

Bandeau anonymat

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Alan Ayckbourn - Absurd Person Singular
2. How does Ayckbourn dramatise the fragility of communication?

In Absurd Person Singular, Alan Ayckbourn depicts three couples that hardly manage to communicate. Between and within couples, communication is fragile due to self-centered characters which results to hypocrisy and misunderstandings, picturing the 70s British society and its flaws.

Communication is shown to be fragile in Absurd Person Singular especially throughout misunderstandings which pour through the play thus creating comedy but also enabling Ayckbourn to depict the absurdity of human relations.

What is the most striking example of misunderstanding is the suicide attempts of Eva which nobody reacts to. In Act 2, Eva starts by going to the window before being brought down by Geoffrey and does the same with a knife. Geoffrey leaves to go get the doctor and Eva is left in the kitchen. Though there are four characters in one single kitchen by

the end of the act, none of them is able to understand what Eva is trying to do.

When Eva puts her head in the oven to kill herself, this echoes with Jane's cleaning obsession who therefore proposes to clean the oven for her, understanding that "urge" that she gets "to clean that often if it kills [her]". Therefore, each time Eva tries to suicide and that it fails, other characters rush to help her such as Sidney trying to unblock the sink after Eva has dropped pills in it. The lack of communication is always highlighted by the characters wanting to help without understanding the real problem almost like it was to give them a good reputation. This is illustrated by Sidney picking up one of Eva's suicide notes and asking "nothing vital, is it?" then drawing on the back without even having waited for her answer. Thus, Act 2 by staging the inability of characters to catch a major problem shows the fragility of communication ironically contrasting with Jane saying "It's at time like this you're glad of your friends".

Another meaningful misunderstanding occurs when the 3 men are found talking about Lottie Potter in the kitchen of the Hoppers in Act 1. Sidney's lower social class

contrasts with Ronald and Geoffrey's upper class.

Indeed what seems to be a "locker room talk" enables the audience to see Sidney's strong efforts to keep up with the others while he doesn't understand what's going

on. When Geoffrey discusses the appearance of Lottie's thighs, Sidney reproduces his movement by tapping his thighs as well. Though Sidney seems lost in this meaningless conversation, he continues on pretending showing the emptiness of language. He laughs when they laugh without knowing why and this makes it absurd and awkward.

Fragility of communication is also shown through appearances and hypocrisy which tend to hide the truth thus challenging dialogue.

In Act 3, we are found to be in the Brewster-Wrights' kitchen, the supposed very rich couple. However through the first lines, what we know about this couple and what is shown about this couple is totally different. Indeed, characters are dressed up as if they were outside wearing scarf, gloves, etc., -- in fact, the heater is off. Therefore, Ronald spends very much the evening to justify himself about this. He laughs about it, wonders if it's "dust on the table or frost" to make the situation more light. However, this only emphasize the contrast between his rank and his actual situation as the audience clearly understands what's going on. This creates dramatic irony by highlighting the fragility of communication through Ronald's sayings that nobody believe in. Further in the act, Marion, drunk, will confirm us that it's

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Ronald who "turned all the heating off". When it comes to appearances, there is no room for sincere and meaningful communication. This is illustrated through Act 3 when the Hopcrofts come and propose a game: musical forfeits. Geoffrey is reluctant and begins arguing. His wife Eva cuts him short by saying "If they want to play, we'll play" leaving no space for arguments. This pattern is also shown through Act 1 at the Hopcrofts'. By the end, once all characters have left, Sidney and Jane are having a discussion about this first Christmas at their place. On the one hand, Sidney who affirms that "all went off rather satisfactorily anyway". This contrasts with Jane who has more or less spend the whole evening waiting outside in the rain for her husband to open the back door because he didn't want people to see her in wellington boots and winter coat. However Jane doesn't say anything because on the appearance everything looked good and

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that's the only ^{thing} ~~think~~ that counts. This shows how fragile communication is when it comes to pretending.

Overall, communication in Absurd Person Singular is weak. It both lacks interest for others leading to misunderstandings but also bears too much interest for one's appearance leading to hypocrisy.

Crow
2. Discuss the ways in which Crow challenges common understanding of good and evil.

In Crow, Ted Hughes does not give moral lessons but let the reader deal with what is good and what is evil leading to numerous interpretations of the collection but only one truth: ours, thus creating ambiguity.

First of all, Ted Hughes blurs the line between good and evil through new innovative myths. In "A Childish Prank", which is a rewriting of the genesis, it is difficult to get whether Crow is planning to do good or bad.