How to Make it Rain: A Practical Analysis of Storytelling Forms

Mira Singer

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How to Make it Rain

A Practical Analysis of Storytelling Forms

Mira Singer

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Adviser, Nancy Bisaha

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Adviser, Don Foster
Abstract

The following is an experiment in practical analysis of storytelling media. The project seeks to explore what insights can be gained about media specificity and adaptation theory through the process of constructing a story and adapting it into background notes, a short story, a one-act play, and a comic book. A meta paper analyzes the constraints and opportunities afforded by each media as observed through the process of creation and adaptation. The historical notes will go last before the paper to facilitate more surprise in the reading experience. There are endnotes classified into H/N (historical note), A/N (author’s note), P/S (primary source), ED/N (editing notes), AD/N (adaptation note), as well as notation marking notes to do with form (F), observations (O), and revelations (R). These notes mean to comment upon the process of adaptation, delineate the connections to historical sources, and provide a window into the process of creation and revision.
# Table of Contents

1) Title Page  
2) Abstract  
3) Table of Contents  
4) Acknowledgements  
5) Short Story  
6) One Act Play  
7) Comic Book  
8) Meta Paper  
9) Background Notes  
10) Bibliography  
11) Endnotes
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Eyes wide as the sky, Alysan searched for sympathy her family’s eyes, but met only a circle of stony glares. Something like indignation seethed in her stomach, and tears pricked her eyes. Clouds gathered. Her control slipping, she knew she must leave before she committed a worse breach of etiquette. Feeling raindrops, she ran from the sacred grove to the seashore. When her toe touched the brine, she leapt into the air. Black hair turned to crow feathers, arms to wings. Up she soared into the stormy sky. Rain buffeted her, streamed from her feathers and eyes. The truth hit her like the rain: no matter how far she flew, she was as trapped as those she’d tried to free.

A door appeared in the sky. She had to bank quickly to avoid crashing into it. She circled. She’d wished for a way out, but hadn’t expected an answer. To whom do deities pray? But if this door could send her away… anywhere was better than the hopelessness of here. She turned herself back into human form. Hovering before the door, she turned the doorknob.

Jill painted a final dab of nail polish on the fingernail of the woman sitting across the manicure counter.

“There you go,” Jill pronounced, stoppering the bottle. “All finished.”
“That is extraordinary,” said the woman, turning her hands to admire the concentric circles of red white and blue on each nail. The bright polish jumped out against skin the color of old linen, and easily outshone the faded shades of her bonnet, her black velvet headband, and her shabby dress.

“Careful; they’re still wet,” cautioned Jill. A rosy-cheeked teenager in a flowery pink and yellow dress with more ruffles than a bag of potato chips, she was a burst of color beside the older woman. “You can dry them under the lamp next to Izzy.” She gestured toward a woman seated at the end of a row of chairs by a wall, a pile of books and a packet of letters beside her.

“Izzy” stiffened, fingers tensing on the book she’d been reading. With her finely tailored gown and veil, both of expensive black fabric, and the book covering her face, she might have blended with the shadows, had there been any. As it was, she stood out starkly against the delicate pink wallpaper. Still, she was doing her best to vanish in place—her discomfort read clearly in her book-spine posture and in the way her feet curled beneath the chair as if she was trying to touch as little of the room as possible.

“‘Signoravii Isabetta Valiero,’ please,” she corrected without looking up. “Or ‘Isabetta,’ if you insist on using Christian names.”

“I haven’t got a Christian name,” said the other woman cheekily. She took the seat by Isabetta to dry her nails below the purple lamp, adjusting her patched skirts. “My namesake did take the name ‘Esther’ to hide that she was Jewish… Still, the Persians weren’t Christian, and neither am I.” She shot a challenging look at Isabetta, who buried her face deeper in her book.

“And I don’t recognize titles, your nobleness. I stand with de Gouge, who said, ‘I believe true nobles to be those who never abandon reason, nature or the social good’—instead of those born into ‘the presumptuousness of a usurped power.’”
“It is you who presume, in judging me,” said Isabetta, glaring over her book with bespectacled eyes set in a cloistered-pale face. “Only the Lord may judge, and you, I fear, have more to fear from Him than I,” she added matter-of-factly.

“Good thing we Jews don’t believe in Hell, then,” said Esther cheerfully. “But I do believe in the people’s duty to throw off the yoke of tyrannical hierarchies. You’re no better than I am.”

Isabetta raised an eyebrow, looking unsure whether to be offended or intrigued.

“Now, now,” chided Jill, straightening with a basin of hot water, “this is a neutral space. Everyone is respected as equals here.” She set the basin in front of Esther. “Here, hon. While your nails dry, let’s soak those weary revolutionary feet, hm?”

“Thanks,” said Esther, letting out a contented sigh as her feet sank into the hot water. “Ooh, that feels nice.”

“You sure you won’t try, Isabetta?” asked Jill.

Isabetta eyed the bowl distastefully.

“No thank you. Ornamentation is viewed as vain, and I am suspect enough.”

“Then why are you still hanging around a beauty salon?” Esther asked.

“Intellectual curiosity,” said Isabetta drily.

Esther eyed her to see if she was mocking, then leaned her head against the wall, closing her eyes. Jill hummed the Doctor Who theme as she washed Esther’s feet. She heard a plink, and broke off, listening: a drizzle had started outside.

“That’s weird…” said Jill, frowning at the window.

“Doesn’t it rain here?” asked Esther sleepily.
“Never,” said Jill, shaking her head, strawberry blond corkscrew pigtails swinging.

“Something’s up.”

The rain turned from a drizzle to a patter to a downpour, until sheets of water rolled down the windows. Esther opened her eyes and Isabetta looked up from her book. Jill left Esther’s feet to soak, picked up a towel, and waited. When the rain streamed so thickly the entire parlor seemed underwater, one of two front doors blew open, letting in storm winds and a plump brown-skinned woman. The door blew shut behind her, cutting off the winds.

“Salutations! Welcome to the Out of the Way Station,” said Jill, skipping over with a rustle of tulle petticoats. “Disorientation is natural, but you’ll adjust in no— is everything all right?” she interrupted herself, her smile vanishing.

And well she should ask. The newcomer looked like a cat that had walked through a car wash. Her dripping crow-black hair was a bird’s nest. Her gown’s oddly dry wing-like blue sleeves were tangled. Her arms bent as if braced for a fall. Her eyes darted fiercely. She squinted in the room’s light, blinking raindrops off her eyelashes. She focused on Jill, then shook her hands like a bird fluffing wings.

“No, everything is not all right.” She stormed around the room like a caged bird searching for escape, matching the raging rain now pounding the windows. “I can’t believe them! Can this really be Wisdom and Justice’s decision? ‘Portents’ and ‘duties’ and excuses, they see what’s coming and do nothing to stop it! Sure, Insight mentions destruction, fine, go to war. Don’t listen to me, don’t hear the women scream and the children cry… it’s not like you have a responsibility to them, oh, no,” she said sarcastically. “And Thunder just sat there, nodding!” This last strained her indignation to speechlessness. The rain ceased as if holding its breath. Jill seized on the pause.
“There, there, hon,” said Jill, taking the woman’s hands. “Why don’t you sit and dry off, and tell us what this is about, hm?”

The newcomer breathed deeply, releasing some tension from her posture, and nodded, letting Jill lead her to a seat. The rain lessened as she calmed. Taking in her surroundings for the first time, the newcomer saw the other women staring warily, as if worried she would start storming again. Her cheeks flushed.

“Sorry,” she said, “bad day.” She laughed humorlessly at the understatement. “Maybe I should start again. Greetings,” she nodded to the assorted company. “…What is this place?”

“A rest stop between here and there,” said Jill, offering the towel to the guest, who waved it away, despite her still-dripping hair. Jill shrugged and replaced it. “A place outside of time, where you can observe your life from a new perspective, or just put your feet up for a spell.” She winked. “Plus meet people from different times and worlds! The Place translates so we can understand each other, even though we’re speaking different languages. I’m filling in for the usual caretaker, Which means we get a special session, courtesy of moi! Usually, the Station transforms based on who arrives. But I cast an enchantment Which gives the place a makeover as a salon!” She giggled at her own joke.

“How?” asked Esther.

“Oh, just a little gift of mine,” said Jill, wiggling her fingers. “I’m a Which.”

Isabetta dropped her book.

“A witch??” Isabetta said, retrieving the book, and glanced at the door as if considering running for it.

“No, silly, a Which,” Jill said, emphasizing the ‘h.’ “I can add attributes to something, you know, ‘this broom, Which can fly.’ Little miracles, if you will. Or… editing the world, just a
“smidge?” Ignoring Isabetta’s perplexed expression, Jill turned to the newcomer. “I offer manicures, pedicures, massages, hair styling, plus listening ears and counsel. So, what do you fancy?”

“I… don’t know,” said the newcomer. “Um… who are you all, anyway?”

“Oh, where are my manners?” said Jill. “I’m Jill,” she curtseyed, “this is Citoyenne Esther Ravel de Lorraine,” Esther waved, “and Signora Isabetta Valiero da Sienna.” Isabetta gave a stiff nod. “What’s your name?”

“They call me Alysan, seo Rencio.”

“Pleased to meet you, Alysan seo Rencio,” said Jill. “My, but we do have fancy long names today…” she mused.

“You can call me Rain, if that’s easier. Many do. What are your roles?” Alysan asked politely.

“You mean job?” said Esther. She puffed out her chest. “I’m the Archivist for the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women.”

“I have no job,” said Isabetta, pushing her glasses up her nose. “I’m a writer and philosopher.”

Jill pointed to herself. “Which, and high school junior. And I’m certified in mystic therapy and supernatural babysitting.”

“Why ‘Rain’?” Esther asked Alysan.

“Well, that’s my role, isn’t it?” said Alysan.

“Oh, are you a Whether Nymph, or something?” asked Jill. “That would explain the peculiar precipitation.” She nodded at the light rain.
“I suppose?” said Alysan. “I fly over the land as a crow and open the sky’s floodgates to release rain. People pray to me to feed the crops, to provide drinking water, and to ease child birthing.”

Jill gasped, waving her hands, eyes lit with understanding.

“Oh! You’re a deity!”

Isabetta staggered back until she hit a wall, and crossed herself.

“Blasphemy…”

Esther went wide-eyed, but didn’t scramble away (possibly because her feet were still in the basin of water).

“Of course,” Alysan blinked at them. “Aren’t you?”

“Not that I know of,” said Jill. “Though my girlfriend once called me ‘the goddess of glitter’…”

“Why?” asked Esther, momentarily distracted.

“Long story involving a cat, a drag queen, and my bigoted neighbor Sven,” said Jill aside to her.

Esther opened her mouth to respond, but Alysan, who’d been staring from one to the other, jolted to her feet, and a deluge of rain fell outside.

“You’re mortals?!” Alysan burst out. She winced at her own volume, and the rain lessened. “Sorry—I’ve never actually spoken with a mortal… I assumed you were deities too.”

“So you really are… Holy Moses…” said Esther, leaning heavily on her knees.

“No, no, she’s not Moses; she’s a rain deity,” explained Jill patiently.

“Heresy,” said Isabetta, edging away along the wall. “There is only one true God, and she is not He.”
“Oh!” Jill said. “No, no, no. See, Alysan isn’t claiming to be God—sole creator and ruler of the universe—right?” she said, checking with Alysan.


“Demon?” said Isabetta, pressing flat against the wall, book held to her heart.

“No, Déma ‘Soothking,xxvii deity of Justice, my father,” said Alysan. “He rules with my mother, Gléawnes, deity of Wisdom. They instructed my sister Dream how to create the world.”

“Not helping, hon,” Jill stage-whisperedxxviii to Alysan. She cast around and noticed the life-sized stone angel asleep on a windowsill. “Ah-ha!” She held up a finger. “Alysan and her family are like… angels,” she told the others.

“Oh…” said Esther, eyes widening. “We believe in them too,” xxix she responded to Isabetta’s glance.

Isabetta relaxed somewhat, though she still frowned at Alysan.

“An… angel?”

“Her culture’s equivalent,” Jill nodded. “A… messenger of the divine. Don’t worry, she’s not asking you to worship her…” she glanced at Alysan, “you’re not asking us to worship you, right?”

“No,” said Alysan. “You’re not from my people. Other lands have other deities.”

“See? No harm done,” said Jill, patting Isabetta’s vacated seat. Slowly she sat.

“I’m… sorry,” said Isabetta to Alysan. “If you truly are an angelic being, I’ve been terribly rude. I was strictly taught… but I’ve read of ancient cultures, and I do not believe my people are always right. Perhaps you are a… different manifestation of the divine. As long as you don’t tempt me to sin, I will try to understand.”
“Very gracious,” said Jill, curtseying to Isabetta. “Now, how about I do something with that wet hair and you tell us your troubles, hm?” she said to Alysan.

“I’m still not sure how I got here,” said Alysan.

“Simple,” said Jill, leading Alysan to a hairstyling chair. “When someone realizes the ridiculous nature of the universe, the magic of the Station sends the door to them. When you leave, you can take the same door to the instant that you left. Or play dice with the universe.”

She nodded to the second front door.

“I have enough problems without making more cosmic gambles, thanks,” said Alysan.

“Speaking of…” said Jill, brushing Alysan’s hair, “Spill. Start at the beginning.”

“All right,” said Alysan. “In the beginning there were the scales, and on the scales were Justice and Wisdom—”

“Maybe not that beginning, hon,” Jill cut her off with an apologetic smile, patting Alysan’s shoulder. “Start with what showed you a new perspective and brought you here.”

“Well…” began Alysan again, “the Isle peoples have been warring since their creation. That’s why my elder brother and sister War and Death were created so early. The Norings and the Astings have been in a blood feud for generations. The new Noring king has laid siege to the Asting fortress capital, Caer Ardesk. Only elders, women, and children are inside—the Asting men just left on campaign, and the women can’t contact them. The Noring besiegers plan to slaughter the women and children, to destroy the Asting lineage and win the blood feud.”

“That’s horrible!” said Jill. Esther grimaced sympathy. Isabetta looked a bit sick.

“There’s worse,” said Alysan. “These women know they can’t resist the siege forever. They say they’re sick of men determining their fate, and they want to protect themselves, but
they don’t know how. So they prayed to me. I took their case to my family. But my eldest siblings, Foresight and Insight, say the slaughter has to happen.\textsuperscript{xxxvi}"

“So?” said Esther.

“You don’t understand,” said Alysan. “Foresight and Insight see the future, and they’re always right. My parents say the prophecies not only will happen but must happen, and it’s our duty to make it so.\textsuperscript{xxxvii} So my brothers War, Forge, and my twin, Thunder all feel duty-bound to support the invaders. My sisters say battle is men’s work, and it’s not their place to meddle. Even Death only steps in when the fight is finished. When I asked my family if we could avert this slaughter, they said I was overstepping my role and forbade me to interfere. And even if they hadn’t,” said Alysan with a choked sob, “how could I help? All I can do is make it rain.”

Silence fell, broken only by the rain, which had poured harder as she spoke and now streamed down the windows like tears over glass cheeks. \textsuperscript{xxxviii}

“That is difficult,” said Isabetta.

“Poor dears… you and them,” said Jill, massaging Alysan’s hair with moisturizing oil. They looked down soberly.

“But it’s simple,” Esther said, looking between them. “Isn’t it? The women need to fight the invaders themselves.”


“There must be spare weapons in the fortress,” said Esther, thinking out loud. “Or else pitchforks, kitchen knives, rakes, torches, anything they can swing. The women could arm themselves and surprise the enemy camp when they’re resting.”

Jill pursed her lips, considering.
“Do they know how to fight?” Jill asked Alysan, who shook her head vehemently.

“They don’t have to defeat the men in battle,” said Esther, shrugging one shoulder. “Just scare them into cooperating.” Seeing Isabetta’s skeptical expression, she said, “Hey, it can work. Never underestimate the power of a mob.”

“‘Do you hear the people sing…’” Jill hummed to herself.

“What’s a ‘mob’?” asked Alysan.

“A large group of angry people yelling and waving sharp things,” said Esther primly.

“Women wielding weapons, standing against men?” said Isabetta, curling her lip, “Who do you think you are? Lysistrata? I regret to inform you, she was fictional. Such a thing could never happen outside a comedy.”

Esther’s jaw set.

“I’ve seen it happen.”

“Really? What happened?” asked Alysan, leaning forward, half incredulous, half eager.

Jill pulled Alysan back to soak her hair. Alysan stayed put, turning her head to listen to Esther’s answer, and Jill went to work on Esther’s feet, looking up eagerly for the story. Esther blinked, startled to have an audience.

“There was no food,” Esther began. “Prices soared, and the government did nothing.”

“‘At the end of the day...’” Jill hummed under her breath, soft enough not to distract.

Esther continued, seeming not to hear. “I... have a little daughter, Renée.” Her voice caressed the name. “My husband and I moved to Paris to make a better life for our family, but instead, my child was starving... One day I went to the market to buy her bread, but there wasn’t any. It was too much to bear.” Her cheeks colored with remembered anger. “I felt a pounding and at first I thought it was my heart, but then I realized it was a drumbeat. A woman chanted
‘Bread! Bread!’ as if she’d read my soul. Then I saw a crowd of women with torches, pitchforks, pistols, swords, muskets, broomsticks. They said they were going to demand bread from the King. I joined their procession, and we marched through Paris, recruiting other women, until there were thousands of us. Men tried to stop us, but we just kept marching…”

Her eyes danced with zeal, gazing far away. Isabetta shrank back as if blinded by such bright passion. Alysan listened with rapt attention while Jill filed and painted Esther’s toes, humming, “ ‘Red, I feel my soul on fire...’ ”

“We marched all the way to Versailles,” said Esther. “We were so many that they had to let us in. Four representatives were taken to the King himself! He promised to distribute bread from the Royal stores, and he himself brought escorted wagons of wheat and flour back to Paris! It was glorious.” She closed her eyes, remembering.

Jill finished Esther’s toes and returned to wash Alysan’s hair, then rub it with conditioner.

“So… it worked?” asked Alysan, stunned.

“Yes! …Mostly,” Esther admitted, opening her eyes. “Later we were distracted from bread, with overthrowing the monarchy and aristocracy and establishing a republic…”

“You did what?!” said Isabetta, her book falling from her lap again. She picked it up, checking for damage.

“But we haven’t given up; I’m in a political party that petitions the new government for women’s concerns. The point is,” said Esther over Isabetta’s distressed splutter, “a group of untrained women can make a difference, with teamwork and passion.”

Isabetta made a discontented noise.

“What?” Esther said defensively. “Say what you have to say.”
“Your way could get the Asting women killed. There are other forms of powerful action,” Isabetta said. The others looked at her, surprised. “Like negotiation.”

Esther scoffed.

“You really think they could talk their way to freedom?” Esther said.

Isabetta met her eyes squarely.

“I did.”

Esther opened her mouth, but could make no reply.

“How?” asked Aysan for her. Jill left the conditioner to sit in Aysan’s hair and hopped onto the counter to listen. At their inquisitive looks, Isabetta sighed and began.

“For most of my life, I was under a man’s control—my father, then my husband. Fortunately, my father followed the fashion that allows daughters a Humanist education. My studies freed my mind to imagine other societies, and taught me skills to comment without incurring remonstration. Scholarship became my passion.”

Esther blinked, seeing Isabetta anew.

“So… when you said you stayed here out of intellectual curiosity… you were serious?”

“Of course,” said Isabetta, arching an eyebrow. “With my words, I was free. I love that freedom dearly, and when my marriage snuffed it out, I spent my life seeking to regain it. Eventually, I did. It was not without cost,” she admitted, “I had to surrender my children—”


Isabetta winced. She looked down, fiddling with a bookmark.

“Whilst I was married,” she answered, eyes clouded with pain, “I lived in my husband’s family villa, with his parents, his brothers, and their wives and children. Determined to crush my independence, they occupied me with housework and forbade my studies. The weight of
that forced silence… I don’t know how I bore it.” She shook her head. “Because they feared my corruptive influence, they snatched my sons away to wet nurses and tutors.” Her hands clenched into fists, but she forced them to relax. “When my husband died, for the first time in my life, I had a choice: I could remain with the children I barely knew, under his family’s control; I could break all ties to my husband’s kin and return to my birth family’s control; Or I could sue for my dowry and live free of anyone’s control.”

“You chose the last option,” guessed Alysan, letting out an awed breath.

Isabetta inclined her head.

“His family was reluctant to surrender my dowry, so I fought them in court. My early training served me: with my words, those words I had been denied so long, and my logical arguments, and my knowledge of law, I won my suit.”

“What does that have to do with giving up your kids?” demanded Esther.

“Under Italian law, children belong to their father’s family,” explained Isabetta. Jill gasped, hands to her mouth. “I’d hoped I could still visit the boys,” continued Isabetta, “but my husband’s family said that if I left, they wanted no more association with a ‘cruel mother’ like me,” she finished bitterly.

“Oh, hon, that’s just awful…” said Jill.

“It’s unjust,” said Esther with fire. “But I still can’t believe you left your children! Renée is my life—I’d do anything for her. She’s the reason I strive toward a better world.”

“It’s different,” said Isabetta, not looking at her. “You have a daughter… I have sons. Boys have advantages. With their father’s family, they will have education, money, status, opportunity, and a better life than I could give them. They don’t need me to fight for them—they’ll be happier free from a social pariah like me.”
“That’s not true,” said Esther quietly. “They’d be happier with their mother.”

“They have four mothers,” said Isabetta bitterly. “My dear sisters and mother-in-law have taken them under their suffocating wings. I’m only an embarrassing relative.”

“But don’t you miss them?” pressed Esther.

“Of course I do!” Isabetta burst out. The others jumped. Isabetta took a steadying breath. “But that was the price of my freedom. It help us more than it hurts.”

“You’re sure you did it for them and not for yourself?” said Esther harshly.

Isabetta rounded on her.

“So I did one thing for myself in a lifetime of forced servitude. What ought I to have done? Surrendered the last of myself and sacrificed my life entirely? We cannot all of us be martyrs. I will not be a slave to any man ever again, not even my sons.”

A heavy silence fell between the women as the rain drizzled outside.

“That’s not what I… I didn’t mean…” Esther took a breath. “Of course you have the right to be free. It’s just, you should be able to be with your sons, too.”

“In my world, I am not,” said Isabetta.

“It’ll happen,” Jill said helpfully. “Someday. Maybe not in your lifetime, but the world does get better, slowly. In my time, the year 2007, women are free to do the work they love and have kids.” Her expression faltered. “True, they do have to juggle it… and society does still pressure women to choose between careers and children, and criticizes them whichever they choose…” Jill admitted.

“You see?” demanded Isabetta of Esther, gesturing at Jill. “Four hundred years from now, they still haven’t solved it, so, how should I have done?” Esther drew back, objecting no more.

“My conclusion,” Isabetta said to Alysan, “is that words freed me. I may not have overthrown a
government,” she said, shaking her head at Esther, “but I took control of my life. I moved to a	house my family set aside for widows, and created a safe place for women to think, to speak, to
live an intellectual life, to challenge the world that binds us. The words I read freed my mind to
imagine a better world, and the words I spoke freed my body from a life of servitude, and now,
the words I write will hopefully help other women find freedom.\textsuperscript{lvii}

“Not just words—ideas,” said Esther, jumping on Isabetta’s train of thought, speaking to
Alysan. “They can open eyes. I still say you need action, but the first step to freedom is
imagining it. I didn’t, until Voltaire and Rousseau showed how our government was unjust. The
ideas behind ‘Liberté Egalité and Fraternité’ inspired us to fight back. Maybe your women need
a similar idea.”

“Ooh, shouldn’t chivalry help?” said Jill.

“What’s chivalry?” asked Alysan.

The others stared at her.

“It’s a code that defined laws of war,” said Isabetta, “placing moral restrictions on what
constitutes a just war. Saint Augustine taught that only defensive wars are justified, and
aggressive and vengeful wars are unjustifiable,”\textsuperscript{lvii} said Isabetta.

“Like your people’s blood feud!” piped up Esther.

“Chivalry’s from the historical time in our world that sounds most like your world.” Jill
peered at Alysan as if trying to decipher her culture in her face. “Don’t you have \textit{anything} like
that?”

Alysan shook her head. “War has no rules—what a strange thought! My brother War
presides over army organization, inspiring effective strategies.\textsuperscript{lviii} But when battle starts, he
struggles to maintain order, gets carried away, and it becomes chaotic slaughter. Women are
revered for weaving peace though wise council or marriage to enemy leaders, but if they’re caught in wartime, they’re killed like everyone else.”

“Introducing chivalry could help control war, and protect women,” said Isabetta. “In Arthurian legends, chivalry’s idealized form encouraging knights to practice loyalty, mercy, fairness, to use might for right, to defend the weak, to protect women and honor them though courtly love,” continued Isabetta.

“Courty love?” said Alysan.

“Chivalric ideals encouraged knights to express chaste devotion to women through gifts, deeds, poetry…” Isabetta trailed off. Her hand went involuntarily to the packet of letters beside her. For some reason, she was blushing.

“What are thoooose,” said Jill shrewdly, a smile spreading across her lips.

“Nothing,” said Isabetta, too quickly, turning deeper crimson.


“I would not call it that,” said Isabetta, letting Jill take her hands. “But… if it will help…”

“Yes?” said Jill, literally on the edge of her seat, massaging Isabetta’s hands. “Go on.”

“There’s… a young woman… Cinzia,” said Isabetta with forced levity that failed to conceal tenderness. “She wrote me about my work, and we started corresponding about literature and our own writing. She’s… brilliant. It’s logical she’d inspire my work,” she said defensively.

“What are you getting at?” asked Esther, picking up on her tone.
“Once, struggling to concentrate on reading a Biblical commentary, I started writing,” said Isabetta reluctantly. “It became a poem about… her. I debated, but sent it. And she…” her hand closed tighter around the letters, “wrote me one back. We’ve been exchanging poems ever since. I thought it a normal scholarly tradition, but yesterday, rereading Petrarch, I recognized which tradition: the sonnet cycle. Dante and Beatrice, Petrarch and Laura, Astrophil and Stella—who emulate Lancelot and Guinevere, or Tristan and Iseult, with poetry instead of jousting. They’re courtly lovers: the lovesick man idealizes an exalted, unattainable lady, vowing loyalty and protection.” She winced, embarrassed. “Satisfied?” she asked Jill.

“What’s wrong?” asked Alysan, seeing Isabetta’s expression.

“Sonnet cycle courtly love is usually… romantic.” Isabetta admitted. “Writing in that style, I accidentally placed myself in the pursuing man’s role, with Cinzia as the idealized lady.” She continued quickly: “I told myself I was copying models I’d read. Yet…” She looked at the letters and ran a finger down the ribbon, thinking aloud to herself, “I care for her more than I ever cared for my husband.” She quirked an eyebrow. “Not that that’s difficult. But it makes no sense—we’re two women!”

“It makes perfect sense to me,” said Jill.

“Really?” Isabetta asked, turning so fast she almost dislodged her spectacles.

(Of course! I’m a daughter of Lesbos myself,” said Jill, winking. Seeing their blank looks, she tried again. “In a Boston marriage? Batting for the other team? A KD Lang fan?” Nothing. Jill dimpled. “My girlfriend Jay, the regular caretaker, would say: ‘no spoilers about the future!’ but since she left me in charge, I doubt she’d mind me bending the rules juuust a tad.” She held two fingers a hair apart. “See, romantic love between women always existed, but in my
time, it’s finally being recognized. I can vouch for it,” she said, holding a hand to her heart. “I myself am in love with a lovely girl.”

Esther frowned, then shrugged, muttering: “Well, there is the story of Ruth…”

“Love between women is honored among priestesses,” said Alysan, nodding. “Most mortals don’t realize it exists elsewhere, too, but deities see all.”

“Your language hasn’t caught up to you, that’s all,” said Jill to Isabetta, who looked at the letters, eyes wide. “In my day, it’s fine for women to be in traditionally male roles!” she said. “Including loving, courting, and writing about another woman. My advice? Enjoy each other, and forget society. That’s what Jay and I do. Well, I do, at least,” she amended, glancing to the side. “Jay tries not to care but… well, her relationship with her mother was never good… But we’re young—maybe that can change, too.” She smiled sadly, but it didn’t reach her eyes. She snapped back to comforter mode, squeezing Isabetta’s hands supportively. “I’m sorry your time doesn’t understand yet. Though that might make it easier—you won’t be persecuted for it.”

“Persecuted?” said Esther. “But… I thought your time was so… advanced?”

“In some ways,” said Jill. “We have words for Jay and me, but legally, we don’t have the rights of straight couples—men and women,” Jill explained. “I’m lucky my state allows gay marriage—lets two women or two men get married.”

“What?” said Isabetta. The others shared her expressions of shock.

“Even our women can’t marry each other,” said Alysan.

“I never imagined… but how… really?” Isabetta stammered, wonder making her look younger.

“Yup,” Jill said to their incredulous looks. “It the only one in 50, though. Nearly all the others forbid it. But when I was born, we couldn’t marry in any state. See? Even something as
old and ingrained as marriage can change. Likewise, women can be actively chivalrous, even if traditionally they’re the more passive objects of it,” she said, looking at Isabetta. “Your relationship is more balanced, actually, since you both write each other poems, right? Ordinary courtly love isn’t equality; women were revered above men, but had less control over their lives.” Jill shrugged, finished Isabetta’s hand massage, and turned her attention to Alysan, washing the conditioner from her hair and starting to braid it. “Tesla said, ‘society tolerates one change at a time.’ At least, in a movie, he did. Medieval chivalry is a halfway step to equality for women—but like having one state with gay marriage, it’s a start. We’re changing the rules; you can too.”

Alysan blinked. “Change the rules? But… they’re the rules!”

“So?” said Esther. “We’re changing our bad rules. People were kept in a hierarchy that oppressed those at the bottom, until we created a new government to reclaim the ‘natural inalienable and sacred rights of man.’ She looked down. “I thought that would fix everything, but women are excluded from the rights and government we fought for! We petitioned the Assembly, and this wonderful woman, Olympe de Gouges, wrote ‘The Declaration of the Rights of Women.’ But everyone laughed, saying women are naturally inferior. I don’t understand how they can say nature gives everyone equal rights, yet deny us them?

“Nature has always placed women below men,” said Alysan.

“No,” said Isabetta quietly but clearly. “It’s not nature. I realized today, when Cinzia pointed me to a passage from Moderata Fonte’s dialogue, ‘the Worth of Women’… wait a moment…” she opened the book she’d been reading to a bookmarked page and read: “Here: ‘if men usurp our rights, should we not complain and declare that they have wronged us? For if we are their inferiors in status, but not in worth, this is an abuse that has been introduced into the
world and that men have then, over time, gradually translated into law and custom; and it has become so entrenched that they claim (and even actually believe) that the status they have gained through their bullying is theirs by right.’ lxxi She set down the book. “Men’s superiority was never natural—men created it. It’s a… a…”

“Social construct,” said Jill. “The phrase was recently invented to explain that the way people relate to each other isn’t innate, but is a choice people made and forgot was a choice. They reinforce it in institutions and daily life without knowing it. You need these concepts and language to explain it, or you’re arguing about different perceptions of reality.”

“Oh,” said Esther. “Is that why the Assembly doesn’t see the contradiction?”

Jill nodded. “My mom’sx tells this proverb: in the land of the blind, the one-eyed person is called crazy. Your men laugh because you’ve opened one eye and tried to describe what you see, and they can’t imagine it, because they’ve never seen. But the real truth is, your men aren’t blind—they were born with closed eyes and taught to keep them shut. But they can open their eyes and see what you see, if you show them it’s their choice.”

Alysan jolted to her feet, pulling Jill up as well, hands tangled in Alysan’s hair.

“Wait a minute…” Alysan paced, puzzling it out. Jill chased behind, hanging onto Alysan’s hair to keep the half-finished braid from unraveling. lxxi “So you’re saying… that women… aren’t inferior… that men… created inequality… by treating women as lesser? But Justice says… women’s natural place in the world… is subservient to men. He knows where everything belongs in nature’s… rightful… order…” She froze, and Jill crashed into her. The rain cleared in a startled moment. “But Justice created nature! lxxii And order! Women aren’t naturally subservient… Justice created inferiority when he chose to treat them so!” She started pacing again, Jill hurrying after, the rain picking up as if feeding on Alysan’s excitement. “If
Justice truly knew how everything must be…. why did he and Mother create prophet twins who see the future? And if Justice is always right… why did he give Dream’s twin, Illusion, the role of testing if the prophet twins are infallible? Unless he worries they’re not… which means he can make mistakes… which means when he put women below men… he could have been wrong.\textsuperscript{lxxiii}

The sky cleared, and a rainbow shone.\textsuperscript{lxxiv} But then rain poured, and Alysan slumped onto the chair. The others exchanged concerned looks.

“What’s the matter? We were doing so well,” said Jill, trying to fix the unraveling braid.

“Maybe women are intrinsically equal to men,” Alysan said at last, “and society oppresses them—but oppression still exists, and I’m as trapped as the Asting women are.” She looked up. “That’s the thought that made the door appear to me,” she realized. “Their lives are controlled by men who they are powerless to oppose… and so is mine.”

“There must be something you can do,” said Jill. “Didn’t we decide these ideas of chivalry, courtly love, and social constructs could help?”

“If I could get the ideas to the mortals,” said Alysan. “I can’t talk directly to them like I’m talking to you,” she explained to their confusion. “We… inspire those it’s our role to assist.”

“If you’re not in a position to help, talk to those who are.” said Esther. “That’s why my party petitions the Assembly. You said your relatives have roles regulating parts of society, right? Petition them to pass on the ideas related to their roles!”

“Yeah!” said Jill. “Why not ask War to introduce chivalry and courtly love to the warriors?”

“Rightly or not,” said Alysan, “we’ve been given separate roles. To tell another deity how to fulfill their role… particularly an elder brother…” she shuddered. “Unheard of.”
“But you already asked your family to protect the women, right?” said Jill. Alysan’s brow furrowed. “See?” squeaked Jill, hugging Alysan’s shoulders, “So surely you can talk to your brother.”

“Perhaps if you said you… found an idea that could help him?” said Isabetta. “You said War struggles with maintaining order in battle.”

“And reminding War of that would not put him in a helpful mood,” said Alysan.

“So don’t tell him yourself,” said Jill. She held up one finger. “Tell your twin to do it! Didn’t you say he was helping the invaders too?”

“Thunder?” said Alysan. “Yes. But he hero-worships War.”

“Then he’ll want to impress him!” said Jill. “If you slip into conversation with Thunder that you heard chivalry and courtly love could help War’s problem, Thunder might suggest it to War as his own idea. They’re comrades in arms! Even if War’s the leader, a good general listens to their lieutenants.” She nodded definitively, tying off the end of Alysan’s braid.

Alysan looked down, eyes far away.

“That is something Thunder would do, and War does listen to him more than he’d listen to me…” she looked up at Jill. “How did you figure them out without meeting them?”

“I’m good with people,” said Jill, waving a hand modestly, hopping on the counter.

“Who can you ask to introduce the idea of social constructs?” asked Esther.

“To reveal the idea,” corrected Isabetta. “The constructs exist; they must be recognized.”

“Dream,” Alysan said, then blinked, startled at her own idea. “She presides over hopes, and it’s her job to reveal Illusion when his schemes are too dangerous.” But Alysan gestured helplessly, letting her hands flop. The rain turned dreary. “Even if this works, it won’t be in time
for the Asting women,” she said. “Customs take time to stick. The Norings won’t surrender just because someone suggests they ought to protect women.”

   Esther leaned forward.

   “That’s why words are only a start.” said Esther. “You need action to get the heads rolling—sorry, I meant ‘the ball rolling.’” She turned red.

   “Don’t your petitions use words to combat injustice?” said Isabetta.

   Esther took a breath.

   “Well… that was the idea, but… things haven’t gone well lately,” she admitted.

   “Ah,” said Isabetta.

   Esther shot her a look. “What?”

   “I wondered,” said Isabetta. “If things were perfect with your ‘glorious revolution’ and your women’s party, then why are you here? Something’s happened,” she guessed.

   Esther wavered, then—

   “Fine,” she said. “It’ll explain why Alysan’s women need more than words. We petitioned the Assembly for women’s rights, but yesterday, the Committee of General Security arrested my party’s president, Claire Lacombe. When we went today to petition for her freedom, we heard that the Committee for Public Safety passed a ‘Law of Suspects,’ which creates tribunals to prosecute and… execute counterrevolutionaries.”

   Jill groaned sympathetically.

   “I saw it as a last resort for traitors,” said Esther. “But when I told Simon—my husband—he went pale. He says the tribunal sounds like the Spanish Inquisition. He’s sure they’ll come after the Jews.”

   “Why?” asked Alysan.
“Historically, every country eventually turns on us.” She swallowed, looking away.

“Simon’s talking about… retreating from politics. Or even… leaving France! After we’ve come so far! We were going to create a better world for Reneé. We considered another petition—Simon writes pamphlets that I edit. But you need the tool that matches the problem; you won’t catch many fish with a wheelbarrow. While we use words, the new government responds using action. You can fight words with words; you can’t fight action with words. The ancien régime didn’t respond until we marched to Versailles. My father often quotes Thucydides, who said: ‘right, as the world goes, is only in question between equals in power.’ The Asting women must strengthen their bargaining position so the attackers will listen, and so when they talk, it’s on equal ground. This is an army. They need to see comparable power before they’ll negotiate.”

“But how can either words or actions help?” said Alysan. “Insight and Foresight have foreseen that slaughter must happen.”

“How do their prophecies work?” asked Jill.

“Foresight sees precise visions of future moments,” said Alysan, “He saw the fortress gates breaking while someone in armor cries victory from the walls. And his sister Insight sees broad arcs of the future. She prophesized destruction and sacrifice.”

“Wait a sec,” said Jill. “Prophecies are tricksy; some only make sense in hindsight.”

“Like the story of Croesus,” said Isabetta, At Alysan’s inquisitive look, she explained: “He was a king of Lydia who asked the oracle—a prophetess—whether to attack Persia. She said if he did, a great army would fall by his hands. He assumed that meant he would win, but it was his own army that was destroyed.”

Jill nodded sagely.

“So be pacific; what exactly did Insight say?” Jill asked.
Alysan sat forward and recited: “Her words were ‘Ancient fortifications will fall. Life blood will flow and restore balance.’ ”

The others all contemplated this, trying to find some way around it.

“That seems pretty definite,” admitted Esther reluctantly.

“Not necessarily,” said Isabetta. “The literal meaning is grim. But could it be symbolic? Does that happen?” she asked Alysan.

“Often,” admitted Alysan.

“So. What could it mean?” Isabetta asked, switching to scholar mode.

“It sounds like the fortress breaking, the women being slaughtered, and peace coming from death,” said Alysan gloomily.

“What else could it mean?” Isabetta pressed on.

“Ooh, ooh, the social construct of women as inferior is an ancient fortification!” said Jill, bouncing up and down. “Maybe that will fall through this conflict, and balance gender equality!”

“Or,” said Esther, “it could mean the ancient custom of blood feuds will fall, ending this war, and be replaced by a fairer system?”

“It’s your family’s job to fulfill the prophecies, yes?” said Isabetta. “Perhaps your introduction of chivalry, courtly love, just war theory, and social constructs to this situation will lessen oppression of women and end blood feuds.” said Isabetta.

“That might work…” said Alysan. “But what about ‘blood restoring balance’? My family says it means the death of the women will end the feud.”

“Does it say ‘blood spilling’ or ‘blood flowing’?” asked Esther.

Alysan frowned.

“Blood flowing. But what difference does that—”
“All the difference in the world!” said Esther. “Blood spilling means violence. But blood flowing can mean life, passion. When we marched to Versailles, our hearts pounded—”

Jill leapt onto the counter, hoisting a towel like a flag.

“‘The time is near! So near it’s stirring the blood in their veins!’ something something something… ‘when the beating of your heart echoes the beating of the drums, there is a life about to start when tomorrow comes!’” sang Jill.

“What was that?” said Esther.

“It’s from a musical—that’s like an opera—about a French Revolution,” said Jill.

Esther opened and closed her mouth several times.

“There are operas about…?” she said weakly.

“So ‘life blood flowing and restoring balance’ could mean the women’s passion will give them courage to defend themselves, negotiate for peace and rights, and destroy their physical and social imprisonment?” continued Jill blithely, sitting again.

“Maybe… but even if I convince them Insight’s prediction could be favorable to the women, there’s still Foresight’s vision,” said Alysan.

“If his visions are out of context,” said Jill, “they’d be easy to misunderstand.”

“This one seems clear,” said Alysan. “The fortress gates bursting open while someone in armor declares victory from the walls?”

“Wait… how much time do these visions show?” asked Jill.

Alysan shrugged.

“A moment only.”

Jill and Esther frowned at each other.

“But then…” said Jill.
“That doesn’t make any sense,” agreed Esther, nodding. They grinned at the others. “If the vision only shows one moment, the person shouting victory on the wall would have to *already* be inside the fortress when the gate’s breached. That makes it unlikely he’s an invader.”

“That could be one of the women!” said Jill.

“Yeah!” said Esther. “Maybe they *did* get weapons and armor like I said they should!”

“None of this has happened yet,” said Aysan.

“Then maybe that’s what they *will* do,” pressed Esther.

“But why would the women declare victory if the gate’s being breached?” asked Isabetta, still struggling with the concept of a woman in armor.

“I don’t know. But somehow, the women must be winning,” said Esther.

“How?” said Aysan, at a loss.

Esther grabbed Aysan arms, meeting her eyes. Aysan yelped in surprise. “You’re duty bound to fulfill the prophecies, right? Maybe Foresight’s vision means it’s *your* job to turn the tide in the women’s favor!”

“But what can I do?” asked Aysan.

“Is there any other way you communicate with mortals?” asked Jill.

“We send signs,” Aysan shrugged.

“Signs?” asked Isabetta, frowning.

“Like… if a king angers my brother Seafaring, he sends sea storms when the king sails. Or, if people neglect the rituals, my sister Agriculture causes famine, and my sister Husbandry makes the animals fight their handlers.”

“Oh, oh, get Seafaring to send the Asting men home with a storm?” said Jill.

“You’re both water deities, surely you can talk to him.”
“There’s a strict division of labor so we don’t get in each other’s way. Like how human men hunt, women tend domestic animals; women farm, men sail; Seafaring controls oceans—I control rain.”

Jill jumped up.

“Hang on, hold everything, stop the world! Rewind, ding ding ding—neon light bulb, we have a winner!” said Jill, pointing at Alysan. The others stared, flabbergasted. “She’s rain. You’re Rain!”

“So…?” said Alysan.

“So… rain!” said Jill.

“Yes…” said Esther. “You can send a rainstorm after the ships!”

“I—Thunder usually decides when we storm,” Alysan murmured.

“But you can make rainstorms without him,” said Jill. “Like that downpour when you arrived here.” She shook her head. “Very dramatic.”

“I’m not sure rain would be enough to turn the ships back…” said Alysan.

“What’s the layout of the fortress?” said Jill. “In the words of the Dread Pirate Roberts, what are ‘our liabilities and our assets’?”

Alysan looked for paper, and Isabetta reluctantly handed her a notebook. Alysan swept the manicure materials to the side, making room on the counter, and drew a map. The others gathered around. “Caer Ardesk is on a mountain on the coast. A river flows from the peaks through the fortress walls to the sea. Here’s the enemy camp. They blockaded the trade roads. The fortress is well supplied, but it won’t last forever. The invaders have provisions and a forest where they can hunt—plus the farmlands they’ve occupied.”
“You could wreak havoc with their camp, easy,” said Jill. “There’s this great book by Tamora Pierce about a girl who can talk with animals. She gets caught in a war, and sends animals to mess up the enemy army’s food, weapons, sleep, so when they attack, they’re tired and hungry, and not at their most effective. You could do that with rain! Turn the ground to mud, soak the tents and food, make the men so miserable they give up on their own!”

“You could also flood the river,” said Isabetta, peering at the drawing through spectacles. “Floods cause inconvenience—I should know; I live in Venice.”

“But most of that river is within the fortress,” said Alysan.

“What’s that?” asked Esther, pointing at a squiggle where the river met the inner wall.

“A dam,” said Alysan. “In dry seasons, the mortals turn a device to divert water to the irrigation system that runs through the farmland outside.” She indicated an ordered vein-like network branching off from the river at that spot.

“Perfect!” said Esther. “Those troughs go under the enemy camp—you can flood them!”

“It’s regulated not to overflow,” said Alysan. “Unless there’s too much—” she broke off, light kindling in her eyes, merry spring showers starting outside.

“—rain,” Jill finished gently.

Alysan nodded. Then her face fell. “But the apparatus that diverts the water is off.”

“You don’t need it,” said Isabetta, who’d been studying the sketch carefully. She pointed to the wider part of the river right before the dam. “If you overfill the river enough, it’ll break through the dam on its own, and the whole river will flood through the fortress gate.”

“The gates!” said Jill, standing. “Oh, oh, oh!” She jumped up and down and even spun in a little twirl before landing. “Foresight saw the gates break open. Open, not in. What if the vision shows the overflowing river breaking the gates from the inside?”
“That fits Insight’s prophecy,” said Isabetta, sitting forward. “Perhaps ‘longstanding fortifications’ does refer to the gates breaking, but neither prophecy specifies what breaks them.”

“And the river and the rain are the ‘lifeblood’ of the farms!” said Jill. “Rivers flow, and the rain overflowing this river would bring destruction!”

“And maybe that ‘restores balance’ by putting the women and invaders at more equal bargaining positions!” said Esther.

“Wonderful!” said Alysan. “But what about the women’s rights idea?”

“It could mean both,” said Jill blithely. “The armored figure on the wall might mean the women stand up for themselves.”

“Maybe when they realize what the rain is doing, they’ll help it along,” said Esther. “And after, maybe they negotiate for peace and women’s rights.”

“Agriculture will be furious,” said Alysan gleefully. “But she can’t complain—that’s the beauty of it! Rain is my job. And technically I would be irrigating her land, even if I get a bit… overenthusiastic about it…”

“That’s the spirit!” said Esther, clapping her on the shoulder.

“Yet… why would the prophecies mean the opposite of what they seem?” said Alysan. “Unless—Scinn!” she burst out. The others stared. “The trickster, Illusion—it’s his role to try to trick Insight and Foresight! My parents thought they’d evaded his influence because the prophecies always prove true—but maybe he found he couldn’t make Insight and Foresight lie, so he distorts their visions, making them vague and misleading! In which case, it’s our job to find the true meaning. That’s an argument my family might listen to.” Thank you,” said Alysan, eyes shining, rain sparkling on the windows, “for showing me what I have to do.”
“You don’t *have* to do anything,” said Isabetta, facing Alysan squarely. “You have a choice.”

“Like Harry Potter!” said Jill. “Dumbledore says, of course you’ve got to fight injustice not because a prophecy said so, but because you’ll be discontent until you try. ‘The prophecy doesn’t mean you have to do anything; you’re free to choose your own way.’”

“We’re not saying our interpretations are *certain*; just *plausible,*” said Esther. “Your family’s acting as if the massacre is inevitable, but we proved there are other possibilities. It’s up to you to decide which to make true.”

“That’s our point,” said Isabetta to Alysan. “You have more actions within your power than you thought—but more importantly, they are *options.* You were assigned a role by a fallible man—you can stay within the lines he drew or realize those lines are arbitrary. No one can take away your freedom to think, and you can use that power to free yourself and others. I wish I could do as much as you’ll be able to,” Isabetta added, looking away.

“But you help people free their minds too,” said Esther. “Like you did here,” she nodded at Alysan. “That’s the first step toward justice. My father says, the real enslavement of the Israelites was they forgot they’d ever been free.”

“Like V told Evey, you were born in a prison and lived inside so long you couldn’t imagine a world outside,” said Jill to Alysan. “We showed you the cage door. It’s up to you whether to walk through. And then you can show others the way out too. You have the power to change your world. If something needs to be made right, than you can make it, Rain.”

Alysan looked up sharply.

“Make it… rain…?” she said to herself.

“So, what do you want to do?” asked Jill.
Alysan looked down.

“I want to help those women. You showed me their unfair situation was created by people, so it can be changed by people. I want to teach them what you taught me, and free them as you freed me. These words you use… these ideas… chivalry, just wars, courtly love, social constructs, rights, liberty, equality… I want those. For myself, and for all women! So…” she took a breath, and grinned. “I will make it rain.”

“Vive la Révolution, xcvi my friend, xcvii” said Esther.

“You’ve come so far,” Jill said, gazing at Alysan. “You came here thinking you were powerless. You balked at interfering, even when your heart told you there was injustice to right. And now you’re planning to use your own strength to free others. Look at you.” she said, cupping Alysan’s chin. “Like Evey. You look like an angel.”xcviii

Alysan beamed, wide eyes shining.

“(Who’s Evey?)”xcix Esther stage-whispered to Isabetta, who shrugged.

Alysan stood, feeling the braid Jill had made of her hair.

“Well, it seems I have work ahead. Thank you all,” she said, clasping her hands before her. “You have truly opened my eyes.”

“That’s what we’re here for,” said Jill. She hugged Alysan. “Godspeed, hon, and take care of those women—though they may help take care of themselves.”

Alysan laughed. She shook Isabetta’s hand and waved at Esther, who waved back. She stopped before the door. With one motion, she tore the tie from the end of her hair and shook the braid out so that her crow black hair flew around her head in glossy waves like wing feathers, far from the wet birds’ nest it had been when she arrived.

“There’s a storm brewing,” she said. Then she opened the door and stepped through.
The rain lightened until only droplets remained on the glass. Jill dried Esther’s feet.

“I envy her, a little,” admitted Esther, looking where Alysan had exited. “So certain. I felt that, once. Recently, even. But now…”

Jill took Esther’s hands. “It seems you have a decision to make,” she said. “I’m going to cheat the rules again. I can’t tell you what will happen—I want to, believe me, only Jay says it’d cause temporal paradoxes. But you’ve seen the bloodlust.” Esther bit her lip, then nodded.

“And… you know the expression ‘things get worse before they get better’? The danger is real; please, take it seriously.”

“I want to stay in France,” Esther objected. “We’ve made such progress. If I could do good by staying, wouldn’t that be worth the risk?”

“If you were sure you could cause good,” said Isabetta. “If the chance of doing good is smaller than the risk of causing harm, it isn’t worth it.”

“Sacrifice is noble only if it creates more good than it destroys,” agreed Jill.

“ Didn’t we just help Alysan decide it’s right to act against injustice?” said Esther.

“Alysan is not in immediate danger, no matter what action she takes,” said Isabetta. “The women are already in such danger that Alysan’s actions couldn’t make it worse. In your case…”

“What would you have me do?” said Esther, retrieving her hands from Jill’s grasp. She paced across the room, hugging herself. “Pick up and leave? That’s what Jews have always done. Ever since Abraham. Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Spain, everywhere we go we arrive with nothing and leave with nothing.”
“Not with nothing, hon,” said Jill, walking to her. “With your traditions. With your spirit. With your lives. With your family. Don’t get swept away by Revolutionary spirit and forget what you’re fighting for.”

Esther stopped pacing. “…Reneé,” she sighed.

Jill nodded.

“You asked me earlier whether I left for my sake or for my sons’,” said Isabetta quietly. “Now I ask you: are you certain you wish to stay because it’s what’s best for your daughter? Or is it what you want?”

Esther shot her a look through watery eyes. “You said we could do some things for ourselves.”


“You and Alysan both want to protect people.” said Jill. “Is the best way to protect your daughter to reform your country? Or to hide in it? Or to leave it?” Esther’s hands twisted her skirt. “You don’t have to decide now,” said Jill. “And there are many ways to do good, just as there are many kinds of bravery.”

Isabetta nodded. “One of my role models, Isotta Nogarola, was chased from public life for her writing. She didn’t sacrifice her work, only retreated to a place where she could continue safely. There’s no shame in that. Sometimes it takes courage to see an injustice and not try to solve it, when you know that your actions would only make it worse.”

“And retreat is not always surrender,” said Jill. “Sometimes it’s just removing your head from the crocodile’s mouth. Or the guillotine’s.”

Esther stood, looking grim, but resolved.
“I think I need to have a serious talk with Simon.” She looked down at the tricolor cockades painted onto her fingernails, then glanced forlornly at Jill. “It started out so well.”

“I know, hon,” said Jill. She opened her arms and Esther hugged her. “Take care of yourself too, okay?”

“I’ll try,” said Esther. “I’m glad I met you, Jill.” She sniffed. She started to turn, then looked back at Isabetta. “I’m glad I met you, too. You’re nice, for a noble,” she said. “If others are like you, the Revolution should rethink some policies.”

Isabetta smiled wryly.

“Coming from you, I’ll take that as a high compliment. Take care, Jeanne d’Arc.”

The corner of Esther’s mouth twitched. Then she draped her shawl around her shoulders and stepped out the front door.

Jill cleaned the counter and Isabetta stared at the letters in her lap.

“Anything else I can get for you, Izzy?”

“…No, I think I’m fine.” She paused, startled. “I am fine. What a thought.”

Jill beamed.

“Good.”

“I should return too, though.” She stood, back cracking, and gathered her books. She turned to Jill. “Part of me wishes I was going to your world of women marrying and better social vocabulary.”

“Part of me wishes I could love without being hated for it—at least for Jay’s sake—as you can,” said Jill, smiling sadly. “Freedom can be found in quiet things. Treasure it.” They shook hands. Isabetta started to say something, then turned and left.
Jill stood in the center of the room, hands on hips, surveying the scene. She smiled, satisfied. A tinny recording of ‘Blue Jay Way’ started playing from behind the bar. She rummaged until she fished out of her purse a pink phone with a porcelain kitty keychain and answered it.

“Hello, sweetie,” she said sweetly. “Oh, nothing exciting. Well…” her grin got mischievous, “maybe two or three things… Say, Jay, dear; have you ever seen it rain here? Ladylove, have I got stories for you…”
HOW TO MAKE IT RAIN
An Out of the Way Station Play in One Act

By

Mira Singer

DRAMATIS PERSONAE:

JILL, 15, a Which

ESTHER, 34, a revolutionary

ISABETTA, 40, a writer

ALYSAN, immortal, a rain deity

SETTING

(The Out of the Way Station, a rest stop at the crossroads of everywhere and everywhen and beyond. Currently a cheerful beauty salon, a calm oasis from the troubled universe. JILL, wearing a colorful Lolita dress and pigtails, sits at a counter with manicure supplies, painting tricolor cockades on ESTHER’s nails. ESTHER’s dress is shabby and her hair is covered. ISABETTA, all in widows’ black and wearing no makeup or jewelry, sits reading in a waiting chair, trying to disappear into nonexistent shadows. Beside ISABETTA are a pile of books, a packet of letters, and a nail-drying lamp. A hairstyling chair sits empty. A human-sized stone angel sleeps by a window. Outside of the windows is nothingness. Two doors stand beside each other, one leading everywhere, the other leading everywhere else.)
NOTE: Think of the set as the stars in a constellation, with the minimum props necessary to suggest ‘beauty parlor,’ leaving the actors and audience to fill in the details. However, the costumes should be historically accurate—see notes at the end.

JILL: Done!

ESTHER: Exquisite!

ISABETTA: Gaudy.

ESTHER: I like it.

ISABETTA: Your funeral.

JILL: Careful! You can dry them under the lamp by Izzy.

ISABETTA: ‘Signora Isabella Valiero.’

ESTHER: I don’t recognize titles.

ISABETTA: They come with being a noble.

ESTHER: True nobles honor reason, nature, and social good, not presumptuous usurped power.

ISABETTA: You presume. The Lord alone may judge.

ESTHER: It’s the people’s duty to judge and dismantle unjust hierarchies, Izzy.

ISABETTA: ‘Isabella’ if you must insist on Christian names.

ESTHER: I haven’t got a Christian name.

ISABETTA: Your parents must be uncreative, not to give you one.

ESTHER: I have a name. A Jewish one.

ISABETTA: I am sorry.

ESTHER: Thank you.
ISABETTA: That you’re born a heretic.

ESTHER: Better than born a tyrant.

JILL: Now, now, dears, everyone’s equal here. (To Esther) cxi Let’s soak those weary revolutionary feet, hm?

ESTHER: Thanks.

JILL: Sure you don’t want anything, Isabetta?

ISABETTA: And give the crowds more reason to suspect me? exii Thank you, no.

ESTHER: Then why hang around a beauty salon?

ISABETTA: Intellectual curiosity.

(Pause in which JILL hums the Lord of the Rings Shire theme, washing and massaging ESTHER’s feet, ISABETTA resumes reading, and rain starts outside, growing from a few drops to a downpour.)

JILL: That’s weird…

ESTHER: Doesn’t it rain here?

JILL: Never.

(JILL gets a towel ready and watches the first door expectantly. The rain grows to a roar, streaming so thickly down the windows that they appear to be under water. The first door blows open and ALYSAN enters, the door blowing shut behind her. ALYSAN is distressed and disheveled, like a cat in a car wash exiii: her hair is a tangled bird’s nest and soaking wet, her medieval gown is dry but rumpled.)exiv
JILL: Welcome to the Out of the Way Station! Disorientation is natural, but you’ll adjust in no—is everything all right?

(Beat where the rain pauses as ALYSAN struggles between curiosity and the need to rant.)

ALYSAN:

exvNo, everything is not all right!

I can’t believe they will not fight

To save those whom they should protect!

How can Justice be correct?

The women scream and children cry!

And he would turn away his eye?

And Wisdom will not raise a hand

To aid the women of her land?

Insight says ‘destruction,’ sure,

Whatever, fine, go off to war. exvi

Talk of portents and of duties,

Brush me off with your excuses!

And Thunder sat there, nothing said.

He merely nodded his big head! exvii

(An indignant beat. The rain ceases in shared outrage).
ESTHER: Why are you talking like that?

ISABETTA: *(impressed)* And how? It was a sonnet! Was it improvised?

ALYSAN: I’m afraid I don’t understand.

   This is how we speak in my land.

   What matters more is what I meant!

   There has been a dire event!

JILL: There, there, hon. How about sitting and drying off, hm? Then tell us *aaall* about it.

*(The rain resumes more sedately as ALYSAN sits.)*

ALYSAN: I’m sorry. Today’s just a disgrace.

   Let’s start again: what is this place?

JILL: *(offering ALYSAN the towel, which she declines)* A rest stop where you can look at your life from an out-of-time’s eye view.

ALYSAN: What are those tools? This is, I ween,

   The strangest shrine I’ve ever seen.

JILL: Oh, the Station usually transforms based on who visits, but I’m filling in for the usual caretaker today and I did a spell Which gives the place a makeover as a beauty salon!

ESTHER: *(to JILL)* A spell?

JILL: A little gift of mine. I’m a Which.

ISABETTA: A witch??
JILL: No, silly, a *which*, W-H-I-C-H. I can… edit the world a smidge, you know: ‘this broom, Which can fly.’

ESTER: You do magic… with grammar?

ISABETTA: That’s not often what they mean by ‘words have power’…

JILL: *(to ALYSAN)* Today I’m offering manicures, pedicures, massages, hairstyling, plus listening and advice, of course. What do you fancy?

ALYSAN: I have no clue.

Um, who are you?

JILL: Oh, where are my manners? I’m Jill. This is Citoyenne Esther Ravel de Lorraine, and Signora Isabetta Valiero da Siena. What’s your name?

ALYSAN: Most people living down below Call me Alysan seo Rencio.

JILL: Pleased to meet you, Alysan seo Rencio. My, we have fancy long names today…

ALYSAN: I am called Rain by many souls—

You can as well. What are your roles?

ESTHER: You mean job? I’m Archivist for the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women.

ISABETTA: I have no job. I am a scholar.

JILL: *(indicating herself)* Which, and high school junior. I’m also certified in mystic therapy and supernatural babysitting.

ESTHER: Why ‘Rain’?

JILL: Are you a Whether Nymph? That would explain the peculiar precipitation.

ALYSAN: I soar as a crow o’er land and firth,

Release sky-water and ease childbirth.
JILL: You’re a deity?

ISABETTA: (crosses herself) Heresy!

ALYSAN: Are not we?

JILL: My girlfriend did once call me ‘goddess of glitter’…

ESTHER: Why?

JILL: Long story involving a cat, a drag queen, and my bigoted neighbor Sven.

ALYSAN: (Sudden deluge of rain) You’re mortals?! (She winces, rain returns to a drizzle) I didn’t mean to roar—

I never spoke with mortals before!

ESTHER: So you’re really… Holy Moses…

JILL: No, not Moses—a rain deity.

ISABETTA: There is but one true God, and she cannot be He.

JILL: Oh, no no. See, Alysan isn’t claiming to be God—sole creator and ruler of all—(to ALYSAN) are you?

ALYSAN: No. I am sorry for the dilemma.

Of course I’m not; that would be Déma.

ISABETTA: Demon?!

ALYSAN: Déma Soothking: Justice, my father.

He rules with Gléawnes, Wisdom—mother.

Through their knowledge they unfurled how sister Dream should make the world.

JILL: Not helping, hon. (She looks around for a way to explain and sees the stone angel.) Ah-ha!

(To ISABETTA and ESTHER) They’re like… angels!
ESTHER: Oh… *(to ISABETTA)*

ISABETTA: An angel?

JILL: Don’t worry, she’s not asking you to worship her… *(aside to ALYSAN)* you’re not asking us to worship you, right?

ALYSAN: No. You’re not my people. Mortals’ pleas

From other lands go to other deities.*

ISABETTA: If you are angelic, I have been most rude. Perhaps you are… an alternate divine materialization. If you don’t tempt me to sin, then I shall try to understand.*

JILL: *(To ISABETTA)* Very gracious. *(To ALYSAN)* Now, how about I do something with that hair and you tell us your troubles, hm?

*(ALYSAN lets JILL lead her to the hairstyling chair.)*

ALYSAN: I’m still not clear

How I got here.

JILL: When someone realizes the ridiculous nature of reality, the Station sends the door. You can take the same door to the instant you left. Or play dice with the universe. *(She indicates the second door.)*

ALYSAN: I have enough troubles

Without more cosmic gambles.

JILL: *(brushing ALYSAN's hair—continues throughout next section)* Speaking of which…

*Spill. Start at the beginning.*

ALYSAN: Hark! In the beginning be the bright scales
Justice enthroned was  Wisdom too was...

JILL: Maybe not *that* beginning, hon. Start with what brought you here.

ALYSAN: Women are trapped in a fortress tall,

Besieged by enemies who mean to kill them all!

JILL: That’s awful!

ESTHER: Oy vey gevalt...

ISABETTA: How did this happen?

ALYSAN: Betwixt their peoples is an ancient blood feud.

The enemy prince wants it to conclude.

By killing all the women within,

He’ll end their lineage and win.

ISABETTA: Monstrous!

ESTHER: Where are the men?

ALYSAN: They just left on campaign.

The women are in pain!

To me they’ve prayed,

And I’m desperate to aid

Them. But father forbade me.

He says that this must be.

ESTHER: Why?

ALYSAN: My eldest twin siblings, Foresight and Insight have said

That the slaughter must happen—the women will be dead!

ESTHER: So?
ALYSAN: Listen: they have future sight.

Their prophecies are always right.

They show how events will and must go,

And it’s our duty to make it so.\textsuperscript{cxxxiv}

ESTHER: People’s duty is preserving the common good!

ALYSAN: I wish that were true.

There’s naught I can do.

I asked my family, begged them, cried,

But my siblings have taken sides.

Even my twin, Thunder, is helping War

Support the besiegers even more!

They said I overstepped my role,

That this is out of my control.

ESTHER: There must be a way.

ALYSAN: Even were I allowed

To assist the women crowd,

How could I their freedom gain?

All I can do is make it rain.

(Pause filled by sad rain streaming down the windows like tears over glass cheeks.)

JILL: (massaging ALYSAN’s hair with moisturizing oil.) Poor dears…

ISABETTA: Most unfortunate.
ESTHER: Simple! The women should fight!

ISABETTA and ALYSAN: What?! 

JILL: (To Alysan) Do they know how?

ALYSAN: Some, but far

Outnumbered they are.

ESTHER: They don’t need to beat the attackers, just scare them.

ISABETTA: Aren’t you old for fairy tales?

ESTHER: Hey, never underestimate a mob.

ALYSAN: A maid’s cap? How will that help?

ESTHER: No, a mob. A large group of angry people yelling and waving sharp things.

JILL: (Sings) “Do you hear the people sing…”

ESTHER: What was that?

JILL: ‘Les Mis.’ An operetta about a French Revolution.

ESTHER: There are operettas about…?

ISABETTA: (to ESTHER) Who are you, Lysistrata? She was comic fiction.

ESTHER: The men weren’t laughing when we marched to Versailles.

ISABETTA: (Disdainful) In a parade?

ESTHER: With cannons!

ALYSAN: Scriptures? Scriptures?

ESTHER: Weapons.

ALYSAN: (leaning forward) What? Why? Tell me, hie!
(JILL leans ALYSAN back in the hairstyling chair to soak her hair, then manicures ESTHER’s toes.)

ESTHER: My little girl, Renée, was starving.

ISABETTA: (Incredulous) So you became an Amazon?cxlii

ESTHER: The government did nothing to help! Prices soared!

JILL: (Sings) “At the end of the day…” cxliii

ESTHER: Our food stretched thinner than the Maccabees’s oil!cxliv I went to the market, praying for a miracle. But there was no bread! I felt a pounding and thought it was my heart, but it was a woman beating a drum, chanting ‘Bread! Bread!’ as if reading my soul. A crowd of women formed, said we’d demand bread from the King! We marched through Paris, recruiting women, thousands!cxlv

JILL: (Sings) “Red, I feel my soul on fire…” cxlvi

ESTHER: We stormed Versailles. Four women met the King! He promised bread from the Royal stores, and he escorted wagons of wheat to Paris! Glorious… cxlvii

(Jill finishes ESTHER’S toes, and goes to wash ALYSAN’s hair, then rubs it with conditioner.)cxlviii

ALYSAN: It worked, you said?

You got the bread?

ESTHER: Yeah!

ISABETTA: And fixed the prices?
ESTHER: …We had larger concerns soon.

ISABETTA: Larger than the starving children?

ESTHER: The injustice was deep! We cut the roots.

JILL: Literally…

ISABETTA: Which were…?

ESTHER: The monarchy, aristocracy, and clergy. We overthrew the government and established a republic!

ISABETTA: You did what?!

ESTHER: Who’s laughing now? Comedy indeed. Well, comedies end happily! (To ALYSAN) So will your story if you do as we did.

(ISABETTA makes a discontented noise.)

ESTHER: Say what you have to say.

ISABETTA: Your way she would get them killed.

ESTHER: She won’t.

ISABETTA: She would.

ESTHER: Won’t.

ISABETTA: Would.

ESTHER: Won’t!

ISABETTA: Would!

ALYSAN: I couldn’t bear to see them dead!

Is there another way instead?
ESTHER: (to ISABETTA) Fine. What’s your suggestion, scholar?

ISABETTA: Negotiation.

ESTHER: Talk their way to freedom? Please.

ISABETTA: I did.

ALYSAN: Did you? How?

    Please tell me now!

(JILL leaves the conditioner to sit in ALYSAN’s hair and hops onto the counter.)

ISABETTA: After my ‘dear’ husband’s death, I left his kin, and won my dowry by suit.

ALYSAN: Your dowry was clothing, then?

    Why did your parent’s give you men’s?

ISABETTA: No, I mean I took my suit to court.

ALYSAN: You wore men’s clothes before a king?

    I never heard of such a thing!

ISABETTA: No, a suit, a legal claim before a court of justice.

ALYSAN: I thought you did not know

    My father, though?

ISABETTA: Judges, human judges.

ALYSAN: Oh, I see what you drive at!

    Do you mean trial by combat?

ISABETTA: By words.

ALYSAN: A magic spell
To make things well?
Teach it me,
I beg of thee!

ISABETTA: Not magic. Scholarship.

ALYSAN; Lore far from new,
What could that do?

ISABETTA: My learning let me prove my rights. My studies freed my mind to question;
questions freed my body.

ESTHER: So you weren’t joking about intellectual curiosity?

ISABETTA: With words, I’m free. I dearly fought and paid for my freedom.

ESTHER: Paid? With what?

ISABETTA: (reluctantly) I had to surrender my children—

ESTHER: (interrupting) What!? Why? How?

ISABETTA: I knew when I left my married house, by law they’d remain behind.\textsuperscript{clv} I’d hoped I could still visit the boys… but the family wants no association with a “cruel mother”\textsuperscript{clvi} like me.

JILL: Oh, hon, that’s awful…

ESTHER: It’s unjust! But how could you abandon them? I’d do anything for Reneé.\textsuperscript{clvii}

ISABETTA: I barely knew\textsuperscript{clviii} them. They were snatched to nurses, kept away from me. Besides, you have a daughter… I have sons. In my husband’s house they will have\textsuperscript{clix} a far better life than I could give them. They’ll be happier free from a social pariah like me.

ESTHER: They’d be happier with their mother.

ISABETTA: They have four mothers. My dear in-laws took them under their suffocating wings.
ESTHER: Don’t you miss them?

ISABETTA: Of course I do! But separation helps us all more than it hurts.

ESTHER: You’re sure you did it for them and not for yourself?

ISABETTA: So I did one thing for myself in a lifetime of forced servitude! Ought I to have surrendered up my life entirely? We aren’t all martyrs. I will not be slave to any man, not even to my sons.

(A heavy pause, revealing the continuous background sound of drizzling rain.)

ESTHER: I didn’t mean… Of course you should be free. But you should be with your sons, too.

JILL: It will get better. In 2007, women can have jobs and children! Although… they are still pressured to pick one… and criticized either way…

ISABETTA: (To Esther) See? Four hundred years later, they still have not solved this, so, how should I have done?

ESTHER: It’s just so unfair…

JILL: There’s this Arthurian web comic that says: “It’s true. Life isn’t fair. But there are people who use that as an excuse not to behave any better, and there are people who do what they can to make up for it.”

ISABETTA: Precisely. I did not overthrow a government, but I obtained control over my life, using words. (To ALYSAN) You and your women should do as I did.

ESTHER: (sarcastically) What, invite the army to talk over tea? No. But, it’s true that words like ‘Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité’ helped… by inspiring us to take action ourselves!

(To ALYSAN) You need a similar idea.
JILL: Ooh, like chivalry.

ALYSAN: What’s chivalry?

   Explain to me?

ISABETTA: Rules for war.

(ALYSAN bursts out laughing.)

ALYSAN: Nice test.

   You jest.

ISABETTA: I don’t.

ALYSAN: War has no rules! Brother War teaches tools

   Of strategy to win the day,
   But he’s often carried away.
   Battle’s a chaotic mess—
   That’s why I am in distress!
   If the besiegers breach the fortress wall,
   All the women are going to fall!

ISABETTA: Have they never heard about ‘just wars’?

ALYSAN: They do know just war—

   That’s what I am worried for.

ISABETTA: Not ‘just’ like ‘only’—‘just’ like ‘justified.’

ALYSAN: Justice doesn’t war control—

   That is my brother War’s role.
ISABETTA: Must you keep personifying every thing?

ALYSAN: Pardon?^{elxvii}

ISABETTA: Never mind. This war is wrong—‘just wars,’ Saint Augustine declares, are all
defensive—are not vengeful or aggressive.^{elxviii}

JILL: Like blood feuds are?

ISABETTA: Yes. And, chivalric warriors ideally must defend and honor women, with courtly
love.^{elxix}

ALYSAN: Ah, like peace-weavers: women brave,

Who marry enemy kings to their people save?

ISABETTA: No—men expressing chaste devotion though gifts, deeds poetry…

(ISABETTA touches the packet of letters beside her.)^{elxx}

JILL: What are thoooose?

ISABETTA: (Quickly) Nothing.

JILL: Oh my. You have first-hand experience? Tell it! To explain chivalry? I’ll massage your
hands for those writing cramps? No paint, promise. Pleeease? I love a love^{elxxi} story.

ISABETTA: (letting Jill take her hands for a massage) I would not call it that. But… if it will
help…

JILL: (Starting to massage ISABETTA’s hands. Continues through this section.)^{elxxii} Go on…

ISABETTA: I’ve been exchanging poems with a… someone. Recently, I realized we’ve fallen in
the sonnet cycle form, like Dante with his Beatrice, who emulated courtly lovers
Lancelot and Guinevere—lovesick men vowing love and loyalty to an exalted lady.

*(She winces. To JILL)* Satisfied?

ESTHER: What’s the problem?

ISABETTA: She’s—*(She breaks off, realizing what she let slip).*

JILL: Ohhhhh.

ESTHER: What? You’ve got to tell us now.

ISABETTA: *(With forced levity that fails to conceal tenderness)* If you must know… I’m writing to a ‘she.’ Cinzia. It started as an exercise! And yet… *(to herself)* romantic language just feels right… it makes no sense!

JILL: It makes perfect sense! I’m a daughter of Lesbos myself. *(They don’t get it.)* In a Boston marriage? Batting for the other team? A KD Lang fan?

ESTHER: You lost us.

JILL: I myself am in love with a lovely girl!

ISABETTA: …What?

JILL: Haven’t you read Sappho?

ISABETTA: Wait… do you mean… is that what she was talking about?

JILL: Of course! See? It’s quite common.

ESTHER: *(To herself)* That explains the story of Ruth…

ALYSAN: Some priestesses other women love—

We deities see others too from above.

JILL: *(To ISABETTA)* I know you must feel confused—but you’re not alone. We’re only recently finding the language to come out.

ISABETTA: Come out of what?
JILL: The closet of heteronormativity!

ISABETTA: Hm… a mix of Greek and Latin roots for ‘different naming-ness,’ or ‘norms’… yet
I can’t guess the meaning. I thought this place translated.

JILL: Your language hasn’t caught up to you. But that may be good! You and Cinzia won’t be
persecuted!

ESTHER: I thought your time was advanced.

JILL: Yup, but advance brings panic. Many hate us… We ignore them—I do, at least. Jay tries
not to care, but… well, she and her mother always had troubles… But some things
are great! We can show pride, find each other, even marry!

ISABETTA: What?! I never thought… but how… really?

JILL: Only in Massachusetts, though. Most everywhere else forbids it.

ALYSAN: Our women can’t marry each other! But then,
most can’t choose who they marry at all in the end…

JILL: But when I was born, we couldn’t marry anywhere! See? It’s a start! Tesla said, “society
tolerates one change at a time.” Or in a movie he did… (To ALYSAN)
Anyway, Chivalry isn’t perfect either. In reveres women above men, but gives them
less agency. But! It’s a halfway step to gender equality! We’re changing the rules;
you can too.

(JILL finishes ISABETTA’s hand massage, returns to ALYSAN to wash the conditioner from her
hair and braid it.)

ALYSAN: Change the rules?
But… they’re the rules!\textsuperscript{clxxix}

ESTHER: So? We’re changing our bad rules! We threw off the yolk of despotism and reclaimed the “natural inalienable and sacred rights of man”\textsuperscript{clxxx} And my party petitions the Assembly\textsuperscript{clxxxi} for women’s rights!

ISABETTA: If you already reclaimed the rights, why petition?

ESTHER: …Never you mind.

ISABETTA: Ah.

ESTHER: What?

ISABETTA: I wondered…\textsuperscript{clxxii} if your ‘glorious revolution’ was so perfect, why are you here?

Something’s happened.

ESTHER: (Reluctant) Well… (Her mask cracks, frustration flooding through) I thought we were united, that we’d fix everything! But it seems when they said ‘rights of man’ they only meant ‘men’! Now women are excluded from the rights and government we fought for! Olympe de Gouges\textsuperscript{clxxxiii} wrote ‘The Declaration of the Rights of Women,’ but everyone laughed! Laughed! I don’t understand how they can say nature makes everyone equal, yet insist women are naturally subservient?\textsuperscript{clxxxiv}

ALYSAN: Justice says by nature women

Always have been below men.

ISABETTA: No. They all are wrong. It is not nature that did this to us!

ESTHER: What then?

ISABETTA: “The fault is not in us” or “in our stars”\textsuperscript{clxxxv} … it’s not innate! Nor is it fate! It’s—listen. Cinzia sent a line from Moderata Fonte’s ‘Worth of Women’\textsuperscript{clxxxvi} that explains it all… wait a moment…
ISABETTA: (continues) Here: “if men usurp our rights, should we not complain and declare that they have wronged us? For if we are their inferiors in status, but not in worth, this is an abuse that has been introduced into the world and that men have then, over time, gradually translated into law and custom; and it has become so entrenched that they claim (and even actually believe) that the status they have gained through their bullying is theirs by right.”

(ISABETTA looks up from the book.)

ISABETTA: (continues) Men’s superiority was never natural—men created it! It is a… a…

JILL: Social construct!

ESTHER: A what?

JILL: Ooh, mother loves complaining about them! She says it means that the way people relate is a choice people forgot they made, and keep making without knowing it!

ESTHER: How can people make a choice and not know it?

JILL: Mom tells this proverb: in the land of the blind, the one-eyed person is called crazy.

ALYSAN: I never heard of such a place.

Poorest people, what a sad disgrace!

JILL: But we live there! All of us! We’re the one-eyed people, and many others are blind!
(ALYSAN quickly checks to make sure she still has both eyes.)

JILL: (continued to ALYSAN) Metaphorically, hon. (to ESTHER) Your men laugh because you’ve opened one eye and described what you see, and they can’t imagine it, because they’ve never seen! But the real truth is, your men aren’t blind—they were born with closed eyes and taught to keep them shut! But they can open their eyes and see what you see, if you show them it’s their choice!

(ALYSAN jumps up, pacing excitedly about the room through the next speech, JILL running behind, trying to keep ALYSAN’s braid from unraveling.)

ALYSAN:

So you say… here let me see…
That women… aren’t inferior…
That men… made inequality…
By treating women as lesser? But justice knows where every thing
Belongs in nature’s rightful order…

(ALYSAN freezes and JILL crashes into her. The rain clears in a startled beat.)

(Cont)

But he created nature! And order!
(ALYSAN resumes pacing, JILL chasing after. The rain picks up as if feeding on ALYSAN’s excitement.)

(ALYSAN Cont:)

If Justice truly knew how things
Must be, what was his rational
In making twins that see futurity
And giving Illusion the role to see
Whether the prophets are infallible?
If Justice knew he could make mistakes all along,
When he made women lesser, he could have been wrong!

(The rain clears, and a rainbow shines for a triumphant beat. Then the light fades and rain pours. ALYSAN slumps onto the chair. JILL tries to fix her unraveling braid.)

JILL: What’s the matter, hon? We were doing so well!

ALYSAN: The universe remains controlled under men’s will.

The women and I are trapped still!

JILL: But these ideas could help change things!

ALYSAN: I can’t talk to mortals like I talk to you.

We only do what it’s our role to.

ESTHER: Then petition your family to introduce the ideas related to their jobs!
JILL: Yeah! Why not ask War to give mortals chivalry and courtly love?

ALYSAN: Unheard of! To control

A brother deity’s role!

JILL: But you went to your family for help, right? Surely you can talk to your brother!

ESTHER: You said he struggles regulating battle. Say you learned something that helps!

ALYSAN: Reminding him would not be good,

Nor put him in a helpful mood.

JILL: Ooh, tell your twin to ask him!

ALYSAN: He would not take on such a chore.

Thunder hero-worships War.

JILL: Perfect! He’ll want to impress him!

(JILL ties off the end of ALYSAN’s braid.)

ALYSAN: He would, it’s true…

How’d you guess what he’d do?

JILL: I’m good with people.

ESTHER: Who’ll introduce the social construct thing?

ISABETTA: Not introduce; reveal. The constructs are in place; they must be recognized.

ALYSAN: Swefna! (Startled beat at her own idea.) She presides o’er hopes and dreams.

Her job’s to reveal her twin Illusion’s schemes!

(The rain turns dreary as ALYSAN realizes a flaw in this plan.)
ALYSAN: But none of this will be in time
to save the women from this heinous crime!

ESTHER: Words are a start, but you need action to get the heads rolling—I mean ‘the ball
rolling.’

ISABETTA: Don’t your petitions use words to fight injustice?

ESTHER: They’re not working! Instead, my party’s president, Claire Lacombe, was arrested by
the Committee of General Security. And when we petitioned for her release, the
Committee for Public Safety announced a ‘Law of Suspects’ to… execute
counterrevolutionaries.

JILL: Aw, hon…

ESTHER: I thought it a last resort for traitors, but… when I told Simon—my husband—he
panicked. Said it’s the Inquisition again, and he’s sure they’ll go after Jews.

ALYSAN: Jewels? Mortals like treasures
In very large measures.

ESTHER: No, Jews, my people.

ALYSAN: Why would they kill you?

What did you do?

ESTHER: Nothing! But every country turns on us! Simon says we should retreat from politics,
or even leave France! But if we act now, we could fix things… I know it!

ISABETTA: You can’t just sew it like a sock.

ESTHER: And when have you ever sewn a sock?

ISABETTA: How do you think I spent my marriage? Singing?
ESTHER: Then you should know, you need the tool that fits the task—you won’t catch many
fish with a wheelbarrow.

ALYSAN: Fight with a fishing rod?

A thought quite odd…

ESTHER: Thucydides said “right, as the world goes, is only in question between equals in
power.” We need to strengthen our bargaining position. You women do too; they’re
facing an army. The warriors need to see comparable power before they’ll negotiate.

ISABETTA: You have read Thucydides?

ESTHER: Did you think you were the only one who’d read dead Greek men?

ISABETTA: Aren’t they fascinating?

ALYSAN: Neither words or actions can win the day

With prophecies standing in the way!

JILL: Wait a sec… prophecies are tricky. Like with that king, um…

ISABETTA: Croesus? The one who heard the oracle say that if he went to war an army would
then fall, and thought that meant he’d win, but his own army fell?

JILL: That’s the one! (to ALYSAN) So be pacific: what exactly are these prophecies?

ALYSAN: Foresight sees visions of future moments;

He saw the fortress gates break, a warrior yelling “victory!” from the battlements.

And his sister Insight sees broad arcs of the future.

She said: “Ancient fortifications fall. Life blood’s flow, balance will restore.”

(Pause as they contemplate this, trying to find some way around it.)
ISABETTA: Taken literally, it’s grim. But do the prophecies ever have symbolic meaning?

ALYSAN: They often do,

That’s true.

(ISABETTA pulls out a notebook to write their ideas)

ISABETTA: Then what might “ancient fortifications” mean?

JILL: Ooh, ooh, the social construct of women as inferior!

ESTHER: Or the old custom of blood feuds!

ISABETTA: (writing their suggestions) And “blood restoring balance?”

ESTHER: Does it say “blood spill” or “blood flow”?

ALYSAN: Blood flow.

But what does knowing—

ESTHER: That makes all the difference! Blood spill is violence, but blood flow is passion.

(Jill leaps onto the counter, hoisting a towel like a flag.)

JILL: (Sings) “The time is near! So near it’s stirring the blood in their veins! something something something… “when the beating of your heart echoes the beating of the drums, there is a life about to start when tomorrow comes!”

ALYSAN: You can speak like we!

That’s nice to see.
(ISABETTA holds out her notes)

ISABETTA: Put together, it may mean the women’s passion will end their oppression.

ALYSAN: Oh, I really like that version!

But what of Foresight’s vision?

JILL: How much time do the visions show?

ALYSAN: He sees but a moment,

Then it’s spent.

(Jill and Esther frown at each other.)

JILL: But then…

ESTHER: …That makes no sense.

(They grin at the others)

ESTHER: The warrior on the wall declaring victory must already be inside when the gate breaks!

JILL: It could be one of the women!^scx

ISABETTA: But why would they shout victory?

ESTHER: Somehow, they must be winning.

ALYSAN: Some how?
But which how?

ESTHER: It’s your duty to fulfill the prophecies right? Maybe it’s your job to turn the tide in the women’s favor!

ALYSAN: But what can I do

To help them through?

JILL: Can you communicate with mortals at all?

ALYSAN: We can send signs

Of various kinds.

ESTHER: Signs? Like banners and flags?

ALYSAN: Like… brother Seafaring sends sea storms.

JILL: Oh, oh, can he send the men’s ships back to defend the women?

ALYSAN: We each stay in our own lane;

Seafaring controls oceans—I control rain.

(JILL jumps up.)

JILL: Hang on, hold everything, stop the world! Ding ding ding—neon light bulb, we have a winner!

ISABETTA: Translation, please.

JILL: She’s Rain. You’re rain!

ALYSAN: So…? Explain.

JILL: So… rain!

ESTHER: Yes… You can send a rainstorm!
ALYSAN: Thunder usually decides when we storm…

ISABETTA: What would you call that downpour when you first arrived?

ESTHER: It was rather fearsome…

ALYSAN: Was it so?

    I didn’t know.

    But I doubt it’d turn the men back,

    Or stop the attack…

JILL: What’s the fortress layout? In the words of the Dread Pirate Roberts, what are “our liabilities and our assets”?

(ALYSAN makes a map)

ALYSAN: (Indicating each feature on the map) The fort, Caer Ardesk, stands on a mountain high.

    A river flows from its peak to the sea beside.

    Their enemies camp on this outer farmland.

    The women have provisions, but can’t long withstand.

JILL: You could use rain to mess with the enemy camp, easy! Like Tamora Pierce’s story of how Daine’s animal friends helped in a siege!

ISABETTA: What’s that? A fable? They need more than myths— (Sees ALYSAN. Remembers she’s sitting next to a rain deity). Forget it. I forgot my company. Proceed.

JILL: Soak the tents and food, make the men so miserable they give up on their own!

ISABETTA: Or… flood the river. That makes trouble. I should know; I live in Venice.
ALYSAN: But the river courses
   Mostly within the fortress.
ESTHER: *(pointing to something on the map)* What’s that?
ALYSAN: A dam. It can divert
   Water to the outer farmland’s dirt.
ESTHER: Perfect! Those troughs go under the enemy camp!
ALYSAN: They’re designed not to overflow the drain.
   Unless of course there’s too much…

*(Merry spring showers start outside.)*

JILL: …rain.
ALYSAN: *ccxx* But how to send water to the troughs?
   It’s the wet season; the device is off!
ISABETTA: *(studying the map)* If you overfill the river, it will break through the dam and fortress gate.

*(JILL jumps up spins in a little twirl).*

JILL: The gates! Oh, oh, oh! Foresight saw the gates break open, not in! What if he saw the river breaking them from the inside?
ISABETTA: Perhaps the gate still is the prophecy’s “fortification”…
JILL: And water is “lifeblood”!
ESTHER: And the flood will level the bargaining positions and “restore balance”!

ALYSAN: Wonderful! You make it clear

But what about your first idea?

JILL: Both could come true!

ESTHER: Maybe the figure on the wall means the women help break the dam! And when they’ve cowed the attackers, they can negotiate for peace and women’s rights!

ALYSAN: Agriculture will be furious, but she can’t complain!

If I’m overenthusiastic, I’ll still be doing my job of rain!

ESTHER: That’s the spirit!

ALYSAN:

Yet why would the prophecies mean

The opposite of what they seem?

Unless—The trickster, Scinn! Illusion!

His role is to cause the prophets confusion!

My parents no longer fear his influence,

Since the predictions always come to pass—

But maybe Scinn can’t make the prophets lie,

So he distorts their visions! How sly!

Then our duty’s to find the meaning true!

That’s an argument my family might hearken to!

(Rain sparkles on the windows. To the others:)}
(Cont): No longer will just I do what they say
I will follow your advice on from this day.
All my gratitude goes to you
For showing me what I have to do.  

JILL: No, no no, we’re not telling you what to do! Dumbledore says, you’ve got to fight injustice because you personally won’t be satisfied ‘til you try, but it’s still your choice.  

ISABETTA: That’s the point. We proved the massacre is not inevitable, but our interpretations are not certain; merely plausible. You decide which to make happen. I wish I had as much power …

ESTHER: You do! You help women free their minds! My father says, the real enslavement of the Israelites was they forgot they’d ever been free.

JILL: Like Evey Hammond! (To ALYSAN) You’ve been in a cage so long you never knew there was an outside. We showed you the door, but it’s up to you whether to walk through.

ISABETTA: You’ve seen you were assigned a role by a fallible man. You can choose to stay within the arbitrary lines he drew, or not. No one can take away your freedom to think, and you can use it to free yourself and others.

JILL: If something needs to be made right, than you can make it, Rain.

ALYSAN: Make it… rain…?

JILL: So, what do you want to do?

ALYSAN:
I want to help those women.
Slaughter would be terrible.
You say their situation was created,
And so it can be changed.
If it’s truly avoidable,
It should be avoided.
And if I can help stop it,
I should. I want to.
And after, perhaps we can move on
To these ideas you teach:
Rights, freedom, equality.
I want those, for all of us.
My choice is plain:
I will make it rain.

ESTHER: Vive la Révolution, my friend.

ISABETTA: And you thought there was nothing you could do.

JILL: Look at you now. Like Evey. Like an angel.

ESTHER: *(Aside to ISABETTA)* Who’s Evey?

*(ISABETTA shrugs. ALYSAN stands, feeling the braid Jill had made of her hair.)*

ALYSAN: Well, it seems I have my work cut out.
   It’s high time that I headed out.
   Thank you, and goodbye
   You have opened up my eyes.
JILL: That’s what we’re here for. *(She hugs ALYSAN.)* Godspeed, hon.

*(ALYSAN grips ESTHER’s hand in a warrior salute, and nods at ISABETTA, who nods back.*

ALYSAN stops before the door. *With one motion, she tears the tie from the end of her hair and shakes the braid out so that her hair flows around her head in glossy waves like wing feathers, a far cry from the wet birds’ nest it had been when she arrived.)*

ALYSAN: Here goes everything.

A storm is brewing.

*(ALYSAN exits through the first door. The rain trickles and fades away.)*

ESTHER: So certain… I was like that, once. cxxixiii

JILL: You have a decision to make, too, hon.

ESTHER: I want to stay in France.

ISABETTA: Why? Are not you in danger?

ESTHER: …Maybe. Yes. But we’ve come so far… if I can do more, isn’t it worth it?

ISABETTA: What if the risk is greater than the rewards? Is it still worth it?

ESTHER: Didn’t we help Alysan decide it’s right to act against injustice?

ISABETTA: Alysan is immortal, and the women are already in such peril that her actions could not make it worse. In your case…
ESTHER: What would you have me do? *(She paces around the room.)* Pick up and leave? Jews always have, since Abraham. Egypt, Babylon, Spain, we arrive with nothing and leave with nothing.*cxxxiv*

JILL: Not with nothing, hon. With your traditions, lives, family. Remember what you’re fighting for.

ESTHER: *(Stops pacing.)* …Reneé.

ISABETTA: You asked me if I left for my sake or my sons’. Now I ask you: is staying best for your daughter? Or is it what you want?

ESTHER: You said we could do some things for ourselves.

ISABETTA: You said you’d do anything for Reneé.

ESTHER: … Touché.

JILL: I’m going to bend the rules. I can’t say much—Jay says it’d cause temporal paradoxes. But you’ve seen the bloodlust. Please believe the danger’s real.

ESTHER: …I know.

JILL: There are many ways to do good, and many kinds of bravery.

ISABETTA: Yes. It takes courage to let injustice stand when fighting it would make it worse.

Isotta Nogarola*ccoxxv* was chased out of public life for writing, yet kept at in isolation, somewhere she could do so safely. There is no shame in that.

JILL: Retreat’s not always surrender. Sometimes it’s just removing your head from the crocodile’s mouth. Or the guillotine’s.

*(Decisive beat)*
ESTHER: I think I need a serious talk with Simon. It started out so well…

JILL: I know, hon. *(They hug.)* Take care of yourself too, okay?

ESTHER: I’ll try. I’m glad I met you. *(Starts to exit. Then to ISABETTA)* You too. You’re nice, for a noble. If others are like you, maybe the Revolution should rethink some policies.

ISABETTA: From you, I’ll take that as a compliment. Fare well, bold Jeanne d’Arc.∗∗∗∗∗∗

*(ESTHER exits through the first door. JILL starts tidying up the place.)*

JILL: Anything I can get you, Izzy?

ISABETTA: I’m fine. *(Realizing) I am fine.*

JILL: Good!

ISABETTA. But I should return as well. *(She gathers her books. To JILL)* A part of me would almost wish that I was going to your world of women marrying and better social language.

JILL: Part of me wishes I could love without being hated for it—at least for Jay’s sake—as you can. Freedom can be found in quiet things. Treasure it.

*(They shake hands. ISABETTA exits. JILL surveys the room, satisfied with her work. A tinny ringtone of “Poor Wandering One” plays, and JILL hunts for her phone: “Poor wandering one, though thou hast surely strayed, take heart, pray, thy steps retrace, poor wandering one... Poor wandering one, if such poor love as mine can help thee find true peace of mind, why, take it, it is thine ∗∗∗∗∗∗∗∗∗)*

*(JILL finds her cell phone and answers it, and continues tiding)*
JILL: Hello, sweetie. *(Glancing at the window)* Swimmingly! Oh, nothing exciting. Well… maybe two or three things… Say, Jay, dear, have you ever seen it rain here? Ha. Ladylove, do I have stories for you…
To help with the research and production aspects, here are some historical notes.

**Clothing for Italian Renaissance widows:**

- Dress: Black, with a train
- Hair: Covered, veil or cap, black
- Jewelry: None
- Makeup: Natural


**Clothing for 18th Century French Jewish Women:**

- Dress: shabby, dull colors. Arms covered past the elbows or wrists, legs covered to feet, chest covered to above collarbones. See images of Revolutionary women.
- Hair: covered under a bonnet, perhaps the red cap of liberty. Perhaps with velvet headband to simulate hairline or a wig.
- Other: Perhaps wearing the tricolor cockade, pinned on a hat or dress.

**Possible clothing for a bubbly teenage Anime fan (Japanese Animation, a growing cultural trend among teenagers in the mid 2000’s):**

- Dress: Lolita dress, or knee length colorful sundress with fluffy skirt and frills
• Hair: Pigtails

Possible Clothing for a Rain Deity

• Dress: Medieval European, with dipping medieval sleeves, wing-like
• Hair: Loose and wild at beginning
• Feet: Bare, safety permitting

Wet Hair

ALYSAN’s hair doesn’t have to be wet—it can be, of course, but I don’t want the actress to catch a cold. It could either be simulated through acting, or through various effects such as stylized raindrops.

Some set/tech possibilities (None of these are required, just ideas to help inspire)

• The basic set could be anything from a full on beauty salon to a black box with mimed props and boxes for chairs and counters.
• The rain should change based on ALYSAN’s mood throughout the play. I’ve marked various places where this could come into play, but depending on how it is played these moments can be chosen differently. As can the manner of the rain, from sound (no thunder, because her brother is in charge of that) to lighting effects out the window or on the whole room to dappled spotlights on the windows to actual water on the windows.
• The map ALYSAN makes could be anything from drawing a physical map on one of ISABETTA’s notebooks, to rearranging the chairs, to using people to stand in for landmarks, to drawing on a menu board, to ALYSAN magically projecting an image for
the characters to see, to ALYSAN drawing and having the map be projected for the sake of the audience. Many possibilities.

- Shadow puppets or the like could be used during any or all of the story reenactments, particularly Foresight’s vision.
In the beginning were the scales.

Justice and Wisdom.

On them were

A fortress full of women is under siege!

The men just left on campaign.

An enemy army plans to slay the women to end the ancient blood feud between the peoples.

The women say they're sick of men determining their fate, and want to save themselves, but don't know how.

So they prayed to me for aid.

I asked my family, but...

You overstep your role.

My sisters refuse to interfere, and my brothers feel duty-bound to help the invaders.

Even my twin, Thunder!

Even were I allowed to help, how could I? All I can do is make it rain!

Even though we sympathize, but the prophet twins say it must happen. It's our duty to fulfill their prophecies.

There was no bread.

"My daughter, Renée, was starving."

Thousand[s of us] marched to demand bread from the king!

The women rose up to protest.

Impossible.

I've seen it happen.

Really?

What happened?

Glorious!
How to Make it Rain

My late husband's family refused to let me leave with my dowry.
So I fought them in court.

My scholarly studies served me.
I won.

My married family was a prison. They forbade my studies, tried to control my mind. I will not be slave to any man again, now that I have my freedom back.

Since then, I've created a haven for women to think and speak and study freely.

And I found someone I care about deeply and equally.

I've been exchanging poems with a young woman.
Cingia...
I...love her...as I never loved my husband.
But it makes no sense!
We're two women!

It makes perfect sense!
A Koi Long fan?
In a business marriage?

I'm a daughter of Leshos myself!
Better for the other team?
I'm in love with a lovely girl!

My time has finally acknowledged we exist!

My state lets us marry!
But it's the only one.

Still, it's a start! We're changing the rules; you can too!

Change the rules?

But they're the rules!
How to Make it Rain

Natural, Inalienable, and Sacred Rights of Man

I thought we were united, But they say the ‘Rights of Man’ only apply to men! Women are excluded from the rights we fought for!

If you already claimed rights, why petition?

Wait a moment...

Olympe de Gouges wrote to defend the Rights of Women.

They say women are naturally inferior!

But everyone laughed!

Justice says women have always been naturally below men.

It’s neither innate nor fate.

The idea of men’s superiority was created by men. It’s a social construct.

What’s that?

Mom loves talking about them! She explains it as:

In the land of the blind, the one-eyed person is called the... But the truth is, the others aren’t blind. They were blindfolded by society so early that they can’t imagine sight!

But they can see what you see if you show them it’s a choice.
How to Make it Rain

Wait... You say women aren't inferior... Men just treat them so!

But Justice says he knows where everything belongs in nature's rightful order...

But Justice created nature! And order!

He and Wisdom also created the prophet twins to see the future, and a trickster to test their accuracy...

Unless... he worried he could make mistakes!

Why do that?... when he put women below men...

And if he can make mistakes, that means...

He could have been wrong!

What's wrong? We were doing so well!

Rightful or not, men are still in charge.

I'm still powerless to help the women.

Explain all this to your family?

They won't listen... So don't talk, act!

I thought you wrote petitions for justice!

They're not working! The Committees arrested our party president.

and made a tribunal to execute traitors.

Simon - my husband - thinks they'll go after the Jews, and he wants to leave France!

But if we act, we can fix things, I know it!

Likewise, your women need to increase their bargaining power.

Then they can talk about equal rights.
[Comics page discussing themes of prophecy, fate, and the intersection of words and actions.]

**How to Make it Rain**

But how can words or action help?

The prophets still say the slaughter must happen.

Wait a sec. Prophecies are tricky.

What exactly did they say?

Insight sees broad themes of the future.

She said ancient fortifications will fall. Lifeblood will flow and restore balance.

Foresight sees visions of future moments.

He saw the fortress gates break while a warrior on the wall shouted...

Victory!

Could Insight's prediction be metaphorical? Does that happen?

Often, but what else could it mean?

When the beating of your heart echoes the beating of the drums...

[Dialogue about the difference in the world, blood spilling is destruction, blood flowing is life, passion.]

How much time do the visions show?

A moment only

But then...

...that makes no sense!

If the vision's true, the warrior must be someone who's already inside when the gate breaks!

It could be one of the women!
How to Make it Rain

But why would the women declare victory?

There must be a way for the women to be winning.

How?

It's your duty to fulfill the prophecies, right?

Maybe it's your job to turn the tide in the women's favor?

I told you, all I can do is make it rain!

We have a winner!

Ding ding ding!

You're Rain.

So?

So... rain!

How would that help?

Make the enemy camp so miserable they leave!

And if they don't?

What's the layout? As the Dread Pirate Roberts would say, what are our assets and liabilities?

Perfect! Those run right under the enemy camp! You can flood them!

The fort is on a coastal mountain.

A river runs from the peak to the sea.

The army is camped on conquered farmland.

A dam. It can redirect water to the irrigation trenches.

It's regulated not to overflow. Unless there's too much...

But the device that diverts the water is off.

But you don't need it. If there's enough overflow, the river will break through the dam...

The prophecy!
How to Make it Rain

The women taking up arms and helping the
river break the dam.
and wash the
armies away.

Scin!

His job
is to try to
trick the
prophets.

You don't
have to
do anything.

You have the
power to help,
and the freedom
to choose.

Your life is what you
make it, Rain!

You have the
power to help,
and the freedom
to choose.

There's a
storm brewing...

I will make it rain!

My parents
no longer fear his
influence
since the
prophecies always come
ture.
If he can't make
the prophecies lie,
maybe he makes them
confusing on purpose!

That's an argument my
family might
listen to!

Make it...
...rain?

Once they even the
playing field, the women can
negotiate for peace and rights!

This could
work...

Thank you for
showing me
what I have
to do.

I want to help
the women.
That's what I
believe is
right.

So...

The women's vision shows!

...what foresight!

Yet why
would the
prophesies mean
the opposite of
what they seem?

Unless...

Maybe that's
what foresight's
vision shows!

What about the
equal rights idea?

It could mean both!

It could
mean both!

It could
mean both!

It could
mean both!

It could
mean both!
How to Make it Rain:

A Practical Analysis of Storytelling Mediums

INTRODUCTION

Starting before I can remember, my parents told me stories. As soon as I could, I began creating stories of my own. I considered applying to an arts high school, but its students had to choose one medium to specialize in—writing, or acting, or drawing. I saw no reason to choose, preferring to study the connections between the forms. Vassar’s independent major program allowed me to explore and compare literature, creative writing, acting, film, folklore, and history, and comparatively analyze the way forms of storytelling work.

This thesis is the culmination of that study. All of the subjects I studied at Vassar enabled the background experience, attention to theory, critical eye, analytical practice, and inspiration that contributed to this project. All of these subjects, plus one more:

At Vassar, I acquired an accidental education in feminism. Every class discussed gender and analyzed the way society shapes the perceptions people have of the world and of each other. In-class analysis challenging social assumptions by demonstration how every society is a human creation, and demonstrated that social status and unequal treatment are human choices, and thus can be changed. Those ever-popular Vassar buzzwords ‘social construct’ entered my vocabulary, first as an inside joke, then as a critical analysis in my papers, and finally as a passionate assertion in this project. After writing numerous feminist critiques of literature and history, it followed naturally for this thesis to address issues affecting the status and dilemmas of women from different contexts.
Constructing this project began with searching out fields of theory that would unify and clarify the disparate studies. The most applicable disciplines appeared to be adaptation theory and media specificity theory.

However, in much of adaptation theory, few if any of the theorists I could find were themselves creators of stories as well as critics. This might not seem surprising, except that in many other fields—such as law, history, and drama—the practitioners contribute to the theory and are not separate from it. The lack of a creator’s perspective in adaptation theory can become an issue because when the critic is the not creator and when the adaptor is not the author of the source text, it is difficult to distinguish which changes in the adaptation are made because of the qualities of the form and which are made because of the aesthetic choices of each creator.

I asked: What insights about adaptation and media specificity can be learned by a practitioner through creating an adaptation?

This is my answer.

**HYPOTHESIS**

Both theory and practice are necessary for understanding any subject. Critical insights about theory can be gained through practice; I learned the most about theater through acting, the most about literature through writing, and the most about art through drawing.

Adaptation and media theory could benefit from the creator’s perspective because engaging in a process of creation and adaptation can illuminate how and why decisions are made when adapting a work from one form to another. So I set out to study media specificity by creating a story and adapting it into each medium. If these insights prove useful, it will help to
validate my proposed mode of analysis through practice. Such insights about these media may be helpful to others interested in studying or making effective stories.

ADAPTATION

This project grows from Julie Sanders’ “Adaptation and Appropriation,” in which she identifies many common functions within adaptations, including but not limited to the following six: 1) using historical facts as the source text for an adaptation; 2) emphasizing underrepresented perspectives; 3) imitating and expanding upon an existing style of narrative; 4) intertextuality—putting disparate sources in conversation with each other; 5) translating a narrative from one genre or medium into another; and 6) meta analysis.

How to Make it Rain explores each of these six aspects. I’ve adapted historical sources from the ‘Dark Ages,’ French Revolution, Renaissance Italy and present day to create four characters, conducted historical analysis into how the historical context might influence their perspectives, and posed hypotheses based on the history about how the characters might respond to each other and to unfamiliar situations. The selection of sources and development of characters have examined women’s roles from four eras which perpetuated patriarchal oppression. The plot is a version of the archetypal narrative that portrays an encounter between a group of people sharing stories—a style of narrative seen in such diverse works as Boccaccio’s The Decameron, Chaucer’s The Canterbury Tales, and Steve Martin’s “Picasso at the Lapin Agile.” The story discusses issues of gender politics from four eras (Dark Ages, French Revolution, Renaissance Italy, and modern United States), putting the historical sources in conversation with each other within the characters’ exchange of tales and advice, illuminated by the notion of intertextuality. I’ve adapted the characters’ encounter and exchange of tales into a
short story, a short play script, and a short comic. And this a meta-paper will critically analyze
the four narrative forms (history and background, short story, one act play, comic book) based on
practical experience, attempting to determine which aspects of a story each form is most suited to
highlighting, which aspects pose the most challenges, and how techniques concerning
presentation differ and align.

PROCEDURE

Before writing any of the forms or even starting research, I first needed a story to tell. In
developing story ideas it was necessary to consider what would be possible to depict in each of
the media. For instance, a narrative with many settings, physics-breaking magic, large casts, or
expansive epic journeys would be difficult to portray onstage, whereas a story with no visual
interest would not make an interesting comic. Searching for a premise, I lighted upon the Out of
the Way Station, a magical setting I’d invented that allows characters from any time and universe
to meet, which seemed like it would function in each medium. The short story form would
follow the model of previous short stories I’d written in that setting. A story that took place in
real time in one place followed Aristotle’s theory of unity of time place and event and should
function onstage. The premise of characters meeting would allow them to tell stories which
could become monologues on stage and be illustrated for visual interest in the comic.

RESULTS AND DATA

Here I will present the constraints and opportunities I found as I worked with each media,
as well as the strategies I used to deal with the constrains, what I learned from the opportunities
that helped reframe the adaptations. I will also include comments about how each medium
functions, and about the role of audience reaction, as well as giving advice to creators in that
genre based on my observation of each form.

**Historical and Character Background**

The first medium into which the story was adapted is actually that of fictionalized
historical background, which allowed for examinations of the way historical fiction functions as
a medium for storytelling.

History can provide inspiration and background information for stories, reveal the many
ways people have lived and the many values they have believed in, illuminate how purportedly
objective historical narratives are shaped by the perspective of their author, teach writers to
create the illusion of realism by emulating historical people’s accounts of their own times, and
present outside perspectives to challenge the assumptions of the present.

Developing the plan for the story required a compilation of background information.
Research into the characters’ historical contexts was adapted into concise historical summaries,
then interpreted to construct each character’s biography. This involved finding the ways the
historical context could act upon the characters in shaping their lives and perspectives.

All of the characters’ historical eras involved a society changing drastically yet remaining
trapped by assumptions that prevented social practices from reaching the ideals many people
extolled. Each character explores the struggle of women within her era, confronting the contrast
between ideals and reality.

Isabetta comes from Renaissance Italy in 1600, a time many modern scholars describe as
enlightened in its elevation of reason and the individual, but which fell short of those ideals by
clinging to patriarchal social and legal practices that deliberately attempted to exclude women
from those developments. Isabetta’s story is inspired by women Renaissance writers Moderata Fonte, Isotta Nogarola, and Laura Cereta, who walked the line of acceptable behavior while subtly subverting the conventions of their time.

Esther comes from Revolutionary France in 1793, at the turning point when the idealism of the French Revolution’s “Rights of Man” turned into the Reign of Terror. Esther’s story is inspired by the role women played in the Revolution, such as in the Women’s March on Versailles, and by those women who realized the “Rights of Man” were not addressed to them and petitioned to be acknowledged as having the rights they had helped fight for.

Jill comes from New England in 2007, a time in which the gay rights moment was gaining momentum, and facing pushback. Jill’s story is inspired by my own experience of the movement. Despite coming from a familiar time and place, her story required as nearly as much research into her historical context, and that of her parents, did the other characters.

Alysan comes from a constructed fantasy world based on ‘Dark Ages’ Britain, and the Arthurian legends set therein—a violent historical time in stark contrast to the idealized stories. Despite being fantasy rather than historical fiction, Alysan’s backstory also required as much research as the others’ historical contexts, and new challenges, as it necessitated the creation of a new culture and mythology. This process as aided by a variety of historical Earth cultures and mythologies including Norse, Welsh, Breton, Greek, and other early medieval cultures. Fantasy allows more leeway with facts than realistic fiction because the historical elements serve as inspiration rather than requirements, and therefore Alysan’s story is not tied strictly to any one culture but includes elements inspired by many and some that are completely original.

Constraints of Historical Fiction
As historical fiction functions within the framework of known information about historical eras, the major obstacle to writing the historical summaries and character bios was the scarcity of certain historical records, which presented problems for constructing historical fiction. I hit a wall trying writing Esther’s backstory when unable to find much information about Jewish women in Revolutionary France, other than the fact that they existed. Professor Bisaha and Professor Mita Choudhury explained why it was difficult finding primary sources: they don’t exist. That showed how ‘history’ is a construction based on what scholars have been able to find and interpret from surviving records, and where there are no primary records, any description of the period is educated guesswork. How then to write a story about a woman from that time period with no historical records? As it turned out, the solution to gaps in historical research for fiction is the same as the solution to gaps in historical research for historians: extrapolate possibilities based on available related data to fill in the missing areas. Esther’s final biography is based on a few secondary resources that functioned by extrapolating likely trends based on existing data, and educated guesses for what wasn’t covered.

For the purposes of historical fiction, it matters not if something did happen—only if it could. For example, though records are lacking as to whether or how much Jews participated in various revolutionary events, records do indicate that Jews were emancipated during the Revolution, and that might inspire them to patriotism and sympathy with the Revolution and hope for equality. Though records are lacking as to whether any women in the Women’s March to Versailles were Jewish, census records indicate there were Jews in Paris at the time, and that the women in the March pulled random women off the streets, so it is possible a Jewish woman could have lived in Paris, gotten swept up in the March, and through that introduction entered into the women’s political parties that sprang up around the time. Asking what a Jewish woman
could have experienced and thought, I constructed a fictional account rooted in the history, which is accurate to known historical events and circumstances when possible, and plausible based on educated guesswork and interpretation when not certain.

The narrative of Esther’s marriage is one of those areas of interpretation. Though the sparse sources indicate marriages were usually arranged by the matchmaker, they also indicate it was common for foreign Jewish students to travel through French Jewish communities; and that it was a custom for locals to welcome in such strangers; and that these students sometimes found wives in these communities. Building upon those historical facts allowed the construction of a plausible narrative for Esther: it is conceivable that a Swiss Jewish student might pass through the village where my character Esther lived; the student could well be invited to Shabbos dinner at Esther’s house, strike up a connection with the daughter of his host, find an affinity with her, and have a word with the village matchmaker about arranging a marriage. This possibility for subtle subversion of the arranged marriage convention is also important to remember and likely existed in many historical eras that involved arranged marriage. Though the rules of society dictate one sort of marriage, individual cases can vary greatly, and logically it is likely that at least a few couples from various eras found ways to get around the rules, or make them work for them. Indeed, it would be more unlikely to believe that there was a single model of arranged marriage in societies that had them than to conclude that a spectrum of variations might have existed based on varying circumstances and characters.

Trouble also occurred when researching options for widows in the Italian Renaissance, with similar solutions. Secondary sources described the complicated choices and possibilities widows faced, while making it clear that individual situations varied greatly. While no primary source or historical personage followed the exact path character Isabetta, her narrative pulls
together elements from many different narratives to extrapolate plausible interpretations: widows had legal rights to their dowry, and were allowed to reclaim it after their husband’s death, by suit if necessary, and some did. Some families kept houses for older widows. Some noble women did participate in the humanist scholarly movement. Some received education in their youth; some communicated over their lifetimes with other writers; some composed their own creative and scholarly works, though they faced hostility the longer they continued their studies. Therefore it would be plausible for a noble woman to receive a humanist education, be forced into a marriage, be widowed, sue for her dowry, move to her family’s house for widows, and then construct a safe space for herself and other women to write. This last element is more of a stretch than the others, but houses for single women did exist, and women did communicate with female friends and relatives, sometimes about writing. The convention of literary dialogues also provided a resource, indicating that a literary gathering of women might be unconventional but not impossible. Isabetta’s narrative kept a consciousness of social conventions while recognizing freedom within them.

Opportunities of Historical Fiction

A freeing truth for historical fiction writers to keep in mind is that conventions of each time period were guidelines, not definitive universal descriptions of historical people’s actual lives. People live within and are aware of the rules of their times but can also choose to challenge them and risk the consequences. As long as the context is kept in mind, such diversions from the prevailing rule are not only plausible but can lead to sources for story conflict and opportunities to comment upon the historical social context and processes of change. Historical fiction benefits
from an awareness of those conventions and also of the ways they were and could have been subverted.

For instance, the few sources about Jews in Revolutionary France indicate that Jewish girls were not given the formal education Jewish boys received. However, given the Jewish cultural value placed on education and scholarship, and the fact of variation between families, it is plausible that a son-less scribe might tutor his daughter in scripture and other basic scholarship. Important to remember in any era of history is that a lack of formal education does not mean that those without it would have been completely uneducated. Education of girls is particularly likely within Jewish families, which for centuries have valued discussion of written texts and oral tradition. Even if a Jewish girl did not go to a school, she would likely encounter scholarly debate in conversation with her father and others in the family and community. This invisible social transference of information is useful when analyzing, writing about, and adapting history.

To write historical fiction, it helps to free oneself from assumptions about how history was, and thereby avoid reverse anachronism. Anachronism is acting as if something was around before it was invented; reverse anachronism is assuming something did not exist or not possible when it was. For instance, when writing the story, I had Jill (living in 2007) ask Alysan (the rain deity from a fantasy world based on early Middle Ages Britain) if the mortal women in Alysan’s land knew how to fight, and Alysan shake her head vehemently. I showed the story to Professor Bisaha, who studies and teaches medieval history, and she told me that women from the early Middle Ages, particularly if they had brothers, would actually have had rudimentary fighting ability—not only able to lead a fort during a siege, but even able to execute practical elements like stringing a bow and swinging a sword. This experience taught me not to assume that an idea
or practice present today did not occur in the past. More basically, never assume you know something about history without being able to point to evidence; look everything up. You may find something surprising.

Similarly, awareness of historical context and of the importance of background research is also important in works set in the contemporary era. Another opportunity enabled by studying history is that drawing upon the past illuminates our own time and the assumptions we make and the conventions we take for granted. It was for this reason that I chose to include a character from 21st century America in the story, both to provide a familiar point of reference to the audience and to highlight how assumptions inherent in our own times should not be taken for granted. I placed Jill in the year 2007, which while recent to us is still a part of history and just far enough away that we can see how times and practices can change. She acts as facilitator of the conversation and audience surrogate in order to help readers draw comparisons between the historical settings and modern day. Her presence is also meant to show how our own time is a context we often forget to acknowledge that nevertheless effects how we view the world, and that we are shaped by our context as much as anyone from another era was. The choice of setting her several years ago is meant to highlight the way society can change even in so brief a time period, and illustrate how we and our time are as much a part of history (or will be) as the other eras. In this way, studying history can help writers think more critically and specifically about the present. Creativity expands as writer realizes that things don’t have to be the way they are and that even our modern society is constructed.

Treating fiction set in a contemporary setting as historical fiction and doing appropriate research might be a useful technique for authors of contemporary fiction. Doing this work illuminated that some American books set in modern day have little to no historical or political
consciousness. Many young adult books feature ‘generic’ American protagonists, with culturally dominant traits as the standard, which assumes a false universal and leads to neglect to create particularized details about the character’s family and their place in history. The standard is for characters to be ‘generically’ American and rarely is any attention given to when and how their family arrived to America, which would inevitably have shaped something about that character’s experience. The truth is, there is no ‘generic’ person—that standard itself is a social construct. A character’s current context and family history will affect their attitudes, lifestyle, and behavior no matter if their ancestors were Irish immigrants four generations back, Jews fleeing World War II, if they arrived with the pilgrims, or any other of the nearly infinite possibilities. There is a tendency to believe that modern fiction is ‘easier’ because it requires less background work, since it’s assumed that everyone’s already familiar with this world, but I would argue that it is just as important to do just as much historical and background research for a modern day story as for an historical one. Therefore I explored Jill’s history, highlighting the fact that so much has changed even in this brief interval of time in terms of gay marriage rights. And I also looked into her parents’ backstory, which would have shaped Jill’s upbringing as much as her own time would have. Situating her parents as hippies who protested the Vietnam war illuminated many aspects of Jill’s character and philosophy, as well as why she as a fifteen year old high school student would be familiar with the idea of social constructs.

Concluding Lessons from Historical Fiction

The process of conducting historical study and adapting it into historical fiction is aided by building upon existing details, extrapolating plausible elements to fill gaps, being conscious of the constructed nature of every society, understanding that conventions varied in their
manifestation by individual circumstance, finding freedom for characters to subvert and challenge their society within their own context, and questioning one’s own society and assumptions and the ways they manifest unconsciously in one’s writing. All realistic fiction is historical fiction, because in ten years ‘now’ will have become ‘then,’ and researching modern fiction can lend useful insights about our own time and what forces would have influenced the characters. History is historical fiction as well, made up of constructed narratives pieced together and fill in with educated guesses. Likewise modern society is a construct that can prejudice the writer’s viewpoint if they aren’t careful. Historical fiction therefore might manifest as ‘something that didn’t happen, but could have.’ Historical fantasy, incorporating both elements of history and fantastical elements, might be ‘something that didn’t happen, couldn’t have, but if it had happened, here’s how it could have or would likely have played out.’

**Short Story**

**Constraints of Short Stories**

Translating character back stories and historical notes into a short story required refocusing attention on the thematic and emotional heart of the narrative. With so much background information, it is tempting to include everything. But to keep a short story short, on topic, and constantly engaging, it helps to only include the background details that support the plot.

Though many background historical details never appear in the story, they are still important to develop. For example, the short story never explicitly describes the death of Isabetta’s first three children in infancy, or details about most of Alysan’s deity siblings, or accounts of Jill’s parents’ political involvement, or the story of how Esther married her husband.
Yet these elements were not extraneous because all shaped the characters’ perspective even if the causes are not apparent within the narrative. Isabetta’s ability to distance herself from her sons and her lack of closeness with them is definitely linked to the fact that her first three children died as infants. Jill’s philosophical knowledge and morality were taught her by her parents even if their stories don’t appear in detail. Alysan’s entire demeanor is shaped by being a younger sister of overbearing brothers, and her self-perception is based on how her family treats her. And Esther’s defense of family is linked to her happy home life. Therefore it behooves an author to create a lot of information and let it influence the story, but not try to force every detail into the content.

Another good reason to create what seems like too much background information is that before writing the story it is hard to know what may become relevant later, and it’s useful to have a store of details to draw from. Some background elements I assumed would remain background ended up being relevant enough to include in the story. For instance, the creation story from Alysan’s world was never meant to appear within the story, but the fact that it existed ended up creating the opportunity for a joke. Similarly, Isabetta’s backstory might not have appeared, except that it became useful for her argument about the power of words. Extra information, references, and a consciousness of previous history, create the sense that there are whole worlds and lives behind these people and these events.

Other times the story required details I hadn’t known would be needed and therefore hadn’t researched: for instance, Renaissance attitudes toward Jews, the history of the sign of the cross, the history of glasses, rules of war, and hair salon techniques, among others. Research doesn’t cease when writing begins. The process of writing the story tells the writer what historical details are needful, and sometimes that requires additional research.
Translating a tale into a short story requires finding a way to adapt exposition to be engaging in a fictional narrative rather than sounding like a textbook or philosophy paper. This story contains many instances of characters telling other stories, (inspired by classics like the Decameron), but adapting those stories from the historical background into the story ran into danger of sounding like a text book. It became clear that to keep exposition engaging, it is important to select only the most important details, those tied most closely to the central theme and story progression, and focus on those while letting the rest go. That makes the information conveyance more manageable and more closely tied to the action of the story and the characters as people rather than vehicles for delivering information. So in Jill’s description of the station, I added humor in an attempt to see how she would formulate the explanation. In Esther’s account of the Women’s March on Versailles, I refocused on her role and individual consciousness and perception of the events, trying to convey her personality as well as her backstory, asking what elements would have stuck in her memory and letting the rest go. For instance, I kept the moment when the women are chanting in the market, but skipped the visit to the National Assembly because it wouldn’t have been as important to her. I also considered how Esther would tell her own story, as a memory rather than history, and focused on those details to which she had strong emotional associations, swiftly getting to the heart of the story and the elements she would consider most important, the details most essential to the point of her speech. I found it wasn’t necessary to show every step and connection and detail, but rather the narrative could jump to the important points and imply the transition—drawing in the key frames, as it were. This is more true to how people actually recall and describe memories, rather than in a logical linear fashion. It also became apparent that it can also be useful to find some action for the characters to be doing during long conversations to break up the exposition—in this case, the salon
activities and various antics such as Jill jumping up on the table. Not all stories are as focused on a long dialogue like this one, but many stories include scenes of important conversations, and the energy of the narrative can’t be allowed to drop off or the reader will lose interest. Interspersing dialogue with action can help propel the reader through the story.

Selecting only the details most relevant to the central narrative and key aspects of character also helps in determining how much physical description of setting, character appearance, and physical actions to include without slowing down the narrative. Therefore the character descriptions include the descriptive details most indicative of each character, the physical description interwoven with action, introducing details as they became relevant and as they related to each other. For instance, the text begins with the action of fingernail painting, and segues into a description of Esther’s clothing by contrasting the bright color of the polish with the faded tones of her outfit. Critics, theorists, and writers disagree about how much character description is needed in a short story; in the end the image of the character will be up to the reader. And as tempting as it can be to over describe everything, physical description can distract from the central narrative, unless it is used to support the narrative. Therefore I found it important to focus physical descriptions the most important details to convey the essence of the character.

Most short stories, except for post-modern ones, come to some sort of resolution at the end, or at least a resolute lack of resolution. Focusing on the thematic heart of the story also helped with finding an ending. Even ambiguity must be deliberately constructed, or it ends up being confusing rather than intriguing. Considering where and how the story should end, I returned to the core theme and realized that the characters’ entire problems could not be entirely fixed or entirely resolved within this limited timeframe while keeping the story a short story.
rather than expanding it into a novel. Instead, the short span of this tale could capture the collective sense of personal empowerment these four women gain through their meeting and conversation. Rather than showing what happens next, the story focuses on the plot leading up to a theme and the ending is structured around that central theme.

Oppunities of Short Stories

In a prose story, the narrator has a lot of power. A short story writer can be prescriptive about character appearance, setting, gesture, and physical action, and allude to sounds and sights without having to create them. When Jill hums the Doctor Who theme, I can simply say what it is rather than having to include the melody and hope the audience recognizes it. The writer is not limited by the rules of physics and can incorporate elements from any place or time, real or imaginary, and describe anything, no matter how magical or bizarre, limited only by the writer’s imagination. In the short story format it is quite easy to show Alysan’s anger call a rainstorm, show her transform into a bird, and instantly transport the narrative to a different place. Portraying such elements in prose is literally as easily said as done.

Prose also affords the opportunity to use the voice of the narrator to add commentary outside the content and action of the story. Whether using an omniscient narrator or a narrator who is one of the characters, the writer can employ literary tropes like similes and metaphors for poetic thematic or comic effect. For instance, I can say that Jill’s dress had more ruffles than a bag of potato chips and that Alysan storms in looking like a cat that had gone through a car wash. A danger here is falling into clichés, but the writer is limited only by their imagination, and twists on clichés can turn out quite original and clever.
Though prose can be read at whatever speed the reader wishes, syntactical techniques can be employed to control pacing by paragraph breaks and non sequiturs. For instance, an earlier draft used the word ‘suddenly,’ and a later draft removed it, ironically making the action it described feel more sudden. ‘Suddenly’ is a warning to the audience, telling them to expect something. But to gain the feeling of ‘suddenly,’ the writer can simply do something without preamble, using the process of moving between sentences and paragraphs to create the experience for the reader of a surprising shift.

Some storytelling conventions that have their origin elsewhere can nonetheless function perfectly well in a short story and indeed help it. These include the translation convention used in many other media, such as in American movies set in other countries. The translation convention deals with the difficulty of characters speaking a different language than the reader by letting the audience understand that the character is not actually speaking English, but the narrative form has translated the meaning for the sake of the audience. The characters are understood to be still speaking another language, but their dialogue is conveyed in English for the sake of the intended English-speaking audience. I used and built upon this convention in the Out of the Way station, a place in which the characters are indeed all speaking different languages with the meaning being translated, though the magic of the Station. Yet since three of the characters are not speaking English, certain terms remain in their native languages, such as titles of address (Signora, Citoyenne) and names (Isabetta Valiero da Siena, Esther Ravel de Lorraine, Jean d’Arc) and untranslatable concepts (Liberté Egalité Fraternité, peace weaver, just war, chivalry, heteronormativity). This and other techniques can work across media.

Employing concepts from theater to help with the writing showed that they could be helpful in prose as well. An ‘aside’ is a useful acting convention to show actors talking to each
other or to the audience without another character or character noticing. It’s a nice and concise way to convey that impression in prose. Also, actors stepping on stage are encouraged to think about the ‘moment before’—that is, where their character was and what they were doing the moment before they stepped onstage, so they can enter with intention and the feeling of existing in the larger world. I wrote the introductory section with Alysan for myself so that I could see the moment before. Including that moment in the short story it is like giving the audience a glimpse backstage before the dramatic entrance.

Conventions of the fantasy genre helped in finding clear and concrete ways to explain abstract concepts. Fantasy often functions as literalized embodiments of abstract concepts, containing concretized representations of the metaphoric elements of the intrapsyche. The rain deity Alysan’s name means ‘release’ in Old English, which alludes to her releasing the rain, and also points to her eventually breaking free of her society’s patriarchal assumptions, plus alluding to her power to free other women, using the common archetypal trope of water representing rebirth. I ran into trouble when trying to explain the abstract concept of social constructs to her, until I found a way for her to work within her own frame of reference to understand and literalize the idea through an allusion to her brother, the trickster deity. Such concrete representations of abstract concepts help not only the characters, but the audience, and that is one power of the fantasy genre.

Fantasy can also call into question various cultural assumptions, because it is not constrained to obey any of them. Part of the power of fiction and adaptation is its ability to include diversity to represent and empower traditional marginalized groups. Therefore although Alysan’s world is based loosely off of pre-Christian Britain, I gave her dark skin—not to try to represent African or African-American cultures on Earth or other experiences of persons of color
in our universe, but to disrupt the too-prevalent assumption many readers make that all characters are white. Studies have shown that all readers can benefit from the power of representing diversity in creative works rather than assuming that every character is white, straight, male, and Christian. Plus, as Jim C. Hines said, any story that depicts the world’s people as more homogenous than they are can break the audience’s suspension of disbelief. For those who don’t notice that inaccuracy, the inclusion of any sort of diversity is even more important to let them realize that their own assumptions about what constitutes a default state of being are socially constructed and inaccurate.

Audience Feedback to the Short Story

Audience feedback helped immensely in editing the short story. I shared the draft of the story with my writing center thesis consultant and several friends including Sarah Holden. I asked them to comment from the perspective of an audience member—for instance, to indicate their immediate reactions while reading, including how passages made them feel, which lines they found funny, which sections were boring, and any concerns they had about, history, content, or syntax. Comparing what the author intends with and what readers understood and experiences enables an understanding of what in the story works effectively and what doesn’t. When my thesis consultant admitted she had skimmed the prophecy section, which was then very long, I realized that was because it was boring and should be shortened. Professor Don Foster suggested the draft was long for a short story, given the conventions of contemporary publications, so I did my best to cut extraneous material. Sarah gave helpful comments from a historian’s and dramaturge’s perspective that helped particularize certain sections, adding accuracy and clarity. She also made several joking references to Les Misérables in the margin next to Esther’s story,
which ended up incorporated into the story, because *Les Mis* could function as a familiar point of reference for modern audiences and provide a humorous entrance point into Esther’s story. Knowing an audience’s reaction is as useful as getting editing suggestions for revising the story and finding how to convey the writer’s intention through the medium to the receivers.

Concluding Lessons about Short Stories

Short stories do well with nonphysical elements of narrative—metaphor, simile, physically impossible transformation, magic, time jumps, narrator voice, and abstract concepts—but these resources must be balanced with keeping interest by choosing the most important details to support the central heart of the story through the characters and plot. Writing a short story is a balancing act between the many interesting elements possible to depict, and constructing it so that those elements further the central plot. It’s easy to pursue tangents concerning character or scene descriptions, or let a character ramble away from the subject of the conversation. The writer needs to keep a narrative arc threading all the way through to make sure that the story is always progressing forward. Each subject, sentence, and word must move the narrative along. Something should usually develop and change from the beginning to the end of the story through the process of what is in between—nearly all narrative theorists agree. What that change is, how it comes about, and why, are what lie at the heart of the story, and prose is merely a tool to get at that intangible center.

Play

Trying to construct a literal translation from short story to play fell flat, and showed that adapting a story into a play requires rediscovering the heart of the story and finding ways to get
at it through the particular elements of playwriting. Examining my first rough draft of the play, Professor Don Foster helped me see that the leisurely pace of the story would not hold up on stage. For the story to work as a play, I had to reevaluate what the core of the story is and what provides tension that would make a stage production compelling. The trick was finding a way to convey the heart of the story through the vocabulary of tools, opportunities, and constraints of the new medium of theater. As an actor I do know that for a play to keep the audience’s attention, it needs constant energy being passed from character to character. If the energy ever drops, the play falls flat. Writing a play demonstrates that the responsibility for sustaining that energy isn’t just on the actors, but on the playwright too. So I refocused on the conflict, emotion, and character development and the intangible changes taking place between the characters onstage. The largest challenge is to convey emotion while adhering to the playwriting custom of eliminating spoken subtext—which means almost never having characters say what they’re feeling or thinking and why, but instead showing emotions and thoughts subtly and naturally through the dialogue and trusting the actors to find the tone and action and body language to convey it in their own way.

**Constraints of Plays**

Even more so than in writing the short story, adapting the tale into a play meant not including everything. The need to keep the energy moving forward without prescribing too much and overstepping into the director and actor’s territory necessitates means paring the text down to the barest essentials needed to tell the story. This required reimagining character and setting descriptions, lighting, sound, and stage directions, and editing them in order to focus on what is essential and be careful of prescribing elements that could be plausibly reinterpreted. The main
struggles are balancing the need to avoid spoken subtext while still conveying emotion, not sounding like a textbook while conveying information, creating excitement when all people are doing is talking, and letting go of a desire to dictate everything about how the story should unfold onstage and trusting in the future production team.

Finding brevity in character descriptions is a challenge of playwriting. Here is an instance where the writer is allowed to describe as much as they want, but the truth is directors won’t follow such instructions, and conventionally, most plays, particularly classic works, have minimal character, set, and action descriptions. Therefore the Dramatis Personae at the beginning of this play only includes each character’s name, age (for casting purposes) and their thematic profession. Merely saying what a character’s job is might not be important for illuminating character ordinarily, but in this case I felt that describing them as “a Which, a revolutionary, a scholar, and a rain deity” would be intriguing and give a general impression of the character, and that those descriptions were therefore useful details to keep. Anything else would be inessential and could be cut.

It’s particularly important to leave room in character descriptions so that the directors have some freedom in casting. Chances are they won’t find the person who perfectly fits the writer’s imagination of the physical appearance of the character, and even if they do, that person may not have the voice or mannerisms that the author intends. What must be conveyed is a general sense of the character, and the writer should be aware of the broad spectrum of actors that exist and accept that many people could play the part. Finding a brief description can also help the writer find the character’s essence beneath the superficial surface details. It doesn’t matter what color Esther’s hair is; what matters is that she considers herself a revolutionary, and that is what will matter to the actress playing her.
Set descriptions are another area where the writer must hold back and be conscious that even if they do include a detailed description, the designers will likely ignore it: The description of the Station is therefore limited to the elements the production needs to know, like how many exits there are and that there should be windows and chairs, and a basic idea of the magical feeling of the place, while leaving it up to the designers how to achieve it.

As an actor I’ve experienced that stage directions and dialogue tags are often completely ignored by actors, so as a writer I knew to include only actions that are necessary and not obvious, and leave the rest up to the interpretation of the actors. Editing with this in mind, nearly all of the dialogue tags were quickly discarded, along with the adverbs describing how a line is said, and most of the stage directions. A few examples: I (ironically) cut the direction to stage whisper; directions about characters’ reactions; Isabetta dropping her book; Jill bouncing and sitting on tables; facial expressions; laughter; and other prescriptive elements.

Certain stage directions are impossible to prescribe. For instance, the story can describe Isabetta blushing, I can’t very well tell an actress to blush on command. Some can manage it, but not enough to make it a useful direction. Other directions are too specific for the stage, such as the characters’ facial expressions and gestures. The actors will find those elements in rehearsal, not in the script. Similarly, intonation of spoken lines is also something actors figure out for themselves. As I learned from studying Shakespeare, in acting, there isn’t a single right interpretation for any character or moment, and as long as an interpretation is rooted in the text, it is a plausible representation. As with studying history, the actor must take the clues given and extrapolate the rest. The only dialogue tags that are useful are those that are absolutely necessary and not obvious—for instance, ‘sarcastically’ if not apparent, to show that a character is not speaking sincerely. Or in another instance, the line: “Isabetta: (disdainfully) in a parade?” I
included “disdainfully” to show that it’s not a sincere question, as it otherwise might be played. Likewise, if it is not clear to whom a line is directed, conventionally a play writer can indicate that in a stage direction.

Sometimes it is hard to tell which details are relevant. One technique I discovered for determining what is essential and what is extraneous is to cut too much, then read it over and then check if any crucial details are missing. If a relevant detail is missing, you can choose whether to put any details back. For example, after paring down the dramatis personae character descriptions, it became apparent that certain details about the characters’ clothing would remain needed. To convey the plot and character relevant historical specificity of the characters, they would need to be wearing clothing that is historically accurate, or if not at least a plausible equivalent, and certain choices would simply be inaccurate. Isabetta needs to be wearing a black gown with no makeup or jewelry, and Esther needs a shabbier modest dress and a hair covering. To avoid cluttering up the dramatis personae descriptions, I put the basic and most relevant description notes in the description for the top of the scene, as some other plays do. One solution to determining what to keep and what to cut is asking for every element: “does the story need this?” “does it add anything” and “if this is taken away, does the story lose anything important?” That is one way to decide what must be kept. I also noticed that nearly every time I questioned whether an element was needed, it usually wasn’t.

To make exposition shorter, more interesting, less repetitive, and without spoken subtext, it helped to eliminate extraneous detail, focus on emotion and the elements tied to the characters emotion, and put the most important ideas first and last. Making cuts, while painful, in the end makes the exposition more interesting and exciting. Exposition (long stretches of text conveying information) is even more of a problem in plays than in short stories, where it is conventionally
appropriate to have occasional long paragraphs of description if they are relevant enough. In a play, the philosophical discussion and long narrative segments weren’t working—they divert attention from the interpersonal interaction and make the energy drop. And perhaps nonphysical concepts might appear even more removed from reality and interest than in a story where everything is represented non-physically than in a play where everything seen onstage is concrete. And if people would get bored reading a textbook summary in a story, how much more might they tune out in a play? Some serious re-envisioning was needed to make the story work in this new form.

For example, Jill’s speech about social constructs was giving me trouble, so I first tried to shorten it, in two different ways: first cutting the illustrative story and focusing on the concept, then cutting the explicit statement of the concept and focusing on the illustration. Doing the second one showed that the statement of the concept was spoken subtext, and it was conveyed just as well, less obviously, and more vividly and briefly by the story, so that’s the version in the final.

In other instances, I rewrote Alysan’s, Isabetta’s, and Esther’s stories, making them much shorter, and starting with the central point, rather than starting with background information and building up to it. This decision was based partially on my knowledge of theories of classical texts, and of essay writing: in Shakespearean monologues, the most important ideas are often in the first and last line—as body paragraphs of analytic essays. It’s a useful technique for prose stories as well. For the play, I cut the monologues entirely and had the characters state the main point of the story, and let the rest be drawn out by the questioning of the other characters, and even then included only the details that the characters connected to emotionally and that were relevant to the emotional plot at hand.
In that process, Esther’s story changes from a broader one about the French Revolution to a personal narrative about her own motivations for joining. In the version of Esther’s story in the short story, she began her tale with “There was no food. Prices soared, and the government did nothing” and in the play she starts with “My little girl, Reneé, was starving.” A subtle change since they both address the food situation, but the first in a broader political background, while the second is a personal emotional connection.

Isabetta’s tale goes from a socially conscious summary of her life to a proud assertion of her accomplishments. In the short story, her personal story starts with “For most of my life, I was under a man’s control—my father, then my husband” while in the play it starts with “After my ‘dear’ husband’s death, I left his kin, and won my dowry by suit.” I found this construction quite counterintuitive at first—it felt like jumping to the end. But the second statement contains most of the information needed to understand it, and is really the point Isabetta is trying to make, so it made sense that she would start with that, and reluctantly reveal the other details when pressed. In the short story, her personal narrative unfolds in a far more linear manner, and in the play it follows from the proud conclusion to a series of puns and misunderstandings as she tries to explain an entirely alien concept to Alysan.

Similarly, Alysan’s tale gets reformatted from a narrative story to an emotional statement that expands into the relevant details. In the short story, Alysan’s account of the women’s plight begins with: “The Isle peoples have been warring since their creation,” while in the play her story starts with “Women are trapped in a fortress tall, besieged by enemies who mean to kill them all!” A more dramatic change, truly cutting to the chase of what she’s getting at. It could be that the play helped find an overall more dynamic and impactful statement, but in the short story it is still conventionally more acceptable to provide background information and to tell the story
as if one was telling a narrative story, making the characters into authors within their own
narrative, as it were, whereas in the play keeping the action moving and the energy going and the
focus on the emotional plot meant jumping to the heart of the story.

Overall the major solutions I found to the constraint of the need to eliminate spoken
subtext, focus on the emotional core of the story, and keep the energy and tension building were
to have the details support the story, rather than the other way around, show emotion through the
way the characters react to each other, condense and cut a lot of the lines, and only give
directions and dialogue that aren’t obvious from context. It was also useful to add
misunderstanding, puns, and bursts of song to keep the stories interesting.

Some of the overall revelations from the play parallel those from writing the short story,
though many are even more focuses in this form: don’t state the obvious, and leave as much as
possible up to the discretion and interpretation of the production team, prescribing only what is
not obvious or clear from context and is also necessary for the understanding of the piece. Short
stories should still show more than tell, but they can tell more than plays can, which don’t even
so much show as imply. Perhaps the most major difference between writing plays and short
stories is the revelation that the playwright must learn to accept a lack of creative control over
the final product. A short story goes straight from the writer to the reader, but a play passes
through a rehearsal process and the interpretations of an entire production team before anyone
sees it, and the writer has virtually no control of how that team will represent the play. That is the
largest inherent constraint I discovered of the medium, and it influenced the way I went about
writing the play. The first audience is not the audience, but the actors and director, and it is to
them that the playwright must write. Knowing the process of how play production works shows
how much trust the playwright must place in the company’s ability to interpret the clues set out
for them, and I must accept that they may (and probably would) come up with an interpretation different from what I envisioned.

Opportunities of Plays

The medium of playwriting also provides numerous particular opportunities, including the ability to play with the convention of verse, and a visual structure that makes it easier to see and cut down on repetition. With deeper exploration, the form of playwriting isn’t necessarily limiting—that is, it isn’t that plays can’t do all the things prose can (though there are a few things they just can’t do) but rather that plays convey the same information through a different vocabulary of formal elements and different techniques. For instance, losing the dialogue tags doesn’t mean that the writer can give no indication of tone of voice—rather tone of voice can be conveyed through syntax, meter, phrasing, word choice, and punctuation. Many of the dialogue tags were replaced with punctuation to indicate tone—for instance, exclamation points for emphasis, ellipses for trailing off and hesitance, dashes for interruptions. These are ways to indicate the tone without having to explicitly say what it is.

In considering how to differentiate the characters’ voices and modes of speaking onstage, I lighted upon one useful technique particular to the playwriting form: verse. It’s possible to use verse in other media, but very uncommon. Verse has gone out of fashion in plays lately, but there is a long tradition of it, one I have studied extensively in classical literature texts. So when faced with the challenge of how to differentiate the characters’ voices and how to make Alysan sound more divine, I experimented with different forms of playwriting verse, giving each character a different genre of theater, inspired by Shakespearean and modern conventions: Esther as the plainspoken commoner speaks in decidedly un-metric prose; Isabetta, the cultured noble scholar,
speaks in iambic prose (alternating unstressed and stressed syllables, but without line breaks—a technique used for instance at one point in the Lion in Winter); Alysan, the rain deity, speaks in rhymed verse, with inconsistent meter—inspired by the Shakespearian convention of having magical beings talk in rhyme; and Jill, the bubbly modern teenager and the character most conscious of form and meta-analysis of texts, speaks normally most of the time but bursts into song in a toned down allusion to musical theater.

Undergoing this exercise, it became apparent that using verse makes a writer think about and reexamine every word choice, not only for meaning but also for sound and rhythm. Sometimes that attention helps show that there is a better word or phrasing. Attention to rhythm also affected the order of words; sometimes necessitating compressing a line, sometime lengthening it. Consciousness of meter and verse made me rethink what concept I was trying to convey and find the best words to do so. English, a repository of words from many languages, has enough synonyms to usually generate an appropriate word with the needed syllable stress, sometimes one with a subtly different meaning than the original but which is actually closer to what was intended. Meter helped cut text as well; some phrases that were difficult to fit into meter were revealed to be superfluous in the first place. Making Alysan’s speeches into sonnets actually helped organize and compress her ideas and show a logical progression of thought.

One of the most powerful aspects of using a syntactical pattern like verse or rhyme is finding thematically significant places to break out of it. Using conventions like verse doesn’t mean adhering to them without thought, and a valuable resource is the chance to find operative places to break the conventions, intentionally and with meaning. Shakespeare didn’t adhere strictly to form and himself often broke out of it. In my literature and acting classes we learned to analyze the effects of those variances and find that they are not mistakes but indications of
meaning. For instance, starting a line with a trochee instead of an iamb shows emphasis on the first word, while ending a line with an eleventh unstressed syllable can show uncertainty. Only when writing parts of this play in verse did I realize that those moments of variation are perhaps the most significant aspect of using verse. Many places in my play break conventions for thematic effect. For instance, Isabetta breaks her pattern of iambic prose when talking about surrendering her children and when talking about being called a cruel mother. In other places the characters break verse in places corresponding to moments when they are uncertain, confused, incredulous, disappointed with a rule, discontent with being stuck in a form, bitter despite their certain words, or when they want to emphasize something or when they come to a realization. The break in rhythm, even if not noticed, might register on an unconscious level as unsettling, or break up the rhythm of speech. Iambic pentameter is designed to sound closest to natural English speech, slightly more regularized, and that rhythm speaks to people familiar with English language conventions; breaking it might register with the audience or communicate to the actors that they should convey those moments as unsettled. Because of the valuable insights gained from using verse, I wonder whether it could be useful to bring back, at least in subtle ways, to inform other kinds of modern writing. I’m not saying every play should be in Shakespearean verse, or that short stories should necessarily rhyme, but having a consciousness of meter could help in any sort of writing with helping the writer think critically about every word choice and meaning, and perhaps using selective moments of iambic prose or even an occasional rhyme to show certainty the way breaking those conventions shows uncertainty. Consciousness of syllable stress without a need to adhere strictly to it could also help writers find ways to place rhythmic emphasis on certain operative words and guide the reader through a sentence the way a bar of music guides a musician.
Once the writer adjusts to the different tools plays use to tell stories, a lot of information can be conveyed with very little, and large ideas pointed to by small hints. In plays, the heart of the story springs from implication and the energy and interaction happening in the space between the actors and between the lines of the text. The job of the writer is to outline and let the reader fill in the details, much like my description of the set as emulating a constellation. In a play the writer may not be allowed to draw the whole picture, or even connect the dots, but instead of fighting the form, by working with it, a lot can be done with the strategic placement of those dots.

Audience Feedback to the Play

Rather than having advisors and friends read the play on their own, I gathered a group of friends including actors, historians, literary critics, and writers, and had them participate in a cold reading of the script (reading the play aloud without having read the full play before). Great insights came about how to revise the play both from their comments and from observations about the way they read it. I would highly recommend playwrights test their plays in such a setting as part of the editing process.

The comments from the play-reading group illuminated elements they found confusing—such as how to envision the map onstage, which parts were references and what they were references to, and where the rhyming couplets should fall (in that draft I hadn’t divided them up by line). I also learned from their comments about which elements worked for them. They understood the central theme of Alysan’s empowerment; they gathered how the use of breaking verse indicated freedom; and most importantly they said they could envision the play onstage. They also gave suggestions about the content based on their observations and expertise which
helped reframe certain moments, like Alysan’s revelation at the end, and helped find ways to make the moments more believable and consistent.

Yet I learned even more from my own observations of their live reading of the play. Hearing it read and seeing which parts generated spontaneous responses, including laughs, smiles, and which parts received no response, provided invaluable insight into what worked and what did not. So did hearing which lines caused confusion, which phrases or names they stumbled over, which moments were landing, which jokes were funny, which lines of dialogue were clear, and which weren’t. Every audience would of course be different, but my small (yet diverse in expertise) group of test subjects provided evidence in favor of certain moments that worked for them and others that did not.

Concluding Lessons about Plays

This exercise showed how much is out of the playwright’s control. Readers didn’t always read the meter the intended way, or emphasize the intended words. They sometimes stumbled over my painstaking historically accurate but polysyllabic names; other times they read certain lines with different emotion than intended. I’d expected stage directions to be sidelined, but was surprised by how quickly and completely the readers totally ignored all stage directions. Yet my biggest revelation was that their different interpretations are fine. I felt and saw demonstrated that one of the hardest and most important parts of being a playwright is accepting that the play the playwright had in their head is not the one that will be seen on stage, and that’s okay.

For instance, the reader reading Esther’s part took one segment in an entirely different direction than I’d been imagining. When Esther is talking to Isabetta about children and families, I’d intended Esther to be accusing, but the reader played her as compassionate. I realized that
neither interpretation is more correct, and that both work with the text and character and either would be fine onstage. If an actor wants to emphasize one word over another, or come up with an unexpected portrayal of a moment or emotion, that is the actor’s prerogative, and furthermore, their job. As the one interpreting and embodying the character, the actors should have freedom to find their own interpretation as long as the choice is rooted in the text, plausible, and not clearly against the intention. Theater is a team sport, and the playwright is one collaborator among many.

From my own experience in shows and acting classes, I’ve observed that actors talk very little about authorial intention when choosing how to portray characters. We take what is given—the text—and put our own spin on it, or find something in it we can relate to or latch onto, or an interpretation that works for us, and that is how we play it. And if there is one thing I’ve learned from all my acting and play analysis classes is that there is no such thing as one right interpretation. That is an easy realization to come to as an actor, since it frees you to take the character in the direction that works for you, within reason, but it is a hard lesson for the playwright. Yet this lesson can be a resource. If the writer learns not to holding onto the surface details and realizes that the heart of the play isn’t in the physical appearance, gestures, tone of voice, or even how one moment is played, but the overall feel and message and development of the story, they can work on constructing a script that will ensure sufficient clarity for the important elements to be preserved in any production, and allow sufficient latitude for other variations that add interest and new insights surrounding the central thread of narrative purpose.

Comic Book
Next began work on the comic book version. I’d hoped to use the play script as the comic script, but it became immediately apparent that because of the media differences and the choices I’d made when adapting the story into a play, this would not work—it would have more words than are conventionally used in comics, the verse would not translate well, and it would not be taking advantage of the visual opportunities of sequential art. Again it was necessary to rethink the story in a new form. This included researching relevant visuals for reference (both historical and general), sketching concept art to experiment with how the characters should look, finalizing the character designs, creating character reference sheets with drawings of each character from different angles to use as references when drawing the comic, drew thumbnails (small drafts of panels and page layout) and storyboarded the comic, drafting full size placement of panels, framing, dialogue, and then finally drew the outlines of the final pages and began adding the text.

Film classes helped inspire inclusion of a graphic comic book version of the story, and helped make it come to be. Those courses focused on elements particular to visual storytelling, such as camera angle, framing, choice of shot, and how to convey meaning primarily through visuals. The main difference between film and sequential art is that a comic shows only the key frames while a film shows movement between them. Therefore many observations and techniques of filmmaking can be helpful in creating sequential art.

Constraints of Comic Books

Perhaps the largest and most obvious constraint of the comic book form is the technical challenges of drawing, but even this can be addressed with sufficient preparation. Because comics are a visual medium, everything present must be drawn, consistently and accurately. This seems obvious, but it is the largest change from the other mediums, where to mention a thing
was enough. In producing a comic, one can’t simply create a table by writing the word—one must draw the table, decide its dimensions and placement in the room, and keep track of it as the scene progresses through different angles of view (like camera angles). And that is for a simple object. The more complex the object, the more difficult to draw once, let alone multiple times, making something like ‘bicycle’ on a higher level of challenge than ‘table’ where in a short story neither concept is more difficult to express. Similarly, a playwright can use prose to call for any item needed. In a play, acquiring such items is the job of the prop people; in a comic, depicting and keeping track of items is the job of the artist.

References are a useful technique for addressing the challenge of a visual medium. Reference photographs, physical objects, live models, and doll-like artist models can help with the suddenly difficult task of representing everyday objects like hands, books, lamps. In the course of drawing the first page, I looked up reference photographs for wings, crows, clouds, and a hand opening a door. Later I found reference pictures for rain on windows, different hand positions, Lolita dresses, Sherlock Holmes hats, and many other elements besides. References are useful for every day objects, and for unusual historical visuals such as clothing, architecture, and specific historical scenes. Just because the story is written and the comic is presented visually doesn’t mean that research ends—instead, a whole other type of research begins. And research is essential. Again it became clear: things you think you know, you don’t—always look up everything. Don’t assume you know. For comics, that means looking at pictures even when drawing familiar items like towels. Although most humans live in the visual world, when we sit down to recreate it, it is easy to be inaccurate, and there’s no cost to looking at a reference.

Creating a dynamic, consistent, and recognizable visual design of each character is a challenge unique among the media I studied. While in prose and plays a character can be
presented by name and nothing more needs to be said, in a comic each character has to be entirely recreated every time they appear in a panel. For this to work, every character must be clearly recognizable, and simple enough in design that the artist can draw them many, many times, while keeping their appearance consistent from different angles, poses, and contexts. One solution is to start with concept art (sketching ideas for the character’s appearance), making it more complicated and detailed than necessary, then paring the design down to the fewest lines needed to suggest the person and using that to construct the finalized design. A simplified and systematic depiction of a complex design enables the artist to draw the character many times while keeping their appearance recognizable and consistent. Drawing a character sheet that shows each character from several angles with every detail of their appearance also helps with this consistency. The character sheet can function as a useful reference throughout the creation of the comic, because at any moment, the artist may realize “wait, what does her head look like from the back?” or “what kind of shoes was she wearing?” (both questions I encountered) and be able to instantly check and fill in the appropriate details.

Even with all of that done, there is still the mechanical aspect of transferring the ideas to paper. That process encompasses drawing ability, layout, framing, clarity, and revision. One technique is drawing lightly at first before finalizing the lines, and then erasing earlier lines—much like drafting and editing a prose story, except with visuals. The second solution is to realize that the drawings won’t always all look perfect, and that that’s all right. Even in professional comics, there are panels where a character’s face looks a bit off and generally if it’s not too often, the audience forgives (at least keeps buying.)

Sequential art function differently from the other mediums in terms of the tools it uses to convey the information. As a play must keep the interpersonal energy going at all times, a comic
must provide a constant source of visual interest to keep the reader engaged and to justify the use of this form in the first place. This makes exposition if anything even more difficult than in the other two forms. A solution is to illustrate the stories being described, make them concrete, and add visual interest. Sometimes elements that can’t add visual interest are the ones that need to be cut. I cut many dialogue segments where there wasn’t enough going on visually. When choosing how to spread the words through panels, sometimes there was too much text with too little action. The text could either remain, with an increased number of panels to accommodate it, or the text could be condensed to fit fewer panels. In most cases I condensed. This need demonstrated that abstract concepts that can’t be represented by imagery are even trickier in a comic than in a play, and the whole discussion of chivalry and ‘just war’ theory were cut because they were too far removed from the world of the medium, and they were replaced with simpler and more visually interesting possibilities for getting to the same point behind the concepts. In other cases when all or most of the text was needed, there are ways to bring interest to it—such as having Alysan walk around during her monologues and breaking up the speech into smaller connected text bubbles to keep the reader’s attention.

Working on the comic definitely had me reevaluating (again) what the core of the story is and then trying to find a way to show it using the vocabulary of the new form. The choice of what to show in panels is the choice of which moments to highlight. A useful way to find the most important moments is to draft different panel structures, draw more than needed, and then cut it back to the essentials, reducing the number of panels to the minimum necessary to convey the story. This also means cutting ideas and sections from the story that are tangents or that otherwise draw attention away from the central thread of narrative, or that are simply unnecessary and clutter up the page and stop the flow—for instance, having too many reaction
shots. In order for the reader to follow the thread of the plot, it helps to be very focused on a
center of action—finding the point of the story and zeroing in on it, and then having every
moment, every image, somehow further that, or at least stay on topic.

Opportunities of Comic Books

Sequential art provides many opportunities not present in the other forms by virtue of
being a visual medium. Far from the anxiety raised by short stories and plays about how much to
describe, here at last I get to show exactly what each person and object looks like and where they
are and how people move and what they do. With still images as the vocabulary through which
narrative is conveyed, many possibilities open.

Drawing the panels first and planning to add in the words later, revealed that the story
could be followed pretty well with just the images. That more than anything drove home what it
means for something to be a visual medium: the burden of telling the story lies mostly on the
images, and the words only tell what is not obvious from what is shown. For instance, a friend
helped me reach the revelation that Jill doesn’t need to explain that the place is a beauty salon—
because the audience can see it! This revelation could perhaps carry back into the play, although
in the other forms, saying the information may be more relevant because the explanation of the
settling matters to other characters as well as to the audience. The comic form requires a much
more concentrated and centralized narrative, necessitating cuts to superfluous information that
gets told by the visuals anyway. Similarly, even more spoken subtext can and should get cut as
emotion can be conveyed visually, not only without stating it outright, but without implying it in
dialogue at all, because comics can show a character’s expressions and body language, and that
is the vocabulary that conveys emotion more than the dialogue.
The comic form provides opportunities for visual humor and motifs not possible in the other forms. The play adds many puns and wordplay, but when adapting the story to a comic, a lot of the puns were cut and replaced with visual jokes, which work better in a visual medium. Also, in exploring how to show that the women’s disparate stories are all individualized and different but also have parallels among them as each character stood up against the patriarchy of her time, my thesis partner and I realized this could be accomplished by drawing parallel images where each character in her own setting stands in the same position facing the same way. This draws a visual connection between them, through framing and placement even while the background content and details of each image are different, which indicates a thematic connection.

It is also possible to bring in thematic elements in the character design. The theme of varying the characters on many categories (religion, romantic status, orientation) continues in varying the shape of the characters’ features with attention to the thematic personality traits of each character. Their eyes vary in size based on their level of hopefulness; sharp features can indicate a sharp personality; rounder features can show friendliness; eyebrow shape and placement can show attitude and convey emotion. Isabetta’s eyebrows are strict and arched ironically. Jill’s eyebrows are rounded and raised in childish wonder. Alysan’s are quirked quizzically, conveying uncertainty and lack of surefootedness. Esther’s are bold and sharp, quick to lower in anger. Whether any of this registers consciously with the reader, it is another means of conveying information afforded by visual art, and allows for a thematic reason to introduce visual distinctiveness between the characters. Exaggerating features to emphasis character traits is a common tool in comics, particularly in those with more cartoonish styles, and offers potential for making very clear visual depictions of personality.
It is also possible to make visual references rather than textual ones. Instead of quoting a line from a historical document, a comic book can include a drawing based on an historical image. Such a drawing can function like a quotation, referencing historical visual rather than a written quote. This comic book frequently draws upon that technique in order to create visual interest, and several of the panels are visual quotes of real historical images such as: a sketch of the women’s march to Versailles; the shape of Versailles itself; the statue holding the Declaration of the Rights of Man; a drawing of a meeting of a French revolutionary women’s group. The drawing of Cinzia is based on a real Renaissance painting, as is Isabetta’s appearance. Jill’s story about gay marriage includes a drawing of a photograph that appeared in the *Boston Globe* article about the Massachusetts 2007 referendum decision to keep gay marriage legal; and other instances. This shows that comics are not limited in terms of ability to make references—they just make them in a different way from how plays and stories make references. These references offer a resource for embedding humor, action, emotion, and historical content.

Another set of resources includes other visual techniques often used in comics. It is easy to show interruptions since the words exist on the page and can literally overlap; silhouettes are useful artistically and also because they save the trouble of drawing details; and perspective can be indicated with camera angle. For an example of showing perspective: the siege is shown from within the walls rather than without, hence placing the reader literally on the side of the women. Shifts in time can be made easily simply by drawing a new place. It is becoming more common for comics to include panels of different shapes and sizes. This convention is used to created oddly shaped panels to set off and differentiate the stories the women tell.
Another great resource of comics is the ease in expressing fantasy elements. Visuals can easily show magic such as Alysan transforming into a bird. That transformation also utilized the useful resource of parallel image placement, to show one element turning into another, showing a before and after image. It also shows Alysan mid-transformation to make the magic even clearer. Some inspiration for how to do this came from the depictions of Changeling in the *Teen Titans* comics. Comics offer a rich vocabulary of possibilities, very different ones from those offered by prose and theater, and support experimentation.

Being a visual medium means that in sequential art, most of the story is conveyed through the images, which must be interesting, not static or repetitive, and can make use of framing and parallels to make thematic connections. There is far less patience for words in comics, perhaps partly because, as I’m finding, it feels like a shame to cover up too much of the art. That, coupled with the confusing nature of needing to jump around between shots, might contribute to the sense that comics are perhaps more focused around a central story, each panel moving that forward in some way, with little to no room for tangents. With this in mind, I refocused the story around Alysan, cutting a lot of the others’ details and keeping only the elements that directly related to helping her plot, and making it clear what each story’s purpose is in relation to Alysan. The reader does have to fill in some details, like imagining the character moving between panels when in reality they are standing still in two different drawings, but most elements are told quite plainly, and quickly, through visuals.

**Audience Feedback to the Comic Book**

A particularly interesting audience reaction to the comic was offered by a first grade girl. She was fascinated with the drawings and asked me to explain the story to her. I learned a lot
from her reactions about how the story is working. She was able to guess the professions of half of the deities at the beginning; this showed that the designs were effective. I told her a simplified version of events, pointing at the panels, which still had no words. She is a precocious child, and it was surprising and heartening to hear that she was able to retell the story to others and seemed to have no trouble following the thread through the images. However she also offered a critique when she saw me working on later pages. I’d jumped around to fill in the characters’ dialogue between the stories they told, leaving the panels in the middle blank, and when she asked me what the characters were doing on in two different panels I answered: “She’s braiding her hair” and in the second one, “she’s still braiding her hair” and the little girl asked me “do they do anything apart from braid her hair?” She showed me concisely that I was in danger of falling into the problem others had noted in previous forms of depicting too much static exposition and not enough action or progression. Her comment also confirmed that the comic had to be more about the stories within the stories. In the comic, the Out of the Way Station could function as a frame narrative, offering exchanges and emotional development between the characters around the stories that they tell. Each woman’s story could be focused back to the central heart of the plot by showing how it could be used to help Alysan. This is quite the opposite of the play, in which they stories the characters told were deemphasized and the interaction between the characters highlighted, whereas in the comic, while the emotional progression and interactions between the characters are still essential, much of the visual focus and the heart of the emotional progression is within the stories they tell.
This paper itself is an adaptation of the story, from a narrative to an analytic study, and the process of creating it offers insights into storytelling. Though I created every adaptation with an analytic eye, and most of this paper comes from those notes, returning to those works from the perspective of the paper illuminated new insights. For instance, compiling meta notes showed that whenever I had to ask myself if I needed something in one of the forms, I had cut it, showing I probably hadn’t needed it. It also illuminated which lessons carried across the genres and which were particular to individual forms. And many of the overall lessons learned about writing became relevant in writing this paper—such as the need to choose the essential details and let go of the ones that don’t support the central progression (I had many more notes and observations than were included here—see the endnotes). These insights prove that theoretical disciplines like critical analysis are useful to understanding creation, but also that the process of creating a work in a critical medium is itself a useful practical form of analysis.

CONCLUSIONS

It is not for me to judge whether these works are exemplary, particularly effective, or even good attempts at each of these forms. Rather the process of creating them and struggling with each form generated useful insights beyond even what I’d expected. The insights outlined here are sometimes confirmations of common ideas, but for the most part new ideas that I have not seen frequently discussed before. The presence of so many useful insights from this project confirms the hypothesis that practice can allow useful critical analysis of media form.

I set out to explore the constraints and opportunities of each media to see which story elements are easily conveyed and which provide difficulties. I did observe pressures and resources in each form. But more than that, this project revealed that each medium is equally
capable of conveying the heart of a story. It isn’t that they are unable to depict certain elements but that they use different means to do so. Adapting a work means using the tools of the new form to get at the heart of the story from a different angle.

Adaptation theorists often discuss the issue of fidelity, debating what it means to be ‘faithful’ to the source text and whether fidelity is something to strive for, or whether it’s more important to create a good work or fresh interpretation in the new medium. This project shows that even when adapting one’s own work, the question of fidelity remains, as I was faced with choices about what to change. But it also raised the question of whether ‘fidelity’ means being faithful to the exact events, characters, words, and actions, or the plot, theme, mood, essence, and heart of the story.

All of the versions of the tale presented here are about four seemingly different women realizing they all are engaged in a common struggle dealing with patriarchal societies, and the women uniting to empower each other. What changes between media is the means of reaching and depicting that progression: in the short story, it happens through philosophical discourse; in the play, it happens through witty banter and emotional outbursts; in the comic book it happens through the stories (depicted through visuals) they tell each other. This indicates that media specificity isn’t just about what can be conveyed but rather how it is conveyed. The question becomes not “what must change when adapting a story into a different form?” but “how can I use the vocabulary of this form to tell the story?” Each adaptation started as translation but quickly stopped being a transposition of the previous form and became a retelling of the essential story. The different forms change the cosmetic elements such as exact wording, choice of moment, and level of descriptiveness, and highlight aspects of the central theme from varying
perspectives, but in the end the core remains the same. The heart of the story is a rose by many names.
Background Notes

Character Profiles, Character Reference Drawings, Historical Background Notes.

JILL
Name: Jill Pennington.  
Age: 15.  
Marital status: In a relationship.  
Relatives: Parents: Eliza Pennington (Yoga teacher and Green party political campaign manager) and George Mooney (kids social worker/tutor). Also a girlfriend named Jay.  
Orientation: Lesbian.  
Religion: New Age spiritualist.  
Class: Middle class.  
Profession: Student / witch.  
Education: Elementary and middle school at Cambridge Friends, a Quaker school. Currently a junior in high school at Cambridge Rindge and Latin.  
Family history: Jill’s parents were hippies—they were from the Midwest and were teenagers during JFK’s assassination. Her father, George, was drafted but was a conscientious objector. Her parents went away to school at Washington University, and got swept up in hippie culture protests against the war. After school, they lived in a hippie commune for a while in Massachusetts. Then her mother, Eliza, went to law school, and now her mother is a yoga teacher in between working as campaign manager for green party political candidates and her father is a children’s social worker. Her parents trained themselves to do some basic magic through spiritualism, such as seeing auras and card reading.  
Where she’s from: Midwest.  
Where she lives: Massachusetts.
How much money they have: A moderate amount.

Political affiliation: Green party.

Connection to/perception of magic: She’s a Which, which means she has the power the word ‘which’ has, which is to add or subtract attributes from something. She’s quite comfortable with her powers and with moving in the magical community, both in Massachusetts and in other dimensions. Her girlfriend, Jay, is a powerful medium, so Jill’s familiar with Jay’s line of work and the strange places and people it’s led to as well.

Connection to/perception of gender roles and the debates in their time: Feminist.

Social norms she’s used to: See gender notes.

Literary influences: Tamora Pierce, Harry Potter, Tolkien, Peter Pan, Alice in Wonderland, Sherlock Holmes, fairy tales, historical heroines like Joan of Arc, Queen Elizabeth, Grace O’Malley, etc.

Appearance: Corkscrew curl pig tails.

Clothing: Hoop skirts, corsets, lace gloves, and Lolita fashion.

What problem brought her there: The normal caretaker, her girlfriend Jay, is busy and asked her to fill in.

Personality: Bubbly.

Temperament: Cheerful but stubborn.

Level of idealism/cynicism: Very idealistic. Her parents passed down their values to her, such as the power of non-violent protest.

Style of speaking: Modern with some anime lingo and occasionally puts on formal tones.

Language(s): English, Elvish.
Background

Jill met her now-girlfriend Jay in a kindergarten program. They went to different elementary schools—Jill went to Cambridge Friends and learned Quaker traditions like speaking circles and consensus and pacifism. Met up with Jay again in high school at Rindge. Jill’s always known she liked girls—in preschool she was trying to kiss other girls. Teachers said she’d grow out of it, but she always knew she wouldn’t. Her parents were very supportive and never saw any problem with it. She’s also known about her magic for almost as long. It was unpredictable when she was little, and things she wanted would happen by accident without method. In early elementary school she learned to get more control over it. Her parents were startled but also accepting of that, given their own limited abilities. She also dresses very unconventionally, in hoop skirts and corsets and such. She was teased in elementary school until she turned one bully into a tadpole for a week, and then they left her alone. She helped Jay come to terms with being gay (her parents are not as supportive as Jill’s) and in the process they fell in love and became a happy couple. Jill has continued helping Jay in her struggles with her parents. Eventually Jay came out to them, and they ordered her to keep it a secret, so Jay left and took refuge at Jill’s house until she could find a place of her own. Jay’s aunt, a famous Seer who is always traveling, now lets Jay live in her house while she’s away, and Jill visits frequently. They have a group of other misfit friends who know about magic and some of whom practice different kinds of it. They sometimes do magical jobs for people and creatures based on their specialties.

Historical Notes: United States, 2007

Gender Roles
In Jill’s world, there have been many advances toward legal gender equality, but still some inequalities and stereotypes remain. This is after several waves of feminism and women’s movements, and women can now:

- Vote
- Hold most jobs a man can if she has the proper training and gets hired
- Be elected to political office
- Chose to stay at home (rather than being forced to) if they have the economic means to do so
- Get divorced
- Own and inherit property
- Control their own money
- Make contracts without the consent of their husbands
- Speak freely
- Go to school, including higher education
- Serve on juries
- Gain primary custody rights over her kids
- Leave their houses whenever they want
- Make life decisions (after a certain age) without needing permission of her parents
- Travel
- Legally allowed to be self sufficient, not have to be tied to a man
- Live where she wants
- Wear what she wants (legally, in most circumstances, within reason)
• One of the main candidates for election for president in 2012 was Hillary Clinton, and likely will be in the next election, and seems to have a great chance of getting support.

Persistent inequalities

• Military
  o Women are excluded from combat when working in the military
  o Women don’t have to register for the draft
  o Women who do work in the military are persistently sexually assaulted by other soldiers (including their superior officers) and not given justice

• Work
  o Women still often don’t get equal pay for equal work
  o Men are still more likely to be promoted to leadership positions
  o Very few places have paid maternity leave
  o Women are still expected to ‘dress up’ and wear makeup to be presentable
  o Women often still do the bulk of work at home, including childcare

• Politics
  o There’s never been a woman president of the US
  o 7% of presidents and prime ministers worldwide are women\textsuperscript{celxxvii}
  o 17% of US Congress is female\textsuperscript{celxxviii}
  o 18% of America leadership positions are held by women\textsuperscript{celxxix}
  o The media spends more time talking about female politicians’ appearance than their policies

• Media
The media is full of harmful gender stereotypes

- “Strong” female characters—scantily clad women with weapons and fighting ability and no personality
- There is only a small number of films that pass the Bechdel test (two named female characters having at least one conversation about something other than a man)
- Nearly all female characters are young and thin and white and straight
- Women newscasters are usually young and blonde, while the men can be young or old and grey
- Female superheroes are far more likely to be killed off (and be drawn in objectifying, physically impossible and combat impractical poses and costumes)

- 56% of commercials aimed at women market beauty to promote products
- Less than a quarter of films have a female protagonist
- 29% of speaking characters in major Hollywood films are female
- Female characters are 4x more likely to be sexualized
- 80% of characters with jobs in g-rated films are male
  - The 20% that are female are almost never CEO’s, lawyers, or politicians
- The average fashion model weighs 23% less than the average woman
- Many women writers feel the need to write under a male pseudonym to get published/read
- There are many fewer major women authors, directors, screenwriters
• Violence
  o 1 in 4 women are victims of domestic violence\textsuperscript{celxxxvii} and for some women, such as Native American women, the percentage is far higher.
  o On average 3 US women are murdered by their partners every day\textsuperscript{celxxxviii}
  o 1.3 million reported being sexually assaulted in 2009\textsuperscript{celxxxix}
  o A major cause of harm to women is men

• Law
  o Lots of people are lobbying for laws to limit abortion and birth control

• Religion
  o Under the conservative Christian ideal, women are still supposed to be chaste
  o Terrible to no sex education in most schools, often for religious reasons, which leads to rampant teen pregnancy
  o Women aren’t allowed to be leaders in the most orthodox ends of nearly every major religion

• Persistent stereotypes: No matter how much people have fought them, these are stereotypes and expressions are still around:
  o “Fights like a girl” is used as an insult
  o “Throws like a girl” is used as an insult
  o Women who get angry are often dismissed and called crazy
  o “You’re cute when you’re angry” is played for humor
  o People say “Lighten up” or “It was just a joke” or “don’t take things so seriously” in response to being called out for sexist remarks
  o Girls are often assumed to be worse at math and science
Girls are often assumed to be naturally physically weaker than boys

Girls are often assumed to be bad at sports

Women are seen as more emotional than men and less rational and criticized and ignored on account

Women are told they have to be ‘beautiful’ (according to society’s standard of beauty—tall, thin, curvy, clear skin, muscular, perfect hair, big red lips, dark eyelashes, thin eyebrows, hairless apart from the hair on her head, un-freckled, wearing tight ‘flattering’ fashionable clothing that’s not too prim and not too risqué and is young but age appropriate) to ‘succeed.’

Women who work instead of staying home with their kids are called neglectful

Women who stay home instead of working are called unmotivated anti-feminists

“Girly” things like pink and dolls fill aisle in the malls

- Some of them reinforce gender roles like:
  - Girls as more parental than boys
  - Girls as not as intelligent as boys (fewer complicated toys such as science kits, more dolls)
  - Reinforcing focus on appearance
  - Un-harmful ‘girly’ things like the color pink are seen as inferior and boys don’t want to be seen with them

Women are supposed to fit an impossible standard of beauty, have a successful career, take care of a family, keep a tidy home, all at the same time, and not complain.
“Feminist” is still often seen as a dirty word, and many people, women and men, refused to identify with it

Persistence of the Eve/Mary dilemma

Girls aren’t supposed to be aggressive

Women have trouble making their voices heard, often literally, in classrooms, in meetings, in congress

Continuing emphasis on women’s appearance in media and news

Gay Rights

At the time of Jill’s story, 2007, Massachusetts is the only state in the US where gay marriage is legal. Gay people are not allowed in the military, and are kicked out if they’re found out. Only a dozen states prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation. Everywhere else there could be housing discrimination, employment and public accommodations discrimination. Businesses can still exclude customers and employees on the basis of sexual orientation. Landlords could refuse to rent to gay people. Gay couples can’t visit each other in the hospital and have legal issues regarding shared property or children. Often a couple can’t both adopt together, so one parent doesn’t have the legal rights or obligations of a parent. Many gay people are still in the closet. There is rampant bullying and suicide of gay teenagers. Almost no gay characters are in the media, and those that are tend to be minor characters and stereotypes. There are few out gay celebrities. Yet support for gay rights is on the rise and matters are much better than they were in previous decades, and homosexuality has become more visible and mainstream and gay-straight alliances exist and some people are out of the closet.
Politics

In her life Jill has witnessed George Bush’s contested election and reelection, which gave many people in her generation a cynical view of politics and of what effect their vote would have. She also was in 4th grade during 9/11, and watched the fear, increased security at airports, and the beginnings of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, which in 2007 have at point yet to end, though Osama bin Laden has yet to be caught and it has become clear that the war in Iraq is more about oil than security. Despite the controversy of the war, it is important to note that women were not in combat roles, gay people were ostensibly not fighting, and most Americans were not directly involved because there is no draft. The war is abroad, so after the first terrorist attack, there is no fighting within the country. Also, some experts are beginning to become concerned about the economy and the growing national debt, and the country is on the edge of the largest financial crisis since the Great Depression. There still are racial inequalities in income and in schooling and in legal proceedings. Bush is still the president, late in his second term.

Historical Notes: United States, 1970’s

Nearly as important as the events in Jill’s own time are the events in Jill’s parents’ time.

Vietnam

The United States went to war in Vietnam from 1959-1975. It was a very unpopular war, and many Americans were drafted and many died. Some people tried to dodge the draft or were conscientious objectors, which meant they had moral or religious objections to serving in the war, and some managed to avoid being drafted that way. There was a large youth outcry against the war, which went on for a comparatively long time in American history.
Hippie Activism

There were some communities of hippies who created a lifestyle of communal living, frugal spending, simple foods, study groups, informal clothing, and activism.

Communes

Groups would live together in small houses, sometimes with around 12 people, male and female, with communal kitchens and living rooms. They would have a schedule of cooking and rotating cleaning, and rotating house parties and potluck suppers with lots of friends. It was a very social culture, welcoming to new friends. They lived simply and cheaply. They had day jobs, but the outside culture and weekend gatherings, lectures, and activism, were at the center of their lives.

Activism

There were evening lectures and many organizations that would meet and plan activities to raise consciousness about social issues through such means as street theater, speaking on street corners, handing out pamphlets, and other forms of nonviolent social change. They wanted to spread awareness about what people’s taxes were paying for and about what was going on in other countries. At first people would yell at them and call them Communists. But when the Watergate scandal broke and Nixon was exposed as a liar, suddenly people stopped yelling and started listening, when they realized what the activists were saying about the government’s corruption was fact. The issues the activists brought attention to included such issues as: political prisoners in Saigon; a south-Vietnamese dictator imprisoning people in tiger cages; the Vietnam
war; bar codes; anything that seemed anti-worker or anti farm worker; and more. After the war, activists got involved in the amnesty movement for draft dodgers and trying to get forgiveness for conscientious objectors from president Ford. Later, many got into environmental causes, amnesty international, trying to free political prisoners in other countries, green peace, and even later, protesting the Afghanistan and Iraq wars.

Gender

The women’s movement was another cause wrapped up in the activism, though there was sexism and related tensions within some of the anti-war activist movements. In some groups, about half of the women kept their names if they married.

Religion

Many got interested in Quaker culture, drawn to the communal meetinghouse setting and the form of informal spirituality. They often resisted organized religion, deciding not to commit to joining particular institutions.

Moving forward

As time went on, many hippy activists kept some of the cultural aspects through to modern day, such as informal clothing, jeans, long hair, vegetarianism, spirituality, not wearing fur, activism, liberal politics, personalized spirituality, giving money to causes such as poverty support and environmental groups, volunteering for politics, canvassing for candidates, and community service. They also tried to pass on their values to their children.
Values

Values they might pass down to their children include: the sense that there are forces and causes larger than individuals which are worth working for; the importance of working for peace over wars; the principles of nonviolent social change; the idea that individuals have a stake in society and can make a difference through small action and joining together; the mission to make the world a better place; the idea that life should be joyous and you don’t have to deprive yourself; the importance of balancing work for your own life with helping others.
Name: Ālŷsan.

Year of birth: N/A.

Year of story: N/A.

Age: Ageless.

Marital status: Single.

Orientation: Asexual.

Religion: N/A.

Class: Lower level young female deity.

Profession: Rain deity.

Education: Brought up by Justice and Wisdom and taught about history and the world as it was and is, and trained to know her place in it and to do her job. Kept informed by elder siblings Insight and Foresight about the workings of the future.

Family history: See mythology below.

Where she’s from: The sky.

Where she lives: On the magical island of the deities.

How much money they have: N/A.

Political affiliation: With the women in the besieged castle.

Connection to/perception of magic: See mythology.

Connection to/perception of gender roles and the debates in their time: Believes what she’s been taught about the natural order of women being below men, but is beginning to dislike the situation. See level of idealism/cynicism.
Literary influences: The sagas and epics the humans tell about her and her siblings and about human heroes.

Appearance: Large calm eyes, like the eye of a storm.

Clothing: Medieval dress.

Personality: Changeably quiet or passionate.

Temperament: Often mild with occasional volatile outbursts.

Level of idealism/cynicism: Somewhere in the middle—realism. Has been brought up to believe that things are the way they are and will be the way they will be. But she’s beginning to be indignant about some of that and wonder whether things have to be that way.

Style of speaking: A mix of grand and colloquial.

Language(s): The human language, the deity language.

Background

She was created by Justice and Wisdom, the king and queen of the deities, along with her twin brother Thunder, to be weather guardians and assist their elder siblings with functions in the world. Her job is to help her older sister Agriculture to grow plants to feed the humans. She tries to get along with her brother, who is excitable and slightly insecure about being created so late and being so young, and who hero-worships his older brother War. He is very passionate and is usually in charge of storms, and Rain usually leaves that to him so that he can feel like he has some territory that’s his own, and most of the time she prefers her quiet job.

In recent history, there have been even more wars among mortals than usual, rising from conflicts between old rival clans and important families and cities. One clan has been going around besieging cities and trying to acquire more fortresses and territory. They’ve been striking
towns and forts while the men are away campaigning elsewhere, though often the men hear soon enough that they return to take back the city or defend it and rescue their women. There is one particular city on a cost of one of the islands with a basic wooden fortress built into a natural fortification on the mountainside, with a village and its farms spread out around. Most of the men went off exploring and plundering, satisfied that their women would be safe in the well-supplied and naturally defended fortress should the need arise. But soon after the men left, an army appeared on the horizon. The women fled into the fortress, and the army laid siege. It’s a battle of who can last longer. The women wait desperately for the men to return and rescue them, but they are getting tired of waiting for rescue and are beginning to wonder whether they can or should try to get out of this situation by themselves. The men left recently, and the women know they won’t be back for a while, and they can’t get word to their allies, so they’re on their own. The women are getting frustrated with feeling powerless and beginning to question the gender roles that left their lives at the mercy of men. Some of them have prayed to Ālīsan to help them, because she’s an approachable nurturing female deity who gives aid and helps relieve suffering rather than requiring work from them or frightening them with destiny. She is touched and wants to help, but doesn’t know how to because all she knows how to do is make it rain. This is complicated by the fact that War, Forge, and Thunder are siding with the invading force, Seafaring and Hunting are busy helping the absent men, and the women deities customarily have been taught not to interfere in battles (even Death doesn’t step in until after it is over) and are only helping to keep the women working on their limited supplies inside the fortress. To complicate this further, Foresight and Insight have predicted this siege and seen signs that seem to indicate that there is nothing the women can do. Foresight saw the great gate breaking open while a warrior in armor called victory from the battlements, and Insight said: “Fetters close in
tight. Longstanding fortifications will fall. Life blood will flow and bring destruction. What is once opened cannot be closed. But after, great sacrifice will restore balance. The deities assume this means that the men will not return in time, the besiegers will break through the walls and take the city and slaughter the women, because obviously the woman haven’t been trained to fight so they must be defenseless, but that in the long run this slaughter will lead to a restoration of order and justice, perhaps through the clan’s seeking retribution and so ridding the land of the invaders or deciding the matter once and for all one way or another, and most of the deities accept this as inevitable and agree that they must play their parts in it. Ālīsan was touched by being asked for help, since she’s a minor deity, and recognized that the women must be at the end of their rope if they’re asking her, so she took on that risk and brought the matter before the deities council, shocking everyone, since a war is outside the boundaries of her job, and the seers strongly advised Ālīsan not to interfere. She doesn’t know what to do and is struck by the strangeness of her position where she feels stuck and pulled in many directions, for the first time feeling personally just as trapped as the women who asked her for help and frustrated with the men who have power over her world. So she saw the door and came to the Out of the Way Station to try to think of a plan and decide what to do and whether she can or should do anything.

**Historical Notes: the Isles**

**DEITIES**

**Mythology**

First, there were the Great Scales of balance in the sky, and on the scales were the deities of Justice and Wisdom. They oversaw the world’s creation. Wisdom decided what needed to be added to the world, and Justice put everything in its proper place, trying to keep everything
balanced and as it ought to be. Along with the world they created many children, all fraternal twins born fully grown to fulfill contrasting needed roles in the world. Justice created all of the male deities in the more active aspect of the element the twins would be administrating. Wisdom created all of the female deities who would be custodian of the more passive aspect of the element. First, Justice and Wisdom wanted to know more. Justice wanted to know the future, so he created his son, Foresight, who can see flashes of specific moments that will happen in the future. Wisdom wanted to know broader themes and forces of impending events, so she created her daughter Insight, who sees a broader and more vague perspective on the currents of the future. Insight’s eyes are white, as they are turned inward into her head so that she can perceive the currents of the universe. The four of them oversaw the beginning of the world, guiding its path. It appeared that the predictions of the twins Foresight and Insight (as interpreted by Justice and Wisdom), particularly together, always came true, though not necessarily in the way it seemed. To see if it was possible to ever get around fate, Justice created Illusion. Illusion was a trickster whose job it was to try to test Foresight and Insight to see how infallible they were, but their predictions still proved true, and Justice and Wisdom learned to accept the predictions as inevitable outlines of what must be, though Illusion vanished to continue his job and keep testing the prophet twins in case their sight ever failed or left a blind spot. Meanwhile Wisdom created Illusion’s twin sister, Dream, so the deities could imagine the world into being, which they did. Through Dream, they raised islands out of the sea and grew plants on them in sacred circles, and at the direction of the oldest four, Dream dreamed and thus created animals and humans, and a basic society began to be formed, guided by the deities. Conflict began to arise between different peoples, and Justice created his son War to oversee and arbitrate battles and to establish rules of combat and honorable fighting. Meanwhile Wisdom
created War’s sister Death to guide fallen warriors to their final rest—both those warriors on the battlefield and those humans who had finished their struggle though life. To guide the people into taking care of themselves, Justice and Wisdom created deities of Hunting and Husbandry to teach the humans how to hunt food and train animals to their benefit. When the humans’ islands became too small to hold them, Justice created Seafaring so they could explore foreign lands and seek their fortune, and Wisdom created Agriculture so they could continue cultivating the land at home. To power the ships and feed the plants, Justice and Wisdom created Thunder and his sister Rain. Last they created Forge and Loom to teach humans how to make crafts and spin. The deities all live on their own special island surrounded by mists apart from humans.

List of deities

They can be referred to either by their name or by their element. For those with two names, their second name is a title or an epithet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gods</th>
<th>Goddesses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Justice: Déma Sópcyning</td>
<td>Wisdom: Gléawnes Dryhtcwén</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King and father of the deities, creator of all the other male deities</td>
<td>Queen and mother of the deities, creator of all the other female deities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foresight: Rhagwelediad</td>
<td>Insight: Mewnwelediad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He has magnifying lenses over his eyes and can look into the future and see with perfect clarity certain important moment and every detail about them, but</td>
<td>She wears a blindfold over her always inward turned eyes and removes it to gain insight into the broad patterns of the future and the universe and makes</td>
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nothing of the context. Everything he
foresees comes to pass.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>broad, vague predictions that are open to interpretation but always prove true</th>
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<tr>
<th>Illusion: Illusion: Illusion:</th>
<th>Scinn Scinn Scinn</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A trickster designed to test the limits of Foresight and Insight’s powers.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>His constant mission is to try to deceive them, and the other deities, and mortals too, and surprise them, because with Foresight and Insight, the deities always see the shape of everything coming in advance.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Dream: Dream: Dream:</th>
<th>Swefna Swefna Swefna</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A spirit of creativity who helped dream the world into existence and passes on her gifts to humans to allow them the power to create and hope. She knows and presides over both the sleeping and waking dreams of all.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>War: War: War:</th>
<th>Gudhafo Gudhafo Gudhafo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An enthusiastic but strict battle deity in charge of all wars. He loves combat but gets very angry if people break the rules of combat.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Death: Death: Death:</th>
<th>Nihtúle Nihtúle Nihtúle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A calm presence who welcomes all after their death. She doesn’t kill them—life or war does that—but once they’re dead, she takes care of them and puts them into a gentle sleep.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hunting: Hunting: Hunting:</th>
<th>Wædan Wædan Wædan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A hunter who carries bow and arrow and sword and knives and has hunting dogs around his feet. He who chases down monsters in the wilderness to protect the universe and teaches humans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Husbandry: Husbandry: Husbandry:</th>
<th>Heordness Heordness Heordness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A shepherdess with a crook who teaches women how to handle animals gently and raise them and how to collect their milk and wool and eggs etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
how to hunt game. He has antlers sprouting from his head.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seafaring: Brimlidend</th>
<th>Agriculture: Túnicel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sæweard</td>
<td>A nurturing, motherly force who helps plants grow and keeps them tended and takes care of humans by making sure they’re fed. Also a fertility goddess.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A wizened sailor sea deity who guards ships and sailors, guiding them or throwing storms in their way if he gets annoyed with them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thunder: Punorrád</th>
<th>Rain: Réncio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ligetweorpere</td>
<td>A helper to her older sister Túnicel, who brings water to help plants grow, and bring fresh drinking water to the people, and helps women through childbirth. She flies through the air in the form of a crow, and from her wings drops the rain.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An admiring younger brother of War who often goes with him on campaign to battle to make the triumphant sounds of War. He also makes storms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forge: Þweran</th>
<th>Loom: Crencestre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forge</td>
<td>A mild-mannered weaver deity, guardian over women’s sewing circles, gossip, and household chores.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A smith, and companion of war who forges weapons and metal works and teaches human men to do the same.

Relations between the deities

Justice is very much seen as being in charge, taking on a role that mirrors the human hierarchy of a king, man, husband, at the head of a household and country and universe. Wisdom
is revered and respected, sometimes even perceived as more intelligent than Justice, her opinion always worthy of consideration, and she is almost always consulted and has a quiet say in whatever happens, but Justice has the last decision on most matters. After them, the seer twins are most highly revered. The deities and humans believe that they are infallible, and that the combination of what the two of them see is the truth of what will inevitably have to happen and it can’t be changed, though some aspects won’t be clear until after the event. It is up to the other deities and occasionally humans to interpret the prophecies. The deities, particularly the higher ranking ones, have a pride in being accurate and believing they can nearly always properly interpret the prophecies. The prophecies also carry a weight of inevitability and the deities are expected to fulfill whatever prescribed role the seers foresee for them. After them, the deities diminish in prominence and importance by their age, and younger deities are perceived as more limited, less powerful, less intelligent than the older ones.

Relationships between the individual deities differ. Each set of twins has some connection between them, either emotional or practical. Illusion and Dream have a special relationship in that Illusion was created to try to trick his siblings and Dream was created partially to watch him and make sure he didn’t cause too much mischief, but she ended up feeling more affinity for him than for their parents, and didn’t report on him as much. Rain and Thunder on the other hand have a very different dynamic—Thunder is the loud, eager brother and Rain gets drowned a bit in his shadow, but he needs her to make storms, resulting in a grudging sibling comradeship—“Can I make a storm? Can I? Oh, fine, I’ll take my sister along if I have to…” sort of thing. Meanwhile Thunder hero-worships War and is always tagging along with him, wanting to help him but not being as powerful in himself. Agriculture and Husbandry are well behaved hard workers.
Gender Roles among the deities

The gender roles among the deities mirror those of humans, though they are not exact parallels. Female deities are revered and respected and believed to have particular wisdom, from their mother. However, they are also created according to the idea that women ought to take a more passive role, and they are expected to stay strictly within their own job and not step onto their brother’s territory. Similarly the male deities are not supposed to step into their sister’s territory, but their talents are viewed as more active, external, and sometimes, as more important. Sometimes they can influence events and decisions, but mainly behind the scenes, through convincing their male relatives, or working subtly within their craft.

Relations between the deities and humans

Humans pray to the deities in order of prominence according to whatever craft or element the human is closest to. Traditionally, women usually pray to the female deities and men to the male ones.

HUMANS

Day to day life

Most people lived in small rural communities in the countryside scattered along an archipelago of islands, though there were some cities. Villages would often be organized around a central fortified manor for local lords, that they help supply and receive protection during wartime in exchange. Villagers would engage in whatever agrarian trade fitted their environment—farming, pasturing, etc. Many people farm, supplementing crops with game from
hunting. The men go out to work the fields or forests and the women do laundry, tend farm animals, spin and sew and mend, and so on.\textsuperscript{ceclvi} In certain seasons, many of the adult men often go off on long sea voyages together to explore and pillage other lands, returning home with their spoils, and their wives, children, and elderly maintain the land while they are gone.

**Gender roles**

Women had some independence, but legally they were under the control\textsuperscript{ceclviii} and protection of their closest male relative, and if no male relative existed, then of the king. Yet women are respected, honored, thought wise, and consulted for advice and on spiritual matters, and all men of a court would pay homage to their lord’s lady.\textsuperscript{ceclii} Men and women have their roles divided up: men work outside of the house, women in and around. Men do more active jobs, such as farming, hunting, sailing, and warring, while women do secondary or quieter jobs, like tending farm animals, weaving, sewing, keeping house, raising children.\textsuperscript{cecliv}

Women in a community meet at communal animal tending areas, wells, sewing circles, and keep informed about each other’s goings on.\textsuperscript{cecl} Marriage is arranged by parents, sometimes a betrothal at birth, sometimes later on, often for political or financial reasons.\textsuperscript{ceclvi} There is an exchange of goods and wealth on both sides—a bride price and a dowry.\textsuperscript{ceclvii} The women legally owned their dowries, though it was under the control of their husbands. They also were allowed to own property outside of their dowry.\textsuperscript{ceclviii} Queens and noblewomen were particularly supposed to bear sons, though childbearing and rearing was important for all women.\textsuperscript{ceclix}

**Religion**
The humans worship their pantheon of deities. They go on pilgrimages to sacred groves and give treasure and other offerings to honor the deities. Men sometimes have visions of the future given to them by Foresight, but they only show snapshots and often cause more harm than good since the visions can’t be averted anyway. Some human women are seers of wider themes of the future through whom Insight speaks, and if their predictions are proven true, they are revered and consulted for advice. Women also often know some healing remedies. Literacy is not common but there is a thriving oral culture, mainly of mythological tales and heroic epics.

Government

They have a limited proto-feudal system with petty kings, their queen consorts, their peasant subjects. Queens rarely rule on their own, though they are essential to holding a court together and are often turned to for advice by the king and can help guide events from behind the scenes. Sometimes local groups have large gatherings called ‘things’ where they decide important matters and drink mead. Women can take on the role of ‘peace weavers’ either by helping to negotiate a peace, or by marrying across clans and thereby ending conflict.
Name: Isabetta Valiero da Siena

Year of birth: 1560.

Year of story: 1600.

Age: 40.

Marital status: Widowed.

Relatives: Two sons, Pietro (9) and Matteo (5), husband (deceased): Bernardo Gronchi. Also a writer friend, Cinzia Sacchetti de Castiglione.

Orientation: Bisexual.

Religion: Catholic.

Class: Nobility.

Profession: Humanist writer.

Education: Tutored at home in Latin, Greek, mathematics, classics, and other disciplines.

Family history: Her family was a minor noble family in Sienna, but they fled to Venice to escape the Black Plague outbreak of 1348 and remained in Venice ever since.

Where she’s from: Born in Venice.

Where she lives: Venice.

How much money they have: Lower nobility—substantial dowry.

Political affiliation: Humanists.

Connection to/perception of magic: There were many patron saints prayed to for different matters, and some superstitions, such as the use of charms to help during childbirth.
Connection to/perception of gender roles and the debates in their time: She grew up educated and had dreams of being a writer and wanted independence and equality, but was disillusioned with her world when she was forced away from that, and is now trying to reclaim some of that dream and grapple with the place of women in society and the dichotomy where she sees women as equal to men, yet they are not treated as such.

Social norms she’s used to: The idea of paterfamilias with the man being the king of the household. The society was also influenced by Aristotelian gender stereotypes.

Literary influences: Cicero, Petrarch, Aristotle, Isotta Nogarola, Laura Cereta, Moderata Fonte.

Appearance: See character reference drawing.

Clothing: She wears a black dress with a high collar, a train, a cap covering her hair.

What problem brought them there: she read Moderata Fonte’s defense of women, and it made her call into question many aspects of her life and world.

Personality: A bit harsh and jaded, but hiding passion underneath.

Temperament: Wry, stiff.

Level of idealism/cynicism: Pretty cynical. Trying to salvage what’s left of her integrity, but carries guilt and bitterness for the actions she took in her past, forced upon her by society, such as her marriage and the fact that she had to choose between her studies and her children. Jaded by society’s manipulation and control of her and attempts to suppress her. Still insisting on trying to carve out a space where she can be herself and do her work, but she holds no illusions anymore about being accepted by society.

Style of speaking: Formal.

Language(s): Italian, Latin, Greek.
Background

She was born to a well of noble family, and educated in Latin and Greek and classic texts and disciplines. She wrote in the humanist tradition, corresponded with other writers, and was praised for her abilities. But as she grew older, her family began to disparage her scholarly work, and at the age of 17, they married her to a 33-year-old noble lord, Bernardo Gronchi. She moved into his family estate in the city, a large household led by his father, housing his brothers and their wives. Isabetta was the youngest wife, and her in-laws were condescending and strict with her, wanting to ensure that she know all she needed to in order to be a good wife and mother, and they were determined to have no more independence and writing from her. Bernardo kept her occupied with housework and forbade her from continuing her studies, wanting her to be the perfect model of a wife. After two years, she gave birth to a daughter, who died in infancy soon after her birth. Five years later, she had a son who also died very young, and four years after that, she had another son who died. Finally at 30 she had a healthy son who was promptly given to a wet nurse and survived. He was named Pietro. Four years later, she had another son, Matteo, also passed to a wet nurse soon after birth. Isabetta’s experience with children dying early left her wary of getting too attached to them, so she distanced herself while making sure they were taken care of. Both were given to wet nurses shortly after birth on the command of her sisters in law, and she had limited contact with them. Late the of Matteo’s birth, Bernardo got sick and died at the age of 50. After her husband’s death, his family insisted that Isabetta stay in the household and raise the children, but she’d had enough, and sued for her dowry. There was a long and nasty fight about it, but the law was on her side and she managed after some struggle to reclaim her dowry. However, the family stipulated that the children must remain with them,
as was their right, \textsuperscript{edxxvii} and that if she left, she could not take them with her, and would renounce the small allowance left her in her husband’s will.\textsuperscript{cccxii} Desperate for freedom to return to her studies, reluctant to bring scandal upon her children by her connection to them,\textsuperscript{cccxiii} and secure in the knowledge that her husband’s family would care for them well, she took her dowry and left. Her birth family kept a house for older widows if they needed it,\textsuperscript{cccxiv} and she moved in, with her dowry to support her, and resumed her studies.\textsuperscript{cccxv} The house provided her the security of her family’s protection and the independence from control\textsuperscript{cccxvi} she wanted, and she offered it as a haven to other women relatives and acquaintances in a similar position. She got into contact with other humanist writers, including some women, and has fallen in love with one of her female writer pen pals.\textsuperscript{cccxvii} But it the recent death of Moderata Fonte (a writer correspondent of Isabetta’s) and Isabetta’s recent reading of Moderata Fonte’s posthumously published dialogue “The Worth of Women”\textsuperscript{ccclxxi} and its commentary on gender roles and how they are created by humans and not natural that has truly led Isabetta her to view her world in a new light and question everything she has lived through and known, from her confusion about her feelings for her pen pal, coupled with her doubts about whether she did the right thing in leaving her children, which has left her the most unsettled she has been since she gained her freedom. And that has led her to the Out of the Way Station.

\textbf{Historical Notes: Renaissance Italy, 1600}

\textbf{VENICE}

Venice had been built in a swamp to escape the Lombard invasions. It was a center of the Italian Renaissance and one of five key political cities in Italy, with Florence, Milan, Naples, and Rome as the others.
Government of Venice

Venice was a republic, but it shied away from popular government, instead embracing the elite.\textsuperscript{cccxcvi} The government consisted of (in hierarchical order):\textsuperscript{cccxcix}

1. The Dodge – an elected duke-like figure. Marino Grimani is the dodge in 1600.\textsuperscript{cd}

2. The Ducal Council – the other main center of power. Members were on terms of several months. It combined judicial and legislative functions.

3. The Forty and the Senate – held the court of appeals and prepared legislation for debate, made laws, helped direct foreign policy, managed state finances.

4. The Great Council – an electoral body consisting of all males over 25 from the 200 most elite families.

5. The General Assembly.

WOMEN

The lives of women were in many ways even more restricted in the Renaissance than in the preceding “Dark Ages.” Women were perceived as inferior and weak, and most fathers hoped for sons (though some grew to appreciate having daughters).\textsuperscript{cdi} Women were supposed to be silent, obedient,\textsuperscript{cdii} chaste,\textsuperscript{cdiii} and subservient to their male relatives.\textsuperscript{cdiv}

Guides for Behavior

Many male writers at the time published strict guides of behavior for every aspect of women’s lives. One suggested that little girls shouldn’t be allowed to play with dolls, but only with miniature household implements, in order to prepare themselves for their domestic duties.\textsuperscript{cdv}
Some suggested that adolescent girls should have no contact with boys and shouldn’t even talk to their brothers. One even suggested girls should fast, eat only bland foods and wear only bland clothes, in order to keep her tame and chaste. Many emphasized that women should be very religious, starting from a young age. Many also stressed that women should be kept at home, under the control of their elder, usually male, relatives. Not all of these instructions would always have been followed, and most applied mainly to the upper class, but the very presence and prevalence of these prescriptive documents speaks to the overwhelming social pressures upon women.

Education

Learning among young and adolescent girls was sometimes encouraged—within boundaries, and only until they were grown up. While some writers suggested limiting what texts girls were taught, or limiting their education altogether, many approved of educating girls, and that approval was carried out in reality. Literacy was on the rise among both men and women since the middle ages, and boys and girls alike were educated in the classics, mathematics, and other subjects. Girls were taught at home by private tutors, or their parents, or at convents.

Adulthood Overview

Many of the strictures and prescriptions on girls’ behavior carried over from childhood to adulthood. Many writers decried makeup and adornment as vain and dirty and unchaste. Yet they were still supposed to be clean and pretty. There were strict laws about dress that varied by year and location but often concerned how much skin a woman could show, how much
jewelry she could wear and of what kind (usually very limited), how expensive and fancy cloth she was allowed to wear (also usually limited), etc. \textsuperscript{cdxix}

Marriage

Marriages were arranged by families, and were political and financial transactions devised to ally families and gain political power, social standing, and money. \textsuperscript{cdxx} The couple had little to no say in the matter, \textsuperscript{cdxxi} and sometimes betrothals were made when children were still infants. \textsuperscript{cdxxii} Girls were treated like commodities, and families of brides would compete for the most noble, politically powerful, and wealthy husbands for their daughters by trying to outbid each other with their dowries. Husbands were often much older than their wives. \textsuperscript{cdxxiii} The average ages differed over the course of the Renaissance, lowering after periods of plague and rising again slightly afterwards, but overall women usually married between the ages of 15 and 25, \textsuperscript{cdxxiv} while men married when they were their 20’s to their 40’s. \textsuperscript{cdxxv} The dowry was the wife’s inheritance and the only property she automatically owned under the law. \textsuperscript{cdxx} But while she was married, her husband controlled her dowry, and could dip into it with her permission, though his family was supposed to pay back whatever he took when he died so it could remain as insurance for her and her children. \textsuperscript{cdxxvi} Wives were still supposed to appear and act as chaste as possible, being loyal to their husband by not cheating on them, but also not showing too much interest in relations with her husband, waiting for him to make the first move. \textsuperscript{cdxxvii} Appearances were as important as actions, and reputations were important to uphold. Wives were supposed to be obedient to her husband and stay out of men’s sphere. Men who did what their wives said could be perceived as weak. \textsuperscript{cdxxviii} Wives were supposed to mainly remain at home, but at home, they were in charge of the running of the house, \textsuperscript{cdxxix} overseeing the kitchens and servants. Aside
from their husband’s business if he chose not to share it with her, she had the run of the estate. Her main task, however, was bearing sons. Women also played a primary role in raising their children and educating them, particularly when they were still young.

Widowhood

Widows generally had more say in their lives than unwed or married women. Some women saw it as a liberation, and indeed they had more freedom to make choices and study the arts. Still, wealthy and noble women who were widowed only had three main options:

1. Stay with her husband’s family, live under their rule and authority, and raise her children.

2. Collect her dowry and go. She was the legal owner, and her husband’s family had to pay it back if she wants them to. Her own family might try to force her to return to them and remarry, using her original dowry. If she leaves her married family, the children stay with her husband’s family.

3. Use her dowry as leverage to get political capital to maintain a degree of independence, either living on her own or with her married household.

HUMANISTS

With the rediscovery of classical texts from Greek and Roman writers and philosophers, a new intellectual and literary movement called Humanism began to gain prominence and popularity in Italy. Humanism influenced many parts of society, from philosophy to politics to science and art. Humanist scholars studied those classical Latin texts like those written by Cicero and Aristotle and engaged with them, writing commentaries on them or responses to them, and
sometimes even challenging them. There were two life paths or philosophies in Humanist study—active humanism, and passive humanism. Active humanists focused on this life, and, using the classics, some took their philosophy and rhetorical studies into politics. Passive humanists, like Petrarch, retreated into their studies and contemplation in isolated areas.

Humanist Women

The revival of the classics and the growing literary culture of humanism was a contributing factor to the increased education of girls, and some women joined the humanist movement, though it was still very male dominated. They wrote works, read classical texts, and corresponded with noted writers. However, after marriage, all of that was supposed to stop, for women, at least. And for many, it did. Women who had been scholarly when young often ceased these activities, or at least hid them from the world and from history, after they were married. Those who did wish to continue to study sometimes went to convents. Adults who continued writing faced censure from their male counterparts, and sometimes scandal and often isolation.

Glossary

Aristotle: A Greek philosopher and thinker, highly influential in the Renaissance. His negative views on women were used as an excuse to oppress them.

Paterfamilias: The idea of a powerful man as the head of a household.

Dowry: The dowry an amount of money and goods attached to a young bride to attract husbands and act as insurance to support a wife in case her husband died, or to pass down to her children.

Cicero: A Greek writer who influenced the active Humanist tradition.
Petrarch: An early Renaissance contemplative Humanist writer.

Isotta Nogarola: a noblewoman writer in the Renaissance who was chased out of public life because of her writing. She wrote a dialogue claiming that Adam’s sin was worse than Eve’s—a radical claim at the time, and one that stood in for the entire gender debate.

Laura Cereta: a noblewoman woman writer in the Renaissance. She wrote about gender issues and fought for her own independence as a writer.

Moderata Fonte: a courtesan woman writer who wrote a defense of women.
Name: Esther de Lorraine.  
Year of birth: 1759.  
Year of story: 1793.  
Age: 34.  
Marital status: Married.  
Relatives: Daughter Renée Weyl, husband Simon Weyl de Lorraine.  
Orientation: Straight.  
Religion: Jewish.  
Class: Third Estate.  
Profession: Seamstress, Archivist.  
Education: Was taught household skills at home and some informal literary and religious tutoring from her father and her husband.  
Family history: Several generations of poor Ashkenazi Jews who came to France fleeing persecution.  
Where she’s from: Lorraine.  
How much money they have: Poor.  
Political affiliation: Member of the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women.  
Connection to/perception of magic: She’s an observant Jew, but superstitions persist about things like the evil eye, the spirit of Lilith, and certain spells to avoid being drafted and to ward off evil, and to call on the protection of the Jewish archangels.
Connection to/perception of gender roles and the debates in their time: Grew up with traditional gender roles, but wanted education to convinced her father to teach her. Contrived to have a say in choosing a husband. Became awakened to the idea of women’s rights by Olympe de Gouge and others and began imagining an equal world and wanting to fight for it.

Social norms she’s used to: Rousseau influenced gender stereotypes. Women were not allowed to vote and were subservient to their closest male relative, who had control over their property and children.

Literary influences: Olympe de Gouges, a contemporaneous feminist who pointed out the inequalities in their society and wrote a “Declaration of the Rights of Women and the Female Citizen” in response to the revolutionary government’s “Rights of Man” and proposed a new, equal marriage contract in response to the existing one. She tried to unite women, and convince them to recognize their oppression. Another literary influence would have been Voltaire, who expressed a slightly more feminist perspective on gender roles than Rousseau did.

Appearance: See character reference drawing.

Clothing: Hair covering with a black ribbon headband.

What problem brought them there: Claire Lacombe, the head of her organization, was publicly denounced before the revolutionary government and imprisoned, and the next day that government created a tribunal to prosecute counter revolutionaries. Her husband suggested they leave France, and Esther doesn’t know what to do and still can’t quite believe what is happening.

Personality: Intellectual, stubborn, protective.

Temperament: Passionate.

Level of idealism/cynicism: Very idealistic.
How to Make it Rain

Style of speaking: Informal.

Language(s): Yiddish, French

Background

Esther Ravel was born in a small Jewish kelle in the French province of Lorraine in 1759. Her father was a poor scribe. He loved knowledge and she loved learning and she managed to convince him to teach her some things and grew up literate and moderately learned. To supplement her family’s income, she started working as a seamstress in her teens.

One Sabbath in 1782 they invited in a wandering traveler, a young Swiss student named Simon Weyl, fresh from the Haskalah movement in Germany, who was traveling between yeshivas. They hit it off, having many intellectual discussions, and her father approved of his learning. With their approval, Simon hinted to the village matchmaker that he was looking to settle down and she made the match. Esther was 23 when they were married, Simon 25. Simon resolved to settle in France and started working as a scribe while Esther continued sewing, since they were both very poor. Widespread famine hit in the year following their marriage, and they moved to Paris looking for opportunity. In the same year, Esther gave birth to a girl and convinced Simon to let her give the girl a French name meaning rebirth, and she became passionate about creating a better world for her daughter.

Simon began writing for a Jewish paper, and Esther sometimes contributed under his name. She was recruited off the streets to join the Women’s March to Versailles on October 5th, 1789. They were both inspired by the revolutionary ideals, though Simon was apprehensive about some of the passion and violence, while Esther felt her eyes had been open and she began dreaming of liberty and equality for Jews. When on September 27th, 1791 the Jews were emancipated by the National Assembly, the couple began to believe that things would truly
get better. In July 1793, Esther became a member of the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women. There she heard Olympe de Gouges speak, and was inspired by her cry for equality for women. Esther was appointed archivist for a time and helped edit a petition to the National Assembly. On September 16th, Claire Lacombe, President of the Society for Revolutionary Republican Women, was denounced before the Committee of General Security and briefly imprisoned, and the women’s party began to lose influence after that. On September 17th, the “Law of Suspects” was passed by the Committee of Public Safety, creating tribunals to find and execute counterrevolutionaries. Simon was reminded of the Spanish Inquisition and suggested they leave France while they still could. Esther didn’t know what to do—in the ruins of her dreams, still clinging to hopes of fighting, in a world that seemed turned on its head, she found her way to the Out of the Way Station.

**Historical Notes: France, 1793**

**JEWS IN FRANCE**

**Overview**

By the time of the Revolution, a growing Jewish population existed in France. They had come there to escape religious persecution and find opportunities afforded by the Industrial Revolution. They were allowed to live there, but excluded from society and subject to anti-Semitism. They were not citizens, and they had to pay special taxes, were not allowed to perform certain jobs, and were not allowed to live in most cities or towns, (though some Jews were in Paris in 1790) and so formed small Jewish villages in the countryside. Over time, the villages became overcrowded as the population increased. However, within these communities Jews were allowed a measure of freedom and self-governance.
instance, Jews educated their children within their own communities. Some areas permitted Jews to register grievances the way French citizens could, while other areas prohibited this participation. The largest populations of Jews lived in the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine. The Jews of Lorraine were not especially wealthy, but were scholarly. Jews could be merchants, Rabbis, cattle dealers, hawkers, and some could even hold important local offices and act as liaisons between the Jewish communities and France. This time period was in the middle of the Haskalah, the Jewish Enlightenment, which encouraged secularism, patriotism, and the arts. Some Jews were inspired by the ideas of the revolution and some even participated in the revolutionary efforts.

In September 27th 1791, the Assembly emancipated the Jews, granting them full citizenship, lifting their extra taxes and the restrictions on where they could live and what jobs they could have. In Lorraine and other areas, Jews had already begun to be accepted leading up to this declaration, and had become inspired by the revolutionary spirit to hope for equality. After the declaration, Jews could live where they wanted, practice the profession they wanted, and participate in civic functions to the same extent as other French citizens, though they had to pay the ordinary taxes of all citizens. After the declaration, many Jews moved to cities and some began to become less observant and more assimilated and more interested in politics. Some became successful in industry and trade, and some few were even artisans or scribes. However, although Jews were legally equal now, some prejudice still remained, particularly in cities. Still, many Jews became very patriotic towards France.

Jewish Family Life and Women
Few records survive, but there are indications that the Jewish communities had strong nuclear families and also strong ties to extended family. Tradition was focused in the home, and they observed Shabbat as a family each week. On average, women married in their early twenties, and the men only a few years older. Sometimes Jewish men traveled from Germany or Switzerland to France and married local women, settling there. Those foreign arrivals were more likely to be artisans and literate. They sometimes came to travel between yeshivas. In general, people married within their social class. A matchmaker called a shadkhn usually arranged marriages. Like in the outside French communities, dowries were a common practice. Families had an average of 2-3 children. Wives may have helped with their husband’s jobs, particularly in tending stores and other professions close to home. Some could even supplement their family income with small time craft work such as she might have done before marriage in the same limited areas as non Jewish women: domestics, laundresses, seamstresses, and sometimes widows could take over their husbands’ businesses. Later in the mid 1800’s there were some groups of Jewish women performing community service. In general the roles within the household seem similar to those of non-Jewish households. Jewish holidays were observed religiously (no pun intended) and synagogue attendance was regular. Jews only ate kosher food. They had a sense of obligation to social support. Within their communities they had groups called hevrot for study, philanthropy, and education, and some for women, mainly for burial customs. Towns would hire a teacher to each their sons.

WOMEN IN FRANCE
Women in France during the late 18th century had varying degrees of freedom based on their social class and marital status. Women of the Third Estate were without great wealth or education. By their teens, many single women would work outside of the home, often as seamstresses or domestics, earning on average less money than men. They could marry, with little to no dowry, and struggle to make ends meet, working hard alongside their husbands. There could be a certain degree of freedom and partnership between the couple in their work, though wives were still regarded as inferior and subservient to their husbands. In the countryside, wives helping out around the house while their husbands worked at agriculture. If they didn’t marry, lower class women could be washerwomen, midwives, seamstresses, servants, mourners, actresses (who were celebrities but looked down upon), nurses, nuns, or prostitutes.

Bourgeoisie girls often studied in a convent briefly, then returned home and took private lessons in the arts. They had more freedom in choosing a husband than the higher-class women did. But after marriage, they’d be under the authority of their husband, though some did help out with their husbands’ work, particularly among the petite bourgeoisie. Still, this could amount to a kind of equality and partnership between couples.

High class girls were more or less sold into marriages, but once married could wield considerable wealth and power.

For all classes, however, women were legally subordinate to their husband in particular and seen as inferior men in general. They could not vote or hold positions in government and had limited options for employment. They theoretically owned their dowries, but couldn’t access them without their husband’s consent. They were also theoretically entitled to half of the shared property of a couple, but only if the couple split or her husband died.
Women in Law and Politics

In theory, women were allowed to have a voice in politics by attending and speaking at public meetings, if not a vote, but few exercised this right. Rather, when they had grievances, they were expressed more often in spontaneous riots in the streets.

The largest and most significant of these riots was the Women’s March on Versailles in 1789 when a group of food sellers protesting the rising price of bread took to the streets, acquired arms, formed a mob, recruiting more women along the way, and stormed the palace before being expelled and ending the night in a chaotic muddle. Though this was a women’s movement, they were not after rights for women specifically, but rather gathered for shared economic concerns.

As the Revolution moved forward, women became more involved, joining or forming political groups, writing flyers and petitions, and otherwise working to help the cause. There were some cases of women pleading directly for their rights. Many were swept up in the revolutionary fervor and inspired by the language of freedom and equality, and suitably outraged when they realized those ideals were not being applied to them. Olympe de Gouges responded to the implicit exclusion of women from the landmark “Declaration of the Rights of man” by writing her own “Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen.” It was a powerful demand for equality, but had little affect in larger culture and politics. She also created a model marriage contract for an equal marriage, which did not become a legal standard. A group of women submitted a petition similar to de Gouges declaration to the National Assembly in 1789, which explicitly called for the abolishment of male privilege, both legal and social, and attempted to change not only the legal status but also the moral
perception of women. Etta Palm petitioned the Assembly for women’s rights in 1792. Their pleas had little effect, however, and few men were on their side—though a small number were. Condorcet campaigned for extending the freedoms of the Revolution to Protestants, Jews, slaves, and women, but he too was unsuccessful. Some women found their way into important meetings, others challenged social norms by wearing men’s dress or revolutionary symbols such as the tricolor cockade and the red cap of liberty. In 1693, lower class women (sans-culottes) created the Society of Republican Women, a revolutionary women’s political group. In addition, some even fought alongside men.

Glossary of French History terms

“The Laws Relating to Jews”: the French Emancipation of the Jews: “The Laws Relating to Jews” was a declaration by the French national assembly emancipating the Jews of France and declaring them equal French citizens. This was not a sudden move; the act had been debated for several years leading up to the decision, and Cerff Berr and Berr-Isaac-Berr and other groups of Jewish petitioners had several times pleaded the Jewish case to the Assembly. In addition, public opinion had been swaying in favor of the Jews.

Haskalah: The Jewish Enlightenment was a European movement from the 1700’s to the 1800’s founded by Mendelssohn and others. It was born in an environment where people were beginning to discuss the concepts of equality and tolerance. The movement was centered in Germany, but stretched outwards as well. The Haskalah encouraged assimilation, secular engagement, patriotism to their country of residency, and emphasized the arts and sciences. As part of this movement, women began campaigning for Jewish rights. The movement also emphasized education, and even Jewish girls began to be educated in other
countries, though less so in France. The views of the Haskalah included a rejection of the idea of waiting for the Messiah.

Moses Mendelssohn: A German Jewish scholar and scientist, one of the founders of the Haskalah. He encouraged a balance between assimilating to surrounding culture while still holding onto Jewish roots.

Voltaire: Voltaire was a French philosopher and writer in the 1700’s. His work was very influential in French society during the time of the Revolution. He spoke favorably of women, yet the female characters in his books can be viewed as rather two-dimensional.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Rousseau was another influential French philosopher and writer. He had a very patriarchal viewpoint and spoke of women as inferior to men. But the female characters in his works were stronger in some ways than Voltaire’s.

Women’s March on Versailles: in October 1789, a group of women food sellers gathered to protest the price and shortage of bread. A large crowd of women gathered, got riled up, attacked city hall, acquired arms, marched through the streets, gathering more women along the way, several thousand by some accounts, marched to the National Assembly and Versailles and stormed the palace, voicing their grievances about the price of bread through a spokesman. The march, while dramatic, had no clear, lasting political affect.

Olympe de Gouges: A widowed, middle class French woman who advocated for women’s rights during the revolution. She was executed during the Reign of Terror.

“Declaration of the Rights of Women and the Female Citizen”: A document written and published by Olympe de Gouges in response to the “Rights of Man.” The “Rights of Women” proclaimed women free and equal to men in every respect and declared that women had the right to “liberty, property, security, and especially resistance to oppression” as well as
asserting women’s right to participate in government,^{dxciv} to speak in public,^{dxcv} pay the same
taxes as men and no more^{dxcvi} and all around have an equal share in the ideals of freedom
espoused by the revolutionaries.

The Society of Revolutionary Republican Women: An activist women’s group created in May of
1793^{dxcvii} during the Revolution. They had officers, held meetings, and worked to involve
themselves in politics and promote liberty and equality.^{dxcviii}

Claire Lacombe: An actress, and president/founder of the Society of Revolutionary Republican
Women.

Dowries: a sum of money conveyed with a young woman when she married. Dowries were
meant as a kind of insurance to provide for the woman and or her kids if she became widowed or
separated from her husband.

Yeshivas: A yeshiva is a Jewish religious school of study and higher learning where Jewish men
gather together to study Talmud and other Rabbinic texts. There were several yeshivas in France
before the revolution, and a small culture of itinerant students traveling between them and
similar institutions in the nearby Germanic states.^{cdlxxii}

Scribe: A Jewish profession—someone who writes, many copying holy books, and studying.

Meta Notes

A glimpse into the backstage process of translating history to summary to story.

FRENCH STORY

Notes on Creating the Fictional Character Backstory through Historical Research
Esther’s story came out of the facts I found, but I also filled in gaps in the history with the story by finding plausible interpretations or types of events. For instance, there probably wasn’t an Esther Ravel who was part of the Revolution, but given the fact that

1) There were Jews in France,

2) Some Jews were allowed to live in Paris even before emancipation,

3) Lower class women could help with their husbands’ work, which might allow them to be out of the house,

4) The Women’s March to Versailles pulled random women off the streets to join them,

It’s therefore very possible that a Jewish woman could have plausibly been in Paris at the time and gotten swept along into the Women’s March, subsequently joined a Women’s political group, and heard Olympe de Gouges speak, since Olympe de Gouges was a member of that group and gave speeches at meetings.

It’s also important to remember when reading social history that social conventions, unless written into the law, could be more guidelines than actual rules, and situations could differ given the parties involved. For instance, even though Jewish girls weren’t usually educated, it’s conceivable that since Jews were taught at home, a scholarly man with no sons might be convinced by his precocious daughter to teach her a few things. And although marriages were usually arranged by a matchmaker, given the fact that:

1) Swiss Jews did travel to France,

2) There were yeshivas in France that some Jews traveled between,

3) There’s an old Jewish custom which was apparently observed at the time of taking in the stranger from another land,

4) Some foreign Jews came to France and married,
It’s very possible a Swiss student could have been taken in by a family on his way to a yeshiva, fallen into conversation with the daughter, and with her consent had a word with the matchmaker about it, particularly if he had the father’s approval—and being a scribe, it’s possible that the father would approve of a scholarly match, even if a poor one, for his daughter.

As for why I picked which elements I did, I first centered on the French Revolution as a setting because of the Women’s March and similar pleas for women’s rights. I wanted a character who’d been part of that, riled up with revolutionary fervor, and then worked some of the details to make sure she could have been at the important places and heard the right speeches. As a revolutionary, it would make sense for her to be poor. I wanted to create variation between the four characters, and so decided, based on what I already knew about some of the others, that Esther would be married, and Jewish. I thought of the idea of her being Jewish and then researched to see if that was possible, not knowing whether there were even Jews in France at the time, and lo and behold I discovered that not only did Jews live in France during the Revolution and sometimes participate in it, the Revolutionary government emancipated the Jews! Just another fascinating element to add in. This character would be someone who’d seen a world change, had seen her people given rights not allowed for generations, and having being given rights for her class and for her religion, would want them for her gender as well. Giving her a daughter might only strengthen that resolve, providing for her an extra motivation to want to create a better world for her child. Given the likely restrained nature of the Renaissance character, the bubbly teenaged-ness of the modern girl, and the ethereal-ness of the water deity, I thought it would be good to have a down to Earth feet in the dust rioting writing passionate idealistic hard-working gritty revolutionary, and that her perspective could give an important angle to the question of women’s rights in any world or time.
Meta notes on French historical research

First big research snag. There have been other problems with the obscurity of records and I had to spend many hours trying to figure out something as simple as what Jews were named. Eventually I found a primary source in the form of an online database of a census from the time period. From that I was able to extrapolate that many Jews had Jewish names and last names the same as their father’s first names, as I read elsewhere, and found some common names to be able to name my character and her husband and daughter.

Then when I tried to research more about the culture I found a lot about women in Revolutionary France and a little about Jews as a whole in Revolutionary France but nothing about the lives of Jewish women in Revolutionary France. I talked to Professor Bisaha who directed me to Professor Mita Choudhury, who said the reason I haven’t found anything is there isn’t much. She didn’t have anything to tell me about it but suggested I look at Jewish communities from the time period in other countries and extrapolate from that.

This is one problem that sometimes happens in the storytelling field of history—there are gaps, and the technique historians use is to extrapolate likely possibilities from other data and fill them in. Historical fiction functions much the same way. In that way, gaps in source material are both frustrating and liberating as they leave more room for creativity and invention based on existing data. And that’s also the way the ‘facts’ of history can translate into historical fiction. Knowing that Jews were emancipated in this date and then allowed to live in the city, and knowing that some Jews moved to Paris, and knowing that women marched on Versailles and that they grabbed random women of the street, means it’s quite possible Esther could have been there and gotten involved in politics that way.
Update: I since met with a research librarian, found a few articles and one book that made the connection I was looking for between Jews and women and gave a window, albeit small, into Jewish culture. It confirmed what I’d supposed, and the book itself framed its discussion of gender roles as probable hypotheses based on existing data to fill a gap in the historical records.

Meta Notes on Renaissance

Similarly, I did a lot of research into options for Italian Renaissance widows, and though there was no one person who had the exact same experience as what my character ended up with, I was able to pull pieces from many different sources and extrapolate possible scenarios based on gaps in the history and implications and imagine something that didn’t happen but could have.

Notes on Fantasy Medieval Era

There were communal medieval bathhouses in the high Middle Ages. Communal bathhouses died out in Italy in the 1400’s though some remained and some nobles would go to hot springs. Very little information is available, however, and given the moral writings about women, it is likely that even if there were communal bathhouses, it would not be socially acceptable for women to be there. But given the prevalence of classical learning, they would likely know about the Greek and Roman baths.

Meta Notes on beginning to draft the short story

There are many concerns even before beginning when thinking about how to start the story.

The issue of perspective comes up very quickly.
I have written stories in this setting before, and need to decide whether to stick closely to the same format I’ve used before or not—that format being, telling it from the perspective of a newcomer, describing the place the way they see it, showing a few minutes of where they were before ending up there and how they got there.

However, I have a mechanic written in that the Out of the Way Station looks different to everyone who goes there. When I visualized this particular story, I imagined the place manifesting as some sort of manicurist’s parlor. But that would be how Jill would see it, not how Alysan would. To keep that setting, perhaps I should start with Jill’s point of view.

There is also the issue that in the play, it will be harder to show anything outside of the room, and indeed I don’t want to. I picked this story partly because I thought it would work to keep it all in one setting. Plays don’t have to be in one setting, but I like plays that are because it focuses attention on the interaction between the characters in real time. One setting is also easier for one-act plays.

But then again, nothing says that just because the play happens in one place, that the other two forms need to be. A part of me says that I ought to use the opportunities afforded by the media, which means taking advantage of the ability to show multiple settings. That might suggest keeping the format and showing a little bit before Alysan’s entrance.

But I don’t want to give away too much of what’s happening since she’s going to tell them. Maybe if I just show a sliver of how she ends up there, that might be good. On the other hand, I like the idea of showing the others anticipating her arrival by the strange event of rain in the place and Jill pointing out how strange that is. Might be dramatic.
Of course, I could always do both—show a little bit before her entrance, then switch to being in the Station and show her entrance from there. Though that would be a break with tradition. But maybe that’s okay.

It still leaves the problem of perspective. Perhaps instead of choosing to show the story from the perspective of either Jill or Alysan, I could do a third person omniscient point of view. That might get rid of some of that confusion.

Yet in that case, it raises the question, how do I describe the setting? If it looks the way each character expects, and I’m not showing it through one character’s point of view, what does it look like?

The play will solve that, because it can be done in black box. But for the others, it has to have some definite setting. I suppose I could do the story without describing it, but that seems like a bad idea and a missed opportunity.

It might be useful to just start writing and try out different things and see what works or what doesn’t. I don’t need to get it right on the first try.

Perhaps I should start by writing the moments before Alysan’s entrance. That could also be good because even if it doesn’t make it into the story, it will be useful for me as the writer to know ‘the moment before’—that is, what happened just before she entered, because that will effect what mood she’s in and how she acts. That’s a concept I get from theater. Before entering a scene, an actor is advised to think about the moment before—where their character just was, where they’re coming to, and take a moment to get into character before setting on stage.

Backstage is a space the audience doesn’t see, the place where the actors prepare themselves to give the performance that the entrance sees. It is invisible but therefore vital to what the audience sees. In writing, backstage is probably the proverbial drawing board, the cut scenes and
brainstorming (like this) and background details (like above) that may not all make it into the scene but are vital for shaping how it unfolds and shaping the outcome.

All right, all of that has convinced me that I should begin by writing Alysan’s ‘moment before’. I’ll see how that goes and decide whether or not to keep it and whether or not to stay with her perspective, take a broader omniscient perspective, or switch to Jill or an omniscient viewpoint when entering the place.

It could also be a thing that if I take a third person omniscient point of view, the viewer of the place is not the characters but the audience, and so it is them seeing it the way they’d think of it, and since it’s a modern audience, the place they’d be most familiar with or expecting would be a modern manicurist parlor. Yeah, I like that. Third person omniscient with the setting looking according to how the audience would perceive it, in a modern way.

But that leaves the question: how do the characters see it? Do they see the modern manicurist parlor or does it look like a Roman bath or some other sort of historical equivalent to them? If the latter, is the physical space different for them and if so how would they interact with it? I.e. disappearing through a wall if it looks larger to one than another (idea from a brainstorming conversation with Ian.) I like it being the same size and space… there could be equivalent materials, like instead of magazines could be French pamphlets and Isabetta’s books for her to read while waiting… But as for modern or not… I’m not sure if there are equivalents in France and Italy in the time periods the characters are from. If it’s a modern or unfamiliar type of setting, that might make them uncomfortable. Which could be an interesting thing to play with, but would that make sense? Wouldn’t the place want to make them comfortable?

Alternatively, does it confirm to the strongest perspective in the room or that of the person who’s been there the most?
I think I need to look up if France and Italy had any sort of equivalent female space for beauty/bathing/replenishing/hair type stuff, and if so, make this look like whatever they expect as close as possible to each and have it be close enough that they all can interact in the same space.

UPDATE: After talking with Dorian, we came up with a new idea that the place changes to the perception of the most recent person to enter the room. This might be jarring if there were many entrances and exits, but in this story and in others, everyone will either be there or enter at the beginning, and then stay the rest of the time. I could have Alysan enter, the place turn into her expectation, and then Jill, having stepped out back for a moment, reenter and turn it back into a manicurist parlor? Might try that. But would that happen every time the bartender left the room or would they have to leave the place itself? And if so would Jill have to leave completely and come back, since I envision her being there at the beginning? Though Jill is a Which… maybe she could use her powers to influence the place to turn into what she wants also… that might work too…

More notes as I start writing: I find myself wondering whether I should start conserving space, even in the drafting stage, so it doesn’t get too long. Then I realize that the play will mostly be the dialogue, so if I’m going to do that, I just need to worry about how many lines of dialogue there are, though either way I probably shouldn’t be worrying about length at this early point.
These sources range from primary sources, government documents, and scholarly research to websites, photographs, other stories. They are placed here with the understanding that some are more reputable than others, but in the interest of clarity and honesty, all of these works were useful at some point, so it’s as well to say so. Inspiration can come from strange places. If anything has been missed out, it is because of the extraordinary breadth of sources employed in this project.

**Primary Sources**


Doctor Who. BBC. N.d. Television.


Pamphlet by Olympe de Gouges: “In this pamphlet, written in April 1792, de Gouges replies to some of the comments her previous text (Esprit français) had elicited; with her usual prescience she warns her fellow citizens that the revolution is in danger of becoming mired in corruption and violence. Her ever present yearning for equality and freedom yet again presses her to address the pitiful gains made by women under the new regime. This pamphlet was sent to the Legislative Assembly on 15 April 1792 with an accompanying letter; the latter, read aloud, was scorned by the gentlemen of the Assembly who passed on to other matters, pamphlet unread.”


Declaration abolishing noble titles


How to Make it Rain

Rayman, Anne. Personal interview. 29 Dec. 2013.


“The editors thank Karen Offen for supplying this document.” “This petition was addressed to the National Assembly sometime after the October 1789 march of women on Versailles. The authors were clearly well acquainted with the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, as well as with the many prior publications about the historical accomplishments of celebrated women. They were also conversant with the concept of “genre” (gender), understood as society’s construction of sexual difference.”


**Secondary Sources**


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Images

Most of these were used as reference pictures for drawing the comic, and many have little citation information available. Other references were used as well, including live references.


“Doge’s Palace Law Courts” Google Images https://www.google.com/search

“Ducal Palace Venice” Google Images https://www.google.com/search


“Open Floodgates” Google Images https://www.google.com/search


“Sherlock Hat” Google Images https://www.google.com/search

Stirpe, Cassie. "Inside the royal courtyard. The Three arched windows straight ahead belong to the King's apartments.", Versailles. Photograph. 2014.


“Venice Town House Renaissance” Google Images [https://www.google.com/search](https://www.google.com/search)

**Further reading**


“Selected Sources: Sex and Gender” in *Internet Medieval Sourcebook*, Fordham University [http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/sbook1v.asp](http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/sbook1v.asp)


**Inspiration/reference**


For stage direction descriptions

How to Make it Rain

ENDNOTES

Short Story

i A/N: Prose allows the writer to make statements that function both as narrative truth and the character’s thoughts.

ii A/N: One way to get across the feeling of something happening suddenly in prose is, rather than writing “Suddenly,” to just abruptly introduce whatever it is, creating the feeling of “suddenness” in the text by the non-sequitur and paragraph break. This attempts to affect the pacing, bringing the reader up short and having something be a surprising and sudden shift, even though prose can be read at whatever speed the reader wishes.

iii A/N: a useful thing about prose: I can cut away to different locations, show traveling, show magic—like a person turning into a bird—with ease. Adaptation note: other stories in the Out of the Way Station usually start with something about where the new arrival was right before they arrived, so I decided to do it here, because prose can do that, and think about how to adapt it into the other forms later.

iv H/N: The tricolor cockade – a symbolic badge worn by French Revolutionaries.


vi A/N: One problem of prose: I struggled a lot with how/where to write these character descriptions. Some think writers shouldn’t describe their characters, but I think it’s important to getting a sense of the character. Still, it’s tricky to do well. In a play, I’ll just need to write some directions at the beginning, and in the comic, I will of course just draw what they look like, but here I had to tell it somehow. I tried to interweave the description with action, showing the details as they relate to each other and as they become relevant.


viii H/N: It’s difficult to find the correct terms of address, but this is a guess of what would be a formal convention, based on looking at numerous primary sources.

ix H/N: She’d had had rules of propriety trained into her all her life—habits that are hard to break—and be used to a certain formality in conversation.

x A/N: Translation convention—since they’re not speaking their native languages, their dialogue will be written in the modern English equivalent of what the tone would be. As she is lower class and less classically educated, Esther might therefore speak with a less refined grammar and Isabetta with a more heightened, formal style.


xiii H/N: glasses were around in Italy in the 1600’s, and had been for some time. They were primarily used for reading, and most were held with a the hand or perched on the nose—they were still working out methods of keeping them on one’s face. Strong, Doug. "Spectacles in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance." The Village and Manor of Muckley. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Apr. 2014.

xiv H/N: most Judaism has no concept of Hell, and certainly not the Christian picture of afterlife, and focuses more on instructing people how to behave in this life.

xv H/N: Paraphrased from much language commonly used by Revolutionaries at the time. See for example: Gouges “Le Bons Sens Français.”

xvi A/N: I spent a while deciding which show to use, and decided to use different ones for each form based on what would work best: Doctor Who is relevant because it’s a similar type of story, with the TARDIS being a place out of time, like the OOTWS, and Jill being a magical person filling the job of meeting people from many different times and worlds. Doctor Who is a show she’s familiar with and would probably notice the similarities and so be humming it here. The tune is difficult, but because this is prose, I don’t have to describe it, I can just say what it is—I can also do that because this is written in third person omniscient, so it doesn’t matter if the others in the room don’t recognize it; the reader still can (even if they don’t know the show either).

xvii A/N: Her hair is wet because it was her feathers, and that’s why the rest of her is dry.

xviii A/N: Another simile of the kind most useful in prose. It’s a modern reference, reflecting the omniscient viewpoint and sharing a joke between the writer and audience.
How to Make it Rain

xxiv H/N: seen note 11. A/N: I’m keeping the French form of the title since it is the formal replacement for ‘Madame’ and helps convey Esther’s setting in the French Revolution.

xvi Foreshadowing—perhaps she’s already subconsciously unsure if it is her proper role.

xxv A/N: Deliberate pun—in Jill’s world, everything imagined exists in some form, and people’s perceptions give power to imaginations. Partly because of changing usages and partly for humor, many magical creatures are puns, like Jill being a Which and being able to do spells with the world ‘which’—a Whether nymph’s powers work similarly, and they could decide Whether there would be weather and Whether the weather would be rain or sun or anything else.

xxi Play on her name, Alysan, which means release.

xxii H/N: She is Catholic, and the act of making the sign of the cross was around in 1600 Italy.

xxiii Prose also allows for humorous commentary from the narrator.

xxiv Asides are a theater convention that was useful here.

xxv With the trouble I had finding any information about Jews in this time and place, it’s unlikely I could find records of what an appropriate exclamation would be. This is probable, and is something people say today, and therefore a plausible translation convention.

xxvii A/N: I’m putting a translation of his title Sóþcyning using the translation convention mentioned earlier, so it’s easier for readers to read and understand. ‘sooth’ is an archaic term some readers may be familiar with, and abbreviation meaning ‘in God’s truth’ so ‘soothking’ means ‘true king.’

xxviii A/N (F) Theater expression.

xxix H/N: “a magic ceremony recited in a combination of Judeo-Alsatian and Hebrew for the purpose of drawing a high number in the draft lottery and thereby escaping army service. Here a traditional ritual was adapted to the new circumstances … resort to religious magic persisted. At midnight the young man would light a lamp with olive oil and, promising to make a charitable contribution, would recite in a combination of Judeo-Alsatian and Hebrew the prayer for exemption … At the time of the drawing of lots, the candidate would three times call upon the angels Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphael for their beneficent protection.” Hyman p. 69. “traditional decorative plaques (shiviti plaques), which also called upon the four angels for their protection.” Hyman p. 70.

xxx A/N: A reference to the story prompt / title that helped me create the first story in this place. The Vassar Sci-Fi Writers Club issued a story prompt: “playing dice with the universe” and that helped me synthesize the ideas I already had for The Out of the Way Station and write the first story set there, establishing conventions upon which this story is based.

xxxii A/N: This is why it’s interesting to create more information than you thought you’d need. I didn’t think their creation story would make it into this story, but it came up, and provided an opportunity for a joke and a little more background about her world. I’ve often found that happen, and that’s how it happens best, when you do your research, don’t try to force it all in, but let details slip in as they become relevant to the story. This is also a reference to a common literary and mythological trope of retelling creation stories, such as in the Old English account of the poet Caedmon, where an angel comes to him in a dream and says: ‘Caedmon, sing me hwæthwugu … Sing me frumsceaft.” (“sing me something … sing me first creation”). Bede, and (web) Benjamine Slade. "BEDE'S STORY OF CAEDMON." BEDE'S STORY OF CAEDMON. From Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum. In Beowulf in Cyberspace, 2002-3. Web. 16 Apr. 2014. http://www.heorot.dk/bede-caedmon.html.


xxxiv H/N: Astings = east people (ast- = prefix for east, -ing = suffix for people) "List of Generic Forms in Place Names in the United Kingdom and Ireland." Wikipedia.

xxxv H/N: Caer Ardesk (Caer = camp, fortification) (ard = high, height) (esk = water). "List of Generic Forms in Place Names in the United Kingdom and Ireland." Wikipedia.

xxxvi A/N: I decided not to put Insight’s full prophecy here, so that someone can ask about it later and they can puzzle through the exact wording and think of other possible interpretations.

xxxvii H/N: “The Nordic gods are not omnipotent. Óđinn himself lacks full foreknowledge and is forced to seek information from a völur or sibyl. Having acquired knowledge of the future in this way, the gods are still not able to
alter the outcome, but under the auspices of the norns they are obliged to carry out actions that happen of necessity.”


xlvii A/N: observation: prose is the only form (unless you do narrative text boxes with comments or voice over) where you can have such a simile in the description of the scene, rather than just showing what is there and leaving literary devices to dialogue).


xlix A/N: I was having some trouble phrasing this speech, so I went back to her background as written up in the character chart and adapted some of the phrasing to fit this form. I had to change it from third to first person, put it in her voice rather than as a narrator, and decide which details were essential, but some phrases and brevity of the original summary were useful, such as this phrase. In this draft, I found many details were not needed and focused on the ones essential to the point of the speech—the power of words, and the oppression of their lack.


lii H/N: I’m skipping the intermediate step of seeing the assembly because the real important part of the story is that some of them got in to talk to the king and I think Esther might skip to that.

liii H/N: see summary of Humanism in the historical background section.

liv A/N: Originally this was ‘arranged marriage’ but she wouldn’t call it that since she doesn’t know of any other kind.

lv H/N: “In Tuscany, daughters left their family of birth at their marriage and went to live with their husbands … Sons … whether married or not, remained in their father’s house, bringing their young bride there if they took a wife. Several generations of couples ‘co-residing’ under the authority of a father frequently occur.” Klapisch-Zuber, *Christiane. Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 1985. Print. p. 18. “A mezzandro in the Florentine countryside or his city-dwelling landlord have the best chance of living a good part of their lives in a household of complex structure in which several couples ‘co-reside’ ” Klapisch-Zuber p. 19.

lx A/N: I was having some trouble phrasing this speech, so I went back to her background as written up in the character chart and adapted some of the phrasing to fit this form. I had to change it from third to first person, put it in her voice rather than as a narrator, and decide which details were essential, but some phrases and brevity of the original summary were useful, such as this phrase. In this draft, I found many details were not needed and focused on the ones essential to the point of the speech—the power of words, and the oppression of their lack.


ii H/N: “Theoretically, a widow had some choice in the matter. She could live in her husband’s family, by her children’s side; she could live independently without remarrying, but near her children’ or, finally, she could remarry and leave the first family that had received her.” Klapisch-Zuber p. 120.

iii H/N: “If the widow was 40 years old or older, the difficulty of finding her a new husband discouraged her own parents from intervening. It was up to her husband’s heirs to persuade her to remain with them and not to ‘leave with her dowry’ to live independently … The suits initiated by widows to regain their dowry show that the heirs did not always see matters her way. In the fifteenth century, however, widows had the law and judicial instructions on their side: if they were not discouraged from the start, they ended up by taking back what they had brought to their marriage.” Klapisch-Zuber 121-122.

iv H/N: “The ‘cruel mother’ was the woman who left her young children, but it was above all the mother who ‘left with her dowry.’ … The abandonment was economic as much as affective … The mother who deserted the roof under which her children lived placed the interests of her own lineage and her own family above her children’s interests, and that is why she was stigmatized.” Klapisch-Zuber p. 128.
People think matters are so much better nowadays, and in some ways they are, but looking at history shows us that some problems still persist, and have long roots, and shows us how far we still have to go. When you look at the facts, the argument that everything is better now starts to feel thin. This is one area where socially if not legally Isabetta's problem still exists, albeit in a less extreme manner, and Jill’s comments should show/comment on this.

I didn’t plan if or where her story would come out, but it flowed logically from this part of the conversation. She’s a shy, close person, given her background and her training and her need for self-control and concealment. But I’ve found that people are often more open about themselves when they are not the center of attention but when they are helping someone else. Someone who wouldn’t take the spotlight to go on about their own troubles might spill them all when commiserating with a friend, using their own experience to give advice, to prove their right to give advice, to bring comfort, when they otherwise might have remained silent, and that is the kind of person I think Isabetta is.

H/N “the concept of the Just War … was … a matter that had occupied many … from at least the time of Saint Augustine … Christine upheld the current opinion that a Just War could be waged only by a king or legitimate ruler, not as an individual, but as a head of state responsible for the welfare of his subjects. A lawful war could be waged only to obtain justice, or against oppression or usurpation; wars of aggression or vengeance were in no way legitimate.” The introduction to De Pizan, Christine. The Book of Deeds of Arms and of Chivalry. Trans. Sumner Willard. Ed. Charity Cannon Willard. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State UP, C. 1364, Translation 2003. Print. p. 6.

H/N: See Vegetius's De Re Militari, one of the most influential war textbooks in the Middle Ages. It’s a Roman pre-chivalric text concerned mainly with strategy, training, the use of different weapons, and maxims of how to be effective in war, and was not concerned with the moral implications of battle or the treatment of noncombatants. Renatus, Flavius Vegetius, (390 AD) John Clarke, Lieutenant (trans) (1767) and Mads Brevik (etext). "The Military Institutions of the Romans (De Re Militari)." The Military Institutions of the Romans (De Re Militari). Digital Attic, 2001. Web. 15 Apr. 2014. http://www.digitalattic.org/home/war/vegetius/index.php#intro.

H/N: “Chivalry and martial honour have long been regarded as essential components of warrior ethics and military tradition. They are reflected in most cultures in one way or another … They generally honour bravery in the face of the enemy, loyalty to a common cause or individual, sense of identity (tribe, city state, class or caste, unit, later country), good faith in keeping one’s word and honouring agreements and at least some degree of clemency towards those who are harmless, helpless or who have surrendered and requested mercy.” Gill, Terry, and M. Toebes. Armed Conflict and International Law: In Search of the Human Face. N.p.: Springer, 2013. N. p. 35


H/N, P/S: “Arthur was a prudent captain. He perceived no profit in wasting his own realm, burning his towns, and stealing from his very purse. His eyes were in every place, and much was forbidden by his commandment. No soldier might rob nor pill[age] … Nothing he dared to destroy or steal” “The “Arthuarian” Portion of the Roman de Brut” York University Website. <http://www.yorku.ca/inpar/wace_mason.pdf > c. 1155.

footnote all of these

A/N: Both a Doctor Who reference (River song’s frequent tease of ‘spoilers!’) and a meta reference—Jill’s girlfriend Jay is aware that she’s a fictional character, and so would quite un-ironically use literary terms, like spoilers, to refer to the world.

The book of Ruth, the Bible. A story about two women friends. There exists much commentary wondering if they were lesbians.


"It is altogether astonishing that, having gone so far along the path of reforms, and having cut down a large part of the forest of prejudices, they would leave standing the oldest and most general of all abuses, the one which excludes half of the inhabitants of this vast kingdom from positions, dignities, honors, and especially from the right to sit amongst them. What! They have generously decreed equality of rights for all individuals. […] They have broken the scepter of despotism, they have pronounced the beautiful axiom [that] we are a free people. Yet still they
How to Make it Rain


I heard it from my own mother, and Jill would be likely to hear it from her hippie feminist, green party political organizer yoga teacher mother.

A/N: Pun—keeping the braid from unraveling while Alysan is trying to keep a train of thought and logic from unraveling.

A/N: I tried for ages to figure out a logical way to construct this revelation. I finally realized I can draw the connection by contrast, using syntax, sentence structure, and tricks like italics, to show parallels. Fun thing about prose. I was trying to think how Alysan could make the leap to realize Justice created nature, so therefore he created women’s inferiority. By using parallel words and sentence structures, I could compare her summary of their points to her relating the ideas to her own live. Italicizing both ‘created’s helps draw that parallel.

I spent ages figuring out how the logic of this should work. I finally realized she can imply certain steps and connections by the contrast between each point and doesn’t have to outline exactly how everything leads to the next as long as it’s clear in context.

I second guessed this but then decided to leave it in and figure out how to do it in the other forms when I get there.

Have them explain better how to her? have Isabetta give her a copy of Christine de Pizan? Would she have it with her? or since Jill made the Place be a salon, did other things manifest form them, like the books and pamphlets?

A/N: Freudian slip foreshadowing that she has executions on the mind.


Silly reference to Yellow Submarine, a movie Jill would have seen, since her parents are hippies. Yellow Submarine. Dir. Erich Segal, Lee Minoff, Al Brodax, George Dunning, John Lennon, and Paul McCartney. United Artists, 1968. Videocassette.

Find some French revolution quote about blood?

Les Misérables—Jill’s conflating the first line from “Red and Black” with a line from “Do You Hear the People Sing.”

Esther’s still working within the framework of Alysan’s world—maybe to understand her and maybe because they share the concept that there is some order in nature.

It occurs to me that since we obviously won’t know the ending, since we won’t see what happens when she goes back, they don’t even necessarily need to decide exactly what she’s going to do and how it’ll play out—just show her that the future isn’t as bleak as she thinks, she’s more powerful than she thinks, and she has more options than she thinks, and empower her with lots of choices about how to proceed and with the willpower to decide that she will protect the women no matter what her family says.


I could show this in the graphic novel, describe it here and in the play. An opportunity for visual interest for the comic.

Her describing the map like this will be useful onstage. I suppose I could just have the description here but not have it in dialogue…


Research irrigation systems. Could also invent one—could probably be a simple mechanical device like a train track switcher to change the direction of the river with walls that like.
Also onstage Alysan’s hair doesn’t have to be wet—she could either just walk like it is, or maybe her hair is tangled, and Jill combs it, pretends to wash it, braids it, and at the end, she tears the braid out? (I realize these aren’t relevant to the places they’re cited, but this is just marking when I’m thinking of these things…).

A/N: this idea is important because it shows Alysan not only accepting their ideas, but learning to think critically herself, examining aspects of her world they don’t know and applying a new way of thinking to them. She’s from a fantasy world, which means it is full of embodiments of abstract concepts, for fantasy can be a concretized representation of metaphoric elements of the intra-psyche. For her, the idea that prophecies are open to interpretation and could mean something different than what they first appear is easier to understand through the concrete character of a trickster god.

Paraphrased from HP:HBP: “Of course you’ve got to! But not because of the prophecy! Because you, yourself, will never rest until you’ve tried … The prophecy does not mean you have to do anything! … you are free to choose your way” Rowling, J. K. *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. New York, NY: Arthur A. Levine, 2003. Print. p. 478 (don’t quote and just reference with Isabetta?)

This is a reading/interpretation my family likes to review at Passover. Had trouble finding a source for this. Even if it was invented, it’s possible her father could have had the same idea. Possibly a Chasidic saying from Martin Buber’s, in a Haggadah.


Translation convention: since the phrase is common in English, keep it at least partially in French?

Save this for later? A last line before she leaves?


A/N: a handy visual way to set off asides (a theater concept—define?) in a prose story.

Insert Jill giving Isabetta a hand massage somewhere—when she’s telling about Cinzia?

Bit of a hint toward the play to come…

Describe a bit of what comes through the door when they go? what it looks like on the other side? Howl’s Moving Castle like?

I may change the song later, because I think she might do something more like what contents she’d associate with Jay and Blue Jay Way is too melancholy a melody… but I like the pun since her girlfriend is Blue Jay so it’d make sense if that was Jill’s ringtone for her. Maybe I’ll leave it in the short story and change it in the other two like the first song.


Play

Started again, trying to make the dialogue snappier, keeping the spirit and ideas but not sticking too close to the original words, though I tried to keep up what I was trying with Isabetta’s iambic prose whenever she’s speaking more than two words.

Implicit stage direction.

Paraphrased from Gouges “Le Bons Sens Français” –I quoted it in the story, but an actor suggested it would feel more natural this way in the play.

Cut the part about not believing in hell and put the Jewish thing later—should I put that back somewhere?

“When the government violates the people’s rights then insurrection is, for the people and for every section of the people, the most sacred of their rights and the most indispensible of their duties.” Marquis de Lafayette, 1790 - "French Revolution Quotations." *French Revolution*. AlfaHistory, n.d. Web. 02 May 2014. http://alphahistory.com/frenchrevolution/french-revolution-quotations/

Trying to put more confusion, it occurred to me thinking about that that this pun might not be obvious and could give room for Isabetta to make a snarky comment. I thought about what she’d say and decided she’d be more likely to snark about education and creativity than religion or wealth. (R) even snarkiness can reveal character, show what they think is important and what they disdain.

I may not need this, but it’s helpful for the actor. I suppose it’s not clear she’s not talking to both of them so it is important to have it.

Attempt at a better less textbook-y way to explain her aversion to ornamentation.

Added back in that descriptive phrase—eliminate distressed dishevelment?
Doing this again I moved the later description up here to put them together and break it up less. In a play she’ll be seen as she arrives, not when they’re taking in her appearance, and so her description should go there too.

AD/N (F) (Q) Should this be laid out like a poem or like prose? If it’s a classical play it would be in poem form but for modern actors would it be easier like this?

AD/N (F) (R) Turns out I can still keep some of the colloquial sarcasm even while putting it in verse…

Accidentally a sonnet… nice!

AD/N Too much summary, cut this down to the essentials, the rest can come out later? Including that Jill’s not the usual caretaker?)

(O) (P) From the read through, these names and others like them people stumbled over, and historical terms, but in rehearsal they’d figure it out.

AD/N (F) (R) The rhymes don’t disrupt the text too much, especially since I’m not sticking to line length.

H/N A real women’s revolutionary political group. See historical background for more details.

AD/N Realized doing verse that I don’t need Alysan’s reply, or Jill’s ‘or something’

AD/N (Q) ED/N It’s not earth… but it rhymes so well…

AD/N With the verse I cut a lot, but couldn’t find space for saying people pray to her, but then if she thinks they’re deities she wouldn’t need to say that…

H/N on Sarah’s suggestion/definitions, changed this from “blasphemy” to “heresy” because they have different meanings, and “heresy”, going against the law of the Church, seemed to fit more here.

(P) How to rhyme when she’s only got a few words? Rhyme with previous line?

ED/N Cut the we believe in them too—don’t need it. Her ‘oh’ is enough to show she understands, and the animosity with I isn’t coming across. No effect in reading..

AD/N I think it’s ok to be looser with the meter here as long as I keep the rhyming pattern.

Cutting where she says why she thinks what she does—hopefully that’ll come up later, and instead I’m leaving just her reaction here.

(O) ED/N During the reading, the person reading Jill automatically said ‘speaking of which’, showing me it was awkward to break off like that, so I’m putting it in.

A/N Beowulf reference, starts with Hwaet. Switching to old English poetry style for a creation story—felt fitting.

(I’m not sure I need the ‘with passion’—maybe the ‘!’ does that?)

AD/N untranslatable expression that’s become more common in English. And… yeah, she would speak Yiddish.

H/N: “The Nordic gods are not omnipotent. Óđinn himself lacks full foreknowledge and is forced to seek information from a völur or sibyl. Having acquired knowledge of the future in this way, the gods are still not able to alter the outcome, but under the auspices of the norns they are obliged to carry out actions that happen of necessity” Jochens Old Norse Images of Women. p. 40

This sounded great with two people saying it at once, worked well


H/N It’s a 17th century item, but I wanted the confusion and pun, and since Alysan’s not form earth, they might have it in her time? Maybe?

A/N: A song from Les Misérables that Jill would know

In the reading, the reader went on and kept singing a little of the song, letting the next person interrupt.

Good to know that that’s a thing up to the actor to do—it is a thing I know actors do when they’re going to be interrupted, make up something to say to keep going, and in this case, it’s built in. Also I realized going into this that the actor playing Jill will need to know Les Mis.

H/N An Aristophanes comedy play about a woman who organized a women’s strike to try to stop a war. With the rediscovery of Greek and Roman literature, there’s a chance Isabetta might have read it. Aristophanes. Lysistrata. Trans. Douglass Parker. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan, 1964. Print.

Oh, just realized this isn’t in rhyme… maybe it’s ok for her to break out when she’s confused?

H/N Women warriors from Greek stories.

A/N: Song from Les Misérables that Jill would know

H/N Reference to the story of Chanukah—a time when the Jews were being persecuted and their temple destroyed. There was an eternal light that was supposed to be kept always lit, but when the temple was destroyed, there was only enough oil to burn one night, yet miraculously it burned for eight nights.

AD/N Really cut out any extraneous detail, trying to focus on the ones tied to her emotions, and changed the order to start with her daughter.
How to Make it Rain

cxlv
A/N: song from Les Misérables that Jill would know.

cxlv
H/N Based on the historical women’s march on Versailles, an important event in the French Revolution. See historical background.

cxlvii
(Q) How should I structure ongoing stage directions?

cxlviii
(R) (F) Turning a story into a play is much more than simply the format. Dialogue in a short story functions very differently from dialogue in a play, and you need different things and a completely different style to make them work.

clix
(O) People started chuckling darkly at this point—I hadn’t even realized the dramatic irony here.

clix
AD/N Is this to juvenile or is that funny? Is it too generic or is it good back and forth conflict? Are they debating or having tension? I kind of like their evolving sibling rivalry thing… E seems to really irritate I, bringing out her snark…

clix
ED/N Don’t need “scoffs,” “please” does that.

clixii
AD/N In both this and the other I’m jumping right to the point and then by questions bringing out more of the background details. I think people talking would do that, wouldn’t think ahead of time about what background you need to understand it and just cut to the chase.

clixiii
H/N A popular medieval means of judging cases. It was seen that divinity would favor whoever was right, similar to witch trials.

clixiv
H/N: “the children belonged to the lineage of their father. Thus, boys all their life and girls until their marriage resided with their agnatic kin … When a widow left a house in order to remarry, she left with her dowry but without her children. In 1427, many of the tax declarations deplore the abandonment of orphans whose mother had ‘left the family, taking away her dowry,’ leaving her husband’s heirs in charge of the guardians and of paternal kin.” Klapisch-Zuber p. 125

clixv
H/N: “The ‘cruel mother’ was the woman who left her young children, but it was above all the mother who ‘left with her dowry.’ … The abandonment was economic as much as affective … The mother who deserted the roof under which her children lived placed the interests of her own lineage and her own family above her children’s interests, and that is why she was stigmatized.” Klapisch-Zuber p. 128

clixvi
(O) The person reading Esther took it in a different direction than I’d imagined, making Esther seem more concerned and sympathetic rather than hostile and outraged. Neither way is more right, that’s just interesting to see how that can be interpreted different ways.

clixvii
(O) Reading it, the person playing her said ‘knew’ instead of now—I guess that feels more natural. Not sure which to keep… maybe knew is better since she’s talking about when she left?

clixviii
ED/N I don’t need the whole list here, she sums it up in the next thing.

clixix
ED/N Would she call it that?

clix
A phrase she’d be familiar with, having more to do with LGBTQ rights but really relating to any form of long-term justice.

clixi

clixii
(O) Hearing it read it occurred to me that ‘true words’ felt like a compound phrase and it was confusing

clixiii
(O) The reader didn’t phrase this as a question, which is interesting because in earlier drafts it wasn’t. change back?

clixiv
Putting the verse in different lines makes we need to remove or move these dialogue tags so it lines up well. Maybe I don’t need some of them—Shakespeare didn’t).

clixv
(O) The actress wasn’t reading the stage directions and didn’t notice this, though started laughing between the two lines. Take it out?

clixvi
Oh, again, forgot verse… maybe confusion makes it ok…

clixvii
H/N “the concept of the Just War … was … a matter that had occupied many … from at least the time of Saint Augustine … Christine upheld the current opinion that a Just War could be waged only by a king or legitimate ruler, not as an individual, but as a head of state responsible for the welfare of his subjects. A lawful war could be waged only to obtain justice, or against oppression or usurpation; wars of aggression or vengeance were in no way legitimate.” de Pizan introduction p. 6.

clixviii
H/N: “Chivalry and martial honour have long been regarded as essential components of warrior ethics and military tradition. They are reflected in most cultures in one way or another … They generally honour bravery in the face of the enemy, loyalty to a common cause or individual, sense of identity (tribe, city state, class or caste, unit, later country), good faith in keeping one’s word and honouring agreements and at least some degree of clemency towards those who are harmless, helpless or who have surrendered and requested mercy.” Gill 35.
How to Make it Rain

(F) A/N I’m just noticing it’s not perfect but these scene directions sometimes mark scene changes…

(O) The reader missed this word, but you need it for the next line. With rehearsal it would get noticed and put back, I think.

(Q) Should these go here or should only dialogue related actions go like this?

(F) Going through for emotion and subtext I wonder if this is spoken subtext and if she’d have gotten here yet, so I might cut her caring for Cinzia as much as her husband and try to show it.

footnote all of these.

A/N I debated for a while whether or not to mention Sappho then finally left her out because I had a Lesbos reference, and thought that Isabella if she’d read her wouldn’t have understood, but at the reading people asked if I should reference her and I realized Jill would have read her, then putting it back in I found that she could help Isabella understand that, and knowing there was someone else before her time, recognizing it in literature, might be helpful for her.


O I wasn’t sure whether to keep this in, but felt like I had to specify that he didn’t really say it, but people laughed when they heard it and I realized it’s unintentionally funny. Yay! (R) Sometimes things you intend on being funny won’t be, sometimes things you didn’t intend on being funny will be. And audiences are different of course, and there are different levels of amusement from private internal amusement, to smiles, to giggles, to laughs.

AD/N Ha, she’s so flustered she rhymes a word with itself…

H/N P/S: National Assembly

H/N The National Assembly, the temporary people’s government established by the French Revolutionaries.

AD/N Changed to “…” to connect this with next thing.

H/N See history notes (do I need those in the play too?)

“It is altogether astonishing that, having gone so far along the path of reforms, and having cut down a large part of the forest of prejudices, they would leave standing the oldest and most general of all abuses, the one which excludes half of the inhabitants of this vast kingdom from positions, dignities, honors, and especially from the right to sit amongst them. What! They have generously decreed equality of rights for all individuals. […] They have broken the scepter of despotism, they have pronounced the beautiful axiom [that] we are a free people. Yet still they allow thirteen million slaves shamefully to wear the irons of thirteen million despots!” “Women’s Petition to the National Assembly.” 1789.

Shakespeare, Julius Caesar I.i.141-142. I think she’d know it?

H/N See history notes.

(O) Do I need to say who’s doing it if it’s in her line?

Fonte p. 61

(O) In the reading they played this as Jill getting excited and interrupting her instead of her trailing off and the next person filling it in. it worked well and it made ‘social constructs’ which could be so academic, into an exciting and amusing thing, particularly when the next line came in.

(O) People laughed at this line, which tells me that bringing in her mother and making it personal helped make it less textbook-y or boring.

I heard it from my own mother, and Jill would be likely to hear it from her hippie feminist, green party political organizer yoga teacher mother.

From an HG wells story. Interesting in that there seem to be alternate versions—one where he’s king, but in the story he’s called crazy.

Hearing this read helped me see something important. I wasn’t sure whether she was too certain starting out—I’ve been thinking in terms of the monologue sonnet form, accepting the quest, going on the quest, taking the journey, and this sort of started with the point. But the way she read it, it made it clear that she’s restating their idea but isn’t sure if she believes it yet, and isn’t until she reasons through to it in her own way.

AD/N Kept this nearly the same, chancing ‘moment’ to ‘beat’ because that’s theater speak.

AD/N (F) Making the sonnet was tricky but it actually helped me focus and organize the ideas and compress the sentences pretty briefly since it can only be 14 lines and I think it might be clear, at least as clear if not clearer this way, maybe? Still don’t know if I want to keep it in verse form visually or put it looking like prose in the script…

AD/N I cut most of the rest of this line. I think it’s implied and clear enough without it?

(O) This one felt like it would get textbook-y until the slip up which made it funny

These sound very similar aloud, and the reader might even have repeated “Jews”—the similar sound will make it funny, but the actors will have to work on making them distinctive enough to show they’re different things. The reader might even have repeated “Jews” — the similar sound will make it funny, but the actors will have to work on making them distinctive enough to show they’re different things. No one laughed or cracked a smile—I was uncertain about this joke and now not sure it’s working well enough to be worth keeping.

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Thucydides.

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AD/N From a suggestion and a joke, the joke adapted to be more in character.

Hearing I think it works, it felt like natural speech and conversation, the one person looking for a reference and another filling it in. Hopefully less textbook-y.

Silly reference to Yellow Submarine, a movie Jill would have seen, since her parents are hippies. Yellow Submarine 1968.

Also looking at other plays, it’s not set in stone form stuff, you’re allowed to have some style.

AD/N Doing it this way helped me cut it down a lot. I cut lots of extraneous detail, focusing on one thing at a time, and I think the back and forth of this might actually make it clearer as well as more exciting. Later I cut some more detail that works I think in the story, but I’m not sure you need it here. If this section can’t be an argument or interpersonal conflict, at least it can be short, snappy, and exciting?

I’m also realizing they’ll need to know/look up the music to Les Mis songs…

The actor had some trouble finding the tune, but did a good guess, and then found the second one. Reminded me the first one is a less well known quote, but again, that can be worked out in rehearsal.

Les Miserables—Jill’s conflating the first line from “Red and Black” with a line from “Do You Hear the People Sing”

AD/N (P) Cutting things like this, sometimes it makes it a lot more concise, sometimes I realize I cut something earlier that I’m refereeing back to and now it’s gone, so now I have to decide whether to put it back in, get rid of the reference, or change it some other way to make it work.

AD/N This doesn’t rhyme but it alliterates? Like the Old English stuff? Is that enough? Just give her poetic sound repetitions?

AD/N This isn’t clear any more whether she means the missing men or the attackers, but it could mean either so maybe that’s ok?

AD/N Cutting the ‘murmured’ — the actor can decide.


Meant to be left open to how they want to do it, for instance the borrowing a notebook and drawing it, or writing on a menu board, or rearranging chairs or people, or writing and it being projected, or her making a magical projection — it should.

Readers said this was confusing to envision onstage. Go back to idea of having her rearrange the space to simulate it? That might be better.

Pierce.

ED/N The joke wasn’t clear enough in the dialogue, and if they ignore the stage direction it’ll be missed entirely.

Reading it, Emily read this as it was the end of a sentence, so the “…” wasn’t working.

Cutting ‘nods’ — don’t need it. The actors didn’t read the stage directions, and in fact ran right over them instead of letting Mari read them, which tells me they’re not that important, and so cut them down to things that they can’t know or figure out any other way, things that are essentially important. (R) reading it aloud, a cold reading, first step if it were to be put on as a play, was helpful for figuring out things about how it should be written, what words they stumble over, what parts are funny, what stage directions are ignored (almost all of them).

Leaving a spondee for emphasis?

This script is not going to work as a script for the comic book…. Some of it might be helpful, but I’ll need to write another comic book script, and perhaps go back to the earlier draft of this and of the story for dialogue…

Paraphrased from HP: HBP “Of course you’ve got to! But not because of the prophecy! Because you, yourself, will never rest until you’ve tried … The prophecy does not mean you have to do anything! … you are free to choose your way” Rowling p. 478 (don’t quote and just reference with Isabetta?)

This is a reading/interpretation my family likes to review at Passover. Look up who came up with this … even if it was invented, it’s possible her father could have had the same idea. Possibly a Chasidic saying from Martin Buber’s, in a Haggadah.
How to Make it Rain

How to Make it Rain

ccxxv H/N Moore p. 170-171.
ccxxvi (O Observation) Hearing it read, despite my attempts to put Isabetta’s lines in iambic prose, the actor might choose to emphasize different words and break out of that, and in some places they trip over awkward phrasing I made to try to keep the meter.
ccxxvii AD/N Phew! This section took me an age, and I’m still not sure it’s working. Note: freewriting helps, even if none of it makes it into the final.
ccxxviii AD/N Not sure how to keep the rhyme here, but I like this line… maybe it’s ok and will stand out like this? And maybe she’s free from the strict structure? Just thought of that…
ccxxix She’s still breaking out of speaking in the language of duty obligation what she must do, should to, finding her way to choices and what she wants to do.
ccxxx Beginning to break out of the form. It’s still a sonnet, but there’s even less meter than usual, and it doesn’t rhyme until the last couplet. She’s still in the process of emerging, but she’s getting there, freed from the restrictive rhyme and finding her way into free verse—ha, aptly named, I didn’t even think of that.
ccxxxii AD/N Do I need Isabetta shrugging or to say she’s perplexed?
ccxxxiii AD/N Cutting spoken subtext.
ccxxxiv H/N Do I need to cite these?
ccxxxv H/N See historical notes (should I just specify that were I to frame this as a play I’d take the historical notes, not character charts, and compile them as dramaturgical assistance?)
ccxxxvi H/N Do I really need to cite her? And of course her name isn’t in translation because things are what they are here like their title, and I wouldn’t be saying her English name, she’d be saying her Italian name, but it would translate here to her original French name.
ccxxxviii Most of these would be uncommon to accompany an ordinary play, I understand, but as my adaptive role these are things I’ve thought about and so imagining that I am both playwright and perhaps dramaturge it behooves me and my project to think of some of these elements form a dramaturgical point of view in addition to an historical or dramatic one.
ccxxxix Sarah, who’s done dramaturgical work, pointed out that onstage you still need stage makeup even to look natural, so though Isabetta wouldn’t be wearing makeup, the actress would be, just subtly.
ccxl “In their dress, the widows of Venice with the death of their husband embrace the death of all vanities and ornaments. Because apart from dressing in black they cover their hair, firmly enclose their bosoms with a heavy veil, gather their mantle up to their forehead, and walk in the streets, with head inclined. When they want to stay a widow, they wear a train, and never ever dress in colours if they do not want to remarry. At home they wear a cap which covers their hair. They always dress in black, both at home and outside … They would only wear ornament if they wished to remarry.”
ccxli General rules of dress for Orthodox Jewish women—probably in effect at this time and place.
ccxlii “Brides customarily cut their hair short and tucked it under a bonnet which bore a black velvet bandeau to simulate hair” Hyman p. 72.
ccxliii And some Revolutionary women challenged social norms by wearing men’s dress or revolutionary symbols such as the tricolor cockade and the red cap of liberty
Hanson, Paul R. Historical Dictionary of the French Revolution. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2004. Print. http://books.google.com/books?id=LfUbkACi3-wC&amp;pg=PA72&amp;lpg=PA72&amp;dq=history+tricolor+cockade&amp;source=bl&amp;ots=TjifX_Nu4-4&amp;sig=brvXNyWoG-lq3VJSR0UXpNLHYmA&amp;hl=en&amp;sa=X&amp;ei=VVy1LU-q2B83f0AGb7IGwDw&amp;ved=0CxEEQ6AEwCA#v=onepage&amp;q=history%20tricolor%20cockade&amp;f=false "At a November 15, 1793, meeting of the Commune, Anaxagoras Chaumette … scolded a group of women wearing Phrygian bonnets who had interrupted the meeting, and he warned them that women who imitated men by sporting the red cap of Liberty were women headed for the guillotine" Smart, Annie K. Citizenesses: Women and the Ideal of Citizenship in Eighteenth-century France. Newark: U of Delaware, 2011. Print. p. 144.
c cxliv “Lolita is a Japanese street fashion inspired primarily by the clothing and general aesthetics of the Rococo and Victorian periods… In the case of the fashion the term “Lolita” only refers to the child-like nature of some of the clothes and is also used because of the beauty or cuteness of the name.

http://www.lolitafashion.org/what_is_lolita.html

ccliv A/N I really shouldn’t put these because no one will listen to them. But Sarah Ruhl gives some suggestions about possible tech things that could be done…


http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bianca_Cappello_by_Lavinia_Fontana.jpg


http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Women%27s_March_on_Versailles01.jpg

As it would be difficult to compellingly represent and make recognizable a wordless song in a comic book, the song Jill hums is again changed, this time to the thematically relevant song lyrics from the theme song of the TV show “Firefly.” Whedon, Joss. "Firefly." Firefly. Fox. Television.

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ccclvi Another idea from Sarah who’s worked in dramaturgy, theater tech, and costume design.


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Vendetta wasn’t clear enough to reference, so I used an artistic trick to frame Alysan with the angel statue behind her so it looks like she has wings. Whether or not readers get the obscure reference, it hopefully ends visually thematically relevant interest.


cclvi “History, literary or otherwise, is being redeployed in these instances in order to indicate those communities and individuals whose histories have not been told before, the marginalized and disenfranchised … The retrieval of lost or repressed voices is a motif we have identified as being common to many of the appropriations we have considered thus far.” Sanders p.140.

Many adaptations “seek to voice marginalized or repressed groups … similar in their search to reveal ‘hidden histories’.” Sanders p.124.

cclvii “[I]n certain respects it is specific genres, or even specific genres as they emerge during a particular time period, which become the focus of a shared (re)creative impulse.” Sanders p. 121.

cclviii “Intertextuality … has come to refer to … how texts encompass and respond to other texts both during the process of their creation and composition.” Sanders p. 2.

“[Eliot] suggests that meaning stems from the relationships between texts, relationships which encourage contrast and comparison.” Sanders p. 8.

cclix “[A]daptation can be a transpositional practice, casting a specific genre into another generic mode.” Sanders p.18.

cclx “Metafiction and metahistory collide in interesting and provocative ways in the course of this self-consciousness about the constructed nature of texts.” Sanders p.124.

cclxi Another example: in Gloria Naylor Bailey’s Café: “the café of the title is a literal space in the novel but one that appears able to cross geographical and temporal borders. The characters who visit he face each have a tale to tell and their tales are reworkings of biblical ones.” Sanders p. 9.

cclxii A humorous example occurs at the beginning of the Mel Brooks movie “To Be or Not to Be” in which the main characters begin speaking in Polish until the narrator interrupts, saying: “Attention: for the purposes of clarity and sanity, the rest of this movie will not be in Polish.” See To Be or Not To Be. Dir. Mel Brooks, Anne Bancroft, and Tim Matheson. Perf. Mel Brooks and Anne Bancroft. Brooksfilms, 1983. DVD.


cclxv There are too many to cite—it’s a popular opinion.

cclxvi “scene designers and directors won’t pay much attention to a playwright’s detailed set description and neither will professional readers. Give us just enough information to know where we are and to create our own rough picture of what this might look like … But if the setting is suggestive or symbolic rather than realistic, we do need to know how you imagine this abstract space and more importantly the atmosphere it should create.” Toscan, Richard. Playwriting Seminars 2.0: A Handbook on the Art and Craft of Dramatic Writing, with an Introduction to Screenwriting. United States: Franz, 2011.


cclxviii “Narratives Across Media" Explores "what can medium x do that medium y cannot" and ask how media can push back their limits … as if the properties of a given medium are favorable or detrimental to narrativity" Ryan, Marie-Laure. Narrative across Media: The Languages of Storytelling. Lincoln: U of Nebraska, 2004. Print. p. 35.

cclxix “the constant debate over degrees of proximity to the ‘original’ that has generated those many typologies of adaptation processes: borrowing versus intersection versus transformation (Andrew 1980:10-12); analogy versus commentary versus transposition (Wagner 1975: 222-3); using the source as raw material versus reinterpretation of only the core narrative structure versus a literal translation (Klein and Parker 1981:10)” and “the morally loaded discourse of fidelity is based on the implied assumption that adapters aim simply to reproduce the adapted text (e.g., Orr 1984:73). Adaptation is repetition, but repletion without replication” Stam, Robert, and Alessandra Raengo. Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005. Print. p. 7

Background

A/N: The year I was born—her perspective is closest to mine.

A/N: At that time, only Massachusetts allowed gay marriage.

A/N: Her mother kept her maiden name, and passed it onto Jill, to make a feminist statement. Her father approved, but she got his name as a middle name. (My parents almost did this, but decided to do it the other way around because they thought my Dad’s last name was objectively better).


A/N: Again, where I’m from—I can fill in her perspective based on my experiences

Most of the following information is taken from an interview with Anne Rayman. Rayman, Anne. Personal interview. 29 Dec. 2013.

A/N, H/N: The Old English word for “release” Mitchell, Bruce, and Fred C. Robinson. A Guide to Old English. Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1992. Print. Suggested by Aditi, an Indian sky goddess, whose name contains the root ‘da’ meaning ‘fettered’ or bound” and with the addition of the ‘a’ means unbound, or free one. She was often called upon by petitioner looking for freedom. I thought the name especially significant because the act of freeing contains within it the captivity, just as one must recognize a society’s oppressive social structures in order to get outside them. “unbound” “free” and “release” all also invoke rain, the idea of the sky releasing, and a tempestuous but less violent sort of power. Alysan is also cool because it sounds like a modern name but has a fitting meaning. I wasn’t sure if I ought to appropriate the name Aditi from Hindu mythology, particularly if I wasn’t writing about that character and was only using some aspects as inspiration, so I took the concept of the meaning of the name and translated it into the Old English equivalent, closer to the culture my character comes from. “Aditi: Freedom.” Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web. 16 Apr. 2014. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aditi#Freedom>. "Hindu Mythology, Vedic and Puranic: Part I. The Vedic Deities: Chapter IV. Aditi, and the Adityas." Hindu Mythology, Vedic and Puranic: Part I. The Vedic Deities: Chapter IV. Aditi, and the Adityas. N.p., n.d. Web. 05 May 2014. http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/hmvp/hmvp08.htm


Added after finishing the project. I guess it took that long to figure this out—I had to find this answer when writing, and in retrospect it answers this question.

H/N: “Unique to the Mowanjum people, Wandjinas (pronounced ‘wannias’) have large eyes, like the eye of a storm, but no mouth. It is said they have no mouth because that would make them too powerful. They are often depicted with elaborate headdresses, indicating different types of storms.” "Aboriginal Culture & Resources - Creative Spirits." Creative Spirits. N.p., n.d. Web. 16 Apr. 2014. http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/arts/what-are-wandjinas#ixzz2ilQwIN3f
A/N: Added in when working on the short story based on what I wrote there.

This I also had to fill in at the end—in fact, her style of speaking caused troubles along the way and changed in the different forms.

This ended up being adapted during the short story writing and made shorter in order to condense the section in which they discuss the prophecy—see the short story.

A/N Since she is not from Earth, these will be notes about the mythology and human cultures of her world, which will be based loosely off of and inspired by early British culture and classical mythology. Specific references to Earth history and mythology will be footnoted.

Much of the mythology inspired by an amalgam of Greek, Norse, and other mythologies, and many details figured out during a brainstorming session on 2/2/14 with Grace Terdoslavich and Emily Kottler, who have knowledge of classical literature and literary techniques. More additions made after further brainstorming with Grace Terdoslavich and Vex Batchelder on 3/2/14.

Because this is meant to be a biased, patriarchal mythology, to fit with the human culture.

Just as Odin wanted to know more about the universe and about the future and went to seek out that knowledge: “The Nordic gods are not omnipotent. Óðinn himself lacks full foreknowledge and is forced to seek information from a volkr or sibyl.” Jochens Old Norse Images of Women. p. 40.

“Latin and Norse sources credit ancient female divinities and mortal human women with knowledge of the future.” Jochens Old Norse Images of Women, p. 41.

“Having acquired knowledge of the future in this way, the gods are still not able to alter the outcome, but under the auspices of the norms they are obliged to carry out actions that happen of necessity” p. 40.

A/N like Avalon—mythic faerie island from Arthurian legends.

In the way that English lords could be referred to by the name or the name of their holding (for example, calling John “England” in conversation, or referring to Richard III as “Gloucester”).


Old English word for “king of truth god king of justice” Old English Translator.

Old English word for “wisdom prudence skill penetration diligence sign token” strong feminine noun Old English Translator.

Old English for “A noble queen” strong feminine noun Old English Translator.


Like some depictions of blindfolded deities of justice, hope, and love.

A/N: Inspired by the Greek oracle, whose vague predictions (“A great army will fall by his hands”) only become clear in hindsight. Also related to British seers—wise women who could predict and sometimes influence the future, related to the Greek Fates.

From the long tradition of trickster deities including Loki and Coyote and Set.

From the Old English “scinn,” a strong neuter noun meaning “an extraordinary appearance a deceptive appearance illusion a specter evil spirit phantom magical image” Old English Translator.


“úle” from Old English for owl. Old English Translator.

A/N: In the model of the Greek Ares, the god of war.

Old English for “war hawk eagle” masculine noun Old English Translator.

Old English for herald of war Old English Translator.

This ended up changing slightly to fit the demands of the story as the narrative helped me figure out what was needed and how the deities should logically behave to make the story make sense.

A/N: From a long tradition of afterlife guardian deities and spirits, including: the eldest of the Fates from Greek mythology, Apropos; the eldest of the Norns; the Norse Valkyrie maidens whose job it is to collect the spirits of valiant warriors fallen in battle to convey them to the afterlife; Dulahans, which are British headless women riders who are harbingers of death; Charon, the boat man from Greek mythology who conveys the spirits of the dead to the afterlife; and others. Also partly inspired by Neil Gaiman’s depiction of Death from the Sandman graphic novels. Gaiman, Sandman.

“úle” from Old English for owl. Old English Translator.
From the old English: “Ellorsi þ” a journey elsewhere departure death, “ellor” meaning elsewhere elsewhere elsewhither to some other place” and “wísa” for ‘leader director.” *Old English Translator.*

In the model of Orion and a male version of Artemis.

Old English for “to wander roam about hunt” *Old English Translator.*


Old English strong feminine noun for “custody keeping watch” *Old English Translator.*

In the mould of Poseidon and other ocean deities

Old English for “seafarer, Viking” from *A Guide to Old English*

Old English strong masculine noun for “coast-warden sea warden keep watch and ward on the sea-coast” *Old English Translator.*

A/N: An unusually low on the list version of the earth mother goddess figure, like the Greek Gaia and Demeter and Persephone, and also druidic nature deities: “they are distinguished by a common worship of Nerthus, or Mother Earth. They believe that she interests herself in human affairs and rides through their peoples.” Aldhouse-Green, Miranda J. *Caesar's Druids: Story of an Ancient Priesthood.* New Haven: Yale UP, 2010. Print. p. 223.

Old English for “small property small farm” *Old English Translator.*

An unusually lowly positioned place for a traditional role related to other thunder gods such as Thor and Zeus.

Old English for “thundering” *Old English Translator.*

Old English for “lightning” *Old English Translator.*

Old English strong masculine noun for thrower, caster.


From the Old English “Rén” for rain and “cio” for crow – also a reference to Tolkien’s “Gandalf Stormcrow.”


Like the Greek Hephaestus.

Old English for “to beat forge render malleable soften.” *Old English Translator.*

A/N: A ‘well behaved’ and passive female deity like Hestia, guarding an important female occupation of weaving like the Greek Athena and Arachne, the two great mythological weavers.

Old English weak feminine noun “female weaver spinster” *Old English Translator.*

In the model of well-behaved Hestia of Greek Mythology.

“The classic rural settlement was the village, with a nucleus of clustered homes and gardens surrounded by arable fields worked in rotation and further ringed by wasteland and woodland which was in common use but often allocated according to the arable share. If the village coincided with a single manor there was just one community. But often things were less simple – a village had more than one manor, or parts or more than one manor in it, with different lords and their officials exacting seignorial dues … There were villages where the lord’s demesne was an enclosed cloe, and villages where it was scattered in strips intermingled with those of the tenants.” Jewell, Helen M. *Women in Dark Age and Early Medieval Europe: C. 500 - 1200.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. Print. p. 56.

“It is generally considered that pastoral economies offer more opportunities to women, as milkers of cows, sheep and goats, as makers of butter and cheese, as spinners of wool … Icelandic women in fact played an unusually important part in the whole country’s economy/ Homespun woolen cloth … was essential for clothing, bedding even sails and packaging … Women were involved in achieving these standards.” Jewell p. 53.

“Women tended to stay ‘at home’ more than men – it was the men who roved a-Viking and the men who left the villages to labor in the towns in the off-peak seasons of the agricultural year” Jewell p. 57

“During her marriage, a queen or noblewoman was expected to subordinate herself to her husband’s interests.” Jewell p. 100.

“Where laws made any gender distinction it was mainly to the woman’s disadvantage: first her father, then her husband, overshadowed her, although this was widely seen as protective and for the woman’s good, as it often was.” Jewell.

“Husbands have power of life and death over their wives as well as over their children.” Aldhouse-Green p. 211.

“A strictly patriarchal system in which women had limited rights and, in theory at least, were subject to a male head of the household. The paterfamilias had technical powers of life and death over women, although – in practice – such authority was curbed by various other kinship systems, such as the ‘family council.’ Furthermore, the legal
powers of the paterfamilias were, by this period, no means matched by social practice” – Aldhouse-Green p. 211. “The most restrictive on women, preserved the perpetual minority of the woman, who had to be under the control of some man, her mundoald, usually father, then husband, and perhaps eventually son, with the king as the last resort if she had no male relatives.” Jewell p. 38.

cclv “The Germans believe that there resides in women an element of holiness and prophecy, and so they do not scorn to ask their advice or lightly disregard their replies … a reverence untouched by flattery or any pretense of turning women into goddesses.” Aldhouse-Green p. 212.

cclvi “In life and in fiction a queen or noblewoman had considerable input into household management. Throughout the period, they were the mistresses of the household, which involved a supervisory relationship with the young military followers of their husbands. It was not just in chivalric literature that the knights honored their lord’s lady. In earlier times the lady with the mead cup swept graciously through her lord’s hall … the queen responsible for maintaining there an atmosphere conductive to government.” Jewell p. 100.

cclvii “It used to be a simplistic categorization that medieval women had no, or few, public rights and responsibilities but could be influential in the private, domestic sphere and, being generally supposed that public rights and responsibilities have always been what constituted real power, the women in the home could only exercise a pale imitation of it in her limited sphere. Even queens could be fitted into this view, as primarily mistresses of the royal household, ensuring domestic order round the king.” Jewell p. 81.

cclviii H/N: “A division of work was generally established between women and men. Most clearly articulate din law, the rule specified—without making it an obligation—that a wife was to manage the couple’s affairs that pertained within the house … and it was understood that the husband was in charge of everything outside” Jochens, Jenny. Women in Old Norse Society. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995. Print. 117, and “The observation that men’s work involved outdoor tasks should not lead one to conclude that women’s domain was confined entirely to the indoors. The basic distinction between male and female work was that men exploited nature directly, bringing back grain and hay, slaughtered animals, fish and eggs, whereas women’s work primarily consisted of processing and converting the results of male work for short term consumption and long-term preservation. Some of these tasks were performed outdoors, others inside the house.” Jochens Women in Old Norse Society. p. 120.

cclix “In the sizeable nucleated settlement women would have other women around them and activities such as fetching water, laundersing in streams, and berry picking could easily become socializing experiences, leading to meeting others and engaging in conversation and co-operation.” Jewell p. 57.

cclx “Feudal conditions preset matrimonial strategies in ways which resulted in the higher nobility having perhaps less freedom of choice of marriage partner than any other social class. Families were jostling to preserve useful traditional alliances, open up new dynastic possibilities, and come to terms with old rivals and enemies. Marriages were normally within the same over-all class, but in some areas it was more usual for the men to marry upwards … marriage was certainly too important for families and overlords to be content to leave it to the personal inclinations of the individuals concerned, and marriages were generally arranged, the outcome of negotiations and even sale.” Jewell p. 93.

cclxi “Germanic clans practiced spouse exchange and balanced dowry and dower as agreed by a wider circle than just the couple. The wife’s dower thereafter remained in her family’s possession, while the husband managed her dower, but under her clan’s supervision” Jewell p. 38.

cclxii “In respect of landed property rights, women were inferior, though customs varied … Although a woman needed her mundoald’s permission to manage property, the Lombard law did recognize her ownership of land and goods. Visigoth law gave women freedom to dispose of their property … women’s inheritance rights were generally more favorable … Women generally enjoyed dower and dowry and in some places shares in aquests (property acquired by the husband after marriage)” Jewell p. 38.

cclxiii “Once married, noble wives and queens alike were safest if they bore heirs quickly.” Jewell p. 99.

cclxiv “Llyn Cerrig was a physically remote island secret place that, nonetheless, was persistently visited by pilgrims who may have come from quite long distances” Aldhouse-Green p. 145. “Sacred space is important for it is the arena where the world of the spirits touches that of humans. Holy ground belongs to the gods and it was here that ancient priests were able to access the supernatural world.” Aldhouse-Green p. 124. “In an island of Ocean stands a sacred grove, and in the grove stands a car draped with a cloth which none but the priest may touch” Aldhouse-Green p. 223. More on sacred groves in Aldhouse-Green p. 125-128.

cclxv “When they have decided to fight a battle, it is to Mars that they usually dedicate the spoils they hope to win; and if they are successful, they sacrifice the captured animals and collect all the rest in one place. Among many of the tribes it is possible to see piles of these objects on consecrated ground. It is most unusual for anyone to dare to
go against the religious law and hide his booty at home, or remove any of the objects that have been placed on such piles. The punishment laid down for that crime is death by the most horrible torture” Aldhouse-Green p. 61.

cclxxi Like King Arthur’s prophetic dreams.

cclxxii Although outstanding women mystics and visionaries won enormous respect and were listened to by leading churchmen, secular political figures, and private individuals with problems, they had first to prove their credentials in the world and usually this required male assistance … To be taken seriously these spiritual women needed as it were a reference from a male religious professional of proven capacity” Jewell p. 119.

cclxxiii In Vatnsdœka saga … another Þórdís, nicknamed spákona “prophetess,” is approached by the Vatnsdœka family for advice in their quarrel with the powerful magamate Gudmundr ríki: “…[She was very worthy and knowledgeable in magic and they asked her for help and support for Porkell’s case and said that a great deal depended on her agreeing to advice them.]”[“] Þórdís accepts their request and goes on to arbitrate the matter at the following alþingingi (national / assembly), an unparalleled event in the corpus of the Íslendingasögur.” Fridriksdóttir, Johanna Katrín. Women in Old Norse Literature: Bodies, Words, and Power. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. Print. p. 54.

cclxxiv “Queens had quite an influential role in creating and preserving good relations with nobility, for they undoubtedly headed the social side of the court, winning the admiration of the young bloods … who moved out to be the regional aristocrats as they aged” Jewell p. 91.

cclxxv The power of personal influence (even of women over men) is almost impossible to assess from sources which give little psychological insight, but some medieval women may have manipulated affairs successfully behind their more visible menfolk.” Jewell p. 81. “If we concentrate on power’s traditional association with having input and decisive action in public affairs, then it is clear that women came to any such influence chiefly through being born into, or married into, families wielding authority, usually via possession of land. Much evidence has been found of women placed in power by these means wielding it successfully and acknowledged as doing so by contemporaries.” Jewell p. 82.

cclxxvi “The political life … Men ran the meetings at the alþingi and the local assemblies as active executors of justice and as receivers and supplicants. They also found time for visiting socializing and drinking” Jochens Women in Old Norse Society. p. 113.

cclxxvii “An Italian variant on “Elizabeth” present during the Renaissance, meaning “God’s oath.”


cclxxix A/N: A common form of surname in the Renaissance was the father’s name and/or a place name. Therefore this means her family is from Sienna. ”Names from Sixteenth Century Venice.” Names from Sixteenth Century Venice. N.p., n.d. Web. 05 May 2014. http://www.s-gabriel.org/names/juliana/16thcvenice.html

cclxxxi A/N: The year of publication of Moderata Fonte’s Il merito delle donne (The Worth of Women)


cclxxv A/N: While the term did not exit in the Renaissance, nor did the idea of sexual orientations as identities, the anachronistic term describes an existing phenomenon. There is evidence of lesbian activity in the Renaissance (even if not under that name), such as in the case of the nun Benedetta Carlini. And scholar Adrienne Rich has posited “a lesbian continuum in which lesbian identity is tied not so much to a self-conscious identity or even to sexual relations or attractions as to the emotional bonds that emerge between women in the midst of patriarchal society” Brown also points out the prevalence of homosocial environments for women within convents, suggesting that they might have the same effect for women as armies historically have for men, and backs up that theory with legal examples of nuns being punished for various same-sex acts. Brown, Judith C. "Lesbian Sexuality in Renaissance Italy: The Case of Sister Benedetta Carlini." Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 9.4 (1984): p. 755


cclxxvii “The midwife’s skill and experience was not the only help offered to women in labour, who relied also on the protection of saints, especially St. Margaret, the patron saint of childbirth. Charms, relics, or objects which were believed to have special apostrophic powers were also used” Rogers Tinagli p. 168
Women faced an uphill battle in raising their children even to the age of 5. Infectious diseases, injuries, and even unrecognized birth defects could kill. "Women and Medicine in the Middle Ages and Renaissance." Rogers Tinagli, p. 157.

In the 1440s, which were good years, infant mortality was at 26.6 percent. In the early 1450’s it got much higher, closer to 50.6 percent. Klapisch-Zuber, p. 151. "With the high level of infant mortality, women faced an uphill battle in raising their children even to the age of 5. Infectious diseases, injuries, and even unrecognized birth defects could kill." "Women and Medicine in the Middle Ages and Renaissance." Rogers Tinagli, p. 157.

Alberti says that “more [people] do indeed die … during this first age [early childhood] than during all other ages” Klapisch-Zuber 113 In the 1440s, which were good years, infant mortality was at 26.6 percent. In the early 1450’s it got much higher, closer to 50.6 percent. Klapisch-Zuber 151. "With the high level of infant mortality, women faced an uphill battle in raising their children even to the age of 5. Infectious diseases, injuries, and even unrecognized birth defects could kill." "Women and Medicine in the Middle Ages and Renaissance." Rogers Tinagli, p. 157.

Many forbid their women to read and write, maintaining that this is the ruin of many women, almost as if from virtue its contrary, vice, would follow.” Moderata Fonte, in her dialogue “defense of women’s learning” 1600 Fonte 1988, p. 104.

On trouble reclaiming dowries: “she will be abandoned by everyone there, for those who should help her keep her there unwillingly … for they are not relatives but enemies who have been the cause of all her ills” Y Maguire in “Proper dress for the widow” Vecellio (1590), fol 134r. in Rogers Tinagli, p. 192. "There was much affectation in their language and in the way they addressed those of higher station than themselves.” M. L. King and A. Rabil Jr., trans. and eds., Her Immaculate Hand: Selected Works By and About the Women Humanists of Quattrocento Italy (Binghamton, NY: MRTS, 1983), pp. 81-86 in Bartlet, Kenneth R. The Civilization of the Italian Renaissance: A sourcebook, (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2011) pp 196-198. p. 26

Alberti’s treatise on the family discusses … Can one take joy in the least actions and gestures of a little child when he knows … he is risking great unhappiness if the child should die?” Klapisch-Zuber p. 113.

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some Florentines, anxious to assure shelter to the widows of their blood after the extinction of their male
descendants, provided in their will that one of their houses be devoted to ‘taking in, in the future, all of our women
‘gone out’ [of the house’ and widowed, and assuring them the tornata.’ Thus, veritable old people’s homes for
family members were created, in which women rejected by their family by marriage could end their days honorably,
knowing they could count on the solidarity of those of their blood even onto the next generation.” Klapisch-
Zuber p. 122.

“Those [widows] who were comfortably off might come to enjoy their new-found freedom, occupying their
time … with practical, cultural, or more frivolous activities.” Rogers Tinagli p. 187.

“What grace is more universally longed for by every creature, than fair, sweet, dear and precious liberty?”
“Widowhood as liberty” Bernardo Trotto Dialoghi del matrimonio, e vita vedovile (Turin, 1578) pp 14, 16, 32, 50-
51 in Rogers Tinagli p. 189 and “Remarry…? …I’d rather drown than ever again put myself under the thumb of any
man! I have just escaped from servitude and misery and you want me of my own accord to bet bothered with all that
again? Heaven forbid!” Moderata Fonte (1600), pp 16-17, 24-5; (1997), pp. 53-4, 64. in Rogers Tinagli p. 200.

“Philips’s concept of friendship, which is in part an adaptation of the ideas about Platonic
relationships that had circulated in Henrietta Maria’s court, in part an English version of fashionable French
précieuses culture, and in part Philips’s own unique approach to friendship as simultaneously a way to express
same-sex desire, and a way to establish a Royalist ideology that would compensate for recent defeat.” Salzman,

“Gray also offers an integrative reading of the poems to Rosania and Lucasia, seeing them as offering, through their
homoerotic retreat from the world, a political critique of current events that extends even to Calvinist ideas about
marriage” Salzman p. 179.

“Hierarchy and description of Venetian government: Bisaha, Nancy. History 225 “Lecture 5: Venice and
Byzantium”

“The joy of having a daughter, Venice, 1537” in Rogers and Tinagli. p 96.

“obedience … is her master and companion, … nothing more important … can be demanded of a wife than
this … let the husband give the orders and let the wife carry them out with an even temper.” Even more is said by
the fact that this quote is from a document written to be given as a wedding present to a new wife of a Medici.

Barbaro, Francesco, “Selections from On Wifely Duties” from B. Kohl and R. Wits, eds., The Earthy Republic:
in Bartlet, Kenneth R. The Civilization of the Italian Renaissance: A sourcebook, (Toronto, Canada: University of
Toronto Press, 2011) p. 113

As much as possible, in appearance and behavior, even with her husband: P/S: “The woman’s greatest and
absolute care must be both to refrain from copulating with another man, and to avoid the suspicion of such a
repulsive wickedness.” Matteo Palmieri Libro della vita civile (c. 1438) in Rogers Tinagli p. 143.

“her father and mother had taught her to obey them and had ordered her always to obey me … a girl who
knows how to obey her father and mother soon learns to please her husband.” Alberti, Leon Battista, “The Family in
Renaissance Florence” from Leon Battista Alberti, The Family in Renaissance Florence, trans. R.N. Watkins
(Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1969), pp. 207-29 in Bartlet, Kenneth R. The Civilization of the

“Her first games should be with girls of her own age … these childish games should in their character
amount to a blueprint for a chaste and virtuous woman’s life. Therefore, I advice that those silly dolls which are
fashionable in every house, dressed and adorned with jewels … are removed from her. She should instead be given
utensils for every type of housework” Dolce “How to bring up a daughter” (1547) fols 8v, 10v-11r, 12v in Rogers
and Tinagli p. 98-99.

“do not allow them to chat with males, not even with their brothers once they are more than seven years”

“Fasting often will be useful to curb the fires of the flesh … Her food should not be too refined or spicy, [as]
our first mother [Eve] was driven from paradise because of what she had eaten … Her bed should not be too soft,
and the same [should be true of] her clothes” “Strict instructions for adolescent girls, 1546” Juan Kuis Vives, in
Vives, fol 83r. In Rogers and Tinagli p. 100.
How to Make it Rain

“Make them go to confession many times during the year … Get them accustomed to say, every day, the Office of Our Lady … and … to spend time praying in the morning when they get up, as well as in the evening.”


“While they are still at home, the mother should not let her daughters go away till they are married. Do not let them go and stay away from home whether by day or night, whether with friends or relatives. They should be continuously under her care” p. “Advice to Mothers, 1480’s” by Vespasiano da Bisticci (1999) pp 124-5 in Rogers and Tinagli p. 98.

Rogers and Tinagli p. 94.

“But I would like woman … to be directed only towards the study of moral philosophy …there are many books in Latin, which I would not like chaste women to read … Amongst the books in the vulgar tongue, they should shun all lascivious books … must be avoided are all the romances … knights-errant” “Different learning for different ranks 1584” Tre Libri dell’educazione Cristiano dei figliuoli Silvio Antoniano, E. Cattaneo “La cultura di San Carlo. San Carlo e la cultura’ in N. Raponi and A. Turchini, eds. Stampa, libri e lettere a Milano nell’età di Carlo Borromeo (Milan 1992) pp 34-5 in Rogers Tinagli p. 104.

In reality, “From the end of the fourteenth century onwards, girls belonging to the elite and to middle ranking families usually learned to read and write, and were also numerate.” Rogers Tinagli p. 105.

“They would be taught at home, or less commonly at school, sometimes by female teachers. Convents, where girls from different social backgrounds lived as boarders together with novices, were popular as educational institutions where girls could be kept safe from the dangers of the world until they were married.” Rogers Tinagli p. 105.

“Our girl should not dirty her face with cosmetics … She should not colour her hair… She should not delight in scents … She should look in a mirror not to dress her braids with exaggerated care” “Unadorned Simplicity is Best” Dolce (1547) p. 28 in Rogers and Tinagli p. 100.

“Our girl should … wash [her face] with pure water. She should … but keep [her hair] clean and free of dirt. She should … be careful that no bad smell comes from her. She should look in a mirror … to wind [her braids] … simply, seeing that, as a modest virgin, nothing in her body could give occasion for criticism.” “Unadorned Simplicity is Best” Dolce (1547) p. 28 in Rogers and Tinagli p. 100.

How to Make it Rain

234


cdxxv “History 225 Lecture 6: “Women, Marriage, Sexuality” Prof. Bisaha. Also “make the decision to take a wife while you are between twenty and twenty-five years old … If you think that your position would be improved by waiting till you are thirty, so that your status is much greater, then wait … do not marry down, but rather up” in “The qualities of a prospective wife” Giovanni di Pagolo Morelli, “Ricardi” in Mercanti scrittori. Ricordi nella Firenze tra medioevo e rinascimento, ed. V. Branca (Milan 1986) pp 168-9 in Rogers Tinagli p. 116.

cdxxv Professor Bisaha lecture notes, History 225 “Renaissance in the Mediterranean.”

cdxxvii P/S: “Whenever [a wife] is with [her husband], also when they are alone, she should never cross the limits of agreeableness, nor should she touch the boundaries of lasciviousness. … a lascivious woman, besides giving her husband reasons to be suspicious of her, is held in poor esteem by many … And during their most secret caresses, she must hold onto her real reputation, and not offer herself to her husband as a brazen prostitute, but be happy as a chaste wife, and sweetly receive her husband when he seeks her” Bernardo Trotto Dialoghi del matrimonio, e vita vendovile (Turin, 1578) p. 90 in Rogers Tinagli p. 143.


cdxxix Dolce (1547) fols 56-57v in Rogers Tinagli p. 155.


cdxxx Paper in Rogers Tinagli, p. 167 and 183.

cdxxxii P/S: “What grace is more universally longed for by every creature, than fair, sweet, dear and precious liberty?” Bernardo Trotto Dialoghi del matrimonio, e vita vendovile (Turin, 1578) pp 14, 16, 32, 50-51 in Rogers Tinagli “Widowhood as liberty” p. 189.

And a character in Moderata Fonte’s dialogue says: “Remarry…? …I’d rather drown than ever again put myself under the thumb of any man! I have just escaped from servitude and misery and you want me of my own accord to bet bothered with all that again? Heaven forbid!” Moderata Fonte (1600), pp 16-17, 24-5; (1997), pp. 53-4, 64. In Rogers Tinagli p. 200.

cdxxxiii Professor Bisaha lecture notes, History 225 “Renaissance in the Mediterranean” Also Rogers Tinagli p. 187.

cdxxxiv A widow “could live in her husband’s family, by her children’s side … It was up to her husband’s heirs to persuade her to remain with them and not to ‘leave with her dowry’ to live independently.” Klapisch-Zuber p. 120-121. “The paternal kin had to take charge of orphans ‘of whom it can be said that they are orphaned on both the father’s and the mother’s side’ … [once, a] widow ‘left the house ]with her dowry…] and left her children on the straw, with nothing.” Klapisch-Zuber p. 126.

cdxxxv “In principle, the dowered goods that a wife brought her husband were attached to her for life: they had the double function of providing for the expenses of the household and, when the household dissolved at the husband’s death, of providing for the surviving wife. … If a widow, however, did not get along with her husband’s heirs and preferred her freedom, she had no claims other than to her dowry.” Klapisch-Zuber 121-121.

cdxxxvi “Young widows, especially those without children, would frequently regain their dowry and remarry, having returned to the homes of their father or other birth relatives.” Rogers Tinagli p. 187.

cdxxxvii “the children belonged to the lineage of their father. Thus, boys all their life and girls until their marriage resided with their agnatic kin” Klapisch-Zuber p. 125.

cdxxxviii “Others headed their households and brought up their children alone, living off the proceeds of their dowries or with support from family or charity.” Rogers Tinagli p. 187.

cdxxxix Lecture notes, class 1 Nancy Bisaha History 224 “Renaissance in the Mediterranean.”

cdxx “The learned woman appeared … at the same time as the men who espoused ‘the new learning.’ But her reception into that world by the men who reigned over it was complex.” King p. 11.

cdxxi “The men with whom [Isotta Nogarola] corresponded praised her” King p. 17 “the women, as young girls, were encouraged and strongly supported in their studies. They were recognized by their families, by male humanists, and by their cities as prodigies.” King p. 25.

cdxxii of those who chose marriage “only one maintained her humanist studies intensely after marriage.” King p. 25.

cdxxiii King p. 19- 23.
How to Make it Rain

“in order to maintain her intellectual life, Isotta had to pay a high price: perpetual chastity and isolation from other learned people” King p. 19 “Those women, however, who aspired to continue a humanist career into their adult years were not greeted with the encouragement or praise they had received as prodigies, but icily and with hostility.” King p. 25.


A/N: H/N: A surname of French origin meaning ‘rebel’ "Last Name: Ravel." The Internet Surname Database. N.p., n.d. Web. 05 May 2014. <https://www.surnamedb.com/Surname/Ravel>. It was a last name some Jews in Paris in the late 1700’s had: "Alsace - Census of 1784." Also from the few census records I’ve been able to find it seems Jewish last names in this time period was usually the name of their parent, and that wives could keep their own last name when not simply referred to as ‘first name—wife of …”

H/N: An area where many French Jews lived in the time.

H/N: A central year of the French revolution.

H/N: A French name meaning ‘rebirth.’ It was unusual but not unheard of for Jews to have French names. Hyman p. 67 “French names for women … both in the countryside and in Strasbourg, prevailed well before the Revolution” Hyman p. 68.


“On the eve of the French Revolution in 1789 there were more than 150 communities in Alsace, the oldest ones were created in the 17th century and the newest from 1750 onwards.” "History of the Jewish Community in Alsace and Lorraine - 2." Hyman p. 68. "traditional decorative plaques (shiviti plaques), which also called upon the four angels for their protection.” Hyman p. 70.

“Alsatian Jews used amulets and hung incantations on the wall of a woman in childbirth to keep away such evil spirits as Lilith … A circle was drawn around the bridal couple to ward off evil.” Hyman p. 72.

H/N: John Cole explains the view of the writer Elizabeth Badinter, who, he says, offers “a psychological explanation: men felt so threatened in their masculinity by a radical challenge to traditional gender roles and civil status that they embraced Rousseauist orthodoxy on women and the family” Cole, John R. Between the Queen and the Cabby: Olympe de Gouges’ Rights of Woman. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2011 p. 203.
How to Make it Rain

CDLV H/N: "for the five years from the publication of her first political pamphlet in September 1788 to her trial and execution in November 1793, she published on current affairs and public policy more often and more boldly than any other woman … she demanded the extension of full civil and political rights to women more formally and more uncompromisingly than any prior person, male or female, French or foreign." Cole p. 6.

CDLVI P/S: In one of her works of fiction, Olympe created a character who comments on these gender inequalities: “We’ve seen some of them [men], rising from the lowest origins, reach the greatest fortune[s] and sometimes dignities. And women, without employment, remain in misery, that is, if they’re virtuous” Olympe de Gouges in Cole p. 103-104. Cole explains Olympe’s quotation as a critique of the societal hierarchy: “the speaker means to emphasize gender inequities in opportunities for promotion in the hierarchical society of the Old Regime. In other words, the common man can at least occasionally rise by his own efforts, enriching and even ennobling himself, but a woman can only sink, prostituting and degrading herself” (Cole p. 104). “Gouges … protests against a Rousseauist relegation of women to the roles of pleasing men and conducting households. She defends her intellectual life and literary ambitions. And she pleads for solidarity among women” Cole p. 108.

CDLVII H/N: Scott, Joan Wallach. "French Feminists and the Rights of ‘Man’: Olympe De Gouges's Declarations." History Workshop Journal 28.1 (1989): 1-21. Print. p. 11. And “The Social Contract that Gouges proposed twenty-six years later was altogether different and may reflect her own youthful experience as a wife … Neither parents nor priests would be involved. There would be no dowry given over to a husband to administer, nor any presumption of his “marital power” over the person and the property of his wife. The woman would be assured of paternal support for her children, all of them, and there would be no renunciation of her own claims on her partner’s estate should he predecease her” Cole p. 151. The Postamble of her Declaration tried to “convince women that gender relations under the Old Regime have been pervasively immoral and that marriage itself in its traditional form is much of the problem (lines 245-322)” Cole p. 152. She “explicitly assert[s] that men’s dominance over women is a form of tyranny” (Cole p. 119), akin to the tyranny of the king that the French people were protesting, and frames her new model of marriage in similar ideas of equality as advocated by the revolutionaries: “Hers would be a truly democratic agreement between equals” Cole p. 151.

CDLIX H/N: Scott p. 9.

CDLX P/S: Olympe de Gouges wrote: “The Revolution will be achieved only when all women are convinced of their deplorable lot and of the rights that they have lost in society” (Cole p. 29).


CDLXI H/N: “Brides customarily cut their hair short and tucked it under a bonnet which bore a black velvet bandeau to simulate hair” (Hyman p. 72)

CDLXII Again, had to fill this in after writing the stories. The only way to see what her voice was like was to write it.


CDLXV H/N: Jews lived in small communities ("Jewish Genealogy Research in France.") called kelles ("History of the Jewish Community in Alsace and Lorraine - 2.") in the countryside ("History of the Jewish Community in Alsace and Lorraine - 2.")

CDLXVI H/N: David Shorenstein’s description of “a poor sofer (scribe)” Hyman p. 59.

CDLXVII H/N: On Jewish communities that were not wealthy but were scholarly "Jewish Genealogy Research in France."

CDLXVIII H/N: “Only 9 percent of the mothers of the marrying couple and 12 percent of the brides in village marriage records of the 1820’s and 1830’s were illiterate” Hyman p. 66.

CDLXIX H/N: “Alsatian Jews … welcomed the wandering poor on Sabbaths and holidays. When the progressive Jewish press suggested terminating all charity as a means of solving the social problem of itinerant beggars, a village rabbi rejected the proposal with explicit references to traditional Jewish concepts of social responsibility and philanthropy” Hyman p. 71.
"cultural conditions prior to 1789. Throughout the ancient régime, the Jews of Alsace-Lorraine belonged to a cultural orbit that extended del beyond the eastern borders of France. Modes of Talmud study, rabbinic peregrinations and appointments, religious customs, marriage patterns, and liturgical rites indicate that toward the end of the ancient régime the area stretching from Metz in the west to as far as Prague in the east was still a unified religion-cultural entity … Young men moved freely between France and central Europe, often driven by a spirit of adventure in their struggles to master Talmudic literature." Berkovitz p. 31.

cdlxx H/N: “The Haskalah, or Jewish Enlightenment, was an intellectual movement in Europe that lasted from approximately the 1770s to the 1880s. … and the movement was based on rationality. It encouraged Jews to study secular subjects, to learn both the European and Hebrew languages, and to enter fields such as agriculture, crafts, the arts and science. The maskilim (followers of the Haskalah) tried to assimilate into European society in dress, language, manners and loyalty to the ruling power. … The Haskalah was characterized by a scientific approach to religion in which secular culture and philosophy became a central value. It was influenced by a Maimonidean approach that valued secular studies and used reason as the measure of all things … The maskilim encouraged a switch in Jewish professions. Jews moved from commercial jobs such as money lending and trade to more skilled jobs such as crafts and agriculture.” “The Haskalah.”

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cdlxxiii H/N: “The contours of the marriage market suggest the survival of an Ashkenazi cultural unit linking Alsace, the southwestern German state, and, less important, the neighboring Swiss cantons … The brides were more likely than the grooms to be locals” Hyman p. 53.

cdlxxiv H/N: “Husbands were on average two to three years older than their brides” Hyman p. 52.


cdlxxvi H/N: “In this city there are quite a number of Jews. Some are scattered in the different quarters of Paris. The rest, and in larger numbers, in order to make their gathering together easier and to thus compensate for their isolation from other men, are attracted to particular quarters” Abidor, Mitchel. “Addresse de l’Assemblée des Représentants de la Commune de Paris à l’Assemblée Nationale sur l’Admission des Juifs à l’Etat Civil.” Paris, Imprimerie Lottin ainé. 1790 in marxists.org 2009 URL: http://www.marxists.org/history/france/revolution/1789/juifsresidansaparis.htm accessed 11/13/13

cdlxxvii H/N: “The Jews followed the revolutionary trend and gave their children names in consonance with that trend. In Saint-Espirit lés-Baoyoone Jewish children were given such names as Brutus, Virgil, Delphine and Elodré.” Szajkowski 798

cdlxxviii A/N: after writing the story and play I realized Renéé had to be alive before the women’s march for it to make sense, so I went back and changed when she was born a few years.

cdlxxix P/S: “Stainslas Maillard describes the Women’s March to Versailles (5 October 1789)” Source: From Women in Revolutionary Paris, 1789-1795, edited and translated by Darline Gay Levy, Harriet Branson Applewhite, and Mary Durham Johnson. Copyright 1979 by the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois. Used with the permission of the University of Illinois Press, 36–42. in http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/473

How to Make it Rain

"History of the Jewish Community in Alsace and Lorraine - 2."


H/N: "some Jews were migrating westward. Many had fled the religious wars of the seventeenth century and the anti-Jewish pogroms … They began returning to … France … where religion now seemed less of an issue and where the Industrial Revolution had opened up new opportunities for trade." Taitz, Emily, Sondra Henry, and Cheryl Tallan. _The JPS Guide to Jewish Women: 600 B.C.E. to 1900 C.E._ Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003. Print. p. 199.

P/S: "Degraded till now by public opinion, offended on all sides, pursued through our very name, which others use to insult us, separated from society and participating in none of its advantages, though common charges are imposed on us, such has been our fate in this empire … These terrible and ceaseless persecutions that we have suffered have never led us to forget that submission is the first of our duties." Abidor, _Adresse presentée a l’Assemblée National le 26 Août 1789 par les JUIFS résidans à Paris._ "Everywhere persecuted, everywhere degraded yet submissive, and never rebellious. Objects among all peoples of indignation and contempt when they should have been objects of tolerance and pity." Berr-Isaac Berr 1789 Abidor, Mitchell _Adresse presentée a l’Assemblée National le 26 Août 1789 par les JUIFS résidans à Paris._ "The fate of the majority of Jews of the kingdom … is only to certain that they still remain charged with their irons, and their chains seem every day to become heavier in proportion as the enjoyment if Liberty increases around them” "Address on the Granting of Civil Rights to Jews, French Revolution 1790 Abidor, “Adresse de l’Assemblée des Représentants de la Commune de Paris à l’Assemblée Nationale sur l’Admission des Juifs à l’Etat Civil.”

H/N: "When France progressively took control of these provinces, a certain status quo was respected, though Jews were no citizens, not allowed to live in towns and were subjected to discriminatory taxes.”

H/N: “the ghetto borders didn't change anymore in the next centuries though the number of the population permanently increased. One can assume that insalubrities and overcrowding didn't make life easy for the Jewish part of the population … At the end of the 17th century the Alsatian Jewish population rapidly grew at the same time as the Christians. In 1689 the Intendant De la Grange took a census of 525 families (2/3 in Lower Alsace and 1/3 in Upper Alsace) … Eight years later there were 738 families and already 1269 in 1716. In brief there is no denying that the Alsatian Jewish population basically grew in the 18th century.” "History of the Jewish Community in Alsace and Lorraine - 2."

H/N: “On the other hand, Jewish communities could live according to their own rules, as long as the relations with the civil and Christian authorities remained as imposed.” Kallman.

H/N: “For most of their history, Jews educated their children in their own institutions and expressed their educational ideas in their own languages, until the late 18th century.” “Education.” _Education._ Jewish Virtual Library. Source: Encyclopaedia Judaica, 2008. Web. 05 May 2014. 

http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejod_0002_0006_0_05565.html

H/N: “The first difference between Southern and Eastern Jews from the point of view of Paris began with the registers of grievances in which every French citizen could say his opinion about his life and the problems of his country. The Jews of Eastern France were not allowed to participate in the writing of these registers, contrary to the Sephardim of South-Western France.” "History of the Jewish Community in Alsace and Lorraine - 2."

H/N: “Besides these two French speaking communities, the largest number of Jews living on the territory of present France, the so-called German Jews, lived in Alsace, initially under the control of principalities of the Holy Roman Empire, and in Lorraine, around Metz.” Kallman.

H/N: “Jewish merchants did most of their business in the towns, entering them in the morning and leaving before curfew.” Kallman.

H/N: “Alsatian Jews used to be until the late 19th century cattle dealers or hawkers as symbolic figures of the Alsatian Judaism, but they also dealt in real estate, plots of land and basically always acted as go-between between
farmers and administration, merchants and customers. The less well-off acted as touts or spread useful information about diverse opportunities.” “History of the Jewish Community in Alsace and Lorraine - 2.”

divii H/N: “Little by little some persons of the Jewish faith held important official positions because of their influence or their fortune. The local authorities considered them official responsible for the relations between the Jewries and themselves.” "History of the Jewish Community in Alsace and Lorraine - 2.”

div P/S: “The Jews of Avignon … are ardent friends of the Revolution and they have embraced its principles with enthusiasm. They have served it with all their might. They have served it with a gratitude all the stronger because they owe it their having been freed from an oppression that lasted twenty centuries and for having finally attained the dignity of man.” Abidor, Mitchell. “Observations pour les Juifs d’Avignon.” Paris, L’Imprimerie Momoro, 1794


div “It can’t be denied that the sense of community faded little by little as the social and religious discriminations also began to disappear. The transition to as less religious, very integrated city dweller took place very gradually” "History of the Jewish Community in Alsace and Lorraine - 2.”

div From that time Jews were allowed to exercise the profession of their choice, to acquire buildings, to dwell or marry where and whenever they wanted. In a way it was the real revolution for Jews.” “History of the Jewish Community in Alsace and Lorraine - 2.”

dviii “They suffered many disabilities, but by the end of them 1700’s, the French Revolution introduced the concept of individual rights to each man and woman living within its borders. In return, the government demanded primary allegiance to the state, including direct payment of taxes. This new system effectively eliminated the power of the Jewish community over its members and caused a considerable weakening of Jewish life.” Taitz p. 200.

divii “After their emancipation in 1791 when they were granted the right to settle wherever they chose, Jews began moving to the cities.” Hyman 31 “the 1872 census revealed that at least 34 percent of the Jews living in Paris had been born in Alsace and Lorraine” Hyman p. 86.

dix “It can't be denied that the sense of community faded little by little all the more so as the social and religious discriminations also began to disappear. The transition to as less religious, very integrated city dweller took place very gradually” "History of the Jewish Community in Alsace and Lorraine - 2.”

dx “[migrant Jews to cities] may also have been predisposed to experiment in social, cultural, and religious behavior” Hyman p. 93.

dixii “In the late 18th century some Jews became well off thanks to their industrial activity or a flourishing trade, and yet most of them continued to exercise the old traditional jobs” “History of the Jewish Community in Alsace and Lorraine - 2.”

dixiii “The city economy also attracted Jew with the expanded possibilities of artisanry in an urban market compared to the traditional, and marginal, Jewish street trades of peddling and dealing in secondhand goods. More than three times as many heads of households in the city were artisans than in the countryside and less than half as many were peddlers or hawkers of old clothes” Hyman p. 36 other jobs: “Only four Jewish artisans—a shoemaker and three bakers—appear in these records, but Jewish merchants, wholesalers, commercial agents, horse dealers, cattle merchants, butchers, money changers, bankers, cloth dealers, mercers, furniture dealers, grain merchants, wine merchants, dealers in metal and wood, soap manufacturers, agents of military replacement, a soldier, and a rabbi” Hyman p. 38 “Political emancipation offered Alsatian Jews new economic opportunities, but it did not lead to a radical transformation of livelihood. Their traditional role as mediators between the peasant in the countryside and
his markets and suppliers of consumer goods in the town remained attractive to Jews even after all occupations were theoretically open to them. Some Jews purchased property, and a small percentage became artisans, farmers, or even industrialists, but the vast majority chose to support themselves in the trade, along with moneylending, that had been the pursuit of their fathers.” Hyman 49.

dxiii “In comparison with urban well-off Jews who still could experience anti-Semitism and bad effects of ignorance, the country Jews could show more solidarity with Goyim, their houses were open and their way of life less mysterious.” ”History of the Jewish Community in Alsace and Lorraine - 2.”

dxiv “The Sephardim (Bordeaux, Bayonne, Provence) felt discriminated and put at a disadvantage by remaining mixed up with the Ashkenazim of Eastern France because of their image and the common prejudices about them in Paris.” ”History of the Jewish Community in Alsace and Lorraine - 2.”

dxv “A wave of patriotism invaded the Jewish communities; the new emancipated Jews wanted to be good Frenchmen with the risk to be overzealous. Even Ashkenazim considered France the best host country for Jews in exile. Berr-Isac-Berr, even as a traditionalist, said that Jews should show "the patriotism that lies dormant in our hearts" in order to be appreciated by Frenchmen.” ”History of the Jewish Community in Alsace and Lorraine - 2.”

P/S: “our ardent love for the monarch … the solemn vow we make to forever sacrifice our fortunes and lives for the public good … One object alone dominates our souls: the good of the fatherland and the desire to dedicate all our strength to it. We don’t take second place in this regard to any inhabitant of France.” Abidor, Mitchell Addresse présentée a l’Assemblée Nationale le 26 Août 1789 par les JUIFS résidans à Paris.

dxvi “At the end of the eighteenth century…even those who criticized their economic practices, religious ritual, and cultural backwardness admired the Jews for the quality of their family lives. The Abeé Grégoire, a supporter of Jewish emancipation but a critic of the Jews … lavished praise upon the Jews for their domestic virtues: “…Nothing was more rare among them than adultery; their conjugal union was truly edifying; they are good spouses and good parents. I must also mention … [their] profound respect for authors of their days…” the lack of Gentile criticism suggests that the external signs of family disintegration … were not found, or were kept hidden, among Jewish families in Alsace on the eve of emancipation” Hyman p. 50 “Most Jewish families in Alsace, like most other western families, were nuclear in structure, composed of a married couple, a married couple with children, or a single parent with children.” Hyman p. 57.

dxvii “The location of much Jewish ritual within the home lent an aura of religious sentiment to domesticity even for those whose traditional faith had been eroded … In honor of the Sabbath the home was cleaned, and family members donned festive clothing. The wife rose early on Friday morning to prepare food for the evening meal and Sabbath day dinner. For many Jewish families in the countryside the Sabbath was the only day on which all family members gathered together … On Saturday after morning prayers the Jewish women would pick up their Gesetsi Sup, the Sabbath dinner dish of split peas or white beans, potatoes, and sausages or other meat” Hyman p. 51.

dxviii “Extrapolating from census data, it appears that Jewish women in Alsace and Lorraine married at a mean age of about 23 at the turn of the nineteenth century” Hyman p. 52.

dxx “Husbands were on average two to three years older than their brides” Hyman p. 52.

dxxi Hyman p. 90.

dxxii Hyman p. 54.

dxxiii Hyman p. 54.

dxxiv Hyman p. 56.

dxxv Hyman p. 59-60.

dxxvi Hyman p. 60.

dxxvii “The modern Jewish family took its cues from the prevailing notions of bourgeois domesticity … the male head of the household, endowed with strength and rationality, the qualities of a leader, was expected … to protect and provide for his wife … For her part, the wife acknowledged her role as the dependant creator of domestic haven … the responsibility of wife and mother for maintaining family harmony … The mother was entrusted with the major burden of rearing children and socializing them as moral beings and as Jews. The father’s prayer included, in reference to his children, a general request for wisdom” Hyman p. 62-63. “Jews [in the countryside], embedded in the traditional Jewish economy, doubtless preserved a style of relations between husband and wife that reflected a more expansive and rigorous economic role for women than was the case in urban bourgeois society” Hyman p. 63.

These lower-class women were, in some ways, much freer than the bourgeoisies. In Paris many were sent out at eighteen years of age or earlier to work in shops, sell merchandise in the streets or become domestics ... most refined member of the working class, the fashion shop worker, traditionally dressed in grey serge and called therefore grisette.” Lee, Vera. The Reign of Women in Eighteenth-century France. Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Pub., 1975. Print. p. 30.

P/S: “If nature has refused them beauty they get married, without a dowry, to unfortunate artisans; lead aimless, difficult lives stuck in the provinces; and give birth to children they are incapable of raising.” “Petition of Women of the Third Estate to the King” (1 January 1789).

If married, the lower-class woman was, even more than the bourgeoisie, her husband’s helper. Whether by his side or elsewhere she would toil long hours to supplement his meager income. Her work gave her, on the one hand, a certain freedom of movement and at times a degree of financial independence, but more often than not it made a sheer slave” Lee p. 20.

Even in cases where a woman worked side by side with her husband she was still considered his subordinate. When the average farmer's wife served dinner, she would often serve the farmer first, then all his hired help, and finally, she herself ate—standing up—the remains of the meal.” Lee p. 33

“outside the bustling realm of Paris lived the great majority of the lower classes ... they earned their livelihood less from the production and sale of commodities than from cultivating the precious land around them ... a peasant woman's work was mainly confined to household tasks or to relatively non-muscular activities” Lee p. 31.

“Occasionally she had a job outside of agriculture: selling fabrics, meat or salt, tending a cabaret or working as a washerwoman, midwife, wetnurse, servant and even a paid mourner at funerals.” Lee p. 31.

“those whom a fortunate penchant inclines to virtue, who are consumed by the desire to learn, who feel themselves carried along by a natural taste, who have overcome the deficiencies of their education and know a little of everything without having learned anything, those, finally, whom a lofty soul, a noble heart, and a pride of sentiment cause to be called prudes, are obliged to throw themselves into cloisters where only a modest dowry is required, or forced to become servants if they do not have enough courage, enough heroism, to share the generous devotion of the girls of Vincent de Paul.” "Petition of Women of the Third Estate to the King” (1 January 1789).

If, on the contrary, they are born pretty, without breeding, without principles, with no idea of morals, they become the prey of the first seducer, commit a first sin, come to Paris to bury their shame, end by losing it altogether, and die victims of dissolute ways” "Petition of Women of the Third Estate to the King” (1 January 1789).

“Most little girls were raised by their own mothers, who dressed them, took them visiting and familiarized them with the running of a household. At around eleven years of age a daughter very likely went off to a convent for the bit of formal schooling and religious instruction the preceded her confirmation. But this was only for a year or two. Soon she was back home ... she received private lessons in music, dance, geography, or penmanship” Lee p. 20.

“The middle bourgeoisie enjoyed more liberty than those more elegant females who were kept under wraps in a convent until marriage time. She might have met her fiancé at church, at a ball or walking with her family ... Rather than the prompt settling of a deal, marriage here was more likely considered as the wedding of two individuals. The young girl of this class had a greater say in the choice of her mate. She didn’t have to be madly in love with him, but changes are that her parents looked for some positive inclination on her part.” Lee p. 20.

“But then this pre-marriage freedom was followed by a stricter pattern once the knot was tied. No nonsense here about living apart from your spouse ... He was possibly a functionary such as town clerk, a professional man like a doctor or lawyer or business man at the start of a prosperous career his new wife was proud to be his helpmeet and happy when he discussed his job with her. Perhaps she even took an active part in her work.” Lee p. 20.
“Like the middle bourgeoisie, she scarcely played any political role in her times, but was highly energetic on the domestic front and in business and industry. Most merchants’ wives truly collaborated with their mates and worked alongside them at their jobs. They sold at counters, kept the books, took charge of the correspondence and had a detailed knowledge of the business. Certain of them, especially widows … kept their own shop or directed small businesses or factories where they busied themselves ordinarily in the production and sale of lace, silk and other fabrics.” Lee p. 27.

“in Paris the average middle class woman was more frequently on a par with her mate than in the provinces, where she most often played the part of respected subordinate. Her participation in his work could sometimes amount to a true partnership; for example, her husband might need her countersignature on contracts. But morally she was rarely considered his equal.” Lee p. 22.

“Her husband was officially Lord and Master. Lest there be the slightest doubt about that, the law spelled it out in no uncertain terms: "Marriage, which forms a society, that of husband and wife dominated by the husband, gives said husband, in his capacity of chief of this society, the right of power over his wife's person" On marrying, the bride moved into lodgings inhabited or chosen by the groom of his family, and from then on she was bound to follow her husband wherever he wished" Lee p. 101.

P/S: “You have broken the scepter of despotism, you have pronounced the beautiful axiom [that] the French are a free people. Yet still you allow thirteen million slaves [women] shamefully to wear the irons of thirteen million despots! [husbands]” “Women’s Petition to the National Assembly” 1789.

“Excluded from public office and many professions, 'sheltered' from civic affairs, barred from principle inheritance rights, denied the freedom to administer her own possessions, placed often at the mercy of her husband but forbidden divorce” The Reign of Women p. 110

"A husband acted as trustee of his wife's marriage portion; he could not dispose of it but neither could she do so without his consent. This capital was a sort of insurance: if the couple separated or if the husband died before his wife, her dowry returned to her, and if his death followed hers the children inherited it. " The Reign of Women p. 102

“Community property referred to the money and other possessions that a husband and wife would pool at the time of their marriage. Theoretically the wife held one-half interest in this property... get her share back if he died or if they separated. But in point of fact, a woman's right to community property was only an eventual one, for while she lived with him, her husband exercised absolute power over it, even that part of it which she had contributed.” The reign of Women 102

When it came to political action, women had, theoretically, an age-old right giving them voice in public affairs. Since the Middle Ages they were permitted to attend city and village meetings of town assemblies ... although this right still existed in the eighteenth century, for some reason it was no longer exercised. Such lack of participation does not mean, however, that the women kept their peace” “The Reign of Women” p 43

“In Toulouse, Caen, Rouen and elsewhere the rising prices of grain, cotton and other commodities had peasant women rioting in the streets ... female food vendors could cause a nuisance as no others could ... Before the Revolution their complaints did not take the form of truly organized demonstrations. They erupted rather in spontaneous explosions provoked by a street quarrel or the mere mention of an unpopular political figure.” “The Reign of Women” p. 43

“Stainslas Maillard describes the Women’s March to Versailles (5 October 1789)”

http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/473

P/S: “at the entrance to the City Hall, where the women were already assembled in very large numbers; detachments went off into different districts to recruit other women, who were instructed to meet them at the Place Louis XV” “Stainslas Maillard describes the Women’s March to Versailles (5 October 1789)

“Madelaine Glain … testifies that, having been forced, as many women were, to follow the crowd that went to Versailles last Monday, 5 October … they answered that they were going to ask for bread at Versailles.” Disposition Number LXXXIII “Women Testify Concerning Their Participation in the October Days (1789)”

“In 1789, when the Paris common women began beating the drum for their long trek to Versailles, they were thinking not o the feminist cause but of the high price and scarcity ob bread and of the aristocrats whom they held responsible for their misery.” Reign of Women p. 118

“Some women began to gather in clubs, joining men in their societies or forming all female ones" Reign of Women p. 119 Also there were instances of groups of knitters raising money for revolutionary men also p. 119

For a list of several significant women w ho participated during the revolution, see Semmers.
“man” in the Constitution of 1791 was clearly gender specific. This is most evident in the Constitution's division of citizenship into two categories, "active" and "assize" status driven: "Active citizens were men who were over twenty five, independent, and who had paid the poll tax ... This entitled men to vote ... and ... hold public office. The Constitution denied women access to any political status by constructing women as 'passive' citizens along with a motley assortment of civic outsiders, including men who couldn't pay the poll tax, children, all domestic servants, rural day-laborers and most journeymen, slaves, Jews, actors, and hangmen. Unlike most of the other marginal groups, however, women were born passive and remained so. Later laws granted citizenship to some of the marginal groups" Smart, p. 134

See also the “Women’s Petition to the National Assembly” 1789: “It is altogether astonishing that, having gone so far along the path of reforms, and having cut down... a very large part of the forest of prejudices, you would leave standing the oldest and most general of abuses, the one which excludes the most beautiful and most lovable half of the inhabitants of this vast kingdom from positions, dignities, honors, and especially from the right to sit amongst you.”

"Gouges's Déclaration went virtually unnoticed and legally affected no one." Smart, p. 135

"For Gouges, equality begins at home...grounding he marriage pact in shared consent... In order for women to act as moral agents in the public sphere ... women must first have equal rights within the marriages. Gouges frames the formal and publicly recognized relationship between a man and a woman as a civil contract and not a holy bond ...[her form of] marriage pact must reflect the revolutionary ideals of liberty and equality. Both women and men enter into the pact of their own free will, and the pact secures equality between the two parties ... the civil contract lasts as long as the two parties love each other... the couple vow to pool their resources and to divide the wealth equitably in case of separation" Smart, p. 140

"Women's petition to the National Assembly” 1789.

"1792 Etta Palm led a group of women to the Assembly where she argued logically that since women had shared in the dangers of the Revolution, why could they not share in the advantages?" Vera Lee p. 122


http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/475

“The demands of these women--the femme sans-culottes--were less about bourgeois equality and more about supplying the Parisian populace with subsistence. Women were the ones who stood in bread lines and congregated in the streets and markets, and their behavior was volatile in times of shortages or increases in the price of bread. These women used different tactics than the men to exert their influence. They shouted and stamped their feet in the spectator gallery of the national legislature … They also circulated seditious petitions, made insulting remarks to local and national magistrates and participated in food riots and popular insurrections.” Semmers.

"At a November 15, 1793, meeting of the Commune, Anaxagoras Chaumette used Gouges to illustrate the dangers of crossing gender lines. He scolded a group of women wearing Phrygian bonnets who had interrupted the meeting, and he warned them that women who imitated men by sporting the red cap of Liberty were women headed for the guillotine. Chaumette reminded these women of [de Gouges's execution]”p 144 implying she was executed "not for political sedition, but because she ... [was] a women who entered a 'masculine' space" Smart, p. 144 The importance of this story isn’t only that women were being chided for overstepping society’s prescribed roll for them, but the fact that they were doing so in the first place to such an extent that someone thought they needed reprimanding

“In 1793 the femme sans-culottes formed the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women, the first political interest group for common women in Western history. Claire Lacombe, an actor, and Pauline Leon, a chocolate maker, founded the organization.” Semmers.

"Women were active participants in the storming of the Bastille. Women led the March to Versailles that resulted in Louis' return to Paris. Poor women participated in the August 10, 1792, defeat of the Swiss Guard at the Tuileries Palace that resulted in the formation of the Commune and the imprisonment and later execution of Louis XVI.” Semmers.

“The Universal Declaration of Human Rights took place August 27th 1789. The emancipation of Jews was adjourned for two years after several discussions and speeches at the National Assembly among others.” "History of the Jewish Community in Alsace and Lorraine - 2."

“Speech of the Deputies of the Provinces and Bishoprics of Alsace and Lorraine Pronounced at the Barr of the National Assembly by Berr-Isaac Berr, one of the Deputies of Lorraine and an Excerpt from the Minutes of the National Assembly Relating to it” http://www.marxists.org/history/france/revolution/1789/jews-alsace.htm
The Jewish Community in Alsace and Lorraine - 2. "

Address on the Granting of Civil Rights to Jews, French Revolution 1790.

http://www.marxists.org/history/france/revolution/1790/jews.htm

"Moses Mendelssohn (1726-1789) is considered the father of the Haskalah. Mendelssohn was a philosopher with ideas from the general Enlightenment. ... He represented Judaism as a non-dogmatic, rational faith that is open to modernity and change. He called for secular education and a revival of Hebrew language and literature. He initiated ... tried to improve the legal situation of the Jews and the relationship between Jews and Christians, and argued for Jewish tolerance and humanity." "The Haskalah.

In these western lands ... Concepts of freedom, religious tolerance, and reliance on reason were being openly discussed." Taitz p. 199.

"During the general Enlightenment (1600s to late 1700s), many Jewish women began to frequent non-Jewish salons and to campaign for emancipation (the granting of equality to Jews). In Western Europe and the German states, observance of halakkhah (Jewish law) started to be neglected." "The Haskalah.

"The Haskalah also brought about change in the education of girls. Daughters of wealthy families generally studied with private teachers. In the 1790s, the maskilim established schools for poorer girls in Breslau, Dessau, Konigsberg and Hamburg. The curriculum generally included some Hebrew, German, the fundamentals of religion and ethics, prayers and arithmetic. Some schools also taught Yiddish writing, handiwork, art and singing. The Haskalah also affected education in other European countries besides Germany." "The Haskalah.

"One of the ideas characterizing Haskalah thought was anti-messianism, a feeling that one should not be constantly yearning for a miraculous messiah. This was boosted by the failure of Shabbetai Zevi, a false Messiah in the 1600s. The maskil Jonathan Eybeschuetz was quoted as saying that the main achievement of the Messiah would be that the Jews "would find clemency among the nations," i.e., the better legal and social status they were striving for in Europe. Mendelssohn agreed in principle to messianic hope but considered it not to have "any influence on our civic behavior," particularly in places that "have treated the Jews with tolerance." Others equated the Messiah with universal peace and toleration. Exile was no longer seen as divine, but as the result of historical factors. One of the ideas characterizing Haskalah thought was anti-messianism, a feeling that one should not be constantly yearning for a miraculous messiah. This was boosted by the failure of Shabbetai Zevi, a false Messiah in the 1600s. The maskil Jonathan Eybeschuetz is quoted as saying that the main achievement of the Messiah would be that the Jews "would find clemency among the nations," i.e., the better legal and social status they were striving for in Europe. Mendelssohn agreed in principle to messianic hope but considered it not to have "any influence on our civic behavior," particularly in places that "have treated the Jews with tolerance." Others equated the Messiah with universal peace and toleration. Exile was no longer seen as divine, but as the result of historical factors." "The Haskalah.

He advised Jews: "Adapt yourself to the morals and the constitution of the land to which you have been removed; but hold fast to the religion of your fathers, too." Mendelssohn, quoted in Taitz p. 201.

Voltaire's writings in history challenged the common conception at the time that historiography dealt with big political, military, and diplomatic events. He instead emphasized in the cultural history, the arts, the sciences, the customs. He is known to be the first thinker to try to write a history of the world based on cultural, political and
dlxxx P/S: “In our days a woman can really be a philosopher” Voltaire in Lee, p. 61.
dlxxxi Lee p. 65.
dlxxxii “Rousseau touched off a whole series of arguments with his reactionary statements on his ideal of a supreme-feminine-woman-submissive-to-man” Lee p. 57.
Rousseau in Lee “Woman is made specifically to please man” p. 61 in Rousseau’s Emile “Woman is made to give in to man and even to endure his injustices” Rousseau in Lee p. 64.
dlxxviii Rousseau in La Novelle Heloise Saint-Preux to Julie “It is up to you to direct our destinies” Lee p. 65
dlxxix “The city council was not in session, but the rooms were filled with women who were trying to break in all the doors and rooms in the City Hall … he found it at first impossible to enter the building, which was occupied by a large crowd of women who refused to let any men come in among them and kept repeating that the city council was composed of aristocrats” “Stanislas Maillard describes the Women’s March to Versailles (5 October 1789).
dlxxx “a large number of men go up … having compelled the women to let them in. They then flung themselves on the doors that the women had begun to beat, broke them down… and took all the arms they could find and gave some to the women … they decided to proceed to the Place d’Armes … whence he saw detachments of women coming up from every direction, armed with broomsticks, lances, pitchforks, swords, pistols, and muskets … by means of prayers and protestations he succeeded in persuading the women to lay down their arms, with the exception of a few who refused” “Stanislas Maillard describes the Women’s March to Versailles (5 October 1789).
“Maillard went to a great deal of trouble to keep order among the women, who were armed with pikes, sticks, pieces of iron, and other things, and that he succeeded in getting them to disarm en route.” “Women Testify Concerning Their participation in the October Days (1789) Source: From Women in Revolutionary Paris, 1789–1795, edited and translated by Darline Gay Levy, Harriet Branson Applewhite, and Mary Durham Johnson. Copyright 1979 by the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois. Used with the permission of the University of Illinois Press, 47–50. In http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/474
dlxxxviii P/S: “at the entrance to the City Hall, where the women were already assembled in very large numbers; detachments went off into different districts to recruit other women, who were instructed to meet them at the Place Louis XV” “Stanislas Maillard describes the Women’s March to Versailles (5 October 1789).
“Madelaine Glain … testifies that, having been forced, as many women were, to follow the crowd that went to Versailles last Monday, 5 October … they answered that they were going to ask for bread at Versailles.” Disposition Number LXXXIII “Women Testify Concerning Their Participation in the October Days (1789)”
dlxxxviii P/S: “They now numbered about six or seven thousand” “Stanislas Maillard describes the Women’s March to Versailles (5 October 1789).
dlxxxviii P/S: “they took the road to Versailles with eight or ten drums at their head … they entered Versailles … So they arrived at the door of the National Assembly … fifteen were chosen to appear with him at the bar of the National Assembly” “Stanislas Maillard describes the Women’s March to Versailles (5 October 1789).
dlxxv P/S: “she went with the other women to the hall of the National Assembly, where they entered, many strong” “Women Testify Concerning Their Participation in the October Days (1789).
dlxxv P/S: “the president read aloud five papers relative to the demands addressed by the Parisian National Guard to the National Assembly and to the king concerning the food supply” “Stanislas Maillard describes the Women’s March to Versailles (5 October 1789).
dlxxvii Cole.
dlxxvii P/S: Gouges “Rights of Women” article II. in Cole p. 31.
dlxxviii P/S: “all female Citizens and male Citizens must concur in its formation, in person or by their representatives … All female citizens and all male citizens, being equal before it, must be equally admissible to all public honors, positions and employments” Gouges “Rights of Women” article VI. Colep. 32.
dlxxviii P/S: “Convinced that there is no liberty without customs and principles, and that one must recognize one's social duties in order to fulfill one's domestic duties adequately, the Revolutionary Republican citoyennes have formed a Society to instruct themselves, to learn well the Constitution and laws of the Republic, to attend to public
affairs, to succor suffering humanity, and to defend all human beings who become victims of any arbitrary acts whatever. They want to banish all selfishness, jealousies, rivalry, and envy and to make good their [Society's] name. But besides the spirit and principle of a Society, there still must be a particular rule which lays down all the conditions of the Society; consequently they [the Revolutionary Republicans [citoyennes]] have drawn up the following regulations: Article I. The Society's purpose is to be armed to rush to the defense of the Fatherland; citoyennes are nonetheless free to arm themselves or not.” “Regulations of the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women” (9 July 1793) from Levy, Darline Gay, Mary Durham. Johnson, and Harriet Branson Applewhite. Women in Revolutionary Paris: 1789-1795. Urbana: Univ. of Illinois, 1979. Print. in "Liberty Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution.” Chapter 5 Page 1. Center for History and New Media, n.d. Web. 16 Apr. 2014. http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/481/

H/N: “married women chose the kinds of work that would necessitate the least separation from their homes. Because few Jewish men in Alsace were engaged in industrial labor, their wives had opportunities to assist in commercial dealings, in stores located in or near their dwellings, or in petty crafts. In the 1846 census data some 50 percent of Jewish men were listed as merchants, and it seems likely that their wives helped them with their stores,” Hyman p. 59. “Married women … lent money and held mortgages. At least occasionally wives who participated in the commercial affairs of their husbands received legal powers to conduct business.” Hyman p. 59.

P/S: “at the entrance to the City Hall, where the women were already assembled in very large numbers; detachments went off into different districts to recruit other women, who were instructed to meet them at the Place Louis XV” “Stanislas Maillard describes the Women’s March to Versailles (5 October 1789).” “Madelaine Glain … testifies that, having been forced, as many women were, to follow the crowd that went to Versailles last Monday, 5 October … they answered that they were going to ask for bread at Versailles.” Disposition Number LXXXIII “Women Testify Concerning Their Participation in the October Days (1789).”


"the communal bathhouse had begun to die out in the 14th century, though some continued to thrive. Italians always prized bathing more than other European countries, and many wealthy homes had heated bathing facilities.” "Cosmetics and Perfume in the Italian Renaissance." Cosmetics and Perfume in the Italian Renaissance. N.p., n.d. Web. 05 May 2014. http://home.comcast.net/~mikibu/Articlefolder/cosmetics_and_perfume_in_the_ita.htm


A huge amount of credit goes to Grace Terdoslavich who sat down on the spot and wrote a computer program to alphabitize my bibliography, dealing with French symbols, odd formatting, annotations, different categories, quotation marks, hyperlinks, computer bugs, and worked technical wizardry until she’d succeeded. This bibliography would be an out of order mess with repeats and other problems without her brilliance.