

Examiner's commentary

Many candidates mistakenly believe that they are required to conduct practical research or interview practitioners (they are not). While this candidate did show initiative in directing a performance of a scene for an audience, and conducting interviews with theatre professionals, the essay offers a strong example of a candidate using empirical research to test hypotheses and research findings, rather than as an end in itself. Analyses are not merely supported by references to audience surveys, but to research into semiotics, costume design, and actors' experiences, after having consulted a range of types of source. What a costume represented symbolically to the actual historical character the play is based on clearly intrigued the candidate, sparking their interest in the topic. While there are some weaknesses in research methodology, and some referencing problems, this is a well-structured argument, driven by the research question, rather than a compartmentalized report.

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International Baccalaureate Diploma Program

Extended Essay

Subject: Theatre

Title: Costume And Character Perception In “iWitness”

Research Question: To what extent does costume affect the audience perception of a character in Joshua Sobol’s play, “iWitness”?

Word Count: 3865

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To what extent does costume affect the audience perception of a character in Joshua Sobol's play, "iWitness"?

Introduction

Almost sixty years after the thirty-six-year-old Austrian peasant Franz Jägerstätter was condemned to death for "undermining military morale" (Polybius at The Clickto Network) and later beheaded by the Nazis in 1943 (Gordon), Joshua Sobol's play, "iWitness", made its debut at The Cameri Theatre in Tel-Aviv (Israeli Dramatists Website).

"iWitness", which is based on the true story of Jägerstätter, follows his last moments in jail in Berlin, while he is on death row for being a conscientious objector. He is given the opportunity to wear the nazi uniform and be forgiven, but refuses to do so and demonstrate any support in the Third Reich, despite his relatives' and acquaintances' attempts to persuade him. The very center of the play is the decision that he, as many other people in the time of Second World War, needed or was forced to make under the control of Nazi Germany - to either join it and thus accept its ideas or go against it and face the consequences. He sees each individual in the society as responsible, and several times throughout the play he repeats the line "When a leader allows himself to break the rules of humanity, it is the responsibility of every citizen to break the leader's rules". According to the article "iWitness play review at Mark Taper Forum" from "Coast To Coast Newspaper", Jägerstätter "[refused] to wear a uniform to do janitorial work". What was it in this piece of fabric that was so strong, significant, and meaningful in his eyes to the extent of leading him to reject it so firmly?

As opposed to Jägerstätter's reaction and strong association of clothes with ideas, Chris Wilkinson informs us in his article 

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[REDACTED] that in the theatre world there had been voices disregarding and devaluing the importance of performance elements including costume, claiming that as long as there is a [REDACTED]

[REDACTED].

These two contradicting occasions and different events in which clothes played such a major role and were the central discussion of people interested and inspired me to further explore the field of costume. In addition, when first reading the play I was fascinated by the totality that led people in their actions. Hence, this extended essay investigates and examines the research question: "To what extent does costume affect the audience perception of characters in Joshua Sobol's play, *iWitness*?"

Thesis

To explore this question effectively, this paper will analyse the thesis: Costume design plays a significant role in audience perception of the character as in Joshua Sobol's play, "iWitness".

To what extent does costume affect the audience perception of a character in Joshua Sobol's play, "iWitness"?

Methodology

This will be examined through a thorough analysis of the play itself and the playwright scene descriptions in it, a practical experiment in which I designed a costume that was worn by an actress during a scene that she acted out according to my directing, and interviews with key people who took part in the original production. For this essay, the original recording of the play which was performed at The Cameri Theatre in Israel (2003) was utilized. This primary source is appropriate for two reasons. The first being the fact that it is the first presentation of the play. Secondly, this was when the play was 'running' in the country in the original language that the play was written in, to a relevant audience who watched it during the occurrence of some affairs with historical significance that initially drove and influenced the playwright to start writing a theatrical piece on this matter.

In order to establish the apt tone, I would like to clarify at this stage that this essay deals with the **extent** to which costume affects the way the audience perceive a character, and not **if** it does. This decision was made at the time of researching due to the nature of costume which is inevitably connected to theatre, and cannot be referred to as optional in performance. Such reference would be unrealistic and impossible to approach, as will be further explained in this essay.

The extent will be measured by comparing the audience's responses, the amount of information extracted and the level of understanding that they managed to reach regarding a character.

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Theatrical Context

In order to start tackling the research question, it is important that we first understand that the theatre world consists of different components, known as elements, which work along with each other to create a performance. The main division of these elements is into two:

- Performance: includes the actor (gestures, body, voice etcetera).
- Production: includes the other elements that contribute to the creation of a performance: light, sound, set etcetera.

In the book "Theatre As Sign-System" by Elaine Aston and George Savona the word 'read' is used for explaining the significance of the choice of theatre elements. People interpret things on stage as having a meaning, regardless of whether or not there is an actual intention to have them there. An example they give is the 1988 Red Shift production of "The Misanthrope" in which the lead's bandaged hand caused different interpretations, though, in reality, the reason for that bandage was that the actor was injured (99). That is a great example of how an 'accident' changed the message and the way the audience 'read' the performance.

Since theatre elements are all very complex, as proof we can see people who have dedicated their lives in order to explore only one of them, and in order to have an in-depth specific research, this extended essay focuses on costume, one of the production elements.

Costume has a significant role in conveying a feeling and giving a better understanding of the settings to the audience in that audience members would perceive

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and read the status of a character according to the costume chosen for its role. For instance, if a play happens in France in the 15th century, the audience might understand that only from 'reading' the set design. However, in order to know what the position of each character in that society is, we would 'read' its costume. For example: "scruffy hair, shabby outfit and ill-fitting shoes signify poverty; bowler hat, suit and umbrella signify city gent" (99). Both of these could appear in one play occurring at the same place , and thanks to the costumes the audience would be able to understand what the status of each character is.

As Lingwood puts it, "the costumes and the props are the things that have to tell the story about that character and the journey that that character has through the show" (National Theatre Discover). She mentions the significance of different costumes for different characters, and concentrates on another aspect of it, which is to tell a story about the journey a character has. It means that the same character might be poor at the beginning of a play, but become rich in the end, and that will have to be considered when making decisions regarding its costume design.

"We have actors who play more than one character in a show, so ... [to] differentiate between those different characters that the person is playing, it's imperative that that character is portrayed by a costume that tells part of that story"

(National Theatre Discover)

Another significant role of costume, as Lingwood tells us, is to have it clear for the audience what character the actor is playing at a certain moment. That reinforces

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and visualises the 'power' a costume change has- the audience are convinced enough that another character is involved in the story, and are able to concentrate on a the plot rather than the technicality.

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Applied Research

In order to examine the extent to which solely the costume would be able to convey message and information about the character, I investigated the research question by performing an experiment in which the same extract of the script was presented twice by the same actress, to the same audience. Aiming to find the influence of the costume, all of the different production and performance elements were kept the same in the two performance sessions, except for the costume itself. This way I hoped to isolate the effect of it on the audience perception of the character.

The extract that was used appears in the beginning of the second scene and is a monologue of Maria, a young girl who is the daughter of Franz Jägerstätter. She comes up on stage in an "army uniform which is several sizes bigger on her" (iWitness, 2), and talks about and refers to her father, using military jargon. Margaret, who used to be in love with Franz, enters the scene and fights Maria to get Franz's uniform that she is wearing. She also implores Maria to give her information about Franz's whereabouts and stops only when Maria's mother who is at the house intervenes. The reason for choosing the scene is that this moment of the play has distinct costume instructions from the playwright and is what would be the first confrontation of the audience with the question- what do clothes represent and what is their significance?

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Methodology

Costume Design

In order to design the costume for the character, I needed to dive into the world of costume design, and therefore, read and watched different sources and interviewed some professionals.

For the first performance session, the costume needed to be 'plain' and 'neutral' in order to differentiate it from the second session and have it as the 'control group'. When researching what this type of costume would be, I faced an obstacle, as these were not defined anywhere. As a result, I turned to Dana Tsarfaty, a professional set and costume designer for Israeli theatre, and asked her for her experienced opinion on the topic. As she said, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In visual arts, we can find black, white and grey as neutral colours, ergo I decided to design a black long-sleeved costume for this performance session. The actress wore no shoes with her hair being free, and the costume was designed with no intended meaning related to the play behind it.

In the second performance session, the costume was chosen intentionally to support the script and convey an image of a young girl who is imitating a person from the military while wearing her father's clothes, in a way that shows how she views him as an inspirational figure in her life. Brianne Crist's listed characteristics (class (status), age, gender, personality) used by him when designing a costume guided me in my attempt to create a costume design of my own, therefore I referred to them and try to

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convey them through the costume design. The final design consisted of: a green shirt that looked too big for the actress, large pants of the same colour and black leather shoes that were a few sizes bigger than the actress's shoe size. These specific items and colours were chosen in order to fit the appearance of soldiers in Berlin during Second World War. That was a typical army uniform in the country, and the shirt size was chosen because Maria had to look smaller on stage and convey the fact that she is a young girl.

Giuseppe Cannas, the head of wigs, hair and make-up (which are crucial parts of costume) at the National Theatre, explains, "We have to kind of transform or help the actor. That's why we use costume..." (National Theatre Discover) This provides insight as to the purpose of costume - not only is it for the purpose of the audience's interpretation of the character, but also for the actress, as eventually the costume is worn by the actress who needs to feel complete and comfortable with it as the character. Similar advice was given to me by Tsarfaty, who shared her thinking process in which she tells the actors her apprehension of the whole play and then listens to them, [REDACTED] Therefore, after choosing the costume I asked the actress to try it on first, and make sure that she feels like it does not interrupt her in her acting but enhances it. Changes were made accordingly, and it was suggested by the actress to tie her hair into pigtails.

An important part of the experiment was the rehearsal process with the actress, in which I needed to take both the role of a director and of a costume designer. I chose to focus only on these two aspects while making sure that the rest are kept the same.

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The work with the actress required several rehearsals in which the directing evolved from my sole vision to a combination with the actress's input and contribution of ideas. As she acted, we noticed how her idea to have pigtails helped her to build the character and how specific elements helped her to signify specific ideas. Here, I needed to act as a director and make a decision if it fits the plot and the ideas I wish to be presented and conveyed, and at the same time to consider it as a costume designer who needs to decide if it would best represent Maria's appearance and personality.

Questionnaire

When creating the questionnaire that was handed to the audience members after each performance session, different parts of information regarding the character from Crist's list were asked to be determined by them: class (status), age, gender, personality. They were also asked about the connection (whether emotionally or mentally) and the relationship they felt that they would have with the character if she was not fiction. (See Appendix _ for full questionnaire)

The audience members were first shown the performance with the 'neutral' costume and then given the questions. Thereafter, they were shown the performance with the costume that was designed especially for the play, and then given the same question as before.

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Results

Most surveyed thought the character to be female in both videos, except for a minority that thought her to be male in the first performance but female on the second. Only one made a reversed observation (female- male).

Most also changed their perception regarding the age of the character from '18-30' to 'youthood' and vice versa.

When watching the first performance some thought that the character was of a high position in the military but then changed to a little girl, saying that the pigtails made them think this way.

Most did not change their answer about the connection they felt to the character. Only a minority of the surveyed said that they felt a greater connection to the character in the second performance.

Most people who watched the performances stuck to the same answer when were asked regarding a hypothetical relationship with the character. About a third of them expressed better relationships towards the character in the second performance, and a especially a shift from 'distanced' to 'friendly' was noticed.

About a third of the surveyed described the character in the same way when were asked if it was either positive or negative. Another third changed their answer from 'negative' to 'positive' from the first performance to the second.

When participants were asked about the easiness of forming an impression about the character, most people said that it was easier for them to do so after watching the second performance.

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Analysis

From the results we learn that no matter what costume the actress was wearing, the audience 'read' it in a certain way and gave it some meaning, whether or not it was intended, which was influenced by their own context and life experience. Indeed, some people answered the same regarding both performances, but the vast majority of them changed their answer from one performance session to the other.

I believe that the significance of the pigtails in the surveyed people's eyes is important to notice, inasmuch as several of them had referred to it as the main part that made them change their perception of the character. They said that it made her look more childish and easier to define as a girl.

Veltrusky says that "The figure of the actor is the dynamic unity of an entire set of signs, the carrier of which may be the actor's body, voice, movements, but also various objects, from parts of the costume to the set. The important thing is, however, that the actor centers their meanings upon himself, and may do so to such an extent that by his actions he may replace all the sign carriers..." (Veltrusky 1964: 84) He claims that the costume is first of all for the actor and is there to serve him, as he is playing the main role in conveying the message through semiotics. Therefore the actor's 'relationship' and feeling towards the costume has to fit the ideas that are willed to be conveyed. He conveys the importance of the actor's work by saying that on its own it should be sufficient, but by doing so he disvalues the importance of the rest of "the sign carriers", including costume. On the other hand, during the direction work with the actress, I

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noticed that the moment she put the costume on, unintentionally her entire posture changed. Even wearing only the shoes themselves made a huge difference. Mordi Gershon clearly shows the connection between the costume to the acting by saying that



Therefore, I infer that the costume subconsciously influences the actor's approach to acting, which then directly affects the way the audience perceive the character.

Considering the different responses and the final results of the applied research, I believe that it clearly supports the thesis that costume plays a significant role in the audience perception of a character in "iWitness".

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Evaluation

It is important to acknowledge the fact that this research is limited because of several factors:

First, the scene extract, was performed in Hebrew, which therefore made it accessible to view only by Hebrew speakers. Consequently, the audience consisted only of Hebrew speakers who were mostly people I knew, which supposedly makes this experiment specific and valid only to people from the same background and culture as that of the surveyed.

Second, one of the audience members replied saying that he knew the actress, thus he cannot answer. It was a comment that repeated several times, when audience members expressed the difficulty they had to answer any of the question due to previous knowledge they had about the actress. This raised the issue of detaching any previous piece of information you had about the actress in order to see the current character as a different one.

Third, people's replies might be a result of the test-retest situation, in which they may naturally be more inclined to form an impression to the second performance simply because they have seen it the second time.

Nonetheless, most surveyed managed to answer the questionnaire without showing any difficulty, and their limited background does not prevent the experiment from being accurate, but specifies it to the Israeli population, which was the target audience of the original play production anyway.

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Interview Analysis

Aiming to have a better grasp of the influence of costume in the play, we must acknowledge the presence of the actors. Therefore, I approached Mordi Gershon, who played both the sanegor and the pastor in the original production of the play. Gershon describes the Nazi military lawyer suit as [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In this production, he was asked to wear a tank top and training pants for the role of the pastor, which [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In his words we certainly see a repeating motive of influence of costume on his feelings and behaviour as an actor, which affect his acting. The costume he wears sets the tone for the character, and even a character that he thought to be conventional in costume such as the pastor was interpreted differently by the director and so the costume controlled and changed his approach to acting this particular character in these particular settings.

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Conclusion

In the experiment, even though various opinions and details were identified by the audience, we can still see that the costume design did affect different factors involved in the play, including the actor's approach and the audience's understanding, which is reinforced in the interview.

After considering and evaluating the different ideas mentioned above in the essay, I conclude that the thesis was right and that costume clearly does affect significantly the audience's perception of a character. This is proven and backed up by both the applied research and the interview, which corroborated it. Moreover, I believe that not considering the costume design when directing a theatre performance is a choice that does not align with the will to create a complex theatre piece, which is inevitably dependent on each of its different performance and production elements, including costume. It cannot be ignored that the costume plays a significant role in conveying ideas, messages and information regarding a certain character, due to its visible nature and consistent presence on stage. In Peterek's words "a costume speaks to the audience with words of silence". It is true that the costume does not explicitly 'say' anything, however, it is about the underlying message that it conveys.

The audience, whether consciously or subconsciously, give meaning to everything that is happening on stage, therefore, a costume with no intention behind it would still be interpreted and taken into consideration when thinking about and analysing the performance. For this reason, it is important to make sure that the costume design does contribute to the plot and enhances it, rather than confuses the

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audience with unrelated information. It is important to acknowledge the fact that different audiences would give different meanings and interpretations because of their different backgrounds, but even though it is the case, at the end of the day any audience member would certainly be affected by the different mise-en-scene elements on stage and would perceive the character accordingly.

In one of the scenes of the play, Jägerstätter says "It's not enough for them. They demand me to wear a uniform".

"...it's only a formal matter," replies the doctor.

"No, that's the whole point," he answers.

Just as it symbolises and evokes strong feelings in Jägerstätter, this piece of fabric constitutes the central point, and it is significant and important when creating a believable complex character, inasmuch as the development and design process of a costume can be clearly seen from first sight. The audience read what they see, and the designer controls what is seen, and there lies their power- in the decision of what piece of fabric each character would have, and at what time.

To what extent does costume affect the audience perception of a character in Joshua Sobol's play, "iWitness"?

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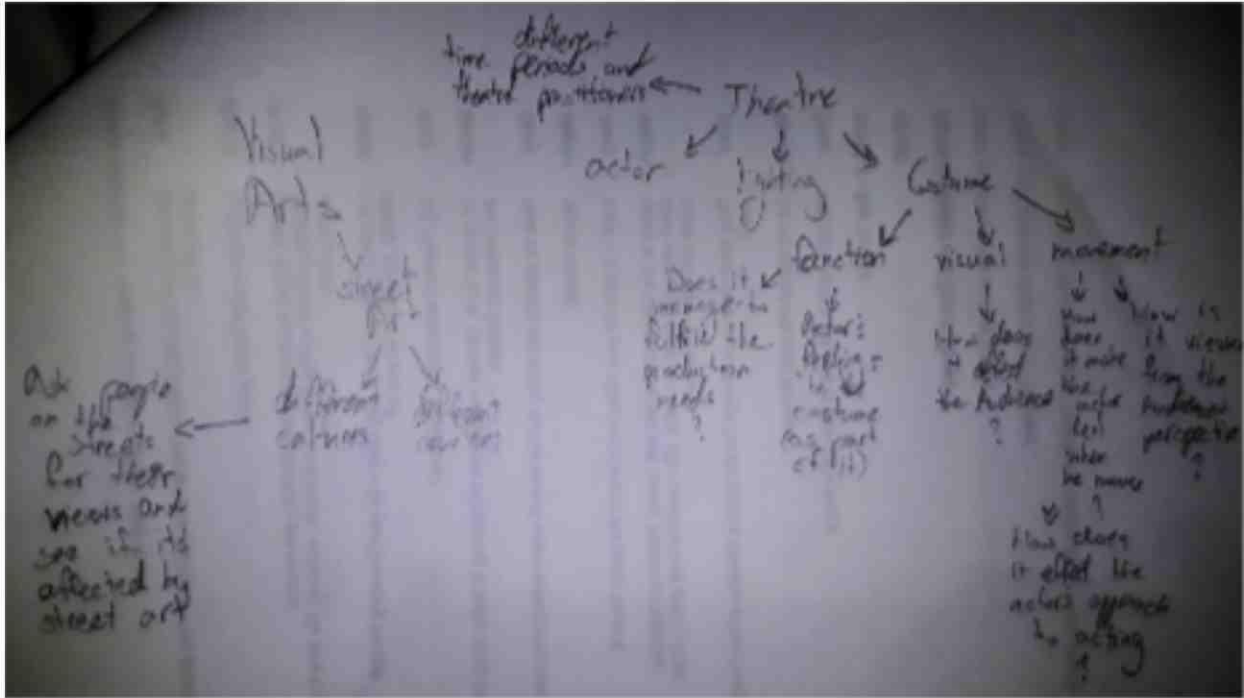
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Appendix

1. Researcher's Reflection Space- May 2018



EE/RPPF



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For use from May/November 2018

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Candidate personal code

Extended essay - Reflections on planning and progress form

Candidate: This form is to be completed by the candidate during the course and completion of their EE. This document records reflections on your planning and progress, and the nature of your discussions with your supervisor. You must undertake three formal reflection sessions with your supervisor: The first formal reflection session should focus on your initial ideas and how you plan to undertake your research; the interim reflection session is once a significant amount of your research has been completed, and the final session will be in the form of a viva voce once you have completed and handed in your EE. This document acts as a record in supporting the authenticity of your work. The three reflections combined must amount to no more than 500 words.

The completion of this form is a mandatory requirement of the EE for first assessment May 2018. It must be submitted together with the completed EE for assessment under Criterion E.

Supervisor: You must have three reflection sessions with each candidate, one early on in the process, an interim meeting and then the final viva voce. Other check-in sessions are permitted but do not need to be recorded on this sheet. After each reflection session candidates must record their reflections and as the supervisor you must sign and date this form.

First reflection session

Candidate comments:

I'd like to research the way costumes influence the actor's approach. I want to see what happens to the way theatre elements of the actor (voice, body) change by the costume specifically in relation to old periods of time. I've been told by my supervisor that I should choose more specific settings, so I'm now considering the French Revolution as my focus. I feel like it allows me to explore the research question deeper. In addition, I'm planning to experiment the question by having an actor that will act the same performance twice- once without a costume and once with it, and to see the change in their feeling and behaviour. My supervisor advised me to try and look for and choose a specific script, that will be the 'controlled variable'. I think it's a good idea since that way I'll be able to see the differences caused solely by the costume.

Date:

Supervisor initials: _____

Interim reflection

Candidate comments:

When rereading I realized that my method lacked clarity of what “no-costume” was and since I haven’t found any unified view regarding this, I’m trying to evaluate how do I know what it means- fully black? Daily life clothes of the actor? While developing the experiment method I’m developing my costume design skill by further reading resources. Along with that, I need to learn how to direct, which I’ve never done before. I decided that my focus would be to see how costume affects the way audience perceive a character. I’m confident with my question and I’m going to execute the experiment when I go back home, where I’ll need overcome the challenge of finding an actor and an audience to help me.

Date: June 15, 2018

Supervisor initial

Final reflection - Viva voce

Candidate comments:

After I explored and researched a lot of resources, including professionals from the theatre world, I believe that my costume design and directing skills have improved. I can now do both more confidently, as I practised them during the process of executing the applied research and experiment. I’m glad I used a mind map (RRS), as it assisted me during the process of thinking and brainstorming whenever I got stuck, by helping me link ideas in a more visual way. Writing the EE proved to be even more challenging than I initially thought, due to different factors, one of them being the fact that this is the first academic paper I write in my life, and it is in English, which I started studying in only about a year ago. Also, since I spent my summer break travelling in China, where access to many sources is denied (including social media), I struggled to communicate with different people and to access different information I intended to use. Therefore, I had to be creative, and after consulting my Chinese friends I found a place where I could access what I needed. If I were to redo the EE, I would try to properly manage my time from the very first day in order to keep things organized. I’m now aware of the importance of calculated topic choice.

Date: November 5, 2018

Supervisor initials: