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THET 639A

*The Pillowman* Concept

*The Pillowman* presents us with questions of truth, authority, imagination, and the author's responsibility to their audience (if they have any at all). In a world defined by a totalitarian regime, truth is a confusing and battered concept, and Katurian seems as unpopular for his willingness to touch on those truths as for his alleged connection to a pair of child murders. The stories that the characters other than Katurian are willing to tell often reveal more truth about them than anything they say in conversation- nearly everyone in the story is some kind of unreliable narrator.

To reflect the bleak universe of the world these characters inhabit, the stage will seem to cage us in the same way Katurian is caged- the dingy painted cinderblock walls that seem to stretch up out of sight are reminiscent of the brutalism of Soviet bloc architecture- towers of cramped apartments towering above, closing in the world below. They close in the battered table and filing cabinet. There is no apparent door, but the walls lean in just a little- like they too are watching over the scene. The room is lit by a bare bulb that hangs from a long cord that descends all the way down through the stage picture- casting the corners of the room and its upper reaches in shadow. The room isn't dirty, but it is grimy, muted stains in the corners and dripping down from a leak in the unseen ceiling. The cell scene would also happen in this same setting, table, chairs, and filing cabinet replaced with a chair, a mattress, and a pillow.

When Katurian begins to tell us the story of his family, the walls have disappeared, and we enter an entirely different world- as we will when the stories are played out. Where the world of the interrogation room is bleak, monochromatic grays and whites, the world of Katurian's stories is fantastical in its violence- both in color and content. None of the proportions or scale is quite right, but they never edge in to being comfortably comedic- they are, much like Katurian's stories- just not quite *right*- more reminiscent of Edward Gorey than anything else. If we decide to 'play out' other of the small stories (like the Applemen, or the Three Gibbet Crossroads)- I would like to explore having areas of the walls become rear projection surfaces for shadow puppetry, or perhaps scrimmed windows to little 'picture frame' scenes of the stories (like illustrations in a children's book). These could also be perhaps played out as puppetry, or as relatively still images or projection content- either all in the same location, or in different areas of the walls.

The clearest moment that these two worlds of color and style touch (though perhaps there are flashes of it elsewhere- in the design of a cigarette case, or the color of the pillow in the jail cell, in other such small touches that relate to a given character, story, or situation) is after Katurian's execution- perhaps the bag over his head, a shock of red blood on the floor, and the color of the trash can that Ariel doesn't use to destroy his stories, and the truths hidden inside.