

Adam Washburn

by [Adam Washburn](#) - Tuesday, 15 February 2011, 12:29 AM\

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The conversations between Moon and Birdboot seemed to go nowhere because they are both completely in their own heads and self – centered. They thought their opinions were important even though they were irrelevant. Birdboot seemed to have fallen in love with the actor who played Cynthia at first glance. He began to compliment her acting as if she was the Van Goo of acting, while basing this comparison on seeing her on stage for only a few minutes.

Birdboot and Moon switching from the audience to the stage gave the reader a different perspective on the play within the play. It went from being this corny play to something realistic and life like. By colliding these two worlds the play seemed to become more suspenseful. Maybe Stoppard is pointing out that in order for a character to be interesting the actor must bring some aspects of his real life towards this character. An actor is to take his experiences and relationships in his own life, and apply them towards the relationships between his character and the other characters on stage.

Magnus turning out to be the real Inspector Hound and also the husband of Cynthia was a funny twist. It was kind of a ridiculous ending but it did add to the outrageousness of this play. Having Simon and the Inspector take the seats of Moon and Birdboot is presenting the idea that their useless phrasing of words and judging can be done by anyone.

This play seems like an interesting play but I can see how it could be difficult to perform on stage. I wonder how everything is going to fit together. Will Moon and Birdboot's lines overlap the lines of the other characters? Will the two alternate realities, on stage and off stage, contrast smoothly with each other and seem realistic?

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I felt this reflection to be one of the most helpful ones I have read after reading a play. The reason being is that when I was finished reading this play, I did not understand it at all. I did not understand how they switched places or why for that matter and everything was just up in the air and I was left confused.

But after reading Adam's reflection, he brought up a point that made the play make more sense. He said that he thought the point of the play was to show us that critics cannot destroy a play when they have not even acted in one. And this play shows us what it would be like if the characters traded places with the critics. And in the end it turned out that the critics could not handle it and they got killed.

Basically when I read this reflection, it was a revelation for me.

Erica Betts

by [Erica Betts](#) - Monday, 14 February 2011, 10:31 AM

I found that this play was very confusing at first. Actually, it was pretty confusing throughout the whole thing. I had no clue what was going on at the beginning and I'm still left with so many thoughts and questions about the play as a whole. Were Birdboot and Moon just audience members? How did they get on the stage and become part of the play? Is it supposed to be a play within a play? Or is it just suppose to be something completely unrealistic? I don't get it but maybe I will once we have a chance to discuss it.

But besides the confusing parts, I actually did enjoy reading this piece of work. It kept my attention and I constantly wanted to know what was going to happen next. It kept me thinking the whole time I was reading it and it was kind of a mind boggler. And it is still a mind boggler after you've finished it.

It kind of reminded of those books, I think they're called clue books, because of the way everything was set out. Here is an example, there are a bunch of people in one place and people are constantly dying without any evidence. And by the end of the book everything is revealed and it turns out to be who you least expected it to be. The same with this play, sure you may have expected it to be Magnus who was killing the people but you did not expect Magnus to be inspector hound or Albert for that matter. One thing I did not like though, was how everything was revealed so quickly at the end and the play finished so suddenly. It was like, "I'm inspector hound and Albert and Moon is dead... The end." Or at least that is what it felt like to me. I feel like there could have been a little more description with the ending and get everyone views on what had happened.

I also do not get how Simon and Inspector Hound switched places with Moon and Birdboot. What did they think at the end? Were they just suppose to take the place of the other people or was there any real big significance as to why they switched, was it suppose to mean something? Or was it only to create a different atmosphere for the 'actual audience' and on the stage.

I find this reflection is hard to write because as I have said above many times, it was too confusing. I feel like my understanding about the play is less than what I should have before writing a reflection. But I also wonder at the same time if that is what the author wanted, for his audience to be confused and not getting what was happening. I also could be confused because I just read the play, see I feel as though plays are supposed to be preformed and when they are preformed, than they reveal their full potential and just reading a play is not going to be enough for the person, only when they see it will a person understand it fully.

When I was reading it, I started comparing it to Buried Child and when I compare them, I find Inspector Hound was a lot shorter and it seemed less detailed than Buried Child. I found there was not that much information describing what was happening and going on which left me lost in at some parts. In my opinion I felt like there should have been more detail between the lines.

I guess I also do not know what the author's intentions were and if he just wanted you to be lost through most of it or if you were just supposed to go with the flow. I know one thing though, when I realized that Moon and Birdboot were supposed to be an audience watching the play, it was not until half way through the play. Then I had a revelation and was completely understanding everything but then in the next couple of lines it switched so they were on stage and it just through me for another loop.

I really want to know if anyone else was as lost as I was who read it, I know all I basically wrote about was how confused I was but that is because it is how I felt about it. I am actually really excited to see the play for this one and to see how it is all done and if it will make more sense to me after I see it.

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I found Erica's reflection to be very insightful for many reasons. One of the reasons I like it is because even though she says she doesn't understand a lot of the play she keeps writing. I find this very educational because even though she doesn't understand she continues to push it and try and discover why she doesn't understand and relate it to the playwright creating a feeling of not understanding.

Also I thought that her comments on the abrupt ending of the play offered an interesting perspective to that genre of literature ( e.g who done it? books). It is an aspect I never thought of before although is consistent with many who done it? books. The ending does come abruptly and much suspense is created around who actually committed the crime. -- Lisa Schellenberg

More confusing than Buried Child

by [Lucas Martin](#) - Wednesday, 16 February 2011, 01:46 PM

When reading Heart's Desire I kept being reminded of something that Len Falkenstein said when he was talking to the class about UNB's production of Buried Child, as he described the action of the play as "multiple realities colliding onstage" or something like that. So for a while I looked at Heart's Desire as the same sort of thing, but with bits and pieces of the different realities being shown to us in no particular order rather than all colliding at once. The play keeps drawing attention to the fact that it is a play as it keeps restarting itself. I feel like some people in the audience might think that the first restart was caused by an actor or technical mistake. After the play restarted itself a few times it became clear that the play was showing different perspectives from the imaginations of some of the characters in the play.

In one of the versions of the scene that is presented, Alice leaves Brian. I thought this suggested that Alice wants to leave Brian in reality, but can't summon up the courage to do so. In another reality it is hinted that Suzy was injured or killed in a subway accident. Maybe Brian subconsciously wants a tangible thing to make Alice feel guilty for not having met Suzy at the airport. Each time the play restarts itself, Churchill is showing us an either conscious or subconscious desired reality of one of the characters.

I found Maisie to be pretty strange. It seems like for the entire play she's just standing there waiting for the opportunity to deliver a monologue. Her first line is an out of place monologue about Australian fauna. She also later delivers monologues on the topics of waiting and death. I think this is an example of Churchill trying to draw attention to the fact that some theatrical conventions are slightly absurd in realistic terms. Maisie is very out of place because she's essentially just a character stuck in the middle of a scene with two real people.

My biggest concern for the production is how the actors are going to pull off redoing their actions when the play restarts. At one of the restarts where the lines are read at double speed, there is a stage direction that says "precision matters, intelligibility does not." If the actors can pull this off well, I'll be really impressed.

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Lucas brought to my attention in this post what Len Falkenstein mentioned about *Buried Child*, that multiple realities collide in the play. Lucas went on to discuss that each time the play re-winds itself it is from another character's perspective, even though it looks the same to the audience; we are seeing their true "Heart's Desire" every time a scene plays through from either their conscious or sub-conscious mind.

Lucas' post was enlightening to me in that I had never gotten the title of the play, and what its significance was. I had many theories about what this play was all about, but Lucas' idea of seeing each character's "Heart's Desire" made me look at the play in a different light. I wasn't totally bought on the whole realities colliding idea that he made reference to, but I could see where he got the idea. His post was the first one I read on *Heart's Desire* was the first post I had read that gave ideas as to what the play was actually about; others' posts kept saying how confusing the script was and how they didn't get it, but Lucas started to give ideas as to what it all meant.

What I found challenging was trying to accept his idea as a version of truth; since no one else had posted an idea of what it was all about, I started to believe that my idea was the right one because no one else had an idea. So when I read Lucas' post, I had to accept that I was wrong and that his idea made more sense. The URL is posted below.

Alexander Brown

Hug machines, language, and age: some thoughts on Perfect Pie.

by [Andréa Peters](#) - Saturday, 19 February 2011, 08:04 PM

Having lived in a small rural area about 30 mins away from Belleville as a child in a house with long train-tracks just across the field in my backyard, reading this play really hit home for me in terms of picking up on all the sensory details, and on the importance of the “identity” and “home” themes.

The first thing I noticed while reading, was how effectively Thomson uses gestures and body language over actual speech in her stage direction and lines, to portray how her characters feel. In many instances where the dialogue was really emotional or gripping, the characters’ actions (such as gasping or remaining silent instead of answering in words), did a really good job at portraying how easily words fail people, when they are really overwhelmed emotionally and/or deep into their own memories.

Usually, this sort of action instead of speech happened in the script just before the characters were about to reveal something important, and make themselves vulnerable (like in scene 14 when Patsy’s asking Francesca if she had been suicidal). In relation to said gestures, the predominant one seemed to be hugging, and I found really interesting how often this comforting motion seemed to show up in the script as a means of buffering the hardness of the unspoken words that were obviously in the heads of both characters.

Another thing I picked up about the occurrence of hugging was that it was often present in the scenes where one of the characters was just about to seize, and the characters had been talking about the farm and its animals. What specifically caught my attention, is that it reminded me of how seizures (and hypersensitivity in general) can be appeased if a lot of pressure is applied all over the body of the person seizing, because it helps bring the sympathetic system down.

The fact that cattle and horses are typically confined in squeeze chutes that apply a lot of pressure on them to keep them still and calm (usually when they’re being medically treated for stuff like mouth care, foot-trimming, and other care which stresses animals), reminded of how the characters’ extensive amount of hugging was probably much more meaningful, therapeutic, and nurturing a gesture than what I would have thought at first.

And having experienced seizures herself, Thompson is likely to have had experience with a “hugging machine” used on people to settle hypersensitivity that causes seizure, so the connection between the characters’ hugging really emphasized the deep relationship these two women shared, and I thought it was interesting how Thompson may have incorporated both in the farm setting intentionally to remind the audience people are still deep-down, very instinct-based.

Also, another interesting element present in the play, is the challenge of the common beliefs around age, and time. Even as kids, Thompson makes a point of showing how “old” and weathered Marie is, and I thought it was fascinating how the parent-child relationship reversal between Marie’s mother and her, in comparison to Patsy and her own mother, took place.

Moreover, I thought it was a neat detail for Thompson to specifically indicate how old the characters were in each of the flashbacks, because it really highlighted how sometimes people can grow “old” really quickly when they suffer a lot, and that a numerical number to represent age does a really poor job at mapping age out, past a biological status.

Throughout the play, Patsy’s constant caring for Marie was remarkably mature for a child, and Francesca’s life journey adeptly outlines how struggling with mental and physical illness, poverty, and “otherness” ages folks. It seems to me like Thompson was trying to show us that growing old isn’t so much about wrinkles or numbers, but more about becoming disillusioned about the world, and people’s real ability to be cruel and shallow.

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The reason I found this post to be enlightening is because Andrea pointed out a very interesting and odd connection within “Perfect Pie” that I had not actually noticed or thought about on my own until reading her post. I had not read her post before now because I had already done my responses when she posted, but I wish I had because I think it would have changed my experience seeing “Perfect Pie” into a more meaningful one.

The connection Andrea addressed links the hugging in “Perfect Pie” to the farm animals and the seizures. Her main point was that animals are contained in spaces that apply lots of pressure on them, which keeps them calm. Similarly, pressure is used to settle hypersensitivity in humans, such as during a seizure. Andrea states that the hugging in “Perfect Pie” occurs just before a seizure happens or when the characters are talking about animals, and she suggests that this reflects the characters’ natural instincts to calm and soothe one another in a time of stress, even after the years of separation. It is this analysis that I found so thoughtful and enlightening because Andrea is displaying that the bond between Patsy and Marie was a “natural” one and nothing could have ever broken it. Again, I think this would have been a good post to have read before seeing the play because I feel like it would have made the overall experience more heart-warming and touching for me to think of this. -- Emily Cochrane

## Reflection

by [Erica Betts](#) - Sunday, 20 February 2011, 11:26 PM

When I finished Heart's Desire, I could not figure out if I actually liked it or not. It was very monotonous (which those who have read it know it is VERY repetitive.) And I still do not know if I liked that aspect of it or not. I could not tell if it was meant to be a comedy, or to be taken seriously, or if it was just a play that Caryl Churchill wrote just to make a way to laugh at the actors on the stage and to kind of make fun of them. I'm not sure what her intentions were, maybe just pure entertainment for the audience, but it was not clear to me.

I have to admit, when I was getting closer to the end, I was getting a little annoyed with how it kept repeating everything from the beginning. I almost cringed when I read for like the 7<sup>th</sup> time that everything stops and resets. Also, I find when it did this, you already have read it so I found myself just skimming through everything being said and not actually reading it carefully again. But when I look back, a part of me feels like I did not get the whole experience because I did not carefully read the parts that were repeated. Another part of me feels as though it did not matter if I read the stuff that was said more than once carefully because the play could just be for entertainment and you're not going to get anymore out of it if you read it more than once.

One part I did like about the play was the randomness, I loved when it had the children ran on stage and when the gunman killed them all and my favourite was the big bird coming on the stage. I actually would have liked to see more of that kind of stuff in it. But then again if there were more of those little random things in it, it may have taken away from the play. But in my opinion, I think it would have added to it and made it more interesting and would make all of the repeating worth it because you would want to read it to see what else was going to come on stage and be extremely weird.

I know in class two people gave an example of what the play could've meant, one person said that it was their Heart's Desire", and another person said that they were just imagining the worst that could happen. My lasting impression is that it is examples of what the worst that can happen because there was not really anything that seemed like someone would want to desire. Everything that happened was either really depressing or really bizarre. I know if I thought of a situation and imagined it the way I would want it to go, it wouldn't have two gunmen killing everyone around me, or have a huge bird walk in on this so called situation. Those are like complete opposite of what I would want to happen. So I would have to agree with the person who said that it seemed like a play of imagining the worst that could happen.

One thing I know for sure is, is that I cannot wait to see this play done on stage. I'm curious as to how everything is going to work out. Especially the parts where the dialogue is supposed to speed up and everyone say everything double time and also the part where people just say the end part of the lines. Oh, and saying this about the part where everyone just said the last few words to the repeated lines, I found since this happened further on in the play, you have already read those lines a couple of times, so when you read the last few lines, it is like you already know what they're saying and you could tell which line was which. That was one thing I actually found really cool and maybe that is why Caryl decided to have things repeated so we would know what was being said during the time in the play where they just said the last few words. That part I did enjoy and made me realize how much of a play or how much of what you are reading you actually take in.

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I chose to comment on Erica Betts' reflection. The reason I chose to post on this reflection was because I actually found it enlightening in retrospect. Her post discussed the problems she had with reading the script – which I have to agree, was very monotonous and because of its repetitive nature easy to skip over important parts. I suppose the real reason that I chose this reflection was that it was honest in that she admitted to skipping over parts that she assumed to be just repetition. Like her I have also done this myself and in a way like her I also found that in retrospect after seeing the play I had short changed myself. It should be noted that her post was done before she viewed the play, and that when I speak about my experience of feeling short changed after viewing this play I may have taken a few of her ideas out of context. -- Nigel Bone

Adam Washburn

by [Adam Washburn](#) - Tuesday, 15 February 2011, 12:29 AM

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The conversations between Moon and Birdboot seemed to go nowhere because they are both completely in their own heads and self – centered. They thought their opinions were important even though they were irrelevant. Birdboot seemed to have fallen in love with the actor who played Cynthia at first glance. He began to compliment her acting as if she was the Van Goo of acting, while basing this comparison on seeing her on stage for only a few minutes.

Birdboot and Moon switching from the audience to the stage gave the reader a different perspective on the play within the play. It went from being this corny play to something realistic and life like. By colliding these two worlds the play seemed to become more suspenseful. Maybe Stoppard is pointing out that in order for a character to be interesting the actor must bring some aspects of his real life towards this character. An actor is to take his experiences and relationships in his own life, and apply them towards the relationships between his character and the other characters on stage.

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I really liked Adam's thoughts on the script because he raised some interesting points that I hadn't thought of before. He talks about the possible theme of the play being audience members critiquing actors without knowing what they are talking about. I never thought of this and found it very enlightening because 1) I had never thought of this idea while I was reading the script. It seems like an interesting and funny way to open up discussion about the very class we're in. Many people in our class had never even been to the theatre, and it makes their reviews interesting to read. Some people critique actors without knowing why they make certain choices, and without studying theatre it is hard for an audience member to understand why things were done a certain way. 2) I really liked how he raised the idea that when Birdboot and Moon go onstage, it's like they're saying to the audience "Oh you think this is so easy? Then why don't you come up onstage and try it?" It's a great concept because as an actor I've gotten mixed reviews on some of my acting choices by audience members, and it makes me feel like I want to say "well if you didn't like what I did, then why don't you try it?" -- Georgia Priestley-Brown



God! We've blown a fuse!

by [Ashley MacDonald](#) - Wednesday, 16 March 2011, 04:39 PM

I enjoyed reading the script for Black Comedy. It was different from the other scripts that I have read in that it is very humorous. Other plays we have studied have had humour that was not very apparent until it was seen on stage, while Black Comedy is blatantly funny. The title gives this away, and it is of course a pun. Black Comedy is a great story with no loose ends that left you guessing.

The play is set in Brinsley's flat in London. It opens up with Brinsley, a young struggling artist and his fiancé Carol in the apartment. They are preparing the apartment for the arrival of Carol's father, Colonel Melkett, and Georg Bamberger, a well off art collector, whom Brinsley is hoping will be interested in his art. To impress the two men, the couple has borrowed furniture from Brinsley's neighbour, Harold Gorringer, who is an antique collector. Before the guests arrive, a fuse blows in the apartment building and this puts the characters into complete darkness. Only the audience can see what is going on. From there the play develops into a hilarious night filled with

What strikes me most about this play is the range of characters we see. They each have their own distinct personalities, some very funny. The following characters personalities stood out to me:

- Brinsley is the main character of the play. He is a timid, anxious young man who is very intelligent and displayed as very distressed throughout the play. Brinsley will do anything to impress his fiancée's father and Bamberger. Despite his dishonest acts, it's hard not to feel bad for Brinsley and the situation he is placed in.
- Carol is a spoiled young woman with a terribly low self-esteem. She takes advantage of Brinsley in the way that she is dependant on him, both emotionally and financially. She has an unmistakeable voice that sounds like a quack. Towards the beginning of the play they seem like a good match, but in the end it's clear that they are a terrible couple.
- Colonel Melkett is a stern, cold, stubborn military man who is not at all shy about expressing his true feelings. He is very judgemental and suspicious of Brinsley, and does not see him fit for his daughter. There are many times in the play when he gets angry with Brinsley, and his orders come as barks.
- Clea is Brinsley's ex-girlfriend and mistress. I really enjoyed Clea's character. She is a clever, savvy, mischievous young woman who will not give up until she gets Brinsley back, even if it means ruining the entire evening. There is a hidden love story between Clea and Brinsley that becomes intertwined in the chaos. The writer gives subtle hints to the fact that Brinsley is still in love with Clea, such as the fact that he keeps her picture in his drawer.

One thing I found a little challenging was the large amount of characters involved in the play. I found myself turning back to the character list to see who they were. Once I got further into the play it was a bit easier. Also, a few times in the play characters are mistaken for one another, such as when Clea pretends she is Miss. Punnett. This is also a tad bit confusing. I hope seeing the play on stage will clear this confusion up.

I am interested to see how this play is performed on stage. Since it is set in London, I am assuming that the characters will have accents. As noted earlier, all the characters in Black Comedy have very strong, distinct personalities. I think some impressive acting skills will be needed for some of the things the script calls for, such as stumbling around in the dark, and acting drunk. I'm also interested to see the reversed lighting tactic in action, as the script is very precise on the lighting used throughout the play. I think the ending of the play is brilliant. The power is turned back on therefore casting darkness upon the audience, and the tune of the Sousa march is heard.

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I have several reasons for choosing this post, the first being that she exhibited thoughts on subjects I hadn't considered; such as the amount of people required on stage could pose a challenge when attempting to focus the audience's attention on a single character. Secondly I found that the section in which she described the characters who "jumped out" at her helpful in understanding quirks of individuals in the play, which I had missed before. -- Matthew Goodwin

Reading the script (twice)

by [Andréa Peters](#) - Wednesday, 2 March 2011, 08:14 AM

It's pretty rare that I'm at a complete loss of words and can't think of *anything* to write, but this is what happened right after reading the script for the first time a few days ago. Having stared at my blank computer screen long enough, I decided to sit on it and read Black Comedy again, rather than write something like "this is pretty funny" in a lot of different ways...

So here I am now, and the first thing I'm finding myself interested in is the idea that light is a better disguise for dishonesty than pitch darkness. I know of course part of the reason Shaffer insisted on this in his script has to do with making the production possible to "watch" in the first place, but I think there's some sort of reference to purity on the go.

As I read the stage direction "the stage is brightly lit" when the colonel lit his lighter to see what Brindsley was up to; reminded me of the "I'll tell the whole truth" thing, that we often see when captors or culprits are interrogated in otherwise dark little rooms, but there's a big lamp shining on their faces.

Though it may not appear as so on the surface, I'm tempted to speculate Shaffer may have been running a bit of a social commentary about honesty in this play, and the religious and symbolic colour "white", along with bright light, signifies purity of both intent and action.

And thought I'm not sure, I think Shaffer may also be poking fun at the commandments, I think, since his characters break a heap of them on purpose: lying, adultery, not observing Sabbath on a Sunday, deceiving and cheating your neighbors, not honouring the parental figures—and what I thought was most interesting since Brindsley's a sculptor—"You shall not make for yourself any carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." That's six out of ten...A little past coincidences, maybe?

Secondly, I very much liked how Miss Furnival, whom I thought was the least like an obvious stock-character, defied society's ageism, and the belief that most people past the age of like...60? shouldn't enjoy being groped in a sexual manner (even if it's accidental and by strangers in the dark,) or get drunk and make fools of themselves.

I had totally overlooked this aspect the first time I read the script, but I really thought it added some depth to the generally pretty light (albeit tense) play. I think it was the combination of the stage direction that Miss Furnival has giggled or squealed when Harold? had groped her butt to keep from falling, that made me remember that it's people aged 65 or more living in nursing homes, that compose the population most likely to get syphilis and minor infections...

Who would have known, right? In a sense, Shaffer evoked those aspects in a bit of a similar way to how Judith Thompson wrote about seizures, and rape, and bullying—nonchalantly, but it counted, because nobody aside from Sue Johanson is really "out there" talking about enjoying sex at all ages.

The third thing that interested me most when reading the script a second time, was the social interactions between the characters, and the acute ethnocentric tendencies of all the characters towards the electrician guy. As I read Shuppanzigh's spiel on art, I felt like high-fiving Shaffer for having broken the stereotype that all electricians (or anyone in a trade, for that matter), are completely void of any culture or artistic taste.

When it comes to it, I was much more interested in what Shuppanzigh had to say about the sculptures, than what Bamberger did, and he's the reason the whole furniture changing and the party's failure occurred in the first place.

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First off, I like that she was honest about being at a loss for words, and so took the time to re-read the script. I found that very thorough, when she could have easily written a less thoughtful posting simply to get it done with. Secondly, she really took her reflection beyond value judgments like "I liked/didn't like \_\_\_\_" or "I thought \_\_\_\_ was funny". she took her time to look for some more underlying themes, and in my opinion was very successful in finding some discussion-worthy ones. For example she talked about the theme of dishonesty and how that ties in with the light/darkness theme. She pointed out how interesting it was that the play suggests that it is harder to disguise dishonesty in the dark. Then she started talking about the ten commandments. At first I thought that was a bit of a stretch, but as she defended her suggestion, I saw how many instances they were broken as well, and I began wondering if it was more than coincidence, as well.

Then when she talked about the German electrician, instead of speaking about how rude or prejudiced they seemed, she used more academic terms and thought processes, such as "ethnocentric". This opened a new tangent and had me looking at the characters' interactions more sociologically - *why* do certain people act the way they do? *Why* is Carol so unbearable? Miss Furnival so uptight?

Overall, I think she did an incredibly thorough and thoughtful job in this reflection. -- Amber Carroll



You are my heart's...

by [Lisa Schellenberg](#) - Thursday, 17 February 2011, 10:49 PM

I really enjoyed reading this play! I thought the way Churchill presented her story was awesome. Although the play is different and not your conventional type of play it is still fantastic and offers interesting themes and will surely be an interesting play experience.

One thing about this play that is different is the repetition of lines and setbacks to previous times in the play. It is almost like they are playing out different possible scenarios of what will happen when Suzy finally comes home. One thing I did notice about the repetition was that although the lines were the exactly the same some of the punctuation was different. For example on page 6 Brian says "How can you speak of your daughter." And the next time the line is repeated it is formed as a question rather than a statement "How can you speak of your daughter?". I think this will be really emphasized in the performance and will make the lines seem different every time.

I'm a little familiar with some of Churchill's other plays like *Cloud Nine* and I know it that particular play she played a lot with the time line. I think something similar is happening in this play. That each time the lines are repeated it is a different time or a different scenario. I think also Brian's changing of sweaters helps make this change in order to make it a little clearer for the readers.

I'm very interested to see how the actors and director will do some of the stage directions and props. The script calls for a gaggle of children, mafia men and a ten foot bird although these things might be hard to acquire I hope they do them because I think that it really adds a surprising element to the play. Also in the script where it indicates that time speeds up and slows down. I'm very curious to see how the actors will do this while maintaining clarity of the words. This speeding up and slowing down will also make the actions that come along with the words difficult to emulate the same way each time.

An interesting point I found in the script was the author's opposing themes of lovely and spoilt. This becomes apparent in the line "Alice- This should be a lovely day. You spoil everything. Brian- You've done it now, it was a lovely day, you've spoilt it." The reason for this dichotomy of lovely and spoilt is lost on me however; I did find it to be something that really stuck out. As well I think it is interesting how both characters blame each other for ruining a lovely day. Personally, I think that the day isn't lovely to begin with because she daughter is late and they are worried and want something to blame on one another rather than their child that is really ruining their day.

I think another important part to this play is the dark imagery. For example the way Brian talks about eating himself and the way Masie talks about death. This imagery creates some icky feelings and I hope this translates to the audience. I think that the dark imagery is put to show the true feelings of the characters. Perhaps this play is about family dynamics and the contrast between how we portray our feelings about family to them and as opposed to how they really feel about family.

In this play there are two characters that I'm a little confused about are Lewis and Maise. I don't really understand their purpose in the play. Lewis is clearly the drunk brother who brings shame on the family but why is that important? Maise on the other hand seems to only talk about time. For example she talks about the tube being a fast way to travel or how waiting is the hardest thing. I think this also plays with Churchill's concept of changing time lines and reinforces the idea that time passes differently to everyone.

In reading the play I get the sense that Suzy doesn't like her family. Lines saying that she will never come home again for the first time or if they move to Australia then she will move somewhere else really emphasizes this point.

This play left me in suspense especially towards the end. I found myself waiting and waiting for the time that Suzy would show up and everything would be fine. I really like this aspect of the play because you know it is coming but are still eagerly anticipating it. Although the ending is predictable that Suzy comes home and is ok, it is not so predictable that after the whole play resets to the top. I think this is interesting because it creates a feeling of never being satisfied with the ending you get. This is true in the play and real life.

Like I said at the beginning, I'm really excited to see this play and I think watching opposed to reading it will make all the difference in comprehension of the play.

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I decided to read Heart's Desire, because it was the play I was in, so I read it, but I couldn't post a reflection on reading (because I was seeing the whole process of it being made)

What I really found clear and enlightening about Lisa's reflection is that she really got the idea of the play, because she took the time to observe little details that make this play what it is. She gave clear examples, using fragments from the script and then developing her argument. She explained how she felt and also why she thinks she felt that way, always going back to the text as support. Doing this allowed her to enjoy what she was reading and that is the whole point of doing this. Finding what is it about this play that makes me want to go watch it, what conventions are we usually attracted to, and what techniques do playwrights use to entertain us. While you analyze a play, you are also analysing yourself. I think Lisa did that, and that's why I feel she did a better job than most people (addressing the text several times was definitely an asset) she even made other people think about it and realize that they weren't interested because they weren't paying the necessary attention to the lines..the text.-- Juliana Duque

Adam Washburn

by [Adam Washburn](#) - Tuesday, 15 February 2011, 12:29 AM

I found that the Real Inspector Hound was an interesting play to read yet it was hard to follow at times. I thought it was neat how the play was presented as a play within a play. Moon and Birdboot were critics who seemed to come off as completely outrageous. I think this play attempts to present a sort of criticism towards those theatregoers who feel that they can critique a play when they barely know anything about acting. I think this play points to those who act like they know what they're talking about, but really all they're doing is using big complicated words and making what they say sound smart. When Birdboot gets up on stage it is sort of figuratively saying, "You think you can sit there and judge this play? Then why don't you come up here and actually see what acting is all about? The fact that Birdboot and Moon die on stage in the end is kind of ironic in that it presents them as having failed as actors.

The conversations between Moon and Birdboot seemed to go nowhere because they are both completely in their own heads and self-centered. They thought their opinions were important even though they were irrelevant. Birdboot seemed to have fallen in love with the actor who played Cynthia at first glance. He began to compliment her acting as if she was the Van Goo of acting, while basing this comparison on seeing her on stage for only a few minutes.

Birdboot and Moon switching from the audience to the stage gave the reader a different perspective on the play within the play. It went from being this corny play to something realistic and life like. By colliding these two worlds the play seemed to become more suspenseful. Maybe Stoppard is pointing out that in order for a character to be interesting the actor must bring some aspects of his real life towards this character. An actor is to take his experiences and relationships in his own life, and apply them towards the relationships between his character and the other characters on stage.

Magnus turning out to be the real Inspector Hound and also the husband of Cynthia was a funny twist. It was kind of a ridiculous ending but it did add to the outrageousness of this play. Having Simon and the Inspector take the seats of Moon and Birdboot is presenting the idea that their useless phrasing of words and judging can be done by anyone.

This play seems like an interesting play but I can see how it could be difficult to perform on stage. I wonder how everything is going to fit together. Will Moon and Birdboot's lines overlap the lines of the other characters? Will the two alternate realities, on stage and off stage, contrast smoothly with each other and seem realistic?

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The reason I chose this reflection is because it has all the elements I feel are necessary in one for it to be good. First of all, he avoided recounting the play but was still able to touch on aspects that he felt were important or interesting. He looked for connections between what was happening on stage and messages the playwright may have been trying to put forth using the play. He made connections concerning people in the play and what they might represent which I find very relevant. Also, Adam compared his reading of the play to how the play might feel when someone sees it. This is obviously a thought we all should be concerned with, considering we all go see the plays we read in this class.

Another thing that caught my eye was how he talks about Stoppard's intentions concerning the play. He obviously wants to find deeper meaning than what's on the surface. This is another thing I believe we all should do (sometimes anyways). Lastly, I found it funny how he commented on Magnus being the real inspector AND the husband. This is so largely because I am convinced we are not meant to be sure this is truly the case even at the end of the play. Stoppard likely wanted to leave us with unanswered questions, and I feel this is one of them. -- Brandon Thibodeau

Reading the script (twice)

by [Andréa Peters](#) - Wednesday, 2 March 2011, 08:14 AM

It's pretty rare that I'm at a complete loss of words and can't think of *anything* to write, but this is what happened right after reading the script for the first time a few days ago. Having stared at my blank computer screen long enough, I decided to sit on it and read Black Comedy again, rather than write something like "this is pretty funny" in a lot of different ways...

So here I am now, and the first thing I'm finding myself interested in is the idea that light is a better disguise for dishonesty than pitch darkness. I know of course part of the reason Shaffer insisted on this in his script has to do with making the production possible to "watch" in the first place, but I think there's some sort of reference to purity on the go.

As I read the stage direction "the stage is brightly lit" when the colonel lit his lighter to see what Brindsley was up to; reminded me of the "I'll tell the whole truth" thing, that we often see when captors or culprits are interrogated in otherwise dark little rooms, but there's a big lamp shining on their faces.

Though it may not appear as so on the surface, I'm tempted to speculate Shaffer may have been running a bit of a social commentary about honesty in this play, and the religious and symbolic colour "white", along with bright light, signifies purity of both intent and action.

And thought I'm not sure, I think Shaffer may also be poking fun at the commandments, I think, since his characters break a heap of them on purpose: lying, adultery, not observing Sabbath on a Sunday, deceiving and cheating your neighbors, not honouring the parental figures—and what I thought was most interesting since Brindsley's a sculptor—"You shall not make for yourself any carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." That's six out of ten...A little past coincidences, maybe?

Secondly, I very much liked how Miss Furnival, whom I thought was the least like an obvious stock-character, defied society's ageism, and the belief that most people past the age of like...60? shouldn't enjoy being groped in a sexual manner (even if it's accidental and by strangers in the dark,) or get drunk and make fools of themselves.

I had totally overlooked this aspect the first time I read the script, but I really thought it added some depth to the generally pretty light (albeit tense) play. I think it was the combination of the stage direction that Miss Furnival has giggled or squealed when Harold? had groped her butt to keep from falling, that made me remember that it's people aged 65 or more living in nursing homes, that compose the population most likely to get syphilis and minor infections...

Who would have known, right? In a sense, Shaffer evoked those aspects in a bit of a similar way to how Judith Thompson wrote about seizures, and rape, and bullying—nonchalantly, but it counted, because nobody aside from Sue Johanson is really "out there" talking about enjoying sex at all ages.

The third thing that interested me most when reading the script a second time, was the social interactions between the characters, and the acute ethnocentric tendencies of all the characters towards the electrician guy. As I read Shuppanzigh's spiel on art, I felt like high-fiving Shaffer for having broken the stereotype that all electricians (or anyone in a trade, for that matter), are completely void of any culture or artistic taste.

When it comes to it, I was much more interested in what Shuppanzigh had to say about the sculptures, than what Bamberger did, and he's the reason the whole furniture changing and the party's failure occurred in the first place.

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The reason why I chose this response to reading Black Comedy was because it really made me consider what was going on in the script. I read it and, sure, I saw some underlying themes but I didn't look too hard. I just sort of dismissed it. It's a comedy, so I didn't expect there to be a lot of morals or what have you hidden in the text of the play. I read it for what it was, and if I picked up on any hidden subtexts then that's great. I was reading it to see what happens if you lie to your friends or steal from your neighbour. But, when I read this response to the script, I started looking back and noticing little things that might have been a bigger message. The thing that really stood out to me about this entry was how the script may be playing with the idea of sin. That didn't even come close to entering my mind when I read it the first time. But after reading this, it made sense to me. I guess I don't usually expect religious undertones in a comedy but, there are lots in this one. I had to stop myself from overlooking the play and under-rating it, and I had to go through and note where there could be a sin being played out. And there were quite a few. It was just really interesting to me to read this response and realize that I hadn't given the script as much credit as I should have. It's a funny script and such, but I just assumed there wouldn't be any morals to it besides the obvious. I'm glad I read this response or Black Comedy wouldn't have all the clever, witty bits accounted for in my mind. Jilly Hanson

reading Black Comedy

by [Amber Carroll](#) - Wednesday, 16 March 2011, 12:05 PM

First and foremost, I feel like the play will be much funnier on stage. I can tell there is a lot of situational humour here, the kind you have to 'see to get'. I think it will be funny to see the characters talking to each other but looking in the wrong direction, and what they do when they think no one can see them.

The humour really lies in that fact that no one can see each other, and in the deteriorating state of Brindsley's clumsy deceptions. I can't wait to see what the director chooses to add in as far as clumsy mistakes in the dark.

One thing that I find is really sticking with me is how distasteful I find Brindsley's character. I think I could forgive him the whole deception of having a mistress, for the sake of the humour of the show and his young naïveté. However the way he speaks to Clea and eventually Carol when things start to go wrong really shocked me. His girlfriend finds out he has a fiancé and is reasonable upset about it (and actually keeps her cool pretty darn well) and he calls her bitch and all kinds of nasty things. All under his breath, because he is so preoccupied with keeping up appearances and being deceitful. And then I started to get the sense that he may have been sending Harold false messages, leading him on. He just seems pretty nasty and selfish all-over, so I lost a lot of sympathy for him when things went wrong. I think this was meant to add to the humour of the show, though. Maybe if we sympathized with his misfortune, it would be harder to laugh at it.

I'm not really sure I understood Miss Furnival's purpose in the play. Her character seemed like it might be funny in the play, but as I'm going back over it in my head, I don't think she really added anything to the play. She was in the studio for a good portion of it, and doesn't really do much to either advance the plot or personally add a whole lot of comedy. I felt like she was funny, but I expected a lot more from her once she was drunk – wasn't that the point of the cocktail mistakes? But it seems to me she just got a *little* giggly and talkative. Maybe it will be more evident and humorous on stage.

I think the idea of having the bright lights symbolize darkness and then dimming the lights to indicate a match/candle/flashlight is really different. I had never heard of anything like this before, but it's such a neat concept. I mean even in a room full of people, I'm sure people do all kinds of different things when they think no one can see them. It will be really interesting to watch, and I really look forward to it.

Oh and another thing – was I right in assuming Harold was gay? I mean I got those 'vibes' but I'm not sure it was ever specified in the character description. I will be interested to see how the director chooses to play that. I also got the feeling that Miss was in love with him. Again, all implied, but just what my gut told me when reading the script.

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"One thing that I find is really sticking with me is how distasteful I find Brindsley's character. (...) He just seems pretty nasty and selfish all-over, so I lost a lot of sympathy for him when things went wrong. I think this was meant to add to the humour of the show, though. Maybe if we sympathized with his misfortune, it would be harder to laugh at it."

What I found most interesting about Amber's comment, is her questioning of Shaffer's motives for making Brindsley a character with whom it is (perhaps) more difficult to feel sorry for. More specifically, the comment caught my attention, because I had not considered before whether I find it easier to laugh at a nasty person's misery if I think they deserve it.

Additionally, the real question seems to me to not be so much about whether or not the character was supposed to be sympathized with, but more whether or not Shaffer intended for us to get a laugh at Brindsley's expense as a counterbalance for his hurting all the other characters. Although I'm aware the play is a comedy, the serious undertones of ethnocentricity, selfishness, deceit, and hurt—lead me to believe Shaffer's use of humour around the character's stumbling in the dark, is much more of a defense mechanism against human nature's shortcomings, than blatant comedy in itself. In fact, I think the funny groping and falling about that occurs as Brindsley's constructions fall down are funny *because* it brings a welcomed escape from the actual focus of the play, which I think is dishonesty.

On the other hand, I wonder the play's producer's will put a slight spin on the circumstantial humour in the play, in order to make us more sympathetic to Brindsley... Because overall, I think it's much more satisfying (and challenging for actors), to make one laugh at the misery of somebody you sympathize with. Because then, it's not just circumstantial laughing, or that nervous laughing people do when they witness a stranger's fall, but it's that laughter that is rooted in resentment and revenge— which are I think, stronger themes in the play than slapstick comedy stunts.