

Full-Length Play Project

Camila Papadopoulo, Class of 2020

I spent my nine weeks at Bowdoin completing two drafts of a full-length family play I named “The Waiting Room,” a seventy-five-page project that I started from scratch. My play consists of four characters: Sarah Dunne, Lillian Crump, James Crump, and Margret Crump. I limited my cast to four in effort to keep the production under strict control and small enough with the hope and intention to eventually stage it myself here at Bowdoin my senior year.

Sarah Dunne, the antagonist, is a female therapist in her late forties. Lillian Crump, the *apparent* protagonist who goes by “Lee,” is a recent college graduate from Fordham University. Both Sarah and Lee interact in a therapeutic context, discussing and exploring issues of a young woman’s narcissism (which Lee denies), as her parents James Crump—a forty-five year old money grumping jerk—and Margret Crump—a forty year old religious fanatic whose beauty hasn’t diminished a bit with age—wait and face their own marital disputes in the adjacent waiting room. Lee’s reason for therapy: disguising her true humanity and insecurities with a fabricated and perfect Instagram account.

After four short years of college independence Lee returns home to her parents who make her go to therapy to “get answers”. A single introductory appointment that spins out of control leads Lee to confront other issues present in her life: trying to come to terms with her angering experiences with men, and how they were not what she expected having grown up with a *seemingly* healthy, loving example at home. As the play progresses, however, the audience realizes that Margret and James’s relationship isn’t so nurturing after all, allowing Margret to reveal her rightful identity as the true protagonist of the story: *A woman uses her daughter as an excuse to attend therapy with the hopes of finally confessing her suppressed unhappiness that has accumulated over the years.*

The books that I read and worked with in detail during this project include: “Night, Mother” by Marsha Norman, all stage plays by Yasmina Reza, “Endgame,” and “Waiting for Godot” by Samuel Beckett, “Oleanna,” “The Anarchist,” and “Sexual Perversity in Chicago” by David Mamet, “True West,” and “Fool for Love” by Sam Shepard, “Long Day’s Journey into Night” by Eugene O’Neill, “Sex With Strangers” by Laura Eason, “Equus,” by Peter Shaffer, “Betrayal,” and “Old Times” by Harold Pinter, “Stop Kiss” by Diana Son, “American Hookup” by Lisa Wade, “Hooking Up” by Tom Wolfe, and “The Moral Animal” by Robert Wright. My technical guides for this project were “Dialogue” by Robert McKee and “The Empty Space” by Peter Brook.

I spent half of my day working on my play, and the other half the day studying other works, and books to help with my technical development as a playwright and a writer in general. I worked six days a week, with Sundays off. I wrote to Professor Walton on a daily basis through email and met with him face to face every ten days or so to go over my work and monitor progress.

This summer has taught me about the method and technique of writing, including how to develop a play step by step, as well as the analysis of plays and utilizing reference material. I now feel as though I can develop a play from scratch. I hope to continue building on visual storytelling by learning how to translate what I see in my imagination onto paper, and to implement this skill as I continue working through more drafts of this play and other work in the near future.

Faculty Mentor: Professor Anthony Walton

Funded by the Alan M. Christenfeld Summer Research Fellowship