

Pseudonyms Versus the Patriarchy: Representation Through Masks in Siri Hustvedt's *The
Blazing World*

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the way the masks in Siri Hustvedt's *The Blazing World* can be seen as pseudonyms, and how these pseudonyms represent the main character Harriet Burden's reasons for starting her project and why it failed. Pseudonyms can be defined as masks that allows the characters to express opinions and concepts freely, without having these connected to themselves. This is done through representation, which can be understood through Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of signs, Roland Barthes' theory of denotation and connotation, and Michel Foucault's discursive theory. The three masks from Harriet's project represent the ways in which her project failed, whereas the mask Richard shows her reasons for starting it, and how she was influenced by the patriarchal structures around her. The Richard mask allows Harriet to explore the way she views masculinity, and it exposes the way she feels she has been oppressed by some of the men in her life.

Keywords: Siri Hustvedt, *The Blazing World*, Pseudonyms, Masks, Gender.

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Introduction:

The practice of writing under a pseudonym is one that has historically allowed people to express themselves freely without retribution from those opposed to their work. This has happened in the form of politicians expressing radical or unpopular opinions, but has also been done to avoid a bias in perception due to race, sexuality, or gender. Although generally done by writers, this practice can be extended to take into account works made by other crafts, such as artists. The fact that it allows a person to create something without having it associated with themselves, makes pseudonyms or masks an excellent shield against the opinions and biases of others. In *The Blazing World* by Siri Hustvedt, this practice is used to expose one such bias, namely one against women.

The Blazing World's main character Harriet Burden uses the fact that pseudonyms can be used to avoid negative perception due to gender, and attempts to expose the gendered bias of her audience. Her reasons for doing so are influenced by her history of feeling unappreciated by men in her life. This paper will explore the way the masks in *The Blazing World* function as pseudonyms and what they reveal in terms of representation of gender. It will look at the way Harriet's project attempts to use three male artists to unveil the sexism in the artworld, and how these three masks represent the way she failed to do so. It will discuss Harriet's reasons for starting her project, and how gender plays into this. A conclusion will be reached through the application of theory on pseudonyms and representation, and close reading of the novel. Harriet starts her pseudonym project in an attempt to expose sexism in the artworld due to the way she has personally felt oppressed by patriarchal structures, but her three masks represent the way she did not achieve this.

Chapter 1: Masks as Pseudonyms

Pseudonyms can be defined in multiple ways, such as protective devices, literary devices, or merely the use of a different name. Historically, pseudonyms have often been used to disguise one's identity for self-preservation, for protection against an institution, such as a government or a religious institution (Baggini 46, Ezell 12). Julian Baggini argues that they were often used to avoid religious persecution, or to freely express unpopular political opinions.

Margaret Ezell emphasises the latter, explaining that this became more associated with pseudonyms over time because it was done so much by 19th and 20th century political writers (12). However, Ezell argues that there are many different ways to use pseudonyms. For instance, they can be used as a type of literary device. (16). There were also writers who used them to signify their membership of a particular literary movement (15). Baggini mentions the idea of hiding your identity as a literary device as well, namely when discussing Kierkegaard. He claims that Kierkegaard used different names to borrow an identity and extend his world view (47). Both Baggini and Ezell mention that a myriad of women have used pennames to avoid societal judgement (Baggini 46, Ezell 14). Paula Feldman offers a different perspective by stating that women in 18th century England often were opposed to writing poetry under a pseudonym (283). She argues that the belief that women did not publish under their own name originates from the fact that these cases were discussed more in academia. Feldman adds four reasons for writing under a pseudonym, which are the discussion of controversial subjects, the intended audience being children, using it as a publishing ploy, or enabling co-authorship (286-7). Baggini states that in a contemporary context, the reason for using a pseudonym has changed (46). In this day and age, people may use them to protect their privacy in a digital world (47). Furthermore, the rise of the internet brought with it the opportunity to use a fake name that allowed people to anonymously send negative messages to people they disliked, like internet trolls. Jessica Taylor also discusses a modern way of

using pseudonyms, namely the idea of using a penname as a property (116). She explains that romance writers in the United States and Canada have been using them as a way of developing a brand. In this way, the penname becomes their property, something the authors can use to make money (121). Taylor argues that the names these author's use are identities that are similar to the author's sense of self, but not identical.

Thus, pseudonyms can be defined in a number of ways, which can be used to look at the masks in *The Blazing World*. This novel features a myriad of masks that come in many forms, both literal and figurative. The concept of disguises is introduced as early as the editor's notes (1). The fictional editor, I.V. Hess, introduces the reader to the main character Harriet Burden, and her ambitious art project. This project involves Harriet exhibiting her work under the disguise of three male artist, which is where the first disguises come in. Each of these artists were perceived by Harriet as a mask (2). There are also masks in this novel that are pennames, such as Roger Raison, Bertha Pappenheim, and James Tiptree. These are merely names used to hide someone's identity. One of the other examples in *The Blazing World* is seen in the passage where Rune and Harriet play with gender (236). Here, the characters are wearing physical masks, but they are intentionally undecorated and called "blank" (235). They represent the figurative masks Rune and Harriet put on, namely those of the gender opposite to their own. Physical masks also feature in the art installation that Rune and Harriet put on together (262-3). All these examples show different types of disguises. Some are physical, some are names, some are figurative, but they can all be seen as pseudonyms. Roger Raison and James Tiptree can be understood as such in the sense that they were used by writers in order to hide their identity. The name Anna O., although not used for writing, works in the same way. The other masks, apart from perhaps the physical ones in Harriet and Rune's art installation, fit into the same category. A person using a pseudonym, often does not want their work to be associated with themselves. In Harriet's project, this is

because she has noticed that people cannot separate her art from their perception of her as a person (37). Harriet wants to prove that because she is a woman, and because she was married to an art dealer, her audience does not take her art as seriously as they should. She wants to use the identity of male artists to show that her work will be perceived as more valuable when her audience thinks it has been made by a man (37). Her using the identity Anton Tish, Phineas Q. Eldridge, and Rune can therefore be seen as her using a pseudonym, as it prevents people from linking her to her art. Furthermore, some of the characters in the novel call it a pseudonym project, such as Maisie and Bruno (4, 167). The notion of preventing a link between Harriet and a concept is also evident in the blank masks Rune and Harriet wear in their experiment. In this experiment, it is important for them to let go of their individual identity, and to take on the new identity of the opposite gender. Again, the characters are trying to disconnect themselves from their project. However, in this instance it can be argued that Rune and Harriet take on pseudonyms to express an unpopular opinion. This is because the way they express gender is quite extreme. Since Harriet's goal is to show that women are equal to men, at least in the sense of art, it probably goes against her personal ideology. The woman is weak and cowers before the man, who cannot stand her weakness. This view can be considered extremely conservative, as portraying the woman as weak and the man as her strong superior, is something that is seen as rather outdated. The masks therefore allow them to express their way of viewing gender in a safe way.

Chapter 2: Representation and Ethan's Alphabet

The masks in *The Blazing World* represent certain ideologies, and because of this, taking into account how production of meaning through representation works can further the understanding of these representations. Stuart Hall claims that representation “connects meaning and language to culture” (1). Hall’s argument focusses on how people use language and representation to understand the world around them, to which Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright add the dimension of vision. Sturken and Cartwright argue that people use both language and images to create meaning (12). Their book, *Practices of Looking*, focusses on how representation works through visibility, whereas Hall gives a more detailed account of representation in general. Hall claims that there are three approaches to explaining how language is used in representation (10). First, there is the reflective approach. This approach claims that meaning lies in the real world, in an object, idea, or person. Language here functions as a mirror, it merely reflects the ideas inherent in the world around us. The second approach is the intentional approach. Here, the speaker or author imposes meaning on the world, so their intentions are what their words mean. The creator produces an understanding of the world. The third approach is the one Hall uses to develop his theory throughout his book *Representations* (11). This is the constructionist approach. With this approach, the social character of language is taken into consideration, and therefore it acknowledges that people create and share knowledge using representational systems. To understand the way representation works more thoroughly, Hall delves into theory developed by Ferdinand de Saussure (16). Saussure saw representation as consisting of signs. There is the signifier, which is the idea or concept, and the signified, which is the corresponding concept that idea triggers in your mind. Hall argues that words can signify many different concepts over the course of history, and therefore definitions are never fixed. Deciphering these definitions must involve a process of interpretation, as people must try to understand what specific words mean in a

specific moment of time (17). Hall discusses Roland Barthes in order to add to the understanding of representation. Barthes argued that there are two levels of meaning, denotation and connotation (23). Here, denotation is the basic descriptive level, whereas connotation is when the description is decoded into broader themes of meaning. Sturken and Cartwright use this theory to explain why visual representations such as for instance photographs are not essentially objective (20). They argue that objectivity lies in the denotative message, but the connotative myth needs to be taken into account as well. They state that “connotative meanings are informed by the cultural and historical contexts of the image and the viewers’ lived, felt knowledge of those circumstances” (20). Therefore, connotation is deeply personally informed. Hall explains the importance of human interaction in understanding representation, which he does through discursive theory developed by Michel Foucault (27-8). This theory takes into account the subject of representation, without putting that person back in the centre as the intentional approach did. This theory could therefore account for relations of power: who has the authority to speak and who does not. Foucault was interested in the production of meaning and knowledge through discourse (29). The discursive approach shows how power can influence what is considered to be true (33). Discourse can sustain a “regime of truth”, which means that if a large group of people believe a concept to be true, their behaviour will change, which will lead to that concept becoming the truth as an aftermath of their actions (34). Who is allowed to participate in discourse can therefore heavily influence what is believed to be true. Sturken and Cartwright argue that representation can create an ideology, which they define as “the broad but indispensable shared sets of values and beliefs through which individuals live out their complex relations in a range of social networks” (23).

This theory is particularly evident in two pages of *The Blazing World*, and they can be seen as an explanation of the way Harriet’s many masks function in the novel. Harriet’s son

Ethan writes a piece that is titled “An Alphabet Toward Several Meanings of Art and Generation” (144). This piece consists of seven numbered paragraphs, each explaining art using abstract letters. A is the artist, B is the artwork, and C is the audience looking at the artwork. In Ethan’s description of how meaning is found in and by these letters, there is representational theory evident. For instance, Hall’s theory of the intentional, reflective, and constructive approaches can be found here. The intentional approach can be vaguely seen in point 1, as Ethan notes that “an idea that is part of the body of A becomes a thing that is B” (144). This suggests that what the artist had intended becomes what the artwork shows. However, in point 2 Ethan mentions that B can exist without A, which means the meaning is inherent in the object, quite like the reflective approach (144). Most of the other points Ethan makes go into the constructive approach. It can be argued that D denotes ideology. D is what becomes attached to B after A has moved out of the picture (144-5). It is also stated that “B’s meaning lives only in the body of C” (145). In this sense we can see the constructive approach and Foucault’s discursive theory, where the way the viewer discusses and thinks about the object is taken into consideration. Barthes’ notion of denotation and connotation is visible in the way artwork B no longer merely means what is shown in it. Rather it has an extra layer, D, that has changed the way C looks at B (144-5). This all ties into power structures, as C has the power of looking, and whoever ensured that D was the ideology attached to B has the power to change C’s mind.

The importance of Ethan’s alphabet is that it can aid in explaining how Harriet’s masks functioned. Ethan’s text can be seen as an explanation of how Harriet’s art was viewed. In point 3, Ethan states that “when C looks at B, C does not view A” (144). The artist is a part of the viewer because this person is viewing the art with the artist’s idea in mind. However, once the artist is not associated with the art anymore and the concept D has taken its place, the art can be viewed without the presence of the original artist. We can see D as multiple things

here. If A is Harriet, D could be Harriet as Felix' wife. It is mentioned that people saw her as such, rather than an independent, talented artist (135). She was supposed to host his parties, and the people attending those did not like her big opinions, they would rather have her be quiet. We can also take D as the male artists Harriet used for her project. For instance, Harriet's ideas for her artwork with Phineas are not inherent in the art, seeing as none of the critics can see it (210-2). Rather, these critics come up with an interpretation that makes sense with Phineas as the artist. Phineas himself states that the art was read through him (136). Whether the viewer has Phineas or Harriet in mind as the artist, the denotation of the artwork will be the same. It is the connotation that changes, which is how the meaning of the artwork is changed as well. This, of course, is the case for all three of Harriet's art masks. An interesting question that Ethan poses is whether A's idea can be found "somewhere in B, despite the fact that C does not know A was there and believes in D" (145). This question is, in a way, answered by Sweet Autumn Pinkney, who describes how she sees auras in all of Harriet's artwork (379). In this sense, there is a remnant of Harriet left in her work, although Sweet Autumn may be the only person who can see it. Most prominently, Ethan's alphabet shows how representation works in relation to the people involved. It can explain how Harriet's pseudonyms and masks conveyed meaning through representational systems.

Chapter 3: The Pseudonym Project

3.1 Harriet's Three Masks

Each of the three masks from Harriet's experiment represents a specific aspect of how her pseudonym project worked and, in the case of Tish and Rune, how it failed. Each of the works that Harriet makes with them can be seen as a combination of Harriet and her co-artist, although the audience's perception differs from this. Tish represents the fact that there is a person behind each pseudonym that Harriet chooses. This applies to all three masks, but Tish's humanity shines through more so than the other two. Harriet calls Tish her green mask (213). This is partially because he is her first pseudonym, but also because he is inexperienced in the artworld. Harriet sees him like an empty canvas that she can use to make whoever she wants as her pseudonym. The installation she creates comes from her years of experience with art theory, something that the young and inexpert Tish is lacking. Tish is not familiar enough with art theory to have produced an installation filled with it, and yet he believes that the work is his creation (114-5). This can be linked to Ethan's alphabet, as Ethan discusses to what extent the artist is visible in the art itself (144-5). According to Foucault's discursive approach, the meaning of the artwork depends on everyone involved: Harriet, Tish, and the audience. However, as Harriet's name is not attached to the work, Tish is what the audience saw and thus linked to the work, regardless of how much he actually contributed. The meaning of the work lies in the connection the audience has made between the installation and Tish. However, Harriet sees the work as hers, and is disappointed that she spent a year helping Tish only for him to turn into a "smug, deluded, pompous creep" (115). Harriet tried to shape Tish into the mask she had envisioned, thereby disregarding who Tish is. According to Diana Wagner, Tish is supposed to represent the fact that the human body is not an empty vessel (Wagner). Harriet wanted to shape Tish into what she needed, but she could not disregard his contribution to the art without him objecting. The men Harriet uses for her project are

pseudonyms because they allow Harriet to hide behind their names, but the difficulty with these specific pseudonyms is that there are people behind the names who all in one way or another influenced the finished product. Although Tish has not established himself in the artworld yet, he did help Harriet with the artwork and therefore his touch may be visible in the work, regardless of whether or not he got credit.

The second artist Harriet uses for her project, Phineas Q. Eldridge is representative of the way gender, sexuality, and race can shape perception. Phineas is a homosexual, black man, which means he is at an intersection of multiple minorities. He feels as though his entire existence breaks binary opposition regarding these minorities (126). He mentions that he is queer not just in terms of sexuality, but in terms of deconstruction, seeing as he a part of intersecting minorities. Kiene Brillenburg Wurth and Ann Rigney define deconstruction as a critical reading strategy developed by Jacques Derrida, although they mention the concept is not limited to this definition (283). They claim that deconstruction involves attempting to expose a text's reliance on binary oppositions. The latter term is then defined as "a set of two terms posed in diametrical opposition" (280). These two elements are in a "contrastive relation to one another" (280). Phineas deconstructs binary oppositions when he embodies both of his parents in one of his shows. This discredits the idea that gender is a binary that refers to two completely different types of people. Judith Butler argues that the behaviours and concepts we associate with gender are arbitrary in the sense that we are only copying, or 'citing', what norms we see around us (177). She claims that the norm cannot be fully approximated, resulting in gender norms that change over time. Phineas exposes the arbitrary nature of these norms in his show because he cites patterns of behaviour associated with both the male and female gender, thereby deconstructing the notion that these genders are inherently opposite. By representing both genders in one body, Phineas shows that one person can convey both masculinity and femininity. Wagner argues that "the experiment

demonstrates human perception to be reflective of culture and existing stereotypes and biases connected not just with gender, but also with race and sexual orientation” (Wagner). In this sense, Harriet’s second mask gives her a chance to explore and perhaps express the breaking of traditional boundaries regarding gender, sexuality, and race. As Sturken and Cartwright argue, connotation is deeply personally involved (20). Therefore, Harriet might have interpreted Phineas’ show in a way that allowed her to apply it to herself. Phineas and Harriet’s artwork can be read through each of them, but the public sees only the interpretation that relates to the former, as his name is associated with the work. It is possible that the reason their work can be read through either of them is partially that they made it together and thus both influenced it, and partially because Harriet was interested in finding a way to express Phineas’ intersectionality and deconstruction of binaries.

Rune is the mask with the most potential of supporting Harriet’s project, seeing as his stardom could broadcast her message to a plethora of people, but eventually the message gets lost due to the way the audience’ perception differs from the artists intention. This, of course, is something that problematizes all three of the pseudonyms from Harriet’s project. However, Rune is already famous when Harriet picks him, meaning that he has devotees that believe in him. Phineas mentions this, arguing that people cannot “separate talent from reputation when it comes down to it” (141). Subsequently, Harriet is not able to shape her mask the way she did with Tish. Like the other two male artists, Rune actively participates in the making of their piece, and therefore parts of him can be found in the art. Harriet’s contributions to the piece are then either dismissed or ascribed to Rune. The third mask reveals the sexism in the artworld, perhaps more than the other two masks. The installations Harriet made with Tish and Phineas were moderate successes, but Rune’s is the one that could have potentially helped drive Harriet’s message through, if he had not taken full credit. That Rune claims the installation as his is an example of how people are more inclined to believe that men make

good art, whereas they dismiss women. It is ironic that the very concept Harriet was attempting to prove ends up being disrupting her plan. Rune has more power over the discourse concerning their art, seeing as he is a man. Therefore, the ideology that Harriet wanted to shine through in her project fails to do so because someone more powerful controls the discourse. Wagner argues that “by choosing Rune as her third and last mask she places her art into a different environment which leads to the discrepancy between the artist’s idea and public’s interpretation” (Wagner). This discrepancy was what Harriet intended to use to prove that her work would never been praised because people knew the artist was female, but it turned out to be the reason her project failed. Rune therefore shows the sexism in perception of art, although in such a way that is not useful to Harriet.

3.2 Richard Brickman and Gender

Besides the three men Harriet uses for her project, there is one mask that is specifically interesting, particularly when looking at its representation of gender. This is the mask that Rune and Harriet are using in one of the events Harriet describes in notebook O. These masks are blank but gendered through subtle facial features, and here Harriet and Rune are using them to experiment embodying the opposite gender (236-9). When Rune first turns into the female Ruina, he immediately changes the way he acts and talks. His voice becomes higher-pitched and soft, he does not maintain eye contact and looks down a lot, and he moves in a way that reminds Harriet of a drag queen (236). Rune also makes his female self come across as weak and overly modest. This annoys Harriet, as it makes her wonder if this is how Rune views women (237). It is interesting to see Rune’s interpretation of a woman, seeing as Ruina’s softness and unwillingness to ask directly for what she wants connotes a feeling of inferiority. Ruina says she likes art, but that she is not an artist. Rather, she describes herself as an illustrator. This specific terminology indicates her uncertainty regarding her ability. By stating that she is merely an illustrator, she suggests that she is not good enough to be an

actual artist. Therefore, Rune's depiction of a woman accentuates the idea that women cannot be artists because of limitations inherent to their gender. That this is the job Rune picks for his female persona is noteworthy, considering that Harriet is a female artist and Ruina could therefore be referring to her. Rune is pointing out her failure to make it in the artworld.

Harriet's depiction of a man is quite the opposite of Ruina. Richard feels like she is wasting his time and finds it annoying that she speaks so softly (238). He is quite harsh toward her, going as far as to say her whining disgusts him, and that she reminds him of "a kicked dog" (238). Richard orders Ruina around and displays a sense of authority. When Ruina fights back a little, Richard justifies himself by saying he is being reasonable. His reaction to Ruina's behaviour shows the position of superiority he has created for himself based upon her attitude. His maleness exerts itself in the power he is emitting through his actions, the climax of which is when he grabs Ruina and shakes her. Here he is physically displaying their power relation, a point they arrive at quite quickly, seeing as the characters have had little conversation.

When Rune's mask falls off, the game is over, but Rune and Harriet have very different reactions to their display of gender. Harriet is shocked, indicating that she had not expected herself to turn Richard into the aggressive man he was. On the other hand, Rune is laughing and states he is happy with getting everything on tape. Harriet wonders who had led the way in this experiment. Did Harriet merely react to what Rune was showing her, or did she express her own view regarding masculinity? The characters are playing with gender in a way that allows them to incorporate their personal beliefs in those of their character without associating these with themselves. Harriet is unsure where Richard's behaviour came from precisely because he is a pseudonym, which means Richard allows Harriet to express her thoughts and feelings without attaching those to herself. This type of pseudonym may be exposing a part of Harriet that has relatively conservative views on gender roles and women and men's position in society, which would not have happened had she spoken as herself. It is unclear whether

she purposefully exposes such views in this situation, or if she is merely following along with Rune's depiction of Ruina.

Analysing Harriet's reasons for starting her project may facilitate the understanding of where Richard came from and what he represents. Harriet, in a conversation with Rachel, states that they were for revenge on what Rachel calls a "monolith of adversarial forces" (110). These forces are the people who refused to take her art seriously and instead thought of her merely as Felix King's wife. They are described as "an enemy with a masculine, not a feminine face" (110). This suggests that Harriet felt particularly oppressed by the patriarchal structures in the artworld. Harriet's relationship with Felix, and the resulting lack of attention for her art, may have been a contributing factor in her ambitious project to expose gender inequality in her career. Bruno says as much in a written statement (166-7). He explains that Felix only showed a handful of women in his galleries, and that he assumes that must have affected Harriet. He insists that Felix should have bothered to help her, although Harriet does not feel like he could have. It is clear that Bruno thinks Felix played a large role in Harriet's view on the artworld. Harriet does not blame Felix, rather she describes a mysterious "thing" that has existed in her long before she met Felix (63). She tiptoes around this thing, because she is afraid that "the earth will rumble and the walls will crack and fall" if she wakes it (63). This thing can be seen as the anger Harriet feels toward the patriarchy. She describes being taught to always ignore this part of her, to make nice and be polite. However, through the pseudonym project, she is able to express and expose that anger. She states that the monster has been let out of the box, but that it is not fully grown, which is why she felt she needed one more mask after Phineas (165). At some point, Harriet does admit to Felix making her feel bad about herself. She mentions that he looked through her on occasion, and that he "erased" her, something which angered her, although she did not show it (149-50). Interestingly, she talks about Felix like this right after a passage in her diary that describes the way her father let

her down. Her father did not want her, but Harriet describes that she kept looking for his love through small changes in his voice (152). Felix and Harriet's father are the two of the most prominent men in her life and both of them dismiss and ignore her and her art. Felix does so, perhaps unintentionally, by marrying her and thus turning her into his hostess, and by neglecting her art, whereas Harriet's father did not love her and told her that her art "doesn't resemble much else that's out there" (129). For a large portion of Harriet's life, the most prominent men in her life were, to some extent, oppressive and degrading towards her art. It can therefore be argued that Harriet felt as though she had been opposed by the patriarchy in her attempts to develop her artistic career. This is incorporated in her portrayal of Richard in the way she reacts to Ruina calling herself an illustrator, not an artist. Richard starts making demands, asking her whether or not she can draw and if she can be more forward (137-8). Rune reveals at some point in the novel that he knew Felix, so it is possible he might have been expecting her to act like this (175). He might have been taunting her, which could explain the way he laughed at the end of their experiment (238-9). Richard embodies the difficulty Harriet had in breaking into the artworld. His role, in this case, is that of the patriarchy, in a position of power of the female artist that is trying to work her way up, despite perhaps being taught she is not good enough to do so. Harriet's Richard may have been influenced by her feelings toward Felix and her father. The only men in Harriet's life that support her, apart from perhaps her son, are Bruno and Phineas. Although the former does not support her pseudonym project, he encourages her to make art (157). Phineas does encourage the project, defending it by stating that in order to be seen, Harriet needed to become invisible (138). It is fascinating to see that both of these men are not completely stereotypically masculine. With Phineas this is because he is a homosexual man who cites both masculine and feminine behaviours. Bruno "suffers from a pronounced anxiety of authorship, which forces him to give up on his masterpiece" (Thiemann, 322). According to Anna Thiemann,

this is a position more typical for women, but here Bruno embodies this stereotype. Richard therefore does not embody all Harriet's experiences with men, but merely those in her life before Felix' death, those that mistreated her in some way or another. Richard is a representation of the way Harriet has felt oppressed by patriarchal structures around her, and the pseudonym project is a result of that.

Conclusion:

Therefore, Harriet's project attempts to expose sexism in the artworld because she has felt personally oppressed by the patriarchy, but her three pseudonyms ends up representing the way she failed. Harriet's masks are pseudonyms in the sense that they allow her to express opinions and ideologies without linking them to herself. This is especially evident in the way she expresses gender through the blank masks she and Rune wear, as she creates a persona that may be a direct result from the patriarchal suppression she felt throughout most of her life and throughout her artistic career. Through representational theory, Harriet's three pseudonyms can be understood as a representation of why she felt she needed the project and how it ultimately failed. The project was supposed to expose misogyny in the artworld, but through the masks of Tish, Phineas, and Rune, it becomes evident that this very misogyny is why the project was not successful.

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