

Companion
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I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free

—Michelangelo

I spent my ten weeks at Bowdoin completing one draft of a full-length play I named “Companion,” a project I started from scratch. My play is inspired by Jean Leon Gerome’s painting “Pygmalion and Galatea,” 1890, an interpretation of the Greek Pygmalion-Galatea myth. This myth centers on this idea of woman being created out of or by man to serve as his companion: Pygmalion, the sculptor constructs his ideal, chaste woman Galatea out of white marble. During his molding process, Pygmalion becomes infatuated by his model, which causes him to beg Venus, the goddess of love and sexuality, to bring his ideal object to life, which then leads to complications, as she becomes her own person.

My play consists of four characters: Chapman (my Pygmalion), Madeline (my Galatea), Venus (my Goddess), and Finley. Finley was created to serve as a consoling acquaintance to Chapman, the “best friend”. He is a balance to Madeline’s Venus, her female intimate in the play. Chapman discusses Madeline’s development with Finley while Madeline discusses her development (and desires) with Venus. My play’s premise as stands is: *Instead of accepting the women, the humans, he interacts with, Chapman, uses his sculpting experience to create his perfect woman only to find it impossible: women, too, have desires.*

My play diverges from the original allegory in a multitude of ways. The most important difference, however, is the inciting incident: what provokes Chapman to create Madeline in the first place. Chapman’s desire to keep a chaste, unspoiled woman for himself is what propels his molding project. In other words, both his disgust and imaginative resolutions is what draws him to sculpting: his dissatisfaction with modern sexually liberated women and the contemporary hookup culture—the world and women Finley relishes in—leads him to creating his ideal companion out of stone. Madeline’s own understanding and awareness of companionship, building a family and her demanding sex to both procreate and love, leads her to become another one of his failed pursuits, *a modern woman*. Finley, meanwhile, also fights his own casual affair in his fear of commitment: his version of an ideal is casual sex and nothing more. The issue at hand, therefore becomes: *While men desire to know women desire to be known.*

Chapman and Venus work together to create Madeline from scratch. Venus commits to this process out of pity, amusement, personal pleasure, and manly instruction: instead of shaping Madeline into what he wants, it is her belief he should enjoy what he discovers and let her behave herself. Venus, therefore, encourages Madeline to think for herself. Chapman and Finley’s unacceptance of their individual partner’s wants and desires causes them to remain *unaccompanied*.

The books and sources I read and worked with in detail during this project include: George Bernard Shaw’s “Pygmalion,” Alan Jay Lerner’s “My Fair Lady,” Alex Garland’s “Ex Machina,” “Anatomy of Love” and “The First Sex” by Helen Fisher, “How to Create the Perfect Wife,” by Wendy Khadijah Moore, “A Short History of Myth,” by Karen Armstrong, “The Evolution of Human Sexuality,” by Donald Symons and “On Human Nature,” by E.O Wilson.

I spent half of my day working on my play, and the other half the day studying other works, and books to help with my technical development as a playwright and a writer in general. I worked six days a week, with Sundays off. I wrote to Professor Walton on a daily basis through email and met with him face to face every ten days or so to go over my work and monitor progress.

This summer has taught me about the importance of literary and historical research; how existing stories can be used to inspire my own. In other words, I was reminded once more of the importance of analyzing and utilizing reference material to generate new ideas.

This summer was the last time I would be able to immerse myself in my apprenticeship as an artist without any other demands to earn my living and/or face the demands of academic study. I would, therefore, like to thank the college for giving me this time to continue to grow as a writer. I am eternally grateful.

Faculty Mentor: Professor Anthony Walton

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