

4-20-2021

Women's Turn

Cassandra Rosado

Follow this and additional works at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/digressions>



Part of the [Art and Design Commons](#), and the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Rosado, Cassandra (2021) "Women's Turn," *Digressions: Literary & Art Journal*: Vol. 18 , Article 4.
Available at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/digressions/vol18/iss2/4>

This Special Issue is brought to you for free and open access by the Digressions at NSUWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Digressions: Literary & Art Journal by an authorized editor of NSUWorks. For more information, please contact nsuworks@nova.edu.

WOMEN'S TURN CASSANDRA ROSADO

The piece begins at Chapter 34 during Circe Berman's last night with Rabo. From the perspective of Circe, we learn her true identity. Circe Berman does not exist. The woman Rabo meets on the beach is his mother. Inspired by Vonnegut's unique framing of time, the piece characterizes his mother as someone who can become "unstuck" in time. That term is used by Vonnegut in Bluebeard to describe how his characters travel through time in strange ways. The mystery of Circe Berman, who she is, and why she acts the way she does was never answered from Rabo's point of view. Through Circe's memories we can begin to understand her motives and add depth to a character we know little about.

...
"Animal, vegetable *and* mineral?"

He said it was all three, and upon seeing the painting, I confirmed that it truly was each of those and more. When my eyes first land on the canvas, the colors glitter under the floodlights like jewels. I could feel my chest tighten as if Rabo had reached in and grabbed my heart with his fist.

...
Dogs growled somewhere to my left, fighting over the rib meat of a corpse. I closed my eyes tightly, trying to stop the panic building in me. It pressed on me like a physical weight. Or maybe that was the dead man on top of me. Unfortunately, all closing my eyes did was direct my attention to the putrid smell of feces, vomit, and rot. It was enough to make my eyes water even while closed. Opening my eyes again, I stare into the gaping mouth of a dead woman. No teeth occupied her mouth, but jewels flowed out of it and pooled around her like a perverse waterfall.

...
When Rabo leads me to the middle of the painting, I realize the scene is familiar. It is the last day of WWII. I recognize the chaos. Years ago, I had gone to bed as a young girl in Armenia. When I woke up, I was in a German valley as confused as anyone else there. I did not stay long. I was back in my bed in Armenia after what felt like only a few minutes; judging by the sun rising outside my window I understood several hours had passed. That is my first memory of becoming unstuck. Since then, it has happened many times. I never know where or when I

will go, but I can feel when it is coming. It usually feels like time is peeling off my body like glue. Sometimes it is like I am cotton candy being held under the slow drip of a leaky faucet.

. . .

“Where are we,” I ask him despite already knowing the answer.

Rabo is more than willing to answer the question and the several dozen I asked him after that one. I can see the Gregorian influence in his art style, and it makes me proud to know that there were *two* great Armenian artists known in America. My son, an Armenian with a name like Karabekian, will be known for decades to come as a successful art collector and artist. The painting itself is heartbreaking. To imagine what Rabo must have seen and been through after I left him has always weighed on me, but I can see him healing with each backstory he gives to his painting. Being here to witness it is healing me too.

As we leave the potato barn, I feel lighter.

. . .

“You took me dancing after all,” I say. Our clasped hands swing between us as we walk across the lawn. The night air is salty and cool.

. . .

We sit in the living room and share one final conversation as Rabo Karabekian and Circe Berman. For Rabo, it is his final conversation with ‘Circe Berman.’ For me, it is my last conversation *as* ‘Circe Berman.’ I know that I will have many more conversations with Rabo in my future. Not necessarily in *the* future, if you look at time linearly, but I know that I will speak with Rabo once I go back to the time and place I was before I became unstuck here.

. . .

Rabo asks me if I will write. His words are not completely registering, and I can feel myself slipping through the hourglass. I know my presence here will not last much longer, which is why I told Rabo this is my last night here. The time I spent being here was a blessing and a curse. No mother wants to learn that their child’s hardships continue into their old age, but I have used this time to learn about him. That first day on the beach, I learned just how much time I will miss in his life and made it my mission to catch up. Becoming unstuck here specifically

was dumb luck. I have been in many places, many times, and met many people, but it is rare that I become unstuck in a time and place so close to my own timeline.

“That’s all I do,” I answer, “that and dancing. As long as I keep that up, I keep grief away.”

. . .

“Մտո՞ր?”

He does not seem to hear me. He only stares at the town with a blank expression. *Paved with gold?* Fool’s gold, maybe. My heart feels heavy. All that I have gone through and all the things I have done...for *this?* I stole jewels from a dead woman’s mouth—a secret I will deny and take to my grave—just to throw them to a scammer. I was disgusted by my actions before, but now I am angry and determined to keep going even if my only motivation is spite towards fate. One day, when we have a family, I will make sure our children make it out of here. They will show everyone that Armenians are a people to be reckoned with.

. . .

Somehow, we got on the topic of Paul Slazinger. Rabo brings up the idea of meat and soul again.

“I wonder what his soul felt when his meat decided to jump on top of a grenade,” he muses.

“Why didn’t it kill him?”

“Unforgivably sloppy workmanship at the hand grenade factory,” he shrugs.

I let that sink in for a minute and choose my next words carefully. “His meat did that, and *your* meat made the picture in the potato barn,” I say.

Rabo responds, but I am not really paying attention. I already know what kind of response he will have. I clear my throat. “Well then,” I start, “isn’t it time for your soul, which has been ashamed of your meat for so long, to thank your meat for finally doing something wonderful?”

. . .

“That sounds right, too,” Rabo responds.

"You have to actually *do it*," I urge.

"How?"

"Hold your hand in front of your eye," I start, "and look at those strange and clever animals with love and gratitude, and tell them out loud: 'Thank you, Meat.'"

I watch as Rabo lifts his hands up, his one eye focusing on them. "Thank you, Meat."

I hold my breath as I watch him. As he speaks, I can feel the sincerity in his words. His gratitude is also an apology. Rabo's face holds a smile so small I am not sure he even realizes he is doing it. For the first time since I have been staying here, Rabo seems happy. Content.

. . .

I feel satisfied that I can now leave Rabo's life again. I am leaving and taking with me the knowledge that one day my son will let go of his guilt.

Tell me how your parents died, I had asked him. Knowing that I will leave him at such a young age, I felt remorse. I wished I could tell him that I am here, that I am proud of him. But I could not do that. All I could do was this, but maybe this is enough. Maybe I die so soon because I became unstuck here, and I know that life will eventually work itself out for my son. Maybe I die in peace because I know that my son will be able to die in peace.