

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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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-

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’

Question Model of 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 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.

Little Borders

By Phillip Kavanagh

CHARACTERS

ELLE

STEVE

A slash (/) marks the point of interruption in overlapping dialogue.

ONE

ELLE: You won't regret it.

STEVE: Not once.

ELLE: If you approve us, you'll never say to yourself.

STEVE: What were we thinking?

ELLE: What were we thinking?

STEVE: Not once. We both work.

ELLE: He works.

STEVE: You work.

ELLE: I work from home.

STEVE: She makes jewellery.

ELLE: It's all sold online.

STEVE: Fantastic jewellery.

ELLE: I wouldn't dream of selling door to door.

STEVE: Chains and beads.

ELLE: I don't use beads.

STEVE: I've seen you use beads.

ELLE: Beads are cheap.

STEVE: What was that red one?

ELLE: Tacky.

STEVE: That had beads.

ELLE: I do gems.

STEVE: I'm sure / that had

ELLE: Semi-precious stones. And metals. Up-market, really. Stylish.

STEVE: It definitely / had

ELLE: Steve's works in advertising.

STEVE: I'm a creative.

ELLE: He came up with that ad for Sampson Mattresses.

STEVE: A Good Night's Rest for You and Every Member of Your Family.

ELLE: Brilliant.

STEVE: They mostly played the cut down version.

ELLE: I had to have Steve explain it to me.

STEVE: If you'd seen the full length version it would make sense.

ELLE: But it is brilliant.

STEVE: They butchered it to nothing.

ELLE: Those midget Sherpas are so moving. Steve's incredibly intelligent. He has a Masters degree.

STEVE: I do.

ELLE: In history and politics.

STEVE: Stalinist Russia.

Beat.

ELLE: Not that we're

STEVE: No.

ELLE: We're not

STEVE: No!

ELLE: I'm all for small government.

STEVE: The smaller the better.

ELLE: I want to make my own decisions.

STEVE: And she takes her time making them.

ELLE: I'm not sure about that.

STEVE: She took two and a half hours to decide what to wear today.

ELLE: Not that my other options weren't as stylish as this one.

STEVE: She always looks stylish.

ELLE: I pride myself on my sense of style. I'm also an accomplished pianist.

STEVE: She's bloody good.

ELLE: I'm very good.

STEVE: She is.

ELLE: Not to sound boastful.

STEVE: She'd never dream of boasting. But she is good. I've got two left hands, myself.

ELLE: But a good ear. He'd know if I was bad.

STEVE: I would.

ELLE: And he'd tell you.

STEVE: I'm very honest like that.

ELLE: And I'm not.

STEVE: She's not honest.

ELLE: I'm not bad. I'm good. Aren't I?

STEVE: Very good. She practises every day.

ELLE: Softly.

STEVE: Not / always.

ELLE: I always practise softly. Pianissimo. Piano on the rare occasion. But only if absolutely necessary.

STEVE: Her Rachmaninoff will—

ELLE: I'll stop. I'll stop playing entirely.

STEVE: Stop?

ELLE: If that's what you want.

STEVE: Why stop?

ELLE: The important thing is I can. I'll play for you once then stop. The ability itself shows a sense of focus and discipline. Of cultural sophistication.

STEVE: You wouldn't stop.

ELLE: I would. If you wanted me to, I would

STEVE: I think she's having you / on.

ELLE: I'll cut off my hands. If that's what it takes — to prove to you. I'll cut off my hands.

STEVE: Elle...

ELLE: Just say the word and they're gone.

STEVE: Love...

ELLE: Please. We're not safe here. I can't sleep at night. The bombs... The bombs are...

STEVE: Elle, we don't have to do this.

Pause.

ELLE: I keep waking up at night to the sound of bombs.

Pause.

ELLE: I wake up dripping with sweat. I can't sleep now, because I'm liquid and liquid doesn't sleep. So I tip the bed over and pour myself to the window. And I see our next-door neighbour. Mohammad.

STEVE: Ahmed.

ELLE: You don't know that. We don't know his name. We just like to pretend. I'm floating there in front of the window. And he's there, Mohammad,

STEVE: Or

ELLE: Ahmed, yes. And he's there, and he's tinkering with his car. At one am. Tinkering with his car at one am. Our street's getting darker.

STEVE: One house at a time.

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ELLE: Straight off the boat and into a two bedroom townhouse. We used to joke when Mohammad first moved in.

STEVE: Ahmed.

ELLE: Mohammad. Imagine if that little house became a terrorist cell. We used to call it the Terrorist Single Cell.

STEVE: If you'd seen the house you'd understand.

ELLE: Tiny.

STEVE: Really tiny.

ELLE: So you can imagine.

STEVE: Terrorists planning anything in there.

ELLE: It'd be like Russian clowns in a V-Dub planning The October Revolution.

STEVE: German clowns.

ELLE: Russian.

STEVE: V Dubs are German.

ELLE: What are German clowns doing in Russia?

STEVE: What's a 1930s car doing in 1917?

ELLE: Anyway, Mohammad and his wife have a couple of friends over every Thursday night.

STEVE: Sort of like a prayer group.

ELLE: They sing. Loudly.

STEVE: We're talking till the early hours, here.

ELLE: Sets off every dog in the neighbourhood.

STEVE: So, one Thursday night.

ELLE: Jokingly.

STEVE: We started joining in.

ELLE: Singing Arabic.

STEVE: But not actually Arabic.

ELLE: No, not actually Arabic.

STEVE: Cause we don't actually speak

ELLE: Let alone sing

STEVE: It was just this sort of almost Arabic.

ELLE: We were singing in just this sort of almost Arabic.

STEVE: It was quite funny.

ELLE: It was quite funny.

STEVE: Just a joke, really.

ELLE: Just between us.

STEVE: Only...

ELLE: Paper thin walls

STEVE: We think they might have... I went to get the mail the next morning. I'm at the letterbox and Ahmed's there at his. I nodded to him, real friendly. Didn't have to, but just wanted to show, you know, that's what Aussies do. We take the piss. But he didn't nod back. Just took his mail inside and slammed the door.

ELLE: Please. Please let us in. We're not safe where we are. With the tinkering and the staring. I can't help but think.

STEVE: Slam.

ELLE: What are those meetings about? What do those songs mean?

STEVE: Nod.

ELLE: I wish I did. I wish I did speak Arabic.

STEVE: Slam.

ELLE: We just want to feel safe again.

TWO

ELLE: At first I thought I was imagining it. The night we moved in I told myself, "It's not there." But I could definitely hear something. Only it wasn't...

Even here, within the walls of our estate, I still can't sleep.

I've had a total of six hours this week. A total of six, not six a night. Six over seven nights. That's not healthy.

I'm tossing and turning. A bark pulls me upright in bed. Another throws me to my feet. Yips and yaps push one foot in front of the other. I'm staring at the bookshelf and a sharp "ruff" extends and retracts my arm. The community by-laws. All 600 pages.

I should go straight to the index, but I'm incapable of skipping ahead. If I start a book, I have to read it cover to cover. Even with reference books, I'm worried I'll miss some important detail if I skim over even a single line. I'm absolutely terrified of dictionaries.

I'm poring over the rules, knowing what I'm searching for, but still keeping my eyes out for tiny details. I turn each page, faster and faster, the by-laws transforming into a nail-biting legal thriller. I almost forget what it is I'm looking for, until — a yap. The word "Pets." A yap.

No dogs. Cats, confined to the house, yes, but no dogs. And yet I can hear this yapping. This constant, never-ending yapping.

It's the middle of the night and I should just ignore it and go to bed. Collapse into Steve's arms, and be like him, sleeping through the noise. Blissfully unconscious. Asleep on that bloody, bloody mattress.

And I know if he can do it, I should be able to. Just stick in ear plugs, maybe, or maybe put on a CD of whales on heat but I find myself leaving the house, in my dressing gown and slippers, drawn to each bark like it's someone calling my name. The house two doors down. A townhouse, like ours. Slightly garish, but not tacky. Tack is prohibited within the walls.

I almost knock at the front door — mahogany Isabella — but just, you know, to test I suppose, I grip the door knob — brass Tulip Schlage — and turn. It opens. Yes. So it should. There's a trust here. I can walk out of my house in the middle of the night in my dressing gown and slippers and trust that I won't get mugged, won't get beaten, won't get raped. Trust is a beautiful thing. You are my neighbour. You are me. I am you. We are one.

I don't need to knock.

I step into the doorway, white tiled entrance hall, and slip out of my slippers to feel the cold tiles against my feet. I take off my dressing gown, place it on the coat rack and move into the lounge room where they have the same sofa as us. Exactly the same. Same model, same colour, same depression on the left hand side. This is my sofa. The same sofa me and Steve picked out together. I lean back slowly, my body falls into the contours of the seat, shag carpet creeping up the gaps between my toes like sand on a beach.

I'm still holding the by-laws. I never put them down. I notice the coffee table, an original Sean Dix, like ours, except that it's not. It's bare. I need to place the by-laws on the table, just to have something there, to fill that horrible blank space. A growl.

Something is standing in the room, growling at me. I remember why I'm here. I expected a Chihuahua, Pomeranian, Fox Terrier, not something so big. This dog, this illegal animal smuggled into our estate. This beast. This monster.

I back away to the coat rack and almost leave but This beast. This monster. is just staring at me. Just standing there, panting, wheezing, his tongue hanging out as he huffs in and out like he's enjoying watching me. Enjoying my panic and I'm shaking and I'm holding the by-laws and I'm gripping them and he's panting and he's wheezing and he's laughing and I swing the book hard into his skull.

Crack.

And again.

Crack. Crack. Crack.

Long silence.

He's lying there, gasping now, but I can still hear laughter. It's coming from me. I'm laughing at him, and I feel a sense of of of of victory. Of hysterical joy. I can't stop laughing, my whole body convulsing with laughter. I hear the stairs creak.

I'm frozen, holding the by-laws over my head while the dog lies bleeding in front of me. A woman is standing at the top of the stairs, staring. Not at me, not at the dog, just staring.

"Who's there? Peter, come."

Just staring.

Her eyes are dead.

She has dead eyes.

I drop the book and her ears turn her face to me.

“Who’s there? Come. Peter, come. Don’t move. Don’t move, whoever you are, I’ve sounded an alarm. A guard will be here any second.”

She’s bluffing, I know that she’s bluffing.

I need to not be here.

“I’m sorry.” I whisper the words so softly, I’m not sure if I say them or just think them, but either way, she knows. Her face changes, her features crumple and compress.

“Peter?”

She moves down the stairs towards me, fumbling towards me, reaching for the banister, and I can’t move, I’m frozen, and I watch her, fumbling, reaching. Her foot slips.

She topples down the stairs.

Her head hits the white tiles with a crack.

Red tiles.

Her eyes dead.

I grab the book, my slippers, my gown and I run. I run back home, back to my seat, open the by-laws and race to the same section — yes, Pets.

No dogs.

No dogs.

Wait. What?

Except in the case of assistance animals for people with disabilities.

That wasn't there before.

There were no clauses. Cats yes, dogs no. No dogs. I'm certain I checked.

I shouldn't be up. I should be in bed. I need to be asleep.

But first.

Lock the door.

THREE

STEVE: When Harry first came to me I thought, “You have got to be joking.” He’d had an ad made, shot cheap, so he could pay for more airtime. But it was just... embarrassing. This stencilled logo for Sampson Mattresses. Cut to Harry himself, struggling to walk and talk at the same time while he stiffly gestures to the mattresses in his showroom. Carefully enunciating each word like he’s learnt them all phonetically. He came to me, desperate for someone with vision to spearhead a new campaign.

The midget Sherpa idea came to me in a dream, and I wrote the whole thing in an evening. The cut down nonsense Harry actually aired had no sense of the story I’d written.

Mt Everest.

Mattress.

Dancing midget Sherpas.

Sleeping midget Sherpas.

A Good Night’s Rest For You And Every Member of Your Family.

But it got people talking. Got his name out there.

A month later I was meeting with Harry to talk about my idea for a new ad. I was walking him through the storyboard. I reached the last frame. He broke down in tears. The others in the room turned to me awkwardly, not sure what they were supposed to do. I waved them out of the room and they almost ran to the door in relief. I poured Harry a glass of water and he took it, sipping slowly, his hand shaking. There was blood. On his left hand. Just a tiny fleck. I didn’t notice till he wiped a drop of water from his bottom lip and streaked red across his chin. “I’ve fucked up,” he cried. “I’ve really fucked up.” And then he told me. He told me what he did. I don’t know if he realised he was doing it. Maybe he was just caught in a soliloquy and I just happened to be in the audience.

When I got home that night, Elle was sitting in the lounge room watching TV, surrounded by half-unpacked boxes. The coffee table a mess of chains and beads. She smiled at me as I walked through the door and I felt a tightness in my chest. Knowing what Harry had done and wondering if I could ever...

I slid onto the couch next to her and pulled her towards me. She clung to my shoulder and just held me. We didn't say a word. We just held each other. I should've turned off the TV, I should've crawled into bed and shut myself off from the world, but I had to, I just had to, just for a second, I just had to flick over to News 24. To hear it for myself.

"Earlier today, the wife and children of Harry Sampson, owner of Sampson Mattresses, A Good Night's Rest for You and Every Member of Your Family, were found bludgeoned to death in their beds." I kept waiting for the punch line. "Looks like this family will finally be getting a good night's rest." Something. But there was just this deadpan "Back to you in the studio."

The next day the phone didn't stop ringing. Clients wanting to pull their campaigns with us. For unrelated reasons we were no longer the right "fit." By two o'clock Harry was the only account we had left.

You'd think, I mean, you would think, if he'd been at all concerned about his business, he would've cut the brakes on his wife's car or taken them out to the park and strangled them with a skipping rope. But in their beds?

He'd made it so every person who sleeps on a Sampson mattress feels like they're sleeping on one of those mattresses, like they're lying in a pool of his family's blood. But I could fix it. I could find the right spin so people would look past that. Focus on the spring support technology and the superior stitch work, that will last twice as long as the stitch work from a leading competitor. But no matter what angle I came up with, I was still hampered by the fact that when

people think of Harry Sampson, they think of his family, lying there, face down, bludgeoned to death.

Like Elle. I asked Harry for a freebie when we moved. Figured, well, here to help her sleep, new house, new community, new life, new mattress. And they are bloody good mattresses. I mean I'm paid to sell them, but if we'd ended up going down the infomercial route, I would have done a customer testimonial myself. I hit that mattress and I'm out like a light. But Elle would spend every night just lying there awake.

So I thought I could try and use that. If she's one of those people, one of those people lying awake in a pool of imaginary blood, maybe I could make that work. Independent market research. Each morning, over breakfast, I'd try things like, "I don't think he did it, you know? I think it was the neighbour." Or, "I hear they weren't in that much pain when they died, because the blows were softened by their mattresses' firm yet comfortable pillow top cushioning." And she'd nod and take another gulp of coffee, then lie awake all night, covered in blood.

But today I made a breakthrough. A woman in our community was murdered two nights ago. And last night, Elle slept through the night. For the first time since we moved, Elle slept through the night. So that was it. Harry had to change the story.

I phoned him today, he's allowed phone calls, I phoned him to tell him what I'd realised. And do you know what he tells me? What the bastard just happened to let slip in court today? What every paper is going to publish tomorrow? What has effectively screwed any chance I had of saving his business? Of saving mine? The mattresses, the mattresses his family were found on, the mattresses they'd been sleeping on every night. They were from IKEA. They weren't even his.

FOUR

ELLE: I just think, if we can afford it, I just think it's the right move to move.

STEVE: Elle.

ELLE: Listen to me, "*the right move to move.*" But it is. It's the right move to move.

STEVE: Do you want to talk about it?

ELLE: There's already three houses up for sale on our street alone. Not counting the house where it actually happened.

STEVE: Because I'd like to talk about it.

ELLE: And sure, we might stand to lose bit of money since the community has that that that tarnish now, but

STEVE: Alright, I froze. I froze and maybe that says something.

ELLE: Better to lose a bit than to stay. Cause who knows what's going to happen if the prices drop. So if we can afford it, I don't...

STEVE: If you want to draw something from that, then fine.

ELLE: I don't...

STEVE: I froze. That little shit.

ELLE: Steve. Can we please just. Peace. It's fine. It's over. It's done. Can we please just. Just. Discuss this.

STEVE: That little shit.

ELLE: Can we have a few more minutes, please? We're still looking over the menu.

STEVE: It all looks so tempting.

ELLE: It really does.

STEVE: There're probably still out there. Milling around the car park. I should go find them.

ELLE: Just drop it. Alright?

STEVE: Nice arse, nice arse, hey nice arse. What did he, what was he hoping to / achieve?

ELLE: Please.

STEVE: I should, I should

ELLE: What? What should you do?

STEVE: I should hit him.

ELLE: There were three of them.

STEVE: Hit all of them.

ELLE: They looked like they could hit back.

STEVE: You don't think I could? Think I'm some kind of... I used to get into fights, you know.

ELLE: When?

STEVE: Before I met you. Before. I used to fight.

ELLE: Sure.

STEVE: You don't... That back there was nothing. I could take them. I could, I could. What's that look for? What's that look meant to? You don't think I could. You don't. When I was 22, I broke three bones in my hand after some little shit called me a poofter. Face like a Picasso by the time I'd / finished with him.

ELLE: Don't.

STEVE: Three broken bones but I felt good. I felt so bloody good.

ELLE: Just don't.

STEVE: What?

ELLE: I... I like that you're gentle. I like that you have soft hands.

STEVE: I don't.

ELLE: When you proposed, I like that you crouched down on your haunches instead of getting onto bended knee because you didn't want to get your pants dirty.

STEVE: They were new.

ELLE: And I said yes.

STEVE: I should go back there and find him. Make him apologise.

ELLE: You don't have to do anything. It's over. It... It didn't bother me.

STEVE: Elle. You were crying.

ELLE: No.

STEVE: Yes.

ELLE: No, I was. I wasn't crying.

STEVE: Yes. You were crying and you looked at me. You looked at me and I could see that you wanted me to do something. To hurt him. But I didn't.

ELLE: I wasn't crying.

STEVE: I froze. Do you wish I was different? That I carried a gun and shot at anything that moved? I could've been a soldier. Do you wish I was a soldier? Then I could protect you. Fight to protect you. We wouldn't have to run. Wouldn't have to hide from people who want to kill us. I could track them down, storm their houses, bind their hands, cover their faces, make them kneel before us and blow their brains out.

ELLE: You'd ruin their pants. Let's just go home. I'll rub lotion into your hands and kiss them and push them inside me and wrap my own soft hands around your cock. You can dress up in khaki and fuck me while we pretend we're in a war zone. Protected by our soldiers guarding the gate and roaming the grounds, you fucking me while bombs are going off.

STEVE: We should get more. More guards. Build our own army. Deploy them onto the streets. So when someone says something like, tries to intimidate, our soldiers can swoop in and cut out their tongues so that they can't. So we can walk around and the worst they can do is grunt, but they won't even grunt, they'll see us and know who we are. They'll fucking salute.

ELLE: Why don't we? Why don't we move where they have more already? Where things aren't falling apart. Please, Steve.

STEVE: I love you.

ELLE: Yes.

STEVE: You know that, right?

ELLE: I know that.

STEVE: I wish I could... I wish I could protect you.

ELLE: We can't afford it, can we?

STEVE: I wish I knew how to protect you. I'm sorry I froze.

ELLE: Forget about dinner. Let's just go home.

STEVE: Okay.

ELLE: And I...

STEVE: What?

ELLE: I do, you know. Have a nice arse.

STEVE: You do.

FIVE

ELLE: We were out of milk. I hadn't left home in days. It'd been over a week since I'd ventured outside the gates. But we were out of milk.

It's strange leaving the house at first, like I'd forgotten there even was an outside. I move down our street past gardens filled with weeds, lawns that need to be mowed. Since they lowered the strata fees the gardeners come less often. Work less hard.

There's a for sale sign outside the house

two

doors

down.

The blind woman's house. It's been sold. The staircase. White tiles. Red...

I keep walking.

I reach the guardhouse but it's empty. Back in Ten. He should be protecting us. I move past the empty guardhouse and step outside.

I turn left, then right, then left again. I twist and turn into dead end streets. Children are playing cricket. Their parents watch through the lounge room windows. I turn back onto a mainish road. I head towards the strip of shops. I reach a corner store. I hesitate. I'm suspicious of any grocery store that lacks a fresh food section, but I'm here, and it's convenient, so I go in.

The floor's sticky. There's a Chinese woman at the counter rapidly talking Mandarin into her phone. She's serving a customer, a skinny guy in an oversized

t-shirt. He's muttering to himself. He gestures to a pack of cigarettes. Without taking a breath from her conversation, she passes them to him and takes his coins. So many coins. She doesn't look down as he hands them to her. She flicks them into the cash register like she's dealing blackjack.

I go to the fridge. I grab a carton of skim. I move to the counter. There's a beep from the doorway. A woman bursts in, parting the strips of orange plastic with her pram. She's panting loudly. Her baby is screaming against the loud, rapid Mandarin.

I turn away. She's spotted me looking at her. She wheels towards me. She stops right next to me. I can feel her there, the wheel of her pram nudging my foot.

She starts barking into my ear.

"The bastard. The bloody bastard has. Last time. Never again. Done with this. Can I borrow your phone? I need to borrow your phone."

I don't have my phone on me. The words are frozen in my throat.

"Can I borrow some change instead?"

I have some on me, I do, but the words coming from my lips say I only have enough for the milk.

I can feel her breath on my neck. She's staring at me. At the milk in my hand. It's boiling. Her eyes are boiling it.

I move to the counter. Take out my purse. Open it. So many coins. I extract the exact change slowly. Try not to make a sound. One coin. Two. Three. I lay the change out in front of me. I slide it across the countertop. I zip the coin pouch shut and squeeze my purse into silence. I take my milk and leave.

I wind my way back home, back through the games of cricket. The children. They're aiming at my head. And the parents. They're sneering at me. I speed up. I get to the gate. The young guard. He's standing with a woman. She's holding a baby over her shoulder, bobbing him up and down.

It's the woman from the shop. Did she follow me here? I watch from a distance. The guard nods at her. He lets her walk in. He just lets her inside. What is he doing? What the fuck are we paying him for? I walk to my house, casually throwing glances over my shoulder. Just to check if she's ... she is, she's following me.

The pram is wheeling towards me, gaining speed, gunning towards me. I reach my driveway. She's getting closer, gaining on me. She turns. She walks up the drive of the house

two

doors

down.

She fishes out her keys.

She opens the door.

She catches sight of me and pauses. Looking at me strangely. Fingers fly in front of me. They're mine. I'm waving to her. How long have I been waving to her? She stares at me with dead eyes. She turns back to the house. She pushes the pram over the threshold. She wheels it in. She shuts the door behind her. Slam.

SIX

ELLE: The house two doors down.

STEVE: The house where the blind woman...

ELLE: Yes. I've been watching it.

STEVE: Okay.

ELLE: You're giving me that look.

STEVE: I'm not. Really. You've been watching the house.

ELLE: It's been sold.

STEVE: You said. You mentioned the woman who moved in there.

ELLE: I did. Yes. Okay. There's this man.

STEVE: Right.

ELLE: He comes every day. Sometimes she lets him in. Normally she doesn't. Sometimes. Sometimes she calls the guards. Has him taken away.

STEVE: Right. How did you see this?

ELLE: What do you mean?

STEVE: From the window? Cause you can't really... I mean, you can catch a glimpse but you can't really see the house that well from the window.

ELLE: Not the window. The road.

STEVE: Right.

ELLE: I was walking. I was walking up and down the road to make it look. They wouldn't have known. They'd have looked at me and thought, this woman is walking. Just walking.

STEVE: You were walking on the road?

ELLE: Yes. No. Not on the. The footpath.

STEVE: Right.

ELLE: I was walking up and back, and each day this car. This man. He gets out and bangs on the door. And each day that woman she she she changes. Lets him in. Calls the guards. Does nothing. Pretends she's not home. Leaves him waiting for hours. Screams at him. Kisses him. Fucks him.

STEVE: You watched them fucking?

ELLE: No. No, but you can tell. From the way she was kissing him as she let him in. From the way the baby was screaming, left ignored. You can tell.

STEVE: Right.

ELLE: But today I... today I... I...

STEVE: What?

ELLE: I needed to know. She let him inside. She doesn't do that very often and I needed to know. I needed to know what was happening. I went over to their front window. Pressed my face to the glass. There's a crack between the window frame and the curtain and I can just see through. Only... I think they saw me.

STEVE: Elle.

ELLE: I can't be sure. There wasn't much to see. An eye, a nose. If they saw anything at all they might not have known it was me. I was back home before they would have had a chance to check. But they looked at the window. They looked right at me. Steve I I I

STEVE: Hey, it's okay. It's alright.

ELLE: No. It's not. I saw inside. They weren't fucking. He was beating her.

STEVE: Right. Right. It's okay. Alright? It's okay.

ELLE: What if he saw me? What if she saw me?

STEVE: I'm here. I can protect you. I can I can I can

ELLE: Do something.

SEVEN

STEVE: I normally just jog along the lake. We call it a lake but it's more of a, you know, artificial. It's an artificial lake. A fake lake. I jog along on concrete, one of the virtues of controlled nature, and I get into my zone. I'm in Borneo. I'm jogging along a stretch of rainforest and there are natives watching me from the trees. Fascinated by me because they can see me running, see my form, and can't quite compute how I could be human. I must be some sort of God or alien. It's hard to keep this up. I feel the concrete beneath me. See another jogger running the other way, struggling through a polite nod, his shoulders rising and dipping with his head. Another jogger overtakes me. It pulls me right out. I slow down to a walk. They're not overtaking. I'm letting them pass.

I sit for a bit. By the fake lake. I'm on a beach. When the jogger's out of sight, I'm back and I'm running through Borneo.

I turn back onto my street. Normally that's it. But my legs are still moving. I'm jogging up and down my street. For a second, I'm in high school, running the beep test. I increase my speed with each lap. I catch glimpses through the window of the woman

two

doors

down.

Reading.

Stretching.

Feeding her baby.

Each scene different from the last. A silent film shot just for me.

I slow down. There's a car parked on the street outside the house

two

doors

But the closer I get the less true this becomes. My body returns to earth, so heavy, so sore. I'm aching. And my smile has gone ... but

His smile is so wide. So...

I go inside the house. I lean against the door. My vision's blurring. I have to look back through the window to see him one more time. I peer through. He's standing in my driveway. He raises his hands and he gives me a round of applause. Smiling.

Smiling.

EIGHT

STEVE: We were washing the car together. Elle and I.

ELLE: Steve wanted help washing the car. I'm good with the hose and / it's nice

STEVE: It's nice

ELLE: Washing together

STEVE: Doing this together.

ELLE/STEVE: It's nice to do things together.

STEVE: I'm soaping up the left door.

ELLE: I'm blasting suds from the bonnet and / the car pulls up

STEVE: The car pulls up. The beat up Monaro

ELLE: Outside the house

ELLE/STEVE: Two

doors

down.

He gets out.

ELLE: That man

STEVE: Shaved head. A trail of ink running down his left shoulder.

ELLE: That man

ELLE/STEVE: He gets out

ELLE: And approaches the house

STEVE: Bangs on the door. And / the woman

ELLE: That woman

STEVE: Comes out

ELLE: That woman comes out

STEVE: And starts yelling at him

ELLE: Screaming

ELLE/STEVE: Abuse

STEVE: I don't know where to look.

ELLE: I look away

STEVE: We didn't mean to be here.

ELLE: Just focus on the hose. Just washing our car

STEVE: Just minding our own business

ELLE/STEVE: Together

STEVE: They've seen us

ELLE: Only

ELLE/STEVE: They think we're watching them

STEVE: They start yelling at us

ELLE: They see us and start yelling at us

ELLE/STEVE: Together

STEVE: The car dripping with suds

ELLE: I've dropped the hose. The lawn is saturated.

STEVE: And we're yelling back

ELLE: We're yelling

ELLE/STEVE: Abuse

STEVE: At them

ELLE/STEVE: Together

ELLE: We're all screaming

ELLE/STEVE: Abuse

Together

ELLE: And the lawn is wet

STEVE: And the car is dripping with soap

ELLE: Her eyes are swollen.

STEVE: His knuckles are red.

ELLE/STEVE: And we're yelling. Abuse.

Together.

ELLE: That woman. Barking at me.

STEVE: That man. Smiling as he yells.

ELLE: Her eyes are swollen.

STEVE: His knuckles are red.

ELLE: And they scream as they / retreat

STEVE: Retreat

ELLE/STEVE: Together. Into the house.

Two

doors

down.

ELLE: Slam

STEVE: And we're. And we're

ELLE: And we're left there

STEVE: And we're standing there

ELLE: The grass turned to mud.

STEVE: And we're standing there

ELLE: Soap suds dripping from the car door.

STEVE: And our neighbours have lined the street. Watching

ELLE: And our neighbours are staring at / us

STEVE: Us.

ELLE: Like we were the ones yelling

ELLE/STEVE: Like we started it.

ELLE: Like we're the problem

STEVE: And it's like. It's like

ELLE: Like like like

STEVE: And it's like

ELLE/STEVE: We're the only ones who can see

ELLE: That woman

STEVE: That man

ELLE/STEVE: That house.

ELLE: Like we're the only ones who can see

STEVE: We can see it all so clearly

ELLE/STEVE: The problem.

STEVE: Us.

ELLE/STEVE: We can see the problem.

Together.

Clearly.

ELLE: Slam.

NINE

ELLE: Sorry, can we try over here? I just think it would look nice. In front of the frangipanis.

STEVE: Yes, that would look nice.

ELLE: Right. Are we ready?

STEVE: Yes. It was ten o'clock when we heard it.

ELLE: A sort of wailing.

STEVE: We didn't notice at first.

ELLE: This alarm

STEVE: It just didn't register

ELLE: But when it didn't stop.

STEVE: When the noise didn't stop. We heard it. We heard it and felt this...

ELLE: Alarm

STEVE: We did, we felt this alarm. It ripped through our bodies

ELLE: His and mine

STEVE: Mine and hers

ELLE: Pulsing

STEVE: Retching

ELLE: Writhing through our bodies.

STEVE: We crawled out onto the street.

ELLE: All of us, everyone

STEVE: Out onto the street.

ELLE: Standing there, watching the house, waiting

STEVE: Waiting for the noise to stop

ELLE: We didn't know what it meant, this noise

STEVE: It meant something was wrong, sure, we knew, it had been so long since we'd heard, but instinctively, you just know. You just feel it.

ELLE: Loud noise means something bad is going to happen.

STEVE: Or is happening. We knew that, yes. We knew, this is not good, but we didn't know. We didn't know what to do.

ELLE: Do we call someone? Do we tell the guards?

STEVE: But surely they know already. They'd've heard. And if it's making this much noise, if the system is set up to make this much noise, to draw us all out of our shells to stand around listening to it, then surely it reports back somewhere. Surely it reports back to some server that says, Something Bad is Happening.

ELLE: And then that server would send someone.

STEVE: Someone equipped to deal with these sorts of things.

ELLE: Whatever this sort of thing was.

STEVE: Bad.

ELLE: People equipped to deal with bad sorts of things.

STEVE: And then we noticed.

ELLE: It wasn't till we'd been standing there for a few moments, wondering when someone would arrive who knew how to deal with bad sorts of things that we noticed

STEVE: The smell.

ELLE: It was like burning

STEVE: And the smoke was

ELLE: Wafting from the house

STEVE: Two doors down

ELLE: A town house, like ours. Slightly garish but not tacky

STEVE: No, not tacky

ELLE: Tack is prohibited within the walls.

STEVE: Smoking

ELLE: Burning.

STEVE: We didn't know that yet. We just knew that it was smoking.

ELLE: But the smell.

STEVE: Well, yes. But it wasn't till later...

ELLE: Right

STEVE: Wasn't till later that we learned that it was burning

ELLE: Right.

STEVE: At this point we just knew about the smell

ELLE: Right.

STEVE: And the smoke

ELLE: Right.

STEVE: But later we learned what it meant. That the house two doors down was on fire.

ELLE: But there was no one rushing in and out.

STEVE: No one yelling for help.

ELLE: No one screaming.

STEVE: Just the smoke.

ELLE: They say it was the smoke that did it. That smoke inhalation must've caused them both to pass out, so they didn't hear the noise

STEVE: The alarm

ELLE: Warning them

STEVE: To get out.

ELLE: And we didn't know. None of us knew what the noise meant. Hadn't pieced it together. Someone, I'm sure someone would've tried to help. If we knew. We would've rushed in there straight away. If one of us had known what was happening. Known what to do.

STEVE: But it all happened so fast. The noise, then the smell, then the smoke, and before we knew it,

ELLE: The microwave was beeping and we had to

STEVE: We had to go back inside

ELLE: To check it

STEVE: Because we had this reflex now.

ELLE: Big noise equals trouble

STEVE: And we couldn't just leave it

ELLE: Beeping every ten seconds

STEVE: We had to go take care of it

ELLE: And then dessert was ready

STEVE: And we forgot

ELLE: And we forgot about the noise

STEVE: And the smell

ELLE: And the smoke

STEVE: And we ate

ELLE: Just leftovers

STEVE: Not just. Leftover sticky date pudding.

ELLE: Well, yes.

STEVE: It was bloody good.

ELLE: It was very good.

STEVE: It was.

ELLE: We didn't remember till we came out this morning and the house was devastated

STEVE: Destroyed

ELLE: The fire contained

STEVE: Thank God.

ELLE: But the house, destroyed. Some people say, though...

STEVE: Thank God.

ELLE: It was deliberate

STEVE: Thank God.

ELLE: And that they were already dead before

STEVE: Love

ELLE: Before the fire

STEVE: Love

ELLE: That someone snuck in there before it started. Before they started it.

STEVE: Love

ELLE: Some people say that someone snuck in there with some big fuck off heavy

STEVE: Love

ELLE: While they were asleep. Just lying there. Just bludgeoned the fucking

STEVE: Love

ELLE: Just lying in bed like some stupid fucking

STEVE: Love

ELLE: But that's rubbish

STEVE: Yes

ELLE: They were well liked

STEVE: Well loved

ELLE: Pillars of the community.

STEVE: We'll topple now they're gone

ELLE: Like a house of cards.

STEVE: Left to pick up the pieces.

ELLE: All 52. Are we done?

Exegesis — Chapter One

Genesis

Little Borders was not born out of an idea for a story, out of distinctive characters, or an intriguing plot synopsis. The initial seeds for the play came from my desire to explore a particular thematic terrain. I was fascinated with notions of class difference and racism in a country that has historically prided itself on egalitarianism and multiculturalism, and I wished to explore how fear of crime and fear of the Other could manifest itself in a distinctly Australian suburban setting, with characters willing to go to any length to ensure their own safety. I felt that this heightened sense of fear, that could not be easily explained or justified, had an inherent sense of absurdity and terror that would lend itself well to a dark satiric comedy. Setting out on this process of creation and discovery, I had decided little else.

Early in the research process, I decided to anchor this thematic exploration around the physical setting of an Australian gated community. As I will explain below, this setting gave a physical potency to these issues of race, class and fear of crime and outsiders; these issues are built into the architecture of gated communities, and are the subject of much discussion by sociologists charting the rise in fortified housing developments. In this chapter, I provide a summary of the research that fed into the first draft of *Little Borders*, and describe the ways in which I have crafted a work of drama from it. In retracing the steps I have taken in the creative process, I return to the research I immersed myself in before I had decided what form the play would take. I illustrate how this research provided the

initial seeds for the play, and explore the ways in which character and story was built upon these foundations.

Gated Communities

The streets these days are full of cockroaches and most of them are human. Every man has a right to protect his family, himself and his possessions, to live in peace and safety. Sanctuary Cove is an island of civilisation in a violent world, and we have taken steps to ensure it remains so.

Mike Gore, developer of Sanctuary Cove, Australia's first gated community, addressing reporters in 1987.⁴

Gated communities are a relatively recent phenomenon in real estate developments. They are marked by the privatisation of space that would ordinarily be public, such as streets, beaches, parks, footpaths and playgrounds. Edward J. Blakely and Mary Gail Snyder, in their seminal text on gated communities, *Fortress America: Gated Communities in the United States*, identify the key physical characteristics of these developments:

They are security developments with designated perimeters, usually walls or fences, and controlled entrances that are intended to prevent penetration by non-residents. They include new developments and older areas retrofitted with gates and fences ... Their gates range from elaborate two-

⁴ Matthew Burke, 'The Pedestrian Behaviour of Residents in Gated Communities', paper presented at *Walking the 21st Century*, February 20–22, Perth, Western Australia, 147 *Little Borders*, a play for two actors and accompanying exegesis – Phillip Kavanagh

storey guardhouses staffed twenty four hours a day to roll-back gates to simple electronic arms.⁵

It is this privatisation of public space, through the use of gates, walls and fences, that distinguishes gated communities from high-density apartments and condominium buildings with similar security structures. First emerging in America in the 1960s and 1970s, gated communities were originally designed as leisure-oriented retirement complexes. It was not until the 1980s that prestige and security zone communities began to emerge, according to a typology of gated communities developed by Blakely and Snyder. Prestige communities are planned developments that lack the recreational facilities which distinguish these earlier leisure communities. Prestige communities differ very little from standard residential subdivisions, except for the gates and walls or fences, which “symbolize distinction and prestige and protect a secure place on the social ladder.”⁶ Security zone communities, unlike prestige communities, are not planned, with gates and fences retrofitted to existing urban and suburban areas in response to a fear of crime and outsiders.

In Australia, a number of prestige gated communities have been built, along with security zone communities, as residents retrofit gates and fences in response to a perceived—though not necessarily justified—fear of crime and outsiders.⁷ While over 16 million Americans were thought to live behind gates by

⁵ Edward J. Blakely and Mary Gail Snyder, *Fortress America: Gated Communities in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 1999) 2

⁶ Blakely and Snyder, *Fortress America*, 40-41

⁷ Caro Meldrum, ‘Fear of Crime Industry Fuelling Gated Communities: Criminologist’, *ABC News*, May 21 2007

the early twenty-first century,⁸ the number in Australia was thought to be just 100,000.⁹ However, non-gated Master Planned Estates (MPEs) are now “*the* [emphasis in original] mainstream suburban product”¹⁰ and there are many interesting links to be drawn between prestige gated communities and non-gated MPEs in Australia, with both types of housing developments offering residents a sense of safety and social distinction, and both acting as zones of exclusion and exclusivity. While not explicitly addressed in the final draft of *Little Borders*, the links between these two types of housing developments is something that emerged throughout my research into gated communities and MPEs. I will return to this point in more detail later, as it was addressed quite explicitly in earlier drafts of the play. In these earlier drafts, I explored the question of whether or not Australia might see a sharp rise in fortified housing communities in years to come. Before I expound upon this, it is worth exploring how the play grew out of the very first scene, and the research that informed this scene.

Setha Low’s *Behind the Gates: Life, Security and the Pursuit of Happiness in Fortress America* provides a fascinating insight into the causes for the proliferation of gated communities in the United States. In interviewing a number of residents throughout the United States, Low observes that the reasons individuals give for their decision to live in gated communities “vary widely, and the closer you get to the person and his or her individual psychology, the more complex the answer.”¹¹ However, two reasons—prestige and fear of crime—were

⁸ Setha Low, *Behind the Gates: Life, Security and the Pursuit of Happiness in Fortress America* (New York ; London: Routledge, 2003) 15

⁹ Matt O’Sullivan, ‘Behind the Urban Curtains’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, March 4 2005

¹⁰ Brendan Gleeson, *Australian Heartlands: Making Space for Hope in the Suburbs* (Crowds Nest, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 2006) 101-2

¹¹ Setha Low, *Behind the Gates*, 231

provided in many of the interviews conducted. These helped to build a picture of the motivations that drive these individuals to move to gated communities, and have been crucial to the formation of Elle and Steve, who began life as little more than personified manifestations of these motivations.

Scene One was the first scene I wrote, and for a while it was the only scene that existed. It sat as an appendix to a research proposal, as the prologue to a play that had not yet formed further in my mind. As a prologue to the play, it works to “establish the setting, introduce the characters [and] indicate a theme.”¹² While I knew the setting of a gated community would form the focus of the play, this scene is not set explicitly within the community; instead, it focuses on two characters desperate to be granted residence. Drawing on Low’s research, and several other sources, I was able to use this scenario to explore the motivations that drive residents to choose to live in these fortified suburbs.

Prestige

Many of Low’s interviewees sought gated communities for the offer of social distinction. Residents feel that the gates, and the covenants, contracts and deed restrictions (CC&Rs) governing these communities—with guidelines for everything from house colour to total weight allowance for pets—help ensure that a certain “class”¹³ of people occupy the neighbourhood. This exclusivity offers residents a form of social distinction that elevates them to a level above those living outside the gates. This desire for social distinction and prestige is also seen

¹² Ross Murfin and Supryia M. Ray, *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms* (Boston: Bedford/St Martin’s, 2009) 408

¹³ Setha Low, *Behind the Gates*, 173

as a key factor in the choice of Australians to live in gated communities and MPEs.¹⁴ Scene One of *Little Borders* starts with the audience initially in the dark about the dramatic scenario. Elle and Steve are seeking ‘approval’ for something, but the specifics are unclear. Perhaps they are applying for a loan? Perhaps they wish to adopt a child? What is immediately clear is what the characters place value on, what they believe distinguishes them from their less ‘cultured’ peers. They are obsessed with signifiers of status—occupation, education, style and artistic taste. Halfway through the scene, this obsession with cultural status is disrupted. Like the complexities of motivation Low encountered in her interviewees, I wished to have a second, stronger motivation lurking beneath the façade of prestige—fear.

Fear of Crime

Criminologist Murray Lee notes that there is a strong link between a rise in fear of crime and the emergence of gated communities in Australia.¹⁵ Therese Kenna conducted interviews with residents of both the non-gated MPE of Glenmore Park and the gated community of Macquarie Links, both in West Sydney, and found that fear of crime was named as a prime reason for their choice of residence, along with the promise of social distinction.¹⁶ This desire for security is also one

¹⁴ Therese Kenna, ‘Consciously Constructing Exclusivity in the Suburbs? Unpacking a master planned estate development in Western Sydney’, *Geographical Research* 45 2007: 308-31, 1 ; Therese Kenna, ‘Macquarie Links Estate: A Gated Residential Suburb in Sydney,’ UNSW, available from <http://www.fbe.unsw.edu.au/cityfutures/SOAC/macquarielinksestate.pdf>, 564-5

¹⁵ Caro Meldrum, ‘Fear of Crime Industry Fuelling Gated Communities’

¹⁶ Therese Kenna, ‘Consciously Constructing Exclusivity in the Suburbs?’, 309 ; Therese Kenna, ‘Macquarie Links Estate’, 564-5

of the main factors attributed to the proliferation of gated communities in America.¹⁷

Many of Low's interviewees rated fear of crime as one of the main reasons they chose to live behind gates. Despite this, there was an almost universal ambivalence regarding the effectiveness of the safety measures protecting them. In gated communities without guards, where residents enter the gates with a key code or swipe card, many residents found that cars would tailgate them as they entered, rendering the gates useless. Communities with guards found that the guards could be inconsistent in their enforcement of security, at times letting people through without question, other times refusing to let residents in without thoroughly confirming that they were who they claimed to be. Low's interviewees also acknowledged that, while the gates may help to prevent cars from breaking in to their community, anyone who strongly wished to gain entry could simply climb over the wall.

In a survey conducted with residents of the Sydney gated community, Macquarie Links, Kenna found that, despite the developers' expectation that the golf course within the estate would be the key attraction, 80% of respondents named the desire for security as their main reason for living in the gated estate. And yet, like the American residents interviewed by Low, Kenna's respondents were aware that the gates are merely a deterrent, listing several crimes that had occurred within the estate, ranging from vandalism to a drug bust.¹⁸

Multiple studies in the United States have concluded that there is no significant difference in the crime rates between gated communities and

¹⁷ Edward J. Blakely and Mary Gail Snyder, *Fortress America*, 74

¹⁸ Therese Kenna, 'Macquarie Links Estate,' 564

neighbouring non-gated areas,¹⁹ yet the promise of safety and security motivates many residents to move into these gated developments. The key difference seems not to be an actual decrease in crime but rather a psychological lessening in the fear of crime. This is reflected in the residents' paradoxical acknowledgement of the inadequacies of the safety structures in place and their decision to live in these communities because they feel safer with walls and gates than without them. This notion is explored in further scenes of *Little Borders* as Elle and Steve find that the security mechanisms they had hoped would keep them safe are inadequate, and the fear that drives them into the community keeps driving them further and further through the action of the play.

That the effects of gating are primarily psychological can readily be observed from the Californian examples of “fake gated communities.”²⁰ The Long Canyon development in Simi Valley and the Sea Pine Gate development in Newport Beach both feature all the aesthetic trappings of gated communities, but they are not actually gated. The gates at the entrance to Long Canyon are modelled on those in real gated communities, but they never close, while the guardhouse at Sea Pine Gate never actually houses a guard. These communities are designed to give outsiders the impression that they are gated, as this gives the neighbourhoods a greater sense of prestige, and the residents a greater sense of security.²¹ Fake gated communities mean developers do not have to fight the local councils to allow public space to become privatised, which also benefits residents, who aren't required to pay for the upkeep of the roads and other shared areas.

¹⁹ Anna Minton, 'Building Balanced Communities: The UK and the US compared', Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors Leading Edge Series, 2002, available from http://www.rics.org/site/download_feed.aspx?fileID=3534&fileExtension=PDF

²⁰ Evan Halper, 'Communities Say Keep Out — By Bluffing,' *Los Angeles Times*, May 28 2002

²¹ Evan Halper, 'Communities Say Keep Out — By Bluffing'

These communities are allowed by councils on the provision that they still function as normal suburbs, meaning, despite the appearance of exclusivity, the roads and other open areas are still public space. City officials, though they dislike these fake gated communities, are more willing to approve them than the real things. Actual gated communities are thought by councils to be problematic and detrimental to a city, as they create zones of social exclusion.²² Similar concerns have been raised about non-gated master planned communities, which function like gated communities in a number of ways.²³ These links were crucial to the first draft of Scene One, in which Elle and Steve observed the erection of walls and gates around their neighbouring suburbs.

The Links Between Gated Communities and Non-Gated MPEs in Australia

Non-gated MPEs, like prestige gated communities, are low-rise housing developments built to a grand design. While acknowledging that MPEs are hard to define, Pauline M. McGuirk and Robyn Dowling offer a broad definition of MPEs as “large-scale, integrated housing developments produced by single development entities that include the development of physical and social infrastructure, and are predominantly located on the ‘growth frontier’ or city fringe.”²⁴ The primary distinction between MPEs and gated communities is that they do not exclude entry by outsiders, yet a desire for safety is seen as a key

²² Evan Halper, ‘Communities Say Keep Out — By Bluffing’, *Los Angeles Times*, May 28 2002

²³ Brendan Gleeson, *Australian Heartlands*, 101-2

²⁴ Pauline M. McGuirk and Robyn Dowling, ‘Understanding Master-Planned Estates in Australian Cities: A Framework for Research’, *Urban policy and Research*, 25 (1) 2007: 22

factor in the rise of both gated and non-gated MPEs in Australia.²⁵ While gated communities offer protection from the outside world through the physical structures of walls and gates, Australian non-gated MPEs are similarly exclusive and analogous in their contribution to socio-spatial polarisation.²⁶ This is because developers of non-gated MPEs have employed methods of exclusion more insidious than the erection of gates and walls.

One of these exclusionary methods is the exorbitant house prices of many MPE properties: “the quality of exclusiveness, and by extension exclusion, is assured by the expense of buying into such estates,”²⁷ which effectively contributes to socio-spatial polarisation. Another method of exclusion in MPEs is the use of physical attributes that “‘design out’ non-residents.”²⁸ In the case of MPEs built on community title, where public space is privatised in the same way as gated communities, this can take the form of signs that remind passers-by that communal land like parks and playgrounds are for “residents only.”²⁹

The Glenmore Park estate in Sydney offers an example of how developers can construct an appearance of exclusivity without the use of gates and walls. The figure below shows the Eastern entrance to this estate, which, as Kenna asserts, “provides a strong sense of separation from the area outside Glenmore Park.”³⁰

²⁵ Brendan Gleeson, ‘Community: It Belongs to the Rich and Fearful’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, December 4, 2003 ; Meldrum, ‘Fear of Crime Industry Fuelling Gated Communities: Criminologist’ ; Therese Kenna, ‘Consciously Constructing Exclusivity in the Suburbs?’, 308-311 ; Therese Kenna, ‘Macquarie Links Estate,’ 564-5

²⁶ Brendan Gleeson, *Australian Heartlands*, 101-2

²⁷ Brendan Gleeson, *Australian Heartlands*, 72

²⁸ Brendan Gleeson, *Australian Heartlands*, 72

²⁹ Brendan Gleeson, *Australian Heartlands*, 72

³⁰ Therese Kenna, ‘Consciously Constructing Exclusivity in the Suburbs?’, 307

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Figure 1 The Eastern entrance to Glenmore Park, 2004 (Source: Therese Kenna).

The developers of this estate and others like it use the physical landscape to create “meaningful psychological boundaries”³¹ in a way that mirrors the developers of gated communities, signalling the entrance into an area of distinction and exclusivity, separate from, and elevated above, the world outside the estate. Furthermore, the Glenmore Park estate is entirely surrounded by trees,³² which provide a physical barrier akin to gates and walls, but with a link to nature that is “seen to enhance the notions of status and class.”³³

Much like gated communities, Kenna found that the marketing material for Glenmore Park encouraged a homogenous community, in this case through

³¹ Masterplan Consultants Pty. Ltd., *Glenmore Park Structure Plan (South Penrith Release Area)*, Penrith City Council, Penrith NSW, 1990

³² Therese Kenna, ‘Consciously Constructing Exclusivity in the Suburbs?’, 310

³³ D. Wood, ‘Selling the Suburbs: Nature, Landscape, Adverts, Community.’ *Transformations* 5 2002: 1–10

the “dominant representations of young families, children under the age of 15 and Anglo-Celtic Australians.”³⁴ Of the 286 images Kenna examined from both marketing material and community newsletters, only one featured a non Anglo-Celtic Australian — an image showing the Italian owners of the local pizza shop.³⁵ As previously discussed, the residents from the Glenmore Park Estate listed a desire for safety and prestige as their prime motivation for living there, which further connects these estates with gated communities.

The links between these two types of housing communities was integral to the first draft of Scene One, as I initially wished to explore the critical division over whether or not gated communities would ever become as common in Australia as they are in America. Those who believe it is unlikely claim that, in general, Australians are thought to be less security conscious than people in countries where gated communities are currently prevalent.³⁶ While this assertion is anecdotally undermined by the information gathered from interviews with residents of gated communities in Australia, it is more clearly and widely challenged by the proliferation of these non-gated MPEs, which, though they lack gates, walls and fences, offer residents a similar promise of prestige and safety from the outside world.

Earlier drafts of *Little Borders* explored these links quite explicitly. The play was actually set in the immediate future, with Australia reeling from the shock of a terrorist attack on home soil. This information was revealed to the

³⁴ Therese Kenna, ‘Consciously Constructing Exclusivity in the Suburbs?’, 308

³⁵ Therese Kenna, ‘Consciously Constructing Exclusivity in the Suburbs?’, 306

³⁶ Therese Kenna, ‘Consciously Constructing Exclusivity in the Suburbs?’, 302 ; Brendan Gleeson, *Australian Heartlands*, 75-7 ; Matt O’Sullivan, ‘Behind the Urban Curtains’ *Little Borders*, a play for two actors and accompanying exegesis – Phillip Kavanagh

audience when Elle and Steve, in first confessing their inability to sleep, announced:

ELLE: Since the attack on the Opera House, I keep waking up at night to the sound of bombs. For Steve it's—

STEVE: For me it's Anthony Warlow bursting into flames. (*Sings*) *The Phantom of The*

ELLE: Boom.

This led to the couple recounting the way their world had physically changed through the erection of walls and fences around the formerly non-gated estates in their area:

ELLE: One by one, the walls came up on the estates around us. Bright Lakes, Sunny Woods, Charles Grove, Birch Fields.

STEVE: You had to be there.

ELLE: We were all but fenced in, chain link and off-white stucco bordering every side of the neighbourhood.

STEVE: You'd've laughed.

ELLE: And we're on the wrong side. Please. I can't sleep at night.

Excising these passages from the play has had a profound effect on the text as a whole, and it is crucial to consider why I made this decision, and the impact it has had on the play. Setting the play in the future offered me a way of engaging with this sociological discussion surrounding the likelihood of gated communities becoming commonplace in Australia.³⁷ Drawing on Anna Minton's assertion that the growth of gated communities in the United Kingdom reflects the climate of fear "surrounding the 'War on Terror' and the London bombings in 2005,"³⁸ I

³⁷ Therese Kenna, 'Consciously Constructing Exclusivity in the Suburbs?', 302 ; Brendan Gleeson, *Australian Heartlands*, 75-7 ; Matt O'Sullivan, 'Behind the Urban Curtains'

³⁸ Anna Minton, *Ground Control: Fear and Happiness in the Twenty-First-Century City* (London: Penguin Books, 2009) 140

chose to set the play in a world where Australia, too, is reeling from a terrorist attack on home soil. This enabled me to explore the potential ramifications of this attack, with citizens seeking to protect themselves by walling themselves off from the outside world. This shifted the setting of the play to a very different Australia than the nation that has, to date, “been relatively quarantined from large-scale, organised terrorist activities such as those which have emerged in central and southeast Asia, Europe and the United States.”³⁹ It wasn’t until the final day of the National Script Workshop that I made the decision to remove this future setting from the play. I found that, in attempting to engage with this sociological discussion so overtly, I was serving neither the interests of the research nor the play. I was not able to contribute to the sociological discussion in any profound way as I was not writing a sociology essay, nor was I able to focus on character and story if I was hampered by a didactic exploration of the future of Australian housing. Utilising this research to inform character and story allowed me to make the most of the medium I was working in, and saw the creative work enriched by the research, but observing the demands of what would make the play more engaging above all else.

One of the aims of this creative development was to find ways of making Elle and Steve sympathetic characters, despite the horrific things they say and do. Setting the play in the present, without the terrorist attack, removed a barrier to audience engagement with the couple. It was previously all too easy for the audience to distance themselves from the characters by saying, ‘This is not my world.’ In order for the play to work, the audience has to identify with the

³⁹ Adam Tomison, foreword to Russell G Smith, Rob McCusker and Julie Walters, ‘Financing of terrorism: Risks for Australia’, *Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice* 394, available from <http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/current%20series/tandi/381-400/tandi394.aspx>
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characters, to share their fears and anxieties, and to constantly interrogate their reactions to the characters' actions. Removing the future setting closed the gap between the audience and the characters, shifting the world of the play into one more recognisably contemporary. Setting the play in the present also meant that I was freed from having to enter into a debate about the likelihood of a Fortress Australia. Instead, I was able to use the setting of a gated community to explore the characters' fears and anxieties, rather than using the setting to explore projected real estate trends in Australia. The more I shifted away from the demands of the research in order to service the demands of character and story, the stronger the play became. The choices made in these creative developments will be discussed further in Chapter Two. Before I could take part in these developments, however, I had to complete a first draft of the play.

Scene Two

Despite managing to successfully write an opening scene to *Little Borders* based on my research into the motivations that drive residents into gated communities, I still had no idea where I would take the play next. I toyed with the idea of introducing new characters; exploring tangentially connected scenes within the one setting; structuring the scenes with a disrupted chronology; never seeing the same characters more than once. After consulting with one of my supervisors and agreeing that the script would benefit from creative development further down the line, I realised that I would not have the entire candidature in which to explore these options, and decisions had to be made.

I decided that the script should focus solely on Elle and Steve. This choice was made for many reasons. On a purely pragmatic note, keeping the cast to just two actors means that the play would be cheap to produce, which could make it attractive to potential companies. I also felt that, as this was my first attempt at a full-length play, I wanted to keep the cast small so that my focus was narrowed, and I could explore the larger issues in the work through a concentrated lens. The characters also appealed to me because they were initially nothing more than manifestations of fear and desperation. I felt that, given this sense of terror was motivating people to protect themselves from the outside world, these figures of fear and paranoia personified warranted further investigation as multi-dimensional characters moving through a narrative arc.

Once I had made the decision that I would persevere with Elle and Steve, I realised that Scene One ends with an obvious question: Is the couple successful in their application for residence at the gated community? Either answer seemed viable and, for a maddening day and a half, I toyed with the answer of ‘No.’ After planning a very dull play in my head, I quickly realised the possibilities would be endlessly more fascinating if I answered ‘Yes.’ This provided the location for the rest of the play, which is set mostly within the confines of their gated community. Another question that remains for Scene One was whether or not moving to the gated community would actually lessen Elle’s fear so that she could sleep at night. This was one of the questions I answered in Scene Two.

The idea for this scene came from a desire to explore the peculiarity of gated communities’ by-laws. Like the CC&Rs of American Gated Communities mentioned above, in Australia, “strata or community title ... allows for ... the

creation of by-laws that bind all individual owners and the collective, unerringly running with the land.”⁴⁰ Cathy Sherry details the way in which by-laws pertaining to pets “are a good example of the profound effect that by-laws can have on the quality of people’s day-to-day lives in strata and community title schemes.”⁴¹ She points to the example of one Australian MPE that featured a convoluted by-law allowing “owners to keep one dog with the permission of the body corporate, as long as it was less than 10 kilograms, dry, free of dirt, sand, garden material, parasites, was toilet trained and did not disturb others.”⁴² This community voted to change the law to a simple rule banning pets, despite the fact that, for some residents, this meant that “owners were faced with the choice of giving away much loved pets or having to sell their apartments.”⁴³ Despite “Australian State legislatures still allow[ing] bodies corporate to ban pets outright”⁴⁴ Australian states generally “prohibit by-laws that ban guide dogs and children.”⁴⁵ Hence, while the example above may see changes in by-laws having a detrimental impact on some residents of that community, Australian by-laws can be “struck down if they are unreasonable, oppressive or discriminatory.”⁴⁶ Despite this caveat, “by-law making powers are extremely wide.”⁴⁷

⁴⁰ Cathy Sherry, ‘The Complexities of Multi-Owned Property: Australian Strata and Community Title and United States Condominiums and Homeowner Associations’, in *Property and Security: Selected Essays*, ed. Lyria Bennett Moses, Brendan Edgeworth and Cathy Sherry (Sydney: Thompson Reuters, 2010) 264

⁴¹ Cathy Sherry, ‘The Complexities of Multi-Owned Property’, 269

⁴² Cathy Sherry, ‘The Complexities of Multi-Owned Property’, 267

⁴³ Cathy Sherry, ‘The Complexities of Multi-Owned Property’, 268

⁴⁴ Cathy Sherry, ‘The Complexities of Multi-Owned Property’, 168

⁴⁵ Cathy Sherry, ‘The Complexities of Multi-Owned Property’, 265

⁴⁶ Cathy Sherry, ‘The Complexities of Multi-Owned Property’, 265

⁴⁷ Cathy Sherry, ‘The Complexities of Multi-Owned Property’, 265

This not only provided me with a framework from which to begin Scene Two, it helped me to extend upon issues raised in Scene One. As I explained above, while Elle and Steve’s motivations for moving to the gated community are multifarious, they are bound up in both fear and prestige, with the former dominating over the latter. Both motivations can be observed in Scene Two. We again gain a clear sense of what Elle values as a character, as she observes the aesthetic choices—both internal and external—made for the house two doors down. She takes note of the front door, the doorknob, the entrance hall, the sofa, and the coffee table. But, as in Scene One, this obsession with external signifiers of class and cultural taste quickly gives way to the fear that is truly driving Elle through the play.

When she is confronted by the dog, her panic builds to the point that she “swing[s] the book hard into his skull.” As she stands watching the dog, her fear dissipates, replaced with a sense of “victory” and “hysterical joy.” It is no accident that the object of her fear is destroyed using the by-laws. In Scene One, it is the community as a whole which Elle and Steve hope will alleviate their fear. This fear is directed towards their Muslim neighbours, and they feel that by being on the ‘right’ side of the walls of the community, they will be protected from physical harm. In Scene Two, Elle’s fear is directed towards the dog—he appears to her as an “illegal animal smuggled into [their] estate ... [a] beast [a] monster.” Elle both figuratively and literally clings to the by-laws as justification for her fear of the dog. It legislates against his existence, and is wielded as a weapon to permanently remove him from the community. Not only is her certainty of the dog’s “illegal” status undermined by a clause allowing “assistance animals for

people with disabilities,” but her heightened fear is directed at a harmless guide dog. There is a similar disparity between the fear and the feared in Scene One. While Elle speaks of her fear about the meetings taking place next door, and the secret meanings of the Arabic songs that she is unable to decode, all that is actually taking place is a regular meeting of friends joining together to sing religious songs. This disparity is an extension of Brendan Gleeson’s claims that the rise of gated communities in Australia is “a phenomenon largely driven by anxiety and a fear of crime rather than the experience of crime.”⁴⁸ Addressing fear of crime in a holistic sense, Murray Lee describes this disparity as the “fear/risk paradox.”⁴⁹

The fear/risk paradox

The fear/risk paradox refers to the “recurring theme [in fear of crime literature] of lower risk/higher fear.”⁵⁰ For example, despite being at a greater risk of crime, fear of crime is markedly lower amongst young people than amongst the elderly.⁵¹ Likewise, while women “are more fearful of crime than men,”⁵² they are actually “less likely to become the victims of most categories of serious crime—excluding of course sexual assault and domestic violence.”⁵³ As Michael Maxfield notes, it is an “almost universal finding [that] those who least often become victims of

⁴⁸ Matt O’Sullivan, ‘Behind the Urban Curtains’

⁴⁹ Murray Lee, *Inventing Fear of Crime: Criminology and the Politics of Anxiety* (Uffculme, Devon: Willan, 2007) 3

⁵⁰ Murray Lee, *Inventing Fear of Crime*, 3

⁵¹ Murray Lee, *Inventing Fear of Crime*, 3

⁵² Murray Lee, *Inventing Fear of Crime*, 116

⁵³ Murray Lee, *Inventing Fear of Crime*, 116

crime are most often fearful.”⁵⁴ This paradox has informed each scene of *Little Borders*, with Elle and Steve’s heightened fear of crime and Others constantly at odds with their slim “actuarial risk of crime.”⁵⁵

Throughout the play, they find that each method they employ to ensure their safety does nothing to alleviate their fear; the walls, the guards, the by-laws, are all inadequate. In the end, the only way to ‘protect’ themselves is to take their safety into their own hands, murdering the couple two doors down and setting fire to their house. The reason their fear is not lessened despite their best efforts illustrates this fear/risk paradox. Even though Elle and Steve never face any real threat to their safety at any point in the play, their fear only grows as they seek to protect themselves. Clearly, there is a disparity between their fear and actuarial risk. Ironically, their fear is exacerbated by the physical amenities offering them ‘security.’ Lee suggests that “with each security purchase, with each new safety device aimed at managing our fear, at securing our security, our anxieties seem to increase.”⁵⁶ He refers to this counterintuitive phenomenon as the “fear of crime feedback loop.”⁵⁷ By this term, Lee means the following:

that research into fear of crime — through crime and victim surveys — produces the criminological object fear of crime statistically and, discursively, a concept is constituted. This information then operates to inform the citizenry that they are indeed fearful, information the *fearing subject* [emphasis in original] can reflect upon. The law and order lobby and politicians use fear to justify a tougher approach on crime (they have to, the citizenry are fearful apparently), a point on which they grandstand

⁵⁴ Michael Maxfield, *Fear of Crime in England and Wales* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1984) 47

⁵⁵ Murray Lee, *Inventing Fear of Crime*, 122

⁵⁶ Murray Lee, *Inventing Fear of Crime*, 167

⁵⁷ Murray Lee, *Inventing Fear of Crime*, 167

and in doing so breed more fear. The concept feeds the discourse and the discourse in turn justifies the concept.⁵⁸

Elle and Steve are “fearing subjects”⁵⁹ who, in moving into their high security community, find that their fear grows as it is constantly validated by their surroundings. This is the inevitable consequence of “open[ing] up ‘crime fear’ to the market economy.”⁶⁰ With private industries offering services to protect fearing subjects from crime, fear of crime itself is both preyed upon and amplified by these industries. Fear of crime is essential for these industries to survive and thrive; without it, there is no need for their services. In Western democracies, the fearing subject is expected to take some level of responsibility for their own security, by “consum[ing] insurance, private security and security hardware.”⁶¹ The gated community is the “most grand-scale embodiment of a lifestyle change driven by the marketisation of the imperative for private citizens to take responsibility for reducing their risk of victimisation.”⁶² Elle and Steve find their fear of crime increasing as they make every attempt to reduce their risk of victimisation, to the point where they become more proactive than is usually desired by private industries—they take matters into their own hands and violently attempt to ensure their own safety.

I am not the first creative writer to address gated communities as a refuge for the fearful in my work. Matthew Burke, in his article ‘Fortress Dystopia: Representations of Gated Communities in Contemporary Fiction’, identifies a range of thematic approaches to the setting of a gated community that appears

⁵⁸ Murray Lee, *Inventing Fear of Crime*, 77

⁵⁹ Murray Lee, *Inventing Fear of Crime*, 77

⁶⁰ Murray Lee, *Inventing Fear of Crime*, 171

⁶¹ Murray Lee, *Inventing Fear of Crime*, 171

⁶² Murray Lee, *Inventing Fear of Crime*, 172

across the work of many different writers. *Little Borders* reflects the approach Burke identifies as “The New Enclosure Movement—Gated Community as Response to Fear.”⁶³

The New Enclosure Movement—Gated Community as Response to Fear

Drawing on an analysis of T. C. Boyle’s novel, *The Tortilla Curtain*, Burke suggests that “the whole gating movement is ... at least partly about attempting to create a bulwark against all that is wrong in society”⁶⁴ and reflects an attitude of “let us save ourselves and retain our own treasured existence. Let the world fend for itself.”⁶⁵ *The Tortilla Curtain* is set in Los Angeles and contains a split narrative, focusing on both an affluent upper middle class couple, Delaney and Kyra, and a pair of illegal immigrants from Mexico, common-law husband and wife, Cándido and América. In the beginning of the novel, the master planned estate that Kyra and Delaney live in, Arroyo Blanco, is entirely non-gated. Over the course of the novel, as fear and hatred rises in the community, the residents choose to wall themselves off from the outside world.

This fear and hatred of illegal immigrants is overtly displayed in the community meetings where the decisions to add a gate, and later a wall, are made. One character, who considers himself to be “as liberal as anybody in [the] room”⁶⁶ speaks out in resounding favour of a gate:

I’d like to open my arms to everybody in the world, no matter how poor they are or what country they come from; I’d like to leave my back door

⁶³ Matthew Burke, ‘Fortress Dystopia: Representations of Gated Communities in Contemporary Fiction’, *Journal of American and Comparative Cultures*, 24 2001: 116

⁶⁴ Matthew Burke, ‘Fortress Dystopia’, 117

⁶⁵ Matthew Burke, ‘Fortress Dystopia’, 117

⁶⁶ T.C. Boyle, *The Tortilla Curtain* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1995) 44

open and the screen door unlatched, the way it was when I was a kid, but you know as well as I do that those days are past ... L.A. stinks. The world stinks. Why kid ourselves? That's why we're here, that's why we got out. You want to save the world, go to Calcutta and sign on with Mother Theresa. I say that gate is as necessary, as vital, essential and un-do-withoutable as the roofs over our heads and the dead bolts on our doors.⁶⁷

This fear of outsiders is also explored through the subtle shifts in the views of Kyra and Delaney, though more so in the latter. While Kyra justifies her dislike of illegal immigrants to herself by reflecting on the effect that their presence has on house prices⁶⁸—even the pragmatic real estate agent—Delaney finds inexplicably racist thoughts flooding through his self-professed liberal humanist mind. These come after a series of escalating encounters with Cándido, whom Delaney accidentally hits with his car at the beginning of the novel. Towards the end of the novel, Cándido and América unintentionally start a fire that almost destroys the Arroyo Blanco estate. This fire “made [Delaney] seethe and it made him hate,”⁶⁹ to the extent that he finds himself tracking down Cándido and América where they are camped, and springing upon them with a gun in hand. If a mudslide had not hit at this precise moment, Delaney may have committed an act he would have lived to regret.

This fear of outsiders is not solely confined to Mexicans. Initially opposed to the wall around Arroyo Blanco, Delaney finds his sense of safety threatened when he spies a “phantom car”⁷⁰ slowly driving through the estate. Though nothing eventuates from the appearance of this car, it spooks him enough so that, when another liberal-minded resident attempts to enlist Delaney's help to oppose

⁶⁷ T.C. Boyle, *The Tortilla Curtain*, 44

⁶⁸ T.C. Boyle, *The Tortilla Curtain*, 159

⁶⁹ T.C. Boyle, *The Tortilla Curtain*, 313

⁷⁰ T.C. Boyle, *The Tortilla Curtain*, 227

the wall, Delaney finds himself recalling this moment when he felt his safety threatened, and chooses not to contest the construction of the wall. Despite his self-professed liberal-mindedness, he is just as susceptible to irrational fear of outsiders as anyone else on the estate.

The scope of Matthew Burke's article precludes him from addressing more than one or two texts for each of the thematic approaches to gated communities that he identifies. However, I would argue that The New Enclosure Movement informs the thematic discourse of the Mexican film *La Zona*, directed by Rodrigo Plá;⁷¹ several short stories in *The Development* by John Barth;⁷² the novels *Parable of the Sower* by Octavia E. Butler⁷³ and *Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood;⁷⁴ the plays *Amongst Friends* by April De Angelis⁷⁵ and *State of Emergency* by Falk Richter;⁷⁶ and several of the short plays in *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat* by Mark Ravenhill.⁷⁷ The scope of this exegesis likewise limits me from exploring any of these texts in great detail, but I do wish to note that reading other texts set in gated communities, with similar thematic discourses, enabled me to observe how other writers of fiction and drama had balanced their sociological analyses with the demands of character and story. While the texts mentioned above were the most relevant for their thematic treatment of the subject, there were several other texts that helped me to develop these observations. These texts can be found in my bibliography.

⁷¹ Rodrigo Pla, director, *La Zona* (feature film) 2007

⁷² John Barth, *The Development* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008)

⁷³ Octavia E. Butler, *Parable of the Sower* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 2000)

⁷⁴ Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* (London: Virago Press, 2004)

⁷⁵ April De Angelis, *Amongst Friends* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009)

⁷⁶ Falk Richter, *State Of Emergency* (London: Oberon Books Ltd, 2008)

⁷⁷ Mark Ravenhill, *Shoot/ Get Treasure/ Repeat* (London: Methuen Drama, 2008)

Fear of Others

The Tortilla Curtain shows that gated communities are not always driven by fear of crime per se. Though Delaney and Kyra are worried for their own physical safety, they project their fear onto the Mexican immigrants surrounding their estate. Low found that many gated community residents harboured a similar fear of Others, and employed a “kind of us-versus-them thinking ... to rationalize their fears of those outside the gates.”⁷⁸ This notion of ‘those outside the gates’ as Other is key to understanding this relationship between fear of Others and gated communities. It is outside the scope of this exegesis to explore psychoanalytic criticism, which is only touched upon briefly, if at all, in most writing on gated communities. However, when discussing Others, a useful definition for my purposes would be “any person or category of people seen as different from the dominant social group.”⁷⁹ These ‘differences’ can be tied to race, gender, class and sexuality, but gated communities offer an even simpler way of making this distinction.

In his discussion of pedestrian behaviour of residents of Australian gated communities, Matthew Burke observes that:

the solidifying of perimeter barriers leads to a greater sense within the residents of being an ‘insider’, and of being part of a tangible ‘community’. The reverse process, the creation of a perception that designates those beyond the walls as ‘outsiders’ is inevitable. And it is only one small mental step from being an outsider to being a threat.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Setha Low, *Behind the Gates*, 173

⁷⁹ Ross Murfin and Supryia M. Ray, *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*, 359

⁸⁰ Matthew Burke, ‘The Pedestrian Behaviour of Residents in Gated Communities’, 147

Low also found that residents of gated communities fell into this “dualistic thinking”⁸¹ that saw the “‘good’ people”⁸² inside the community “and the ‘bad’ remaining outside.”⁸³ For Elle and Steve, this is the solace initially offered by their community. However, after the incident with the blind woman leads to falling property values, even the walls of the estate are unable to provide the prestige that initially offered the couple this solace.

Throughout *Little Borders*, the Other onto which Elle and Steve project their fear is in a state of flux. In Scene One, they are terrified of the Muslim couple next door, and let slip casually racist remarks, before divulging how real and overwhelming their fear truly is. In Scene Two, Elle’s fears are projected onto a dog, which she is certain the by-laws prohibit. In Scene Four, Elle and Steve venture outside the community, and are heckled by a group of men, who remark on Elle’s physique. At the end of this scene, Elle and Steve retreat from the outside world back into their community, where the gates and the guards will keep them ‘safe’. However, there are already hints at the inadequacy of these safety mechanisms, with Elle desperate to move to a community with more guards, “where things aren’t falling apart.” From Scene Five to Scene Nine, their fear is focused on a couple who move into the community. Elle, and eventually Steve, are convinced that the couple do not belong, and their notion of where they draw the borders that split the ‘good’ from the ‘bad’ are thrown into question; they eventually take matters into their own hands to ensure that only the ‘good’ remains within the borders of their community. The scenes relating to the couple

⁸¹ Seta Low, *Behind the Gates*, 138

⁸² Seta Low, *Behind the Gates*, 139

⁸³ Seta Low, *Behind the Gates*, 139

two doors down will be the focus of further discussion in the second chapter. The creative developments helped me to ensure that the threat posed by this couple was never palpable, so that Elle and Steve's fear always followed the fear/risk paradox established in the earlier scenes of *Little Borders*. Crucially, though, it is not until these scenes that Elle and Steve attach their fears to a stable source.

To use the terminology of Murray Lee, Elle and Steve, as “fearing subjects,”⁸⁴ are frightened of various “feared subjects”⁸⁵ throughout the play. Feared subjects are usually “strangers, the unknown *other* [emphasis in original].”⁸⁶ As “strangeness connotes difference,”⁸⁷ these feared subjects are generally “those who are, or at least appear to be, different.”⁸⁸ Elle and Steve's initial inability to attach their fear to a stable feared subject reflects the way in which “the experience of fear makes us hungry for a range of stereotypical *others* [emphasis in original] through which our anxieties can be justified.”⁸⁹ This unfixed feared subject has the effect of reaffirming the fear/risk paradox, as Elle and Steve never truly have anything to be afraid of. In addition to exposing the irrationality of their fear, it also serves to make the fear itself the focus. While the feared subject may change, the fear remains, growing as the play progresses. It is this fear that drives Elle and Steve through every scene of the play, as they do all that they can to make themselves feel safe.

This irrational fear that runs throughout the play could be seen as a reflection of Australian border panic, with Elle and Steve symbolising the nation

⁸⁴ Murray Lee, *Inventing Fear of Crime*, 151

⁸⁵ Murray Lee, *Inventing Fear of Crime*, 151

⁸⁶ Murray Lee, *Inventing Fear of Crime*, 152

⁸⁷ Murray Lee, *Inventing Fear of Crime*, 152

⁸⁸ Murray Lee, *Inventing Fear of Crime*, 152

⁸⁹ Murray Lee, *Inventing Fear of Crime*, 154-5

in a way similar to the family in Ben Ellis' *These People*⁹⁰ or the protagonists in Ian Wilding's *October*.⁹¹ As Hilary Glow notes of Ellis' play, "the family ... stands for the nation and it produces individuals who are frightened of difference, and who learn that the most expedient strategy in difficult times is to look out, not for one another, but for oneself."⁹² Likewise, Ian Wilding sets up the central couple of his play "as a symbolic representation of the nation as it deals with the fear of invasion."⁹³ The gated community offers me the perfect environment in which to engage with a similar symbolic treatment of this "defensive state of being which Ghassan Hage identifies as the 'institutionalisation of a culture of worrying.'"⁹⁴ Murray Lee notes that "the gated community is the privatised, securitised embodiment of the more coercive measures taken by the state to secure borders."⁹⁵ This reading of *Little Borders* is reinforced in a number of ways throughout the play, most notably in the title itself. An entire chapter could be dedicated to the way in which *Little Borders* functions as a satirical allegory for a nation seeking to defend its borders. I had initially planned to expand upon this in great detail in this exegesis, to show the way in which a consideration of the fear/risk paradox, and the panic of breached borders, links my play to this discourse. However, I decided it was more crucial that I address the two creative developments I have undertaken, and explore the ways that these developments have influenced the script, helping me to move from a first draft to the final

⁹⁰ Ben Ellis, *These People* (Strawberry Hills, NSW: Currency Press, 2004)

⁹¹ Ian Wilding, *October* (Strawberry Hills, NSW: Currency Press in association with Griffin Theatre Company, Sydney, 2007)

⁹² Hilary Glow, *Power Plays: Australian Theatre and the Public Agenda* (Strawberry Hills, NSW: Currency Press, 2007) 147

⁹³ Hilary Glow, *Power Plays*, 167

⁹⁴ Hilary Glow, *Power Plays*, 167

⁹⁵ Murray Lee, *Inventing Fear of Crime*, 167

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version contained in this thesis. While this first chapter has detailed the research into fear and gated communities that informed the first draft of the play, the second chapter charts the dramaturgical process that informed subsequent drafts, with a focus on the form of the play, and its relationship to story and character.

Chapter Two

This second chapter of my exegesis focuses on the process of redrafting *Little Borders*, through two creative developments. The first creative development (which I will refer to as the Development) was made possible through a grant from the Faculty of Education, Humanities and Law at Flinders University. In the Development, I spent a week working with director/dramaturg Corey McMahon and actors Elena Carapetis and Craig Behenna. The first half of the Development was dedicated to redrafting the play, while the second half focussed on presenting a semi-moved reading of the work to industry professionals at the Adelaide Festival Centre. The draft that came out of this development was then selected for PlayWriting Australia's third National Script Workshop for 2011 (which I will refer to as the Workshop). In the Workshop, I spent two weeks working with director Iain Sinclair, dramaturg Leticia Caceres and actors Danielle Cormack, Josh Quong Tart, Paula Arundell, Russell Dykstra and Eamon Farren. Early in the second week of the Workshop, the first two scenes of *Little Borders* were performed in a reading to industry professionals at Carriageworks. Apart from the single day spent rehearsing for this reading, the two weeks of the Workshop were dedicated to developing the script. PlayWriting Australia does not require a *Little Borders*, a play for two actors and accompanying exegesis – Phillip Kavanagh

performance-ready draft to eventuate from the National Script Workshop, so while a great deal of progress was made on this front, the script contained in this thesis has been rewritten subsequent to the Workshop. Details of key revisions made after the Workshop will also be covered in this chapter.

The roles of director and dramaturg were quite fluid in both of these creative developments. While Corey McMahon directed a semi-moved reading in the second half of the Development, the first half of this week was dedicated to redrafting, and he played the role of the dramaturg. Likewise, only a day of the Workshop was spent rehearsing the two scenes performed to an industry audience at Carriageworks; the rest of the time Iain Sinclair acted as primary dramaturg for the workshopping process. Consequently, despite the official titles of director and dramaturg respectively, Iain and Leticia both acted as dramaturgs for the Workshop, with Iain facilitating discussions in his role as primary dramaturg. The National Script Workshop is designed to provide support for two playwrights in tandem, so while Iain was the primary dramaturg on *Little Borders*, he was the secondary dramaturg on the development of Angela Betzein's *Helicopter*, which Leticia facilitated as director and primary dramaturg. Angela and I alternated between mornings and afternoons, so that the half of the day that wasn't dedicated to workshopping could be spent rewriting.

It is worth noting that dramaturgy is a very “slippery term,”⁹⁶ and I am using it to refer to one facet of a much broader discipline. The term dramaturg is often used interchangeably with literary manager, when referring to a specific role within a theatre company. In this context, a dramaturg or literary manager may be

⁹⁶ Cathy Turner and Synne K. Behrnt, *Dramaturgy and Performance* (Basingstoke, N.Y. : Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) 17

responsible for anything from “helping to articulate and structure a work that gradually finds its form through the rehearsal process”⁹⁷ to assisting with “programming new work”⁹⁸ for the company’s season. Indeed, the terms *dramaturgy*, *dramaturg*, *literary manager* and *literary management* all “accrete, mutate and dissolve meanings over time and place, and today have multiple but often incompatible definitions, so that there are no specific meanings independent of specific contexts.”⁹⁹ Unlike literary managers, the role of dramaturg performed by Corey, Iain and Leticia was not a full-time position within a company, but instead lasted one week for Corey, and two weeks for Iain and Leticia. According to Mary Luckhurst, this kind of dramaturgy—centred on “short term new writing developments,”¹⁰⁰—“correspond[s] roughly to the post-Brechtian idea of the *Entwicklungsdramaturg* (Development Dramaturg).”¹⁰¹ The development process involved group discussions that identified areas of the script that required further work, and I, as the writer, was tasked with finding solutions to the problems that were identified by the group. These solutions were sometimes found in the discussions themselves, and other times I discovered them overnight, after I had been left to write in private. In addition to the director(s)/dramaturg(s) and I, actors were involved in these group discussions. Not only were they called upon to offer their own responses to the script, but they also applied their craft to the text, giving it dramatic life. By hearing the words spoken out loud, in character, we were able to ascertain what worked and what jarred, what needed revision and

⁹⁷ Cathy Turner and Synne K. Behrndt, *Dramaturgy and Performance*, 101

⁹⁸ Cathy Turner and Synne K. Behrndt, *Dramaturgy and Performance*, 101

⁹⁹ Mary Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy: A Revolution in Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 11

¹⁰⁰ Mary Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy: A Revolution in Theatre*, 201

¹⁰¹ Mary Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy: A Revolution in Theatre*, 205

what was ready for performance. The way in which this process informed rewrites of the play will be discussed later in this chapter.

In leading these creative developments, Corey and Iain were both respectful of what I wanted to achieve with the play. While some dramaturgs take “a far more controlling role over script development,”¹⁰² each of these employed a “gentle, questioning approach, drawing out from the writer a sense of what their project is, what they are hoping to communicate and achieve, rather than offering an interpretation, framework and rules.”¹⁰³ This approach is strongly advocated for by literary manager and dramaturg Penny Gold:

Something I believe very, very deeply, is that it is the role of the script editor or the literary manager or dramaturg, or whatever you want to call them, to subdue themselves to the spirit of the writer they are dealing with and not to impose some kind of prescriptive notion of how plays ought to be. So your endeavour is to try to find out what the writer hopes for; what he or she is trying to explore; what he or she wants to say ... and help them to make it what they want it to be.¹⁰⁴

While I encouraged each dramaturg to give me their impressions on what was and wasn't working in the play, they each also allowed me to set the agenda of what I wanted to achieve, and we navigated this process of redrafting through collaboration and compromise. At times, I became an extra dramaturg in the room, analysing the script as if it had not been written by me, and offering possible solutions to problems that the writer might wish to consider.

For my purposes, then, the dramaturg was responsible for both facilitating group discussion and for analysing the script. In both the Development and the Workshop, the primary focus of this textual analysis was on the links between form and content. Norman Frisch describes dramaturgical analysis as the process

¹⁰² Cathy Turner and Synne K. Behrnt, *Dramaturgy and Performance*, 134

¹⁰³ Cathy Turner and Synne K. Behrnt, *Dramaturgy and Performance*, 134

¹⁰⁴ Cathy Turner and Synne K. Behrnt, *Dramaturgy and Performance*, 134

of finding an “appropriate presentational format for the subject under investigation.”¹⁰⁵ In this process, dramaturgical questions include, “How and with what consequences do form and content relate? ... How does structure shape audience perception? Is content to be found in a given structure?”¹⁰⁶ Such questions informed both the Development and the Workshop for *Little Borders*, and the answers found will inform this chapter. I do not outline the dramaturgical process chronologically; instead, I focus on individual sections of the play, since both creative developments were dedicated to exploring the form of *Little Borders*, and how form relates to story and character. Rather than address each scene individually, I will collectively analyse the scenes according to the forms I have written them in: direct address duologue, soliloquy, dialogue, and synchronous soliloquies. Additionally, when submitting the play for consideration to the National Script Workshop, I was required to attach a document outlining what I wished to gain from the development, and how I intended to make use of the time and resources offered by PlayWriting Australia. This document greatly informed the workshopping process, and is included as an appendix to this thesis.

Forms

A formal analysis of scenes reveals that there are four forms in *Little Borders*:

ONE Elle and Steve, direct address duologue, with the audience functioning as an implied off-stage character.

¹⁰⁵ Judith Rudakoff and Lynn M. Thomson, *Between the Lines: The Process of Dramaturgy* (Toronto: Playwrights of Canada Press, 2002) 273

¹⁰⁶ Cathy Turner and Synne K. Behrndt, *Dramaturgy and Performance*, 25
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TWO Elle, soliloquy

THREE Steve, soliloquy

FOUR Elle and Steve, dialogue

FIVE Elle, soliloquy

SIX Elle and Steve, dialogue

SEVEN Steve, soliloquy

EIGHT Elle and Steve, synchronous soliloquies

NINE Elle and Steve, direct address duologue, with the audience functioning as an implied off-stage character.

The soliloquies were the most thoroughly revised during the Workshop, and form the primary focus of my discussion. I also address the way in which Scenes One and Nine function as prologue and epilogue, and how this perspective informed the way they were rewritten. Scenes Four and Six will be analysed for how the dialogues sit in a play that is otherwise direct address, and the effect that this has on the play as a whole. Scene Eight is discussed with regards to my choice to have the two characters engaged in synchronous soliloquies, and the links this choice draws between form, character and story.

SCENES ONE and NINE — direct address duologues, with the audience functioning as an implied off-stage character

Scenes One and Nine function as prologue and epilogue to the play. As such, while Scene One was workshopped in isolation, when we reached Scene Nine, we looked back to the approach we had taken to Scene One and attempted to ensure a level of consistency to the style of dialogue and the rhythm of the scene, as well as the way Elle and Steve relate to one another.

As the prologue to the play, Scene One “sets the stage for the story that follows”¹⁰⁷ and works to “establish the setting, introduce the characters [and] indicate a theme.”¹⁰⁸ The scene establishes the world of the play, priming the audience for what is to follow. At the start of the Workshop, this scene was highly discursive. Elle and Steve were constantly bickering, each character correcting everything the other said in short bursts of overlapping dialogue. While this rhythm was maintained, it was crucial that we ensured Elle and Steve were working together towards a common goal. Having the characters constantly battling over minor details established a dynamic to their relationship that was not followed through into other scenes, and distracted from this scene’s intended focus. It is Elle and Steve’s fear and anxiety—their desperate desire to be accepted into the gated community—that drives the scene. This highly nervous energy feeds into the fast, inter-cutting, overlapping dialogue. The scene was rewritten to ensure that, when the characters do bicker, it is not a matter of disagreement, but a matter of miscommunication. We see the rhythm of the scene getting away from Steve, who is fighting to keep up, in the following lines:

¹⁰⁷ Ross Murfin and Supryia M. Ray, *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*, 408

¹⁰⁸ Ross Murfin and Supryia M. Ray, *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*, 408

ELLE: I pride myself on my sense of style. I'm also an accomplished pianist.
STEVE: She's bloody good.
ELLE: I'm very good.
STEVE: She is.
ELLE: Not to sound boastful.
STEVE: She'd never dream of boasting. But she is good. I've got two left hands, myself.
ELLE: But a good ear. He'd know if I was bad.
STEVE: I would.
ELLE: And he'd tell you.
STEVE: I'm very honest like that.
ELLE: And I'm not.
STEVE: She's not honest.
ELLE: I'm not bad. I'm good. Aren't I?
STEVE: Very good.

Steve's line "She's not honest" is not a considered remark, delivered in an attempt to derail their application for residence in the community. Instead, it is Steve's attempt to keep up with Elle in presenting their façade of the perfect couple. Steve is lost on a separate train of thought to Elle; his line before this remark is "I'm very honest like that" and, only half-listening to Elle's line, "And I'm not," he rushes to agree with her by stating, "She's not honest." Steve's inadvertent attack on his wife's honesty is the result of misinterpretation. Elle is actually referring to not being bad at playing piano, something she is very quick to point out, and have Steve reconfirm. Immediately following this exchange, Steve attempts to regain ground by raving about his wife's musical ability, boasting of how often she practises, and how wonderful her Rachmaninoff is. As soon as he begins this praise, Elle suddenly realises that the property manager might not wish to have the community flooded with the sound of loud and constant music, and attempts to contradict Steve:

STEVE: She practises every day.
ELLE: Softly.
STEVE: Not / always.
ELLE: I always practise softly. Pianissimo. Piano on the rare occasion. But only if absolutely necessary.
STEVE: Her Rachmaninoff will—
ELLE: I'll stop. I'll stop playing entirely.
STEVE: Stop?
ELLE: If that's what you want.
STEVE: Why stop?
ELLE: The important thing is I can. I'll play for you once then stop. The ability itself shows a sense of focus and discipline. Of cultural sophistication.
STEVE: You wouldn't stop.
ELLE: I would. If you wanted me to, I would
STEVE: I think she's having you / on.
ELLE: I'll cut off my hands. If that's what it takes — to prove to you. I'll cut off my hands.
STEVE: Elle...
ELLE: Just say the word and they're gone.

Elle and Steve are both desperately trying to present themselves as the perfect couple, and their moments of disagreement come not from issues within their relationship, but from a failure to recognise the tactic the other is attempting to play at each given moment. The two exchanges outlined above are the breaking point for Elle and Steve's games of miscommunication; it is immediately after these lines that Elle drops the façade entirely and reveals the real reason she is desperate to move. Although initially reluctant to join Elle in this confession, Steve too begins to recount the story of their next-door-neighbour. From this point on, Elle and Steve are entirely in step with each other. The only interjections of disagreement—such as whether their neighbour is called Ahmed or Mohammad, or whether it would be German or Russian clowns planning the October Revolution in a V-Dub—come from a place of humour, of light-hearted play fighting. Essentially, once the effort of maintaining the façade of perfection is

dispensed with, Elle and Steve are able to present themselves as the couple they genuinely are, bound lovingly together by their mutual fear and paranoia.

While Scene One helps to establish the dynamic between the two central characters, its function as a prologue that establishes the world of the play is problematic. One of the main difficulties with this opening scene is that it establishes a dramatic convention—with the audience functioning as an offstage character—that is discarded as soon as the scene is over, and not reused until the final scene of the play. In Scene One, the audience takes the place of the property manager interviewing the couple, so that every assumption Elle and Steve make about the manager's own prejudices are levelled directly at the audience, along with every new tactic of charm, every plea of desperation. While Scene Two is still delivered in a direct address to the audience, it shifts into a soliloquy, and this formal convention of the offstage character is abandoned; the audience is no longer required to take on a role, and they must reassess their relationship to the characters, and to the world of the play. In addition to this shift in form from Scene One to Two, there is a shift in the location, and a jump forwards in time. Elle and Steve have been accepted into the community, they have moved in, and Elle begins recounting the events that have just occurred two doors down. While there is no scripted action to aid this transition, we established in the Workshop that some physical action would help the audience make the necessary mental leaps from one scene to the next. Iain Sinclair suggested that one choice would be to show Steve carrying Elle over the threshold of their new home. This physical action would illustrate the transition in time and place to the audience, so that they would only be charged with recognising the shift in form as Elle's soliloquy

unfolds. Despite the obvious benefits that would come from this stage image, I have chosen not to incorporate it into the script. In order to justify this omission, it is worth considering the distinction between the dramatic text and the performance text.

In *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, Elam Keir outlines this distinction, which he considers crucial for any researcher in theatre and drama. Although “intimately correlated,”¹⁰⁹ the dramatic and performance texts are “quite dissimilar.”¹¹⁰ While the performance text is “that produced *in* the theatre,”¹¹¹ the dramatic text is “that composed *for* the theatre.”¹¹² As a playwright, my primary focus is on the dramatic text—the script. However, the Workshop and the Development both provided me with the opportunity to experiment with possibilities for the performance text, and these have then informed the rewrites of the dramatic text. This is particularly true of the soliloquies in *Little Borders*, as can be seen from the section of this chapter addressing the consideration of gesture in soliloquy.

In *Little Borders*, I have attempted to provide as much room for interpretation as possible when it comes to making the transition from dramatic text to performance text. There are no descriptions of set, no directions for movement, and no adverbs dictating the intended delivery of a line. While this requires an active act of imagination when reading the script, it provides directors, designers and actors with greater freedom for creating their own performance text, without being bound to my backseat attempts at directing, designing and

¹⁰⁹ Elam Keir, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002) 3

¹¹⁰ Elam Keir, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, 3

¹¹¹ Elam Keir, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, 3

¹¹² Elam Keir, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, 3

acting. Sitting in the rehearsal rooms of the Development and the Workshop, while Corey McMahon and Iain Sinclair broke the scenes down into beats with the actors, and identified the action behind each line, I was struck by how little the playwright needs to put on the page. Both directors were able to recognise my precise intentions for each shift in the scenes, and identified the necessary the rhythm and style of each scene, in collaboration with the actors. They were also able to extend upon my own intentions, shading the scenes with tiny character details that had not occurred to me. In doing so, the two moved readings were distinguished from one another, as distinct performance texts of the same dramatic text.

Finding a physical action to complement the shift in time and place between Scenes One and Two is one of the tasks I have left open to the artists who would be responsible for a performance text of *Little Borders*. While Iain provided a possible solution, it is only one of many. By stripping the dramatic text back to nothing more than dialogue, laughter and silence, these choices can be made by the directors, designers and actors who will be responsible for the performance text. This style of a somewhat open dramatic text lends itself particularly well to this play, where so much of the action is relayed through recollection.

Scene Nine was redrafted in the Workshop with consideration of its stylistic connections to Scene One, so that a consistency could be achieved between the epilogue and prologue of the play. Scene Nine marks a return to the rhythm of Scene One, with the same fast, inter-cutting, overlapping dialogue. It also marks a return to the convention of direct address duologue, with the

audience functioning as an implied off-stage character—a convention that has been abandoned between these points. The rhythm of Scene One was driven by Elle and Steve’s desperate desire to be let into the community, and the effort of maintaining a façade of perfection to achieve this. We again see Elle and Steve attempting to maintain a façade in Scene Nine, and this scene is similarly driven by overwhelming desperation. In this scene, the off-stage character Elle and Steve address is a television journalist, interviewing Elle and Steve outside their house the day after a fire has claimed the life of two members of their community. Like Scene One, this scene was initially very discursive, and both the Development and the Workshop focused on ensuring that Elle and Steve are entirely in step with one another. This time, the first moment of disagreement comes when Elle accidentally shifts from the rehearsed story, and adds a detail to her recount that Steve is quick to correct:

STEVE: And the smoke was
ELLE: Wafting from the house
STEVE: Two doors down
ELLE: A town house, like ours. Slightly garish but not tacky
STEVE: No, not tacky
ELLE: Tack is prohibited within the walls.
STEVE: Smoking
ELLE: Burning.
STEVE: We didn’t know that yet. We just knew that it was smoking.
ELLE: But the smell.
STEVE: Well, yes. But it wasn’t till later...
ELLE: Right
STEVE: Wasn’t till later that we learned that it was burning
ELLE: Right.
STEVE: At this point we just knew about the smell
ELLE: Right.
STEVE: And the smoke
ELLE: Right.

STEVE: But later we learned what it meant. That the house two doors down was on fire.

This slip in the story alerts the audience to the lies being told in this scene, which should be palpably clear in the play's closing seconds. As in Scene One, Elle reaches a moment towards the end of Scene Nine when the façade lifts. In this case, she becomes so lost in retelling rumours about the fire that she starts to relive the actions of the previous night. In increasingly incensed language, she almost reveals that she and Steve have committed an act of arson and double murder:

ELLE: Some people say, though...

STEVE: Thank God.

ELLE: It was deliberate

STEVE: Thank God.

ELLE: And that they were already dead before

STEVE: Love

ELLE: Before the fire

STEVE: Love

ELLE: That someone snuck in there before it started. Before they started it.

STEVE: Love

ELLE: Some people say that someone snuck in there with some big fuck off heavy

STEVE: Love

ELLE: While they were asleep. Just lying there. Just bludgeoned the fucking

STEVE: Love

ELLE: Just lying in bed like some stupid fucking

STEVE: Love

Unlike in Scene One, Steve does not join Elle in her bout of truth-telling; the stakes are far too high, and his interjections eventually rein her in, so that the final moments of the play are spent in a frantic attempt to re-establish the façade of innocence they had so desperately been trying to maintain:

ELLE: But that's rubbish
STEVE: Yes
ELLE: They were well liked
STEVE: Well loved
ELLE: Pillars of the community.
STEVE: We'll topple now they're gone
ELLE: Like a house of cards.
STEVE: Left to pick up the pieces.
ELLE: All 52. Are we done?

SCENES FOUR and SIX — dialogues

Scene Four and Scene Six are the only dialogues in the play, with the other duologues utilising direct address. In the Workshop, the discussion of these scenes focussed on whether or not they should also make use of direct address. In all other scenes, Elle and Steve address the audience either through self-reflective soliloquies or through direct interaction with an off-stage character or characters. These two scenes break with this convention, adding an additional form to the play.

In the Workshop, we discussed the possibility of rewriting these scenes to fit a form similar to Scenes One and Nine, in order to establish a consistency of direct address for the entire play. In the rewritten Scene Four, Elle and Steve would be complaining to the manager of the restaurant about an incident that had happened in the car park outside. In the rewritten Scene Six, they would be attempting to convince one of the guards of their community that something needed to be done about the couple two doors down. These would have been valid choices, and would have fitted nicely with the sense of entitlement Elle and Steve exhibit throughout the rest of the play. I decided to not to employ direct address in these two scenes for several reasons.

Firstly, by keeping the unseen character unique to scenes One and Nine, I am able to distinguish them as prologue and epilogue. There is a sense of book-ending to the play that would be disrupted by two more uses of this form. Secondly, it gives me a chance to explore Elle and Steve's relationship in a way I can't in the other scenes; we have the opportunity to see how they relate to each other when there is no element of performance to their interactions. In Scene Four, we see Steve's desperate and tragic attempts to be the 'real man' he so desperately wishes to be, offering Elle, if not genuine action, then at least a fetishised image of the soldier he could have been. In Scene Six, we see Elle at her most terrified, worried that the couple two doors down may have seen her spying on their act of domestic abuse. Leaning on Steve for support, we finally see him spurred into action, taking on the role of protector in a manner that redeems him for the impotence he exhibits in Scene Four.

Perhaps most importantly, these dialogues provide the audience with a sense of reassurance that they are witnessing events that are actually transpiring. As I will outline later in this chapter, the soliloquies are narrated in a manner that is so skewed to suit the purposes of the character telling their tale that the audience is compelled to question the veracity of their accounts. If every scene in the play were similarly delivered in direct address, the audience could be expected to question whether any of the events in the play are actually taking place, or whether this is simply Elle and Steve engaging in a perverse act of role playing. Dialogue has the sense of being "much more 'objective' than [a] first person narrative, since we see for ourselves and are therefore able to observe ... the facts

at our ease.”¹¹³ Scenes Four and Six help to assure the audience that, while the characters’ justifications for the actions may be disjointed from reality, there is a definite reality to the world that they are in, and the actions they perform within it.

SCENES TWO, THREE, FIVE and SEVEN — soliloquies

A focus of both creative developments, and one of the primary aims of the Workshop, was to chip away at the soliloquies, stripping them of any prosaic excesses and making them as active and dramatically engaging as possible. This section of the exegesis focuses on how this was achieved, by analysing of the use of tense, consideration of gesture, and exploration of the subjectivity of the narrating character. I will conclude this chapter with a look at Scene Eight of *Little Borders*. Unlike the other scenes, Scene Eight was written after both developments had finished. I will address why this scene is necessary to the play, and why I have chosen to employ the form of synchronous soliloquies.

Before I move on to analysing the work that was done in the Workshop to redraft these soliloquies, it is important to provide some context for how I am using certain terms—namely, the use of the terms “narrative” and “soliloquy”—for the purposes of this discussion. While, historically, drama has “not generally [been] accepted as a narrative genre in most narratological discussions,”¹¹⁴ recent scholarship has attempted to refute this assertion, exploring the different forms of

¹¹³ Monika Fludernik, ‘Narrative and Drama’, *Theorizing Narrativity*, ed. John Pier and José Ángel García Landa (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008) 369

¹¹⁴ Ansgar Nünning and Roy Sommer, ‘Diegetic and Mimetic Narrativity: Some further Steps Towards a Transgeneric Narratology of Drama’, *Theorizing Narrativity*, ed. John Pier and José Ángel García Landa (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008) 331

narrative employed by dramatic writers.¹¹⁵ Much of this scholarship differs in its definition of narrative and narrativity, so it is worth defining what I mean when I refer to the narrative techniques employed in *Little Borders*. I draw on Gérard Genette's focus on narrative as "the discourse ... that narrates"¹¹⁶ the events of a story, in a "verbal transmission"¹¹⁷ between narrator and recipient. Ansgar Nünning and Roy Sommer, dissecting a wide range of definitions of narrative—including those posited by Genette, Aristotle, and Plato—provide a typological extension to Genette's theories on narrative, applying them to drama in a manner that has implications for *Little Borders*, particularly the role of narrator undertaken by Elle and Steve in these scenes. Nünning and Sommer argue that, while drama is generally considered for its mimetic narrativity—i.e. "the representation of a temporal and/or causal sequence of events"¹¹⁸—many dramatists employ diegetic narrative techniques in their work. Unlike mimetic narrativity, diegetic narrativity relies on "verbal, as opposed to visual or performative, transmission of narrative content ... the representation of a speech act of telling a story by an agent called a narrator."¹¹⁹ Mimetic narrativity refers to the writer's attempt to *show* a story, while diegetic narrativity refers to their attempt to *tell* a story.

¹¹⁵ Ansgar Nünning and Roy Sommer, 'Diegetic and Mimetic Narrativity'; Monika Fludernik, 'Narrative and Drama'; Brian Richardson, 'Drama and Narrative', *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, ed. David Herman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 142-55; Brian Richardson, 'Voice and Narration in Postmodern Drama', *New Literary History*, 32 2001: 681-694

¹¹⁶ Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1988) 13

¹¹⁷ Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, 16

¹¹⁸ Ansgar Nünning and Roy Sommer, 'Diegetic and Mimetic Narrativity', 338

¹¹⁹ Ansgar Nünning and Roy Sommer, 'Diegetic and Mimetic Narrativity', 338

Genette considers mimetic narrativity “impure,”¹²⁰ and diegetic narrativity as constituting “pure narrative.”¹²¹ Nünning and Sommer acknowledge that, in drama, narrators often bridge the gap between diegetic and mimetic narrative, by both telling stories directly, as Elle and Steve do, and introducing stories that are then played out for the audience mimetically—through dialogue between characters on stage. They define the former narrative style, with its pure act of verbal narration, as “intradiegetic,”¹²² while the latter narrative style, with narrators generating scenes that are then played out in action and dialogue, as “extradiegetic.”¹²³ Brian Richardson defines these extradiegetic narrators as “generative narrators.”¹²⁴ While Elle and Steve, through their pure verbal narration, can clearly be classed as intradiegetic narrators, I will also examine the ways in which I have attempted to create soliloquies that have such a strong sense of immediacy and engaging dramatic action that the scenes have the effect of unfolding in the present moment. For my purposes in discussing soliloquy, I draw on the distinction between soliloquy and monologue outlined by Manfred Pfister in *The Theory and Analysis of Drama*. Pfister acknowledges that these are fluid terms, but points to a terminological distinction between the two that has been established by Anglo-American criticism:

monologue is distinguished from one side of a dialogue by its length and relative completeness, and from the soliloquy ... by the fact that it is addressed to someone. ... A soliloquy is spoken by one person that is alone or acts as though he were alone. It is a kind of talking to oneself, not intended to affect others.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, 18

¹²¹ Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, 18

¹²² Ansgar Nünning and Roy Sommer, ‘Diegetic and Mimetic Narrativity’, 339

¹²³ Ansgar Nünning and Roy Sommer, ‘Diegetic and Mimetic Narrativity’, 339

¹²⁴ Brian Richardson, ‘Drama and Narrative’, 152

¹²⁵ J. T. Shipley, *Dictionary of World Literature* (Totowa, N.J. : 1968) 272f

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Pfister states that soliloquies are based on “an unspoken agreement between author and receiver, which ... allow[s] a dramatic figure to think aloud and talk to itself.”¹²⁶ This has a particular resonance with these scenes, where Elle and Steve do not address their speeches to another character in the way that they do with their dialogue in Scenes One and Nine.

The choice of tense has been crucial to the construction of these soliloquies. All but one of these scenes start in the past tense and, after no more than a few lines, shift into present tense. By shifting from past to present tense, the scenes begin with either Elle or Steve recollecting an event and, through that recollection, reliving the experience. Framing the soliloquies with past tense gives the audience a clear indication that these scenes, although active in a way that recreates the sense of present drama, are actually recollections of past events. This provides each scene with a very clear chronological placing within the world of the play. Elle recounts Scene Two after returning from killing the guide dog and watching the blind woman topple down the stairs; Steve recounts Scene Seven having just returned from his encounter with the man with the shaved head.

The effect of clearly articulating the chronological positioning of these scenes is twofold. Firstly, it assists the audience in being able to place the movement of the characters through the larger dramatic arc of the play. This is crucial, as each scene jumps forward in time. Providing a strong sense of where, chronologically, Elle and Steve are at the beginning of each scene allows the audience to make the necessary connections to follow the shifts in time. The

¹²⁶ Manfred Pfister, *The Theory and Analysis of Drama*, trans. John Halliday (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 131

second effect of this chronological positioning is that the actors are provided with an emotional state to inform the recollection of each soliloquy; they are essentially reacting to the events that have just transpired, soliloquising as a way of making sense of these events. The shift into present tense is utilised as more than just a pragmatic way of making the scenes more active—as the characters begin their recollecting, they move through the scene in a detailed act of narration. They live through each scene twice in short succession, once off stage and once on.

In these scenes, after establishing the frame of recollection through the initial use of past tense, Elle and Steve become something akin to Brian Richardson's generative narrator. While Richardson uses this term in reference to a character "who comes on stage and narrates events which are then enacted before the audience"¹²⁷ (such as Tom in *The Glass Menagerie* or the Stage Manager in *Our Town*) the term could also be applied to Elle and Steve's act of active recounting in the present tense. Like Tom in *The Glass Menagerie*, both Elle and Steve are "participant[s] in the events he or she recounts and enacts."¹²⁸ Unlike Tom, the scenes Elle and Steve introduce are not then enacted in a traditional sense; instead, they are recreated through their retelling. By recounting these events in the present tense, Elle and Steve are situating themselves in the dramatic scene they are narrating. The act of narration and generation are one and the same. This act of vividly recounting offstage action can be traced back to Greek Tragedy, but Elle and Steve's soliloquies go beyond messenger speeches in the manner in which they re-experience the action in retelling it.

¹²⁷ Brian Richardson, 'Drama and Narrative', 152

¹²⁸ Brian Richardson, 'Voice and Narration in Postmodern Drama', 682

With regard to this sense of the characters re-experiencing the scenes they narrate, it is worth considering the process of “metaxis.”¹²⁹ Drawing upon a term coined by Plato, Augusto Boal defines metaxis as “the state of belonging completely and simultaneously to two different, autonomous worlds: the image of reality and the reality of the image.”¹³⁰ Tom Maguire explains how this concept of metaxis can be particularly useful when considering the relationship between a narrator character and the story they narrate. He argues that “even as a single narrator tells us about a past event, she is present both in the here-and-now of the telling and in the there-and-then of the story.”¹³¹ While beginning each of these soliloquies in the past tense provides a definite sense of the here-and-now of the telling, I have had to rely on both tense and other technical considerations to shift this dichotomous relationship between the narration and the narrative as firmly as possible into the there-and-then of the story. The aim is to create the effect of characters re-experiencing and reanimating the dramatic story they recount, as they recount it.

There is one exception to this shift from past to present tense in the soliloquies of *Little Borders*: Scene Three begins in past tense, and it remains there. The reason for this is that Scene Three is quite unlike the other soliloquies; it does not tell the story of one single event. Instead, Steve begins this scene by recounting his first meeting with Harry, and then moves on to other events. The attentive audience member will recognise that Steve first met Harry prior to the interview in Scene One. In Scene One, Elle and Steve discuss Steve’s advertising

¹²⁹ Augusto Boal, *The Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy* (London: Routledge, 1995) 43

¹³⁰ Augusto Boal, *The Rainbow of Desire*, 43

¹³¹ Tom Maguire, ‘Performing Evaluation in the Stand-Up Theatre of Claire Dowie’, *Contemporary Drama in English*, 18 2011: 102

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campaign for Harry's mattress company, featuring Mt Everest, midget Sherpas and the "simple" tagline of "A Good Night's Rest For You And Every Member Of Your Family." While this shows that Harry and Steve have already met prior to this opening scene, there is no mention of Harry bludgeoning his wife and kids to death in their beds. In Scene Three, after recounting this first meeting with Harry, and his subsequent ad campaign, Steve jumps forward to the day that Harry broke down and confessed his sins. In Steve's recollection of this day, we see him returning home to Elle, who sits in front of the TV "surrounded by half-unpacked boxes." This is a way of indicating that, in the chronology of the play, the couple have recently moved into the community when this occurred. By the end of Scene Three, we are brought into the present moment from which Steve is recounting. Steve's reference to the 'murder' of the blind woman, which he recalls as having happened two days prior, assures the audience that the progression of scenes is chronological, even if this speech refers to events that precede Scene One.

The draft of Scene Three with which I began the Workshop did make use of the present tense in one crucial moment, when Steve is pitching an advertisement to Harry and Harry breaks down in tears:

I'm in the conference room, pitching it to Harry, excited, actually excited for the first time in God knows, I'm walking him through the storyboard, and I reach the last frame (her kids on rocking chairs out on the veranda while she's still asleep in bed) when he breaks down in tears. The others in the room turn to me awkwardly, not sure what they're supposed to do. I wave them out of the room and they almost run to the door in relief. I pour Harry a glass of water and he takes it, sipping slowly, his hand shaking.

While the use of present tense lends this moment a sense of immediacy, it is highly problematic for the scene as a whole. Directly after this, Steve jumps to recounting the lead story at six that night, then returns to the conference room to re-examine his emotional response to Harry's impending confession. In the Workshop, we decided that, while the shift from past to present tense was highly effective for the monologues that focussed on one dramatic situation, the narrative complexity of Scene Three dictated that it be recounted entirely in the past tense. However, tense is not the only tool at my disposal that can be used to craft soliloquies that firmly locate Elle and Steve in the there-and-then of their narratives.

At the commencement of the Workshop, the soliloquies were fully formed stories, crafted in a manner that sat somewhere between radio drama and prose. However, unlike prose, these soliloquies are not intended to be read, but to be performed, and, unlike radio drama, the actor is physically present on stage for this performance. Tom Maguire, in considering narrative in drama as distinct from prose and radio drama, stresses that “the voice speaking live has to be acknowledged as the product of a body which is present and apprehended by another body.”¹³² In his analysis of the importance of the physical presence of the actor in the monodramas of Claire Dowie, he closely examines the use of gesture in the performance text of her plays. Drawing on the work of Justine Cassell, David McNeill and Karl-Erik McCulloch, Maguire points to three recognisable forms of gesture—iconic, metaphoric and deictic gestures—each of which came

¹³² Tom Maguire, ‘Performing Evaluation in the Stand-Up Theatre of Claire Dowie’, 95 *Little Borders*, a play for two actors and accompanying exegesis – Phillip Kavanagh

under consideration in developing the dramatic text of *Little Borders*, with a careful consideration of the potential performance text.

Iconic gestures “may specify the manner in which an action is carried out.”¹³³ These gestures provide a literal interpretation of the action a character narrates. In Scene Five, for instance, when Elle takes the coins out of her purse, a possible accompanying iconic gesture could be having one hand extracting mimed coins out of the actor’s other hand, cupped together to signify a purse clenched between her fingers. This example is perfect for observing how this consideration of iconic gesture in the performance text informed the dramatic text. Before I had considered the use of gesture, this moment in the play read as:

I move to the counter and I take out my purse. I extract the coins slowly, careful not to disturb the others as I lay the exact change out in front of me. I slide it across the countertop, as I zip the coin pouch shut and squeeze my purse into silence.

When this scene was read in the Workshop, Danielle Cormack instinctively added an iconic gesture to accompany the text, miming the extraction of coins from a purse. Suddenly it was clear that more could be made of this moment, and the text could be written to aid in heightening the deliberate care taken to execute this gesture without revealing how many coins are contained in the purse. With this in mind, this moment was rewritten as:

I move to the counter. Take out my purse. Open it. So many coins. I extract the exact change slowly. Try not to make a sound. One coin. Two. Three. I lay the change out in front of me. I slide it across the countertop. I zip the coin pouch shut and squeeze my purse into silence.

¹³³ Justine Cassell, David McNeill, and Karl-Erik McCulloch, ‘Speech-Gesture Mismatches: Evidence for the underlying Representation of Linguistic and Non-Linguistic Information’, *Pragmatics and Cognition* 6 (2) 1998: 4

What previously would have called for a simple iconic gesture now contains the potential for greater dramatic resonance; the actor is able to deliberate over their mimed purse, and take extreme care in the gesture of silently extracting each individual coin. This example also shows that, when writing with consideration of iconic gestures, sentences benefit from brevity. Keeping the sentences as short as possible enables the actors to find the shifts in thought and gesture that occur with each line and action. This allows for a greater clarity of expression in thought and gesture on the part of the actor, and a greater clarity of understanding for the audience. With a succession of short, image-based sentences, each scene is driven from one dramatic utterance to the next, giving an immediacy that is hindered by long, meandering sentences.

Metaphoric gestures are “similarly representational,”¹³⁴ except in this case “the pictorial content ... corresponds to an abstract idea.”¹³⁵ For instance, at the end of Scene Five, Elle surprises herself when she finds that she is waving to the woman two doors down. In an earlier draft, this moment read as:

She catches sight of me and pauses for a moment. She’s looking at me strangely. That’s when I realise, I don’t know when I started doing it, but I’m waving to her.

While the obvious iconic gesture for this moment would be a wave of the hand, this was not the solution proposed in either the Development or the Workshop. When this moment was acted out in the Development, both director Corey McMahan and actor Elena Carapetis agreed that the moment would be best

¹³⁴ Tom Maguire, ‘Performing Evaluation in the Stand-Up Theatre of Claire Dowie’, 96

¹³⁵ Justine Cassell and David McNeil, ‘Gesture and the Poetics of Prose’, *Narrative Across Media: The Languages of Storytelling*, ed. Marie-Laure Ryan (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004) 115

served by a metaphoric gesture. Rather than waving her hand, Elena kept her hand by her side and gently moved her fingers. This metaphoric gesture shows that the literal iconic gesture of the wave is something that is outside of Elle's control, and in recounting the event, with control over the narrative, she is able to keep her hand in check and merely allude to the wave of her hand. There was a similar consensus in the Workshop that this moment was best served by a metaphoric gesture, so it was rewritten to better serve this choice:

She catches sight of me and pauses. Looking at me strangely. Fingers fly in front of me. They're mine. I'm waving to her. How long have I been waving to her?

By employing a metaphoric gesture, the actor ensures that the audience cannot answer the question Elle poses to herself. It also means that the description of fingers flying in front of her stands as initially obscure before being explained, as it is not accompanied by a waving hand to contextualise it. Like iconic gestures, metaphoric gestures in the performance text are best served by short, simple sentences in the dramatic text. This allows the gestures to be similarly clear and simple, although in the case of metaphoric gestures, they are used to counterpoint the text, providing new meanings in the disjunction between text and image.

Finally, deictic gestures “locate characters in space, and make apparent the spatial relationships between them, even if this information is not conveyed verbally.”¹³⁶ This is one of the most crucial ways that actors can help to create a sense of living in the there-and-then of their narratives. It was in the

¹³⁶ Justine Cassell, David McNeill, and Karl-Erik McCulloch, ‘Speech-Gesture Mismatches’, 4

Development, watching Elena Carapetis mentally plot out the imagined space of each scene, that I saw the potential for how dynamic and dramatically engaging each soliloquy could be. As Elle enters the corner store in Scene Five, the audience is presented with an image of the physical space through the direction of the actor's gaze as she describes the characters and scenic details she is confronted with. Although we never see the woman with the pram, we can gain a clear sense of how uncomfortable her presence makes Elle through the actor's embodiment of Elle's determined refusal to direct her gaze to where the woman is standing. Here, clarity and consistency are key, as the audience is guided through the physical world of the story by the focus of the actor's gaze and gestures. Again, this is aided by clarity of expression in the dramatic text; by clearly separating each image into its own short sentence, the actor is able to locate each new image within their imagined physical rendering of the scene. Elle's entrance to the corner store originally read as:

The floor's so sticky I don't think it's ever been cleaned, and there's a Chinese woman at the counter rapidly talking Mandarin into her phone. The whole while, she's serving a customer, a skinny guy in an oversized t-shirt who's muttering to himself under his breath, and she's staring slightly to the side of him, as if trying to catch sight of whoever it is he's talking to. He gestures to a pack of cigarettes and, without taking a breath from her conversation, she passes them to him and takes his coins. So many coins. She doesn't even look down as he hands them to her. It's like she can feel the weight of each one and just flicks them into the cash register like she's dealing blackjack. They fly from her hands as quickly as they fall from his in a seemingly endless jangle.

This was rewritten to a much more succinct:

The floor's sticky. There's a Chinese woman at the counter rapidly talking Mandarin into her phone. She's serving a customer, a skinny guy in an oversized t-shirt. He's muttering to himself. He gestures to a pack of cigarettes. Without taking a breath from her conversation, she passes

them to him and takes his coins. So many coins. She doesn't look down as he hands them to her. She flicks them into the cash register like she's dealing blackjack.

The rewrite of this moment in Scene Five provides the actor playing Elle with much greater room for clear deictic gestures.

Unlike the other scenes in the play, the soliloquies provide Elle and Steve with a chance to reflect on the events they narrate in their own words, from their own perspective. Eamonn Jordan, in his analysis of the storytelling techniques employed by contemporary Irish playwrights, considers the effects that the narrative form has on the relationship between an audience and a dramatic character. With no other character to relate to, these soliloquies speak to the “aleness”¹³⁷ of the narrators; Elle and Steve, although they are married and living together, exhibit aspects of aleness through their narration. They keep secrets from one another, and progress through the play burdened by their own private, personal turmoil. Elle never reveals to Steve that she had a hand in the blind woman's death, while Steve does not confide in Elle that his company is on the verge of bankruptcy. These soliloquies provide Elle and Steve with “a form of sanctuary.”¹³⁸ They are able to unburden themselves of the trauma they are carrying—a trauma that is so volatile that they are unable to share these stories even with each other. According to Pfister, even Shakespeare's soliloquies “exhibit the tendency to explain the solitude of the speaker and his or her utterances by invoking the speaker's psychological disposition and social

¹³⁷ Eamonn Jordan, ‘Look Who's Talking, Too: The Duplicitous Myth of Naïve Narrative’, *Monologues: Theatre, Performance, Subjectivity*, ed. Clare Wallace (Prague: Litteraria Pragnesia, 2006) 134

¹³⁸ Eamonn Jordan, ‘Look Who's Talking, Too’, 134

situation.”¹³⁹ Pfister suggests that Hamlet’s soliloquies do more than simply “give the audience an insight into his mind.”¹⁴⁰ Like Elle and Steve, Hamlet’s soliloquies reflect “his sense of isolation, his problematic individuality and his tendency to indulge in introspection.”¹⁴¹

Despite the sanctuary offered by the soliloquy form, Elle and Steve are not entirely honest or objective in their accounts. Throughout *Little Borders*, they attempt to justify their actions as the necessary and rational response to an unsafe world. It is the audience’s task to recognise the disparity between their overwhelming fear and its underwhelming source—a dramatic realisation of what Murray Lee referred to as “the fear/risk paradox.”¹⁴² In Scenes One and Nine, they are justifying their fear to a third character. In Scenes Four and Six they are justifying their fear to each other. In these soliloquies, they are justifying their fear to themselves. Ciarán Benson proposes that “a story is an answer to a question.”¹⁴³ In contemporary dramatic narrative, Jordan argues that “a story is also the answer an individual or character wishes to give, it can be an alibi, selective, fictive, imaginative, exaggerated, and contain all sorts of self-deception.”¹⁴⁴ In Scene Two, having just killed the guide dog and watched the blind woman fall to her death, Elle starts to tell a story. An objective account of these events would reflect very poorly on her. She murdered an innocent animal and then left a disabled woman to die. In her subjective recollection, Elle finds a way to justify the murder of the guide dog to herself, and to the audience:

¹³⁹ Manfred Pfister, *The Theory and Analysis of Drama*, 134

¹⁴⁰ Manfred Pfister, *The Theory and Analysis of Drama*, 134

¹⁴¹ Manfred Pfister, *The Theory and Analysis of Drama*, 134

¹⁴² Murray Lee, *Inventing Fear of Crime*, 3

¹⁴³ Ciarán Benson, *The Cultural Psychology of Self: Place, Morality and Art in Human Worlds* (London: Routledge, 2001) 45

¹⁴⁴ Eamonn Jordan, ‘Look Who’s Talking, Too’, 153

Something is standing in the room, growling at me. I remember why I'm here. I expected a Chihuahua, Pomeranian, Fox Terrier, not something so big. This dog, this illegal animal smuggled into our estate. This beast. This monster.

I back away to the coat rack and almost leave but This beast. This monster. is just staring at me. Just standing there, panting, wheezing, his tongue hanging out as he huffs in and out like he's enjoying watching me. Enjoying my panic and I'm shaking and I'm holding the by-laws and I'm gripping them and he's panting and he's wheezing and he's laughing and I swing the book hard into his skull.

Crack.

And again.

Crack. Crack. Crack.

In Elle's account of the murder, the dog transforms before her eyes as her panic grows, becoming a "beast," a "monster." An earlier draft of this scene had Elle identifying the breed of the dog, but this was removed during the Workshop as it disempowered Elle in her skewed account of events. If she named the breed of the dog, it could not truly be a monster. To the audience who had been told it was a golden retriever, it would always remain so. By employing deliberately obtuse descriptions, I am able to draw the audience into Elle's hysteria, ensuring that they understand her violent reaction to the presence of the animal. At this point in the story, she believed dogs to be prohibited by the community by-laws; it is no accident that this 600-page book is used to kill the very animal it supposedly legislates against. What Elle didn't realise in the there-and-then of the narrative,

but is conscious of in the here-and-now of the narration, is that there is a clause allowing “assistance animals for people with disabilities.” In recounting this story, Elle attempts to convince herself and the audience that she is in the right, regardless of any clause. She even asserts that “there were no clauses. Cats yes, dogs no. No dogs.” As Monika Fludernik states, “what we get to hear of the story is dependent on the narrator figure who keeps distorting the plot, if not inventing it.”¹⁴⁵ According to Jordan, the audience is charged with “unravelling the contradictions, the anomalies, false justifications, undermining the self-aggrandisement, and empathising with either the person’s or character’s journey, or the inequity of an encounter.”¹⁴⁶ Privileging the there-and-then of the narrative over the here-and-now of the narration allows Elle to relive the scene ignorant of the clause, and therefore justified in murdering the “illegal animal smuggled into [her] estate.”

Steve’s “self-aggrandisement”¹⁴⁷ in his soliloquies is most apparent in Scene Seven. In Scene Four, we are first introduced to the biggest contradiction of his character. He wants to protect his wife—to conform to the conventional masculine role of the protector—but, when confronted with the threat of actual violence, he freezes. Steve is haunted by his impotence, and desperate to prove his worth as a man through an act of violence to protect his wife. While he finally gets this opportunity at the end of the play, he lets it slip through his fingers in Scene Seven. When the man with the shaved head baits Steve as he jogs past him, Steve has flashes of violent thoughts, but is incapable of acting on them:

¹⁴⁵ Monika Fludernik, ‘Narrative and Drama’, 370

¹⁴⁶ Eamonn Jordan, ‘Look Who’s Talking, Too’, 153

¹⁴⁷ Eamonn Jordan, ‘Look Who’s Talking, Too’, 153

I should run back past him. I should call the guards. Throw him out myself. Run over there and punch him in the face. Smash my fist through his car window. Only I can't move. I can't even look at him.

Immediately following this, he runs in the opposite direction from the man, indulging in a fantasy of jogging through Borneo. This fantasy is particularly crucial to understanding Steve's character if we consider the process of metaxis in this narrative. Steve narrates this encounter from the here-and-now, after the event has taken place. If we are to assume that he is soliloquising immediately after the event, then he is still rattled by fear, having escaped back into his house without any direct interaction with the man outside. When he begins slipping into the there-and-then of the narrative, it is not a literal account of his jog, but one filtered through his self-aggrandising fantasies:

I'm in Borneo. I'm jogging along a stretch of rainforest and there are natives watching me from the trees. Fascinated by me because they can see me running, see my form, and can't quite compute how I could be human. I must be some sort of God or alien.

Having once again found himself impotent, Steve exploits the sanctuary of the soliloquy to rebuild his ego, indulging in a bout of self-deception that crumbles as he gets closer and closer to re-experiencing his moment of terror. Desperately wishing to be the man of action he so painfully is not, "reflection seems endlessly postponed, not because of indifference per se, but because of an inability to validate or substantiate."¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Eamonn Jordan, 'Look Who's Talking, Too', 136

SCENE EIGHT — synchronous soliloquies

While Scenes Two, Three, Five and Seven see Elle and Steve seeking solace in the private sanctuary of soliloquy, Scene Eight finds them sharing the stage as they soliloquise simultaneously. This scene was written after both creative developments had taken place, although the need for this scene was identified as early as the first day of the Development. In the final scene of the play, the audience learns that Elle and Steve have murdered the couple two doors down, and burnt their house to the ground. Without Scene Eight, this revelation requires the audience to make a large deductive leap. In discussions during both the Development and the Workshop, it was clear that, while some people were able to draw this conclusion from the final scene, others were not. In order to help the audience make this leap, I made a number of changes, in addition to writing Scene Eight.

In previous versions of the script, only the woman was murdered, and the activities that piqued Elle's obsession in Scene Six were very different from those in the current draft. Previously, Elle was not observing the one car arriving outside the woman's house day after day—she was observing many. She became obsessed with these cars, because they were stopping outside the house for minutes at a time, passengers were alighting, entering the house, exiting, and then driving away. She witnessed this action for a total of ten cars in the one day. While never explicitly stated, the implication was that the woman two doors down was a drug dealer. The man that Steve encountered in Scene Seven was not her abusive partner, but rather a client waiting for his friend to return from inside the

house. And Elle and Steve did not murder this man and the woman, but simply the woman.

These elements of the plot were problematic for a number of reasons. One was that Steve's tipping point into complicity with Elle comes from his encounter with the man in Scene Seven. However, while this may trigger his sense of fear and paranoia, it does not justify his joining Elle in murdering a woman he has had nothing to do with. By keeping this man as part of the equation, and adding another encounter with both the man and the woman, we are able to understand Elle and Steve's justification for their actions. This follows the pattern of disjunction between action and justification seen throughout the play. In line with the fear/risk paradox, despite there never being any actual risk to the characters' safety, their fear is very real and, in their minds, entirely justified. In Scene One, Elle and Steve are terrified that their Muslim neighbours next door are going to attack them violently; they worry that the prayer groups taking place every Thursday night might actually be meetings of a terror cell. We see Elle and Steve's very clear justification for why they need to move to this gated community. But the audience also sees what Elle and Steve are blind to—the reality of the situation. They are the ones who cause their neighbours' hostility towards them. They make the first move by mocking the religious songs they sing. What Elle fears as terrorist activity is nothing more sinister than a gathering of friends, joining together in prayer.

This clear justification for their fears, and the actions they take to alleviate them, is constantly juxtaposed with the innocuous reality of the situation. Having the woman two doors down as a drug dealer altered this pattern and, essentially,

let Elle and Steve off the hook. Not only were they able to justify her murder to themselves, their actions obtained some degree of genuine justification. There was no paradox between fear and actuarial risk; there was a genuine reason for the characters to be fearful. I needed to shift the circumstances so that, while they are still certain that their actions are right and their fear warranted, the audience can see that they are actually engineering their own downfall.

In the final version of the script, the woman two doors down is no longer dealing drugs; she is trapped in an abusive relationship. Rather than fear for the woman, Elle is afraid of her, and this fear quickly turns to hate. Elle is frightened that the couple may have seen her when she was spying on them; we, as an audience, recognise that Elle's perspective is disturbingly off-kilter. Elle not only invades their privacy by looking through their window, but what she sees is horrific. Despite the acts that she witnesses, her concern is not for the woman's well-being, but rather for her own. Thus, the pattern established in earlier scenes of the play is maintained through this change in the plot; the audience is able to see Elle and Steve's justification for committing horrific acts of brutality, while also seeing how unjustified those acts are.

Scene Eight shows Elle and Steve speaking together in a moment of ultimate complicity that follows through to the final scene of the play. Formally, the scene differs from the direct address duologues of Scenes One and Nine in a number of ways. Although they share the stage, Elle and Steve are not conscious of one another in the scene. They are each delivering a soliloquy; they begin in past tense, switch to present, and recount the scene as if they are reliving it. However, rather than providing the audience with two skewed perspectives on the

one event, Elle and Steve's recollections are perfectly in synch with one another, right down to the overlapping dialogue. By subverting the soliloquy form, Scene Eight turns the notion of sanctuary and aloneness on its head. While their narrative perspectives are still skewed, they are skewed in entirely the same manner. Elle and Steve share a sense of self-righteousness in their accounts. The audience sees, through this form, that the characters are connected in a way that they haven't been throughout the rest of the play. Seeing them so clearly 'together' in this scene assists the audience in inferring what takes place between Scenes Eight and Nine, helping them to conclude that Steve and Elle are entirely complicit in the play's final act of brutality.

It is crucial to note that this scene was written several weeks after the Workshop had ended, and that these significant changes to the play were made outside of the actual workshopping environment of the creative developments. This suggests that there is far more to creative developments than the work done in the process of workshopping, which I have outlined in the rest of this chapter. By exposing myself and my play to the critical eyes of actors, directors and dramaturgs, I was able to approach my subsequent redrafting process equipped with a keener sense of what was working in the play, and what wasn't. I was able to carry this insight into my own work on the script so that, even though I was working in isolation, I had various views on the play that I was balancing in my redraft. Above all else, it is the perspectives gained from a shared active, critical engagement with my play that has been the greatest benefit of these creative developments. It is this critical insight into my own work that has enabled me to make significant changes to the play subsequent to the workshopping process.

Conclusion

Little Borders lies at the heart of this thesis, and can be assessed in isolation from the accompanying exegesis. However, the exegesis provides me with the opportunity to reflect on the process of drafting and redrafting the play. The first chapter outlines the research that informed the first draft. Like the Research-Question Model of exegeses, this chapter gives me the space to document this research both for its relationship to the creative piece and for the arguments I have traced through the sociological literature. Although this is the first time I have approached creative writing in this manner, I doubt that I will ever write in a fashion that does not incorporate extensive research in the future. The play was born out of a thematic interest, but it was this sociological research that enabled me to create the world of the play—the setting, the characters, and the story. The setting of the gated community provided a physical metaphor for the fear, exclusion, and splitting of ‘good’ people from ‘bad’ people that is crucial to *Little Borders*; Elle and Steve began as little more than personifications of fear and prestige—common reasons given by residents for moving to gated communities; the by-laws that govern these communities inspired Scene Two; and the concepts of fearing subjects, the fear/risk paradox, and the fear of crime feedback loop all contributed to the structure of the entire play. Had I not approached the creative writing process from this research background, there is no way I would have written the play that I did.

In the second chapter, I have analysed the collaborative dramaturgical work that has produced the final version of the creative piece. These

developments have had a profound effect on the play, with decisions from word choice to major structural changes all affecting the final product. The development process reflects the collaborative process of theatre making. Rather than handing over a finished script to a creative team for production, the creative development sees the playwright actively engaging with other theatre practitioners in the creation and reshaping of a work. This collaborative consideration of the way the text could be handled by a production team led to a focused redrafting of the text with added perspectives that hadn't previously occurred to me. Fostering these relationships, which blur the lines of director, playwright and dramaturg, hugely benefited the final script, with all artists contributing to the play in their various roles. In addition to the collaboration that occurs within the workshopping process itself, the lasting benefits of creative development can be seen in the way it affected my redrafting process well after the workshops had ended. This process of interrogation of a script from a number of perspectives equipped me with a greater sense of what I was doing as a writer, and enabled me to make informed, intelligent decisions about subsequent rewrites undertaken in isolation. With regards to my future practice, I hope to be lucky enough to have access to such skilled practitioners for future creative developments.

Essentially, the first chapter outlines the research-led practice that I employed for the first draft, while the second chapter outlines the practice-led approach to dramaturgy and redrafting. In the focus of these two chapters, I am able to identify a potential methodology that can be used when writing a play. This latter part of the methodology is not always available, but it is something I

will seek out for all future work. These two exegetical chapters—and two halves of the creative process—culminate in the play itself, which forms the focus of this thesis. While the exegesis has recounted the creative process, the script itself will now enter the industry divorced from this document, as a play to be considered for production. While this is how it will be received within the industry, it is also one third of a whole in this thesis. *Little Borders* marks the realisation of research, experimentation, soul baring, collaboration, and revision. I can trace the various drafts and hold them against this record of the process, to see how research into gated communities gave life to setting, character and story; how separate ideas collided to form a dramatic scene; how story was dictated by the patterns discovered in fear of crime research; how the style of scenes was affected by hearing them spoken out loud; and how drastic changes were made after collaboratively interrogating the script. This thesis will serve as a template for my future work—to revisit my process and remind myself of the work required to produce a script that is ready for production; the collaborative workshopping with actors, directors, and dramaturgs this can involve; and the various stages of dissatisfaction that must be met in order to progress beyond them. It can be used to provide an insight for other writers into the various stages of process that have gone into crafting the final piece. Writing this play has been one giant learning curve, and I hope not only to retrace this methodology in the future, but also to continue questioning it, refining it, and augmenting it, as I come to further understand and develop the process required to write a play.

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Appendix — Proposed Development / Intended Use of Time and Resources for PWA National Script Workshop

22/06/12

There are a number of areas to explore and refine in the workshopping and redrafting of *Little Borders*. During a week-long development in May with director/dramaturg Corey McMahon and actors Elena Carapetis and Craig Behenna, a great deal of headway was made on the script, but there are several areas that require further investigation.

As part of the workshop, I will explore the different opportunities afforded by the soliloquies. Half of the scenes in this play are soliloquies, and they provide opportunities for the characters to step away from the world of the play and enter a confessional space, to reveal thoughts and stories to the audience that they do not even share with each other. Currently, Elle's soliloquies are stronger than Steve's. In her scenes, we move with the character as she begins her recollection, then slip into the present tense as the memories are brought to life. There is an immediacy to her scenes that is lacking from Steve's; his scenes could be more active and dramatically engaging, losing the anecdotal quality they currently have. Also, because of time constraints in the previous development, there was very little experimenting with the scenes on the floor. Dedicating time to this experimentation will enable me to judge the different options for how these soliloquies could be staged: whether they are spoken in static stillness, or whether the actors give them a physical life through movement. Identifying which of these staging choices is more effective will have a significant impact on the rewrites of

these scenes; if they work best accompanied by movement, I will strip back the language to let this physicality do the work.

In the week-long development, I also significantly rewrote scenes four and six. While they are now much stronger, they are far less developed than the other scenes. These two scenes provide me with a real opportunity that I'm not yet making the most of. Here we have the only time in the play where Elle and Steve are directly communicating with each other. There is no interview panel or journalist to impress, no confessional space that they occupy alone; they are simply talking to each other. These scenes will be examined in close detail in order to tease out and shape their relationship: to explore the balance of power between the two; the need for safety and security; and the slow and mutual rise in their hysterical paranoia. I will use these scenes to clearly establish where Steve is on this journey, so that by the end of the play the audience will understand how he can be complicit in an act of extreme brutality. As I consider Steve's journey, another question looms: is there a scene missing?

There is a large jump from scene seven to scene eight, which was a deliberate choice to ensure that the audience would not be privy to the planning of Elle and Steve's final, brutal act. Instead, they slowly learn what has transpired through hints in the final scene. However, I have not yet sufficiently shown the deterioration of Steve's sense of security to adequately explain his complicity in this final act. The addition of a new scene could assist in mapping this journey for the audience.

Working with actors, a director and a dramaturg as part of the National Script Workshop will provide me with an invaluable space and resources to

explore all of these aspects of the script. I hope to build on the work that has already taken place to maximise the strength and potential of this play. The exploration of fear and otherness at the heart of *Little Borders* could not be more timely. We are living in an age where our multicultural heritage is no longer seen as something to be celebrated; where our political leaders trade asylum seekers like playing cards, without a shred of human compassion; where those trying to breach our borders are feared and demonised; and where the borders we draw are getting closer and closer to home.