

PERFORMING “CAMP, VAMP & FEMME FATALE”:
REVISITING, REINVENTING & RETELLING THE LIVES OF POST-DEATH,
RETRO-GOTHIC WOMEN

Richard T. Ruane, B.A.

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APPROVED:

Kelly Taylor, Major Professor

Scott K. Simpkins, Minor Professor

John M. Allison, Jr., Committee Member

John S. Gossett, Chair of the Department of
Communication Studies

C. Neal Tate, Dean of the Robert B. Toulouse School of
Graduate Studies

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This thesis examines the production process for “Camp, Vamp and Femme Fatale,” performed at the University of North Texas in April of 1997. The first chapter applies Henry Jenkins’s theory of textual poaching to the authors’ and cast’s reappropriation of cultural narratives about female vampires. The chapter goes on to survey the narrative, cinematic and critical work on women as vampires. As many of the texts were developed as part of the fantasy role-playing game *Vampire: The Masquerade*, this chapter also surveys how fantasy role-playing develops unpublished texts that can make fruitful ground for performance studies. The second chapter examines the rehearsal and production process in comparison to the work of Glenda Dickerson and other feminist directors.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“While the male vampire story was a tale of domination, the female version was one of seduction. In the usual scenario a young man has to deal with an older supernatural temptress who somehow drains his energy, leaving him weak and desperate,” said James Twitchell in his book *The Living Dead: A Study of the Vampire in Romantic Literature* (39). He goes on to note, “. . . in each of these works a young man has been seduced by an older woman. . . and that, as a result of this action, the young man is introduced to the perplexities of manhood” (40). Because of this, he insists, for the female writer the female vampire is “unalloyed, hateful and repulsive.”

While Twitchell is writing about the female vampire as she occurred in the poetry of Coleridge and Keats, as well as the vampiric women of Charlotte Bronte’s novels, it would seem that, given the portrayal of vampiric women from the work of writers such as Bram Stoker and Sheridan Le Fanu, the situation had not changed drastically by the turn of the century. In fact, some might be lead to believe that the story of the vampire was inherently and irredeemably misogynistic. The problem with such an assumption is that it assumes that all vampire stories circulated are represented by marketed, published fiction. It assumes that all vampire stories are told for profit rather than self-expression.

Such an assumption would be patently untrue. Beyond the simple tales still occasionally told by children around flashlights during sleep-overs, many adolescents and adults are actively involved in telling vampire stories that are expressions of their own

life experiences. Almost every Saturday night, hundreds of individuals gather in various spaces across the United States, from private homes to parks, from community centers to hotel conference rooms. They come from various vocational, educational, economic, and social backgrounds and range in age from the early teens to the forties and even fifties. What brings them together is a game in which most of them take on the roles of vampires. For a few hours that evening, they interact with each other in the guise of a particular character distinct from themselves, weaving together a secret, largely invisible performance through their interactions.

As part of these performances, players often create biographies of the characters they portray. Some of these are simple sketches of the key details of the character's background. Others are extended pieces that include a variety of narrative perspectives, and occasionally include segments from the character's diaries, journals and correspondence. "Camp, Vamp & Femme Fatale" worked with stories generated by women in vampire fantasy games, looking at how the stories of women as vampires can subvert traditional understandings of women, their social roles, and their relationships. Following the work of anthropologists such as Victor Turner ("Anthropology") and Edmund Bruner, these unpublished narratives are examined as important expressions of the experiences of their players. Drawing on the character biographies of women, "Camp, Vamp and Femme Fatale" highlighted the subversive potential of fantasy biography and fantasy play.

The Nature of Fantasy Gaming

The people who are described above engage in a form of entertainment called fantasy role-playing games. Role-playing games may be live-action, with players taking on the roles of their characters and physically moving around a designated game area, which may be public or private. Tabletop games are those in which players remain in a smaller area and narrate or report the actions of their characters with little or no enactment, and computer mediated games use chat rooms, email, computer bulletin boards or Multi-User Domains (MUDs). All role-playing games take place in a particular world either designed by the players in the group or described in the game's contents and official or unofficial supplements. The world of the game is controlled by a referee, called variously the game master or storyteller, who narrates and dramatizes the events going on around the characters. The players create the characters that they will portray in the game.

The character biographies that this production was based on originated from three game systems: the tabletop role-playing game *Vampire: The Masquerade*; *The Masquerade*, a live-action version of *Vampire*, and *Vampire: The Dark Ages*, a version of *Vampire* set in the twelfth century. All three games are published and distributed by White Wolf Games Studios. *Vampire: The Masquerade* was the second-best selling individual game system in 1994, second only to the long-standing market-leader *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*. In part, *Vampire*'s success has been attributed to its higher-than average draw of players who enjoyed fantasy activities (historical and fantasy recreation, literary and media fandom, round-robin writing groups) but who had disliked

the strongly masculine traditions associated with many games and gaming groups (Amthor). Women and gay men in particular, who often otherwise enjoyed fandom and fantasy recreation activities (Jenkins), often found themselves alienated by what Gary Alan Fine calls the “locker room” atmosphere that pervaded most traditional gaming groups, often including stories that focused on rape and other forms of violence against women.

Fine noted the paucity of women in gaming in the early years of the role-playing hobby, having completed his research in the late 1970s, only a few years after *Dungeons & Dragons*, the original role-playing game, was released. My own evidence from gaming conventions, complimented by Fine and Amthor’s observations, suggests that women became more highly involved in fantasy role-playing after the release of a high number of dark fantasy games in the early 1990s, of which *Vampire: The Masquerade* (*V:TM*, released in 1991) was the leading seller.

Fine’s research and my own conversations with gamers attributed the lack of women in gaming to the masculine slant not only of game systems and players, but also to the stories the characters would perform: they stressed action and problem-solving over relationships and character development. One of the key changes in *Vampire: The Masquerade* was the strong emphasis on the relationships between characters and the development of character’s backgrounds and personalities. Accompanying materials and fan publishing emphasized background material and often included extensive amounts of game-related fiction and poetry. The first 12 pages of the *Vampire: The Masquerade* (*second ed.*) rule book were written in the form of a letter explaining vampiric existence

from a penitent Count Dracula to an aging Mina Harker. Other game supplements published by White Wolf included extensive narrative, entire books written as instruction manuals for young vampires, with very few formal rules included. Among its other changes, White Wolf represented a break with the traditional language with which rules were framed and described in rule books. Traditional terms borrowed from war gaming such as adventure, campaign (a series of adventures in a connected time-frame with the same characters), and game master, were dismissed and the words story, chronicle, and storyteller were used in their place. In addition, White Wolf's editors began to use inclusive language in their rule books and source books, including the generic feminine pronoun for undetermined antecedents. The *Vampire* rule books also began to cater to the objections that some women gamers had about other systems, among them was common objection to the common portrayal of women as dominatrix figures wearing armored bikinis, as noted in many online conversations with women gamers on [alt.games.whitewolf](#) and [rec.games.frp.storyteller](#). One of the most interesting developments was the stress placed on character backgrounds and biographies. While other systems had mentioned the development of character biographies before, White Wolf dedicated four pages of text in *Vampire: The Masquerade* and an entire chapter of *The Masquerade Player's Kit* to showing players how to develop character backgrounds. Some rule books included notes from the authors and play-testers about the spiritual and cultural significance of storytelling and how role-playing was a way of tapping into the storytelling tradition. Even before the first release of *The Masquerade* official rules, White Wolf was encouraging players to experiment with ways of playing their games

outside traditional role-playing and war-gaming formats. Together, these factors drew many women to White Wolf games who had never been involved in fantasy gaming before, and some who had been dissatisfied with, and often only marginally been involved in, games that encouraged more masculine systems and adventure stories, de-emphasizing the visual, tactile, and aesthetic dimensions of play.

Transformations in the Vampire Narrative

The stories we selected from in producing “Camp, Vamp & Femme Fatale” are Internet-published poachings. The word poachings was used by Henry Jenkins for narratives that are significantly adapted through the process of consumption. In this case the poached narratives are adaptations of popular fictions of the female vampire-monster, most widely distributed in the vampire film. While a handful of intentionally feminist films have been produced about the myth of the vampire, such as the 1989 adaptation of *Carmilla* entitled *The Vampire’s Kiss*, they are largely foreign films and have not met with the popular success of the other films mentioned below. The majority of popular vampire narratives present the female vampire as a threatening monster. Though a few comic films such as *Once Bitten* or romance/suspense films such as *The Hunger* downplay the horrific nature of the female vampire, the women in these films are still presented as threats that must be defeated (Flynn, Silver & Ursini). Though Barbara Creed asserts that vampiric women are horrific because of their association with blood, the “monstrous” women in such films as *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* (1992), *Bordello of Blood*, *Vamp* and *Fright Night 2* are presented as monstrous not because of their diet, but because they use sexually-charged contact to destroy virile, handsome young men.

Because the woman's vampiric attack is associated with the sex act and with the seduction of a young man, implied fellatio being a dominant metaphor, Creed's analysis of the *femme castratrice*, discussed further below, seems more applicable. The female vampire is a monster because she is a rapist/seductress and castrator/killer. The contrast between these film narratives and the real-life stories of women as victims of rape, humiliation and mutilation by men is frighteningly ironic.

The stories we found, created by women *Vampire* players are very different. In contrast to the narratives mentioned above, these stories portrayed human and vampiric males as the primary sources of violence. Against the violence of the male characters, some female characters are able to escape the violence of men; others are enabled to take revenge on the men who abuse them; others explore their roles as women who serve as mentors, leaders, and patrons in both vampiric and mortal societies.

Significance of the Study

The primary focus of this study was to use the narratives developed by women in fantasy games as the starting place for a predominately-collaborative feminist production. This production shows that a culturally subversive performance can be developed by a male director working with a cast of largely untrained female performers without resorting to traditional power-oriented directing methods or simply foisting all power onto a female "codirector" as recommended by John Lutterbie. This required a radical redefining of such key theater and performance concepts as director, assistant director, crew and actor. By redefining these roles, a system of collaborative production emerged that did not depart from its feminist political roots.

In addition, the script developed for this show demonstrates that poached texts and popular unpublished fantasy fiction can serve as challenging and rewarding source of performance material. Past psychological research has explored and criticized the capacity of fantasy role-playing games to aid in the process of development and adjustment, which Robert Coles notes is often a process of assimilation. No research has been done to highlight the subversive potential of fantasy role-playing. This silence is interesting because cultural power centers such as parents groups, right-wing religious leaders, police departments and schools have long insisted on the subversive potential of fantasy role-playing (Fine & Martin). The U.S. Secret Service has gone so far as to break into one gaming company's offices and seize their computers and files ("Steve").

Despite the paranoia of most hegemonic forces, the performance studies community has remained largely disinterested. Performance movements as otherwise diverse as the Dadaists, the Constructivists and the Surrealists stress the subversive importance of non-realism, and the Russian non-realist movements were especially associated with the early Bolsheviks (Goldberg). Kay Ellen Capo and Darlene M. Hantzis have discussed fantasy as a potentially subversive psychic strategy. Henry Jenkins has discussed the subversive potential of women's fantasy narratives arising from media fandom, and Victor Turner emphasizes the subversive potential of human fantasy and play. While all of these authors insist that fantasy, depending on its nature, may have a socially reifying effect, it is certainly surprising that little research has been done into the subversive or reifying potential of fantasy gaming. In generating narratives in the forms of character biographies, game-world histories and game-related fiction, players are creating and

distributing fantasy narratives outside of the commercial interests of traditional publishing. It stands to reason that performances of these narratives generated by women and other minority gamers bear a high potential for social criticism and consequent cultural subversion.

Review of Literature

The first study done on fantasy role-playing games was by Gary Alan Fine. His research culminated in his 1983 book *Shared Fantasy: Role Playing Games as Social Worlds*. Fine's work emphasized the collective nature of the gaming fantasies, and how they were mediated through a number of social frames, including the everyday-life world of the players, the game system rules, and the constructed fantasy world. Fine was also the first to notice the generally masculine orientation of most gaming narratives and the paucity of women who participated in fantasy gaming. Though Fine did mention the relationship between the narratives that gamers create and the published game worlds distributed by gaming companies and popular fantasy and science fiction novels, he did not apply theories of media or cultural reception charted later in Jenkins, and did not discuss the potentially subversive nature that fantasy play could have. His material, though ground breaking, is also now largely out of date: of the four games he surveys, two are now out of print (*Chivalry & Sorcery* and *Empire of the Petal Throne*) and two have gone through extensive revisions under a multitude of designers (*Dungeons & Dragons* and *Traveler*). Long-time players have aged, a significant number of new games have been released, women and other minority groups have increased levels of participation, and gaming has become an accepted part of media fandom, with games,

especially live-action games, being scheduled parts of most media conventions.

Additionally, Daniel Dayan has criticized Fine for his lack of analysis of the issue of a marketed subculture, though Dayan's criticism reflects many of his own misunderstandings about the gaming community, which develops and distributes a number of game systems and source materials for free through using public domain or "home-brew" systems and supplements. Games also extensively share rule-books within a gaming group and often spend little or no money on an individual gaming system. I have personally participated in a significant number of long-running games in which I did not own any rule books or spend any money in order to participate in the gaming group.

Subsequent academic research on role-playing has largely focused either on the rhetoric of the anti-gaming movement of the late 1980s (Fine & Martin), or on exploring the possibility of social or psychological deviance among fantasy game players (Abyeta & Forest, Carroll & Carolin, DeRenard & Kline). Psychological reports on fantasy gamers, all of which have focused exclusively on male players, have reported only that gamers are less likely to perform criminal acts, are less prone to develop psychoses (Abyeta & Forest), report slightly more masculine scores on psychological gender tests such as Bems (Carroll & Carolin) and experience a marginally higher degree of social alienation (DeRenard & Kline).

Related to the research being done on fantasy role-playing games, anthropologists such as Victor Turner and cultural critics such as Henry Jenkins have examined how human fantasy play in general and appropriations of media and cultural images in particular can serve socially and culturally subversive purposes. In his book *From Ritual*

to Theater, Turner addresses the potentially subversive capabilities of human play. Play, Turner asserts, is a liminoid event, existing not completely in and not completely outside of the structures of daily life. According to Turner, almost all liminoid phenomena involve temporarily overturning elements of the status quo, though most liminoid events assume a reversion to the status quo after the event is over. Some of these events, however, have the potential for subversion: to attack and critique the status quo by allowing participants from traditionally repressed communities to critically reflect and, therefore, potentially recognize the forces behind their oppression. Liminoid events are clearly distinguishable from the everyday world of paid and unpaid labor, which is often assigned and unchosen and dominated by mainstream political and economic processes, further allowing individuals to distance themselves from everyday experiences.

Elsewhere, Turner (“Anthropology”) and Edmund Bruner have discussed the importance of relationships between expressive artifacts such as stories, dramas, and games and the lived experience of the people who generate the artifacts. As Bruner asserts, it is largely through such expression that we can gain access to a group’s or person’s experiences.

Also discussed above, Jenkins has looked at the subversive nature of media-based fan fiction. Fan fiction, he asserts, represents women’s poachings, or renarratings, of the stories that most models of media-viewer interaction expect will be passively consumed. In fan fiction, women are able to selectively assimilate and discard those parts of a given narrative which they find oppressive, rather than simply acquiesce to the wishes of media producers. Jenkins identifies a number of social issues that women are able to critique through fan fiction, including the role of technology, relationships with men,

relationships between men, and the role of government. While Jenkins has not considered the collectively developed and played narratives of women gamers, his work certainly points to the theoretical grounding for understanding women's reception of the narratives given to them in the game worlds and to why such reinvention and refantasizing activities can be significant.

The Female Vampire in Cultural Studies & Criticism

A number of writers have surveyed the various developments of the vampire myth in folklore, literature and film (Holte, Morse). These writers stress the connection between the vampire myth and human sexuality in mythological stories of Lilith and Ghoul, historical accounts of vampirism such as Elizabeth Bathroy, and literary stories such as *Carmilla*. Though Morse discusses grotesquely shaped and deformed vampires more deeply associated with ancestor worship, what he designates as "peasant" or "revnant" vampires, the female vampires he discusses are all connected to sexuality. Morse also traces vampire myths as they are told and lived among blood-fetishists, though he fails to consider other groups who are engaged in vampire story-making such as fantasy gamers and fan writers and thus centers the entire vampire myth on blood consumption. Interestingly enough, Morse feels that if appropriated correctly, vampire stories could be used to relieve stress in ways that foster social and cultural assimilation, considering all subversive appropriations as pathologically connected to blood fetishism and delusions.

In her analysis of sex and gender roles in *Dracula*, Cyndy Hendershot says that stories of the vampire are less about blood and more about sexual identity. She claims

that in becoming a vampire, sex and gender are lost and one takes on the qualities of both men and women. Hendershot goes on to say that vampire stories appear most frequently in periods when sex and gender roles are confused. In *Sexual Persona*, Camille Paglia stresses the female vampire as a sexually threatening *vagina dentata*. As discussed above, Twitchell (*Living*) believes the story of the female vampire to point to a male coming-of-age rite, associating the female vampire with the seduction and disempowerment of the male, a theory that he also extends to most horror stories (*Dreadful*). Twitchell claims this even when the object of the female vampire's desire is expressly female, as in Coleridge's *Christabel* or Le Fanu's *Carmilla*, the story should be interpreted as symbolizing male/female relationships. Twitchell goes on to assert that because the female vampire's role as seductress threatens the female writer and reader, women did not generate stories of sympathetic female vampires during the romantic period. Ken Gelder, rather, points out the male paranoia and homophobia that is inherent in men's stories of female vampires such as *Carmilla* by Le Fanu. In *Carmilla*, the vampire is evil because she is lesbian, representing a threat both to the young women's virtue and to the established structures of male dominance.

Looking at the more contemporary and popularly influential narratives of film, Silver and Ursini dedicate two chapters of their book *The Vampire Film* to discussing the female vampire. Though they recognize a definite feminist politics behind the interpretations of some directors, they do not discuss the politics of status-quo maintenance in the more popular vampire films. Despite this shortcoming, they are the first to try to examine and discuss the variety of roles female vampires play in films,

including the roles of seductresses, dominatrixes, lesbian lovers and immortal destroyers. Interestingly, neither they, nor James Flynn in *The Cinematic Vampire*, discuss the relationships that vampiric women play in the lives of male characters, centering rather on lesbian relationships and the female vampire's destruction of other women. The most extensive analysis of the female vampire in film and its relationship to the threatening nature of female sexuality is Barbara Creed's *The Monstrous Feminine*. Though Creed links the monstrous nature of the female vampire to men's fear of the menstrual cycle, it is her discussion of the vampire as *femme castratrice* and her comparison of the toothed mouth to the *vagina dentata* that seems to best explain the sexual violence present in most vampire films.

Especially significant for understanding women creating stories about female vampires is Joan Gordon's article in which she notes a shift from men's narratives in which the vampire, male or female, is a monstrous figure fitting into the classical horror genre, to women's narratives. These narratives, Gordon says, emphasize the romantic and fantastic elements of the vampire story. Such elements as blood-drinking and blood-letting are downplayed or dismissed all together.

Performance Theory

The first avant-garde performance movements to take seriously the concepts of pantomime, the fantastic, the folkloric and the grotesque in this century were the Russian futurists and constructivists. Feeling there was an excessive reliance on and misuse of verbal communication within naturalist theater, Vsevolod Meyerhold and his

contemporaries began to explore the carnival, the fairground and the circus (Goldberg, Roose-Evans). As theater historian James Roose-Evans says of the period,

The grotesque, on the other hand, sharpened the senses by mixing opposites and creating harsh incongruities. It was a means of making situations and events startling and dynamic whereas the verisimilitude of realism depended upon the audience's familiarity with what was being portrayed and was therefore ultimately banal. (23-4)

These movements flourished immediately before and after the October revolution. They were, however, outlawed following the Stalinist takeover, and social realism again became the dominant force in the Russian performing arts (Goldberg, Roose-Evans).

In their work, Della Pollock and Michael Bowman have made connections between carnival and playfulness in performance and the literary theories of Mikhail Bakhtin. Bowman especially stresses that in novelizing the stage, the director seeks to emphasize heterovocality, difference and the "uncrowning" of privileged symbols and relationships.

A number of feminist performance theorists have also explored the potential possibilities of fantasy and carnival over and against the problems of social realism (Forte & Sumption, Kendall, Hamilton). Jeanie Forte and Christine Sumption discuss the importance of staging designs that are fluid and fluctuating, stressing the importance of staging internal mental processes such as dream and fantasy. Kendall stresses the importance of overdrawn types and the staging traditions of camp. Sabrina Hamilton finds it important to work closely with mythic and popular images borrowed from high

and low culture. In her essay, "Strategies for Subverting the Canon," Gay Gibson Cima also emphasizes the importance of staging the powers of the academy and its canon in order to critique their authority over the stage and to show how women are able to function within and against their structures. Cima stresses the importance of carnivalizing techniques: the use of contemporary popular imagery in staging and casting, miscasting, cross-dressing, abstract staging, audience participation, historical recreation, parody and experimentations with non-theatrical space.

Working on specific approaches to directing, I was particularly drawn to feminist director Glenda Dickerson's essay "Wearing Red," in which she celebrates the centrality of the cast of her production "*NO!*" *A Parlor Reading*. "Gone," she says, "was the pompous director's gaze, absent the royal director's chair" (161). However, she compares herself to a musician: "I played with fingers grown beautiful, on the instruments of their voices." Though the essay makes clear that cast members held some control over staging, they were always subject to the vision of Dickerson, the adaptor/director, and the presence of the author/producer, Alexis de Veaux. Though authority seemed almost inescapable in her production, the sense of affection and respect she held for each actor comes through in her careful chronicling of each actor's contributions to the overall show. How different her autobiographical advice is from traditional manuals for directors working with beginning performers:

Let's say a scene calls for an actor to carry a chair across the stage. Now there are two chairs next to each other that could be used. "Which chair would I carry?" ponders the actor. The set designer shrugs. "The one on

the left,” says the director. Why the one on the left? It's not important.

You see, it doesn't matter which chair is carried. What matters is that someone needs to decide. A director makes decisions. (Smyth 89)

At the more traditional extreme, Robert Smyth's book includes a set of “rules” that would be familiar to almost anyone from a traditional theater or performance background: “there will be no extra talking during rehearsals. (Go outside to talk.),” and, “actors never direct other actors. If you have ideas talk to the director” (105). This subservient approach to acting carries over into Smyth's approach to the script, “It is in the script of the play or sketch that the actor discovers the life of their [sic] character. From the moment the actor receives the script until the first performance, much time should be spent reading and re-reading it for the meat it holds” (131). For Smyth the actor's art lies in doing the will of the director and in honoring the author. This sense of directorial control is completely opposite the perspective of Dickerson who celebrates the role of the actor in creating meaning. In Dickerson's production, in fact, de Veaux added material specifically for certain performers. Dickerson speaks of her actors not in terms of their developing appreciation of their characters, but in developing appreciation of themselves.

Even more extreme in their difference from the traditional approaches to scripting and directing are the members of the Split Britches company. Instead of considering themselves “duty bound” to the script, the members of Split Britches use fantasy, play and brainstorming to generate material as a group (Hamilton). In fact, says Hamilton, the members of Split Britches do not even consider the audience, insisting that their expressed experiences are valuable in and of themselves, without audience approval

(138). Though Hamilton makes it clear that the company members are more directive in their work with young or new performers, even new performers are seen as having important and valuable contributions to make to the process of composing and producing the piece for the stage.

Production Concept

The production concept for “Camp, Vamp, & Femme Fatale” represented a deliberately feminist political show utilizing what Bowman called a novelization of the stage. The show was not only feminist in that it attempted a subversion of patriarchal storytelling and critical practices, sought to present women’s voices, and dealt with issues, such as male violence, which concern women. It was also feminist in that it was an experiment in new forms of director-company relationships built on collaboration, exploration, and play, as opposed to traditional relationships built on clear-cut authority, top-down organizational and decision-making patterns, and the conceptualization of rehearsal as work. As several feminist directors have noted (Forte & Sumption, Donkin, Lutterbie), I could not call myself a feminist director, trying to hear the voices silenced by patriarchal systems if I in turn silenced the voices of my cast through my reliance on traditional conceptions of a strict hierarchical director-company relationship.

The production is also what Bowman has called a novelized or carnivalized performance, relying on a mix of voices, speech genres and the overturning of traditional hierarchies. The show represents different voices in that it draws on the work of four different writers: three women, one a woman of color, and one man, not including the sketches developed in rehearsal by the cast or the critical commentary compiled and

developed by the cast and director. The show relies on a variety of speech genres, including didactic lecture, cultural satire, guided discussion, dominatrix show, monologue, storytelling, film, music, prose reading and comic sketch. The show upturns the traditional privilege of the publishing industry and the male writer in favor of women's writing and personal, autonomous distribution systems such as gaming communities and the Internet. In addition the show subverted academic space by staging a variety of speech acts in a lecture hall which has been prepared and presented for a lecture. The large majority of stage props were items already located in the lecture hall: chairs, tables, desks.

The show examined how women are able to poach, to use Jenkins' terminology, the traditional narratives of female vampires in which women commit acts of violence against men, and create stories that are expressive of the experiences of women as victims, escapees, avengers, and mentors. As mentioned above, the central texts this production was based on came from the written character biographies of two women engaged in fantasy role-playing games. The performance of these stories relied on counter-presentations of popular vampire narratives, popular and academic feminist critical voices, and a cutting from Bram Stoker's short story "Dracula's Guest." I chose to use Bowman's novelized staging techniques because they represent a staging practice much closer to that of the textual poacher: relying on emotional investment, humor, and appropriation and reappropriation of dominant cultural narratives. Jenkins notes that such practices constitute a more feminine style of reading. Textual poachers critique texts not by holding it away from them for examination but rather by holding tightly to

certain textual elements, feeling free to change or abandon those that do not fit into their value system. For this reason, Bowman's novelization and carnivalization were more appropriate adaptation and staging techniques than the now-traditional Brechtian techniques preferred by Breen.

CHAPTER 2

DISCUSSION

“Perhaps to have carnival in production, one must have carnival in rehearsal,” I wrote in my director's journal sometime after blocking the opening scene. Though I began the rehearsal process primarily interested in the writers and the script that would emerge from my interaction with women involved in fantasy role-playing, what soon took over was my interest in my cast. What began as their attempts to present what I had explored ended in our attempt to stage what we had learned in the process of exploring these texts as a group. In doing thus, we remained focused on the topics that had brought us all together, but we were also weaving those original texts together with our fun, our games, our exercises. What began as a performed ethnography of women writing about vampires, ended up a performed study of a group of women and men reading women writing about vampires. Often, one voice, most likely Maria Simone's or mine, rose to the forefront, but consistently, we were told by the cast, “we're with you in what you say.”

In examining the written responses of my cast to the rehearsal process and the journals I kept both during rehearsal and briefly after production, I have come to believe that the process we developed as a cast for writing, staging and performing the show are as important as the texts we developed, selected and used. In the second half of the post-production analysis, I want to look closely at the production process and what demands process makes on feminist directors.

Though my goal was certainly to be a feminist director, I was bound by considerations from which both the members of Split Britches (Hamilton) and Dickerson were largely free: I had made a commitment to a certain set of texts. In fact, I had made a commitment to privilege these texts in production because they otherwise existed in non-privileged and non-canonized formats. They were the writings of women writing on cultural margins and, as I discovered in my discussions with the writers, writing out of their own experiences. It would have been anti-feminist of me, who had chosen these texts specifically because they were free of the traditional commercial demands that published texts are subject to, to place my cast in too much of a position of power over these texts. While Hamilton speaks disparagingly of directors and performers who seek only to embody texts produced by others, this is exactly what I had set out to do. The challenge in front of me was to find a way to both honor the texts and empower the cast. The first thing I did was to take small groups of cast members out to meet with some of the women whose texts we would be considering. Then I let them generate a set of their own related texts. I then brought them the stack of texts I had collected from women role-players. They sorted through them and experimented with all of them. Then they made their choices. I had asked them to select three, but they chose four entries and then cast them through a volunteer process. Knowing that the voices of the women writers we were dealing with made more sense in the context of more typical vampire stories, I selected one, "Dracula's Guest" by Bram Stoker, and then drew on some that had developed in rehearsal. In consultation with cast-member Maria Simone, I generated the critical material to be used by the joker/narrator character Dr. Molly, then sat down and

edited it with cast-member Molly Fitzgerald. Molly enjoyed this process, remarking in her rehearsal report, “[not starting with a script] wasn't a bad thing, because in the end I had more liberty with my character.”

None of the cast members expressed any reservations about the actual material we selected. In fact a number, especially Geoff and Molly, who both identified themselves as the children of staunchly feminist mothers, expressed a strong understanding of the material. True to the predictions of Hamilton and the Split Britches company, many people who enjoyed the process were initially very uncomfortable with not having a script. Selecting and adapting the script was perceived as a “director” job, even though many also told me that they had no previous theater experience.

Geoff, a somewhat more experienced cast member who said that he later felt that the show had “changed for the better,” reported that he initially worried that, “with each rehearsal we couldn't be sure what was going to be changed. It left everyone guessing for a while in which direction we were headed....” The performers were definitely hesitant to assume control for the show's direction. Even Courtney, who said that she “liked that Richard involved us in the performance writing process from beginning to end. It really made me feel that I was an important part of the performance, that he cared about our ideas,” also said, “some of my fellow cast members would have liked a set script from the beginning.”

Other cast members were more direct: “Not having a script really stressed people out,” said Kevin. One cast member said what she definitely liked least was, “not having a script till about three weeks after we had been meeting.” Another said, “get the script

earlier.” But even these cast members did not want a total change: “I really liked that we had so much input into scripting and staging, though. It made me feel like a real part of the show,” said one on the next line after commenting on the early need for a script. Kevin added, “keep up the open mind for suggestions.”

Perhaps one solution to the contradictions is to be more direct with the cast about the need for their own contributions and responsibility for producing the script. Instead, I feel we had spent too much time discussing our commitments to the writers we were using. This is largely because the show existed somewhere on the ground between a feminist performance, performed ethnography, and Bakhtinian carnival. This frustration over the script also was caused by several changes that were made from the type of texts we were exploring when we started (interviews) and the type we were exploring a month later when we began work on the script (character biographies).

A second area of concern I wanted to explore was the cast's relationships with each other. As one of the members of Split Britches told Hamilton,

“It sounds real corny to say this, but in order to do this kind of work, you have to go to a place that's a lot about love. I mean, it's about that openness.” [The members of Split Britches] describe their work as coming from a “prepolitical” place in which unconditional trust must be established before one can build the politics. Ultimately, this kind of subversion seems to be generated from a sense of spirituality and a sense of humor. (143)

Thus, the challenge my cast faced was in learning to deal with each other in a way that was about respect, that acknowledged that one of the most important political accomplishments they could make in the rehearsal process was to become friends. This challenge was especially difficult because any real discussion of sexism, especially when it includes such graphically enacted portrayals of rape and oppression, relies on people being able to trust each other. Especially in regard to the rape scene in the Aphra story, Rochelle had to trust Geoff, as well as both of them trusting both me and Charlet (the cast member who volunteered to co-direct the scene with me). I also had to trust and listen to other cast members in their own concerns about Rochelle's comfort with the scene.

When Rochelle hesitated about a suggestion I had made, I had to know I could rely on Maria to translate the hesitation into the actual feelings of female cast members about the rape scene. This was one of the strengths of the rehearsal process as we approached it.

By the time we started seriously examining what we wanted to include in the script, cast members trusted each other enough to listen to and learn from each other. It is important to admit here that power-relationships were almost impossible to avoid: of the 14 other people, besides myself, who worked with the show at some point or another, including two people who withdrew from the cast, ten were in classes I was teaching. During the course of our semester-long relationship, I had to grade performances, tests, quizzes, and other presentations. They specifically auditioned for the show in order to earn extra credit for the classes. For this reason both Maria and Melissa, as they were two people who had worked with the cast from the beginning but had no official titles, played important roles in mediating between the cast and I. Because Maria was my colleague

and Melissa was a long-time friend, the power-relationships were equitable. Their situations allowed them to serve as go-betweens for cast members who remained more reserved and to represent cast members who were initially hesitant to speak during times when I was specifically working on grading classroom presentations.

I had several reservations about whether this task of bringing a disparate group of people together and developing a cohesive, trusting group was possible. I had a number of concerns about whether any trust could be built. Some specific areas of concern were my minority cast members as well as my male cast members. During the rehearsal process, I wrote in my journal,

The. . . most frightening thing for me, is that my racial minority cast members are so. . . excluded during much of the process. They make the fewest decisions. They came to the fewest rehearsals. They participate the least. It wasn't until this week that we knew anything about Rochelle. It wasn't until the cast circle, a week before production, that Jilly told us anything about herself. Olivia, who was a good friend, left school to go home.

This lack of participation on their part seriously concerned me. In addition, though Maria and I believed very strongly in the script's contents, I was concerned that Geoff and Kevin would perceive much of the content as male bashing. Though I knew going in that Brad, my assistant director, had previous work experience with a feminist director, and Geoff obviously became more comfortable with the material during rehearsal, Kevin's reticence to comment on the material concerned me,

I had worried about Kevin, especially, Geoff was more communicative, more vocal about what bothered him or what he didn't understand. I wondered how he felt being a straight white boy in the obviously feminist production. Geoff was there too, but vocal, and expressive and telling us what his concerns were. He took "abuse" well, and attributed it to his staunchly feminist mother. "Rehearsal is my favorite part of the day," Geoff told me. Brad also vocalized his concerns, but Brad was gay and open, he was, I guess, "untainted" by accusations of rape or gaze or objectification -- he might have experienced similar things himself. But Kevin's quietness worries me. He is prone to just sit there, to do whatever is asked, to offer very few opinions.

However, cast feedback contradicted many of my concerns. Rochelle commented that the thing she enjoyed most about being in the show was getting to work with the cast. Kevin also felt that he had made a lot of new friends and, interestingly, invited the whole cast to hear his band at Mr. Gatti's the next weekend (most of them came, including myself).

Other cast members also specifically stated how significant working with the cast was to their participation in the production.

"The best thing about the show was the friendships that came out of it," said Molly.

"I made so many new friends, and this cast bonded and stuck together," said Geoff.

Courtney said, “I really enjoyed bonding with the other cast members during the first month of rehearsals. I think this is why we worked together as a cast, because we really knew each other and how to work with each other.”

The cast also agreed on the role of the director in setting up the atmosphere for this kind of interaction. One cast member wrote,

. . . Richard did not yell at us. . . [he] was a very flexible as a director. He did not go crazy when things went wrong. He kept his cool. . . The staging process was very fun. He, again, involved us in the process from beginning to end.

. . . During rehearsal in high school it was all business, not a fun experience! I actually looked forward to rehearsal. We were given lots of breaks and Richard would see when we were getting tired and let us go home. He did not punish or torture us like my other directors did.

“I feel. . . the way Richard was able to detect how the cast was feeling is his greatest asset,” said Geoff. “If there was a sense of frustration or tension, Richard would stop what we were doing and handle the situation, rather than ignore it and let it fester. I also liked the way Richard allowed us input. . . If we didn't like the way. . . something looked or felt we were able to speak up. . .”

“This was different from any other rehearsal I've taken part in,” said Molly. “In most rehearsals, the feeling wasn't as warm, but it was a wee bit more formal and organized.” All cast members turning in critiques mentioned that they especially considered the production “fun.” These results lead me to believe that one of the key

challenges facing the feminist director is to challenge the prevailing idea that performance is a highly organized activity, with discrete roles to be played by writers, directors, and actors, with all being assigned specific tasks for the completion of the final product. Instead, the feminist director's job is to overturn all roles and all expectations. Actors write and make blocking decisions; directors facilitate and help to create an atmosphere. The whole process is messy and unorganized, personal and fun. The feminist director has to recognize as significant the day-to-day feelings and concerns facing all the other members of the performing company. She must empower them when they want to be submissive and challenge them to add their voices to the voices of the overall production process. This variation on the directorial role is, perhaps, the most significant contribution of feminist theater.

APPENDIX A

SCRIPT

CAST

GK: Geoff

MF: Molly

RB: Rochelle

CW: Charlotte

CO: Courtney

MM: Melissa

MS: Maria

JH: Jamie

K: Kevin

HB: Holly

[Open with scene from *Bram Stoker's Dracula*]

GK: As I looked there came a cold shiver in the air, and the snow began to fall. I thought of the miles and miles of bleak country I had passed, and then hurried on to seek shelter of the wood in front. Darker and darker grew the sky, and faster and heavier fell the snow, till the earth before and around me was a glistening white carpet the further edge of which was lost in misty vagueness. The road was here but crude, and when on the level its boundaries were not so marked as when it passed through the cuttings; and in a little while I found that I must have strayed from it, for I missed underfoot the hard surface, and my feet sank deeper in the grass and moss. Then the wind grew stronger and blew with ever increasing force, till I was fain to run before it. The air became icy- cold, and in spite of my

exercise I began to suffer. The snow was now falling so thickly and whirling around me in such rapid eddies that I could hardly keep my eyes open. Every now and then the heavens were torn asunder by vivid lightning, and in the flashes I could see ahead of me a great mass of trees, chiefly yew and cypress all heavily coated with snow.

I was soon amongst the shelter of the trees, and there in comparative silence I could hear the rush of the wind high overhead. Presently the blackness of the storm had become merged in the darkness of the night. By-and-by the storm seemed to be passing away, it now only came in fierce puffs or blasts. At such moments the weird sound of the wolf appeared to be echoed by many similar sounds around me.

Now and again, through the black mass of drifting cloud, came a straggling ray of moonlight which lit up the expanse and showed me that I was at the edge of a dense mass of cypress and yew trees. As the snow had ceased to fall, I walked out from the shelter and began to investigate more closely. It appeared to me that, amongst so many old foundations as I had passed, there might be still standing a house in which, though in ruins, I could find some sort of shelter for a while. As I skirted the edge of the copse, I found that a low wall encircled it, and following this I presently found an opening. Here the cypresses formed an alley leading up to a square mass of some kind of building. Just as I caught sight of this, however, the drifting clouds obscured the moon, and I passed up the path in darkness. The wind must have grown colder, for I felt myself shiver as I walked; but there was hope of shelter, and I groped my way blindly on.

I stopped, for there was a sudden stillness. The storm had passed; and, perhaps in sympathy with nature's silence, my heart seemed to cease to beat. But this was only momentarily; for suddenly the moonlight broke through the clouds showing me that I was in a graveyard and that the square object before me was a great massive tomb of marble, as white as the snow that lay on and all around it. With the moonlight there came a fierce sigh of the storm which appeared to resume its course with a long, low howl, as of many dogs or wolves. I was awed and shocked, and I felt the cold perceptibly grow upon me till it seemed to grip me by the heart. Then while the flood of moonlight still fell on the marble tomb, the storm gave further evidence of renewing, as though it were returning on its track. Impelled by some sort of fascination, I approached the sepulchre to see what it was and why such a thing stood alone in such a place. I walked around it and read, over the Doric door, in German--

COUNTESS DOLINGEN OF GRATZ

IN STYRIA

SOUGHT AND FOUND DEATH

1801

On the top of the tomb, seemingly driven through the solid marble--for the structure was composed of a few vast blocks of stone--was a great iron spike or stake. On going to the back I saw, graven in great Russian letters: 'The dead travel fast.'

And now a perfect tornado burst upon me. The ground shook as though thousands of horses thundered across it; and this time the storm bore on its icy wings, not

snow, but great hailstones which drove with such violence that they might have come from the thongs of Balearic slingers--hailstones that beat down leaf and branch and made the shelter of the cypresses of no more avail than though their stems were standing corn. At the first I had rushed to the nearest tree;but I was soon fain to leave it and seek the only spot that seemed to afford refuge, the deep Doric doorway of the marble tomb. There, crouching against the massive bronze door, I gained a certain amount of protection from the beating of the hailstones, for now they only drove against me as they ricocheted from the ground and the side of the marble.

As I leaned against the door, it moved slightly and opened inwards. The shelter of even a tomb was welcome in that pitiless tempest and I was about to enter it when there came a flash of forked lightning that lit up the whole expanse of the heavens. In the instant, as I am a living man, I saw, as my my eyes turned into the darkness of the tomb, a beautiful woman with rounded cheeks and red lips, seemingly sleeping on a bier. As the thunder broke overhead, I was grasped as by the hand of a giant and hurled out into the storm. The whole thing was sosudden that, before I could realize the shock, moral as well as physical, I found the hailstones beating me down. At the same time I had a strange, dominating feeling that I was not alone. I looked towards the tomb. Just then there came another blinding flash which seemed to strike the iron stake that surmounted the tomb and to pour through to the earth, blasting and crumbling the marble, as in a burst of flame. The dead woman rose for a moment of agony while she was lapped in the flame, and her bitter scream of pain was drowned in the thundercrash. The last

thing I heard was this mingling of dreadful sound, as again I was seized in the giant grasp and dragged away, while the hailstones beat on me and the air around seemed reverberant with the howling of wolves. The last sight that I remembered was a vague, white, moving mass, as if all the graves around me had sent out the phantoms of their sheeted dead, and that they were closing in on me through the white cloudiness of the driving hail. . .

MF: Thank you. . . Stop!

Now, before we get underway, let's take a look at this -- shall we? By the way, I'm Molly Fitzgerald and welcome to "Camp, Vamp & Femme Fatale," our look at post-death, retro-gothic women. Tonight we're going to look at vampire stories -- hopefully better than the one you just saw, which was the unpublished opening to Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Now, taking a look at what we have heard, a few things come to mind.

First of all, can anyone tell me where male vampires like Count Dracula get to spend their time? Come on. Fess up. Ok -- everyone in here was a jock in high school and obviously didn't read? You there -- you look like you spent a few lonely evenings in high school, did you get around to reading *Dracula*? Oh put your hand down Dr. _____, darling, we all know you can't read.

Right, right. Safely locked up in castle, hidden away, underground in a coffin.

Now, where is our beautiful young countess? Lying out on a table in the middle of an unlocked mausoleum where any fool can come by and look at her. And who would want to look at her?

Of course, if anyone comes by and looks at her, what happens. HE -- and honey I mean he, who else wanders the countryside fantasizing about finding a beautiful available woman just passively lying around? -- loses his life -- yes, power --yes, innocence -- yes. Do we have any mothers here -- lock up your virginal sons and boyfriends. So the male writer wants to fantasize about the ravishing beauty lying about in the cemetery, he goes in -- he looks around, he enjoys -- and then, whose the bad guy -- she is: she ferocious, animalistic, dangerous, and vain. He gets his cheap thrills and he gets to call himself a victim -- who do you think wrote this story ladies.

To borrow a phrase from that great media theorist John Fiske, the male writer creates the female vampire character to express his fantasies of hypersexuality. She's sexual beyond the bounds of reality, waiting for the next guy to come along, no matter what he looks like so she can do anything he wants, and he still gets to play innocent. I do wonder who writes these stories.

ALL: *(to men)* Get over yourself.

MF: This show isn't about traditional stories of women vampires who are:

CW: Monsters.

RB: Sex Objects.

CO: Threats to male purity.

MF: These are stories about vampires from women writers. Here you are going to hear not only about innocent women who have fought off the vampire's curse, but also about Aphra, a female vampire who slowly takes revenge on the men who raped her; and Mary Jane Ploughman, who fought back against the self-righteous

fanatics who were destroying her kind. You'll also see traditional stories, complete with villainous women and their male victims (Oh that's a problem in our society) -- but these are only for points of contrast -- their our "Straw Men" if you will. They serve as original sources -- backdrops -- against which these women have decided to tell their own stories -- stories that delve into the secret histories of women's experiences, women's thoughts, and women's daydreams and nightmares. These vampires do not meet the traditional images of mentors, destroyers, defilers, but rather are reinventions -- these are stories of immortal women who serve as patrons and avengers. Victims and escapees. We begin with the story of Isabella.

CO: I had read an excerpt in a book that stated, "The Church had further taught women that their children belonged more to God than to themselves, thus eroding the instinctive maternal possessiveness that fosters the best of child care. Not illogically, mothers often left their unwanted children for God to care for."

I decided on an Italian noblewoman who'd had an indiscretion with a man not her husband, and became pregnant. Because the lover was of Moorish descent, the child would very likely betray her mother's affair simply by being an inconvenient color. So the woman fled to Paris (nice metropolis, she had a townhouse there, and no questions) to have the baby, and left it at a convent/foundling home.

The baby girl, Isabella, was radiantly beautiful, and became a darling of the convent. She had a wonderful pure voice, and a shining devotion primarily to the Virgin Mary, but baby Jesus was okay, too. :-)

Having no family and therefore no

prospects, she wanted only to grow up and take her vows. Unbeknownst to her, she **did** have family.

Cristofero Giovanni, extra-ordinarily ill-behaved vampire wannabe (he was a vampire's servant at the time), had discovered his mother's indiscretion and blackmailed her in exchange for not revealing the existence of the child. He took over the Paris townhouse so that he might watch over the guilty secret more closely. From his vantage point, he watched young Isabella grow into beautiful young-womanhood, captivated by her purity. Her dark skin was like caramel to him, and at the sight of her in her white lace Confirmation dress, he knew that he had to have her. Soon. He would wait as long as he could...

He arranged to have her kidnapped and Embraced by his vampire lord so that she would be captured at her most radiant and perfect. Once she was Embraced, he knew that anything that he did to her would be healed, and so he took full advantage of that. A lot. Afterwards, in a fit of guilt, he pampered her in the extreme. He brought her only the blood of white doves in a crystal wineglass. She wore white lace gowns, velvet ribbons, and wanted for nothing. Except of course, her freedom.

Frightened and stunned into cooperation, she did as she was asked, but begged forgiveness in her prayers every morning before going to sleep. Cristofero's attacks and attempts at making up for them further confused the poor girl, and their master decided to put a stop to it by embracing Cristofero (in hopes that he'd stop the nature of his attacks). It worked, sort of. He simply switched to feeding from her instead.

It took the massive chaos caused by the French Revolution to enable Isabella to escape. The world outside her home was hellish, and she was completely unable to care for herself. Since she didn't know how to feed, she subsisted on the bloody water from the Parisian gutters. She spent nights in the doorways of cathedrals singing praises to the Virgin, and her nights curled up in a mausoleum in Pere Lachaise cemetery. It was one of these nights that she was found and adopted by the Toreador Celestine, who overheard Isabella singing. . .

MF: Like the writer of Isabella, some women writers have used the vampire story to name and condemn violence against women. In some of those stories the vampiric male victimizes, or is tempted to victimize the mortal female:

JAMIE'S STORY (An improv monologue by Jamie)

MF: However, as those of us who've suffered through Mina Harker's cringing virtuosity in Stoker's *Dracula* know, too often male writers can turn the theme of victimization against female characters. The woman's position of victim gives male writers a pulpit from which to control and patronize women and insure their place as a dominant social force. All too often, it might be argued, men are telling stories like this to remind themselves they are needed, desired, and wanted -- all their jealousy, protectiveness, and paternalism are, after all, necessary for our survival.

But what happens if the story is completely turned around? What if the hunters are the victimizers and vampires are the victims?

MS: November 12, 1969

San Francisco

Dear David,

MM: Mary Jane Ploughman was born to peasant parents in the spring of 1653 in a small village in Kent, England. However, life was not easy for a farm girl of that era and her parents were very harsh, her father abusive and her mother a cowed alcoholic. At the age of 17 Mary Jane ran away to London to escape her dreary upbringing and soon found work as one of the first actresses on the English stage. Mary Jane had a natural talent for acting, as well as the other half of the job requirements for an actress: upscale prostitution. Her career was not particularly remarkable, but she earned a steady wage and attracted the attention of King Charles II and his courtiers. Charles II had a weakness for actresses, and she was for a short time one of his many mistresses. Yet he tired of her as he did the others, and she became attached to the Earl of Rochester. During this time she made the acquaintance of Sir Richard Mastershire, the illegitimate half-brother of the Duke of Buckingham and himself an amateur playwright. Mastershire was taken with Mary Jane, and composed plays with her in mind as the lead actress. These plays were pitiful, however, and never were accepted by any company for performance.

By the summer of 1678, Mary Jane had given birth to a child, the son of her lover Rochester. Unfortunately, the child lived only a few weeks before succumbing to a common childhood disease and quickly died. Mary Jane was distraught beyond belief, and her despair and depression led her to attempt to take her own life in October of 1678, just three days after the child's demise.

MS: You're out again on your nightly hunt, searching for the enemy, the prey you are sworn to destroy. You are always so careful, watching for those who may be hunting you, those Hunters who may decide instead to put a stake through your own bitter and black heart. Yes, David, my dear clever one, you are so smug in your trappings and so confident in your own abilities that you fail to notice that the enemy lies here, in the bed that you vacate every evening just after sunset.

MM: Fate was to allow Mary Jane to meet death that night, but not in the form that she had anticipated. As she slit her wrists and watched the red life pouring from them, Sir Richard Mastershire, *a vampire of the Toreador clan*, stealthily stole up behind her. Taking her gushing wrists to his mouth he began to drink deeply of the blood that issued. Mary Jane was by that point already too weak to argue, or even to care. She thought she was dying and had no concern for the madman who wanted to drink her final blood. Mastershire could not bear to see the woman of his obsession pass over into death, and so that night he embraced her.

MS: Did it not seem strange to you that we kept the same hours, or did my theater lifestyle become an excuse for you to notice that I, too, arise after the sun sets and fall to slumber near dawn? Hunter and Hunted must keep the same schedule if either of us is to succeed.

Oh yes, I know exactly who and what you are David. I'm probably quite foolish to even be writing this, for fear that my plans may go awry and you may escape to your comrades. Yet it is my turn to be overconfident, and I cannot help but to take a final moment to utterly humiliate you and expose you for the complete fool that you have shown yourself to be. Within minutes of your discovering this letter,

you will be dead, but you might as well sit back and relax, for my tale may interest you.

MM: Time passed quickly for Mary Jane. She remained in the theater though grew distant from Mastershire quickly. In 1690 she moved to Paris where she settled into the Court of Louis XIV (the Sun King) and became a part of his personal performance/entertainment retinue. She returned to London several years later, in 1750, to act in the great comedies by Sheridan and Goldsmith. In 1800 she traveled to New York, remaining there until 1910, and being involved in the early days of that city's great theatrical traditions. But her wanderlust took hold in 1910 and she circulated Europe, diving into the great experimental theaters that thrived in that period. Dadaists, Surrealists, Futurists, Expressionists...she worked with them all.

MS: Oh, and speaking of your death...you've only been kept alive these past six weeks because of my protection. I wanted the chance to uncover your secrets, to weed out of your subconscious the names of your companions, your comrades. But now I have had more than ample time to pry into your mind, and I can abide your smug, self-righteous face no longer. I suppose I shall have to make penance for your death, but I shall relish the painstaking hours spent on another masterwork, for of all souls on this planet you deserve this fate.

MM: She found herself in Berlin in 1933 when Hitler came to power, and loving art more than her own honor she did all that she could to A) stay alive and B) stay working. Unfortunately during the war she compromised many of her principles just to save her life. She fell victim to *those who used* her as a pawn in their wars

against other clans. She became the mistress to some of the most cruel of the SS officers, and at one point she was responsible for the persecution of other vampires who still remained in Germany. Her conscience is still utterly tormented to this day by the atrocities she witnessed or aided in, and this is her dark secret.

MS: Oh David...so many of us have you slain, yet you are still so trapped by your misinformation. You've killed what, 12, 14 of us yet cannot recognize a vampire in your own bed? Tsk tsk, hunter. Is it because I can eat food, drink wine and sometimes stay awake in the daytime? Granted I cannot walk in the sun, but I was able to maintain a drowsy consciousness enough times in lazy autumn afternoons that you were fooled, and you never questioned my nocturnal lifestyle. Or were you thrown by the warmth of my skin and the color of my flesh? Oh I certainly hope so, I spent enough energy making myself warm to fool you. <<SNIP>>

MM: After the war she returned to New York and performed in many of the great 1950s musicals on Broadway. Her creative itch flared up again during the 1960s when groups in California began reviving some of the methods of the avante garde theater she had loved in the 20s, so she hastily moved to San Francisco to work with the performance art groups and experimental theaters, changing her name to the hippie inspired Hyacinth. While there she was instrumental in the discovery and death of a feared vampire hunter, her cunning and acting abilities worked to her advantage and saved the lives of several kindred of California.

MS: So now you know the truth, David. David MacDonnell, prize vampire hunter, has been deceived by his own worst nightmare....

Do enjoy death, David. I know I did.

Hyacinth

MF: In Hyacinth's story, the hunter hunted relationship is turned on its ear. We are forced to reconsider whether we are simply to believe what we've always been told about who the "good" guys and "bad" guys are. The typical story of vampire hunters, fighting fiercely to protect people from the forces of darkness, goes something like this:

DRAC FILES (An improvisational *X-Files* parody)

MF: But let's stop again. Notice who we are hearing here -- whose side is told? Anyone? Anyone? A guess why these vampire women are terrorizing the coroner's office? We'll never know. They were never asked. The hunters -- aptly renamed agents -- are the staunch defenders of the common good. Or are they quietly working to silence those women who refuse to take "it" lying down?

CW: She was a very pretty little girl. Her black hair curled about her face naturally, not in ringlets but in wispy waves. Very pretty. Certainly not like her father, in fact she did not resemble him at all, the strong, blond and rather plain baker of the village. No, indeed she had a certain air of nobility about her even as a very young child. Village gossips said she was the child of a fae prince who seduced her mother one Beltane eve. Village cynics said she was the child of the Earl's third son, Thomas. Her father said it didn't matter to him one bit, she was the child of his beloved wife, who died in her birthing.

Aphra was always a curious sort...shy when the other children were loud; curious when the other children were carefree; wise when the older children were foolish. She spent most of her time with her "aunt" who was the village midwife. She

preferred to spend her afternoons helping Marianne harvest herbs and grind them into healing potions. As Aphra grew, Marianne taught her small bits of herb lore, and lots of fictional folktales. Aphra was a very intelligent child, and knew that Marianne was holding back, but she was complacent and too shy to push for more.

Life changed radically when Aphra was 14. Betrothed rather unwillingly to Andrew Smithson, the local blacksmith, she was preparing herself mentally for the life of a village wife and mother. She had always loved water and bathed as often as she could, this time singing softly to herself a wedding melody while swimming in the nearby lake. Unbeknownst to her, she was being watched by a rogue...the son of the Lord of Northumberland had stopped at the lake to refresh his horses while traveling back to London after a holiday. This nobleman's son was very arrogant indeed and was spoiled into believing that everything he saw belonged to him or should belong to him. Peasants were but playthings for the noble class, and this luscious lass before him was certainly a thing he wanted to play. It was only a few minutes before he began his brutal attack and raped her, carving his sign into her upper arm as he whispered over and over "You are mine. You belong to me. No one else will want you after I have finished so you might as well come with me now." He pulled her struggling toward his horse, intending to kidnap her and keep her as his slave but somehow she broke free of his hold and dashed into the forest. She ran for what seemed like hours before ending up at the forest hut of Marianne, where she collapsed in a faint.

Never again was she the same. A fire burned in her eyes, and in her soul, crying out for revenge against the rogue who had stripped her of her chastity and robbed her of her dignity. Her father, the quiet and compassionate man tried to be supportive, but was too firmly entrenched in the doctrine that the nobility could do as they pleased to help her in her plans. She turned instead to Marianne, who saw the anger burning her in eyes and knew the damage deep in her soul. Marianne began teaching her in earnest everything she knew of herbal lore, both the positive and negative potions and effects. Unfortunately, Marianne's poor education left much to be desired by Aphra, now that her bright curiosity had a target. Near Christmas, Aphra stole away from the village on a borrowed horse and managed to sneak her way into the castle of their lord, where the Northumberland family was spending the feast days. A mangled attempt to poison the rouge son almost ended in discovery and death but for the odd nature of the man who discovered her plot. Rainald was the Chief Advisor to Lord Northumberland, a wise and trusted man who had a curiosity much like Aphra's own. His fascination was death, and the power one could gain over humans when one holds the threat of death over them. Indeed, Rainald was of the undead himself, a member of the Cappadocian clan and a master of lies, deceit and trickery. He was an outcast among his own kind for the barbarous events he had caused, and for betraying his own brothers when it suited his purposes. Rainald manipulated Aphra's fears and claimed her for his servant. He threatened to expose her plot to the noblemen if she did not cooperate fully, and his powerful persuasions coerced her acquiescence. Rainald was a man of great greed, but also

a master of deception. His plan was to present Aphra at the banquet as the abused daughter of a minor lord and challenge the rogue to admit his guilt. Once sentenced of rape, only Aphra's guardian could determine the fate of this unruly boy. Of course, his lord was most anxious for the fate of his son, and offered Aphra and Rainald great rewards in exchange for his life.

After the feasting days had ended, Aphra was installed in the household of Lord Northumberland as a lady in waiting to his wife, yet both her debt to Rainald and her hatred of the rogue remained. She learned to play the part of the nobleman's daughter flawlessly, and her beauty was greatly admired by visitors. Gradually Rainald revealed to her his true nature, and that he desired to make her his pupil in the black arts that she may gain her revenge against the boy while still keeping the new position she had attained and without tarnishing his power over the Lord. Of course, he was a very demanding master, and required many demeaning acts of service in exchange for his teaching. He prostituted her to visiting lords when it suited him, fed upon her with sexual abandon, often leaving her weak and upon the point of death. His cruel nature both broke and refined her spirit, molding her into a being like him, yet hating him.

After several months, she became a strong woman, devouring not only his teachings but also the herbcraft and medical lore of the surgeons and scholars. She learned to manipulate mortal men with her body and spirit, while extracting from them promises of devotion. Still, her need for revenge burned deep within her, and her insatiable fixation with life and death drove her into deep study. After two

years of abuse and torture, Rainald finally embraced his "sweet Aphra" into a life of darkness.

The rogue? He married, but his poor wife miscarried all of his children until one year she gave birth to a beautiful red haired little girl with bright green eyes. What a pity her "father" was of dark hair, dark eyes and thick bones. He became the laughingstock of the entire royal court, for it was quite obvious what red haired bard had sired his wife's child.

Poor, poor Rainald failed to see the power and strength of will within his little Childe. Within 3 more years she had drained him to the point of death and held him barely alive for days, staked and lying on the dungeon floor before finally drinking his soul.

MF: Hyacinth and Aphra, far from reckless monsters, are careful, methodic avengers working against those, especially men, who would use sex and class to their own advantage -- who destroy what they fear and what they do not understand. Yet we continue to fear those who are different than us, or should I really say "we."

When Jane Donnwerth surveyed pulp magazines of the 1920's and 30's, she found that while men wrote about bug-eyed monsters, women wrote stories about alien beings who were beautiful, hospitable, and friendly. Other critics have noticed that while women write stories of romantic, sensual, sympathetic vampires, men write stories continue to be dark and horrific:

THE VAMPIRE QUEEN (An improvised vampire dominatrix sketch)

MF: OK Stop! Let's take a look at this. Look at this scene! If the critics who say that vampire fantasy's emerge as especially popular during periods of confusion over

sex roles are right. Could it be this scene -- adapted from movies like *The Hunger* -- represents what men fear most from women finding places of authority in old male-dominated institutions: the dominatrix demon who kills, emasculates, enslaves, destroys?

If so, what do women imagine such a role or place to be?

HB: My love, I know not where to begin my tale, though I feel it in my heart necessary to explain myself to you. It has taken me almost five hundred years to return to this spot, the location at which you met your final death. This homage is soothing, bringing a new peace to my wearied and tortured soul as I engage in this exercise of reflection. But first I must tell my tale to you, once we shared every thought and experience, now I am compelled to relate to you the story of my nights since your untimely demise.

Do you remember, in that oblivion where you now lie, how you came to make me into the creature that I am? Does your soul recall those sweet and tender nights when as a young woman of only 17 I was pressed into your service as a model for your glorious art? I would sit before you for hours, holding a pose you a set for me while your fingers recorded my likeness for eternity. Our love grew between us like a flower opening its petals in the pale light of the moon. Two short years later you gave me the kiss of death that would make is lovers and friends for the seventy years that passed before your soul met its final end in this square. We were happy in those times, you with your painting and me at your side, as lover, wife, model, and assistant. From you I learned the ways of the vampire but also the ways of art...watching your masterful strokes of the brush I felt joy at

watching you create yet sorrow that I could not join you in that pleasure. I contented myself with the social position we held at the time, for your fame as an artist had spread across Italy during those middle days of the Renaissance. As your wife I learned to play the perfect hostess, not only for your mortal friends but also for our fellow vampires as we hosted some of the most magnificent balls that Italy had ever seen...no, perhaps than Italy has ever seen, for I doubt that few of today's Social climbers could equal our great combination of creativity and planning...

Ah, my love, too quickly those years ended. When the *anarch* took your life that fateful eve in this place, I was utterly devastated and could not bear to live without you. I willed myself to die, though I was too afraid of final death to actually kill myself. Instead I prepared for the sleep of ages and sunk into a torpor that lasted over seventy years. When I awoke it was 1593, our homeland was greatly changed: the Austrians ruled Firenze and the political climate was tenuous. Or perhaps it just seemed so horrid because the seventy year sleep had done nothing to ease the pain of your loss...whatever the cause, I made up my mind to travel to England and there settled for the following century.

While in London I was fortunate enough to attach myself in a minor position to various companies of theaters, learning the craft that went on behind the stage of the greats such as Jonson and Shakespeare. Although I now know that my gender should never have prevented me anything, I was too indoctrinated by the culture of the time and thought myself worthy of nothing more than menial positions of sewing and cleaning for the great actors. However, after the Restoration of the

English king in 1660, women were encouraged to take a much broader role in the theaters. My, what a life we had then! It amuses me to see how the current age thinks that we of the seventeenth century were so pure and pristine when nothing could be farther from the truth! Every vice ever designed was rampant under our good King Charles II, and he himself was easily swayed by the charms of the ladies...

My abilities grew in that century as the world about me changed. I learned to maneuver the politics of mortals, and would often amuse myself by toying with men of power. How easily they fall prey to the charms of a lovely lady. My curiosity grew, and I began to search for the beauty and perfection in this world. I learned to open my eyes to nature, and to absorb the mystery and wonder of creation.

Still, I never considered myself an artist and remained mostly on the outside of vampiric circles. I had no desire to engage in Kindred politics without you by my side to lead me gently through the vipers. After the accession of the conservative William of Orange to the throne of England, I felt it was time again to move on, and settled in Paris for the few remaining years of the Sun King, Louis XIV. He, like Charles II of England, was easily swayed by a pretty face and I again was able to gain favor for a short time. The women of the court were vicious and fiercely competitive, even in his declining years, and there I learned the spirit of competition while also learning how to control a mortal from behind the scenes. I never asked much of Louis, unlike many of his other mistresses, but the power I did indeed possess.

After the death of the Sun King, I wandered aimlessly through Parisian society, slipping casually into anonymity. I took a lover of a promising young musician and made him my ghoul, but unfortunately he still fell prey to smallpox and died while I was in the country. My soul grew restless and bored so in 1732 I made my way to the New World and settled in the growing city of New Orleans.

I arrived amidst war-torn Louisiana...the battles with the Indians, Spanish, and later the English were to dominate the period of my sojourn there. However, as death rose up around us in many thousand forms and faces, a spirit of discovery and perseverance took root in the hearts of the populace. As the only vampire in the city yet, I experienced great freedom...no longer did any rigid prince have any say in my life.

Unfortunately, the New World soon attracted others of our kind and the loose agreements of peace were often shattered. The political world heated up again in 1803, the year of the three flags, and both mortals and vampires were living in terror. I almost suffered your fate when I fought a duel that left me on the threshold of final death. However, through some miracle of fate I was able to defeat the blackguard and retreat to the country. There my wounds claimed me and with only a brief preparation for safety I sunk into torpor once again, hidden in the crypt of a prominent merchant family. I lay undisturbed for sixty years before I rose...

At first I thought I had not slept long, for the New Orleans I encountered was again seized by the perils of war, but slowly I noticed the costumes and architecture had changed and the year was 1863. New Orleans was being held by

Union forces in the American Civil War and was suffering under a strict military governor. My instincts and distaste for violence convinced me that it was wise to leave the region, so I boarded the first available boat (a task not easy, given the tightly guarded port) and sailed back to France.

It was in France the following decade that I discovered my hidden artistic talent...

During the 1870s, a group of painters emerged, labeled by critics as Impressionists. Their images captured the soul, the essence of the scene, yet did not cling to the boundaries of realism. Even women were accepted into their ranks, and, upon the inspiration of one Mary Cassat, I took up the brush for the first time in my unlife.

At the turn of the twentieth century, I indulged myself in a tour around Europe and Northern Africa, marveling at the majestic wonders of natural beauty and the masterpieces of man. I had wanted to return here to commune with you then, but after having seen one of your altarpieces in a small church near Siena, I found I still could not bear the pain and so avoided Firenze and the cozy villa on the hill where once we lived.

After ten years of traveling, exposing myself to the greatest minds of modern art--the Expressionists, who greatly shaped my style and personal art philosophy; Pablo Picasso, then a young but already rising painter; the Futurists of Italy and the Dadaists of Switzerland; I returned to New Orleans and settled into a lovely mansion in the Garden District. At that point I involved myself into the politics of our vampire clan, gaining prestige as one of the first vampires to have lived in that fabulous city. My mission now is to teach the young, both Kindred and mortal

artists alike, and to reclaim the glory that once we shared, you and I, in our fetes and soirees that dazzled the Kindred and Kine of that long dead age.

They call me a leader now, so well I have learned the politics of vampires in these past centuries, yet I do not feel like a matriarch. I am simply an artist and a historian, now also a teacher. I still live to create, I love mortals and alas, I still love parties and revels, though I have tempered myself and learned patience and self-control. It is enough for me that I am respected and admired. Or perhaps I am fooling myself, you my love may be able to see me more clearly from your eternal home. Have the backbiting and conspiracies I learned in the Sun King's court stayed with me? Have I fallen prey to competition and jealousies? Do I fight for my position and ruthlessly defend myself and my friends from those who would undo me? Perhaps I have, my love, though I regret to admit as such. I try to be gentle, but the Beast may win me yet...

Take care, my love. I shall visit this place again soon. There is so much more I want to tell you, so many details of my life that I have omitted. I have purchased the villa in the hills, perhaps if your soul needs rest it can sleep peacefully there. I must return to New Orleans, my students need me, and I am finally ready to make my mark among Kindred and Kine.

Love eternally,

Giulia Michela

MF: Americans are afraid of dragons, and vampires, and monsters. . . An maybe, just maybe women. But are the women who write and enjoy these stories afraid?

Some anthropologists and literary critics have discovered that in fantasy,

storytelling, and play, some have found ways to break through, at least temporarily, the cultural expectations and sex roles and imagine a new world, a secret hidden world, a secret, unknown history that hears other concerns and tells other stories. Stories where women escape; stories where women find justice. Maybe that's why so many people are afraid of fantasy. As long as we walk along blindly and everyone works as much as they can, nothing different will really happen and the world will keep going the same old way. But when we try to dwell on images from nightmares and daydreams, we have the potential to rename and reunderstand reality and to reimagine what it could be like. We might just turn all their old stories and old ways upside down. No wonder most people think vampires are scary!

APPENDIX B
PRODUCTION JOURNAL

Date: ***Thursday, January 16***

Warm-Up: None

Activity: Initial Meeting with Pre-Cast

Assignment: None

Three of the five people I've asked to do the show have made commitments. Brad Allen will serve as Assistant Director. In general, the cast is inexperienced. We discussed the idea behind the script and what role they should play in its development.

Date: ***Thursday, January 23***

Warm-Up: None

Activity: Discussion, Brain-Storming

Assignment: None

I let the cast ask questions about the people whose materials we would be looking at. Cast discussed their perceptions of role-playing games and vampire stories.

Date: ***Saturday, January 25***

Warm-Up: None

Activity: Observation of local *Masquerade* game

Assignment: None

Those who were pre-cast take an opportunity to meet local women involved in *Masquerade* games and watch them play. Several choose to participate in the game as minor characters.

Date: ***Thursday, January 30***

Warm-Up: None

Activity: Auditions for remaining company members

Assignment: None

Pre-cast company members attend auditions and help make decision about who to ask to join the show. I go ahead and ask people to come in as understudies.

Date: ***Tuesday, February 4***

Warm-Up: Basic tension relievers (jog, jump, shake) and consonant isolators
(pairings, tongue twisters)

Activity: Full company meets for the first time, begin vampire image exercises

Assignment: Company Mardi Gras party, food assigned, costumes

Use Boalian image theater techniques to begin exploring what the cast thinks about vampires.

Date: ***Tuesday, February 11***

Warm-Up: None

Activity: Fantasy Role-Playing Party for Mardi-Gras

Assignment: None

Assigned each cast member a vampire or vampire-like character and let them enjoy a small social while staying in character.

Date: ***Thursday, February 13***

Warm-Up: Tension relievers, consonant isolators, jump-spin-roar

Activity: Writing

Assignment: None

Gave the cast fictitious titles of books about vampires and had them write “chapters” for each title. Most of the titles included a central vampiric character (Dracula, The Countess, Carmilla, The Queen of the Damned) and a subtitle (I was her prisoner, In his

own words). Some had made-up non-fiction titles (Seduced by the vampire witches, Your children and the monsters, Looking for the real Dracula). After letting them write for a bit I called them back and let them begin performing the stories they had written. This exercise got them used to the idea of appropriating stories they knew for their own entertainment.

Date: *Tuesday, February 18*

Warm-Up: Columbian Hypnosis, trust walk

Activities: More readings of written pieces, claiming space exercise

Assignment: None

The cast continued to read and perform their pieces. This time I made them stand on the table and perform in a highly dramatic manner. Following this, I asked them to stop and break into groups. Each group was responsible for coming up with a ritual that would allow them to “take possession” of their performance/rehearsal space. I let them spend some time blocking each other’s written pieces in order to get them used to blocking for the stage.

Date: *Tuesday, February 25*

Warm-Up: None

Activity: Movie night

Assignment: None

The cast got together to watch *Vampire Hunter D* and *The Lost Boys*. The first was okay, but I should have brought a more female-centered film for the second.

Date: *Tuesday, March 4*

Warm-Up: Tension relievers, consonant isolators

Activity: Improv

Assignment: None

Based on the writing exercise combined with the imaging exercise, I put titles on the chalk board and ask them to form tableaux. When they had finished setting-up a tableau, I would say “start” and they would begin an improvisational scene. Titles I gave them included Queen of the Vampires, Vampire on the Roof, Hello Vampire, The Vamp Files, etc.

Date: Thursday, March 6

Warm-Up: Tension relievers, consonant isolators, vowels, jump-spin-roar

Activity: Improvs

Assignment: None

Continued working on improvs.

Date: Tuesday, March 11

Warm-up: Tension relievers, consonant isolators, tongue twisters

Activity: Select script narratives

Assignment: None

The cast studied and briefly performed a small set of character biographies that had been collected for use in the script. They then selected four of them to use in the show as well as selecting two of their improv sketches. I asked Jamie to write a monologue based on the story she had done during the writing exercises.

Date: Thursday, March 13

Warm-Up: Tension relievers, consonant isolators, vowels, tone and pitch

Activity: Read-through script, block Queen

Assignment: Lines

Read through the basic stories for the script without the commentary yet. Cast parts based on initial read-through. Blocked and reworked the Vampire Queen improv with Melissa in the central role as Charlet was absent.

Date: Tuesday, March 25

Warm-Up: Columbian Hypnosis, consonant pairings and vowel sounds

Activity: Review Queen Blocking, Block Vamp Files

Assignment: Break into groups and block Isabella and Aphra for next session

Let the cast block Vamp Files after seeing me do blocking on Vampire Queen last week.

Let them alter Vampire Queen. Broke them into groups and asked them to come to rehearsal on Thursday ready to codirect the Isabella and Aphra scenes.

Date: Thursday, March 27

Warm-Up: None

Activity: Block Isabella and Aphra

Assignment: None

Brad met with the cast members in my absence to walk through their blocking for Isabella and Aphra scenes.

Date: Tuesday, April 1

Warm-Up: Jump-spin-hiss, tension relievers, vowels

Activity: Block Isabella

Assignment: None

Worked through the blocking of Isabella with Courtney as the main codirector, with feedback from the rest of the cast and me. I asked them to include candles in the scene

and suggested they limit the number of nuns in the opening scene. Ran through the Vamp Files and Vampire Queen scenes for review.

Date: ***Thursday, April 3***

Warm-Up: Columbian hypnosis, tone and pitch, tension relievers

Activity: Block Isabella

Assignment: None

As Rochelle, who had been cast as Isabella at first, had been absent on Tuesday, we ran through the scene again. After a lot of feedback from the cast (who thought Rochelle was far too aggressive to fit into Isabella's passivity) I asked Jilly to step into the role of Isabella and asked Rochelle to play Aphra.

Date: ***Tuesday, April 8***

Warm-Up: Basic tension relievers, vowel sounds, consonant separations, Columbian hypnosis

Activity: Block "Dracula's Guest," Block Aphra

Assignment: None

Worked this afternoon with Maria in writing the commentary/joker role. Worked with Molly for an hour before the show helping her find her own words for the critical piece.

She added some material and cut some things she was struggling with.

We began the evening by blocking *Dracula's Guest*. I had intended to block the scene myself, but the cast kept interjecting, turning the piece into a campy comedy routine.

Perhaps to have a carnivalistic production, you need to have carnival in rehearsal?

Charlet and I blocked the Aphra scene. We did our first run-through of the whole show.

Date: ***Thursday, April 10***

Warm-Up: Vowels, Hissing, Jump-Spin exercises, Awareness Meditation

Activity: Run through whole show. Work on Aphra scene.

Assignment: Geoff, Jamie, Charlet and Molly's lines by April 17.

Ran through show without stopping twice. Continued to work on the rape scene in Aphra.

Date: Tuesday, April 15

Warm-Up: Consonant Exercises, Columbian Hypnosis Exercises

Activity: Run Through, Cast Support Group

Assignment: Reminded them about line assignments for Thursday, asked for volunteers to bring props for the Guilia monologue

Ran through once. Because cast tension was high and most were unfocused, we broke, I sent one ill cast member home, and we sat and just talk about life and various stresses.

The exercise was rewarding. Maria, Melissa and I developed music for the Guilia scene.

The cast discussed options for the Guilia monologue as Olivia had not returned to rehearsal.

Date: Thursday, April 17

Warm-Up: Columbian Hypnosis, Tension Relievers, Tongue-Twisters

Activity: Run Through Show Off Book

Assignment: None

Put Geoff and Charlet officially on book for the Aphra and Dracula scenes. They were having too much trouble with memorizing and had the hardest time covering mistakes.

Cast decided to let me find someone to step in for Olivia.

Date: Tuesday, April 22

Warm-Up: Columbian Hypnosis, vowels, consonant separations, pitch and tone

Activity: Run Through Off Book

Assignment: None

Holly Baber joined us to take over the role of Guilia. We ran through the show and Holly and I blocked the Guilia monologue.

Date: Thursday, April 24

Warm-Up: Columbian Hypnosis, vowels, tongue-twisters, jump-spin-roar, jump-spin-hiss

Activity: First Dress Rehearsal, Publicity, Plan Cast Party

Assignment: None

Ran through the show with basic props and costumes. Sent cast out to distribute publicity flyers and then did a second run through on their return. Planned cast party with Dr. Taylor who had volunteered her house.

Date: Saturday, April 26

Warm-Up: Columbian Hypnosis, jump-spin exercises, tongue twisters, vowels, awareness meditation

Activity: Tech and Dress Rehearsals, First Performance, Cast Party

Assignment: None

Ran through show in afternoon with full tech, costumes, set. Rehearsed for first time with video elements. Went through first performance. Cast attended a cast-party at Dr. Taylor's home and brought friends. Got to meet each other's friends and family.

Date: Tuesday, April 29

Warm-Up: Light tension relievers, jump-spin, light vowels and tongue twisters.

Activity: Cast dinner and Jim's Diner, final performance

Assignment: None

Ate dinner together. Set up to tape performance and did final performance. Went out with cast to relax afterward. Molly had larengitis, but managed to struggle through the performance admirably.

Date: Thursday, May 1

Warm-Up: None

Activity: Post-production get together

Assignment: Production reviews

Went together to see Kevin's band play at Mr. Gatti's. The cast exchanged summer addresses and just relaxed together. Kevin's band complimented the cast members on the performance.

Post-Production Notes:

This is the confusing thing -- did I succeed? I can say it was MORE than any of my cast expected, with they themselves calling shots and making edits, I can also say, it was more for me -- I had been very anal retentive before and very needy as a director, needing the cast's love, focus, attention, needing to actualize my own vision for what was to happen, needing to make my own choices I would call this a medieval view of theater - everyone has a place. What I was looking for was organic theater: a theater that alternated roles regularly, where little was assumed, where people made contributions and decisions, regardless of who they were.

The biggest, most frightening thing for me, was that my racial minority cast members were so, I don't know, excluded during much of the process. They made the

fewest decisions. They came to fewest rehearsals. They participated the least. It wasn't until closing that we knew anything about Rochelle. It wasn't until the cast circle, a week before production, that Jilly told us anything about herself. Olivia, who was a good friend, left school to go home before production.

I had worried about Kevin, especially, Geoff was more communicative, more vocal about what bothered him or what he didn't understand. I wondered how he felt being the straight, white boy in the obviously feminist production. Geoff was there too, but vocal, and expressive and telling us what his concerns were. He took "abuse" well, and attributed it to his staunchly feminist mother. "Rehearsal is my favorite part of the day," he told me. Brad also vocalized his concerns, but Brad was gay and open, he was untainted by accusations of rape or gaze or objectification -- he had experienced similar things himself. But Kevin's quietness worries me. He is prone to just sit there, to do whatever is asked, to offer very few opinions.

It was sad to see the last production go. I keep wondering when, if ever, I will see people again. These people are part of my life now, no longer just part of one project, but part of a larger event coming to a close.

We were our own culture group. We saw each other a lot; we were always together. They partied together, played together, participated in ritual behaviors together. The rehearsal space is where they came to play, to make noise, to claim territory. They came from so many places, half already knowing each other and half hardly knowing who each other were, except from Jay's class. Rehearsal was their way of bonding together to perform, to trust, to rely, to interact. That's why I stressed the hypnosis

movement exercises. I wanted them all to follow each other -- to constantly watch (out for) each other, to have a sense of loyalty to each other.

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