

6-2018

# The North Pool

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### Director's Concept

My concept for *The North Pool* focuses heavily on the grief portrayed throughout the piece. Dr. Danielson and Khadim have both suffered the loss of someone close to them which leads to a very interesting power dynamic that I want to create. This dynamic consists of Khadim holding back all of the supposed information he knows about Dr. Danielson and Dr. Danielson berating him with only a part of the truth. This allows for a structure that allows Khadim's frustration boil over and bring him to a breaking point in which he brings up Dr. Danielson watching the sex tape and his wife leaving him. I want the play up until this point to focus on Khadim only trying to stay calm and be okay but slowly having a harder and harder time keeping all of his thoughts inside until they get to a point where they are just overflowing and spurt out of his mouth.

One of the things that this play does a good job of addressing is the post 9/11 Islamophobia. Dr. Danielson makes many remarks about Khadim being "different" and alludes to bomb threats to the school and almost accuses Khadim of threatening the school. I want Khadim to almost play into these in a way getting offended but also just thinking these allusions are completely absurd. In doing this, I want Khadim to a fake Saudi accent after being patronized. I think the decision to have him accent some words and joke around will show the absurdity of the time, and make it slightly comical while also keeping the play in touch with reality.

The part I want to accentuate most and elaborate on is the grief dealt with during the play. At the beginning of the show, the stage will be half lit with Dr. Danielson and Khadim staring at each other as the monologue plays with music superimposed. Then, at the end of the play, they will be in the same position with the music playing and the monologue playing softly under it. This will create a cyclical feeling, as it signifies that the play will begin again but will be softer. The grief they feel because of Lia's death won't go away, it will just slowly be put aside in their brains until it is only a thought that pops up in times of struggle. Another thing I will add to this is the sound of a clock throughout the play. During moments of high intensity and high stress it will become louder, signifying the realization that the moments that are the most painful are the ones that feel like the most time. It will also add tension because when people hear the sound of a clock ticking they assume it is leading up to something or time is running out. In this case, the amount of time that they can live with their guilt has expired, causing both Kadim and Dr. Danielson to reach a breaking point. This shared realization causes them to make the decision to emotionally lean on one another in order to forgive themselves as well as each other, despite their obvious differences.

## Mental Health

Conflict drives the story of a play forward to make it more interesting. Characters that are rational and are able to make decisions based on empathy are less likely to be interesting characters. By this standard, a character with deep internal pain and suffering would make a play much more interesting. Their decisions are made based on feeling, not based on logic or any rational thought. Through my research on mental health, I talked to Marcus Hotaling at Union Colleges wellness center. Over the course of conducting this research I came to the conclusion of what illness I would show through my main male character: borderline personality disorder.

Borderline Personality Disorder is a mental health affliction that is “marked by an ongoing pattern of varying moods, self-image, and behavior....People with borderline personality disorder may experience intense episodes of anger, depression, and anxiety that can last from a few hours to days” (The National Institute of Mental Health Information Resource Center). Because of this volatile state of emotive existence, people who suffer from BPD tend to have many interpersonal setbacks, especially finding it hard to maintain a healthy relationship. Additionally, people with BPD tend to view the world in stark opposition, meaning there is rarely an acknowledgement of “grey” area, and more frequently a “black and white” approach to understanding things. This polarizing outlook causes a person with BPD to have extreme reactions to things that do not warrant said reaction. In a relationship, BPD causes incredibly high highs but

also incredibly low lows, perpetuating a cycle of emotional abuse. In relation to my play, the male character who is suffering from BPD will still be in contact with his ex-girlfriend, even though their relationship has always and still remains emotionally abusive.

While talking to Dr. Hotaling, an interesting point came up about people with BPD and conscious thought. We discussed at length how people with BPD have a hard time experiencing their own conscious thought, because often their inner monologue comes across as jumbled chaos. This chaos would have it make sense to not have the conscious mind on stage with the male character, to have his built personality stuck in this blank space pleading for any truth. Sadly, this person never gets an answer but occasionally from their own subconscious mind, leaving them with a feeling of emptiness and the thought that they are lost. Being lost causes the male character to grasp onto anything that feels real especially when it's with another person. Unfortunately, this other person gets caught in the whitewater of volatility of emotion dispensed from a person with BPD, and is often left abused in some way.

In a relationship, this imbalance of emotional power and stability makes the person who is "normal" begin to feel like they are not enough. They start to doubt themselves and find flaws in everything they are doing because their relationship lives on the two poles of good and bad. When the relationship is good, it feels like pure euphoria which contrasts perfectly with the utter despair felt when the relationship is bad. The contrast creates an addiction to the good times because the bad times feel like a withdrawal from the normal. Much of the time, the "normal" people in such relationships seek psychological help because they notice a problem, hence why one of

my characters would be a psychologist. The abused person wants to be fixed, but doesn't always realize that they aren't the issue. The abused person can't be fixed because they aren't suffering from a mental illness, even though sometimes they feel as though they are in a second hand sense. They are dealing with a self loathing egotist, which presents an impossible paradox, ultimately causing the people around them to slowly decay to a point of insanity, continually repeating the cycle but expecting a different result.

When talking to Dr. Hotaling, he was saying how relationships like these are very tricky to council. As a psychologist, it's hard to tell the person you are helping to "get out" of a toxic relationship because they actually enjoy much of the parts of the relationship they are in. He said, the internal dialogue a psychologist goes through is generally much different from what they say. Like any normal person it's paved with empathy and frustration often thinking "just get out!" but never being able to fully speak their mind. This often causes some self doubt and reflection, wondering if one is doing the right thing, when in fact one is in maintaining a good, healthy relationship with their patient. When talking to Dr. Hotaling, I learned it is hard to separate yourself from the person you are trying to help because in building a relationship with them, you want to help them more.

Overall, Dr. Hotaling, helped me greatly in defining how my characters would act and speak towards each other and towards themselves. These two "healthy" characters live a happy life that was taken over by one characters insecure mental health. By putting this on stage I think I will give an interesting insight into how emotionally abusive

relationships affect the mental health of all parties involved. This will also allow for a different perspective on how one's mind works through an incredibly difficult time.

Works Cited:

“Borderline Personality Disorder.” *National Institute of Mental Health*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,  
[www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/borderline-personality-disorder/index.shtml](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/borderline-personality-disorder/index.shtml).

Hotaling, Marcus. “Mental Health.”

## Content Paper

Throughout this paper I am going to describe the plot concepts of my play while also intertwining some of the playwriting strategies I have found in *The Blunt Playwright* by Clem Martini and *New Playwriting Strategies* by Paul C. Castagno. My play will explore the minds of four characters, all with different mental states. These four characters never interact directly, but are all interconnected by one character who is a symbolic representation of the conscious mind and one character who is the subconscious mind. During this paper I will show what the content of my play will be while supporting how I will write it.

One of the most important parts of a play is the development of plot, which is extracted from the story behind it. Story is the foundation of a play, and necessary for conflict and plot to progress organically. In my play, the story will be told by exploring the inner minds of the characters, and focusing on each individual's subjective experience with reality. While all of their individual lives are connected in some way, the audience only watches the story progress in the mind of each individual. Therefore the story is incredibly important and accounts for plot progression. For instance, the notion that story acts as the base for everything in a play is explained well by Martini, when he claims that “story is constructed upon, and only exists because of everything that happened prior. As the play slowly grows out from its base, it relies upon those roots for grounding, nourishment and support” (Martini, 65). Essentially, Martini’s argument that a play can grow organically from the background story is something that I



want to integrate into my play, because I find the interconnectedness of the past, present, and future to be interesting and relevant to human experience. Story is the foundation for everything that exists within the world of a play. In my play, the protagonist is a physical representation of a universal human consciousness; this character's story expands far beyond the four characters in the play, considering it is a broad and all encompassing phenomenon that is only expressed as human-like for the sake of clarity in the play. This character's story is built upon the beginning of morality, specifically the separation of what is instinctual from what is classified by society as morally and ethically "good." I want to challenge the widely accepted thought that "good" and "evil" exist independently of human beings, and question how morality is created, grows, and changes. This makes the plot of the play an infinitely small blip on the timeline of free thought. My main character will be widely knowledgeable because of this but in the same instance, misguided by the character that represents the subconscious mind.

While researching, I wanted to better define what could be classified as character, since I am thinking about playing around with personification and concepts as well as human character in my play. I came to the conclusion that character is anything that can independently provide conflict, action, or push the plot line of the play forward. Interestingly, I found that "characters may be unnamed or nonhuman" (Castagno 61), which is something I want to incorporate into my play. I want to create two important characters who are nonhuman and genderless, in order to provide a point of reference and insight into the human characters in the show. These two characters will reflect the

conscious and subconscious mind; therefore, in objective reality, being nothing more than a few neurotransmitters firing. These characters will look and dress human but will have the ability to change truths and memories in the minds of the other characters within the play, in turn manipulating the other character's personal realities. These manipulated memories cause conflict and visibly force the plot and story to progress.

One of the pieces I have been getting stuck on when thinking about my play is conflict. More specifically, how I am going to create conflict between characters if they are never speaking to each other. When characters have conflict, the story becomes more interesting. It adds a reason for the audience to watch because they want to see the conflict resolved. Conflict between characters will provide complexity to the plot, and will work to define characters in a three dimensional space, considering "character clash provides the play with a nonlinear dynamic that interrupts or aborts a trackable, traditional narrative within a representational system" (Castagno 69). I am interested in Castagno's idea of a "nonlinear dynamic" because often I find that the brain and inner reality of human beings is actually very far from fitting a linear timeline. The main reason most things are expressed chronologically is because that is the way human beings have unspokenly agreed to make sense out of the confusing and often contradictory events in life. The idea I had to create this clash of characters is to show that when conflict arises the internal mind is constantly fighting with itself. Especially when we look at mental illness, when any conflict arises, the ego and the superego are constantly fighting between doing the rational thing and doing what the body thinks it needs. By playing with the complexities of human consciousness and cognitive function, I am

deepening the conflict between each character and exposing it to the audience, even though the conflict is happening inside each of the characters own minds. For every normal character clash, my play will also explore the external and internal struggles that accompanies conflict.

Overall, throughout my play, I want to challenge the conventional way story, character, and conflict are seen. By adding an extra layer of perspective, the story becomes murky showing that one singular line of thought is not entirely correct, while calling attention to the reality of differing perception. Also, by adding this perspective, the characters can develop further because you are able to see into their heads to understand what they are thinking. This technique allows the conflict to branch out and reflect several different internal struggles, rather than focusing on the struggle of one individual person. My decision to challenge conventional storytelling in theater will change the way the story is told and perceived; this allows me to incorporate several identities into the characters, while making them more relatable and fostering a stronger connection with the audience.

#### Works Cited:

Castagno, Paul C. *New Playwriting Strategies: a Language Based Approach to Playwriting*. Routledge, 2001.

Martini, Clem. *The Blunt Playwright an Introduction to Playwriting*. Langara College, 2007.

## Self Evaluation

Through the process of directing *The North Pool* by Rajiv Joseph, I learned an extraordinary amount about myself as a director, especially because of the size of the cast. When I started off, I began blocking 10 page sections for every day we meet which meant I would be done blocking, or setting the movement patterns of the actors after the first week. After the first rehearsal, I realized that was going to be way too fast. I had to give the actors time to digest the piece and realize why they are doing the movements I am giving them and really give them the ability to move not only because I say to but also because it is natural for their character. So, after the first rehearsal, I decided to slow it down and block five pages at a time while also playing character games with them. We would do short improv scenes based on the text to make the actors feel what the characters are feeling in the moment. Overall, I felt like these short scenes gave them a good idea and structure for what the story of the play is, It allowed them to not only tell the story through text but also through backstory and feeling.

One of the biggest difficulties I faced through this process was not actually in the directing of the actors but figuring out how to really make the world they are in pop out from just being a set. I wanted to really give the audience a sense of the world the actors are living in. I think I achieved that, but it felt a bit rushed for me. One of my biggest faults is not being necessarily the most organized person, so I was attempting to get things done early like the set and props but I definitely could have gotten started on some of the bigger props, like the flute, much earlier in the term.

Throughout this, I also learned that as the director you expect actors to drop everything going on outside at the door but that doesn't always happen. Sometimes people have a rough day and just aren't feeling it so you have to stroke their egos a bit or attempt to make them feel better just so they can try and get some work done. I think it's an interesting role one has to play, organizing individuals who have had two completely different experiences throughout the day to feel the same feelings, or similar feelings at the end of it. This process has not only taught me a lot about what the stage looks like and how to create a piece that is interesting to an audience; but has also given me a lot of respect for the department, and the faculty that make these productions happen from term to term. It has given me the ability to recognize how fortunate and privileged I have been to work with these amazingly intelligent, understanding, and forward thinking faculty amongst the theatre and dance department here at Union.

Matt Mintz  
Script Analysis- *North Pool*

*The North Pool* is set in Sheffield Massachusetts, in a typical American public high school. The entirety of the show takes place on Friday, April 13, 2007. The play takes place during spring time, so it can be assumed that it is mildly warm but not too hot. Specifically, it is known that the meeting time between the two protagonists, and the start of what the audience witnesses, begins at 4 in the afternoon.

In terms of evaluating the economic environment, the most valued thing throughout this play is the memory of Lia Whinston, the student who committed suicide. She is the focal point of the show, uniting character, plot, and setting. A tangible example of Lia's value in the world of the play can be seen during the moment when a flute is taken out during the meeting between Khadim and Dr. Danielson. It is apparent that the flute holds considerable sentimental worth, considering Khadim bought her the flute when he was in love with Lia. When Dr. Danielson takes the flute out, Khadim immediately reacts in a defensive and emotional way, because the flute simultaneously represents his past happy memories of Lia as well as the overwhelming grief he feels now that she has passed away.

The political environment of the play can be seen through the power dynamic that exists between Dr. Danielson, a Vice Principal, and Khadim, a student. Inherently, the power dynamic between school administrator and student is unbalanced on many levels. For instance, Dr. Danielson is a legal adult and has access to more autonomy in comparison to Khadim, who is a minor and has much less life experience. Additionally, Dr. Danielson has the title of Vice Principal and "Dr." which illustrates his educational superiority and professional work experience, which are both things that lend him more power. Lastly, Dr. Danielson is a white

man while Khadim is of Middle Eastern descent, so there is a racial imbalance of privilege and power that needs to be taken into consideration throughout the play. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the play begins with Dr. Danielson taking complete control and asserting his dominance by making sure Khadim knows he is aware of all of Khadim's secrets. However, as Dr. Danielson attempts to unravel the secrets about Khadim's past, his family, and his relationship with Lia, Khadim begins to regain the power in the situation because he knows much more about the Vice Principal than once thought. At the end of the play, the power dynamic shifts, placing both characters on equal footing as they decide that Lia's death is both of their faults.

In terms of the social environment of the play, Khadim is more of an angst ridden delinquent and Dr. Danielson is seen to be a predator in the eyes of the students. At the school, there is an underlying sense of mistrust between students, and no real undercurrent of camaraderie or loyalty. A good example of this can be seen when Khadim's friend, Mike Dozier, tells Dr. Danielson that Khadim has drugs in his locker after he hosts a party. Mike is known to be an avid drug user, so his hypocritical decision to get Khadim in trouble is telling of the unpredictable and chaotic social environment of the high school. While characters have clearly defined stereotypes and roles to fulfill in the dynamic of the play, there is a considerable amount of grey area and overlap as well.

The religious equivalent of this play is the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. Both characters have a very literal "God is dead" outlook, as they have lost touch with their religion and only worship the memory of Lia. Although Khadim is Muslim, he feels alienated from society because he only focuses on the memory of Lia. In a similar way, Dr. Danielson worships only his job because he has nothing more to give his energy to since Lia is dead and his wife left him.

The previous action we are aware of is that Lia, a student who is close to Dr. Danielson, committed suicide. Their relationship is somewhat inappropriate, considering she tried to kiss him at one point. Dr. Danielson stops her, firmly tells her that her actions are inappropriate, and requests that she leave his office. Lia had a sex tape made of her getting brutally raped by a group of five male wrestlers. Since Dr. Danielson was a wrestler, he watches the tape multiple times to make sure that the perpetrators were not from Sheffield high school. The rumor behind why Dr. Danielson's wife left him is that she walked in on him while he was watching the tape. Khadim is seen as a foreigner and a delinquent; his parents live out of the United States in Riyadh, he smokes, got kicked out of school for selling rare birds inhumanely, and he was in love with Lia. He tried to set up Lia to make money by going to parties, but she was taken advantage of at these parties.

At the beginning of the play, Dr. Danielson is incredibly calculated and manipulative, with his one goal of trying to prove that Khadim is the reason for Lia's death motivating all of his actions. He says "I'm a numbers guy Khadim. I can't help it. When I was in high school I was embarrassed by it. Sometimes I'd pretend I didn't know the answer when I knew it. Sometimes it feels so awkward to be smart, to be precise" (Joseph, 9). In doing this Dr. Danielson attempts to assert his intellectual dominance over Khadim in order to break him down and admit that all of the blame of Lia's death falls on him.

However, by the end of the play, he re-evaluates and decides that the blame is truly shared equally between himself and Khadim, and begs for forgiveness. Speaking to Khadim, Dr. Danielson says ""I'm asking if you'd forgive me. Because no one else will. Would you do that?" (Joseph, 42). This request is a difficult thing for Dr. Danielson to realize and accept. More than anything, he wants to be able to avoid blaming himself; however, by actively trying to place the blame on Khadim he realizes that he is also at fault. By the end of the play, he comes full circle



as a dynamic character, accepts his faults, and swallows his pride to ask his student to forgive him.

In complete juxtaposition to Dr. Danielson, Khadim is motivated by his desire to leave the meeting and the school at the start of the play. He tells white lies in order to smooth over situations like leaving school early to smoke with Mike Dozier. He says "Everyone left school for the fire drill! I just went home. It was the last class of the day" (Joseph, 10). This only hurts him because Mike Dozier was in Dr. Danielson's office earlier and told him everything, which in turn exposes Khadim's lies. So when he continues to be questioned he reaches a breaking point where he no longer wants to leave and wants to show Dr. Danielson that he knows all of the terrible things he did. Khadim later says "She came to your office? What did you talk about? Huh? That must've been a great talk, man" (Joseph, 39). This references that the talk Dr. Danielson had with Lia somehow influenced her negatively and ultimately contributed to her decision to commit suicide. Additionally, there is slight sexual innuendo, and it hints at the fact that he made inappropriate sexual advances on Lia.

The characters dialogue also matches very well with the way their attitudes develop throughout the play. Khadim is very passive aggressive, at one point he calls Dr. Danielson's mother a whore in Spanish. Khadim speaks five languages but speaks English in a very proper way. He has no dialect but puts accents on words that need it for proper pronunciation. This passive aggressive, educated way of speaking goes well with how he wants to leave and then his emotional snap mid way through the play. Interestingly enough, Dr. Danielson is less proper in his English. In fact, Dr. Danielson is slightly racist and conservative in his views. His speech is very calculated and reserved, however, he does slip up and swear occasionally. He feels the need to keep up appearances with the students, which in turn creates a weird tension between

the two of them because neither are speaking in the natural way they would amongst friends or people they were comfortable around.

These characters have various wants and needs, but in the play itself they each have one fundamental need. Dr. Danielson wants to relieve his conscience of the recent death that has occurred. Khadim only wants to forget that he knew Lia and what he did to her. Along with both characters not fully understanding the wants and needs of the other, the title describes this disconnect from the deeper meaning rooted under the surface of each character. Dr. Danielson sums up this desperate clawing for information with two philosophical statements. He says "The world is unfair. Life is unfair" (Joseph, 27) and "Perception becomes reality. The onion is still the onion, no matter how many layers you peel off" (Joseph, 23). Overall, *The North Pool* is filled with buried lies, secrets, and fears that dig their way into the scene until everything is left out on the table.

## Spring Thesis Proposal

As a senior Theatre Major, I have had the ability to act, produce, and work on many shows at Union. However, the one thing I have never been able to do so far is direct my own piece of work. While working on writing my own play last winter term, I found myself focusing on the many complexities, intricacies, and struggles of human communication as seen through romantic relationships. Specifically, my play explored the difficulty of communicating with someone who suffers from mental illness, and who exists in a reality that is built upon skewed perception and lies. Therefore, since my passion and academic interests lie with this topic, I wanted to find a play that explored something similar to direct in the spring. The play I have chosen to work on is *The North Pool* by Rajiv Joseph, which explores how a web of lies between a vice principal and a student lead them to uncover many complexities in each others lives. This analysis of identity and manipulation of truth is something I have always wanted to concentrate on, because I find it brings forth very interesting character development and richness of plot.

Over the next term, I will write a script analysis detailing all of the complexities in the play and mapping out the ways it could be interpreted. After this, I will write a paper that chooses the direction I want to head in with this play, which will be a directors concept for what I want the audience to feel and think when watching and what the story behind the plot is so that I can direct the characters in a way that enhances that story. Throughout this process, I want to create a piece of work that not only explores

perspective, truths and lies, and an interesting power dynamic between characters, but what people can trust in their own lives and make them question if they really “know” a person.

Throughout the process, I will have a feedback committee of two professors and two peers get together to review my work. Currently, I am going to have a stage manager and an assistant stage manager to make sure I can have one at all rehearsal times. Angel Flores will be doing costumes and Aidan Murphy will be doing lights.

Calendar:

Week 1: Pick show and make auditions sheets and email.

Week 2: Auditions 4/9 and 4/10, cast show and have first read through.

Week 3: Script Analysis due end of week three. Decide on what the set will be. Begin blocking.

Week 4: Directors Guideline due by the end of week four. Finish blocking.

Week 5: Feedback committee. Scene work

Week 6: Scene work. Soft off book is end of week six.

Week 7: Feedback committee. Scene work.

Week 8: Scene work. End of week 8 is hard off book.

Week 9: Scene work.

Week 10: Tech and Show!

Matt Mintz  
Senior Project Proposal

As a theatre major, the creation of art is incredibly important. Throughout my experience at Union, one of my main goals has been to make art. To me, art is not only a form of distilled human expression, but it can also be used as an effective tool to show subjective opinion, share experience, and educate the people who choose to engage with a piece. Specifically, theater creates a semi permeable barrier between artist and audience, and performance takes this one step further to craft an intricate dialogue where change is possible by shifting the way people view controversial issues. Writing and producing a thesis at Union is a tremendous honor, and I want to make sure I use the artistic power and influence that accompanies creativity to breathe life into something that can affect people and change the world positively. Through my thesis I want to highlight the need for better mental health standards as well as a collective responsibility for human well being.

I began my Union College journey as an engineer, because I was interested in discovering how things worked by breaking them down to their most fundamental states in order to gain insight into their mechanics. However, I quickly found out that engineering was not an optimal vehicle to achieve my ultimate goal of thinking differently, creatively, and in a manner that encourages large-scale problem solving. Making a drastic change in majors opened up a whole new perspective for me the winter of my freshman year; pursuing theater as an academic discipline and as a passion allowed me to approach countless relevant problems, topics, and the human condition in a creative way, all while constantly pushing me out of my comfort zone and forcing me to learn how to adapt. By taking this leap of faith, I came to realize that it was not

things I was interested in figuring out, but rather people. As a theater major, I actively work on a daily basis to deconstruct human interaction, human motivation, and human relationships in order to evoke positive change on our man-made society and the world at large. Over the past four years, theater has come to be a part of who I am, a trusted route of thinking, and a way of life. Coming full circle and setting out on my last year at Union, I want to give people the same thing that theater gave me: the opportunity to better understand who they are through art.

In terms of my project specifically, I will be writing a full play in winter term and producing/acting in the play after the piece is complete in spring term. Throughout winter term, the term this proposal is for, I will be writing, researching, thinking, and collaborating by reading plays, reading secondary sources, and watching documentaries and films in order to better my writing. With reading and watching these pieces I will write short reviews on each to describe what I am taking away from them. In the piece I am writing, I want to emphasize the often imperceptible flux from realism into absurdism. I will strive to use theater to show how often times people categorize things as Absolute Truths when in fact these things are all relative and rooted in subjectivity and personal experience. By exploring the notion of “truth” I want to change how I think and how others think by engaging with the creative process of making something from nothing, but also by communicating a cohesive plotline to the audience.

One film that influenced me greatly is *Mr Nobody*, by Belgian director Jaco Vandormael. The absurdist film explored every choice we make through an identity-less character who remembers everything despite whether he made the choice to do something or not. The film is presented as incredibly real, tangible, and authentic, while simultaneously exploring the absurd concept of human choice and time. In reality, this film showed me that my ultimate goal of

synthesizing the real with the absurd is possible and is achievable through film and theater. Additionally, one playwright who has influenced me is Sam Shepard, specifically with *Cowboys #2*. This show influenced me to write with a certain amount of incredibly specific ambiguity, causing my play to have a very specific plotline that can also be interpreted very differently by each audience member depending on his or her personal experiences. Lastly, the two other people who stand out and influenced me to think in a different way I met at Union. Nathan Singer and Christina Belforti both separately allowed me to see perspective clearer than I have ever before through their writings and the art they have made. For my thesis in particular, the ability to perceive, manipulate, and develop perspective is essential considering this is how I will grow character and make the plotline intricate and also influential.

In terms of plot, this play is about how society is not often set up to encourage success, happiness, or the mental health of human beings. In fact, I argue that the danger of living a complacent life and not questioning reality constantly causes people to slowly diverge away from humanity based on the external world. With my characters, I will explore how some people cannot handle a selfless existence, and how other individuals cannot handle the world they are born into, therefore sending them into a downward spiral towards mental illness. I will also try to explore how the more we try to suppress our humanity, the more we regress towards primal behavior. Some lofty goals I have for myself are exploring mental health, societal norms and the way that people follow made up rules that hurt a lot of people and don't always help (even though the rules are put in place to guide society). Considering the recent political atmosphere, the misguided gun control debate, and other related and seemingly preventable tragedies our

world faces today, I hope to ultimately provide a commentary about the need for higher mental health standards as well as a collective responsibility for human well being.

**Tentative Calendar for Winter Term:**

Week one: Cutting scenes, Outlining one new scene. Finish reviews.

Week two: Finish outlining new scenes. Finalize reading committee.

Week three: Write half of the newly outlined scenes.

Week four: Finish the other half of the scenes to have a rough draft.

Week five: Continue editing and adding to draft.

Week six: Continue editing and adding to draft.

Week seven: Have a read through of the rough draft and be given notes.

Week eight: Do the first revision and finish second draft.

Week nine: Have a second reading with notes.

Week ten: Finish editing and have a final draft completed.