

UNIVERSITY OF LLEIDA

Faculty of Arts

**Writing for the Contemporary Naturalistic Stage:
A Personal Process of Creation**

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Final Project

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Abstract

The aim of this project is to develop further and consolidate the training goals and competencies of the English Studies degree through a creative writing project, in particular, the creation of an original play. The paper consists of, on the one hand, an introductory section on Naturalism, which is the genre that has been chosen as cultural and methodological framework and, on the other hand, the personal creation of a Naturalistic play, which includes the first complete act of a manuscript. This project has involved a complete process of creativity that has been justified through the study of the main theories of well-known Naturalistic writers, such as Émile Zola —as a precursor of Naturalism— and August Strindberg as one of the mentors of this literary genre. The results obtained in this paper are: the creation of an original play, a certain specialization in the Naturalistic movement as applied to contemporary drama, and the deeper knowledge of the English language that is attained through the dramatist's perspective.

Keywords: Creative writing, Drama Theory, Naturalism, Contemporary Theatre

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1. Introduction

1.1 Training Goals and Competences of the Project

The main objective of this project is to prove the acquisition of the competences and goals of the degree through a creative exercise that allows me to combine them and put them to the test in a synthetic way. Following the official list of goals and competences from the degree of English Studies of the University of Lleida, the training principles that have guided the present project are:

1.1.1 Training Goals

- To reflect on the systematic aspects of the use of the English language from different analytic perspectives: semantic, syntactic, discursive, pragmatic, stylistic and socio-linguistic.
- To understand and analyze the evolution of English literature and its growth and popularization through the theater and the media.
- To be familiar with the main texts, authors and literary movements of English-speaking countries.
- To understand the historical and cultural reality of English-speaking countries.
- To be autonomous in the process of creation of texts.
- To be able to put linguistic knowledge into practice.

1.1.2 Competences

One of the main objectives of this paper is to prove the achievement of the following competences:

- Knowledge of and sensitivity towards cultural diversity.
- Ability to plan and organize academic work and research.
- Ability to use the terminology and techniques specific to a particular professional environment.
- Capacity for analysis and synthesis.
- Capacity for thinking critically.
- Capacity for learning and for exploring human heritage.

1.1.3 Personal Training Goals and Competences

Apart from the objectives of the degree I have also set some personal ones that I would like to fulfill with the development of this project. I have decided to focus my paper on the world of the theater since I have always found this art very interesting and fascinating. “Theater in English” is one of the subjects in the curriculum of my degree which I enjoyed tremendously. In my humble opinion, theatrical pieces more than any other literary genre work as an artistic mirror reflecting onstage or on paper the different stages of our society. In addition, I have always been keen on theater as a literary genre and reading, analyzing and putting all the pieces together of all the different plays I have had to read has been very nourishing and satisfactory for me in many ways. Even if the purposes of my project could seem slightly unconventional with respect to more traditional approaches towards literary studies, I believe that it is a good idea to push the boundaries of my learning process and step into the world of the theater from a different perspective, that is to say, as

a playwright. It is worth mentioning at this point my internship placement has been ascribed at the *Aula Municipal de Teatre*. There, I will have the chance to learn the practical part of theater, which will surely help me see the universe of theater studies from a wider perspective. Having my tutor's support for the direction I would like the project to take has also been very important. Hence, I think that it is my time to experience the feeling of telling a story through a dramatic form and put myself on a playwright's shoes, walk through them and find my own way by following my creativity. The dramatic form I choose for my first creative path is Naturalistic drama.

1.1.4 Personal objectives

The personal objectives I have set in the development of this project are:

- To reflect my use of the English language in a creative-writing exercise.
- To learn more technical concepts from drama theory.
- To challenge myself and write a creative-writing piece which could reflect and develop further all the training goals and competences of my degree.
- To apply all the concepts learned in the course "Theater in English" in a personal play.
- To read and analyze plays that will serve as referents while I am writing my own theatrical piece.
- To apply critical analysis to my own creative production.
- To tell a story in a deeper level by following a specific dramatic genre (in this case, *Naturalism*).

- To communicate with others through a creative piece and reflect my personal view of life, fate and family conflicts through my own play.

To finish this section, I would like to mention that my goal is not to write a masterpiece, because I still have to continue learning about the complexities of playwriting. Rather, I want to reflect in a creative piece of art as much of the knowledge I have acquired throughout the degree as possible. Even if this creative-writing exercise will entail a series of technical and academic difficulties I am sure that the challenge is worth taking.

1.2 Creative Writing for the Stage: The Case of Naturalism

According to the *Cambridge Paperback Guide to Theatre*, the term Naturalism —

refers to the scientifically based extension of realism propounded by Émile Zola in the 1870s and 1880s. In Naturalistic writing, medical and evolutionary theories of 19th-century science inform readings of human character and social interactions, which are seen as genetically and historically determined. The struggle of the individual to adapt to the environment and Darwinian idea of survival of the fittest become central concerns of Naturalistic fiction and drama. (Stanton and Banham 1996: 261)

The precursor of this movement was, indeed, Émile Zola, who expressed in his essay *Naturalism on the Stage* that Naturalism installed the real human drama instead of the ridiculous untruths that were on display. Zola reinstated this literary genre since during the entire classical period tragedy ruled as the only and unique genre. He also sustained that “a rebirth of dramatic art was inevitable” (Gale 2010: 127), moreover, “to destroy one rhetoric it was necessary to invent another one” (Gale 2010: 128). Zola claimed that “Romantic drama ruthlessly made itself the armed adversary of tragedy and assaulted it with every method to defy the old formula” (Gale 2010: 127). In fact, he believed that

the Romantic Movement effect was outstanding and unquestionable because it allowed the new artists to be what they really were: free artists, therefore, the Romantic drama was a first step in the direction of Naturalistic drama clearing the ground and proclaiming the freedom of art. Its predilection for action, its blend of laughter and tears, its research into accuracy of costume and locations show the genre's impulse towards true life. He also thought that “logically all that can grow up on the free ground conquered in 1830 is the formula of Naturalism” (Gale 2010: 129). In addition, he affirmed that “Naturalism is stronger because it has taken longer to grow and is found in greater number of our masterpieces” (Gale 2010: 129). Naturalism alone represents our social needs since its formula expresses the nature of our current intelligence, reflects the spirit of our times and it will not die until a new movement transforms our democratic world. Zola reaffirmed that “Naturalistic thinkers are telling us that the truth does not need clothing; it can walk naked” (Gale 2010: 132). In fact, he thought that the new theater should show us activities of modern life; “costumes supplied by tradespeople, not sumptuous but adequate for the purposes of truth and for the interest of the scenes” (Gale 2010: 136); “playwrights will show us real people and not those whining members of the working class who play such strange roles in boulevard melodrama” (Gale 2010: 136); lifelike diction applied to our current society; plays study reality more closely and their characters are more true to life, meaning, a highest possible degree of truth; the environment must determine the characters in their personalities and behavior since he believed that “when plays are more truthful, the actors' diction will gain enormously in simplicity and naturalness” (Gale 2010: 137).

Gordon Farrell, professor of playwriting at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, explains in his book *The Power of the Playwright's Vision* (2001) that Naturalism first appeared in France in the nineteenth century, and it gained a lot of success in literature and painting, but in theater it was harder to capture this new vision of art. Most of the Naturalist plays of the period

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were nothing more than traditional melodramas produced with startlingly authentic sets and costumes. German playwrights like Gerhart Hauptmann and Georg Buchner certainly had better luck than the French capturing this vision of futility in their scripts, but it was the great Russian theatrical pioneers Anton Chekov and Constantin Stanislavski who brought Naturalism to life. In their brilliant productions of Chekov's scripts, they formalized the first basic set of techniques necessary for capturing that vision onstage.

August Strindberg was also one of the mentors of this literary trend in its theatrical manifestations. In his *Preface to Miss Julie* he explained that he had “not tried to accomplish anything new, for that [was] impossible, but merely to modernize the form according to what I [believed were] the demands a contemporary audience would make on this art” (Gale 2010: 138). In fact, he selected a theme from real life that impressed him and which was suitable for the tragic form, because as he said tragedy can only make us sad if we see a fortunately placed individual perish when a whole family dies out. Strindberg also mentioned his “souls (characters) [were] conglomerates of past and present stages of culture, bits out of books and newspapers, scraps of humanity, torn shreds of once fine clothing now turned to rags, exactly as the human soul is patched together ...” (Gale 2010: 140) since our souls are “eager for knowledge, they cannot rest satisfied with seeing what happens, but must also learn how it comes to happen investigating the box with the false bottom, touch the magic ring to find the suture, and look into the cards to discover how they are marked” (Gale 2010: 143).

As explained by Farrell, Naturalism is a literary genre that claims that there are two forces that determine who we are and how we live: environment and heredity. Certainly it is obvious that the environment in which we are raised determines much of our surface behavior. Our social manners, our personal ideas about hygiene and diet, even our ways of speaking are all shaped by the *milieu* in

which we are immersed as children. All these affect our ability to get ahead in the world, to meet new people, to be exposed to opportunities. In addition to having to cope with our environment, we are also saddled with heredity. In fact, psychopathic behavior, obesity, susceptibility to a disease, depression, and abusive behavior may be partly encoded in our genes long before we are born. In his study, Farrell makes available the most potent and effective structures by the world's most important dramatist such as: Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, John Millington, Gerhart Hauptmann, Georg Buchner, Anton Chekov, Constantin Stanislavski and Henry Ibsen. He says that Naturalism does not use an action structure and the great challenge of writing in this style is to show a world in which characters can change nothing, and yet somehow prevent the play from being static and boring.

This scholar explains that the techniques the Naturalistic playwrights mentioned before used in their plays in order to provoke dramatic change were mainly the following ones: (Farrell 2001: 72)

- Characters are shown to be in situations that compel them to want change like in the following cases:
 - The situation may be a painful family environment.
 - It might be an oppressive political situation.
 - It might be a form of social oppression, like racial prejudice or sexism.
- Some of the characters will be resigned to the situation, but some characters will try to change it.
- The fact that at least one character seeks to produce change is essential to dynamically illustrating the underlying vision of the play.

- Those few characters who *do* seek to produce change do so in different ways, for instance:
 - Some will be obviously idealistic.
 - Some will be too cynical and ruthless for the audience taste.
 - Some will appear to have the right balance of realistic thinking and reliable ethics.
- In some scenes, change will appear to occur or to be imminent. If change *does* occur, it produces consequences that only worsen the lives of the characters.
- Some changes can be caused by forces we generally recognize to be normal or natural, such as:
 - The effect of age or a disease.
 - The reassignment of a military unit to another city.
 - An area typically subjected to extreme weather may have to endure an onslaught of snow or rain.
 - People working in jobs with high turnover rate may simply get fired, for no apparent or substantial reason.
- Dramatic changes brought about the actions of characters can occur offstage and be reported by someone who witnessed them, after the audience has already figured out what happened.
- Dramatic changes brought about the actions of characters can occur between the acts or scenes. Playwrights let the audience members deduce for themselves what happened.
- One type of permissible change is when the characters are engaged in a technical activity that always produces change, for example, building something onstage, making and sharing a meal, or cleaning a room.

- Finally, an important change can occur onstage if something trivial is occupying the audience attention. For example, patrons in a diner may be arguing loudly about who ate the last piece of a pie while in the corner, a waitress opens her paycheck to discover a pink slip inside.

Generally speaking, it can be concluded that today Naturalism still uses everyday speech forms instead of poetic language; a true world without ghosts, spirits or gods intervening in the human action; a clear focus on contemporary subjects without exotic creatures, fantastic locations, historical or mythic time periods; there are not aristocrats of classical drama, nor bourgeois but working-class protagonists; and a style of acting that attempts to recreate reality by seeking complete identification with the role, understood in terms of its “given circumstances”. Naturalistic role play is used within theatrical performances to prove and show to the spectators how this would appear in real life. In fact, Naturalistic drama is used within many drama pieces to show the true feelings of the characters since this helps the characters to touch the audience with their feelings properly and appropriately. (Banham 1998: 89)

1.2.1 Naturalistic Theater Today

Naturalism is the literary genre that I have used to adapt my own personal play because it reflects the real state of our society. The plays that I have chosen to study the transformation of Naturalism today are *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (1996) by Martin McDonagh and *August: Osage County* (2008) by Tracy Letts. Both plays are not labeled as Naturalistic plays *per se* but as examples of “in-yer-face theater.” “In-yer-face” is defined by *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* as something “blatantly aggressive or provocative, impossible to ignore or avoid.” (Pearsall 1999: 746). As the term indicates, this sort of theater implies being forced to see something close up, having your

personal space invaded. It suggests the crossing of normal boundaries. In short, it describes perfectly the kind of theater that puts audiences in just such a situation. Nonetheless, both plays mentioned before contain all the ingredients to belong to this literary genre, Naturalism, such as: the stage is meant to be a reflection of our reality; the familiar conflicts are presented as mirrors of our society; the characters make an attempt to produce change without success; characters show their feelings and fears; the psychology of the characters is shown throughout the play; characters use everyday language; time is specific and presented in a lineal way and there is no distance with the audience; the personalities of the characters are influenced by the heredity and the environment, and it is clear to see the similarities of parents and children.

On the one hand, McDonagh's play is labeled by critics in the *Style Weekly* magazine¹ as a black comedy which depicts the situation of Maureen, a plain, slim forty-years-old woman who lives in a little cottage in Leenane, a small town in Connemara, Ireland. She is in charge of her seventy-years-old mother, who is described as annoying, stout and frail. Maureen has an affair with a male character called Pato, who lives and works in England and has very good intentions with her. Madness, lies, transgression, loneliness, manipulation and tragedy are the main ingredients of this excellent play where hopes turn into ashes in a matter of seconds. In fact, Maureen seeks change without success; the stage is pretty simple and realistic and the whole play takes place in the living-room/kitchen of the house; Maureen is presented as a fragile character who shows her feelings and fears; the familiar conflict is between mother and daughter since Maureen is in charge with her annoying mother who holds her back and does not let her advance in life; and at the end we see that her future is just as her mother's, full of loneliness and forget.

1 <http://www.styleweekly.com/richmond/theater-review-the-beauty-queen-of-leenane/Content?oid=1902734>

On the other hand, Tracy Letts' play is also considered a darkly comedic play by critics in *The New York Times*² which takes place over the course of several weeks in August inside the house of Beverly and Violet Weston in Parahusar, Oklahoma. Violet has tongue cancer and is addicted to pills, and the father is found missing. Therefore, all the members of the family come together to support the mother with such a horrible situation. The three daughters, Barbara, Ivy and Karen deal with different problems. Barbara is divorced but wants to recuperate her marriage; Ivy still lives with her parents and wants to escape and be independent with her cousin; and when Karen finally thinks she has found the love of her life we see that her man is not as perfect as she believes. At the end, the father is found dead and the stability of all the members of the family gets worse. Again, this play deals with transgression, madness, lies, tragedy, incest, pederasty, addictions and false appearances. All the characters look for change or improvement of their lives but there is not a trace of it. Moreover, heredity is also present since in the case of Barbara she is as reserved and perfectionist as her father and Karen and Ivy are more impatient and irrational like the mother.

A Matter of Fate, the play I have devised for this project and which I present in the next section, can be regarded as a Naturalistic play because it reflects the ideas defended by Émile Zola and August Strindberg. I have tried to maintain the essence and nature of Naturalism as the basis of my theatrical piece. I personally think that my play reflects heredity and environment in the psychology of most of the characters as it was thought to be in the 19th-century by Émile Zola, but it also represents a contemporary time, space and characters because, as Zola said, “without believing art progresses we can still say that it is continuously in motion, among all civilizations, and that this

² <http://theater.nytimes.com/2007/12/05/theater/reviews/05august.html?pagewanted=all>

motion reflects different phases of the human mind.” (Gale 2010: 128) By this he meant that theater evolves and adapts to our culture and needs.

2. The Process of Creation

This section deals with the personal process of creation I have been involved with before producing my personal play. I will explain all the different steps and purposes I have followed during the process. In addition, I will try to justify all the decisions I have made and the theories about creative writing I have taken into consideration in order to produce my own paper.

2.1 Creative Writing for the Stage

I have used the theory by Brighde Mullins on creative writing for the stage. She is an American playwright, poet, professor of playwriting and currently the director of USC's Master of Professional Writing Program who wrote a chapter called "Writing for the Stage" on Steve Earnshaw's book *The Handbook of Creative Writing* (2007). In this chapter she claims that the playwright is the maker of a script for the stage, a useful text and also the one who craft an idea to be represented onstage. This ability is meant to be unteachable, however, there are some exercises that make the playwright aware of the existence of models and practical techniques that can be acquired. Mullins affirms that "writing for the stage implies writing words that will be spoken by actors and heard by an audience. If you are writing for actors, then actors are your vehicle, your instruments" (Earnshaw 2007: 263). This is the most important distinction between writing for the stage and writing for another literary genre. The play fully exists only in production, and therefore the single most vital element that a playwright has to shaping his craft is access to a theater. For instance, the best insights and ideas could come by working on running crew backstage and sat waiting for cue light. If being surrounded by a theatrical atmosphere is not possible, reading and then seeing plays in performance is the next best option. Many playwrights have acting experience but it is by no means a prerequisite. "Some of our finest living playwrights are essentially shy

people, who would never dream of setting foot onstage” (Earnshaw 2007: 264). The primary thing then, is to acquaint yourself with practical models, plays that you can read and then go to see in production. In this way, you can see the way that theater works on the level of the pores: as a physical embodiment, a collaboration with actors and designers, and of course that other unstable but necessary element, the audience. She also insists that “writing for the stage starts with writing for the page. The personal connection is, as in all genres, paramount. The private obsessions, ideas, ideals, recurring dreams, fondest hopes, greatest fears will be tapped in the writing from the heart or from the gut” (Earnshaw 2007: 264). All of this sounds abstract but there must be a real skill to translate these areas into a story onstage.

2.2 The Title “*A Matter of Fate*”

The title of the play came to my mind as soon as I started producing the first draft of the play. It is meant to reflect the impossibility of escaping our past, no matter how hard is the attempt, what goes around comes back around. This title also contributes to my idea of fate and the philosophy of the Naturalistic playwrights, since I also believe that everything we do, good or bad, has a price which is paid sooner or later in the course of our lives.

2.3 Source of Inspiration

The main source of inspiration for this project comes from music and some Naturalistic authors. On one hand, I have been inspired by a contemporary musician called Lana Del Rey. I created in my mind the seed of the story while I was listening to her latest record, *Born to Die, The Paradise Edition* (2012). From the very beginning I had a special fixation for her persona and her music and that is the reason why I have named the protagonist of the play after her and have also quoted in the first scene of the play a little part of her song *Body Electric*. On the other hand, I have been influenced by well-known playwrights and their masterpieces, such as: *A Doll's House* (1879) by

Henrik Ibsen; *The Glass Menagerie* (1944), *A Street Car Named Desire* (1947), *A Cat On a Hot Tin Roof* (1955) and *Sweet Bird of Youth* (1959) by Tennessee Williams; *All My Sons* (1947) and *A View from the Bridge* (1955) by Arthur Miller; *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990) by Brian Friel and *August: Osage County* by Tracy Letts (2007). The reason why I have chosen and also have been offered by my tutor to read these plays is because I wanted to create a family drama, break the world of appearances the characters are submerged in, reflect the influence of our past mistakes affecting our present and show the influence of the genes and the environment on the characters. Furthermore, almost all these plays present a beautiful woman in distress as the center of a family. This idea has unconsciously inspired me to write a Naturalistic piece.

2.4 Characters

The play has six different characters onstage and four more are just mentioned in the conversations but also make part of the whole story. Every single character emerges from different ideas I had in mind before I started writing. In fact, the first characters that have inspired me to create the story have been Lana Smith and the King's that invaded my mind when I was listening to Lana Del Rey's record. Since I knew from the very beginning that I was keen on Naturalistic plays I have created strong psychological features of each of the characters. Once I had the main characters I have started weaving their relations and personalities.

Lana Smith is the protagonist of the play. She is described as an eighteen-years-old orphan girl who has finished her studies at a boarding school in New York City. She is ambitious, greedy, intelligent, young and beautiful. Lana represents the young ambition, doomed beauty, and lonely girl seeking for the right place in a cruel world where she does not fit in. As I have mentioned before I named her after the musician Lana Del Rey.

Mother Superior is a nun in her sixties turning gray; she is strict, intelligent, tolerant and wise. This character is not very keen on the protagonist and questions her plans and intentions since no one knows Lana better than herself.

Mr Angel Kings is described as a forty-six-years-old doctor with the perfect family. He is strict, authoritarian, clever, highly-principled and determined. Mr Kings wants his children to go to university and have respectable jobs and careers. With his devoted wife he is caring and all the parts of his life seem to be as impeccable as his career. His name is Angel because I wanted to give to this character a sort of cleanliness and purity that gets stained by the ignominy of his past at the end.

Mrs. Anne Kings is a forty-two-years-old woman who used to be a school teacher but quit to fully dedicate her life and care to her children and husband. She wanted to become an actress when she was young but she did not have the support from her parents.

Angel Kings Jr is a handsome twenty-two-years-old boy who is studying medicine to become a doctor as his father. He is described as apparently forgetful, doubtful, cynic and with a lack of personality. He is engaged to Adelaide Knowles.

Joanne Kings is a beautiful eighteen-years-old girl who wants to become an actress but she does not count with the support of her father. She is described as impulsive, sentimental, sensitive, conceited, brave and romantic. Nonetheless, her relationship with her brother is not good since they are very different and she is jealous of him, in exchange, she is the biggest support of Lana inside and outside the house. Also, she is dating a guy called Saul who is seven years older than her.**2.5**

Character Map

2.6 Settings and props

In this section I am going to distinguish between two sorts of spaces presented in the play. On the one hand, the fictional space which is the one *off* stage and we have to imagine. On the other hand, the presentational space which is the actual presentation *on* stage.

2.6.1 Fictional Space

As the fictional space, this play is set in two places New York City in the state of New York and Lancaster in the state of Pennsylvania in United States. In terms of geography Lancaster is 263 kilometers from New York, in fact, that is the distance between Lana and the Kings. On the one hand, Lancaster where the house of the Kings is located evokes a sense of conservatism, presence of religion, in fact, 80 per cent of the population is considered Christian. On the other hand, New York City represents the urban essence of the play where Lana has been grown up at the boarding school with a lot of frustrated ambition. Los Angeles, California is where nowadays all the actors and actresses want to go to make their American dream come true of becoming successful film stars as Joanne and Saul, however, their conflict is the distance and the risk of leaving all their lives behind.

2.6.2 Presentational Space

Regarding the presentational space, the play is set in three main places:

➤ *Mother Superior's Office*

The first, second and nine scene of the play are presented in the office of the Mother Superior with Lana Smith's farewell and Mr Kings' visit and the main props of the scenes are: first, the suitcase Lana holds together with the song she sings represents her fate, loneliness and dramatic situation. Mr Kings also brings a briefcase which represents his power and authority as a doctor. The big

picture of the Last Supper hanging on the wall represents, in fact, the firm Catholicism in the boarding school.

➤ *The Dining-room*

The main space of the play is the dining-room of the King's since it is a place of reunion for the all the members of the family. The crystal chandelier over the table is meant to represent the social status of the family since it is a very expensive ornament. The re-use of the picture of the Last Supper shows the presence of religion of the family and what I really wanted to do with this holy image was to reflect the idea of Jesus Christ surrounded by his disciples through the family. Take for example, Mr Kings who presumably has the power and control on almost all the members of the family is betrayed by all of them since they attempt to break the chains he had put on them.

➤ *Mr Kings' Office*

This place is supposed to be respected by all the members of the family since it is Mr Kings' work place when he is at home. However, Joanne and Lana take the place and his throne as they please late in the night smoking his cigarettes and drinking his liquor. Their behavior show the beginning of a lack of respect towards Mr Kings and the loss of power on all the members of the family during his absence. Another important prop in this place is the gun which advances a dramatic ending and symbolizes the presence of aggressiveness, guilt and fear in the house.

2.7 Plot

I have written a complete plot of the whole story at the very beginning, even though it is not necessary, in order to organize my ideas, to outline the core of the play and decide the evolution of the characters. My intention has been to find out what I really want to tell, why and how. In fact, I have freely followed my creativity and imagination to write the story. As I have mentioned before the main topics of the play are: ambition, appearances, lies, power, control, tragedy and fate because

I have always been fascinated by the result of our past actions. My idea has been to dissect a family and unveil their personal desires, their conflicts, their possible resolutions and the role of fate on each of them. In addition, I think that having a female character in distress as the protagonist is quite interesting because she unwillingly destroys a family that on the outside seems to be perfect but in the inside is a total chaos. Almost all the characters want to obtain their own reward without affecting the other members of the family but they will learn that things are not that easy.

The climaxes I want to recreate in this act are tension between Lana and Mother Superior; disappointment when Lana finds out than Angel Jr has broken their promise; an atmosphere of trust between Lana and Joanne; despair when Joanne is missing; sexuality and attraction between Lana and Angel Jr; confession between mother and daughter; conflict between Lana and Joanne when they realize that they are mutually confronted.

I have only produced the first act of the play since I did not have the time to write a whole theatrical piece. However, this act is supposed to introduce all the characters, present their personal conflicts, their desires, their future plans and also their relations. As I have said before, none of the characters is simple at all and that is the nature of the global conflict since they all want to get what they want. The role of fate is quite important in my play that I even dare to consider it a character in the story. As many Naturalistic dramatists claim the aim of the theater should be showing to the reader and spectator the reality accompanied by the influence of our genetics and the environment we have been raised, show them the cruel truth of life to make them learn from others' mistakes.

The plot of my play could be summarized as follows: Lana Smith is an orphan girl who has been raised in a Catholic boarding school and has spent her summertime at the house of a wealthy family for whom her mother worked as a maid and died after giving birth. Mr. and Mrs. Kings have been in

charge of Lana because of the close relationship with her mother. She gets along with Angel Jr and Joanne, the kids of Mr and Mrs. Kings. When she was 16 years old she was told that she had an uncle and she was offered to spend a whole summer with her only family without an option to refuse. Those days were not as sweet as they seemed to be since she does not want to see them never again. When she reaches her legal age she gets back to the Kings' house as a beautiful woman with ambition in her eyes willing to decide her future but instead of that she discovers that love is tough and tragedy loves her company no matter how hard she tries to avoid it.

2.8 Function of Every Scene

Every single scene in this act has a purpose and a clear objective. In fact, this was the most difficult part of the creating process since I had a clear idea of what I wanted to tell but the difficulty reside in locating all the characters in a clear and clever way in order to build the story, create an impact on the reader and of course create a theatrical piece.

Scene One

This scene is meant to be the introduction of the protagonist, Lana Smith, physically and mentally. The song she sings which is, in fact, the very first words she utters in the play reflect her past, her personality and her current situation in the play. The suitcase together with that melancholy in her eyes and steps foretells her incoming drama. The scene begins with an inevitable journey that reinforces the sense of drama. Although, the Kings' house is the place fate had already planned for Lana since it is her only destiny and destination.

Scene Two

In this scene we can see the first interaction of the protagonist with another character in the play, which is the Mother superior of the convent and boarding school. The conversation and interaction

between both characters undress and unveil Lana's desires, ambition, frustrations and plans since Mother Superior knows her better than herself.

Scene Three

This scene gives to the reader the first spatial description of one of the most important spaces in the play, the dining-room, where many scenes take place. In addition, information from five of the characters is also given Mr Kings, Mrs. Kings, Angel Jr, Joanne and Lana. A first approach of many relationships is presented in this scene, such as: the siblings, Mrs. Kings and her children, Mr Kings and his children, Mr and Mrs. Kings and Lana with the rest of the characters.

Scene Four

The objective of this scene is to show how Lana's plans are turned into ashes by the announcement of Angel's engagement with Adelaide which represents the break of a promise she was clung to for such a long time. In fact, this is the beginning of her distress and wave of sadness by Angel Jr's coldness and lack of interest.

Scene Five

A new space is presented in this scene, Mr Kings' office, which is taken deliberately by Joanne and Lana drinking and smoking. This action transported them into their past summers together and creates an aura of intimacy and trust where the two girls feel comfortable sharing secrets and doing forbidden actions like drinking and smoking. It is also worth mentioning the discovering of the gun which anticipates the incoming tragedy.

Scene Six

The objective of this scene is to reunite Angel and Lana by chance. Lana takes advantage of the situation and drags Angel into her territory forcing him to give her an explanation. This is the very first time these two characters have the chance to talk after Angel's lack of interest in Lana.

Scene Seven

This is a very intimate scene between a mother and her daughter. It is explicitly explained how oppressed these two characters feel by Mr Kings. Moreover, for the very first time Mrs. Kings speaks her mind and tells Joanne something that has been kept as a secret, in spite of the facts, their lives are not as different as they thought. The confession is unexpected by a character like Mrs. Kings, in fact, it convinced Joanne that leaving her house to make her dream come true is the right decision. On the other hand, Mrs. Kings realized that her children are not exactly how she thought and both characters revolt against the rules of the King.

Scene Eight

In this scene, on one hand, we can see Lana and Angel slightly drunk talking loosely about the broken promise. Also, these characters flirt with each other playing the cat-and-mouse game reproaching their past actions. On the other hand, Joanne is confused and angry because she is not the only one struggling for love since Lana is also willing to fight for what she really wants while the future of the family is hanging from a thread. A war of feelings bursts and the crystal castle Mr Kings has built is shaking.

Scene Nine

This is the last scene of Act One and my purpose was to close the cycle with a similar scene to the second one in which Lana says goodbye to Mother Superior. In this case, it's Mr Kings who chats with her about Lana's behavior and apart from that he is also given a message from Lana's uncle

Martin who needs to talk to him about a powerful information that will lead to a blackmail. It is remarkable to say that in this scene we can see a vulnerable father whose faith is shaking.

With this scene I wanted to create expectation, suspense and show vulnerability on the authoritarian King of the house. This scene also gives some clues of what is coming later since the puzzle of the story begins to make sense. My intention was to make the reader know what is coming next and consider a possible continuation of the story.

A Matter of Fate

Act One

Characters:

Lana Smith 18 years old

Mr Angel Kings 46 years old

Mrs. Anne Kings 42 years old

Angel Kings Jr 22 years old

Joanne Kings 18 years old

Mother Superior 50 years old

Locations:**Scenes 1, 2 and 9**

A prestigious convent and boarding school in New York City called *Le Sacré Coeur*.

Scenes from 3 to 8

The house of the Kings in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Scene 1

Lights are focused on the desk of the mother superior of the convent and boarding school. A big picture of the Last Supper is hanging on the wall. It is summer, a very hot one. Lana Smith enters singing to the office holding a heavy bag. She wears an orange short dress that shows off her slender figure, a jean jacket and flat shoes. She waves her black long hair. She looks around with a sort of melancholy and sits in the chair in front of the desk...

Lana: *(Singing)*

Elvis is my daddy

Marilyn is my mother

Jesus is my bestest friend

We don't need nobody

'cause we got each other

Or at least I pretend...

BLACKOUT

Scene 2

Enters Mother superior, a nun in her fifties turning gray; she is strict, intelligent, tolerant and wise. She sits behind the desk, in front of Lana...

Mother superior: *(With a dry tone)* Miss Smith,

Lana: *(Curtsey with a smile on her face)* Your Reverence.

Mother superior: *(Looks at the bag)* So, you are prepared to leave...

Lana: Yes *(Points at her bag)* I'm ready to leave...

Mother superior: How are you feeling?

Lana: *(Melancholy)* It's weird, I've always thought that this would be my place forever, I thought that I belonged to this place, but I guess this moment had to come someday.

Mother superior: *(Quietly)* Regrettably, it is no longer possible for you to stay. However, all the teachers of this institution taught you the best resources and tools to find you a good job. You are an excellent student.

Lana: *(With insistent force)* Thanks again Your Reverence. By the way, apart from saying goodbye I would like to know if you have talked to Mr. or Mrs.. Kings. I know nothing about them.

Mother Superior: I did Miss Smith! I did speak with Mrs.. Kings.

Lana: *(Amazed)* Really? What did she tell you?

Mother Superior: I told her your current situation

Lana: *(Desperately)* So...

Mother Superior: They are willing to take you in for some time until you decide what you are doing with your life.

Lana: *(Happy about it and relieved)* I can't be more grateful. Are they okay?

Mother Superior: She told me that they are okay, yes. But there have been some slightly changes.

Lana: *(Amazed)* Changes? Well, it's been a couple of years...

Mother Superior: Yes, you will find out once you get there.

Lana: *(Thoughtful)* Yes, it's true.

Mother Superior: *(Surprised)* Miss Smith, have your plans changed since the last time we talked about them?

Lana: *(Still pensive)* Well, I've been thinking that I could work for Mr. and Mrs.. Kings during the summer and save some money.

Mother Superior: *(Doubtlessly)* It sounds reasonable but... *(Pause)* something tells me that your plan involves more than that.

Lana: What do you mean Your Reverence?

Mother Superior: You perfectly know what I mean Lana. *(Pause)* Remember that God punishes greed and ambition. Simplicity is better; it makes you happier than....

Lana: *(Overlapping)* Excuse me Reverent Mother but I wasn't born to live simple. Is it wrong to wish for the best Your Reverence?

Mother superior: No, of course not Lana. What is wrong is to wish what is not yours!

Lana: *(Pretends she's hurt)* You are taking me wrong Reverent Mother.

Mother Superior: *(Overlapping)* You know, *(Pause)* I ask myself why you decided to go with the Kings instead of going with those relatives you met last summer.

Lana: *(Directly)* It is simple Your Reverence, those people are not my family. They are poor and filthy. That is not what my mother who rests in peace would want for her daughter.

Mother Superior: *(Holding back herself)* Being poor is not something you can choose Lana.

Lana: *(Confident and haughty)* I know Your Reverence, but in this particular case it is something I can avoid.

Mother superior: You are a clever girl Miss Smith. I hope you use your wisdom for good purposes.

Lana: *(Arrogant)* I will Reverence Mother *(Pause)* *(Raising)* By the way, don't bother praying the rosary for my broken mind I am no longer a trouble for you.

Mother superior: *(Rises her voice)* Do not make the others pay the price of your frustrations.

Lana: *(Sarcastic but calm)* I am not like that Reverend Mother.

Mother superior: You have been here for 18 years...

Lana: *(Grabs her suitcase and ignores Mother superior's comment)* And now it is time to go and find my way

Mother superior: I hope you had learned something of the values we taught you.

Lana: For sure Your Reverence

Mother superior: God bless you!

Lana: *(Turns to Mother Superior before leaving)* Just one little more thing Reverend Mother *(Takes a rosary from her pocket of her jean jacket and hands it to the mother superior)* I want you to keep this... 'cause I don't feel like I need it anymore... ME AND GOD? WE DON'T GET ALONG..

Lana leaves the office. Meanwhile, the mother superior stands frozen onstage.

BLACKOUT

Scene 3

A very fancy dining-room onstage with six chairs. Mr. and Mrs.. Kings' chairs are located at the extremes of the table, their son's and daughter's chairs are in front of the audience and a couple more are located on the other side. A huge painting of the Last Supper is hanging on the wall. A crystal chandelier hangs over the table. Next to the table there is a couch. Joanne wears an expensive tiny pink summer dress. She looks beautiful. She is on the sofa using her cellphone, smiling and texting. Angel Jr is wearing a black and white pull-over, jeans and black leather boots. He is sitting in the table in the place of his father unwillingly reading a book of organic chemistry.

Mrs. Kings: *(Offstage)* Come on everybody take your place. They must be here in a minute...

Joanne: *(With a very girlish voice)* I'm coming mum.

Angel Jr: *(Tosses the book to the sofa and sits in his place)* Stop using that phone...

Joanne: *(Sitting on her chair)* Shut up! *(Pause)* Are you nervous?

Angel Jr: Me? Why?

Joanne: Lana is coming in a minute!

Angel Jr: So? We are all excited to see her again

Joanne: *(Furrows her brow)* You know what I mean

Angel Jr: *(He pretends he doesn't know)* No, I don't...

Joanne: Anyway, it's your problem not mine

Angel Jr: It's you who sees a tempest in a teapot

Joanne: *(Emphasizing)* You made a promise

Anger Jr: Come on Joanne, we were kids

Joanne: You were 19 already, not a kid anymore...

Angel Jr: *(To Mrs.. Kings)* Mum do you need any help?

Mrs. Kings enters and starts setting the cutlery and the napkins on the table. She is a 42 years old woman, still beautiful and active. She wears a summer lilac dress, pearl earrings and flat shoes.

Mrs. Kings: *(Tenderly)* Oh no honey, everything is almost ready...

Joanne: Lana must be so beautiful...

Mrs. Kings: Sure, her mother was as pretty and lovely as her... Angel had the pleasure to know her, do you remember honey?

Angel Jr: Well, I was four years old mum, I don't recall much...

Mrs. Kings: *(Softly)* You are right honey...

Joanne: *(Excited)* I can't wait to ask her about those relatives in New York

Angel Jr: It must have been rare for her to spend a summer with strangers...

Mrs. Kings: For sure, I called her a couple of times asking her about it, but she said nothing...

Joanne: I know Lana, she likes keeping secrets....

Mrs. Kings: We knew she had an uncle, but we had no information or contact...

Angel Jr: *(Surprised)* Why didn't you tell her about it?

Mrs. Kings: I didn't want her to create expectations about someone, not even your father and I knew...

Joanne: For her we are her only family! And she's like a sister to me.

Mrs. Kings: She's a sweet girl

Joanne: *(Maliciously)* Well, for me a sister, for Angel a bit more than that...

Mrs. Kings: *(A bit angry)* Joanne can you please avoid inappropriate comments like that? You brother is engaged now...

Joanne: *(Through clenched teeth)* Sorry mother...

Angel Jr: *(Ignoring them)* What time is it now?

Mrs. Kings: Quarter past nine! They must be here right now...

Joanne: *(Hears the door and screams effusively)* Here they are....

Mr. Kings and Lana enter. Joanne rushes to embrace Lana. The rest of the members of the family look at them. Angel Jr is astonished by Lana's beauty and Mrs.. Kings goes and grabs Lana's arm.

Mrs. Kings: Lana darling, look at you! *(Spins her around)* You look so beautiful, my goodness me! You're the same image of your mother...

Lana: Thank you so much Mrs.. Kings! I'm so glad to see you too...

Angel Jr: *(Unpleasantly)* Hey Lana... you look... *(Pause)*... you are a woman now...

Lana: *(A bit disappointed by the tone of his voice)* Hi Angel, you look so grown up too....

Mrs. Kings: *(Picking Lana's luggage and heading offstage)* Oh come on guys don't act like strangers, you're like siblings... Lana honey you're going to stay in Joanne's bedroom as usual, is that okay?

Lana: Of course Mrs. Kings...

Joanne: *(To Lana)* That's more than okay, we have loads of things to talk about... *(Winks at her)*

Mrs. Kings: *(Coming back from offstage)* Everyone to the table! *(To Mr. Kings and Lana)* You must be starving, so we are...Tonight we have Lasagna, Lana's favorite plate!

Lana: Thanks again Mrs. Kings...

Everyone sits down. All eyes are on Lana except for Angel Jr who avoids looking at her.

Mrs. Kings: So, Lana honey... Is everything okay?

Lana: Yes, but it was very hard to leave the school, that place has been my home for a very long time...

Mrs. Kings: *(Softly)* I guess darling! But one day or another you had to...

Lana: I know but... Time has passed so quickly.

Joanne: Definitely, I still remember... me and you playing with the dolls right there *(Pointing to the right of the stage)* What a time!

Mrs. Kings: *(Softly)* My dolls are no longer kids!

Joanne: But still beautiful dolls mum... *(Laughs)*

Mrs. Kings: Of course darling, the most beautiful girls around this town...

Mr. Kings looks in a very affectionate way the two girls and they all start eating the meal.

Lana: *(Pretends a smile, breathes in and ask)* So, anything new around here?

All the members of the family look at Angel Jr but he doesn't dare to say a word until Joanne says...

Joanne: Well, Angel should tell you the latest...

Lana: *(Nervously)* Really? What is it?

BLACKOUT

Scene 4

Everybody is still in the table having coffee. Lana looks let down and confused.

Mr. Kings: Well everybody, tomorrow in the morning I'm leaving to New York! A couple of weeks I guess. Medical conference about my oncology research!

Mrs. Kings: *(Caressing out his back with her white hand)* You better go to bed early darling...

Mr. Kings: I will... *(Standing up)* Joanne, Angel... behave yourselves!

Joanne: Daddy we're no longer kids!

Mr. Kings: I know I know! But you act like you were sometimes though... Joanne, you better make a decision about your future by the time I get back here!

Joanne: *(Stands up and embraces her daddy)* I will papa...

Mr. Kings: And Lana... welcome back home... We're gonna talk about your plans.

Lana: Of course Mr Kings, good night!

Mr. Kings: Good night!

Mr. and Mrs. Kings exit. Angel Jr and Lana stand up.

Angel Jr: Okay girls, I guess you have a lot to talk about

Lana: *(Uneasily)* WE HAVE!

Joanne: Yes, we have...

Angel Jr: *(Avoiding Lana's look)* Good night!

Angel Jr exits. Lana and Joanne stare at each other with complicity and Joanne takes Lana's hand and they both exit too.

BLACKOUT

Scene 5

Lana and Joanne are in Mr. Kings' office. Joanne is sitting on the desk and Lana in the chair in a very comfortable way. It's very hot in the office and they are smoking and drinking whiskey. The windows are open. It's almost midnight.

Joanne: *(Puffing her cigarette)* Here we are like in the old times...

Lana: (*Looking at the ceiling*) You have no idea of how much I missed this.

Joanne: Me too.

Lana: Have you smoked since I left the last time

Joanne: No, I did not have the courage (*Staring at her*) (*Pause*) It was something we discovered together.

Lana: (*Sipping from her glass*) I did not have the courage either

Joanne: (*Looks at Lana and grabs her hand*) How are you feeling?

Lana: (*Sadly*) Confused!

Joanne: I know darling (*Pause*) Do you want to talk about it?

Lana: Not now!

Joanne: (*Tries to cheer her up*) Oh mademoiselle you have to tell me where you got those tits!

Lana: (*She grabs her own breast*) They're all natural and you can't complain either... (*A bit happier and interested than before*) Now tell me everything about you...

Joanne: I got a boyfriend!

Lana: No way! Really?

Joanne: Yeah!

Lana: How is he? What's his name? Come on, tell me everything....

Joanne: (*She makes herself comfortable on the desk*) Oh his name is Saul... He's so handsome, dark-haired, pretty tall, brown eyes, slim, a little bit too much, but I can fix that...

Lana: How old is he?

Joanne: Some years older than me!

Lana: (*Interested*) How much is that?

Joanne: Well, (*Long pause*) 7!

Lana: (*Astonished*) What???? Seven???

Joanne: Shhhhhhh shut the fuck up! You're speaking so loudly! My parents don't know anything... if they knew I'd be dead!

Lana: (*Whispering*) Sorry! (*Pause*) What does he do for living?

Joanne: He studies medicine!

Lana: That's great girl! Your parents will love him then!

Joanne: I don't think so, he doesn't like it... He's gonna give up! He also wants to be an actor

Joanne: (*Takes Lana's hands*) Oh Lana he's amazing, when he performs...(*Sighs*) (*Pause*) He's like a God, like... He does it with his heart and soul and when I look at him I lose the notion of time....

Joanne sings in French and Lana follows her...

Quand il me prends dans ses bras,
Il me parle tout bas
je vois la vie en rose
Il me dit de mots d'amour
des mots de tous les jours
et ça m'fait quelque chose

Lana: Oh gosh the song we used to sing when were kids. My goodness! You are in love Joanne...

Joanne: (*Sighing*) I know, I have never felt this way before...

Lana: Well, you were so in love with William... (*Pause*) and Paul, and Gerard, and Lucius...

Joanne: Oh come on Lana... It's not the same.... Well, there are a couple more to add to the list you don't know, before the one and only, SAUL...

Lana: Only a couple?

Joanne: Well, there were four actually! But this time is different... I've been thinking about things I've never thought before...

Lana: For instance... (*Drinks some whiskey*)

Joanne: (*Looks around*) We've been thinking that our future isn't here in this fucking town

Lana: So where?

Joanne: Well, do you know where all the actors and actresses go when they want to be successful?

Lana: Mmm New York?

Joanne: No!

Lana: No idea! Tell me!

Joanne: (*Triumphant*) LOS ANGELES! HOLLYWOOD! CALIFORNIA!

Lana: Whaaaaaat??? Are you nuts? That's on the other side of the country!

Joanne: I know! I know! Don't be mad...We have it all under control...

Lana: Under control... What?

Joanne: What do ya think? The journey (*Pause*) The getaway... The romantic getaway

Lana: What? (*Takes Joanne's glass and drinks up the leftover whiskey and shakes her head*) , I guess you have drunk too much. You must be joking

Joanne: No, I am fine!

Lana: Yes, you have...

Joanne: (*With fury*) No, bitch I am not drunk, tomorrow me and Saul gonna talk about it. We need a plan.

Lana: (*Worried*) Oh my gosh! Your parents gonna kill you!

Joanne: (*Lights up another cigarette*) I know Lana, but... I'm not a child anymore, I AM A WOMAN NOW.... They will have to figure it out...

Lana: You know they won't

Joanne: (*Pissed off*) Thanks for the support

Lana starts opening and closing the drawers of the desk and Joanne goes to her and tries to stop her...

Joanne: What are you doing? Stop! It's Dad's stuff!

Lana: Relax! I'm just looking for a lighter

Joanne: Stop Lana! (*Holds a lighter*) This one works!

Lana opens the last drawer of the desk and pulls out a gun

Lana: (*Amazed like she has just discovered a treasure*) So Mr. Kings still keeps his gun here... (*Looks at it and touches it with care*)

Joanne: Why should he keep it in a different place?

Lana: (*Keeps touching the gun and looks at Joanne*) It only has three bullets

Joanne: Yeah, papa says that three bullets are enough: one for protection, two for precision and three for perfection.

BLACKOUT

Scene 6

Mrs. Kings and Lana are in the dining-room. She is calling someone on the cellphone but there's not answer. She looks at her watch and it's two A.M. Mrs. Kings looks worried and desperate. She paces the floor. Meanwhile Lana is sitting on the sofa wearing a summer white dress she is also nervous but calmer than Mrs. Kings.

Mrs. Kings: (*Desperately*) Oh Lord! Where is she?

Lana: Calm down Mrs. Kings she must be here in a minute

Mrs. Kings: Lana, do you realize of how late is it?

Lana: I know Mrs. Kings. Maybe she is at a friend's house

Mrs. Kings: (*Pissed off*) So why the damn hell she doesn't answer her phone? All day with that thing in her hands...

Lana: Mrs. Kings you know that Joanne is a bit scatterbrained

Mrs. Kings: (*Close to tears*) That's not an excuse Lana.

Lana: (*Pause*) Are you sure she didn't tell you that she was coming late today?

Mrs. Kings: (*Doubtlessly*) I guess she doesn't! No, she definitely did not say a thing about it

Lana: (*Alarmed*) Mrs. Kings I heard something outside...

Angel Jr enters with a packet of cigarettes in his hand. He hides it when he sees his mother and Lana. Mrs. Kings. rushes to his arms crying.

Angel Jr: (*Surprised*) What's going on mum?

Mrs. Kings: Oh Angel honey your sister hasn't got back yet from the drama school.

Angel Jr: What? It's too late now. (*Nervously*) Have you called her?

Mrs. Kings: A thousand of times but there's not answer.

Angel Jr: Why didn't you call me before?

Mrs. Kings: I did but there was not answer either

Angel Jr: I'm so sorry mum. Not battery! And have you called to the police?

Lana: Yes, but they said that all we can do is wait. Someone is considered missing after seventy-two hours of absence.

Mrs. Kings: (*Softly and afraid*) Angel, why don't you go and look for her? Will you do that for me darling, please?

Angel Jr: Of course mama

Lana: I would like to go with you Angel if you don't mind Mrs. Kings.

Angel Jr: (*Uneasy*) Yes, I guess

Mrs. Kings: (*To Lana*) Of course not honey.

Lana: Okay, let me grab me a sweater (*Goes quickly to her room*)

Lana exits

Angel Jr: Don't worry mama

Mrs. kings: Oh darling

Angel Jr: Tell Lana that I'll be waiting for her outside in the car

Mrs. Kings: Okay, if Joanne comes back I'll call you.

Angel Jr: Okay mum, go to bed we'll be back home with Joanne...

Angel leaves the stage and Mrs. Kings cross herself and looks to the audience in despair...

BLACKOUT

Scene 7

Joanne enters cautiously. Her hair and clothes look a bit messy, and then she sees her mum in the sofa... Mrs. Kings stands up and rushes to embrace her daughter.

Mrs. Kings: *(Crying and checking that she is okay)* Joanne darling! Are you okay?

Joanne: *(Amazed and starts talking nervously and very fast)* Yes mama I'm so late. I had to perform tonight in a small town with the whole crew. Didn't I tell you? I thought I did. I guess I told papa instead of you. Oh you're so busy with the wedding. I simply forgot to tell you. I am so sorry!

Mrs. Kings: Your phone is off! I called you a thousand times...

Joanne: Oh really? *(Looks at her phone)* No battery! How silly I am...

Mrs. Kings: Your brother and Lana are desperately looking for you around town...

Joanne: Then, call them and tell them that I'm back home!

Mrs. Kings calls Angel Jr...

Mrs. kings: *(Resigned)* His phone is off too

Joanne: Sooner or later they're gonna come back. My car is parked in front of the house, they gonna see it, don't worry...

Mrs. Kings: *(Calmly)* You're right! Come on honey let's sit and talk...

They both sit in the sofa.

There are a couple of things we need to talk about honey...

Joanne: What's that mum?

Mrs. Kings: Well, about your future... I know that you're a bit confused...

Joanne: (*Angry*) Mama I'm not confused! I know what I would like to become...

Mrs. Kings: I know baby but... (*Pause*) Your father and I want you to be happy but doing something more... (*Pause*) professional

Joanne: (*Angry*) being an actress is professional and respectable!

Mrs. Kings: Yes, it is! Why don't you consider it as a hobby?

Joanne: Because that's what I wanna do for living...Mama when you decided that you wanted to become a teacher your parents supported you, didn't they?

Mrs. Kings: (*Not very convinced*) Yes, they did

Joanne: That's the sort of support I need right now! You knew since you were a little kid that you wanted to be a teacher and that's what you are. (*Pause*) Well, you were... Why did you quit?

Mrs. Kings: Because I thought that my family was more important than a job and you and your brother needed my entire attention... By the way, before I decided to be a teacher (*Pause*) I wanted to be something else...

Joanne: (*Surprised*) What was it?

Mrs. Kings: (*Ashamed*) I wanted to be what you want to be right now!

Joanne: (*More surprised*) (*Long pause*) What? What?

Mrs. Kings: Yes, that's why I understand your position more than anyone else...

Joanne: Mum, are you aware of what you are telling me? Why didn't you tell me this before?

Mrs. Kings: Yes honey... I saw your talent once I saw your eyes for the very first time, that's why I took you to the drama school when you were a little child. I saw my spirit and my art in YOU before anyone else... but (*Pause*) Your father says that you are smart enough to do something better...

Joanne: Ohhh mama (*Embraces her mother*) Why didn't you become an actress?

Mrs. Kings: I didn't have the support either.... So, I did something more “productive” as you grandfather said... and I met your father and we married... and here we are 24 years later. This like (*Pause*) a MATTER OF FATE. You don't know how hard it is for me, it breaks my heart when I have to convince you that performing is not a profession.

Joanne: Mama, I feel like for the very first time you are being yourself with me...

Mrs. Kings: (*Smiles*) I have always been myself honey... but when you become a wife and a mother, things change.

Joanne: Papa and you have always seemed a happy couple!

Mrs. Kings: We are honey! Your father is the best man I've ever known... and I'm very proud of being his wife and the mother of his children, but...

Joanne: He's so authoritarian

Mrs. Kings: Well, that's not the right word...

Joanne: It is mum... I love my father, but he wants to have everything under control... Angel for example, he's studying med because my father asked him to... he doesn't like it...

Mrs. Kings: (*Raising her voice*) That's not true Joanne... (*Pause*) He enjoys it very much, or at least, that's what he says

Joanne: Exactly, that's what he says... Did you quit your job because papa asked you to?

Mrs. Kings: Not exactly... but in a way, yes he did and I agreed with him, family comes first...

Joanne: He's so authoritarian... and I am going to do what I like... we have the right to get wrong, to fall and fall all over again and get up by ourselves...

Mrs. Kings: Joanne your father loves us more than anything else... He acts like that because he wants us to be happy!

Joanne: And are we? I won't be happy if you send me to that freaking faculty of doctors... I WON'T

Mrs. Kings: But you're good at it...

Joanne: That's what you want to believe... Actually, I copied from Danielle Spenser in Biology and Chemistry tests and I never got caught ... I wanted to make my father proud!

Mrs. Kings: (*Astonished*) Oh Joanne!

Joanne: My father is the best in the whole world, but we have never behaved like we really are... just to make him happy! And I think this is our time...

Mrs. Kings: Joanne I want you to promise something, when your father comes back you will talk to him and try to sort this thing out as adults, is that right?

Joanne: I will try mum but... I don't see a clear solution to this...

Mrs. Kings: Let's go to the kitchen and have something to eat...

Joanne: Oh no mama, I'm not hungry... eat something and go to your room, you must be exhausted and tomorrow you will have to keep working on Angel's wedding...

Mrs. Kings: You're right honey, but what about your bother and Lana?

Joanne: I'll wait here for them... meanwhile, I'll be reading the book Lana lent me the other day... I'll surprise them...

Mrs. Kings: Okay honey, good night! (*Kisses Joanne's forehead*)

Joanne: Good nite mama! I love you...

Mrs. Kings: Love you too baby!

Mrs. Kings exists and Joanne sits on the sofa and starts reading the book... she falls asleep

Scene 8

4 hours later... Lana and Angel Jr enter the dining-room holding hands, touching each other and laughing like drunkards, they stay very close... Joanne awakes and pretends she's asleep

Lana: You're a dirty boy. *(She switches the lights on and sees Joanne)* Oh gosh Joanne is on the couch...

Angel Jr: She's asleep don't worry! *(Clasping her to him)*

I want you so badly and you know that... *(Tries to kiss Lana)*

Lana: *(Refuses him)* Come on Angel, you don't want me that bad if you asked the first slut you found in this town to marry you...

Angel Jr: I waited for you and I was still in love with you when I started the relationship with Adelaide, but you didn't come. Two years have passed...

Lana: I told you before that I was forced to go to New York

Angel Jr: I know, but...

Lana: So you still love me? *(Approaches him and takes his jaw)* Tell me that you still love me!

Angel Jr: *(Dejected)* Lana, I am engaged!

Lana: So what? *(Pause)* Okay, now I know what you really want and you're not getting it...

Angel Jr: You've been provoking me all night long *(Embraces her)*

Lana: Baby you can't have everything. I am a lady...*(Frees herself from him)*

Angel Jr: What about you? Do you still love me?

Lana: That's something you will have to find out by yourself... Oh no, *je suis dessolée* you're engaged and you lost your chance...

Angel Jr: How can a beautiful woman like you be so bad, you're evil!

Lana: Stop! It's too late, I'm gonna wake Joanne up and go to bed... and you should do the same..

Angel Jr: Gimme a kiss!

Lana: No, go to bed... you drank too much tonight!

Angel Jr: *(Puts his hands in the air)* Okay, you're hard prey to get... but I won't surrender... *(Winks at her)*

Lana: Good nite drunkard! *(Smiles)*

Angel Jr: Good night *belle dame sans merci*

Angel Jr exits and Lana goes to Joanne and wakes her up

Lana: Joanne! Joanne! Wake up! It's too late...

Joanne: Bitch I've been awake since you both crossed that freaking door...

Lana: Oh gosh you have heard...

Joanne: (*Overlapping*) And seen you both pawing like animals...

Lana: I'm so sorry... Where have you been?

Joanne: (*Angry*) Lana it doesn't matter! Listen, Angel is engaged! What the heck are you doing?

Lana: I haven't done anything (*Pause*) and you know my feelings

Joanne: Oh gosh! If my parents knew they would die of a heart attack. They will have enough with my getaway and now this...

Lana: That's not the worst part (*Pause*)

Joanne: What?

Lana: Angel told me that he wants to quit his studies..

Joanne: (*Rises, paces up and down*) Oh my goodness! I want to be happy but I don't want to kill my parents... Lana you must convince him that he should marry Adelaide and keep on the med school...

Lana: Me? Why? Joanne... (*Softly*) I love him

Joanne: (*Desperate*) Oh holy shit! Can you please stop provoking him? Oh gosh, this is not right... What's next? Lana you can't love him! He broke that promise he made to you (*Emphasizing*) And now he's engaged to Adelaide! You deserve someone better honey! You must be confused!

Lana: No, I'm not confused! I love Angel and you love Saul and that's the reason why you're escaping with him. Shouldn't I fight for what I want?

Joanne: Oh my god! Lana it's not the same...

Lana: (*Angry*) It's not the same because it's me and not you...

The two girls look at each other like they have never done before.

BLACKOUT

Scene 9

Mr Kings is waiting at the office of the Mother Superior staring at the Last Supper picture. He maintain a calm attitude, he wears an expensive suit and a business leather briefcase. Mother Superior enters to the office a bit suffocated.

Mother superior: Mr Kings, we weren't expecting you to come today!

Mr Kings Stands up and they shake hands

Mr Kings: Forgive me if I came in a bad moment but you asked me to come as soon as possible!

Mother superior: Yes, indeed.

Mr Kings: *(Sits)* Anything wrong with Lana Your Reverence?

Mother superior: *(A bit worried)* Well, Mr Kings I called you because I wanted to inform you about a couple of things

Mr Kings: Please go ahead Reverent Mother!

Mother superior: *(Nervous)* Mr Kings... *(Pause)* Lana's farewell was a bit strange

Mr Kings: *(Surprised)* Strange? What do you mean?

Mother superior: *(Nervously)* She said outrageous things about religion

Mr Kings: *(Impressed but calm)* Your Reverence, Lana is just eighteen years old. Kids, they say things like that to feel like adults

Mother superior: *(Emphasizing)* There's more than that Mr Kings, believe me!

Mr Kings: You must have misunderstood her words Your Reverence

Mother superior: *(Insisting)* It was not just what she said but what her eyes said too

Mr Kings: *(Calmly)* Don't worry Your Reverence, Lana is fine at home and my wife, my children and I love her. She is just another member of our family.

Mother superior: What are your plans for her? You have done a lot for her paying for her education here in this institution.

Mr Kings: That is something I still need to talk to her. Besides, if she wants to keep studying, she has all our support.

Mother superior: She is such a lucky girl!

Mr Kings: *(Looking away from mother superior's eyes)* Her mother was a very important person in our lives. This is the least we can do.

Mother superior: By the way, now that you have mentioned her mother there's something I need to tell you.

Mr Kings: *(Amazed)* What is it Your Reverence? About her mother?

Mother superior: Not exactly, Mr Kings

Mr Kings: Tell me...

Mother superior: Her uncle Martin Smith called me the other day

Mr Kings: And what did he say?

Mother superior: He asked me to tell you that you both have a pending matter to talk about

Mr Kings: (*Uneasy*) What? I don't even know him

Mother superior: A business or something like that... (*Pause*) He asked me to give you his telephone number

She passes him a piece of paper. Mr Kings looks worried and pale...

Mother superior: Mr Kings is anything wrong?

Mr Kings: No, I am fine (*Pause*) It's just that I don't know what he may want

Mother superior: (*Confused*) It's strange because he told me that you will know what he was talking about

Mr Kings: (*Pensive*) I will call him as soon as I can (*Pause*) Thanks Your Reverence...

Mother superior: (*Suddenly says*) It was something related to Lana's mother...

Mr Kings: I guess so! Thanks again

Mother superior: It must be nothing! Besides, you always have everything under control Mr Kings

Mr Kings: (*In a dry tone*) I wish I could Reverent mother...

BLACKOUT

4. Conclusions

The present project was designed as an attempt to combine two different academic areas: creative writing and drama in which I have tried to apply all the knowledge acquired during the four years of the degree. This project has entailed a long process of creation and justification of all the decisions I have made along the path. The competences and training goals I think I have achieved or developed in the process of creation of this project are:

- ✦ *To reflect on the systematic aspects of the use of the English language from different analytic perspectives: semantic, syntactic, discursive, pragmatic, stylistic and socio-linguistic.*

It is very difficult to create and express your ideas in a foreign language. Hence, I focused my attention on a semantic perspective or the production of meaning in order to build a whole conflict; a syntactic perspective since the discourse of the characters had to be grammatically correct; discursive perspective since the conversations among the characters had to be coherent and concise; a pragmatic perspective since I used the language for a specific purpose in the play. For instance, the dialogues were carefully chosen in order to create the dramatic conflicts and uncover the desires, intentions and needs of the characters; stylistic since I had to adequate my creation to a theatrical form; and a socio-cultural perspective because the environment and personalities of the characters are reflected in their speeches.

♣ *To understand and analyze the evolution of English literature and its growth and popularization through the theater and the media.*

I applied the main ideas of the drama theories in my own play. In fact, my play reflects the ideas of Naturalism applied in a contemporary stage and also the influence of emblematic playwrights, such as: Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller or Brian Friel.

♣ *To be familiar with the main texts, authors and literary movements of English-speaking countries.*

The reason why I decided to focus my project on theater and follow Naturalism as the literary genre for my project was my familiarity with different texts and authors that I found outstanding and inspiring. In addition, I learned to read between the lines and recognize some symbolic elements present in theater.

♣ *To understand the historical and cultural reality of English-speaking countries.*

Some aspects of the history and culture of United States indirectly takes place in the process of creation of my play such as the fervent present of religion and the pursue of the famous American dream.

♣ *To be autonomous in the process of creation of texts.*

I had never written a play before but my experience as a reader, writer of poems, songs or short stories and the guidance of my tutor made of this project a pleasant adventure with a clear goal: apply all my acquired knowledge of English in a creative project and improve my writing skills. Creating a play has not been an easy task since the complexity of the

genre demands several capacities such as showing more instead of telling or focusing the attention of the spectator on the action. But, with the constant feedback of my tutor I learned how to improve all those mistakes I made.

♣ *To be able to put linguistic knowledge into practice.*

The project is regarded as a “literature paper” but linguistics is also present in theater since it embraces semiotics or the study of signs and shows more than says with words. Therefore, creating meaning in different ways is paramount in this genre. For instance, I have learned to detect and decode the signs included in the some plays which is connected with the notion of linguistic knowledge.

♣ *Knowledge of and sensitivity towards cultural diversity.*

I personally believe that theater is the genre that best reflects our cultural traits and our history. In fact, my purpose was to tell a story for the contemporary stage and show to the readers or spectators the consequences of our own mistakes, the appearances, our individual dilemmas or the constant pressure of the society in which we live in.

♣ *Ability to plan and organize academic work and research.*

This projects involves more than writing and creating since to do so I have read some plays related to the story I wanted to tell and some books about Naturalism, creative writing and drama theories and I have attended drama classes in order to be familiar with the languages of the stage and visualize myself both as an imaginary actor and spectator before becoming a writer. In fact, I had very present in mind the story I wanted to write

but thanks to all the research, readings and involvement with drama classes I could polish the story and learned how to locate the characters onstage and make the story much more effective.

✧ *Ability to use the terminology and techniques specific to a particular professional environment.*

I read several books related to theater, creative-writing and Naturalism. Therefore, I got acquainted with different theories, techniques and authors of these academic and professional fields.

✧ *Capacity for analysis and synthesis.*

I had to carefully select and organize all the information I wanted to give to the reader in a very natural fashion in order to create meaning in my play. Furthermore, it was difficult to synthesize the ideas I first had in mind for my project but thanks to my tutor the focus of the project was decided relatively quickly.

✧ *Capacity for thinking critically*

When you are working on a creative project it is quite difficult to be critical since the creative impulse is a very important part of it. However, I learned that in order to create we have to know about the genre, do a considerable amount of research about it and also about the world you want to depict, and ultimately be able to predict the reader's or spectator's understanding of your work.

△ *Capacity for learning and for exploring human heritage.*

As I have mentioned before my play takes place in a contemporary space and I wanted to give to the characters human values, desires, fears and defects. In fact, my play represents in a way my personal point of view about life.

This project looked very daring and ambitious at the beginning but I personally feel that I have achieved many of the purposes I set when I started it. My goal was to put myself in the playwright's shoes and experience the complexity of a creative-writing process. Now that I have completed the first act of my play, I can maintain that this experience has been very satisfactory for me in many aspects since I have always liked writing and creating but I never thought that I would be able to write an act of a play. Now that I have gained experience and I have the basic ideas of theater I definitely would like to finish my play. I would also like to say that I have been very lucky to be involved with a theatrical environment during the creative process of my play at the Aula Municipal de Teatre in my internship, and also to have been guided by a great actress, dramatist and professor. I also overcame my fear of showing traces of my life, desires and ambitions through my own texts since when you write and create many memories kept in your brain come out of your mind and I realized that I really like writing and creating stories from a theatrical point of view. Moreover, I have experienced the complexity of theater as a literary genre trying to give to the reader the image I created in my mind with the right lines of the characters and stage directions. Actually, finding the right story with the right characters was not easy at all but I felt a creative impulse that made me feel comfortable with the message I was trying to transmit. In spite of the fact that the story I tell in my play is not

completely original, since many other playwrights have depicted family dramas similar to mine, I realize that the importance of creating is based on how a piece is written and not on how original we think it is. My first objective was to create a whole theatrical piece but I soon realized I did not have enough time to complete it in a satisfactory way. In fact, some playwrights could work on a same play for a long period of time. Finally, as expressed at the beginning of the project, my purpose was far from writing a masterpiece but mainly to channel and express everything I have learned at the university during these four years. Even if I am now at the end of my university studies, I personally feel about my play as August Strindberg expresses in the last sentence of his preface to *Miss Julie* ³“I have made an attempt. If it proves a failure, there is plenty of time to try over again.”

³ Preface to *Miss Julie* included in *The Routledge Drama Anthology and Sourcebook: from Modernism to Contemporary Performance* (2010)

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