

What is it about the *Dracula* narrative that is attractive dramatically? Its format is hardly exciting in that it is written as a series of letters. Similarly what could one possibly do in a theatrical production that has not been done? This would form the key research question that underlined my own subsequent production i.e. how does one approach such a classic? Indeed, when I ran a research seminar on the intended production, I was met with initial scepticism and resistance with a general response of “Why bother?” This is a fair question when one considers the plethora of dramatic renditions on stage and screen, in particular the ubiquitous vampire television series. Ultimately the answer to this question could only be explored through practice: textual in adapting the script, and physical in rehearsing the play. The capacity for Dracula and the vampires to turn into—variously—wolves, bats, rats and from smoke into the flesh of the living dead stimulated my creative thinking about how one might stage these transformations. I also began to imagine how an audience might literally follow the story’s protagonist, Jonathan Harker and his journey to Transylvania and back through everyday spaces such as corridors, café, paths and old buildings on the University Campus where I work.

I re-read the Stoker novel and re-examined the two German films *Nosferatu* (1922 Dir. Friedrich Murnau) and the remake: *Nosferatu the Vampyre* (1979 Dir. Werner Herzog). As a playwright, I chose these sources for two reasons: I did not want to overload my creative sensibility with too much source material and the novel and the 1922 film are in my view historically the key transmitters of the Dracula fable. I subsequently wrote a “new” version of the *Dracula* tale in February 2014 and then directed the production over March-June with 3rd year media arts students here at the University of South Australia. The production played for a week in June as part of the Adelaide Cabaret Fringe Festival. What follows is a self-reflective analysis of this rendered text and production and what insights it might give to animating such a classic as *Dracula*.

Practice as Research

Practice as Research (PaR) is a relatively new paradigm within the academic discipline of creative arts.¹ PaR advocates that creative practice itself can constitute research and lead to awareness of innovative approaches to making art. That is to say, “insights, conceptualisation and theorisation can arise when artists reflect upon and

document their own practice.”² Or taken another way a “knowing arises when handling materials in practice” leading to the idea of “material thinking.”³ Material thinking, coined by Paul Carter and extended by Barbara Bolt, invokes a “particular responsiveness to or conjunction with the intelligence of materials and processes in practice.”⁴ This article examines what was revealed when “handling” the prime sources of novel and films when making a new adaptation of *Dracula*. In turn this responds to the query posed by this practitioner/researcher of how to overcome the clichés extant in such a classic. This approach is not unusual as often artists plunge into what Brad Haseman describes as “an enthusiasm for practice” and research areas of enquiry are born out of the creative endeavour.⁵ However in the increasing debates on creative research, the question of then what actually constitutes research is quickly raised. As Robin Nelson asks are PaR “projects [...] sufficiently discriminating as to produce knowledge?”⁶

The first step in answering this question is to consider that practice is knowledge, that is to say, in understanding “how to do things.”⁷ The second step is to distinguish between the artistic approaches and techniques employed in making the creative work and the research methods employed in the subsequent analysis. Broadly speaking, how does the contextualising analysis speak to the artistic process and artefact? In analysing this project, I employ participant observation to reflect upon the playwriting and rehearsal processes. In combining rehearsal analysis with ethnographic study I formulate a research methodology suitable to this article. This is consistent with the fact that PaR often involves the formulation of particular research strategies that are pertinent to the investigation at hand—a point made by both Haseman and Patrice Pavis.⁸

The ethnographic method of stepping inside and outside of practice is intended to give the reader insight into rehearsal processes. What claims I might make as to academic research in this article reside in these insights into how theatrical practice and theory might inform each other. Practitioners often work intuitively, trying things out on the floor, discovering “what works”. An unpacking of this process in turn reveals on a micro level the practitioner’s training and prejudices—I use this word in positive sense—and on a macro level the artistic approaches and theories at play. The creative work is then contextualised within the broader frame of the challenges of the particular enterprise—in this instance revitalising a classic. This stepping back process is critical

in allowing some measure of objectivity to what is, for an artist, an inherently personal and subjective exercise.

The writing up and subsequent reflection of artistic process is a substantial part of PaR and can be broken down into two parts. The first is the documentation of the artefact, the evidence as such of the creative work. In this instance the documentation includes the play's sources, excerpts from the script, images and description of the rehearsal and production. The second is the narrative that the practitioner now turned analyst brings to describe the artistic process—this constant slippage between artist, documenter and analyst, between practitioner, researcher and academic is symptomatic of PaR and one of the challenges in negotiating this research activity.

From an ethnographer's perspective "fieldwork is situated between autobiography and anthropology" as it brings together a "personal experience with a general field of knowledge."⁹ I subsequently employ the "reflexive *I* of the ethnographer to subvert the idea of the observer as impersonal machine." This "autobiographical insertion" acknowledges not only that "I was there" but the positioned self (playwright/director) with whom the student actors worked.¹⁰ Ethnography also encourages a "polyphonic"¹¹ retelling of events in the field, that is to say a multi-vocal platform in order to give differing points of view. In a similar fashion I attempt to give more than my own voice to this narrative through drawing on an interview I conducted with the lead actor playing Dracula and a case study by the supporting actor playing Lucy. These insider accounts, together with reference to appropriate theoretical texts and other practitioners' approaches, are intended to broaden the perspective(s) of this analysis. The production was not reviewed, which limits claims for the impact of the creative work. The focus here is therefore on getting inside the production and revealing the practices at work. I then contextualise my specific enquiry within the broader debate of the challenges in staging a classic and overcoming the accrued clichés.

Re-writing *Dracula*: Ethnography of the Text

In January of 2014, with the pressure of needing a script completed by the beginning of March, I set out to draft the play, drawing significantly from the plot of the 1979 film but with some key differences. I had a limited number of student actors, so condensing the roles of Lucy Westenra and Mina Harker and Dr Van Helsing into

one while eliminating the other vampire hunters made sense. It also strengthened the now composite Lucy role as Amanda Cox, the actor playing Lucy commented:

Her intelligence and drive to kill Dracula come from Dr Abraham Van Helsing. Her promiscuousness, wit and sexual desires are traits of Lucy Westenra, and her submissiveness and wifely concern for her husband originate from Mina Harker.¹²

That is to say “so many characteristics to work with” contributed to a multi-dimensional character.¹³ Lucy emerged as a martyred heroine who alone can stop Dracula though her self-sacrifice. In the Stoker novel the staking of Lucy has been read as a metaphor for pack rape, though as in any reading this is contested¹⁴ With this in mind, and noting her Victorian era definition as a “hysterical female,” I wanted her to take control of her own body—repositioning her as an active heroine was a strategy towards achieving this—more so in an environment where, as Cox notes, women were not encouraged to have a “political opinion.”¹⁵

I also began with the premise of deciding on an ending that I could work towards and which was inspired by the ending to the 1979 film. Knowing that Jonathan Harker would transform into a vampire gave a clear trajectory to follow. I then constructed a series of titles for each scene which formed the skeletal structure of the script and then wrote each scene sequentially (see appendix). In this regard the approach of the German playwright Bertolt Brecht is relevant. Brecht comments in that in analysing a play one must:

Find out what socially valuable insights and impulses the play offers. Boil the story down into half a sheet of paper. Then divide it into separate episodes establishing the nodal points, i.e. the important events that carry the story a stage further. Then examine the relationship of the episodes, their construction. Think of ways and means to make the story easily narrated and to bring out its social significance.¹⁶

The key to the reconstruction of the *Dracula* story, in this instance, was focussing on the social significance or “social gestus” of each scene and how they related to each other; that is to say, “the attitudes that people adopt towards one another” which demonstrates their social and political status.¹⁷ As an example of this, the first scene between Jonathan and Lucy will bear this out. A second guiding Brechtian principle at work was that of “dialectical theatre” through the use of contradiction where “previously held ‘truths’ are revised through the juxtapositioning of a thing against its opposite.”¹⁸ In respect to this I will discuss how the accepted notion of Dracula as pure

villain might be challenged by viewing Dracula as both animal and refugee, and hence victim.

I set the play on the eve of WWI recognising the centenary of the Great War, and this had a number of consequences on the development of the storyline. It gave an added impetus for Jonathan Harker to leave for Transylvania before the borders closed. It gave another reason for Dracula to come to England, to escape the coming war as a refugee. It also allowed commentary on how humans treat animals, which I would develop into a fundamental moral question within the play. Preliminary research revealed that in WWII animals from zoos in both England and Japan were slaughtered. This was due to the concern that with the bombing of cities animals might escape and pose a threat to the populace. I transposed this to the WWI setting so that the play begins with Lucy waking from a nightmare of howling wolves. Jonathan sees a newspaper lying on her lap and reads the following:

“War imminent. Refugees welcomed. Zoo to be closed. Bats to be released. Wolves to be put down.” Faugh! It’s this paper that’s given you a bad dream. That and your imagination.¹⁹

Jonathan’s dismissal of Lucy’s concerns reveals a subtle arrogance that he will come to regret as he ignores successive warnings, first from Lucy and then from the gypsies he later encounters. (The use of the term “Faugh” means an expression of contempt, which came from Stoker’s novel and also contributed to how I wrote Jonathan’s dialogue to give a sense of a somewhat haughty character.) The scene establishes key aspects of Jonathan and Lucy characters: perception with a lack of awareness, as against curiosity with awareness, respectively. Lucy then asks: “Why are they killing the wolves? I haven’t read that far.” To which the following conversation ensues:

JONATHAN They say if the zoo is bombed they may escape and be a “menace to the town.”

LUCY Is that what war is now bombing zoos?

JONATHAN And civilians apparently.²⁰

The scene then introduces the notion of how the innocent: animals and civilians are now victims of 20th Century warfare. When Jonathan finally meets Dracula later in the play in scene 6, the latter picks up on this theme where he argues for the primacy of animals over humans:

DRACULA I read that just now you are slaughtering your wolves in your London zoo.

JONATHAN Yes sadly it is true.

DRACULA I am glad that you share my compassion for our animal friends. As the philosopher Georges Gurdjieff says “If we practice love on animals first; they react better and more sensitively,” than men. Men who now are preparing to slaughter themselves in a great war

JONATHAN They say it won't last long.

DRACULA and will “go on slaughtering themselves [...] for several years” because they decide “to hate one another; or for some exalted purpose; or that they must defend somebody or something and that it is a very noble thing to do; or something else of the same kind. They fail to realize to what an extent they are mere pawns in the game.” Unquote.²¹

JONATHAN You speak as if you prefer animals to men.

DRACULA Animals are true to themselves, men are “machines.” They “sleep,”²² unaware of their own natures.²³

Building on the first scene this dialogue poses an underlying question of who is the more immoral? Animals? That is to say, vampires who kill to survive, or humans who kill for Empire? It is clear who Dracula favors. Research into actual vampire bats partially supports this assertion from a physiological viewpoint as vampire bats have to drink blood nightly to survive, though they don't necessarily kill their hosts. Indeed, a vampire by definition can either chose to allow their host to live or die depending on how much blood they take. Either way they have to drink blood to continue living—a physiological necessity, while Dracula argues, men kill for other reasons. This argument adds shades of grey to the Stoker black and white portrayal of Dracula as immoral “devil.”²⁴

The notion from the philosopher Georges Gurdjieff that men are “asleep” is not only an indication that Jonathan is slow to pick-up on the danger surrounding him, in this instance from Dracula who is standing before him but that animals in their innocence are more alert to their surroundings. For Glenn Rafferty,²⁵ the actor playing Dracula, this speech was the center of the first scene between Dracula and Jonathan in that it established that “humans are machines who start wars” while “animals are innocent and this is what man is doing destroying that innocence.”²⁶ Rafferty extends this further, commenting that:

I don't think anything drives him [Dracula] but pure need. It's not lust, it's partly hunger; he's something he didn't plan to be. He didn't decide to be one [a vampire]. He's a victim just as much as Lucy and Jonathan.²⁷

This view ties in with Rafferty's portrayal of Dracula where it was simply not possible for him to just play “evil” but to rather play aspects of the personal.²⁸ Rafferty also felt that the incorporation of the moral argument from Gurdjieff in this scene marked Dracula as a “political creature” in a script that was “very political.”²⁹ This emphasis

on the political was highlighted in the depiction of the arrival of the Russian schooner, the Demeter into the British port of Whitby. Through a dialectical approach, the casting of Dracula as refugee was extended to bring in a wider moral commentary on the plight of refugees in contemporary Australia.

In Bram Stoker's *Dracula* the Demeter arrives with all crew gone, killed by Dracula. I asked, as a playwright, how would that boat have been received in a contemporary context?³⁰ In Australia, refugee carrying boat arrivals are termed "unauthorised" by the current conservative government.³¹ Refugees are labelled "illegal" and their treatment and indeed refoulement are shrouded in secrecy. A newly created border force, Operation Sovereign Borders Joint Agency Taskforce, has militarised a hitherto civil bureaucracy. Language is couched in a militaristic tone with little factual information provided. Media briefings were initially given with a Minister and high ranking military officials in 2013-2014. To reflect this political reality I edited together excerpts from Stoker's *Dracula* with verbatim comments from the then Australian Minister for Immigration, Scott Morrison's press conferences—a re-framing of then and now. The scene took place with a Minister and Military official seated onstage with a Union Jack³² projected behind them and the journalists seated in the audience. The Stoker quotes are in italics and the Morrison quotes underlined:

JOURNALIST Is it true Minister, that eyewitnesses reported that "*lashed to the helm*" was the Captain's "*corpse*," holding a "*crucifix*?"³³

MINISTER It is a "tragedy" that this has occurred. However now that we are at war those who sail through enemy waters do so at their own risk.³⁴

JOURNALIST So you can confirm minister that the captain "*was simply fastened by his hands, tied one over the other, to a spoke of the wheel*?"³⁵

MINISTER That it an "on-water matter." I cannot reveal those details in this time of grave danger.³⁶

JOURNALIST 2 Commander can you confirm reports of a large wolf leaving the ship in question?

LT COL I have only hearsay on this question of a "large wolf" and are therefore unable to give confirmation.

JOURNALIST 2 There were also reports of a large number of rats leaving the ship.

LT COL "If I haven't reported it, it hasn't happened."³⁷

The excerpt finishes with an Orwellian definition of reality, a verbatim comment that is chilling in its determination to reveal nothing. This is attributed to Australia's Chief of the Defense Force, Air Chief Marshal Mark Binskin who accompanied Minister Morrison at this press conference. The juxtaposition of a key incident from the novel within such a contemporary socio-political setting demonstrates the absurdity of the

logical fallacy of the latter. Facts that are a given in the novel are now contested by the ruling authority, revealing a culture of secrecy that exists to safeguard the government from scrutiny. Such an inherent “instability,” as Brecht noted, is not without humour, in that theatre is able to turn “dialectics into a source of enjoyment [...] with the joke of contradiction.”³⁸ I might add that the “contradiction” here constitutes a dark humour.

The incorporation of verbatim quotes in this scene brings the play closer to what is known in the UK as verbatim theatre, and in the USA as documentary theatre. According to Carol Martin, this type of theatre seeks to “interrogate specific events, systems of belief and political affiliations.”³⁹ The juxtaposition of verbatim text from a border security media briefing with text from the Stoker novel highlights that “social reality-including reporting on social reality-is constructed.”⁴⁰ In this instance the inclusion and “omission” of the Stoker text are combined with the radical re-positioning of Dracula as a refugee. In turn, this serves as a platform to critique the way that the current Australian Government “spin” their version of events to support an overarching narrative of power and exclusion of those deemed unacceptable: in this case, refugees arriving by boat.⁴¹

Rehearsing *Nosferatu*: Performance Ethnography

The script was developed through a socio-political lens, arguing that animals have a superior morality to that of humans; while Western governments like Australia veil their responses to refugees in militarised secrecy. The script offered a different reading to the prime sources: the novel and the two films of the *Dracula* fable, however in performance these sources would still be referenced. In order to situate the work in a popular cultural context, there was a need to quote some of the classic reference points of cinema surrounding the *Dracula* story, As Rafferty comments:

It was good to have the clichés because you have to and they came out in every main character [...] such as the] *Nosferatu* pose and those things are very important. Little tiny exclamation points [...] but you break from it pretty quickly you don’t hold it [the cliché] you got to play from it [...] it’s how you sweep from that.⁴²

The “*Nosferatu* pose” that Rafferty refers to in the production is when a door of Dracula’s house opens and he is revealed standing, his arms at his sides, back-lit. This genuflects to the central “framing motif” from Murnau’s *Nosferatu*, as Jörg Waltje comments:

When Jonathan hears a clock strike midnight, he gets agitated and runs to the door. As he opens it a crack, we share his POV. In a long shot, Dracula is visible at the end of a long, dark corridor. A dissolve brings him closer, his shadow lurking behind him, and although we have seen his ghastly figure before, for the first time he wears no hat in this scene, and we perceive his bald head with pointed ears, while his long arms like claws stick threateningly out of his sleeves. He is the center of this tableau, framed by light in a coffin shape and by the darkness that surrounds him – indeed, it almost seems to radiate from him.⁴³

This framing device was applied to the production by positioning the audience behind Jonathan so that they would similarly share his POV, as in the film—which I will cover in more detail later. The image also appeared on the poster and in a sense delivered on what was promised to the audience with a clear nod to the history of the character (see Figures 1 and 2). Rafferty's *Nosferatu* brought together two historical strands of the cinematic portrayal of Dracula: the animalistic of Max Shrek's Count Orlok in Murnau's film; and the aristocratic in Bela Lugosi's *Dracula* in the film of the same name by Todd Browning (1931). The former is exemplified by his long black fingernails and the embodiment of the bat, as I shall discuss, and the latter with a Hungarian accent and wearing his classical knee-length morning suit. Similarly the production co-opted one of the other tropes of the Murnau *Nosferatu* with the door of Dracula's house opening, as if by magic, to reveal Dracula. As Waltje notes, *Nosferatu* "repeatedly makes use of special effects: doors opening by themselves" in order to invoke the world of the "supernatural."⁴⁴ Such references to the founding cinematic genres are typical of subsequent renderings of the vampire myth and pay homage to the original, while "modifying and reinterpreting certain aspects that are generically coded."⁴⁵ However the question remained that, while referencing these "exclamation points" of the *Dracula* vocabulary, how could the performers enliven the clichés now long associated with *Dracula*? Rafferty gives a clue in explaining that one has to "sweep" from such clichés. But sweep to what exactly? What follows is an ethnography of rehearsal, via the participant observer mode, that explores the approaches of the director and performers and how these translated into performance.



Figure 1: Count Orlok revealed. *Nosferatu* (1922 Dir. Frederich Murnau).



Figure 2: Referencing the original. *Nosferatu the Undead*. (2014 Dir. Author; Artwork Ronnie Baily).

Overcoming Clichés

One part of overcoming clichés in the theatre is ascribing to director Peter Brooks' notion of the "deadly theatre," a type of theatre which reinforces clichés through a blind repetition of classical tropes, and is to be avoided. "Deadly theatre is bad theatre," notes Brook, who comments that:

The Deadly Theatre takes easily to Shakespeare. We see his plays done by good actors in what seems like the proper way—they look lively and colourful, there is music and everyone is all dressed up, just as they are supposed to be in classical theatres. Yet secretly we find it excruciatingly boring.⁴⁶

The same analysis could be given to the plethora of Draculas in popular culture. From films, television series and cartoons, to the ubiquitous cape and fangs available at the local costume shop, the vampire has literally lost its bite. As Matthew Beresford notes, "the vampire has become a parody of what he once was due to the supplanting of the myths of folklore with the mass-markets of modernity."⁴⁷

One means of going beyond the cliché is to confront it head on. Theatre practitioner Tina Landau observes in director's Anne Bogart's approach to staging classics that the actors were asked to respond directly to popular conceptions. Landau notes that:

The first things that came up were often the most obvious, but Anne [Bogart] encouraged the actors to lean into the clichés and stereotypes rather than try to ignore them. By going through them, she explained, they would come out on the other side with something that used, but transformed them.⁴⁸

I adapted Bogart's approach and asked the actors early in rehearsal to respond to the following questions and include common answers:

When I think of *Dracula*:

- I see: fangs
- I hear: screams
- I smell: musty, mouldy rooms
- I taste: blood
- I touch: cold flesh
- I feel: goose bumps, fear and excitement Dracula
- I think: old, powerful, charismatic

Having identified these stereotypic responses to *Dracula*, we were then able to transform these clichés through a close examination of the physiological qualities of

bats that were then embodied by the performers, along with the promenade nature of the production.

Transference: Animal to Human

Further research during the rehearsal period located video of vampire bats sinking their teeth into an animal and drinking their blood.⁴⁹ This was revelatory for the student actors and provided a means to go beyond the stereotype of “sucking blood,” to licking blood off the victim. Both the actors playing vampires and Dracula rehearsed this method. Similarly, the way that vampire bats walk on their thumbs informed how Dracula would move around the boardroom in his first meeting with Jonathan in Murray House (where University senior management are based by day and which doubled as Dracula’s Castle).⁵⁰ Jonathan and the audience entered the house at Dracula’s invitation and were led to a boardroom where Jonathan and Dracula sat at the opposite ends of a large table. Some of the audience sat at the table as well, with the remainder standing next to the walls of the room. Rafferty placed his thumbs on the backs of audience members seated at the table in order to move himself from one side of the room to the other—much to both the consternation and amusement of the audience.

To find an “authentic” way to show how vampires might fly, the students viewed a slow motion film of a flying Egyptian fruit bat. The online commentary of this video notes that “the video was shot in slow motion to highlight the amazing beauty of the only flying mammal.”⁵¹ Indeed the actions of the bat when slowed down have an impressive aesthetic quality—with the head forward and full extension of the wings moving back, then forward. I directed the students to mimic and embody this movement in detail, and the result was a graceful movement score at odds with their blood-licking natures. This was incorporated into one key scene where the vampires fly as bats and circle Lucy prior to her final fatal rendezvous with Dracula (see Figures 3 and 4).

The transposition of the movement principles of the bat to the performer’s body is defined by mime teacher Jacques Lecoq as the “transference method” which is based on identification of the actor with “natural dynamics,” such as animals for “expressive purposes.”⁵² In order to dramatize the death of Dracula and the vampires due to exposure to sunlight, I directed the actors to base their movements on the destruction of paper. To demonstrate how they are torn apart by sunlight, the actors mimicked the

tearing apart of paper: a literal transposition. As Lecoq states, paper once crumbled cannot “recover its initial shape” which introduces a “tragic dimension,” particularly when mimed by the body. The objective, as Lecoq sees it, is “to achieve a level of theatrical transposition, going beyond realistic performance.”⁵³ The embodiment of both the bat and paper created stylised movement scores that allowed the performers a physical way into their character. Rafferty comments that:

Because you start instantly with what it is to be an animal [...] it didn't involve thinking about it, it didn't involve what it would look like; it involved getting into that animal's mind and body. It changed a lot of things from there on for me. It changed in that I could look at my body movement and really feel my body and how I was reacting to what I did every scene.⁵⁴

The emphasis on the animalistic helped the performers to transcend vampire clichés; rather, by being true to the movements of both animal and paper, they could physicalize their performance in way that was authentic to the dynamics of nature. In this way the performance style was able to go beyond cinematic realism to achieve an expressive and stylised mode of acting. The visceral nature of this embodiment was enhanced by an increased intimacy between performer and audience that was due to the promenade nature of the production, an aspect which I shall now discuss.



Figure 3: Slow motion of a flying bat provided a movement score for the vampires. Warren Photographic © 2012.



Figure 4: Transference: the vampires embody flying bats as they approach Lucy.

Promenade Theatre: Intimacy between Character and Audience.

The novel is characterised by mobility of both the body and mind, epitomised by the physical journeys of Jonathan and Dracula and their subsequent battle of wits. The promenade nature of the production sought to reflect this journey. As Rafferty notes:

Jonathan is a way of carrying the audience on the journey. Nosferatu is on one end and the Lucy on the other end. Jonathan takes you back and forwards and then brings them together.⁵⁵

The audience, in following closely behind Jonathan, shared in his discovery of the key characters and events of the story, as noted earlier. They were positioned as a *collective Jonathan* as they encountered vampires, gypsies and Dracula (see Figure 5). The audience followed Jonathan from the theatre foyer—through darkened corridors, the university bar now transformed into a gypsy bar, then outside to walk to Murray House before moving through cloisters and finally entering the theatre proper. My colleague Ian Conrich noted that there was a sense that the “vampires could appear around any corner” (personal correspondence). The element of surprise with the vampires appearing and disappearing multiple times, combined with the darkened corridors (normally fluorescent lit), replicated the chiaroscuro effect of the original *Nosferatu* and created an “experiential, sensory or felt space.”⁵⁶ The various spaces utilized on

campus were kinetically charged by the audience and characters mingling together in close proximity, and in subdued lighting. This reached a climax when the audience shared Jonathan's entrapment in the boardroom in Dracula's house. Peter Brook notes that:

A good space is intimate: it is a room in which the audience sit with the actors and see them in close-up, showing what is true in the acting and revealing mercilessly what is false. Yet, a good space is more than one that it is challenging, calling on the actors to go beyond themselves, beyond a cinematic realism.⁵⁷

This intimacy extended to Dracula breathing closely and running his long nails along the backs of seated audience members, heightening the sensory contact between character and audience and breaking the usual physical separation between the two (see Figure 6).

The campus architecture also would play a part in both commenting upon and framing the narrative—an architectural dialectic, to draw on Brecht once more. Joanne Tompkins notes that “site-specific performances⁵⁸ immediately contrast a “real” world location with the “world” of the narrative.⁵⁹ Such a contrast between the normative aspects of university campus with the world of *Dracula* was not without irony or humour. For example, the notion of a “shared space” for pedestrians and cyclists inscribed on a fluorescent sign was extended to include Dracula and the vampires, when Jonathan emerged from Dracula's house to be confronted by vampires standing under the sign (see Figure 7). On the other hand, Lucy's sleepwalking along outdoor cloisters drew on the formal nature of this building's structure to both invite and frame her movement, reflecting Cathryn Dwyre and Chris Perry's, view that “architectural form [...] while static in nature, lends aesthetic expression to the dynamic qualities of movement”⁶⁰ (see Figure 8).

The production also made use of the geometry and texture of the theatre itself by including the auditorium as a field of performance. The walls of the theatre became the walls of an asylum that Renfield slammed against, talked to quietly and was chained against. The auditorium became a press conference, a place from which journalists—and ultimately Lucy—would question authority. The theatre “was used as a whole environment implicated in the universe of the drama”—in much the same way as the whole university campus had been utilized to tell the story of *Dracula*.⁶¹ The formal conventions of separation between performer and audience were challenged by this

spatial proximity in order to re-create the “fear and excitement” identified by the students in their initial response to the *Dracula* story.



Figure 5: The audience as a “collective Jonathan”: sharing his journey to Count Dracula.



Figure 6: The intimacy of a shared environment between Dracula and the audience.



Figure 7: Shared space extended: Dracula and vampires add to the normative inhabitants of university campus, pedestrians and cyclists.



Figure 8: The contours of architectural space invite and frame the sleepwalking Lucy.

Conclusion

In rehearsal, the focus on the animalistic aspects of Dracula and the vampires facilitated movement scores for the performers that were intended to transcend culturally inscribed clichés. This transference technique was utilised to overcome the “stereotypes” of “deadly theatre” associated with the blind repetition of classical tropes

in period drama. This adoption of a stylized mode of acting also sought to move beyond cinematic realism to a level of expressive and theatrical transposition. This physical focus corresponded with the development of a textual debate between the instinctual need of vampire bats to drink blood to survive, and the amoral desire in humans to kill each other. This in turn problematized the Stoker human/vampire, hero/villain binary and posited a moral repositioning of Dracula.

The use of a promenade style of production, and staging it at night, helped foster the elements of surprise, sensorial impact and intimacy between performers and audience. The site-specific nature of the various spaces used on campus, with their formal and historical aspects, further enhanced the kinetic relationship between performer and audience, and narrative and location respectively. Having the audience follow behind Jonathan was an adaptation of a cinematic POV to a theatrical setting—a remediation of a filmic motif. For audiences who are familiar with *Dracula* primarily from the screen, it is not unusual for a theatre work to adopt the latter's framing devices in order to locate the work in cultural memory. One can also view this approach as part of a broader attempt to maintain theatre's "legitimacy" by referencing the more dominant medium of film.⁶² If the production sought to avoid the literary tropes of such a classic, it was still bound to embody filmic tropes to appeal to an audience raised on the latter.

What aspects of handling both archive and contemporary materials were relevant in addressing and adapting a classic, in this instance the vampire genre? The Dracula myth is malleable, in that it was able to be relocated historically to 1914, with Jonathan having extra impetus to travel to Transylvania before the closing of borders and Dracula now a refugee. In turn, the contrast with Australia's current political reality created a verbatim commentary on Western society more broadly—both then and now—particularly in Australia's increasing rejection of refugees deemed to have arrived "illegally." This "joke of contradiction" located this textual juxtaposition in the "dialectical theatre" advocated by Brecht. Such a dialectical approach enabled a classic text to be viewed through a contemporary socio-political.

As I write this article, Australia's moral treatment of refugees has again come under question,⁶³ in the USA presidential candidate Donald Trump has promised to ban all "Islamic immigration," while Europe still grapples with the "refugee crisis."

In this regard it is perhaps fitting to leave the last word with Rafferty:

The script is very political because we're dealing at the moment with a government who's talking about refugees, how they're terrorists, they're horrible dirty vile creatures, they cause disease. And this script is all about that. It's about a virus coming in with this boat; it's full of rats; it's full of the vampires. There's no people there. Everything that comes from overseas is nasty.⁶⁴

If Dracula initially embodied the fear of the “other,” the dangerous exotic and immoral Eastern European who was literally “beyond the pale,” the Other has now been replaced by the refugee, with the same amoral qualities inscribed upon them by the government and popular media. This framing of the Other enabled the embedding of contemporary political realities in the production, with a classic villain now reframed as demonised victim.

PaR is revelatory in enabling artist/scholars to reflect on both the means and outcomes of their practice. Their specific enquiry can be positioned within a broader contemporary debate; in this instance, the challenges of staging a classic. In turn, the hitherto closed doors of the rehearsal world can be opened to reveal the complex “doing” that animates such creative work.

Appendix: *Nosferatu the Undead* Scene Titles and Brief Description

- Scene 1: Lucy's Nightmare: Lucy senses Dracula's coming.
- Scene 2: Renfield sends Jonathan to Transylvania to sell Count Dracula a house in their town.
- Scene 3: Jonathan farewells Lucy who sings an original song *A Cruel Choice* describing her loneliness and gives him her locket with her portrait
- Scene 4: Jonathan is accosted by vampires *en route* who sing as sirens, the *First Stasimon* by Euripides.
- Scene 5: Jonathan is rescued by a gypsy band who sing first *Gypsy Melody* and then an original song *Dracula's Castle* as they warn him from approaching Dracula which he ignores.
- Scene 6: Jonathan meets with Dracula; they debate the morality of the coming war. When Dracula sees Lucy's locket he immediately purchases a house to be near her.
- Scene 7: Jonathan sees Dracula climb down the walls of his castle with an empty bag.

- Scene 8: Jonathan is accosted by the vampires. Dracula “feeds” them with a baby from the same bag. He then bites Jonathan and draws his blood.
- Scene 9: Jonathan walks down to the cellar of the castle and finds Dracula lying in a coffin gorged with blood.
- Scene 10: Jonathan escapes in order to warn Lucy that Dracula is coming to her.
- Scene 11: He is followed by the vampires who become bats.
- Scene 12: Gypsy funeral chant: Jonathan encounters the gypsies lamenting their baby stolen by Dracula to feed the vampires; they recognise that he has been bitten and Jonathan regrets not listening to them.
- Scene 13: Jonathan finds Lucy sleepwalking, followed by the vampires as bats.
- Scene 14: Jonathan rescues Lucy: she sings of her experience, repeating the siren chant of the vampires. Jonathan gives Lucy a book from the gypsies that describes Dracula as a vampire.
- Scene 15: Renfield now transformed into a “lunatic” catches and eats flies and calls to his “Master” while chained to the wall.
- Scene 16: Film montage shows Dracula arriving via boat and the subsequent burials of townsfolk.
- Scene 17: Press conference: authorities refuse to answer questions over the sudden deaths in the town. Lucy warns them that a vampire is present, but is ignored.
- Scene 18: Jonathan deteriorates and begins to transform into a vampire.
- Scene 19: Renfield alternates between madness and sanity, and then escapes.
- Scene 20: Lucy determines to contain Jonathan and sacrifice herself to destroy Dracula. She places *hostia* around Jonathan and sings: *Autumn Leaves*.
- Scene 21: The vampires as bats visit Lucy in her dreams to prepare her for Dracula’s arrival.
- Scene 22: Lucy seduces Dracula as the vampires watch.
- Scene 23: The sun rises and Dracula and the vampires die.
- Scene 24: Lucy dies from loss of blood.
- Scene 25: Renfield rescues Jonathan from the circle of blessed bread.
- Scene 26: Jonathan completes his transformation to vampire and states: “it is accomplished”— an ironic reference to Christ’s words on the cross, signalling the end of mortal life.

¹ Baz Kershaw comments that by:

The end of the first decade of the third millennium, performance as research (PaR) - creative practices considered as a research methodology in their own right - was a well-established or emergent part of the performing arts in universities in the UK, Australia, Canada, Scandinavia, South Africa and elsewhere.

Baz Kershaw, "Performance as Research: Live Events and Documents," in *Cambridge Companion to Performance Studies*, Tracy Davis, ed., (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 28. On the other hand Robin Nelson notes that the American response to PaR has been "antagonistic—indeed hostile at times." See Robin Nelson, ed., *Practice as Research in the Arts : Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances* (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 12, accessed August 18th, (2016) <http://www.palgrave.com/la/book/9781137282897>

² Hazel Smith, and Roger Dean, eds., *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts* (Edinburgh and New York: Edinburgh University Press and Columbia University Press, 2009), 5.

³ Barbara Bolt, "The Magic is in Handling," in *Practice as Research Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*, Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt, eds. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 29.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵ Brad Haseman, "A Manifesto for Performative Research', *Media International Australia* 118, (2006): 100.

⁶ Robin Nelson, "Practice-as-research and the Problem of Knowledge," *Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts* 11, no.4 (2006): 106.

⁷ Nelson, "Practice-as-Research," 107.

⁸ Haseman, 2006, 8; Patrice Pavis, *Analyzing Performance Theater, Dance and Film*, trans., David Williams (USA: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 1.

⁹ Kirsten Hastrup, "Writing Ethnography State of the Art," in *Anthropology and Autobiography*, Judith Okely and Helen Calloway, eds. (Routledge: London, 1992), 116.

¹⁰ Judith Okely, "Anthropology and Autobiography Participatory Experience and Embodied Knowledge," in *Anthropology and Autobiography*, Judith Okely and Helen Calloway, eds. (Routledge: London, 1992), 23.

¹¹ James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature and Art* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988), 46-54.

¹² Amanda Cox, *Case Study*, Undergraduate Essay, (2014), (Unpublished).

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ See Elizabeth Miller, “Coitus Interruptus: Sex Bram Stoker and Dracula,” *Romanticism on the Net*, (2006): 44, accessed 19th May 2016, <https://www.erudit.org/revue/ron/2006/v/n44/014002ar.html>

¹⁵ Amanda Cox, *Case Study*.

¹⁶ In John Willet, ed. and trans., *Brecht on Theatre* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1982), 240-241.

¹⁷ In Marc Silberman, Steve Giles and Tom Kuhn, eds., *Brecht on Theatre*, 3rd Edition, (London and New York: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2015), 248.

¹⁸ Lara Stevens, *Anti-War Theatre After Brecht: Dialectical Aesthetics in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 19-20.

¹⁹ Author, *Nosferatu: The Undead* (Unpublished), 3.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

²¹ Peter Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous Fragments of an Unknown Teaching*, (1949), accessed December 2nd 2015, www.gurdjieff.am/in-search/index.pdf, 31.

²² The notion of men being “asleep” and functioning like “machines” is a central tenet of George Gurdjieff’s philosophy that Ouspensky discusses.

²³ Author, *Nosferatu*, 16-17.

²⁴ For example, Van Helsing describes “the *nosferatu*” as variously “evil [...] brute [...] devil in callous.” Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (Project Gutenberg E Book, 2013), (originally published New York: Grosset and Dunlop, 1897), accessed September 8th, 2015, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/345/345-h/345-h.htm>, 169.

²⁵ Rafferty is an experienced professional actor and a mature age student.

²⁶ Glenn Rafferty, *Interview with Author*, (2014), 17th December.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Matthew Beresford notes that this marks one of the defining departures of the *Nosferatu* characterisation from that of Stoker’s *Dracula* where the Count Orlok of the 1922 film is portrayed as “lonely, desperate and condemned and the viewer is encouraged to empathize with him”—an approach similarly taken in the 1979 film and in the *Vampire Chronicles* by novelist Anne Rice. See Matthew Beresford, *From Demons to Dracula: The Creation of the Modern Vampire Myth* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 142.

²⁹ Rafferty *Interview*.

³⁰ I remain unequivocally outraged by the prolonged detention and abuse of refugees in Australian-run offshore camps at Nauru and Manus Island that have been condemned by the UN and referred to as “Australia’s Guantanamo Bay.” See Connor Duffy, *UN Condemns “Australia’s Guantanamo Bay,”* (2016), accessed August 15th, 2016, <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2014/s3952255.htm>

³¹ I refer to the conservative Coalition Government (2013-) formerly led by Prime Minister Tony Abbott and now by Malcolm Turnbull who have a controversial and hard-line policy of not resettling refugees arriving by boat in Australia.

³² The former Prime Minister Tony Abbott was notorious for holding press conferences filled with Australian flags. Any perceived “security threat” was inscribed with nationalism.

³³ Stoker, *Dracula*, 58-59.

³⁴ Scott Morrison, “Transcript: Press Conference - Operation Sovereign Borders Update 6th December,” *The Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection Newsroom*, (2013), accessed December 1st, 2015, <http://newsroom.border.gov.au/channels/transcripts>.

³⁵ Stoker, *Dracula*, 59.

³⁶ Scott Morrison, “Transcript: Press Conference - Operation Sovereign Borders Update 8th November,” *The Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection Newsroom*, (2013), accessed December 1st, 2015, <http://newsroom.border.gov.au/channels/transcripts>.

³⁷ Mark Binskin, “Transcript: Press Conference - Operation Sovereign Borders Update 30th October,” *The Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection Newsroom*, (2013), accessed December 1st, 2015, <http://newsroom.border.gov.au/channels/transcripts>.

³⁸ Brecht argues that “dialectics” can demonstrate “the instability of every circumstance” in an enjoyable manner. In Willet, *Brecht on Theatre*, 277.

³⁹ Carol Martin, “Bodies of Evidence,” *TDR: The Drama Review* 50, no. 3 (2006): 9.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴¹ Martin notes that “Government’s ‘spin’ the facts in order to tell stories. Theatre spins them right back in order to tell different stories.” This seems an appropriate description of the construction and intent of this scene. *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴² Rafferty *Interview*.

⁴³ Jörg Waltje, “Filming *Dracula*: Vampires, Genre, and Cinematography,” *Journal of Dracula studies: official publication of the Canadian Chapter, Transylvanian Society of Dracula* 2, (2000): 2.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁵ Waltje, *Filming Dracula*, 1.

⁴⁶ Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* London: Penguin Books, (1968), 12.

⁴⁷ Beresford, *From Demons to Dracula*, 140.

⁴⁸ Tina Landau, "Source-Work, the Viewpoints and Composition: What are they?" in *Anne Bogart: Viewpoints*, Michael Dixon and Joel Smith, eds. (Lyme, NH: Smith and Kraus, Inc., 1995), 19.

⁴⁹ See *World's Weirdest - Vampire Bats*, accessed September 18th, 2015, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iLp-ls8AoaU>, (2012).

⁵⁰ Murray House is a large two story 19th Century period building that is "Victorian era Italianate-Gothic in style." Swanbury Penglase. *Murray House Conservation Plan* (Adelaide: Swanbury Penglase Architects, 2001), 38.

⁵¹ See *Bats in Slow Motion 2*, accessed September 18th, 2015, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTKNZDjSaXQ>, (2011).

⁵² Jacques Lecoq, *The Moving Body Teaching Creative Theatre*, David Bradby trans. (New York: Routledge 2001), 44. The author studied at Ecole Jaques Lecoq in 1982-83.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Rafferty, *Interview*.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Cathryn Dwyre and Chris Perry, "Expanded Fields Architecture/Landscape/Performance," *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 37, no.1 (2015), 3.

⁵⁷ In Andrew Todd and Jean-Guy Lecat, *The Open Circle Peter Brook's Theatre Environments* (London and New York: Faber and Faber Ltd., 2003), 25.

⁵⁸ Site-specific performance refers to "a relationship between elements which amplifies a fundamental exchange between site and performance." I focus here primarily on what the site offers in terms of a "particular formality (shape, proportion, height, disposition of architectural elements, etc.)." See Nick Kaye, *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* (London: Routledge, 2000), 53. Site-specific may also refer to the historical, political, cultural and social aspects of a place.

⁵⁹ Joanne Tompkins, "Theatre's Heterotopia and the Site-Specific Production of *Suitcase*," *TDR: The Drama Review* 56, no. 2 (2012): 106.

⁶⁰ Dwyre and Perry, "Expanded Fields." 2.

⁶¹ Todd and Lecat, *The Open Circle*, 79.

⁶² Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin state that “earlier technologies are struggling to maintain their legitimacy by remediating newer ones.” See Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin, “Remediation,” *Configurations* 3, (1996): 352. A point extended by Phillip Auslander who argues that theatre reflects the “cinematic vocabulary” of audiences and is part of a larger whole or framework that informs our perception of the world — what he refers to as a “media epistemology.” See Phillip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999.)

⁶³ See Duffy, *UN Condemns*.

⁶⁴ Rafferty, *Interview*.