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Six Degrees of Separation Script Analysis

Aristotelian Analysis:

I. Plot

A. This play begins in 1990 in the apartment of Flan, an art dealer, and his wife, Ouisa Kittredge. We see that they are panicked about someone who has broken into their home, and feel lucky to have made it out alive. This immediate jump into the action compensates for the following 20 pages of intellectual discussion and frills. A convention is utilized where Flan and Ouisa address the audience directly as if speaking to high brow acquaintances. Throughout the action, the couple turns out and adds exposition unheard by the other characters in the scene. We are introduced to Geoffrey, an extraordinarily wealthy South African businessman and an old friend of the pair. Geoffrey returns to the states for dinner with Ouisa and Flan, where they plan to convince him for a two million dollar loan for an upcoming art deal. While they are engaging in the initial small-talk before departing for their dinner reservations, Paul, a young man who appears to be injured, arrives at their door claiming to be a friend of their children's from Harvard. Ouisa and Flan believe him, and while they patch him up, he explains that he is the son of well-known actor Sidney Poitier, and he returned to New York City to meet his father at his hotel in the morning. He charms Ouisa, Flan, and Geoffrey with his connections, intellect, and manners; making them a luxurious dinner, discussing classic literature and philosophy, and inviting them to appear as extras in his father's latest film. At the end of the evening, Geoffrey agrees to put in the two million dollars, and Flan and Ouisa, overjoyed, offer Paul a bed for the night until he's able to meet up with his father.

The next morning, Ouisa finds Paul in mid-coitus with a hustler. She and Flan chase them both out of their home, which is the context of the first page of the play, and are rather shaken up by the whole experience. After a dinner with their friends, Kitty and Larkin, who have an almost identical story about Paul, the four decide to go to a detective and find out the true identity of this man. The plot expands as the two couples involve their children, all of whom are initially disgruntled at their parents behavior. It is confirmed that Dr. Fine, another parent of a Harvard student and upper-class New Yorker, interacted with Paul. The layers are unpeeling and we're beginning to see how far Paul went to con these families, although his intentions are still unclear. The children, growing curious of what their parents are up to, look through their high school yearbook in search for anyone who looks like they might know something about Paul. They spot Trent Conway, a student at MIT, and we immediately find out that their children were correct. Trent has Paul at his house and shows him all of the information he has collected about his classmates and their families. Trent teaches Paul how to communicate with these wealthy families and invade their lives. After staying with Trent for three months, Paul moves on.

Ouisa introduces the audience to the next layer of the situation: Paul's relationship with a younger couple, Rick and Elizabeth, who he charms into a couch to sleep on from an interaction in Central Park. He claims that he is the estranged son of Flan Kittredge from a previous relationship, and that he has come to New York City to reconnect with a father who wants nothing to do with him. After staying with them couple for weeks, Paul persuaded Rick to give him \$250.00 to get a train to meet his father in Maine, without Elizabeth's consent. Paul takes Rick out dancing unknowingly to Rick, with his money, has sex with him, and leaves. Out of the shame of having lost their money and betraying his relationship with Elizabeth, Rick commits suicide by jumping out of the window of their apartment. Elizabeth, infuriated at Paul for both swindling her and indirectly causing Rick's death, goes to the same detective to report Paul. With reasonable cause to press charges, the police begin investigating Paul and the newspaper publishes an article sharing the stories of those he has affected. Ouisa attempts to continue on with her life, but can't stop thinking about Paul and wondering how he came into their lives.

One night, Paul calls the Kittredge household, haphazardly explaining himself. Ouisa pleads for Paul to turn himself in to the police, promising that she will visit him in prison and that she and Flan will teach him to be an art dealer when he gets out. Paul agrees on the condition that Ouisa personally delivers him to the police. With protests from Flan, Ouisa says that she will accompany him, but by the time she and Flan arrive at the meeting spot, the police have already arrested and detained Paul. She searches throughout city records to discover what happened to him, but without family connection or a name, she is unable to recover any information. She and Flan argue about what Paul's involvement in their life signifies, and she expresses continual concern and curiosity. The play ends mysteriously with Paul and Ouisa looking up at the painting that has been hanging above the set.

- A. Stasis and intrusion: The stasis is Ouisa and Flan's cookie cutter upper-class life before they meet Paul. Paul is the literal intrusion into their lives. Similarly to Blanche's arrival in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, the conflict revolves around his appearance in an otherwise stagnant life-style.
- B. Inciting Incident: The inciting incident may be argued to be either Paul's intrusion into the Kittredges's lives, or, considering the first page of the play, his decision to bring a hustler into their home. The more likely answer is when he arrives at their apartment because that is what sets forth the action timeline-wise, but considering that the first thing we hear is the panic from Flan and Ouisa, it's possible that the inciting incident that begins the play is their realization that Paul isn't who they thought he was, and their sudden disenchantment with him.
- C. Beginning Exposition: In order to understand the story, we are given initial insight into the stasis of the Kittredges. By describing a few of the many expensive artifacts and paintings they own, we learn that they are a wealthy family, and listening to them banter off of each other when speaking directly to the audience, they are immediately likable, while perhaps frivolous, people. The playwright

reveals information sparingly, utilizing many forwards to keep the attention of the audience (but we'll discuss that in more detail later). We don't get a significant amount of exposition at the beginning of the play, rather it trickles in as it becomes relevant. This mysterious style was slightly confusing while reading the play the first time, but made more sense after watching the film and seeing the text brought to life.

- D. Complications: Some of the complications in this play include Paul's tightly woven narratives and the fact that until Rick and Elizabeth, he did not technically do anything warranting investigation from the authorities, the college-aged childrens' refusals to assist their parents, and the red tape preventing Ouisa from discovering more information from the county officials and the justice department.
 - E. Crisis: The crisis is when Rick commits suicide, because it is the most devastating result of Paul's actions and is what leads to his arrest.
 - F. Climax: I think the climax of the play is when Paul is arrested because it marks the end of the conflict, but the emotional climax of this play is Ouisa and Flan's final argument about the life they live and Ouisa's dissatisfaction with their experiences seemingly existing only for the consumption of their rich friends. This moment not only is the most genuine emotion we see from the couple, but also reveals the key to the play¹.
 - G. Reversal: If we're using Paul's arrest, I think the downward fall of the action is the slow realization from the Kittredges, especially Ouisa, that they have to return to their original state. Ouisa clings to this burst of excitement, still looking into where Paul is imprisoned, but is ultimately forced to accept that she doesn't have enough information to move forward.
 - H. Resolution: It is unclear at the end of the play how Paul's involvement will affect Ouisa's life moving forward, but she certainly has been enlightened to a new mindset and is no longer sleep-walking through her life.
- II. Character- Dramatis Personae
- A. Protagonist/Antagonist: Although it is unclear at the beginning of the story, as Ouisa and Flan are initially presented as a package deal, Ouisa is arguably the protagonist of *Six Degrees of Separation*. It is her persistence to understand Paul that pushes forth the dramatic action of the story. This is where it gets slightly complicated, because while Paul is the antagonist of the story, acting as a foil for

¹ After finishing this project I read a review of a 2017 production of *Six Degrees of Separation* written by Joseph Charninski where he describes the play as a "dissertation on storytelling", and I agree with this statement. Ouisa's debate with Flan acts as both the emotional climax and the thesis of what the playwright is attempting to get across with this piece.

Ouisa and causing conflict in the lives of these four families, he also undergoes personal change throughout the story and could be defined as the protagonist.

B. Analysis of Ouisa Kittredge:

1. Given Circumstances- there aren't a ton that don't delve into the subjective.
 - a) Ouisa is 43 years old (*Page 11: "Louisa Kittredge is 43".*)
 - b) She is an attractive woman (*Page 11: "They are very attractive".*)
 - c) Ouisa is married to Flan (*Page 11: "Louisa and Flan Kittredge".*)
 - d) She is very wealthy and owns many art pieces (*Page 11-12: "Elegant robes", "The Silver Victorian Inkwell", "And there's the watercolor".*)
 - e) She has three children: a daughter and son who both attend Harvard, and another daughter. (*Page 18: "Three, two at Harvard, and another girl at Groton".*)
2. Super-objective- Ouisa needs to expose the truth about Paul in order to grasp some sense of spontaneity and genuine connection.
3. Character POV- Ouisa has spent her life as a wealthy wife to a successful art dealer. She has always been surrounded by high society, and has inadvertently missed out on many of the aspects of life that make us human. Her children resent her, her marriage is satisfactory but not excellent, and she wants her experiences to hold more value than as stories to tell her similarly well off friends. Paul interrupts this stasis and gives her a glimpse at a life she's never had the opportunity to explore.
4. 3 Word Description-
 - a) Acquisitive
 - b) Extravagant
 - c) Empathetic
5. Journey- At the beginning of the play, Ouisa's curiosities have been awakened to experiences outside those she was accustomed to. She had a pleasant stasis living in New York City in a glamorous apartment with her husband Flan and three children at prestigious schools. Paul's intrusion into her life breaks this maybe not so blissful ignorance. He entertains her and Flan with stories of his "father", Sidney Poitier, building himself up from nothing, offering them opportunities to break from routine, and conversing in deep intellectual topics. After chasing him out of the apartment, Ouisa's fascination with Paul is apparent. She stops at nothing to reveal the truth about him and has dreams fantasizing about what his life must be like. The illusion is ultimately shattered, but even so, Ouisa gives Paul the opportunity to live with them when he is released from

prison, and offers to visit him in the meantime, sharing their lives. When Paul is arrested, Ouisa continues to pursue him, but to no avail. She is forced to accept that she will likely never see him again, especially after reading that a man imprisoned at the same location as Paul hanged himself. While not much has tangibly changed for her, she is certainly more enlightened and has a different look on the high society world she lives in.

C. Analysis of Paul:

1. Given Circumstances- This is tricky because all of the given circumstances are either proven false or never confirmed. We never know a lot about who Paul really is and if he is lying even in his final conversation with Ouisa.
 - a) Paul is a young black man (*Page 16: "Paul, a young black man".*)
 - b) Paul is sexually attracted to men (*Page 32: "The Hustler throws Flan back, picks up his clothes, and leaves", Page 50: "He asked if he could fuck me".*)
2. Super-Objective- Paul needs a home and the means to move up in society.
3. Character POV- Paul is a con man who understands how to use his assets to weave detailed narratives to manipulate the wealthy into giving him kindness and resources. He gets little snippets of validation and deeper emotional connection from those he interacts with, and that feeds him.²
4. 3 Word Description-
 - a) Manipulative
 - b) Suave
 - c) Mystifying
5. Journey- Timeline wise, Paul meets Trent Conway, a student at MIT who attended high school with the children of the Kittredges, Kitty and Larkin, and Dr. Fine. He is intrigued by Trent's knowledge of his classmates' wealthy families, and learns as much as he possibly can in order to eventually infiltrate their homes under the alias of Paul, Sidney Poitier's son. He first interacts with Kitty and Larkin, who let him stay in their house for the evening but leave him there alone while they go out to dinner. They find him chasing a "burglar" out of the house in the middle of the night. Paul next goes to the Kittredges, where he enchants them and their acquaintance Geoffrey with his sophisticated jargon. He pays for a hustler to come to their apartment and is found with him by Ouisa the

² A New York Times article review of the 2017 production by Ben Brantley describes Paul as "An African American man whom rich white liberals feel they can embrace as one of their own, he's flattering to those he preys upon, he's a grotesque, fun-house distortion of them"

following morning. He is kicked out of their home, and begins preparing for his next excursion. Paul transitions his focus to Dr. Fine, a single man who gives Paul the key to his apartment to stay at. Dr. Fine realizes that Paul is in fact not a friend of his son, Doug's, so he calls the police. Paul worms his way out of this by proving that Dr. Fine gave him the key, he didn't break and enter, and departs. After this, Paul changes his narrative when he meets Rick and Elizabeth, a young, lower class couple from Utah. He claims to be Flan Kittredge's son from a previous affair with a black woman, and asks for the couple's help in contacting his "father". He cons them out of their remaining funds and has sex with Rick, which leads Rick into a shame spiral and commits suicide. When the police begin searching for Paul after Rick's death, Paul calls Ouisa and asks her for her "eternal friendship". He agrees to meet her at a nearby location to turn himself in to the police, but is arrested before they meet. It is unclear as to what happens to Paul after this.

III. Idea (Thought)

A. From the characters-

1. Paul: "Now there's nothing wrong with emotional and intellectual paralysis. It may indeed, thanks to Chekov and Samuel Beckett, be the great modern theme" (25) The entire speech from pages 24-26.
2. Ouisa: "I read somewhere that everyone on this planet is separated by only six other people. Six degrees of separation. Between us and everyone else on this planet. The President of the United States. A gondolier in Venice. Fill in the names. I find that A) tremendously comforting that we're so close and B) like Chinese water torture that we're so close." (45)
3. Ouisa: "And we turn him into an anecdote to dine out on. Or dine in on. But it was an experience. I will not turn him into an anecdote. How do we fit what happened to us into life without turning it into an anecdote with no teeth and a punch line you'll mouth over and over for years to come... And we become human juke boxes spilling out the anecdotes. But it was an experience. How do we keep the experience" (61)
4. Ouisa: "I am all random. My god, Flan, how much of your life can you account for". (62)

B. From the action-

1. The convention of turning out and speaking directly to the audience highlights the focus on storytelling, making the experience anecdotal, which is exactly what Ouisa is so scared of at the end of the play.
2. Paul's entire self-constructed narrative reveals another layer of the theme of never knowing what the truth is, and which lies matter and why.

C. Comparison to themes of the author's other works, other authors, and plays with similar actions-

1. A common theme throughout Guare's work is the "impossibility for deep human understanding and implies that this natural weakness is aggravated by the constrictions of church, state, and class." (Clive Barnes) This is an excellent articulation of the themes found in *Six Degrees of Separation*, as Ouisa so badly wants to understand Paul's motivations and significance, but the roadblocks of her class and the system's rejection of her when she attempts to find out more.
2. David Rooney writes "the play is less about the desecration of a privileged class or the aspirations of outsiders than it is about the realization that nobody really knows anybody, least of all themselves." I think this fits in nicely with the research we did about John Guare's themes
3. I found his writing to be a more sensical version of Edward Albee in that he seems to be going for some of the same ideas but with different stylistic conventions.

IV. Language

A. Special Words, Vocabulary, and Jargon

1. Reading *Six Degrees of Separation* felt similar to reading *The Heidi Chronicles*, because it shamelessly references art, popular culture, and literature, assuming or hoping that the audience is cultured enough to understand/the actors are competently conveying the significance with their tone.
2. The emphasis on word choice is evident from the beginning. The below example shows how the Kittredges are conscious of the language they use in front of their wealthy peers.
 - a) Flan- "The figure is superfluous" Ouisa- "I hate when you use the word 'superfluous'". (Page 13)
3. When Trent Conway teaches Paul how to say "bottle of beer" not "bo-dill a bee-ya", it may be interpreted as commentary on how scrutinizing language is a form of classism. By learning how to speak like the upper echelon, Paul defies the expectations placed on him because of his race, and is welcomed with open arms into their homes. He impresses the Kittredges with his sophisticated vocabulary and immaculate diction, showing that language is a significant factor in maintaining the class division.
4. The language is modern and easily digestible aside from the various references, making the sometimes confusing plot more accessible.

V. Music/Sound

- A. Music does not play a significant role in this play. I could not find a single example of background music or sound in the stage directions. When I watched the film, an upbeat strings section playing in a minor key underscored the beginning credits, which highlighted both the ominous and satirical tones of the piece. It was a strange juxtaposition and I was confused as to what I was getting myself into while listening, but after exploring the play more I think it was a strong choice.
- B. As previously mentioned in the Language/Diction section, Paul's altered dialect and professional appearance adds to the facade he has created to trick the Kittredges. Because he is speaking in a way they can relate to, he is more "approachable" and they trust his story without verification from a secondary source.

VI. Spectacle

- A. Setting- I particularly enjoyed the design of the 2017 Broadway revival of *Six Degrees of Separation*. The red carpet adds a luxurious feel to the space and sets the tone for what kind of life the Kittredges live (See below in the Staging section). In this production there was also a hanging Kandinsky painting, a visual reminder that there are two sides to every story.
- B. Costumes- Considering that I am particularly partial to William Ivy Long's designs, I think his work on *Six Degrees of Separation* was both stylistically appropriate and brought a nuance to the characters. His creations for the 2017 production work seamlessly with the red and gold accents on the set. He utilizes a neutral color palette for the Kittredges, which when viewed next to the rich scenery, shows how even though they are surrounded by beautiful things, their personal lives are still heinously dull. It also contrasts with Paul's light pink shirt.
- C. Staging
 - 1. I could not find a bootleg of the 2017 revival, but based on production photos, there seem to be plenty of dynamic stage pictures. Keeping the staging engaging is important particularly at the beginning of this play because for 20 pages it remains in the same location and conversation. Once the action picks up and the location shifts in a split-second, that becomes more inherent. In the image below, we see a scene in which the parents are attempting to convince their children to take part in the hunt for Paul's identity. We can see in specifically Woody's body language sitting on the floor and leaning against the presumably expensive furniture that he holds disdain for the world his parents live in, and desires to separate himself from it. The characters form a 3D triangle onstage, and as we discussed in directing, that's lovely.

2. The lighting conventions with phone calls/phone booths are effective because it plays into the concept of turning out and speaking directly to the audience.



Backwards and Forwards Analysis:

I. Backwards (Pages 52-63)

- Paul appears in a pool of light (*Stage Directions: "Paul appears in a pool of light, wearing the pink shirt" (63)*).
- Ouisa mourns the possible loss of Paul (*Stage Directions: "To us with a sense of loss". Ouisa: "But it was the pink shirt." (62)*).
- Ouisa reads that a man in Rikers Island prison hung himself (*Ouisa: "I read today that a young man committed suicide in Riker's Island prison". (62)*
- Flan justifies his life by taking responsibility for his own luck while gambling as an art dealer. (*Flan: "How much of my life can I account for? All of it! I'm a gambler". (62)*)
- Ouisa questions the control she has over her own life, wondering if there is something more out there for her. (*Ouisa: "Then I am a collage of un-accounted for brush-strokes. I am all random". (62)*)
- Ouisa breaks down over whether any experience she ever has will be more significant than an anecdotal story to repeat to the people she knows (*Ouisa: "How do we fit what*

happened to us into life without turning it into an anecdote with no teeth and a punch line you'll mouth over and over for years to come?" (61))

- Flan isolates Ouisa, refusing to acknowledge the effects Paul has had (*Flan: "Help me? He could have killed me. And you... Cut me out of that pathology. You are on your own--" (61)*)
- Ouisa humanized Paul. (*Ouisa: "He is in trouble and we don't know how to help him". (61))*)
- Flan inquires as to why Ouisa is still pushing the issue with finding Paul. (*Flan: "Why does it mean so much to you?" (61))*).
- Ouisa searches for Paul's arrest information but finds only dead ends. (*Ouisa: "We called the District Attorney's office. We weren't family. We didn't know Paul's name. We called the Civil Courts. We weren't family. We didn't know Paul's name" (61))*).
- Paul is arrested (*Flan: "The girl at the box office said the police were there and had arrested a young man" (60))*).
- Flan and Ouisa rush to the movie theater to meet Paul and escort him to the police. (*Flan: "We get there. I run into the theater. No one" (60))*).
- Flan and Ouisa inform the authorities of Paul's location in case of danger. (*Flan: "He's at the Waverly Theater" (60))*).
- Paul agrees to meet the Kittredges at the Waverly Theater in thirty minutes to turn himself in. (*Paul: "I'm in the lobby of Waverly Movie theater on Sixth Avenue and Third Street", Ouisa: "We'll be there in thirty minutes" (60))*).
- Ouisa begs Paul to turn himself in to the police. (*Ouisa: "Where are you? Tell me. I'll take you to the police. They will treat you with dignity" (60))*).
- Flan overhears Ouisa on the phone and yells at her to stop communicating with Paul. (*Flan: "Get off that fucking phone! Is it that kid? Get him out of our life!" (60))*).
- Ouisa explains to Paul that she can't immediately turn him into the police because she has dinner plans. (*Ouisa: "It can't be tonight. I can take you tomorrow" (59))*).
- Paul accepts his fate and is ready to willingly go to prison under the condition that when he is released he will have the full support of Ouisa. (*Paul: "I'll plead guilty and go to prison and serve a few months. And then I'll come out and work for you and learn all the trade" (58-59))*).
- Ouisa offers to visit Paul in prison and help him start a new life once he is out. (*Ouisa: "Go to the police. Turn yourself in. You'll be over it all sooner. You can start your life. I will help you-- but you have to go to the police" (58))*).
- Paul describes the tactics he used to captivate Ouisa and Flan, claiming that he wanted to admire her life, not mock it. (*Paul: "That night was the happiest night I ever had... You let me use all parts of myself last night..." (57))*).

- Paul once again urges Ouisa to allow him to stay with her in exchange for more information about his identity. (*Ouisa: "Who are you? What's your real name?" Paul: "If you let me stay with you, I'll tell you" (57)*).
- Ouisa implores Paul to stay on the phone despite Flan's interjections. (*Ouisa: "Don't hang up! PAUL! Are you there?" (56)*).
- Flan berates Paul for attempting to get back in his good graces. (*Flan: "what the hell am I talking career counseling to you? You embarrassed me in my building! You stole money! There is a warrant out for your arrest!" (56)*).
- Paul distracts Flan with talk of the art dealing business. (*Paul: "I was thinking that what I should do is what you do-- in art but making money out of art and meeting people and not working in an office" (56)*).
- Flan calls the detective on another line. (*Flan: "I've got that kid on the line" (55)*).
- Tess picks up the other line and informs her father that she is getting married and moving to Afghanistan to no response. (*Tess: "I'm going to ruin my life and get married and throw away everything you want me to be because it's the only way to hurt you" (56)* *Stage Directions: "Tess fades away" (56)*).
- Flan enters and, realizing that Ouisa is on the phone with Paul, picks up the other line to call the police. (*Stage Directions: "Flan appears", Ouisa: "It's Paul", Stage Directions: "Flan goes to the other phone", Flan: "I'll call the detective" (55)*).
- Ouisa and Paul discuss their affinities for art. (*Ouisa: "Ah, so you've become an aesthete", Paul: "Are you laughing at me?", Ouisa: "No, I read them too" (54)*).
- Paul reveals his genuine affection for the Kittredges. (*Ouisa: "What did you want from us?", Paul: "Everlasting friendship" (54)*).
- Ouisa describes how Paul's actions have affected her and Flan. (*Ouisa: "My husband feels you betrayed him... You were a lunatic" (53)*).
- Paul asks Ouisa for a place to stay. (*Paul: "Would you help me?", Ouisa: "What would you want me to do?", Paul: "Stay with you" (53)*).
- Ouisa puts her daughter, Tess, on hold to find out what Paul wants. (*Stage Directions: "Tess fades to black" (53)*).
- Paul calls the Kittredge house-hold. (*Paul: "Hello?", Ouisa: "Paul" (53)*).
- Tess calls to tell her parents of her plans to get married. (*Tess: "Mother, I'm getting married" (52)*).
- Ouisa and Flan prepare for an art auction at Sotheby's. (*Ouisa: "It's a black tie auction. Sotheby's--", Flan: "I know we'll get it" (52)*).

II. Forwards (Pages 11-23)

- The largest and most effective forward in *Six Degrees of Separation* is the choice to begin the play with a preview into the consequences of Paul's visit. Audiences hear Ouisa and

Flan panicking about an “intrusion”, but are given no context. This, followed immediately by the introduction of breaking the fourth wall and a time jump to the beginning of the couple’s evening is jarring and leaves a sense of ominous curiosity throughout the first twenty pages. (*Stage Directions: “A couple runs onstage in elegant, silk bathrobes, very agitated” (11)*).

- The name dropping of “Harvard” and “Two million dollars” both verifies the standards and stakes of the Kittredge family and causes the audience to ‘lean in’, because according to Aristotle’s poetics, Drama portrays those as “higher” than us. Audiences hear hints of high power and class and want to listen. (*13, 16*).
- The Kandinsky painting rotating above the set is a visual forward for what kind of story we are about to hear. It screams sophistication, appears slightly bizarre, and is a very specific choice, causing the audience to question what its significance will be. (*Stage Directions: “A painting revolves slowly high above the stage. The painting is by Kandinsky. One side is very geometric and somber. The other side is wild and vivid. The painting stops its revolve and opts for the geometric side” (11)*).
- Paul’s arrival and the details he leaks about his “background” are forwards because each droplet of information reveals another answer and another question. It’s an unbelievable story, but as he pushes it further the audience is charmed right along with the Kittredges and Geoffrey.

Personal Critique

While this play at first wildly confused me with its bizarre plot, themes, and aesthetic, after further exploring it for this analysis project, I vibe with it significantly more. For the first third of *Six Degrees of Separation*, I was under the impression that the scene with Ouisa, Flan, Paul, and Geoffrey would take up the majority of the script. The subversion of this expectation was initially unsettling, but once I made peace with Guare’s style, it came together smoothly. What I enjoyed about this play is that the longer I thought and the more I researched, the perceived randomness connected under Guare’s common themes of how we can never truly understand ourselves or each other, and how society systemically blocks us from doing so. *Six Degrees of Separation* was written before the age of technology, but I think the themes of feeling disenchanting from the life you’ve inherited and feeling a severe disconnect from the people around you is still a relevant concept in our society. The convention of turning and speaking to the audience is clever and brought the audience into the world of the Kittredges. Its commentary on experiences v. anecdotes reminded me of Plato’s *The Republic* when he described art as merely a simulation. This question of whether imitating something takes away the value of the initial thing/experience made me question Aristotle’s Poetics and was a new perspective.

My one critique of this play is it reads as slightly elitist in its language and desired audience. I got the feeling that Guare wrote this play for upper middle class people to relate to and feel some catharsis via Ouisa and the questions she will never have complete answers to. I

can see other demographics having a difficult time sitting through this, but I suppose as long as the seats are filled that's not a huge deal. I feel about this play how Peter feels about *Mr. Burns*. I think the 1993 film and the 2017 revival do the story justice. If I were to direct this play I would likely not try to reinvent the wheel because the work on the previous adaptations are successful and reinvention for the sake of reinvention isn't always the best answer in my opinion.

Working on this project was a really fun and enlightening experience for me. It was wonderful to actually have the time to go in depth and fully examine a play while also setting the standard for what I should hold myself accountable to do to prepare for future directing projects.

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