

Dear Diary

I was walking out of work one Wednesday night, smelling like something that had just come out of a fryer. I wrapped my oversized woollen jacket around my shoulders and zipped it up before braving the brisk November night. My knitted scarf trailed behind as I struggled to find the energy to push the weighted fire door open. Taking my phone out of my coat pocket, the dull screen displayed the numbers 23:07. Mummifying myself, I wrapped my scarf close to my face to provide protection against the sharp breeze. It offered little consolation.

In the obscurity of night, in spite of the dim street lights that were attempting to illuminate the road I know so well, it felt foreign. An alien town. When the local brewery no longer serves past 10:30pm on a weekday, and the harsh flickering electric light of the 24-hour convenience store was now sleepy and dull, it was empty. The alleys and street corners housed nothing but solid masses of darkness that were briefly interrupted by small rustlings from the scavenging foxes that were pillaging for scraps amongst the bins.

The darkness does not scare me. But how it twists innocent thoughts does. When seeing someone in the daybreak they are exposed; they cannot hide. The sun has no limitations to what it shows. However, when we only have the faint hue from the moon and artificial street light to allow us to pierce through our subsequent suspicion of the solitary figure coming towards us, they appear as sinister silhouettes.

Shadows can be deceiving.

As every normal person walking alone at night, of course I was going to be cautious and paranoid. But this wasn't paranoia. I turned back to see a distant profile of an unknown figure. This someone was quite distinctly a broad shouldered male that was

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becoming increasingly at every moment. Not to assume the worst, I continued towards the park.

It is quicker this way.

The frost-bitten grass crunched under the weight of my body as I went wandering through the empty playing field that was the best entertainment for any child. I recalled the countless hours spent amongst friends, entertaining ourselves with next to nothing. How what felt like minutes turned into hours of playing tag, hide 'n' seek and stuck in the mud. The swings that were once a gate to the castle of the playful sanctuary had now been abused with graffiti and rust. Everywhere was littered with rubbish, deflated footballs or odd gloves. It was offbeat.

Interrupted, I stopped. Being so consumed in the innocent thoughts of my childhood, the sound of another set of feet on the icy grass had escaped me. It wasn't just footsteps –the stench of cheap cologne, stale beer, and desperation crept ever closer. I picked up my pace. My paranoid thoughts were now becoming a reality.

Don't look back. Just get home.

Out of the park, I felt safer. The sodium gleam of the street lights now gave me a sense of relief as I began to walk down the alley. Without warning, I was yanked backwards from my shoulders. Losing my footing, I fell the ground. In a haze, I attempted regain my balance but the towering mound continued to pushed me down with a brute force. Forcefully whipping my scarf off my person as I tried to crawl away in desperation. Dropping the scarf, he strode toward me. He was just getting started. Without difficulty, I was thrown towards the stone building. Pushing myself up against the wall, I shrieked. He proceeding to slam his hand over my mouth and

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pinned me against the wall... The reddened brick providing little cushioning to soften the blow.

The light had only but a few seconds ago given me comfort, was now casting shadows protecting the predator's identity. I was being consumed by the night. I was engulfed by the stench of alcohol on his breath.

My vision slowly became infatuated with fuzzy swirls and lines of deep reds as a high pitched ringing started to fade out.

November 28th

Dear Diary,

I am sorry I haven't written in a while. I just don't feel like myself. I feel disgusting, like it was my fault. I have lost all control.

I still haven't told anyone; no-one knows what happened. But I can't help myself anymore. I am trapped, which is why I have resulted to this...

I feel like a prisoner of thoughts and blameless 'what ifs'. My own mind keeping me here.

What If I had gone a different way home?

What if I had finished work just a few minutes later?

Dear Diary

What If, What If, What If.

I am suffocated with the sensation of hurt. That same night being replayed day in day out. I am unable to concentrate at school, I have started to detach myself from everything and everyone. I don't want people to ask, I don't want to make it obvious. It's easier this way.

I thought that if I didn't speak about it, it would just go away. If I spoke to someone it would all become real. I'm not ready for people to know... not ready for it to become reality. Because when they do, I will be treated differently.

Why would they believe me anyway? I didn't even see his face. I'd be called a 'liar', known as that girl that walked the wrong way. 'It is her own fault anyway'. It was months ago, and it wouldn't make a difference to what has happened. I've got to live with it no matter what.

I remember walking in a quiet moment
gone with someone by your side
like by accident

Speech to Sixth Form Students

Audience

I remember being at school, doing A-levels much like you are now. I was heavily into sports because let's face it, when you're juggling 4 A-levels anything to get you out the house was great. What I noticed was that there were only typically female sports available to take part in. Sports like football, rugby and cricket were not an option, this was a problem to me so I said something. This is where it became clear to me that there is a common divide between how the genders are treated.

So why is it that we are treated differently? Why do some people think there are superiors and inferiors? I can tell you why.

History has been the same for many years. Going back through the decades, women were to stay at home cook, clean and care for children whilst men were striving to succeed in the workforce. Women were merely stay at home baby-makers.

You want to vote? Forget it.

What about a job? Good one.

Fortunately, things have changed. Women have gained substantial political rights and governmental professions. However, the world is still unequal towards women, it is much easier for men to find work because most employers will still choose men over us. 25% of female workers have experienced discrimination and unfair treatment in the work place! That is a quarter of every one of you in this room right now.

Speech to Sixth Form Students

It is all down to the fact that society has always placed women below man, because of the placement of power. Money demands power, therefore whoever brings home the money holds all the power in the household, this was primarily the man many years ago. Men have the ability to have a successful career and also a family without having to compromise. Woman on the other hand can be either have a successful career OR be family orientated, a sacrifice has to be made. But what if we want both?

You can't cook? I feel bad for your husband.

You don't have kids? Isn't that what your body is made to do?

No job? Probably best so you can focus on children.

Either route a woman chooses to follow ends up with people questioning her, like we shouldn't feel complete without children, like we shouldn't have a choice to put ourselves and a career first. This is where the traditional gender roles still prevail in everyday society.

Women are almost expected to have children; people are shocked when a woman hasn't had them because they cannot be fulfilled without the idea of children.

Even when a woman does have work, they are less likely to advance and receive promotions. This is thanks to the fact that they participate in an uneven playing field that is the workplace. Gender diversity is not a priority; it is not treated like the imperative it should be. The higher up you go up the leadership ladder, the fewer women there are undertaking senior roles in companies as there are more barriers than there are for men. Women remain underrepresented in all sectors of work

Speech to Sixth Form Students

purely because society has not yet realised that us as women deserved to be treated the same as our male colleagues and friends.

The women who have achieved high roles such as CEO's in organisations are under threat by male employees that are resentful by the fact that a female has an equal or higher position than them. These women defy the social expectations of them. Often, confident, driven women feel although they have to adopt the male attitude towards business in order to achieve this. This can then result in being characterized as aggressive or intimidating, but is the man called this?

No! They are ambitious, and are portraying their most attractive aspects in order to move forward.

The society we live in today is causing women to pander into self-doubt. We belittle ourselves and our achievements in fear of being accused of bragging. If we have achieved something great, it can't possibly be down to us as an individual. Some sort of assistance must have been acquired, is some of the comments I have certainly heard. When in reality women can do a list of things more effectively than men can, for one we have the power to make children, do men? I sure hope not.

What I am trying to say is that whatever hurdles that have been put up to prevent you from aiming for what you want because you are a woman are difficult and unfair but they are possible to overcome. I got my football team.

Commentary

Both my fiction and my non-fiction coursework enable me to explore stereotypical gender issues with society, particularly focusing on females: the strain applied to women in the workforce by authority figures, and the liability and lack of support from the world around them outside of work. *To Kill a Mockingbird* *Kite Runner?* provided me with a broad range of examples about how women are treated differently in everyday life. This enabled me to highlight the dramatic contrast about how women have been treated differently to men throughout the decades. My literary piece 'Dear Diary' is an extract from a short story that is written in first person narrative 'the darkness does not scare me', much like 'The Kite Runner'. There is a clear narrative voice running throughout, enabling me to suggest women's helplessness under men; consequently, I can imagine it being read by a mature audience primarily, such as late teens and onwards due to the disturbing nature of the piece shown through the lexical field of violence 'lashing, yanked, with a brute force'. The overall idea was brought from my wider reading around the subject through 'Cupcakes and Kalashnikovs'. Creating the idea of boys 'peppering their words' in order to avoid conviction for sexual harassment and the idea that if a girl speaks up, she is not believed. The main protagonist is unnamed through-out as it adds to the authenticity and reflects the idea that victims prefer to remain anonymous about their experiences.

Gender power and control
My non-fiction piece is a speech aimed at mature student girls, to inform them on the unfair 'hurdles' that the genders propose in the working environment. The speech is subjective and persuasive and aims to provoke deeper thought about the work place and how women are treated. I was inspired by the Reliable Plant article about workplace discrimination that explores the unfair community that segregates not only women, but homosexuals, Hispanics, Asians, African-American and workers

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with disabilities. However, I chose to interpret only the women segment as I found it fitting with my wider reading.

My fiction's persona begins with a flash back of a past event that hints suspense through the use of a simple syntax and use of one-line paragraphs 'Don't look back. Just get home'- to provide extra emphasis. The use of stichomythia helps increase the pace and tension in the climax, which also helps ease the reading for the audience. The short sentences are accentuated by the longer complex sentences used for exposition purposes; 'In the obscurity of night, in spite of the dim street lights that were attempting to illuminate the road I know so well, it felt foreign.'. The use of literary devices is also carry on through the sense of foreboding; 'The darkness does not scare me. But how it twists innocent thoughts does.'

Personification of the 'darkness' is used to hint to the reader that an event might occur later in the text. While this is just an irrational vision, it also gives the reader an ominous detail and introduces the idea of light and darkness that is carried on through out, 'the sodium gleam of the street lights' and 'the light that had but a few seconds ago given me comfort.'

Contrasting with the fiction's simple register, the speech has some elements that use an elevated lexis: 'traditional gender roles' and 'gender diversity' which correlate to the lexical field of hierarchy. There is a clear sense of intimacy and engagement with the audience, 'You want a job? Forget it' and 'So why is it we are treated differently?'- using rhetorical questions helps interaction because of the direct address. The speech's character has a tone that fluctuates. She is eager to establish a relationship with the audience 'I remember doing A levels'- starting off with an easily accessible phrase. Developing from this, she often uses first and third person

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pronouns 'I can tell you why' and 'But what if we want both?' - which convey a dominant and confident character along with the use of exclamatory sentence types 'No!'. Rhetorical questioning is a common feature in the speech and is used as a persuasive device; 'Why do some people think there are superiors and inferiors?' and 'You can't cook? I feel bad for your husband.' Triadic structures 'cook clean and care for children' also convey a sense of anger through the consonance of the letter 'c'. The speech also uses facts and statistics in order to manipulate the audience's beliefs of the subject, '25% of female workers have experienced discrimination and unfair treatment in the work place!'. This also helps increase reliability and credibility.

While the speech provides a literal description of the work place environment through her first hand experiences 'this is where it became clear to me...', unlike the short story extract that uses more figurative language: metaphors ('the swings that were once a gate to the castle of the playful sanctuary') continues to give a sense of foreboding. The literary piece uses alliteration of the 's' sound 'our subsequent suspicion of the solitary figure coming towards us, they appear as sinister silhouettes', this sibilance creates a strong hissing sound which is suggestive of a violence and unexpected nature.

There is a pivot in the literary piece, the start is in the past tense and is heavily made up of exposition, however the second section is a present tense diary entry sharing the thought and feelings of the character. By talking in the present tense with mainly declaratives, 'I am sorry I haven't written in a while. I just don't feel like myself. I feel disgusting, like it was my fault. I have lost all control.' - she is presented as anxious in her personal commentary of the previous events, anxious to let the audience know her thoughts. This can also be conveyed through the shorter sentences, 'I feel like a

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prisoner of thoughts and blameless 'what ifs'. My own mind keeping me here. What If I had gone a different way home?'-to show the confusion in her mind and to relay the fact that she is 'detaching herself'.

My created texts harbour different attitudes towards the idea of Society and the individual; the speeches persona is used for inspiring and pre-warning the audience of what to expect in the future- which is summarised by the ongoing idea of the football team; 'I got my football team'. The use of this at the start and at the end of the speech help tie the piece together as a whole whereas the literary piece is overall more serious, through the use of language and exposition and the subject matter.

This is not what I mean. It's specific
of language. There is a distinct difference
between the two. It's not a matter of
how the text has been created.
There is some acknowledgment of the
importance of language. It's not
just a matter of words. It's about the
+ could be developed.
And it's not in individual. It's
the. And not by the way.
for the individual.
Endogamy?