



Un tributo a

NORTHERN EXPOSURE™

Una serie que nos atrapa, encandila y estimula


DA es rica en múltiples referencias que abarcan el arte, la filosofía, la psicología... que transforman a los integrantes de la historia, y que a la vez revelan un pensamiento multifacético sobre el ser humano. DA es una serie tan divertida como interesante, pero que está mucho más allá de una simple serie de humor. La propuesta de algunas personas que amamos esta serie para este rincón es reunir periódicamente y en forma de revista tanto ensayos de aficionados como valiosa información heterogénea ya sea original y proveniente de las fuentes de NX como la vertida ya en otros sitios de la red.

Directora de contenidos: Silvia Colominas (aka "Nikita Fleischman")

Coordinación y diseño web: Carlos Rossique (aka "Kepler")


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Entrevistas y comentarios de creadores y guionistas:

 **"Comentarios de Joshua Brand a North to the Future"**


06/2002. Saludos del creador de la serie a Nikita, colaboradora de esta revista

Entrevistas a actores:

 **"Entrevista a Mr. BARRY CORBIN (Maurice Minnifield)"**

16/07/2002. Uno de los pesos pesados de NX, entrevistado por Nikita Fleischman.

Ensayos de la red:

 **"Exposing Northern Exposure, An Exercise in Creating Themes...."**

October, 1995. by Kristin Wright and Julio Vigil



Joshua Brand, el creador de la serie, ha respondido a las peticiones de información de alguno de los colaboradores de esta revista:



"I am very proud of Northern Exposure and I'm extremely happy that people all over the world enjoy it and that it has touched so many lives. It has changed my life and for that I'm also very grateful. It's very close to my heart, but it's a chapter in my life that's over. What I had to say about the show I said in the show. That's why I left the show. I felt I really didn't have anything else to say, at the time, without repeating myself. Trying to recreate that feeling now or trying to explain why I chose to do this or that seems artificial and beside the point... for me. I respect your desire to understand the genesis of the show and I'm sure no doubt many of your conclusions will be accurate, and so I leave the job of interpretation up to you and people who, like yourself, will find satisfaction in understanding something that has touched their lives. No hard feelings on my part. Gratitude to people like yourself is more like it."

Que nos aventuramos a traducir como:

"Estoy muy orgulloso de 'Doctor en Alaska' y extremadamente feliz de que gente de todo el mundo disfrute de ella y que haya tocado tantas vidas. Esto cambió mi vida, y por ello estoy también muy agradecido. Está muy cerca de mi corazón, pero es un capítulo de mi vida que concluyó. Lo que tenía que decir sobre la serie lo dije en la serie. Eso es por lo que dejé la serie. Sentía que realmente no tenía nada más que decir, en ese momento, sin repetirme a mí mismo.

Tratar de recrear ese sentimiento ahora, o tratar de explicar porque decidí hacer esto o aquello parece artificial y fuera de lugar... para mí. Respeto vuestro deseo de comprender la génesis de la serie y estoy seguro, sin duda, de que muchas de vuestras conclusiones serán exactas, así que dejo la labor de interpretación para tí y para gente que, como tú, encontrará satisfacción en entender algo que ha tocado sus vidas. No hay resentimiento por mi parte, sino más bien gratitud hacia gente como tú. "

MR. BARRY CORBIN (MAURICE MINNIFIELD IN NX)



🇺🇸 Interviewed by Nikita Fleischman

🇪🇸 Entrevistado por Nikita Fleischman



1.

I know you have been working in cinema since many time ago. I know about movies like *Nothing in Common*, *The man who loved woman*, *War Games*, *Any which way you can*, *No one can hear you*, *etc.* **But I guess working on tv is such a different thing.** Tell me a little bit about how you came into *Northern Exposure* and why you took the role of Maurice Minnifield.

I came into the show the way I usually do, by auditioning. I guess they liked my audition because they hired me.

2.

Try to imagine that you are the *Northern Exposure*'s producer and you have to select the casting for the show. **Which actors and actresses would you choose? Which actor would you like to be Maurice Minnifield?**

My actor's ego comes into play and I have a hard time imagining anyone else being Maurice. I know they were looking at several others for the role, and I'm sure any one of them would have done a fine job, but the character would have been different. We all bring our life experiences into the roles and make them our own. Because of this, I can't imagine anyone else in any of the other parts either.

3.

I've read you love the western very much. All this time I've been studying *Northern Exposure* I've found that there are many things in this show that can be understood as a typical western things. This idea is specially obvious in the episode called "Cicely" -the number 23 of the 3rd season- that explains the origin of the town. In this episode you where Mace Mobrey, the villain of the western. In fact, Cicely (Alaska) is a symbol of the Western Culture (the opposite of the East one that simbolizes Rob Morrow's character) and speaks about the land of opportunities. **What do you think about it?**

Because of where I grew up (West Texas), the western history has always been very dear to me. I enjoy western movies, even though they are often not true to actual history. I think the show "Cicely" was an example of the "mythical west". I feel that most movies and TV shows miss the actual history. However I do feel that Cicely, Alaska is a symbol of what we think of as the "frontier".

4.

In your official website you define Maurice the next way: *"Maurice is only happy on the edge of civilization, happy in the space, happy in the wild. Ha has Ph D. In aerospace engineering. He's the best traveled person in the world because he's been out og this world. He's very literal-minded, but he would love to be instinctive. That's the part that's missing. He's in anguish over the fact that it's missing".*

I do believe Maurice Minnifield is a kind of cowboy from the twilight western like Clint Eastwood in *Unforgiven* although Maurice doesn't wear a cowboy hat but a NASA's bearskin and a leather jacket with the american flag. He's a real cowboy in "The Three Amigos" (3.16) where the death of an old friend sends him and Holling packing off into the snowy wilderness to bury him at No-Name Point. I guess you enjoyed a lot making this episode because you were able to ride a horse. **Did you think about Maurice like a kind of cowboy when you had to create him?**

When we started NE I tried to play somewhat against the cowboy image, but being who I am I couldn't ignore it completely. I think probably Maurice is as close to a "cattle baron" as you can be in modern times.

5.

Joshua Brand says the next at your Official Website: *"Maurice really embodies the best and the worst qualities of what is meant to be an American".* And Chris defines you the next way in the episode "The Big Feast" (4.21); *"You are a real american, you're an ex marine and astronaut, you ARE America. You're rich, you're rapacious, you're progress without a conscience, paving everything in its path. You're five percent of earth's population, yet consuming 25 percent of the earth's natural resources. You pay a lot of taxes, you do a lot of charity work, most of it's tax deductible, but your heart's in the right place".* **What do you think about Maurice as a symbol of America/american?**

I think Maurice with all hisfaults and attributes is a good example of what the world thinks of as essentially American. He is by turn, honest and sly, generous and selfish, tender and abrasive, and

brave and frightened. Many people in the world think of America as a bully (speak softly and carry a big stick). This is sometimes true, but we are also the first to help others in a crisis. Sometimes our help is misguided, but like Maurice, our heart is always in the right place.

6 .

As I told you, I'm writing the research project for my Doctoral Thesis. In this project, I'm trying to see how *Northern Exposure* explores the nature of human being through myths, fairy tales and dreams. I know this tv show was nominated for Emmys as the Best Drama but I'm not agree it's a drama. Joyce Millman in her article called "Twenty ways the 90's Changed Television" says the next; "*Northern Exposure won the 1992 Emmy for the best drama series, but, in his acceptance speech, show co-creator John Falsey laughed, "We're really a comedy!"*".

When I try to establish to what gender does NX belongs to I find it isn't easy. Christine Scodari speaks about Dramedy (Drama + Comedy) and I think it's true but it doesn't reflect NX's essence at all. We can also think about bizarre because it shows surrealistic things and quirky characters but, NX isn't like *Twin Peaks*. I mean *Twin Peaks* showed the worst part of human being, it was a journey into nightmare while NX is a journey into myth, dreams and fairy tales. It's magicom.

I don't like to put things into boxes but if you had some boxes in front of you, each one with a label with next words: comedy, tragedy, drama, quirky gender, bizarre, etc. **Into which one of them would you put *Northern Exposure*? Or would you create a new one?**

I think it's a mistake to try to categorize any art form. TV is arguably an art, and to categorize it diminishes it. The Emmys categorize any 30 minute show as a comedy and hour long shows are dramas. This is certainly an imperfect system, but I guess it's the best that they have. As for myself, I find it a trap to think of my work as either "comedy, tragedy or whatever". The only categorization that is valuable to me is whether or not we're telling the truth, and for the most part, NE was honest.

7 .

Carlos Rossique, a friend of mine, uses to say that you've got a pretty good "gesture engineering". Taylor Fogarty in the American Western Magazine, defines you the next way: "*Whenever he appears on-screen he can walk tough, talk tough, and look every bit the part. Then too, he can melt your heart like warm butter on hot Texas toast by simply appying that innocent, little boy expression of his (...) sad puppy-dog eyes*". **Have been difficult to swing the Maurice character expression to exactly this undefined point between comedy and drama? How do you feel more comfortable, making comedy or drama?**

I think I answered this in #6. I do appreciate passing on the fine compliments of Carlos Rossique and Taylor Fogarty.

8 .

In a recent interview to Mr. John Cullum in Broadway On Line, Michael Buckley asked him about the message underneath the musical comedy parodies. John Cullum answered; *It takes you on a comic journey. If you don't want to get the message, you don't have to. It's very subliminal. Do you think in Northern Exposure happened the same?* I mean, it was a very smart tv show with great intertextuality. There were a lot of references to literature, music, philosophy, folklore, etc. Deep and interesting messages, but it wasn't like a magisterial lesson. There were different levels of reading for all type of viewers.

I think there are levels in any art, and you can enjoy film, TV, literature, etc.. on any of these levels. I think John Cullum is right in his statement that NE works on many levels, some of them subliminal. It seems to me that much of television is mind candy; you can enjoy it for the moment but you don't

take anything away when it's over. I think NE is a show you can think about an hour, a week, or a year after you've seen it and find something of substance. I'm very proud to have been a part of it.

9.

I think the essence of NX (at least, one of them) is showing opposite worlds. This tv show speaks about dichotomies; science versus magic, nature versus civilization, woman versus man, west versus east, fantasy versus reality, medicine versus shamanism, etc. *Northern Exposure* shows that sometimes the frontier between opposite worlds doesn't exist at all, nor does it become erased. We, as watchers, are settled in this frontier and Alaska is the state called "The Last Frontier". **What do you think about it?**

I think you're right that the TV show is essentially about dichotomies. The only frontier we have now is the frontier of the mind. I think the last true frontier was the frontier of space. In NE Maurice has conquered the frontier of space and now struggles with the frontier of the mind.

10.

If we take my Dichotomy's Theory as a truth, Maurice should be defined for different dichotomies, the one between Past/Future, for example. Maurice is a man who really cares about his past, he's very proud of himself and he misses his childhood. I remember the episode "Homesick" (4.20) where he moves his childhood home from Oklahoma to Cicely and it stirs up memories of his brother. But although Maurice is nostalgic about his past, he's also interested in the future. His slogan in the pilot is "North to the future!" and he never loses his faith in making of Cicely a bigger and more important city in episodes like "Dreams, Schemes and Putting Greens" (1.04) selling Cicely as the new Riviera, "Rosebud" (5.07) preparing the Cicely Film Festival, "Horns" (6.13) selling Cicely's water, etc. **Which part of Maurice's personality did you like the most? Which one of them do you think better defines him?**

The thing I admire most about Maurice, and incidentally, most of the other characters on NE is that they are grounded in the past, live in the present and look to the future.

11.

Maurice is a man of honour who needs to believe in heroes. His sense of honour makes him to have problems with the others. For example, in the episode "Brains, Know How and Native Intelligence" (1.02) he dismisses Chris because he speaks about Whitman's homosexuality at K-BHR. Maurice says "We need our heroes", it seems to him a gay man couldn't be a hero, so he would have to suppress that information for the sake of maintaining Whitman's well-deserved respect. **What do you think about Maurice's homophobia?**

I think you have misinterpreted Maurice's supposed homophobia. It seems to me that when needing our heroes, he is talking about judging a person by his or her accomplishments without delving into their personal lives. Maurice is a very private person and does not like people digging around in his business. I think he's extending that same love of privacy to Walt Whitman, or any other public person. If you remember in the speech he mentions the foibles of many famous people including Dwight Eisenhower, J. Edgar Hoover and Richard Nixon. I don't say that Maurice is not a homophobe, quite possibly he is, but the thrust of his attack on Chris has more to do with privacy and leaving people to live their own lives the way they see fit.

12.

Another thing that makes Maurice look like a villain is his racism. In episodes like "Sleeping with the Enemy" (4.24) he says nasty things like: "All my life I've dreamed of having a son. A little towheaded tyke I could bounce on my knee, teach to ride, hunt,

fish. What do I get? A middle-aged Chinaman". He also says he can support everything, physical handicaps, even his son was a worm but not that he isn't white... **Did you ever feel afraid to have the hate of *Northern Exposure's* fans or you felt Maurice was sensitive enough to be understood by the audience?**

The human animal is xenophobic by nature. Hopefully we spend most of our lives trying to overcome this. I think the reason Maurice said the hurtful things he does in "Sleeping With the Enemy" is partially because he feels guilty. He had an affair many years ago and forgot about it. When the result of his affair comes back years later he's shocked, embarrassed and frightened. The thing to remember about Maurice is his final reaction. He accepts his son and to an extent, his son's mother.

13.

What about his relationship with Holling? Do you really think Maurice loved Shelly or it was just a beautiful thing to have and contemplate? I remember Maurice says that "*women were objects of desire, admiration, nothing more*" 'til he meets Barbara Semansky.

The difference between Holling and Maurice is that Holling can be Shelly's friend and Maurice could never be friends with a woman. I think Holling is probably Maurice's closest friend. I think Hollings closest friend is Shelly. This sets up certain conflicts in their relationships. As for loving Shelly, I think Maurice has no idea what romantic love is. He tries, but he always fails.

14.

Mr. Joshua Brand says that there is no evolution. That the characters are always the same because if they weren't, it should be another tv show. **Do you think there's an evolution in Maurice? Or do you think he's the same from the beginning to the end of the show?**

With all due respect to Josh Brand, I think characters in TV shows evolve just like people do. Think about the characters in *All In The Family* from their beginning season through *Archie Bunkers Place*. There is definite evolution just as there is definite evolution in every character in *NE*, including the town of Cicely.

15.

Another thing that makes Maurice a credible character, that makes him real and human, is his sensibility. *Northern Exposure* shows Maurice as a very rational and material man but, at the same time, as a very romantic and sensitive person. Maurice is worried about his orchids –how not, the most elegant flower- when his house burns ("The Gift of the Maggie" 5.19), he adopts Chris ("A Kodiak Moment" 1.07), he embraces Ed when he's sad because of his relation with Heather ("Balls" 6.19), etc. I think the only thing he really wants is the same that all of us want; to love and to be loved. I remember when he feels alone and misses Ed when he doesn't go to his house as he used to do because he goes to the Brick to watch TV. **Do you think Maurice misses to have a family and he protects himself keeping his feelings hidden and playing Maurice the rock?**

Like many modern American men, Maurice is in a constant struggle to figure out where he fits in in the world. He reads about the "Sensitive American Male" and it turns his stomach. He grew up in an era and a place where if things got tuff, you sucked it up and went on. About the only time you see Maurice show doubt is when he's alone. It's the way he was raised and it would be very difficult to change.

16.

Some directors don't want their actors read all the screenplay. Woody Allen or David Lynch, for example, only give to the actors the scenes that have their dialogues. *Northern Exposure* is a choral TV Show where every character has a very close relation with one another. **Did you have all the episode's screenplay? Did you create Maurice thinking in the other character's actions in each episode or you used to think about him as an independent entity?**

We all had the complete scripts of each show. It would be difficult, in my case anyway, to be able to effectively play a character without knowing how that character fits in to the mosaic of the whole.

17.

Did you ever felt you have to do something against your character's nature in any episode?

Very rarely we got into a situation where I felt that we were going against the nature of my character. If we did, we would discuss it and more times than not would come to a compromise. If a compromise was not possible I would play it in such a way that I would do as little damage as possible to Maurice's integrity.

18.

In what moment did you feel you were in a very special and quirky tv show? In what moment and for what reason did you know all of you were making a show that would be a classic and would last forever?

When I read the pilot script I thought this was a very unusual show and the character was much fuller than the average TV series character. I felt from the beginning that this show had a chance to be something special. Most shows that are as different as this one are not given a chance to survive. They are put off in unfavorable time slots and given very little promotion. This show somehow survived all that and ran for a productive 5 years.

19.

It seems Joel Fleischman experiments the journey of Joseph Campbell's hero. Fleischman starts a journey he didn't want going to Cicely. Then, he can comes back ("Horns" 6.13) but he denies the return. Finally, he's saved by the external world in a magical scape ("The Quest" 6.15), acrosses the return's threshold and goes to NY. Joel has freedom to live and shows it in the card "NY is a state of mind" he sends to Maggie. Well, Joel was a very rational person that now speaks about a state of mind... I guess his experience in Cicely has repaired the hole in his life that it created in the beginning. Sometimes you have to break something to make it better then.

I can't avoid to ask you for Joel's character. I don't know if you were a watcher of the show or if you only knew about the episodes where your character was in but I'd like to know **what is your opinion about Joel's evolution in the show?**

I disagreed with the arc the show took in the final season so I'm not the best person to ask about Joel's final shows. I felt the producers and writers were wasting time writing a spin off series that couldn't be made when the time could be more productively spent developing the new characters. I think that is the reason for the show's cancellation.

20.

If you had the chance to write the last episode, Which would be for you the perfect ending for the show? Including all the characters.

I wish I could tell you what I would like to see in the final episode of NE. I've had many fans approach me with ideas, but I don't know that any of them would work. If someone came up with a viable script though, I'd be first in line to do it. I wasn't ready to say goodbye to Maurice.

To finish, I only wanna thank you for answering these questions (I know you don't feel too good at the e-mail) and for all the great moments I lived with Maurice. I'll always remember when he looks at Chris' Aurora Borealis trying to understand its meaning at night ("Aurora Borealis" 1.08), when he embraces Ed and says: don't worry! ("The Gift of the Maggie" 5.19), when he really tries to meet and speak with his son Duk Won for the first time at the Brick ("Sleeping with the Enemy" 4.24), when he feels old and doesn't want to be called a senior citizen ("The Mystery of the Old Curio Shop" 5.02), when he looks for jews to help Joel mourn his uncle Manny ("Kaddish for Uncle Manny" 4.21), when he protects the violinist Cal Ingram although it means to lose Barbara ("Lovers and Madmen" 5.24), when he understands his old army comander, his hero, is just a man ("Lost and found" 3.17), etc.

Thanks for all these moments, Maurice. Thanks for your gesture of a NASA's cowboy and for sharing the sensibility there's inside.

Thank you for all your nice comments. I look forward to seeing you at Moosefest.

Barry

April 27th, 2002.



1.

Sé que trabaja en el mundo del cine desde hace mucho tiempo en películas como Nothing in Common, The man who loved woman, War Games, Any which way you can, No one can hear you, etc. pero supongo que trabajar en televisión es algo muy diferente. Explíqueme brevemente cómo llegó a Northern Exposure y por qué se le asignó el papel de Maurice Minnifield.

Llegué a la serie de la manera en que normalmente lo hago, a través de un casting. Supongo que les gustó my audición porque me contrataron.

2.

Intente imaginar que es usted el productor de Northern Exposure y que tiene que seleccionar el casting de la serie. ¿Qué actores y actrices escogería? ¿Qué actor le gustaría que fuese Maurice Minnifield?

Mi ego de actor juega un papel importante y me es difícil imaginar a nadie más siendo Maurice. Sé que estuvieron tanteando a varios actores para el papel y estoy seguro que cualquiera de ellos habría hecho un buen trabajo, pero el personaje hubiese sido diferente. Todos ponemos experiencias de nuestra vida en los papeles y los hacemos nuestros, por esta razón, tampoco puedo imaginarme a nadie más en ninguno de los demás papeles.

3.

He leído que le gusta mucho el western. Durante todo este tiempo que he estado estudiando Northern Exposure he encontrado que hay muchas cosas en la serie que pueden interpretarse como típicas del western. Esta idea es especialmente obvia en el episodio "Cicely" (3.23) que explica el origen del pueblo. En este episodio usted era Mace Mobrey, el villano del western. De hecho, Cicely (Alaska) es un símbolo de la Cultura del Oeste (lo opuesto del Este que simboliza el personaje de Rob Morrow) y habla sobre la tierra de las oportunidades. ¿Qué opina sobre esto?

Debido al lugar donde crecí (West Texas), la historia del oeste siempre ha sido algo muy querido por mí. Disfruto de las películas del oeste, incluso cuando no son fieles a la historia. Creo que el episodio "Cicely" fue un ejemplo del "mítico oeste". Siento que muchas películas y series de televisión pierden la historia, sin embargo siento que Cicely, Alaska, es un símbolo de lo que nosotros pensamos como la "frontera".

4.

En you web oficial define a Maurice de la siguiente manera; "Maurice sólo es feliz en el filo de la civilización, feliz en el espacio, feliz en lo salvaje. Tiene un doctorado en ingeniería aeroespacial, es la persona que más ha viajado del mundo porque ha estado fuera de este mundo. Es literalmente intelectual pero le encantaría ser instintivo, eso es la parte que le falta, él está angustiado por esta parte que le falta". Yo opino que Maurice Minnifield es un tipo de cowboy del western crepuscular, como Clint Eastwood en Sin Perdón, aunque Maurice no lleva gorro de cowboy sino su gorra de la NASA y su cazadora de cuero con la bandera americana. Él es un auténtico cowboy en "The Three Amigos" (3.16) donde la muerte de un viejo amigo le lleva junto a Holling por la naturaleza salvaje y nevada para enterrarlo en el lugar sin nombre. Supongo que disfrutó mucho haciendo este episodio porque le permitió ir a caballo. ¿Pensó en Maurice como un cowboy cuando tuvo que crearlo?

Cuando empezamos NE intenté interpretar algo contrario a la imagen del cowboy, pero siendo quien soy, no podría ignorarlo completamente. Creo que probablemente Maurice es lo más cercano a un "magnate del ganado" que se puede ser en los tiempos modernos.

5.

Joshua Brand dice lo siguiente en su web oficial "Maurice realmente encarna las mejores y las peores cualidades de lo que significa ser americano". Y Chris le define de la siguiente manera en el episodio "The Big Feast" (4.21); "Eres un verdadero americano, un ex marine y astronauta. Tú eres América, eres rico, rapaz, eres el progreso sin conciencia, aplastándolo todo a su paso. Eres el 5% de la población de la tierra pero consumes el 25% de los recursos naturales. Pagas muchos impuestos, haces muchas obras de caridad, muchas de ellas deducibles de impuestos, pero tienes el corazón en el lugar correcto". ¿Qué opina de Maurice como símbolo del americano o de América?

Creo que Maurice, con todos sus fallos y sus atributos, es un buen ejemplo de lo que el mundo cree que es esencialmente un americano. Él es alternativamente honesto y astuto, generoso y egoísta, tierno y brusco, valiente y asustadizo. Mucha gente en el mundo piensa en América como un matón o tirano (habla suavemente y lleva una buena porra). Esto a veces es cierto, pero también somos los primeros en ayudar a los otros en las crisis. A veces nuestra ayuda es equivocada pero, como Maurice, nuestro corazón siempre está en el lugar correcto.

6.

Como ya le dije, estoy escribiendo el proyecto de investigación para mi Tesis Doctoral. En este proyecto intento ver cómo Northern Exposure explora la naturaleza del ser humano a través de los mitos, los cuentos de hadas y los sueños. Sé que esta serie fue nominada a los Emmy's al Mejor Drama, pero no estoy de acuerdo con que sea un drama. Joyce Millman en su artículo titulado "Twenty ways the 90's Changed Television" dice; "Northern Exposure ganó el Emmy al Mejor Drama de 1992, pero, en su discurso de aceptación, el co-creador de la serie, John Falsey rió, "¡En verdad somos una comedia!". Cuando intento establecer a qué género pertenece NX encuentro que no es fácil. Christine Scodari habla

de Dramedy (Drama + Comedy) y pienso que es cierto pero que no refleja del todo la verdadera esencia de NX. También podemos pensar en el bizarro porque muestra cosas surrealistas y personajes peculiares, pero NX no es como Twin Peaks. Quiero decir que Twin Peaks mostraba lo peor del ser humano, era un viaje a la pesadilla mientras que NX es un viaje al mito, al sueño, al cuento. Es realismo mágico. No me gusta poner las cosas en cajas pero si tuviese que algunas cajas enfrente, cada una con una etiqueta con palabras como: comedia, drama, tragedia, género quirky, bizarro, etc. ¿En qué caja pondría Northern Exposure? ¿O crearía una nueva?

Creo que es un error intentar categorizar cualquier forma de arte. La Televisión es posiblemente un arte y categorizarla la disminuye. Los Emmy categorizan cualquier show de 30 minutos como comedia y los de una hora de duración como drama. Este es ciertamente un sistema imperfecto, pero supongo que es el mejor que tienen. En lo que a mí se refiere, encuentro que es una trampa pensar en mi trabajo en términos de "comedia, tragedia o lo que sea". La única categorización que me es válida es que sea lo que sea estemos contando la verdad y, en su mayor parte, NE era honesta.

7.

Carlos Rossique, un amigo mío, suele decir que usted tiene una gran ingeniería gestual. Taylor Fogarty en American Western Magazine, le define del siguiente modo: "Donde quiera que aparezca en pantalla, puede andar rudamente, hablar rudamente y aparentar ser rudo. Pero también puede derretir tu corazón como cálida mantequilla en una tostada caliente de Texas simplemente utilizando esta expresión inocente, de niño pequeño con tristes ojos de cachorrillo". ¿Ha sido difícil balancear la expresión del personaje de Maurice exactamente hasta este punto indefinido entre comedia y drama? ¿Cómo se siente más cómodo, haciendo comedia o drama?

Creo que contesté esto en la anterior pregunta. Aprecio mucho los agradables cumplidos, tanto de Carlos Rossique como de Taylor Fogarty.

8.

En una entrevista reciente al Sr. John Cullum en Broadway On Line, Michael Buckley le preguntó sobre el mensaje que hay por debajo de las parodias de las comedias musicales. John Cullum respondió; Te lleva a un viaje cómico, si quieres coges el mensaje, pero no tienes porqué, es muy subliminal. ¿Piensa que en Northern Exposure sucedía lo mismo? Quiero decir que era una serie muy inteligente con una gran intertextualidad, tenía muchas referencias a la literatura, la música, el folclore, la filosofía, etc. Mensajes profundos e inteligentes pero no era como una lección magistral. Habían diferentes niveles de lectura para todo tipo de espectador.

Creo que hay niveles en cualquier arte y puedes disfrutar de una película, de la tv, la literatura, etc en cualquiera de sus niveles. Creo que John Cullum estaba en lo cierto al afirmar que NE trabaja en muchos niveles, algunos de ellos subliminales. Me parece que mucha de la televisión es como un caramelo; la puedes disfrutar en el momento pero no sacas nada más una vez ha terminado. Creo que NE es una serie en la que puedes pensar una hora, una semana o incluso un año después de verla y siempre encuentras algo de sustancia. Me siento muy orgulloso de haber sido parte de ella.

9.

Creo que la esencia de NX (al menos una de ellas) es la de mostrar mundos opuestos. Esta serie habla de dicotomías; ciencia versus magia, naturaleza versus civilización, mujer versus hombre, oeste versus este, fantasía versus realidad, medicina versus shamanismo, etc. Northern Exposure muestra que a veces la frontera entre términos aparentemente opuestos no existe del todo e, incluso, a veces desaparece. Nosotros, como espectadores, nos asentamos en esta frontera situada en Alaska, el estado de la última Frontera. ¿Qué opina sobre esto?

Creo que tienes razón diciendo que esta serie de tv habla esencialmente de dicotomías. La única frontera que tenemos ahora es la frontera de la mente. Creo que la última verdadera frontera era la del espacio. En NE Maurice conquistó esta frontera del espacio y ahora lucha con la de la mente.

10.

Si tomamos mi Teoría de las Dicotomías como una verdad, Maurice se definiría por diferentes dicotomías. Una, por ejemplo, sería la existente entre Pasado/Futuro. Maurice es un hombre que realmente se preocupa por su pasado, se siente muy orgulloso de sí mismo y añora su infancia. Recuerdo el episodio "Homesick" (4.20) cuando traslada la casa de su niñez desde Oklahoma hasta Cicely y revive recuerdos de su hermano fallecido. Pero aunque Maurice siente nostalgia por el pasado, también está muy interesado en el futuro. Su slogan de piloto es "'El Norte hacia el Futuro!" y nunca pierde su fe en hacer de Cicely una ciudad más grande e importante en episodios como "Dreams, Schemes and Putting Greens" (1.04) vendiendo Cicely como la nueva Riviera, "Rosebud" (5.07) preparando el Festival de Cine de Cicely, "Horns" (6.13) vendiendo el agua de Cicely, etc. ¿Qué parte de la personalidad de Maurice le gustaba más? ¿Cuál de ellas cree que le define mejor?

Lo que más admiro de Maurice y también de muchos de los otros personajes de NE, es que están conectados con el pasado, viven en el presente y miran al futuro.

11.

Maurice es un hombre de honor que necesita creer en los héroes. Su sentido del honor le hace tener problemas con los demás. Por ejemplo, en el episodio "Brains, Know How and Native Intelligence" (1.02) despidió a Chris porque habla sobre la homosexualidad de Whitman en la K-BHR. Maurice dice "Necesitamos nuestros héroes", parece que opine que un gay no puede ser un héroe, por lo que suprime esta información para mantener el respeto a Whitman. ¿Qué opina sobre la homofobia de Maurice?

Creo que has malinterpretado la supuesta homofobia de Maurice. Creo que cuando él dice que necesitamos a nuestros héroes, está hablando sobre juzgar a una persona por sus talentos sin entrar en sus vidas personales. Maurice es una persona muy privada y no le gusta que la gente indague en sus asuntos. Creo que extiende este mismo amor por la privacidad a Walt Whitman, o a cualquier otra persona. Si recuerdas el discurso menciona las manías de muchas personas famosas, incluidas Dwight Eisenhower, J. Edgar Hoover y Richard Nixon. No digo que Maurice no sea homófobo, posiblemente lo sea, pero su ataque a Chris tiene más que ver con la privacidad y el dejar que las personas vivan sus vidas de la manera que ellas decidan.

12.

Otra cosa que convierte a Maurice en el villano es su racismo. En episodios como "Sleeping with the Enemy" (4.24) dice cosas tan desagradables como: "Toda mi vida he soñado con tener un hijo. Un pequeño al que pudiese sentar en mis rodillas, enseñar a montar a caballo, cazar, pescar. ¿Y qué tengo? Un chino de mediana edad". También dice que puede soportar cualquier cosa, minusvalías físicas, incluso de que su hijo fuese una lombriz pero no que no sea blanco... ¿Temió alguna vez ganarse el odio de los fans de Northern Exposure o sintió que Maurice era lo suficientemente sensible para ser entendido por la audiencia?

El animal humano es xenófobo por naturaleza. Esperanzadoramente pasamos la mayor parte de nuestras vidas intentando superar esto. Creo que la razón por la que Maurice dice estas cosas hirientes en "Sleeping With the Enemy" es parcialmente porque se siente culpable. Tuvo un affair hace muchos años y lo olvidó. Cuando el resultado de ese affair aparece unos años después Maurice se queda en estado de shock, está avergonzado y asustado. Lo que se debe recordar de Maurice es su reacción última, él acepta a su hijo y, por extensión, a la madre de su hijo.

13.

¿Qué me dice de su relación con Holling? ¿Cree realmente que Maurice amaba a Shelly o simplemente era una cosa hermosa que tener y contemplar?

Recuerdo que Maurice dice que "las mujeres eran objetos de deseo, admiración, nada más" hasta que conoce a Barbara Semansky. La diferencia entre Holling y Maurice es que Holling puede ser el amigo de Shelly y Maurice nunca podría ser amigo de una mujer. Creo que Holling es probablemente el amigo más cercano a Maurice pero pienso que el amigo más íntimo de Holling es Shelly. Esto establece ciertos conflictos en sus relaciones. Por lo que respecta a amar a Shelly, creo que Maurice no tiene ni idea de lo que es el amor romántico, lo intenta, pero siempre fracasa.

14.

Mr. Joshua Brand dice que no hay evolución, que los personajes siempre son los mismos porque sino se trataría de una serie distinta. ¿Usted piensa que hay evolución en Maurice? ¿O piensa que él es el mismo desde el principio hasta el final de la serie?

Con todos mis respetos por Josh Brand, creo que los personajes en tv evolucionan igual que lo hacen las personas. Piensa en los personajes de All In The Family desde su primera temporada pasando por Archie Bunkers Place. Definitivamente hay evolución del mismo modo que hay una evolución en cada personaje de NE, incluido el pueblo de Cicely.

15.

Otra cosa que hace que Maurice sea un personaje creíble, que le hace humano y real, es su sensibilidad. Northern Exposure muestra a Maurice como un hombre muy racional y material pero, al mismo tiempo, como una persona muy romántica y sensible. Maurice se preocupa por sus orquídeas- cómo no la flor más aristocrática- cuando se incendia su casa en "The Gift of the Maggie" 5.19, Maurice adopta a Chris en "A Kodiak Moment" 1.07, abraza a Ed cuando éste tiene una crisis sentimental con Heather en "Balls" 6.19, etc. Creo que la única cosa que quiere Maurice es la misma que queremos todos, querer y ser querido. Recuerdo cuando se siente solo y añora a Ed cuando éste no va a su casa a ver la tv como solía hacer porque se queda mirando la tv en el Brick. ¿Piensa que Maurice echa de menos tener una familia y se protege a sí mismo escondiendo sus sentimientos y haciendo el papel de duro?

Como muchos hombres americanos modernos, Maurice está en constante lucha buscando su lugar en el mundo. Él lee acerca del "Sensible Hombre Americano" y le revuelve el estómago. Él creció en una era y en un lugar donde si las cosas se ponían difíciles, te las tragabas y seguías adelante. El único momento en que se ve dudar a Maurice es cuando está a solas, es el modo en que fue criado y le sería muy difícil cambiar.

16.

Algunos directores no quieren que sus actores lean todo el guión. Woody Allen o David Lynch, por ejemplo, sólo dan a los actores las escenas que tienen sus diálogos. Northern Exposure es una serie coral donde cada personaje tiene una relación muy estrecha con los demás. ¿Tenía el guión completo? ¿Creó a Maurice pensando en su relación con las acciones de los otros personajes en cada episodio o solía pensar en él como una entidad independiente?

Todos teníamos el guión completo de cada episodio. Hubiese sido difícil, al menos en mi caso, interpretar efectivamente el papel sin saber cómo encajaba el personaje en el mosaico creado por todos los demás.

17.

¿Sintió alguna vez que tenía que hacer algo en algún episodio en contra de la naturaleza de su personaje?

Muy raramente llegábamos a una situación donde sintiese que estaba yendo en contra de la naturaleza de mi personaje. Si sucedía, lo discutíamos y muchas eran las veces en que llegábamos a un acuerdo. Si éste no era posible, interpretaba de la manera en que menos daño hiciese a la integridad de Maurice.

18.

¿En qué momento sintió que formaba parte de una serie muy especial y peculiar? ¿En qué momento y por qué razón supo que todos ustedes estaban haciendo una serie que se convertiría en un clásico y perduraría para siempre?

Cuando leí el guión del piloto pensé que era una serie inusual y que el personaje era mucho más completo que los personajes corrientes de las series de tv. Desde el principio sentí que esta serie tenía la oportunidad de ser algo especial. Muchas series que son diferentes como ésta no tienen la oportunidad de sobrevivir, son programadas en horarios desfavorables y se les da poca promoción. De algún modo NE sobrevivió a todo esto y se emitió durante 5 productivos años.

19.

Parece que Joel Fleischman experimenta el viaje del héroe de Joseph Campbell. Fleischman empieza un viaje que no quería yendo a Cicely. Después, puede volver a NY ("Horns" 6.13) pero niega el retorno. Finalmente, es salvado por el mundo exterior con una escapada mágica ("The Quest" 6.15), cruza el umbral del retorno y vuelve a NY. Joel tiene la libertad para vivir y lo muestra en la postal "NY es un estado de ánimo" que envía a Maggie. Bueno, Joel era una persona racional y ahora habla de un estado mental... Supongo que su experiencia en Cicely ha reparado el agujero en su vida que creó en un inicio. A veces debes romper algo para después construirlo mejor. No puedo evitar preguntarle por el personaje de Joel. No sé si era un espectador de la serie o si sólo sabía acerca de los episodios en que salía su personaje pero me gustaría saber ¿cuál es su opinión sobre la evolución de Joel en la serie?

>No estuve de acuerdo con la dirección que la serie tomó en su última temporada, así que no soy la mejor persona a la que preguntar sobre los últimos episodios de Joel. Sentí que los productores y escritores malgastaban el tiempo escribiendo una serie spin off que no pudo ser hecha cuando el tiempo podría haberse gastado más productivamente desarrollando los nuevos personajes. Creo que esa fue la razón de la cancelación de la serie.

20.

Si tuviese la oportunidad de escribir el último episodio, ¿Cuál hubiese sido el final perfecto para la serie?

Incluyendo todos los personajes. Me gustaría poder decirte qué me hubiese gustado ver en el último episodio de NE. Muchos fans me han dado muchas ideas pero no sé si ninguna de ellas hubiese funcionado. Si alguien viniese con un guión viable, sería el primero en alinearme. No estaba preparado para despedirme de Maurice.

Para terminar sólo quiero agradecerle que me haya atendido y haya contestado mis preguntas., sé que no se siente cómodo con el e-mail También quiero darle las gracias por los grandes momentos que me ha hecho pasar dando vida a Maurice. Siempre recordaré cómo mira la Aurora Boreal de Chris por la noche intentando entender su significado (struggles with the frontier of the mind) en "Aurora Borealis" 1.08, cuando abraza para confortar a Ed y le dice No te

preocupes en "The Gift of the Maggie" 5.19, cuando conoce y relamente intenta hablar con su hijo Duk Won por primera vez en el Brick en "Sleeping with the Enemy" 4.24, cuando se siente mayor y no quiere ser tratado como un ciudadano de la tercera edad en "The Mystery of the Old Curio Shop" 5.02, cuando busca a los judíos para que Joel pueda celebrar el kaddish de su tío Manny en "Kaddish for Uncle Manny" 4.21, cuando protege al violinista Cal Ingram aunque eso signifique perder a Barbara en "Lovers and Madmen" 5.24, cuando entiende que su antiguo comandante de la armada, su héroe, es sólo un hombre en "Lost and found" 3.17, etc.

Gracias por todos estos momentos, Maurice. Gracias por su gesto de cowboy de la NASA y por compartir su sensibilidad interna.

Gracias por todos estos agradables cumplidos. Espero verte en el Moosefest.

Barry

April 27th, 2002.



Exposing Northern Exposure:

An Exercise in Creating Themes

by Kristin Wright and Julio Vigil

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(<http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR2-2/wright.html>)

In qualitative research literature, several recent articles have been written which explore the relationship between clinical practice and qualitative research (Chenail, 1994; Gale, 1993; Moon, Dillon, & Sprenkle, 1990). In a similar vein, Talley, Strupp, and Butler (1994) also recently edited a book in which they question why research has previously failed to inform clinical practice. These authors attempt to bridge the communication between the research and therapeutic communities by presenting thought-provoking articles in which researchers and clinicians utilize the ideas of both professions (Chenail, 1994; Gale, 1993; Moon, Dillon, & Sprenkle, 1990; Talley, Strupp, & Butler, 1994). The consensus seems to suggest that the skills which researchers find helpful in their work may also be useful for therapists and vice versa.

As both family therapists and beginning researchers, we discovered that many of the skills which inform our therapeutic conversations with clients also serve us well in our work as researchers. Upon completing our first qualitative research project, we identified the ability to "hear," "find," or "create" themes out of the information which evolved in our work as a paramount skill. We, rather surprisingly, agreed that this skill is also primary in our work as family therapists.

Both family therapists and qualitative researchers generate a great deal of information in their work and are therefore faced with the arduous task of "doing something with it." We identify with colleagues who speak of the overwhelming confusion they experience once expected to analyze the information they have collected. Ely (1991) refers to the researcher's discomfort sitting amongst mounds and mounds of data, contemplating, "What do I do with all of this?" (p. 140). So too, the family therapist toils over what to do with the wealth of information which evolves out of a family therapy session. Unfortunately, it is quite easy as therapists and as researchers to get lost in the content of information: unable to find or create an overarching theme or pattern that connects the data. And yet, it is this "chunking" of information into meaningful constructions that we believe is one of the most important skills for both researchers and therapists alike. The goal then for both professionals is to "find some way or ways to tease out what they consider to be the essential meaning" (Ely, 1991, p. 140) of the gathered information.

This "essential meaning" (Ely, 1990, p. 140) is what we understand to be a theme or pattern. Although we are cognizant of Leininger's (1985) distinctions regarding patterns and themes, for the purposes of this paper, we simply conceptualize the two terms as interchangeable. When referring to themes and/or patterns we are referring to the significant segments of interviewee/client stories which emerge over and over again.

We propose that the ability to create themes or patterns out of information does not come naturally and instead we suggest that this skill is one which requires constant nurturing and refining. It is through our own struggles and attempts to further develop this skill that we set out to find a fun way of practicing this ability. We especially wanted a way to practice our theme creating efforts without committing to the formal process of identifying a researchable question, performing interviews, generating data, taping interviews, transcribing interviews, etc. Therefore, we decided to create a playful way to practice the skill of categorizing information by analyzing a popular North American television series: *Northern Exposure*.

Northern Exposure provides an interesting challenge for researchers and therapists who want to enhance their ability to categorize information. Similar to an interviewee (or client) providing a story for researchers (or therapist), the writers of *Northern Exposure* provide a story for viewers to make sense of. Unique to this series, is that in each episode the writers connect three stories under a more encompassing central theme. Therefore, the information we as an audience receive has already been processed, and our task is simply to try to identify the theme which the writers have suggested.

Typically, in each episode of *Northern Exposure* there are three vignettes or stories being carried out by the various characters of the series. By the shows end, there is an evolved overarching theme that supports a central meaning or theme which connects all three vignettes.

Northern Exposure

Northern Exposure takes place in the small town (population 839) of Cicely, Alaska (Nance, 1992). The weekly series began with the story of Dr. Joel Fleishman, a recent graduate of medical school who was recruited to provide medical care for the townspeople of Cicely in repayment for his student loans. Dr. Fleishman is a native New Yorker who finds himself trying to cope with life in the remote outdoors of "the last frontier."

The episode we analyzed began with Dr. Fleishman narrating a story to Ed, a young Native American who befriended Dr. Fleishman when he first arrived in Cicely. Ed has gone up-river to find Dr. Fleishman who previously left Cicely on a house-call. After providing medical attention to a baby in a remote village, Joel (Dr. Fleishman) decides to stay. Wanting Dr. Fleishman to return, Maurice (the town patriarch) sends Ed to bring Dr. Fleishman back to Cicely. In his narration of the episode, Joel tells three stories that help to explain why Joel has decided to stay in the remote village. What follows is our construction of Joel's narration and the three stories or vignettes.

Vignette One - Fireworks

This story begins with Joel moving into Maggie's home. Maggie is a young independent pilot who has shared a long-time love/hate relationship with Dr. Fleishman. In this vignette, the two of them are attempting to negotiate the nuances of living together and getting to know one another on a more intimate basis. The history of their relationship is marked by frequent arguing concerning Joel's desire to control his external world versus Maggie's desire to accept things as they come. In this particular story, anytime Joel and Maggie become intimate with one another, a shotgun discharges. These incidents become problematic for Joel since he cannot explain why this is happening. In contrast, Maggie is not concerned with the "why," but simply relishes in the bizarre nature of these occurrences.

MAGGIE: Well, if there is a connection between you and me and the gun, I think that's kind of fun.

JOEL: Fun?

MAGGIE: Yeah.

JOEL: That's a turn on for you?

MAGGIE: Well, (laughs) yeah.

JOEL: Oh, that's great. Putting our lives at danger is an aphrodisiac for you. I'm living with a risk junky.

MAGGIE: I wouldn't paint it so negatively. You know, I just like surprises.

JOEL: Well, sorry. I don't. Having my car start in the morning and watching a good movie on cable is about as much surprise as I like.

MAGGIE: God. This is so like you. Everything has to be so controlled and safe. What is the point in living life like that?

Vignette Two - Falling in Love Again

In this story, Ruth-Ann, an elderly independent woman who owns the town general store experiences a great deal of confusion when confronted with the knowledge that she is in love with Walt, a local trapper. When Walt leaves to work his winter trap line, Ruth-Ann begins experiencing feelings that are reminiscent of teen-age love. Ruth-Ann becomes

quite distressed when she perceives herself losing control of her independent life as she knows it. Ruth-Ann visits Dr. Fleishman for a physical examination:

RUTH-ANN: I keep forgetting things, my mind wanders, sometimes I find myself standing in a room, and I have no idea how I got there.

JOEL: Well, your B.P. is good. It's 144 over 86.

RUTH-ANN: The mood swings. One minute I'm on top of the world and the next minute I'm sunk in despair. It's so oppressive I can hardly breathe... You know Joel I am 77. Now I can't expect to be as sharp as I was when I was 65. Maybe, I'm just losing my marbles.

JOEL: Oh, Ruth-Ann you're not senile.

RUTH-ANN: Who am I kidding. I'm not sick. I know what's wrong with me. And I never should have come here in the first place. I'm sorry I bothered you.

JOEL: Oh, Ruth-Ann.

RUTH-ANN: It's not a medical problem and it's not your concern. What difference does it make if you know. I'm in love Joel. I'm desperately in love with Walter. . . . I don't need this. I don't want this. The heart palpitations, the mindless daydreams, the horrible stirring in the pit of my stomach. Yuk.

JOEL: Can't you think of it as something positive.

RUTH-ANN: Positive, look at me. I'm a grown woman and I've been reduced to a needy, vulnerable, school-girl. Well, I'm going to fight. I'm not going to let it get the better of me. I'll be just fine without him.

Vignette Three - "Mi Vida Loca" (My Crazy Life)

The final story introduces Chris, the town philosopher and radio disc-jockey. Chris is having renovations done to his trailer in an attempt to organize "mi vida loca" (my crazy life). He hires a local contractor to complete the work; however, problems soon arise. When Chris attempts to control the contractor, the plans of remodeling quickly go awry leaving Chris in the pits of chaos and his trailer near ruin. At the episode's mid-point, viewers are left with the scene of Chris exiting his damaged trailer, looking around the outdoors, and screaming from the depths of his soul.

Theme Development - Part One

The excerpts presented above took us to the episode's mid-session. In an attempt to get more familiar with each of the character's stories, we continued to re-play each of the vignettes. At the time, we were not interested in comparing the different vignettes, but simply wanted to note re-occurring ideas or words in each story. Individually, we noted our initial ideas regarding what we thought each character was experiencing. We then assigned one word headings or categories which seemed to encompass the story of each character. To see if there were any similarities and/or differences in what we had each come up with individually, we then discussed our thoughts with one another. At the mid-session of the episode, we had developed themes concerning "loss of control" and "life's transitions."

In vignette one, we agreed that Joel was struggling with the transition of living with someone after years of living alone and was feeling overwhelmed due to his life being unpredictable. His fears of the unknown were reinforced by the unexplainable gun-shots each time he and Maggie became intimate with one another. In vignette two, we noticed Ruth-Ann's frustration in realizing that she was in love with Walt and the loss of control she perceived this brought to her life. Lastly, vignette three illustrated Chris' failed attempt to achieve some level of stability and structure to what he perceived

was an unorganized life. The common theme we constructed from the stories thus far revolved around each characters desire to maintain a feeling of control when their respective lives were in a state of transition. The words that we created to encompass these stories were struggle and transition.

At the episode's mid-session, we had some difficulty attempting to make a connection with the opening scene of the episode which involved Joel's telling of the story to Ed. This meta-perspective which Joel narrated evaded us. From our previous knowledge of how an episode typically evolves, we were hopeful that a connection would resonate for us later. Therefore, we returned to the data: the second half of the episode.

Vignette One - Re-visited

This story re-opens with Joel and Maggie talking about their differences. Joel apologizes for his previous "up-tightness" and explains that he knows he must change his ways:

JOEL: I know I gotta relax and be more open to what comes down the pike. I gotta be a more accepting and less controlling person...

MAGGIE: Living with you is something I really wanted, but it just isn't working. You exhaust me. There's just so much of you and it's always working so hard.... You have to move out.

JOEL: What?

MAGGIE: ...Look, you hold on to everything so tightly that your knuckles are white, and I need somebody who can let go a little.

Vignette Two - Re-visited

After spending her time writing poetry and listening to love songs while attempting to fight her feelings for Walt, Ruth-Ann announces:

RUTH-ANN: I tried. Lord knows, I've tried. I'm just no good without him. I give up. I surrender. Let fate do what it will.

She later goes to the radio-station and has a message sent across the air-waves to Walt telling him, "There's no dignity in love. Come home."

Vignette Three - Re-visited

Following the scene of Chris' primal scream, Joel visits Chris to provide some Xanax to help Chris with his insomnia. Chris announces he is no longer having difficulties sleeping and is over his previous feelings of anxiety. Chris then explains his "ah-ha" experience:

CHRIS: . . . Great lesson. Real watershed. Though, you know, a guy like me tries to get his space together. Put a three piece suit on it. The universe with its big ursine paw just slaps it down like a house of cards you know. Ruins everything. Next thing you know I'm homeless, cast out like some sap, kneeling in the mud.... Well, thing is Joel, what is a house, but a metaphor for the mind. Isn't that what it's all about. You gotta tear down the old before you build the new. You gotta loose your mind before you find it. The universe whacked my house, it was really whacking my mind. . . . Give up man. Throw out all those old plans and sink your face in the hear and now. whether it works out or not I'm a free man.

As the episode came to an end, the viewers were left again with Joel's narration to Ed:

JOEL: See, it struck me. There is something for me to learn from Chris and Ruth-Ann, right? These people stopped struggling. They've given up the reins and basically opened themselves to whatever life handed them. . . . I never experienced such a sense of loss. Working so many years for something. Actually, kicking me out was probably the most loving thing she could have done for me although I didn't realize it until I came up here on a house-call.... At that moment, the experiences of the last week coalesced. To find myself I had to throw off the external trappings of my life.

Theme Development - Part Two

The excerpts presented above further illustrate a common theme which seemed to evolve in each story. The characters faced an epistemological crisis of sorts when they each acknowledged their own inability to control the turmoil they were experiencing in their lives. Ruth-Ann gave up control by accepting and acknowledging her feelings for Walt. Chris relinquished his need to control the renovations to his trailer, which he equated with his need to control his mind. By letting go of these feelings, Chris was able to accept the chaos in his life. Joel's way of giving up control was to leave Cicely. Unlike Chris, Joel's life was too stable. He was imprisoned within his own existence. Therefore, he chose to physically disconnect from everything that was controlling him: his job, his relationships, and his life in Cicely.

We suspected that the narration Joel provided throughout the episode contained an embedded message for Ed. Witnessing Joel living and learning the ways of the Native Americans, left Ed feeling alienated from his own culture. In their conversation with one another, Ed questions if he too should stay with Joel and learn the ways of "his" people. The stories which Joel narrates to Ed seem to illustrate that, like the other characters, Ed also is being controlled by his beliefs or expectations of how he "should" be. Because Ed strongly identifies himself as a Native American and witnesses Joel, a New York Jew, living the stereotypical "Native American" existence, Ed is trapped into believing that he also should be living a life more consistent with his heritage. For us, Joel's stories exemplify that each person must pick his or her own path in life and that the path one chooses may not be appropriate or fitting for another.

In retrospect, we attempted to look at how we developed the themes which evolved. We followed a conceptual template which our professor, Ron Chenail (personal communication, November, 1994) shared with us. To help look at how the ideas are connected, he suggested:

vignette ----- meta perspective
vignette ----- meta perspective
vignette ----- meta perspective

This simple template proved most useful when we picked an episode to analyze. With each story or vignette, we attempted to think about what message the writers were attempting to evoke. Once we came up with an idea for each story, we then attempted to connect the three. Of course, what we constructed as our theme was simply our construction. Similarly, when analyzing any data, either from a client or in an ethnographic interview, the themes that the researcher or the therapist develops speak only to that researcher. Another researcher may offer another description, another theme.

To many readers this exercise may seem a bit silly and even trite; however, we suggest it is these very type of playful exercises which encourage therapists and researchers alike to truly hone their craft. Thankfully, our colleagues have encouraged our attempts to be playful with theoretical ideas. Through this playfulness, we suspect our theoretical learning will become more than a remote discussion in a textbook and instead, will become integrated into useful and pragmatic ideas informing our work as researchers and therapists. This paper is our attempt to simply play at categorizing information and allow the readers to follow our process.

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