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Outside a Binary System, The Brighter Object Is a Dream

Luisa A. Igloria

Old Dominion University, ligloria@odu.edu

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OUTSIDE A BINARY SYSTEM, THE BRIGHTER OBJECT IS A DREAM

BY LUISA A. IGLORIA

In graduate school, my roommate declared: women actually want someone who's the truck driver type, but with a Ph.D. I wondered, how is that different from someone actually a truck driver, but who's the Ph.D. type? Doesn't that kind of exclude, even hypothetically, the guy whose funding runs out in his last year of school, so he's willing to consider driving for FedEx or UPS or delivering packages for Amazon using his father-in-law's pickup truck? What about the female long-haul driver (they make up 5% of the industry) who finishes the entire audiobook series of Proust's *Swann's Way* and Christie's *Hercule Poirot Mysteries*, delivering distilled water coast to coast to pay off student debt? Was my roommate just practicing how to explain to friends more well-heeled or "intellectual" why she got engaged to a guy who was some kind of mechanic—though he worked on planes, which I guess is a kind of upgrade from Jiffy Lube down the street? And that kind of question is tricky; shouldn't we know by now anything reduced to a simple binary leaves out a whole field of intersecting nuances we can't even begin to address, in theory or praxis? I learn about a poet married to a woodworker— he carves and sands honey-colored cheese boards from natural wood. I order one at Christmas and it is a beautiful thing, a work of poetry itself. I don't know if he has a Ph.D. in what he does. There's a local art fair where we go every year to admire handmade jewelry, glazed pottery with uneven rims where sometimes you can see the speckled imprint of the potter's thumb on clay. Once I helped edit a friend's book, the product of ten years' painstaking field research— like long-haul driving. She paid me with two hand-sewn, hand-beaded blouses made by T'boli women from villages around Lake Sebu. Each was exquisite— on bodices and sleeves of jet black and royal blue, intricate starred clusters beads: hornbill yellow, ivory, macopa red. No one of these designs was exactly like another: they were dictated in dreams to each artisan, who worked afterward from memory, by touch.

LUISA A. IGLORIA is a professor of English and creative writing at Old Dominion University. She is the author of *What is Left of Wings, I Ask*, winner of the Letterpress Poetry Chapbook Prize; and *The Buddha Wonders if She is Having a Midlife Crisis*.

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