

August: Osage County Paper

For this paper, I am comparing the mother and father of this play – Ms Gail Johnson playing Violet Weston and Mr Todd Wilson playing Beverly Weston. I am aware that this may be slightly controversial, but it was on my mind the whole time during the play; I will go by the character names for easier identification.

Mr Weston introduced the play with a huge speech, talking to Miss Monevata, the new house-keeping girl about his life, books, poetry and a small part on his wife. His introduction speech came off as him fed up of life, his pill-popping wife and keeping sane with drinking and delving into an alternate reality with the magic of books.

When Mrs Weston first appeared on stage, I could immediately understand and justify his weariness and thus as the play progressed and it became apparent he committed suicide, there was no shock, just a simple nod of acceptance. There was not much interaction between the two of them; Mrs Weston's first appearance came off as crazy and deranged and Mr Weston's behaviour to her was to keep her quiet and calm. There was a small hint of how manipulative she was due to her being trying to be nice to Mss Monevata, but it really became obvious when the news broke over Mr Weston's death. My first impression of Mrs Weston was that she was a crazy burden to Mr Weston and soon changed to disgust at realising how manipulative she is; never judge a book by its cover as they say.

As the play progressed, information about the Weston's marriage summarised to it being dark, blame-shifting, and full of lies, secrets and manipulations – even at the very start with Mr Weston conceiving Little Charles with Mrs Mattie Aiken. This made me think about how parents' behaviour affect their children, consciously and unconsciously, and in the play I do see the result on the girls and I truly wonder how messed up they are without themselves realising it, and how important it is to have a healthy marriage so the children won't have a barrage of mental-health problems later in life.

Every time Mrs Weston spouted a dark family secret, she did it gleefully and revelled from the disruption it caused and when Ms Barbara Fordham tried to retaliate, Mrs Weston took it, magnified and reflected everything that was blamed on her, enjoying the destruction it caused. However, when it became apparent that she could no longer deflect the blame, she went back to the same old story of how the pills messed with her mind; that was what truly disgusted me – not taking responsibility of her actions, along with the character of her true nature as a human. It was extremely spiteful and I felt sorry for her children for having to put up with it and understood completely about them escaping the clutches of their mother.

My rather expressive paragraphs above was all due to Ms Gail Johnson's acting. Her appearance was perfect – the wrinkles, bulging eyes, her dishevelled hair all fit into what a typical American mother would look like who's from the countryside. The switching of personalities from crazy to shrewd was not only in her personality but her appearance: her eyes became brighter and sharper, body language was aloof and refined, and I was very impressed at how instantaneous the switches were apparent – like at the very end when everybody left her, she was finally and truly alone and she broke down, trying to find solitude in music.

There were no breaks in the dialog and since it flowed together so well, it gave a really tense atmosphere and I was really sucked into the play, fully believing (well most of them) that the actors were not actors, but really who they were playing. Mrs Weston raising the family and knowing all their dark secrets gave her a sense of superiority, and that sense translated very well into her being as a whole. Being all meek and dependent on Mr Weston when he was alive but with the all that knowledge led to her knowing that she could turn the tables at any moment and her superiority shone through when she was expertly bouncing off her children's attacks. The play was mainly revolving around her and Ms Barbara Fordham, the fight for control and whenever Ms Fordham thought she had the upper-hand, Mrs Weston revealed another secret. Although the full extent was not shown, her addiction must have had some effect on her, so I am not entirely sure the times when she blamed the pills, if they were legitimate or if she was trying to get sympathy.

That comes to the end of my paper and I would really like to thank all the cast members for putting in so much work and producing such a memorable night.