

Behind Valencia: A Contemporary Play

The Honors Program
Senior Capstone Project
Student's Name: Emily Charbonneau
Faculty Sponsor: Amber Day
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SYNOPSIS

The purpose of this play is to highlight the length that modern females go to in order to maintain a desired appearance, especially across social media. These desired appearances are influenced by the glamorous and unrealistic looks and physiques that are prevalent in the media. Essentially, the primary goal of these characters is to attract the attention of their male counterparts because of the gender roles society promotes. This shallow lifestyle can be completely consuming for impressionable, young females.

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INTRODUCTION

For an actuarial mathematics major, it is not typical to write a play. However, this makes sense for me because, despite my love for math, I do consider myself to be a creative person. The idea to do a creative project has been the plan since I knew it was an option for the Honors Program Capstone. Not only was this the case because I have very little academic opportunity to be creative, but also because I have felt that the existence of artistic work at Bryant is lacking. I have made my own artistic impact at Bryant with Velocity Dance Team and by writing for Her Campus, but felt I was always missing the chance to express my imaginative side and then be able to share it with an academic community. In taking my upper level Literary and Culture Studies course, Studies in Drama, I was able to realize my academic interest in theater. Even though this one class was my only real experience working with theater, I was eager to take on the new and exciting challenge that was writing a play.

Writing a play was not simple and took me through a long and difficult process. It was very challenging, especially for someone in a major with minimal writing practice. Using a creative process to produce a work such as a play was an interesting course that led to a satisfying result in the end. I was able to write a play that exposes how some girls have the mindset that leads them to believe they need to maintain a certain look, especially on social media, and how that look will foster attention for them. It goes a step further to look at why these girls think this way; it is the fault of society's definition of beauty as well as sexist assumptions about gender roles.

METHODOLOGY

Brainstorming Process

The center of the brainstorming process and inspiration for the play begins with conversations I had experienced in the past. I have both listened to and participated in conversations that bothered me because of how shallow and bratty they seemed. Without divulging too much detail, these conversations made it clear that several girls I knew did not feel validated without Instagram likes or attention from boys. Once I started paying attention to it, I realized this was the case for several girls around me. I listened to conversations between girls

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whenever I was in public. They weren't only talking about themselves; they would judge what other girls did, too. I remember hearing girls talk about posted photos and then critiquing another girl for whatever they deemed wrong with the photo, whether that was how she looked (often too skinny or in an outfit that was too scandalous), or how posed and/or photo-shopped the picture appeared. The best and most interesting things about these conversations for me was how hypocritical I thought these girls actually were. Yes, they might have criticized another girl for photo-shopping her skin too much, but they themselves definitely whitened their teeth in all of their Instagram posts. Because of this, parts of these conversations made their way into *Behind Valencia*.

Although these conversations provided helpful material, there were several ideas that came with writing a play about these "bizarre girls" who really wanted attention and whose actions were questionable. A method that helped to decipher these thoughts was using a mind map. I wrote one large idea down and connected to another which connected to several different ideas of its own. I did a few of these and while each led to different directions at the center of this divergence was the underlying "bizarre girl." Word association with synonyms and stand-alone words was helpful, too. I was able to relate concepts and narrow down a specific theme. These assisted in my decision to focus on how these girls wanted to look a very particular way and how it was helping them receive attention and validation. Once a theme was narrowed down and more concrete, I did more research about the particular subject. It was not enough to expose how these girls were acting but also why they were acting this way: Why do they have this particular mindset? Women compare themselves to other women and women in magazines but why? It seems like a lot of women want to look good for men. Is this a pattern? I wanted so many of these questions answered and explored a couple of sources that provided some reasons.

Prominent American author Naomi Wolf wrote *The Beauty Myth*, a nonfiction book about the way women look at themselves and measure beauty. It brings to light so many pressures society places on females to be "beautiful." From work to religion to the media, women are surrounded by the idea that if you do not exude beauty then not much else matters; it is a woman's appearance that is her most valuable asset. Wolf reveals the role of the gaze in

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performance and performativity: “Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only the relations of men to women, but the relation of women to themselves” (58). Although critic John Berger is the author of this quote, Wolf praises it to be “true now more than ever” (58). Although the book was published in 1990, this issue is still relevant several decades later and provides sociological support for my overarching themes. Throughout my play, there are undertones of women expressing how they think they appear in the eyes of their male counterparts.

More support for this motif comes from a film, *Killing Us Softly 4*. This short film goes through several examples of how women are portrayed in the media, specifically advertisements, and how it ultimately effects women. It deeply explores several facets of advertising and how they all share the same commonalities within; they make incredibly skinny photo-shopped women into sex objects and convince women this is what they should strive to look like in order to be beautiful (*Killing Us Softly 4*). Since it is in advertising that these techniques are used, their purpose is ultimately to sell their products. Regardless, it is important to see where these desires for lipstick and being skinny and seeming “sexy” come from. The film offers an explanation for why many women act the way they do and want the things they want for their appearance. Both of these sources have provided not only insight into the issue, but have become a source of inspiration, as well.

Writing Process

Playwriting can be a daunting task for someone who has not written creatively for years. However, several resources exist to counteract this concern. Will Dunne’s book *The Dramatic Writer’s Companion* is filled with information worth noting when beginning to write a play. He divulges countless tips and methods to develop every aspect of a play. Creating characters is described with advice about how to produce who a character actually is and what their motives are. He connects this facet to how their motives and personalities deliver the theme to the audience. Because of this, I chose to come up with character ideas first when writing. The creation of characters allowed me to know exactly how they would all act in relation to each other as well as in each scenario they were put in. I knew I wanted the

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protagonist to be opposite of the girls the play was exposing. I also knew I wanted those types of girls I was interested in to be embedded in the play, so I created them. The rest of the characters existed only to support the more important roles.

The Dramatic Writer's Companion discusses the creation of scenes and setting in detail. It explains the foundations so that they can be built around the theme. Action, character interaction, conflict and resolution are all presented to the reader so that they have a broad and concrete understanding of these aspects of playwriting. Barranger makes similar efforts with her article, "Components of Theater." She describes the production aspect of components of theater such as the elements of the written play, directing, scene and costume designing. The goal of this source is to provide the reader with a basic understanding of several elements necessary to comprehend the process of producing a play. Both works share opinions on the areas where they overlap in creating scenes. They attest that the scenes need to support the theme, although they look at scenes from different viewpoints. Dunne explains how to write a scene while Barranger discusses the more physical setting of the scene. These works provide insight on very technical skills that playwrights need to develop in order to produce a successful work of theater. Both of these sources proved to be useful when creating each scene. I didn't have a solid idea of what exactly I wanted the plot to look like and found comfort in knowing how a scene should look. I started with the first scene and dove into the writing process. My advisor encouraged this type of procedure and suggested I take the process organically. It felt right to go scene by scene and so that is just what I did.

Each scene would have a goal I wanted to get across whether it be the girls partaking in a certain action, a particular phrase I wanted to incorporate, or development for the protagonist. I would come up with those ideas first and then write a draft of the scene. I would rewrite and revise several times until each word was exactly right and each stage direction was just what I wanted to express. It was once I was satisfied with a scene that I would share it with a reader. I was nervous to show my work to others but it was vital to gain the feedback I needed. By having others read the play I was able to see what the audience would think and if the messages I wanted to get across were coming out in my writing.

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Somewhere along the writing process I did come across a few ethical concerns. As I wrote I realized that I was incorporating real phrases and dialogue that I had heard in real life. Right away I felt like it was hurtful to criticize people I knew so openly by including what they said in my play. Initially I thought if they read it they would know I took our private conversations and put them on paper not only to share with the world but also to make judgements towards them. I discussed this concern with my advisor, my editorial reviewer, and my friend who also helped read my play. My friend understood and she herself had similar concerns in the past. She suggested I change the wording and the situations so that the friends would never realize and if I could not do that, to ask for their permission. My editorial reviewer and advisor both thought that this was not really something to be concerned about; art is inspired by life and should be reminiscent of such. Permission was not needed because anyone other than them would fail to realize who had actually said those pieces of dialogue since it really could have been anyone. I ultimately agreed and did not hold back from using what I had heard in my play. Even so, if any of those people read the parts that were inspired by them, I do not think they would even notice.

BEHIND VALENCIA

Note: What the characters see on their laptops and phones the audience sees as well. These can be projected behind them or off to the side of the stage. All activity on devices will be shown on screens.

Scene 1: Girls in coffee shop

An empty dark stage. An advertising image featuring an attractive, young woman appears. It fades. The audience sees the same image on a magazine that a man is reading. He is at a coffee shop on a college campus. There are several people scattered amongst tables in nondescript clothing. Two girls in trendy outfits walk in and walk to the counter.

Maddie: I'll have a latte, please- with skim milk.

Jessica: Make that two.

Barista: For here or to go?

Maddie: They're for here.

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Barista: Names?

Maddie: Maddie

Jessica: Jessica

Barista: Those'll be right out

The girls sit down at a table and get out their laptops from oversized, flashy bags.

Jessica: What time are we meeting this girl?

Maddie: Quarter of?

Maddie looks at her fancy watch

Maddie: We're early still

Barista brings over coffees and the girls thank him.

Jessica: Good, I should post a photo.

The girls both take pictures of their coffees from several angles. Then begin taking pictures of each other. They move silently and efficiently.

Maddie: Will you get one of me drinking like this?

She holds the cup up to her mouth and giggles.

Jessica: Turn to the side a little- your arm looks kinda big. Yeah, just like that. Got it.

Maddie: Thanks let's air drop them.

Girls look down at their phones.

Jessica: I just want this project to be over. Who even is this chick?

Maddie: She's no one. Here I'll show you here- you'll recognize her.

Maddie pulls up Facebook on her laptop and scrolls through her Facebook profile pictures.

Jessica: Never seen her.

Maddie: Really? She's been in like three of our classes.

Jessica: Does she have an Instagram?

Maddie: Yeah, but she just posts pictures of trees and shit.

Abigail walks in, spots the girls and joins them.

Abigail: Hey guys! Mind if I grab a coffee before we get started? I'm in desperate need of caffeine!

Maddie: Yeah go for it.

Abigail goes up to the counter.

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Abigail: Hi! I'll have a mocha with whipped cream, please.

Jessica: *Whispers* Oh I totally have seen her before.

Maddie nods as she scrolls through Instagram.

Maddie: Oh my god look at this picture Todd just posted.

Jessica: Who's that bitch?!

Maddie: I don't know... he hasn't posted anything with her before.

Jessica: Click on her.

Damn she's private. Well, she's hot but you're hotter.

Maddie: She's skinny.

Jessica: So skinny... Think we'll see her at his house this weekend?

Maddie: I never have before.

Jessica: So if not, you gonna kiss Todd again?

Maddie: *Angrily* Shut up! Don't talk about that in public you're such a big mouth...

Matt cannot find out.

Jessica: Don't worry, he's never going to know.

Maddie: What he doesn't know won't hurt him, right?

Jessica: Exactly!

Abigail receives her coffee and starts walking towards the girls.

Maddie: So what was that, like 70 calories?

Jessica: Yup! Hey, at least you didn't get something sugary with whipped cream and shit.

Abigail catches the end of their conversation while behind them. She pauses, looks down at her coffee, sips it, and sits down.

Maddie and Jessica look at her beverage and exchange glances unapprovingly.

Maddie: So, should we get started?

Scene 2: Chris's apartment

Abigail walks in to her boyfriend's apartment. He is sitting on the couch on his laptop. The TV is on in the background. The TV is playing advertisements all featuring young, attractive women.

Abigail: Hi, babe.

Chris: Hi! I applied to three more internships this morning!

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Abigail drops her things, joins him on the couch, and greets him with a kiss.

Abigail: Woah, three? Look at you, on a roll!

Chris: Yeah I'm excited about this I.T. one in New York City.

Abigail: *Looking at his computer screen.* Twenty-four dollars an hour? Yeah I'd be excited, too.

Chris: And I heard they help with housing. But it's 10 weeks and super intense.

Abigail: Sounds like it was made for you.

Chris: You still haven't heard anything right?

Abigail: Unfortunately not... I can and will apply to more places though. I refuse to waitress again this summer.

Chris: You've worked so hard... as long as you keep your grades up you'll be good though, I know it.

Abigail: To have an actual internship in a city like New York... that would be incredible.

Chris: It's the dream...

Hey, how did your group meeting go?

Abigail: It was fine. This project is so obnoxious, we are going to have to do so much.

Hopefully I won't have to do all the work this time.... No, I won't do all the work. I refuse!

Chris: Thatta girl!

Abigail: You should have seen these girls. So shallow. The calorie-obsessed, photo-taking, social media mogul types.

Chris: Oh come on. They're nice though, right?

Abigail: Well yeah... they were nice and will be fine group members.

Chris: Well that's what's important, right? You don't have to be best friends.

Abigail: Definitely not. I stalked their Instagrams on the way home. There's no way their lives are this fabulous.

Abigail pulls out her phone and shows Chris pictures. The first is of Maddie sipping coffee.

Abigail: This one is from earlier. Wonder how long it took them to take this. Why is she having a "night in" with wine in a bathtub?! Is she 30? Doesn't she have homework? How can she drop everything and go to Miami for the weekend? Why does she always look this fancy? Where is she going dressed like this? 6 inch heels are never necessary.

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Chris: I don't know, she looks kind of hot.

Abigail: But why is she wanting all of Instagram to see that? Like, these are on the internet.

Chris: Oh, I should make my accounts private I don't need any job recruiters seeing me with a Natty Light in my hand.

Abigail: Hey, did you still want to go to Giordano's this weekend?

Chris: Oh damn I forgot to tell you. We are all going up to Mike's cabin this weekend. He wants to leave Friday afternoon.

Abigail: Didn't you guys just go hunting?

Chris: Yeah but that was weeks ago! And we didn't do well at all.

Abigail: Might be a good chance to get this group project over with if you aren't going to be around.

Chris: Giordano's next weekend?

Abigail: Sure!

Scene 3: In class

Professor Lin's class. Maddie and Jessica are seated, chatting. Students are entering. Abigail enters. Advertisements featuring the same young, attractive women are on the laptop screens in front of them.

Professor Lin: Make sure you sit with your groups, I'm going to want you to consult with each other today.

Abigail: Hey guys.

Jessica: Hey how are you?

Abigail: I'm good, you?

Jessica: Good! What did she just say?

Jessica nods towards the professor.

Abigail: Oh, we have to sit together.

Abigail sits next to them.

Maddie: Wonder what she'll have us do...

Jessica: I'm sure we'll find out.

Jessica shows her phone to Maddie. She is on Tinder.

Maddie: No, not cute.

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Decent.

No.

Oh, he's cute.

God no.

Yes, who the hell is that?

Jessica clicks on his Instagram account.

Jessica: Look at his abs! What I would do to lick them...

Maddie: So yummy. Look, he's holding a cute baby in that one!

Jessica: Oh my god my heart

Maddie: My vagina!

The girls giggle and class begins. Professor Lin starts droning on.

Jessica: *Whispers to Maddie* Oh my god we matched!

Maddie: Shut up, you did not!

Jessica: Does he want to date me, I don't know.

Maddie: You cannot message him first, let him come to you.

Jessica: What if he doesn't?

Maddie: You're easily the hottest girl on there, just wait.

Hot guy in class: *To professor* Would you mind going over question six on the homework?

Maddie: Oh my god Jess, is that abs?

Gesturing towards Hot Guy

Jessica: Is it?

Jessica consults her phone and shows Maddie.

Jessica: It's hard to tell.

Maddie: Did Lin call him Ryan?

Jessica: *To Abigail* Hey, is that guy's name Ryan?

Abigail: Over there? Yeah that's Ryan Smith.

Jessica: Holy shit no way. Maddie he is in our class he is right there. I should totally message him about homework or something.

Maddie: Calm your tits. Don't look desperate.

Jessica: Okay yeah, you're right.

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Maddie: Maybe ask a question, make him notice you.

Abigail: He's in my next class, want me to say something to him?

Jessica and Maddie look at each other.

Jessica: You should ask him if he's going to Todd's party on Saturday.

Maddie: Great idea!

Abigail: Okay, yeah I'll do that.

Jessica: Abby, you are the best.

Abigail: I'll report back tomorrow. You guys still want to get together to work on the project, right?

Maddie: Definitely. Our place?

Abigail: Yeah just text me your address.

Jessica: Just not before, like, 2. I'm going to be hungover AF.

Scene 4: In the hall

Outside Abigail's next class.

Abigail: Ryan, hey!

Ryan: Oh, hey what's up?

Abigail: Eh, I've got a weird question.

Ryan: Haha, shoot!

Abigail: So, you know Jessica from our last class? She's in my group?

Ryan: Oh yeah I totally just matched her on Tinder.

Abigail: Yeah, she was pumped. Oops I probably wasn't supposed to say that.

Ryan: Wait, really?

Abigail: Yeah, so anyway I'm supposed to find out if you're going to some guy named Todd's party tomorrow?

Ryan: Yeah I am.

Abigail: Okay, great thanks.

Ryan: Was she wondering?

Abigail: Yeah I think she wants you to message her?

Ryan: Thanks for the heads up, she's seriously hot so I was planning on it.

Abigail: *To the audience* Shocker.

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Scene 5: Maddie and Jessica's house

The girls are working on their project. Magazines lie around all over the apartment. Sexy men and women are featured on the covers.

Maddie: Do you think we can call it quits soon? I need to shave before tonight.

Abigail: Yeah, fine with me we did so much today.

Jessica: I already know what I'm wearing. Black halter dress. Never fails.

Maddie: Yes girl.

Jessica: Abby what are you doing tonight? Hot date with bae?

Abigail: Oh, no he went out of town with some friends.

Maddie: Aw bummer. Guy friends?

Abigail: Yeah! He goes hunting like all weekend with some guys.

Jessica: Hunting? Is that code?

Abigail: Haha what? Hunting, like shooting animals.

Maddie: That's definitely code, there is no way people actually do that.

Abigail: No, I've gone with him before. It's awful but it's definitely hunting.

Jessica: My ex used to "go up north" all the time and he was really hooking up with some bitch.

Maddie: If Matt ever did anything like that.... He'd be done.

Jessica: You are such a hypocrite!

Maddie: I only cheat on him when he deserves it. Or when I'm blackout. Abby don't repeat this.

Abigail: I won't, you don't have to worry.

Jessica: Have you ever been cheated on?

Abigail: No way.

Maddie: Well how can you really ever know?

Abigail: I trust him!

Jessica: But he could be fucking some slut right now and you would never know.

Abigail: He just wouldn't.

Maddie: All I'm saying is you never know.

Abigail shrugs.

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Jessica: Whatever you say....

Abigail: Look out for Ryan at your party tonight, he said he was going.

Jessica: He messaged me, look!

Jessica shows Maddie the messages between her and Ryan.

Abigail: Oh that's awesome! Are you going to hang out with him tonight?

Jessica: I don't know... he's so sexy but like wanted to like, talk about books? Like who reads?

Maddie: He sounded kind of soft. But hey, maybe he's good in bed?

Jessica: Yeah, I don't know. I'm keeping my options open.

Abigail: Sounds like you've got a plan. So we'll talk Monday?

Maddie: Where are you going? Come out with us! It's an excuse for you to show us that little 24 hour pizza place!

Jessica: Yes! We should totally spend our allowance of drunk calories on that pizza!

Abigail: I shouldn't come...

Maddie: Why not?

Abigail: I mean I have some homework to do and I was going to catch up on Game of Thrones.

Jessica: Sundays are for homework.

Abigail: I don't have any clothes here at all...

Maddie: Borrow ours. Next?

Abigail: I don't really drink much.

Jessica: We can change that.

The two girls are signing a song and dancing around. They are helping transform Abigail into looking like them. They start taking pictures of each other in different poses and in different areas around the house. Abigail gladly takes pictures of the two of them together.

Jessica starts snapping pictures of Abigail.

Abigail: No, really that's okay.

Jessica: Stop, you look hot. Pose like you're happy at least.

Maddie: Here, like this.

Maddie poses and Abigail attempts to mimic her.

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Jessica: Yes!!! Work the camera! Give it to me!

Abigail looks to Maddie for guidance and half-heartedly poses.

Abigail: This is ridiculous.

Maddie: Okay, I've had enough, time to turn up.

Jessica: Look at this one!

Jessica shows Abigail her phone.

Maddie: Yeah post that, you look hot. The likes will come pouring in.

Abigail: I think I look kind of silly.

Jessica: What? No I'll help you pick a filter. Valencia is my go-to.

Maddie: Do I look fat in this one? I can always make my stomach look flatter... You know what, I'm just going to do it.

Jessica: Post whatever then we have to rip shots it's getting late. Here, Abby, post this.

Abigail: Okay...

Scene 6: Party

The three girls are mingling with others at a party. Todd's house has Sports Illustrated swimsuit edition posters everywhere.

Jessica: Isn't Seth looking fine tonight?

Maddie: Absolutely... He's not with that girl right?

Jessica: Well it isn't on Facebook.

Maddie: Good point.

Jessica: I'm going to linger around him, make him see me.

Matt, Maddie's boyfriend walks over.

Matt: Babe this party sucks let's get out of here.

Maddie: Matt, we just got here.

Matt: I've been here for a while I'm ready to leave, let's go.

Maddie: But I'm not ready yet!

The two argue loudly and Abigail seeks solace elsewhere. She pulls out her phone.

Text messages

Abigail to Chris: Hey, what did you think of my Instagram?

Chris to Abigail: Idk, I don't think I saw it.

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Abigail to Chris: You liked it...

Abigail to Chris: Did I see a blonde girl in your snap story? I thought you said it was just the guys this weekend?

Ryan approaches Abigail with a drink in hand.

Ryan: Hey Abigail, you really look like you need a drink.

Abigail: Haha, is it that obvious I'm out of my element here?

Ryan: Well you keep checking your phone... and to be honest I was surprised to see you here at all. I never have before.

Abigail: Yeah, Maddie and Jessica dressed me up and convinced me.

Ryan: Well I'm really glad you came out.

Abigail: Still not sure if I am...

Ryan: Oh come on, let me convince you! Let's start with this drink.

Reluctantly takes drink and starts sipping.

Abigail: Yum...

Ryan: That's the spirit! Wanna dance?

Abigail checks her phone.

Chris to Abigail: Yeah, Mike's sister brought some friends

Abigail: Sure, why not?

Ryan: I'll try not to embarrass the prettiest girl in the room

Ryan takes Abigail's hand and leads her to the dance floor. They grind casually.

Abigail to Chris: So... it isn't a guy's weekend then. Lol

Chris to Abigail: Guess not technically? Idk, it was supposed to be

Abigail watches the update to Chris's snap story. He is loudly drinking and singing. The camera pans between a guy and a few girls. Abigail takes out her phone and records the party she's at, including taking a selfie with Ryan.

Across the room, Maddie is making out with Todd. Jessica is making out with an unidentified suitor.

Time passes. Abigail spends her time dancing with Ryan and consuming jungle juice. Her phone buzzes in her pocket. It goes unnoticed. Ryan and Abigail migrate to the edge of the room.

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Ryan: I'm pissed we never hung out sooner.

Abigail: We've had class though.

Ryan: That barely counts!

Abigail: I must say I am impressed by your dancing.

Ryan: Well it's easy to dance when I'm dancing with you...

Ryan puts his arms around Abigail's waist.

Ryan: *Whispers in Abigail's ear:* Can I kiss you?

Abigail chugs her drink then shakes her head, no.

Ryan: I'm sorry, you're just so hot. I've been thinking about kissing you since that Instagram post earlier.

Abigail turns around and kisses Ryan.

Abigail: I'm sorry, I have to go.

Abigail runs over to Maddie and Jessica.

Abigail: Guys, I've got to get out of here.

Maddie: What's wrong?

Abigail: Please, please

Maddie yanks Jessica's arm as she is still sucking some guy's face.

Jessica: What?

Maddie: Let's talk in the bathroom.

Jessica: We'll be right back, boys.

The three girls trek through the house and into a powder room.

Abigail: I just kissed Ryan. Oh shit, Jessica I didn't even think about you guys... I'm so sorry.

Jessica: Normally I'd be pissed but he was boring as hell, all yours girl.

Maddie: Why are you upset?

Abigail: I just kissed Ryan! I have a boyfriend?!

Jessica: It's okay Abby I really don't care!

Abigail: No, no I have a boyfriend and Ryan is not my boyfriend.

Maddie: Don't sweat it. Here, clean your eyes up. Put on some more lipstick.

Abigail: I just cheated on my boyfriend... Oh my god I'm a cheater...

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Jessica: Chill he never has to know!

Maddie: You don't have to put a label on it either, my god.

Jessica: Look, shit happens! It's no big deal. And I bet that kiss was great! Well actually, maybe not... is Ryan even a good kisser?

Abigail: I don't know.

Jessica: Maybe you should get back out there and find out, come on!

Scene 7: The morning after

Abigail wakes up on the couch to chit chatter from Jessica and Maddie in the other room. She emerges, dazed and hungover.

Maddie: Well good morning.

Abigail: Hi... what happened last night?

Maddie: Who knows, we both blacked out. You too?

Abigail: Well I remember going to Todd's and... oh no... I kissed Ryan...

Jessica: You really really really kissed Ryan...

Maddie: And Jess really really really... had sex with Pete.

Jessica: Hahahahahaha

Abigail: I don't know what to do, I've got to get out of here, oh no Matt comes home in an hour, dammit! I don't know what to do

Maddie: Okay you have got to calm down...

Jessica: Abby don't worry!

Maddie: Avoid talking about the party and just leave everything that has to do with Ryan totally out of the picture. Focus on his weekend, ask him questions, be interested in what he has to say.

Abigail: Oh yeah, I have lots of questions for him you've got that right.

Jessica: Well perfect! No harm, no foul!

Maddie: None of last night's happenings leave this apartment.

Abigail: I think I need some water and an Advil.

Scene 8: Chris's apartment

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Abigail is about to enter Chris's apartment but hears a conversation on the other side of the door. She stops and listens.

Mike: Dude, Natalie has totally grown up.

Abigail quickly finds Natalie's Instagram account through Mike's sister's followers. Natalie's pictures are similar to Maddie and Jessica's: revealing and posed.

Chris: Yeah she's hot... have you guys hooked up?

Mike: Once a long time ago.

Chris: Dude was your sister so pissed?

Mike: I didn't tell her!

Chris: Hahahaha she followed me on Instagram.

Mike: She's thirsty on Insta.

Abigail walks in to the apartment.

Abigail: Who is?

Chris: Hi babe! Chris's sister's friend... How was your weekend?

Chris greets her with a hug.

Abigail: It was fine. Hi Mike.

Mike: Hey Abigail. I better run, catch you later Chris.

Chris: Ok see ya.

Abigail: So, did you have fun this weekend?

Chris: Yeah, it was great.

Abigail: Yeah the hunting looked great.

Chris: Why are you mad?

Abigail: You were just acting so sketchy! Why would you specifically call it a "guys weekend" when you knew it wasn't like that?

Chris: I don't know... it was going to be. When plans changed it was just easier not to mention it I guess. I barely thought anything of it.

Abigail: Okay I guess I just think it's weird that you left that detail out.

Chris: And you would have been annoyed that other girls that you didn't know were going and you weren't.

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Abigail: If other girls were going why didn't you invite me to come? Did you not want me there?

Chris: Obviously I want to be with you but they just aren't the kinds of girls you like being around. They were on Tinder the entire time, you would have been bored.

Abigail: But you do like being around them?

Chris: Eh, doesn't really make much of a difference to me.

Abigail: I'm not wasting my time with this, I've got to go.

Chris: Where are you going? I thought we were applying to internships and doing homework tonight?

Abigail: I have to go to the mall. Maybe after.

Chris: The mall? On a Sunday? I can't remember the last time you didn't do homework all day on a Sunday...

Abigail: I'll text you when I'm back.

Scene 9: Mall Montage

Abigail joins Maddie and Jessica at the mall. There is a cyclone of advertising, clothing, and accessories as they try on and purchase items. Time passes in this scene as they spend the entire day at the mall.

The stage goes dark. It lights up and Abigail is alone.

Chris texts Abigail to apologize and see if she's okay. The stage goes dark. When the light returns, the girls are shopping.

Abigail goes on Instagram and sees that Natalie posted a scandalous photo and Chris liked it.

Abigail posts her own picture on Instagram. It was taken earlier in the dressing room when Abigail was trying on a sexy but nonrevealing outfit. The stage goes dark.

Ryan DM's her on Instagram and asks for her number. She gives him her number. The audience only sees this on screen.

Scene 10: Chris's apartment

The following day Chris and Abigail are on Chris's couch, facing the TV, per usual. Chris is doing homework and Abigail is sitting on her phone.

Chris: Did you have fun at the mall?

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Abigail: Yeah, it was good.

Chris: Get anything?

Abigail: A few things.

Chris: That's good, I feel like you never buy new clothes.

Abigail is silent and doesn't look up from her phone.

Chris: Hey I found out about that internship....

Abigail looks at Chris.

Abigail: You did? Did you get it?

Chris: Yeah I did! They emailed me this morning.

Abigail: Chris that's incredible! Oh my god I'm so glad!

Abigail congratulates Chris with a hug.

Chris: Thanks! I'm so excited to go to New York City! And hopefully you'll be coming with me! Did you end up finishing that application?

Abigail: Oh I don't really remember... I think so.

Chris: Well shouldn't you submit it soon?

Abigail: Yeah I guess.

Chris: What happened to you? This isn't you... do you not want to work in New York City anymore? Is that no longer your goal?

Abigail: I don't know...

Chris: Is this about this weekend? Are you still mad at me?

Abigail: What? No, drop it.

Chris: You're just acting weird is all.

Abigail doesn't respond because she is so consumed by her phone. Mike enters the apartment.

Mike: What's up guys?

Chris: Hey Mike.

Mike: You end up getting that internship? You find out today, right?

Chris: Yeah I did!

Mike: Congrats, man that's awesome!

Abigail begins collecting her things.

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Chris: Babe, where are you going?

Abigail: To dinner with the girls.

Chris: You don't want to stay and celebrate?

Abigail: Maybe tomorrow, ok? I'll text you. Congrats Chris that really is great.

Abigail kisses Chris on the cheek and leaves.

Mike: Is everything good?

Chris: I don't know man, she's been weird lately.

Mike: I wasn't going to say anything but I saw her on Tinder today.

Chris: What?

Mike: Yeah, I'm sorry dude.

Chris: No way... Abigail thinks Tinder is barbaric

Mike: I kinda couldn't believe it either. Here, look.

Mike shows Chris his phone. Pictures of Abigail and the name "Abby" are seen on her profile. The photos are selfies, both face and mirror.

Chris: What the fuck.

Mike: I'd be pissed too.

Chris walks into his room and slams his door.

Scene 11: Girls in coffee shop

Two younger college girls sit at a table in the corner of the coffee shop. They are chit chatting and updating their social media. Abigail walks in.

Girl 1: Oh my god, is that "abby.woodbridge"?

Girl 2: It definitely is, I recognize that Michael Kors bag.

Girls consult their phones

Girl 1: That's so weird, I've followed her for a while now but I never actually knew who she was!

Girl 2: I had a class with her once! Wait... that was like years ago. How is she still in school if she's a year ahead of us?

Girl 1: I bet she studied abroad and partied too much so her grades weren't good enough and she had to redo them.

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Girl 2: I actually think she failed the class we had together... Now that I think about it, I think that's the girl that almost failed out of school completely.

Girl 1: Oh my God, look at this one of her in Ibiza!

Girl 2: Holy shit, that's gorgeous. Isn't she fabulous?!

Girl 1: Yes, how does she possibly look like this?

Girl 1 pulls up a picture of her posing in a bikini at the beach.

Girl 2: I don't know if I would ever put a picture that revealing out there for everyone to see...

Girl 1: I would be more likely to consider it if I looked that good.

Ryan walks in and sits at a table with Abigail. He greets her with a kiss on the cheek. They barely chat, and are focused on their phones.

Girl 2: He's hot... is that her boyfriend?

Girl 1: Yup, he's all over her Insta.

Girl 2: Wow, her life is goals.

INTERPRETATION OF PLAY

It was my goal to have the central theme supported by the following key components: language, meaningful images, the need for attention, and maintaining a desired appearance. By combining both dialogue and stage direction I feel as if I accomplished communicating to readers the central theme I concocted.

Theme

The theme is vital to the entire work. With *Behind Valencia*, I attempted to highlight how a particular faction of college-aged women act in order to maintain a certain appearance and how that appearance has been forged by both the media's portrayal of women and the gender roles enforced by society. The image that these girls are working to maintain is mostly via their social media accounts but particularly on Instagram. Their profiles boast flawless images that are not always representative of what they actually look like. In fact, it often takes these girls dozens of shots in different poses before achieving their desired look and that

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one perfect picture to post. The finished product is an entire profile that contains images the user posts.

Desired Appearance

This “look” that they are trying to achieve mirrors that of models in magazines and in advertisements. In a way, their Instagram account is like their own magazine where they are displaying their fabulous and posed life for their followers. Because of this, in *Behind Valencia* I wanted to draw attention to the particular “hot look” these girls are going for and how they are achieving it. The appearance that they are desiring comes from what can be seen in advertising images, in magazines, on television, etcetera. In particular, this includes flawless skin, thin bodies, large breasts all put together in a pose that highlights these features and might even draw attention to a particular area of their body in a seductive way. This ideal beauty made up of all of these characteristics is exactly what surrounds us in society. We see images of skinny, photo-shopped women on television, on billboards, in magazines, and now on our Instagram feeds. This creates the idea for these women that if they don’t look like models, they are not desirable. And to make themselves more beautiful by society’s standards, they can edit their own photos with a simple iPhone or Android app. At one point, Maddie says, “Do I look fat in this one? I can always make my stomach look flatter... You know what, I’m just going to do it” about a picture she took that she is considering posting on social media (Scene 5, line 61). Whitening teeth, smoothing out skin and even altering the photo to look leaner and taller is possible and easy. Filters are also offered right on the Instagram app. They may be intended to give a photo a certain look, but also have general slimming and smoothing effects when matched with the right photo. These girls make themselves look “hot” because of what society defines as beauty and then share it with their followers on the internet.

Need for Attention

It does not stop with sharing these edited photos on the internet; there is a certain reward in doing so in the form of likes. This faction of girls is able to gain validation from followers when she posts a photo and her followers “like” it. The more likes, the more validation one receives. Validation and flattery can come in other ways, too. Within the “party culture” it is not uncommon for a couple to “make-out” or “hook up” at a party and then never speak again.

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For a girl of this previously discussed mindset, this would be another form of validation. If a girl and a guy make out, then the guy is most likely attracted to her and again she can feel validated. The goal of these girls is to be “hot.” The ways in which they know they are hot come from attention from their male counterparts in the physical world as well as the cyber world. Both hook-ups and likes provide these girls with validation that they are actually “hot” and do have the appearance that they are going for. Throughout the play, the girls receive validation in both of these forms. Maddie is encouraging Abigail to post a photo and tells her, “Yeah post that, you look hot. The likes will come pouring in” (Scene 5, Line 58). She is directly relating likes to “hotness” in this line. The girls also all have make-out sessions. Jessica in particular kisses a guy the audience assumes she just met or does not really know almost instantaneously when the girls get to the party. It is as if nothing matters if one’s quality of appearance is not confirmed in one way or the other.

Language

Part of “being hot” in the physical world also includes being seen as “cool.” One way this is done is to use the language that is commonly found within the partying culture in college. I wanted to make sure that the dialogue accurately incorporated how it is that college students communicate in certain situations particularly when partying and discussing sex. Slang and vulgarity play a large role in this. By including phrases like “turn up,” “soft,” “slut,” the readers fitting into this age group are likely to be able to relate to the story more and should feel like the dialogue is more realistic. While they believe the dialogue to be realistic, it is my hope that they would find the context of the conversations realistic as well.

Imagery

Another important element of *Behind Valencia* is the images I incorporated into the piece. Throughout the play there are stage directions indicating what images are displayed and how. These images include a variety of media; everything that the characters see on their phones and laptops is shown to the audience on a screen. The goal of this is to better imbed the audience into the situations the characters are in. Advertising images are included as well. In each scene there is a different “societal image of beauty.” For the first scene, we see a beautiful woman on the cover of a magazine that a man at the coffee shop is reading. In the party scene, we see posters of half-naked Sports Illustrated models on the wall. During the

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scene when Chris and Abigail are hanging out on the couch, commercials featuring sexy women are playing on the television. This constant imagery serves as a reminder that this is all around us all the time. The girls who are affected by this do not even notice because it is something our society is just so used to.

CONCLUSION

The theme is comprised of several elements: the desire to maintain a particular look, the attraction of attention due to this look, the language that surrounds this group of people, and the images that circulate around us, pushing us toward this mindset. Without these specific features wound throughout the play, the theme would not accurately be portrayed. I want the audience to understand what these girls do to get attention and how their behavior has been shaped by society. I intend audience members to be critical of this lifestyle and to question themselves and their motives. Perhaps they edit a picture before they post it or insistently check up on the number of likes they have received in the last hour. This can be detrimental to the psyche of a person, as it was for Abigail. It is important for them to realize that this societal definition of beauty that we are surrounded by can be broken and that beauty is more than what is in a magazine.

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APPENDIX

Examples of Images



Figure 1- An example of an advertising image that might be seen in “Behind Valencia.” This is representative of society’s gender roles as well as the media’s portrayal of women.



Figure 2- An image of a party spot that features a poster of a model half-naked and posing provocatively.

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Figure 3- This is an example of a photo Maddie and Jessica would post on Instagram. The woman is in a skimpy outfit and clearly posed for the photo.

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