

Part 1

Gravity Falls is a show that took the world by storm in the mid 2010's as it was well beloved by fans across the globe for its colourful characters, interesting story and just how interactive the story was with the fans. Even to this day you can still see a lot of the effects the show had on people with shows that have followed after it trying to have a similar following such as The Owl House. The show has also inspired a lot of people to go down the path of film and tv and even animation where you can see evidence of this on the creator of the show Alex Hirsch's twitter feed.

Today I will be analysing the philosophical themes embedded into the show through the screenwriting techniques used throughout its story, I will be doing this by looking at how philosophical ideas are expressed through storytelling by looking at a few different key thinkers and their philosophical beliefs such as Joseph Campbell's concept of the hero's journey and Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis of dreams and symbolism.

The narrative structure of Gravity Falls was really unique at the time of its airing as it was a serialised animated show and while there were shows before Gravity Falls that were none was as connected as every episode was connected one way or another, there was the occasional episodic episode but even in them they still worked together to forward the plot using easter eggs as well as codes to be deciphered that would tease future events or even make previous ones more clear. Almost every episode had a little bit of foreshadowing which was integral for the show to work and even coming back today you still find things that just make more sense on later viewings.

Intern all of this lead to a lot of fan theories on original viewing and also alternate realities where people would create their own versions of the lore which leads me into my first philosophical notion from Roland Barthes about the death of the author which is a literary theory that argues that the meaning of a text is not determined by the author's intention, but rather by the reader's interpretation. This theory helps suggest the importance of the audience's opinions and allows the original work to be open to interpretation and based upon the popular fan theories and the alternate realities created by the fans it's safe to say Alex succeeded in this allowing people to enjoy his show however they wanted leaving the fans satisfied but also leading to fans butting heads based on different opinions. "A text's unity lies not in its origin, but in its destination" A quote from Roland Barthes that fits Gravity Falls very well in my eyes as it's implying that in the case of Gravity Falls the whole story is only united if we the audience can help figure it out. We can also look at Joseph Campbell's hero's journey, which describes the common heroic narrative in media and is a useful tool to compare stories throughout different times and cultures. Here in Gravity Falls for multiple characters and helps benefit all of them in completing their character arcs and what makes this such a fun topic to discuss is the way that the characters fit into the different roles for the hero's journey such as if we're looking at Dipper as our hero then Ford would be the mentor but if we looked at Stan as the hero Ford would be our herald it's just a matter of perspective.

The hero's journey can also help give us a little insight into characters' personal development and by the end of the show a lot of the main cast all fall into archetypes that Carl Jung came up with and each of the Pines family have their own little arc such as Dipper learning to become more braver and bold to stand up for himself and his family but he still very much falls into the explorer archetype as he is always wanting to learn and see more of the world which comes into conflict with Mabel's character arc and is handled extremely well and

allows the story to finish in a very strong way with the two siblings. Based upon Carl Jung's archetypes Mabel would be considered the innocent character as she is very childish and her character arc involves coming to terms with growing up and it leads to a great moment that causes the the end of the world to begin with her and Dipper clashing, leading to the second to last episode where they finally are able to finish their arcs and begin the final battle. "Archetypes, in spite of their conservative nature, are not static but in a continuous dramatic flux." This quote by Carl Jung refers to the idea that people change and are never stagnant. Which in the case for characters in Gravity Falls is definitely the case for characters such as Dipper who switches between the explorer and the hero.

As I briefly touched on earlier Gravity Fall has some very important dialogue and is very important to the narrative as even just an off handed comment can have big consequences further down the line such as when Dipper says "Uh Grunkle Stan, why did you write this?" Stan replies "Because I regularly commit massive tax fraud." This was early in season 1 and it was foreshadowing the fact that Stan has a twin brother and he's been using his brother's name while trying to save him from another dimension. Sigmund Frued's theories on symbolism and psychoanalysis which is the core of Gravity falls as it is full of symbolisms and a key part to the wider story is about dreaming such as in episode 18 of season 1 and episode 15 of season 2. Episode 15 of season 2 is more of a unique case as we get a closer look into the past.

In conclusion it's very clear to see that Gravity Falls touches on a lot of philosophical ideas and there's even more that I don't have time to get into. The show itself benefits greatly from all of these as its a show from theorist's to theorist's so with the use of all of the ciphers which got more complex as the show went on. The main antagonist attacking through the mind and being shown to infiltrate dreams connects to Sigmund Frued.

Part 2

With everything that I have looked into with this module it has made me go back and look at some of my old work and look to see what it is that I could improve upon implementing in screenwriting to make my writing more compelling such as using Carl Jung's character archetypes where in some of my old works like 5 minutes of fame which had an explorer but now after looking more into it I would change the archetype of the main character to give her a more interesting story to allow the audience connect more. I would go back and add a few more little bits to hint towards later events. Continuing to look at 5 minutes of fame while I am very proud of what I created I believe that I can improve upon the work by bringing in more philosophical ideas as it is a mystery film. Looking at Vladimir Propp's theory on the morphing of folktale, there's a quote that says "the number of functions of a fairytale is limited" that I find interesting in context to my project as it refers to the notion that no matter how much you change a fairytale or add to it, there will be somethings you just can't change which I can connect to my project as it is to do with an old in universe fairytale. One of my other projects that I want to go back and improve now after I have done this is called Influencer's influence as it's one of my most recent projects which is about morality and beliefs which with the information I now have I would go back and improve upon the writing by including some philosophical themes that will make the story more compelling and less one note. This module has also got me thinking about the future as well such as what I might look into for example Carl Jung's archetypes, something I had very little knowledge of but

now the more I do the more I feel that my future character will benefit from them, as it will make my characters more concentrated and refined compared to the occasional times when they might end up acting extremely out of character which hurts the story, character and the audiences viewing experience.

“We are inclined to think of reflection as something quiet and personal. My argument here is that reflection is action-oriented, social and political. Its ‘product’ is praxis (informed, committed action), the most eloquent and socially significant form of human action.”
(Stephen Kemmis, 1985, pp 139 at 141)

This quote is referring to the way personal growth affects the way people’s actions change as their own character grows, in my future I have a planned trip to Australia that will allow me to gain more personal experiences that will shape my language in scripts and the way that I look at characters and the worlds I create which will lead to more people enjoying my work. This leads into my true goal from all this, I very much am a huge fan of Gravity Falls and Alex Hirsch as a whole and I am so happy I got to experience growing up with the show and being in the community its where a lot of my passions started such as for screenwriting, animation and mysteries. My true goal in all of this is to create a similar community for people all across the globe to help people through difficult times and help build bonds with people they usually wouldn’t and to hopeful even inspire people to go on and do something similar as they grow up as to me it just makes the world feel more connected and everyone’s just having a good time. Thanks to this module I feel like I am one step closer to achieving my goal as it has opened my eyes into ways that I can improve everything without changing the core of my writing style. I really connected to Roland Barthes theory on the death of the author as while I was reading about it, it really took me back to the days of being really invested into the Gravity Falls fanbase and how all of us worked together to create whole new worlds and even the actual story itself as Alex Hirsch actively listened to the community and even got involved with trolling us sometimes to have fun with us. I have now acquired a mentor who is a writer in the industry and through talking to them a lot more options have opened up which is incredible for me. We spoke about the philosophical ideas that I have written about and she gave me a few pointers for when I include them into my writing especially when it comes to character archetypes such as if you have someone in mind to play a character write a little bit of them into the character as it makes it easier for the actor as it allows them to bring more to the character whilst also making it a little bit easier for you as the writer. Whilst I was talking to her she told me about how usually a lot of shows will have a writer who will ensure the scripts allow the overarching tone and story stays connected despite having multiple writers working on different scripts which will make my future work less stressful as I can either as the showrunner/creator of a show ensure that everything works together or as a writer include a lot of my own style including some philosophical themes and have someone ensure it all works in telling the entire story in a way that works. So in conclusion I have a great amount of work to do to improve upon my work however i do feel as if that if I stick to my plans and what I have discussed todayl believe that might writing will improve by a lot.

Part 3:

"Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent." a quote by Ludwig Wittgenstein that refers to the idea that if you can't find the words to describe something don't. This can be looked at in multiple ways and through the eyes of a screenwriter I look at it as a way that says if you can't find the right words to tell a story don't. I feel that our personal experiences are a huge part of what helps create our stories, for example in a fun livestream with her voice actors the creator of Hazbin Hotel Vivienne Medrano where she says "I feel like there's a lot of me in all the characters." This helps to show that our experiences help influence what we write. This can be connected to Roy Bhaskar's idea of meta reality where she can use parts of herself in her characters to enable fans to connect to them and be more enticed into the show. The quote can also be used to challenge us as screen writers to go out and experience more as where it says "one must be silent." This could be looked at as if it's challenging you to go and experience new things to help your writing, or even your life as a whole. For example it can be a challenge to look into philosophical theories more to see how it can influence both your writing and your life. Looking at theories such as Joseph Campbell's hero's journey and Sigmund Freud's theory on psychoanalysis of dreams and symbolism, it has gotten me thinking of ways in which I could improve my characters and the world of my stories themselves. It has challenged me to go back to see my old characters and how I can improve their story to make their world and seem more compelling and interesting for the audience. My Australia trip I feel could be important to bring up here as the quote from Ludwig implies you can improve your understanding by learning to speak of what you don't understand and my trip to Australia will be all about that as it will be a challenging trip to help improve my understanding other another culture which will allow me to make much more compelling stories and characters as I can add much more defined and broad characters that can help inspire and be more relatable to more people. So in conclusion the quote to me feels more like a challenge than a statement that over the next couple of years I am looking forward to taking part in improving my screenwriting.

Bibliography

Part 1

"A text's unity lies not in its origin, but in its destination" Roland Barthes, Death of the author 1967

"Archetypes, in spite of their conservative nature, are not static but in a continuous dramatic flux." Carl Jung, Letters Vol. II, Pages 184-187. 1951-1961

Uh Grunkle Stan, why did you write this?"

"Because I regularly commit massive tax fraud." Gravity Falls season 1 episode 14
bottomless pit, 2012

Part 2

"We are inclined to think of reflection as something quiet and personal. My argument here is that reflection is action-oriented, social and political. Its 'product' is praxis (informed, committed action), the most eloquent and socially significant form of human action."

Stephen Kemmis, "Action Research and the Politics of Reflection" in David Boud, Rosemary Keogh and David Walker, eds., *Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning* (New York: Kogan Page Ltd., 1985) 139 at 141.

Part 3

"Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent." Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* 1921