

JOAN SEES STARS Script, 60 min, 1993

Part 1 - Starsick

O.K. all you twelve steppers, my name is Joan and I am a media-holic, a complete movie junkie. I watch everything on TV except animal shows on PBS and sports games- which I am unable to see due to a hormonal imbalance. I love the weather channel, and, what I haven't seen at the movies with popcorn and Snow Caps, I rent on video. But this is not enough. I've had to go further- and make my own videos. I am what is known as a video artist. **Ah hah! a video artist.** Your eyes light up with recognition. It's a household word -- like TV dinners or Cher, right?

No. It's because you live in a culture that's supposed to be democratic but where you get absolutely no say in what you're allowed to see, to hear -- to know.

In the aesthetic vernacular of TV, I, and probably you, am unrepresentable -- as a woman who's not a mother, or a demon, or a product of massive plastic surgery. God. It's probably against the law for a woman to appear on TV, over forty- with her own face, unless she's in an ad for geriatric diapers. Why does Barbara Walters look younger at sixty than when she was young? **CELEBRITY CULTURE RULES!** (Torch)

So what **is** a video artist? Well, we take this most public of languages --Video/TV -- and use it in the first person. I, moi. We, who work with these fragile electronic signals, are caught somewhere between Van Gogh and MGM -- real art and a factory. We have this irrepressible desire to break the rules, break the codes of the media machine. Well, somebody's gotta do it. Let me tell you, when we went to borrow the blow torch at Ralph's Welding to make a special effect, I thought jeez maybe its time for a career change, retail, maybe. **HAAAAAAAAA (Breathes Fire)**

I'm mad about Ava Gardner, haunted by Dorothy Dandridge, inundated with Madonna. Like everybody else, my identity, my very body has been marked and marked deeply by the mass media. How can someone else own the rights to what is already a part of me? MGM OWNS ME, RIGHT? You'll SEE.

My dear friend, Leland Moss, the playwright, actor and director, when he was sick with AIDS, was trying to meditate -- for his pain. He confessed to his friend Aaron that in the middle of his meditation, the theme song from "Bonanza" would always start playing in his head (Dum da da Dum DA DA Dum da da dum da da DA da). "Why don't you just sing along as part of the mantra?" a friend asked. He did -- and from then on to the end, the "Bonanza" song was transformed. And a picture of Liz Taylor, was hung unabashedly, like the Virgin Mary herself, by his bed.

YOU ARE MY PROJECTION OF AN AUDIENCE. The TV is not really an opening to visit other worlds or escape INTO something. It's a slit in the skin, on the inside of your house through which the salesmen can surveille you. (GUNSHOT)

"Give us this day our daily illusion" God Save the Queen. Is that Joan Crawford or Joan Jett Black? God Bless America. NO, Lord, Give us pleasure that is ours, that we don't have to pay for later; and give, us Oh Lord, a free and democratic media.

A/Roll: Performance, B/Roll: BUTTERFIELD 8.

Look, I get to be in bed with Liz Taylor. We all do -- in a certain way. Tell me you haven't had her, you know what I mean, had a Liz Taylor movie in your bedroom on your very own TV. Tell me you don't watch TV. Lots of people own TV's who can't even afford dinner (CHANGES INTO POTATOE). I love TV, really, and it's such a fabulous scam. You think you're watching it and it's actually keeping an eye you, hon, keeping you where it wants you, and who it wants you to be... buy this, don't buy that. Feel fat, feel poor, feel like your life will suck- bigtime- if you don't personally own something that makes your toothpaste come out of a pump or make you look like Cindy

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Crawford, or better yet, it says, identify with my beauty, my wealth, my thighs. (Bring³ out THIGHMASTER) I bought the freakin thighmaster not because I wanted to be like that bimbo Suzanne Summers but cause it was a little more credible than that tummy tucker thing you strap on to yourself and it works you, while you suck down beers. (SHE STRETCHES DIGITALLY)

B/Roll: "Love Connection"

Voice over with intestine shot

When I began to make this tape several years ago, it was going to be a very different piece. What changed it was an acute attack of an illness I had had since the early 80's. I had been lucky til then, in much of my life. The severity of the illness was terrifying. I hid it for as long as I could but the constant high fever, internal bleeding, pain and inability to digest food were finally apparent to those closest to me. Eight months into it, Nina found the blood and took me to a doctor. Then it was real. I had ulcerative colitis and it was far enough along that they said I might die. Eventually I learned that it was an auto-immune disease.

My illness wasn't like the representations of romantic heroines in La Traviata - who got sick, suffered beautifully and died with the music swelling. The first time I got sick, there was a clear narrative. It was like a major change in the weather. A storm with no end in sight. The sun wouldn't come out for a long time. I tried remedies and cures from doctors, healers, and witches. I took strange drugs with unpleasant side effects. I ate strange foods and swam miles and miles at the "Y". A battle was going on inside of me. Finally I recovered -- but thinner.

Seven years later, with another attack, the narrative crumbled. It wasn't interesting anymore, just something to get through, marking time, hurting as projects and plans were delayed.

During this time we had all begun to witness another disease that was assaulting people our age. It was AIDS. Only people weren't recovering. Between AIDS and breast cancer, our friends, in their thirties -- were dying.

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It was then, on the phone with Leland, sick in San Francisco, that my relationship to the domestic media changed. We turned it into something therapeutic. ⁴

Back to A/Roll: Performance, B/Roll: BUTTERFIELD 8

VCR's have added a whole new wrinkle to viewing possibilities and of course, video itself, the material of television before the corporations get a hold of it, suggests other openings. Take me and Liz here. I can decide when I need to be with her -- we have a long-term relationship actually. I mean, it's not like this looks, she's not even my type, not for what you're thinking. But being with her -- in a higher sense -- as I am here... it's like being touched by god.

A/Roll: Performance, B/Roll:

But I could compare notes with my friend Leland in San Francisco. He was sick too and despite being a brilliant theater director, writer, and actor for God's sake and consciously gay since the age of five, he had been mad for Elizabeth Taylor for as long as he could remember.

Liz:

Monty: I am

Liz: Don't

Monty was lying in pieces on the road after cracking up his car on the way down the hill from her house. She ran to the wreck and reached her hand all the way down his throat to pull out a piece of him so he wouldn't choke to death. He had been her idol, her mentor as a serious actor. She didn't judge her friends by their sexuality. What did being a gay male have to do with loving Liz? What did being a female, gay or straight, bisexual or any of the various genders have to do with any of it. Remember, the stonewall insurrection, that explosion of gay rage, took place on the day of Judy Garland's funeral. Well that's what this tape is all about, hon.

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A/Roll: Performance, B/Roll: CLEOPATRA

She's a cultural icon like no other - I mean violet eyes -please. The woman is a magnet⁵ for projection, a mass of floating signifiers. Not only will she always look like she does in Butterfield 8 or Cleopatra (when they are on) while the rest of us succumb to gravity, she has fifty years of other peoples fantasies stuck all over her; she was raised by MGM, grew up on camera and is still Liz at --60 as it announced on the heavenly lit and airbrushed cover of life magazine. She is, as someone said, the last real star.

Take CLEOPATRA -- the critics all said it was a bad movie. O.K. It's not Citizen Kane. It's not Godard or Maya Deren. But everyone knew it cost half the war budget, was in production for years, that it's opulent sets were the scene of passion, adultery and heartbreak, that Eddie Fisher got dumped for Richard Burton - aka - Marc Antony when he fell for the wiles of the Queen of Hollywood, and the Queen of the Nile.

They had called her a "plump, suburban Queen" -EEEk CELLULITE. In our culture, a culture -above all -of appearances, of cults of personality and industrialized beauty, she seemed as close to a Queen as we were likely to produce.

I could stare at her for hours. Her body itself is an enigma. Apparently she nearly died about a hundred and fifty times and the last time a year or so ago, before she proved to be the only public figure interested in redistributing the wealth -- by marrying Larry the construction worker who she fell in love with at the Betty Ford Center, TV news covered her trip to the hospital like it was a national emergency. And I guess it was.

The Queen was ill again. The Queen is getting married again. Hey I guess she doesn't just move in with these guys because of the royalty thing. When she was in her marry-the-Senator-get-bored-and-eat-a-tub-of-chicken phase, the joke was: every American woman spent their lives wanting to look like Elizabeth Taylor. And now, unfortunately, they do. Ha Ha Ha. Thanks fellas. AAAHHHH! (FIRE BREATHING) Married, divorced, she acts out

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our national festivals and tragedies in her movies and lives them on the side.

("I steal a kind man's wife") She's Dying, no, presto change-o - she's well and raising money for Aids on the Arsenio Hall Show. She's like our public miracle site, Our Lady of Guadalupe. Pray to her and she cries real tears of Passion perfume.

A/Roll: Performance, B/Roll:

Were VCR's designed for the age of AIDS, chronic fatigue syndrome and environmental illnesses and Republicans who don't care (and don't want you to either)? for people with long-term illnesses locked up alone in post-nuclear families where everyone has to work outside the house to pay the bills? Here in the tiny TV surveillance center in your home, where the love affairs of presidential candidates matter more than their health care policies, everything from the Anita Hill--Clarence Thomas debacle to one channel devoted exclusively to movie stars, to infotainment, bust your neighbor shows, eye-witness video, entertainment news, the Olympics, a 24 hour shopping experience and the latest video rental -- all pass by on the same bit of rectangular space, the same screen.

A/Roll: Eye Shot, B/Roll: Cultural Figures with voice over

Who stars in the movie your dreams make? Anita Hill or Anita Bryant? Marlon Brando, Navatalova, or Prince? When Grace Kelly married into an ancient monarchy the stage was set for us to wonder what those Kennedys did to Marilyn; and why did the outing of Malcolm Forbes appear on the same page as Jane Fonda's new diet and a sighting of Jesus? In celebrity culture queens get more play than ideas, talk show hosts and mass murderers exist in the same way; all they need to do is get you to identify with some sounds and images. Do you trust his eyes? Do you wanna be? Cults of personality and American style, individualism play a duet in which heads of state become talking heads. Queens are genetic. Your id picks your brand, (*whispers*) **Freud or Lassie, Rosa Parks or Rock Hudson, Lincoln or Taylor.**

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A/Roll: Performance, B/Roll:

Like most young girls, we were shopping among the stars for who and how to be. But now that I was a grown-up, I thought I had gotten over that. Not that I didn't wish for legs as long as Cher's, an expensive bum tucked as good as Goldie Hawn's, the staying

power of Tina Turner, 6 full time personal managers, but I knew who I was, right?
Wrong.

You know what fat chance means? In celebrity culture, you're never supposed to be done with this, especially if you're a girl -- who's outsides still matter more than your freakin insides. What about an eye-tuck, could they shoot my chins off? Identity. let's say, physical, spiritual, mental -- is not a stable category, and maybe it shouldn't be, for Chrissakes. (F/X)_

Certain movie stars began to dominate my mental life. It happened gradually. I would lie there with too much pain to think or read much, living on this strict regimen my amazing healers had concocted. And I don't have to tell you that Blue Cross did not begin to cover the half of it. Food was medicine. Medicine was medicine. Images were medicine. And as we all know, in our marvelous and ridiculous country, everyone can afford a TV but no one can afford health care. (F/X)

Before long, Montgomery Clift and Vivien Leigh, were more present to me than my boyfriend, my friends, my family, even sometimes, my cats, though they watched with me a lot. My illness was in my gut so all I could eat for pleasure came through the eyes. Movie stars, dead and alive, occupied my TV, my bed, my dreams. Day and night, they were there. Increasingly, I needed to know them better, get more of them, somehow. So I supplemented the movies with biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, reminiscences, trash and literature, and of course, the tabloids -- for weekly updates. Jane got those breast implants. Dolly Parton achieved full-blown anorexia, and the Dad on the Brady Bunch turned out to be gay. So was half of Hollywood, of course. Bodies, bodies - relabeled, inflating and deflating -- Liz gained and lost hundreds of pounds. So did Oprah.

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And look at her here in 1961 before the flesh police made real bodies illegal. There's some meat on this beauty. She won an Oscar for this performance, they say, because she was so good in Cat on A Hot Tin Roof, the year before, Mike Todd died and she had this tracheotomy. Right Award, wrong movie. That's what she thinks. I know this because

she said so on the Arsenio Hall show. But I think it was that slip. You gotta give her that
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-- she looked amazing in that fu--ing slip.

A/Roll: Performance, B/Roll: Books

I read 47 star books - this is an exact count, I mean this series is called Nothing But the Truth, right?-- we're not talking good novels here, nothing analytical, no theory or history. I was reading these morality tales about lives that had been re-written so many times that even the stars can't tell what's true anymore. Fiction upon fiction: the real stars, the big ones that the huge Hollywood studios like MGM had invented full cloth with cameras, gauze, lighting, make up, writers, directors, plastic surgery, speed, hair do's, publicity departments and gossip columnists -- the bodies and gestures that filled you up whether you were paying attention or not.

A/Roll: Performance, B/Roll: BUTTERFIELD 8

Ava Gardner, Marlon Brando, Barbara Stanwyck, Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall, Clark Gable, Rita Hayworth, Robert Mitchum, Ingrid Bergman, Cary Grant, Judy Garland, Rock Hudson, Kim Novack, Lana Turner, John Garfield, James Dean, Henry Fonda, Katherine Hepburn, Kirk Douglas, Bette Davis. All these white people plus Lena Horne, Dorothy Dandridge, Sidney Poitier, Dolores Del Rio and Carmen Miranda.

A/Roll: Performance, B/Roll:

It got worse. I would read the biography and that week, I would have the Susan Hayward film festival. I adore that movie where Susan is chasing Tyrone Power all over South Africa where he's trying to steal all the Zulu peoples' land and diamonds and she lunges out into the countryside and says; "It's beautiful, How much of it is mine?" The video store loved me. I'd study the TV guide for TNT or Max showings of little known early films with

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Carole Lombard or Jack Palance. And to think that most of these people had begun life with names like Isur Danielovitch and Frances Gumm like the rest of us. Check it out. Hollywood Christened these two Kirk Douglas and Judy Garland-- better commodities, music to our ears.

A/Roll: Performance, B/Roll: BUTTERFIELD 8

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So here's BUTTERFIELD 8. I hadn't seen it since junior high school when I read the novel by O'Hara and decided to become a high class call girl who lived rich, tormented men and got 50 dollars for the powder room like Audrey Hepburn in BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY'S.

A/Roll: Performance, B/Roll: BREAKFAST AT TIFFANIES

My best friend Ferne and I stayed at least twice through that one. Here finally was something serious to aspire to, especially for a girl trying to figure out if there was anything in the future beyond big hair. We were the major hairhoppers at the time and the bigger the hair, the closer to God. But anyway, Capoti's character, Holly Golightly wore black turtlenecks, black cocktail dresses, and always had rich, famous Hollywood type beatnick people hanging around her apartment. We knew she had some kind of power. We just weren't entirely sure what it could get you and where, exactly, it came from

A/Roll: Performance, B/Roll:

I was completely and utterly obsessed. Sick as a dog, but working, ha ha, always working. I wouldn't pick up the phone if the movie I was watching couldn't be put on pause. I wouldn't return phone calls. Anyway my friends seemed to be getting pretty sick and tired of the latest updates on my symptoms or my newest macrobiotic cure and I certainly wasn't going to admit that my life had devolved down to such an obsession, such a cliché, to admit that I, an alleged mature woman had gone back through the Looking Glass.

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A/Roll: Performance, B/Roll:

Yes, my dear Leland, when all else failed, we had stars. Were you going somewhere when you died? Why wasn't I dying too? Leland's approach to the illness had been: live well while you're here, productively while you can, go out with grace. My illness seemed so mundane but it was so strict with me. It was "degenerative" they said, so I would have it on and off forever and live on and on and on. This had not been my plan.

What went wrong? Bette Davis always got her eyesight back; James Dean died young¹⁰ and left a beautiful corpse; Liz made a million miraculous recoveries and anyway had total access, like Monty, to every painkiller on this earth. WHERE ARE THEY? *WIPE OF JOAN SWIMMING.*

A/Roll: Performance, B/Roll: BUTTERFIELD 8

Leland and I plied ourselves with movies. The illnesses sucked at our physical lives (at different paces) but our life with the stars was like being set free in a zone where there's no gravity, a world without our sick bodies - only their perfect one. Cable TV and the video store had reached into our houses with movie history, stories and stars, permanently wedding the domestic to the fantastic. Who ever said, throw your TV out the window? Ignore the sitcoms and the ads; switch rapidly passed the pathetic news. We ran our own show, while fate and history went and served up something different... I ate vegetables. I was becoming a vegetable.

When Leland's Karposi Sarcoma got bad and the trips to the hospital multiplied, there was no more romanticizing his sickness for me. But Leland, of course, kept writing, kept laughing, kept meditating and did not give up on the grace part. And yes, he thought he might well be going somewhere when he died? I wasn't so sure about this but I liked the idea because it offered another narrative, another script, another movie. Would he be waiting there for Elizabeth? For me? For my last birthday while he was still here, he sent me five postcards from stars -- movie stars and art stars. Each had a personal message from the star; "Dear Joan: Keep up the singing, you're gonna be a big star. Love, love, love -Judy." "To Joan: Stars - Andy Warhol. Card - 75 cents. Stamp - 15 cents. Hearts from Liza." "Birthday to Joan dear

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happy wishes you best all, -John Cage." "Dear Joan: Molcolm told me it was your birthday and I wanted to send you all my best. Buy yourself some passion on me. Love always, -Elizabeth."

On Leland's deathbed, we sang together the entire libretto of GYPSY. He got to be Rose mostly. I had to be Baby June and some of the other characters -to which normally, I would have objected strenuously. But you just couldn't say no to a dying man on a pain

and morphine trip doing Tyne Daly, doing Ethel Merman to beat the band. Here is a picture of Leland as Mama Rose. [SHOW PICTURE]

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A/Roll: Performance, B/Roll:

He could hardly lift the camera but insisted we pass it to him. Then he directed us, the vigilant friends, in vampy poses, aesthetizing ordinary life to the end. At this point, somebody had a contact who got directly to Liz Taylor's major domo. She had done a lot of AIDS work, and yes, she would call him on the phone as soon as she got over her flu. She'd spent a life dealing with bodily maladies after all. Another link. But Leland couldn't wait. He had been dreaming of a green place. Was it the Emerald City or did this have something to do with vegetables? Toto, we're not in Kansas anymore.

He went quietly in his last coma in his own bed with many people who loved him close by. He sent this letter out to his friends a few months before: "You may feel sad, but I don't and here's one reason why: you have been such good friends, companions, fellow travelers, you have given me such love, warmth, humor and wackiness. I don't know where it is I'm going; indeed, I don't really understand if "I" am going anywhere. But I'm looking forward to the journey. And if there's anything like a phone there, I'll give you a call."

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A/Roll: Performance, B/Roll: BUTTERFIELD 8

My plane was leaving. Adrenaline, the best drug there is, half made me forget my illness through this last visit. I rushed around his apartment trying to grab a memento without looking like a thief. He had already said he was willing me his grandmother's diamond ring, telling me to sell it when the grant money ran out. I did, Lee, I just did. But I wanted something now.

I grabbed that book next to his favorite couch where he'd been watching movies with me on this other coast. !Good God, it was his Tibetan meditation book!

It helped him, I thought and jammed it into my bag, hoping desperately for a fraction of¹² his courage and calm. He's gone, he's gone, I cried to myself on the airplane. I opened the damned meditation book, starting to get that feeling of intense claustrophobia that even thinking about meditation never fails to give me, and here's what fell out-- A golden cardboard ticket to the Academy Awards Ceremonies dated 1965. Leland's ticket to meditation was pure Hollywood.

END OF PART I

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PART II: MGM - Movie Goddess Machines

Photographs on beach

You are 14.

You are walking along the beach by the ocean.

Just a few years ago, you built sand castles here and jumped unselfconsciously in the surf for hours on end. You romped and played and felt the caress of the breeze, the strong baking of the sun and the power of the waves on your cute little body.

You were a young animal immersed in elemental pleasures.

Now you are 14. Your body has changed in certain decisive ways. Men look at you differently now. And, as a result, the world is a fundamentally different place. Now your breasts have been looked at and visually fondled by everyone from your Uncle Max to the bus driver whose bus you ride to school to the cute boy in the third row in chemistry class and the cuter one on the basketball team. In any case, these breasts, hips, woman-parts, which are apparently yours - are a presence. Are they in charge now? Are a pair of boobs running the show? Song: "Where the boys are..."

Your hair was in braids or a ponytail but now you have freed it to the wind. You like how it blows around your face. You think it looks dramatic, grown up, sexy, even. Your father calls you Veronica Lake when it hangs in your eyes. You remember Veronica Lake - the noir anti-heroine, her face half covered by a cascade of waved blonde hair. You toss your sandals over your shoulder as you walk into the sunset. This is a calculated move. You are posing for someone or something. Your career as a woman, like the career of a movie star has begun.

One day at the lake, when I read an early draft of this script to my friend Carrie Mae, she said "Girl, what you mean "you"? What do you mean, "we"? She whipped off her hat. Check out this hair. Did it blow across my shoulders in the breeze like that blonde movie star? Who do you think I

wanted to look like? Aunt Jemima? Hattie MacDaniel? or one of the Shirelles.
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A dart shot into my heart. Race, the color purple, seeps in everywhere in this culture, I thought. A thousand images burst in my brain. Toni Morrison's little black sisters, sitting in the air conditioned movies Saturday afternoons in the deep south -- in her novel The Bluest Eye -- trying desperately to identify with the blue eyed blondes we'd all seen walking on beaches in movies. Me, in another theater - the Howard in Washington where I grew up, listening to Percy Sledge or Joe Tex, the only white face in the crowd. Ava Gardner, pictured here, cast as Julie in SHOWBOAT cause Hollywood wouldn't risk a Black star.

A/Roll: B/Roll:

Carrie, one of the sexiest women on earth, had clearly modeled her elegant, studied carriage on a melange of images. You knew she was cool. She had that "to be-looked-at"

kind of signal radiating from her every gesture. But Annette Funicello and Frankie Avalon in BEACH BLANKET BINGO were about as Italian dark as things got on movie beaches. Song "Beach Blanket Bingo" ¹⁴

A/Roll: Performance B/Roll: BEACH BLANKET BINGO

The big beauty machine, sends out only one single set of images at any given time and we each make something out of them, given our color, our shape, our place, brains, our terror or our rage. Twisted sisters, we learn what we can, reject what we can, do what we can to survive under the unforgiving eye of the Big Camera which is our ticket, our possibility or our curse as girls.

A/Roll: Performance B/Roll:

Yours is a career on camera, in the public eye, to be consumed. An invisible camera fixes you, pinions you. Is the baby fat still jiggling there on your thighs? Are you cool? Is this attraction of the glance, the leer, the smile, power or oppression, pleasure or pain? Your body will never be fully yours again. Like Liz Taylor's or Madonna's, it belongs to the public eye of media world and its double -- the private eye inside you. You will be under this semi-visible surveillance til the day you die. Are you ready for my close-up now Mr. DeMille?

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A/Roll: Marilyn Monroe, B/Roll: Frankenstein

I'm hardly the first to remark that when Mary Shelley wrote Frankenstein, she was writing her own autobiography and everywoman's. Marilyn, of course, is a strong and fragile miracle, eat your heart out Madonna. But who's the invention here? Who's the construction? The butch, the femme, the monster? Wooooh.

OK, So you're a little twisted by media culture. No big thing. You know it and anyway who's not? You'll always hate your thighs or your nose or you're Adams apple; but now, someone loves you. And, of course, as the song says, You're no one til somebody loves you.

BUT WHY? Why are you no one? OF COURSE YOU'RE NOT NO ONE. You're ¹⁵ someone, for chrissakes, (sings) You're the top you're the coliseum,---though it would be hard to tell in this particular cultural context.

Sex and violence - they can't be thought separately, where we live. Rhett kisses Scarlett with Atlanta's flames giving the red glow to their passion and back in the wagon, Butterfly McQueen in yet another maid's role is a slave to Melanie's pain and the back on which the whole crumbling edifice rests. Justify my love.

The look, The walk. Flirting. Fighting. Romance. The struggle. The kiss, now you're - Under my thumb. And the way you look tonite you could play the dating game and make a love connection. Desire. Delay. Denial. It's in the script. It's in the lyrics. (sings) You're Delightful you're Delicious, you're Delovely.

A/Roll: B/Roll:

At Western High School in Washington D.C., my hometown, race lines and class lines were not the same. You know, there were prosperous Black people and there were poor whites. As an NAACP hood, I hung out with both. That's where I was at that age, the teen age, shortly after teenagers

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were invented. Look, Natalie Wood, the perfect cleaned up hood chick is getting all lathered cause she gets to stick out her boobs and act as the go-go-go signal so her boyfriends can put the pedal to the metal and chicken race in their stolen cars right on over a cliff. Anyway, when you look back at Marlon Brando in *The Wild One* ('54) and James Dean in *Rebel Without a Cause*('55) we're talking serious teenagers here, let's here it for the boys.

A few year later they'd cast young Natalie in *WEST SIDE STORY* as the Puerto Rican who felt pretty. No offense guys, but you'd think they could find one PR besides Rita Moreno. "Smoke on your pipe and put that in." Sorry, this is against the laws of the star system where Star power equals box office equals too bad Latinas.

Kenneth Anger said it gay and out there in Scorpio Rising. Sal Mineo - loving James¹⁶ even then - had to stay in the Hollywood closet. Elvis ripped off Black rhythm and blues and said it with his thighs. This was it. Bad ass rebel white boys on bikes in leather and nihilism drag. An old blues song, white-washed with outfits and big noisy dick toys to speed on.. The Stones and Easy Rider came later - and I've never seen anything, not a goddamn thing on MTV that fundamentally changed this basic picture... sorry Motley Crue, get an idea.

Course, I didn't see these movies then. When I hit puberty, I saw girl movies, all the ones in this tape. And clearly they marked me, shaped me but good. Spank me now. No accident that Butterfield 8 and Breakfast at Tiffany's and Cleo and Splendor in the Grass and West Side Story, for that matter, all came out in those early sixties when I was 13.

But these icons, James and Marlon, were in the air you breathed. HEY, Oedipus complex, take a back seat, here comes the USA and its ubiquitous pop culture machines. Get over it. They're everywhere. Raw, thumping, teenage, hormonal desire, the texture of leather, the sound of a big bike. You get it.

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Why do fools fall in love? I have no idea. Is man inherently evil? Well, who could tell? If you were a girl, the culture was telling you in no uncertain terms, that the badder, the eviller the guy, the finer he was, and the more you were supposed to love him. He's a rebel and he never did any good. He's a Wild one. I will follow him, follow him wherever he may go. He's so fine, he's my -- Soldier boy, oh my little soldier boy. Do you believe this? And a few minutes later, Along came Viet Nam.

But Like a rubber ball I'll come bouncing back to you. Torture. Tenderness. Love me tender, Love me sweet. Even now, it Cuts like a knife but it feels so right. Come on, baby, make it hurt so good. He's so fine. / She's an angel. You cheated you lied, you said that you loved me. Take my money, Daddy, but gimme that sweet jelly roll, Bessie Smith sang, way back in the thirties. And Billie, yes, that's Billie Holliday, all black and blue sang, I swear I won't call no copper if I'm beat up by my poppa; I'd rather my man

should hit me than jump up on me and quit me. Beat it, beat it. You wanna be tough,¹⁷
better do what you can. So beat it.

Smoke gets in your eyes, and I'm burning up with your love, baby. And anyway I'm
lovesick, bewitched, bothered and bewildered. But you're never gonna get it, never
gonna get it. Honey, **Sado masochism is not utopia but it is, without question, the
paradigm for romance in our crazy culture.** Bend me shake me, any way you want
me, as long as you love me, its alright. I'm Crazy, crazy for thinkin you loved me.
Check it out . I fall to pieces.

A/Roll: GONE WITH THE WIND, B/Roll: A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

Here they are: two Vivians for the price of one. The most beautiful woman in the world
is what Hollywood called her after the so-called "worldwide" search to cast Scarlett
O'Hara - which broke so many celebrity hearts. Gone With the Wind was every white
woman's deadly bible. They still have festivals and museums to celebrate this crazy,
seductive, racist romance. In the story, Scarlett survives (good) -- then gets punished
anyway (bad). But

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not as much as the crazy, desperate Vivien, as Blanche Du Bois in Streetcar Named
Desire , which one critic called, "a Vehicle named Vivien."

Her make-up had been carefully applied by a professional studio make-up man. He had
been instructed to use his imagination and do a "Scarlet O'Hara face."

Vivien was standing so that Selznick saw her face illuminated by the fire that was still
raging. She stepped forward, letting her mink coat fall open, revealing a beige silk dress
that showed her tiny nipped-in waist. Good evening, Mr. Selznick, she said liltingly with
a hint of laughter, ha ha.

Where are the lines between the pictures and the real in this scenario?

Vivien's was one of my favorite biographies. She kept my hours, rarely sleeping til early morning. Married to one of the greatest actors of the century, she lived her life to the limit, striving for juicy roles, even if they deglamorized her.

Streetcar was made only eleven years later, eleven years from the pedestal to the garbage bin, as defined for men and Hollywood, a short life. To me, they look exactly the same. My boyfriend thought they were different actresses. She also became manic depressive later in life. One nurse sought to soothe her by saying "I know who you are, you're Scarlett O'Hara." Vivien, according to Granger, screamed, "I'm not Scarlett O'Hara, I'm Blanche Du Bois." Offered a role playing Eva Peron, Vivien, 45, said "Eva Peron, was lucky, she died at 33."

Right, Viv. When I read this line I nearly cried. See I got sick and almost died at exactly age 32, right when I started making my own work in video. I know what Viv meant, the good die young leave a pretty corpse and all but ouch.

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CHICKEN SHOT

Get liposuction, get an eye-tuck and above all, diet, diet diet. Exercise relentlessly; sell your soul to the plastic surgeon. Get into it. The painful orthopedics of re-making bodies through modern science and technology.

Cellulite, it turns out, is only fat. But its the fat on womens' thighs -- specifically women, specifically thighs. Fanny tucks; chin tucks, breast reductions, implants. Put poisonous, leaky plastic globs inside the skin of your breasts. Never mind breast cancer. Make me over. Rearrange me. Stick a surgical vacuum inside my belly so it can suck out my center. Volunteer for unnecessary, dangerous, expensive surgery that will take you 4-6 weeks to recover from. Sorry, forget it, you can't afford it.

Get a nose job. Get a lip implant. Let there be many bee-stung lips and more Anglo-noses. Let Bulemia and Anorexia flourish in the land, terrorize the teens. Deal a meal, baby. Food is poison. Living is poisonous. It makes you old. It makes you wrinkled.

Make me over, take me over, make me your Barbie, oh Lord, let me be less than what I
am. Be smaller, be tiny, smaller still, almost nothing. 19

Disappear gradually now, girls. Simon says, disappear almost completely. Become an advertisement for death.

So why a tattoo? -- instead of that surgery, that makes every woman over 40 on TV look like a Chinese lantern, we mark ourselves. Whatever power hands out AIDS and cancer, doesn't do tattoos. You choose. You and a tattoo artist. It used to be a boy thing, a macho thing. It hurts. NUh uh, No. Twenty minutes ain't real pain honey. It's an itch. Real pain lasts long. You don't know when it's gonna end. That's the beauty of actual torture.

My illness marked the inside of my body. Like a cruel master, my immune system ate away at itself. When I went into remission, I marked the outside myself, with friends, with a magical picture, a milagro. People have marked their skin together with blood in every prison in the world. In the

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prisonhouses with bars or without like our prisonhouse of so-called beauty, these marks say, we're alive. I'm in charge of something about my body. Good girls don't cry. Good girls are seen and not heard. Our refusal is written in blood and paint and skin. I remind myself when I look at my tattoo. Our silence? Never, never again.

Ava Gardner at 37 appears as Moira, drunken, slutty, elegant and cool -- fun loving and frustrated in ON THE BEACH ('59), a film about the end of the world.

The lines of her 37 year old face and body are to me, among the most excruciatingly beautiful on film. The close-ups move me to tears. Ava/Moira is a woman who has lived -- and you can see her life on her face. This face is inspiring to some of us who have been around, lo, these 40 years because her beauty is not about the innocence of youth but about the experience of age. The basic "beauty" -- the stuff that got her a contract at MGM is still there, of course: the slant of the eyes, half closed, the rich ovals of the face - they were put there by genetics or God. The spirit that animates it though, is this woman herself, Ava Gardner, born in North Carolina, gorgeous and poor, as she appears through

this lighting, this casting, this director, this narrative -- this woman, Moira, in an impossible romance at the end of the world as the hideous rays from the neutron bomb make their way across the planet to Australia, on location. I desired her, while desiring to be her.

According to one biographer, Ava was moody, depressed, on the wagon and still mooning over the last generations' heart-throb, the overrated Frank Sinatra, her ex-husband.

But on film, she is a gift. World-weary and world-wise, her body and legs long and shapely, she has nonetheless, the wrinkles and bulges which have now been criminalized by the TV figure fascists and aerobics storm troopers. Ava, neither young nor old was considered just about over the hill at this time. Yes, over the hill, done for.

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Western culture's narratives used to just kill them or drive them nuts. Now they're allowed to make themselves back into synthetic thirty year olds so the rest of us can't tell what the hell to think when we look in the mirror. We know we have qualities of mind and spirit that we don't have to erase with under-eye concealer but it's still a tug of war between that knowledge - and the cover of Vogue.

Ava at about 40 spoke to me as a teen about some possibilities for life after Beach Blanket Bingo. O. K, she was a movie star, an adventuress, not a rocket scientist. Sure, the movie made me cry because I'm caught in the melodrama reflex. Sure it turned me on because Waltzing Mathilda and the long, passionate kisses were underscored by the ultimate violence of the H bomb. Hiroshima, Mon Amour.

We know our jobs: CONSUME; IDENTIFY. But Ava, did middle age on her own, solo, in Spain drinking and dancing with regular people, and - on camera with no apologies. I say, BRAVO.

O.K. we're going to do the make-up shot, then we're out of here.

Here it goes, eyelasheyelash. This is what women do, this is what they actually do,
Take all this junk off, take all the junk off. And pretty soon you can see an actual human
being ...an actual person. O.K., that's it. (FACE EXPLOSION, FIRE BREATHING)

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Dana Master

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Brook Altman (Body Double)

On Piano

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Assistant Production Manager

Meg Taylor (& Best Girl)

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Statue of Liberty Torch/ Rafe Halstead

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Gopi et al - India Palace Restaurant

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Designer Meat by Chuck at Everybody's Market

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