

***Little Borders*, a play for two actors,**

and accompanying exegesis

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Abstract

Little Borders is a play for two actors. Elle and Steve are desperate to move into a gated community. Elle can't sleep. They're worried their Arab neighbours might be planning something sinister. Surely the walls of the community will keep them safe. But Elle hears a noise in the night.

My exegesis examines the research into gated communities and urban fear that informed the first draft of *Little Borders*, and charts the dramaturgical process of two creative developments that were dedicated to redrafting this play into a script that is ready for performance. In examining the processes of drafting and creative development, I use this experience of writing my first full-length play to reflect upon the creative process, and outline a potential methodology for writing a play.

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I certify that this work does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

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Introduction

This thesis is split into three parts: a creative piece and two exegetical chapters. Each section has a different focus, a different agenda; each is integral to the whole. I will briefly outline the content of each part, and provide an explanation of the role each plays in the construction of a whole. In doing this, I will explain the rationale for their order, the relationship between them, and the way in which they connect to form a complete text.

The first section is the creative work itself, *Little Borders*—a play for two actors. As is the expectation of creative theses, this work can be read in isolation, extracted from the surrounding exegetical chapters and assessed in its own right as a creative document. It can be judged on its merits as a dramatic text, as a “publishable”¹ (or, in this case, ‘performable’) piece of work—as “a creative work at current arts industry standards.”² It is in this fashion that the script will enter the industry, entirely removed from its academic context. For this reason, although all three components of the thesis should be considered together, the script should also be assessed independently, and considered as the focal point of the exegesis.

In the first chapter of the exegesis, I provide a detailed analysis of the sociological research undertaken into gated communities and fear of crime and outsiders, and examine the way in which this research has informed my creative work. The dual focus of this chapter strikes a balance between what Barbara Milech and Ann Schilo define as the Commentary Model and the Research-Question Model of

¹ Jeri Kroll, ‘*Uneasy Bedfellows: Assessing the Creative Thesis and its Exegesis*’, *TEXT*, 3 (2) 1999, ed. Nigel Krauth & Tess Brady, [online] available from <http://www.textjournal.com.au/oct99/kroll.htm>

² Jeri Kroll, ‘*Uneasy Bedfellows*’

exegeses.³ The Commentary Model provides an opportunity for the writer to articulate the relationship between the research and the creative product, or the creative product as research, while the Research-Question Model provides the writer with a very different opportunity; they are able to answer the same research question that they do in their creative piece, but in a different language: the language of academia. It is this model that I initially proposed for my entire exegesis, but the Research-Question model alone quickly proved inadequate for articulating the unique concerns that arose in the construction of *Little Borders*. When my research proposal was submitted, I had not yet written a first draft of the play, nor was I aware of the script development I would undergo in moving towards a final draft. I was lucky enough to take part in two creative developments during my candidature; the first was made possible through Project Funding from the Flinders University Faculty of Education, Humanities and Law, and the second was with PlayWriting Australia's National Script Workshop.

The process I underwent in both drafting and redrafting *Little Borders* through these two creative developments is key to understanding the 'final' creative document I am submitting. I must flag at the outset that 'final' is a slight misnomer — inevitably, if and when the work goes into production for the first time, the text will be reworked in collaboration with this creative team — but it is this word I will use when referring to the creative text I am submitting for examination. 'Final' does not imply a definitive ending to the process of redrafting, but rather an ending to the process articulated in my exegesis.

³ Barbara H. Milech and Ann Schilo, 'Exit Jesus': Relating the Exegesis and Creative/Production Components of a Research Thesis', *TEXT Special Issue Website Series, 3: Illuminating the Exegesis, 2004*, ed. J. Fletcher and A. Mann, [online] available from <http://www.textjournal.com.au/speciss/issue3/milechschilo.htm>
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My research proposal outlined a planned Research-Question model for my thesis in which the same research question was explored in two different forms, creative and exegetical. I proposed that my exegesis would explore the question of what the proliferation of gated communities in Western countries reflected about these countries' citizens, and how this trend could be seen for the Australian context. To this end, a consideration of the links between gated communities and non-gated master planned estates (MPEs) within the Australian suburbs would form the basis not only of my exegesis, but of my creative piece. This argument gave rise to the first two scenes of *Little Borders*, as I will discuss in the first chapter of the exegesis. However, in moving beyond these two scenes, other factors asserted themselves as worthy of consideration, and the demands of the creative piece as a work of drama—the requirements of story, character and form—dictated the way the play progressed. Consequently, while the exegesis does initially take the form of the Research-Question Model, where I will articulate the sociological research and argument that gave birth to the play, it then moves on to the considerations that informed the writing and rewriting of subsequent scenes, and the consideration of form, character and story that informed the complete play. It is worth noting, then, that while this sociological research was up-to-date at the time I was commencing my candidature, some of the analyses I rely on may be slightly dated, even if it is only by a matter of years. I will outline in my first chapter how this research informed the first draft of the play, and how the focus of my sociological discourse shifted slightly but significantly as the play was revised.

The second chapter is entirely devoted to the process of redrafting, outlining the dramaturgical work that was undertaken in each creative development, with a particular focus on the form I have employed to tell this story, and how this form

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impacts upon story, theme and character. If the first chapter can be read as an articulation of my research-led practice — showing how the work of drama was born out of academic research — this second chapter can be read as an articulation of my practice-led research. In working with actors, directors and dramaturgs, I have been able to interrogate the decisions I have made in how best to tell this story, and assess what these choices say about the story itself. I have also been able to revise the text in a way that ensures that it is the best realisation of the play I wished to write.

In compiling these three sections of my thesis, each with their own concerns, an argument can be seen to emerge. The play is to be read first, so it can initially be assessed in isolation, viewed as a work of drama, separate from any exegetical justification. The first chapter of the exegesis explores the sociological research undertaken into gated communities and crime fear, and shows the way in which the initial scenes were strongly drawn from this research, and how the research informed the play as a whole. In the second and final chapter, I will explore the work conducted in the two creative developments, focusing on the form of the play, and how this form reflected and enhanced the consideration of theme, character and story. In my conclusion, I will reflect upon the process of writing and developing the play in these different stages, and how this process reflects a potential methodology for writing a play.