

# Drama: ruby moon essay



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How has Cameron Malcher used dramatic forms, performance styles, techniques and conventions to communicate strong social and personal issues in his production of Ruby Moon? Contemporary Australian theatre mainly focuses on the reflection of the 'real' Australia and communicating to the audience real and modern issues/ideas that respond to the social climate and community. As well as that, CAT tries to give marginalized voices a voice that is heard. Cameron Malcher has used dramatic forms, performance styles, techniques and conventions such as symbolism, a setting that is everlasting, transformational acting and more. The use of these techniques explores the social and personal issues of suburban paranoia, identity and grief/loss. Although the play itself is not very much realistic, Malcher explores the issues in a way that can be performed so that the audience can understand these particular issues and view them in a serious and somber way.

These issues that "Ruby Moon" is faced with are suburban paranoia, identity, the fear of child abduction and grief/loss. The context of suburban Australia and 2000 and onwards has been faced with 'western' issues of personal identity, national identity and body image. With society and technology constantly changing, Australia is a country that has gone from a rural farming, close-knit community to a multicultural, diverse society. With a new 'Australian Dream', the success of the home security market has shown that people aren't trusting their own neighbor's or just don't feel safe in the suburb. The fear of child abduction also that relates to the feeling of distrust from neighbor's, is one idea that has always been in the back of Australia's communal mind fueled by the media.

The ways in which the director, Cameron Malcher looks further into these issues is the way Ray and Sylvie lose their child Ruby. The grief that the characters express flows throughout the play and connects each scene where the each scene displays different versions in the parents' grief.

Through this process of grief, the audience has the chance to gain an insight into the parents' thoughts through the stage directions and dialogue they are given.

(Page 4) " I'm always in a state..." -Sylvie Moon. The neighbors in the play represent the stereotypical and diverse identities in contemporary Australia that is criticised against by the society and others around them. The use of the transformational acting between the two actors is one that is used to question the identities of others and in general, the issue of identity.

The use of dramatic forms and techniques is used extensively with deeper meanings and motifs behind them to represent the issues of suburban paranoia. Everything in the play from the lighting to the actors is employed to have some sort of symbolism. The whole play only utilizes two actors that the audience questions if all the characters that they play are actually all who they really are or just illusions of Ray and Sylvies' minds and hallucinations. The indefinable setting of the suburban street and possibly just one home is strategically placed there to create a claustrophobic and inescapable atmosphere. The setting of the timeless home is created through the chairs and props that are made to look as if they have aged and not cleaned over some time period which symbolizes the grief and memories of Ruby which disturbs the parents in the presumptuous future. This setting influences the audiences' views on each issue that is explored and creates

their own interpretation of the play and ideas. The element of a fairytale is produced to support the timeless sets in this play and is clearly established at the beginning and the end. The opening line, " It begins with a fairytale..." and the finishing line, " It begins like a fairytale, but how does it end? ".

This is then supported when Ray reads out of a leather-bound book which brings an image of a father reading a story for his child. The parts from the book that are read out are written in such a way to make it seem like a children's nursery rhyme which later on in the play, characters add onto this or interpret it in a different way. Mentioning's of Ruby being dressed in red is then related to little red riding hood to add onto the fairytale-like theme as well as the character of Carl, the ' wizard'. Another motif that is constantly being brought up is the red dress that Ruby was last seen wearing. In comparison to the other costumes of different characters that are mainly pale colours, this dress places a distinctively visual memory for the audience as well as embodying childhood innocence, death and sex. This red dress changes its context from time to time between these three ideas in the play. Cameron Malcher has made the performance styles and techniques as non-realistic as possible adding an atmosphere of awkwardness and oddness to back up the setting of it being uncomfortable and inescapable. The only two actors that were used for the play were basically life-sized puppets for the suburban neighbors in reality.

All these characters were extremely satire characters and made to look as non-realistic as possible. The two actors do not make extreme costume changes when transforming into other characters and only changes one little piece of the costumes with symbolism used each time when they change.

Ray and Sylvie's characters are very hard to pin point with similarities between the neighbors. The audience starts to question if these characters are really all Ray and Sylvie's neighbors or all a part of their hallucinations in their grief of losing their daughter. Does Ruby or the neighbors even exist? Or are they all just pigments of the parents' imagination. The use of lighting and spotlights are especially and extensively used to make objects like the mannequin to disappear and reappear.

Through this theatrical convention, the atmosphere of an eeriness and spookiness is added to the play being uncomfortable and claustrophobic. It also makes some of the characters segregated and represents the characters' minds at times as just like in their minds things disappear and then reappear; the spotlight does the same for the audience. The director, Cameron Malcher successfully utilizes the tools of dramatic techniques and theatrical conventions to communicate the strong social and personal issues of suburban paranoia, grief and child abduction. He has used these techniques to question suburban Australia and create a contemporary Australian play that gives marginalized voices a different perspective to the audience as well as becoming a play where it can be used to give the audience new ideas and issues to question society and suburban paranoia.