

helen.

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rules

*a note about the performing aspects: any number of women can participate in helen. but it must be women and they must all be helen.

*helen is the every woman. pieces are rooted in the greek myth, but extend into our own challenges as women today. she exists in four roles: the wife, the child, the whore, and the lover. there are many more dimensions to helen, these are just the ones I have focused on. the performance is structured in cycles. cycles may contain one piece from each helen role and thread thematically with concerns faced today, for example: believability, sexual assault, infidelity, objectification, sexuality, etc. cycles also may center on the individual helen roles themselves whereas there's the wife cycle, the whore cycle, the child cycle, and the lover cycle. (for the sake of my performance as of 2019, I will be focusing on this). pieces may be created, devised, switched out, repeated, as long as the four roles of helen are honored and the language I've written is depicted as displayed on the page. the cycles are unnamed, but could be named if something jazzy is discovered. there can be any number of cycles in a performance.

*the performance is not necessarily a play. it is not linear. it exists outside time and "space". I put quotations around space because I think the piece is grounded in the roots of the myth and the roots of our current society. it should operate as an "installation" where as all the senses are engaged. the space should be transformative and include as many visual elements and art forms as possible.

*not all the text is writing of mine. I steal.

* a note about what she wears: anything. I envision various outfits, from a plain white slip, to all red, to what reminds me of a barbie workout outfit. nudity is also probable.

* a note about the space constructed: helen must be in a contained room. it is her room. each corner, I envision, encapsulates one of the helen roles, though her identity certainly isn't that divided. I envision that the child exists mostly center, the whore exists closest to the audience and wanders a bit more, the lover exists by a window (if there is one) in a corner, and the wife in the opposing corner. depending on the cycles selected and the props they require, the space can be constructed differently, however, the props in cycles that aren't appearing in a particular performance can still live in the space. I don't envision this to take place in a theatre, but it very well could. the audience should not be in a separate space from the performance space if that is the case.

*my initial thoughts on the space do not have to be followed, however, as of 2.20.2019 this is what I envision: a space with windows (it would be great if you can crawl out of them), black tarp or plastic covering the walls – it shouldn't appear like a normal room, it shouldn't necessarily be of this world. paintings of nude women hung in the space. they are taped in empty frames. amongst the paintings of nude women there should be photos of nude women. in the one-

woman performance I intend to do, they will be nude photos of me, including artistic photo shoots, nudes, and images from sex work I have done. my face will be cut out or burned out so only objectified parts are viewed. the two kinds of photos are integrated in the space. the audience invades the space. hopefully it is a tight squeeze. they shouldn't have chairs. they can stand or sit on the floor. (I love the idea of helen greeting them one by one and introducing them to the space. In my head, she connects with the women, asking them something about if her makeup is alright or if she looks fat while she flirtatiously asks the men to move a heavy object across the space. hopefully, the men think they are uniquely selected, but as the next male is introduced to the space, they witness her ask him the same thing.) the performance should be immersive, hopefully she can have a jar accepting tips. it should be as public as it can get.

things that must be in the space:
mirrors of all sizes // at least one hand held

suggested objects:
a toy horse, a deck of cards, a record player, cellophane, rotisserie chicken, lipstick, swans, ships,
photos, paintings, frames, maps of greece, maps of paris, feminist books, non-feminist books,
mattress, records, sheets, old-school phone with cut telephone line, a cigarette

*the helen zero's are pieces that are miscellaneous and don't necessarily fit into the four roles:
the wife, the whore, the lover, the child
that helen has been placed into. the helen zero's structurally can be slipped in as starters and
enders or transitions for the performance piece. they can also be switched out or added
throughout the cycles for pieces that fit into the constrained roles. the helen zero's deal with
helen's essence of self and realized state of identity. they are everything and nothing.

zero I

(helen puts on a record

MY GIRL - THE TEMPTATIONS

she looks at the audience

she begins to censor the photos and paintings with red paint

when she finishes

she curtsies)

the whore I

and the boys come
to me in the middle
of the night with their
loose zippers
table talk they say
 helen
this is just table talk
get up on it they say
with very soft booms
unhinge the table
right from under me
pull out the chairs
sit they say
 oh helen please
sit
 and I do
I do sit in front of them
and they feast

 baby likes your sweet eyes your swiping features
 you know those brow things how they're curved
 like those curves those bounce things you know those
 big ball things you know baby hey baby sexy put on that
 no put that tight thing you know that tight thing with the strings
 put on that blue piece with tie in the back with the noose in the front
 yeah we like that no actually yeah actually actually why don't you take that
off no keep it on no take it off so I can imagine so I can think I take it off for you let me do it for
you baby why don't you put up your hair into that tight thing I like that look you have put down
your hair baby sexy put up your hair pigtails that's so cute that's so cute take out those pigtails I
told you leave it down better that way told you to put up take it down and up and why don't you
say something nasty to me you must know some nasty things a girl like you
woman like you must have some tricks some sweet things to say why don't you tell me
something sweet vulgar tell me what you want to do to me what you want me to do
all up to you to me say something dirty nice make me feel good boy bad boy
go ahead say something say something why don't you just say something

(helen pulls out a chair.)

the whore II

(helen fixes her makeup)

I hate early shifts
one couldn't get off last night
had him jerk himself to finish in time
pissed he got cum in my hair
the other exploded the minute I touched him
another newbie whose wife won't give him a blow job

phone call from a regular
drives down every few months
same thing
strips me down
puts me hand and knees
checks out my ass like a doctor
talking about canadian politics
while he reams me

reminds me, need more lube

you ever get cum in your eye? yes? no? hurts doesn't it? and the worst part is you can't
ever really get it out. because if you wash it out it becomes this. film. this sticky
film. this painful stinging burning aching stuck. it's just you're just stuck.

caught one more for the night
repeat who likes to hog tie
strips me fake rough
puts me face down
gags with torn strips of sheets
ankles to wrists

early gymnast training comes in handy

unties me
kiss kiss kiss

always make a mess.
it's amazing. what lips can do.
better to leave well enough alone.
no lips. just from behind.
take me from behind.

the whore III

(helen shuffles the deck.
plays blackjack with another.)

He took me. He came to me in the middle of the night as a stranger. I didn't know. I could have been kidnapped. I could have been raped. Murdered. Chopped up into bits of bone buried in the backyard. Or worse, brought home to meet his mother.

A stranger stood before me talking of bodies, of mine, of his. Talking of touch and feel. Of cheeks and tongues. Inside. Outside. My skin - or was it - or is it his skin. I can't remember.

The pit of me. That stranger, no different than the others. The story doesn't matter. They're all the same.

the whore IV

(helen auctions herself off.)

Tits. 5. For flash. Bra off. 15. Pictures. Fine. No flash. I see stars. Panties. Off. 30. Flash. Discount 20. Altogether let's say 45. That's looking not touching. Just remember I'm the most beautiful woman in the world, said so yourself. Alright. Blowjob 50. Rimjob 50. They go hand in hand if you know what I mean. For a fuck. One fifty-fifteen. 115. But, only from behind. New rule, I don't do mouth stuff. Condom. Pull out. No cream pie.

Oh you probably want to know my credentials! Special skills: Roleplay, Dom, Sub, All natural, DDD, EE, Deepthroat, Foot Stuff, Ass stuff, POV, DP, BDSM and when I say light I mean light, Tying, Flogging, Spanking, Caning, you name it.

There are plenty of people
who put shame on my shoulders
whenever opportunity presents.
In the name of respect or goodness or for godssake helen
Do something more useful More conservative More committing
Less of the low-neck Of the blue balls The profit The prating
They speak to me in dull hushed tones
Standing on their swollen defeat
Making twelve an hour for hours and hours
While whistles and rump twists wait in men patient
After all, mutilation is ours no matter the making
Why not gain from what's given Or choose from the taking?
I say selling what's supplied is our own saving grace
Demands of debasement Posing in my face
They speak to me of corruption As if bodies were objects
Only on special occasion
Not intended to be spent Or used Even better
Pressed between sheets Against lamp posts Even in bad weather
The nature of exploitation is an inevitable occurrence
Why not make it our own special form of currency
And Yes They are Right
The cards stacked against us
No matter which way we slice it
But we have some decision
Our pick of the blades
And I'll take the –
I'll take the -
I'll take the -

the whore V

(helen seduces someone.)

uh oh

seem to have found a run here goes all the way up would you would you mind or
care to take a little look sir little peek sir help a gal out lost lady big fun help a girl
take a feel awful run I got here terrible run see it come on take a look just there

(helen hopefully convinces someone to touch her thigh.)

uh oh

seems I forgot the hose all together aw come on come on have a laugh little laugh sir
little peek sir lost lady big fun come on lost lady big fun hiya heyah why don't we go
why don't you take me for come on what do you take me for lost lady big big fun quick
ride a stop ride red light ride you know quick one joy ride any kind of ride you like really
I'll do anything you like really I'll be anything you like really really really if you take me if you take
me out please take me out really I'll do anything I'll be anything really

the whore VI

(helen eats a chicken. it should be erotic.)

the wife I

(helen at a window)

¹ I was married when I was eighteen
and I was afraid of my husband
because he was a teacher, and
I had only just left school.

² In those days, I thought him
an awfully scholarly, clever,
and important person. And now
it is not the same unfortunately.

³ I'm not speaking of my husband.
I'm used to him. But among civilians
generally there are so many rude,
ill-mannered, badly brought up people.

⁴ Rudeness upsets and distresses me.
I'm unhappy
when I see that a *woman* is not
refined, not gentle, not polite
enough.

⁵ When I have to be
among teachers,
my husband's colleagues,
it makes me quite m -

Wait a second. That's not my story.
I was married when I was a teen.
And I was terrified of my husband.
Because he was a man and
I had never known a knife.
I thought him awful.
I was uSed to him.
I'm unhappy.
When I see.
When I have to be.
Used to him.

¹ Adapted from Masha in Three Sisters (Chekhov and Covan 1923) p 30

² Adapted from Masha in Three Sisters (Chekhov and Covan 1923) p 30

³ Adapted from Masha in Three Sisters (Chekhov and Covan 1923) p 31

⁴ Adapted from Masha in Three Sisters (Chekhov and Covan 1923) p 31

⁵ Adapted from Masha in Three Sisters (Chekhov and Covan 1923) p 31

the wife II

(helen scrubs the stains out.)

⁶ the good wife's guide:

have dinner ready. plan ahead. even the night before. to have a delicious meal ready. on time. for his return. most men are hungry. when they come home. and the prospect of a good meal. especially his favorite dish. is part of the warm welcome needed.

the warm welcome needed.

prepare yourself. take time to rest. so you'll be fresh when he arrives. be fresh-looking. be a little more interesting for him. be happy to see him. free him. greet him. and show sincerity in your desire. to please him. a good wife always knows her place.

in the palace. up the foyer. with the skillet. under the top sheet. over the mattress.
in the city-state. with the solid man. the men. the men that lay us. the men that chose us.
that chose me. that chose the face. the body. to be small and beautiful. to be the good wife.

⁶ Adapted from The Good Wife's Guide (Housekeeping Monthly) 13 May 1955

the wife III

(helen stuffs a chicken with cellophane)

I got married in a big tent. There were a few selected guests and we served chicken, but I couldn't have any. I was watching my figure. I was spinning and dizzy. I was trying to find the groom I couldn't recognize. The groom that just stuffed his tongue in my mouth in front of the audience of wedding marooners. Festivities make me ravenous. At night, when the ceremony was over and utterly official, I tried to grab a bite. Snuck down the trail thinking of gravy boats and wishbones and just as I reached the leftover station, he pulled me by the veil. Let's go to bed, he said. There I went, still craving.

the wife IV

I fear.
I fear.
I fear.
And then I see.
In that order.

Black eyes.
Soap rinds.
Purse lips.

His tongue
a coin
forced to
the bottom
of my
lint pocket.

He salts
my skin
for taste.
He blisters
it blue.

All that's left
a balloon pop
rubber fetters
my mouth.

My two
pet lapels.
Busted open
sweet bags
with a broken zipper.
Now they simply
won't close.
Just this
raw
gaping
pit
with
two
flaps.

(helen takes a pair of panties. tears them in the middle.)

the wife V

(helen laughs.)

There was an episode on last night. It was memories of how he and Laura first met. And she was a dancer in the USO show and Rob was a soldier in the army. And she was there to entertain the troops and he was a troop so he asked her out to get a few beers, and she said

No Thank You

So then he asked if he could show her around the camp, you know, give her a tour, and she said
No Thank You

So then he went behind her back and asked her dancing partner if he could pay him out so he could do the routine instead. So he did that and she said

No. Don't come onstage with me. Get off the stage.

But, he didn't listen. So they're dancing and she's pretending to smile and in the middle of the dance he steps on her foot and breaks all her toes!!!!

And she fell in love.

And she married him.

And she saved the boots he was wearing.

The boots that broke her.

I don't usually watch, I was waiting for him, I was warming his supper. He always makes a mess. Dribble down his chin. Crumbs on his lap. Stains in his clothes. At night, he makes a mess.

His mouth on me. He suckles. He coos like a baby. Touches on them. Lays. Holds. Squeezes. I like to play with them. I like the way they look feel. Pinches. Do you like it? He says. Do you? His mouth on me. Nothing comes out. There's nothing there. He expects me to empty out, to fill him up in some way. Sucking on my tit, I think, what am I nourishing? What am I feeding into?

I'm jealous of Laura.

Her broken feet.

the wife VI

(helen lays out her hand.)

last time at the horse races I bid what I imagine to be my life's savings on Ricochet Shelly for the fifth time. she's not a very pretty horse nor is she fast, not even "useful" he says. which might be true, I don't know much about horses really. I just like her colors, the way she breaks out of the crate. when we go, he buys me a cracker jack and sits me in the skybox out of harms way. I have hope that he'll let me choose. And I get up there and I see her and I look at him, "next time" he says, he always says, "next time". I'm not given any money and he always bets on the stallion, and the stallion always wins. I think it's a rigged shift he clocks into. I'm sure of it. And I don't have any money, but when I'm up there, alone, I'm thinking. I'm thinking about bidding. I mean I'm really thinking about bidding.

the lover I

(helen packs a suitcase.)

It begins like how it ends, with me with my heart with him. I am astounded. I am this elated beast. This beyond bursting. This nature of being I hold in my hands, hold in my heart, when I hold him. This nature of being he is, I want to be, I aspire to be like. I would like to live in his pocket. With his thigh, his seams. With the every step. With the skip, the jump. With the giant fall, the faithful leap. I want to be there. With him.

I'm singing in everything I do. Everything I do. A screaming of his name. Just another way. Closer to him I get, closer to me. So close to what I know for so long. And the old longing. And the new knowing. And the now seeing, myself, there, a reflection in his eyes. When I'm up close there. I can finally see. See myself with my heart with him.

And present. A presence. Here and now. Crack open. A light. Put together. A simple gesture. So simple it is. So full. So full I am. So full it is. So full that I roll. I roll around in the feeling. I sprawl. I sprawl spread eagle on the bed of the like of it. The love of it. Take up as much space as I can here. Now. This greatness. This nature of being. He is. I am.

(helen tries to lift up the suitcase. it's too heavy.)

the lover II

He's going to come for me. Pick me up. Rattle me out. For me he will. Like he always does. In the middle of the night. When the house is asleep and my feet are just dust. I hear the phone ring before it even does. His fingers on the dial across the state and ohhhh should I pick up. Maybe I'll let it go a few times make him nervous make him miss. Me. For me. In my head, I see him. Key ignition. Big hooves. Across the way. Different state. Always out there while I'm in here. In a different state. In a different state, I'm throwing my arms around Paris.

(helen throws her arms around herself.
she pulls a muscle.
she gently puts her arms around herself.
waltzes.)

the lover III

(helen puts on lipstick)

My name in a mouth. My father zipped. My mother yells.

The sound of it bounces off the walls

of a thousand
canvases.

At night,
when I'm finally alone-lone,

in the middle of my bed

I let the spit
pool.

It's what's left of me. It's what's dead from the day. In the morning,

I wake up next to

him like I sometimes do roll over on top underneath that heart thing he huffs and
puffs his spit in my spit his hold in my hold but all he can say is
hell

He never finishes.

He rolls back into that pit.

Puts me back.

Where he keeps me.

Down there.

And I wait and wait for him to take me out
again.

the lover IV

every inch of my flesh is jumping off my skillet bones leaning across the table the dining room table the kitchen table the counter leaning across reaching across my flesh salivating there still and not still and the reaching parts those parts how how how every part of me is wanting is wearing down to the skin of it right down to the skin of it being peeled by eyes peeled by parts that aren't mine that aren't reaching back too flesh of fruit is messy such a mess stumbling down beards and stumbling across counters towards napkins towards fingers that peel that stuff and such a consuming feeling being consumed wanting and wearing down to the skin of it in an undone uncontrollable unbelievable way the way to across the kitchen table the way across to the hands that split open devour the parts of me that are reaching the flesh of me that jumps grab the knife quick i'm rotting wilting in my flesh bed don't use a napkin use your hands to split me open to eat me to swallow me whole get full of me get full off me tell me I'm filling too

(helen tears apart the chicken.
wipes her hands. and her face.)

the lover V

He took me.
No matter which way
you look at it.
I saw him. I had no choice.
He stole me. I ran away.
I wanted to go. I never left.
I left. I didn't want to go
. I called him. He called me.
He took parts of me,
ones I wouldn't give.
Ones I always gave. I
go to him and I go to him.
Of my own will and without it.
The story doesn't matter.
I'm neither.

(helen puts away the cards.)

the lover VI

His Mistress. He says. He says that's what I am. What I've always been. Nice legs that roll and serve. The word's like poison on my tongue. Try to spit it out. Get rid of the image. But, I can't. What if that's what it is? What I was? The extent of my lines, my shadow, erased behind me. I was once the most beautiful woman in the world, he told me so. He told me my skin was like milk. Creamy. Satin. My lips pools he drowned in. A world he could get lost in. I grew into a goddess before his eyes, I was a woman divine. But, now is different, I'm afraid. I'm afraid. My face. I can't remember. I can't remember how it looks. It looked. We looked. So beautiful. But now. But this.

Distorted. Ugly. I was once. I was once. A face. But now. But now. Amiss. Some tits. It's not about the face that launched a thousand ships. It's about the tits that started a thousand wars.

(helen breaks a mirror)

the child I

(helen in the mirror. her mouth stuffed. she combs her hair.
puts them in pigtails.
then she hopscotches. her tits bounce.
she tries to hold them. that works for awhile.
then she stops. they bounce. she sits. takes the tape off)

my mother was raped. I'm still not quite sure what that means. she told me one day I'd understand though. she said I was the most beautiful girl in the world. the entire one. but I didn't believe her because all mothers say that sort of thing. a lot of people like me though they come to visit and I'm not quite sure why. sometimes they'll bring big boxes with tight little bows on them so tight I can't stick my finger in. or sometimes they'll bring popsicles which aren't as fun. I never get to keep the presents they go into a big room I'm not allowed in yet. it's a room for when I'm older and taller and have longer hair.

I don't see what my mother sees but she gets a little out of hand sometimes and talks really fast and cries a lot. I'm not quite sure what that means either. she tells me to

be careful that beautiful things are the most dangerous. creatures especially. with black eyes. with bright noses. men with striking features. she thinks I'm the most beautiful girl in the world, but sometimes she can't even look at me. so I never believed her.

the child II

(helen smears lipstick on her face)

I don't wear this. Don't put it on. Big colors. Pop. Pop. Pop. What I want is. Bright. What I want is so bright. Tiger fire. Me oh. Me oh. My. My. My. Such a pretty girl. Baby pretty girl. Big lady some day. Wear a big hat maybe. On horses we keep our knees together. Side saddle. Mommy says. Side side side.

I don't like to sit like that. It's uncomfy and I have no room. I like to have some space. In my room, I can have it, but there are always visitors and they take a long time. They just looking. They are. I mean they are just looking. What takes them so long. Some of them bring paint. Say I'll last forever, but I don't know what that means. They smile and stroke. Flat pieces of paper? Slate. Stone. Something flat. Say I'll fill out one day. Still don't know what that means. I have to sit still. I want to play. Can't until they go. And brushes. Long ones with horse hair. They tell me. I want to ride. Can't until I'm older. Then I'll be somewhere else with somebody else so they have to paint and paint and paint now. While they have me here. They bring colors I like. Bug juice? I don't know. Not like this kind. I like this kind. Like this. Like me like this.

Side, helen. Side. To the side. Other side. Back side. Front side. There are so many sides! I don't like to sit like that. I'll sit like this for now until they come again.

the child III

(helen sings rhinestone cowboy.
she rides what she thinks is a horse.)

"and offers coming over the phone"

oh.

the child IV

(helen plays a game of solitaire)

King. King. King. King. Queen.

(she pulls a card out of her bra.
goes to place it. hesitates.)

I'm not a cheater.

(she rips the card)

I swear. I'm not.

the child V

(helen reads outloud quiet)

⁷ then, then, from utter gloom
stood out the breasts
the breasts of helen

(helen giggles)

⁸ and hover-huh-hoveringlyyyy a sword
now over and now under
now direct
painted itself to purse-to peers-to pierce
but sank down
shamed
at all that beauty

(helen peeks in her bra)

⁹ had two
sun and moon
of heart's desire
love's lordship lay between
him and me
see? how like it is? see it bare? is the cup to thy hearts desire?
make it is
must give it
where it's due
give it there
to the heart's desire

(helen puts down the book)

who do I give it to?

⁷ Lucretius (Tennyson 1883) 60-61

⁸ Adapted from Lucretius (Tennyson 1883) 61-64

⁹ Adapted from Troy Town (Rossetti 1869) 3-39

the child VI

(helen with a wishbone)

sometimes I think about how meat is dead and I cry and my mother says what's the matter and I say it's dead it's dead it's dead and she says don't matter don't waste.

I wish I could touch my own bones. THAT'S NOT MY WISH. that's not my wish. it doesn't count I didn't break it. your wish only comes true if you break it.

you're supposed to break it with someone else, but I don't play that way, I like to do it myself so then I get double chances wish come true. it's a fact.

It doesn't have wings anymore. someone ate its wings. crack. blood. gone. cooked allll the way through. can't fly.

(helen cracks the wishbone)

zero III

(helen gives someone a love letter.
it says:)

I caught a glimpse of myself in the mirror, I called upon the great gods of fury, I told them give me one more chance. Just one more chance at making it right. There are train men and business men and free men and they all loved me. They all loved me and - no no no. You're wrong. You're so wrong, Helen. There are no gods. There are only men. Felt right, but wrong. They slipped me on like a glove. Their fingers clench and spread. So that I can feel it. In that tight hole. Down there. Lovers get lost. They see and taste. They try on they try out, what it must be like, what it could be like to put on Helen. To put on her gloves. No hands. They try me on, but never fully. They never stare long enough. They never get to know what's inside. What's inside Helen. In her house, the records she plays, the paintings she hangs, the food she eats, where she sleeps. They go and go and go and I keep wait and waiting for someone to see. For someone to look. At me.

zero II

(helen puts on a record
MANDY - BARRY MANILOW
she starts to clean the space
she takes down the photos of her
holds them close
she throws down the paintings
she runs out of the room
she runs outside – hopefully out the window where the audience can still watch
she smokes a cigarette)