
A Sudden Epiphany

Joddi Alden

Abstract

This creative work, featuring a poem and two photographs integrated into the text, details a queer relationship in Vienna, Austria, against the backdrop of global and historical violence. In the poem, a queer couple walks in downtown Vienna, noticing how stoplights in the capital city seem to depict same-sex relationships, thereby demonstrating an acceptance that was only just legalized in 2019. Initially overjoyed, given the country's historical legacy of intolerance (Austria was the birthplace of Adolf Hitler, early 20th century fascism, and is still well-known for its traditional and conservative values), the couple realizes that their happiness is overshadowed by the epiphany that Austria is one of the few countries to have voted against a ceasefire in Gaza. Stunned by this realization, the couple looks on at the stoplights, aghast, considering the complexities of violence in today's social context.

Keywords

queer, Austria, genocide, violence, persecution, homonationalism

At night in Vienna, surrounded by
Ornate buildings which catch the eye.
You walk beside me, hands entwined,
Reflecting on the past—let's rewind.

The birthplace of music, wondrous sound
Caressing the ear, a silver flute found.
A place of tranquility, snow abounds,
Visions of white, the mountains gowned.

The birthplace of hate in years gone past,
A frightening dictator, the world aghast.
Speeches from balconies, flags adorned,
The violence of difference, acceptance scorned.

And then,

We see,

Them:



Standing together, side by side.

The red showing us,

STOP!

In the name of love!

The green showing us,

GO!

Don't be afraid to love!

Walking together, side by side.

I turn to you, my face overjoyed,

Small steps forward, past hate destroyed.

The tiny heart, it reflects mine

Shining in the night, our love combined.

2019 in Austria wasn't so long ago,

And now we have this—love aglow.

We smile at each other, confident now,

Us together, confirmed somehow.

And then,

We remember

It:

The war.

The apartheid.

The genocide.

And then,

We know,

That:

This country said no, no to the ceasefire,

We stroll safe while others die in raucous gunfire.

An unacceptable exchange: our suffering for yours.

An eerie echo of the times before.

I turn to you, our smiles diminished—

A victory here when others are finished...

It's too much, or not enough, now we don't know.

We stare as the stoplights flicker, fire aglow.

Author Biography

Joddi Alden (she/her) is a PhD candidate in the Department of Sociology at York University. She previously obtained her SSHRC-funded Master of Arts degree at Queen's University, where she examined Philippine migration to Canada and transnational chains of care extending from the Global South to the Global North. Her current research interests include gendered migration, transnational capitalism, and the effects of the beauty and fashion industries on mobility in Southeast Asia. A veteran of the fashion industry in both North American and Asia, Joddi has lived, studied, and worked in various countries in the Asia-Pacific region, including South Korea, Singapore, the Philippines, Thailand, Taiwan, and China.