

A SITUATIONALLY SENSITIVE CRITIQUE OF THE SPACE OF LAW SCHOOL FROM A QUEER AND TRANS PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

In this article, I explore the challenges of radical queer and trans critiques of law and life in two Finnish law schools. Drawing on critical theories and personal experience, I demonstrate how the space of law school exercises power to silence and “other” radical queer and trans energies. The bulk of this article focuses on three specific moments when this power is exercised: when speaking up, dressing up, and looking around. I argue that this power dynamic is made possible by the “apolitical” theories of law and legal expertise according to which a great majority of law schools are still structured. I conclude the article with a gentle encouragement: we can and should enter these sites of power with the desire to resist the power dynamics of the “apolitical” space of law school. This article is written with that desire – to resist conventional expectations of legal and academic writing. The opportunities are manifold.

I. FROM RECEIVING TO DISTRIBUTING INTERSUBJECTIVE ZAPS

By now I have gathered an abundant harvest of law school critiques. There is surely more than enough in my Zotero Library for me to convey my message. However, I keep on devouring the words of the disenchanting and dispossessed scholars in one bite, each time assuring the article of the moment to be the last. Deadline notwithstanding, I open HeinOnline and fornicate with another file replete with critiques stemming from exceeding frustration of legal education.

These professors¹, they are all drug dealers. My plug² professors and their articles have proven to be reliable distributors of the so called intersubjective zap.³ For exemplification, I have tracked certain jolly psychosomatic effects that can flow from a first dosage of the good old *Legal Education and the Reproduction of Hierarchy*⁴: a sky high heart rate, euphoric light headedness, a radically charged desire to organize and fight, a sense of do or die urgency vibrating the whole corpus. The plugs describe the intersubjective zap as “a sudden, intuitive moment of connectedness.” It is a source, or ignitor of common radical pursuits. I discovered the vast body of critical legal scholarship about three years ago. I dare to argue I found meaning where I thought there would be none. From the intersubjective zaps emerged my political subjectivity and consequently its positioning within the historical course of critical approaches to law. To not lose hope in the space of law school, I must continue injecting intersubjective zaps on a daily basis.

Regrettably, the effectiveness of the intersubjective zap is diminishing. The reduction follows from the fact that my moments of connectedness are, in the end, moments of connectedness with someone either dead or living too far away. This applies to both, the CLS plugs and to the others I mention in the first footnote. Therefore, I only experience limited intersubjective zaps since I cannot fully share the temporal or spatial dimensions of their critiques. The connectedness between the CLS plug professors, however, demonstrates the intersubjective zap par excellence – they found each other and began to mobilize their critical stance within a specific time and space that had its idiosyncratic ideological, material

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- 1 Here I make a reference to the ones associated with the critical legal studies movement. However, nowadays my plugs are not just the CLS professors, but covers a wide range of people who critique the prevailing power structures from e.g., a queer, trans, crip, race and feminist perspectives and aim to mobilize radical energies that wish to redistribute resources such as wealth, safety, accommodation, dignity, life chances and health. Good examples are Dean Spade, Libby Adler and Eric A. Stanley.
 - 2 A person who has the ability to get or supply hard-to-find items.
 - 3 (...) a sudden, intuitive moment of connectedness. It is a vitalizing moment of energy (hence “zap”) when the barriers between the self and the other are in some sense suddenly dissolved.” Peter Gabel & Duncan Kennedy, ‘Roll Over Beethoven’ (1984) 36 Stan L Rev 1.
 - 4 Duncan Kennedy, ‘Legal Education and the Reproduction of Hierarchy’ (1982) 32 J Legal Education 591.

and cultural aspects which again conditioned critiques of law and legal education. As a brutal simplification, they were red diaper babies experiencing legal academic and intellectual life during the heyday of postmodernism and political radicalism that penetrated American cultural strata in the 1960s.⁵ The time was ripe to declare law as political, as a perpetuator and reproducer of structural injustice, as a detrimentally futile tool to advance radical societal change. My limited intersubjective zap suffers a reduction in quality precisely because critique is always a spatial and temporal product – something to which a one-size-fits-all approach does not fit. Jorge Esquirol captures this exact problem more eloquently:

”If comparative law has any one thing to say to legal theory, it is that legal constructs are epistemically situated enterprises. Concepts and critiques take different meanings depending on their community of reference. Members of a given interpretive community create the conceptual and relational associations that make particular sense to them. (...) Accepting this point means there is no singular path forward for either construction or critique. They both vary according to situational understandings.”⁶

You get the problem - my location lacks radical queer and trans critiques concerning law and legal education from a legal perspective. Therefore, the intersubjective zap plugs are few and far between. I loosely employ the term radical to point towards critiques that bash the prevailing power structures from queer and trans perspectives, question the capacity of traditional legal concepts to bring about structural change, do not shy away from instigating processes towards alternative futures and have the potentiality to mobilize energies that predominantly aim to redistribute resources such as e.g., wealth, safety, dignity, housing, power and life chances in a more socially just manner. Critiques of this kind are not present in Finnish legal academia to my knowledge. This essay is therefore no more than an attempt to convey a situationally sensitive description of the elements that condition and limit the possibilities of radical queer and trans critique and energies within very specific epistemic and social communities – the University of Turku and University of Helsinki.

5 Juhana Salojärvi, 'A Counter-Culture of Law: Jurisprudential Change and the Intellectual Origins of the Critical Legal Studies Movement' (2019) 59 *American Journal of Legal History* 409, 436.

6 Jorge L Esquirol, 'MAKING THE CRITICAL MOVES: A TOP TEN IN PROGRESSIVE LEGAL SCHOLARSHIP' 92.

This essay asks, by relying on critical theories of law, critical costume studies and a performative approach, how the space of law school exercises power to silence and to “other” queer and trans critiques. Additionally, this essay is a culmination of me asking myself repeatedly over the years “why has law school been so awfully desperate, hopeless and lonely time to me.” Personal experiences are thus used as a research data, which brings this work close to autoethnography.⁷ Sara L. Crawley presents autoethnography “as a kind of self-interview, which is not a defined method with specific parameters but rather a balancing act between modernist empirical science, postmodernist deconstructions of science and subjectivity, and the activist pursuit of recording marginalized ideas and voices.”⁸ This formulation draws theoretical firepower from feminist standpoint theory, that, among other things, stresses the importance of lived experiences and social location in knowledge production.⁹ A crucial addition to this is that experiences are not assumed as essential, but as processes that go through continuous metamorphoses in the whirlwind of political, economic and societal forces.¹⁰ Thus, this is not the queer and trans experience.

With such a theoretical backpack, I identify power exercised against queer and trans critiques when speaking up, dressing up, and looking around. However, the essay first and foremost encourages us to consider these cases in a Foucauldian spirit: “where there is power there is resistance.”¹¹ Arrogantly, I wish to distribute an intersubjective zap to you, dear reader.

7 Tony Adams and Stacy Jones, 'Telling Stories: Reflexivity, Queer Theory, and Autoethnography' (2011) 11 *Cultural Studies Critical Methodologies* 110.

8 Sara L Crawley, 'Autoethnography as Feminist Self-Interview' in Jaber Gubrium and others, *The SAGE Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft* (SAGE Publications, Inc 2012) 144 <<https://methods.sagepub.com/book/handbook-of-interview-research-2e/n10.xml>> accessed 18 May 2023.

9 Andrea Doucet and Natasha S Mauthner, 'Feminist Methodologies and Epistemology' in Clifton Bryant and Dennis Peck, *21st Century Sociology* (SAGE Publications, Inc 2007) 37 <<https://sk.sagepub.com/reference/sociology/n62.xml>> accessed 14 February 2023.

10 Tuija Saresma, 'Kokemuksen houkutus' teoksessa T Saresma, L-M Rossi & T Juvonen (eds) *Käsikirja Sukupuoleen* (Vastapaino 2010).

11 Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality*, translated by Robert Hurley (London: Penguin Books, 1998). 96.

2. SPEAKING UP

A few years back, I was critiquing the criminal law professor for a lack of even the slightest consideration on structural aspects of criminal law. The events of the court case we analyzed during the lecture proceeded as follows. A and B were a couple. A and B got pissed out of their minds in a sauna. Just before the sauna shift ended, A left back to the apartment, while intoxicated B remained in the sauna. B had consequently died in the sauna later that night. The professor asked: "Was A obligated to take care of B?" An invitation for not so rigorous contemplation, I thought. Frustratedly I replied: "According to law and the preceding judgments, A and B cannot be regarded as family members. Therefore, no responsibility can be established." The professor did not get to finish his obligatory compliment before I continued: "But is that all we have to say? Do we not find the narrow definition of family as hostile towards other families who do not fit into the parameters of traditional family? Do we find no guilt in the conduct of law and court of perpetuating an individualistic worldview at the expense of a more communal way of social life?" The professor's face appeared somewhat perplexed as he calculated how to deal with my outburst. A few seconds later, a reply followed that speaks volumes. He stated: "What you say is interesting. But for everyone listening, I will not award points for political and ideological analysis in the exam." The conversation died there. Onwards with the real thing!

Make no mistake - I am fully aware how lazy and unimaginative my question was. I was a beginner and not the most promising one I am afraid. Yet, I doubt even the most sophisticated critical question would have made a difference. As my critiques developed, the answers remained, for the most part, similar in terms of substance. Indeed, during the five years of my law studies, first in the University of Turku, and later in the University of Helsinki, there has been a strong tendency to belittle pursuits to interrogate the relationship between law and the structures of society. Interestingly, this bears resemblance to the dynamic that has dictated also the universal history of legal thought. According to Roberto Unger, the functioning of legal thought throughout its history has relied on theories of law that camouflage and/or deny law's relation to the political structure of society.¹²

The authoritative answer of the professor made clear that the precondition for qualifying as a respectable participant in the space of law school requires one to solely rely on "(...) a method of legal justification that can be clearly contrasted to open-ended disputes about the basic terms of social life, disputes that people call ideological (...)." ¹³ What is expected,

12 Roberto Mangabeira Unger, 'The Universal History of Legal Thought' 51, 2-4.

13 Roberto Mangabeira Unger, 'The Critical Legal Studies Movement' (1983) 96 Harvard Law Review 561, 564.

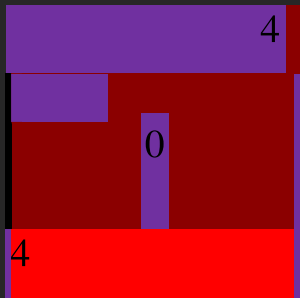
taught, and graded, is autonomous objective reasoning. To be precise, the precondition is to predominantly derive the legal answer with the help of "non-political" legal positivist doctrine from the system of rules and other institutional sources.¹⁴ This is what it means to think like a lawyer. The space first and foremost promotes expertise that turns a blind eye to the fact that legal actions predominantly uphold and reproduce structural injustice and systems of unjust distribution of resources. My choices of words like "non-political", "positivist doctrine", and "structural injustice" in regards of legal education, however, just obscure more than they reveal. Some have managed to do the opposite: "Learning to 'think like a lawyer,' the enunciated goal of legal education, means learning to think like the stereotype of a lawyer as a white, straight, upper class male, preferably Protestant, and able-bodied enough to play golf. Political perspectives are discouraged, and emotions exist to be manipulated."¹⁵

I have constructed an exhibition. I call it 'muted'. You'll find it below. It entails me, speaking up to not all, but most of the professors I have encountered during my studies.

14 David M Trubek, 'Where the Action Is: Critical Legal Studies and Empiricism' (1984) 36 Stanford Law Review 575, 578.

15 Kim Brooks and Debra Parkes, 'Queering Legal Education: A Project of Theoretical Discovery' 9.

“Professor. In my view, equal right to marry is a cold comfort for marginalized queer communities that suffer from the lack of resources such as safety, health, accommodation



or wealth. We ought to reimagine legal expertise that sensitively considers how law functions to produce conditions that subject these communities vulnerable to structural injustice. Our horizon

should not be solely formal legal equality.”¹⁶

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“Or professor hey, how can we, as legal experts, promote structural justice if we deny our connection to political structures while simultaneously upholding them? How do we imagine a socioeconomically just and environmentally sustainable future if law secures substantive rights, but always in favor of preserving and maintaining existing power relations.”¹⁷

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4 0 4 0 4 0 4 0 4 0 4 0 4

16 Libby Adler, *Gay Priori: A Queer Critical Legal Studies Approach to Law Reform* (Duke University Press 2018) 175 – 211.

17 Angela P Harris, ‘FROM STONEWALL TO THE SUBURBS?: TOWARD A POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SEXUALITY’ 14 1565.

more! **404!** I find it disturbing that the law we are thought teaches us to

4 0 4

conceptualize racism, homo- and transphobia, ableism, and xenophobia **4 0 4** as spatially and temporally pinpointed nasty moments of misguided conduct perpetuated by a misbehaving individual – not as social phenomenon that structures the life chances of so

many in a violent manner”¹⁸

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18 Alan David Freeman, ‘Legitimizing Racial Discrimination Through Antidiscrimination Law: A Critical Review of Supreme Court Doctrines’ 62 MINNESOTA LAW REVIEW 1054.

“Prof, prof! I
do not think
this — legal
expertise — I
am — being
harnessed
into — will
ever
help me
deliver
structural
justice, since
it seems to
me that “the
greater — the
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less
responsibilit
y
can — be
established

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“Professor!”

The valorized abstract knowledge of apolitical legal expertise stands for the representation of the space.²⁰ Consequently, the space distributes tremendous power to speaking up with expertise to those who rally under the banner of dominant interests. The distributional dynamics construct the space of law school as a space with a core and a periphery.

Core - We are hard. We are reason. We are logical. We are reality. We are law.

Periphery – You are soft. You are politics. You are emotion. You are passion. You are subjectivity. You are fantasy. You are not law.²¹

19 Scott Veitch, *Law and Irresponsibility: On the Legitimation of Human Suffering* (Routledge 2007) 2.
20 Chris Butler, ‘Critical Legal Studies and the Politics of Space’ (2009) 18 *Social & Legal Studies* 313, 320. “Representations of space are forms of abstract knowledge generated by formal and institutional apparatuses of power engaged in the organization of space. Obvious examples include the work of planners, bureaucrats, social engineers, cartographers and the variety of scientific disciplines holding socially recognized ‘expertise’ in the management and control of spatial form.”
21 Duncan Kennedy, ‘THE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE LAW SCHOOL CURRICULUM’ 14 *SETON HALL LAW REVIEW* 17, 11.

3. DRESSING UP

I wish now to illustrate how law school couples cis normative dressing up with professionalism.²² In the very beginning of my time in law school, I remember entering a local smart casual / business wear clothing store accompanied by an overwhelming certainty about my inadequacy in terms of style.²³ Although my garments from high school and a gap year bore resemblance to business wear, I was fully aware that I would need to spend a substantial portion of my student loan to level up. The reason for my no-hesitations-investment was that all the major law firms had been scheduled to visit our faculty during the first months of law school. We all knew what was about to go down: PR and headhunting. I could simply not run the risk of coming across as ill-suited and ignorant to the standards of the profession in front of the representatives of behemoth law firms.

Their arrival is well detailed in my mind. Men dressed in three-piece suits and women in formal dresses, etiquette fetishism, nonchalant declarations about over the top fringe benefits, narrated power fantasies of popping champagne after closing a deal, a hot dog wagon and an afterparty. A few hundred euros poorer but dressed up in a costume that tried to signal “I am the fucking man”, I mingled with the lawyers and PR representatives with champagne (or sparkling wine, I can’t tell the difference) in one hand and a hot dog in the other.

A few weeks later I encountered law school activism for the first time. Thoughtful chads of our student body had devoted themselves to arrange annual excursions to Herrainpukimo, an obnoxiously well-equipped elite menswear boutique. The owner lectured about the fine intricacies of menswear, assuring we need at least three pairs of quality shoes for our professional lives. Chad A and Chad B, I assume, believed it to be of crucial importance for us to understand how to *really* dress professionally. Advanced special studies to acquire a competitive edge in the professional world. And without their law school activism, the gravity of my mistake would not have maybe ever surfaced to me: the shop I visited two weeks ago was a bootleg store filled with piles of shit. And so was I.

22 Others have also pointed out this connection. See generally: Ann Juliano, ‘How to Look Like a Lawyer’ 34 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT; Rebekah Hanley and Malcolm MacWilliamson, ‘Model Dress Code: Promoting Genderless Attire Rules to Foster an Inclusive Legal Profession’ 34 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT; Elizabeth B Cooper, ‘The Appearance of Professionalism’ 71 Florida Law Review; Shannon Cumberbatch, ‘When Your Identity Is Inherently “Unprofessional”: Navigating Rules of Professional Appearance Rooted in Cisheteronormative Whiteness as Black Women and Gender Non-Conforming Professionals’ 34 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. Celia Meredith, ‘Neither Here nor There: Nonbinary, Law, Student’ (2022) 10 Ind JL & Soc Equal 453.

23 Robert S Chang and Adrienne D Davis, ‘Making Up Is Hard to Do: Race/Gender/Sexual Orientation in the Law School Classroom’ (2010) Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies Research. 11. Chang and Davis zapped me to consider how I’ve navigated in the space of law school to comply with conventional gender identities.

Yet, I managed to land two trainee positions at major law firms. I lured my mother to buy me new office wear that would comply with the professional standards. Quality menswear, just as I was taught. But important only to match the professionalism expected from a junior trainee. Smart casual. No suit or shiny shoes. But perfectly in line with what is expected from a bottom tier noob. A higher rank of professionalism seemed to summon more office wear: one male associate trainee had a suit jacket just in case, another had that, dark trousers and a belt matching the shoes. One male partner appeared to have robbed Herrainpukimo empty. A formula for dressing up professionally.

In their article, Swethaa S. Ballakrishnen presents ethnographic interview data that identifies the same trajectory I have narrated. One of the students they interviewed explained: “When you go to your first job [interview], women should wear skirts and panty hose and men should wear suits.” Drawing from interview data, Ballakrishnen argues that “(...) manners of dress in professional space were seen as an important part of how ‘put together’ or ‘professional’ one was.”²⁴

I wish to delve deeper into how costumes, bodies and spaces are intertwined in meaning production. It is crucial to understand that costumes are documents that have possibilities to “perform concepts of space, (...) politics, and more.”²⁵ I went to the local store, Herrainpukimo, and shopping with mom exactly because I needed a costume that had a possibility to perform ‘a concept of law school space.’ It indeed feels like women should wear skirts and panty hose and men should wear suits because these costumes have a self-evident possibility to perform concepts of space and politics of law school.

And the concept of space of law school is a space of dominant interests. As I have already argued, it is so because the representation of the space is built upon abstract knowledge that favors objective law and impartial legal education. The representation of the space, in abstraction, is status quo. Some might even argue that law and legal education that prioritizes objectivity and impartiality lines with the interests of “‘benchmark men,’ that is, those who are white, Anglo-Celtic, heterosexual, able-bodied, and middle class, and who support a mainstream religion and a right of centre politics.”²⁶ We have done and keep doing an astonishingly good job in dressing up in costumes that perform the concept of that exact space.

24 Swethaa S Ballakrishnen, ‘Law School as Straight Space’ 91 FORDHAM LAW REVIEW 1129.

25 Sofia Pantouvaki and Barbora Přihodová, ‘Critical Costume 2020: Investigating Costume Agency’ (2021) 6 Studies in Costume & Performance 143, 145.

26 Margaret Thornton, ‘TECHNOCENTRISM IN THE LAW SCHOOL: WHY THE GENDER AND COLOUR OF LAW REMAIN THE’ 36 OSGOODE HALL LAW JOURNAL 370.

But we all cannot do that. Radical²⁷ gender deviance lacks the force to perform the concept of contemporary space of law school. To fail is to be categorized as a negation of an archetype of representation – not (as) professional. Thus, the power to appear professional aesthetically is distributed differently to cis, queer and trans bodies. However, just like abstract critique, a costume is an instrument of resistance against dominant interest powers.²⁸ To dress up is to enter sociopolitical, cultural, spatial and sensorial sites of struggle,²⁹ where our costumes intervene in a meaning production “between the body and space.”³⁰ That is why I urge not to assimilate into costumes of hetero-cis-normativity. I urge to dress up to law school in costumes that perform concepts of radical queer and trans critiques despite the risk of being viewed as non-professional. The costumes have a potentiality to operate as distributors of intersubjective zaps – as sources of hope, connectedness, and of radical energies in a space where there seems to be none. A radical dress up is an activist pursuit to reframe what it means to look like a professional. The space of law school is infected with sites of power exercised – thus with sites of possible resistance. That is why I want us to consider e.g., a contract law lecture as a radical costume party.³¹ I can imagine no better way than to end with the words of Dean Spade.

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- 27 With radical I mean what Robin Dembroff means with genderqueer. For Dembroff, genderqueer is something that is both internal and external. Here I stress the externality, since as Dembroff states: “(i)f being genderqueer were simply in the head, a world functioning smoothly according to the binary assumption, with no material challenges to this binary, could very well be a world full of genderqueers. (...) (R)esistance to gender binary systems requires more than thought and affect.” Simultaneously I am aware that performing radical gender deviance can be extremely dangerous in hostile environments. Robin Dembroff, ‘Beyond Binary: Genderqueer as Critical Gender Kind’ (2020) 20 21.
- 28 Donatella Barbieri and Sofia Pantouvaki, ‘Costume and Ethics: Reflections on Past, Present and Future Entanglements’ (2020) 5 *Studies in Costume & Performance* 3, 9.
- 29 Pantouvaki and Přihodová (n 18) 146.
- 30 Dorita Hannah, ‘Alarming the Heart: Costume as Performative Body-Object-Event’ (2014) 2 *Scene* 15.
- 31 Madeline Taylor, Anna Germaine Hickey and Remi Roehrs, ‘Celebrating Bowery: Radical Costume Parties as Queer Heterotopia in Brisbane’ (2020) 5 *Studies in Costume & Performance* 85.

” I want to be disturbed by what you’re wearing, I want to be shocked and undone and delighted by what you’re doing and how you’re living. And I don’t want anyone to be afraid to put on their look, their body, their clothes anymore. Resistance is what is sexy, its what looks good and is hard to look at and what sometimes requires explanation. Why would we want to do things that don’t require explanation, that are obvious, impervious to critique because no one even notices we’re doing them?³²

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- 32 Dean Spade, ‘Dress to Kill, Fight to Win | LTTR’ <<http://lttr.org/journal/1/dress-to-kill-fight-to-win>> accessed 28 April 2023.

4. LOOKING AROUND

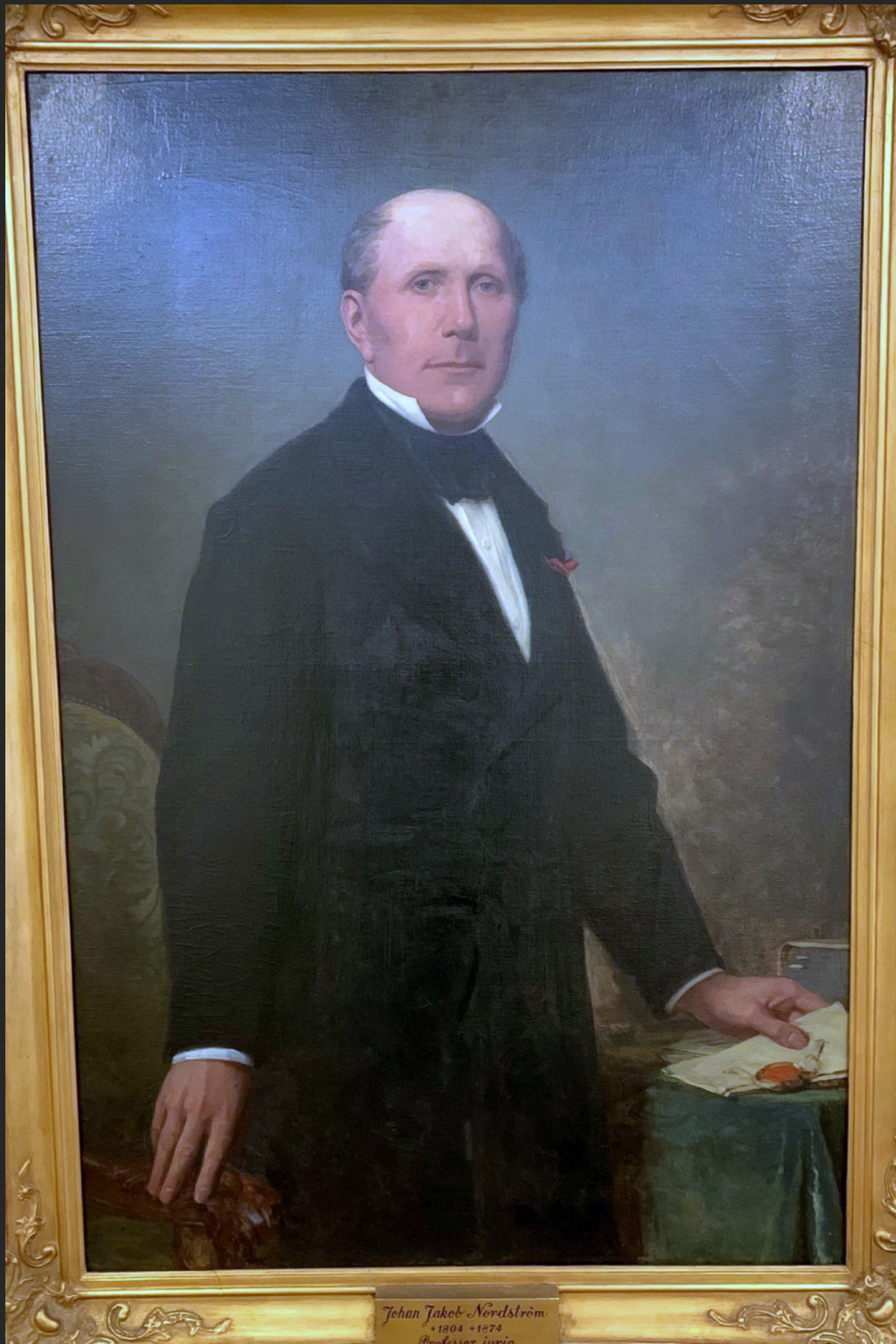
Gosh I took so much space with Spade's words. My apologies. From now onwards, I promise to be more considerate with how I use space. Now that I think about it, I guess it would be actually quite considerate if I just spoke in footnotes.³³

33 Okay so here I am now. I still have something to say about this space called law school I cohabit with dominant interest forces. I have now presented how abstract knowledge and material costumes cooperatively produce the representation of law school space. Lastly, I want to focus not on the space at large, but on a specific section of the whole space. I leave home to investigate our faculty's premises.

I stand at the corridor of my law school. I sense someone looking at me from the walls. I turn left to a give a look.

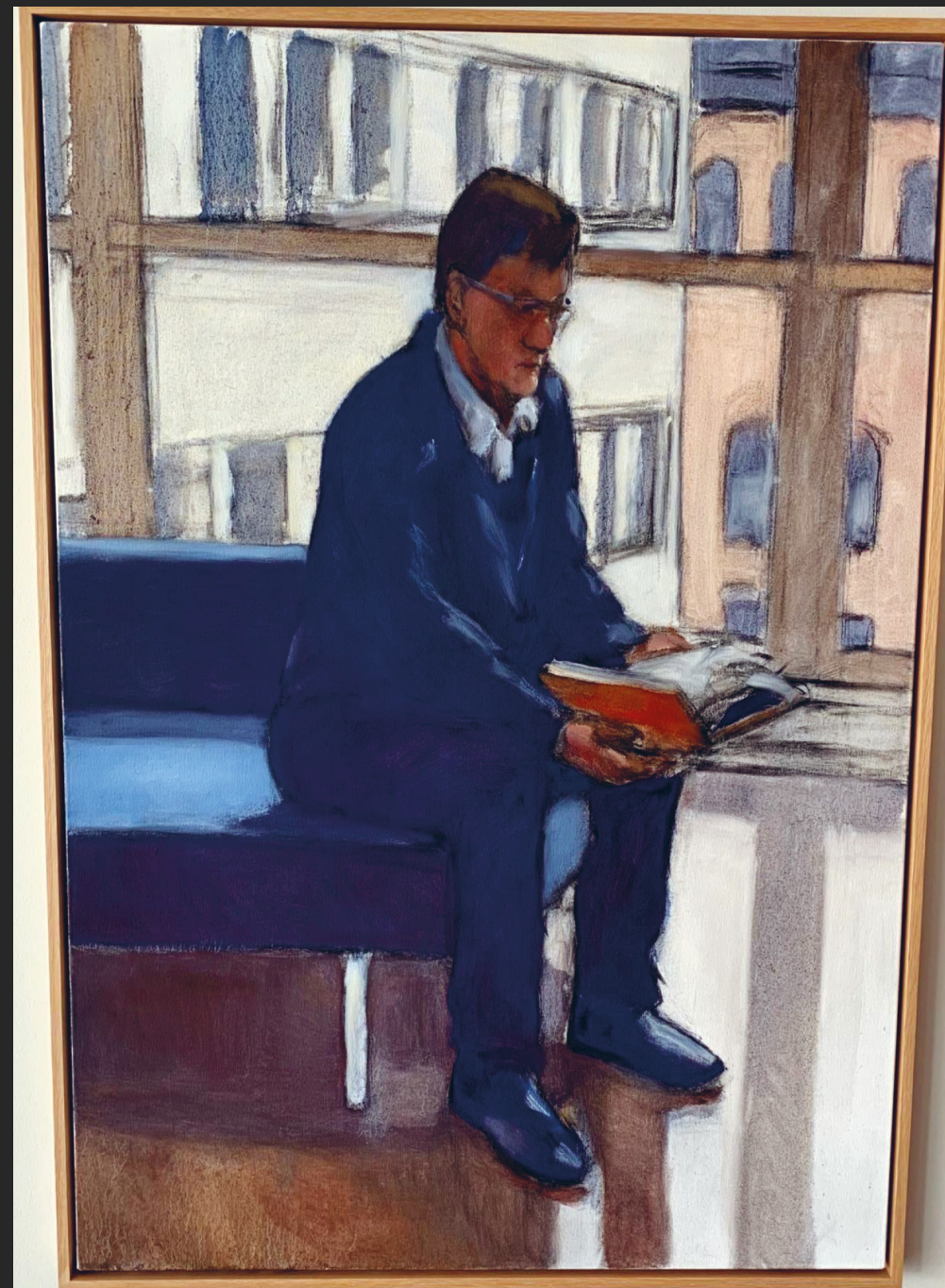


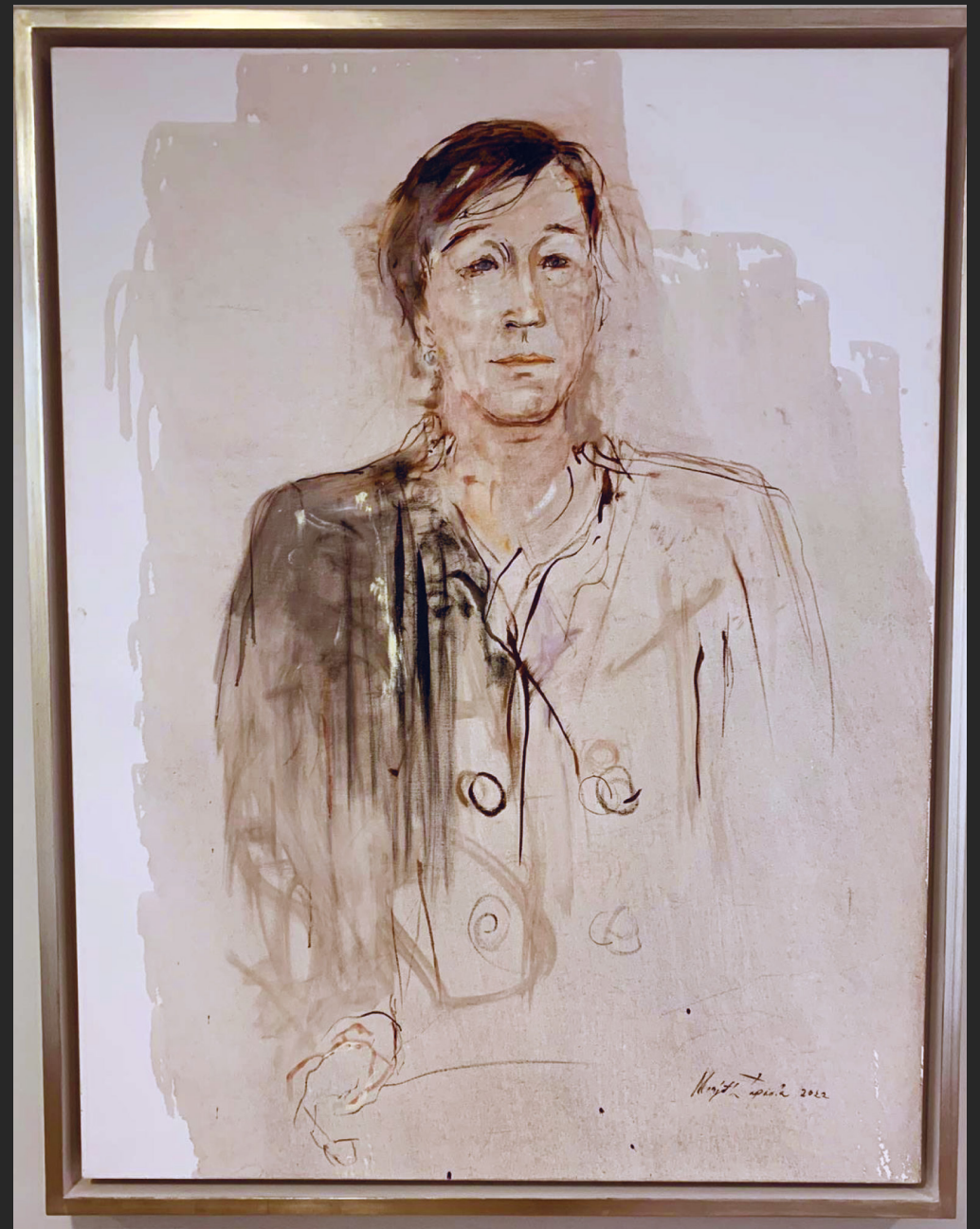
34 We share a moment, but it is quickly interrupted by another gaze drilling the back of my head. Intrigued, I turn around to look.



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- 35 "Hey there. Who are you?" The portrait asks, continuing "Let me guess, you come from the faculty of gender studies, eh? Ah, no? Ok. Well anyways, thanks for looking. Could you be a good boy and go look at the rest of us at the end of this corridor? Then there is more of us at the other corridor. Make sure to look at them also." Despite being somewhat saddened by the fact that the portrait misgendered me, I look around to see who these "others" are.







I bend across the bed to plug the phone back to a charger. Back arched, I type “Arca” and press shuffle. As the alien reggaeton beat begins, I become aware of how inviting my stance is, and the thought of it being so charges my body with electricity. I stand up with a sense of full-frontal pride that can only result from Sylvia scolding you, and head back to bathroom as Arca plays. This filthy bathroom mirror is a canvas of my portrait. The basin is filled with tarred cotton swabs and grimy makeup wipes. I rub off the stains of paint from my face again and again, each time more frustratedly. The motion irritates my skin, leaving it a red rash. It hurts now, but regardless, I continue to bring eyeliner’s tip back to the outer corner of my eye and execute swipes shooting diagonally upwards. It hurts now, but regardless I apply glittery pink eyeshadow and red lipstick in a way that makes my lips look plentiful. I want this portrait just right. I want a juridical portrait.

Juridical portraits belong to a genre of their own. Peter Goodrich has called the genre as megalography, which is art that portrays greatness. I was not simply looking at portraits earlier. It could be argued I was looking, or I was being looked at by a technique that has certain functions: namely, megalographic and symbolic.³⁷ My reading of Goodrich is that together, they function to show the mask a lawyer should put on to mimic an ideal type of social and legal identity. Besides this, a juridical portrait is a sign that can also reveal a great deal about the identity of the institution in which it resides. In his research on judicial portraits, Leslie Moran points out that the institutional values have been embedded within judicial portraits through specific aesthetic decisions regarding e.g., the posture, background, set pieces, size, and location.³⁸ The portrait/ the amalgamation of aesthetic decisions is “fabricated according to the abstract ideas, values and virtues associated with the institution and the collective. Through the sitter’s image, these institutional values and virtues are not only made, but are made visible, public and accessible.”³⁹ The expectations of impartiality and objectivity appear to dictate a certain look. It is predictable and bland, gendered and devotedly norm conforming.

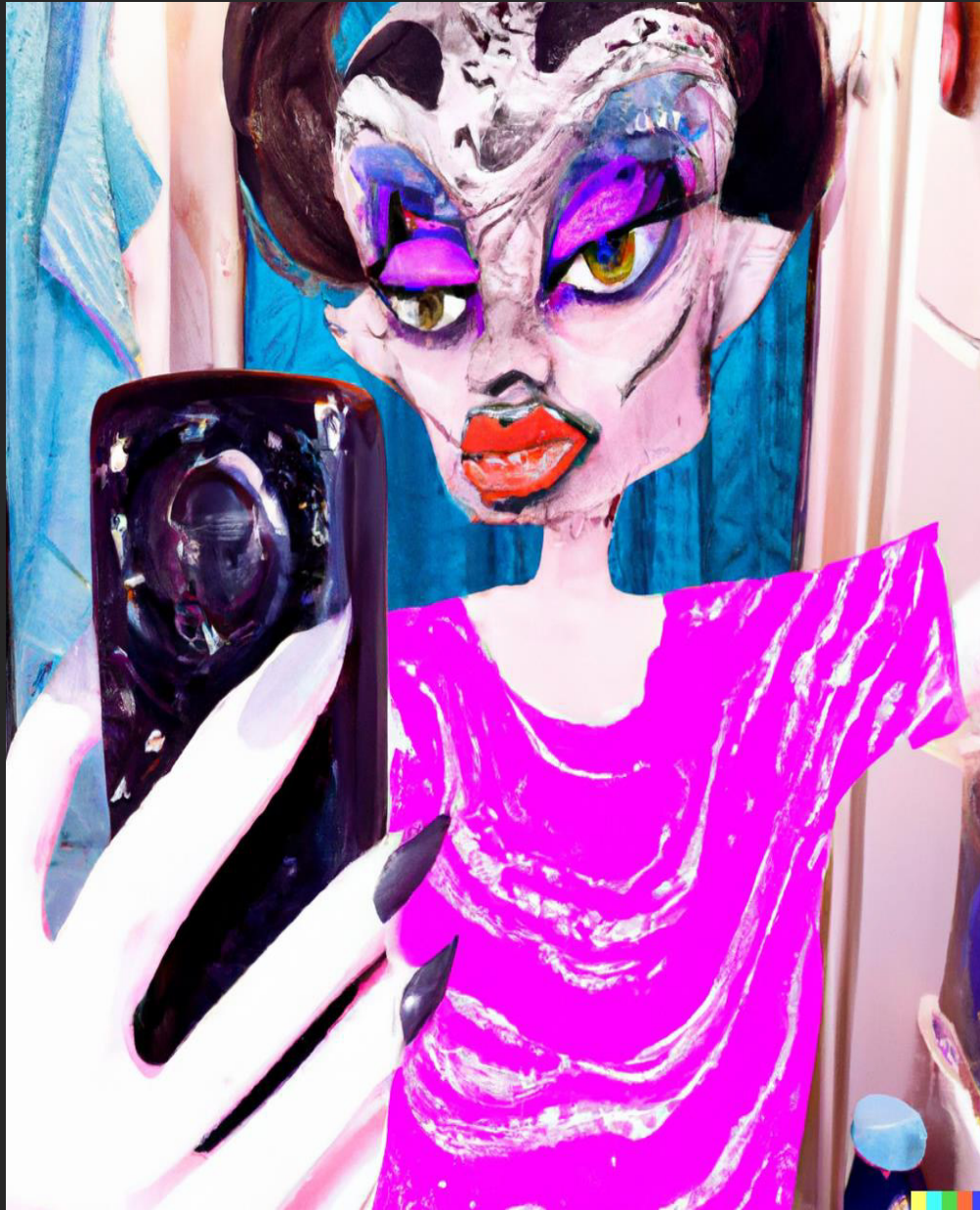
I have never tried false eyelashes, but for this portrait I just might. I sharpen the eyeliner, stretch my eyelid and paint it black. And the other one. Cheekbones? Purple contour it is. Brows? Upwards with lamination gel. I am buzzing with excitement and make a run to the living room to grab my phone. I have to type the password since the face recognition feature fails to deliver, then navigate my thumb to “camera”, strike a pose, and press the camera button. The last step is to take it to law school.

36 These were all I could find. I walk back home, knowing exactly what needs to be done.

As I make my face up by the bathroom mirror, my phone rings. It is Sylvia Rivera, commanding me to get out from the footnotes.

37 Peter Goodrich, ‘Looking at the Overlooked: Portraits of Law’ 54 *BUFFALO LAW REVIEW* 840.
 38 Leslie J Moran, ‘Judicial Pictures as Legal Life-Writing Data and a Research Method’ (2015) 42 *Journal of Law and Society* 74, 87.
 39 Leslie J Moran, ‘Judging Pictures: A Case Study of Portraits of the Chief Justices, Supreme Court of New South Wales’ (2009) 5 *International Journal of Law in Context* 295, 298.

My portrait hangs next to the greats now. Please, visit the faculty to see it. Then tell me if my portrait shows “not the person but life, not the likeness but the character, not the face but the law.”⁴⁰



40 Goodrich (n 37) 860.

5. BECOME THE PLUG

Repeatedly I've asked myself the question Louis E. Wolcher put forth in the *Ethics of Justice Without Illusions*. "Is a life in the law – even one spent in the pursuit of justice – worth living, and if so, how can a disenchanted person come to bear the living of it without constantly having to engage in self-deception?" I'll leave the question of self-deception for another day. But the first remains. Is it worth living?

Yes – but only if shared with others who believe that another end of the world is possible.

Start dealing.