't have the stomach for it, not after --

GENEVIÈVE

(Overlapping.)

What about the dermagraph scene?

BLANCHE

You're only suggesting that because you're not in it!

GENEVIÈVE

That's not fair.

AUGUSTINE

Would the two of you please --

GENEVIÈVE

(To Blanche.)

You've been trying to sabotage me all [night/afternoon].

BLANCHE

Not my fault if you're so bloody boring --

AUGUSTINE

(Throwing up her hands.)

We need to get back on track.

GENEVIÈVE

Augustine, she's been --

AUGUSTINE

(Overlapping.)

Please stop repeating my name.

BLANCHE

(Overlapping.)

Don't to listen to her Augustine, she's --

AUGUSTINE

(Quietly, overlapping.)

Stop it, please stop it.

GENEVIÈVE

(Overlapping.)

I can't stand this arguing, let's just finish the show please --

BLANCHE

How, this is what we're trying to ---

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GENEVIÈVE

Just pick a scene --

BLANCHE

I can't remember the lines...

GENEVIEVE

(To AUGUSTINE.)

Can you?

AUGUSTINE

Give us a moment.

GENEVIÈVE

Please before he --

BLANCHE

(To herself.)

Baisé ma mère...

GENEVIÈVE

This is not what I wanted, this not what I wanted...

AUGUSTINE

Not helping, Geneviève.

GENEVIÈVE

Hurry, hurry...

BLANCHE

I'm trying.

GENEVIÈVE

M'encule.

AUGUSTINE

Would you give it a rest we're trying --

BLANCHE

Why's it so important to you anyway? What do you do? Nothing!
We've been carrying you around since --

GENEVIÈVE

I want out, Blanche. Do you understand? I have a child. I
have a --

BLANCHE

Brain tumour.

GENEVIÈVE

(During the following,
GENEVIEVE's breathing starts
to become steadily heavier.)

You will let me finish a sentence!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GENEVIÈVE (cont'd)

I have a daughter, out there, somewhere. Neither of you have any idea what that's like, it's like searching through piles of limbs to find your own arm, except you can't find it, it isn't there. If they want us to perform, if it'll help even at all, it may not be worth it to you but it is to me.

AUGUSTINE

(Quietly.)

Okay Gen --

GENEVIÈVE

No. It's like he says, sixty minutes is what they've come for and sixty minutes is what they'll get. Even if I have to do it myself.

BLANCHE

Gen --

GENEVIÈVE

Not another word. This is what you wanted isn't it?

(Turning to the audience.)

Here I am, ladies and gentlemen: Geneviève the saintly, Geneviève the demonic, Geneviève the hysteric, and I have a devil inside of me.

(Clutching her womb.)

Right here. Prends pitié de moi, Dieu -- ladies and gentleman have you ever watched an exorcism? -- en ta bonté, lave-moi tout entier de mon mal -- Blanche and Augustine, the queen and the model, but voici Geneviève la Pucelle --

(To the VOICE.)

Monsieur, I am finished with the escapes, I am finished with fits, I just want to feel your love, monsieur, pardonne-nous nos péchés, préserve-nous du feu de l'enfer -- I am here, I am listening, I...am...ecstatic...

(GENEVIÈVE's breathing has reached a climax. She begins to sieze. AUGUSTINE and BLANCHE waste no time, they rush to her and try to keep her still, try to calm her.)

AUGUSTINE

Be careful, her tongue --

BLANCHE

I know, I have it.

AUGUSTINE

Watch her head.

BLANCHE

There she goes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

(They hold her, comforting her.
GENEVIÈVE calms, resting in their
arms.)

(Beat.)

VOICE

Ladies and gentlemen, one unfortunate symptom of the hysteric is her inveterate compulsion to lie, to simulate, to enhance and exaggerate her symptoms, for no reason and to no end. Be advised that although procedures are being taken to ensure that today's show is authentic, you would do well not to take seriously all that you see. Now: ladies. If you're quite finished, let's make an ending, shall we?

(Beat.)

BLANCHE

What do we do?

AUGUSTINE

Are you alright, Geneviève?

GENEVIÈVE

I'm so tired, Augustine.

BLANCHE

What do we do now?

AUGUSTINE

We'll do what he asks. Do you have one last scene in you?

BLANCHE

Which one?

AUGUSTINE

Dreams.

GENEVIÈVE

Dreams. That would be nice.

BLANCHE

Okay.

AUGUSTINE

One last scene. And then we can stop.

(They stand up, helping GENEVIÈVE.
Brush themselves off. They take a
moment to check in with each other,
sisterly, then about-face to the
audience.)

SCENE 15 - DREAMPLAY.

ALL
Sometimes we have this dream.

AUGUSTINE
A recurring dream.

BLANCHE
Partway between nightmare --

GENEVIÈVE
-- and afflatus.

ALL
In the dream --

AUGUSTINE
A revolution is being performed in a theatre.

GENEVIÈVE
The actors have rehearsed this, the director manufactured --

BLANCHE
-- the playwright's contributed whatever it is playwrights
think they contribute --

ALL
-- and the lights shine --

AUGUSTINE
-- limestone green onto a set of passionate attitude.

GENEVIÈVE
"Justice!"

AUGUSTINE
A scream.

BLANCHE
"Vengeance!"

AUGUSTINE
Another.

ALL
Across the boards an emperor flees from a lynch mob --

BLANCHE
-- a dance, con bravura, a desperate brisé diagonally towards
the audience --

ALL
He is chased down by the chorus --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GENEVIÈVE

-- and pinned to the stage.

AUGUSTINE

There is calculation in this.

ALL

A guillotine is flown in from the wings.

BLANCHE

There is calculation even in the geometry of the blood
spatters left behind as his head rolls --

AUGUSTINE

-- and rolls --

ALL

-- and rolls --

AUGUSTINE

-- into the lap of a young girl in the first row, who cannot
tell prop from flesh --

BLANCHE

-- nor truth from showmanship --

GENEVIÈVE

-- but who knows --

ALL

That in some way this is all for her.

BLANCHE

So what, show's over, she'll go home --

GENEVIÈVE

-- to her bed and her fireplace --

ALL

But the head will still be there --

BLANCHE

Beneath the chair, where it rolled.

AUGUSTINE

As was planned since the moment rehearsals began.

(Pause. They sigh. **SLIDE 14. - Attitude
passionelles - crucifixion.**)

AUGUSTINE (cont'd)

Ladies and gentlemen --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALL
This is the Hystericon --

(A crash. The lights collapse into a spotlight on a brooding Augustine.)

SCENE 16 - IN THE YEAR 1880, AUGUSTINE ESCAPES THE SALPETREIRE, DISGUISED AS A MAN.

AUGUSTINE
Is that not the ending you wanted, Monsieur?

VOICE
No, not quite.

AUGUSTINE
You're running out of time. Sixty minutes, remember?

VOICE
Augustine...

AUGUSTINE
Yes?

VOICE
Do you know that I love you?

AUGUSTINE
Yes.

VOICE
Tell them.

AUGUSTINE
(To the audience.)
He loves us.

(Pause. Augustine makes to leave the stage.)

VOICE
Not yet.

AUGUSTINE
Tick tock, Monsieur.

VOICE
No, I have time left, you will --

AUGUSTINE
Yes?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VOICE

This isn't right, Augustine the ending has to --

AUGUSTINE

Too late, Monsieur, too late. Your time is up.

(She reaches under her skirt and pulls
out her bloody uterus.)

AUGUSTINE (cont'd)

There. There's your Hystericon. Adieu.

(She hurls it to the floor. Exits.)

VOICE

Augustine! What have you done, what is that on the stage?
What is that?

(Screaming.)

What is that! Oh my god.

WHAT IS THAT?

WHAT IS THAT?

(Blackout.)

(Fin.)