Claremont Colleges
Scholarship @ Claremont

Scripps Senior Theses | Scripps Student Scholarship

2012

Power and Relationships in the Plays of Neil LaBute: Directing and Performing in Some Girl(s)

Mary Peyton Griffith
Scripps College

Recommended Citation
Griffith, Mary Peyton, "Power and Relationships in the Plays of Neil LaBute: Directing and Performing in Some Girl(s)" (2012). *Scripps Senior Theses.* Paper 112.
http://scholarship.claremont.edu/scripps_theses/112

This Open Access Senior Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Scripps Student Scholarship at Scholarship @ Claremont. It has been accepted for inclusion in Scripps Senior Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholarship @ Claremont. For more information, please contact scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu.

POWER AND RELATIONSHIPS IN THE PLAYS OF NEIL LABUTE:

DIRECTING AND PERFORMING IN *SOME GIRL(S)*

by

MARY PEYTON GRIFFITH

SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS

PROFESSOR ARTHUR HOROWITZ
PROFESSOR ANNE HARLEY

APRIL 25, 2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Neil LaBute: Life and Work 2-42

1. Introduction 3

2. Early Life 4-6

3. Early Work 7-13

4. Middle Period 14-35

5. Later Work 36-43

II. Production: *Some Girl(s)* 44-91

6. Why *Some Girl(s)?* 45-47

7. Diary 48-62

8. Guy's Biography 63-68

9. Sam's Biography 69-72

10. Tyler's Biography 73-83

11. Lindsay's Biography 84-86

12. Bobbi's Biography 87-88

13. Music 89

14. Program Notes 90

15. Self-Evaluation 91

III. Works Cited 92-94

NEIL LABUTE: Life and Work

INTRODUCTION

Neil LaBute is one of the most prolific playwrights in contemporary theatre, and one of the most divisive. His plays and films have caused him to be labeled a misogynist and a misanthrope, as he never fails to reveal humans at their absolute worst.

However, such labeling leads to the question of whether or not a playwright is misogynistic or misanthropic just because his or her characters are. I would personally argue that the playwright's life certainly affects his or her writing, but the attitudes of characters are not necessarily the attitudes of their author. Furthermore, LaBute examines many different types of characters and finds faults with all of them. If anything, his work serves as a catalyst for discussion about human behavior in general.

In writing my thesis and acting and directing in my production of *Some Girl(s)*, I have had the opportunity to delve deeper into LaBute's work than most do, and have found that, while it is far from flawless, it is thought provoking. I have had discussion upon discussion with my actors and audience members about LaBute's work, leading me to believe that anyone who is so divisive actually provides a much-needed service to a society. As I wrote in my director's note, if nothing is ever questioned, then nothing is ever changed. And LaBute uses his power as a writer to provoke and question contemporary American life as he views it. Therefore, the issue becomes, not whether or not he is offensive, but if that offensiveness is useful.

The fact that we are discussing the attitudes in his writing at all proves not only the usefulness of LaBute's work, but also its importance and power.

EARLY LIFE

"My father would have found the Nazis soft" is hardly the voice of one who was raised in the idyllic, American life portrayed in a Norman Rockwell painting.[1] But playwright Neil LaBute, who was born in Detroit on March 19th, 1963, did not experience the type of childhood that would be looked back on with a sense of glorified nostalgia; instead, he faced a difficult family life.[2] Growing up in a rural area near Spokane, Washington, LaBute has said that his father, Richard, "was unpredictable." LaBute continues, "He would occasionally be violent to myself, or my [older] brother, or even my mother."[3] [4]

Therefore, LaBute was relieved whenever his father was away, as his job as a truck driver often required him to be. He and his family feared his father's "natural bad temper" and his mood fluctuations, which often manifested in verbal cruelty.[5] LaBute remembers that he always was scared of his father's return from the road because he would not "know...what mood he'd come back in" and he would have to closely watch his father to be certain he would not miss any warning signs of violence.[6] The effects of such daunting and erratic violence caused the childhood LaBute to "get a sense of betrayal that [he could not] put specifics to" from the man who was supposed to protect and support him.[7]

Yet, his difficult childhood led LaBute to analyze the world around him in great detail, especially the wrongdoings people commit that hurt others:

---

[1]Hunter, Jeffrey W. "Neil LaBute." *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Vol. 225. Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2006. p211-241.
[2] Bigsby, Christopher. *Neil LaBute: Stage and Cinema*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. p. 3.
[3] Bigsby, p. 236
[4]Jordan, Pat. "Neil LaBute Has a Thing About Beauty." *The Times Magazine*; March 29th, 2009.
[5]Bigsby, p. 236
[6] Ibid, p. 3
[7] Ibid.

> Over the course of my youth...I know that I was instilled with a certain moral sense, a code of right and wrong, and a healthy interest in sin - not in committing it, necessarily, but the very idea of it - that has lasted to this day....I [am] dedicated to studying the limits of this behavior and what makes it happen, why we choose good or evil and whether it really matters if no one but ourselves knows we've done it.[8]

When it came time for LaBute to attend college, he decided on Brigham Young University in Utah where he received a scholarship reserved for non-Mormon students and would be at least a state away from his father.[9] Even as a college writer, LaBute was met with controversy: his dark work was often banned from being performed by the school administration. For instance, "in order to prevent the staging of his play *Lepers*,...the administration locked up the theatre."[10] LaBute circumvented the administration by performing plays in found spaces.

However, in a surprising decision for someone who constantly provoked the community around him, LaBute converted to Mormonism while at BYU.[11] In 1985, LaBute married Lisa Gore, "a devout Mormon" and eventually the woman with whom he would have two children.[12] LaBute's dark writing later caused a separation between him and his wife and a brief estrangement from his children in the 2000s.[13] LaBute has said that Mormonism was "opposed to the way [he] was brought up," which proved to be its attraction for a man who did not feel like part of a healthy, loving family but still desired a strong sense of community.[14] He was later "disfellowshipped" by the Mormon elders when

---

[8] LaBute, Neil. *The Break of Noon*. New York: Soft Skull Press, 2010. p. ix-x.
[9] Bigsby, p. 4
[10] Ibid, p. 6
[11] Ibid, p. 4
[12] Ibid
[13] Jordan, Pat
[14] Bigsby, p. 5

his play *bash: latter day plays*, a series of monologues depicting Mormons performing monstrous acts of violence, premiered in 2001.

Christopher Bigsby writes that after graduating from BYU and spending a year in New York City, LaBute attended the University of Kansas for his master's degree from 1986-1989. Then LaBute went to New York University, where he graduated in 1991 with an MFA in Dramatic Writing. His MFA experience included a semester abroad at the Royal Court Theatre in London, a theatre known for producing provoking plays. LaBute returned to BYU to start a Ph.D., but he never completed his coursework.[15]

[15] Ibid, p. 4-5

EARLY WORK

After his formal education stopped, "LaBute worked in psychiatric hospitals and taught, all the while continuing to write and place his plays."[16] LaBute's first professional production was *Filthy Talk for Troubled Times: Scenes of Intolerance,* which opened off-off-Broadway in 1992. LaBute wrote, acted in, and directed the performance.[17] He later noted that *Filthy Talk for Troubled Times* includes "many of the same themes that [he] continue[s] to write about today - betrayal, gender politics, the isolation of the individual even in close-knit groups, the numbing death that is the workplace, etc."[18] In addition, *Filthy Talk* dealt with the controversial topics that later made LaBute known. One audience member was so incensed in watching a monologue about AIDS that he yelled, "Kill the playwright!"[19]

Filthy Talk for Troubled Times takes place in a "local topless bar (out near the airport)" and features five men and two cocktail waitresses, all of whom are either in their twenties or thirties.[20] The play includes both scenes and monologues dealing with everything from prostitution to relationships to attitudes about homosexuality. As one would now expect from a Neil LaBute play, especially one that garnered such an outburst as was mentioned above, the discussions had by the characters paint them as selfish and often cruel. For instance, the opening scene features lines like:

> I mean, I don't expect anything for buying dinner, springing for a movie, shit like that...But some chick, she lets me in the front door? Then hey, I figure it's open season...Otherwise she's a tease, right? Now, I can see making clear on the porch she's a prude bitch, doesn't go in for all the humping and what have you - in fact, I

[16] Ibid, p. 8
[17] Ibid, p. 9-10
[18] LaBute, Neil. *Filthy Talk for Troubled Times and Other Plays.* New York: Soft Skull Press, 2010. p. xi-xii.
[19] Ibid, p. xii
[20] Ibid, p. 3

> kinda admire that - then it's a handshake and 'I will see you soon.' Fine...I never call the gash again so long as I live, but fine...But if it's over on the couch...Fuck it, the bitch is mine...The way I see it...she opens one door, she opens 'em all.[21]

The women also desire distance from men. One of the waitresses tells her co-worker that she is "happy to get off with some guy right away…but [she is] not gonna be his fucking psychologist." She continues to reason, "Why should I? What'd he ever do for me?"[22] She wants sex but not emotional intimacy, which she views as a chore or burden rather than a facet of a healthy relationship; but she laments the fact that she does not have good communication with others in her life, meaning she is posing as her own obstacle.[23]

LaBute does not mince words when he explains sex in *Filthy Talk*, either. One of the waitresses explains her dissatisfaction with her sex life:

> All this crap about men are trying to be more caring…bullshit!...You can lick 'em until you start to black out, it'd still take a court order to get them down on you. Instead, you're treated to thirty, maybe forty seconds of tit massage…a couple minutes of clumsy humping in some god-awful position – his choice, always…[24]

The waitress bemoans her lack of power in her sexual relationships. According to her, the man has the choice of position and, apparently, all of the satisfaction. Yet the men are ignorant of this, if Man 4's admission that his "women orgasm *every* fucking time" is any indication.[25] This declaration then leads to the question whether men are ignorant regarding women's sexual satisfaction because they are not paying attention or because women are not communicating enough with men.

---

[21] Ibid, p. 6
[22] Ibid, p. 33
[23] Ibid, p. 14-15
[24] Ibid, p. 40
[25] Ibid

In *Filthy* Talk, men and women who should be emotionally and sexually satisfied and connected are not. What connects them is that they share the same place and language. Both sexes speak crudely in order to illustrate their ideas. Jody Handerson writes that LaBute's profanity is "like a scalpel, carving away layers of propriety to expose the raw, oft-unsightly, emotion beneath the character's actions and thoughts. Ripe language becomes the common denominator, the cathartic vehicle, the them-us link."[26] To skirt around the language would diminish the play's impact. There is a message in the play; it might not be neatly wrapped up or displayed in an obvious moral at the end, but there is a message nonetheless about the need of both men and women to examine themselves and their roles in romantic and sexual relationships, lest they become one of the unhappy and lonely men or women at the topless bar.

LaBute's next major project was his 1997 movie *In the Company of Men*. The film follows two recently dumped male businessmen, Chad and Howard, who both seduce and dump a deaf, beautiful secretary in the firm in which they work in order to avenge themselves upon all women.[27] They both go on dates with Christine, who later admits to Chad that she has fallen in love with him. Howard realizes he loves Christine and tells her about the plan. When Christine confronts Chad, he tells her, "I was gonna try and let you down easy, but I can't keep a straight face…so, fuck it. Surprise."[28] When they return home, Howard discovers that Chad's girlfriend, who is sleeping soundly in Chad's apartment, never broke up with Chad in the first place. Howard, it turns out, has been as much a pawn

[26] Handerson, Jody. "Filthy Talk for Troubled Times: and Other Plays." *Literary Review*. Madison: Summer 2010. Vol. 53, Iss. 4; pg. 199, 5 pgs.
[27] LaBute, Neil. *In the Company of Men*. Boston: Faber and Faber, 1997.
[28] Ibid, p. 80

in Chad's game as Christine was, in Chad's personal and business related schemes: the final scene informs us that Howard's office has been moved to a lower floor while Chad works on an important presentation.[29]

In one telling scene, Chad makes a young, black company intern show him his testicles in order to prove he has the "balls" for the business world.[30] As Chad explains, he sees business as "who's sporting the nastiest sac of venom. And who is willing to use it." [31] Business, in Chad's world, is not only a game; but it is a game where the person most associated with traditional masculinity wins. Any weakness, such as the emotion Howard feels towards Christine or Christine feels towards Chad, is feminine and jeopardizes one's career.

LaBute's film shows masculinity as business-oriented, selfish, cruel, and strong, a potent view that mirrors the self-centered men in *Filthy Talk*. Furthermore, he is critical of the corporate, American world as a dehumanizing force. While Chad and attractive white men like him rise to the top, other people are crushed. Bigsby notes: "One nation indivisible was exposed [in *In the Company of* Men] as divided along lines of gender and race, a young black man being as casually humiliated as a vulnerable young woman."[32]

Like *Filthy Talk*, *In the Company of Men* caused its audiences major moral discomfort. John Istel, for instance, writes that, while watching the film, "You laugh, you shiver and, particularly if you're female, you get pissed off."[33] Jennifer Egan further

---

[29] Ibid, p. 82
[30] Ibid, p.63-5
[31] Ibid, p. 64
[32] Bigsby, p. 10
[33] *Contemporary Literary Criticism,* p. 218

illustrated this audience disgust when she wrote that "the misogyny of LaBute's characters was stomach-turning," made even more so by the fact that as a female audience member, she is closer to being Christine than Chad or Howard.[34] Moreover, Istel writes that "[t]here were reports that one woman who attended a screening confronted actor Aaron Eckhart, LaBute's former college roommate who plays…[*In the Company of Men*'s] central cad, and slapped his face."[35]

Yet critics found much to admire in the film. Sue Sorensen sees "[LaBute's] strength [in] structure and social criticism."[36] This social criticism that Sorensen mentions is conveyed through the harshness of Chad and Howard and therefore has an impact on its audience. Besides, LaBute's "screenplay…shows a firm grasp of the dangers and capabilities of language."[37] Like LaBute's father used words to hurt his family, Chad uses words to hurt those around him. Words, Sorensen notes, hold power that can be manipulated in order to cause pain in others' lives or write a screenplay that angers its audience.

Your Friends and Neighbors, a film that was released in 1998, also examines what Drew Limsky refers to as a "vision...of romantic warfare, a kind of sexual Darwinism in which few survive with their psyches intact."[38] *Your Friends and Neighbors* deals with the sexual relationships and power dynamics between friends that become more and more difficult as their cruelty to one another escalates.

---

[34] Ibid, p. 235
[35] Ibid, p. 218
[36] Ibid, p. 237
[37] Ibid, p. 239
[38] Ibid, p. 214

Again, themes of sexism and selfishness permeate the piece and are suggested to be commonplace in human life, as the title infers that "your friends and neighbors" act in the way the film's characters act. Most startling in his cruelty is Cary. Cary humiliates the women with whom he has sex in a vicious manner; in one scene, he yells at a woman who realizes that she is menstruating right before they were going to have sex. Cary responds by ranting at her and telling her to "try shoving two aspirins up [her] crack and never, ever, fucking call [him] in the morning."[39] In another scene, he confides to his friends, Barry and Jerry, that the best sex he ever had was when he and three other boys raped a male classmate in the gym locker room during their senior year of high school. Cary tells his friends that sex has "never been like that with a woman...as many as [he] fuck[s]."[40]

One striking part of the movie is that "[t]he men...prefer...masturbation which has the advantage of requiring no reciprocity [to sex with a woman]...[W]omen are disruptive" to the men around them rather than parts of healthy romantic relationships.[41] This fact is evidenced when Barry tells his co-worker, "Nobody gives me more pleasure than I give myself."[42] Barry's wife, Mary, then starts an affair with their friend Jerry. Jerry is living with his girlfriend, Terri, who cheats on him with the also-rhyming Cheri. At the end of the movie, Barry and Mary have separated, as have Jerry and Terri. The final scene shows Mary in Cary's bed, wanting comfort from a man who is too selfish to provide it.

Not only are the characters divided between men and women; all relationships between people are questioned and have the ability to cause someone else pain. Jerry

---

[39] LaBute, Neil. *Your Friends and Neighbors*. London: Faber and Faber, 1998. p. 67.
[40] Ibid, p. 58
[41] Bigsby, p.65
[42] LaBute, Neil. *Your Friends and Neighbors*. p. 8

hurts Barry by having an affair with Mary, and Cary's callousness hurt the boy he raped in high school. In *Your Friends and Neighbors*, the problems stem from the cruelty and selfishness of both men and women.

MIDDLE PERIOD

bash: latter day plays opened in 1999. The work contains three separate acts: *iphigenia in orem*, *a gaggle of saints*, and *medea redux*. *iphigenia in orem* is a monologue relayed by a man to a single unseen listener in a hotel room. He starts by saying that he picked the unseen character to hear his story because he "figured [he or she]'d be a great listener, that [he or she] wouldn't mind if [he] told [him or her] all this…"[43]

He then says that he and his wife had a five-month-old girl who had been sleeping in their bed and got smothered in the sheets. The man continues by telling the listener that, at the time of his daughter's death, the office where he works was having layoffs. He got a phone call from "a guy from school" telling him that he was going to be one of the people laid off. He went home, in a daze, and heard his daughter in the bed in the next room. He went in to check on her and saw her under the covers. He continues, "[I] realized that's what this was. [A]n opportunity, and [I] wasn't going to waste it…[I] just kind of coaxed her down a bit…then [I] dropped the covers back and walked out…"[44].

He explains that he "took…this calculated risk for [his] family that this whole episode would play out in [their] favor, give [him] that little edge at work," and stop him from being laid off.[45] The man even blames his daughter's death on fate, "just the whimsy of a lingering red light or a prolonged chat with one of [the] neighbors in the produce aisle."[46] He explains that, had his wife come into the house sooner, their daughter would have been alive; therefore, his daughter was subject to destiny rather than his actions. The

[43] LaBute, Neil. *bash: three plays*. New York: Overlook Press, 2010. p. 14
[44] Ibid, p. 27
[45] Ibid
[46] Ibid

man kept his job and even had another baby with his wife. Months later, he discovered that the call from his friend was a prank and he was never going to be fired. All the man says about the prank that led to him murdering his daughter is, "he'd gotten me, alright, he got me good, just like the old days."[47] The man only sees the murder of his child as a "good" prank and his daughter as a sacrificial victim to his own happiness, like the mythological Iphigenia was to her father.

a gaggle of saints is a two-person scene spoken by John and Sue, a couple who both attend Boston College but have known each other from high school. While they sit next to each other on stage, they do not interact with one another, a significant choice that divides man from woman despite their romantic relationship. They tell the audience about a party in Manhattan that they went to with their "old youth group."[48] The day of the party also happened to be their four-year anniversary, and they recount the first time they became interested in each other. They were running together on the track when Sue's ex-boyfriend, who had left the church, came to drive Sue home.[49] John was confronted by the ex-boyfriend and, in response, "flipped him over onto the ground and started pounding on his head."[50] Then he walked her home and their relationship began, with Sue being apparently unfazed by the violence that John had just committed.

At the time of the scene, Sue even tells the audience that they are "getting engaged this summer, [they] already planned it."[51] After spending some time at the dance, John

[47] Ibid, p. 29
[48] Ibid, p. 35
[49] Ibid, p. 46-7
[50] Ibid, p. 49
[51] Ibid, 50

went to the park with some other boys while Sue and her friends went up to the hotel room to take a nap. At the park, John saw "two men… kissing like something out of a…film."[52] He continues, "[I] know the [S]criptures…and this is wrong."[53] John followed one of the men to the restroom and let the man kiss him before he whistled to his friends to come in the restroom. They all proceeded to beat the man "long after he…[had] blacked out."[54] They beat him to death and John stole the man's gold pinkie ring before one of the other boys "start[ed] offering up a short eulogy…and halfway through…[they] all start[ed] giggling."[55] John gave then Sue the ring as an anniversary present.

The final play, *medea redux*, is a monologue given by a woman who is being interviewed at a police station. As she smokes, she relays the story of the romantic relationship she had with a teacher when she was thirteen. The relationship eventually led to her getting pregnant. She refused to tell anyone that her teacher was the father and he left his job at her school without telling her. She had the baby. Fourteen years later, she drove with her son, Billie, to meet his father. When she sees him with Billie, she realizes that "he loved this boy."[56] Furthermore, "he was satisfied…because he'd gotten away with it all…he'd beaten fate."[57] When the man leaves, the woman kills her son by dropping a tape recorder into the bathtub while he is in it. The monologue ends with the woman explaining that she can get through the hardship of her son's death and prison by imagining her former teacher:

---

[52] Ibid, 60
[53] Ibid
[54] Ibid, p. 63
[55] Ibid, p. 64
[56] Ibid, p. 91
[57] Ibid, p. 92

> [H]e's just stumbling there by himself…can't be consoled, right, the truth all spilled out now like it is, and all these tears running down, yelling up at the sky, these torrents of tears and screaming, the top of his lungs, calling up into the universe, 'why? why?!!' over and over…but you know what? [I]n my fantasy, there's never an answer…[58]

Like the classical figure of Medea and the man in *iphigenia in orem*, children are a pawn used by the parents to further their careers or wishes; children are not seen by their parents as individuals, only an extension of themselves. Of course, another message of the plays is that, as Mark Steyn states, "damaged children become damaged adults" and part of that damage, in the case of John and Sue, are the teachings of the Mormon Church.[59]

All characters are either Mormon or involved with Mormonism, which caused the Church of Latter-day Saints to "disfellowship" LaBute. "Disfellowship," Bigsby writes, "strips the individual of the right to attend temple, serve a Church calling, give talks, take the sacrament or offer public prayers."[60] In response, LaBute edited the play from referencing Mormons, even going so far as to remove the subtitle.[61] Yet he never really returned to the Church and by 2009, he no longer considered himself to be a Mormon.[62] He later protested that he never viewed the behavior of the characters in *bash* to be unique to Mormons; instead, he had had experience with Mormonism and therefore felt confident he could write about it.[63]

LaBute's next play, 2001's *The Shape of Things*, tells the story of Adam, a college student with little regard for his appearance, and his subsequent seduction by a beautiful

---

[58] Ibid, p. 94
[59] Steyn, Mark. "Medea Redux." *The New Criterion*: Sep. 1999, Vol. 18, No1 p. 38-42.
[60] Bigsby, p. 27
[61] Ibid
[62] Jordan, Pat.
[63] Bigsby, p. 249

art student, Evelyn. Evelyn convinces him to change his appearance and lifestyle, including persuading him to get rhinoplasty. Adam begins feeling more confident and notices that other girls, including his best friend Phillip's fiancée, Jenny, find him attractive. When he and Jenny are alone, Adam even kisses her, despite their respective romantic relationships. Adam soon leaves his other friends because Evelyn tells him to do so after discovering that Adam kissed Jenny. Then Evelyn presents her data on him as her art project in a public forum, humiliating him, and leaves him.[64]

The Shape of Things has been compared to Pygmalion and Frankenstein, as both, like *The Shape of Things*, are about an extreme makeover of a vulnerable subject.[65] [66] Of course, the telling difference between those stories and LaBute's play is that a woman has the power. Evelyn uses her intelligence, magnetism, and sexuality to convince Adam to change himself. Even he tells her that she is "dangerously close to owning" him.[67] His friends notice: Jenny asks Adam, "[W]hat is that girl doing to you?" when she notices that Adam has stopped wearing glasses and started wearing contacts and Phillip asks, "[W]hat is going on with the 'metaphorphosis thing here? [Y]ou're like [F]rankenstein" when he sees that Adam has changed his clothing, stopped biting his nails, has lost weight, changed his hair, stopped wearing glasses, and has a bandage on his nose from the rhinoplasty.[68] [69] Adam responds that Phillip should say "[F]rankenstein's monster," demonstrating that he is

[64] LaBute, Neil. *The Shape of Things*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2001.
[65] *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, p. 218
[66] Ibid, p. 231
[67] LaBute, Neil. *The Shape of Things*, p. 40
[68] Ibid, p. 51
[69] Ibid, p. 81

aware of the significance and scale of the transformation Evelyn has influenced him to make.

In her final presentation, Evelyn refers to Adam as her "human sculpture" and then explains her "systematic makeover, or 'sculpting'…of the human flesh and the human will."[70] She details the changes that Adam made "using only manipulation as [her] palette knife" in order to "hone[…] them into something…in the eyes and standards of society, …arguably improved."[71] She also has an exhibit of physical objects, including Adam's journal in which he tracked his weight loss, videotapes of their sexual encounters, and Adam's grandmother's engagement ring, which he had just given to Evelyn two days prior.

If Evelyn's cruelty is shocking to its audience, then LaBute has reached his goal for the play. He writes that, after *In the Company of Men* was released, he was questioned about whether or not a woman could ever be as heartless towards others as Chad is. LaBute "was quite sure a woman [could act like Chad]. But what was particularly male," in LaBute's mind, "was the pack mentality. If it [were] a woman…it really would have been a singular pursuit."[72] Indeed, John Petrakis believes that Evelyn's treatment of Adam "is every bit as unpleasant and controlling as the ugly male posturing of" Chad and Howard; Olivia Glazebrook calls Evelyn "a manipulative…unpleasant match for the cruel men of *Your Friends and Neighbors* and *In the Company of Men*."[73] In LaBute's world, cruelty does not depend on one being male or female; it is a facet of being human and striving for power.

---

[70] Ibid, p. 119
[71] Ibid, p. 120
[72] *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, p. 220
[73] Ibid, p. 230

The Mercy Seat, which premiered in 2002, is another one of LaBute's looks at romantic relationships, or as he writes in his preface, "a particular kind of terrorism: the painful, simplistic warfare we often wage on the hearts of those we profess to love."[74] The only two characters in the play, Ben and Abby, are carrying on an affair. Ben's wife and children think that he is most likely dead because he was supposed to be at a meeting at the World Trade Center the day before, which was September 11th, 2001. The play takes place in real time and shows the conflict between Ben and Abby as they discuss what Ben should do.

Eventually, Ben tells Abby, who is also his boss, that he wants to run away with her and, as his family thinks he is dead, they would not have to undergo the betrayal they would experience if he had to tell them what he was doing. Abby agrees, but then tells Ben she will only run away with him if he makes the telephone call he was about to make the day before, as Abby believes he was going to finally tell his wife about the affair. Ben makes the call, but when Abby's phone rings, it is revealed that Ben was going to actually end the affair with her. The play ends with Abby walking out on Ben and Ben staring at his cell phone as it rings with calls from scared family and friends who do not know where he is.

David Kaufman notes that the character of Ben first strikes the audience "as just another one of LaBute's selfish and contemptible males."[75] Like Chad in *In the Company of Men* and the man in *bash*'s *ipheginia in orem*, Ben views every event around him, no matter how heinous, as an opportunity to further his own interests. Mark Steyn agrees, "That's the

[74] LaBute, Neil. *The Mercy Seat*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2003. p. ix.
[75] *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, p. 224

Labutian anti-hero in a nut's shell: power and immaturity; the man who's always a boy."[76] Yet Kaufman also argues "both Ben and Abby are lent a complexity that LaBute's characters are typically denied."[77] For instance, they are given a specific geographic location, which is a telling departure from the "geographic and moral vacuum" in which LaBute typically writes his plays, and therefore are given more individuality as characters and people.[78]

The audience sees Ben and Abby's vulnerabilities; for instance, Abby is insecure about her age, especially because she is twelve years older than Ben; [79] and Ben truly loves his wife and kids, despite the three-year long affair he has been having with Abby.[80] They fight with each other constantly, aware of the right buttons to push to cause the other the most pain possible.[81] But they do care for each other, as evidenced by Ben's confession that he loves Abby.[82] In the end, however, Ben tells Abby that "if [he is] publically forced to choose between those little girls' hearts and [Abby's] *thighs*…there's just not much to question."[83] There is no doubt that Ben is a coward, yet his emotion towards his daughters redeems him from being a villain. Unlike Chad, Ben does not delight in cruelty.

The Distance From Here, which premiered in London in 2002, is a play about Darrell and Tim, bored teenage boys with dead-end lives and the numbing that those lives have caused them to feel.[84] Darrell's working-class family is unstable, to say the least. He lives

---

[76] Steyn, Mark. "The Mercy Seat." *The New Criterion*: Feb 2003, Vol. 21, Issue 6, p. 40. 5p
[77] *Contemporary Literary Criticism,* p. 224
[78] LaBute, Neil. *The Mercy Seat*, p. x
[79] Ibid, p. 18
[80] Ibid, p. 26
[81] Ibid, p. 36
[82] Ibid, p. 62
[83] Ibid, p. 67
[84] LaBute, Neil. *The Distance from Here*. New York: Overlook Press, 2002.

with his thirty-eight-year-old mother, Cammie, and her boyfriend, Rich.[85] Cammie's ex-step-daughter - and Darrell's ex-step-sister - Shari is also often at the house, though she has an apartment of her own that she can only afford because she is on welfare as a single mother. Shari's two-year-old child, a boy, is heard constantly bawling from another room as she and Cammie both ignore his needs. Inappropriate sexual relationships abound; Rich seems just as interested in Shari as he is with Cammie.[86] Bigsby writes that, in the play, "sex...is an opiate, an act of aggression, a prelude to abandonment" rather than a way to form a bond between two people, which is similar to the way sex is used in *Your Friends and Neighbors*; Shari even flirts with Darrell, despite their history as family members.[87]

Darrell's own love life is problematic: he is extremely controlling regarding his girlfriend, Jenn, and beats up Tim when he discovers that Tim happened to see Jenn at the mall for a moment and did not tell Darrell. Darrell also belittles Tim for having a job and doing schoolwork ahead of time, indicative of Darrell's view of life as stagnant rather than progressive; in Darrell's mind, there is nothing for which one should work or prepare.

The climax shows Darrell holding a bag with Shari's baby in it; he threatens to throw the baby over a fence into a pool in order to hear the truth about his girlfriend, Jenn, and whether or not she was sexually demeaned by a black man.[88] He discovers that she performed oral sex on a black student as payment for him to beat her stomach until she miscarried, as she had become pregnant by Darrell when she was fifteen and could not afford an abortion. Darrell feels even more betrayed when Tim tells him that he was the

---

[85] Ibid, p. 19
[86] Lahr, John. "The Critics: The Theatre: Neil LaBute Turns Psychology into Behavior." *The New Yorker* 78. 13 (May 27, 2002): 120-121.
[87] Bigsby, p. 121
[88] Ibid, p. 126

one who recommended that Jenn go to the boy in the first place, as Tim's older sister had done the same thing. Darrell throws the baby into the pool anyway and physically fights both Jenn and Tim in order to stop them from saving the baby. Tim is left lying on the ground, almost unconscious; they are too late.

Back at the house, Shari and Rich are kissing and she asks him when he will finally leave Cammie and live with her. They are interrupted when Cammie enters and tells them that she could not find Darrell or the baby. In the final scene, Jenn and Tim are outside the pool, which has frozen over. They had talked to the police and lied about knowing what happened; the police now assume that Darrell took the baby and ran away. Tim and Jenn still feel guilt, though, and Tim climbs the fence so he can retrieve the baby's body from the pool.

While the ending seems shocking, John Lahr writes, "it's an indication of LaBute's prowess that we experience it as both a surprise and an inevitability."[89] After all, Darrell has been desensitized and dehumanized due to his home environment: his own mother, for instance, would rather spend time with her boyfriend than her son and does not view her memories of his childhood as important.[90]

In addition, Lahr states that Darrell is "[s]urrounded by men and women who are predatory and amoral," which only adds to the dehumanization.[91] One such amoral sexual moment occurs when Rich tells Darrell stories of his time in the Gulf War, including a story about a ten-year-old girl and her mother both offering to have sex with him for six

[89] Lahr, John. "The Critics: The Theatre: Neil LaBute Turns Psychology into Behavior." *The New Yorker* 78. 13 (May 27, 2002): 120-121.
[90] LaBute, Neil. *The Distance from Here*. p 59-60
[91] Lahr, John. "Neil LaBute Turns Psychology into Behavior."

dollars.[92] While he did not actually do it, he implies that he would have if a kite had not distracted him. There is no mention of the fact that he would have been raping a child; her age is viewed as an interesting facet of a war story rather than a tragedy. Therefore, Darrell is desensitized enough to murder a baby; life, in his mind, has no value or importance and, consequently, is not tragic if taken from someone. Life, particularly contemporary, working-class, American life, is hollow enough to destroy someone's humanity.

Yet, as Jenn and Tim indicate, not all is lost. Darrell is gone, having physically and spiritually escaped, but Jenn and Tim demonstrate guilt over Darrell's deed; they are not as hollow as Darrell and therefore do not feel as powerless. Maybe they can change their own circumstances.

2004's *autobahn* consists of seven unrelated two-person scenes that all take place in cars.[93] The simplicity of the set, LaBute notes, lets the focus fall on the relationships between the characters.[94] The first scene, *funny*, takes place between a teenage girl and her mother returning from the daughter's release from a rehabilitation facility called "Twin Oaks." The entire scene is an extended monologue by the daughter who reveals that she is going to be honest with her mother. The daughter then tells her mother, "I'm gonna do everything in my power to use again...I can't wait to get my hands on some shit...I know I'm gonna relapse. Can't wait to, really."[95] She then mocks her mother, saying that she will

[92] Ibid, p. 83-4
[93] LaBute, Neil. *Autobahn*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2005.
[94] Ibid, p. x
[95] Ibid, p. 11

"probably lie [her] ass off to everybody else if [her mother] tell[s them] about [their] little chat," effectively making her mother an unwilling confidante with no power.[96]

In *bench seat*, a couple is sitting together. The guy starts to attempt to break up with the girl, but the girl starts scaring him with tales of stalking the ex-boyfriend who also broke up with her in that same spot. Issues of class and privilege further complicate the relationship: while the guy is a graduate student, the girl works at Wal-Mart. He has an obvious escape route through his education and his car; she can only escape through him. The scene ends with the girl drifting off to sleep in the guy's arms as he stares ahead, wide-eyed in fear.

all apologies is a monologue one man is saying to his wife as he attempts to apologize for calling her a "cunt" in Albertson's. Throughout the scene, the man reveals that his behavior to his wife is consistently violent. She says nothing but maintains a sense of power through her silent stare.

merge is a scene between a husband and wife as she tells him about men who attacked her in her hotel room during an out-of-town conference. Eventually, the husband learns that his wife was drinking, blacked out from alcoholic's amnesia, and probably had sex with men she had met at the bar. The scene ends with him looking at her in shock as she calmly falls asleep, indicating that their views regarding their marriage are drastically different, yet they are stuck with one another.

The scene *long division* takes place between a man and his friend as the man persuades his friend that he has the right to go to his ex-wife's house and take back his

[96] Ibid, p. 12

Nintendo-64, which grabs the men's attention rather than the issue of custody of the children. The scene is basically a monologue said by the man, though his friend speaks one line when he decides to get his video game console after all.

road trip features a man and a girl who have been driving for "twenty-some hours" together to a cabin.[97] While the scene seems to be between a father and daughter at first, the man mentions that he was her Driver's Ed teacher and the audience realizes the scene is a kidnapping.[98]

The final scene, *autobahn*, features a woman and her husband as they drive back from a foster agency where they have dropped off their foster son. The foster son did everything from stealing from them to bringing a handgun to school. When he was returned to the agency, he then accused the husband of molesting him, which the woman dismisses as nonsense despite her husband's fondness for the boy. The woman muses that "the Germans have it right" with the autobahn. She says, "Perhaps that's the way it should be...all of us speeding by one another, too quick to stop, too fast to care...And maybe we wouldn't hurt so much. Or feel so deeply when we've been betrayed or hurt or lost."[99]

Bigsby notes, "[W]hat emerges from the whole cycle is a vision of America."[100] A vast, deeply varied country can be portrayed in the confines of a car because the car forces tensions and personalities of all different types of characters to be revealed. After all, there is no escape: "Those who in other circumstances could walk away are here forced to face

[97] Ibid, p. 69
[98] Ibid, p. 80
[99] Ibid, p. 92-3
[100] Bigsby, p. 148

who and what they are, to speak, listen, or remain silent."[101] In *funny*, for example, the mother cannot do anything but listen in horror; in *bench seat*, the guy cannot escape as easily as he had hoped. The car has forced language upon them, language that has eroded their sense of safety.

People are betrayed by each other but seem to still hope for more. Yet that hope is empty. The man in *all apologies* hopes that he has appeased his wife, but she continues to stare at him in disbelief and anger; the woman in *autobahn* hopes to one day adopt another child, but the audience knows that her choice will only hurt the child. Men and women attempt to communicate with one another in *merge* and *all apologies*, but they never reach an understanding. And finally, the movement of being in the car does not bring about a progression for the people inside the vehicle; as Bigsby remarks, "[t]his America is on the move but there is no sense that it is going anywhere in particular."[102]

The vulgarly-titled *Fat Pig* (2004) is about a man, Tom, who begins to date an overweight woman, Helen. He finds that he is falling in love with her but does not want his co-workers Carter and Jeannie - the latter of whom also happens to be an ex-lover of Tom's - to know that he is dating her. When they discover that he is, Carter teases him mercilessly and Jeannie demands to know if Tom is dating Helen to make Jeannie feel insecure about her own appearance. Yet Tom stays with Helen because he has fallen in love with her. Helen wishes to meet Tom's friends and begins asking if he is ashamed of how she looks, which he denies. He then invites her to a beach party for work to prove to her that he is proud of being with her. However, at the party, when Helen still feels he is ashamed of her,

[101] Ibid
[102] Ibid, p. 162

she asks him if she can change for him, which, she says, is something she would not do for anyone else. Tom then breaks up with her; even though he still loves her, he is too weak to withstand the pressure he feels from others but also is uncomfortable with forcing Helen to change herself.[103]

Fat Pig differs from *In the Company of Men*, LaBute's most searing indictment of corporate, white male culture, in that Tom is portrayed as a sympathetic character. He truly loves Helen and wishes to be a better person in order to make her happier. He is not a man who delights in being cruel, unlike *In the Company of Men*'s Chad or *Your Friends and Neighbors*'s Cary. While he was unreliable and immature in his relationship with Jeannie, he has grown as a person to be with Helen. But this change in his behavior makes the final scene all that more brutal: even good people can give in to peer pressure and hurt themselves and others. David Rooney argues that Tom and Helen's humanity is the "most absorbing" part of *Fat Pig*, "not…the virulent behavior that is the [LaBute]'s stock in trade."[104] Unlike *In the Company of Men* and *Your Friends and Neighbors*, there is no clear villain; yes, Carter and Jeannie can both be mean and unpleasant, but they are hardly evil. LaBute, in his growth as a playwright, is exploring the grey area of human behavior and male-female relationships more thoroughly.

LaBute's other 2004 play, *This Is How It Goes*, is a study of racism in a seemingly progressive American culture. The Man, who serves as narrator and a character, returns to a small, Midwestern town where he becomes the third person in his friends Cody and

[103] LaBute, Neil. *Fat Pig*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2005.
[104] Rooney, David. Rooney, David. "Fat Pig." *Variety*: Dec. 20-26 2004, 397 no5 53-4.

Belinda's troubled interracial marriage.[105] He and Belinda become interested in one another, which angers Cody. At a barbeque, the Man tells Cody, who is black, the reason he was fired from his job: he yelled racial slurs to a woman on an airplane. Cody and Belinda get divorced and the audience learns that Cody and the Man had orchestrated the divorce together. However, Belinda remains unaware of the Man's real involvement and she and he start a serious relationship. While the Man argues that he is not racist, by the end of the show he has used multiple cruel words and phrases about black people, including in a diatribe directed at the audience.[106]

Rooney writes that *This is How it Goes* is a "sharply honed work that insidiously inches under the skin with its unforgiving insights and typically LaButeian nasty tricks."[107] Furthermore, LaBute is astute enough to delve into the weaknesses and biases of all of the characters, a choice that forces his audience to consider that racism and racial intolerance permeate all people if the larger culture allows racism to flourish in the first place; we are all victims and perpetrators. Rooney phrases this examination as "equal-opportunity misanthropy that lets neither white nor black attitudes off the hook."[108]

While the Man may seem extreme to the audience, LaBute did not see him as such. If anything, he wanted the Man to, as Simi Horwitz writes, "simply voice[…]the rarely voiced but undoubtedly present racist views of the audience."[109] As a reminder of the very real existence of racism in modern American society, LaBute displayed a letter written to

---

[105] Bigsby, p. 179
[106] LaBute, Neil. *This is How it Goes*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2005.
[107] Rooney, David. "This is How it Goes." *Variety*: Ap 4-10 2005, 398 no7 72-3.
[108] Ibid
[109] Horwitz, Simi. "Face to Face: Neil LaBute: Scanning Society's Ugly Underside." *Back Stage - National Edition;* April 21, 2005-April 27th, 2005; 46, 16; International Index to Performing Arts Full Text. pg. 15.

him by viewer of a film LaBute had directed, *Nurse Betty*, in the lobby of the theatre where *This is How it Goes* was playing; in the movie, Morgan Freeman kisses Renee Zellweger. The viewer was angry about the kiss occurring between a black man and white woman.[110]

LaBute views the Man as "a member of the society he is talking to, [who is] also holding up a mirror to the society without being preachy." Therefore, LaBute hoped, the Man could be the catalyst for dialogue about racism.[111] And there was at least one very audible response: "At one performance, after [the Man gave his] thesis on Cody - explaining that it's not that he's black but that he is a 'nigger' - one woman in the audience shouted back, 'You're full of shit,'" a frank reminder that LaBute's words still have the power to arouse strong emotion in his audience.[112]

Some Girl(s) (2005) contains four scenes with two characters in each. One character, Guy, is constant throughout the play, though the female character in each scene changes. All of the women in the play had romantic relationships with Guy previously and he is now seeing them again before he gets married to a twenty-two-year-old nursing student.[113] The women are Sam, his now-married high-school girlfriend; Tyler, his sexually adventurous graduate-school fling; Lindsay, the married professor with whom he had an affair while teaching; and Bobbi, his college sweetheart.

While the set does not change much in each scene due to the fact all scenes take place in hotel rooms in the same chain, the women are very different from one another.

---

[110] Ibid
[111] Ibid
[112] Ibid
[113] LaBute, Neil. *Some Girl(s)*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2005.

Sam is trying to not let her anger get the best of her but eventually succumbs to it when she slaps Guy; Tyler seems happy for Guy in his marriage and does not show her sadness regarding the end of their relationship until he mentions that he had been in love with someone else while he was with her; Lindsay, seething, wants revenge in the form of Guy's humiliation; and Bobbi is curious to see what he wants from her but refuses to believe his lies and excuses.

Guy tells Bobbi he realizes that he has loved her all along, to which Bobbi replies that he is far too late. As she attempts to leave, Guy blocks her path. In the scuffle, Bobbi finds a microphone and Guy tells her that he has been recording his conversations for *Esquire*. He defends his actions by saying that he thinks the events that have occurred in his life are owned by him; therefore, he has the right to use them in his stories. Bobbi, furious, leaves him. Guy is distraught and begins destroying the tape when his fiancée, Alex, calls. Guy rewinds the tape as he tells Alex he will "always" love her, a promise he has given - and broken - so many times before.

The first staged productions of *Some Girl(s)*, in London and New York, removed the part of the play in which it is discovered that Guy is taping his conversations.[114] This removal changed the play to be "deft but finally bloodless," in the words of Michael Coveney.[115] Even David Rooney wrote that *Some Girl(s)* "lacks bite."[116] Perhaps, then, the plotline involving Guy recording his conversations would have returned much needed "bite" to the productions. As Gwen Orel states, "there's so little doubt that Guy is a self-

[114] *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, p. 240

[115] Ibid

[116] Rooney, David. "Legit Reviews: Off Broadway: Lad Exposed as Cad in LaBute's Girl(s)." *Variety;* Jun 12, 2006-Jun 18, 2006; 403, 4; International Index to Performing Arts Full Text. pg. 40.

involved, pompous jerk that the play has nowhere to go."[117] Without the reveal, *Some Girl(s)* is stuck in its tale of an immature man visiting his ex-girlfriends, a tale that repeats itself in every scene. Furthermore, the lack of the subplot leads "Guy and the play [to] resist the opportunity for depth as we expected they would."[118]

The women, however, differ from Guy in that they see him for his reality, even while he continues to paint himself as a, in the words of Bigsby, "well-meaning young man recounting a series of amusing experiences."[119] Sam realizes that her and Guy's relationship "was just a teenage thing and [he] dated somebody else right after [her]," despite Guy's protests to the contrary.[120] Tyler knows that she can seduce Guy easily, even if he insists that he has "kind of taken this vow thing here, and [he] need[s] to stick to it."[121] Lindsay asserts that Guy is "the kind of person who leaves a *bunch* of hurt in [his] *boyish* wake," to which Guy responds, "if you're referring to the story, it's fiction," still unable to accept the truth of his actions.[122] Bobbi tells Guy that he is only visiting his ex-girlfriends in order to "know that [his fiancée is] the best deal [he] can get. The nicest, the sweetest, the *prettiest,*" to which Guy can only respond, "No," unable to provide any meaningful reason for his visit.[123]

---

[117] Orel, Gwen. "More Reviews: 'Some Girl(s)'. *Back Stage - National Edition;* Jun 22, 2006 - Jun 28, 2006; 47, 25; International Index to Performing Arts Full Text. pg. 42.
[118] Ibid
[119] Bigsby, p. 218-9
[120] LaBute, Neil. *Some Girl(s)*. p. 18
[121] Ibid, p. 23
[122] Ibid, p. 42
[123] Ibid, p. 62

The problem with Guy, John Lahr writes, is that he "is chronically fickle" and therefore unable to change and mature.[124] Instead of facing his problems, he has always run away, something he only acknowledges as "a sorta bad habit."[125] Lahr continues, "Guy's history of bolting from his relationships without so much as a farewell marks him as a perpetual adolescent." Meanwhile, Sam, Tyler, Lindsay, and Bobbi have been forced to undergo the consequences of their relationships and have therefore matured, albeit in varying ways from one another. Guy's constant boyhood is even demonstrated by his name being changed by LaBute: the original London production listed his character as "Man," but the New York production and published script feature him as "Guy."[126]

The play also provides a telling look into contemporary American male-female relationships, from the high school sweethearts to the adulterers. The dynamics between Guy and the women are never the same, because the women differ so greatly. Yet Guy still retains most of the power, an important note in a supposedly equal society. He has gained his power through detachment and "cannibaliz[ing] the suffering of others for his own gain," as phrased by Jorge Morales.[127] Overall, the women are still the victims of Guy, despite their individual strength; and while they suffer, Guy is rewarded by being published and having his voice heard, yet another source of power. Lahr sees Guy's exploitation of

---

[124] Lahr, John. "The Critics: The Theatre: Blood Under the Bridge." *The New Yorker* 82. 18 (Jun 19, 2006): 92-93.
[125] LaBute, Neil. *Some Girl(s)*. p. 42
[126] Rooney, David. "Lad Exposed as Cad."
[127] Morales, Jorge. "*Voice* Choices: Theater: Ex Man: In LaBute's Latest, a Single Guy's Last Stand." *The Village Voice*; Jun 14, 2006-Jun 20, 2006; 51, 24; International Index to Performing Arts Full Text. pg. 74.

power as "a deep-seated misogyny that he cannot see in himself but cannot help making visible to others."[128] Again, Guy is in denial about his actions and intentions.

Wrecks (2005) is LaBute's interpretation of Socrates's *Oedipus Rex*. The play is a one-man show in which Edward Carr, smoking cigarettes, speaks to an imaginary listener - played, effectively, by the audience - at the funeral of his wife, Mary Josephine, or "Jo-Jo."[129] He tells the listener about how he met Jo-Jo, when she was still married to her first husband, and how she left her first husband for him. Edward built a successful career and a family life with his wife, who was fifteen years older than he was. She died of cancer, the same disease he has now and he knows will kill him soon. At the end of the play, he reveals that Jo-Jo had a child conceived from a rape when she was younger: Ed was that child. Only, in a plot point that differs dramatically from Sophocles's original play, Ed always knew he was an orphan and tracked his mother down before he married her, leaving her ignorant of the situation until her death.

Edward insists that he loved Jo-Jo, even though she was his mother, and that no one was hurt by them being married and having children. Yet, in this statement, he ignores Jo-Jo's ex-husband, their children, and an ex-fiancée he left as soon as she gave Ed's birth certificate to him.[130] Most importantly, he forgets Jo-Jo's feelings. After all, she is informed on her deathbed that he was, in fact, that child she had left and dies soon after hearing Ed's confession. Therefore, her reaction is never made known. Ed states that the "look on her face" was of "pure relief," but her response is still not voiced or made explicit.[131]

---

[128] Lahr, John. "Blood Under the Bridge."
[129] LaBute, Neil. *Wrecks and Other Plays*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2007.
[130] Ibid, p. 33
[131] Ibid, p. 30

Furthermore, we only hear Ed's view, which is clouded by his own judgment. Bigsby writes that what Ed did was not merciful, but cruel:

> He had…knowing the anguish his mother had felt throughout her life, chosen to withhold the truth which might once have set her free only to reveal it when it had become contaminated, revenge clothing itself in the garments of human concern.[132]

Instead of introducing himself to her as his son when they first met, he lured her into an incestuous relationship. Ed held the secret over her head, having the power over the mother who had exercised her power earlier by abandoning him. In addition, he is the person to write her eulogy, the definitive account of her life. Like Guy in *Some Girl(s)*, the ability to write about someone else is empowering to the author rather than the subject. Bigsby refers to this authority "as a special power which derives from knowledge withheld as there is from knowledge revealed…It is the power that goes with storytelling."[133] It is the power that LaBute encounters everyday as he shapes his characters' lives in the way he sees fit, even if that leads them to experience pain and hardship. That is the power that Ed now enjoys as he tells his story, the power that he wrested from Jo-Jo.

[132] Bigsby, p. 224
[133] Ibid, p. 226

LATER WORK

In a Dark Dark House (2007) is the story of two brothers, Terry and Drew, who meet at the rehabilitation facility where Drew is currently staying.[134] Drew, a once-successful lawyer who cheats on his wife and self-medicates with alcohol and drugs, tells Terry, a security-guard, that he was molested as a boy by a man named Todd; at the time of the molestation, Terry had warned Drew about Todd. Drew tells Terry that Todd, who was about twenty at the time, had taken Drew to their family tree house and molested him. Therefore, Drew says, he was led to abuse alcohol and drugs in his adult life, though his risky behavior has brought him economic success. Terry tracks Todd down but instead meets Jennifer, Todd's flirty sixteen-year-old daughter. He seduces her by playing a miniature golf game with her and offering to take her for a drive.

At Drew's Welcome Home party, Terry tells Drew that he knows that Drew fabricated the story about Todd molesting him, as the tree house had been destroyed before the summer that Drew says he was molested. Terry reveals that Todd had molested him, but he loved the attention he got from Todd. He warned Drew, consequently, in order to keep Todd's attentions to himself. As Drew walks away, Terry takes Jennifer's keys from his pocket, her fate still unknown to the audience.

In a Dark Dark House manages to illuminate the complexity behind familial relationships through Terry and Drew, two different men who were brought up together. As Jeremy McCarter writes, "LaBute…does a skillful job of reversing the brothers' relationship. At different moments, each seems like a pretty good guy, the other a total jerk,

[134] LaBute, Neil. *In a Dark Dark House*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2007.

making the play a comparative study of two kinds of asshole."[135] Drew is the charismatic asshole who makes money and lives dangerously while Terry is the martyr asshole, constantly blaming others for his problems and unable to progress in his own life. Yet their bond is powerful, as evidenced by Terry coming to see Drew when he called and Terry's protection of Drew that has existed since their boyhood, including standing up to their abusive father, which of course is a reminder of LaBute's own childhood.[136]

The most troubling aspect of the play is the continuation of abuse that is implied by Terry's seduction of Jennifer, which he defines as "our little thing;" this is the language of an adult who is aware that his actions would be deemed by others as wrong. But he decides to go driving with her anyway.[137] He even tells Drew that he is umpiring kids' little league games to "try and prove to [him]self that [he] would never do that to some kid," meaning he wrestles with his past on a daily basis, including feelings of pedophilia.[138] These inclinations further illuminate Terry's distance from Drew; he does not want to be around Drew's children, perhaps because he is afraid of what his actions would be if he were.[139] Like Darrell in *The Distance from Here* and the woman in *medea redux*, Terry and Drew are products of an abusive childhood, a theme explored by LaBute to uncover the cause of the darkness of which people are capable. We are all products of how we were raised; our pasts are inescapable.

---

[135] McCarter, Jeremy. "Played Out?" *New York*. June 18 2007, Vol. 40, Issue 22, p. 132, 2p.
[136] LaBute, Neil. *In a Dark Dark House*. p. 28
[137] Ibid, p. 53
[138] Ibid, p. 69
[139] Ibid, p. 57

Reasons to be Pretty (2008) features Greg, who LaBute describes as "one of the few adults [he has] ever tackled."[140] The play opens with Greg fighting with his girlfriend, Steph, who demands to have him repeat to her something he had said to his friend, Kent, that Kent's wife, Carly, then relayed to Steph. Eventually, the audience discovers that Greg told Kent that he thought Steph's face was "just *regular*...but [he] wouldn't trade her for a million bucks."[141] This fight causes the couple to break up.

Greg works at a factory with Kent and Carly and therefore has to deal with the aftermath that his breakup has caused with them, as Carly is friends with Steph. Kent later tells Greg that he has been seeing a receptionist. Greg tells him that seeing this new girl is Kent's own business, but never that he thinks that doing so is wrong.

Kent eventually changes shifts and he and Greg see each other less. When Carly tells Greg that she is pregnant, she asks him if Kent is seeing anybody else; Greg skirts around the issue but tells her that he does not think that Kent is cheating on her. Yet when Greg and Kent are warming up for a softball game, Greg tells Kent that he will not cover for him anymore. He sees that Kent is still a bully stuck in a high-school mentality. Kent and Greg get in a fight and Greg quits the team. Greg then, at work, tells Carly that she should go home and surprise Kent now, which Carly understands to mean that Kent is seeing another woman. She leaves to confront Kent as Steph enters to see Greg. Steph tells Greg that she is now engaged and is impressed that Greg has matured since they broke up. They both agree that they needed to break up; they were stuck as a couple. Greg's final monologue

[140] LaBute, Neil. *Reasons to Be Pretty*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2008. p. xi.
[141] Ibid, p. 16

serves as a vehicle for him to reflect on what he has learned and how he has changed because of his fight with Steph: he, in his own words, is "pretty much a grown-up now."[142]

The character of Greg is a change for LaBute. Instead of ignoring his weaknesses like Guy in *Some Girl(s)* or failing to take responsibility for his actions like Drew in *In a Dark Dark House* or the man in *bash*'s *iphigenia in orem*, Greg acknowledges that his actions have consequences and he must learn to take care of his mistakes. This profound change did not go unacknowledged by others familiar with LaBute's work. Bernard Telsey, a New York producer of LaBute's work, says:

> Neil's growing as a playwright…In the beginning of his career, his plays were more shocking. That's how he got attention. If he didn't, he might not have a career now where he's allowed to explore the human race on a more emotional level instead of a shock level.[143]

In addition, David Rooney writes that for "LaBute, who has specialized in unrepentant shits, usually unwilling to learn from their mistakes," Greg is "a breakthrough character."[144] The maturity displayed in *Reasons to be Pretty* also makes the characters more empathetic and dynamic. While one may find *In the Company of Men*'s Cary to be charming, he is still a villain. But Greg is sympathetic, as are Carly and Steph. The most villainous character of the play is Kent, who is merely immature and selfish, not malevolent.

Therefore, *Reasons to be Pretty* engages its audience on a human level - especially concerning the romantic relationship between Steph and Greg - leading Rooney to state, "there's compassion and even tenderness running through this play that make it one of

---

[142] Ibid, p. 129
[143] Jordan, Pat. "Neil LaBute Has a Thing About Beauty." *The Times Magazine*; March 29th, 2009. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/29/magazine/29LaBute-t.html?pagewanted=all.
[144] Rooney, David. "More than Skin-Deep.: *Variety*: Ap 6-12 2009, 414 no8 29, 31.

[LaBute's] best," echoing Telsey's aforementioned statement that LaBute is "growing as a playwright."[145] Like *Fat Pig*, *Reasons to be Pretty* benefits from exploring male-female relationships in a more complicated and nuanced way.

2010's *The Break of Noon* is also a play about the maturation of a man. The main character, John Smith, is the only survivor of a shooting at his office by a disgruntled ex-employee. In the first scene, John talks to unseen and unheard detectives about his experience, including the picture he managed to capture on his cell phone of the shooter in action. Furthermore, John tells the detective he heard a heavenly voice that instructed, "Remain here and you will be safe, John. Stay where you are and you shall be saved."[146]

The following scenes all occur between John and one other character, with each other character only having one scene, similar in fashion to *Some Girl(s)*. First, John sees his lawyer who advises him to sell the photo for a large amount of money but is uncomfortable with John's religious interpretation, saying that John is going to get "a lot less [money] with the Jesus bit" he has been saying.[147]

In the next scene, John attempts to romance Ginger, his ex-wife, over a picnic in order for them and their daughter, Chrissy, to be a family again. Ginger, however, is unable to understand John's behavior, which is unlike from the selfishness and immaturity he used to portray. She does not think he could possibly be as changed as much as he claims and she also doubts that God actually spoke to John.

---

[145] Ibid

[146] LaBute, Neil. *The Break of Noon*. New York: Soft Skull Press, 2010. p. 16.

[147] Ibid, p. 26

John is next onstage with a television host of a talk show who questions the validity of his experience with God. John, visibly uncomfortable with all of the attention, nevertheless wants to spread the word of God. John explains to her that he has "had people spit on [him] and others chase [him] down the street, just to hold [his] hand."[148] He also tells her that he used to not be a good person. He "did all kinds of crap every day that [he is now] ashamed of and got away with it" before he survived the shooting. He continues, "Life...is precious...but you have to work at it! You have to appreciate people and you have to do good."[149] The host continues to belittle him, though, so John stands up and leaves the stage.

The following scene shows John in the midst of a session with a dominatrix, Diva Midnight. Eventually, John tells Diva that he knew her mother who was one of the workers killed at his office. Diva expresses anger with John, as John's photo, which has been published, shows her mother's mutilated body. John tries to explain himself to her and asks her to pray with him. He also gives her an envelope of money due to the guilt he feels for surviving while her mother was murdered. Although she seems resistant to pray with him at first, they both end the scene by praying passionately together.

Subsequently, John meets with Jesse, the cousin of Ginger and John's former mistress, in order to try to convince her that they should reveal the truth about their affair to Ginger. When Jesse tells him she does not want to do so, they get in a heated argument. Then, Jesse tells John that she believes that he is a changed man, which excites John because of the resistance he has met from disbelieving people. When Jesse asks John if he

[148] Ibid, p. 55
[149] Ibid, p. 53-4

ever meant to marry her, as he had promised during their affair, he responds by telling her he meant it at the time. Then he attempts to articulate that, currently, he is not looking for any further relationship with her. Jesse tells John that she already heard that he "asked Ginger back" and is irritated; she thought that John would have been honest about that from the beginning if he really were a changed person.[150]

Later, John meets with a detective who doubts John's religious sincerity and questions how John both survived and got the picture he did. The detective tells John he does not believe him, which causes John to leave the interview.

The final scene is John addressing an unseen and unheard audience in a religious setting. He describes his change of behavior and also the shooting. John reveals that the shooter did not, as the detective insinuated, avoid him. In fact, John says, due to John's and his coworkers' ill treatment of him, the shooter attempted to kill John by putting the gun in John's mouth and pulling the trigger. Yet, the gun did not fire and John instead had a religious vision. John tells his audience, "There was no reason for God to single me out, use a man like me for any reason other than it being a part of his...plan...I can't go and change the world - I can barely make anybody believe what's happened to me! But I *must*."[151] He "gets down on his knees" and prays to God, continuing until the play ends with a "burst of intense light."[152]

While the maturation of man theme is worthwhile to note, *The Break of Noon*'s John is certainly still fallible. He loses his temper, he curses, and he yells when he is frustrated.

---

[150] Ibid, p. 79
[151] Ibid, p.100-1
[152] Ibid, p. 101-3

Ben Brantley noted, "Since this is a Neil LaBute play, it is hardly a shock that this born-again soul remains the same jerk he appears to have been before he saw the light in the barrel of a machine gun."[153] But, perhaps, a complete change would be too unfounded in the character of John Smith, a man who himself admits that he "was not a good person."[154] Furthermore, he says that his "life is worse now because [he is] aware" that he must live as a good person should.[155] And he, like Greg in *Reasons to be Pretty*, takes responsibility for treating another person poorly.[156] As dislikable as John can be, he does strive for improvement.

As a play, *The Break of Noon* is not as consistent as *Reasons to be Pretty*, leading Brantley to note that it is an "artistic backsliding for its creator."[157] The pace lags and the scenes tend to repeat the major points. Yet John Smith is a redeemed man among LaBute's men.

LaBute, in his plays and films, has explored the worst of human behavior, particularly as it pertains to power and relationships. Characters like Chad, Cary, and Evelyn delight in manipulation on an almost inhuman level. However, as his career continues, LaBute's characters have become more nuanced and empathetic. Greg and John acknowledge their past actions and work in order to better themselves, even if that betterment is a difficult process. Perhaps as LaBute will continue to mature as a writer, his future characters will do so as well.

---

[153] Brantley, Ben. "He's Born-Again but Still Obnoxious." *The New York Times*. November 22, 2010. http://theater.nytimes.com/2010/11/23/theater/reviews/23break.html?pagewanted=all
[154] LaBute, Neil. *The Break of Noon*, p. 100
[155] Ibid, p. 96
[156] Ibid, p. 97
[157] Brantley, Ben.

PRODUCTION: ***Some Girl(s)***

Why *Some Girl(s)*?

The cheeky answer of course would be, "why not?" But that doesn't answer anything.

If I'm being honest, I cannot give one reason why I wanted to do *Some Girl(s)* as soon as I read it - though I suppose that intuition is a reason in itself.

The way I found the play was a little, if I may say, lucky: I heard that Neil LaBute was a good playwright and I saw *Some Girl(s)* one day at Barnes and Noble. So I bought it, read it, and was fascinated by it.

Specifically, I was fascinated with the women. I am tired of female characters who are nothing more than two-dimensional figures upon which the male protagonist projects. And, while we are supposedly living in an "equal" age, contemporary playwrights often abuse their female characters in this fashion. The recent success of the film *Bridesmaids* was pleasantly surprising; but how pitiful is it that, in 2012, people are arguing whether or not a predominately female cast can head a mainstream film or television show? We, as a society, have a way to go until women can be given the same weight in the media that is held by men.

Therefore, *Some Girl(s)* is refreshing in its treatment of women. All four women are three-dimensional. They all have their own wants, needs, and interests. Guy is often surprised by their actions and reactions. The women are different from one another as well and, while they do help the different sides of Guy come to light, each scene provides an engaging vehicle for each actress as they navigate their characters' words, actions, and inner thoughts.

All the actresses I have cast - friends of mine who are talented and dedicated professionals - have mentioned to me how interesting they have found their characters, which gives me, as a director, a small sense of relief. After all, if they can find them interesting, then they will be much more attached to the project and that much more willing to work those late nights after classes. But they also have somewhere to go in their scenes, which is a gift to them.

I made certain to cast actors who were unlike their characters but could still connect with them. Rosemary Kulp, the actress playing Sam, is not likely to wind up married in the suburbs with kids. But she can still relate to Sam and give her an intelligence that Guy might ignore but that is potent in its own way. I am playing Tyler and can honestly say that I do not think any casting director would see me as they see her. Tyler is a free spirit; she does not seem to want to get married or have kids and is very vocal about her sexuality and other vices. But I hope I can both make that side known of her and bring an emotional weight to the scene that Tyler works to suppress. Allison Lawrence's Lindsay displays the actress's natural intensity, which is necessary for the scene between her and Guy as she is bent on revenge. I am excited to see Allison play older, as she is often cast younger due to her appearance. The final girl is Bobbi, played by Roxanne Cook. Roxy is another one of those women who looks so young that not many casting directors would look past the (adorable) appearance and therefore she is often typecast as the cute, sweet girl. But Bobbi needs to be believable as a doctor, so Roxy will need to portray her as the put-together professional who has been through enough crap to last a lifetime to get to where she is, and I know she can do it.

The final piece of the casting puzzle is the character of Guy. I had a difficult time casting this part because the character is immature and selfish to an extreme level but still must be attractive, personally and physically, enough to have entranced these amazing women. If he is just a pretty boy, then the female characters would not have been as emotionally destroyed by him as the script suggests. So he must be seemingly sweet and smart as well. Furthermore, he has to handle all of the different women and scenes, which is a lot to ask of any amateur actor.

John Verticchio is perfect for Guy because he is attractive and immediately personable. You can see how women can fall for someone like him. But he is smart enough to connect with what makes Guy tick; after all, Guy must be three-dimensional also. If he is just a "jerk," then the play has nowhere to go. Yet John brings a natural sweetness that makes the relationships he has had make more sense.

I have started rehearsals recently and am glad that my actors have been giving this first-time director some time to get used to the directing process. They're all hard working, engaged, and as excited to put on this production as I am. To any director, whether an amateur or a veteran, this is all I could wish for from them. I am extremely grateful and hope I will not let them down.

- Mary Peyton-Griffith, February 22, 2012

Production: Diary

1/22/12: 1st Read Through

John - Guy
Rosemary - Sam
Mary - Tyler
Allison - Lindsay
Eileen - Reggie
Roxy - Bobbi *(absent due to conflict)*

1st impressions:
-Good thing I got John: he can make even Guy seem somewhat charming, even if he isn't particularly a like-able character. But he seems very disgusted at Guy. How do I make him relate to him?
-Read-through was longer than I thought it would be. With possibility of cutting Reggie's scene, though, the time should end up being pretty good
-CUTTING REGGIE'S SCENE: I think the actual scene and character of Reggie are really interesting; also I think Eileen could do noteworthy things with the character. However, she has a thesis show of her own the week before. Also, with Reggie, Guy goes from unlikeable to a child molester, which is a problem for the character and for how the audience will perceive the character. Furthermore, the scene abruptly changes the tone of the play (which shifts again in the next scene with Bobbi) and makes even this short play drag a little. I will talk to Eileen about this.

Assignment for next meeting:
-I want each person to find a house or apartment for their character. I hope this will lead my actors to consider budget, lifestyle, locality of character, etc.
-I want each actor to bring in a song that means something to their character in order to better visualize their characters' mental states.

Costumes and Make-up:
Had some discussion with certain actors regarding appearance. Notes are as follows:
-SAM:

> Clothing: jeans, fit but a little loose, not ripped up or too low/saggy; Birkenstock clogs or sneakers; cardigan or zip-up, fitted sweatshirt; big tote; wedding ring and engagement ring. *She's a mom of multiple kids; her biggest concern when getting dressed is comfort and practicality. She's not a slob, by any means, but she's not the pink of chic either.*

Make-up: Maybe a little mascara *due to meeting Guy for the first time in fifteen years*, but not much else. I want a natural look. Also, should apply some blush to face for ruddy effect (re: when she's talking about the red pigment). Hair: loose braid? clipped up? something easy that gets her hair out of her face.

-TYLER:

Clothing: jeans, fitted and fashionable; heeled boots; bohemian sweater; pink bra and white tank top; bohemian bag; maybe a scarf?; artsy earrings; other accessories. *Tyler cares about how she looks, and, as an artist, has fun picking out her clothing and accessories. She definitely has a bohemian, neo-hippie style, even while being comfortable.*

Make-up: mascara, eyeliner, eye shadow, blush, bronzer, perfume, lipstain, lipbalm (nothing that will rub off on Guy when kissing). *Tyler enjoys getting made up, but her look shouldn't be too overdone.* Hair: should be beachy-wavy with half pinned up for comfort and to get hair out of actress's face (I think I would thank me).

-LINDSAY:

Clothing: fitted, professional looking jeans; heels or flats that she can teach in; blazer or jacket, fashionable but professional; turtleneck; over some sort of lingerie/underwear (will decide with Allison); nice purse. *Lindsay is fashionable, but professional. She's not going to wear anything that would compromise her position with her students.*

Make-up: light aging? At least: foundation to minimize actress's freckles, which look youthful; powder; mascara, eyeliner, eyeshadow, bronzer MIXED with blush (so blush won't look too youthful); lipliner and lipstick; perfume. Hair: French twist. *While we can't make Allison look like she's in her forties, we can give her the air of a more mature woman.*

-BOBBI:

Clothing: leather jacket; sundress or skirt to just above knees; ballet flats or more casual heels; nice purse. *Bobbi is a doctor on her day off, so she's dressed casually, but well.*

Make-up: Eyeliner, bronzer, lipstick, mascara; Hair: should be up, even if casually. Otherwise, Roxy's hair just looks much too youthful for Bobbi.

-GUY:

Clothing: button-down shirt; nice jeans or khakis; nice but casual shoes; boxers (and tee-shirt?) *He's been flying around the country but still wants to look presentable and successful.*

Make-up: doubt aging would carry. Will prob. have to rely on clothes and acting to give Guy age.

1/27/2012: Second Read-Through
John, Rosemary, Mary, and Allison

First Impressions:
-People are getting a little more into character and discussing ideas behind reasons for their characters' actions, reactions, and emotions.
-The play reads better without Eileen's scene, as the arc makes a little more sense. Also, the cast agrees that the play is more cohesive without the scene, and I think not having the scene also makes John's workload more manageable.

Assignment for next meeting:
I am going to meet with each actor separately and interview them in depth about their characters' childhoods, families, wishes, fears, etc.

Interviews: (see biographies)
2/2/2012: Meetings with Rosemary and Allison
2/3/2012: Meetings with John and Roxy

2/10/2012: Third Read-Through
John, Rosemary, Mary, Allison, and Roxy

First Impressions:
-I'm happy to finally have Roxy read with the rest of the cast. I think it's beneficial to have the cast view the work as a whole piece rather than a group of scenes and having everyone read together helps the cohesion.
-The play is running a little long – about 90 minutes total. But I think once we put it on its feet and work on overlapping lines and putting some speed and energy into it, the show will get shorter. If not, I have gone through the script and cut lines if necessary.

2/12/2012: First Blocking Rehearsal
John, Rosemary, and Mary

We blocked the first scene, which is between Sam and Guy. First, I had the actors read through on the set while I watched and took notes. The first thing I noticed was that the actors sat too close to one another, which doesn't work for a scene that takes place between two people who feel awkward around one another and have an embarrassing past that they share. Also, they need to work on their reactions to one another's words and actions, but I feel that will improve once they're off book.

When we redid the scene, I had Sam carry a big tote bag. This prop makes sense because she is a mom and therefore constantly running errands and being prepared in case anything should happen. I also had them sit further apart, with Guy on the bed and Sam in the chair.

We found a few engaging moments in the scene that hadn't come to light just through the read-throughs. First of all, Sam had a hard time trying to get angry enough to slap Guy, so we worked on finding lines he said that angered her and talked about why they angered her so much. Then we found a place in the script when Guy says, "So, you want to…" and, by glancing at the bed then, he seems to proposition the already angry Sam, which leads her to get furious enough to slap him.

Also, when Sam returns and she tells Guy that she had fantasized about running away with him, she follows buy saying that she would "never do it." During this moment, Sam realizes that, for certain, she would never run away with Guy, which was something she thought that she might have done if tempted enough before that moment. Therefore, Sam can leave with the closure she has needed for the past fifteen years.

2/16/2012: Second Blocking Rehearsal

John, Mary, and Allison

We blocked the scene between Guy and Lindsay. I decided to do what I had done in the rehearsal before: I let the actors go through the scene on their own while I observed and took notes and then repeat the scene with my interjecting.

A lot of the problems were similar to the previous rehearsal: reactions need to be bigger and the stakes need to be raised. For instance, when Lindsay tells Guy that her husband is sitting outside in the car, I had Guy think of someone who would terrify him. His reaction got better. Also, I had them vary the blocking, which helped a lot. There's an interesting power dynamic between the two characters that is revealed through the blocking.

In addition, I found another telling moment. Lindsay tells Guy that cheating is the worst thing someone can do to his or her partner. Lindsay is talking about her experience, of course, but Guy has just cheated on his fiancée with Tyler. While Guy and I agreed that he would not actually think that cheating is the worst thing he can do to Alex, the fact that Lindsay keeps talking about the betrayal of cheating is going to affect him.

Hiatus due to John's athletic schedule

2/26/2012: Third Blocking Rehearsal

John, Rosemary, and Mary

We started blocking the scene between Tyler and Guy, so I brought in Rosemary to direct me and John. She specifically wanted to focus on Guy and Tyler's first kiss, because they way in which Tyler seduces Guy is very alien to me. We worked on physicality and the mental state behind the characters in the moment. Rosemary does very detailed work, so we spent a very long time on this one moment.

By the end of the rehearsal, I was much more familiar with the ways in which Tyler uses her body and sexuality in order to empower herself.

3/1/2012: Fourth Blocking Rehearsal

John, Rosemary, and Mary

We went over the scene between Guy and Sam again today. I'm seeing more of a relationship develop, which is good. The actors are beginning to develop their own blocking, which I see as a positive, as it means that they are developing more of an idea of what they want their characters to be.

3/8/2012: Fifth Blocking Rehearsal

John, Mary, and Roxy

I really felt, for the first time, how constrained our set is. For instance, when Roxy suggested that Bobbi be going through Guy's things while he is in the bathroom, I realized we couldn't do it because we don't have an off-stage bathroom set. While we could have another door, I don't think it would be clear to the audience that the other door leads to a bathroom, especially because this is the only scene where we would have need of it.

I like Roxy's interpretation of Bobbi as still pining for Guy, but I'm worried that, for right now, she is playing Bobbi as too vulnerable. I want to see the vulnerability, of course, but Bobbi has to be a strong woman as well. I think we can develop this; I certainly know Roxy has the ability and drive to play Bobbi as a tough lady; but at the same time, I don't want to discourage her by critiquing her too much right now.

We've found some really telling moments in the script. By having Guy attempt to kiss Bobbi multiple times, John and I have had a chance to discuss more of where Guy is coming from: he's deluded himself into believing he is still in love with Bobbi, as he fears being alone. This aspect of his character helps make him a little more human.

Also, the choreography is a challenge for me. There are a lot of times when Bobbi tries to leave and Guy tries to stop her. How am I going to make these times different but organic?

3/11/2012: Line Reading
Rosemary and Mary

Today we just went over Tyler's lines. I keep getting them confused because they're pretty similar. But I still have a much better grasp on them now.

3/12/2012-3/18/2012: SPRING BREAK

3/19/2012: Rehearsal
John, Roxy, and Mary

We had a good rehearsal today. We went over the blocking again and developed some new and improved "escapes." Also, I am LOVING the emotion that Roxy is bringing to Bobbi. She shows how hurt Bobbi has been by Guy's actions, even ten years later. Also, when she acts on a more emotional level, John responds, which is essential for showing Guy as an emotional being and not a simple villain.

I am still having trouble having Roxy separate Bobbi from Roxy; for instance, Bobbi's physicality is distinctly Roxy-like. Also, I need John to separate his physicality from that of Guy's; but, as he has not been trained nearly as much as the rest of us, I am not sure how to approach it.

3/20/2012: Rehearsal
John, Rosemary, and Mary

We did more work on the Tyler/Guy scene today. John and I are getting much more comfortable with one another, which is really helping shape the playful dynamic Tyler and Guy have.

Rosemary is noticing more opportunities for fun moments between the two of them that help show their relationship to the audience.

3/21/2012: Production Meeting
Mary, Laura Steinroeder, Alma Martinez, and Eileen Lopez

While Laura is being a huge help in providing advice, I am having trouble with the constraints imposed by Alma. While Eileen is fine with my play being 70 minutes or so, Alma keeps telling me it must be shorter (a constraint I only found out about this

semester). I will have to cut individual lines in each scene, I think. I feel awful to surprise my actors with this so late. Ugh.

3/21/2012: Rehearsal
Mary, Rosemary, and John

We worked on Alexander Technique with John again. He is getting better, though I don't know if he feels how it helps him.

We did a run-through and I had an idea. In London, we had an exercise in Physical Theatre in which you attempt to embody an element (fire, air, water, or earth). I had each actor pick an element for his or her character and do the scene as that element; John picked air for Guy and Rosemary picked water for Sam. There was a sense of fun in the exercise that I want to translate to the scene. When they started the scene immediately after their exercise, they retained some of the physical expression. However, as the scene continued, it was lost. I think I want to continue this exercise in the future when the actors are more off-book to channel their characters' physicality.

We also worked on Meisner, which I found caused John to react A LOT more than he has previously. I am very relieved at this development. Rosemary is probably more emotional than Sam should be in the scene, but I know it's easier to get her to pull back later, so I'm not too concerned.

3/22/2012: Rehearsal
Mary, John, and Allison

Today, I continued the four-element work, with John continuing to identify Guy with air and Allison choosing fire for Lindsay. I made them do the whole scene as their elements. There were a lot of great rises and falls in action, intensity, and emotion that weren't retained when they went back to acting the scene normally. I'll have to figure out a way to make them keep all of those things.

3/25/2012: Cast Meeting
Mary, Rosemary, John, and Allison (*Roxy absent due to audition in Chicago*)

Due to scheduling confusion, we only had an hour to meet. I went over the cuts with the actors, who are fine with them.

3/26/2012: Rehearsal
Mary, John, and Rosemary

We continued Alexander Technique work with John and did line-throughs to solidify the new cuts in the script for Sam and Guy's scene. Also, I did voice-work with John. I'm trying to get him to talk more from his diaphragm and project more in the space. I'm seeing a lot of progress with his projection already.

3/27/2012: Rehearsal

Mary, John, and Rosemary

We split our rehearsal into two sections today: we started with Sam and Guy's scene and finished with Tyler and Guy's scene.

For Sam and Guy's scene, we worked on staging the scene with the cuts. The actors fell back into some of their bad habits, as their focusing on remembering the script right now. But John is becoming more aware of his posture, so that is very helpful. I kept making them repeat certain sections, so I also think that helped to get their lines in their minds and bodies.

For Tyler and Guy's scene, we continued to work on staging and the physical relationship of the characters.

3/28/2012: Rehearsal

Mary, John, and Rosemary

Today we only worked on Tyler and Guy's scene. Rosemary had us work on Alexander Technique. We also did the whole scene singing, which was a fun way to get the cuts into our bodies. Then Rosemary had us do line-throughs and we went through the blocking a few times.

3/29/2012: Rehearsal

Mary and Allison (*John absent due to illness*)

Allison and I went over the cuts in her script by going over and over the lines. She also came in her outfit, which is helpful in giving her more of Lindsay's physicality.

3/29/2012: Rehearsal

Mary and Roxy (*John absent due to illness*)

Roxy and I worked on cuts today and went over the scene a few times. Also, I went over the four elements with her and we decided that Bobbi would embody earth. She will start being like sand and end the scene being more rock-like. I hope this works in helping Roxy feel Bobbi's physicality.

4/1/2012: Reading

Mary, John, Rosemary, and Allison (*Roxy absent due to conflict*)

The actors are having trouble remembering the cuts in the script. They will have to go over the scripts more in their own time to solidify their lines. Also, part of the problem is that they only do each scene once a week, due to schedules. I'm going to try to split up the two rehearsals that are me, John, and Rosemary so we do half of a rehearsal time devoted to one scene and half devoted to the other. I hope this will help with these two scenes, anyway.

4/2/2012: Rehearsal

Mary, John, and Roxy

I'm seeing some improvement in John's posture and have begun working on his stance as Guy.

Also, I had the actors do some improvisation exercises today, which really helped Roxy get into the scene and helped develop more of the relationship between Bobbi and Guy. Roxy is wondering if we can incorporate the improv into the actual performance. I don't think it makes sense at this point, but I want to see if we can continue to work on it so Roxy can access those feelings she gains in the improv before she does the scene.

4/3/2012: Rehearsal

Mary, John, and Rosemary

Today I decided to split our rehearsal between Tyler and Guy and Sam and Guy, starting with Sam's scene.

We need to make the play seem like more of a cohesive whole, which is why I want the two scenes to be worked on together.

Sam and Guy are pretty solid in their scene right now. The lines are still a little iffy and I would like a lot more overlapping. Also, the pace needs to be sped up; however, the groundwork has been laid for a really dynamic scene.

My scene with John is experiencing some of the same growing pains. As an actor, I think I need to stop being in my head so much.

4/4/2012: Rehearsal

Mary, John, and Rosemary

Today's work was also split between Sam and Tyler. Because we spent more time running the scene yesterday, I wanted to do more detail work today on Sam's scene.

Alma observed today, and some of her changes were very helpful. We changed the set from being all on the same plane to using angles and different walls, which increases overall use of the stage. Also, she saw that Sam was driving what should have been Guy's scene and said that she thought that Sam wanted an affair.

Rosemary and I discussed how to make Sam more nervous about meeting with Guy, not because she wants an affair, but because she really wants closure and the truth from a man who hasn't talked to her for fifteen years.

Therefore, Sam is now much meeker, a big change for someone as confident as Rosemary. Furthermore, we can give Guy more power in his posture and voice, so I'm thinking of ways to work with him on those aspects.

For Tyler's scene, we ran lines and did animal work, which I found very helpful. I think Tyler is a kitten, sleek and sexual but also playful. John decided to be a frog. He was really nervous about doing animal work but he committed to the exercise.

Of course, we had to change a bit of blocking due to the set change, but it didn't change so much that we have to completely redo everything we've done.

4/5/2012: Rehearsal

Mary, John, and Allison

We did some new blocking work with Lindsay and Guy's scene. Like the other scenes, we didn't have to change as much as I had feared. The scene is also pretty solid, though I need more reaction from John. The issue is that he is a beginning actor and working so hard; most important, he is doing a *great* job. So how do I tell him I need more emotion without it sounding condescending or like I don't like what he's already doing?

I also need a bit more vulnerability from Lindsay, but I feel really confidant in the overall character Allison has constructed. Her Lindsay is tough and smart, perfect for throwing Guy for a loop.

4/8/2012: Rehearsal

Mary, John, Rosemary, and Roxy (*Allison absent due to "Othello"*)

We did our first stumble through today, with me standing in for Allison. The whole play took two hours with stops and repeats. I think we can get each scene, except for the Bobbi scene, down to about 15 minutes and the actors agree.

Rosemary's Sam is much meeker, which fits the character. I told her she can still find anger and aggression in her character; they just need to develop as a reaction. I also told John to keep Guy's reactions equal to Sam's actions.

Rosemary did a bit more detail work with the Tyler/Guy scene, but we still got through it pretty successfully. I do need to work on blowback with John, though, as noted

by Roxy. Neither John nor I are smokers, which I think is obvious by how we handle the cigarettes. We'll have to do some detail work on that.

I like how the Bobbi/Guy scene is progressing, though it's clear we'll need to work a lot more on that than the others, due to its length and importance. I need to do some monologue work with John; he's doing well, but the work needs to be more specific.

I'm both pleased and anxious about our run-through. We did it, so that's great. Also, John now knows what it's like to do the four scenes back to back, on his feet. And, of course, our weaknesses are visible, so we can all tackle them.

4/9/2012: Rehearsal

Mary, Roxy, and John

We went through the scene again today. Also, we did voice work, which was valuable for John. He has a good voice when he knows how to use it. Right now, I'm having him talk to the opposite corners of the room; I notice a huge change when he does so. In addition, his posture has improved a lot. I'm very impressed with the amount of progress he has made in such a short time.

Roxy, as usual, does a great job with Bobbi. I still want her to be heaver and more mature, however.

We all agreed that we're going to meet again on Thursday.

4/10/2012: Rehearsal

Mary, Rosemary, and John

We're still working on John's voice, but he's improving a ton. He's starting to be able to think about his voice, posture, and stance all while doing the scene, which all work to give the character of Guy more power and presence.

Rosemary's physicality is also improved. She's beginning to be meek but also energetic, which drives the scene forward.

For the Tyler/Guy scene, we're having a few line issues, so we did a few speed-throughs in order to solidify the script. Also, we fine-tuned the blocking, especially the kissing/blowback parts. Rosemary also found places where she thinks Guy needs to provoke me more, which adds more dynamic action to the scene.

4/11/2012: Rehearsal rescheduled due to *Othello* preview

4/12/2012: Long Rehearsal

Mary, John, and Allison

I started this rehearsal being really nervous, as John and Allison were both so unsure of their lines. So I made them do the scene without me on book, so they would have to deal with skipping or missing lines on their own, as they're going to have to do in the actual production.

I was so relieved to see that they actually knew way more than they thought they did! The scene went by pretty quickly and they were able to find their lines. I'm getting more and more reaction out of John and more vulnerability out of Allison, which is perfect. And we got the scene down to 15:17!!!! The overlapping has much improved, as has John's voice. I am very happy with how this rehearsal went.

Mary, John, and Roxy

We really needed this rehearsal, but Roxy was so sick that we couldn't do as much as I had hoped. We were able to get through it once, though, and work on some improv that was requested by Roxy in order to forge a more emotional connection between Bobbi and Guy. I had them reenact their first meeting and first date.

Mary and John

John and I worked on his monologues by dividing them into beats and actions. It was a lot of work but very productive and necessary. At the end of rehearsal, John remarked how helpful it was…and that we'd been in the theatre for nine hours.

4/13/2012: Rehearsal

Mary, Rosemary, and John

We got the Sam/Guy scene down to 15:40! They're overlapping more and becoming more confident in their relationship, which really adds to the scene. John is self-correcting in posture, voice, and stance, which is excellent. Also, we've added some little moments in the blocking that help to develop each character.

The Tyler/Guy scene didn't go as well. I need to get out of my head. I noticed some really good moments in which I felt I was Tyler, so I need to extend that to the whole scene.

We did have a good rehearsal for John, though. Rosemary had him do some physical work to experience his frustration with Tyler's reaction. We all discussed how volatile Guy and Tyler's relationship used to be and how Guy expects her to be just as hot-tempered as she used to be. Therefore, he attempts to provoke her and for a minute, she responds. But Tyler lets it go, something that marks a big change in her character, demonstrating that she has matured while Guy is stuck in his same place.

4/15/2012: Rehearsal

Mary, John, Rosemary, and Roxy (*Allison absent due to "Othello"*)

We ran through the show today with me reading for Allison's scene. I'm feeling pretty good about it overall. John is able to get through the play without breaks, which is important! Once we have Allison, it'll be easier to see how it will go.

For the Tyler/Guy scene, we worked on some sensory work to better physicalize our characters. I found that helped me a lot, as I know the blocking and the lines but need to better embody Tyler.

4/16/2012: Cue-to-cue

Whole Company

We just went through the cues today in terms of lights, sound, props, and set. The set is really coming together! I'll want to change the sheets but I like the dimensions that Alma helped add. Laura is doing a great job of course. I'm very thankful to have her working on the show! The only little glitch at the moment is the music but she thinks we'll have it ready by tomorrow.

I also had my cast do a line-through in order to help us remember everything.

4/17/2012: Run-through

Mary, Rosemary, John, and Allison (*Roxy absent due to conflict*)

We did a run-through tonight with me reading for Roxy. The Sam/Guy scene went perfectly and we figured out how to make the microphone reveal work in the blocking in the Bobbi/Guy scene. The show is coming together more and more which is a big relief!

The biggest errors were skipping a few lines in the Tyler/Guy scene and the whole Lindsay/Guy scene, in which a lot of lines were skipped and the actors got confused. Therefore, I had both Allison and John stay after rehearsal to work through their scene a few times and John and I ran lines together.

4/18/2012: Run-through

Whole Company

The Sam, Tyler, and Lindsay scenes all went smoothly today. The only issue was with the Bobbi/Guy scene, so I made them go through the lines again after rehearsal. I still feel that we are in a strong place currently.

4/19/2012: Open Dress Rehearsal

Whole Company

The whole show was a lot smoother tonight. I loved having audience feedback; it definitely helps us as actors feel more energetic and responsive to one another! I'm having fun playing with Tyler onstage. I feel weird not being able to actually smoke, but otherwise I'm enjoying being someone who is so completely different from who I am.

The other actors are enjoying the experience as well. Allison is working with the different levels of anger that Lindsay feels, as well as her more sensitive moments, and Rosemary is really responding to the audience's laughter during her scene. John and Roxy are also doing great jobs, of course. I'm always impressed with Roxy's emotional ability, and John is doing very well for someone with practically no experience. I would like him to be more emotional in his voice, but I don't know if he can get there in time.

4/20/2012: Performance

Whole Company

The audience was a little larger tonight, but a lot less responsive. Even so, I think we put on a strong show. I was so worried about the size of the audience before we went up, but I realize it doesn't bother me as much as I thought it would. My actors and I have worked hard and created our own piece. We've been through a lot of drama to get to this point and I'm really proud of what we have made.

I would like Roxy to have a faster pace during her scene, as I felt it was lagging.

Another interesting point about the performance was one of John's female friends slapped him and called him a jerk. Clearly someone was affected!

4/21/12: Performance

Whole Company

The audience was a little louder tonight. I think we're getting better, pace-wise, and the show is getting more cohesive as our performances go on.

I talked with some theatre friends after the show and I was enthused that they found *Some Girl(s)* thought provoking; I especially liked hearing how they saw certain elements of the characters in their lives and relationships. A few girls talked for about an hour about our show! I love experiencing that response because I feel like we, as actors, changed something in them to cause it.

4/22/12: Final Performance

Whole Company

Today was difficult for me. We had our final show, which I thought finished strong, even if the audience was quieter than last night. I just cannot believe that this play that

we've all worked on for so long and has been in the works for about a year now is over. I am thankful to my actors for devoting so much time to this project, but I'm so sad to see them go on with their own things. I'm also thankful that I have this thesis as a very solid reminder of this project.

GUY'S BIOGRAPHY

Written with John Verticchio

Guy grew up in Seattle as an only child, which gave him a sense of independence from an early age. His mother was and still is overbearing, if sweet, while his father was an enigma to him. His father was also a boring, middle management type. Though his parents got along well enough, Guy always felt that they settled for each other because they were getting older and their standards dropped so that they wouldn't end up alone. However, they didn't fight much. Guy tried hard to have a close friend or two, including two boys, Tim and Kelly. Kelly and Guy were particularly close with Kelly being Guy's go-to-friend throughout high school. After high school, Guy did not have many close guy friends.

When he was little, Guy wanted to be an astronaut. Then, when he was about ten or so, he wanted to be a vagabond.

Guy knew Sam throughout middle school, though they never dated then. When they got to high school, they lost touch with one another, as the school was much larger. In their sophomore year, they had a class together and in the summer before their junior year, they started going out. Guy had never dated anyone before Sam.

Their relationship was exciting at first and they were too young to have any serious problems. They talked about getting married and, as Guy still thought adulthood was a long way off, he didn't realize that he didn't really want to marry her. When he finally understood that he wouldn't marry her, he kept talking about marriage because he didn't want to mess up their relationship too soon. While they went out for two years, the last six months were very rocky. Guy was always aware of the inherent expiration date that his and Sam's relationship had. They broke up officially in the spring of their junior year after knowing for a while that the relationship was over.

In addition, Guy had met another girl, and as he had been in a relationship with Sam for a long time, he was curious as to what a casual relationship would be like.

Guy went to college in L.A. and found himself floating around. He wanted to write, but didn't know exactly what he wanted his career to be. He tried poetry, but he kind of sucked at it. He hooked up with a few girls, but wasn't looking for a serious relationship.

When he met Bobbi, Guy didn't really think much about her. Then, he got to know her a bit more and used his usual plays to get her to like him. Their relationship built more and more and became a real romantic relationship. They went out for about three years.

In the summer before his senior year of college, Guy met Billi. He never hit on her or anything, even if he fantasized about it, as he didn't want to screw up his relationship with Bobbi.

Bobbi and Guy had a very serious relationship that went pretty quickly. By senior year, they were thinking and talking about a future together. In one conversation, they even discussed getting engaged; looking back, Guy realized he got too ahead of himself and that he discussed marriage with her because he thought he was supposed to do so.

They began having problems during the second semester of their senior year when Bobbi knew that she was going to med school and Guy had applied to grad school. The relationship wasn't really working, as Guy had become less deluded about him and Bobbi.

Guy then went to Northwestern for graduate school. He held onto his relationship with Bobbi for a little bit, but had problems dealing with the distance in addition to the other issues. Guy was selfish: he wanted the relationship to work in order for him to feel more secure rather than because he wanted to be with Bobbi.

He started going out to bars and clubs with people in his classes and on one of those outings, he met Tyler. She was exciting, attractive, and had a thing about her. Also, Guy was lonely. Tyler was different from his previous ex-girlfriends: While Sam had been a nice girl and Bobbi had been focused and ambitious, Tyler was forceful, spontaneous, uninhibited, and independent. Guy had never experienced another girl like her.

They moved in together, which was Guy's idea; he wanted to be more spontaneous like she was and moving in together solidified their togetherness. At first, their relationship was informal and they made assumptions about the other's behavior because they didn't really want to talk out their issues or feelings.

Before they moved in together, Guy had been calling Bobbi, but after he moved in with Tyler, he stopped talking to Bobbi. He thought he should have been more hung up on her and felt a little guilty about moving on. So he called her and hung up because he liked the romantic notion of yearning for her from afar, even if he knew he didn't really feel that way.

In his new relationship, Guy wanted Tyler to think he got more outside action than he really did, as she seemed relatively open and to have plenty of admirers. Therefore, they had a somewhat open relationship, even if Guy would have preferred for them to be monogamous.

Guy thought it was cool that Tyler was an artist but he wasn't super into it. Also, Tyler smoked and liked pot. She never did anything harder around Guy because she understood that he wouldn't be interested.

Guy didn't promise a whole lot to Tyler, as he knew his time in Chicago was limited. He had thought about their future a little bit, but didn't mention it so much with her. One of the promises he did make to her was that he promised to maybe take her with him when he moved. When he left Chicago, they had a fight on the staircase, but Guy considered this type of outburst par for the course where their relationship was concerned.

When Guy moved to Boston, he met Lindsay almost immediately at a work function. She was significantly younger than her husband and older than Guy. Their affair started in October, when they met at the hotel room that would their go-to place. Before the affair, they had talked occasionally, in a mostly professional manner. He said something one day that caught her off guard, then he kissed her.

Lindsay's intelligence wasn't so shocking for Guy, as he had previous experience with academically intelligent women when he dated Bobbi.

Guy was impressed with himself for teaching a graduate literature course, but he was unprepared. He tried to write but spent a lot more time than he had expected organizing his course. He had only a small piece published.

With Lindsay, Guy kept promising "tomorrows." As her husband was away, he didn't have to consider the tomorrows or the consequences of his actions. But all of his promises to her were made more for the sake of the affair than because he felt them.

They were caught in the second semester by a student to saw them together and confronted them. Guy ran away.

He spent time floating around, writing and teaching to get by. Guy had written enough to get noticed in the professional community and decided to eventually move to New York, even though he didn't have a job when he made that decision. He began writing better, more mature pieces and got a teaching job at NYU.

Guy met a few girls, though he wasn't into the whole bar scene as much as he had been when he was younger.

When he was about thirty-two, he met Alex, who was the friend of one of his students. She was kind of a weirdo, according to Guy, and was taking nursing classes; she wanted to do something "noble" but wasn't smart enough to become a doctor. She was also young and naïve, which gave Guy the control in the relationship. Her parents were at first wary and surprised regarding the relationship, but wanted to be supportive of Alex.

Guy is becoming more and more aware of getting older and thinks he should settle down, but he doesn't realize that he hasn't actually matured.

He is proud of having his piece, "The Calculus of Desire," accepted by *The New Yorker* and plans to write a book when he gets older. Guy considers his talent to be writing what people enjoy reading.

In terms of his good qualities, Guy has a romanticized version of the world and is optimistic. He struggles with focusing and figuring out what he wants to do, but once he does, he goes after it. In addition, he is good in bed; he is not as good as he thinks he is.

Guy doesn't see himself as a douche but instead feels that he has been justified in his actions.

His next story will be for *Esquire*. He wants to use the trip to see his ex-girlfriends in order to further his career, but is also curious to see how they are. He thought of the story soon after he got engaged to Alex.

He wanted to see Sam because she was his first serious girlfriend; Bobbi because she was the one who "could have been more"; Lindsay because she was the one he hurt the most; and Tyler because of her relationship, in his mind, to Bobbi and because he knows he can probably sleep with her.

When he first meets with Sam, he is a little nervous about whether or now she will show up. He is sort of happy to see her again and see how she's doing. Guy feels justified in breaking up with her and thinks that it was the best thing for both of them, as her life fits her and is nothing he would ever want for himself. He still does care for her a little bit and their relationship was a formative experience for him.

When he sees her, the first thing he notices is how old she has gotten. When Sam brings up the girl with whom Guy had attended prom, he legitimately had forgotten about it

and is caught off guard. He does remember her sooner than he lets on, but wants to play it off like it's not a big deal. Furthermore, he knows that bringing up the other girl will make it more difficult for him to patch things up with Sam. Even though he has been slapped, when Sam leaves for the final time, Guy feels that the meeting went well. He mentions the engagement last because he has been more focused on working things up with Sam than telling her that he is getting married.

When Guy goes to Chicago to see Tyler, he thinks that the meeting will be easier because of the type of relationship they had. He is excited to see her and thinks that she will still be cute. When he sees her, he thinks that she looks good. They start talking and are very comfortable with one another. Guy made sure that he waited until they were face-to-face before he told her about the engagement, because otherwise, he knew that Tyler would have time to think about her actions a bit more and she might be more hesitant to see him.

While meeting with Tyler, Guy mentions his secret phone calls to Bobbi because he thinks that Tyler should know. By holding onto Bobbi, he never really gave his relationship with Tyler a chance to become more permanent and feels that he should address this with Tyler to see whether or not she feels the same way. He continues to probe her with recollections of Bobbi when she shrugs it off, due to the story and because he wants to have mattered more to her.

He eventually has sex with Tyler in the hotel. Guy is scared by the fact that he doesn't regret cheating on his fiancée, which leads him to question how good of a person he is and is feelings about Alex.

Before he sees Lindsay, he is frightened of both her and her husband. Guy also knows that what he did to her was bad but is a little excited of the possibilities that their meeting will have for his story. When he sees her, he is seeing her for the first time since he ran away from Boston and it really hits Guy how much he ruined her life. He's not surprised that she is still with her husband. He didn't want to really think about the consequences to the affair because in his mind, Guy is still good and, somewhere, he knows that having an affair with a married woman is not what a "good" person does.

When he hears that Lindsay's husband is outside the hotel, Guy is scared and confused because he is finally faced with the consequences of his and Lindsay's affair.

Lindsay tells Guy that she and her husband tracked Alex down, which surprises Guy. He continues to realize that his relationship with Alex is extremely fragile enough already.

Lindsay commands Guy to sleep with her on behalf of her and her husband, which shocks Guy. He can't even begin to understand her reasons for doing so, nor that her husband has okayed it. Guy decides to have sex with Lindsay mainly because he fears what will happen between him and Alex if she finds out that he's visiting his exes. Guy also is a little sexually excited at the prospect of sleeping with Lindsay again.

After Lindsay leaves him alone in the room in his boxers, Guy is humiliated. He calls Alex because she is hot, young, and pliable; in other words, unlike in his interaction with Lindsay, Guy has the control.

Guy finally visits Bobbi, who he has romanticized as "the one that got away." He thinks he fucked up the most by leaving her and this thought bothers him. He is nervous to see her, due to the serious feelings he had had for her in the past.

When he sees Bobbi, he doesn't know what to think. He is very curious about her life, where she's gone, etc. and knows that she is more important to him than any other of his romantic interests, past and present.

When Bobbi yells at him, Guy feels that he must defend himself. After all, he truly thinks he's justified in his actions and his writing. He tells her he loves her and thinks that he has convinced her of his sincerity. But Bobbi shuts him down.

Guy is extremely surprised and shattered: he put himself out there for her and she rejected him.

He starts to destroy the recording, thinking that he's just gotten screwed over and he doesn't want everyone to know. He also can't put the person on the tape together in his mind with his current self.

Then Alex calls him. He understands that this is his life now, and is snapped back to reality. Guy can salvage the experience of his humiliation by writing the story for *Esquire* and going back to Alex, even if some part of him knows that relationship will not last either: he has, after all, his moments of epiphany but wants to continue to justify his actions to himself.

SAM'S BIOGRAPHY

Written with Rosemary Kulp

Sam is a very involved mother and wife. She has three children: her oldest is her son John, who is twelve; her middle child is Sarah, who is seven; and her youngest is Jamie, who is five. Sam lives with her children and husband, Tom, in Seattle.

While Jamie and Sarah attend nearby Leshi Elementary School, where Sarah is studying in the gifted program, John is a student at Washington Middle School. John is interested in arts and Washington has a strong arts program, but Sam is worried about the weak science program. She wants to get John a science tutor soon so he can perhaps get into a magnet school. Jamie, meanwhile, shows signs of being the "wild one" of the family; Sam and Tom are constantly getting complaints from teachers about Jamie's hyperactivity.

Sam's husband Tom is a Safeway store manager and she earns some of her own money as an independent Mary Kay sales representative. She uses her money for her children's college funds and also has some spare money for herself.

Sam grew up in a happy household and got along well with her parents, with whom she is still close. She never had any reason to get out of her world and was a little scared to do so. She has always been happy with her neighbors and community. When she was little, Sam wanted to be a ballerina. But then, when she was about twelve, she realized that she wanted to be a writer. In high school, she was popular and well liked, even though she wasn't the head cheerleader or anything of the sort. But she did well in school and had a good group of friends.

Sam met Guy in her freshman year writing class in high school. He was dating some dumb girl at the time. But by sophomore year, he and Sam started dating after he told Sam that he had broken up with the other girl. It was only when Sam and Guy later broke up when Sam questioned whether or not Guy had been telling the truth.

The first year of Sam and Guy's relationship went really well. Guy would show his love for Sam by writing poems for her. On their one-year anniversary, Guy and Sam lost their virginity to one another, though Guy had wanted to have sex for a few months beforehand.

Then, the summer before their senior year, Sam noticed that Guy started acting weird. He started bailing on their weekend plans. Afterwards, Sam went on her family vacation and didn't see him for a week. When the new school year started, Guy wouldn't talk to her, but then he would hook up with her on the weekend. He would seem more serious about their relationship again for a while before bailing on her all over again. Sam wondered whether or not he was seeing someone else and also felt weird about not seeing Guy's mother anymore, who had become almost like a second mother to her during their relationship.

After graduating from high school, Sam went to a small, local college that was generally attended by members of the nearby community. Sam remembers these as "bad years," as she was very distrustful of people and still reeling from her relationship with Guy. She spent her freshman year and the first semester of her sophomore year journaling and writing poetry to find herself again.

The second semester of her sophomore year, Sam met Tom, a fellow student who worked at a garage in his spare time and wanted to eventually open his own garage. He was old-fashioned, sweet, and her friends liked him. They had an awkward first date and Sam thought that she would never go out with him again. But she saw him again at a party and they kissed, leading them to date casually for a while. Over the time that they were casually dating, Tom became a good friend to Sam. Then the two of them began a more serious relationship. After college, Tom asked Sam's parents for her hand. They got married and had their first child, John, within the next year. Tom left the garage job for better hours and pay at the local Safeway, eventually climbing the ranks from stock boy to store manager.

The fact that she was married so young does lead Sam to question "what if" from time to time, especially when she meets other men. Also, there is always the question, even if it is faint, in the back of her head about Guy. When she is happy, Sam hopes that he is happy. When she is angry, she pictures him as a starving writer.

When John was still a baby, Sam and Tom had their first real fight. Tom had found Sam's poems from her freshman and sophomore years in college. They referred to Guy a lot, more often than not in a melodramatic way that caused Sam to cringe when she reread them. However, when Tom found them, he teased Sam about them. Due to her emotional

state, embarrassment, and fatigue from dealing with baby John, Sam reacted poorly. The fight was the only time Sam thought, even very vaguely, about separating with Tom because she worried about him not understanding her.

But they got through it and talked openly about the relationship Sam had had with Guy, leading Tom to hate Guy more than anybody else he knew or he knew about.

When Sam compares Guy and Tom, she sees Tom as more reliable, affectionate, and even cuter. Furthermore, Tom is a "what you see is what you get" kind of man and is also a great dad. Meanwhile, Guy is eloquent, passionate, and has been romanticized in her head. He was always enigmatic to her, which attracted Sam, as she wanted to be able to see into his mind. Guy was clever and there was a sense of playfulness between them as well as a fun banter. Yet Guy was always wary of kids, which Sam always wanted. Guy and she had discussed marriage when they had been together and Sam thought, at the time, he actually would have married her.

When she gets the phone call from Guy, Sam doesn't know what to think. She wonders if she should tell Tom and if she should go. In a brief moment, she fantasizes about running away from her problems and responsibilities.

When she sees Guy at the hotel, she doesn't recognize him like she thought she would. To her slight disappointment, he's still very good-looking, which causes her to lose confidence in her own appearance. After all, she wants *him* to realize that he fucked-up by breaking up with her which she thinks he will realize if he still finds her sexually desirable.

Sam, most importantly, wants closure. She wants to know why he ended their relationship and thinks he owes her the answers. Also, she wants to know if he cheated on her, as she later heard rumors about him and other girls. Sam wants to know if there was something wrong with her that led to his breaking up with her. Finally, she wants to deck him.

When Sam sees how Guy turned out, she has a morbid sense of satisfaction that he is not famous and rich. When he tells her that he's getting married, Sam is floored. She, after all, had written him off as someone who wasn't going to get married. But she also sees a dark humor in it; she should have known something was happening because there had to be a real reason for his returning to Seattle.

When she walks out of the hotel room, she doesn't want to see Guy again. She realizes that she loves her husband and kids too much to ever run away from them and resolves to tell Tom about meeting with Guy as soon as she sees him.

In the future, Sam hopes that Jamie will calm down, John will get into a good school, Sarah will continue to do well, Tom can open his own mechanic's shop, and that she will eventually be able to complete and publish a family-oriented novel. Also, maybe they will get a dog, as Tom, John, and Sarah have all been begging for one, though Jamie is scared of dogs and Sam knows that she'll be the one taking care of it.

TYLER'S BIOGRAPHY

Tyler Autumn Lambert was born in Chicago, IL to her two artist parents, Didi Smith and Richard Lambert. They weren't married, but still led a traditional life in many ways: man and woman, living together, with a little girl.

Money was a little tight until Didi got offered a lucrative children's story illustrator job for a series of books about Prince Luke and his magical friends. While they were hardly rolling in dough, the family enjoyed a nice loft apartment, lots of social gatherings, and managed to get Tyler into a posh preschool when she was three.

Richard started spending less and less time at home, however. Tyler doesn't remember much except for a screaming match between him and Didi that scared Tyler so much that she ran to cuddle with her stuffed giraffe in her room. Richard, it turns out, had been cheating with his muse, a college student named Lila who posed nude for his photographs. When Didi found out, she confronted Richard who told her he had been cheating but felt it was "only natural."

The next day, Didi moved her, Tyler, and their things over to a friend's apartment. They stayed for three weeks until Didi found a new place. The new apartment was a one-bedroom place, still in Chicago. Tyler slept in the study nook in a foldaway bed.

Richard worked out that he could see Tyler once a week, but he soon moved to Miami with Lila and only called a few times a year. Tyler missed her Dad and had to deal, even at age five, with her mother's increased alcohol use. The worst part though was the men that Didi would have over.

Eventually, Didi found a more serious boyfriend, Allan, but they had settled on a weird sort of open relationship. Tyler and Didi moved into Allan's apartment, where Tyler had her own room, when Tyler was nine. Didi's alcohol use had lessened and she seemed happy with Allan. Also, she got a new contract for another series of children's books (*Penny the Picky Penguin*).

Tyler worked on her art in private because she thought her stuff couldn't compare to her mother's. One day when Tyler was fourteen, though, her mother hosted a gallery-style soiree with artist friends and one of those friends, Beth, found one of Tyler's

drawings. She thought the drawing was one of Didi's and asked why it wasn't in the show. From then on, Didi always included a few works of Tyler's in her shows.

When Tyler entered high school, she found that she got a lot of attention from boys. She thought, at first, that they thought she was weird: she was skinny, thought she had bad skin, and was artsy and not athletic. But she soon found out, once she had an English class freshman year, that even the jocks thought she was attractive. Tyler was invited to a party and went with her best friend, Chantal.

The party was where Tyler had her first beer (she was allowed some wine with her mom at home) and her first kiss, with Dustin Kinnerman. He dumped her (or so Tyler felt) for his on-again, off-again cheerleader girlfriend Cathy. Tyler got revenge by making out with Dustin's best friend, Chris, which made Dustin jealous. Dustin and Tyler started covertly hooking up to make out and eventually, sophomore year, have sex.

Tyler then garnered the attraction of an assistant football coach at the school who was just out of college and had some boring business job in Chicago and Tyler dumped Dustin. Tyler and Owen started their own little fling, which included a few too many nights of smoking pot and having sex in his apartment and Tyler's subsequent stumbling home at three A.M. Owen broke the relationship off when he was offered a job in Minneapolis.

By the time senior year rolled around, Tyler knew she was through with dating high school boys. She had some guy friends she would hang out with, but she and Chantal would focus their energies on sneaking into bars with fake IDs near the University of Chicago so they could meet and hook up with college guys.

Tyler applied to Columbia College Chicago and got a partial scholarship due to her impressive portfolio. In her freshman year, she met an acting major, Bryan, with whom she started a tumultuous relationship. They would have sex, fight, make up, do drugs, and the cycle would continue. Tyler's grades were slipping but she convinced herself that her drug-induced work was more "authentic" than the work she did sober. One night, Bryan had too much cocaine and had to be rushed to the hospital while Tyler was at the art studio working on her final project. Bryan was pulled out of school immediately by his parents and Tyler decided to stick with alcohol, cigarettes, and pot, for the most part.

In her sophomore year, Tyler made one of the school's best art shows with a large painting (in acrylics on canvas) of a terrorized child sitting beneath two fighting adults.

Tyler managed to sell the painting for a bit of money to a well-connected alum, which she then spent on clothes and better quality pot.

In her junior year, Tyler turned 21 and hit a few bars for her birthday with her art friends Lorrie and Mitch. She was bought a drink by a cute, charming guy who told her he was working on his master's at Northwestern in literature. Tyler was impressed with him, but she didn't want to seem to eager, so she hinted that, maybe, she'd be back next week.

The next week came and Tyler had to do everything in her power to stop from running to the bar as soon as it opened. Instead, she and Lorrie took shots of tequila in Lorrie's room until 11:30 when they went to the bar.

Tyler saw that the guy was there and, being more than a bit drunk, walked over to him, grabbed him by the hand, took him to a corner, and kissed him. They ended up back at his studio apartment on Michigan Ave and she spent the night with him. The next morning, she sneaked out, leaving her name and number on a paper towel in lipstick.

Tyler heard from him a few days later and he wanted to hang out. They went to dinner at a Chinese place and went back to his place for sex. The pattern of hanging out and hooking up continued for a couple of months. Tyler introduced the guy to pot, which he liked but didn't love, and cigarette blowback.

But she kept seeing a few other guys and was a little disappointed when her main guy didn't say he minded.

One day in December, right before Christmas break, Tyler's RA caught her smoking pot in her room and reported her. The college told her she could keep her scholarship if she didn't live on campus anymore.

That night, over wine and pasta at the guy's place, Tyler told him that she had to somehow find a new place and she didn't want to move back with her mom and Allan; the guy suggested that she move in with him, "for now."

Tyler moved in the next day.

For the next few months, she would catch her guy calling someone and quickly hanging up the phone. At first, she didn't think much of it, but after two weeks or so, she thought he must have someone else. So she made sure to see more of her other men. Tyler also checked the phone bill when it'd come in and she noticed that her guy didn't even have a real conversation with whomever he was calling; in addition, this chick was in California,

so she wasn't such an immediate threat. It still sucked, but she didn't want to seem like she had been snooping so she didn't mention it.

But her guy was calling California less and less. Soon, the calls stopped. He seemed more engaged with Tyler and got more sexually adventurous with her.

She worked on her art and painted a few portraits of her guy, one of which she gave to him. Tyler realized she cared a lot more about him than any guy before, which scared the shit out of her. She wanted to test the waters before she fully committed herself to him, especially because she saw all the stuff her mom went through with her dad. So one night, after smoking pot, she brought up one of her other guys. She thought her main guy seemed to mind a little, but he didn't say anything.

Tyler was angry and hurt; she wanted him to lash out. She started crying and stormed into the bathroom with a half-finished bottle of wine and locked herself in while drinking and crying in the bathtub. The guy knocked on the door and begged her to come out; and while Tyler wanted more than anything to run to him and tell him she loved him, she didn't want to seem like she was weak. So she stayed for ten more minutes. She was just about to leave when her guy slipped a piece of paper under the door: it was a poem to her.

She threw open the door and kissed her guy.

Things went okay for a bit: sometimes she would be at the art studio all night or her guy would spend all day at the library on some boring paper. He tried to talk to Tyler about his work, and she would try to listen, but she knew that he didn't really care if she understood him or not; he just wanted, in her mind, to hear himself speak. So Tyler would just talk about her art, which she knew he didn't get.

In the summer before her senior year, Tyler got a waitress job at a restaurant near their apartment. There she met a guy, Courtney, who was a bartender and a musician. Courtney was beautiful and had girls swarming all over him, but he seemed most interested in Tyler. He even asked her to design something for his band's album cover, which sold a few copies on the indie scene but didn't make the huge splash Courtney was hoping for.

When Tyler started her senior year, she wondered if she and her guy were going to do anything for their anniversary. They were living together for months now and were clearly in some sort of relationship, but that relationship was not defined; her guy called

her his "girl" but never "girlfriend." And the difference, to Tyler, was obvious. The week before their anniversary, her guy still hadn't mentioned anything.

Tyler, furious and heartbroken, kissed Courtney after work. While they were kissing, her guy came into the closed restaurant (Tyler and Courtney hadn't locked the door). Tyler looked up and saw her guy staring at her before turning around and walking out. She ran after him and they had a loud fight back at their place. The neighbors weren't happy.

He told her he didn't like seeing her with anyone else, which annoyed her but also made her a little satisfied. Tyler told him, "okay." And then make-up sex happened.

The year after college, Tyler and her guy were still living together as he finished his masters and she continued to waitress and try to get her art stuff off of the ground. But Tyler could feel herself losing him. He kept talking about wanting to travel around. He wanted to live in New York. He didn't ever mention her. Tyler tried more adventurous sex to keep him interested, but her guy didn't change his mind.

He also, in all of their time together, never told her he loved her. Tyler knew, as much as she didn't want to, she loved him. She didn't necessarily want to get married and have kids, but she wanted to be with him; even though he could be pretentious and annoying, she loved his sense of humor and cleverness.

And he wanted to leave.

Sometimes, when her guy was at school or work, Tyler would cry. She took a shirt of his and put it in her dresser, next to the poem he had written for her. She stopped painting. She didn't want to hang out with anyone else. She lost a little weight. But when her guy came home, she pretended nothing was wrong.

But her guy was slipping away from her. Tyler saw it and she hated it and she hated that she couldn't tell him that she loved him.

A month before he left Chicago, he took Tyler out for dinner at the bar where they met. Tyler was hoping so much that he would tell her he loved her. She hoped that he would ask her to come with her or be his girlfriend or anything.

He didn't and it became more apparent over the course of the evening he wouldn't. Instead, he kept talking about how excited he was for his new job because he could meet

people like him. Then he made some bullshit literary reference and all Tyler could do was drink her wine in response.

While walking up the stairs to his apartment, he asked her what her problem was. She told him that the only problem she had was with his "fucking pretentious attitude made of nothing but bullshit." He yelled that he wasn't pretentious, he was just "smart," and then the fight was ON. They screamed at each other for twenty solid minutes before going to their apartment and screaming some more, until she told him, finally, that she obviously didn't mean anything to him, so why did he care? He wrapped her in his arms while she cried (before the make-up sex, in any case).

By the next week, he had moved to Boston. Tyler couldn't face staying in "their" place without him, so she found a smaller studio nearby. She kept waitressing but she cried over her guy every night for three or so months. She reconnected with Courtney and had drunken sex with him.

Tyler began to paint again and little by little began to feel better. She broke up with Courtney - who didn't seem too disappointed - and reconnected with Lorrie. Tyler soon had enough paintings and sketches for a gallery show. She sold a few small pieces, which didn't provide her with a lot of money but did make her feel better about her art and life.

At one of her shows, she met an older man (well, thirty-eight to her twenty-four) who worked for a big consulting firm. He bought a small sketch of hers and asked her out for a glass or two of wine. Tyler learned that Quinn was married, but she wasn't in a place to care much. They spent the night at a nice hotel and ordered room service the next morning.

Tyler started seeing Quinn a few times a month. He offered to buy more pieces or pay for her rent so she could quit waitressing, but she refused; she had already relied on one guy to take care of her and that led to her having a three-month long emotional breakdown. A year into her relationship with Quinn, he told her he loved her and wanted to divorce his wife to be with her. Tyler told him their relationship was over and she left the hotel.

Tyler focused more on her work and resolved to be through - for two months - with guys. Except, of course, for Courtney. But he didn't really count, because they just used each other for sex.

Didi came to dinner one night and asked if Tyler wanted to take a jewelry-making class with her. At first Tyler thought that she didn't really want to, but she didn't want to disappoint Didi, so she said that she would.

She found she liked jewelry, and though she knew the actual craft wasn't her strong suit, Tyler had fun designing. Another girl in her class, Stacy, was better at the crafting. So Stacy and Tyler decided, after the class ended, to start up their own line of jewelry called "Stacy Tyler." They started with small sterling and semi-precious pieces and sold them to a few galleries and boutiques. They noticed they sold more earrings than anything else, so they kept making a lot of earrings. Tyler also designed their web page.

A year or so into the project, when Tyler was 26, they had enough money to expand to gold vermeil jewelry. Tyler wished they had more money for real gold, but she liked the change. They even had a few buyers out of state, including Lorrie, who had moved to Santa Cruz with her girlfriend Hallie and opened her own art boutique.

Tyler felt everything was going pretty well. She even noticed that she thought of her guy less and less. She started seeing a few other guys, but there was no one she felt serious about. She moved into a nicer apartment in the Fisher Building. She even sold some paintings and sketches, though most of her money was still coming through the jewelry line.

Then Tyler met Tommy, a literature professor at University of Chicago. He was handsome, sweet, and just recently divorced. He wanted them to move in together, but Tyler told him that wasn't her style. Her response put him off a little, but he still dated her. On her 27th birthday, Tommy took Tyler out to a nice restaurant. After dinner, he took her to his place where there were rose petals scattered everywhere. He got down on one knee and proposed.

Tyler was confused; they had never said, "I love you," or anything of the sort. She told him she was sorry, but she couldn't, which led to a fight. In the middle of the fight, Tommy called her Renee, his ex-wife's name, and Tyler suddenly understood that Tommy was one of those guys who couldn't bear to be alone. So she walked out and didn't look back.

At this time, Lorrie and Hallie had a commitment ceremony in Santa Cruz. Tyler travelled to be with them and a bunch of their other art friends; she couldn't help but notice

how many of her peers were engaged or newly married. One of her old classmates was even pregnant. A classmate who most definitely had been out of the loop for a while asked where Tyler's guy was; she responded that they had broken up years ago, to which the classmate said that she was certain they'd be married by now. Tyler went to the bar and drank a lot of wine. She was approached by a cousin of Hallie's and slept with him later that night.

Tyler got home to Chicago and started painting. She wasn't sure, when she started, what she wanted to paint; she just knew she needed to feel the paintbrush (sable) in her hand and see the color do as she made it. She was the creator; everything under her hand had to obey her, unlike the chaos she actually had to deal with in her life. She realized, after a while, that the painting was looking more and more like her guy in bed, tangled in the sheets with the morning sun streaming on him. Tyler shipped the painting out to Lorrie with a note attached that said, "Please just sell this. I don't give a fuck for how much."

Tyler continued to immerse herself in her work; Stacy Tyler was doing pretty well and Tyler had to keep up with the demand for more variety in the designs. They were now selling to little boutiques all over the country and kept getting requests from others. Stacy hired a business manager, Sydney, who was much better at the business stuff than either of them and freed them up. They also got Stacy's little sister, Greer, to act as a sort of sales rep. Greer was in college, but over her breaks she would take trips to meet with boutique owners.

In terms of boys, Tyler was still seeing a few men on the regular. Whenever things got too serious, though, she would break it off and start seeing someone else.

The week before Tyler's 30th, birthday, Stacy told her that she and her boyfriend Glenn were getting married AND they were pregnant. Tyler was happy for them but she wondered if she would ever meet anyone else besides her guy who would make her even consider marriage and kids. But mainly she reminded herself that it wasn't worth it if she didn't love her partner and trust him; she feared ending up like her mom, who was mostly happy with Allan but still had issues with the whole open relationship thing.

One day, when Tyler was at the dentist, she was flipping through *The New Yorker* when she saw her guy's name and a story he had written, "The Calculus of Desire." Her name was called then, so she stuffed the magazine into her bag and thought about the story

all through her check-up. She ran home and read it afterwards. She couldn't believe it! She was clearly mentioned in the story. Sure, she was "Casey" but all the sex stuff was there, as was the description of "Casey": "a bohemian artist whose free spirit extended to a fiery sexuality." Yep, that sounded like her guy.

She was excited that she was important enough to be mentioned in the story, but didn't really like how many other girls he wrote about. Not that she was expecting him to stay chaste, or anything, but she still didn't really like to think about him with others.

A few months later, she got an e-mail from the guy. He was going to be in Chicago and he wanted to see her to talk. Tyler was curious; what could he possibly ask her about? Did he just want to have sex? Did he want to talk about their relationship? Did he just want to catch up? Was he moving back to Chicago?

Tyler didn't like how much she was focusing on the guy, so she designed a whole new line of earrings. But as the meeting approached, Tyler couldn't stop wondering what would happen.

The week before she met with the guy, she visited one of her men. But she still thought about the guy. She worked more and drank more; the thoughts didn't subside.

The day of the meeting, she made sure she looked good, did her makeup, put on perfume, put her cigarettes and some pot in her purse, and headed to the hotel where the guy was.

She was anxious about what would happen, but confident because she knew she looked good. She got plenty of looks on the street from men all the time, including on her way to the hotel, which reinforced her resolve. "No matter what happens," she told herself, "I'll be fine."

Tyler got to the hotel and found his room. She held herself tall and knocked on the door. There he was: her guy, smiling at her, wearing khakis and an oxford shirt. They hugged, said hi, and he invited her into the room. They sat down and made a bit of small talk and when Tyler asked how the guy was, he told her he was engaged and getting married.

The response surprised her, but Tyler wanted to seem happy for him. But the whole time she was looking at him, all she could think of was how much she still wanted him. He had gotten even better looking and he was still charming. She kissed him and he kissed her

back. But then he stopped. Tyler was confused; didn't he just tell her he still wanted her? I mean, it's not like marriage means much anymore, she reasoned. He told her he was trying to be faithful to his fiancée, which made Tyler a little jealous because he never tried to be loyal to her. But she tried to act like everything was cool. After all, they hadn't seen each other in years; he didn't really owe her anything. But she really wanted to fuck him, remind him of how awesome their time together was. Plus, he didn't seem super thrilled about being loyal to his fiancée anyway. So Tyler kissed him again. This time, he kissed her back a lot more passionately. And for longer. But he still pulled away.

Tyler still wanted to seem cool with it, so she told him "whatever." She tried to get him to articulate just why he wanted to be loyal now. He really sucked at it, especially for someone who was supposed to use words for work. But he was still so cute.

Tyler got nervous and really wanted a smoke. She asked if she could and he told her it was a smoking room. As she lit her cigarette, Tyler remembered he didn't smoke. She asked him why he got a smoking room and the guy told her it was for her. She was complimented that he thought of her but a little insulted that he assumed she'd show up. What if she had found someone else? What if she didn't care about him? Of course, neither of those options were true but she didn't like the assumption that she was always just available to him, especially when he was getting married to someone else. He thought he was so strong? *Well, I can still seduce you. Easy,* thought Tyler.

She started giving him some blowback form the cigarette, and flirtily darted forward and kissed him. He then grabbed her and pulled her close to him, but Tyler whispered, "...don't forget about your vow thingie." She had tested him, and she had won.

They started to talk about their relationship. Tyler told him that she had dated a lot of guys (well, it's true) that she's forgotten, but she never forgot her guy. Then the guy told her that was why he came to see her, because he never forgot her either.

Tyler was excited; would he tell her that he loved her once? That he still loved her? Or something else?

The guy told Tyler that she was one of a few exes of his that he was going around seeing. She tried to keep cool as she asked him how many girls, but she felt a little heartbroken. How serious could he be about his marriage if he was visiting exes? Then he made an annoying literary reference, which just pissed her off. He *knew* she wouldn't know

what the fuck he was talking about, and she told him so. Then he made another literary reference. He explained that he wanted to make sure everything was okay, that he hadn't hurt her.

Tyler didn't want to admit, now that he had told her about these exes who were just as important as she was to him, that she had indeed loved him once and still thought about him. So she told him that she hadn't been hurt and that she had thought she had broken up with him. In a moment of weakness, she mentioned their fight on the stairway, but then covered that up by saying that she didn't really think of him as the cause of anything serious.

The guy then said that he didn't think that he had given her a chance to have a real relationship with him. He told her that he had been hurt regarding the girl he left for Tyler. But he enjoyed all the sex. Tyler then wondered if that was all he had thought she'd been good for.

Yet she tried to joke around and deflect the talk from their relationship and this California chick. The guy, however, just kept prodding and prodding until Tyler admitted that she caught him hanging up the phone all those times and even checked the phone bill. She admitted that it hurt her to be second in their relationship at first, though she became more of a priority later, when he eventually came around. Tyler elbowed him and called him a prick, but in a playful way; she didn't want him to see how hurt she still was by what had happened.

She turned away to wipe a tear so he wouldn't see and lit a cigarette. Tyler watched as the guy breathed in the smoke and knew she could still make him weak; she offered some blowback, which he accepted. He tried to make her promise that she wouldn't use tongue, but she knew him; he was just covering his ass so he could tell himself he tried not to be seduced.

In her future, Tyler hopes to find a little bit more direction in her life without turning all boring and moving to the suburbs. She wants to find one guy who she actually loves. Maybe she'll even quit smoking; she hears it's bad for your skin.

Biography: Lindsay

Written with Allison Lawrence

Lindsay grew up in Rhode Island with her upper middle-class family. Her parents were moderate with a slight conservative edge, though they always encouraged Lindsay to speak her mind and were of the belief that education is extremely important; therefore, they always expected that she would attend college. Lindsay's independence was also magnified due to her being an only child.

As a child, Lindsay wanted to be an astronaut. However, she discovered later that she was not too interested in science and also thought that she couldn't be a scientist because she was a girl.

In her freshman year of high school, Lindsay started dating her first boyfriend. He was really sweet and they had a happy relationship. But his dad got a new job somewhere else and he had to move away, leaving Lindsay heartbroken. Afterwards, Lindsay went on a few dates, but did not have another serious boyfriend in high school.

Lindsay decided to go to a college on the west coast. According to her, she went "a little wild" with partying and sex, though she is quick to point out that she didn't have orgies or anything; she did have multiple sexual and emotional relationships with men, but she didn't have a serious boyfriend.

In college, the feminist movement was gaining attention and followers. Lindsay was excited by the discussion of women's rights, as she was never the homemaker type anyway.

For graduate school, Lindsay returned to the East Coast, though she went to Boston instead of going back to Rhode Island. Her graduate work confirmed her interest in women's studies and Lindsay wrote her Master's Thesis on women in ancient times. She was, at this time, more interested in school than her social life and she discovered that she wanted to spend the rest of her life studying and teaching.

While she was working on her Ph.D., Lindsay got a job at Boston University teaching gender politics. She continued teaching at BU after she got her PhD and got a full teaching job. She now has tenure.

When she was 28, Lindsay met her future husband, David Bergstram, a fellow professor at BU. He was 39 at the time. She attended one of his lectures and approached

him afterwards, asking him out for a drink. They immediately started dating but took a while to admit that they were falling for each other. They dated for five years before they got engaged then were married soon after in a small, intimate ceremony at the local courthouse with the reception at one of their favorite restaurants.

The first few years of their marriage were nice and fell into a routine. There wasn't much fighting between them and the sex was good, but not Lindsay's ideal, as David wasn't adventurous. Lindsay and David were both satisfied in their relationship, but Lindsay began getting bored, as their life had become a little stale. Furthermore, they were both very focused on their work, and when Lindsay realized that she wasn't entirely happy, she delved even further into her work so that she didn't have to think about her discontent. They both seemingly accepted that they weren't having children, which kept the staleness intact. They got more and more distant from one another.

Then, her husband went on sabbatical to England. Lindsay met Guy, who had been hired by her husband to teach a graduate literature class. Guy was young and excited to be with her, unlike David. Around the time that David returned in April, Guy and Lindsay had been having an affair for about six months. Lindsay and Guy had gotten sloppier in hiding their affair and were spotted embracing by a fellow faculty member and mutual friend of Lindsay and David. The friend went to David and told him what he had seen, which led David to question Lindsay about Guy.

Guy realized what had happened and jumped at a job offer in Austin, leaving Lindsay behind to deal with the consequences of their affair by herself.

David refused to speak to Lindsay for a couple of months and later told Lindsay that the affair had completely surprised him. He had felt that he had had the power and control in their relationship and took it for granted that Lindsay wanted to only be with him. Eventually, Lindsay and David agreed to attend a few sessions of marital counseling, as neither of them wanted a divorce. They took a few years to get back to a place of trust, but they both devoted more attention to their marriage than they ever had before. Lindsay felt extremely lucky to have a man who loved her enough to stick around after she had hurt him in such a terrible manner.

A few years later, Lindsay was told by a colleague that Guy had a story published in the *New Yorker*. She bought an issue and read in disbelief: their affair was detailed

extensively in the story. Of course, "The Calculus of Desire" was published as fiction and the names of everyone had been changed, but all of the circumstances were the same. She called her husband right away and he came to her office. She handed him the magazine and explained what Guy had written. David was furious that Guy had just humiliated Lindsay, as they were worried that colleagues might recognize her character. Also, Lindsay could see how pained David was to be reminded of the affair.

When Guy called her at work, Lindsay was shocked, as he had never contacted her after he abandoned her. He told her that he was getting engaged to a girl, Alex, and that he wanted to see Lindsay again. Lindsay agreed to see him.

She went home and told David what happened. Over a bottle of wine, they formulated a plan to humiliate Guy. They found the engagement announcement online and tracked down Alex's phone number. They agreed that, if he really loved her, he wouldn't sleep with Lindsay, no matter what. But, if he treated this fiancée as he treated Lindsay and all the other women in his life, as evidenced by his story, then he would rather be coerced into having sex with Lindsay than reveal what a scumbag he really is. Of course, Lindsay would never have sex with him; she would get him to undress and then sneak out of the room, embarrassing him like he had embarrassed her.

BOBBI'S BIOGRAPHY

Written with Roxanne Cook

Bobbi grew up in L.A. with her parents and identical twin sister, Billi. While Bobbi was very analytical and a little shy, Billi was "better, smarter, and more dynamic." Bobbi wanted to be a nurse when she was little.

In high school, Bobbi had no boyfriends and no boys seemed that interested in her, which was odd because Billi had a lot of boyfriends and crushes. Bobbi, on the other hand, wasn't even invited to the prom.

Bobbi went to school at UCLA and met Guy one day in the cafeteria. They started dating. She was interested in him, and he was interested in her. Bobbi even lost her virginity to him.

Then there was a weird period in their relationship. On one of their vacations, Guy came home with Bobbi and met Billi. Bobbi noticed that Guy seemed different around Billi from how he was with her and thought he was flirting with her. Billi told Bobbi that Guy had actually pursued her over the vacation. Bobbi didn't want to believe that Guy had really done that, but she knew that Billi wouldn't lie to her about something like that.

Bobbi began feeling like she and Guy were going to break up or that he would manage to sleep with Billi. In addition, Guy would allude to their future, including talking about one day getting engaged, but he was never very definite. When he left for Chicago, Bobbi was devastated and festered in her own self-pity. He never called her or anything and she was scared to call him. But she wrote down exactly what she was going to say on the phone to him if he ever called her.

Bobbi threw herself into her medical school studies and kicked ass. When she looked back on her relationship with Guy, she thought of him as the love of her life and appreciated the self-esteem and love he gave her, though she was still angry about how he didn't call her once he got to Chicago.

During her residency, Bobbi found herself having a lot of random sex, but not a real romantic relationship. She found a position in a hospital in Los Feliz where she still works. Bobbi and Billi's relationship is a little odd; while they love each other, they don't always

get along and are often fighting with one another. Bobbi gets annoyed that Billi doesn't always listen to her. Also, Bobbi is lonely. She is surrounded by people, but pines for Guy.

On the day that she is supposed to meet with Guy, one of her patients at the hospital dies, which jolts her and puts her life a bit more into perspective. Once she gets home, she spends three hours getting ready, changing her outfit again and again. She tells herself that, although he's engaged, he wants her back. And she wants to be with him. She buys a gift certificate from Williams-Sonoma, just in case his fiancée is there or she senses that he really does love his fiancée.

When she sees him, she is excited. He still looks good and seems happy to see her, even telling her that she is attractive and more stylish than his fiancée. But she wants to see if he will finally admit the truth to her about pursuing Billi. She tells him that, on her deathbed, Billi called for him and asks him why that would be. Guy, shocked by hearing about Billi's death, denies that he ever went after her. Bobbi tells him that Billi is actually alive; she was just testing him. When he reacts angrily, she calls him out on his traveling around. He protests and Bobbi tries to leave. As Guy tries to stop Bobbi from leaving, they knock over the lamp and Bobbi sees the microphone that Guy had planted. Bobbi is furious but also hurt. She wants an explanation and Guy tells her that he's recording his visits for *Esquire*. He also tells her he loves her still, which hits Bobbi like a bomb. Everything comes clear to her and she realizes that he hasn't matured one bit. She feels some sadness because she also realizes that she's not really in love with him anymore. But she is vindicated because she was right all along about his being selfish. When she leaves him, she is ready to start healing and moving on with her life.

MUSIC

INTERMISSION

1. “Some Girls” by The Rolling Stones
2. “Break Your Heart” by Get Set Go
3. “Dominos” by The Big Pink
4. “Build me up Buttercup” by The Foundations
5. “War on War” by Wilco
6. “Erase Me” by Kid Cudi and Kanye West

After Sam/Before Tyler:

7. “Can’t Believe a Single Word” by VHS or Beta

After Tyler/Before Lindsay:

8. “Trouble” by Cat Stevens

After Lindsay/Before Bobbi:

9. “Your Ex-Lover is Dead” by Stars

Post-show:

10. “You’re So Vain” by Carly Simon

PROGRAM NOTES

Some Girl(s) by Neil LaBute

Directed by: Mary Peyton-Griffith
Assistant Director: Rosemary Kulp

Guy: John Verticchio
Sam: Rosemary Kulp
Tyler: Mary Peyton-Griffith
Lindsay: Allison Lawrence
Bobbi: Roxy Cook

Note from the Director:

What does *Some Girl(s)* say about modern relationships? Hmmm…not much that's positive. Then again, this is Neil LaBute we're talking about, and a playwright known for his misanthropic look at human behavior is hardly going to pen a rom-com style play. He is divisive, but he is also considered one of the most prolific writers in contemporary theatre. His work provokes discussion, which is invaluable to society. After all, nothing is accomplished if nothing is ever questioned.

Special Thanks from Ms. Peyton-Griffith:

I couldn't have done any of this without my amazing cast who committed so much time and effort to *Some Girl(s)*, despite multiple theses, varsity sports, jobs, volunteer work, other plays, and schoolwork. Thank you so much for all you've done.

Also, I want to thank my parents who have supported me throughout this endeavor and my life. I know having two out of three kids become theatre majors can be trying, but you both have dealt with it with love and grace. Plus, Paul wants to go into business so at least one of us is on the right track!

In addition, I would like to thank Laura Steinroeder for her invaluable assistance, Alan Blumenfeld and Jack Reuler for their directing advice, Alma Martinez for her ideas, and Art Horowitz for supporting my thesis.

Enjoy the show!

SELF-EVALUATION

I am proud of the work I have done on *Some Girl(s)*. I have learned that there is a lot of work that goes into a show that is not necessarily visible, like our work with John's posture and voice, but is important nonetheless.

If I had to do the production again, I would have introduced my cuts to the actors right away so that we could have had the extra time to work out other issues in the production that we instead spent on going over new placement of lines. Also, I would have been a bit more forceful in demanding what I needed from my actors. While I was mostly direct, there were times I questioned myself instead of just trying what I was thinking to myself.

As a director, I liked working with my actors to find what exercises helped them discover more about their characters. For instance, the interviews I did had a major impact in the depth of thinking each actor was forced to do. In addition, Alan Blumenfeld and Jack Reuler's directing class, as well as the work I did at the London Dramatic Academy, was extremely helpful in guiding me as both an actor and director.

I am glad that I had the opportunity to try directing a play in a safe place with actors who are my friends and even prouder that I grabbed the chance for myself. I feel better prepared for both acting and directing in the future because of what I have learned in my experience and know that I am capable of envisioning, organizing, and creating a project like *Some Girl(s)*.

WORKS CITED

Baitz, Jon Robin. "Neil Labute." *Bomb* 83. (2003): 56-61. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 6 Jan. 2012. http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.libraries.claremont.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mzh&AN=2003530128&site=ehost-live

Bigsby, Christopher. *Neil LaBute: Stage and Cinema*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Brantley, Ben. "He's Born-Again but Still Obnoxious." *The New York Times*. November 22, 2010. http://theater.nytimes.com/2010/11/23/theater/reviews/23break.html?pagewanted=all

Handerson, Jody. "Filthy Talk for Troubled Times: and Other Plays." *Literary Review*. Madison: Summer 2010. Vol. 53, Iss. 4; pg. 199, 5 pgs. http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=0000002136856291&Fmt=3&clientId=43168&RQT=309&VName=PQD

Horwitz, Simi. "Face to Face: Neil LaBute: Scanning Society's Ugly Underside." *Back Stage - National Edition;* April 21, 2005-April 27th, 2005; 46, 16; International Index to Performing Arts Full Text. pg. 15.

Hunter, Jeffrey W. "Neil LaBute." *Contemporary Literary Criticism.* Vol. 225. Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2006. p211-241.

Jordan, Pat. "Neil LaBute Has a Thing About Beauty." *The Times Magazine*; March 29th, 2009. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/29/magazine/29LaBute-t.html?pagewanted=all.

LaBute, Neil. *Autobahn*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2005.

LaBute, Neil. *bash: three plays*. New York: Overlook Press, 2010.

LaBute, Neil. *The Break of Noon*. New York: Soft Skull Press, 2010.

LaBute, Neil. *The Distance from Here*. New York: Overlook Press, 2002.

LaBute, Neil. *Fat Pig*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2005.

LaBute, Neil. *Filthy Talk for Troubled Times and Other Plays.* New York: Soft Skull Press, 2010.

LaBute, Neil. *In a Dark Dark House*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2007.

LaBute, Neil. *In the Company of Men*. Boston: Faber and Faber, 1997.

LaBute, Neil. *The Mercy Seat*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2003.

LaBute, Neil. *Reasons to Be Pretty*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2008.

LaBute, Neil. *Some Girl(s)*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2005.

LaBute, Neil. *The Shape of Things*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2001.

LaBute, Neil. *This is How it Goes*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2005.

LaBute, Neil. *Wrecks and Other Plays*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2007.

LaBute, Neil. *Your Friends and Neighbors*. London: Faber and Faber, 1998.

Lahr, John. "The Critics: The Theatre: Blood Under the Bridge." *The New Yorker* 82. 18 (Jun 19, 2006): 92-93.

Lahr, John. "The Critics: The Theatre: Neil LaBute Turns Psychology into Behavior." *The New Yorker* 78. 13 (May 27, 2002): 120-121.

McCarter, Jeremy. "Played Out?" *New York*. June 18 2007, Vol. 40, Issue 22, p. 132, 2p.

Morales, Jorge. "*Voice* Choices: Theater: Ex Man: In LaBute's Latest, a Single Guy's Last Stand." *The Village Voice*; Jun 14, 2006-Jun 20, 2006; 51, 24; International Index to Performing Arts Full Text. pg. 74.

Rooney, David. "Fat Pig." *Variety*: Dec. 20-26 2004, 397 no5 53-4.

Rooney, David. "Legit Reviews: Off Broadway: Lad Exposed as Cad in LaBute's Girl(s)." *Variety;* Jun 12, 2006-Jun 18, 2006; 403, 4; International Index to Performing Arts Full Text. pg. 40.

Rooney, David. "This is How it Goes." *Variety*: Ap 4-10 2005, 398 no7 72-3.

Rooney, David. "More than Skin-Deep.: *Variety*: Ap 6-12 2009, 414 no8 29, 31.

Steyn, Mark. "Medea Redux." *The New Criterion*: Sep. 1999, Vol. 18, No1 p. 38-42.

Steyn, Mark. "The Mercy Seat." *The New Criterion*: Feb 2003, Vol. 21, Issue 6, p. 40. 5p.

Orel, Gwen. "More Reviews: 'Some Girl(s)'. *Back Stage - National Edition;* Jun 22, 2006 - Jun 28, 2006; 47, 25; International Index to Performing Arts Full Text. pg. 42.

Wolf, Matt. “Legit Reviews: Abroad: ‘Some Girl(s)’”. *Variety;* May 30, 2005-Jun 5, 2005; 399, 2; International Index to Performing Arts Full Text. pg. 37.