



Therese White

A Field Guide to Vanishing

Dedication

To the memory of

Elvine Paradis Bacon &
Genevieve Malinowski Warren

An Introduction

A germinal field guide to vanishing predates this work by about 30,000 years, to the Prehistoric Stone Age, specifically in the environs of Lower Austria, near modern-day Krems, about an hour west of Vienna. The Venus of Willendorf, as it is called, the oldest known representation of a female in art, serves as an authentic moment of vanishing (even while it sits in a Vienna museum) that alludes to a full and factual entry. In the 1980s—during a time of new carbon dating—aneecdotal reporting about this vanishing act only increased further disappearances. It was reported universally in patriarchal overtones: *The reason is unknown as to why the woman is so grotesque*. This guide, however, is designed so that vanishing acts can be readily identified

from a safe distance, without risk of inadvertently creating new disappearances, and without resorting to the kind of entrapment that early collectors relied on. Rocking chair and ironing board were ultimately replaced, during this last half-century, with avoidance and denial. We advocate for the mere watching of women without the hope to capture and retain, for personal use, the female subject. And subject is the correct word since most female vanishing acts are exhibited by women who are no longer objectified (aka: *the object of the male gaze*).

Most amateur hobbyists are prone to disbelief at the onset of women watching. Although these hobbyists are a small group, they are growing in number. There are no formal schematic diagrams for rituals related to vanishing acts, so no existing system can be relied upon to assist the backyard hobbyist. But a practical method has gained national acceptance among those wishing to spot a woman in the act of vanishing: the use of peripheral vision. Furthermore, there is little in the way of key spreadsheets and flowcharts to boost common understanding of how a vanishing happens. The best visual impressions come from both the classical and modern world of art and story—often harrowing tales of warning.

Although this guide is a first edition, and therefore new, it is not wholly original. All field guides on vanishing are derivative from the 19th century tomes, *On Visiting the Village Cemetery for Morning Constitutionals, Volumes I & II*, as well as from early 20th century serial publications known as *Ghosts of Lives Past*. Today, vanishing acts can be found most anywhere, therefore necessitating a modern-day and more general field guide. It is safe to say that the field guide to vanishing has come of age.

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Systematic Checklist

Keep a checklist of the vanishing acts you have witnessed by checking off those women (as listed in the Contents) that you have seen. This list is not comprehensive, as it covers only much of North America. And it only includes those women who are described in the body of this *Field Guide*. Sometimes one vanishing act may be comprised of more than one aforementioned group on the list. That is to be expected. We hope to have many other editions of this field guide for other parts of the globe and other female vanishing acts.

How to Identify Female Vanishing Acts

More art than science is enmeshed in recognizing a vanishing in the making. Often there are months and years leading up to a near-complete disappearance. Watchers of women must pack patience into their imaginary arsenal of tools and tricks. The subject is usually unwilling, making the vanishing act all the more poignant to witness. Multiple locations typically foster the vanishing act, so be aware that some travel might be involved in your scouting expeditions. Signs of vanishing creep up in meeting rooms, elevators, bars, bedrooms, offices, and car dealerships.

What is its age?

Acquire the habit of comparing a younger woman to an older woman with some familiar “yardstick”—a college student, an intern, a new hire, etc., so that you can say to yourself, “older than a college student; a little older than a new hire.” The measurements in this book represent lengths of time in decades (with years in parentheses). However, specimen ages vary widely depending on the setting. Additionally, there will be exceptions for using this “yardstick,” as bitches and badasses have been known to go back to school, start a new career or take a new position after the age of <36.

What is its shape?

Is it plump like a yo-yo dieter or slender at the waist like an hourglass?

What shape are its jowls?

Are they fleshy and drooping like a sexagenarian (between the ages of 60-70) or taut and firm like a sorority sister fresh from the quad?

In what shape are its bills?

Is its wallet weighed down with a mortgage, multiple loans, credit card debt, and returns waiting to go back to T.J.Maxx or is its wallet light and small, like a rhinestone choker?

What shape is its tale?

Is it curvilinear, circuitous, halting and jutting forwards and backwards, often moving laterally, however hard it trudges forward—making the tale feel like a swimmer in a riptide—or is it straightforward and linear like a boho arrow on an InstaPost?

How does it behave?

Is it apologetic, reticent, reserved, mildly conservative, overly polite, patient, technophobic, and/or nonsexual? Or is it fresh, fun, impulsive, entitled, innocent, sexual, loquacious, techno-amorous, and/or oblivious? Behaviors between these two extremes exist, but in highlighting what to look for and what characteristics are in contrast to women who vanish, it becomes easier to identify potential specimens.

What are its field marks?

Some specimens can be identified by stretch marks or wrinkles, age spots or dry patches. Note whether the hair is graying at the temples or the roots. Look for out-of-date clothing; lower heels; hair that is either blond, auburn, brown, or black; a body devoid of piercings except perhaps the ears (one per earlobe); and the absence of any tattoos.

Tale Patterns

Does the tale have a pattern? Have there been failed relationships, failed jobs, failed careers, failed pregnancies? Does the tale come with footnotes galore and a long list of works cited?

Rump Patches

Don't be surprised if there are distinctive patches that protrude from the rump, indicating bladder control contraptions. Careful: don't confuse these with pads for menses.

Eye-Stripes and Eye-Rings

Does the specimen have dark circles below the eye? Does it have crow's feet around the exterior of the eye socket? Does it have a ring around the eye, as in spectacles for farsightedness, nearsightedness, or an astigmatism?

Other Terms Used in this Book

Sex Symbols: Females who attract the eye and end up obfuscating the vanishing woman

Accidental: Regardless of intention, a vanishing act can occur accidentally by unsuspecting, somewhat ignorant, and still culpable persons

Casual: The style of treatment of vanishing women if the act becomes public and visible before the disappearance is complete

Introduced: A specimen who is not native, and even though her own native culture might not promulgate vanishing acts among women, she will be prone to disappearing when in society, especially as she assimilates into American culture

Exotic: A specimen who is not native, and who through active retention of her non-American culture, has escaped the vanishing act

In Part: A well-marked sub-species or morph, such as a vanishing act that has a partial reversal of fortune due to strong and continued female mentorship

A Field Guide to the Specimen: Sample Entry

COMMON WORKING FEMALES *Femina Communia Opus Quinquaginta Super*

(<50) Large-hearted women who put in over 35 hours (and up to 60 hours) per week working outside of the home. Work-related flights before sunrise or after twilight may start down the road. Sometimes nocturnal. Many dive from paid work to unpaid work at the home. Volunteer hours also typical depending on the season. Raising of young may occur among this group. Sleep is often foreshortened. Also the group from where the most mentors emerge. Mates (about 70% *Accidental*) become companions to tackle financial concerns. Vanishing Acts can be found in offices, meeting rooms, and bedrooms. Food: efforts at healthy food made with intermittent junk food binges and alcoholic libation. Range: North, South, East, and West. No. of species: America, forty million (+ eight hundred thousand *Introduced*; + four thousand *In Part*; + 900 *Exotic*)...

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