



LIVE UNDERGRADUATE *IDEAS* PRIMARY TEXTS JOURNAL

OCTOBER 2019

*“...Men want to be beautiful.
Women have this beauty naturally
in their essence, but men...we have
to make ourselves beautiful. And,
there are only a few of us who ever
attain this state.”*

-Suan Sonna, pg 65

*You were my home; the home to my
children. That selfish storm, with its
mighty winds and copious rain, took
you in what seemed like an instant.*

-Alissa Rehmert, pg 3

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—Jakob Hanschu & Laurie Johnson



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No. 972. GRIZZLY GIANT (101 feet in circumference), California.

TIMBER FALLS

Alissa Rehmert
senior | english

No. 972. GRIZZLY GIANT (101 feet in circumference), California.

It is incredibly easy to look at an event in our own individual lives, whether the event be major or minor, and disregard the effects that event may have on other people or things. This piece explores three different points of view of one particular event: a tree falling.

Keywords: Point of view, tree, storms, perspective

No. 972. GRIZZLY GIANT (101 feet in circumference), California.

The piercing light whispers “good morning” as it kisses our sleeping faces. Expelling a groggy groan, I roll from my left side to my right. Still basking in a restful tranquility, my husband, Jon, smiles slightly. I watch as his bare chest, like a small boat on pleasant waters, gently bobs. It seems an eternity passes before his green eyes flutter open and, with sleep still in his eyes, he locks onto my face.

Pouncing on top of him, I shriek, “Happy Jon Day!”

He murmurs, “Morning.”

Thirteen hours march faithfully by as noon-light overthrows morning-light and darkness rejoices in his victory over them all. Jon and I sit at our dining room table preparing to play our favorite card game, The Legend of the Five Rings. While shuffling our cards, thunder shakes the house and lightning brightens the dark sky. Suddenly, something hard slams into our front door.

Curious, Jon jumps up and walks out the door to investigate the clamor. As I wait patiently for his return, my stomach ties itself into worrisome knots. Jon quickly darts in saying, “It is like a hurricane out there!”

A lightning bolt flashes as I rush to the windowed front door. With cautious anticipation I rip open the blinds so we may peek outside. In awe, I watch as the trees bend to the mighty wind’s ruthless power.

“GET OUT OF THE HOUSE! Get out the back door, NOW!” Jon howled.

Though I am not fully dressed, the sense of urgency in his voice prompts me to simply follow his commands. Once outside, he tells me he watched the tree, which is less than a foot from our house, uproot and rip up our walkway. As we stand outside in the pouring rain, trying to figure out what to do, we watch as the massive tree rips through a powerline and erupts into hot flames. Jon whips out his phone and dials 911. The fire department, in their shiny metallic car, come to the rescue in mere minutes.

“Happy Jon Day...” I softly whisper as I rub Jon’s sopping-wet back.

~~~

You were my home; the home to my children. That selfish storm, with its mighty winds and copious rain, took you in what seemed like an instant. Before that moment, you were eternal — consistently mine, but then you were gone and I was left with only memories. Oh! What searing loss!

Two years ago I flew to you, drawn by your lush green canopy. Your lovely barked branches seemed to reach the endless sky. You were my resort, giving my tired wings long-due rest after



my, sometimes extensive, journeys. It was in the safety of your sturdy grasp that I decided to raise my family. Gently, you held my intricately and carefully weaved nest. Standing beside me, you witnessed the very day my babies, red and brown, emerged from their delicate shells. From your branches, they ate their first meal, sang their first song, and bravely set out on their first flight. That was long ago, and I am sure my family was one of many to take refuge in your lovely sanctuary.

Now your wooden corpse lay, unmoving, on the shimmering green grass. Off I go on an impossible journey of replacing you — of replacing my home. The wind, which guides me, led you to your final resting place: for you, just as all living things, could not stand forever.

~~~

She ripped through him like the vicious teeth of a chainsaw. Out of total darkness, she appeared, taking everything he ever knew. He valiantly fought as she pushed and pushed, but he could not handle her brute strength. Being old and, therefore, wise, he surmised he had little chance against her agility and youth.

She was a violent storm, formed from pure hatred and black, wicked sin. Bloodthirsty, she travelled across the Midwest, tearing apart anything and anyone who dared cross her path. She had no qualms with anyone in particular, but with life as a whole. On this night, her dark soul hovered over Kansas, brooding.

He, as always, stood strong in the well-manicured yard. Faithfully, he provided shelter to the various forms of wildlife in the area. Several birds, ants, squirrels, and occasionally an opossum or two, called his rough, yet secure, arms home. He took pride in his role as both provider and protector. Tonight, however, he felt a tinge of base fear as the sky above him rumbled in anger.

Soon, the storm began her reckless plight. She blew as hard as she could, just hoping something would bow to her awesome power. Soon, she saw him, nauseatingly snug and firmly planted. With all of her might, she blew. A surge of raw electricity rippled through her as she saw a young man exited his home to observe her dominance.

Quickly, the man ran inside and she refocused on the overly confident tree. In seconds, her mission was accomplished as his wooden legs snapped underneath him. He fell and burst into red hot flames. The young man ran out from his cursed shelter with a woman. The storm reveled in the primal terror displayed on their pathetic faces.

The tree, defeated, lay among the grassy blades he always admired from afar. Never had he been so close to Mother Earth. A sense of bittersweet happiness overtook him as he faded away. The storm proudly stood above him, looking for a new victim to destroy — for she knew the strength she possessed and would allow no one the luxury of doubting her ever again. ~



SPEAKING JOKES TO POWER: COMEDIAN HANNAH GADSBY TAKES ON ART

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Hannah Gadsby's timely comedic performance, "Nanette," handles cultural issues, ranging from gender roles and representation to the dominant narratives that shape experiences and perceptions of the world, cleverly and devastatingly. Gadsby assumes the role of an artist while criticizing the power and privilege granted to artists. As an art form in itself, this stand-up act, "Nanette," demands to be noticed.

Keywords: Comedy, Culture, Art, Hannah Gadsby

"Gadsby, like many women, is done hiding her anger, and in 'Nanette' she bends the bounds of stand-up to accommodate it," reads a raving review in The New Yorker (Donegan 2018). Indeed, this act diverges from what is typical of a comedy special. Comedian Hannah Gadsby uses her hour on the stage to tackle a range of topics including, but not limited to, the #metoo movement, the LGBTQ+ community, mental illness, identity, politics, privilege, and even Western art history. Being politically and socially charged, the performance provides stimulating critiques on these issues and, more broadly, the stories that are told surrounding them. Yet within this torrent of calculated humor and fiery proclamations, Hannah Gadsby remains true to her art and keeps people laughing.

Throughout her acclaimed and timely performance, Gadsby admits she knows her craft well; she reveals that the way to win a good laugh from the crowd is to produce tension. As a comedian, her job is to play this tension as an art form. She labors to build it and then lets it simmer until finally delivering the punchline, saving the audience from its own discomfort and letting it experience a flood of relief and laughter. It's an abusive relationship, she acknowledges, this manipulation of tension and relief.

Strikingly, the comedian performs with a cognizance of how significant her moment on stage is as an artist. Barbara Babcock explains the significance of such moments, saying, "Performers and performances (verbal, dramatic, or artifactual) not only follow but

revise and revitalize accepted rules, acting out and challenging aesthetic conventions and social values" (1993: 75). This is precisely how Gadsby postures herself and her art, with a trajectory to accomplish revision and revitalization. Pushing the boundaries of comedy, she implores her laughing audience to thoughtfully explore conflicts that burden many people within society today: gender roles, the dominant narratives of society, and our culture's obsession with reputation.

The comedian draws on Western art and the broader ties it has to culture, the complex

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and systematic interconnectedness of human relations that help shape experiences and perceptions, as a vehicle for this exploration.

Gadsby purposefully tackles a subject that plays a significant role in dynamics of oppression, flirting with the boundaries of convention. In an entire portion of her show, the comedian jokes about the portrayal of women in art, and these jokes serve a greater purpose than to simply coax a laugh. Gadsby critiques how men's presentations of women have become fixed within culture, exaggerating them as the natural way. She expresses that artistic depictions of women make her feel like a different species. Distinctions between



herself and the species of “dumb history women” include how she always remembers to get completely dressed, “especially if I am leaving the house to get my portrait painted,” and her ability to generate her own thoughts while, “Historically, women didn’t have time for the think-thoughts. ... They were too busy napping naked, alone, in the forest.” This rhetoric proves to be a crucial point in her exposition. Margaret Miles commented on a “need in a male-dominated culture to preserve male control in a form that tends to be thought of simply as ‘order.’ A central component of maintaining and reproducing social order is through the management of women, and a powerful strategy for controlling women is their public presentation (in art, in the media).” Miles’ assertion suggests art to play a forceful role within culture. As well, ramifications of the portrayals of men and women are thought by feminists to contribute to “gender relations of dominance and subordination,” which remain “determined largely by men” (Witcombe 1995: 5, 4, 5). Emphasizing this in one of her most pointed moments of the performance, the comedian exclaims, “The history of Western art is just the men painting women like they’re flesh vases for their dick flowers!” (Olb 2018: 00:48:21-00:50:11). Such honed rage is what makes this stand-up act stand out.

The relationship between artists and their artwork prompts these recurring depictions to be questioned. As can be seen, there is more at stake than a woman being painted promiscuously on a canvas; such images being produced can be revealing

of both the artist and the culture. Clifford Geertz, when referring to the views of Matisse, professes, “The means of an art and the feeling for life that animates it are inseparable.” Art, in its unparalleled fashion, exposes what is within the artist, and much of this is connected to how the artist encounters his or her surroundings.

Praising the art can equate to praising the person, for if Matisse claimed, “I am unable to distinguish between the feeling I have for life and my way of expressing it,” about his own art, is it possible for the audience to make such a distinction between the artist and the art (Geertz 1976: 1477, 1475)? What does this say about the art that is adored within our culture and the images they convey?

***“THE MEANS OF AN ART
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ARE INSEPARABLE.”***

Delving deeper into this question, Gadsby works to convince the audience of the fact that famed Western artists were just as much steeped within their own culture as the rest of humankind, despite how they are not often perceived in such a way. Due to their unique contributions, people often remark such artists like Van Gogh, for example, were “ahead of their time.” This otherness is often suggested as a reason for why they suffered and experienced difficulty throughout life.

In comedic style, Gadsby exaggerates the obvious, knocking the esteemed from their

pedestals: “Nobody is born ahead of their time. It’s impossible!” She comments that this stems from a romanticizing of mental illness, but at the plight of this rant another key point is made, “Artists don’t invent zeitgeist. They respond to it” (Olb 2018: 00:44:45-00:45:21). The importance of this part of the argument lies in illustrating that the identity of artists, and by extension their art, is contained within a relationship to the surrounding culture.

Considering this, the artist can be seen as representative, to a certain extent, of an aspect of the culture in which they existed, and art can be viewed as a product of this interaction between the artist and the outside world. This holds a problematic possibility when examining the legacy many of these individuals left behind. Pablo Picasso serves as a sobering example of the troubling implications within this discussion.

A suspect side of Picasso’s reputation is recounted within Sally Price’s book, *Primitive Art in Civilized Places*. Price describes how the painter had been praised for introducing artwork that was considered original while in reality it was only original to the elite Western art scene. Picasso’s piece was an imitation, yet this imitation gained more status and value than the historically original, which is used to exemplify the low value placed on “primitive” art and the power of an artist like Picasso’s reputation (Price 1989: 96). This is precisely what Gadsby conspicuously alludes to when she speaks on the liberties that have been allowed to Picasso’s reputation for the sake of his artwork. It is then taken a step further in

the stand-up act when Gadsby levels Picasso's artwork with a personal appraisal that it would be worth nothing at an auction without his name attached to it (Olb 2018: 00:52:15-00:52:27).

Gadsby begins her commentary on Picasso, appropriating it for modern times, by claiming he suffered from a mental illness. His mental illness, according to the comedian: misogyny. But cubism! Picasso introduced cubism, and Gadsby hails the pivotal development it was, as it allowed people to view many different perspectives within a single canvas. "But tell me," Gadsby counters, "any of those perspectives a woman's?" The comedian describes Picasso's character with a revealing quote: "Each time I leave a woman, I should burn her. Destroy the woman, you destroy the past she represents" (Olb 2018: 00:51:16-00:54:48). To Gadsby, the artist's contribution does little to mitigate his misogyny, but it cannot be said that the same stance is taken by our society. Such grim content is set to provide an underlying theme for how notable men within history are remembered and their work, venerated. Meanwhile, the atrocities of these men are rendered insignificant. This only perpetuates the cycle of power, feeding into many of the social issues reverberating within society today.

The comedy routine morphs into a keen discussion about the power structures and figures shaping the experiences of many. By speaking about Picasso's reputation and the high regard for his artwork, she moves to address figures like Donald Trump and

Bill Clinton. In her mind, these individuals are not so different, specifically considering the impact politicians, celebrities, and artists have. "Artists," Gadsby declares, "have always been very much a part of the world, and very, very firmly attached to power." Further, the comedian even abstracts upon the existence of her art and proposes that a driving purpose for comedy is to keep those in a position of power in check, which she claims has not been done sufficiently (Olb 2018: 45:34-45:44, 00:55:53-00:56:16). If artists truly embody a key part of the systems of power, their integrity along with the art being revered should be under appropriate scrutiny.

***"ARTISTS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN
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However, the response to such a statement can be concerning when considering the distinguished contributions individuals like Picasso made. The entanglement displayed here is a tedious one, for men like Picasso are found to be recurring figures throughout much of our history. This is the true issue. The reputations of such figures are protected because our story is a bleak one if it follows questionable people like Picasso. "We think reputation is more important than anything else," Gadsby states, and the consequences of this are not to be underestimated. "They

are not individuals, they are our stories," and according to her, the moral of our story, the story of our history, our culture, our society, is that, "We only care about a man's reputation." The comedian does not find this agreeable, and she imparts this tension to all those listening: "What about his humanity?" (Olb 00:56:31-00:57:17). Ultimately, not only are the reputations of such men like Picasso being valued, but the models of how they lived are still firmly attached to power, providing a driving narrative for even today.

The stories of our society and the humanity of those informing them are not matters to be taken lightly. These are crucial to the culture we innovate and the lived experiences of everyone within it. Christopher Witcombe explains, when discussing visual art, social practices, and social representation, "each acts on the other in many tiny ways to nuance or reinforce, to correct or reiterate the role, behaviour, and attitude of women and men in relation to the status quo" (1995: 5). In this light, it is important to recognize how Gadsby through her art can be both perpetuating social roles and producing new ones. She speaks with the voice of a minority, including the narrative of being a lesbian woman, and of being hurt, abused, marginalized and traumatized, but she takes these experiences to push back against the systems that allowed such to happen. She also produces the role within the comedy scene, within the art of stand-up, of a woman telling her own story, avoiding the temptation to truncate it in the form of a joke, with such fervor that it is too compelling for everyone

not to listen and take notice.

What is expected to be an hour of entertainment and laughs turns out to be so much more for those watching Hannah Gadsby's "Nanette." Her art is used to do what she believes it should; it questions those in power. Gadsby's comedy contributes to a greater force emerging within a myriad of disciplines struggling to give women, those within the LGBTQ+ community, and so many others that have been silenced a voice within the story.

Karen Leong states, "Critical analyses of western women's history disrupt[s] the conventional narratives of U.S. western history by making visible how the dominant ideologies of whiteness, gender, and liberalism ... have been and continue to be foundational

***"ARTISTS DON'T
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to U.S. western history as it has been largely understood, produced, and reproduced" (2010: 621). Gadsby personifies how this disruption is not something exclusive to the United States. "Nanette," in its essence, is a timely performance within this emergence to challenge the systems of oppression. Just as she said, "Artists don't invent zeitgeist. They respond to it" (Olb 2018: 00:44:45-00:44:52).~



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IN PRIMAVERA

Mawi Sonna

senior | english

This poem carries both the experiences of being a child and remembering what it is like to be a child again. It holds very personal memories for me, because my first job as a freshman in college through senior year was working for my church's nursery, and since then a private daycare. I've never lived "in the moment" as much as I have when I work with children, or have my patience tried. They are reminders that we are much larger versions of a smaller self. A self with our own strange quirks, needs, and wonderful perspectives. This poem is full of happy contradictions, such as joy and sadness, and openness and hiddenness. Childhood is full of contradictions to an adult, but for a child it is a part of learning how to be human.

Keywords: childhood, memories, wonder

It is bone and soul that leap in dance and anger. Legs chasing
wildflower and familiar. In stomps. Forever twirls and little wounds.
It is feeling everything and everything like nothing
because words are still strange and so hard. And feelings are more real
when it burns the face. And that's okay.
Because perhaps it is easier dreaming in blanket and sand,
since a hand doesn't have to be a hand, or a mouth.
And it is eyes that laugh with secrets hidden
beneath a kind of grin only a child knows,
but if you ask enough
maybe they'll tell you only parts of the body, where
the moon goes to hide, or why why is their only question.
Perhaps it is between the crease of an elbow,
the follicle where scalp meets hair,
teeth clenched in blackberries, or dandelions,
or where joint and skin touch cloud and star.
It is bone and soul that wave hellos in Mother May I's.
It is wrapped around the belly. Like clovers. And lullabies.
It is wanting and wanting, until becoming its own kind of game,
which ends like another end, unwilling.
And it is I love yous wrapped in colors outside of Pooh's lines,
and goodbyes in single redwood petals.
It is wonder and a wish on a honeysuckle,
stories of nonsense and good sense aching
to be real. Where time is unknown
and unknown is innocence alive
without regret.

WHAT ABOUT ME?

A Message from Walter Sterling

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I first got the inspiration to write this poem after a particularly enlightening lecture in my Intro to American Ethnic Studies (ANTH 160) class my Sophomore year at K-State. I had just begun to understand the difference between ethnocentrism and ethno-relativism, which sparked my inspiration to write about Wallace Sterling. This character I created is an author who has observed some of the bloodiest conflicts in history and has written books with the intent of sparking a divide within people. His incendiary messages of hatred and violence still echo in the news, and he tries to defy critics who speak out against his villainous nature. I named the character/narrator Wallace Sterling because it's a portmanteau of George Wallace and Donald Sterling, two notorious racists from recent American history.

"Wallace Sterling" is my own allegory for the evils of white supremacy, and how its coded language in the modern age of social media carries the same nefarious, sinister power just as it did decades and centuries ago.

Keywords: poetry, current events, racism

Hello there, old friend
It's been too long
Oh, you don't know me? Never met me?
Well, allow me to introduce myself
My name is Wallace Sterling
But you can call me "w.s." for short
You may not know it, but I've been by your side everywhere you've gone
Into every building you walked
I've overheard every conversation you've ever had with any sort of person
I've been around for as long as you've been alive
Even before that
I've witnessed some of the most important historical events
Seen the bloodiest battles
Marveled at new technologies
And watched people fight for their voices to be heard in society
I jotted down notes at many of these events
My journal entries are read about in schools across the country
Despite my notoriety
Some people have the nerve to try to silence me
My eyewitness accounts have stirred up many conversations
About whether I'm really telling the truth
Or just making up tall tales
Yet, most tend to agree my findings are legitimate
Regardless of anyone who dares to question my logic
Almost every time this debate has happened
Pathos has trumped logos
And you may not know it
But people have tried to get you to believe that argument since you were very young
Teachers, parents...
Damn near anyone older than you
Stating that what I've written is the stone-cold truth
Before going on their merry way
What people fail to realize, though
Is that my words are more powerful than they think
I'm somewhat of a sorcerer of scripture
Casting spells, hypnotizing men, women & children
My literary voice has the power
To take a rationally thinking human
And transform them into a wild beast
Like a bear, swatting at honeybees

Or chasing after a helpless deer
My words have the strength to silence. Any. Doubters.
And whether you know it or not
My teachings are now world-famous
Oh, it's not like I'll go on book tours, giving speeches, showing up at meet-and-greets
No, no, dear me... I'm much too shy
Luckily, my notes convey what I have to say, with such clarity
That some of the most powerful world leaders in history
Have sworn by them, taught them to thousands, even millions of people
While I must confess my words have done much more harm than good
I think it's cute that I have so many loyal fans
Willing to do anything to shout down the Critics
My journals have practically been bestsellers for decades, even centuries
And they still continue to be popular today
Through books, CDs, podcasts, YouTube videos, websites
Even the evening news if you know where to look
I have mentioned a few times my distaste for Criticism
Lately, it's becoming stronger than ever
People saying that my words will only cause more divisiveness and hatred
Fools! I'll make sure they eat their words
I'll make sure that my believers - I mean, fans - shut the Critics up
Even if it takes fire, bullets, and bloodshed to keep them at bay
Why, what I've written about is enough to make the Most Powerful Man on Earth sing his praises for me!
He only THINKS he's the most powerful!
In reality, he's just part of my puppet show
That I write, produce, and direct
Everybody who's read my books
Tell me they've changed their lives
Now, my believers are never afraid to stand up for me
When the Critics tell me what I'm doing is wrong
They always ask, "What about Wallace? His opinion matters, too!"
Yes...What...About...Me?
My teachings are everywhere
They're being talked about on the news
Every morning, noon, and night!
I can't tell you how happy I feel when one of my fans makes the news
Ooh, I shiver with excitement just thinking about it!
Can you imagine? Someone willing to raise Hell and spill buckets of blood...
Just to prove their undying loyalty to you?

I think it's quite an honor!
You might be thinking, "Wallace, your words can't possibly reach THAT many people, can they?" (1)
I say, just look around you
There are more and more people across this land
Trying to make this country better
By going out to spread my teachings
Every single day
They're doing it while walking, running
Equality-shunning
Jumping, flying
GeNoCiDe-DeNyInG
Skyping, typing
PUNch-BOwL-SPIkING
Hiking, biking
THIRD-REICHING
EVIDENCE-HIDING
STEREOTYPING
RACIAL PROFILING-!
You know...pretty much anything I say is the RIGHT thing...¹
So, now that I've told you a little bit about myself, what do you think?
Want to take a look into my books?
Want to preach the message of world-famous Wallace Sterling?
C'mon, just do it
You know you want to...
Oh, and if I were you
I wouldn't say anything bad about these books
I worked really hard on them
I wouldn't want my nice, caring fans to think that you're a Critic
You don't want my FANS to come out and change your mind
...would you?

(1) The section of the poem from “Skyping, typing...RIGHT thing” is interpolated from two different rap battles, “Rone vs. Caustic (2010)”, released in 2010 by American battle rap league Grind Time Now, and “Rone vs. Caustic (Title Match)”, released in 2016 by Canadian battle rap league King of the Dot. Both battles were written by Adam Ferrone, aka Rone, and Daniel Stefani, aka Caustic.

SEPARATE SPACES AND LANGUAGE CHOICE IN SAUDI ARABIA

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Do men and women talk differently? This question has been the focus of many Western based studies, but what about in other cultures? This paper explores the ways in which Saudi Arabian culture is transforming language use. Since culture alters essentially every part of society, it is increasingly beneficial to support a more holistic and global mindset.

Keywords: Linguistics, Anthropology, gender segregation, Saudi Arabia, hegemony

Introduction

Imagine being told your whole life that sitting behind the wheel of a car could cause birth defects for your child. Imagine needing to get a man's permission to receive higher education. Now imagine not being able to walk in the same entrance as your boyfriend, husband, or even brother or father because men and women have to use different entrances. It may seem unimaginable to many people, but for many women in Saudi Arabia, this is reality. This article will explore the legal insistence on separate spaces and roles for men and women in Saudi Arabia, and the influence of this law on language use and choices made regarding language. Although it will focus on the impact that gender segregation has on women, it by no means erases the fact that men too are being affected. It is also important to note that every generalization about a culture norm, value, or tradition comes with exceptions. Saudi Arabia is made up of many diverse groups of people, social patterns, and linguistic variations. Therefore, any generalizations made should be treated as a "loose" patterns that may not apply to every situation.

Interconnected: Language, Culture, and Gender

Language and culture are complexly intertwined, constantly evolving and influencing one another. In the words of Fatiha Guessabi, a professor of Languages and Translation, "the meanings of a particular language represent the culture of a particular social group. To interact with a language

means to do so with the culture which is its reference point (2017)." Understanding this connection is critical in understanding how the legal insistence on separate spaces and roles for men and women in Saudi Arabia is influencing language choice. Language is not only grammar, syntax, and vocabulary, but also the cultural meaning that is embedded within it. The fact that cultural norms and customs are entrenched within language makes language even more powerful because it shapes how we see the world and how we live in it. For this reason, it is imperative that gender differences are analyzed through the lens of language. Not only does language play a role in determining gender roles, but it also influences how a society or culture defines gender. For example, many cultures have more than two genders.

By analyzing gender difference through a linguistic lens, culture, language, and gender are seamlessly interwoven in a way that helps one realize their most basic assumptions. This is also why it is essential that young people are exposed to different languages and thus, different ways of living, being, and thinking. It allows them to start the conversation, dispel stereotypes, and combat ethnocentrism, the belief that one's culture is superior to others and then judging other cultures from the perspective of one's own culture.

Separate Spaces

Saudi Arabia is a desert country that makes up most of the Arabian Peninsula. Its society is based on conservative Muslim ideals, many of which preserve long standing

patriarchal traditions. However, when discussing legalities in a country so governed by religion, it is important to understand that the laws discussed do not represent the faith of Islam as a whole but are specific cultural interpretations of Islam. For example, though many laws treat women unfairly, this does not mean that the Islamic faith is inherently anti-woman. Nevertheless, as a result of its patriarchal social order, Saudi Arabia is ranked 138th out of 144 countries in World Economic Forum's 2017 Global Gender Gap Index, which considers elements such as political empowerment and economic opportunity. One of the most influential factors in maintaining this gender gap—and gendered language—is that Saudi Arabian society is separated into gendered spaces.

Saudi Arabian social and cultural norms uphold a long-standing tradition of patriarchy that emphasize the women's sphere as domestic. Women stay at home and care for the family in a private setting, while men are considered the "breadwinners," working and interacting in public spaces.

Social Separation

The gender dichotomy in Saudi Arabia is also perpetuated through the types of professions a woman can hold. Institutions of authority like government, religion, and law are all reserved for men (only 5.8% of legislators, senior officials, and managers are women) while women are typically found in professions that reflect their care-taking roles such as health care and education. This

has also been instituted legally: the Saudi labor code states that women shall work in all fields "suitable to their nature" (Manea 2013). This essentially excludes women from the workforce through legal means. It is also important to note that employers may not want to hire women because they may have to spend extra money on separate offices, toilets, recreational areas, and even entrances (Brightside 2018). Although more women are joining the workforce as a result of increased access to education, Saudi Arabia continues

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to have a lower number of women in the workforce than men.

The male guardianship system also plays a major role in maintaining women's underrepresentation in both political and civic spheres (Human Rights Watch, 2017). In accordance with the system, every adult woman must have a male guardian, usually a father or a husband, who makes important decisions on her behalf, including everything from permission to travel, marry, exit prison, and even to go to the police. This system can minimize women's participation in politics because when women are asked to prove residency in their voting district, some are

unable to do so because their names are not listed on housing deeds or rental agreements.

Physical Separation

Although situations do exist in which women are present in public spaces, many times, these spaces are structured in ways that prevent gender mixing. For example, signs can be found outside of many establishments denoting who is allowed inside, and in family restaurants, families are concealed by boxes to separate them from the public. Some spaces are explicitly gender-segregated, like those with signs. Others spaces, such as cafes, are implicitly gender-segregated based on assumed cultural knowledge (Le Renard 2008). Gender segregation in all workplaces, except hospitals, is enforced by The Commission for the Promotion of Virtue which is government-backed.

The Effect of Gender-Specific Networks on Language

The official language of Saudi Arabia is Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), however there are many regional variants, or dialects, such as Najdi Arabic, Hejazi Arabic, and Gulf Arabic. MSA is used in institutions of authority such as government, religion, and finance. For example, it is used "during Friday noon prayers that are regularly broadcast on loud speakers by mosques in many neighborhood" as well as during discourse in judicial courts (Ismail 2012). In these domains, education and formality is valued to a greater extent than locality and community, both of which are characteristics

connotated with dialectal forms of Arabic.

While both men and women typically utilize both MSA and dialectal variations, previous studies have found that gender segregation in Saudi Arabia is reinforcing differences in language use between women and men. (Ismail 2012, Le Renard 2008, and Ibrahim 1986). Women tend to prefer dialectical variations, the more casual or colloquial form of Arabic, while men opt for MSA. This can be attributed to the fact that men and women rarely interact outside of domestic spaces. Since societal norms restrict women's mobility in the public sphere, their social networks are closed. They are often rooted in the local community, among other women, interact frequently and build strong relationships. By using regional forms, women emphasize their ties to the community and provincial area. In contrast, men tend to have open networks where there are not as many strong ties nor fewer close-knit relationships (Milroy, Lesley, Margrain 1980).

Using MSA portrays a global identity and reflects the role of men in Saudi Arabian society as the family wage-earner and provider. Since men are more greatly involved in the "supralocal context," a "non-localized dialectal form that has a broad geographical range" is more fitting to their needs (Ismail 2012). Even more so, MSA is a standardized, institutionalized, and public language, which in a patriarchal society belongs to the male sphere, connoting both masculinity and authority (Ismail 2012, Bakir 1986). This also contributes to why the majority of women

do not correlate MSA with themselves or their speech style. Many times they may feel unworthy or unentitled to speak MSA, since it is so heavily associated with the masculine sphere. Lastly, men have greater access to educational and occupational opportunities than women, so it allows them greater chances to practice MSA.

Difference in Pronunciation and Vocabulary
(Words and pronunciations written in italics or between / slashes / are written in the International Phonetic Alphabet)

Difference in pronunciation is yet another way the gender gap in Saudi Arabia is reflected in the language use of Saudi men and women. In pronouncing different words, one would have the choice of using a more standard MSA pronunciation or using a more provincial pronunciation. In various studies, researchers found that women were more likely to use the provincial pronunciations than the MSA pronunciations. The opposite was true for men (Ismail 2012, Ibrahim 1986, Bakir 1986). For example, Arab women more frequently chose to use the dialectical pronunciation /q/ than the MSA pronunciation /g/ in words such as ha:da, which means “this.” Both /q/ and /g/ are stops, which means that it is a sound made by completely blocking airflow. The difference between the two is that /q/ is made by touching the tongue to the uvula, as opposed to /g/, which is produced by touching the tongue to the velum, or soft palate (Ismail 2012). The same thing happened with the sounds /k/ and /č/. Bakir found that not only was the

standard /k/ more prominent in men’s speech than the non-standard /č/, but also that they used it more than women. Similarly, the data shows that women used the non-standard /č/ more than the standard /k/ and that they used the pronunciation /č/ more often than men (1986).

Just as with the differences in pronunciation, there is also notable disparity in men’s and women’s choice of vocabulary, lexemes in particular. A lexeme refers to a single word, for instance, “run,” and all of its forms, in this case run, running, runs, and ran. In Ismail’s study, of the 258 total non-standard lexemes used during the formal interviews, which was the selected method of collecting data, 203 of them were used by women (Ismail 2012). One example would be the words used to describe the negative version of “but,” “but not.” Women used the word “bas mu,” an informal, colloquial vocabulary term, while men used the standard word “la:kin leisa.” This discrepancy continues to bolster the assertion that women use more colloquial words to emphasize locality while men use more formal words.

Conclusion

Since Saudi Arabian society asserts that women’s place is in the home, men deal with public situations and represent women in various ways, such as with the male guardianship system. This gender segregation is then reflected in the linguistic behavior of women and men: men tend to favor MSA, emphasizing formality and a more public persona, while women tend to use regional

variations that show locality and connection to the community. Their linguistic choices seem to correlate with the spheres in which they are involved: men are in the global and public sphere, while women are in the local and

gaps. By more closely analyzing linguistic choices, the dynamic interaction between language and culture is revealed. ~

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DIFFERENCES...”*

private sphere. Therefore, one could conclude that men’s and women’s choice to use either MSA or a regional variations is an exceptionally powerful marker of social network and group identity.

Although the topic of language and gender is a relatively well researched topic, the amount of data available regarding non-western cultures limited. In the case of Saudi Arabia specifically, the data is becoming progressively outdated as there have been many recent political and social changes. For example, women are beginning to drive cars, a development that could easily create an avenue for women to become more present in the public sphere. For this reason, it is imperative that more modern, up-to-date studies be conducted. Future research could consider the phenomena of gendered language choice in other Arabic speaking countries, or further examine whether men and women are actively choosing to use MSA versus dialectical forms. Overall, language is a powerful force that can both embody and constitute gender differences: producing and reproducing gender

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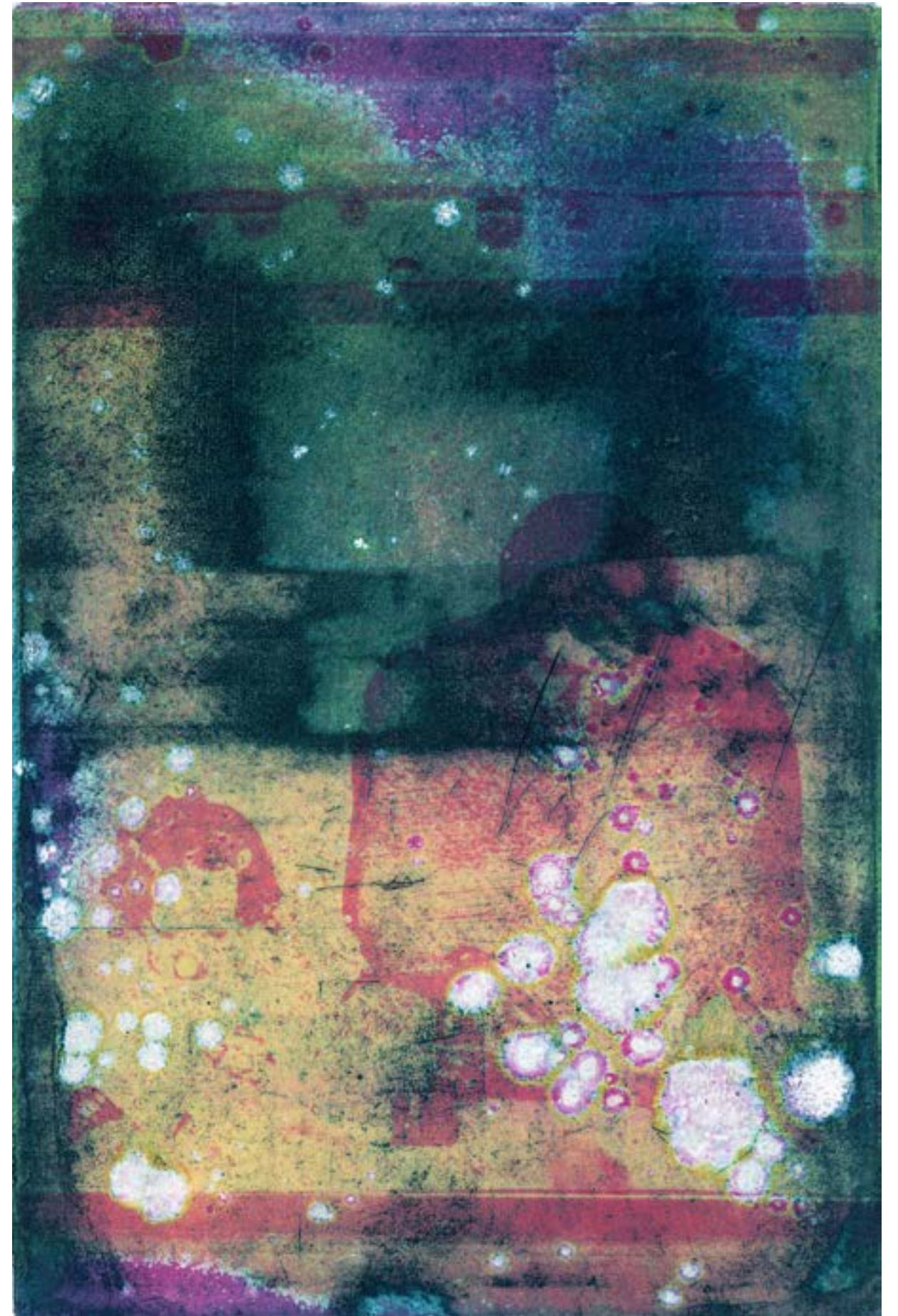
FATHER AND DAUGHTER

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Time manipulates and pollutes our memories. We can't accurately replay every moment in time after it has passed. Many of our early memories feel very distant and can be hard to grasp. My piece Father and Daughter focuses on this concept of fading memories.

Keywords: printmaking, etching, memories, fine art print

Copper etching with inking techniques





THE DEVIL CAN'T SING

How the Ordo Virtutum Reflects Hildegard of Bingen's Monastic Worldview

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Hildegard of Bingen's *Ordo Virtutum* is generally considered to be the first morality play. However, this twelfth-century musical drama also has close ties to Hildegard's own monastic lifestyle. This paper analyzes the *Ordo* to illustrate the specific ways that it was shaped in order to best convey the messages and themes that would have mattered to Hildegard herself.

Keywords: Hildegard of Bingen, Monasticism, Drama

I. Introduction

The twelfth-century musical drama the *Ordo Virtutum* is perhaps best remembered for being the first entry in a genre it was never intended to be a part of: the morality plays. These late medieval works, also referred to as moralities, functioned as a form of outreach from the church into local communities. Named after their tendency to offer allegorical stories with generic spiritual messages—such as cherishing good work or resisting temptation—morality plays were designed to reach any audience. Naturally, this shared goal led to shared plot features: most morality plays include a generic audience surrogate figure, meant to symbolize humanity; at least one representation of temptation or sin; and often numerous personifications of characteristics, emotions, or actions. This is the formula that made morality plays successful, and every aspect of this formula is included in the *Ordo Virtutum*. The only issue is that the *Ordo* was written three centuries before the morality play genre became popular. The play's author, Hildegard of Bingen, was a noted abbess, composer, mystic, academic, and theologian. In crafting both the story and the musical score of the *Ordo*, she made decisions that carefully mimicked her own monastic background—a background that would not be shared by the later moralities. Thus, when the *Ordo Virtutum* is seen as simply another morality play, the intricacies of Hildegard's life are overlooked. For all of the similarities between moralities and the *Ordo*, Hildegard wrote a work that, in many ways, later authors would not have

written. Perhaps the best example of this difference lies in a seemingly trivial fact: while the *Ordo Virtutum* is a musical drama, the Devil himself never sings.

Scholars disagree on how important this small fact is, just as they disagree on whether the *Ordo* should be seen as a morality. In its basic plot outline, the *Ordo* shares many similarities with the morality play genre: An Anima, or human soul, is welcomed by an array of personified virtues, seduced and led away by the Devil, and finally saved by the same virtues who she abandoned. On the surface, this sequence of events, including the role of the Devil, closely follows what one would expect from a morality. Thus, the current scholarly consensus has increased the *Ordo's* prominence by declaring it the first morality play. This widely accepted title gives Hildegard a firm place in the historic evolution of the concept of spiritual battles, from the *Ordo* to morality plays to modern times. However, some academics have shifted focus toward the ways in which Hildegard's play does not meet the later mold. Robert Potter, for instance, responded to general acceptance of the morality play designation by claiming that the *Ordo* is "alone and unprecedented," not so much a precursor to morality plays as it is a unique work (Potter 1986, 12). For these scholars, the behavior of the Devil becomes indicative of Hildegard's worldview. Many morality plays had a very modern outlook on the Devil. His popular image as a smooth corrupter of souls was a perfect fit for theatrical performances—charming but deceitful, and recognizable to any

audience. But Hildegard's Devil is seductive only in theory. Despite his apparent skills at recruiting souls, he never displays any of the impressive tactics or rhetorical skills we would expect from the master corrupter. Instead of singing, this Devil shouts his lines—limiting how seductive he can really be. Morality plays exaggerated the power of temptation; Hildegard restricted it. A small musical choice thus becomes representative of a theological gulf between the *Ordo* and the plays it may have inspired.

The purpose of this essay is not to examine whether or not the *Ordo Virtutum* is a morality play. Rather, it is to build upon scholarly discussion by examining the play in the context it was written in. In debating the merits of calling the *Ordo* a morality, scholars have begun to place renewed emphasis on Hildegard's decisions. By leaving behind the question of categorization, I seek to expand upon this emphasis by prioritizing Hildegard and her choices. Necessarily, this means discussing the conventions of moralities in order to highlight how Hildegard made decisions that later authors would not have made. Because whether or not the *Ordo Virtutum* is a morality play, it is primarily a work deeply affected by its author's personal situation. Morality authors sought to best reach any audience, while Hildegard sought to best embody the monastic experience. Her convent served as her inspiration, backdrop, and audience. Thus, this monastic context played a key role in determining how the *Ordo* could be viewed both as a morality play and as

a one of a kind creation. The unique form of the *Ordo Virtutum* developed because Hildegard sought to write a play that reflected the atmosphere of her own convent. The impact of this atmosphere on the work can be illustrated through the characters, music, and audience of the *Ordo Virtutum*.

II. Hildegard's Characters

The personification of spiritual concepts became a defining trait of morality plays, but Hildegard's personified characters serve as direct symbols of monasticism. For example, the *Ordo's* Anima, Devil, and virtues all have partial analogues in later moralities. But despite these similarities, the uniqueness of Hildegard's work stems from how she treats the various categories. Most morality plays give a numerical advantage to the temptations that a hero must face. In the *Ordo Virtutum*, however, the sole tempter—the Devil—is alone and outnumbered. In contrast, the play includes seventeen different virtues, all working to save the Anima from her one true enemy. Unlike moralities, the *Ordo* is not trying to depict a single soul surrounded by sin. Instead, it shows that same soul surrounded by goodness—much like the intended function of a convent. Hildegard downplays temptation in favor of the positive aspects of a spiritual journey.

To further reinforce the monastic background behind this decision, Hildegard ensured that the play's characters are the specific virtues that guide life in a convent. In fact, many of Hildegard's virtues were not only



important to the lives of individual nuns, but to the texts that would have played key roles in their community. In the *Ordo*, Humility, Queen of the virtues, leads followers such as Chastity, Knowledge of God, and Modesty. (Hildegard 4). Margot Fassler argues that these specific virtues can be traced to three important monastic texts: the Rule of Saint Benedict, the *Speculum Virginum*, and a collection of Hildegard's own visions entitled the *Scivias* (Fassler 2014, 329). The *Scivias*, especially, is important to consider because parts of the *Ordo Virtutum* were originally published at the end of that work. Hildegard, according to Fassler, "designed *Scivias* so that the play makes sense within it" (Fassler 333). Thus, Hildegard's very choice of characters draws an instant connection between the *Ordo Virtutum* and monastic life—and ensures that this connection could be easily understood by

other nuns.

This comparison extends to the fact that the *Ordo's* virtues behave like nuns. This is true even in circumstances where this behavior would not be expected—such as the climactic battle between the virtues and the Devil. While many works that predate the *Ordo* featured personified battles, Hildegard's virtues wage verbal, not literal, war. Their victory comes from their words and behavior, rather than simple strength. Hildegard is clearly acknowledging the tradition of military metaphors, but she modifies it to fit a more monastic setting. This is seen through the character of Victory, who helps bind the Devil and calls the other virtues the "bravest and most glorious soldiers" of God (Hildegard 10). In most morality plays, the military metaphor is preserved in a straightforward and direct manner. But Hildegard shifts this metaphor

to prioritize her true goal: the depiction of monastic ideals.

Similarly, the other virtues that receive special roles in the *Ordo Virtutum* bear special significance to the female monastic lifestyle. This is best illustrated through the beginning

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and end of Hildegard’s work. In the beginning, the virtues are only seen as a group. However, when a single soul becomes troubled, Knowledge of God reveals herself, telling the soul that if she is “steadfast” she “will never fail” (Hildegard 2). The fact that Knowledge of God is the first virtue to receive individual lines fits well with both the educational focus of monasticism and with Hildegard’s specific reputation as a scholar. Once the Devil arrives, Knowledge of God’s role fades, to be replaced by Humility, but this early introduction shows that failing to know and study God is the first step to falling into temptation. For the members of a convent, especially, this would have been a pointed warning. Later in the story, when the now penitent soul returns to the virtues, Humility gains the most focus, asking her followers to “take up this weeping sinner”

and guide her back to God (Hildegard 9). When the Devil returns for Anima, he is defeated by Victory and the other virtues, but, interestingly, his last exchange is not with Humility, Knowledge of God, or even Victory, but with Chastity. Against the Devil’s complaint that she will never bear a child, Chastity responds that there is “one man” she has “brought forth”—Jesus himself (Hildegard 11). By shaping her characters to create the story of a soul that flees from Knowledge of God, is accepted back by Humility, and is at last saved by Chastity, Hildegard structures her plot to mirror what she sees as the essential social role of convent.

III. Hildegard’s Music

If this firmly monastic argument is made by characters, then it is heavily reinforced through Hildegard’s musical decisions. By highlighting music as a tool to be used by a certain group—monastic women—the *Ordo Virtutum* supports the values of Hildegard’s own community. As a musical drama, the *Ordo* has most of its characters sing their lines. This musical aspect of the script takes on a new importance due to the structure of the play: while the beginning and ending of the *Ordo* feature confrontations with the Devil, the majority of the drama consists of an extended showcase of each virtue. Plotwise, very little happens in this segment, but the shifting music gives personality and weight to the individual virtues. In fact, Fassler notes that Hildegard makes the ability to sing certain high notes a defining characteristic of the virtues, and uses this trait to define their relationships with

other characters (Fassler 318). Throughout the play, these singers cycle through a range of high keys. By establishing this power as a key trait of her noble characters, Hildegard is then able to use it as a mark of the trials faced by her most human figure—the Anima. Initially, the Anima is able to match the high notes of the virtues, but she loses this divine voice as she succumbs to the Devil’s temptations. After the Anima returns, she regains this ability, marking a symbolic reunion both with divine harmony and monastic values. However, it is noteworthy that even when the Anima is gone, the play still focuses on the virtues and their

**“MUSIC WITHIN THE ‘ORDO’...IS
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singing. Hildegard shows music—as a symbol for monasticism—to be a key focus even when spiritual battles would seemingly be more important.

As Potter illustrates, Hildegard may have had very personal reasons for giving her play this structure. Shortly before the believed publication date of the *Ordo Virtutum*, Hildegard’s close friend and follower Richardis von Stade left her to receive another appointment that Hildegard viewed as driven by “worldly desires” (Potter 206). Despite

this loss, Hildegard remained focused on her community. Music within the *Ordo*, then, is symbolic of the communal strength of a monastery. The music continues even when a single soul has left. Just as importantly, the emphasis of the play remains on this music, rather than on the soul that has chosen to abandon it. Later morality plays almost always follow a soul’s descent into sin. Instead, the *Ordo Virtutum* highlights the community of virtues ready to accept that soul when she returns. Even with a straightforward script, the emphasis on music reflects both Hildegard’s personal struggles and her beliefs in a unifying monastic community.

The Devil’s inability to sing, then, carries even more weight in light of how Hildegard frames music as a symbol of monasticism. Music is not just a trait of the virtues, it is an ability. If the Devil were to be portrayed as a master of seduction, he would likely be able to match if not exceed the harmonies of heaven. But Hildegard seems to have not been interested in showing the power of the Devil. In fact, Potter asserts that “the balance of power” within the *Ordo* is firmly with the virtues the entire time, even when the Devil appears to temporarily win. He claims the Anima, but never succeeds in claiming the stage. Even during the Procession of virtues, the Devil is restricted to being a minor nuisance. Ultimately, this Devil lacks the weapon which is music, a weapon on full display in the individual introduction to each Virtue. Even today, this is a rare decision. Portraying the Devil as an ineffective adversary risks stripping the play of what

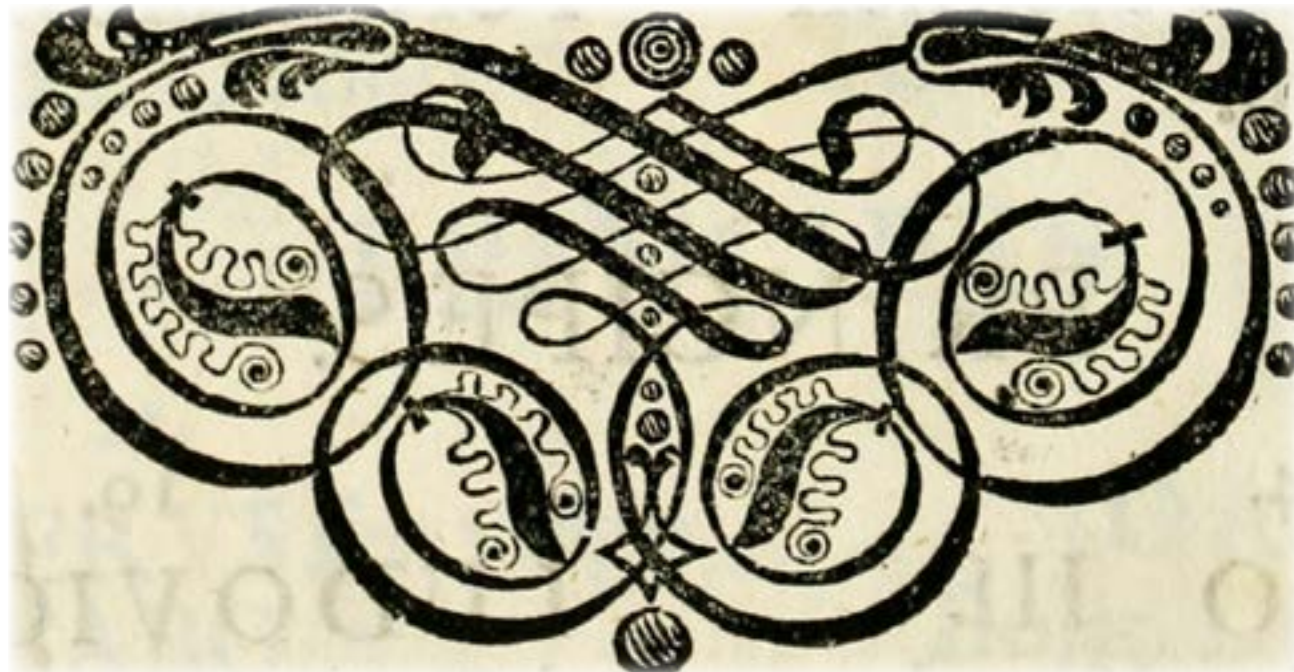
should be its moral, the dangers of temptation. But Hildegard's use of monastic conventions means that she does not need to focus on the terrors outside the monastery, but instead the music inside. This Devil is merely a background temptation, an occasional shout to disrupt the monastic music—worthy of the sole attention neither of the play nor of Hildegard.

By keeping the audience with the Procession of virtues, and its distinct musical structure, Hildegard narrows the focus of her writing to reduce non-monastic influences. Fassler argues that this "systematic progression through tonal areas" was intended to be "understood interactively" within a monastic community (Fassler, 318). Effectively, Hildegard constructs a symbolic monastery using the vocal abilities of her virtues. To do this, she includes very specific musical beats and ranges, and especially emphasizes the parts of music that nuns would be familiar with. By increasing the musical power of her monastic

characters—the virtues—and reducing that of her antagonist—the Devil—Hildegard affirms the long-standing monastic musical tradition as the sole weapon of heaven's servants. The *Ordo Virtutum* reinforces the importance of monasticism through musical cues and themes, tying the work even more closely to Hildegard's perception of her convent.

IV. Hildegard's Audience

Both the characters and music of Hildegard's play are crucial internal factors to the finished work, but she was also closely influenced by her need to reach an external factor: her monastic audience. The *Ordo Virtutum* was primarily written for an audience of nuns, and would have largely—though not exclusively—been performed in Hildegard's own Rupertsberg Convent. This does not mean, of course, that the play would only have been seen by women, as visiting men would also have been common audience



members. However, most spectators would have been nuns, and this means that the message of the play is largely been directed towards women, altering the tone that this message takes. Morality plays were partially defined by their audience—their characters are so generic because they must appeal to any possible group of people. If the *Ordo Virtutum* is similarly seen as a result of its own audience, then Hildegard's monastic focus becomes even more crucial to the work's identity.

The first way that this manifests in the work is through the behavior and fate of the human identifying character, the Anima. Typically, Dorothy Wertz highlights, these characters in later morality plays would be specially designed as a "reconciliation of social classes," a generic being who could exist at any economic level of society (Wertz 1969, 451). The tone of this character would thus try to appeal to any viewer in medieval Europe. Popular morality plays that follow this model include *The Castle of Perseverance* and *Everyman*. Anima meets these criteria in some respects, but is not as specifically generic in economic status. This is especially relevant, Potter argues, because Rupertsberg Convent was an "elite, aristocratic, and female-dominated environment" (Potter 204). The play could have such a lofty tone because many of the nuns in Hildegard's community would have been wealthy and socially connected. Hildegard did not need a main character who represented every single type of spiritual journey, because she knew she was speaking to a specific type of person: nuns. Due to this,

she created a work that spoke to the people in her environment through the play's main character. In doing so, she gives this character a specificity not always available to morality writers.

Similarly, the monastic audience for the *Ordo* means that Hildegard did not need to include some of the more generic tonal aspects that would become necessary for morality plays. For instance, because the convent would perform the play, it wasn't necessary to tie the *Ordo Virtutum* to the local power structures that were needed to arrange moralities. Most importantly, however, the tone of the play's message is seen in its closing passage, where the audience is told directly to look to God, "that he may reach you his hand" (Hildegard). This section, more mystic than the rest of the play, highlights virtuous living as a continuous necessity—giving this work a stronger tone than many moralities. In the cities of Europe, a brief message with a light tone would have been preferable. But in a monastic setting, the work of virtues and of nuns continued long after the play ended. The virtues of the play, already closely connected to the beliefs of convents, are in this passage firmly tied to the everyday lives that nuns are told to lead.

The play's message would also have been more easily accepted in convents because of Hildegard's own authority and reputation. Most importantly, the atmosphere of a convent meant that Hildegard did not need to subvert the inevitability of her own message. Morality plays, Wertz argues, have long struggled with providing "dramatic catharsis," because

catharsis implies balance—and Christian plays can only be resolved “if there is final imbalance on the side of mercy” (Wertz 444). The *Ordo Virtutum*, like most moralities, has this imbalance. In fact, because the Devil as a character is so limited, the imbalance is even more present throughout this work than in most moralities. In the *Ordo*, the power of the virtues is never really threatened, even though the Anima is temporarily corrupted. Balance remains firmly on the side of a monastic sense of godliness and mercy. Unlike morality authors, however, Hildegard did not need to grapple with the confusion of this imbalance, and instead offered clear catharsis based on the environment of her own monastery. The Anima returns, and is forgiven. Wider implications are not grappled with, because, especially for this audience, they are not necessary. Hildegard, by understanding her audience, crafted a work specifically responsive to the needs and understandings of nuns. This ensured that her finished play speaks directly to the female monastic lifestyle, tying firmly into Hildegard’s own experiences.

V. Conclusion

For all of its similarities to morality plays, the *Ordo Virtutum* is most fascinating as a work created by the specific monastic context of Hildegard’s own life. Hildegard was known for contributing to many fields, and the *Ordo* is perhaps one of the best examples of how she applied the lessons of one area of study—such as music—to another—theatre. If she predicted the morality genre, she did

so largely by highlighting the themes and messages that would resonate best with the nuns that surrounded her. The characters, music, and audience of the *Ordo Virtutum* reflect this, combining to tailor this musical drama to the exact circumstances it would have been performed in. If the *Ordo Virtutum* were written as a morality play, it would likely lack many of the peculiarities that set it apart. The key to the *Ordo*, then, lies not only in its impact, but in its uniqueness—there are numerous depictions of spiritual temptations, but the most interesting may be the one play where the Devil can’t sing. ~

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SAUDADE

Melissa Donlon

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Saudade is a Portuguese term that is used to describe a deep emotional state of longing for an absent thing or person that one loves. It acknowledges that the person or object of longing might never return. Moreover it is the appreciation for the sadness that one feels, as sadness is the evidence of the love that remains. As the wife of a deployed soldier, feelings of loneliness, loss, exhaustion and constant fear for my husband's life are continual and unshakable. My artwork deals with the subjects of love and loss, loneliness and hope, presence and absence. It represents how I navigate my husband's deployments and the recent death of our family dog. My large scale multi-media oil painting engulfs the viewer in order to express the overwhelming helplessness that I often feel. It is about my relationship with my husband, the love that we share and my struggle to appreciate the sadness that I feel while he is away.

Keywords: Military, Deployment, Spouse, Separation, Soldier



CONTEXTUALIZING *LAND OF SHADOWS* AS A POSTRACE BLACK DETECTIVE NOVEL

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This article explores Rachel Howzell Hall's contemporary novel "Land of Shadows" and how it fits in and subverts the classic definitions of the black detective fiction genre. As a recent addition to the black detective fiction canon (published in 2014, now with two follow-up novels), "Land of Shadows" speaks to a different ideal of black detective fiction than previously established.

Keywords: race, literature, fiction, contemporary, detective

Rachel Howzell Hall's *Land of Shadows* and its sequels make up a fairly new addition to the black detective fiction genre, published and set in 2014. Elouise "Lou" Norton is a black, female homicide detective in Los Angeles who is assigned to a murder case that bears a resemblance to her sister's childhood disappearance in many ways. Throughout the novel, she and her partner Colin Taggart uncover evidence that links to both the present murder case and her sister's mystery. Lou Norton's story goes on in three subsequent novels — *Skies of Ash* (2015), *Trail of Echoes* (2016), and *City of Saviors* (2017) — carving out a big stake in modern iterations of the aforementioned genre of black detective fiction.

In considering the place of the first novel, *Land of Shadows*, within the genre, we could consider how Lou fits into the role of a black detective as defined by Stephen Soitos and Nicole Décuré. In his book *The Blues Detective: A Study of African American Detective Fiction*, Soitos defines the four main tropes of black detective fiction as the alteration of the detective persona, double consciousness, black vernaculars, and hoodoo (27). Décuré further defines the black female detective in her essay "In Search of our Sisters' Mean Streets: The Politics of Sex, Race, and Class in Black Women's Crime Fiction," particularly overlapping Soitos' ideas of the alteration of the detective persona, expanding into the impact of the detectives' personal relationships.

It turns out that *Land of Shadows* does not line up perfectly with the tropes

that Soitos outlines, and I attribute most of these differences to *Land of Shadows* being a postrace piece of literature. Ramón Salvádar states in "Speculative Realism and the Postrace Aesthetic in Contemporary American Fiction" that postrace literature breaks away from typical black/white tropes, and "the new generation of writers sees race differently, as an open-source document, a trope with infinite uses." Though race is still a relevant social identifier in America today, characters in postrace stories are not controlled or constrained by traditional representations of their race, offering a broader means to define and express race — their self-definitions of.

Since the elements of postrace literature fill in what is missing from Soitos' outline of the black detective genre in this novel, it is apparent that *Land of Shadows* is simultaneously a work of black detective fiction and the postrace aesthetic. It fuses the elements of both genres, offering a new, updated definition of what a fictional black detective is in modern literature, prompting a need to update the typical signposts of the black detective genre to include modern modes of writing about race, such as the postrace form.

Land of Shadows fits into Soitos' first trope of black detective fiction: the alteration of the detective persona. In the genre as a whole, black writers have borrowed some tropes of classical and hardboiled detective works (which feature predominantly white and male protagonists), but they have also "forged new images of the detective based on African American needs" (Soitos 29). The

classical, hardboiled, and “blues” detectives share a “relentless pursuit of the truth” and a focus on “figuring out the puzzle of human behavior in relation to a crime” (29).

Lou personifies these values; after her sister’s childhood disappearance, she sets herself on a career path that leads to her current position as a homicide detective for the Los Angeles Police Department. She is determined to find out what happened to her sister Tori, working in and around her hometown area, and when the Monique Darson case opens at the beginning of the novel, certain aspects of that murder point Lou in the direction of solving her own sister’s case.

One key difference that occurs between white and black detectives is the level of involvement in those characters’ personal lives. The traditional white detective is aloof, lonely, not well attached to anyone. For the black detective, it is common that they are “intimately connected to their surroundings, often involved in family relations, certainly deeply committed to exploring the meaning of blackness in the text” (Soitos 31). Lou certainly applies to this concept, as her personal relationships are well-explored in the novel. Décuré’s essay provides more specific classifications for female detectives’ personal relationships, including mothers, children, female friends, and men.

Lou has a somewhat strained relationship with her mother. Décuré writes that “the role played by the detectives’ mothers” can affect them “positively or negatively,” and from what readers see in *Land of Shadows*,

there are elements of both (6). In Chapter 24, Lou and Colin talk about their personal lives. Tori’s disappearance is brought up, and Colin asks Lou if Tori is the reason she joined the LAPD. In her thoughts, she explains that she was headed toward a career in law, and after failing the bar exam, she decided to join the police force. “Mom had not been thrilled with my decision and days passed before she started talking to me again. ‘Why am I supposed to be happy about this? Because now my other daughter will be taken away from me?’” (Hall 145). Later on, Lou and her mother meet for breakfast on the anniversary of Tori’s disappearance. Her mother is critical of Lou, blaming her for her husband Greg’s infidelity and asking her if they are trying to have a baby. She is also upset that, upon reading the newspaper, Lou had not told her that she was investigating a case involving Napoleon Crase, who they suspect caused Tori’s disappearance (163-165). Lou is frustrated with those accusations, but they find common ground as Lou explains that she is working hard to solve both Monique Darson’s and Tori’s cases.

The next subcategory that Décuré defines is children. For most black female detectives, children “do not come first” and “do not cramp the style of the detectives who can rely on other people for help (a husband, friends) when they have to pursue murders” (8). Children have not come first for Lou, as she does not have any after eleven years of marriage. However, her mother brings up pregnancy when they meet for breakfast, and getting pregnant is also mentioned when Lou

visits with her friend and freelance journalist Syeeda at the crime scene. Syeeda asks if Lou has stopped taking her birth control, to which she responds with a no. “It’s your Spidey senses, you know. They’re tingling and warning you not to procreate with this man,” Syeeda says (Hall 119). We can infer that Lou may not want a child at this time (or any time), but she feels some pressure to have a child in order to save her marriage, something Syeeda advises her not to do: “[H]aving a baby to save your marriage is like a sailor fixing that rip on the Titanic with needle and thread” (119).

Syeeda and another woman, Lena, appear regularly throughout the novel as some of Lou’s closest friends. Décuré explains that “[w]hen the detective’s mother is absent, friends feature as all-important.” Though Lou is in contact with her mother, her female friends bring her advice, stimulating conversation, and laughter. There are several instances when Lou meets or talks with Syeeda and/or Lena. In fact, Lena is introduced on the first page of the novel, as she is at a Krav Maga class with Lou. Lou has to pause her training when she receives the phone call that introduces the Monique Darson case. Lena brings humor to this serious moment—she is obviously flirting with the male trainer—but then offers support when Lou appears shaken by her phone call. “But his words must have spooked me—Lena had abandoned sexy Avarim to come stand beside me. Big brown eyes wide with worry, she touched my wrist and whispered, ‘You okay?’” (Hall 14). These close friendships are most important and noticeable after Lou confirms

that Greg is cheating on her whilst in Japan, and she receives consolation and support from Syeeda and Lena as they talk about Greg (negatively), discuss other hot men, and eat comfort food (279).

Décuré writes that men in the lives of black female detectives “do not play a great role” and can “come under several categories,” one of which is the “no-good ex-husbands” (9). Lou’s husband Greg fits this role best; he is out of the country for the entire novel on a work trip and cheats on Lou while he is there. Lou suspects his infidelity during the trip throughout the book, remembering his record of cheating on previous business trips along with a call to Greg’s hotel room phone answered by an unknown woman (Hall 152). Though her strained relationship with Greg ebbs and flows in relevance throughout the novel, it is not Lou’s priority in the story.

Land of Shadows and its main character fit well into Soitos’ first trope of the “blues” detective and Décuré’s expanded genre-specific definition on personal relationships. However, with Soitos’ next category, double consciousness, Lou does not quite fit the mold. Soitos defines double consciousness as a result of “the nature of American racism,” and it “forces black Americans to see the world filtered through two levels of consciousness. ... They are forced to see themselves as second-class citizens by reason of their African ancestry, both biological and cultural. Then and only then are they allowed the privilege of seeing themselves as American citizens” (33). Through this double lens, Soitos states that this

worldview carries over into black literature and other forms of expression and art. Therefore, it would be expected of Lou to be more aware of her identity as a black person. There are instances where she recognizes her identity; in Chapter 2, she recalls having coffee with Colin on his first day at the LAPD, and knowing that he came from the white suburbs of Colorado Springs, she decided to dispel some assumptions he may have made about her as a black woman. “I’m sassy, but not Florence-the-Jeffersons’-maid sassy. Nor am I ultrareligious. I’m sure as hell not an earth mother, so there’s that to remember, too” (Hall 18).

Later on, Colin asks Lou to take him to the bar where the other LAPD cops drink and chat off-duty. She says no, aware that Colin’s acceptance into that friendly space would take less effort for him than it did for her because of her identities. “I had combated sexism, racism, classism, and jerkwadism, and had finally earned my stripes. So, I had no sympathy for a new fish who had an up on me in three of those four categories” (140).

Though Lou has these moments of self-awareness of her identities and how they are perceived by others, double consciousness is not a common element in her thoughts or dialogue. In a way, she is totally aware of her blackness and her identity as a woman to such a degree that it is almost unconscious. She knows who she is, but she does not see the world through a black/white dynamic. This absence of double consciousness, I believe, is a product of the postrace literature aesthetic. Hall presents Lou and how she views herself

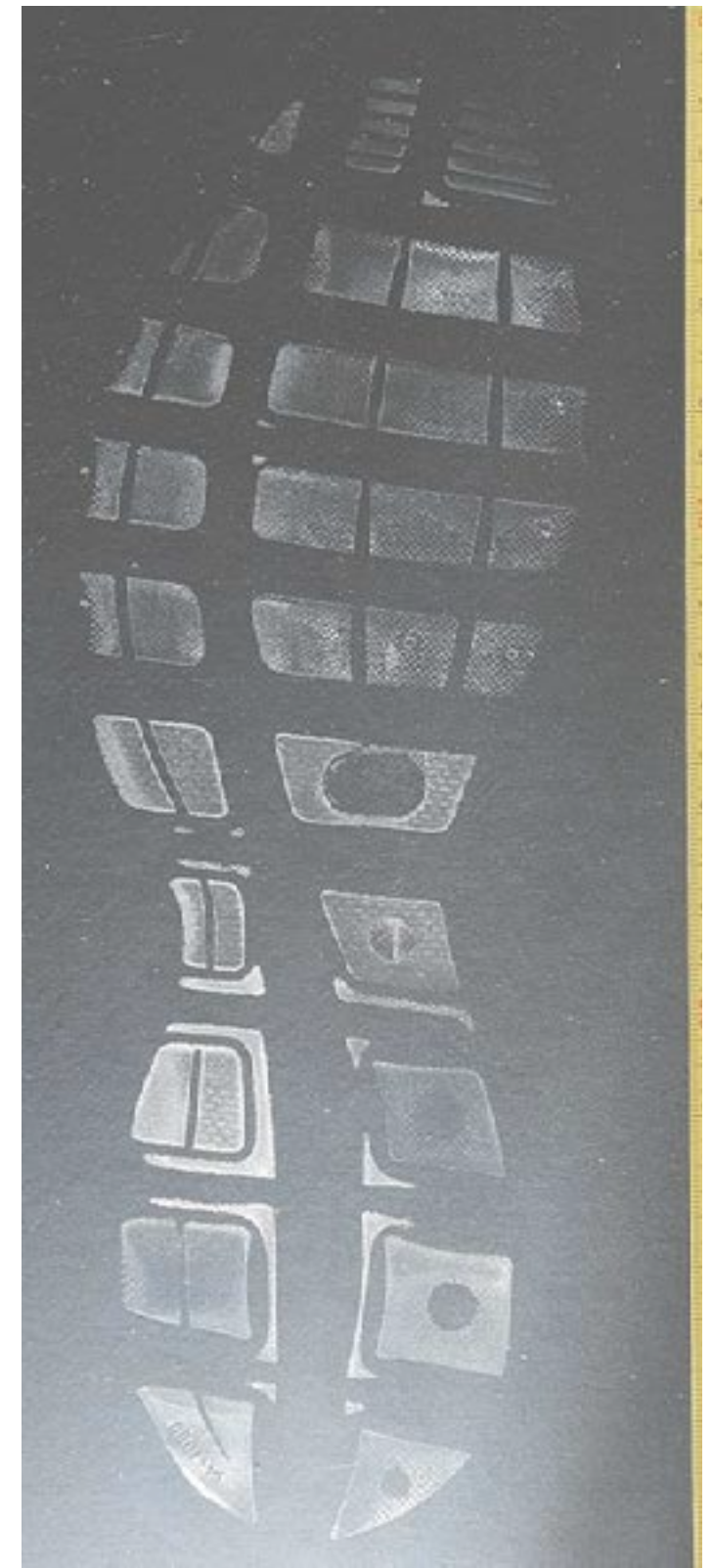
and others in terms of race in a way that provides “a new way of conceiving what ‘race’ is and has been all along,” but not going so far as to infer that Lou has “‘gone beyond’ race” (Speculative Realism).

This postracial form of character expression and the relevancy of race bleeds into how *Land of Shadows* fits into Soitos’ third trope of the “blues” detective: black vernaculars. He states that “[b]lack detective authors use vernaculars to stress the importance of black culture in their texts” (38). Lou does engage somewhat in some vernaculars specific to her racial identity, but the use of her typical “black” speech and interests are not specifically used to enhance the fact that she is black. For example, in Chapter 18, Lou and Colin interrogate one of Monique Darson’s romantic partners, Derek Hester, a black man who lives in the poorer, gang-ridden part of Los Angeles that Lou grew up in. Lou leads the investigation, knowing exactly how to joke around with Derek and help him focus and be calm around them. “[Derek] laughed. ‘You got jokes, too.’ ‘Wednesdays and Thursdays only,’ I said, doing anything to make him—and his Rottweiler—relax” (Hall 108). Colin absolutely serves as a foil to Lou and Derek’s black identities; his questions put Derek on the defensive, as he interprets Colin’s questions as racially biased. When Lou employs a black vernacular to help relate to and get information from Derek, it is for the purpose of gathering evidence, not self-expression.

This strategic use of traditional black vernaculars demonstrates that *Land of Shadows*

fits into the postrace aesthetic by defining Lou and her black identity in a different way. It is an example that not all black Americans share the same heritage, modes of expression, or other vernaculars, so therefore Lou’s vernacular may not be explicitly “black” in a traditional sense. Salvidar recognizes personal portrayals of race, like Lou’s, in “The Second Elevation of the Novel: Race, Form, and the Postrace Aesthetic in Contemporary Narrative.” He states that “views are changing from formerly held essentialist notions of biological races to more complex understandings of race as an element of human experience ...” (2, emphasis mine). With this flexible understanding of race and identity, Lou does have a black vernacular that comes through her dialogue as an individual, but not specifically in the sense of a shared, static black vernacular that Soitos uses in his definition of the black detective fiction genre.

The final trope of Soitos’ “blues” detective is hoodoo practices and tradition. He defines hoodoo, also known as voodoo, as a term to “represent indigenous, syncretic religions of African Americans in the New World, expanding the term to suggest that it also represents alternative worldviews of some black Americans” (42). The hoodoo tradition is the one part of Soitos’ heuristic that *Land of Shadows* does not fit in. Lou disconnected herself from having an “ultrareligious” or “earth mother” identity early on in the novel, and she is not particularly religious at all (Hall 18). There is a moment where she prays before seeing Monique Darson’s body for the first time—“As I reached out to touch the



doorknob, I muttered a quick prayer. ‘Please help me to see.’—but her religious identity and/or spiritual beliefs are not pivotal parts of her personality and identity (24). This lack of emphasis on a religious identity, namely one connected with hoodoo, could be attributed to the postrace aesthetic as a different way of expressing Lou’s identity as a black person and the unique forces that influence her, but I chalk this absence of hoodoo beliefs up to the novel’s modernity. Rachel Howzell Hall belongs to a younger, more modern generation of writers with which Salvídar aligns the postrace aesthetic with, noting that these writers were born “a decade or two after the heroic period of the Civil Rights struggle,” and they know that time not as a memory, but as a history (Speculative Realism). They are living in a time when society as a whole thinks about race differently than it did before the 1960s. This means that Hall and other postrace authors are more separated from historical black American traditions like hoodoo beliefs. The cultural significance of hoodoo has been diluted through time and changing views on race and identity in America, so it follows that Lou is not influenced by hoodoo beliefs in 2014.

Land of Shadows fits perfectly into Soitos’ first black detective trope, the alteration of the detective persona, especially when we supplement Décuré’s ideas on the relevance of personal relationships. The tropes of double consciousness and black vernaculars apply somewhat to Hall’s novel, but the novel does not fit comfortably into those parts of the

heuristic. As for Soitos’ last trope, hoodoo is a puzzle piece that does not even belong to the Land of Shadows puzzle set whatsoever. These deviations from the traditional black detective novel form are present because this novel is a piece of postrace literature, and Salvídar’s definition of “postrace” clashes with some aspects of black expression and identity that Soitos defines in this genre. Therefore, the existence of this novel begs for a redefinition of the traits found in black detective fiction novels, updated to reflect an intersection with postrace literature and more modern ideals of race representation in fiction.~

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clean wind energy

Rachel Lord
graduated | fine arts

Clean Wind Energy is an oil painting done on canvas combining different techniques of painting to create an atmospheric feel. I capture my vision of air pollution across the Kansas plains filled with wind turbines. I use representational marks in the land to show wind turbines off in the distance, just as you might see in western Kansas.

Keywords: oil paint, atmosphere, wind turbines, Kansas, landscape

AN INTRODUCTION TO PRISON ECOLOGY: The Relationship Between Prisons and the Environment

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Jails and prisons are often out of sight, out of mind, and that goes for their impacts on communities, individuals, and the environment. However, there is a growing movement around rethinking how the public understands prisons by examining the institution's relationship with the environment and the well-being of prison inmates.

Keywords: prisons, environment, environmental justice, prison reform, social justice

What is Prison Ecology?

Prison ecology is the intersection between mass incarceration and environmental issues. In other words, it examines the relationship between prisons and nature: the environmental issues that occur within and around prisons and how they impact inmates and the surrounding environment. It emerged from the 2014 launch of the HRDC's Prison Ecology Project, which aims to document the issue of prison ecology and then "do something to change it," according to its founder and the executive director of HRDC, Paul Wright. Wright experienced this issue firsthand when he was serving time in the Washington State McNeil Island prison; there he faced environmental issues firsthand, such as polluted drinking water, which were overlooked or brushed under the rug by prison officials. Essentially, prison ecology boils down to the problems that arise when prisons are located near or on environmentally hazardous or toxic sites, or when prisons become hazardous or environmentally degrading because of their operations or lack of maintenance (Bernd et al. 2017). This article serves to fill the gap in literature on prison ecology by connecting the dots between the other justice movements it stems from: environmentalism, environmental justice, and prison reform.

Prison ecology is an unsuspected issue because, as Wright said, "people generally aren't thinking of prisons and jails as environmental problems or as places where people have legitimate concerns about the environment."

The "tough on crime" rhetoric and the siting of prisons out of public sight has contributed to people overlooking the well-being of prisoners. As the Harvard sociologist Bruce Western put it, "Imprisonment makes the disadvantaged literally invisible," which relates both to these individuals' lack of political power and public visibility (Guo 2016). People typically think of corporations as the big polluter and the government as the entity who will clean it up, but by choosing where to build prisons and allowing them to become sources of toxic waste, the government is to blame for the environmental and health issues prisoners face (Bernd et al. 2017).

Prisons and the Environment

What many people may not realize is that prisons have harmful impacts on the environments they are built on. The Prison Ecology Project's first case was to prevent a maximum-security federal prison from being constructed in a Letcher County, Kentucky town where there was once a coal mine. The Department of Justice has since withdrawn its plans for the prison and cancelled the money it budgeted for the its construction. One major concern of this proposed project was the destruction of 700 acres of habitats for endangered species, like the Indiana and gray bats. The Federal Bureau of Prisons conducted a Draft Environmental Impact Statement, but has since only claimed that the prison would not result in "significant impacts to vegetation, wildlife and threatened and endangered species (Poon 2015; Williams 2017).

The effects that prisons have on their surrounding environments has yet to be fully – or even extensively – explored, though some journalists and researchers have found that many prisons neglect the environment as part of its operations. For example, in 2006, it was found that Alabama prison facilities were dumping twice the amount of raw sewage – including human waste and toxic chemicals – than what is allowed by the EPA into the state’s waterways. At New York’s Riker’s Island Jail, which is also a toxic waste landfill site, pigs were once housed for slaughter, and “copious amounts” of rodents were killed with poisonous gas. Additionally, the number of inmates housed in the confined spaces of a prison lead to overcrowding that often results in the prison becoming a major source of pollution (Poon 2015; Williams 2017).

A Sierra Club article has reported that in California, a state that is well-known for its environmental stewardship, at least 8 of its 33 state prisons were cited for water pollution issues between 2000 and 2015. Even the LEED certified Monroe Correctional Complex in Washington State – another “green” state – was found dumping sewage into public waterways for over 25 years (Slater 2015). If these two environmental leaders among the nation’s 50 states have prisons that are harming the environment, it is likely that the cases are just as bad, if not worse, in U.S. states where the environment is of little concern and prisons are seen as economic drivers. This indicates a need for greater oversight and stricter regulations on prisons from environmental agencies.



Prison Ecology and Environmental Justice

Understanding Environmental Justice

To fully understand prison ecology, it is important to have an understanding of environmental justice because prison ecology is inherently an environmental justice issue. Environmental justice is the concept that disadvantaged social groups, particularly communities of color, are disproportionately exposed to adverse health hazards due to poor environmental conditions (Boer et al. 1997). Communities of color and low-income communities already face critical disadvantages in their communities, including

inadequate public schools that reinforce the school-to-prison pipeline, failing police services, lack of job opportunities with livable wages, and inaccessible quality health care, among others (Putnam 1993). Environmental injustice – once dubbed “environmental racism” – is just another barrier that prevents low-income individuals and people of color from living their highest quality of life. Environmental justice, on the other hand, seeks to undo environmental injustices through an approach that is described by researchers as “the development of a broad, multi-faceted, yet integrated notion of justice that can be applied to both relations regarding environmental

risks in human populations and relations between human communities and non-human nature” (Schlosberg 2007).

In 1982, after a nonviolent civil disobedience movement protested the local siting of a toxic polychlorinated biphenyl landfill in a predominantly black area in North Carolina, environmental injustice became an area of concern for activists. This event persuaded the U.S. General Accounting Office to examine environmental injustice after they found that three out of every four commercial hazardous waste landfills in the Southeastern United States were located within communities that had a majority black population (Godsil

1991).

Cases of environmental injustice often arise when pollution sites like landfills and highways are located too close to low-income neighborhoods or communities of color. Typically, there is a lack of government aid when these neighborhoods do face environmental issues. It is debated whether these are intentional or unintentional acts of discrimination, but intention does not matter when the disparity exists nonetheless. This disparity is evidenced by numerous studies and lived experiences of these communities. For example, a 1990s study in Los Angeles found that working class and ethnic communities were likely hosts of hazardous sites known as treatment, storage, and disposal facilities (TSDFs) creating a substantial cause of concern among environmental justice advocates (Boer et al. 1997; Gosil 1991).

The argument that environmental injustice is unintentional typically examines the phenomenon of Not in My Backyard (NIMBY) Syndrome, which is when communities with greater financial influence and political power – typically white, middle to upper class communities – prevent the siting of ugly facilities and environmental hazards, such as TSDFs, landfills, highways, and so on in their neighborhoods (Gosil 1991). These facilities have to go somewhere though, and the result is often that those without much political power have to live with these sites as their neighbors and often face health, economic, and quality of life issues as a result. A relationship between toxic waste sites and prisons has been

documented, and this relationship exists in part due to NIMBY Syndrome – no one wants toxic waste in their neighborhood, and very few are comfortable living near a prison either (Williams 2017).

The Relationship of Environmental Justice to Prison Ecology

The legacy of environmental injustice that is described above extends to the location of prisons (Bernd et al. 2017). These prisons, which are frequently located in or close to minority and low-income communities, are also often built on contaminated land that no one wants (Bernd et al. 2017). For instance, in 2003, Pennsylvania's State Correctional Institution – Fayette was constructed near the fly ash dump of an abandoned coal mine, which immediately resulted in health issues for both inmates and prison staff (Williams 2017).

The formation of the Prison Ecology Project was inspired by the case of that Pennsylvania State Correctional Institution, as well as the general pattern of prisons being located on environmentally degraded sites and the lived experiences of Wright, the Prison Ecology Project's founder (Kirchner 2015). Earth Island Journal, in conjunction with the Prison Ecology Project, found that 589 federal and state prisons are located within a three-mile radius of Superfund sites; 134 of those are located within a one-mile radius (Bernd et al. 2017; Williams, 2017). A writer for the Sierra Club reported that most of the nation's 5,000 prisons are located in remote and impoverished areas and a majority of their inmates are African

Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans; the author also speculates that if the Federal Bureau of Prisons took this into account when looking at the environmental justice impacts in an environmental impact statement, then "some prisons might never have been built."

Not only are prisoners facing an unequal and concentrated exposure to environmental harms, but these prisoners are also disproportionately low-income or individuals of color. According to a 2016 Washington Post article, there are 1.6 million prisoners in state or federal prisons; those prisoners include 7.7 percent of the nation's black men, but only 1.6 percent of the nation's white men. This article also states that black men are imprisoned at six times the rate of white men and have a one in three chance of ending up in federal or state prisons. Although this article only looked at the differences between incarceration rates between blacks and whites, this article highlights a key issue of prison ecology: people of color are locked up more often than their white counterparts, and therefore face the health challenges that come with prison's environmental conditions much more frequently than white people as well.

The Census Bureau includes prison populations in the data for the communities that they are located in. Wright believes that these populations should therefore also be included in the EPA's environmental justice efforts, although currently they are not (Kirchner 2015). When the agency was writing their EJ2020 Action Agenda, Wright wrote to them asking "if we can recognize the problem

with forcing people to live in close proximity to toxic and hazardous environmental conditions, then why are we ignoring prisoners who are forced to live in detention facilities impacted by such conditions?" (Kirchner 2015). Just as environmental justice pushes for a more healthy and safe community for low-income individuals and people of color, prison ecology activists want a healthier and safer environment for prisoners (Williams 2017).

Prison Ecology and Prison Reform

Although prison ecology is primarily an environmental justice movement with a focus on inmates as the disadvantaged community, it is also about the injustices inherent in our nation's industrialized prison system. The head of the Prison Ecology Project – not the founder – Panagioti Tsolkas explained this by saying, "We are not proposing LEED certified prisons. That simply feeds the perception that you can just put solar panels on a prison and everything is okay. The real issue is that there is a problem with the industry at its core. What we are proposing is, the scale of the prison system is the problem. Piling thousands into a building, into a warehouse is a problem" (Williams 2017).

There are varied perspectives and levels of empathy for the inmates facing the issues. Professor of law Michael Mushlin told a journalist from ThinkProgress that "If we had a different attitude towards prisoners and saw them as not throwaways, but as human beings that need to be assisted, and in our interest to be treated humanely, things would improve"

(Williams 2017).

A resident who lives just outside of the State Correctional Institute – Fayette in Pennsylvania remarked, with a slightly different perspective, that “...those people [in prison] have done something wrong or they wouldn’t be there, but Christ, all of those people don’t have a death sentence.” This same resident suffers from three different kinds of cancer that have all been attributed to the fly ash near the prison (Williams 2017).

Many inmates themselves have been reported to be scared of caring for themselves within these facilities, even hesitating to drink water or brush their teeth. Matthew Morgenstern, who is currently serving time at the previously mentioned Pennsylvania prison, believes that his Hodgkin's lymphoma was also caused by the fly ash; he recovered after leaving the prison, but worried that he "will once again become sick" when he returned to the prison for violating parole in 2016. Two other prisoners in Navasota, Texas face extreme heat in the summertime and only have arsenic-laced water to drink from and bathe in. Thirty years into his life sentence at the California State Prison, another inmate contracted valley fever, which has been known to leave its victim with lifelong symptoms or even result in death. In regard to this issue of public apathy and the declining health of prisoners, one inmate, Bryant Arroyo, from another prison in Pennsylvania, said that "We are the minority and society doesn't care" (Bernd et al. 2017; Williams 2017).

Although the issue of prison reform

reaches far beyond the public's perception of inmates and how they are treated, the Prison Ecology Project aims to address it by talking about it, keeping it as a focal point of its endeavors, and aiming to shift the public's view of the prison system. Imprisonment is a highly controversial topic in the US and, although prison ecology does not directly address reforming prisons, its leading organization calls for changes to how prisons operate, and the movement highlights inherent issues in the nation's prison system (Williams 2017; Prison Ecology Project 2018). To learn more about the Prison Ecology Project's efforts and contribute to their work, visit their website, and to see where prisons and environmental hazards are located across the country, check out the EPA's EJSCREEN mapping tool. ~

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AN UNFINISHED STORY

Part I

Suan Sonna
sophomore | philosophy

Ren, a senior at The Spencer School, is accepted into Stanford University. In just three days, however, his life takes a series of radical turns. He's forced to face his past mistakes, failed friendships and lovers, and to rediscover what it means to be a man.

Keywords: Beauty, Masculinity, Asian, Romance, Teen

On the night I got into Stanford, Ana and I snuck out with a few drinks tucked away. She had the stronger liquor, and I had the classier delicacies – white wine and Limoncello. We planned on meeting at Fordham St. where the paths between our houses intersected under one inconspicuous streetlight.

I left my house around 2 AM, as we had planned. It was still a risky move, however, because my father tended to stay awake into the early morning hours, watching television or reading in his room. We hoped, almost prayed, that he would be asleep by the time I left.

I flicked the lights off in the basement and worked on popping the window open. I dug my nails under the frame's loose lower right corner and pulled, eventually catching the falling upper left corner. I climbed out, then sealed the window shut again. After sealing the window, I stopped to check the energy of the house. I didn't hear my father, no lights turned on, no creaking footsteps echoed. I looked into my satchel and confirmed the drinks were trembling in the moonlight.

Once my shoes touched the black road, I knew I was finally on my own. The only signposts I had were the dimly lit streetlights of my memory. I remembered that I had to take a turn there; when I saw the rusted blue car, turn left; when I saw the meth house, keep going straight.

After following those directions, I found myself under the inconspicuous streetlight, waiting for Ana to find me. I canvassed my surroundings for perhaps a minute or so, before a ghostly white light emerged in the distance. As it passed the tangerine streetlight in front of the neighborhood bar, I knew it was her. She stopped in the middle of the road for a second, braking hard, then continued towards me.

"What was that about?" I asked playfully as she pulled up.

"I just wanted to make sure you were my guy. Hop in."

As I sat next to her, the bottles in my satchel clicked together like bells. I opened my bag, making sure I hadn't broken anything.

"It's okay. I brought my stuff," she said coolly.

"Sounds good." I replied back.

"So, you got into Stanford, huh?"

"I know! It's crazy. I didn't think I would get in."

"Look at you. You're going from the ghetto to prestige. How does it feel to be talking to a lowly mortal like me?"

"It feels just the same. I hope you get in as well."

"The likelihood of me getting in is nonexistent, Ren."

"You know you can call me Ray."

"Sorry, I might have drank a little bit already."

"Are you okay?" I asked.

"We're here for the drinks, Ren. I know the perfect spot for us to chill tonight. There's this hill by the observatory that almost no one visits. We can try there."

I was too absorbed in the euphoria of my Stanford acceptance to ask further questions or pry into her situation. Also, Ana always carried herself this way. There was a rougher side to her that I admired, but it did produce a fair amount of friendly fire. Some friends of hers had disappeared over

the years, refusing to talk to her, and her friend circle eventually dwindled down to me and a few other people I barely know.

As we were driving up a deserted highway to her coveted hill, Ana rolled the window down and allowed her blonde hair to flow freely. She closed her eyes for a few seconds after turning the radio on. She looked as if she had attained her Nirvana.

“Hey, you might want to keep your eyes on the road.” I cautioned.

“Don’t worry about it. There’s no one here.”

She looked at me with disarming eyes, and I didn’t care to question her after that.

Ana always had a way of knowing what she was doing, even in the worst situations. After her expulsion from The Spencer School for fighting a girl who had gossiped about her sister, she had developed a plan.

Ana earned as much college credit as she could, and ended up becoming an excellent amateur songwriter. We were all hoping she made a pitiful enough case to get into Stanford, because everyone knew she was an artist with a rough past. I thought that was enough to impress an admissions officer.

“They don’t want an upper-class has-been girl like me.” She chuckled with a hint of sorrow.

“They’d like you. I mean, you’re just a poor guy who likes the big questions. Although, being Asian might’ve hurt you. I guess it wasn’t enough to knock you out of the game.”

Her laugh was more defined this time in the popping wind. I opened my window to counter-balance the passing current banging against my right ear. When I turned to give her my response, I noticed she had already shifted gears.

“Here it is.”

She parked the car next to a tree and told me to hop out. I didn’t feel comfortable with the location initially. It was as dark as a nightmare, not even the moon gave us guidance. Ana flicked on her phone’s light, and we ventured through the haunting forest. I kept looking around, looking for maybe someone else walking with us or watching in the distance. My mind began seeing things like red eyes and saucers in the sky. I was losing it.

“Look.”

She nudged my arm, and I was ushered into the most beautiful sight of my life. We were by a cove now and the city was in the distance. Waves came rolling in and retreated with the same constant rumble. Even from the height we were watching from, I could hear and feel each crash. The city in the distance began appearing more like an otherworldly fantasy. For a moment, I felt as if I could see the entire story of Los Angeles. I was an unembodied entity watching over the world, and I felt safe from this view.

Ana laid her bag on the ground and began taking pictures. Of course, her camera didn’t pick up anything in the darkness.

“Wait, what am I doing?” she murmured.

With one swipe, her phone transitioned to another mode and captured exactly what she wanted. I rested my satchel on the ground to experience this moment with her. Not only did she capture a remarkable photo, but she had captured the night along with it. I hugged her, and she hugged me back. We were cheering now and hollering as loud as we wanted. I was almost in the mood to start a

fire, like we were in *Cast Away*, until I realized I’m not Tom Hanks.

“Here, let me pick the first drink.”

“Okay,” I said, “Let me pick the second.”

She started off with the whiskey, and we had fun wincing. I especially had fun coughing out the first sips. She turned her flashlight on, almost blinding me, in order to see if I had the “Asian flush”. I told her it was too early.

We continued drinking little by little until we got the hang of it. We then switched to the Limoncello, which we both liked, and decided to stop shortly thereafter. We had no designated driver, and we were both feeling a little tipsy.

It was about 4 AM when she finally asked her pressing question:

“What do you think got you in?”

“Into Stanford?”

“Yeah.”

“I think it was my paper on gender.”

“Oh?”

“Yeah, you know about this. I did a big research project on the nature of men and women.”

“You never told me your conclusion. Do tell, good sir.”

“Alright,” I put the half empty limoncello bottle down and rubbed my hands. I was starting to feel warm, and I suspected this is what the “Asian flush” felt like. “I... I wanted to study where gender concepts and, in particular, gender ideals come from. So, I went and did some research, and I concluded that men want to be beautiful in their own unique way, in accordance with and beyond the masculine ideal women construct; but... they’re not always allowed to be beautiful in this world.”

“What do you mean?” she was almost on the verge of laughing, “Men want to be beautiful?”

“I mean, yeah. We do. We just have a different way of expressing that desire.” I shifted uncomfortably in my spot and continued, “My first premise was that men and women create the idea of gender for one another. In some way, you wouldn’t be who you are without men, and I wouldn’t be who I am without women. There’s this beautiful mutual creation process we go through.”

“Okay...” She was starting to pay attention.

“The second thing I learned is that this creation process creates the gender ideal – the ideal man, the ideal woman, etc.” I cleared my throat of the now sappy alcohol and continued, “The third thing I discovered is that men want to be beautiful. Women have this beauty naturally in their essence, but men... we have to make ourselves beautiful. And, there are only a few of us who ever attain this state.”

Now, Ana was laughing. She rolled around, gathering shards of grass in her lovely jacket, “Are you serious? Men want to be beautiful?”

“Don’t you see it as a compliment?”

“What’s a compliment?”

“Men have to achieve beauty. You – you women just already have it.”

“You’re such a weirdo, Ren. Now I know why Stanford accepted you.”

“Can you stop with the Stanford thing?” I finally lost my cool.

Ana looked at me with apologetic eyes. The wind whistled through the silence between us, until I finally saw Ana rise in the moonlight. I could tell my tone affected her.

“I’m sorry,” she whispered.

“It’s okay,” my voice trailed off and then returned, “Look, maybe we should just go.”

“Wait, before we go...” Ana began swaying back and forth, obviously on the verge of losing her balance, “I think it’s funny how you’re investigating what it means to be a man... even though you aren’t one.”

She staggered towards to me, and I caught her. She started laughing and crying all at once, getting her eyeliner on my jacket.

“Let’s go,” I said.

I drove Ana home but not without feeling a terrible weight in my chest. Something was weighing me down, and I couldn’t piece together my drunken thoughts. Ana was already asleep, so I couldn’t talk to her anymore. I was left with myself in this dreary silence, venturing ever closer to an unintelligible sadness.

I wanted her to help me again, to wake me up, but I had to remember that things weren’t the same anymore. She wasn’t the old friend I could trust. She wasn’t the old friend who used to support me in my endeavors or talk about politics for hours. No, that person died when she left The Spencer School. And, ever since then, I’ve been left with what remains of her and of us.

But, I didn’t want to give up no matter how many times her comments had hurt me. Something about tonight, however, felt like a line had been crossed, and our friendship was now finished. I then started wondering if this would be the last night we would ever be together, if this is how we’d remember each other before our graduations.

A few minutes before I drove into her posh neighborhood, I asked my best friend Yori to pick me up. He said he’d see me soon.

I dropped Ana off at about 6 AM. I helped her to the door, let her open it herself, and then wished her goodnight. Before she climbed her colosseum of stairs, she whispered once more, “I’m sorry.”

I didn’t know what to say back. I smiled as compassionately as I could and closed the door. After that, I waited for Yori. I sat on the front steps and admired the rising pink sun. It felt as if a long nightmare had ended, an awkward and twisted night was finally fading.

That’s when Yori pulled up. I went inside his car, gave him a weak fist pump and then drifted off into the pleasant morning.

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After what seemed like a mere second, I awoke to him shaking me: “Get up, man. I think your dad knows...”

I saw my father’s sullen face waiting for me. Yori helped me to my feet, and then I waved goodbye with one eye open and the other covered in a drowsy deluge. Yori didn’t wave back. He was trying to leave as soon as possible.

As he retreated, my father helped me inside.

He opened our creaky front door and then brought me to the breakfast table. I was anticipating a lecture, an angry rant, a kick or two. But, my father was silent. He then grabbed a bowl of cereal, poured some milk, and got me a glass of orange juice.

I didn’t know what to say, until he finished pouring the juice: “Can I get some water?”

He looked at me for a moment and then filled another cup. It wasn’t until after he had finished dressing my breakfast that he dug into his cereal.

As much as I wanted to eat, I was still confused and overwhelmed by everything. My father was never this calm. He always had to have the final word on my shortcomings and late night adventures. I then realized the meaning of his silence.

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I went straight to bed after breakfast. My father followed me in, still as silent as before. At that point, I didn’t really care why he was lingering around. He looked at my debate trophies, the posters in my room, my unopened Stanford jacket, and then sat next to me. He stared aimlessly for a brief second, perhaps watching a cloud of particles spinning in the infant sunlight.

A soft but tragic smile returned to his person again.

And then he spoke, “I wish you had told me you got in. I saw the news online. I tried to find you at three, but you were gone. I didn’t want to go to bed.” He rested his hand on my head and ruffled my hair a little. “She would be proud.”

A bundle of tears formed around his eyes as he stood up and left. He closed the door behind him. All I can remember after that was the streak of sunlight on my door. I faded away into a cloud of dreams thereafter.

I was reliving my junior year. It was time to find a prom date, and I hadn’t the slightest idea who to ask. I ultimately decided to ask one of the prettiest girls in The Spencer School, Juniper Zhao. Even though she was only a year older than me, she carried herself like a goddess. She looked like she had it all together, and, in my mind, she was the feminine ideal.

There was always a warmth to her person, and, even when she was focused on solving some physics equation or mapping a biological system, her presence was kind. We all felt safe around her, and I guess that’s something we all want out of beautiful people – to feel safe around them.

People would “ship” us together, because we emulated the “opposites attract” principle. She was gorgeous and intelligent, while I was only one of those things. She was the confident straight-A girl who everyone loved being around, while I was the awkward but likeable outsider.

So, I asked her one day, “What kind of flowers do you like?”

She replied, “Surprise me.”

I had picked out the flowers in my mind, my suit was ready, and I had the cash to buy the tickets. Everything was set, but I wanted to check with her one last time. I wanted to know if she really wanted to go with me, if she had any interest, or if I would be dragged along and humiliated. I saw her enter the library, and I followed. But then my joints started tightening; my palms felt as if

they were melting. Apparently, I had lost my confidence. Regardless, I began rehearsing my lines; but the more I tried perfecting them, the more I realized they no longer sounded like me. To be honest, I didn't know how to ask her again without embarrassing myself. I didn't know how to simply take a risk, go with my gut, and trust her. So, I turned my mind off and went into the library.

I scoped the first floor but didn't see her there. I then went to the second and inspected. Out of the corner of my eye, her backpack appeared then vanished again. I followed the lead, until I heard some voices nearby. They were all feminine voices and obviously, I deduced, Juniper's friends. For a second, I thought about leaving, until they got onto the topic of boys. They did the usual: they described their boy problems and, in particular, their troubles with lousy guys everyone warned them not to date. And then, it was Juniper's turn.

"So, the other day, Ray asked me what kind of flowers I wanted." She paused to absorb the squeals of excitement. "And, I said 'Surprise me.'" Once more, Juniper paused for her friends' adoration.

I sighed, realizing that my chances weren't nonexistent. I now had to get the flowers and figure how I would officially ask her: would I make a cheesy poster or do something original? I was just on the verge of leaving, contemplating the carnival of options, when they had shifted to the subject of their ideal man. I listened more intently this time. Even though I was sifting through books, pretending to care about quantum physics and principles of speciation, my focus was entirely on them. They agreed their ideal man would be tall, over 6 feet. They described the strong jaws he would have; the mystical eyes adorning his symmetrical face. They described his body, the physical perfection of his form and the variations they all personally delighted in. I didn't mind their descriptions all that much (this is usual girl stuff) until Juniper stepped into the conversation.

She pulled out her phone and showed a male model she followed on Instagram. When I saw his face, his body, his overall aesthetic, I realized how much I paled in comparison. My arms were lanky. I wasn't nearly as tall. And, people often said I had an intense but lifeless face. There was nothing beautiful about me. The only redeeming quality I had was my intellect, but no one falls in love with a brain.

I felt something pierce my chest and furrow straight into my heart. I'm not talking about the metaphorical heart, the ephemeral place of one's deepest emotions and desires. This inadequacy dug into the meat of my soul, and I couldn't pull myself together. I felt real pain. From there, the dream (more like a bad memory rerun) took an odd turn. I saw myself running through a blockade of stars that led into an ominous cave. I was a child again, running towards my mother's voice. I could hear her calling me with the most gentle inflection. And, the more I heard her voice, the less lonely I felt. Her voice made the blue mysteries of the cave lose their anxious grip over me.

I stopped halfway through my search to wash my face in the pool of memories. Screens began appearing, regurgitating different childhood moments. There were some of my father trying to get me to play soccer – learn how to play any sport really – and how vehemently I cried to do something else. And then the images shifted to me watching the fathers of my friends cheering their sons on during soccer games, followed by the realization that my father wouldn't be at my musical later that night.

However, there were warm memories of my mother greeting me backstage after one of my plays, telling me how handsome I looked and how I was perfect for the role. And then the image of her dying face appeared, privation seated in her eyes, trapping a clouded soul.

Suddenly, I heard footsteps coming from behind. They were fast, almost like hooves. I got to my feet and ran with water still dripping down my face. The footsteps were angrier now. I turned for only a moment and then shrieked at who was following me.

I launched myself into a tunnel and began crawling as fast as I could. Shockwaves of terror electrified my body. I didn't feel like I was going fast enough to escape myself. And then I felt Juniper's disappointment in that narrow tunnel. She had dropped her other plans in anticipation of me. She told her friends she would meet them at the afterparty, that she didn't need a ride to and from the venue. But, everything changed when I backed out. Everyone had already solidified their plans, and she was too devastated to reconfigure her schedule.

It seemed illogical at first, how she missed prom because of me, and then it occurred to me recently how she must've felt.

But, I didn't care. Or, rather, I refused to care. I refused to believe that there was anything more to our few exchanged words.

In fact, I reasoned that since I wasn't her ideal, there was no reason to pretend we could be anything. I didn't want to waste her time or be anything less than what she wanted. She deserves so much better than me. I just wanted to have a good time with her, but I knew that the image of her masculine ideal would perturb my conscience.

And then I wondered if there was something wrong with me. And, when I identified that pernicious deficiency, or the mere thought of it glowed in the corner of my mind, I jumped to the conclusion that I am unlovable. I couldn't shake the insecurities that prevented me from asking her to the dance, and, for the millionth time in my life, I felt trapped in myself.

So, here's the typical response: Maybe it's not time for you.

I knew it would never be time for me. I saw other men in worse conditions who still found someone. And then I realized they had something I lacked, they had one redeeming quality that unified their brokenness and desirability. That one thing was beauty. Moreover, the feminine ideal they pursued created a masculine ideal they could attain. I had disproportionate longings.

Alas, the creature I was running from was myself devoid of all personality and human features. It was a disfigured monster.

As I left the tunnel, I felt something squirm in my heart. A pink liquid suddenly seeped out of my chest and glistened like proud crystals in a river. For a moment, I admired this lovely substance, until my monster had caught up with me. Its vicious arm was raised in the air, and it struck in one perfect motion. That's when I awoke. ~

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