

The Reluctant Public Intellectual & More

by [Sean Bw Parker](#) (June 2024)



A Young Man at His Window— Gustave Caillebotte, 1876

The Reluctant Public Intellectual

Frizzy-haired, his blue eyes scan the auditorium
Fun was the plan, but hubris prompted scared
Messages, indentured movers working behind the scenes
Kind queens twerking over smooth passages of grime
As time slid down the crevasses of the hall, velvet seats
Worked over as the academic's pride blinded the teens

To the fact that he would have preferred to have been at his
desk

Had his mother not unloved him just a little less
Tittle-tattle thrust him into a smothered glove
Aglow, the prattling beaks spanking each other
Under tables, the bad old queens willing and able
To further careers with nods and winks, pedigrees
Buffed with a footnote, kind citations and innocent blinks

The reluctant public intellectual looks down at his notes
And thinks of the two pencils either side of a worded page
Thinks about inserting them into his nostrils, sharp end up
And slamming his head downwards, instant death or damage
Guaranteed, and no more of this; but was this really so bad?
Worse things happened at sea, or so his father had told him
Lying through his beard, as his father always had

Forty-five minutes of nodding will do, grant assured
And a few year's tenure, fortifying his department
Diversity allowing, some more black faces needed to be found
Maybe he should talk about this, bare-chested, beat his breast
Pound the caring classes as the teens eyes wettened
Fatten the calves of the university's food halls some more
Demand four more facts of these limp lambs before the

carnivore

Straining under the expectations of the Great Wall of China
A paper and wire dragon, ready to breathe fire across the quad
God squads now disbanded as coercive groomers, bequeathed
A new frontier, draped in kashmir and ready with machine guns
Flagons slammed down like pencils into eyeballs and beyond
Fond and enthralled, the auditorium is rapt, frizzy-hair
bobbing
Here and there, along with every mannerism, disallowing
The abscond until the forty-five minutes is up, and make-up
wiped off.

Shall I Compare Thee To An American Actress?

Shall I compare thee to an American actress?
Thou art more sensible, and rational
Though column inches and photographs may flatter
And insanity may tempt in being more fashionable
To affirm the day in a Californian sunrise
Hides NDAs as the actress folds others' lives

Into new definitions of happiness, national
Feeling left reeling in premonitions of marriage
Deathless smiles radiate from screens, fashion
Circling back in to disrupt the carriage
Of the journey of girl into glittering princess
Baggage disinterred as the highwayman flinches

Even while holding the gun to the head of the Prince
The fun of the bed forgotten while death looks ahead
Glancing the pearls and Rolexes, diligently pinched
The actress gazes out over the harbour, embedded

In her affirming self, centring the universe, dreaded
Pasts undisclosed, as her now ungiving Prince lies dead

In the carriage, naked and stripped of trainers and watch
The highwayman, white-striped and splendid
Speeds away with everything they need—the plot
Slowly unfurling, as into the infinity pool she slid
Waiting supine with a small smile in the corner of her mouth
The highwayman waiting for her at the border, headed south.

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Sean Bw Parker is a British writer, artist and musician, born in Exeter in 1975. He gained a Masters degree in Fine Art from the University for the Creative Arts in 2003, following which he lived in Istanbul for ten years until 2014 where he gave TEDx talk 'Stammering and Creativity,' and also lectured at Istanbul University. He has published several books, poems, albums and paintings, won a number of Koestler Arts awards and a Perrie Lectures essay award.

He has been published by the Westminster Commission, T.S. Eliot Foundation, Time Out Istanbul, Louder Than War, and appeared at the Brighton Science Festival, the University of Bristol, BIMM and others. He has interviewed Julie Burchill, Ed Harcourt, Kristin Hersh, Ian Broudie of The Lightning Seeds and Sarah Blackwood of Dubstar, hosted shows by The Members, Mark Morriss of The Bluetones and Eat Static at his Seafish music and arts venue in 2016, and was interviewed for a Sky Arts documentary in the same year. He curated the Chi-Signs, Blakefest and Wildefest mini-festivals between 2015 and 2017, and has been involved with numerous other exhibitions and live events.

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