

CAGED: AN ALLEGORY

Written and Directed by Stefan Roseen



DRAMATURGICAL FINDINGS

By Rachel Borgo

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Season One | The Impostors

THE CANVAS

The 19th century had an abundance of exhaustingly boring movements like **REALISM**. But they also had **SYMBOLISM** and **IMPRESSIONISM**. These movements birthed new techniques, **POINTILLISM** for example. Moving out of the 19th century into the 20th we started to reject and evolve our art, and establish new movements. We were reinventing ourselves. We got **POST-IMPRESSIONISM**, **CUBISM**, **SURREALISM**, **EXPRESSIONISM** and later we acquired a mere handful of notable movements such as **ABSTRACT** and **POP-ART**. We lost steam near the end of the 20th century. **POST-EXPRESSIONISM**. **DECONSTRUCTIONISM**, and then just the 70's...All garbage.

- F (*The Creator*)

CAGED: AN ALLEGORY takes place in contemporary times. However, to best understand the dialogue, it is important to recognize the referenced art movements.

But first, what is an art movement?

- The concept of an “art movement” is a relatively Western idea. It refers to collections of art that share similar artistical ideals, style, technical approach, and/or time period.
- They are a simple grouping convenience to better understand and talk about artists over the extensive history of art itself.
- Art movements are not constituted of rules; some artists in one movement may create very similar art (**REALISM**) whereas artist in a different movement (**ABSTRACT**) may have wildly different art from other artists in the same movement.
 - For instance, in Abstraction, *Pollack* differed from *Rothko* who differed from *Frankenthaler*.



TIMELINE OF REFERENCED ART MOVEMENTS

1840-1880

REALISM

Reflected the structure of the everyday life of the time: socially, economically, politically, and culturally. Very rebellious and controversial.

THE GROSS CLINIC, by THOMAS EAKINS

Note: blood, darkness, uncleanliness



1872-1892

IMPRESSIONISM

The first "distinctly modern movement in painting." Abandoned lines and clarity for softer shapes and lighter palettes. Captured a split second of life. What the eye sees and the brain understands are two different things. Allowed imperfections.

Note: Soft lines, soft colors, "amateur feeling", impressions instead of exact depictions



PARIS STREET, RAINY DAY
by GUSTAVE CAILLEBOTTE

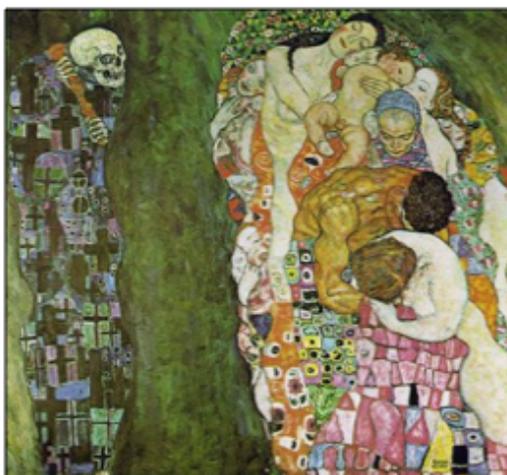
1880-1914

SYMBOLISM

Emphasis was on emotion, feelings, ideas, and subjectivity. Personal ideologies. Nuanced and obscure; i.e. one image did not necessarily mean only one thing.

DEATH AND LIFE by GUSTAV KLIMT

Note: Sexuality and life, overpowering placement of life versus death



1880-1910

POST-IMPRESSIONISM

(Pointillism)

Art is no longer a window out into the world, but rather a window into the mind of the artist. They did not merely represent surroundings, but rather observed the relationship between color and shape to depict what they saw.

Note: Almost like needlepoint, careful placement of tiny dots to create the optical effect



A SUNDAY AT LA GRANDE JATTE
by GEORGES SEURAT



1907-1922

CUBISM

Realistic perspective was abandoned. Background and foreground blended and multiple angles could be viewed at once. Time, space, and movement were explored in new, various ways.

LES DEMOISELLES D'AVIGNON by PABLO PICASSO

Note: Competing foreground and background, sharp angles, aggressive poses

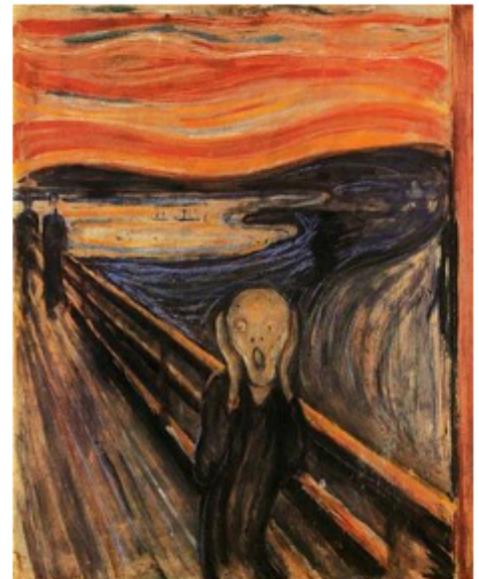
1905-1933

EXPRESSIONISM

Reaction against Impressionism. Distrusting of authenticity and spirituality. The quality of the work reflected the inner workings of the artist, not the subject. Anxiety.

THE SCREAM by EDVARD MUNCH

Note: Evokes fear and disillusionment; colors are distorted and unevenly distributed



1918-1924

POST-EXPRESSIONISM

A return to order, a reaction to chaos in the world. Separated into three different kinds: Magical Realism, New Objectivity and Verism, and Animism.

Magical Realism: everyday objects can be seen as magical and fantastic

New Objectivity and Verism: political satirists who believed expressionism missed the mark; grotesque

Animism: no hyperbolic figures; rather the colors and brush strokes were hyperbolic



DUE CANNARIRI IN GABBIO
by ANTONIO DONGHI



THE ECLIPSE OF THE SUN
by GEORGE GROSZ



BONT STRANDZICHT
by HENRI VICTOR-WOLVENS



1924-1966

SURREALISM

Influenced by imagination and revelations. The unconscious was a way to unlock the power of imagination. Even everyday life could be revealing of some larger truth. Freudian.

THE PERSISTENCE OF MEMORY by SALVADOR DALI

Note: Hard objects are limp, time bends, memory survives even the harshest of circumstances

1943-1965

ABSTRACT

Painting is a struggle between art and life itself. First regarded to be *avant-garde*. Born out of profound emotion and universal themes. Monumental in scale, romantic in mood, expressive of individualism.

MOUNTAINS AND SEA by HELEN FRANKENTHALER

Note: Acrylics thinned to a water consistency, poured and washed, using the medium in a new way





Mid 1950s-Early 1970s

POP-ART

Utilized identifiable imagery and celebrated the everyday life. Blurred the lines between "high" and "low" art, referring to cultural hierarchy. Coolly ambivalent, where as Abstract ran much hotter. Either an acceptance of the popular world or a completely appalled withdrawal.

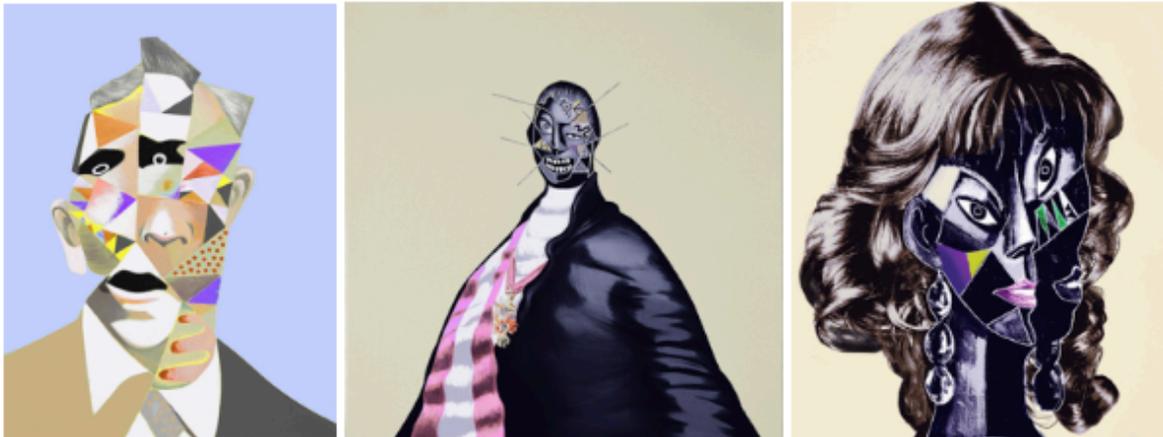
DROWNING GIRL by ROY LICHTENSTEIN

Note: Dialogue bubble and style suggests it is part of a comic, but it is a standalone piece; somewhat ridiculous in feeling

1970s

DECONSTRUCTIONISM

Characterized by fragmentation. Picking apart what we know to look at a piece of art differently. Focuses on uncertainty and self-awareness rather than taste and beauty. Questions symbolism and widely accepted assumptions.



PAINTINGS BY NICHOLAS CHISTIAKOV

1990s-Today

POST-INTERNET

Reflects time during Internet usage. Focuses on the impact of Internet on our culture. Utilizes mediums both offline and online to engage with our relationship with the Internet. Commentary on corporate life, digital culture, and limitless networking.

IMAGE OBJECTS by ARTIE VIERKANT

Note: Pixelated, layered color. Superimposed over a photograph. Infinitely reproducible.



IDENTIFYING THE ALLEGORY

BIBILICAL AND MYTHOLOGICAL ALLUSIONS

The names of the characters in a play should never be taken lightly, even if they seem randomly assigned. In this case, F, C, B, and E are indeed random, but their **titles** are very purposeful. These titles are not once mentioned in the dialogue. Rather, they are likely to be used as tools for the actors to understand the mentality of their individual roles, and for the audience to be cued into perhaps broader allusions via the program.

THE CREATOR – F

This title is appropriate for the mastermind behind the center of this play's focus: *It*. He has “created” It, so he suggests, and helped It realize It's true potential. There are several layers of issues with this title, however.



1. **CREATION AND DESTRUCTION:** F did not in fact create a life. He morphed life into a new self, which is neither creating nor re-creating. His past work, that of a baby doll sculpture is most likely classified as *metalworking deconstructionism*. This is an interesting and troubling transition -- from metal to flesh.
2. **CRUEL AND UNUSUAL:** If he is The Creator, and this is a reference to the Judeo-Christian God that created the world upon which humankind lives, he is a grotesque aberration. Or perhaps, F is meant to help us reevaluate what we think of the “man in the sky” that gave us bodies to move, to ache, to break. F is powerful, ingenious, and cruel. Is God, too?
3. **PRIDE AND PREJUDICE:** F's character struggles with his own arrogance throughout the play: Should he have shared this creation with others, so that they can slap their pathetic names on it? By dubbing F as the Creator, the audience must choose whether they see him as such, or simply view his charming but erratic behavior to be that of an arrogant lunatic.

THE CREATIVES – E, C, and B

A step down from Creator in titular clout is Creative. The term is used across a broad spectrum: from an individual who dabbles in many art forms to an individual who is accepted as a master of many art forms. There are conflicting connotations of false talent and genuine artistic versatility. Just as this term implies, these characters fall across the wide spectrum of these connotations.

E – The Success Story

E is a woman of many talents. She is charismatic, fashionable, hugely talented as a painter, and well respected in her field. For artists who seek to make a living out of their passions, she sets the bar.

ARTISTIC STYLE: POST-MODERNISM
EXAMPLE: BIRTH DEATH SKETCH, by CATHY COOPER

E measures her artistic fulfillment by how successful she is. She name drops David Beckham and leans into the dramatics often regarding one's art form.



C – The Misguided Ghost

C, unlike E, is indecisive and unfocused. His mental health relies almost exclusively on his ability to communicate through his art. However, his message is garbled and difficult to convey. He cannot separate himself from his art, just as a bird cannot separate itself from its song.

ARTISTIC STYLE: MIXED MEDIA
EXAMPLE: BITE, by JEN MCCLEARY

C is trying “new” things. It’s implied that this phase should have been completed back in college alongside his artist peers. Yet, here he is, still trying to figure it out while suffering from untreated depression.

B - The Opportunistic Crusader

B is one of the most compelling characters in this show. To the average audience, he is either completely disliked by his first few lines, or arguably the only sane and relatable character among them all. His work intends to shine a light on the existence of poverty and social class in our society. The catch 22 he finds himself accused of is commoditizing that very suffering for his own personal gain. When the Creation is revealed, he is appalled by what he sees as a distortion of human life.

ARTISTIC STYLE: POVERTY PHOTOGRAPHY
EXAMPLE: PHOTO BY THOMAS THAM

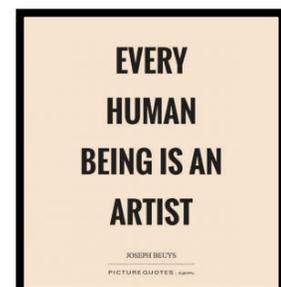
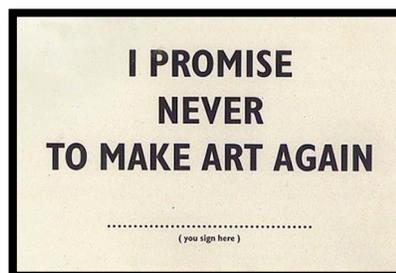
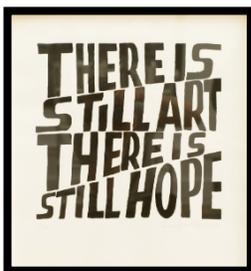
B's true colors begin to show when he speaks about the "dirt on their faces," as if it is simply part of the art, not part of these children's reality.



Each of these artists represents a different mentality about art can manifest in the world:

- E's artistic mentality appears to be **Tangible Results**: aesthetic, money, popularity, and confidence.
- C's artistic mentality appears to be **An Expression of Self**: search for fulfillment through creation, "I create therefore I am."
- B's artistic mentality appears to be **Mission Oriented**: opening the window between worlds, creating connections.

This does not mean that each character exemplifies only one type of artist. They change and grow and shrink and dissolve as each of them are tested by what they believe to be "art." As an allegory, however, it is important to acknowledge the characteristics of each artist and how they fundamentally differ from each other. It's within these moments of discord that the audience is given the space to wrestle with their own beliefs.



From *Greater Good Magazine*:

WHY WE MAKE ART

“I make art for a few reasons. In life, we experience so much fragmentation of thought and feeling. For me, creating art brings things back together.”

– Gina Gibney (**Artistic Director** of Gina Gibney Dance Company)

“I think photographing people is, for me, the best way to show somebody something about themselves—either the person I photograph or the person looking—that maybe they didn’t already know.”

– Judy Dater (**Photographer**)

“I’m trying to capture in language the things that I see and feel, as a way of recording their beauty and power and terror, so that I can return to those things and relive them. In that way, I try to have some sense of control in a chaotic world.”

– Kwame Dawes (**Poet**)

“Whatever the reason, an inner compulsion exists [to create art] and I continue to honor this internal imperative. If I didn’t, I would feel really horrible. I would be a broken man. So whether attempting to make art is noble or selfish, the fact remains that I will do it nevertheless.”

– James Sturm (**Cartoonist**)

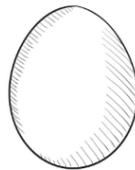
THE CREATION – IT/SIDERO

There are three names throughout the story that refer to the same entity:

- The Creation, as listed in the character list and program
- It, as determined by F
- Sidero, as named by E

Each name grows into the next, giving Sid more and more agency and power as she becomes herself. The motivations behind the names change from broad to specific.

As *the Creation*, this entity could be anything at all -- a living or non-living thing. As *the Creation*, the entity only exists by the action of a Creator. The entity entirely reflects the Creator with a name that says, "I am made."

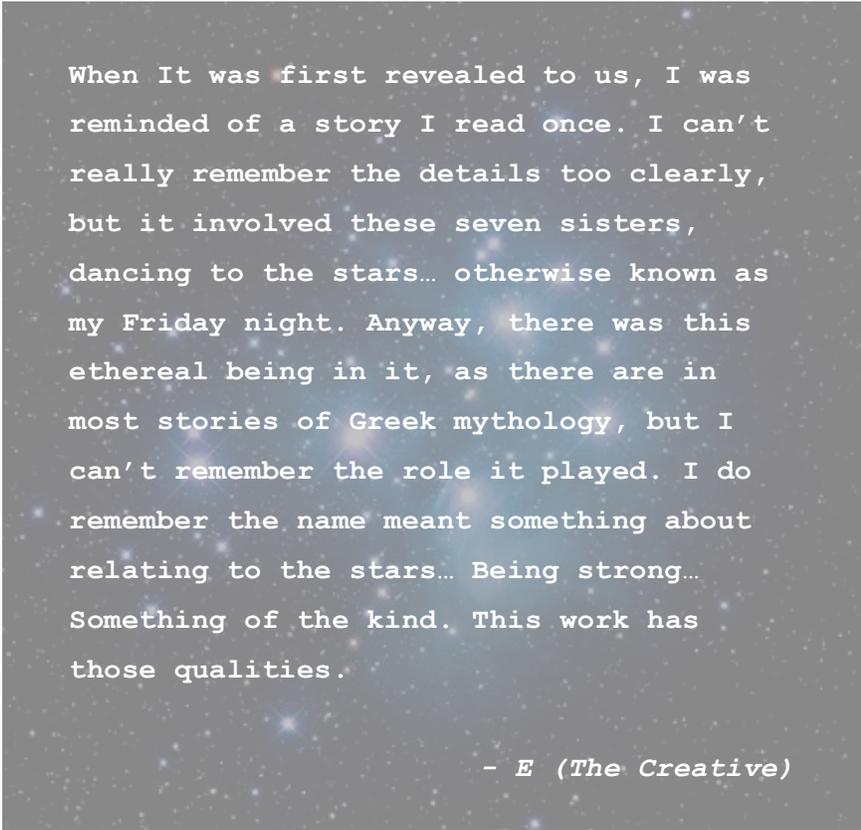


As *It*, the entity gains more of a form. *It* is not recognized enough, yet, to be given a name. But *It* now has the power of fear, as "It" is a very disconcerting name. The name makes us questions ourselves: How do we refer to it? As *It*? When is *It* a formal name and when is *it* a simple noun? What do we know about *It* if we struggle to refer to it as anything but *It*?



The uncertainty drives the characters to give *It* a recognizable name. Not Jake or Beth, but rather they land on a name from mythology: *Sidero*. In ancient Greek, this name means "the Iron One," appropriate for the metalworking deconstructionist's creation. In ancient Latin, this name means "star."





When It was first revealed to us, I was reminded of a story I read once. I can't really remember the details too clearly, but it involved these seven sisters, dancing to the stars... otherwise known as my Friday night. Anyway, there was this ethereal being in it, as there are in most stories of Greek mythology, but I can't remember the role it played. I do remember the name meant something about relating to the stars... Being strong... Something of the kind. This work has those qualities.

- E (*The Creative*)

The seven sisters in the stars that E is referring to are the Pleiades. Modern astronomers believe the stars were born 100 million years ago from the same cloud of gas and dust. This constellation holds six or more stars; each considered a daughter of Atlas, the Titan who held up the sky for mortals. In a Polynesian myth, Pleiades was once a single star that burned too brightly. A jealous god smashed it into pieces, creating the cluster we now know as Pleiades.

There is no mention of the name Sidero in any myths regarding Pleiades. However, the Latin meaning could have sparked that synapse connection for E. To her, the Creation has the qualities of feminine power, specifically the image of iridescent women dancing among the bright and burning stars. The image is a startling contrast to what is in the room: a feminine creature with wings, held captive to the ground. In naming her, E gives the Creation the potential to rise above It's captors, and if not, then burn them.

SWAN SONG QUARTET

What constitutes a masterpiece?

God created man, in the image of God He created; He created them...’ And in the image of my mind, I create my masterpiece.

- F (The Creator)

Because the term is used rather colloquially these days, there are several definitions of a *masterpiece*. They all revolve around the same criteria:

1. A work done with extraordinary skill
2. A supreme artistic achievement
3. The best piece for one particular artist
4. A creation that has been given much critical praise

F can generally depend on his own opinion for the first three criteria. He has used extraordinary skill to attach each feather and claw. He has done something no one else has ever done, deigning him supreme in his achievements. And based on the descriptions of his college work, this is by far the most impressive. But for the last criterion he requires the fawning opinions of his respected peers. When considered from this perspective, the invitation is less to “finish” the piece, than it is to receive the validation that it is, in fact, F’s *magnum opus*.

I’ve come to an impasse. Nothing is finished until influence is injected. Myself. Yourself. We weren’t constructed into who we are now, at this moment, until others’ vision was projected into our own line of sight. My thoughts are partially yours, my opinions are partially yours, my art - yours. I’ve completed as much as I am able to on my own. Now It needs more influence.

- F (The Creator)

E

It is a true masterpiece. How do you not see the beauty?

B

Because not all things are about the finished product. Sometimes you have to pay attention to the process.

INDIVIDUAL VS. COLLABORATIVE ART

A single hand or many can create Art. A painting, for instance, is often the work of a single person (not including the artistic influences of past artists.) A movie, on the other hand, is the creative collaboration of several artists with different skill sets. Where does a Creation fit in the middle of this spectrum? Is it closer to a static depiction on a canvas, or a moving picture utilizing elements of sound, light, story, and focus?

In *Caged: An Allegory*, F is trying to accomplish both, albeit unsuccessfully. He wants to be coined as The Creator, the Mastermind. Meanwhile, the others are merely the artists who were present for its final moments of conception. Is it more prestigious to create art on one’s own? Or is it only with the help of others that an artistic endeavor can reach it’s full potential?

ARTISTS WORKING SOLO CREATE THE FINEST WORK—OR SO WE BELIEVE

New research suggests we consider the amount of effort that goes into making a work of art when we're evaluating it—and take off points for collaborations.

TOM JACOBS JUN 4, 2014

Art is very often a collaborative endeavor. Yet the paintings, poems, and piano pieces we esteem most highly are almost always attributed to a single creator.

So is there something special about work that emerges from an individual imagination? If not, what's behind our bias? Newly published research comes up with some surprising insights.

It finds our perception of the quality of a work of art hinges in part on the amount of work we feel went into its creation. Odd as it sounds, the same piece seems less impressive if it is the product of two or three people, as opposed to a solitary artist.

"For creative works, perceptions of quality appear to be based on perceptions of individual, rather than total, effort," Yale University researchers Rosanna Smith and George Newman write in the journal *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity and the Arts*. Their findings suggest art "is not evaluated as a static entity, but rather as an endpoint in a **'creative performance.'**"

That notion was first proposed by philosopher Denis Dutton. The researchers note that, in his 2009 book *Beauty, Pleasure and Human Evolution*, he argued that "how a creative work was made (who was involved, how long it took, etc.) is central to how we determine its quality and relative value." Our relative dislike for work by multiple authors "appears to be driven solely by people's beliefs, rather than by an inherent difference between individual vs. group-generated creative work."

To exploring that notion, and specifically to apply it to works with multiple authors, Smith and Newman performed three experiments. In the first, 222 adults recruited online looked at two images of a sculpture by Tara Donovan made up of "millions of stacked, translucent plastic cups."

Participants were randomly told it was created by one, two, three, or five artists. After viewing the photos, they rated its quality on a one-to-seven scale.

"As predicted, participants rated the sculpture as higher quality when it was created by a single artist," the researchers report. "As the number of authors increased, ratings of quality decreased."

For the second experiment, the researchers turned to less labor-intensive forms of art, instructing participants to evaluate a painting and poem. The 268 people (again recruited online)

viewed a collaborative work of visual art—a 2010 painting entitled *New Music* by Riha Rothberg and Wayne Mikosz—as well as a poem created by a single writer (Katherine Fallon).

They were randomly told that each work was either the product of a solo artist, or a group project. **Once again, those told it was created by one person rated the works more highly.** This held true whether or not they were presented with (fictional) names of the artist or artists.

For the final experiment, 71 people were assigned to create a haiku on the topic, "What is water?" Twenty-three did so on their own, while the others worked in groups of three to create collaborative poems.

Afterwards, 229 people recruited online were asked to evaluate the poems. As in the previous experiments, they were informed that some were done by individuals and others by groups, but these notes were assigned randomly and did not line up with the actual authorship.

"When participants were told that a poem was written by one person, they rated it as higher quality than when they were told it was created by a group," the researchers report. "However, there were no perceived quality differences between poems actually created by individuals vs. groups."

This suggests our relative dislike for work by multiple authors "appears to be driven solely by people's beliefs, rather than by an inherent difference between individual vs. group-generated creative work," they conclude.

Smith and Newman are quick to note that one's evaluation of a work of art is based on a variety of factors. But their findings suggest that, in looking at a painting or reading a poem, we're not only experiencing the final product, but also taking into account how much effort went into it.

To that end, the researchers conclude, "people's lay theory is to divide perceived effort by the number of authors." And more perceived effort increases appreciation.

Smith and Newman concede that this bias may not hold for art forms where there are obviously multiple creators, such as stage musicals. They wonder if it would be as strong in Eastern cultures where the individual is viewed less as an independent entity. And they note it is possible that the poorer evaluations for collaborative work may be due to the distraction created when people "draw their attention to determining the specific nature of each author's contribution."

It's also possible that, unlike the rapidly composed poems in the third experiment, the greatest works of art are driven by an intensely personal vision that would only be diluted by collaboration. Then again, perhaps we've simply been conditioned to believe that. It's impossible to say.

In any case, this research provides evidence for Dutton's thesis: When evaluating a work of art, we take into account the circumstances of its creation. Which is good news for Beethoven (who surely gets points for composing music while deaf), but not-so-good news for, say, Kaufman and Hart. Sure, *You Can't Take It With You* is a great play, but it took two people to write it.

FINDING THE RIGHT WORD

Once collaboration has begun, the audience becomes better acquainted with each character. There's no disregarding how, excuse the pun, *cagey* the artists are with each other. One of the only moments in which we get to see them pure and unfiltered by the airs they put on is when they use word association to describe the Creation before them.

E	B	C	F
Profound	Profoundly Lost	--	--
Life Shattering	--	Unattainable	--
--	Grotesque	--	--
--	Dysphoric	--	--
Balanced	--	Healing	--
--	Feminine	--	--
Demanding	Voiceless	Reflection	--
--	Opportune	--	--
--	Taken	--	--
Elevate	Eye opening	--	--
Calming	--	--	Heavenly
--	Malignant	Transporting	Owned
--	Frail	--	--
Delicate	Destructive	--	--
Powerful	Robbed	--	--
Free	Emptied	--	--

The tensions between E and B are clear. They speak almost exclusively to contradict each other. Meanwhile, C's answers seem random, almost unrelated. Taken into consideration with his view on art and how he lets it affect him, they align. Lastly, F's only two contributions feed into his God complex, which is surprising to no one.

HISTORICAL RELEVANCE

Word Association began with Carl Jung in his exploration of reality and the unconscious. The Word Association Experiment asks 100 questions for immediate association. Reactions are evaluated, as is timing and tone. Whatever is flagged is then discussed with the subject in depth.

Word Association doesn't only reveal inner thoughts of the subject, but it also is used to recognize disruption in relationships.

"What happens in the association test also happens in every discussion between two people. ...The discussion loses its objective character and its real purpose, since the constellated complexes frustrate the intentions of the speakers and may even put answers into the mouths which they can no longer remember afterwards."

- Carl Jung, *A Review of the Complex Theory*

THE POWER OF SPEECH

It is by design that Sid and E are the only female characters in this play. E doesn't recognize this fact, or at least doesn't give it any bearing, until she hears Sid speak for the very first time. In many ways, E is a reflection of women complacent in a patriarchal society - deaf, or not listening to the misconduct inflicted upon women. This is not due to her disbelief that it exists, but rather to her belief that she's better than it. She'd never let herself be a victim. But she can certainly carry disdain for men as a whole.

Why are you assuming it's a woman anyway?	E 'Cause Its locked in a cage?
Because when I looked in her eyes I could	B tell she feels the pain of the Earth.
Wow. Well, praise the Lord you're here so	E you can take that pain away with your
penis-	

When Sid does finally speak, the audience is never clued in to what she says. Whatever it is, it sparks an immediate alliance between her and E. E recognizes that this was *done to a woman by a man* and any interest in artistic opportunity and prestige flies out the window.

You told me It didn't speak.	E
Any more... I said It didn't speak anymore.	F
You told me she couldn't speak.	E
Whatever It said I assure you it is a lie.	F
What have we done?	E
You know what we've done. Look at me... you know. We are creating, from what I have	F
created-	
--We have created nothing here.	E

Sid can speak, and therefore Sid is a living entity with thoughts and emotions and opinions. The Creation is a now suddenly the Mutation. E hears her voice, and that changes the entire game.

Read the following essay from 2017 about the necessity of the female voice, written by Rebecca Solnit.

Silence and powerlessness go hand in hand – women’s voices must be heard

Silence is golden, or so I was told when I was young. Later, everything changed. Silence equals death, the queer activists fighting the neglect and repression around Aids shouted in the streets. Silence is the ocean of the unsaid, the unspeakable, the repressed, the erased, the unheard. It surrounds the scattered islands made up of those allowed to speak and of what can be said and who listens.

Silence occurs in many ways for many reasons; each of us has his or her own sea of unspoken words. English is full of overlapping words, but for the purposes of this essay, regard silence as what is imposed, and quiet as what is sought. The tranquility of a quiet place, of quieting one’s own mind, of a retreat from words and bustle is acoustically the same as the silence of intimidation or repression, but psychically and politically something entirely different. What is unsaid because serenity and introspection are sought and what is not said because the threats are high or the barriers are great are as different as swimming is from drowning. **Quiet is to noise as silence is to communication.**

The quiet of the listener makes room for the speech of others, like the quiet of the reader taking in words on the page, like the white of the paper taking ink. “We are volcanoes,” Ursula Le Guin once remarked. “When we women offer our experience as our truth, as human truth, all the maps change. There are new mountains.” The new voices that are undersea volcanoes erupt in what was mistaken for open water, and new islands are born; it’s a furious business and a startling one. The world changes. **Silence is what allows people to suffer without recourse, what allows hypocrisies and lies to grow and flourish, crimes to go unpunished.** If our voices are essential aspects of our humanity, to be rendered voiceless is to be dehumanised or excluded from one’s humanity. And the history of silence is central to women’s history.

Words bring us together, and silence separates us, leaves us bereft of the help or solidarity or just communion that speech can solicit or elicit. Some species of trees spread root systems underground that interconnect the individual trunks and weave the individual trees into a more stable whole that can’t so easily be blown down in the wind. Stories and conversations are like those roots.

Being unable to tell your story is a living death, and sometimes a literal one. If no one listens when you say your ex-husband is trying to kill you, if no one believes you when you say you are in pain, if no one hears you when you say help, if you don’t dare say help, if you have been trained not to bother people by saying help. If you are considered to be out of line when you speak up in a meeting, are not admitted into an institution of power, are subject to irrelevant criticism whose subtext is that women should not be here or heard.

Stories save your life. And stories are your life. We are our stories; stories that can be both prison and the crowbar to break open the door of that prison. We make stories to save ourselves or to trap ourselves or others – stories that lift us up or smash us against the stone wall of our own limits and fears. Liberation is always in part a storytelling process: breaking stories, breaking silences, making new stories. A free person tells her own story. A valued person lives in a society in which her story has a place.

Violence against women is often against our voices and our stories. It is a refusal of our voices, and of what a voice means: the right to self-determination, to participation, to consent or dissent; to live and participate, to interpret and narrate.

A husband hits his wife to silence her. A date rapist or acquaintance rapist refuses to let the “no” of his victim mean what it should, that she alone has jurisdiction over her body. Rape culture asserts that women’s testimony is worthless, untrustworthy. Anti-abortion activists also seek to silence the self-determination of women. A murderer silences forever.

These are assertions that the victim has no rights, no value – is not an equal.

Other silencings take place in smaller ways: the people harassed and badgered into silence online, talked over and cut out in conversation, belittled, humiliated, dismissed.

Having a voice is crucial. It’s not all there is to human rights, but it’s central to them, and so you can consider the history of women’s rights and lack of rights as a history of silence and breaking silence. Speech, words, voices sometimes change things in themselves when they bring about inclusion, recognition: the rehumanisation that undoes dehumanisation. Sometimes they are only the preconditions to changing rules, laws, regimes to bring about justice and liberty.

Sometimes just being able to speak, to be heard, to be believed, are crucial parts of membership in a family, a community, a society. Sometimes our voices break those things apart; sometimes those things are prisons.

And then when words break through unspeakability, what was tolerated by a society sometimes becomes intolerable. Those not impacted can fail to see or feel the impact of segregation or police brutality or domestic violence; stories bring home the trouble and make it unavoidable.

By voice, I don’t mean only literal voice – the sound produced by the vocal cords in the ears of others – but the ability to speak up, to participate, to experience oneself and be experienced as a free person with rights. This includes the right not to speak, whether it’s the right against being tortured to confess, as political prisoners are, or not to be expected to service strangers who approach you, as some men do to young women, demanding attention and flattery and punishing their absence.

Who has been unheard? The sea is vast, and the surface of the ocean is unmappable. We know who has, mostly, been heard on the official subjects; who held office, commanded armies, served as judges and juries, wrote books, and ran empires over past several centuries. We know how it has changed somewhat, thanks to the countless revolutions of the 20th century and after – against colonialism, racism, misogyny, against the innumerable enforced silences homophobia imposed, and so much more. We know that in the US, class was leveled out to some extent in the 20th century and then reinforced towards the end, through income inequality and the withering away of social mobility and the rise of a new extreme elite. Poverty silences.

Silence is what allowed predators to rampage through the decades unchecked. It’s as though the voices of these prominent public men devoured the voices of others into nothingness, a narrative cannibalism. They rendered them voiceless to refuse and afflicted with unbelievable stories. Unbelievable means those with power did not want to know, to hear, to believe, did not want them to have voices. People died from being unheard.

If the right to speak, if having credibility, if being heard is a kind of wealth, that wealth is now being redistributed. There has long been an elite with audibility and credibility, and an underclass of the voiceless.

As the wealth is redistributed, the stunned incomprehension of the elites erupts over and over again, a fury and disbelief that this woman or child dared to speak up, that people deigned to believe her, that her voice counts for something, that her truth may end a powerful man’s reign. **These voices, heard, upend power relations.**

A hotel cleaner launched the beginning of the end of IMF chief Dominique Strauss-Kahn’s career. Women have ended the careers of stars in many fields – or rather those stars have destroyed themselves by acts they engaged in, believing that they had the impunity that comes with their victims’ powerlessness. Many had impunity for years, some for lifetimes; many have now found they no longer do.

Who is heard and who is not defines the status quo. Those who embody it, often at the cost of extraordinary silences with themselves, move to the centre; those who embody what is not heard, or what violates those who rise on silence, are cast out.

By redefining whose voice is valued, we redefine our society and its values.

QUESTIONS FOR THE PLAYWRIGHT

As Artistic Director, Stefan's goal is to organize, incite, and guide the artistic events, processes, and goals of The Impostors Theatre Company while also making sure to uphold the mission, vision, and objectives of the ensemble. He aims to ignite passion and conversation through theatre and by embracing the art of the pretend. The stage, for Stefan, provides a place for community and plays at the crossroads of the fantastical and the everyday. At these crossroads, the artist and the spectator discover together the wonderful, infuriating, and ultimately rewarding mysteries of coexistence. The seemingly mundane (the crooked shadow, the narrow alleyway, and the passing stranger) has always fed Stefan's curiosity and imagination. The desire to stage, expose, and explore these imaginings is what led him to found The Impostors.

What is your relationship with art history? Can you describe the impact it has made on you, and how that led to this script?

My interest in fine art and studio art started at a young age. My brother was the reader. I never liked to read. I drew; he read. Drawing always helped me focus, process, and visualize ideas stuck in my head. Both of my parents are very artistic. My dad even majored in art. When I was young, I used to want to be an illustrator. I find the history of art fascinating to an extent. Particularly the meaning behind why certain art forms were deemed "good" and "high class" and other forms were considered "low-brow" or "bad." The meaning and the style change drastically from era to era, and I think the driving force behind why forms and styles change (I.E. mostly people and environment) is what draws me to the history of it.

Allegories are usually intended to examine something very specific - *Animal Farm* and tyranny, *The Chronicles of Narnia* and Christian beliefs. Would you say your allegory operates this way?

I think it's as specific as you can get with anything that's considered relative. The allegory, obviously, is about art, identity, and responsibility. All of these themes are somewhat relative (hence the different character types in the show). In that sense, *Caged* is not cut and dry like the allegory in *Narnia* (Christianity) and *Animal Farm* (Tyranny) because there is very little that is relative to those stories.

How does this play fit into the mission of the Impostors Theatre Company?

Granted, I would say this show falls on the side of "mature." But it is a clear mixture of wide-eyed whimsy and fantasy, and world-weary perspectives.

What are you hoping your audience will take away from this play about artists and their motivations?

Conversation and self-reflection. I think we can all find a sliver of ourselves in every character on stage... whether you're an artist or not. What parts do you want to change? What parts are you guilty of adopting?

Besides the obvious metaphors, why a bird? Why a cage?

Honestly, I'm not sure. Angels and Demons have always fascinated and haunted me. Often times angels are depicted with feathers or wings... but most biblical stories of angels and demons depict them as strong frightening creatures. So despite the obvious metaphors, I think there is something inherently frightening and intriguing about a bird/humanoid. Are we supposed to trust it? Or are we supposed to wrestle it?

RESOURCES

THE CANVAS

- What is an art movement?
http://www.artfactory.com/art_appreciation/art_movements/art_movements.htm
- Timeline of Referenced Art Movements
https://www.theartstory.org/section_movements.htm

IDENTIFYING THE ALLEGORY

- Why do we make art?
https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why_we_make_art
- The Creation - It/Sidero
<https://earthsky.org/space/myth-and-science-of-pleiades-star-cluster>
<https://earthsky.org/favorite-star-patterns/pleiades-star-cluster-enjoys-worldwide-renown>

SWANSONG QUARTET

- Individual vs Collaborative Art
<https://psmag.com/social-justice/artists-working-solo-create-finest-work-believe-82696>

FINDING THE RIGHT WORD

- Historical Relevance
<https://frithluton.com/articles/word-association-experiment/>

THE POWER OF SPEECH

- Rebecca Solnit Essay
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/mar/08/silence-powerlessness-womens-voices-rebecca-solnit>