

Muriel's wedding comparative analysis: choice



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The concept of choice refers to an individual's ability to make decisions. One is able to compare and judge between possible preferences to come to a conclusion, usually self-beneficial. Bruce Petty's cartoon 'Hurricane Downturn' depicts the socio-economical differences and how they influence the power of choice in terms of their situation. 'Muriel's Wedding' written by P. J Hogan expresses the term 'success' under many corrupted ideologies such as marriage. The notion of choice depicted in both 'Hurricane Downturn' and 'Muriel's Wedding' is undermined by a variety of assumptions and themes.

An individual's access to choice is dependent on their availability to it and also by economic and social status. An individual has the power to improve their current circumstances by utilising their power to choose. These decisions hold responsibility in moulding and reflecting an individual's values, beliefs and identity. The binary and restricted nature of choice acts to exclude one choice from another, meaning the consequences that arise from these choices are irreversible.

Similarly an individual's values and beliefs will influence their decision making ability that will ultimately affect their life's trajectory. It is vital to examine how the notion of choice is expressed in the chosen texts and the assumptions that underlay it in order to construct a clearer understanding of it. Firstly, the relationship between power and access to choice is strongly reinforced in Bruce Petty's illustration, 'Hurricane Downturn'. The cartoon demonstrates the notion that the affluent are granted greater access to choice, giving them the ability to subjugate those of lower economic status.

The character in the building exclaims 'move to higher ground!' depicting the differences in both classes.

The individuals found below the 'poverty line' are unable act in order to improve their circumstances due to the adverse conditions they are already put in. This clearly portrays how the individuals in the tall building choose to emphasise their decadence while ignoring the requirements of the less fortunate. Similarly, P. J Hogan's film 'Muriel's Wedding' also promotes the ideologies of power and the access to choice through a medium shot of Muriel grasping onto the bouquet whilst being surrounded by the bridal party. The framing of Muriel being the only woman not a part of the bridal party emphasises her social separation and how an individual's position in the town's hierarchy is determined by their marital status. Muriel's status as a woman who has 'never had a boyfriend' closely communicates her diminishing access to choice in contrast to the women who are married, which in turn reflects her inability to prevail.

It is without a doubt that both 'Hurricane Downturn' and 'Muriel's Wedding' reflect on the notion that an individual holds the power in selecting their choices and that the choices are dependent on their conditions. Moreover, individuals have the power to control, determine and improve their own conditions by bestowing their capability to choose their response to their circumstance. In the film 'Muriel's Wedding' the author has utilised diegetic sound in the window smashing in the instance where Rhonda suffers from the first jolting signs that she is extremely ill. The window representation is used widely throughout the film to communicate the physical barrier separating Muriel from her life and the life she desires.

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Through her decisions to lie about her life, it has allowed her to meet her expectations in life however with the negative impact of her best friend, the choices she has made has influenced where they stand. The harsh sound of the window breaking can be interpreted as a waking to reality for Muriel as she yet understands what she really wants. Contrastingly, 'Hurricane Downturn' challenges the assumptions associated with choice and how power, freedom and opportunity affect it. The composer used vectors within the image displaying the individuals from the bottom reaching upwards in an attempt to past the poverty line, to communicate the challenge towards the assumption.

Only those of high socio economic background have the opportunity to select their choices, whilst those who are not financially stable struggle to exercise their ability to 'choose'. Their hands create vectors directing to the top of the building, highlighting their desperation in binding towards those in the building. They are denied this opportunity due to their low economic status. Both sources communicate differing views on the assumption in which everyone is offered the availability of choice to determine and alter their life's future outcome.

Additionally, the cartoon 'Hurricane Downturn' demonstrates the relationship between the concepts of choices being mutually exclusive against one another, otherwise known as its restrictive nature. The entire image portrayed as a graph openly communicates which individuals are socially accepted and which are not. The 'y axis' of the image consists of the poverty line and the building above it, where those inside the building surpassing the line express their fortune by instructing the other individuals

to act upon something which is out of their hands. By choosing to abuse their power and socio-economic status, they are prohibiting the chances of those less fortunate and therefore restricting the way they live.

Furthermore, the use of saturation within Muriel's home when she returns facing the consequences to her poor choices is nothing but bleak and dull. The colours effectively communicate her disengagement as she has limited her solutions to the problems she has caused. Instead of confidently confronting her poor decisions, she decides to deny and conceal the truth, further preventing her from reversing these choices. By doing so, Muriel is excluding another choice, in this case telling the truth and leaving less of an impact towards her family.

Both visualisations emphasise the choice an individual makes which becomes irreversible and restrict the nature of choice. Similarly, the notion in which choices are influenced by an individual's identity, values and beliefs are effectively illustrated through both texts. In 'Muriel's Wedding' Muriel confronts her 'best friend' Rhonda with a daring lie of being married to her virtual husband Tim Simms on their first meeting after dropping out of school. The oblique vertical angle on Muriel's upper body is used to represent a more complex thought of character rather than a straight on view depicting pure thoughts.

The angle questions her self-identity as she mentions Tim Simms, by shifting her true identity it becomes one of the key consequences to her friendship with Rhonda. Muriel's decision to lie about her marital status is influenced by her desire for marriage under the ideologies that 'marriage is success' and

being married is the only way to become accepted into Porpoise Spits' social environment. Also, ' Hurricane Downturn' demonstrates the opposing values and beliefs illuminated through the application of contrasting colours. Petty's use of shadowed characters beneath the ' poverty level' in contrast to the visible facial features of those in the building connote the differences in who they are and how they are depicted.

The shadowing of the characters illustrates them as having no self-identity as they are being overcast by those who have greater statuses. Their values have been deterred due to the situations which cannot be changed so rapidly, demonstrating their helplessness. Both compositions effectively examine the way in which an individual's choices are responsible or shaping their identity, values and beliefs. In conclusion, the concept of choice is represented through a number of conflicting and differentiating assumptions and themes. The chosen texts offer various views on how the notion of choice is expressed which allows the responder to either accept or reject these ideas.

The inaccurate assumption that access to choice is readily and equally available to all is reinforced both texts. An individual has the power to improve their current circumstances by utilising their power to choose. These decisions hold responsibility in moulding and reflecting an individual's values, beliefs and identity. In saying this an individual's values and beliefs will influence their decision making ability that will ultimately affect their life's trajectory. The binary and restricted nature of choice acts to exclude one choice from another, meaning the consequences that arise from these choices are irreversible.

Ultimately, it is what one chooses that wields the power to determine and shift the path of an individual's life.