

The Effect by Lucy Prebble

I. Given Circumstances

A. Environmental Facts

1. Geographic Location:

London, a sterile environment. For our purposes, outside of Washington, D.C. near Alexandria, Virginia. During the summer, it is humid, subtropical, the sun beats down with intensity, and it rains frequently. For our purposes, the location is equally sterile, but in a slightly more sub-urban area than London. While the facility is climate controlled, the heat exacerbates the supervising doctors' emotional states, and makes for a sense of freedom when Tristan and Connie are able to step out for a moment.

2. Date: year, season, time of day

Year: The Present Day. Season: Spring turning into Summer. Time of Day: For our purposes of the scene, it is 1:30p.m. Both Tristan and Connie have already had evaluations that day, in which they both make startling discoveries about themselves, namely, Tristan's experiencing extreme side-effects and Connie has found out that Tristan is on placebo (or so she thinks.)

3. Economic Environment

While the facilities, and three-fourths of the characters are quite upper-class, the class disparity between Tristan and Connie and the motivations that bring them to the drug trial vary widely. For Tristan, he is a drifter, who finances travelling about via various drug trials, and Connie, an upper-class woman with a college education has joined the study as a means of self-exploration. This, for me, is the heart of the conflict of the play - who has the privilege to live a life with a plan and who must take things day by day? The financials are also a major motivating factor for the supervising doctor, Dr. Toby Sealy, who works for a major pharmaceutical corporation in addition to advising and lobbying the government. A breakthrough in the field of antidepressants would lead to worldwide acclaim and a life of even more economic opportunity, which causes his supervision to be reckless.

4. Socio-Political Environment (Combined Numbers 4/5)

The socio-political themes of this play take shape in many different forms. For Tristan and Connie, the play immerses itself in class, nationality, and gender dynamics, and for our purposes, has an additional element of race. Connie comes from an upper-middle class environment, while Tristan

comes from a lower class environment. Tristan is Irish, but for our purposes, he is Puerto Rican. Connie is from London, but for our purposes, she comes from the continental United States, and is a white woman, which adds layers of complexity to their relationship. As for the larger political environment, Toby works with the government as an advisor and presumably, a lobbyist as well as his own work for his pharmaceutical corporation, which is indicative of the corporate climate that the play takes place in. The drug lobby alongside privatized medicine is one of the precipitating factors for this play, as the pressure from the top via Toby pushes the supervising doctors i.e. himself and Dr. James to have ulterior motives for the results being found. There is also an element of depression and its stigma within this play, as well as a variety of gendered issues particularly e.g. Connie's relationship with a man significantly older than herself, many subversions including why Connie is the only female patient, examinations of gendered language, Toby's monitoring of Dr. James' practitioner bias, etc.

5. Religious Environment

In a world ruled by science, the major religious question here is: is everything physical, since everything can be explained by chemicals? Or is there a higher, adjacent power at work - *can you craft feeling in a laboratory?* Connie is convinced that human intervention makes feelings less real - as if the process of origin of the chemistry behind feelings matters, rather than the end result of the feeling itself. Tristan believes the opposite - that feelings are feelings, and is a frequent user of recreational drugs. For Toby, there is an element of playing God, while for Dr. James there is the fear of everything being placebo and there being no real reason behind living. The intersection of these ideologies is a driving force in the play.

B. Patient Background

For Tristan, he ran away from home after high school, supposedly taking a gap year but never returning home, work, or schooling. He's done a significant amount of clinical trials, to fund his lifestyle, which consists of cutting anyone and everyone of importance out over time. He is of Irish descent, but for our purposes, he is a Puerto Rican. For Connie, she started a relationship with a professor at her university while she was a student. The professor left his wife for her, despite having a child together. For Toby and Dr. James, they shared a relationship when they were younger, but the relationship ended after the passing of Dr. James' father which exacerbated her depression, causing the relationship to fail. Since there, Dr. James has hopped around from job to job, while Toby has found continued success, speaking at conferences, advising the government,

lobbying, and his own work. Toby has also since started a relationship with a younger practitioner.

C. The Psychology

Connie

At Start:

1. How do I feel about my world?

I feel as though my world is bound by my obligations, and it's suffocating.

2. How do I feel about my relationships?

I feel like my relationships are being judged by everyone around me, and that I don't belong in them. I feel as though my relationships are inconstant, and that scares me because I know I have felt fickle so how can anyone else be more certain than me?

3. How do I feel about myself?

I feel like I'm smart, and I can find my way through most things by virtue of my intelligence. Even then, I find that my emotions are the things that give me the most trouble, because they always clash with my logic.

4. How do I feel about my prospects?

I feel as though I don't know where I can really go from here. I could end up getting married, and raising his kid as my own, but I don't know if that's the life I saw.

At End:

1. How do I feel about my world?

I feel like my world is just starting to open up and I can start anew. Although it's scary to stare the world right in its face, it's something I'm willing to try so I can find a sort of happiness.

2. How do I feel about my relationships?

I feel like my relationships are what they are - mine. However I feel on the inside of the relationship, that is what matters because I cannot control the outcomes of what other people might think or feel, as they cannot control mine. And that's okay.

3. How do I feel about myself?

I feel that I am opening a new chapter in my life. I used to be scared all the time of the possibility of things going wrong. But not anymore. Because it doesn't matter if things go wrong, so long as I am doing what I want to be doing.

4. How do I feel about my prospects?

I feel like I'm still not sure where life will take me, but I'm trying to be better about not worrying so much about the future and living in the here and now.

Tristan

At Start:

1. How do I feel about my world?

I feel like the world is anything you want it to be. There are so many places I've yet to go and so many things I've yet to try and so many people I've yet to meet.

2. How do I feel about my relationships?

I feel like it doesn't really matter? People will come and go. What's important is that I'm having a good time.

3. How do I feel about myself?

I feel like I'm a pretty fun guy. I like myself well enough, I mean maybe I feel like I don't have anyone important in my life, but what am I gonna do about it?

4. How do I feel about my prospects?

I feel like I've already said this. The world is my oyster.

At End:

1. How do I feel about my world?

I don't know. I feel like I don't know the world that that's scary.

2. How do I feel about my relationships?

I feel as though this girl that I'm with really loves me. That's all I know.

3. How do I feel about myself?

I feel like I don't know anything about myself.

4. How do I feel about my prospects?

I feel like there's a lot of things to be afraid of out there, but being together solves most of it.

II. Speech Pathology

A. Choice of Words

A contained diction with a few outbursts of language. The play stays largely within the means of casual speech, with short, blunt, and non-complex language that sometimes opens up into a world of science and codes.

B. Choice of Phrases

Most phrases are short. And keep exchanges quick. Except when the characters rise up into a particular story, the phrasing for the most part stays in the realm of hyper-contemporary Realism, "I know they don't want to see me. You know I hear that from people. And I can't say it's not mutual. But you know I would have settled. I would have - I was okay being a disappointment. And be alright with that. I was happy to be an acceptable failure."

C. Choice of Images

The play lives in the brain. And the physical. And works to differentiate the two, although they cannot live in isolation from one another. Occasionally, images from the outside world flow into the sterilized space, "at some point, they've written I Love You in the snow or the sand - on holiday - to me. And it's wonderful, but the next time someone... it happens, or the next even... you think, Oh okay. Again. And you think of last time. And what that meant. And, just for it to get washed away or melt or..." "Our

dog used to have seizures. My parent's dog. It's very upsetting. I mean, not when you talk about it, it seems like a joke - 'My dog's got epilepsy.' 'Really? How does he smell?' 'Awful, he pisses himself, and the carpet, it's a real problem.'

D. Choice of Peculiar Characteristics

Both Tristan and Connie are immersed in peculiarities, like their pee sample for example, "Can I touch it?" "No!" "Don't be precious." "I'm not." "Why are you holding it like that then, it was part of you a minute ago." "I'm just. Nothing (!)" "I'm teasing." "I know. I'm not ashamed of it (!)"

Or Connie's spontaneous thoughts on the two of them sharing the same birthday, "Actually, I don't think it's that unusual, I mean it's not as unlikely as you'd think." "How d'you know what I think?" "Sorry, than most people would think. I mean in a group of people, the group doesn't actually have to be that big for you to share a birthday. Cos probability-wise you're not saying how likely is it this person was born on a particular date - one in 365 obviously. You're just saying, of *all* the dates, how likely is it that two people in a group have the same?" "Oh. Well I think it's a sign."

Or back to the peeing, "*Whilst* you're weeing?" "No, before, to make myself. I don't know." "Why? Out loud?" "Yeah. Quietly. 'Everything's going to be fine.' Like a distraction so I can... 'Everything's fine.' Yes, 'Everything's fine.'" "Are you going to make yourself wee?"

E. The Sound of the Dialogue

Dum. Dum. Dum. Dum. Dee dum. Dee dum. Dee dum. Dee dum. A burst of language that is a phrase of words like a string of pearls, small words laced together to make something beautiful. Dum. Dee dum. Dum.

F. Structure of Lines and Speeches

The structure is built upon the smallest amount of language needed to convey a point, until the words cannot hold and release into speech. One area where this is not true is when the doctors have their monologues. In a way, these monologues come forth from the tension between Tristan and Connie, and follow a similar pattern - short scene, short scene, short scene, monologue, short scene, short scene, short scene, monologue.

III. Dramatic Action

A. Titles of the Units

1. The Fracturing

Tristan delights Connie, Connie Rejects Tristan.

Sand Between the toes, Bittersweet, Dissonance, Jarring Colors, Beautiful Odor

A piece of shit that smells wonderful

Slow

2. The Risk

Connie placates Tristan, Tristan reassures Connie

Tug of war, diss battle, tennis match, two chefs cooking the same cuisine in different ways, pop rocks in the mouth

Volleying a ball that keeps missing its target

Slow, but slightly faster

3. The Monster

Connie puts Tristan in his place, Tristan fends off Connie

Twisting a knife, the smell of barf, the sound of someone calling for help that's been decapitated, looking at mold fester on a piece of really old bread, tasting milk that's gone sour

Scratching at one another's scabs, ripping them off

Moderate

4. The Liar

Tristan wakes Connie, Connie skewers Tristan.

Spitting on the now-opened wound, shaking someone with motion sickness, the sound of a fork scraping a metal pan, the smell of iron but no blood to be found

Watching someone you love react to you doing something you know they hate

Quick but controlled

5. The Gap Life

Connie kidney shots Tristan, Tristan overloads Connie

Taking a picture of a lover with someone else, the smell of a liver failing, the sound of a heart monitor, the taste of bland food, the crushing of a family heirloom

Imagining a future where your lover is very old and sick while you are still young

Bursting and Overflowingly Fast

6. The Phone

Connie wretches on Tristan, Tristan jabs Connie

The smell of iron and then you see the blood. The sound of the breath letting go and the muscles fighting to control the inhale, waking up from a dream where you're falling, kicking someone down from the top of a hill in self defence.

Two people crawling on the floor but too wounded to actually make it to one another.

Explosively fast

IV. The Physical / The Psych Eval

Tristan:

A. Desires

To see the world to fill the void of not having accomplished anything thus far. To be as far away from disappointment as humanly possible. But ultimately, right now, to make Connie smile.

B. Will

Comes from not having to be obligated or responsible to anyone. Allows him to say and do what he feels because he doesn't normally have to regard anyone else.

C. Moral Stance

If it's fun, why the hell not?

D. Decorum

Decorum is for chino-wearing uppity pieces of shit. "Oh no! You're not doing what you're supposed to do!" Fuck that.

E. Summary List of Adjectives

Wild, spontaneous, rule-breaker, fun, quick, witty, sly, charming, deeply sad, funny, aggressive, obnoxious, reckless, poor, uneducated

F. Initial Character-Mood-Intensity at Scene Opening Expressed as:

1. Heartbeat: Rate

Hyper-speed, almost to the point of collapse, easily over 120 beats per minute

2. Perspiration

Armpits and neck and face, sweating profusely

3. Stomach Condition

Constant diarrhea, "I could shit through the eye of a needle," Bursty, Agitated

4. Muscle Tension

Spasmodic tension to the point of trembling. Jerkiness in both the calves and thighs keeping him on his toes, while his chest pumps forward with energy.

5. Breathing Rate and Depth

Quick gasps of air, not going very low into his body.

Connie:

A. Desires

To get away without hurting anyone or being hurt by them in return. To plan adequately for the future so as not to be let down or caught off guard. In this moment, to let Tristan down easy.

B. Will

Comes from having a life of getting what she wants but still feeling guilty or discontented with it. Her extreme intelligence allows her to justify and analyze the world, keeping it at arm's length, which allows her to move through the world.

C. Moral Stance

There are definitely good things and bad things. But if you think about it too long... then the lines get blurry. I think. Yeah that's probably true. So I try to do the right thing but I know that there's two sides to it. So sometimes I'm an ass. But I try not to be.

D. Decorum

People who don't follow the rules are why life is so chaotic. I guess that's why the few times I've acted in my own self interest I've fucked so many people over. But I feel really guilty about it, so I'm gonna keep trying to act proper. Though it definitely causes me anxiety.

E. Summary List of Adjectives

Headstrong, analytical, observant, keen, defensive, particular, untrusting, witty, charming, grounded, reserved, judgmental, well-off, educated, not-not happy

F. Initial Character-Mood-Intensity at Scene Opening Expressed as:

1. Heartbeat: Rate

Slow, but with the medication exacerbating her physical condition, a moderate 80 or so bpm.

2. Perspiration

Sweaty palms. Very sweaty. Some forehead sweat, and in her scalp. The kind that drips down onto the tip of the nose.

3. Stomach Condition

A nervous energy that burns like an ulcer.

4. Muscle Tension

Arms crossed so tight that if she let go, she might explode with rage and implode with fear. A neck that has years of analysis and stubborn moments embedded within it. A forehead that almost always defaults to wrinkle.

5. Breathing Rate and Depth

Smooth and controlled, the breath is forcefully inhaled to artificially go deep. Like the tensest yogi you've ever seen.

V. Idea

A. Meaning of the title

The Effect is ultimately in reference to the medication being administered to Tristan and Connie. However, it also suggests something larger - the idea that chemical effects in our body are somehow less legitimate when administered by human intervention, rather than so-called "natural" or "physical" processes, as though the brain, spirit, and personality live on a plane less physical or natural than the rest of the body.

B. The Spinal Tap:

The spine of this play is the ideological conflict between whether to live in the present or plan for the future, and who has the privilege to do so. While Connie and Dr. James live with trepidation and precaution, Toby and Tristan live from moment to moment, which speaks to male privilege as well as class privilege. Toby has job security, and Tristan doesn't really believe in work, so they both can act on their own volition without regard to consequence, while Connie and Dr. James have somewhat unstable lives, with Connie's relationship to an older, wealthier man while Dr. James' depression has made it difficult to hold down a steady job. While Connie and Dr. James analyze the deeper, psychological impact behind peoples' choices, Toby and Tristan prefer not to read into anything too deeply because it might reveal something frightful, and impact their lifestyles, whereas for the women, this is just their modus operandus.

Although the play mounts to a reversal of ideology in both Tristan and Connie, and seeing the other side for a brief moment, the play has a *deus ex machina* moment with Tristan essentially losing all memory and being forced to be afraid of the unknown, while Connie has come to terms with the worst taking her off guard and still surviving. Together they face the future, their way.

C. The Evidence

1. Connie: "I'm in a relationship and you're clearly not a relationship kind of guy-"

2. Tristan: "I want *you* to live *now*. You're always talking about what happens afterwards or how we got here, tell me what you feel *now*?"

3. Tristan: "You're so scared. Why are you so scared all the time?! It's like being with an old woman, 'What might go wrong though?!'"

4. Connie: "Because you just want it NOW. You know maybe you *should* start thinking about the future a bit. ... You're not exactly on a gap year, are you Tris. It's become a sort of gap life."

5. Toby: "If you're going to kill yourself tomorrow, what do you care if it's short term or not?"

6. Dr James: "Every study, every test shows that so-called 'depressed' people have a *more accurate* view of the world, a more realistic view of themselves, and the future -"

7. Dr. James: "Maybe it's *you* who needs it to be tiny and controllable. Maybe it makes *you* feel better to think that."

8. Tristan: "It's horrible to feel you can't trust your senses."

9. Connie: "Just. Wait. Maybe we should wait till we know more, how we feel."

Tristan: "I know how I feel." Connie: "Well I don't."

10. Tristan: "Do I love you...?" *Beat*. Connie: "I don't know. Do you?" Tristan: "I don't know." *Beat*. *She absorbs this*. Connie: "If you're there. Help me. I don't care what it was I see that now. I hate my past self so much. She didn't know. You won't believe me but I would rather get old and argue with you every day than ever love anyone else."

11. Connie: "No I'm saying sort *yourself* out first - before you make out I'm a coward. I'm happy with my life." Tristan: "Ha! Yeah, course you are, you look happy, you look fucking delighted!" Connie: "You've got no idea how I feel." Tristan: "TELL ME!"

12. Connie: "Where we're going back to. Mine." Tristan: "Why?" Connie: "Because that's what we're doing today."

D. The Diagnosis

The scene is in the play because it is when the conflict of the play reaches a tipping point and explodes out into the most confrontational version of itself. It is explicitly named that Tristan wants Connie to live *now* while Connie wants Tristan to start thinking about the future. The play could not do without it because ultimately, the conflict would not climax and then there would be no conversion or reversal of ideology, leading to a play that builds to a climax then returns to status quo without anything really changing.

VII. The Heartbeat (Tempo)

The scene (and play as a whole) is a series of quick volleys with longer rallies dispersed within. Much of the dialogue is five words or less per character speaking, until it opens up into 4-5 sentences monologues. This lends itself to a quick-quick-slow tempo, like a heartbeat charging forward and then settling, and so on.

VIII. Tone

The high tide lapping at the foot of your hospital bed; a sunrise and sunset at the same time; A sterilize operating theatre splattered with acrylic paint of all colors.