

MARTIN CRIMP

JENNIFER

He makes such a wonderful
servant and his French is impeccable.
Let's have some music. And nothing too arty.
I'm sick of this. I want to party.

*The others laugh. Simon begins to play boogie-woogie
on the harpsichord, but after a moment Alceste makes
a violent gesture – bangs down the lid, or smashes a
plaster Cupid – and the music stops.*

ALCESTE

If that's the life you want to lead,
so be it. Just don't come to me when you need
help, because I shan't be there.
You may not believe in despair
but I do. It's a kind of pit
and you're digging yourself deeper and deeper into it.

He walks out. Embarrassed laughter.

JOHN

It's so typical of him to overreact.
Don't worry: I'll run and bring him straight back.

*John moves towards the exit but, at an imperceptible
gesture from Jennifer, Simon and Alex block his way.*

What're you doing? Look: I want to leave.
I'm worried about him.

ELLEN

Relax, John, just relax. Don't you see
we're better off without him.

ATTEMPTS ON HER LIFE

'No one will have directly experienced
the actual cause of such happenings,
but everyone will have received
an image of them.'

Baudrillard

Seventeen Scenarios for the Theatre

- 1 All Messages Deleted
- 2 Tragedy of Love and Ideology
- 3 Faith in Ourselves
- 4 The Occupier
- 5 The Camera Loves You
- 6 Mum and Dad
- 7 The New Anny
- 8 Particle Physics
- 9 The Threat of International Terrorism™
- 10 Kinda Funny
- 11 Untitled (100 Words)
- 12 Strangely!
- 13 Communicating with Aliens
- 14 The Girl Next Door
- 15 The Statement
- 16 Pornó
- 17 Previously Frozen

Attempts on her Life was first presented at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs, London, on 7 March 1997, with the following cast:

Kacey Ainsworth
Danny Cerqueira
David Fielder
Ashley Jensen
Hakeem Kae-Kazim
Etelá Pardo
Sandra Voe
Howard Ward

Directed by Tim Albery
Designed by Gideon Davey
Lighting by Simon Mills
Music composed by David Benke
Sound by Paul Arditti
Choreography by Patti Powell

This is a piece for a company of actors whose composition should reflect the composition of the world beyond the theatre.

A dash (—) at the beginning of a line indicates a change of speaker. If there is no dash after a pause, it means the same character is still speaking.

A slash (/) marks the point of interruption in overlapping dialogue.

In performance, the first scenario,
ALL MESSAGES DELETED, may be cut.

I ALL MESSAGES DELETED

beep

— Anne. (*pause*) It's me. (*pause*) I'm calling from Vienna. (*pause*) No, sorry; I'm calling from . . . Prague. (*pause*) It's Prague. (*pause*) I'm pretty sure it's Prague. Anyway, look . . . (*breath*) Anne . . . (*breath*) I want to apologise. (*breath*) I realise how much I've hurt you, my sweet sweet darling, and . . . (*breath*) Ah. Look. Look, there's somebody on the other line, Anne. I really really — I'm sorry — but I really really have to take this call. I'll get back to you.

'Monday 8.53 a.m.'

beep

— Anne. Hi. Listen. I only have a moment. Are you there? No? Okay. Look. It's this. What we were discussing? You remember? Well what about this, what about this, what about if, let's say, let's say, let's just say . . . that the trees have names? Okay? That's right — the trees. You think — I know — you think I'm crazy. But let's just accept for a moment shall we that the trees have names. Then what if, what if, what about if . . . *this was her tree*. Shit. Sorry. Look, I have to board now. But think about that. The trees have names. And one of them is hers. I have to run.

'Monday 9.35 a.m.'

beep

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- (*spoken in e.g. Czech*) You know who this is. You leave the device in a small truck at the back of the building. You'll get the truck from Barry. Barry will contact you with more instructions.

'Monday 11.51 a.m.'

beep

- ... Oh. Hello? It's Mum ...

'Monday 1.05 p.m.'

beep

- Hello, this is Sally at Cooper's. Just to let you know that the vehicle is now in the showroom and ready for your collection. Thank you.

'Monday 1.06 p.m.'

beep

- We know where you live you fucking bitch. You're dead, basically. The things you fucking did. We don't forget. (*pause*) You'll wish you'd never been born.

'Monday 1.32 p.m.'

beep

- ... Anne? Hello? It's Mum again. (*pause*) Got your postcard. (*pause*) Looks very nice. (*pause*) And the photo. Is that really you? (*pause*) Glad you're making friends and so on. (*pause*) The thing is, Anne, there just isn't any money to send you. I've spoken to your dad, and he says no, absolutely not.

We hear a man's voice in the background: 'Not another penny. Just you make that clear.' Mum

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replies: 'I'm telling her, I'm telling her.' Then back into the phone:

I'm really sorry, Anne darling, but we just can't keep on doing it.

Man's voice again: 'If you don't tell her, I'll bloody well talk to her.'

Look, I have to go now, darling. Your dad sends his love. All right? God bless.

'Monday 2.20 p.m.'

beep

- Anne? Are you there? Pick up the phone, Annie. (*pause*) Okay ... It's a quarter after ten here in Minnesota and we're just calling to say our thoughts and prayers are with you, Annie. And we love you very much.

'Monday 4.13 p.m.'

beep

- Anne? Brilliant. It's moving. It's timely. It's distressing. It's funny. It's sexy. It's deeply serious. It's entertaining. It's illuminating. It's cryptic. It's dark. Let's meet. Call me.

'Monday 10.21 p.m.'

beep

- Anne. Good evening. Let me tell you what I'm going to do to you. First you're going to suck my cock. Then I'm going to fuck you up the arse. With a broken bottle. And that's just for starters. Little miss cunt.

'Monday 10.30 p.m.'

beep

— Anne?

Pick up the phone. (*pause*) I know you're there.
 (*pause*) It's no use hiding, Anne. Hiding from what?
 (*pause*) The world? Hiding from the world, Anne?
 Come on. Grow up. Grow up, Anne, and pick up the
 phone.

Pause.

So what is this then? A cry for help? Don't tell me
 this is a cry for help. Because what am I supposed to
 do exactly about *your* cry for help? Mm? (*pause*) And
 what if you're lying there, Anne, already dead? Mm?

Is that the scenario I'm supposed to imagine?

The scenario of a dead body rotting next to the
 machine?

Faint laugh Pause.

The what, the larvae of flies listening to your messages?
 Or if your building has been destroyed. Or if your
 city has been destroyed.

The airports and the shoe shops. The theatres and the
 fashionable halogen-lit cafés that have sprung up in
 the disused warehouses by the disused canals. Mm?

Faint laugh.

So only the larvae of insects are listening to your
 messages. Listening to me, Anne, as they tunnel
 through your remains.

Pause.

I'm growing morbid, Anne.

I think you should pick up the phone and make me
 smile, make me smile the way you used to, Anne.

I know you're there.
 I know you're there, Anne. And I know that if I'm
 patient, you'll answer me.

Pause.

You will answer me, won't you Anne.

'Tuesday 12.19 a.m.'

*'That was your last message.
 To save all messages press one.'*

Pause.

'All messages deleted.'

2 TRAGEDY OF LOVE AND IDEOLOGY

- Summer. A river. Europe. These are the basic ingredients.
- And a river running through it.
- A river, exactly, running through a great European city and a couple at the water's edge. These are the basic ingredients.
- The woman?
- Young and beautiful, naturally.
- The man?
- Older, troubled, sensitive, naturally.
- A naturally sensitive man but nevertheless a man of power and authority who knows that this is wrong.
- They both know this is wrong.
- They both know this is wrong but they can't / help themselves. Exactly.
- They're making love in the man's apartment.
- Doing what?
- Making love. Making love in the man's apartment. A luxury apartment, naturally, with a view over the entire city. These are the / basic ingredients.
- A panorama of the entire city. The charming geometry of the rooftops. The skylights and the quaint chimneys. And beyond the TV aerials are monuments of culture: the Duomo of Florence and

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- the arch at La Défense, Nelson's Column and the Brandenburg Gate / to name but four.
- The woman cries out. Her golden hair cascades as it were over the edge of the bed. She grips the bed-frame. Her knuckles whiten. There are tears / in her eyes.
 - The apartment is beautifully furnished.
 - Well obviously the apartment would be beautifully furnished. Obviously it would have high ceilings and tall windows and date in all probability date from the end of the nineteenth century when the rise in speculative building coincided with the aspirations of the liberal bourgeoisie to create monumental architectural schemes such as I'm thinking particularly now I'm thinking of the Viennese Ringstrasse which made such an impression on the young Adolf Hitler as he stood one morning / before the Opera.
 - Or one of the great Parisian / boulevards.
 - Or one of the great, exactly, Parisian / boulevards.
 - And meanwhile, as you say, her golden hair cascades as it were over the edge of the bed. She grips the frame. Her knuckles whiten and her pupils widen, while he —
 - Let's say he grunts.
 - Grunts?
 - Let's say he grunts, yes, but sensitively. Let's say it's the sensitive grunt of the attractive man of power and authority, not for example the coarse pig-like grunt of a mechanic lying on his back in a confined space trying to loosen a cross-threaded nut with a heavy and inappropriately sized wrench.

- Absolutely not.
- Absolutely not, but the masterful grunt of a man who breakfasts on one continent and lunches on another, who flies first class with a linen napkin and a comprehensive wine list.
- That kind of man.
- That kind of grunt.
- That kind of light.
- What kind of light?
- The kind of light that streams in. It streams in through the tall windows transforming their bodies into a kind of golden mass.
- A writhing mass.
- The light, the golden mass, these are the / essential ingredients.
- But now a look crosses her face.
- A what?
- A look.
- A doubt.
- A look of doubt, yes, good, crosses Anne's face.
- Even now.
- Even now in the / intensity of her passion.
- Even now in the intensity of her passion a kind of shadow crosses her face.
- A premonitory shadow.
- Premonitory?
- A premonitory shadow, yes, crosses her face.

- Is that a word?
- Is what a word?
- Pause.*
- Well yes, of course premonitory / is a word.
- Later. Night.
- The lights of the city at night. Strings of light, suspended star-like along the quays and the frameworks of bridges. Odd dull red warning lights pulsing on the tops of tower blocks and TV transmitters. The man at the telephone. His lowered voice. His troubled glances.
- Anne wakes up in the solid walnut bed, hears his faint male voice in the adjoining room. The exquisite Louis Quatorze clock beside her chimes three by means of a tiny tiny naked gilt shepherd striking a tiny tiny golden bell held between the teeth of an enamelled wolf, no doubt a reference to an ancient myth well known to the seventeenth-century French nobility but now totally erased from human consciousness.
- Ting ting ting.
- Pause.*
- 3 a.m. Anne wakes up. Hears voice, lights cigarette. Appears in doorway. Dialogue.
- Who was it, she says.
- Nothing, he says.
- Who the fuck was it, she says. End of dialogue.
- And now she's angry – exactly: end of dialogue – and now she's angry. She's angry because she knows exactly who it is.

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- His political masters / calling him.
- His political masters, that's right, calling him. Just as they have always called him. The very political masters that she hates with every fibre as it were of her being. The very men and women, that she, Anne, in her youthful idealism holds responsible for the terminal injustice of this world.
- The leaders who in her naïve and passionate opinion have destroyed everything she values in the name (a) of business and (b) of laissez-faire.
- In the name (a) of rationalization and (b) / of enterprise.
- In the name of (a) so-called individualism and (b) / of so-called choice.
- The basic ingredients in other words of a whole tragedy.
- A whole, exactly, tragedy unfolds before our eyes in Paris, Prague, Venice or Berlin to name but four, as the moon, vast and orange, rises over the renaissance domes, baroque palaces, nineteenth-century zoos and railway stations, and modernist slabs of social housing exemplifying the dictum *form follows function*.
- Form follows function.
- This whole tragedy / of love.
- This whole tragedy of ideology and love.
- She stubs out the cigarette.
- She begins to shout.
- She begins to beat him with her fists.
- She begins to bite him with her teeth.

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- She begins to kick him with her bare white feet.
- She beats and beats / and beats.
- She beats and beats. And the exquisite clock which has survived two revolutions and three centuries is smashed to pieces on the smooth and highly polished parquet as she beats bites and kicks.
- The tiny tiny shepherd and the tiny tiny bell both vanish – rather a nice touch this – vanish for ever under the / walnut bed.
- Until she stops for breath. Let's say she finally, shall we, stops, at this point, for breath.
- The woman?
- The woman, Anne, yes, stops for breath.
- Pause.*
- And he?
- Bows his head.
- Yes.
- Looks up at her.
- Yes.
- Takes her tear-stained / face between his hands.
- Takes Anne's tear-stained face between his hands like a precious chalice.
- Or a rugby football.
- Like a precious silver chalice or as you say a rugby football before a drop-kick he takes Anne's angry tear-stained face between his hands.
- He still loves her.

- For all their ideological differences – that's right – he still loves her. Speech.
- One day, Anne, he says, you'll understand my world. One day, Anne, you'll understand that everything must be paid for, that even your ideals must finally be paid for. End of speech. At which he smoothes the wet strands of hair from her lips and kisses her. These are the / basic ingredients.
- He kisses her and presses her back down onto the bed. Or she him. Better still: *she* presses *him* back down onto the bed such is her emotional confusion, such is her sexual appetite, such is her inability to distinguish between right and wrong in this great consuming passion in the high-ceilinged apartment with the solid walnut bed, the polished parquet floor, the grand piano by Pleyel circa 1923 without it should perhaps be noted any visible means of protection against pregnancy in the case of Anne or in the case of either against sexually transmitted diseases including the so-called AIDS virus more correctly known as the human immune deficiency virus or / HIV for short.
- A portrait of a young girl sketching once thought to be by David but now attributed to his female contemporary Constance Charpentier, and a triangular yellow ashtray with the legend 'Ricard' containing three cigarette butts and a quantity of fine grey ash.

Pause.

- A great tragedy in other words / of love.
- A great – exactly – tragedy of ideology / and love.
- These are the basic ingredients.

3 FAITH IN OURSELVES

Silence.

- The whole of the past is there in her face. It's written there like a history. The history of her family. The history of the land itself – this land where her family has lived for generations.

Silence.

- It's a valley.
- It's a valley – yes – deep in the hills.
- It's a valley deep in the hills where the traditional ways have been maintained for generations. And there are fruit trees.
- Each child who is born in this valley has a fruit tree planted in their name. In fact there's a kind of ceremony.
- A formal – exactly – ceremony.
- A kind of formal ceremony takes place in the village. And for generation upon generation this formal ceremony of naming has taken place on the birth of each child.
- The trees in other words have names.
- They have names just as the inhabitants have names. There is the person, and there is the tree. There is Anya the woman, and there is Anya the tree.
- The trees have names and so do the blades, the blades of grass. Because life is so precious, life is so *felt*,

things are so *alive*, so *sacred*, that even the blades of grass have names. It's something we can hardly *comprehend*.

— We can hardly comprehend this sacred sacred life, this sense of completeness is beyond our understanding, this sense of awe humbles us.

— But now, devastation.

Silence.

— What?

— Devastation. The harmony of generations / has been destroyed.

— Exactly. This enclosed, secure world has been torn apart.

— The harmony of generations has been destroyed. The women have been raped. The little children have been disembowelled.

— The women have been raped, and then disembowelled. The men have hacked each other to pieces.

— Brother has killed brother.

— Cousin has murdered cousin. Brother has raped sister.

— Brother has raped – yes – sister, and now the dogs are picking over the remains.

— The petrol used to fuel the ancient tractors and generate electricity for the old black-and-white TVs has been used to set people alight.

— Yes.

— First to set living people alight, and now, for health reasons, to burn the corpses.

— Living people set on fire. The cold vapour of the petrol, then the hot rush of flame. The burning people running blazing between the fruit trees which bear their names, scorching the leaves, writhing on the blades of grass, while the soldiers stand by laughing.

— The soldiers are laughing even though these are their own cousins, their own *parents*, their / mothers and fathers.

— Burning their own *parents* in the sacred orchard. Burning them alive and laughing.

— Or burying them alive. Burying them alive up to their necks in the fertile earth, then smashing their skulls open with a spade. They have a name for this.

— 'The flower.'

— It's called, that's right, 'the flower'.

Silence.

And it's all there in her face.

— It's what?

— All there. All there in her face.

— In Anya's face. We don't need words. She's beyond words. Her mouth, in fact her mouth trembles but no words come.

— The inadequacy of words.

— The terrifying, yes, inadequacy of words as she stands by a tree covered in delicate white petals.

— A plum.

— A plum tree covered in delicate white petals which is the moment . . .

— Yes.

- . . . the moment we realise that *this is her tree*.
- This is *her own tree*, Anya's tree.
- Anya's tree, planted what? forty? fifty? years ago on the day of her birth. The hole dug by her father, the roots spread out by her mother and watered and tended by the family who now lie dead.
- Her very own tree.
- The air still smells of petrol.
- It's spring.
- *Silence.*
- Panorama of the whole valley.
- The whole deep valley in spring.
- The trees. The grass.
- A bee crawls into the cup of a flower.
- And now she speaks.
- Yes. Because she *must*. Because the words well up as she stands beside her tree.
- The tree gives her strength, the strength / to speak.
- She points to some charred timbers. That, she says, was my home. My children were hiding under the bed. They killed them both. First the boy. Then the girl. They set light to my little girl's hair. I still don't know why they set light to my little girl's hair. It crackled like a pile of sticks.
- Then she breaks down.
- Who? Anya?
- She screams. She breaks down and scratches her cheeks like something / from an ancient tragedy.

- I don't think so. I don't think Anya screams. I don't think she breaks down and scratches her cheeks like something from an ancient tragedy. I think her eyes blaze. I think she advances towards the camera and begins to curse. You mother-fucking shit-faced murderers, she says. You pig-fucking cock-sucking bastards. You sister-fucking blaspheming child-murdering mindless fuck-faced killers. I spit on your graves and on the graves of your mothers and fathers and curse all future generations.
- She's angry.
- She's very angry.
- *Silence.*
- She's very angry, but she has a *right* to be.
- She has – well obviously – a right to be angry. Everything destroyed. A way of *life* destroyed. A relationship / with *nature* destroyed.
- And this is why we sympathise.
- Of *course* we sympathise.
- Not just sympathise, but *empathise*. Empathise because . . .
- Yes.
- . . . because Anya's valley is *our* valley. Anya's trees are *our* trees. Anya's family is the family to which we all belong.
- So it's a universal thing / *obviously*.
- It's a universal thing in which we recognise, we strangely recognise ourselves. Our own world. Our own pain.

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- Our own anger.
- A universal thing which strangely . . . what? what? what?
- Which strangely restores.
- Which strangely restores – I think it does – yes – our faith in ourselves.

4 THE OCCUPIER

- She's the kind of person who believes the message on the till receipt.
- 'Thank you for your custom.'
- She never stands forward of this notice . . .
- Never.
- . . . or speaks to the driver.
- Pause.*
- When a letter comes addressed to 'The Occupier', she first of all makes . . .
- What? A cup of tea?
- Yes. Then sits at the kitchen table to open it. She opens it and reads it as carefully as if it were a letter from her own son, who now lives in America.
- Canada, actually.
- She's the kind of person who believes the lucky numbers have / been selected . . .
- Toronto.
- . . . just for her. Which in a way, of course, they have. And if she replies within ten days, she will receive a mystery gift. / Toronto? Is it?
- It's not a mystery gift, no. She ticks a *box*, she ticks a *box selecting* the gift she wants to receive: maybe a handy clock-radio, a camera or a set of / miniature screwdrivers.

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— A set of miniature screwdrivers or a handy disposable camera.

— She's a non-smoker.

Silence.

— She's definitely a non-smoker. Although I think it's true to say she may occasionally take cigarettes from other people.

— Exactly. At parties.

5 THE CAMERA LOVES YOU

The camera *loves* you
The camera *loves* you
The camera *loves* you

We *need* to sympathise
We *need* to empathise
We *need* to advertise
We *need* to realise
We are the good guys
We are the good guys

We need to feel
what we're seeing is real
It isn't just acting
it's far more exacting
than acting
We're talking reality
We're talking humanity
We're talking of a plan to be
OVERWHELMED by the sheer totality
and utterly believable three-dimensionality
THREE-DIMENSIONALITY
of all the things that Anne can be
ALL THE THINGS THAT ANNE CAN BE

What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba?
A megastar
A MEGASTAR

The camera *loves* you
The camera *loves* you
The camera *loves* you

We need to fantasise
We need to improvise
We need to synthesise

We need to advertise that
We are the good guys
We are the good guys

We need to go
for the sexiest scenario
It isn't just writing
it's much more exciting
than writing
We're talking actuality
We're talking contemporary
We're saying that we want to be
OVERWHELMED by the sheer quantity
YES BY THE SHEER QUANTITY
of all the things that Anne can be
ALL THE THINGS THAT ANNE CAN BE

What's Hecuba to her or she to Hecuba?
A megastar
(A megastar? The fuck you are)

The camera loves you
The camera loves you
The camera the camera
the camera the camera
the camera the camera
THE CAMERA LOVES YOU

6 MUM AND DAD

- It's not her first attempt.
 - It shouldn't be her first attempt. She's tried at various times. Even before she leaves home / she tries, doesn't she?
 - She tries at various times throughout her *life*.
 - We see the other times.
 - We live *through* the other times. We live through these harrowing times.
- Silence.*
- We see photos, don't we.
 - We see large numbers of photos.
 - We see them close to, so close you can make out the little dots. Funny, isn't it, how everything at a certain point turns into just these little dots – even her smile.
 - It's a happy smile. It's a genuine enough smile.
 - Oh yes, it's a genuinely happy / smile alright.
 - Because no one's *forcing* her, no one's forcing her to smile, are they?
 - No one's forcing her to do *anything*. The idea of Annie, little Annie being forced to do things is quite frankly ludicrous.

- No question of it.

Silence. In the silence:

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'She enjoys hosting these holidays because she loves meeting people. She will introduce you to your fellow guests ensuring that everyone has a memorable time.'

- Absolutely – and this should be made clear – absolutely no question of her doing what she does not / want to do.
- Everything at a certain point turns into these little dots – eyes, hair, smile.
- Smiles from all over the world.
- *People* from all over the world. People from all over the world photographed with Annie. Smiling with Annie. Characters I suppose who just popped in and / out of her life.
- And then popped out again.
- And then – yes – popped straight out again.
- Porno, actually, some of them.
- Porno? Come on. Hardly.
- Pretty pornographic, actually, some / of those pictures.
- I'd hardly call it pornographic, just high spirits. Just the high spirits you'd expect of a girl who's always smiling, always laughing, always on the move, always meeting someone, always leaving someone, always in a departure lounge or a bus station or waiting by an airport carousel or sleeping in the corridor / of a train.
- Always by the side of the road somewhere with that big red bag of hers. Somewhere in Africa, say, with that big red canvas bag she got from Mum and Dad

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when she turned sixteen. Somewhere in South America.

- Somewhere in Europe with that big / red bag.
- Europe. Africa, South America, you name it. Brazil.
- Cuba. Brazil. Romania. / *Nigeria*.
- Romania. Cuba. Florida. Australia.
- That's right. Australia. New Zealand. The / Philippines.
- Morocco. Algeria. Tunisia. The Sahara Desert.
- The Kalahari Desert, the foothills of the Himalayas.
- The foothills of the Alps.
- That's right – the what's it called –
- The / Piedmont.
- The Piedmont. Always in some foothills somewhere with that big red bag of hers.
- Because, let's face it, she *is* concerned.
- Well of *course* she's concerned. We can *see* that she's concerned. You only have to see her for example in those photos, the way she's rubbing shoulders with the poor. She's not afraid in those photos to rub shoulders with the poor.
- Pictures of her in slums with the smiling slum-dwellers.
- Pictures of her on hillsides with the smiling hill-dwellers.
- Pictures of her – exactly – with the smiling hill-dwellers whose land has been eroded, just swept off – fwah! – by the wind.
- And on rubbish dumps.

- Pictures of Annie on rubbish dumps next to smiling people actually living on the dumps, actually living right there on the dumps / with their *children*.
- Whole families of gypsies or whatever they are, are apparently living, that's right, right there on the dumps.
- What it's not – and this is perhaps how it differs from those previous attempts – what it's not is a cry for help.
- It's quite clear that her mind's / made up.
- It's not a cry for help. It's very important to establish that, wouldn't you agree, from the outset. It's very important to establish that no one could've helped / her at that point.
- No one could've helped her – not her Mum – not her Dad – and certainly none of her so-called / *friends*.
- She wouldn't've / *wanted* help.
- Help is the last thing she would've wanted.

Silence. In the silence:

‘She enjoys spending lots of time with guests,
and gets a feeling of great satisfaction
when everyone is having a good time.
She says there are lots of hugs at the station
when it's time to go home, with holidaymakers
waving and calling out
“see you next time” from the train window.’

They laugh all through next passage:

- Some of the strange things she says . . .
- Some of the strange things she says to her Mum and Dad as a child: ‘I feel like a screen.’

- ‘I feel like a screen.’
- She's lying there, isn't she, with the tube in her poor thin arm, looking terribly pale, whiter in fact than / the *pillow*.
- ‘Like a TV screen,’ she says, ‘where everything from the front looks real and alive, but round the back there's just dust and a few wires.’
- ‘Dust and a few wires.’ Her imagination . . .
- She says she's not a real character, not a real character like you get in a book or on TV, but a *lack* of character, an *absence* she calls it, doesn't she, of character.
- An absence of character, whatever *that* means . . .
- *Then* she wants to be a terrorist, doesn't she?
- That's right. She comes down one night to the kitchen with those big earnest eyes of hers and tells her Mum and Dad she wants to be a terrorist.
- The looks on their faces . . .
- She wants her own little room and a gun and a list of names.
- ‘Targets.’
- A list – that's right – of so-called targets and their photographs. She wants to kill one a week then come back to the little room and drink Earl Grey tea.
- That's right – it has to be Earl Grey – and it has to be one a week.
- Her poor Mum and Dad are / *horrified*.
- They absolutely don't know how to take this.
- They've never bought Earl Grey tea / in their *lives*.

- She'd like to act like a machine, wouldn't she.
- Act? She'd like to *be* a machine. Sometimes she spends days on end, whole days on end pretending to be a television / or a car.
- A car or a television, an automatic pistol or a treadle sewing-machine.

Silence. In the silence:

'She is an excellent singles' host,
and loves to take people
on guided walks.'

- A sewing-machine . . . The things she comes out with . . .
- Then of course she's off round the world. One minute it's Africa, the next it's South America or Europe.
- Somewhere in Europe.
- Europe, Africa, South America, you name it. Brazil.
- Cuba. Brazil. Romania. / *Nigeria*.
- Romania. Cuba. Florida. Australia.
- That's right. Australia. New Zealand. The / Philippines.
- Morocco. Algeria. Tunisia. The Sahara Desert.
- The Kalahari Desert. The foothills of the Himalayas.
- The foothills of the Alps.
- That's right – the what's it called –
- The / Piedmont.
- The Piedmont, the Piedmont, the Piedmont, of course it is. Yes. Always some foothills somewhere with that big red bag of hers.

- And the same hair. Don't forget the same hair down / to her waist.
- The same long hair down to her waist at forty as she had at twenty – like a young girl still, isn't she, in some of / those pictures.
- Even at forty she still looks and dresses like a young girl half her age.
- But what's really conclusive is that the bag is full of stones.
- The fascinating thing, that's right, is that the bag turns out to be full / of stones.
- The stones are there to keep her under however much she thrashes, and the handles of the bag are tied to her ankles.
- No question in other words of a / cry for help.
- In other words she's planned all this, she's planned on thrashing, she knew she'd thrash, and equally she knew that the bag would go on dragging her down regardless. So there's never at any point any question of the attempt failing. There's never at any point any question of anyone being able to intervene – not Mum or Dad certainly.
- Well certainly not Mum and Dad – and certainly none of her so-called *friends*.
- If you can *call* them / friends.
- Well you obviously *can't* call them friends.

Silence. In the silence:

'She likes to attend keep-fit classes,
amateur dramatics, and take part
in lively cabarets.'

She is also a member of her local rambling club.'

- And we're tempted to think – aren't we – that perhaps the bag was *always* full of stones. From the moment in fact that she left the house, her Mum and Dad's house on her sixteenth birthday. Aren't we?

Pause.

Well aren't we?

- Aren't we what?

- Tempted. Tempted to imagine that maybe the bag was always full of stones from that very first day. From the moment she went down her Mum and Dad's path and closed her Mum and Dad's gate and caught the bus. That the red bag in the photographs is full of stones. That on the trucks and trains and mules she used to climb up mountains – and on the dumps and slums and hillsides and cobbled renaissance piazzas, the bag is full of stones. And in the refugee camps where she posed at their request next to the stick-like dying just as she posed apparently without a murmur beside the Olympic swimming pools of paunchy billionaires, the bag is full of stones. And on the airport carousels. Particularly on the airport carousels at 2 a.m. waiting with travellers from other time-zones and war-zones for the machinery to start and the luggage to appear through the black rubber curtain on the black rubber track – the rucksacks and the leather cases, the Samsonites and the taped-up cardboard boxes – the bag, that red bag of hers is full of stones.

- We can't be sure.

- Well of course we can't be sure. But from what we know of her, from what we see of her, it's not / impossible.

- We can't be sure that the bag is full of stones. It could be full of old clothes, drugs . . . / anything.
- Why not? Why *can't* we be sure? Why can't we say once and for all that the bag is full of stones, and that the stones explain the smile.
- The stones, it's true, would explain the smile.
- The stones would definitely explain the smile from what we've seen of her. Because there is a funny side to this.
- A what?
- A side. A funny side.
- Oh yes. There's definitely a funny side.

Silence. In the silence:

'Ann feels that there is sometimes a problem with the word "singles", as it is often misunderstood. She would like to stress that these holidays are not match-making events, but instead bring like-minded people together in informal and friendly surroundings, allowing them to enjoy a holiday together, and leave as friends.'

7 THE NEW ANNY

Each speech is first spoken in an African or Eastern European language. An English translation immediately follows.*

- [phrase]
- The car twists along the Mediterranean road.
- [phrase]
- It hugs the bends between the picturesque hillside villages.
- [phrase]
- The sun gleams on the aerodynamic body.
- [phrase]
- The aerodynamic body of the new *Anny*.
- [phrase]
- We see the new *Anny* snake along between the red-tiled Mediterranean rooftops.
- [phrase]
- Fast.
- [phrase]
- Sleek.
- [phrase]
- Free.
- [phrase]
- We now understand that the *Anny* comes with electric windows as standard.

* In the first production, Serbo-Croatian.

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- [phrase]
- We now understand that the *Anny* comes with driver's *and* passenger's airbag as standard.
- [phrase]
- We now understand that all the things other manufacturers offer as extras . . .
- [phrase]
- . . . are offered on the *Anny* as standard.
- [phrase]
- Air-conditioning.
- [phrase]
- Engine-immobiliser.
- [phrase]
- And a mobile telephone.
- [phrase]
- We understand that our children will be safe and happy in the back seat of the *Anny* just as the adults will be relaxed and confident at the wheel.
- [phrase]
- Happy.
- [phrase]
- Secure.
- [phrase]
- In control.
- [phrase]
- The *Anny* skims the white beaches of the world as easily as she parks outside the halogen-lit shoe shops of the great cities.
- [phrase]
- When we arrive at our destination in the *Anny* . . .

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- [phrase]
- ... we will always be embraced by good-looking men and good-looking women.
- [phrase]
- We will not be betrayed.
- [phrase]
- Tortured.
- [phrase]
- Or shot.
- [phrase]
- The two-litre *Anny* achieves excellent mileage in the simulated urban cycle ...
- [phrase]
- ... and is also available in diesel.
- [phrase]
- As a testimony to our ongoing concern for a cleaner, greener, environment ...
- [phrase]
- ... there are no filthy gypsies in the *Anny*.
- [phrase]
- Not in the *Anny* nor in the sun-filled landscapes through which the *Anny* drives.
- [phrase]
- No one in the *Anny* lies cheats or steals.
- [phrase]
- Dirty bastards.
- [phrase]
- Gangsters.
- [phrase]
- Motherfuckers.

ATTEMPTS ON HER LIFE

- [phrase]
- There is no room in the *Anny* for the degenerate races ...
- [phrase]
- ... for the mentally deficient ...
- [phrase]
- ... or the physically imperfect.
- [phrase]
- No room for gypsies, Arabs, Jews, Turks, Kurds, Blacks or any of that human scum.
- [phrase]
- We understand that zero per cent finance is available.
- [phrase]
- But hurry.
- [phrase]
- Since this is a limited offer.
- [phrase]
- The *Anny* crosses the Brooklyn Bridge.
- [phrase]
- The *Anny* crosses the Sahara.
- [phrase]
- The *Anny* streaks through the vineyards of Bordeaux.
- [phrase]
- The *Anny* streaks at dawn through North African villages ...
- [phrase]
- Fast.
- [phrase]
- Sleek.

- [phrase]
- Free.
- [phrase]
- . . . where the veiled women can only gaze with wonder at the immaculate rust-protected paintwork with its five-year warranty.
- [phrase]
- No one ever packs the *Anny* with explosives to achieve a political objective.
- [phrase]
- No man ever rapes and kills a woman in the *Anny* before tipping her body out at a red light along with the contents of the ashtray.
- [phrase]
- No one is ever dragged from the *Anny* by an enraged mob.
- [phrase]
- No child's pelvis is ever shattered by a chance collision with the new *Anny*.
- [phrase]
- The back seat is never made slippery by sperm.
- [phrase]
- Slippery by blood.
- [phrase]
- Slippery by beer.
- [phrase]
- Slippery by saliva.
- [phrase]
- Or sticky by melted chocolate.
- [phrase]
- Melted chocolate. Yum yum yum.

Small print:

- [phrase]
- On-the-road price includes VAT, number plates, delivery and six months' road fund licence.
- [phrase]
- Financial packages subject to status.
- [phrase]
- Smoking can harm your unborn child.
- [phrase]
- Your house is at risk if you do not keep up the repayments on a loan.

8 PARTICLE PHYSICS

- I'll tell you what: she has a kind of ashtray. The tall kind on a stalk. Like something you'd find in the lobby of a cheap hotel, the kind of hotel you visit for a few hours on a weekday afternoon in a strange city with a man you've / only just met.
- With a man you'll never see again.
- With a man – exactly – you've only just met and have no intention of ever seeing again. That's the kind of ashtray it is, with its chromium bowl and its chromium stalk and its aura of sudden unprotected sex in cheap hotel rooms.
- She also speaks five languages and with the aid of the CERN accelerator in Geneva has discovered a new elementary particle which will bear her name and completely change the way we look at the universe.

9 THE THREAT OF INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM™

- She doesn't seem to care. She has no conscience. She expresses no remorse. She says, 'I do not / recognise your authority.'
- 'I do not recognise your authority.' Just what does she *mean* by that? Who does she think she *is*? Does she really imagine she won't have to account for the lives she's destroyed? Does she really imagine that anything can justify her acts of random senseless violence? Nothing in her eyes reveals one spark / of human feeling.
- Not one spark – that's right – of human feeling or any sense of shame. Is this the same child, is this the same child who once wore a pink gingham dress and a straw hat and went with the daughters of doctors, dentists, TV presenters and property developers to the school on the hill with the polished brass plate and the teachers in strict tartan skirts? Is this the same child who had Fantasy Barbie™, Fantasy Ken™ and all the outfits: the tiny tiny knickers and the tiny tiny shoes? The house, the horse, and Barbie's™ / very own car?
- Is this the same little Anne who put all the tiny tiny shoes in rows and all the tiny tiny dolls in rows and all the tiny tiny beads in rows and what's more prayed to God™ each night / with no sense whatsoever of irony.

- Who prayed to God™ 'God™ bless Mummy, God™ bless Daddy, God™ bless Wiggy the cat, God™ bless everyone' with no sense whatsoever of irony but rather in the sincere belief that she might invoke there on her knees and in her Minnie Mouse™ pyjamas the blessing of the Father and of the Son / and of the Holy Ghost.
 - Amen.
 - Who wet the bed each and every night until her sleepless parents took her to the doctor with his heap of magazines to pull with a big smile down her knickers on the high cold leather couch and say, 'Let's take a look then, Anne, / shall we?'
 - The same Anne who came away from the hospital with a wooden box containing a bell to go beside the bed, two stiff squares of metal gauze and a number / of black wires?
 - The same Anne who woke up each subsequent night to the sound of the horrible bell in the horrible / wet sheets?
 - The same Anne who now – what? – *stands* there? *Stands* there in front of serious men and women with witnesses and evidence in sealed plastic bags – false passports and pieces of human flesh – who stands there and refuses / to recognise their *authority*?
 - Pieces of human flesh, false passports, lists of names, traces of explosive, tapes of phone-calls, videotapes from banks and shopping malls and cash dispensers. Psychiatric reports which confirm (a) her intelligence and (b) her sanity. 'She set about her work,' they say, 'with all the terrible detachment of an artist.'
- Witnesses break down / in tears.

- Witnesses break down in tears as videotapes from banks and shopping malls show Anne as just one more person going about their business under constant surveillance, until twenty minutes after she's left, the plate glass blows out of a shoe-shop window in absolute silence and the little grey figures breaking apart and flying through the air in absolute silence with the tiny tiny flying shoes are real human beings mixed with glass. No one can find out / what her motive is.
- No one can find Anne's motive.
- She lives alone?
- She lives alone.
- She works alone?
- She works alone.
- She sleeps alone?
- Apparently, yes.
- Kills / alone? Eats?
- She lives works sleeps kills and eats entirely on her own. In fact her recorded phone-calls consist almost entirely of orders for meals to be delivered to the rooms she rented overlooking the high streets of metropolitan suburbs – a large pizza, garlic bread, and one and a half litres of Diet Pepsi™ all for just nine pounds / ninety-nine.
- Calls which are at first assumed to be / coded messages.
- Calls which are at first, that's right, assumed to be coded messages but which are simply orders for meals delivered to her door by boys on scooters and / paid for in cash.

- Is this really the same little Anne who now has witnesses breaking down in tears? Who now has long-serving officers of both sexes receiving counselling for the night-sweats, impotence, amenorrhea, trembling hands and flashbacks of human heads popping open as if in slow motion and the long long terrible wail of a buried unreachable child recurring as a kind of what's the word?
- An auditory hallucination?
- Yes. For which they're now demanding / to be *compensated*.
- The same Anne who woke up when the bell went and watched the shadows of the chestnut trees move on her bedroom wall in her / wet pyjamas?
- The same Anne who soldered fiddly timing mechanisms and mercury tilt-switches to printed circuit boards with her mouth full of / deep-pan pizza?
- Who summed up the mood / of a generation.
- Who appeared twice on the cover of / *Vogue*TM magazine.
- Who sold the film rights for two and a half million / US dollars.
- Who studied in depth the baggage-handling procedures and memorised the timetables of the principal international / airlines.
- Who was quote a loner / unquote.
- Who listens quote expressionlessly unquote to the description of quote outrage unquote after quote outrage unquote after quote outrage unquote she has perpetrated.

- It's kinda funny and it's kinda sad.
I guess it's kinda bittersweet.
I guess it's one of these kinda bittersweet things, one of these laughing through *tears* things.
After so much time, after so many years, he finally comes back to his mom.
And at first, y'know, like 'Who is this?'
Then there's the moment of realisation: 'Oh God: it's my very own son.'
- And they're hugging each other right there in the kitchen and y'know that is so *moving*.
I mean that is just so moving to see that he has found that thing, that *strength*, to forgive his Mom.
That he has forgiven her her *alcoholism*.
That he has forgiven her for running round with other *men*.
That he has forgiven her for destroying his father's faith in himself and driving him to *suicide*.
And they're both kinda crying and laughing and crying again all at the same time in the same kitchen he sat in as a little boy witnessing his parents' terrible arguments. His Dad in tears pouring her liquor down the sink at ten o'clock in the morning while she screams how if he was a real man with one iota of self-respect she wouldn't need to booze herself to death, would she. And there are these tiny scratches in the table which he recalls having made secretly with a fork. And you're aware, y'know, like of the *continuity* of things, of the bittersweetness of things.

And then he says, 'Hey, Mom, I have a surprise for you.' And Mom kinda breaks away and wipes her eyes and says, 'What surprise?'

And he says, 'Look out the window, Mom.' And out the window there's like this dusty pick-up with two tiny tiny kids in the back like kinda staring. Just staring into the camera. And she can hardly believe these are her very own grandchildren. Then he says, 'Mom, I want you to meet Annie.'

And that's when this woman Annie gets out of the pick-up and she's like real tall and fair and strong-limbed with these clear blue eyes that look right into your heart, and she's like – well I guess she's like every man's *dream* of what a good woman should be, and every mother's dream of the wife she would choose for her boy.

And it turns out how he and Annie and the kids are making this new what? Well, *life*. They are making this new, yes, life for themselves away from the city. Living off the land. Growing stuff. Trapping stuff. Boring under the earth for clean pure water. Educating their own *children*. In the belief that Man is free before God to forge his own destiny and take whatever means necessary to protect his family.

And over lunch – which is basically a kind of chicken salad with mayonnaise – we learn how he is in fact the commanding officer of a whole *group* of like-minded individuals who have armed themselves not out of any thirst for blood, but out of *necessity* because it is war. 'War?' says Mom. 'How d'you mean, war?'

So Annie has to explain to Mom how they don't believe in taxes or welfare or any of that shit. How

the war is a war against a government that takes the bread out of the working man's mouth and gives it to the pornographers and abortionists of this world. Is a war against the God-forsaken *faggots*. Is a war against the crack dealers and the Blacks. Is a war against the conspiring *Jews* and their attempts to rewrite *history*. Is a *crusade* against the degenerate images which masquerade as *art*. Is a war against all those who would deny our right to bear arms.

And Annie has like this inner light. It's like wow, she's cut, she's cut, she's cut through all the confusion and chattering voices of our lives and of our time and found just this kinda really what? *Thing* I guess. This thing, this like absolute *thing*. It's like she's found this thing. It's like – hey – Annie has found this thing, this key, yes, this key thing, this secret, this certainty and simplicity, this secret and simple thing we all search for throughout our lives and which is, I guess, the *truth*.

Yes. And it's kinda moving to see how attentive *he* is to the kids. How he's the one who cuts up their chicken and wipes their mouths with a paper napkin – the image, y'know, of this big guy in camouflage doing all that caring domestic stuff. 'Cos family is at the heart of things, I guess.

And one of the tiny tiny children looks up from his chicken and says, 'Daddy, why is she *crying*?' And it's true. His mother is crying.

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As she sits there at the family table gazing on this family she never knew she had – the son and his fine young wife, their strong and innocent children with their whole lives ahead of them – she is, yes indeed, crying her eyes out like a tiny child herself.

And Annie strokes the boy's hair – which is clipped real short, y'know – like a real young soldier – and says, 'Because she is so happy, son. Because she is so happy.'

II UNTITLED (100 WORDS)

- What we see here are various objects associated with the artist's attempts to kill herself over the past few months. For example: medicine bottles, records of hospital admissions, Polaroids of the several HIV positive men with whom she has had intentionally unprotected intercourse, pieces of broken glass . . .
- Suicide notes.
- . . . yes, and the walls of the gallery have of course been lined with her many suicide notes. In addition to the Polaroids there are rather *unpleasant*, I have to say, video recordings of the attempts themselves.

Well I don't know about other people, but after a few minutes of this I rather began to wish she'd succeeded the first time round.

Silence. In the silence:

head
green
water
to sing
death
long
ship
to pay
window
friendly
table
to ask

cold
stem
to dance
village
lake
sick
pride
to cook

- Well I think that's an inexcusably frivolous comment to make about what is clearly a landmark work. It's moving. It's timely. It's distressing. It's funny. It's sick. It's sexy. It's deeply serious. It's entertaining. It's illuminating. It's dark. It's highly personal and at the same time raises vital questions about the world we're living in.
- What fascinates me is her use of textures. I think there's a great sensitivity here in the juxtaposition of materials: leather and glass, blood and paper, Vaseline and steel, which evoke in the viewer an almost / visceral reaction.
- I'm afraid what we're seeing here is pure narcissism. And I think we have to ask ourselves the question, who would possibly accept this kind of undigested exhibitionism as a work of art? . . .
- Yes, but exactly, that's surely the very point she's attempting to make: *Where* are the boundaries? *What* is acceptable? . . .
- . . . because it's pure / self-indulgence.
- . . . Where does the 'life' – literally in this case – end, and the 'work' begin?
- With respect to you I think she'd find the whole concept of 'making a point' ludicrously outmoded.

If *any* point is being made at all it's *surely* the point that the point that's being made is *not* the point and never has in fact *been* the point. It's surely the point that a search for a point is pointless and that the whole point of the exercise – i.e. these attempts on her own life – *points* to that. It makes me think of the Chinese proverb: the darkest place is always under the lamp.

Silence. In the silence:

ink
angry
needle
to swim
journey
blue
lamp
to sin
bread
rich
tree
to prick
pity
yellow
mountain
to die
salt
new
custom
to pray

- The what?
- The darkest place. It's / Chinese.
- *Why* can't people learn to draw? *Why* can't people learn to *paint*? Students should be taught *skills*, not ideas. Because what we see here is the work of a girl

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who quite clearly should've been admitted not to an art school but to a psychiatric unit.

Silence. In the silence:

money
stupid
exercise book
to despise
finger
dear
bird
to fall
book
unjust
frog
to part
hunger
white
child
to pay attention
pencil
sad
plum
to marry

- A what?
- A mental hospital. Somewhere where she could / receive treatment.
- Well I have to say I think that's an extraordinary remark which I would not expect to hear outside of a police state . . .
- Oh please . . .
- . . . and which – no, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, this has to be said – which appears to be an attempt to reinstate the notion of *Entartete Kunst* . . .

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- Oh rubbish. What an absurd / over-reaction.
- . . . the so-called 'degenerate art' prohibited – rubbish? I don't think so – prohibited by the Nazis. I mean *listen* to yourself: you are saying that this artist should not be allowed to produce work but should instead be compelled to undergo psychiatric treatment.
- I'm simply suggesting that this poor girl . . .
- 'This poor girl.'
- . . . this poor girl, yes, requires help – and I have not as you well know at any point suggested that she should be / 'compelled'.
- Requires help? Oh really? And in whose opinion? The opinion of Goebbels? The opinion perhaps of Joseph Stalin? Isn't Anne actually anticipating the terrifying consequences of that argument and asking us what 'help' actually means? Isn't she saying, 'I don't want your help'? Isn't she saying, 'Your help oppresses me'? Isn't she saying the only way to avoid being a victim of the patriarchal structures of late twentieth-century capitalism is to *become her own victim*? Isn't that the true meaning of these attempts on her life?
- Her own victim – that's fascinating.
- Oh really, this is such flabby reasoning.

Silence. In the silence:

house
darling
glass
to quarrel
fur

big
carrot
to paint
part
old
flower
to beat
box
wild
family
to wash
cow
friend
happiness
to lie

- Well I think whatever the very varied personal agendas we bring to this, we're all agreed that it's a landmark work. It's moving. It's timely. It's distressing. It's funny. It's sick. It's sexy. / It's deeply serious. It's entertaining. It's cryptic. It's dark. It's highly personal and at the same time raises vital questions about the world we're living in.
- (Cue 'sexy'.) That really is such flabby reasoning. Her own victim? If she really is – as it appears – trying to kill herself, then surely our presence here makes us mere voyeurs in Bedlam. If on the other hand she's only play-acting, then the whole work becomes a mere cynical performance and is doubly disgusting.
- But why not? Why shouldn't it be / 'a performance'?
- Exactly – it becomes a kind / of theatre.
- It's theatre – that's right – for a world in which theatre itself has died. Instead of the outmoded conventions of dialogue and so-called characters

lumbering towards the embarrassing dénouements of the *theatre*, Anne is offering us a pure dialogue of objects: of leather and glass, of Vaseline and steel, of blood, saliva and chocolate. She's offering us no less than the spectacle of her own existence, the radical *pornography* – if I may use that overused word – of her own broken and abused – almost Christ-like – body.

- An object in other words. A *religious* object.
- An object, yes. But not the object of *others*, the object of *herself*. That's the scenario / she offers.
- But surely we've seen all that. Haven't we seen all that in the so-called 'radicalism' of the sixties stroke seventies?

Silence. In the silence:

deportment
narrow
brother
to fear
stork
false
anxiety
to kiss
bride
pure
door
to choose
hay
contented
ridicule
to sleep
month
nice

woman
to abuse

- *Seen* it – perhaps. But not seen it afresh, not seen it now, not seen it in the context of a *post*-radical, of a *post-human* world where the gestures of radicalism take on new meaning in a society where the radical gesture is simply one more form of entertainment i.e. one more product – in this case an artwork – to / be consumed.
- Theatre has nothing to do with this and I bitterly resent the implication that I am some kind of a *Nazi*.

I 2 STRANGELY!

- She's driving away from the bombed-out city in a metallic red Cadillac circa 1956 . . .
- NAME!
- . . . when she reaches a checkpoint lit by burning tyres and is asked – exactly – for her name.
- STRANGELY!
- Strangely enough she doesn't reply to this reasonable request but begins instead a tirade of foul-mouthed abuse. 'You mother-fucking shit-faced murderers,' she says. 'You pig-fucking cock-sucking bastards.'
- LANGUAGE!
- 'You sister-fucking blaspheming child-murdering mindless fuck-faced killers.'
- LANGUAGE!
- 'I shit on your graves and on the graves of your mothers and fathers . . .'
- IDENTITY!
- ' . . . and curse all future generations.' And then when asked once more – that's right – for her identity falls silent.
- SILENCE!
- Silence.*
- WHAT?

Silence.

WHAT?

— Then she's mumbling something about her garden and the plum trees and the city's dried-up fountains. About — what's this? — the water she used to warm in plastic bottles so as not to shock the roots. She's mumbling something about . . .

— SPEAK UP!

— . . . she's mumbling something about — that's right: speak up you bitch — something about loss of electricity, nights spent in complete darkness and the decay of frozen meat. About the women banging saucepan lids in the streets as a kind of lamentation . . .

— NAME!

— . . . about the burning of entire libraries full of books and irreplaceable manuscripts and about stale bread thrown off the back of trucks and on and on about the plums and the white flowers . . .

— MEANWHILE!

— . . . and the smell of sewage coffee and human remains and meanwhile — that's right: meanwhile — thank you — the soldiers crowd round this nameless woman with the long grey hair streaked with blood and round the red Cadillac lit by the stacks of burning tyres and ask her just where the fuck, where the fuck on this Godforfuckingsaken earth does she think she's going?

Silence.

— WHAT?

Silence.

— WHAT?

— 'The airport.'

— SPEAK UP!

— 'The airport. I'm taking my child to the airport. You don't have to shout at me. I'm an educated woman — not some peasant out of a field who came to the city to clean rich people's toilets. I have a passport and a bank account in US dollars and I'm taking my child to the airport.'

— STRANGELY!

— 'Now please let me pass.' But yes, as you say, strangely there is no child to be seen. Child? What child? And women with passports don't look like this. Women with US dollars don't look like this. Their hair is streaked professionally in salons with artificial highlights, not with human blood. They don't drive battered Cadillacs, they own four-wheel-drive Japanese jeeps with a spare tyre they will never use strapped to the rear door. Let's shine a flashlight, shall we, on to the back seat and see just what she's talking about.

— CHILD? WHAT CHILD?

— Let's get out the rubber — what child — exactly — flashlight, and see just what it is she's talking about, just what it is she means by 'child', this nameless woman with the long grey hair and nastily pock-marked face. And while we're on the subject of her appearance, why can't she be more attractive? Why can't she be more sympathetic? Why can't she have a few more teeth? Why can't she bend over and let us see her ass? Why can't she break down in tears and make us long to comfort her instead of staring like that and spitting.

— STRANGELY!

— So – what? – yes – sorry – strangely as you say the light from the torch reveals on the back seat of the vehicle only two shiny black plastic bags each tied at the neck but no child whatsoever.

— CHILD? WHAT CHILD?

— And now she's mumbling something about . . .

— SPEAK UP!

— . . . something about a garden swing, something about her little girl, her little Anne, her little Annushka. Something – what's this? Speak up – something about her Annushka 'being in the bags' and about her need, her urgent need to take these bags to the airport with her education and her bank account in US dollars and buy air tickets. Doesn't she realise the airport is closed? Didn't she hear the runway being bombed? Didn't she see the intelligent rockets splash up the concrete like stones dropped into a pool?

— STRANGELY!

— Can't she feel the white heat of the burning aviation fuel? No. Strangely as you say she seems to believe the airport is functioning normally. Strangely she seems to think that the world's white beaches and cosmopolitan cities are still a few hours away by regular scheduled flights.

— STRANGELY!

— This nameless woman strangely seems to imagine she can still operate a bank account with a plastic card and fly first class with little Anne, with Annushka, out of the range of rifles and axes, to a city full of

art galleries, halogen lamps, charming cafés and attractively displayed shoes.

— STRANGELY!

Silence.

— And yes – strangely – no one asks her what she means by Annushka 'being in the bags'.

— STRANGELY!

Silence.

— And yes – strangely – no one asks to examine the bags.

— STRANGELY!

Silence.

— And yes – most strangely perhaps of all – no one questions why a child should be in two bags as opposed to one.

Silence.

— STRANGELY!

13 COMMUNICATING WITH ALIENS

- *Then* we discover that she is being penetrated by mysterious rays which make her invisible in photographs.
- What? X-rays?
- No, not X-rays. It's a new kind of ray. It's a new kind of ray produced by a catastrophe in *deep / space*.
- You mean – okay – that she is in communication are you saying via these rays with *aliens*?
- Not *communication*. No. The aliens are *using* her. They are using her, but *without her / knowledge*.
- The aliens – that's right – are using her mind as a kind of Trojan Horse by which they can gradually invade all of human / *consciousness*.
- And the frightening thing is, is she could be any one of us.

14 GIRL NEXT DOOR

She's the girl next door
She's the fatal flaw
She's the reason for
The Trojan War.

She is royalty
She practises art
She's a refugee
In a horse and cart.

She's a pornographic movie star
A killer and a brand of car
A KILLER AND A BRAND OF CAR!

She's a terrorist threat
She's a mother of three
She's a cheap cigarette
She is Ecstasy.

She's a femme fatale
She's the edge of the knife
She's one helluva gal
She's Intelligent Life.

She's a presidential candidate
For every little warring state
EVERY LITTLE WARRING STATE!

She winters in the south
She collects antiques

MARTIN CRIMP

She has a big mouth
But she never speaks.

She's given a spade
At the edge of a wood
To dig her own grave
By a man in a hood.

She drives a tank
Over neonates
While choosing to bank
At competitive rates.

She bombs by stealth
Has unlimited wealth
White knobbly knees.
WHAT? KNOBBLY KNEES?
Yes. Knobbly knees
And speaks fluent Japanese.

O-shigoto wa nan desu ka?
Oku-san wa imasu ka?
OKU-SAN WA IMASU KA?

She's an artificial tan
She's the fat in the pan
She's the film in the can
She's the shit in the fan.

She's the one who ran
When the shooting began.

She's a girl with a plan
She's a boy with a man
She's a dyke with a *femme*
She's a man with a van.

ATTEMPTS ON HER LIFE

She's a dedicated football fan
With limited attention span
LIMITED ATTENTION SPAN!

She's the predator
She's the god of war
She's the fatal flaw

She's the girl she's the girl
She's the girl she's the girl
She's the girl she's the girl
SHE'S THE GIRL NEXT DOOR!

15 THE STATEMENT

Silence.

— You say she rides her bike in all weathers?

— All weathers. That's right.

Silence.

— And wears a hat.

— Yes. She wears a hat.

— Which, you state, she has knitted herself.

— I believe so.

Silence.

— She grows tomato plants in . . .

— Margarine tubs.

— Margarine tubs.

— That's right.

Silence.

Or yoghurt . . .

— Yoghurt pots.

— Yes.

— I see.

Silence.

Why do you think she does that?

ATTEMPTS ON HER LIFE

— What? Grow tomato plants?

— Yes.

Silence.

— For fêtes.

— For what?

— Fêtes. She sells them at fêtes.

— Of course. And I suppose she takes them to the fêtes on her bike.

— Yes she does.

— In all weathers.

— Yes she does.

— In a cardboard box.

— Yes she does.

— Now why do you suppose she does that? Why do you suppose she takes these, what, these tomato plants in yoghurt pots, why do you suppose she takes them on her bike in a cardboard box to fêtes in all weathers?

Long silence.

You state quote as a child she often shared a bed with two or three of her younger siblings unquote. Do you abide by that statement?

— Yes.

— Why?

— Because she did.

— 'Because she did.'

— Because she did, yes. Because they were poor. Because they had nothing.

Different world, eh?

Silence.

If you could just sign here.

What?

Yes. If you could just sign here to say you have read the statement, and consider it accurate.

Silence.

Well, don't you consider it accurate?

If I could have a pen . . .

A pen is produced, the cap removed. The paper is signed and passed back.

Silence.

Is that all?

For the time being. Thank you.

Silence.

Thank you very much.

Silence.

*The principal speaker is a very young woman. As she speaks her words are translated dispassionately into an African, South American or Eastern European language.**

— The best years of her life are ahead of her.
— [translation]

— She may be seventeen or eighteen . . .
— [translation]

— . . . but ideally she's younger . . .
— [translation]

— . . . fourteen perhaps or younger still.
— [translation]

— It's really really important to understand that she is in control.
— [translation]

— She's always in control of everything that happens.
— [translation]

— Even when it looks violent or dangerous.
— [translation]

— Which it is not.
— [translation]

— (*faint laugh*) Obviously.
— [translation]

* In the first production, Portuguese as spoken in Brazil.

- (*faint laugh*) Of course there's no *story* to speak of . . .
- [translation]
- . . . or characters.
- [translation]
- Certainly not in the conventional sense.
- [translation]
- But that's not to say that skill isn't required.
- [translation]
- Since we still need to feel that what we're seeing is real.
- [translation]
- It isn't just acting.
- [translation]
- It's actually far more exacting than acting — for the simple reason that it's really happening.
- [translation]
- A pause. She seems to have forgotten what to say and looks for a prompt.
- Yes?
- (*prompt*) She enjoys her work.
- What?
- (*more emphatic prompt*) She enjoys her work.
- She enjoys her work.
- [translation]
- She's young and fit, and happy with her body.
- [translation]
- How she uses her body is her decision.
- [translation]
- Obviously.
- [translation]

- Porno doesn't stop her leading a normal life.
- [translation] (*In the translation 'Porno' should have a distinctive stress: 'Pornó'.*)
- She has a regular boyfriend . . .
- [translation]
- . . . and all the normal interests of a girl of her age.
- [translation]
- (*faint laugh*) Clothes.
- [translation]
- Boys.
- [translation]
- Make-up. Pets.
- [translation]
- Music.
- [translation]
- The difference is . . .
- [translation]
- . . . is that Porno is building up for her the kind of security and independence many women would envy.
- [translation]
- Porno.
- [translation]
- . . . is actually a way of taking control.
- [translation]
- Porno . . .
- [translation]
- . . . is actually the reverse of what it seems.
- [translation]
- Because rather than *consuming* the images . . .
- [translation]

- ... she is producing them.
- [translation]
- That, for her, is one of the beauties of Porno.
- [translation]
- Again a pause. She seems to have forgotten what to say: but this should imply a distress which is never allowed to surface. She looks for a prompt.*
- Yes?
- (prompt) She is not insensitive to the evening light.
- What?
- (more emphatic prompt) She is not insensitive / to the evening light.
- She is not insensitive to the evening light when it strikes the tops of the pine trees with brilliant orange.
- [translation]
- She has an inner life.
- [translation]
- She responds sensitively to the world.
- [translation]
- The scenario in fact of the drugged and desensitised child ...
- [translation]
- ... humiliated ...
- [translation]
- ... and then photographed or filmed without her knowledge ...
- [translation]
- ... is a ludicrous caricature.
- [translation]
- Again a pause. Again she looks for a prompt.*

- Yes?
- (prompt) Everything is provided.
- What?
- (more emphatic prompt) Everything is provided for her needs.
- Pause.*
- I can't.
- [translation of 'I can't']
- Pause.*
- I can't.
- [translation of 'I can't']
- She turns away. Momentary confusion. But then another speaker takes over. In fact the rest of the company have probably appeared and may share the following lines, while the first girl drinks a glass of water and is revived; again it should not be clear whether she's suffering stage fright or true distress.*
- The translator remains impassive.*
- Everything is provided for her needs. Including a regular education.
- [translation]
- By age twenty-one the best years of her life will still be ahead of her ...
- [translation]
- ... and she'll have money in the bank from Porno.
- [translation]
- Not everyone has this start in life.
- [translation]
- Or her opportunities.
- [translation]

- Obviously.
- [translation]

The young woman gradually begins to join in again, supported by the other voices.

- She could for example become a model . . .
- [translation]
- . . . a TV personality . . .
- [translation]
- . . . run her own country pub or travel the world.
- [translation]
- She could paint . . .
- [translation]
- . . . swim professionally . . .
- [translation]
- . . . or study for a degree in chemical engineering.
- [translation]

All with growing élan.

- Anne could change the world . . .
- [translation]
- . . . end animal suffering . . .
- [translation]
- . . . end human suffering . . .
- [translation]
- . . . and learn to fly helicopters.
- [translation]

Passionate gypsy violin music begins.

- Anne will distribute the world's resources evenly across the earth . . .
- [translation]

- . . . raise from the dust the faces of the disaffected . . .
- [translation]
- . . . while guaranteeing not to erode the privileges of the middle class.
- [translation]
- She will popularise psychoanalytic theory . . .
- [translation]
- . . . by probing the roots of human behaviour . . .
- [translation]
- . . . in a series of weekly magazine articles.
- [translation]

The music intensifies.

- Anne has seen the world from space . . .
- [translation]
- . . . the wrinkles of the mountains . . .
- [translation]
- . . . and the cobalt threads of the rivers.
- [translation]
- She has excavated the shallow graves . . .
- [translation]
- . . . and picked over the shattered skulls of the dead.
- [translation]
- She has scattered information in the optic fibres . . .
- [translation]
- . . . and danced with the particles of light.
- [translation]

Music intensifies. The speakers divide, creating two simultaneous strands, each strand impassively translated into a different language:

- Anne has hosed down the streets of Bucharest — Anne will now demonstrate the crash position . . .
- [translation] — [translation]
- . . . and listened to the foetal heart. — [translation]
- [translation] — . . . which you should adopt when instructed by the stewards . . .
- She has melted with the ice-caps . . . — [translation]
- [translation] — Head down.
- . . . and flowed into the fertile deltas. — [translation]
- [translation] — Knees drawn up.
- [translation] — [translation]
- She has personally endorsed a brand of imported lager. — If oxygen is required . . .
- [translation] — [translation]
- [translation] — . . . oxygen masks will drop down automatically.
- She has bought an entire newspaper page . . . — [translation]
- [translation] — Pull on the mask to start the oxygen.
- . . . to print a full and unreserved apology. — [translation]
- [translation] — Do not smoke while oxygen is in use.
- She has exterminated gypsies . . . — [translation]
- [translation] — Please ensure that your seat-belt is fastened . . .
- . . . and bought a sprig of lucky heather. — [translation]
- [translation] — . . . your table is folded

- She has hung on a cross to die . . . away . . .
- [translation] — [translation]
- . . . risen on the third day from the dead . . . — and that your seat is in an upright position.
- [translation] — [translation]
- . . . grown a beard . . .
- [translation] — During the flight . . .
- . . . and entered Mecca in triumph. — [translation]
- [translation] — . . . we will be coming round with a list of duty-free goods.
- Anne will save us from the anxiety of our century . . . — [translation]
- [translation] — Anne will save us from the anxiety of our century . . .
- . . . and usher in an age in which the spiritual and the material . . . — [translation]
- [translation] — . . . and usher in an age in which the spiritual and the material . . .
- . . . the commercial and the trivial . . . — [translation]
- [translation] — . . . the commercial and the trivial . . .
- . . . the wave and the particle . . . — [translation]
- [translation] — . . . the wave and the particle . . .
- . . . will finally be reconciled! — [translation]
- [translation] — . . . will finally be reconciled!
- [translation] — [translation]

17 PREVIOUSLY FROZEN

- Okay, so there's a lot on her mind. Things have . . .
- Well that's right.
- . . . things have what? Things have *changed* for her over the past few years.
- Well that's absolutely right.
- I mean we can see – let's face it: we can see that something has died.
- Something has what?
- ~~Has~~ died. Something / has died.
- She feels she's failed.
- Exactly. She feels her work's failed.
- But also personally – her work, yes – but also personally she feels that something, something inside of her has died.
- And *has* it?
- What?
- And *has* it died?
- Has what died?
- This thing, this so-called thing inside of her.
- What so-called thing?
- The thing, the thing, the thing, the thing / inside of her.

ATTEMPTS ON HER LIFE

- In her case, yes, let's say it *has* died. Let's say that everything she's ever worked for – her whole life – has died. (*laughter*) Let's say her life up to this point has been what? what? what? like a . . .
- Book?
- Like a book, like a . . .
- Thread?
- Like a book, like a thread, like a . . .
- Boat?
- Like a boat. Let's say her whole life – yes, very good – up to this point has been like a boat, like a small boat . . .
- Drifting.
- . . . drifting quite happily across a lake. But now she feels the water . . .
- Coming in through the cracks?
- Creeping.
- Creeping into what?
- Her broken heart.
- *Laughter.*
- Her broken – exactly – yes – absolutely – heart. She feels the water of the lake creeping into her / broken heart.
- Her *work* abandoned. Her *home* abandoned by her children.
- *Herself* abandoned by her *husband*. Where is *he* now?
- Paris? Prague? / Vienna? Berlin?

MARTIN CRIMP

— Paris? Prague? Fucking? Fucking is he someone half her age in a city of Renaissance palaces and baroque / domes? Enacting some adolescent fantasy, while she attempts to reconstruct her life.

— But she never had a husband.

— She never what?

— Never had a husband. She never believed in marriage.

— Okay. Perhaps she never believed in it, but she had a husband all the same.

Laughter.

— Paul.

— Who?

— Paul.

— Paul? Paul wasn't her *husband*.

Laughter.

— Well who was he then?

— I don't know. He was just some kind of, some kind of, some kind of . . . / *person*.

— Like smoking.

— What? Exactly. Yes. Like smoking cigarettes.

Silence.

— Talking of which, d'you know she still has that tall ashtray on a stalk?

— Talking of what?

— Of which. Talking of which.

ATTEMPTS ON HER LIFE

— She doesn't.

— She does. She still carries it round with her from / room to room.

— It's a ghastly thing.

— It is not a ghastly thing.

— It's like something out of the lobby of a cheap hotel, the kind of hotel you visit for a few hours on a weekday afternoon in a strange city with a man you've / only just met.

— It is. It's like a *spittoon*. Or what's that other thing?

— What thing is that?

— That thing. That word. That other word.

— With a man you'll never see again.

— What? For spittoon?

— With a man — exactly — you've only just met and have no intention of ever seeing again. With its chromium bowl and its chromium stalk and its aura of sudden unprotected sex in cheap hotel rooms. A cuspidor? What's that?

— Humidor?

— No. Not humidor, but like it.

Pause.

— Cuspidor?

— Cuspidor. That's it. It's like a cuspidor.

— A thing. A thing you spit in.

— She doesn't spit. What are you talking about? She doesn't marry. She doesn't have children. And she certainly / doesn't spit.

— No one's saying she spits.

MARTIN CRIMP

- So why then does she have a thing you spit in?
- She doesn't have a thing you spit in, she has a thing that / *resembles* one.
- But in that case, what's a humidor?
- Humidor is Spanish. Like matador.
- Like conquistador.
- It's a box where you / keep cigars.
- It's a box – that's right – where you keep cigars.

Silence.

- So. What? She doesn't work?
- She *does* work.
- She *has* worked.
- She *can* work.
- She *will* work.
- She *won't* work.
- What?
- She won't work.
- But she has skills.
- Oh yes, she has skills but whatever skills she has seem inappropriate to the world she's living in. Whatever work she's done seems inappropriate to the world she's living in. All she can do is pace round the ashtray or pull down books at random from the bookshelves.
- Don't tell me: classic texts.
- That's right – the classic texts she should've read as a student twenty or thirty years ago.

ATTEMPTS ON HER LIFE

- And just like twenty or thirty years ago gets no further than the introductions.
- Laughter.*
- The bits she underlined with a shaky black biro . . .
- Those bits – exactly – that she underlined in biro because she thought they had some what? Some *meaning*?
- Or was taught.
- Or was what?
- Taught. Not necessarily thought, but taught. Taught they had / some meaning.
- Well – thought, taught, whatever, the fact remains she'd rather skim.
- Okay, you mean to skim seems more appropriate to the world / she's living in?
- That's exactly what I mean: she'd rather skim. She'd rather read just the smallest parts of things. Part of a recipe. Part of a letter. Part of / an article.
- Part of a recipe. Part of a letter replying to a letter she's never read about an article she missed.
- What article was that?
- She missed it.
- She missed it – okay – but we can still imagine what she might've missed.
- That thing about the actor.
- That thing about the politician.
- That thing about the fresh salmon.

MARTIN CRIMP

- That thing about the killer. How he'd inflicted a total of 37 stab-wounds on the child's mother as the child slept.
- And it was his own child.
- No, it wasn't his own child. But his own child was there.
- He brought his child to watch.
- He brought his own child – that's right – to watch him murder this other child's mother.
- Brought his own child. Brought his own child in his pyjamas to watch him do it. Stab her. Yes.
- Silence.*
- And *can* it?
- Can it what?
- Mean 'previously frozen'?
- Silence.*
- What thing was that?
- The salmon?
- Yes.
- Well about how you define the word 'fresh'. What the word 'fresh' in a phrase like 'fresh salmon' actually means.
- You mean can it mean 'previously frozen'?
- Exactly.
He did *what*?

THE COUNTRY