

MOVIE TALK FOR MARY WORONOV

Not filmed

Written Fall 1966

THE LIFE OF LADY GODIVA opened on April 21, 1966 and ran until it was busted on May 15th and taken to court as a case engagingly coded, "The City of New York vs. The Life of Lady Godiva." Eventually, the City won, fined the Lady for disrobing without a C. of O., and closed the theatre. I normally didn't write during a New York run in deference to its nearly daily problems, prima donna traumas, and assorted technical emergencies. And on this show, on some nights I even cranked the ancient dimmer board we used on W.17th, and was present when a gelled hot spot overheated, exploded, and ignited Godiva's wig. Since the fire was doused on stage, the audience assumed the spectacle was intentional, and someone in a back seat enthused vociferously, "Gee! What a great effect!"

In June we moved to a loft at 332 The Bowery and Bond and under its skylight I wrote GORILLA QUEEN. I took off for the coast around Independence Day.

In the fall, after THE CHELSEA GIRLS had been successfully premiered, Andy wondered what my next project should be. He concluded, regretfully, that since Mary Woronov was the only performer he had then willing to learn lines, mightn't I reward her with a feature-length monologue? and we'd do a movie in which she appeared solo. At the time, she was basking in his full favor, though that was not to last long. The fact that her monologue is called "Mary Woronov" as opposed to "Mary Might" - which he himself had dubbed her - shows that considerable tension between them already existed, and that she wanted out from the domination of his removing her - in her own word - "identity," the better to make her his property - something new and aggressive, that was gaining unbecoming momentum at the Factory that fall.

Conceding to her talent, the monologue does not entirely express Mary in her own voice or speech patterns, as do roles for Edie, Ondine, Roger and Gerard. That is, this rumination gives her some leeway to find herself as another. The "superior" in it by whom she is troubled is more a cross of Vaccaro and Warhol

than simply Warhol, and the subject matter reflects her own reality right then only in part, though it is there throughout in the hostility and especially the ringing phone which she won't pick up on: as I'd been with her when that happened on a number of occasions. The shadowy, wordless character she appears to address half-heartedly, an enigmatic listener or watcher, is an inevitable emanation given the direction in which the scenarios were moving, or so it seems to me, and an effect I already was incorporating into the Off-Broadway plays (e.g., some stage versions of SCREEN TEST in particular).

By the time I came up with her monologue, there was open warfare between Mary and Andy: Andy put the script on hold, Mary's mother sued him for back payments, won \$1,000, Mary left the Factory definitively, and MOVIE TALK FOR MARY WORONOV went into the rapidly expanding dustbin of indie history.

Early the following year, I called her for the female lead in the Play-House of The Ridiculous' premiere of KITCHENETTE (an expansion and staging of KITCHEN), and she acquitted herself with honors - and a faithful theatre following. At Easter time, GORILLA QUEEN premiered at the Judson Memorial Church and I later wrote the epic ARENAS OF LUTETIA for her, which played the Judson in 1968. She subsequently appeared in revivals of KITCHENETTE as well as a revival of VINYL VISITS AN FM STATION in 1972.

Mary went on to a big screen career in Europe and Hollywood, and though she is best known for THE CHELSEA GIRLS, ROCK 'N ROLL HIGH SCHOOL, PARTS I & II, and EATING RAUL, she truly has appeared in more films than you could comfortably see in a month of non-stop screening. Today she's known as a representational painter and short fiction writer as well as an actress.

MOVIE TALK FOR MARY WARONOV

a scenario by Ronald Tavel



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No, I was just thinking that if somebody else doesn't do it soon I'll have to write a book called "Celibate City." Maybe I'll call it "Famous Celibates I have Known."

(she laughs) Could get run outta town that way. (mean) It would be worth it. And it would be a worthwhile thing. Don't get a chance to do something worthwhile very often, not many people get a chance to do something worthwhile any more. I'd list all my intimates, all the sublimates - "sublimates" - I like that word. Sounds sick. Someone you wanna work clear of. Bad news. Enough material there for a whole thesis, call it "On how most of the evil in the world emanates from impotent sexual frustration." Steer clear. Put it on and steer clear. You listening?..... I'm not trying to come on to you like I can't get it or something. Anybody can get it. I don't walk half a block but some creep's on my tail for tail. And I'm not coming on that I don't take some of them up on it. Once, twice a week, 'bout the time I figure it'll start getting unhealthy if I wait any longer. I turn right around and snarl 'em down: "Wanna go - right now!" Can't count how many chickenshit out. Once, twice a week. In August, sometimes once a day. And then again, at other times I go for two months without it. Once went for a year without it. (laughs) And took a half a year more getting readjusted. Images kept interferring; were insistently more satisfying. Lamented the loss of complete control, proper pressures, just where, just when. (seeming to hear something) What? In August? Don't you get the hots in August? Find myself crawling the walls in the dog days. Even lasts over into September sometimes. No, you know why? Wonder if the "Famous People" I know have sticky sheets in August. (laughs) Probably figure it's sweat, just sweat. ---It is: -mine! Wouldn't

(Sudden switch: she curls up on top of a table or sofa arm)
No, I have nothing against her personally - she's a crazy old lady, that's all. She does her best. No matter what a woman says to the contrary, she always does her best. It's human necessity. But working for her is another matter. It corrupts: that atmosphere of hostility, that energy derived from hatred; you find yourself functioning in the same mode - it's persuasive, after all, how far under any of our skins is hatred lying? It doesn't take that much to surface it. Pretty soon you find yourself cursing everyone just like she does - calling people out for their race or sexual something or other..... Are you listening? That's why I wouldn't want you to work for her; I'd like to see you keep busy, I mean now once that you've started, and not have to fall into that inevitable depression, that slump after activity, but it's more than just how unpleasant it will be for you, it's the corruption that I'm worried about. I've seen a lot of strong people go under. At least, I thought they were strong. Anyway, they different, they weren't like that. Me? I lasted a long time with her. I figure if the core is good, I don't have anything to worry about. I don't even have to think about whether I should or shouldn't do this that or the other thing. The core will tell me. It will feel sick if the act is inappropriate. It will tell me to leave, gather wool somewhere else. Yeah, I lasted a long time with her, but even me - she got through to me in the end. Made me immobile. Really undermined my confidence in myself. You'd think it would take more than a crazy old lady to get through in a deadening way like that. But it doesn't. How strong is any of us? Day after day, not seeing me, not seeing a thing about me, so utterly without comprehension, that's what did it more than anything else I think. That's pretty lonely going, wouldn't you say? I mean, if you given to saying anything? Wonder about that sometimes. How do I do it myself? All that time spent, all that involvement with and standing by someone who doesn't even see you, imagines your produce as something she "can work with." Tells you, But don't you know I hate products! No ability to evaluate my work either. Really doesn't know where it's at. That's what hurts the most, I

suppose. And that's what I get for a public life. When everything you do is with other people, out there constantly and I don't know when I last had five minutes to myself, you necessarily become a good deal of what goes goes on in their heads. What they make of you becomes part of you and I mean that in more than just the metaphysical sense. And then you have to live with that, live with it, which means more than just dealing with it. Then their amusing stupidities work all through you, part and parcel of their whole and now yours. And it's not too amusing anymore. And whether it's stupid or not, it has very much to be dealt with. I keep thinking there's a way to go through it all with dignity and grace and maybe there is but wouldn't it be better to retire a little on what is really there inside, I mean me alone with books or something? With books or something. I like that.

(She gets up and walks around, lights a cigarette; behind her movements we perceive a figure sitting with back to the camera, but the figure is indistinct, is apparently to whom Mary is addressing herself.)

Me? They say I'm all defense. That the toughness is nerves, the "what the hell, they don't matter, this doesn't matter, screw them all" is just nerves, fear, defense. Puts some people off they say. They wait for the smile. Wait... you'll get it. A love, love, a love: nobody has it. I haven't seen it. (tough) Everybody's looking for it. Every damn body. A lot worship me - women think they'd like to look like me - naturally I'm contemptuous when I feel that - turns you off. What? me get people hot? (laughs) You're not listening, but then I wouldn't listen either. Wonder if he'll rehire me? Think he really wants me again? Wonder why. (She puts out the cigarette) But I will tell you something about yourself. I think it's about responsibility. You don't have it. And so having you is not like anything, it's like not having. I'd like to forgive you but it's not in my nature and anyhow it's not worthwhile. After the first infidelity there is no other. It eats away at my core. You are whole. I cry to have you back but it's all shit. Who needs it? I mean, even if it could be? And that's not even thinking that it might

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happen again. No, I wouldn't kill you. I didn't the first time. You're not worthy of that much response from me. Not worthy, that's it. Completely unworthy of me. Funny thing to say about a complete other being. But it's true. And if at least that's squared away, something's accomplished. So I can start out all over again. Can ya beat that? The way I figure it I don't have to settle for sharing you or anyone else with someone else. Got anymore smart theories about community living? Don't bother saving the crumbs for me. Man, I got past that kinda manure in elementary school. Wonder when Gerard's poetry issue of Film Culture is coming out.....

(We glimpse the seated figure again; it appears to be a man)

(A telephone rings. She pauses and listens.)

The phone again. I'm not stupid - I'm not going to answer it. Not this time, oh, no, not this time. That phone keeps ringing--

(The phone keeps ringing)

but no one ever answers. Some freak that calls this number. He'll call again. And again and again. When I pick it up, no answer. He hangs up right away. I can hear the click as soon as I pick it up. Sometimes there's no click. He listens. He waits. I don't say anything. If I curse or something, it'll encourage him. I wait; he waits. We wait. You listening? Then he hangs up. That's all. No sound, no heavy breathing, no music, no whine. No complaint. And I don't complain either. So why should I answer it? We're both happy.

(The phone stops ringing.)

Some people would call it a nuisance call, but I say he he's just trying to make contact; or she's just trying to make contact; she. Ummmmmm. I've been getting these headaches recently. Little headaches at the back of my head. I'm not prone to them. And excedrin takes care of them right away. So even that's not important. But my time is. I was just getting ready to start something when you came in. Just got into the correct mental frame to get some work done. The work is much more than what I do at the bench. Usually it's mostly wandering around the pad, lying on the bed and staring at the ceiling for hours, the cracks in the white wall. Then I go to the bench for two or three hours and the work is done, done.