

ANTON CHEKHOV'S UNCLE VANYA ESSAY

In Anton Chekhov's 'Uncle Vanya', he depicts characters succumbing to boredom, despair and stillness, enabling for many subjective impressions of the audience. This play utilizes directorial decisions and cinematic techniques such as camera angles and mise-en-scene to further create a chronological exploration of Vanya and Helena's relationship that demises throughout the play, resulting in a life without value or love.

In the text, Vanya is first introduced to the audience immediately complaining about the other tenants that live in the house. Astroff asks how long the Professor will be staying, Vanya replies with "A hundred years!" Sarcasm is woven in between his words to convey the type of person he is and how he currently feels. The lighting in this scene is warm-toned and depicts the stages of sunset. Giving a warm, inviting feeling to the character's introduction, this leads the audience to build a stable introduction of the characters. As the first act progresses, the audience gains a tangible idea of who Vanya truly is. He is much more inclined to talk about himself in conversation and often uses humor to mask the uncanny reality of his sadness. "I had an illuminating personality, which illuminated no one." The audience's depiction of Vanya is separate to that of the script; in the script, the words he speaks holds a certain amount of subjectivity and sarcasm that encapsulates the audience to find Vanya as lighthearted and witty, but in the play this meaning changes to a more cynical, grief-stricken version of himself as the audience can now succumb to the cinematic techniques that change his facial expressions and tone of voice. As Helena is introduced, Vanya expresses that he has fallen in love with her. He looks at Helena with love in his eyes. This is a directorial decision, and as Helena only slightly brushes Vanya off "hush, someone will overhear you." The audience can presume that a romance could potentially be budding.

As the audience is introduced to act 2, The play is more subtle and leads the audience to believe that Helena might give Vanya a chance, as Vanya proposes his love for Helena, she smiles and says in a calm tone for Vanya to 'stop it.' However, In the text, Helena becomes agitated very quickly and repeatedly asks Vanya to stop. "Let go! Go away!" This contrasts majorly as Helena ends up storming out of the room, leaving the audience to immediately know that Helena is not interested in Vanya, and never will be. But within the play this is a different story. Amidst their conversation, they are cut off by Madame Voitskaya entering the room, which ends all possible conversation and routes that the characters could explore within their

relationship. This is a directorial decision and was not included in the script to leave the audience guessing whether or not Vanya actually has a chance with Helena, and holds a certain means of suspension and guessing when watching the play. After Madame Voitskaya is gone, Vanya rambles on about being “stuck” in life, this ultimately turns Helena away from Vanya as she stops listening to him when his talk is cynical. But this is who Vanya is. This informs the audience that Helena would only give Vanya a chance if he stopped succumbing to sorrow.

As the audience was exposed to Vanya's sorrow in act 2, it expands upon itself in the next act, Helena and Astroff are in a room alone together. The atmosphere quickly changes with the actors' dialogue: “beautiful, sleek tigress, you must have your victims! For a whole month I have done nothing but seek you eagerly.” As Vanya walks in on Helena and Astroff kissing, his facial expression stays stuck in a hurtful position. He does not interact with Helena and remains in shock as he sits down to listen to Serebrackoffs meeting. Vanya now views Helena as something that is out of reach; after this, he stops his romantic dialogues to Helena and acknowledges that this will change the meaning of his life, as he lived for her. This changes the meaning of the play by insinuating that the life that could potentially happen for Vanya will no longer happen, and the joy he felt around Helena will not be felt anymore. This leads to an outburst when Serebrackoff announces he would like to sell the property. “My life has been a failure... If I had lived another life I might have become the next Schopenhauer or Dostoyevsky. I am losing my head! I am going crazy!” The actor's representation in this scene further enhances his personality and instability in his life, one thing could go wrong and this changes his will to live. The lighting in this scene softly fades from a warm, sunset color to a faint orange; this represents Vanya's mood diminishing throughout the scenes and leads the play into a different direction. Vanya knows he can now no longer potentially experience love again, leaving him hopeless and questioning his life.

As the final act builds, the audience is greeted with Vanya and Astroff arguing whilst Astroff searches Vanya for morphine. The lighting is dull and blank as it is night, and Vanya has given up hope. The never-ending burden that Vanya has carried inside of him results in wanting to take his own life. The only hope Vanya carried with him was Helena, and the imaginary thought that he would one day end up with her. In the play, Vanya is depicted to sit on a chair in the corner of the room. The placement of characters in the scene gives an audience an insight into how connected they feel. Astroff is on the far right side of the stage, standing upright and

showing no remorse for Vanya through his facial expressions. "How do you fill up thirteen years! If I could only wake some still, bright morning and feel that life had begun again; that the past was forgotten and had vanished like smoke." Vanya does not smile in this scene, and when saying goodbye to Helena he simply says "goodbye." In the text, Vanya is more emotional and unstable, he doesn't know what to do when Helena leaves, so his immediate distraction is to work. Vanya is left working for a man who does not care for his work, and living for a woman who will never see him again.

As the play comes to an end, Vanya's grief and misery is still inside him, yet he holds it with more indulgence and pride. The love for Helena he once had joins that grief inside of him, and he works through the pain. Cinematic techniques help the audience to understand exactly how Vanya is portrayed, and his true feelings about certain people and situations, whilst also still remaining true to the character.