

Chosen Monologue: The Seagull by Anton Chekhov;

In this homodiegetic monologue the narrator addresses his Uncle and describes the extant relationship with his Mother outlining some concerns that he has surrounding this relationship. There is an emphasis on age and also on the art of theatrical performance, reflecting on how this relates to morality at the time of writing, as well as hinting toward the personal moral standards which exist in the mind of the narrator.

This monologue opens with the narrator taking part in a practice originating in France during the Victorian era (during the life of the author, Anton Chekhov) that is commonly known as 'He Loves Me, He Loves Me Not' or 'She Loves Me, She Loves Me Not', in which the person taking part will repeat the phrases "He/ She loves me," and "He/ She loves me not," at the same time as they remove a petal from a flower. The final petal and attached phrase is said to give an indication as to the feelings of the subject of the practice.

Typically this would be done by young children or teenagers toward a prospective girlfriend or boyfriend, but in this case we have a reflection of what is considered a childish ritual being applied to a more adult situation, a type of nostalgia and use of familiar repetition that helps the reader identify with the character (as most people are familiar with this 'He Loves Me, He Loves Me Not' or 'She Loves Me, She Loves Me Not' practice), but that also transforms that childhood nostalgia in to 'real world' empathy for what is likely an adult reader.

The narrator seems confident in his opinions regarding the theatre, but I think less so about

his thoughts toward his Mother. The repetition used throughout almost seems nervous, or something in place of deeper truths which he cannot express openly. Perhaps he dislikes his Mother, and therefore he dislikes theatre, one of her passions. Perhaps he dislikes theatre to such an extent that he has begun to resent his Mother because of this passion for theatre that she so proudly displays.

This conflict makes me feel sorry for the narrator as- despite presenting as confident- he seems to be quite a conflicted and emotionally pained individual. Whereas- taken at face value- he just seems to be a bitter and resentful young man who does not want to see his Mother enjoying herself because of the idea that she is 'too old'.

Potential Storyline: Archaeology Of The Uncanny;

My first idea is to shoot this mainly in a single location within the quarry where the character will be stuck and unable to get free.

I want to then play with the idea of the degradation of the human mind under these sorts of conditions (trauma, lack of sleep, water, food, loss of blood) and the resulting hallucinations. If amputation is needed there could be a sequence where he is called names or treated as a deformed curiosity of some sort. I might show a sequence of the funeral or showing the death of the character. Almost any theme can be introduced with the poetic license provided by hallucinations and an increasingly fragile state of mind.

I'd like to make this an auto diegetic narration where the character becomes increasingly unreliable as his state worsens. I will introduce static and replace an increasing amount of individual words with sound bots of other people speaking (namely famous people or those

that would be available for recall in the confused mind of our character). Eventually his entire sentence structure will contain only borrowed sound bites which might be individual words or entire phrases.

The idea is that the narrator/ character doesn't know what's real or a result of this altered state of mind resulting from trauma. They lack the ability to express themselves, and increasingly rely on words from others who they have remembered.

Maybe have the final part of the dialogue addressing a loved one: I think having familiar voices (famous people) will help lend mood to this if combined with some melancholic music.

Finally the character will use his hands to dig something up from directly beneath where he has been stuck, he/ we the viewers will not know if that thing is real or not. It will be a sort of 'twist' on which to close the story. The narrator will have become too unreliable by this point and so cannot tell us the truth through the distorted garbled mess of voice clips being played in the background.

Ghost Stories: An Analysis;

In this film the writer and director manage to keep a consistent flow through four separate stories that exist within one main storyline. The conduit to allow this is the main character, a renowned sceptic who is investigating three cases that supposedly cannot be solved by his idol (another renowned sceptic who disappeared and was thought to be dead).

There are also repeating themes in each story that bleed in to one from the other. This

provides a visual cue as to the relationship between all of these stories (something that will become apparent at the end of the film when it is revealed that all of this is a dream being had by the main character, a man who has attempted suicide and is now paralysed and 'locked in').

There are Victorian themes in the opening of this film where we see a psychic medium being exposed as a fraud by the protagonist. Psychic mediumship and spiritualism were extremely popular in Victorian times due to a societal obsession with the macabre resulting from the fact that they were surrounded by death. This came as a result of things such as low life expectancy and outbreaks of disease. The normalisation of death, especially infant mortality, is something that leads to a society where exploration of these grim notions becomes the every day.

Infant mortality also being a theme in this film, where it is suggested- through repeated imagery (a child's doll) and continuing narrative surrounding a dead or unwell child- that this is a factor in what is revealed to be the attempted suicide of the protagonist.

As well as the final reveal of the grim reality of the situation the protagonist finds themselves in there is a theme of revelation throughout the film. Partly in a very literal sense when he enters a church and is lambasted by a religious man for his 'lack of faith in that which is intangible'. As the film moves forward we see the orthodoxy of the protagonist's scepticism being whittled away with every encounter he has. He attempts to obscure this breaking down of his tough exterior but cannot do so with sincerity and seems to be lying to himself for the sake of comfort, convincing none of those he pleads his case to. There is a physical reveal as this occurs and the main character's situation becomes clearer to the viewer, a breakdown of reality allows the character and us as viewers to start

to understand this all as a dreamscape of some sort.

The ultimate revelation comes when a sequence leads to the main character in a hospital bed intubated and immobile, the faces from his dreamscape being revealed simply as those of the nurses, neurologists, and cleaning staff who look after him. He is shown to be paralysed and stuck in his physical body, and this reflects eerily as to how he- as the sceptic in his dreamscape- was stuck in his preconceptions surrounding the paranormal.

The Monster Within: Reflective Questions;

These quotes reflect on society and the individual, describing the idea that people are only 'monstrous' when circumstances supposedly force them to behave in this way. Conversely, they suggest that the human being is intrinsically monstrous and that in fact the idea of a good person is discouraged in society through association with suffering or weakness. As well as reflecting more on the institutional ideologies and their spread through society and the individual; whether religious or scientific. We see this a lot in modern storytelling, as an increasingly well-connected and information rich population are more able to question or debunk older theories and myths, replacing them with what they believe is 'a better ideology', or even no solid ideological grounding at all. The latter revealing that these theories of human nature (good or bad) are perhaps more a matter of certain shared ideology than we, still partly non-secular inhabitants of this planet, would like to admit.

The quotes also ponder mortality and one suggests that any person would take the chance to be immortal, despite the potential consequences: something we see in increasing amounts in contemporary media, and in a technological world in which this could be only decades away.

Robert Ben Cooper 04/11/2019
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The way these quotes are presented- despite their differing format and context- allows the viewer to consider the meaning of ideologies, and of the human condition. Why we are susceptible to ideology, and the role of the environment on our psyche in terms of the group or the individual. They may even cause viewers who hold strong ideological beliefs to question them through the act of taking the place of a character and adopting their predicament.

- Robert Ben Cooper