THE WRITING OF *JI: FROM THESE WALLS*

A Thesis

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty of The University of Akron

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

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August, 2009
THE WRITING OF *JI: FROM THESE WALLS*

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To my parents Paul and Sharon Kelsey, and my wife Kimberly. Thank you for your faith, understanding and support in all that I do.
I would like to thank the members of my thesis committee, Mr. James Slowiak, Mr. Durand Pope and Dr. David R. Bush. Without their guidance and support none of this would have been made possible. I would like to specifically acknowledge Dr. Bush for allowing me the opportunity, many years ago, to work on the excavation of the island that led to the inspiration for this project, and for allowing me to share his passion for this part of his life and our history. Lastly, I would like to thank all of my friends who either assisted in the development and proofreading of this project or simply gave me the support I so greatly needed in order to complete it.
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CHAPTER I
RATIONALE FOR THE PROJECT

In the process of choosing this project, I looked to connect as many of my personal interests as possible. The project needed to investigate an aspect of theatre, but given the various directions that the project could go, my interest in history and historical dramas was one avenue that I particularly wanted to explore. With this in mind, I found inspiration in the stories from a production of Edgar Lee Masters’ *Spoon River Anthology* that I recently directed. My connection to Dr. David Bush, the foremost expert on the history and excavation of Johnson’s Island and the Johnson’s Island Civil War Prisoner Depot, solidified my intentions. I decided to write a play based on the history, prisoner diaries and correspondence related to the Johnson’s Island Civil War Prisoner Depot.

My interest in theatre is more than that of theatre as entertainment. I believe theatre also has the power to persuade, enlighten and even educate. The process through which theatre goes gives it the opportunity to reach, individually, all persons involved in the process, from the writing of the script to the actors, directors and audience. Unlike the sterile pages of a history book, the collaborative process of theatre can breathe new life into an historical event. Not only are the facts of history presented, but also the perspectives of the playwright, the director, and the actors. Finally, the spectators
interpret the presentation of the drama and take from it their own understanding of history. The inclusiveness of the art form makes it an excellent and proven vehicle for historical drama.

History, whether oral or written, provides an understanding of the past—why we are the way we are today. Being that history is documented by individuals or passed down orally, it is by nature biased. This bias, however, helps to express the beliefs of the time and to give insight into the situations and events that were going on when the events happened. By researching our history, we learn about the differences in time periods and ways of living. We learn what made certain ideas work or fail. Also, we can look to history to find similarities with our world today. Though societies, technology, religions, morals and general ways of life change with time, there are certain universals that do not change from period to period. It is through the use of these universals in the creation of an historical drama that the audience can connect to the characters and their surroundings and relate to otherwise unfamiliar situations.

My intention is to explore some of the universals, specific events and interactions in relation to Johnson’s Island and its inhabitants in order to create a snapshot of the period. Though we may not have experienced incarceration, we can all empathize with the feelings of unfamiliarity, frustration, survival, assimilation and community that the prisoners of Johnson’s Island experienced during their imprisonment. By writing a script that paints smaller pieces of the big picture, I hope to structure a blueprint to show the audience various ways in which they can still connect with the prisoners of Johnson’s Island emotionally as well as historically.
Edgar Lee Masters’ *Spoon River Anthology* provided me a special kind of inspiration. The process of producing and directing the show allowed me to focus on each of the individual monologues and the history behind Masters’ book. I found it absolutely fascinating that each entry could stand alone as an interesting story, yet be intertwined with others in regard to character relationships, shared experiences and similar emotional themes. Though these poems/monologues were Masters’ embellished impressions of the inhabitants of Lewistown and Petersburg, Illinois, they also formed an historic representation. I compare the bias of Masters’ personal opinions and views on the events of his characters to that of the bias in history mentioned earlier. Understanding these points gave me the idea that personal writings and documented history from Johnson’s Island could be incorporated to create a playscript made up of short monologues and scenes similar to those in *Spoon River Anthology*.

*Spoon River Anthology* also allowed me to work as a director, finding intensity and action in events with minimal spectacle. The short stories in *Spoon River Anthology* are snapshots of life. These stories do not include great revelations or plot twists. At first glance, Masters’ work lacks the element of spectacle necessary to make it interesting theatrically. However, the choices the director makes in the presentation of the drama can help connect the audience with the stories and engage their thoughts. Once engaged, the audience is able to empathize with the characters and their situations and the drama and spectacle become more exciting.

*Spoon River Anthology* is not an historical account of a town and its inhabitants. Rather it is a representation of a fictional time and place based on Masters’ experience.
and observations. However, the relationship of time, place and people, along with the dramatic structure, is what stimulated me when I wrote the playscript based on the prisoner diaries and history of the Johnson’s Island Civil War Prisoner Depot. Following Masters’ structure, I created a playscript, *J.I.: From these Walls*, that I hope will be both enlightening and educational.
In researching the art of playwriting, I quickly discovered that I needed to begin
with Aristotle’s *The Poetics*. The majority of contemporary resources I consulted
acknowledge the importance of Aristotle’s work and its influence on playwriting
throughout history. Stuart Spencer, in his book *The Playwright’s Guidebook*, presents the
most obvious argument as to Aristotle’s importance in playwriting. Stuart points out that
Aristotle did not write the formulas from which the great Greek tragedies were
constructed. Rather, he deconstructed the works of the great Greek tragedians to arrive at
the elements he determined essential to drama. Sophocles and Euripides had already
achieved success. Aristotle simply went back to the works and analyzed what made them
successful (15). By delving into the structure and design of the great tragedies and
measuring them against his desire for order and harmony, Aristotle was able to identify
the dramatic elements that make a script work and broke them down hierarchically into
six categories: Plot, Character, Diction, Thought, Song and Spectacle. He alludes to plot
and character having a somewhat symbiotic relationship, yet concludes that plot, which
gives the drama form, must be the first element considered (Aristotle). These six elements
have provided theorists with much fodder for interpretation, for example, the later discussion in regard to approaching the playwriting process by way of plot or character.

Plot is the order of events in the play (Downs and Russin 57). Stuart spencer explains, “Plot is what happens on the stage. Story is what happens both onstage and offstage--before the play begins, after it ends, and everything that happens concurrent to it but which we don’t happen to see” (215). Carefully selected by the playwright, the order of events is subject to Aristotle’s theory of Unity (Hatcher 35) and the idea of causality (Smiley 80). In order for a plot to be effective, interesting, and functional, each event should occur as a result of the preceding event. By creating a cause-and-effect relationship, the playwright guides the script through what is possible and probable (Smiley 78-79). This is not to say that a play cannot be written without plot; for instance a play may be episodic, in which the events stand alone and do not affect the overall action of the play (Spencer 212).

Aristotle’s second element is character. Smiley suggests that Aristotle saw character as the vehicle by which the plot of the drama is carried out (123). Human actions, incarnated, become the characters of the play and form the center of the drama (Wright 65). It is through each of the characters that the audience connects with the drama. To foster this connection, the characters need to be compelling (Hatcher 22), they need to be integrated into both the plot and the story, and they need to react to events plausibly in regard to their created nature (Downs and Russin 119).

The element of character is much more complicated than any simple definition can contain. Characters must function on multiple levels. First and foremost, the audience
must find the characters interesting and identify with them (Hatcher 22-23). However, it is the actions which truly determine character and create interest (Downs and Russin 117). Actions are motivated by the intellectual, psychological and emotional aspects of the character that make up his/her human personality (Smiley 124). Consequently, this interlacing of plot (action) and character makes it difficult to determine which of these two elements has more effect on the strength of the drama.

Aristotle refers to the necessity of two main characters: the protagonist and antagonist. Protagonist is the character whose goal becomes central to the drama (Smiley 142). It is this character’s action that drives the events of the plot (Downs and Russin 133). The antagonist is the character that presents the greatest opposition for the protagonist (Smiley 143). The antagonist can be another character, Nature, an object, or even the protagonist’s own subconscious (Downs and Russin 133). The key to developing the dramatic balance necessary between the protagonist and the antagonist (Smiley 143) is creating an antagonist who is at least equally as powerful as the protagonist. The creation of action and obstacle between the protagonist and the antagonist keeps the drama in constant movement and the audience questioning what is going to happen next. Spencer claims that this question is the only thing that is on the audience’s mind while watching a play performed (167).

The other characters in the script are considered supporting roles and, though important to the action of the drama, are not as thoroughly examined by the playwright (Downs and Russin 137). Smiley specifically identifies supporting roles as the foil, the messenger and the raisonneur (144). Although not always intentionally, the functions of
these roles are often carried out by some character in a script. The foil serves as an oppositional acquaintance to either the protagonist or the antagonist and allows the audience to see some of the internal conflict from the major characters by way of conversations between the two characters (Smiley 144). The raisonneur is the character that expresses the playwright’s point of view and the messenger, created in the early Greek tragedies, is the character that reports on events that happen offstage. In modern drama, the messenger often provides the information necessary for the protagonist to make the decision which causes the next event (Smiley 145).

The role of a narrator in dramatic structure is set aside from that of the other characters. In fact, Spencer says, “We have no narrator except in particular instances when the effect is either ironic, as in Our Town, or merely clumsy, as in many high school pageants” (12). Narrators can be detrimental to the action of the play as they remove the audience from the action in order for a character to reflect upon his/her own thought (which is where the foil could serve a purpose) or to dispense exposition (Downs and Russin 158). In the case of historical drama, the narrator can serve a valuable role to connect events that happen over long periods of time, hold significant historical importance unable to be expressed in action, or have large gaps of time between events (McCalmon and Moe 254). Caution should still be given as to how and to what extent the narrative device is used. The narrator works best if the character is already part of the story and the narration unfolds naturally from the role (Downs and Russin 158; McCalmon and Moe 254-255).
Aristotle’s third element of drama is thought. Playwrights today use the terms theme and idea interchangeably for thought. Aristotle defines thought as the presentation of that which is or could be, or the explanation of a universal truth (Aristotle). Thought can be defined as simply as, “the message or point that you’re [the playwright] trying to get across to an audience” (Shamas 47) or as in depth as Smiley’s “Three Loci of Thought” (151). Smiley determines the three points at which thought occurs from the playwright to the play and, finally, the audience. Thought is necessary to the play in order to evoke an intellectual challenge for the audience; thought gives the audience some reason to ponder the world in which we live (Downs and Russin 58).

Should thought be considered in the beginning of the playwright’s work or should it grow out of the writing process? Spencer argues that each play warrants its own placement of the development of the thought. Depending on whether the playwright’s intent is to express an idea, reveal a truth, or explore a situation will determine whether the playwright begins with a theme already in mind or not. If the thought is there, work from it; if it is not, let the thought be found in the process (Spencer 154-155).

Correspondingly, Hatcher states that the placement of thought in the writing process comes as a result of the impulse to write the play. If a theme is the impulse for the play, then it comes first. If a story is the impulse, then the theme will grow from the process (Hatcher 41).

Smiley more deeply interprets the element of thought. He defines thought as “what a play within itself ‘says’” (157). Although simply stated, Smiley’s treatment considers thought as an action, not words. Only after understanding the process through
which thought becomes dialogue in the play and is then interpreted by the audience, can
the playwright develop the framework of thought for the script. Thought at this point
becomes the careful interweaving of actions and dialogue that engages the audience in its
own process (Smiley 157).

Meaning is the final step in the process of thought. From thought, the audience
arrives at its understanding of the events and derives its meaning of the play. Smiley
believes that meaning is individual, specific to each audience member, and does not
always coincide with the playwright’s intent (159). He also states that theme, like in
music, refers to only the recurrence of an event, idea or general topic of the play (161).

“Fourth among the elements enumerated comes Diction; by which I mean, [. . .],
the expression of the meaning in words; [. . .]” (Aristotle). Diction is more commonly
referred to by today’s playwrights as dialogue. This should not be confused with the
words we hear in conversation on a daily basis (Downs and Russin 141). The playwright
manipulates the dialogue to serve the purpose of creating action in the script (Hatcher
45). Therefore, diction, to distinguish it from dialogue, is the art the playwright creates
through the form of dialogue (Smiley 183).

Jeffrey Hatcher, in his book *The Art and Craft of Playwriting*, discusses the three
main functions of dialogue:

- It must deliver exposition (what has happened)
- It must depict action (what is happening)
- It must promise future action (what may happen) (45)

In as much as this is true, dialogue also needs to express the nature of the character
speaking the words and not sound manufactured (46). This sort of natural-sounding,
action-based dialogue is the product of the work that the playwright has put into
developing the characters, plot and story and of how the characters listen to and respond
to the other characters in the scene (Downs and Russin 141).

Aristotle places song as the fifth element of drama and spectacle as the last and
“least [poetically] artistic” (Aristotle) element. Today, playwrights tend to place spectacle
over song in importance (Downs and Russin 57) or they put a new meaning to the
element of song that maintains the order but changes the interpretation (Hatcher 47;
Smiley 226).

The Greek dramas, about which Aristotle wrote, all included an element of song
missing in the dramas of today (Hatcher 47). Today, the element of song is determined by
the arrangement of the dialogue, use of words (Downs and Russin 57; Smiley 226) and
use of music in the play (Hatcher 47). Smiley offers the most concise definition of the
role of song in today’s drama: “Melody, [. . .], encompasses all the auditory material of
the play--verbal, mechanical, incidental, and accidental” (227).

Unlike the majority of the sources researched, Smiley took a much more extreme
approach to the element of song or melody. Where others offer explanations of how the
element is interpreted more in the construction of the dialogue and use of incidental
music, Smiley suggests going as far as developing a background in phonetics and how
sound is physically created by humans (228). Having a background in how sounds are
created and used within particular words helps the playwright to develop truer, more
distinguishable, and more beautiful patterns of speech for the characters. In turn, this
attention to sound gives the playwright more control over the thought behind the words in
order to create clearer meaning for the audience (Smiley 228). Smiley also discusses the
employment of tools such as rhyme, assonance, consonance, alliteration, onomatopoeia,
euphony, and cacophony in order to control the melody and rhythm of the dialogue
(Smiley 236).

The last of the six elements of drama is spectacle. Though initially referring to the
work of the “stage machinists” (Aristotle), the element of spectacle has been expanded to
include all of the visual elements of the drama. Although spectacle is a visual element, it
is not left completely up to the discretion of the actors, directors, and technical staff. The
playwright should implant his/her visual conceptions in the script (Smiley 255).

One way in which the playwright can establish his/her vision and add to the
spectacle of the drama is to create carefully the surroundings in which the characters live
(Shamas 38). To describe the surroundings required for the drama and then use the
surroundings as part of the action, gives the playwright options for creating spectacle in
the sense of the spatial relationships between the actors, audience, and other elements of
the setting (Hatcher 52; Shamas 38). The use of the element of spectacle needs to go
beyond a big surprise or large special effect. The images created on the stage through the
drama must be powerful enough to create a long-lasting impression in the mind of the
audience (Downs and Russin 60). Downs and Russin compare these images to a piece of
visual art:

Unlike a painting or statue, a performed work of art exists only during its
performance. Once the performer (actor, musician, dancer) is done, the work
comes to an end -- it no longer exists outside the memory as far as the audience is
concerned. And every playwright must understand that without attention to
spectacle, those memories will be faint and soon forgotten. (60)
Hatcher agrees with this comparison to visual art. He suggests researching photographs and sketches of not only the drama’s subject matter, but also from various periods of theatre in order to develop the best way to create what he calls “framed action,” the organized presentation of spectacle that is suggested in the playwright’s decisions for the various elements of the drama and dramatic structure (Hatcher 52).

Smiley offers insight into the development of spectacle in drama by way of stylistic approach, material for the actors, and suggestions for defining the performance space. Choosing a style such as realism, naturalism, romanticism, symbolism, expressionism or even no style at all helps to guide, not only the playwright’s choices in writing, but also the director’s and actor’s choices at the time of production to present a truer representation of the visual element of the drama (Smiley 278). When the playwright gives the actors visual material that encapsulates what he/she has in mind, it increases the chance that the audience will see what he/she intends. This visual material is written in the form of clear actions and emotions for the actors, good use and variation of the diction and melody of the drama, and clear use of the space integrated into the dialogue (Smiley 267). Smiley also suggests that the playwright consider the space in which he/she would like the play presented and any other physical materials which may be available for the establishment of the characters’ surroundings. Considerations should include how close the audience is to the performers and how the intimacy of this actor-spectator relationship affects the audience’s perception of the stage images (Smiley 270-274).
Types of Drama

Play type refers to the collective aspect of tone, character attributes, mood, plot, purpose and outcome. In its simplest sense, mimetic drama is broken down into three traditional types or forms: comedy, tragedy, and melodrama (Smiley 82). Within each of these categories there is a vast number of subcategories, variations and combinations ranging from Expressionism and Realism to Epic Drama and Absurdism (Downs and Russin 22).

The question becomes whether the type of drama determines the development of the characters and action or whether the writing process itself gives rise to the script’s form and dramatic type. Smiley argues that the playwright’s skills of organization allow the form of the drama to appear in the writing process (90). Shamas, however, places the decision of dramatic form immediately after the initial impulse and recognition of the intended audience (25). He goes on to state that determining the form of the work at the beginning of the writing process allows playwrights to create boundaries which channel their ideas and easily identify any elements that do not conform to the dominant style (24-25). Downs and Russin combine these two methods of writing by suggesting that the playwright develop a basic understanding of the various forms and decide later in the writing process which elements best fit the blossoming work. This approach protects the initial creativity of the writer and encourages playwrights to shape their ideas (22).

Tragedy is the dramatic form that is most serious in nature and is often recognized as the oldest form of drama. As defined by Aristotle’s specific set of rules, tragedy requires the protagonist, of lofty heritage and with an inherent character flaw,
experience a drastic downfall and come to the realization of what has happened and why (Bown and Gawthorpe 117). Because of the strict rules defining classic tragedy, it is often said that modern tragedy does not exist. In response to this, playwrights have developed a form known as “tragedies of the common man.” This modern form includes serious plays that involve an unfortunate turn of events and a sad ending that relates to today’s audiences (Downs and Russin 24).

The counterpart to tragedy is comedy. This form of drama is typically a story about a protagonist faced with adversities who experiences humorous situations and goes through a transformation to arrive at a happy ending (Shamas 24). Interestingly, comedy involves many of the basic aspects of tragedy, such as the protagonist experiencing a downfall and this downfall being the result of the character’s own flaws. The categorical difference lies in how the protagonist approaches situations and reaches his/her ultimate goal (Bown and Gawthorpe 118).

Comedy has developed and changed throughout history—as society has changed and the audience’s view of what is humorous has changed. Comedy as a form has embraced these changes through time and left behind a trail of different subcategories (Downs and Russin 23). These subcategories include: light comedy, satire, farce, parody, comedy of manners, sentimental comedy, burlesque, comedy thrillers, dark comedy and situation comedy (Bown and Gawthorpe 118; Downs and Russin 23-24). Because comedy often relies upon a skewering of a particular society’s norms and views, it is difficult for comedies to survive from generation to generation and elicit the same
response from the audience without some prior knowledge of the time and place in which the comedy was originally written (Smiley 87).

Melodrama, the third basic type of drama, is rooted in the battle between good and evil and the triumph of good over evil. Melodrama is plot driven and often contains stock characters (Downs and Russin 34). A product of the Romantic Movement and popularized in the mid-eighteenth century, melodrama’s formula-based construction, exaggerated characters, and unrealistic conclusions of the ever victorious “good” quickly aroused distaste from serious drama critics. This early form of melodrama, with stock characters, a plot line following happiness -- sadness -- happiness, and the conquering hero, is rarely seen on the contemporary stage; however, this formula has been used successfully by the film industry (Downs and Russin 34; Smiley 87). “Subtle versions of melodramatic form, however, still appear in many plays, for example, Oleanna by David Mamet or Buried Child by Sam Shepard” (Smiley 87).

A fourth form of drama is the didactic drama. This form differs from the three mimetic forms in the nature of its intent and its use of thought or idea. While mimetic plays explore the human condition and take the audience on a journey through some sort of action and resolution (Hatcher 17), didactic drama educates or persuades the audience to a specific idea, belief or thought (Smiley 89). “Didactic drama at its best stirs an audience emotionally in order to lead its individual members through a pattern of concern, realization, decision, and action in their own lives” (Smiley 89).
Dramatic Structure

Dramatic structure is the realization, formulation and construction of a play’s story into the plot. As stated earlier, plot and story are two different elements; plot is the visible action and story is the sum of all that happens on and off stage. Together they form the dramatic structure of the play and become the foundation for the drama (Spencer 23).

Some of the elements of dramatic structure include exposition, conflict, events, obstacles, decisions, climax, enlightenment, and resolution. The most elementary example of dramatic structure is evident in every story and even in dreams. Carl Jung claims that human beings dream in the form of a well-structured play. Each dream contains a beginning in which we discover our needs, a middle that presents obstacles, and an end in which our needs are or are not met (Spencer 29). This simple structure lays the groundwork for dramatic structure. The three-act structure should be observed as a process and not taken literally. The needs of the play determine the placement and number of acts. However, the dramatic structure must always include three distinct sections or movements (Hatcher 86-87).

The first movement is used to deliver the exposition of the story. Not only is this the time to introduce the audience to the characters and setting, but also three important dramatic elements must be revealed: 1) inciting incident, 2) point of attack, 3) major dramatic question (Downs and Russin 65; Hatcher 87). The introduction of these three elements will move the story forward throughout the drama. The remainder of the drama,
from the point of attack on, occurs as a reaction to the inciting incident and unfolds to reveal the answer to the major dramatic question (Downs and Russin 68; Spencer 122).

The inciting incident is an event that is part of the story but directly affects the plot. This means that the inciting incident is an event that is not seen in the course of the play, but results in the event that the audience does see in order to begin the dramatic action. Hatcher presents the example of the fight between Felix Unger and his wife Francis in *The Odd Couple* (81). The audience only learns about this through Felix’s discussion with Oscar and the rest of the cast, but it is the occurrence of the event that causes the point of attack when Oscar tells Felix to move in with him (Hatcher 81). To better explain this concept, Smiley offers the following line diagram.

```
A-----------------B----------------C (102)
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“A is the beginning of the [story]; B is the start of the [plot] and the opening of the play; and C the ending of the story, plot and play” (Smiley 102).

The point of attack in the drama connects the story, the play, and the plot. It also serves as an entry point to the drama for the audience. Within the structure of the play, the point of attack poses a choice for the protagonist, whose decision sets the action into motion and defines the protagonist’s goal (Downs and Russin 66).

As a result of the inciting incident, the point of attack and the subsequent choice the protagonist makes, the audience is presented with the major dramatic question. This question is what will keep the audience actively awaiting the discoveries that will deliver the answer (Downs and Russin 68).
The second movement of the drama, the middle, is the section in which the protagonist is challenged by multiple obstacles as he/she tries to attain his/her goal. Throughout this second section, the way the protagonist handles each of the obstacles he/she encounters leads dramatically to the following obstacle and ultimately to the final climax of the drama (Hatcher 88). This sequential movement is termed the rising action of the drama and should escalate in intensity throughout the play. Even though one obstacle may be overcome, the next obstacle caused by the preceding one should increase in magnitude (Downs and Russin 69; Shamas 58). By the conclusion of the second movement of the drama, the audience should be brought to the crisis of the play (Downs and Russin 70). This crisis should not be confused with the climax, the turning point in the play, which occurs in the third movement of the drama. Another identification of this crisis is referred to as the dark moment. This is the point at which it seems all hope is lost for the protagonist or that, because of his/her actions, he/she realizes he/she will not be able to reach his/her goal (Downs and Russin 70).

To construct the middle section of the drama, Spencer and Smiley suggest the playwright examine the drama’s overall dramatic arc and how each minor struggle affects the overall progression. Both authors offer an approach in which the playwright creates the individual scenes with a three act form that lends itself to a better constructed overall dramatic arc.

Smiley separates generalized events into two categories with different degrees of importance: an event and an incident. Both of these occurrences result in some sort of consequential action, but the event is the more important occurrence of the two (Smiley
101). Similarly, Spencer recognizes the difference in importance of different events. Rather than identify one as more important than the other, Spencer asks the playwright to consider what is at stake for the characters involved in the event. Smiley states, “Stakes are what the character has to gain or lose” (74). This distinction is made to help playwrights understand that it is not the intensity with which actors approach an event that make it important or not, but rather how greatly their character can benefit or lose as a result of the event (Spencer 75). Established stakes for the characters and events ultimately affect the attainability of the characters’ goal. If the stakes are too high, the audience will realize the character cannot possibly reach his/her goal, give up on the story and lose interest (Smiley 81). Both Smiley’s and Spencer’s construction of an event result in the same outcome: a change in a character’s observable action that is equal in magnitude to what is at stake. The change happens as the result of an internal decision the character makes based upon the conflict with which he/she is confronted (Smiley 115; Spencer 88-89).

The final movement of the play is signaled by the enlightenment, or point at which the protagonist understands what needs to be done to win over the antagonist (Downs and Russin 71). Following the enlightenment is the climax, or highest point of dramatic action in the drama. During the climax the overall conflict of the drama is settled (Hatcher 83) which “causes [a] reversal and reveals character change” (Smiley 105) and the answer to the major dramatic question is revealed. One important key to the climax is that all scenes afterward must be as a result of the climax and must not introduce any new major action (Hatcher 83). The remainder of the drama is used to
clarify the aftermath of the climax, restore a balance to the characters, and bring the story to a close.

A variety of techniques and tools to construct the final movement of the play are available to the playwright. In terms of the climax, the playwright has three options. One, the climax can be constructed using an either/or decision. In this case, the protagonist must choose an action that will result in either reaching his/her goal or not (Spencer 89). Two, the climax can be constructed with a tie occurring between the protagonist and antagonist (Spencer 94). If the playwright chooses this type of climax, he/she must make himself aware of what changes might happen as a result of the tie. The playwright risks leaving the audience unfulfilled if the characters do not change after the climax (Downs and Russin 72). The third type of climax is the employment of a device used in ancient Greece: *deus ex machina*. Originally this was a technique in which the character of a god was flown in by machine to resolve the conflict of the plot. This method was acceptable at the time because the citizens of ancient Greece had faith in their deities and their ability to control the human world (Brown and Gawthorpe 68). Though usually not presented by the appearance of a god, *deus ex machina* is still an available tool today. The criteria for *deus ex machina* is simple: it is an action that resolves the conflict and has no relationship to the consequences of the preceding events and incidents (Spencer 91).

Finally, the playwright needs to choose whether to create a cathartic ending or not. The catharsis is an important tool that gives the audience an emotional release and a return to a settled state by the end of the play (Brown and Gawthorpe 70). There are varying degrees of catharsis, from the intensity of that in most Greek tragedies to the
milder effect of that in a Neil Simon or Oscar Wilde comedy. In all instances, however, an emotional release of some sort occurs. Placement of this cathartic event is crucial to the end of the drama in terms of the audience’s interest. The event must happen in a timely fashion following the climax, but must not happen too far removed from the end of the actual play. Once the audience experiences the catharsis, their journey is coming to an end and they do not want to be involved in a long, drawn out resolution (Downs and Russin 72-73).

Approaches

Unlike mathematics and the scientific process, there are no absolutes or steps to follow in playwriting that will produce identical results. Playwriting is an art form that shares many elements from one incarnation to another, yet the final results are uniquely different from one another. Most of the resources that teach how to write a play include several chapters discussing Aristotle’s elements of drama, but refrain from suggesting a standard process to compose a script.

Aristotle’s *The Poetics* continues to serve as the foundation for contemporary playwrights seeking advice on how to develop their craft. However, each playwright interprets Aristotle’s ideas according to his own philosophy of creating drama. For instance, Stuart Spencer, Sam Smiley, William Missouri Downs and Robin Russin literally interpret Aristotle’s order of the six elements of drama by placing action or plot at the foundation of the structure of drama. Whereas, Jeffery Hatcher, George McCalmon and Christian Moe view Aristotle’s order as arbitrary. The latter authors feel that it is
necessary to place the initial focus on the characters the playwright is trying to create. While each of these authors claims success in his process, each also advises that the approach should be taken as a guideline to the process and not as a set of rules.

Jeffery Hatcher, in his book *The Art and Craft of Playwriting*, argues, “Plays are about people. Start with character” (19). Character is argued by some to be the foundation of drama because the characters bring the action of the script to life and determine how the audience connects with the story (Shamas 27). The characters in a drama need to spark a physical and an intellectual interest in the audience. To accomplish this, the characters in a play should be created on multiple levels. It is important for the playwright to understand each character’s background, interests, tendencies, and current situation. From the “biography” of the character, the playwright has a clearer picture as to the action of the drama (Hatcher 26). The individual actions of each character lead to the larger actions of the scene, which in turn lead to the overall action of the drama; each step in the process relies upon understanding why the character might make a certain decision (Hatcher 27).

In *Creating Historical Drama*, George McCalmon and Christian Moe suggest a similar technique which they refer to as saturation. Saturation is the process of the playwright submerging himself into one particular character’s persona. By creating every element possible in this initial character, the playwright begins to discover those relationships necessary for the character, the circumstances, and the environment to develop. McCalmon and Moe advise, “Only as the playwright sits in the center of his material can he write with conviction” (154).
Michael Wright, in his book *Playwriting in Process*, also suggests beginning the process with establishing well developed characters. Wright’s concern, however, comes from his belief that today’s writers are creating weak characters (65). As opposed to just creating the character’s traits and history, Wright offers a series of exercises he calls études, in order to help discover the true nature of the character. By placing the created character into different situations, the playwright begins to develop a better understanding of the character and then translates that understanding into dialogue. Most importantly, Wright addresses the idea that the script only shows the audience a specific time in the character’s life and hence needs to be seasoned with the nuances of that which the character has experienced outside the timeline of the script (68-69).

The opposing approach to beginning to write a play addresses the plot or action first. In *The Playwright’s Guidebook*, Stuart Spencer quotes Aristotle’s famous axiom: drama is, “the imitation of an action” (36). Spencer then develops a process that focuses on first establishing the character’s line of action. He defines action as the want or need of the character which stimulates the decisions that the character makes and drives the plot forward. Spencer does not deny the fact that characters have innate qualities or have had experiences prior to the action of the script. In fact, his formula for character includes the sum of general qualities, emotions, actions and speech/behavior (176). Spencer believes that even in using action as the entry point to beginning a play, one should not try to break apart all of the elements and work on them individually. Each of the elements of drama affects the others and should work together as one (Spencer 171).
William Downs and Robin Russin also approach the playwriting process from the element of action. In their book *Naked Playwriting*, Downs and Russin begin the section on building the play with a chapter about story and plot. The plot or structure of the play is what gives the script order. “Without order, there is no meaning and no art” (Downs and Russin 55). However, Downs and Russin agree with Spencer and caution the playwright from compartmentalizing the process of writing. It is important, for all of the elements to work together during the writing process. “Either method -- putting plot ahead of character, or character ahead of plot -- can lead to failure. Characters are aimless without a well-structured plot, and a plot is empty without well-motivated, multidimensional characters” (Downs and Russin 63).

The Writing Process

The playwriting process is the incorporation of all elements of drama through the use of the tools presented by the requirements of the dramatic structure. The biggest question for most playwrights is where to start. Even before one considers the elements of character and plot, or how the playwright should begin, comes the question of what the play is to be about. Once this decision is made, the playwright needs to collect materials, assign characters, create scenarios, develop scenes, establish action, draft, write, and revise. Much like the dramatic structure of a drama, each step in the writing process leads to the next.

The germinal idea is the entry point of the playwriting process. It can be an image, a memory, a sound, a thought -- anything that piques the interest of the playwright
(Downs and Russin 1) and compels him/her to create a story based upon it (Smiley 29).

Not every stimuli the playwright encounters is worthy of being a germinal idea, each one needs to be explored and tested. The playwright tests these germinal ideas by asking questions like, what is the potential for dramatic action? What physical behavior can be found in the idea? What is the potential for dialogue? How does the idea lend itself to the form of a complete play? (McCalmon and Moe 145). The following is an excellent example of the requirements necessary in a germinal idea:

First, a good germinal idea strongly commands the interest of the writer, one that he or she can live with daily for months or years. Second, a good idea contains the potential for dramatic action. Somehow it needs to promise deep energies in the potential characters involved. Third, in any worthy germinal idea, the writer should perceive one or more of the moments of change [. . .]. The idea also needs the strength to make excitement. That means it somehow intensifies the writer’s life, the lives of the potential characters, and the lives of potential audiences. (Smiley 25)

There are different types of germinal ideas that can potentially be developed into a drama. Typical sources for germinal ideas come about in the form of a theme, situation, character(s) (Grebanier 20), subject, or a conceptual thought (Smiley 27-28). Theme and conceptual thought-based germinal ideas are those rooted in the exploration of a single human idea, thought or belief structure such as hate or greed (Grebanier 20; Smiley 27). The situational-based idea is defined as an idea discovered in the relationship of two people or a group of individuals (Smiley 28). The character inspired idea focuses on one or more characters as individuals and does not immediately involve their situation or relationship (Grebanier 29). The basis of a germinal idea that deals with a subject is a specific topic. Examples are drug abuse, teen pregnancy, AIDS in America, geocaching or
mud wrestling and differ from theme-based ideas in that they are tangible subjects and not broad sociological or philosophical ideas (Smiley 28).

Once a germinal idea is discovered and tested, the playwright gathers material (Smiley 29). One view of this process, saturation, is discussed earlier in this chapter. As with character, the playwright seeks out as much information as is available on the subject of the play. More than just research of the physical aspects of the drama, the playwright also collects intellectual and dramatic materials for the play. To gather material, the playwright engages in the processes of brainstorming, discussion, travel, exploration of other art forms (Smiley 31), impulse writing exercises (Spencer 136), and application of Aristotle’s elements of drama to the idea (Hatcher 72). With the influx of a sea of impulses, images, and information, the playwright must begin to write. The brain can only hold so much information for so long, and soon good ideas are lost; therefore, it is important to write something, even if only notes on scraps of paper (Smiley 33).

After a germinal idea is found, its possibilities explored, and some basic writing completed, the next step is to organize the drama. There are several different ways in which a playwright can approach this next step; however, the most important part is to clearly state the framework. By the end of the collection process the playwright needs to write a brief narrative of the story. This narrative is not a breakdown of what happens at every moment of the script, but rather an idea about who the play involves, their situation, the goal of the drama and what happens (Hatcher 72).

From the narrative, the playwright can use a series of scenarios (Smiley 35-40), an outline based on French scenes (Hatcher 74), or a combination of the two (Downs and
Russin 94, 101) to continue the development process. Smiley’s scenario approach is a three-step process that includes a simple scenario, a rough scenario, and a final scenario. The simple scenario is a list of “ways it could go” (Smiley 35), which includes a list of events that could happen in the drama. He also suggests that the playwright create several simple scenarios to explore the potential of the drama from various directions (35).

In the rough scenario, the playwright places the events and incidents in a dramatic sequence with consideration for the overall escalation and cause-and-effect relationship between the events. This stage of the scenario trilogy contains the following: 1) working title, 2) action, 3) form, 4) circumstances, 5) subject, 6) characters, 7) conflict, 8) story, 9) thought, 10) description of the style of dialogue, and 11) schedule (Smiley 36).

A comparison of these different approaches shows that they all arrive at the same conclusion by this point in the process. Hatcher suggests laying out the structure of the narrative in a series of French scenes (74). From the developed list of French scenes, the playwright will see how each scene’s events affect the next. Like Smiley’s “ways it could go” simple scenario (35), Hatcher’s approach asks the questions, “What would they [the characters] do? What could they [the characters] do?” (75). The answers to these questions will develop consistent actions for the characters and a clear progression for the dramatic structure. Downs and Russin’s approach, in a way, combines that of Smiley and Hatcher. The structure for the scenario is rooted in the narrative, but rather than including only ideas and actions in a list, they suggest that the playwright also compose the organization of French scenes for the drama and an idea of the theme (Downs and Russin 105-109).
The last step required to build Smiley’s series of scenarios is the final scenario. At this point the playwright should have a clearer idea of the progression of the drama, fuller descriptions of the characters, a specific image of the setting, and a complete story. The totality of the final scenario contains all that was in the rough scenario plus a final title, complete circumstances, complete character descriptions, a scene-by-scene narrative of the play, and a working outline that contains all of the action in each scene (Smiley 38). This is the stage at which Smiley introduces the French scene in his process. In all processes discussed previously, the authors caution the playwright to not begin formal writing of the script until they have developed a clear structure for the drama.

In contrast to these processes, Spencer warns:

The tools you learned [. . .] won’t do you any good in finding the impulse. They are used by your conscious mind to help shape your play once it is written or as you are in the process of writing it. [. . .] One of the most common sources of writer’s block comes from the attempt to give form and structure to an idea that is not yet ready to be given form, so put your tools away for the moment. (130)

To properly develop the script, the playwright must remain connected with the initial impulse that grew out of his/her subconscious. This connection will allow the playwright to formulate the truth that lies behind the impulse and create the rest of the story. To make this connection, Spencer offers a writing exercise designed to get the playwright to listen to his/her subconscious (Spencer 134-138). The exercise requires the playwright to create a written image of the play’s physical setting that includes stimuli for more senses than just sight. Once the image is complete, the playwright reads the image, placing himself/herself into the setting and begins writing immediately. The idea is that the playwright documents the impulses the image creates in the subconscious. A main requirement to the
exercise is to not make changes to what is being written. Spencer states, “[The playwright’s] job is not to be creative but to listen.” (135) As the playwright listens to what the characters in his/her subconscious are saying, he/she connects with the impulse and draws the story out of his/her subconscious. At this point, the playwright can then begin to discover the structure that lies within the story. Unlike other approaches, Spencer does not want to impose structure on the story, but instead draw it from the story (143).

The next step in the writing process is the drafting phase. The first draft should immediately follow the completed pre-writing phase. Even if the playwright is not completely comfortable with all of the details in the final scenario; much of this will become more developed as he/she writes. McCalmon and Moe believe that, “The important thing is to start and finish the fullest and most interesting action that he can visualize” (166). At the start of the drafting phase, the playwright needs to create a schedule for writing. This is not a timeline for what will be completed when, but rather a daily schedule that allots time specifically for the purpose of writing. An established regimen will help the playwright develop good writing habits. Even if the writing strays from the drama at hand, what is written could be used as research or an exercise valuable to future projects (Downs and Russin 109). The already established habits of the playwright should be considered in creating the writing schedule -- identify the most productive time of day, location and means by which to write (Smiley 43-44).

To draft a play is to put the final scenario into action through dialogue and stage directions (Smiley 42). This stage of the process offers the playwright both freedom and frustration, determined by the effectiveness of the playwright’s inner critic. If the
playwright uses the final scenario as a guide, the decision making is removed from the writing process and the playwright can listen to the characters and document their words (Spencer 135). The playwright should not concern himself with overwriting; he/she will address critiques, cuts and edits as part of the revision process (Shamas 79). An attempt to meld the drafting and revision processes into one will result in forced dialogue, lack of development, a frustrated playwright, and possibly distaste for the play (Smiley 41).

The benefits of overwriting are that more options and possibilities for the script will present themselves in the revision process; however, the playwright must always listen to his/her characters to know when the line between drama and real life has been crossed. For example, Hatcher sates, “When the characters start talking like people in the grocery store, your creativity has had it for the day.” (77) If the dialogue does not serve a purpose in the continuation of the drama’s action, it then becomes dull, stagnant, and unnecessary. If the playwright feels as though this line has been crossed, it is best to put the writing aside for a moment and re-approach it with a fresh mind (Hatcher 77). All of the sources consulted agree that once the first draft is complete, it should be put aside for a fair amount of time. (McCalmon and Moe 167). There needs to be time, a ripening period, for the playwright to release attitudes of success and immediate criticisms from his/her mind before he/she returns to the script for the next stage of the process (Smiley 48).

To clarify the next step of the writing process, I will address Smiley’s terminology versus the others. Smiley’s differentiations of the terminology intrigued me. Smiley defines the revision of a draft as one that results in another version of the first draft. A
draft can only be deemed a second draft if it has undergone a complete structural
overhaul which includes major rewording of the script. To stay consistent with the
majority of the sources, I will refer to the next stages as revision and redrafting.

To begin the revision stage, the playwright must return to the first draft and read
the script objectively, not once but several times, to examine the work from different
angles (McCalmon and Moe 167). The first reading of the script examines the general
flow; the second addresses the impression of the characters; and another focuses on the
construction of the scenes (Smiley 48). Part of the revision process involves an analysis
of the script for the elements intended initially by the playwright. McCalmon and Moe
suggest the playwright design an appraisal form to help dissect the script (167).

Essentially, this appraisal form is a blank final scenario in which the playwright extracts
all the elements in the script from the dialogue. Smiley suggests the playwright “write a
one sentence summary of each scene, examine the structure of each beat, and review the
dialogue for distinctive voices” (49). This process has the potential to be one of the most
difficult for the playwright. Because it deals with self-criticism, playwrights often err on
either side during this process. The playwright is exposed, he/she must make a decision
of whether what was written is good or bad, useable or not. The playwright must
overcome his/her fear and either admit what he/she wrote is horrible, or employ a humble
nature and accept the fact that it is good (Spencer 226).

Most playwrights, by this point, are eager for someone else to read their work, yet
hesitant to put it on the table for criticism. After all, this has been a carefully guarded
project, sparked by a subconscious impulse and nurtured into an observable work.
Getting responses from others is a valuable step in the revision process; however, the playwright must carefully select the respondents (Smiley 50). The selection process should be based upon the potential for quality feedback from the individuals and the level of trust the playwright has in the reader (Spencer 232).

It is to the advantage of the playwright to invite a group of actors to read the script aloud. This exercise, especially when done with experienced actors, can offer insight to the playwright as to how the actors might interpret the dialogue, how the dialogue will sound (melody and diction), and whether the action of the drama is expressed in the dialogue (Smiley 49-50). The value of a reading can be greatly enhanced if the playwright gives the participants an opportunity to read and work with the script ahead of time. Too many times a cold reading does not give the playwright a true idea of the potential of the script (Downs and Russin 207).

The object of the playwright’s analysis, individual readings, and group readings is to formulate a new plan for revising or rewriting the script. The playwright should examine the responses gathered from others for validity. The playwright will find that some responses are too inflated and offer no help to the revision process. Likewise, negative responses toward the work that do not pinpoint specific examples are equally useless in the revision process (Downs and Russin 207-208; Smiley 50-51). In the end, the playwright must stay true to his/her vision and select the comments and criticisms that will improve the script (Shamas 94).

In an attempt to reduce the burden of sorting through open responses, Spencer lists a series of questions that will help guide the responder to produce useful comments:
What do you think my play is about?
What parts were you interested in?
What parts were you not interested in?
Can you say why you weren’t interested?
Was anything confusing or somehow not clear to you?
Was anything unresolved? (Spencer 234)

In response to these questions, Spencer also suggests that the playwright redirect questions that begin with, “Why did you...” It may be that the playwright did not make the decision, but rather it was made by the subconscious (Spencer 235).

Once the playwright sorts through the responses, he/she devises a plan for the revision of the script. This plan is a specific list of the changes to make in order to improve the script (Smiley 53). If a conceptual approach is used in revision process, it could lead the playwright further astray from the drama, create larger issues and possibly create the need for a redrafting (Smiley 58).

This last part of the process, polishing and editing, is addressed solely by Smiley. Other sources either delve into how to market the play or how to work with a theatre group to develop the script. To polish the play, the playwright, one last time, addresses every aspect of the play to make certain that his/her vision is apparent. Moreover, the playwright will pay close attention to the diction of the play. Do the words make grammatical sense? Does the melody of the dialogue serve the action of the scene? This kind of attention to detail requires multiple readings of the script. Lastly, the playwright edits the script. This is not only the time to check for spelling and grammatical errors, but to also correct any formatting errors. While editing, the playwright may also “freshen trite metaphors and similes, and [. . .] remove unnecessary words” (Smiley 60).
completion of the polishing and editing process results in the final draft of the work (Smiley 60).

The process of playwriting continues as the final draft is put into action by a director and actors. Further revisions and rewrites may occur during this development stage; however, my experience in writing *JI: From These Walls* ends for now with the creation of the final draft.
CHAPTER III

WRITING AN HISTORICAL SCRIPT WITH ACCURACY

When I started this project, my intent was to stay true to the various texts and historic events presented in the script. I feared that I would turn the script into a story that contained some bits of history that may or may not have happened the way in which I dramatized them. This paranoia is rooted in my criticism of other historical dramas I have encountered, on film or stage, that stray from the historical truth in order to fit a dramatic structure or to make the story more interesting or spectacular.

As I started my research I learned the true meaning of the adage, “Never judge a man until you have walked a mile in his shoes.” It is not easy to write a play script in which one must condense the events of an extended period of time into a concise, one to two hour, neatly wrapped package. I struggled in the early stages as I worked to develop the script’s rough scenario. After I read histories of the island and countless diary entries, I collected information that spans a timeframe of five years, includes a countless number of events, and refers to hundreds of individuals. I felt like I had failed before I even started to write, because I realized that even with all the data that I collected, there was still history missing. No matter how I organized the information, the script would not be the historically accurate depiction of Johnson’s Island that I set out to write. As I
continued my research, I learned that there were other obstacles which would prevent the script from having the historical accuracy that I initially desired.

In *The Playwright’s Guidebook*, Stuart Spencer discusses historical drama and how it functions as an art form. There are playwrights who have tried to serve the subject matter and stay true to the exact happenings of history. Unfortunately, these works either never make it to print or, if they do, they lack the action and life to make them successful scripts. Too much loyalty toward historical accuracy hinders the playwright in his/her attempt to create an effective historical drama. As the playwright searches for more facts and uncovers new pieces of history, the need to include these facts in the script complicates the structure of the script. In most cases, the playwright burdens the dialogue with so many facts that there is no dramatic structure other than the fact that lines follow characters’ names when the script is complete. (161-163).

A playwright is an artist and his/her play the work of art he/she creates. Spencer adds, “Information, however, is not the function of art” (161). This is the difference between the historically accurate play that I had in mind at the start of the project and the one I actually wrote. The playwright must satisfy the function of the drama as an art form, not the history. This is not to say that a play cannot be informative. It is just that the function of the action cannot be solely to inform. Spencer contests that this is why there are non-fiction books. These books serve their purpose; they are true to their form (Spencer 161). A play needs a clear purpose, whether it is based on historical events, or built upon fictional characters and situations. The purpose keeps the audience involved and connected.
In contrast, George McCalmon and Christian Moe in *Creating Historical Drama*, feel that the playwright cannot begin to write the script until he/she has exhausted his/her exploration into the history of the subject (154). This point, referred to as saturation, gives the playwright a better understanding of the play’s surroundings and what is plausible in the action of the drama (McCalmon and Moe 154). The process of saturation creates characters that are truthful and able to function in a greater number of dramatic events in the structure of the play (McCalmon and Moe 157). According to McCalmon and Moe, the playwright’s task, made easier through saturation, is to decide which of the events are important enough to include in the final script and which need to be left out (154).

Although McCalmon and Moe wrote an entire book about how to create an historical drama, they never once address the idea of accuracy or criticisms of the historical drama as a form. The text offers good ideas pertaining to the construction of the script from the germinal idea to the main action; however, it does not answer the question of how to write an historically accurate historical drama. Other sources also elude this topic. In fact, Spencer’s book is the only one that takes on the topic with any specificity. Yet, to compare McCalmon and Moe’s approach to writing an historical drama and Spencer’s views on how to interpret the history reveals that both achieve the same goal: a well written script. The difference between the two is that Spencer cautions the playwright to understand the purpose of the script before doing research so that the purpose of the play drives the material, while McCalmon and Moe suggest that the
playwright research as much as he/she can and then decide how that information can give purpose to the script.

Understanding that a play has a different function than that of a history text allowed me to reevaluate my distaste for what I used to consider poor historical dramas. I was able to better understand why playwrights make decisions to include or remove material from a script to serve the purpose of the play. Also, it gave me a better understanding of what I needed to do to begin writing my play. I needed to find the purpose of the script. I could no longer plan to pull small parts of writing from the wealth of documents I had researched in order to stimulate the audience and provide a simulacrum of what it was like to be incarcerated on Johnson’s Island during the Civil War. I had to determine specifically what to say about the island’s inhabitants and which of their experiences to share with the audience.
Johnson’s Island is located in Sandusky Bay just south of Marblehead Peninsula and Northwest of Cedar Point in north central Ohio on the shores of Lake Erie. It is a small island which measures one mile by one-half mile. Presently, the island primarily consists of residential homes and the remnants of a profitable quarry; however, it was once home to a prominent prisoner depot for Confederate Officers.

At the beginning of the Civil War, the treatment of captured soldiers was taken care of relatively quickly, and they were released through parole, hanging, or by taking an oath of allegiance. This process allowed the Union and Confederacy to put aside the need to find, build and staff locations to be used as prison camps. However, neither side was prepared for the war to last as long as it did nor for it to produce such high tolls of casualty and imprisonment (Schultz 7).

In response to the First Manassas and Wilson’s Creek Battles of 1861, Brigadier General Montgomery Meigs, Quartermaster General, initiated the movement for the establishment of facilities to accommodate the growing number of prisoners of war. As part of Meigs’ design for the Union prison system, he suggested the appointment of Lieutenant Colonel William H. Hoffman to the newly created position of Commissary-
General of Prisoners. In this position, Hoffman was an integral part of the development of the Johnson’s Island Civil War Prisoner Depot and maintained a connection to the prison throughout the Civil War (Schultz 7-8).

Due to the insufficient quality of the makeshift camps the Union first established to house the new influx of prisoners, Meigs instructed Hoffman to explore the islands in Lake Erie and choose a location to build a compound specifically for prisoners of war. Lake Erie offered several options for locations including North, Middle and South Bass Islands, Kelley’s Island, and an island purchased in 1852 by Leonard B. Johnson from Epaproditus W. Bull, renamed Johnson’s Island (Schultz 1). Upon visiting each of the islands in Lake Erie, Hoffman concluded that each of the Bass Islands had faults ranging from proximity to the Canadian border to liquor establishments that might be too attractive to the Union guards. Because of its lack of inhabitants, accessibility by way of Sandusky and abundant forest for both lumber and fuel, Johnson’s Island proved to be the best candidate for the location of the new prison compound (Schultz 9; Frohman 4).

Hoffman’s recommendation for Johnson’s Island was approved on 26 October 1861, and on 15 November a lease was agreed upon by L.B. Johnson for the use of 150 acres of the island at the cost of $500 per year (Bush 10; Frohman 4).

Hoffman laid plans for four prisoner buildings, two-stories high, ranging from 105 feet by 25 feet to 112 feet by 29 feet to hold 1,000 prisoners. A hospital, mess rooms, guard barracks, blockhouses and security fencing were included in these initial plans. The total estimate came to $26,266 and was bid out to local contractors William T. West and Philander Gregg. A call was put out for volunteers in Ohio to fill positions in what
became known as “Hoffman’s Battalion.” This drive for enlistment met with excellent results as the volunteers were informed that they would not be used in the field, but rather trained specifically for use on Johnson’s Island. (Schultz 27; Frohman 2-4)

By December 1861, Hoffman’s vision of the Johnson’s Island Prisoner Depot had almost come to complete fruition, with the compound nearing completion in physical construction and two companies of enlisted men on the payroll. At this point, it was necessary to find a man fit to fill the position of prison commander. Former mayor of Sandusky, William S. Pierson, was selected, upon Hoffman’s recommendation, to oversee the prison and was granted the rank of Major. “Though not a military man, Pierson, who assumed command on New Year’s Day [1862], had impressed Hoffman as combining abilities and qualities of a gentleman, with a willingness to educate himself as to the duties of post commander” (Bush 14).

The mid-February 1862 completion of the construction on Johnson’s Island happened simultaneously with the Union victories at Roanoke Island and Fort Donelson which added approximately 14,000 new confederate prisoners to the incubating Union prison system. Taking immediate action, Hoffman contracted West & Gregg to construct more buildings within the compound, increasing the building total to 13 and capacity to 3,000. By 12 March 1862, the initial phase of construction was complete and Pierson announced that the prison was ready for its first contingent of prisoners. This announcement allowed for the transfer of prisoners from Camp Chase in Columbus, OH, to Sandusky via the Sandusky, Dayton & Cincinnati Railroad. From there, the prisoners were to be loaded onto the Island Queen steamship and carried across Sandusky Bay to
Johnson’s Island. On 10 April 1862, the first Confederate prisoners, numbering 200, were placed inside the confines of the Johnson’s Island Prisoner Depot. On 13 April 1862, Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton declared that the Johnson’s Island Depot would be used specifically to house Confederate Officers and all enlisted men were returned to Camp Chase (Schultz 44; Frohman 7).

After having quickly made arrangements to house the increased number of prisoners, the Union found their depots throughout the states in good condition and housing reasonable amounts of prisoners. It was as a result of the Dix-Hill Cartel in 1862 that these prisons saw a drastic reduction in the number of prisoners. Major General John A. Dix was appointed by President Abraham Lincoln to engage in negotiations with Major General Daniel H. Hill to handle the “prisoner-of-war dilemma” (Bush 15). The result of their negotiations was the ratification of the Dix-Hill Cartel on 22 July 1862, which opened the doors for a very large amount of paroles and exchanges (“Civil War Prisons”). The effect of this agreement closed half of the Union prisons and dropped Johnson’s Island’s prisoner population to 1,238 by the end of November 1862. “On the last day of 1862, Major Pierson reported that the number of prisoners for whom he was accountable had fallen to 313” (Bush 15). By 30 April 1863, the island’s population bottomed out at 123 prisoners (Bush 15).

Like the impact of the First Manassas and Wilson’s Creek battles, the surrenders at Vicksburg and Port Hudson as well as the Battle of Gettysburg, resulted in a similar spike in the number of prisoners for whom the Union needed to provide accommodations. The flooded Union prisons and weakened exchange structure (created by the Dix-Hill
Cartel) were all results of Secretary Stanton’s decision to stop the exchange of officers, the treatment of the black Union soldiers and their commanding officers in Confederate prisons, and questions regarding the paroling of Confederate prisoners. On 27 October 1863, Hoffman carried out orders from Stanton that stopped all exchanges of prisoners regardless of rank, leaving the latest reported prisoner population at 2,000 on 31 August 1863, an increase of over 1,800 officers in eight months (Bush 15-16).

During the first year of the prison’s history and through the height of the Dix-Hill Cartel, prisoners and sympathizers planned and attempted raids of and escapes from the Johnson’s Island Prisoner Depot, the first of which was recorded on 18 June 1863. Pierson, having heard rumors of this initial attempt, requested additional troops to be sent to the island and asked that the warship U.S.S. Michigan be sent to patrol in Lake Erie. Hoffman agreed to send the reinforcements, but not the U.S.S. Michigan. Hoffman also commented, “Kindness alone will not keep the prisoners in subjection, and when you can single out a turbulent character you must resort to severe measures. You have the power and you are responsible that it is well-executed” (Frohman 38). Several similar situations arose that year which instigated some concern as to Pierson’s capabilities as commander of the prison.

One of the two more significant plans devised to free the prisoners came in late fall of 1863. Alarmed by what he described as “a bad spirit among the prisoners; they had the idea that a revolt would be a great thing for the Confederacy [. . .] a revolt was only a question of time” (Frohman 38), Pierson again requested the presence of the U.S.S. Michigan and additional reinforcements for the island. Hoffman did not feel it was
necessary to grant these requests. Only upon being requested a second time did Hoffman agree to at least send the U.S.S. Michigan to Sandusky Bay in an attempt to appease Pierson. This time Pierson’s concern was proven to be well-founded. Stanton, informed by British Minister Lord Lyon, learned that Confederate sympathizers in Canada had plotted to run a campaign through the Great Lakes taking the city of Buffalo and continuing into Lake Erie where they planned to capture steamboats and overtake Johnson’s Island. Between November 12 and 14, more than 2,500 Union soldiers were deployed to Sandusky from Cincinnati, Toledo, Sandusky and Cleveland (Bush 17-18; Frohman 40).

The townsfolk of Sandusky were alarmed at the presence of such a large number of soldiers and rumors filling the streets. Many rumors were spurred by inaccurate reports in newspapers printed in Cleveland and Buffalo. One Sandusky citizen recorded that, “According to their statements, Johnson’s Island had been attacked, the Island Queen captured and Sandusky burned” (Frohman 38-39). Though panic struck the wires, on November 15, all was secure and the raid was aborted. Brigadier General Jacob D. Cox, one of the battalion leaders brought from Cincinnati to assist in the defense of the island, reported to Stanton that he would begin dismissing the reinforcements on 18 November, but leave behind a battery of heavy artillery and a battalion of recruits to help protect the island from any future raid attempts. Cox also reported to Hoffman with a list of recommendations for more permanent fortification of the island (Frohman 41).

While the raid was going on outside the walls of the island, life inside the prison was much less exciting. Because of General Ulysses S. Grant’s 17 April 1863 order to
cease all exchanges, the population of Johnson’s Island began to rise. Reports in September 1863, just prior to the attempted raid, noted that there were 2,144 prisoners on the island. By the end of December 1864, the population climbed to an overcrowded 3,231 officers. The increased number of prisoners and agitated excitement of the war led to some of the worst times for the prisoners on Johnson’s Island. Reports of the treatment of Union prisoners in Confederate camps, whether true or not, did not help the situations in the Union camps (Bush 16).

An inspection of the Johnson’s Island Prisoner Depot by Medical Inspector, A.M. Clark on 10 October 1863, opened the door to concern by Hoffman as to the condition of the island Charles Frohman, in his book, *Rebels on Lake Erie* discusses some of Clark’s concern as follows:

> The water from the bay was slightly impregnated with lime from the extensive beds of sulfate of lime in the bay. The drainage was poor, since the island was mostly flat, and no artificial drainage was provided. But the state of cleanliness or ‘police’ was the biggest complaint in the prisoners’ quarters and the hospital. In the federal quarters he was satisfied.

> Internments of the dead, he said, were carelessly made in an unfenced cemetery one-half mile from the camp. Prevalent diseases were typhoid fever and pneumonia, and there were three cases of smallpox. (Frohman 25)

Pierson attempted to defend the state of the prison in several reports to Hoffman; however, reports sent from prisoners to correspondents, including similar situations found in Clark’s official report, were forwarded to Hoffman. These conflicting reports caused Hoffman to order another official inspection of the island. Clark returned on 11 January 1864, and reported many of the same details as four months previous:
This second inspection by Clark, forwarded prisoner reports, and an inspection by Lieutenant Colonel S.B.M. Read, combined with the manner in which Pierson handled the attempted raids on the island, led to his relief of command in mid-January by Brigadier General Henry D. Terry. Terry’s arrival at Johnson’s Island was accompanied by five new regiments of soldiers, four of which were barracked on the island and one stationed in Sandusky. General Terry was only in command of the island for a short time and then replaced by Colonel Charles Hill on 9 May 1864. According to the *Sandusky Register*, Hill implemented the kind of discipline necessary to shape-up the poor conditions of the island:

> Ever since the 9th of May, when Col. Hill took command of the U.S. Forces in Johnson’s Island, the troops have been drilling and policing persistently with very marked improvement in both respects [. . .] work is now the prevailing order and will be until the grounds, fences, buildings and appurtenances are put in the right condition. (Frohman 13)

The second of the two significant attempted raids on the island took place while the prison was under the command of Colonel Hill. Known as “The Lake Erie Conspiracy,” the 16 September 1864 attempt came the closest to freeing the prisoners of the island. The conspiracy was initiated by Confederate President Jefferson Davis’ order that Jacob Thompson relocate to Canada where he could use the neutrality of the country to begin developing a plan to interrupt the Union’s supply line in the North and “to embarrass it [the Union] in any possible manner” (Frohman 72). Thompson utilized the services of Captain Charles H. Cole to spend time in Sandusky and try to infiltrate the crew of the U.S.S Michigan so that the ship could be overtaken and used to free the prisoners of Johnson’s Island. Cole spent quite a bit of time in Sandusky getting
acquainted with the city and the pattern of the U.S.S. Michigan. Cole also spent a great deal of time getting to know members of the U.S.S. Michigan’s crew in order to develop a trust with them that would eventually warrant it not peculiar that he could be aboard the ship (Frohman 73-74, 93).

From Canada, a crew of conspirators, organized by Thompson and led by Captain John Yeats Beall, was picked up by the steam ship *Philo Parsons* at three different locations (Detroit, Michigan, Malden and Sandwich, Canada) under the guise of taking a pleasure trip to Kelley’s Island. When the entire contingency of conspirators was aboard the *Philo Parsons* and only twenty minutes away from its most recent stop at Kelley’s Island, where none of the supposed “pleasure trippers” disembarked, the conspirators took over the crew and passengers of the ship. After a thirty minute struggle to secure the crew and passengers of the *Philo Parsons*, Beall learned that the vessel only carried enough fuel to reach Sandusky and that his plan to escape the lake would be foiled unless they acquired more wood. Beall ordered that the *Philo Parsons* be turned around and taken back to Kelley’s Island to load more wood. When the steam ship arrived at Kelley’s Island, the *Island Queen*, another Lake Erie passenger ship was making a regular stop. The unscheduled return of the Parsons alarmed the crew of the *Island Queen* as well as the islanders. The pirates aboard the *Philo Parsons* struggled with the dock hand to load wood and fend off the attempted boarding of the *Philo Parsons* by the *Island Queen*’s crew. In the end, the *Philo Parsons*, loaded with more fuel and carrying the captured *Island Queen* in tow, headed for Sandusky and the U.S.S. Michigan (Frohman 76-79).
Unbeknownst to Beall, much activity had transpired from the time the *Philo Parsons* made its second stop at Kelley’s Island and approached Sandusky. While transferring the captives from the Queen to the Parsons, one of Beall’s pirates located and destroyed the “pony pipe” on the *Island Queen*. With this valve broken, the *Island Queen* began taking on water and was cut loose in the lake. Next, the pirates began to grow uneasy with the situation. There was concern that some signal was missing from Sandusky. Without an assurance that their plan would be a success, Beall’s crew lost faith in its mission and signed a petition of protest. The combination of these events, along with the concern expressed by the captain of the *Philo Parsons* that the ship would go aground while attempting to head toward the U.S.S. Michigan, caused Beall to change his plans and head for the Detroit River (Frohman 80).

Just north of Malden, a boat containing the ship’s goods was sent ashore. At Fighting Island, with the exception of the wheelsman, engineer and a crew member, the captured passengers were released. Finally, at Sandwich, the *Philo Parsons* was emptied of both passengers and plunder. Lastly, the engineer was taken below and ordered to cut the injection pipes and sink the *Philo Parsons* (Frohman 81).

The pivotal “missed signal” is a speculated result of the Union having learned of the conspirators’ attempt to take the U.S.S. Michigan and free the prisoners of Johnson’s Island. Lieutenant Colonel Bennet H. Hill, Acting Assistant Provost Marshall of Detroit, had received word on 17 September 1864, from a rebel informant regarding the plans of the conspiracy. Hill examined the *Philo Parsons* and decided that it would be more lucrative for the Union if he informed the crew of the Michigan and allow the rebels to
attempt their raid. Unaware that members of his crew had been compromised, Captain J.C. Carter took the intelligence received from Hill and alerted his crew as to the plans of the conspirators. It might have been this exchange of information that kept Cole from signaling Beall to proceed with the raid as planned (Frohman 74).

As 1864 was coming to a close, Abraham Lincoln had been re-elected president, General William Tecumseh Sherman was finishing his infamous “March to the Sea,” and Union forces continued to gain momentum with battles such as the defeat of General Hood’s army at Nashville. The obvious direction of the war reopened the line of exchange for prisoners of war; however, the rate of exchange did not equal the rate at which captured forces were coming in. The prisoner population at Johnson’s Island in January 1865 was 3,256 and only decreased to 2,623 in June of the same year. During the time between these two records, General Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox Courthouse (9 April 1865), thus signaling the end of the war. Shortly after the news of Lee’s surrender made it to the island, the prisoners began taking the Oath of Allegiance in great numbers. “On May 8 it was reported that of the 2,800 prisoners at Johnson’s Island, all but 35 had asked permission to take the oath” (Frohman 68). Prisoners who had taken the oath were then transferred to the mainland and released. By 31 July 1865, only 110 prisoners remained on the island and finally, on 5 September 1865, the remaining five prisoners on the island, including Charles H. Cole of The Lake Erie Conspiracy fame, were ordered to be transferred to Fort Lafayette. The Sandusky Register reported, “With this squad, passes away all that is left to Johnson’s Island as a military prison” (Frohman 69).
The government held public auctions and sales in November of 1865 that included the liquidation of the buildings, pipes, stoves, tools, etc. In December, the Union officers held a public sale of their property including furniture, horses and buggies. A final attempt to sell government property on the island came in April of 1866. All properties that were still on the island on 8 June 1866, were distributed throughout other military companies in the area and the island was officially evacuated by the U.S. government (Frohman 69-71).
CHAPTER V

METHOD FOR SELECTING MATERIAL

Mr. Durand Pope summed up the material selection process best when he stated in an e-mail, “Sounds like a daunting process.” I took the comment lightly at the time, but quickly learned that it was most certainly true. It would be wrong to say that I never felt overwhelmed by the many entries that I had read or had yet to read. In the end, however, each entry shed some light on the situation of the island and the lives of the inhabitants.

I began my research as close to the source as possible. I contacted Dr. Bush to request digital copies of diaries that he recommended. Within a very short amount of time, I received the diaries of Lt. W.B. Gowan, Capt. John H. Guy, Col. Virgin S. Murphey, Capt. Littleburg W. Allen, and Capt. Robert Bingham. I also purchased a copy of Lt. William Peel’s published diary and received a short collection of writings by Lt. Evans Atwood. This was enough material to begin the process.

I read every word of every entry in order to absorb as much information as possible, from the descriptions of the quarters to the relationships developed between the prisoners themselves as well as between the prisoners and the Union soldiers. I learned later that I was following the process of saturation that George McCalmon and Christian Moe discuss in *Creating Historical Drama* (154). Also, I looked for the nuances in the
writing that might give insight to the education or social status of the particular author. Though all the prisoners were Confederate officers, their educational backgrounds varied greatly. Some write very eloquently and speak of literature, philosophy and the art of war. Other’s entries are less well constructed and only give accounts of the day’s activities, weather and how they longed to be at home with their families.

As I read each of the diaries, I made notes that highlighted the basic subject of the entry. Some notes included a brief description of an event about which the author wrote or names of people, cities or battles the entry included. This process of indexing the material allowed me to go back during the pre-writing and writing processes to find not only connections between an individual’s work, but also correlations between different authors. This part of the process did not reveal its importance until I began the actual writing, when I pieced together several different entries in order to not belabor one idea addressed in several entries.

I went through the indexed entries and looked for those that included complete stories. I searched for contrasting ideas; those of a humorous nature versus those of the discouragingly inflated expectations of exchange. Lastly, I identified entries that offered descriptions of the compound’s design and how it affected the prisoner’s interactions. Research in the design of the compound was important to establish the spatial relationship between the characters in the script as well as the actor-spectator relationship I envisioned for the play.
Collecting Materials

With only the notion that I was somehow going to construct a script from diaries and no knowledge of how to write a script, the experience of reading the diaries was very intense. I read all that was written in order to draw from the entries what prompted the prisoners’ need to write. Many of the prisoners give brief descriptions of the days’ events and then reflect upon them; however, other’s entries include stories that stand alone, with no clues as to why they felt compelled to journal the story. While we all have our reasons to write and reflect, we do not think that someday someone may read what we have written and try to determine why we wrote it.

Each individual has a different, interesting focus in his writing; for example, the prisoner Gowan takes a more deliberate approach to tracking life. The majority of his entries recap the traffic in and out of the Block, the day’s weather, and Sunday sermons. Most of his entries are short and direct.

Prisoner Guy, on the other hand, was more of a philosopher. Much of his material addresses issues of the world. At times, he discusses the situation of education and how one should always actively seek new information. Guy also wrote a great number of
letters to members of his company imprisoned throughout the country. He used these letters to help raise their spirits and to offer suggestions on how to spend time wisely while imprisoned.

Prisoner Murphey’s material begins as chapters in a book which give it a very different point of view. The initial chapters are reflections of the time before his imprisonment. Murphey writes very eloquently, includes daily accounts, and retells small events that struck him as humorous. This document also includes recollections of family and home and Murphey makes several references to Shakespeare’s plays, including *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet*.

Captured at the age of 60, prisoner Allen’s diary reads with a different perspective of the war and a strong opinion toward the young soldiers in the Confederate Army. Beyond this, Allen’s entries of daily events include short backstories about the others involved. If not a backstory, Allen often includes a description of the individual’s immediate demeanor and the cause for this demeanor.

Written with a different audience in mind, prisoner Bingham’s entries are frequently romantic. In the opening of the diary, Bingham states, “This diary is intended only for my wife -- and concerns no one and can interest no one but her -” (Bingham). Bingham’s entries describe the daily activities of the prison, with a more poetic flair. By the time I was ready to begin my research in playwriting and dramatic structure. I felt confident I had a good vision of the experiences of prisoners on the island which would help materialize my research as I read.
I perused the materials on playwriting and categorized them not only by their subject, but also organized them by approach. Some of the books were structured as a series of exercises to develop technique as a playwright and others were more information-based. I wanted to learn as much as I could about the foundations of playwriting and then put it into practice with exercises. I did not want to work with exercises without a clear idea of all that was involved in the process of writing and an exploration of the fundamentals of playwriting.

I chose to begin with Sam Smiley’s *Playwriting: The Structure of Action*. In hindsight, this was an excellent choice. As discussed in Chapter 2, Smiley’s approach to playwriting is more traditional, adhering to the Aristotelean elements of drama, and very in depth. I used Smiley’s book as an entry point to the research. It offered me a baseline to which I could compare all further research. I quickly applied some of Smiley’s approaches to ideas in my mind. I brain-stormed with the material I already collected for the script; I answered questions with solutions. It would be a lie, however, if I did not admit that once I finished reading Smiley’s book, the writing process still intimidated me. Negative thoughts filled my head: there’s not enough time; I can’t find common ideas; *Spoon River Anthology* did not follow these guidelines. I panicked.

I turned to McCalmon and Moe’s *Creating Historical Drama* for solace. I hoped that this book might help to ease some of my panic and address the connection of historic material to the playwriting process. In some ways, this came to pass. This book gave me a better idea of how to use the information gathered from the diaries I read. I discovered that I had already done part of the initial step in the process: saturation. When I read the
diaries, I read for not only direct information, but also attitudes and views and I surrounded myself with the subject matter of the play (McCalmon and Moe 154). It was also from this book that I began to understand why certain adjustments are made with regard to accuracy in an historical drama.

Stuart Spencer’s *The Playwright’s Guidebook* greatly influenced the writing of the script. Spencer’s impulse approach to writing challenges the majority of the ideas and elements of more traditional authors like Smiley and Hatcher. The focus of Spencer’s approach is to capture the impulse for the drama in the subconscious and get it onto paper without interference by the conscious mind. He does not advocate building a clear structure before writing. Only after the idea is drawn out can the playwright begin to find form in it. This approach struck a chord with me. From that point on, I could not help but agree with the majority of Spencer’s ideas. I took into consideration that the basics of the characters I included in the script were established in the diaries and focused on Spencer’s approach to find the story and action of the impulse.

By the time I read and analyzed select sources on playwriting and focused again on the research of Johnson’s Island and its inhabitants, I felt that I was in a good place to begin writing the script. I had quite a bit of material with which to work; however, I still had no idea how to organize the information. I continued to search for more sources and information. When I read novelist William Styron’s theory that, “good historical writing should be fed ‘short rations’ of the facts” (Spencer 160), I stopped in my tracks. This idea addressed the notion that the writer, through extensive research, could allow the historical facts to consume the body of the work and ultimately lose the sense of the story.
Continued research would offer an endless amount of information that if the writer included in the drama would create a collection of information and not a play (Spencer 163).

I mulled over this comment for quite some time and concluded that it was this desire to include all the facts that caused much of my frustration. I had done extensive research in the subject matter and the facts of my project before I researched playwriting. This left me with much more than “short rations” of the facts and the dilemma of where to start and how to create a story. I also became less afraid of writing an historically inaccurate script and began to develop a different vision of how the play might unfold. In better understanding the purpose of historical drama versus history books, I saw the choices I had to make in the structure and organization of the drama.

With a fresh vision and new ideas for the script, it was necessary to put some ideas on paper. I had created opening scenes, visualized the characters, scripted voices and other dramatic elements in my head but I had not heeded the advice of the experts and written everything down. What to do now?

Pre-Writing

The first step in my pre-writing process, as suggested by Smiley, was to develop several simple scenarios (34). Each of these scenarios looked at a different time period and approached the history from a different angle (see Appendix A). Some approaches place one character as the center of action, while others put equal emphasis on a group of characters. All of the initial scenarios created are based on the use of large portions of the
words in the diaries. The fact that these early scenarios lacked clear structure for the
dramatic action of the script did not become evident until later in the process.

Responses collected from Dr. Bush to these initial scenarios helped to shape what
would become my next simple scenario and eventually the overall direction of the script.
Dr. Bush offered insight into how incarceration affects individuals. He expressed that
there are generally three options for the prisoners; escape, survival or assimilation. Dr.
Bush questioned how this might help me in the writing process. The addition of this new
information opened a door into which I looked to find a story for the drama. It was then
necessary for me to schedule a time to meet with Dr. Bush, discuss these ideas further,
and inquire one last time for other materials that might be available and pertinent to my
research.

The discussion that arose during my meeting with Dr. Bush solidified my
foundation for the drama. I considered escape, survival and assimilation as wants and
needs for characters in the drama and created the elements of action necessary for the
story to move forward. Later, these actions were paired with conflicts presented in the
diaries of the prisoners and general history of the island. Dr. Bush and I also discussed
my fear of inaccuracy and desire to treat the subject matter with respect. In as much as I
was fortunate to have Dr. Bush as a resource, my relationship with him as a friend and
advisor intimidated me. For this reason, it was a comfort to hear him say that he agreed
with the fact that the action and story needed to be present to make the drama work and
that rearranging events and timelines would be necessary. Dr. Bush advised me to be
careful in what I rearranged. He said that people would be more understanding if the
changes made sense to the drama and did not change major, well known historic events or people. Lastly, our discussion revealed what became the elements for character choice and setting. It was suggested that I use the idea of a mess, a group of prisoners within a block, and explore the interactions between the prisoners within the mess. This gave me a clearer picture of how many characters to include and the kind of relationships to explore.

The preceding research and discussion resulted in the creation of another simple scenario -- very different from the previous. Rather than a loose collection of stories and entries that lacked structure, the new scenario set the action -- survival. The establishment of a clear line of action allowed each of the characters to develop specific goals -- escape, assimilation, or surrender -- each of which displayed the individual characters’ strategies for survival. This scenario also narrowed the timeframe to just over a year and followed Lt. William Peel, the central character, from his arrival on Johnson’s Island to his death. Along with the choice of the dramatic structure, I also needed to choose the form of dialogue. Different from my initial intention, I chose to create dialogue and use key entries as monologues instead of a total monologue approach like that in *Spoon River Anthology*. This change in approach was necessary to turn the historical facts into dramatic scenes.

The creation of the rough scenario came next in the process. The rough scenario, as discussed in Chapter 2, expands upon the ideas in the simple scenario, presents a breakdown of the individual scenes and gives shape to the overall structure. The rough scenario also includes more detailed character descriptions, identifies the conflicts, and expresses the thought behind the drama. After the establishment of the rough scenario, I
switched from Smiley’s process, which includes another revision of the rough scenario to create the final scenario, and employed Spencer’s impulse writing exercises.

The impulse exercises are designed to help the writer find the initial impulse within the subconscious to write the script and develop it free from the criticism and control of the conscious mind (Spencer 129). First, I recreated in my mind an image of Lieutenant William B. Cox’s drawing, *Our Mess*, which depicts a mess of prisoners seated around a table. From this image I wrote a detailed description of what I saw. Part of the exercise included the use of senses other than sight, so I documented what I smelled, the temperature, and the sounds that I heard. I allowed my imagination to work on its own and guide my hand. I created an environment that was multi-sensory and would allow my characters to exist more connectedly with their surroundings.

Once I cultivated the impulse into an image, as the exercise instructed, I allowed the characters to speak. At times, the characters names were evident and their voices clear. At other times, I heard the words, but did not yet know to which character they belonged. Because I did not want to invite my inner critic, the conscious mind, to the table, I left the character names as a letter and continued to write what the characters said. The words spoken by the characters in this exercise did not all end up in the final version of the play. In fact, the majority of the dialogue only appears as an appendix to this document; however, this exercise served to develop many of the attitudes and circumstances that surround the characters (see Appendix D). In the end, this exercise only led to the foundations of three individual scenes. However, it opened up my creative
mind to which characters needed to be a part of the drama, how they might interact, and how to develop clear voices for them.

Writing

With the rough scenario as a framework to follow, I approached the writing of the script in smaller parts. Because I knew what needed to happen in each scene, I connected to impulses and worked on the scenes as they came to me. Some of the scenes were more heavily constructed with text from the various diaries and others were created from only the situations or ideas presented in the material. I began with the scenes that I knew I wanted to base solely on excerpts from specific diary entries.

The character voices I discovered in my impulse exercises helped me to decide to begin with what became Scene 7, Colonel Hill’s interrogation of an escapee disguised as a Major in the Ohio National Guard. Lieutenant William Peel’s diary includes a detailed description of this event, complete with his interpretation of the dialogue between the parties involved. At first, this scene was written to include Col. Hill and the character Abraham Sublet, but through further research, I discovered that Sublet would be better used in a later scene in which he takes the Oath of Allegiance. I then decided to give the voice of the escapee to John Bowles. Peel’s documentation of this encounter helped to make this an excellent point for the characters to begin to exist.

I worked backwards from the action in Scene 7 to construct the preliminary scenes that would lead to this meeting between Colonel Hill and John Bowles. Again, I drew from the dialogue written in Peel’s diary to develop the scene between Bowles and
the Union Sentry who guards the entrance to the compound. It is the confrontation between these two characters that stimulates the subsequent action between Bowles and Hill.

To implement Peel’s excellent depiction of a creative escape attempt, I needed to find a way to plant the initiation of these events into the earlier scenes. I went back to the rough scenario and decided to incorporate this into what was introduced as Scene 7 but became Scene 6, the inspection of the block. References are made throughout many of the diaries about the contraband that prisoners acquired and how they used it in escape attempts. The increase in these items, especially pieces of Union uniforms, prompted frequent searches of the prisoners’ quarters. From these references I developed a scene that not only illustrated this search process, but, through the use of suspense, also presented enough information for the audience to follow Bowles’ escape attempt.

Next, I approached another scene for which I could rely heavily on the actual words in the prisoners’ diaries. Captain John Guy has a series of entries which discusses the effects of sharing a small space with a group of strangers for an extended period of time and describes the kind of thoughts that some of the prisoners pondered in order to deal with the unfamiliarity of their surroundings. His entries reveal both the deterioration of respect toward elders by the younger soldiers and an idea of how the traditional naming process does not serve the same purpose it used to. I knew that these entries were ones I wanted to include, but did not want to insert them as two separate, long speeches. I examined the relationship between Peel and Guy in an attempt to overcome the laborious monologue approach. Guy, whose character was imprisoned before Peel, needed to serve
the purpose of a type of raisonneur as described by Smiley (144). Although, not always acting in contrast, Guy gives Peel the opportunity to discuss some of his inner thoughts that would otherwise not be made evident to the audience. The creation of this relationship made it fit to give Peel and Guy a scene in which their relationship was explored. This choice in turn gave me the opportunity to allow Guy’s stories to be told.

The last of the scenes based primarily on quotations in the prisoners’ diaries is the final scene in the script. Once I made the decision in the pre-writing process to place Peel at the center of the drama, I felt that his death needed to end the play. The first time I read Peel’s diary, I was moved by the fact that his friend and messmate Lieutenant Robert McDowell wrote the final entry. This entry revealed how much the prisoners cared about each other. Peel’s death marked the end of his struggle and incarceration on Johnson’s Island. He died having survived prison life; he never attempted to escape, he did not take the oath of allegiance, and though tested, he did not give up on the Confederacy. For me, it was not important to include the events of Peel’s battle with pneumonia and time spent in the infirmary. By the time the script comes to the end, all other routes that could have been taken by Peel were examined: Guy’s exchange, Sublet’s taking of the Oath and Bowles’ death during an escape attempt.

The rough scenario helped me to keep in mind what events needed to happen; however, it did not include the specifics of each scene. This gave me the opportunity to work on the script in segments. This approach allowed me to better weave the relationships of the characters both with each other and with the action of the play. If I had started with the first scene and wrote the entire script following the rough scenario,
the result would have been a good timeline of events without a story. With my writing liberated, I was able to focus on the impulse of each scene as it presented itself to me.

I placed Peel and some of the other characters into situations and developed their voices, which led to the creation of the introductory scenes. The introductory scenes needed to serve not only the purpose of general exposition, but also include the inciting incident and point of attack. Historically, Peel began his imprisonment at Fort McHenry and was already familiar with some of the basics of prison life; however, I wanted to attack some of these initial experiences in front of the audience. I returned to my research in playwriting and Dr. Bush’s suggestions to discover how to make this work. To keep the drama free from extraneous historical facts and to create the desired reaction in the audience, I decided to ignore Peel’s experiences from his prior prison stay at Fort McHenry. This information is brought up later in the scene, but only to establish why Peel did not come straight from battle to Johnson’s Island. I reviewed approaches to establishing the point of attack expressed by Jeffery Hatcher in *The Art & Craft of Playwriting*. The first of the two possible placements of the point of attack is at the opening of the first scene. In this approach, the audience is immediately placed within the action of the drama (Hatcher 103). The second approach is the “slow immersion” (Hatcher 108), where the audience is introduced to the characters and given some expository dialogue before they eventually begin the plot of the drama (Hatcher 108). I chose to place the point of attack at the opening of the first scene. I want the audience to feel the abrupt change that the prisoners experienced when first placed in
their mess. Right from the start, the audience, as well as Peel, learns what the circumstances are and how they can bring order to them.

The second of the introductory scenes was written to examine the constant influx of prisoners to the island, the way news was brought into the prison, and the relationships of soldiers captured from the same home town and battalion. To accomplish this, I chose to introduce McDowell, a member of Peel’s battalion, who surrendered at the same time as Peel, and Sublet a character with no connection to the others except that he is a Confederate officer. From this second scene, the audience should not only see that the prison enrollment is increasing, but hear a bit of comparison between prison situations. Also, the audience will learn more about Peel’s family including his missing brother, Eli.

The balance of the scenes, discussed hereafter, differ from the previous in their material. These scenes were not extracted as quotes from the diaries and were not chosen for their elements of exposition. Each of the scenes was developed to explore how the prisoners reacted to particular situations. Each of the characters is confronted with a situation in which his decision will establish his version of the goal: survival. I selected several of the recurring obstacles with which the prisoners were faced: the postal express system, prison regulations, prisoner exchange, oath of allegiance and escape. I went back to the diaries and found examples that expressed the attitudes of the prisoners toward these obstacles and situations and explored how each character confronted them.

In Scene 4, Peel begins to feel alone and disconnected because of the restrictions on the postal express system. The only line of communication that the prisoners had with their fellow comrades and family was through this system. As the situations in the war...
varied, so did this amenity. Initially, it was not a problem for the prisoners and outsiders to establish communication and exchange money and goods; however, as the state of the war fluctuated and rumors of the mistreatment of Union prisoners circulated, the commanding officers retaliated with the restriction of the express privilege (Frohman 19). Peel’s loss of connection to the outside world, especially with his beloved Miss Dora, removed him from the temporary world he created inside the prison. This change was not one that Peel had control over and, therefore, constantly reminded him of his actual surroundings.

Scene 5 continues to explore the pressure of new regulations similar to those introduced in Scene 4. The catalyst at this point is the change in command of the depot from General Terry to Colonel Charles Hill. Hill’s command of the depot was stricter than any of his predecessors, including his treatment of the Union guards (Frohman 13). These changes in procedure and policy caused the turbulence that drives the main action of the scene. The longer the prisoners were incarcerated, the more adjustments they made or privileges they took advantage of in order to establish a sense of familiarity around themselves. Change, no matter how small, affected their lives greatly because it introduced something new and unfamiliar into the “familiar” world they had created within the prison. I also included in the scene a discussion about the increased area for gardening that the prison expansion created, as a glimmer of hope. It was not until my meeting with Dr. Bush that I truly understood the significance of the gardens. Dr. Bush explained to me that the gardens represented ownership. The claimed gardens were more
than a hobby for the prisoners. Each one served as a sign of ownership and status within
the prison community, similar to the tracts of land the officers owned in their home states,

Scene 8 turned out to be the weakest scene. It is the scene that will probably go
through the most revision in the next phase of the process. This scene was established so
that Peel could become aware of his situation and write his entry at the close of 1864. My
biggest concern with the scene is that the prisoners discuss the exchange of John Guy at
the beginning and, in Peel’s closing entry, he states, “exchange and peace peer out from
the dimmest future.” The proximity of these two issues creates an inconsistency that I do
not think the audience will overlook; however, I left it alone in the first draft with the
plan to revisit it later.

Scenes 9 and 10 both deal with one single event but required a change in location
to create a more effective moment in the action. These two scenes explore the ever
present option the prisoners had to take the Oath of Allegiance. As the war neared its end,
and the overall attitude of the Confederate prisoners weakened, the Union offered special
treatment for those who chose to take the Oath. I created the first of the two scenes to
show that all of the characters were given the opportunity to take the oath and allowed
each one to express their beliefs toward the idea. This scene also serves to set up the
pressure under which the prisoners found themselves when they took the oath. Sublet,
who leaves a note for the Union sentry, shows his embarrassment and remorse for his
choice to take the oath. In the following scene, the rest of the characters argue over
whether it is right to take the oath or not while Sublet sits quietly in the background. The
contents of the note Sublet left with the Union sentry is revealed when the sentry returns to take Sublet away to better living conditions under the protection of darkness.

The last of these scenes based upon general ideas and ongoing events involves the death of John Bowles. This scene was not included in my preliminary structures. As I wrote the script, I developed a strange relationship with the character of Bowles. I enjoyed writing his dialogue; his voice was the clearest in my head and flowed very easily to the page. The unpredictability of his actions and his short-fuse attracted me to the character; however, I knew from the start that I would kill him off. I felt, if only to give more reward to the other characters for their decisions, that Bowles needed to die. Therefore, I wrote his death as part of an escape attempt. I knew that his character meticulously planned his first plot to escape, though unsuccessful, and would not, unless driven to an extreme, attempt escape again without the same kind of plan. When faced with the truth that he shared space with Sublet, now a traitor, Bowles accused the rest of the characters of treason. Once he created that image in his head, he snapped, he could no longer stay with them. The placement of the rope inside the lining of the straw mattress gives the audience the idea that this was truly part of a larger plan that was to unfold much later. But to not hand it all to the audience, I chose to simply use the sound of a gun to end the scene, which allows each individual audience member to complete the rest of Bowles’ story.

Lastly, my desire to include more actual diary entries and better connect the scenes led me back to the topic of a narrator. McCalmon and Moe present the best usage of a narrator when they discuss the use of a character already in the drama to deliver
information that would help lead from one event to another (254). I decided to use Peel in this role. At the beginning or end of specific scenes, Peel, or in one case Guy, writes in his diary and speaks out loud what he is documenting. Most of these monologues come almost word for word from Peel’s diary. The connecting qualities of these entries appear as both expository monologues that set the action for the next scene or as reflections of the events of the previous scene. This device allows the audience in on how one prisoner processed the events at Johnson’s Island.

Responses and Revision

To begin the process of revision, as much of my research suggests, I put the script away. I did not reread it immediately after I had finished it. After about a week, I sent copies of the script to a select group of people. One group, James Slowiak and Dr. David Bush, was sent the script and asked to offer comments, reactions, and suggestions. From this group I was looking for open responses from which I could develop changes for the revision process. The second group was sent not only a copy of the script, but also a specific list of questions I found in Stuart Spencer’s *The Playwright’s Guidebook*. (see Appendix E)

Because of his expertise in the subject matter of the script, I accepted Dr. Bush’s responses with more careful thought. Overall, Dr. Bush was pleased with the manner in which the material was presented and comfortable with the dialogue created to bring the diary entries to life. Dr. Bush commented, “I have read through the entire script and find it very interesting. It is a good way to project some part of the history.” There were a few
minor edits suggested that dealt primarily with language or further insight about an event or situation.

The first of these edits was the use of the word “Gettysburgers” in Scene 2 to reference those prisoners taken during the Battle of Gettysburg. Dr. Bush expressed concern that it was probably not a term that would have been used at the time. Second, through my research, I read about the availability of books to the prisoners and translated that into the existence of a library within the compound. Dr. Bush shared with me that it was, in fact, a prisoner who had a trunk of books that he lent out for seven days at the cost of fifty-cents per book. With this information, I was able to very easily adjust the reference in Scene 5 to reflect this new information and not affect the action or purpose of the scene.

Dr. Bush’s next comments dealt with the times when guards were permitted to fire upon the prisoners. In the first draft of Scene 5, the messmates discuss the stricter rules the new prison commander has imposed. Guy reads the change as, “Sentinels are permitted not only now to shoot at any prisoner that crosses the dead line, but also anyone who is outside their Block after lights out.” Dr. Bush added that in the same declaration it was also stated that the guards could fire into the block if candles were not extinguished at lights out. This addition, though seemingly small, helped to add a new level of severity to the oppression the prisoners experienced.

The last of the minor edits suggested came at the end of Scene 7. This was one of the scenes rendered entirely from one of Peel’s entries. Peel closed the entry with Commander Hill’s statement, “Damn me if I don’t expect I’ll wake up some morning and
find these rebels standing guard all over the island. Take this Major back to his quarters.”

Dr. Bush offered information pertaining to the action taken against a prisoner who attempted to escape. Dr. Bush wrote, “Typically, the prisoners that were caught trying to escape were put into the condemned prisoner quarters with a ball and chain for a specified period of time, ten to thirty days.” This was yet another edit that did not affect the overall action of the scene, but helped to add a taste of the accuracy with which I have struggled throughout the process.

Dr. Bush felt that the opening scene did not fit the situation of the prison and suggested that I rewrite it. In the first draft, I treated the arrival of Peel as an abrupt entrance into an unknown and uncomfortable situation (see Appendix F). To accomplish this, Guy and Bowles expressed a negative attitude toward someone new entering their mess. My intention was to alienate Peel in order to instigate Peel’s need to make his surroundings familiar. Dr. Bush wrote, “Prisoners that were already at the prison were very interested in newcomers in terms of news from the South. Not sure this is evident in how you have the introduction.”

When I attempted to rewrite the introduction, I struggled with my own ego. Even though my research cautioned me, I became too connected with my writing. It was not until a personal conversation with Dr. Bush that I realized the overall structure of the scene and the dialogue in the latter part of the scene were not the problems, but rather it was the attitude of the scene that created the inconsistency with the history. We discussed that changing the way Peel was treated in the very beginning would change the level of interest shown by the messmates, but not automatically place Peel in a comfortable
situation. Peel still needed to process his new surroundings and make the adjustments necessary to find or create familiarity. With this in mind, I moved the action of the arrival of the “fresh fish” from the entrance of Peel to an offstage event Bowles witnesses through the window. This change created more interest in Guy and Bowles for the incoming prisoners. Bowles now has time to develop a list of questions to fire at Peel as he enters. Careful examination of the action and attitude made it possible to rework the opening of the scene and maintain the remainder of the dialogue in the scene.

I was pleased with the responses I received from the second group, not only because of the positive comments given, but also because of the thought that went into processing the play as a whole. I chose these individuals for their varied levels of experience and interest in theatre: a director and chairperson of a community theatre play reading committee; a family member and avid theatergoer; an actress and media/marketing specialist; an actor, high school theatre director and language arts teacher.

The responses to the question, “What do you think my play is about?” (Spencer 234), were similar to each other and remained in line with my intention for the script. It was apparent to the readers that the play is a snapshot of the prisoners’ experiences on the island and the different ways in which they survived. On a deeper level of thought, one response included the true theme of the script. This reader stated, “It has themes of faith, hope, and survival. An intriguing theme is the cohabitation of acceptance and denial, an eternal struggle humans face.” I was pleased that the readers identified the overall idea of the script in its written form. These responses showed me that the script, without a director’s interpretation and embellished visual presentation, has a clear structure.
The question, “What parts were you interested in?” (Spencer 234), elicited varying responses: an interest in the individual outcomes or ways the prisoners survived; an interest in the interactions of the different personalities; and specific moments and scenes that were intriguing. Coincident with Dr. Bush’s added material about how escapees were punished, one reader identified the inconsistency in Scene 8 where tension was built around Bowles being found out and the response of Colonel Hill to send him back to his quarters. This response helped to justify the change made in the script that differed from Peel’s diary entry.

At first, I was concerned that these responses were not congruent; however, after more thought, I came to the conclusion that it was better that the responses were different. Each individual who will read or see this play will approach the script or production with different backgrounds and for various reasons. If only one part could be identified as interesting, what would be the sense of the remainder of the drama? With this justification, I felt more comfortable with the individual levels of interest.

Because I hoped for some critical reviews, I was genuinely disappointed at the overwhelming response of “None” to, “What parts were you not interested in?” (Spencer 234). Only one reader identified the first scene as the least interesting, stating, “Only because we don’t yet know the characters or have an immediate sense of compassion for them.” I think this is true in many scripts and addresses one of the choices I made regarding the point of attack and whether to use the slow immersion method (Hatcher 108) or place it at the opening of the script (Hatcher 103). My choice to place the point of attack at the opening of the script contributed to the lack of exposition; however, this
abrupt start to the action was the feeling that I wanted to create for both the characters and the audience. So in defense of this method, I think it worked. Later in the response, the reader admits, “But by Scene 3 I was deeply engrossed in the play and its range of characters and personalities.” I understood this response to mean the action of the drama moved the script and drew the personalities of the characters out in small doses.

When asked, “Was anything confusing or not clear to you?” (Spencer 234), the responses dealt, not with information that was addressed in the script, but rather exposition that was not revealed. One reader questioned the backgrounds of Guy and Bowles, who were already well into their incarceration when Peel arrived, and wanted to hear more of their stories with hope that it might add another layer to the drama. I classified this response to fit the previous question about what was interesting. For me, their stories fell into the category of unnecessary exposition that could have potentially affected the overall flow of the drama.

One reader presented two points that he felt were unclear in the script. First, he was concerned about the gunshot, intended to mark Bowles’ death at the end of Scene 11, and Peel’s death in Scene 12. This reader wrote, “I was very surprised to find the final scene was about the death of Peel, not Bowles.” This comment took me aback for a moment. I immediately concerned myself with the idea that I would need to address Bowles’ death more clearly. As discussed earlier in this chapter, I wanted the death of Bowles to be a point at which the audience completed his story themselves. In actuality, the reader’s comment shows that he did process the end of the scene and wrote the rest of
Bowles’ story himself, which allowed him to accept the death of Peel as the following and final scene.

The reader’s other point concerned Guy’s exchange. Confusion arose as to what made Guy “lucky.” I reviewed the script and concluded that this confusion came from the language used to describe the raid of the mess in Scene 6 and the inspection of the compound that ultimately leads to Guy’s exchange. Without prior knowledge that the way in which exchange lists were made was through inspection of the pest house and infirmary, the inspection referred to in Scene 8 could be confused with the raid of the mess which proved to be a fruitless search. I weighed this potential point of confusion against the smallest amount of additional expository information necessary to clear up the matter within Scene 8. The result was to change Bowles’ line from, “He wasn’t rewarded, he got lucky, he was sick the day they made the inspection and got on the list,” to “He wasn’t rewarded, he got lucky, he was sick the day they inspected the infirmary and pest house to compile their list of eligible prisoners to exchange.”

The last of the questions in the guided responses was, “Was anything unresolved?” (Spencer 234). The responses identified two unresolved issues: 1) Peel’s brother and 2) another request for a stronger ending to Bowles’ meeting with Colonel Hill. To revise Bowles’ punishment, Colonel Hill now sentences Bowles’ to the guard-house for fifteen days. This change created not only a more historically accurate ending to the meeting, but also a more believable punishment. Coincidentally, it also recalled Peel’s monologue in Scene 4, where he describes the guard-houses and the prisoners isolated within them. In response to whether Peel’s brother was alive or dead, I
intentionally did not build that into the script. Historically, Peel died before he ever found out about the status of his brother. Because the drama follows Peel and his journey to death, I did not feel it would be fair to answer the question of Eli for the audience if Peel himself died wondering.

The edits I made were minor, except for the first scene. I felt that the changes helped to address some of the readers’ concerns, clarified a few points, and allowed the script to grow organically through the writing and revision process.
The research and creative processes for this project offered me the opportunity for many enlightening experiences. The most important of which were: 1) enlightenment of History versus an Historical Drama 2) modified facts and accuracy 3) structure within the story 4) the process of selection. Though the script is much different from what I originally set out to create, it is resultant of what I learned through my research.

The paramount result of my research was my new understanding of the difference between history and historical drama. I passed from a distaste for historical dramas to a new understanding of the form. This was the most unexpected and humbling lesson that I learned throughout the process. Though now it seems very clear and elementary, it showed me how a preconceived expectation could remove an audience member so far from the actual drama that they miss the story and playwright’s intent completely. If I had not accepted the research and incorporated it into my philosophy, I would not have completed this project. However, I have now seen both sides and hope that I can use this knowledge to my advantage in the future.

Similarly, I learned to accept the fact that changes in the historical information needed to be made in order to make the dramatic structure clearer. The key to these
changes are that they do not affect well-known persons or events and that they truly serve as effective enhancements to the dramatic structure. Following these guidelines will also allow the changes in the historical information to fit seamlessly with the historical facts and action of the play.

My knowledge in playwriting went from limited, through active use of the craft’s tools, to writing a fully developed script. But I feel that I was able to create a work that utilized the devices discovered through thorough research, presents a drama with continuous action and conflict, and offers a living representation of the prisoners derived from their own words and stories.

There are as many different theories on how to approach playwriting as there are playwrights. Every playwright harnesses the impulse, cultivates the story and applies the elements of drama; however, none of them do it in the same manner or by means of the same exercises or tools. Flooded with these ideas in my research, I found I wanted to be loyal to one or another. It was not until I embraced my individuality as a writer that I could comfortably rely on bits and pieces of the research. At first, I felt I should use every exercise, but realized that if I tried to conform the material to fit all of the elements and exercises I would only clutter the writing.

As a result of my research, I was faced with many decisions before I could write. This required a deeper exploration of the overall theme and action of the play as well as a more organized approach to the development of the play’s story. As opposed to trying to fit bits of history into a predetermined structure, I subscribed to Spencer’s theory of
finding structure in the story to create a clearer dramatic structure and truer snapshot of life on Johnson’s Island.

One of the greatest difficulties I faced throughout the project was the process of selection. Not only was it difficult to select the material for the dialogue of the script, but also the timeframe for the drama itself. With a large amount of time and hundreds of different individuals’ stories to tell, I struggled to determine whose story needed to be told and which parts of their story were most important. My initial grandiose idea was to tell it all. I assumed the audiences’ interest in the history of the island and its inhabitants would be so strong that they would accept any information, in any order that it was presented. Dramatic structure at that point was to simply find the two most “dramatic” stories and place them at the ends of each act. Though my research led me to understand the necessities of drama, the span of time from which I wanted to draw material remained the same. After discussions with Dr. Bush and several failed attempts at forcing the timeline of the Civil War -- the dramatic arc of the events per se -- on the drama, I realized that events like the assassination of President Lincoln did not equate to a conflict, obstacle or resolution in the drama I needed to create. Once I saw the prisoners’ lives for what they were, I was able to find the drama in its more intimate form.

I can certainly say that I have developed a new respect for the art of playwriting. It is difficult and time consuming, yet rewarding. There is much more to the development of a well written script than a subject, story and dialogue. The amount of creative work that is involved with the writing process and the need to thoroughly consider every element of the drama from its inception to its printed form is exhausting. The reward to
the process is the sense of accomplishment when the written work is done and the hope that it could be further developed and improved.

If I did it all over again, I would most certainly change the order in which I did my research. I believe I complicated the development of the script because I did not begin with research in the art and process of playwriting before the subject matter of the script. In this case it was not favorable for me to have allowed my ambition to motivate me so much as to rearrange my initial research plan. Had I developed a clearer idea of how to approach the drama before I surrounded myself with the history, I believe the process would have been less daunting and more liberating.

I would like to offer the following suggestions to anyone considering a similar thesis project.

1. Research the process of playwriting and dramatic structure first. No matter how excited you may be to delve into the subject of the play, or what circumstances might affect your timeline; begin with the process.

2. Do not be afraid to be selective in what you pull from your research. Yes, it is research; however, playwriting is still a creative art. Explore new ideas and exercises, but do not lose your connection with the impulse.

3. Pit your sources against each other. Examine what works for one author and why it might not work for another. Compare these theories to your own and marry together what works for you.
4. Specifically with an historical drama, do not get bogged down by the idiosyncrasies of the history. Though this was a major part of why I chose this project, it was also one of the biggest lessons I learned.

5. Be flexible and open to change. Not every step of the process will fall into place like the timeline you initially submit. Not every resource will prove to be worth while and you will not know until after you have invested the time.

6. Include other students’ completed thesis projects as part of your research. Reading through the completed documents and even contacting one of graduates can be a tremendous help when it comes to documentation and formatting of your research.

7. Utilize your advisors and faculty readers as resources throughout the process. Whether it is for comments and suggestions or as an historical resource, you have chosen these faculty members and they want you to succeed; use them.

I do plan to continue work on this script. I have achieved my goal of writing a play script based on the prisoner diaries and history of Johnson’s Island; however, there is more that can be done. Beyond this writing process, I would like the opportunity to actively develop the script, to see how a director and actors will interpret the dialogue and directions so that I may make further changes and additions to enhance the overall story and structure.


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APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

COMPLETED PLAY SCRIPT

JI: from these walls

A Play By

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4382 Strattford Circle West

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Lt. William Peel..............................................Lt., Confederate Army, Captured at Gettysburg
Lt. Abraham Sublet/Captain........................................................messmate/Island Queen Capt.
Lt. Robert McDowell........................................................................messmate
Cpt. John Guy........................................................................messmate
Lt. John B. Bowles........................................................................messmate
Guard/Col. Hill..............................................sentry/commandant of Johnson’s Island

TIME: early 1864 - mid 1865
PLACE: Johnson’s Island Civil War Prisoner Depot, Johnson’s Island, Ohio
SETTING: An open setting that includes a pot-belly stove, bunked cots built into a wall, window, three chairs and a small writing desk. All of the furniture should be worn or distressed in nature and with the exception of the cots, should look hand-made with limited tools. The setting should suggest a small confined area inhabited by the five characters in the script. The majority of the action takes place in the cell block; however, there are a few instances were another location will need to be created with the furniture available.
SCENE BREAKDOWN

Scene 1
- Peel’s barracks

Scene 2
- Peel’s barracks

Scene 3
- Peel’s barracks

Scene 4
- Peel’s barracks

Scene 5
- Peel’s barracks

Scene 6
- Col. Hill’s Quarters

Scene 7
- Peel’s barracks

Scene 8
- Parade Grounds

Scene 9
- Peel’s barracks

Scene 10
- Peel’s barracks

Scene 11
- Peel’s barracks

Scene 12
- Peel’s barracks
Scene 1

(On stage are GUY and BOWLES. GUY is reading the Sandusky Register. BOWLES is playing with a deck of cards. The arrival of new prisoners causes a commotion outside the window.)

GUY

Smell that?

Sure do.

Fish.

BOWLES (looking out window)

Fresh as you can get.

GUY

What’s the count?

BOWLES

Two score at least. Looks like they are bringing some to our block.

(PEEL enters wearing drab, weathered clothing and carrying his only belongings - a leather bound diary, writing utensil and a bed roll. PEEL attempts to take in his surroundings, BOWLES immediately swarms PEEL.)

What is the latest? Where is Grant? What news have you of our General Lee? Would you like some coffee?
(PEEL stands frozen)

How fresh are you? Straight from the line? You been holed up somewhere else?

(PEEL sits and begins writing in his diary)

BOWLES
Please, sit. (to GUY) This one seems to be a man of many words.

GUY
Give the boy a chance. (to PEEL) I too would react the same way if this maniac interrogated me as soon as I came in.

BOWLES
Damn what has been taken from us. Each time we get a fresh face I’m reminded about why I enlisted. I need to be out there, I need to be fighting these damn yanks, not sitting here under their charge.

GUY
Brilliant, Jack. Get yourself all charged up. Now, put on your coat and go get ‘em. You are the fool. What are you going to do? You as much as tip-toe past the dead line you know they’ll shoot you, and enjoy doing it.

BOWLES
I had forgotten that you had it all figured out. Sit and eat spoiled beef, rats and water, read your books and hope that someone likes you enough to put you on an exchange list. Not me. There’s got to be something better for me.

GUY
There is. A wooden box.

BOWLES
Aren’t you at all concerned about what is happening out there?

GUY
I read the papers. I know what’s happening.

BOWLES
The papers? You mean those Yankee rags. Johnny, I thought you were an educated man. You can’t trust a word of that garbage.
GUY
They fulfill my need for information. Now fulfill my need for warmth and fetch some wood.

(BOWLES exits)

PEEL
Lieutenant William Peel, 11th Miss Infantry.

GUY
Billy will suffice.

PEEL
Pardon?

GUY
Your name. Billy will be enough. I mean, sure, I respect your service, your rank. Your other unfortunate comrades will do the like; however, don’t expect that no how from these Yanks. To them all the other went away with your uniform when you were snatched.

PEEL
I wasn’t snatched.

GUY
No, we never are, are we? Let me guess, you were taken by surprise and they were all around --

PEEL
It was Gettysburg.

GUY
(sarcastically) Valiant!

PEEL
Our company was pressing forward toward the Union artillery. We got to about thirty yards from engaging the line, hand to hand, when I noticed the disarray of my battalion. My men were everywhere, some fleeing the incoming fire but many already victims of it. I found myself to be the senior officer of the remaining thirteen men--

(BOWLES enters, carrying wood)
The lake is nearly frozen over --

(continuing) -- our options were to take on a few hundred or surrender. I can only hope that our charge served a purpose.

He speaks?

Billy, Jack.

Lieutenant John Bowles, 2nd Kentucky Cavalry, they call me Jack.

I’m John, Captain John Guy, 48th Virginia Artillery, (to BOWLES) Billy here surrendered at Gettysburg.

What a failure that turned out to be.

We had the advantage at first. We had the high ground.

And by the third day our entire army was lying in the valley. Slaughtered. If we would have just continued the initial push that ground could have been ours.

Theirs.

Huh?

Their, that ground could have been theirs. You weren’t there, Billy was, but you weren’t. You were here, with me, remember?
BOWLES
You see, Billy, Johnny likes being here. He can survive on what rations are given him, read his books and tell others how ignorant they are, but he is blind to the fact that he has already become one of them. He doesn’t question their orders, doesn’t stand up for what we deserve. Short of sayin’ the words, he’s already taken the oath.

GUY
And you have one foot in the grave and one in the lake. What makes that any smarter?

BOWLES
So where have they been keeping you ‘til now?

PEEL
Fort McHenry, Baltimore. I was hospitalized there for my knee. My souvenir from Gettysburg. Shot through.

BOWLES
How are the attitudes there?

PEEL
Very uneasy. Many of the prisoners there are fresh. They are still trying to figure out what they are going to do.

GUY
Not all that much different than here.

PEEL
There is a large amount of privates and they are treated as such. This doesn’t appear to be the case here.

GUY
We have our share commodities. But it is certainly still a prison. You will figure out who your friends are, it doesn’t take long.

PEEL
(writing) There is a different air about Johnson’s Island than Ft. McHenry. At McHenry, many of the prisoners trod through the day looking forward to only the next meal or the end of the day. Here there is a different life, there is something to be said about those who though have more now than others, had more taken away that others never had. The air is heavy with discontent, jealousy and uneasiness. My messmates have made quite an impression on me. John seems to be knowledgeable in both the art of war and tolerance. I believe he and I will get along. Jack on the other hand is always looking for what is beyond these walls. There is a strong desire to escape, as if that were the only way he
could satisfy himself, the only purpose he has. At this point, I am happy to be alive, healthy. Yes, I am frustrated with my imprisonment, but I need time to sort through all that has transpired in the past few months. Now, I look forward to sleeping on something more than the floor.

*(blackout)*
Scene 2

(offstage is heard the call “Fresh Fish!”
Onstage are PEEL, carving a ring, GUY in his bunk reading and BOWLES, shuffling through cards.)

BOWLES
Must be the next wave of those from Gettysburg transferred from Camp Chase.

GUY
Who made that announcement?

BOWLES
Unlike you, I look further than the Sandusky Register for news. The sentry at the small gate filled me in that there was going to be a transfer of prisoners.

(enter SUBLET and MCDOWELL. SUBLET immediately takes the coffee pot from off of the stove, pours a cup and feasts on scraps of meat on a plate.)

BOWLES
(disgustedly) Help yourself.

MCDOWELL
I apologize, we have been traveling a while.

SUBLET
And these scraps are more than we saw all last week. Abraham Sublet.

MCDOWELL
You would think he left his manners in the field, I am truly sorry. I am Robert, Lieutenant Robert --

PEEL
McDowell. Mac!

MCDOWELL
Billy?
Thank the Lord! Mac, I wasn’t sure if you had made it out or not. Have you heard from anyone, any news from home? What happened to your company? Dear Lord, this is wonderful. Mac --

GUY
Give the man a chance to settle in. This block certainly needs a briefing on introductions.

Thank you!

PEEL
Yes, yes, Mac. Sit. Rest.

Captain John Guy.

MCDOWELL
Lieutenant Robert McDowell.

BOWLES

PEEL
What happened?

MCDOWELL
Well, after we got half way across the valley, we were split from the rest of the battalion. It was utter chaos. I have been involved in many a skirmish, but this was unlike any other. We couldn’t see who was who or even where we were headed. We continued to push the flank and realized we were right in the toes of the Union infantry. If we turned around we would have been subject to the cannon fire. With so few of my men left, we had no option but to lay down our muskets and throw up our arms.

PEEL
Our company felt the same pressure. We almost thought we were going to make it around the line by cover of a barn, but they were waiting for us.

MCDOWELL
So many lost for what could have been a great victory.
And home? Any news?

May I have some coffee? We didn’t have any at Chase.

Provided Abey left some behind.

None other than that they have reassigned the remaining companies and are calling for recruits.

I have desperately been seeking news about Eli.

Your brother?

Yes, I have sent letters to several of his commanding officers and none can report him amongst their ranks. Even still, none can confirm his death either.

What about home, did he return?

No family has seen him. We are all clinging to the hope delivered to Grand Pa by a friend at Fort Delaware who claims to have seen him. I pray this is true and that he is safe.

Continue the prayers, we all need it in this war.

*(blackout)*
Scene 3

(GUY sits huddled near the stove to keep warm and PEEL places fresh wood next to the stove.)

GUY

You’re a good man Billy.

PEEL

Thanks?

GUY

I mean that. You aren’t like the others. I am some twenty years your senior and you respect that. I am not saying that I expect you treat me like your father or give me special attention because I’m older.

PEEL

I understand.

GUY

These young recruits are more the Rebs the Union thinks we all are. They are a bunch of selfish, ill-mannered, children. In other blocks these young ones gather so closely to the stove that no heat can fill the room. Do they not understand how the stove works, do they not get that it radiates heat to fill the room and if they all crowd around it everyone else loses? Oh, the degeneracy of the manners of young men today! They have no more respect for the rights of others than if they were the only people alive, and especially rude and disrespectful to the aged.

(GUY stands and offers his place near the stove to PEEL.)

But, I guess these young sprigs with thin skin are very tender, and we of age and experience should be thick and hearty enough to withstand the cold. Bah! These walls are getting to me. I apologize.

PEEL

No need, John. Who else do you have right now?

GUY

Shakespeare, Luther, Grimshaw and -- Mr. Solicitous Good-heart.
Mr. Good-heart. A friend of yours?

Do you consider me your friend?

Yes.

Then yes, Solicitous, you are a friend of mine.

I am sorry John, I do not follow.

Ahh. It is simply my age speaking again. I have spent enough time both inside and outside these walls to understand that for most people it is a fortunate thing that they are given their names at birth.

Fortunate?

Absolutely. See, much like the family names that developed out of the occupations the families held, like Miller’s, Weaver’s, Goldsmith’s, a person’s name should grow out of their identity, not be their identity. We have stopped paying attention to this, this is why we can now take our horse to Mr. Taylor to be shod, or have our uniforms made by Mr. Blacksmith. It would be much easier for us to get through life if we knew by name whether or not we wanted to become acquainted with certain individuals. Take for example Jack, what can we gather from his name John Bowles?

His parents read the bible once or twice.

(chuckling) But we can’t see his obstinate nature or hot headed nature. We can’t tell what a volatile personality he has from that name. It would be much better if he bore the name Mr. Angry Plotter or Mr. Delusional Shortfuse.

I guess I could live with the name Solicitous.
GUY
It isn’t a matter of living with it. You are it. And that is how we should be named, by our acquaintances, for who we are. Imagine the trouble you could save yourself by knowing you were being assigned to a mess with a roster including: Mr. Intensely Selfish, Mr. Unconscious Stupidity, Rev. Sanctimonious Bigot, Mr. Innocent Credulity and Mr. Showy Pretender.

PEEL
It would certainly make us more aware of who we wanted to be.

GUY
More accountability.

PEEL
Is this how you do it?

GUY
What is that?

PEEL
Is this how you can sleep at night and wake up knowing you are going to be in the same place, looking at the same walls, with the same people? Not knowing when or if you will make it home.

GUY
I am here now. I spend my time reading and learning. I write to members of my battalion to try to encourage them. I enjoy the philosophy of life and use that to make my existence more bearable.

PEEL
You aren’t concerned about getting out?

GUY
Sure, I am concerned, but that doesn’t make the days go faster, that doesn’t keep me active. There is no sense worrying about that which you do not know. So, by keeping myself active in my learning and helping others, I serve a purpose in my disposition and when the time comes for me to be released or even go-up, I will be ready.

PEEL
Mr. Timewise Professor
GUY

You are too kind.

(blackout)
Scene 4

PEEL

(writing) June 27th. The arrival of the express is a much awaited event each day. As I cross the yard to inquire about any new arrivals, I see, with a sinking heart, the officers in solitary confinement. There are four of them now in the guard-house - for various offenses. They have a little space of thirty to forty yards square, during the day, and at night are locked up in a little, low hovel, some twelve or fifteen feet square, without a particle of ventilation. I can scarcely see how the fellows escape suffocation; for the heat is such that I can hardly live on my cot -- I made myself one several weeks since -- in the middle of a large room with two doors and windows open. Indeed the sight and thought of them, almost persuades me that, with all I am brought to complain of, I am yet well-to-do in the world.

...27, 28, 29, 30. Thirty fans to send to Miss Dora. All finished but the ribbon. It is the last of what I have. This restriction on incoming goods is quite the inconvenience.

BOWLES

(reading)
Inconvenience, hell, it’s torture. I’ve been waiting for new trousers and some good cornbread from my wife.

GUY

Eh, drab grey suits your personality.

PEEL

John, have you forgotten who you are? You are a Captain in the Confederate Army, not some criminal.

GUY

Billy, you’ve been here too long to still be so ignorant as to what happens here. We have no rank, we are prisoners.

PEEL

They treat us that way, they want us to feel that way, but we are who we are. We deserve better clothing and accommodations than this. We are the leaders of our army.
GUY
Exactly, we are the leaders of our army, the very army that these guards are trying to eliminate. The sooner you and Jack realize your place in this depot, the better off you will be.

(GUY exits)

BOWLES
He has given up. I understand what you are saying. I can’t wait to get out of here. I’ll find a way. When the time is right, you’ll wake up one day and say, “Where’s Jack?”

PEEL
Right now all I ask is, “Where’s my ribbon?”

MCDOWELL
You expecting that in the express?

PEEL
Yes, Miss Dora was to sell the fans and rings I sent her and keep half of the money for herself, and split the rest in supplies and cash to send to me. I received her letter that said she sent the package, but now the package won’t come through.

MCDOWELL
Johnson is back up with the sutler shop. You might have luck there.

BOWLES
Yeah, you might be able to buy the ribbon they confiscated from your package for ten times the price your Miss Dora paid.

MCDOWELL
(to PEEL) It is tough, I know. Jack always accuses John of having given up, but you can’t always be prodding at everything these yanks do. That’s where he’s wrong. He has to keep his head cool.

PEEL
I just feel disconnected. I feel alone. Yeah, how does one feel alone when there are several hundred people in this prison...I get it.

MCDOWELL
Billy, you are not alone in feeling alone. You think I don’t miss my family, my wife, my house. Dear God what I would do just to feel her soft touch, look into her beautiful eyes -- and smell her fresh biscuits baking in the oven. Ooh Lord! But, I’ve got to keep that in my mind. I’ve got to hang onto those thoughts. It’s not going to do me any good no how
to act all foolish like Jack. That’s what is gonna get him killed. You and me, we need to make it through. Get outta here yes, but by chance of exchange or when Lee finally brings Grant to his knees. That is our ticket.

PEEL

Have you heard from home?

MCDOWELL

Still nothing.

PEEL

Yet you keep the faith.

MCDOWELL

So do you. Your faith is in your diary. Those are your stories, that is the collection of all the things you want to share with your family when you see them. You are not alone at all. I have no patience to write, I would much rather think about them, dream about them. This book is your way of bringing your family to you. Someday, you will be the center of attention in the parlor as you tell your children of how you fought for the country that they know as the Confederate States of America.

*(blackout)*
Scene 5

(PEEL sits at the table writing in his diary. SUBLET and MCDOWELL are involved in a game of chess. GUY is reading in his bunk.)

PEEL

(writing) There has been much talk about the new prison commander. Colonel Charles W. Hill of the 128th Ohio Volunteer Infantry has come to relieve Gen. Terry, who relieved Pierson. Colonel Hill is a remarkable man. He commanded a brigade in the field for some time. At the battle of Creek Mountain he made a liberal display of his gallantry and genius, by a dashing charge, individually - but unfortunately in the wrong direction for which he seems to be informed that his resignation would be accepted. His genius, as displayed here, has assumed quite an original character. We are out generaled and completely surprised by an order stuck up on the bulletin board today. The men of this prison have not been exposed to the order and structure that Hill is about to implement. Already today his orders posted on the Block bulletin board have created quite a bit of discussion. For some it will be a great reminder of their position in this war, for others it will serve as a great improvement to our surroundings.

(BOWLES enters)

BOWLES

This is outrageous!

(tosses an envelope on the table)

Here’s your mail. Pierson may have been a buffoon, but this is ridiculous! It is bad enough we have to suffer in these drafty, dirty, rat infested excuses for barracks. As if we didn’t already have trouble making our rations go around for all of our mess. Now this.

MCDOWELL

Are you going to let us know what it is that has you outraged?

BOWLES

This.

(hands notice from bulletin board to MCDOWELL)

He is going to turn each and every one of us into back-stabbing Yankee spies.
Mac, please explain what he is trying to say.

**MCDOWELL**

It actually seems that he is right this time. Hill is ordering that entire blocks be held accountable for each individual’s actions. He has stated that in the case of tunneling, or other conspiracy being carried out in a block and not promptly reported to him, the rations of said Block or mess, should be withheld to such extent that he sees fit.

**SUBLET**

So, he expects us to do the work of his sentinels.

**PEEL**

He is simply testing us. He wants to see how deep our loyalty runs.

**BOWLES**

I don’t know about you but my loyalty runs as deep as the south, but I don’t trust the loyalty of the rest of these guys. Besides, even if they don’t squeal, we still lose.

**SUBLET**

Hill is treating us like common criminals, this order on top of his making us work to dig new sinks and other menial tasks.

**PEEL**

Here, too, shows another example of Hill’s reign.

(hands envelope to MCDOWELL)

**MCDOWELL**

There’s nothing in it.

**PEEL**

Read the front.

**MCDOWELL**

(reading) Writer, H.F.M. Contraband in length.

**SUBLET**

So it would be acceptable to write about escape plans or conspiracy just as long as it were under twenty-eight lines.

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BOWLES
No, then you would have your rations taken away.

MCDOWELL
Jack.

PEEL
It is getting worse. There is very little we can do anymore. I can’t get the trousers that I greatly need, they have cut off my line to supply my carving and fan making --

GUY
Guess you’ll have to take up reading. Small there in Block 6 has a trunk of books he will gladly lend out at fifty cents a book.

PEEL
Thanks, John.

MCDOWELL
You could always try your hand at gardening. Look.

(looking out window)
All that space they are creating over there, there is plenty of room for more gardens. Once they are done moving the wall back, I plan on claiming myself a nice plot for my tomatoes. Nothing coming in or out through the post in that hobby. I figure I could have a good ten foot square of land, bigger than anyone else’s.

GUY
You had better plan on growing more than just tomatoes.

MCDOWELL
Why so?

GUY
It appears that somebody has reported what great conditions we have here.

(reading from Sandusky Register)
There are abundant rations and prisoners are treated with respect. The quality of water is adequate and disease is not rampant.
MCDOWELL
What does that have to do with my tomatoes?

GUY
Well, it seems that this report is being compared to those reports from some of our prisoner depots. The Union prisoners claim that they are being refused their proper rations. They are not being given proper care in the infirmary and in some cases claim that they are being tortured.

MCDOWELL
Tomatoes, John, tomatoes.

GUY
I am getting there. Here is the kicker: the Union wants us to exchange captured negroes. They say that those captured fighting for the Union are free men and should not be treated unfairly in the prison and must be considered in man-for-man exchanges.

BOWLES
Righteous, bastards!

Again --

GUY
In retaliation of this reported behavior, Hill is going to continue to take some of our *luxuries* away. No longer will the receipt of eatables be permitted to prisoners of Johnson’s Island through the express.

PEEL
Nothing?

GUY
No longer will the receipt of eatables be permitted to prisoners of Johnson’s Island through the express. That is what it reads.

BOWLES
No sugar, no bread, jam. Damn.

MCDOWELL
I see. Maybe I can barter for a larger plot.
PEEL
At this point, why do we have the express. We are now forbidden clothing, eatables, long letters, what next?

GUY
Well, it looks, too, like they need reason to get rid of a few of us. Sentinels are permitted not only now to shoot at any prisoner that crosses the dead line, but also anyone who is outside their Block after lights out.

BOWLES
I think the rats have it better than we do.

PEEL
At least they serve a purpose.

(cleans the last piece of meat off a bone from the plate on the table)

I am off to Block thirteen. Captain Maynus is running bible study this evening. Anyone?

MCDOWELL
I’ll join you.

SUBLET
Sure.

(PEEL, MCDOWELL and SUBLET exit)

GUY
(writing) If we are to be kept prisoners during the war, and the Yankees prove victorious, then we shall be regarded as criminals, and not as Prisoners of War. Some will be executed, some will be banished; others will have their property confiscated and few will be pardoned. In any event, it will be terrible to think of. If this is to become the policy of the two sections, then the lot of both armies should lay down their arms and refuse to fight in such a cruel and inhumane war.

(blackout)
Scene 6

PEEL

(writing) August 4th. Preparations are being made for the reception of more prisoners. The Yankee soldiers have been busy hauling in lumber and constructing new dining rooms to accommodate the new arrivals. Despite the ban on incoming food and clothing through the express, many prisoners have managed to acquire parts of union uniforms. Recently, with all of the commotion of construction, there has been a rash of escape attempts. By donning the federal uniform parts they have, Rebs have been sneaking out with the federal soldiers assigned to the lumber wagons. Once through the gate the escapees make a break for the weeds. This has then in turn spawned a series of impromptu block inspections. For me they are just an annoyance, I have nothing to hide.

SUBLET

(enters)

Block eight says we are next.

PEEL

Next?

SUBLET

(sits)

Inspection. Looking for contraband.

PEEL

My loyalty is the only thing they’ll find here.

BOWLES

(bursts in)

Get off the bunk! Off the bunk! Move!

(BOWLES lifts straw mattress and removes a drawstring sack filled with federal uniform parts, tosses the sack out the window and connects the drawstring to a loose nail on the sill.)

(GUARD enters. PEEL, SUBLET and BOWLES stand)
GUARD

Peel, Sublet, MCDOWELL, Bowles and Guy.

PEEL

Peel.

Bowles.

BOWLES

Sublet.

GUARD

Where’s McDowell and Guy

PEEL

McDowell is on work detail and Guy is at the sink.

GUARD

Very well.

Return.

(DELAY turns over chairs and table, tosses straw mattress on the floor and checks the floor for any contraband.)

PEEL

What’s in the sack?

BOWLES

(retrieves sack)

My freedom.

PEEL

What are you planning?

BOWLES

I can’t risk you writing about it in your little book.

(exits, whistling Dixie)

MCDOWELL

(enters)

I heard we got hit.
SUBLET
(picking up)
Just looking for the usual. Uniforms, muskets...

MCDOWELL
How some of the others can acquire those kinds of things baffles me. I simply wanted some wool socks and some good bacon from home, but they confiscated that before it got to me.

(offstage)
BOWLES
Small gate.

GUARD
Sir?

BOWLES
Small gate!

(SUBLET, PEEL and MCDOWELL head to window to look outside)

GUARD
Sir, I do not recall letting you in here.

BOWLES
Perhaps you did not, but somebody did and I suppose it will fall on your lot to let me out. I am Major Durham of the Ohio National Guard.

GUARD
I suppose you would not object to accompanying me to Colonel Hill’s Quarters?

BOWLES
No objection at all.

(blackout)
Scene 7

(HILL is seated on one side of the table facing BOWLES in full Major regalia)

BOWLES
I was here to compare some of the processes you employ here at Johnson’s Island in order to address some issues in other prisoner compounds.

HILL
Well, my dear Major, you must pardon this little inconvenience we have put you to. But you see, we have all to keep wide awake. I find these rebels an intelligent set of fellows. And they are perfectly acquainted with everything any wise appertaining to the guard, the island and the surrounding country, and they take advantage of the slightest chance to escape. They have full suits of our uniform in there. Where they get them, I can’t tell. When I search for them there is nothing to be found and where they go is a mystery to me. Drink?

BOWLES
Thank you, Colonel. I thought, Colonel, they seemed to be pretty well satisfied in there. They were at all sorts of employment.

HILL
Yes, they seem to enjoy themselves. But they must be watched, if they are to be kept there.

(offstage a bell is heard)

BOWLES
Oh yes, I quite endorse your vigilance and hope you won’t think any more about having put me to any inconvenience, but there is the bell. The boat will leave me if I do not hurry down.

HILL
No danger, sir, keep your seat. The Captain of the boat always reports to me before it leaves. Here he comes now. But I see the boat has gone.

(enter CAPTAIN)
(sharply) Why is it that you have allowed the boat to leave without seeing me? Here is Major Durham who wanted to cross on this trip and has been left because I assured him that there was no danger.

CAPTAIN
That is not the Major Durham of my acquaintance.

HILL
I imagine there is but one Major Durham of the 24th Regiment.

CAPTAIN
This is not Major Durham of that regiment.

BOWLES
Alright, alright. (removing uniform) I am Lieutenant John Bowles, CSA, and prisoner of the depot.

(CAPTAIN gathers federal uniform and takes BOWLES by the arm)

HILL
(laughing) Damn me if I don’t expect I’ll wake up some morning and find these rebels standing guard all over the island. Take this Major to the guard-house. Fifteen days!

(exit CAPTAIN and BOWLES)

(blackout)
Scene 8

(SUBLET, PEEL, MCDOWELL and BOWLES are seated at the table with a meager meal on their plates)

SUBLET
I never dreamt of a New Year’s this depressing.

MCDOWELL
We are still alive, which is more than we can say for some of our brothers.

SUBLET
Still so hopeful, Mac. Ever the lighthouse o’er the bay, reminding us that we are never too far.

BOWLES
Reminding us that there is a way out.

PEEL
It seems that John is the one who, in fact, did have it all figured out.

BOWLES
That old man got lucky.

PEEL
Or did he?

MCDOWELL
He spent his time here wisely. He continued his studies, stayed away from the true Rebels and was rewarded with an exchange.

BOWLES
He wasn’t rewarded; he got lucky. He was sick the day they inspected the infirmary and pest house to compile their list of eligible prisoners to exchange.

MCDOWELL
You selfish -- you can’t be happy for your messmate. You can’t step back and say, “I am glad that another one of us gets to go home alive.”
**BOWLES**

It’s not about going home alive. It is about winning the war for our Confederate nation. It’s about keeping the rights I deserve as a man of the South.

**MCDOWELL**

Exactly, it is about your rights. Not the rights of the Confederacy.

**SUBLET**

Christ! Look at yourselves, both of you. How can you be that naive? We are losing, Sherman destroyed half of the South and Grant is only getting stronger.

**BOWLES**

And I don’t want to be here when it is all over. What will happen to us? You really think they are just going to open the gates and let us all go. You wait for this end, this peace, this surrender. It’s not that simple. We will never be able to get back to our lives. We will always be prisoners. They will always treat us as criminals, even in our own land.

**SUBLET**

But somehow you escaping now will change all of that. By getting out now, and being hunted or having your family put in the line of fire, you are better off than us.

**BOWLES**

I will know that it was my choice.

---

**PEEL**

(writing) The last day of ’64 draws upon us, and finds our country still wrapped in war, and perhaps not less than one-hundred twenty-five thousand men -- confeds and yanks -- languishing in prison. Far away from our native countries, among, not mere strangers but enemies, we have waited and watched and longed for the coming of the joyful day which shall bring us tidings of exchange and approaching peace. But, as the fourth year of bloodshed, carnage and devastation draws to its close: and while the dawn of the fifth is in viewing and but a little way off, exchange and peace peer out from the dimmest future as things to be most ardently desired but scarcely to be hoped for, or expected. I have reached my end. I desire not to escape like Jack, my loyalty is too strong for the oath and yet my hope in this war is fading.

*(blackout)*
Scene 9

(GUARD is seated behind a table with a register, pen and inkwell. PEEL, SUBLET, BOWLES and MCDOWELL are gathered)

GUARD

(pressingly) The United States Government and President Abraham Lincoln are offering you the opportunity to pledge your allegiance to the United States in exchange for amnesty. This is your chance. No more will you be treated as any other “Johnny Reb.”

BOWLES

(to PEEL) No, you’ll be labeled a “Razorback” and a traitor by your own comrades.

GUARD

Putting aside your enlistment in the Confederate States Army and taking this oath will not only increase your chances for exchange, but will also better your living conditions for your remaining time here on the island.

BOWLES

(to SUBLET) But you better watch your back as if you were in the field.

GUARD

All Confederate prisoners who so choose to take the oath will be granted transfer from their current overcrowded block to a room containing only seven other men with your own stove in blocks 1 through 4.

MCDOWELL

Enticing as it sounds, I can’t see putting my name in a book and swearing before my God that I would not take up fighting against this United States ever again as anything but a sin.

BOWLES

I knew you were still true in there somewhere.

MCDOWELL

True, yet content. We will all get out sometime, God knows when or how, but sometime. I want to walk out of here guiltless. Whether I pass through those gates as a soldier in the prevailing Confederate States Army or as a soldier in the defeated Rebel Army, I will pass with my conscience clean.
GUARD
Simply, raise your right hand, repeat the oath and sign the register. It’s inevitable, you all will need to sign it someday, why not sign it while the --

(PEEL, BOWLES and MCDOWELL, as if in protest turn and exit)

-- choice is yours, while you have the chance to reap the benefits of pledging your allegiance. Sir? No more shivering, no more crowded room, better bunks, coffee, sugar.

(SUBLET steps toward the table, places a note on the table, turns, and quickly exits. GUARD closes the register)

(blackout)
Scene 10

(PEEL is seated at the table writing, BOWLES is in his bunk, MCDOWELL reads and SUBLET paces. Two candles light the room.)

BOWLES
To think that offering us a few luxuries would get us to turn against our country.

PEEL
Honestly the last thing I am fighting with is my heart. Would I like better rations? Yes. Would I like more room? Yes. Would I like to sleep through the night in warmth? Dear God, yes. Jack, there is very little of the cause for these guys to hold onto.

MCDOWELL
You obviously can relate. You are so fed up with the living conditions you are ready to risk your neck to get out. Is that not the same as these guys taking the oath?

BOWLES
You puzzle me, Mac. You just spoke of how you wouldn’t sign your name in the book, yet you are defending those who would.

MCDOWELL
Yes, just as I defend the fact that you want to scale the walls and swim across the bay. Either way it is the same.

PEEL
His point is true. We can sympathize with both you and the Razorbacks. Would we be either one of you? Not on your life.

BOWLES
So you are afraid to take a side. You are afraid to take action.

PEEL
Not afraid. I just don’t see those actions as necessary.

MCDOWELL
Nor I.
BOWLES
After all this time you have been in here, either you want to get out or your want to surrender.

PEEL
Or, like the Southerly Gentlemen we are, you take faith in the rules of war and stay true to the Confederacy.

MCDOWELL
What good are you going to do when you get out there anyway? By the time you get to the rail station, they are going to be waiting for you. Hell, you won’t even get that far, these folks around here are all too happy to return an escapee for their hundred dollar reward.

BOWLES
You are all damned fools! You should have put your names in the book. Razorbacks!

(BOWLES rolls over to sleep)

SUBLET
You really can understand why others are taking the oath?

PEEL
Yes, I can understand. Don’t get me wrong, I don’t think they are right. They have just been weakened.

MCDOWELL
They let themselves believe that there is no other way. They’re taking this oath to fill that emptiness that we all are experiencing.

PEEL
There is that fine line of your own conscience that must be considered. As much as we feel we are just sitting in waiting and can’t do anything to help, by waiting and surviving, we are helping. We keep the Union occupied.

MCDOWELL
Well, boys, it is lights out and tomorrow is another day. I am checking in.

(MCDOWELL closes his book, blows out candle and goes to his bunk. SUBLET lays on his bunk.)
PEEL

(writing) I am never ceased to be amazed by the way this prison affects each of us individually. We are all creatures of free will, though we are limited in our freedoms in this camp, we still have the freedom of choice. We can choose our destiny based upon our surroundings. Not everyone may agree with our choices, but in reality the only one that must agree is ourselves. Free will it may be, but at what cost would you sell this freedom? Your conscience is currency for your actions.

(PEEL retires to his bunk and extinguishes the candle)

(Offstage a soft knock is heard at the door.)

GUARD

Abraham Sublet.

(SUBLET quickly rises from his bunk and goes to the door)

SUBLET

SHHH!

(SUBLET reaches beneath his bunk and grabs his belongings already packed in a sack, and heads toward the door. SUBLET stops for one moment and looks at his sleeping messmates, and then exits.)

(blackout)
Scene 11

PEEL
(writing) This morning, no less than five members of our own Block began, as if by a preconcerted signal, to pack up their duds and were gone before we had recovered from our surprise. Another room in Block 1 has been vacated for their reception. Several of the razorbacks as they are called, being unable to face the crowd in daylight, went up last night, Abe included. One of these night runners went, by mistake, into the wrong room. Seeing him, thus encumbered with all his house-hold, at that hour, the fellow was at once recognized as a razorback, where upon a stout Kentuckian, very deliberately kicked him out of the room. He took his treatment as his portion and went in quest of others quarters.

BOWLES
And then there were three.

PEEL
Jack, let it go.

BOWLES
(out window)
Razorbacks! Traitors! Bastards!

PEEL
Jack.

BOWLES
Even among us. I should have known. I can’t trust any of you.

MCDOWELL
What trust was broken? He did nothing to you.

BOWLES
(out window)
I’ve got two more names for your book. William Peel and Robert --
MCDOWELL
Jack! It is after lights out, you’re gonna have the guard up here right quick if you don’t knock it off. Talk about thinking of yourself first.

PEEL
Honestly, Jack.

BOWLES
Don’t give me the same speech. I have had to be penned up in here with you, you, you traitors. You are traitors as much as Abe is. You never once have talked of what you would do if you were in the trenches. You haven’t even given one thought to getting out of here. I have spent my time here trying to figure out how to get back to the line. I have wanted to be back in command of my people, not holed up here in this hell. I would take a ball to the chest fighting these Yanks over spending one more day living with them.

(retrieving rope from inside straw mattress)

This is not how I had planned it, but then I never planned on being here so long -- or at all for that matter.

(exits)

PEEL
Mac?

MCDOWELL
Our actions are as individual as we are.

PEEL
We are not traitors. We haven’t signed to the oath, we aren’t acting against our cause.

MCDOWELL
No, we believe. We believe there is an end. We believe in what is being done and will accept the outcome.

PEEL
And trust that, no matter what, each one of our nations’ army did the best that they could to secure the best for each one us.

(blackout)
(offstage)

GUARD

South wall!

(the sound of a gunshot is heard)
Scene 12

(MCDOWELL enters the empty barracks and sits on PEEL’s bunk with his head in his hands. Realizing he is sitting on something, MCDOWELL reaches beneath him to find PEEL’s diary. MCDOWELL thumbs through and eventually lands on the last entry.)

MCDOWELL

(reading) The ground is covered today with about a half and inch of snow and prospects are very favorable for it to become much heavier. I experienced the very mortifying disappointment of learning, when in my state of illness, the surgeon returned my application to write for a box of eatables. Many a time have I been too hungry at night to find a moment’s sleep, until the night was far spent and at times I have lain and wished for just one ear of corn from Grand Pa’s, almost inexhaustible cribs, that I may parch it or make into ley hominy. Often too, I have thought of little James Bates’ indifference as to the kind of bread that was given him, when he expressed himself ready to receive “any kind of bread and dog bread both.”

Though last night I had a most pleasant dream. A dream of my little friend Corine, a little girl of five summers when I left home in 1861. She seemed the same pretty little “Babe,” as she is nicknamed, as when I left her. Home, to be there with Babe, Debon, Mr. Hinman and all would be like a dream forever.

(MCDOWELL moves to the table and begins to write in the diary)

(writing) Lieutenant William Peel, the author of this diary was taken sick with pneumonia, on the 8th of February, 1865 and departed this life, February 17th at eleven o’clock p.m. Johnson’s Island, Ohio. Lieutenant Robert A. McDowell. His friend and messmate.

(MCDOWELL closes the diary and proceeds to the window.)

(blackout)
APPENDIX B

SIMPLE SCENARIOS

Simple Scenario 1:

Characters: The main character would be Lt. William Peel. The majority of his writings would be included in the work to keep the timeline moving.

Time Line of Action: would stay very strict to the period. I would not include any flashback or foreshadowing.

Material: The diary entries would be delivered as they were written, with cuts.

Beginning: an introduction to the selection of the island for the prison and discuss how command was given. The story’s action would follow the major events in the civil war as news came to the inhabitants.

Climax: April 9th surrender of the Confederate Army at Appomattox Courthouse.

Falling Action: the reaction of the prisoners to the surrender and include the assassination of Pres. Lincoln.

Simple Scenario 2:

Characters: My interest would be to place an equal emphasis on the writings of all those I chose to include.

Time Line of Action: would follow groups of events and the individual reactions of different inhabitants to the universal events.

Material: entries would be cut and rewritten to include multiple days into one monologue. Though the general idea of time would not be abandoned, for the sake of continuity, I would piece the entries together by topic or theme.
Beginning: a common event experience by those persons whose entire area
selected for inclusion. The inhabitants reactions to said event will act as
the jumping off point to begin the action.

Climax: April 9th surrender of the Confederate Army at Appomattox Courthouse.

Falling Action: the reaction of the prisoners to the surrender and include the
assassination of Pres. Lincoln

Simple Scenario 3:

Characters: Lt. William Peel and anyone necessary in the materials included

Time Line of Action: would follow the events and experiences of only Peel in
chronological order.

Material: entries would be cut and rewritten to include multiple days in shorter
monologues and dialogues.

Beginning: a recap of Peel’s account of his capture at Gettysburg

Climax: Reported death of Peel, Feb. 17th, 1865

Falling Action: the surrender of Lee at Appamattox, the assassination of Pres.
Lincoln and a summary of what became of Johnson’s Island.

Simple Scenario 4:

Characters: Narrator and a collection of those whose entries were included in the
final script.

Time Line of Action: would follow thematic parts of the materials included. The
action would not flow chronologically, but rather by comparing entries to
each other. This would examine how different prisoners were dealing with
disease, food, family, express, escape, religion, etc.

Material: entries would be cut and rewritten to include multiple days into
monologues and dialogues.
Beginning: the initial entry in each included characters diary, in order to establish what the prisoners were thinking and feeling as they arrived on the island.

Climax: a common theme of release. For one it may be death, for another exchange, for another, the taking of the oath, for another, escape, etc. Each of the prisoners experienced some way to “escape” the island.

Falling Action: the results or changes brought about by the prisoners individual climax, a summary of the remaining life of the island and the affect of the surrender and assassination of Lincoln on the prison.

Simple Scenario 5:

Characters: Narrator and those involved in the materials chosen for inclusion

Time Line of Action: would follow only those events during a specific period of time in the history of the island. One of interest would be from 1864 through mid-1865.

Material: entries would be cut and rewritten to include multiple days into one monologue. Though the general idea of time would not be abandoned, for the sake of continuity, I would piece the entries together by topic or theme.

Beginning: General background of island and arrival of different characters.
Accounts of what it was like spending the holidays in prison.

Climax: April 9th surrender of the Confederate Army at Appomattox Courthouse.

Falling Action: the reaction of the prisoners to the surrender and include the assassination of Pres. Lincoln
Simple Scenario 6:


Time Line of Action: (early 1864 - mid-1865) Examine the survival of prisoners incarcerated at the Johnson’s Island Civil War Prisoner Depot

Material: Dialogue inspired by the prisoner diaries and history of Johnson’s Island

Beginning: Arrival of Lt. William Peel to Johnson’s Island. Explores the process of becoming acclimated to the surroundings, relationships with messmates, and establishment of the goals.

Climax: The point at which William Peel realizes that the war is failing and he will not be exchanged.

Falling Action: The revealing of resulting action for each of the characters’ choice for survival. Death of Lt. William Peel.
APPENDIX D

ROUGH SCENARIO

Working title: JI: from these walls

Action: to survive an extended stay as a prisoner in the Johnson’s Island Civil War Prisoner Depot

Form: drama/comedy Because the action of the play deals with how prisoners must survive in a new situation, in which they are stripped of rank and treated as equals, the action supports more of a serious tone. The action does not support the makings of a tragedy in that there is no involvement of a tragic flaw and fall of the protagonist. Due to the prisoners attempt to make the best of their undetermined sentences, the action does support the possibility of humor as well which is why I have tagged comedy onto the form however this is not by any means the main form of the play.


Subject: Prison life on Johnson’s Island during the latter part of the Civil War

Characters:

Lt. William Peel - Lt., 11th Mississippi Infantry, Company C, CSA, surrendered at Gettysburg. Peel is a loyal soldier. Loyal to the cause through his death. Though he is tested by the incidents in the prison: poor rations, escape attempts, stopping of incoming post, pressures to take the Oath of Allegiance, Peel remains hopeful that the South will prevail until shortly before his death. Even in realizing that the Confederacy was not going to come out on top in the war, Peel stays true to his beliefs and does not take the Oath or become bitter at the failure of the Confederate army, but instead stays true to the confederacy until his death.

Lt. Abraham Sublet - Lt., CSA. Deals with prison life by eventually taking the Oath of Allegiance.
Lt. Robert McDowell - Lt., 11th Mississippi, Company K, CSA. McDowell is Peel’s good friend. McDowell was a member of the same battalion but different company as Peel. McDowell acts a happy medium between the dynamics of Guy and Sublet. Like Peel, McDowell has developed an understanding of what it takes to survive in the prison without giving up on the cause or becoming delusional as to his involvement.

Cpt. John Guy - Cpt., 48th Virginia Artillery, CSA, a well educated man who enjoys spending his time reading and keeping his mind engaged in the valuable aspects of life: history, religion and philosophy. Guy has accepted his placement in the prison system and does not desire to escape and believes he will one day be exchanged so why bother getting worked up. He understands that his involvement in the war ended when he was captured. His demeanor is calm but at sometimes a bit negative.

Lt. John B. Bowles - 2nd Lt., 2nd Kentucky Calvary, Company C, CSA, believes that he is still an active member of the fighting army. Bowles has not adjusted well or accepted the fact that he is incarcerated. He feels that everything the army does he is a part of and that he will someday get out and return to the field. Bowles is never accepting of the news that comes in either form the local papers or the “grapevine.”

Col. Hill - commandant of Johnson’s Island Prisoner Depot

Captain - Captain of the Island Queen, a steam ship that would make daily trips from the island to Sandusky.

Guard - a union sentry enlisted in “Hoffman’s Battalion” to service the needs of the prison.

Conflict: The setting of the play lends itself to external conflicts such as living conditions (rations, cleanliness, weather, close quarters), lack of contact with family and friends, etc. Internal conflicts such as loyalty to the cause, depression, and dealing with the unknown length of the sentences being served.

Story:
1. Arrival of Lt. William Peel to Johnson’s Island
2. Arrival of messmates Sublet and McDowell
3. Attitude of fellow messmate. Name story - John Guy
4. Challenges in creating fans to earn money and connect with lady friends in the outside world (Peel: various)
5. Changes in treatment of prisoners, more strict
6. Firing on those loitering after lights out (Peel: July 16, 1864)
7. Ban on receiving eatables in express and purchasing items from the sutler (Peel: August 22, 1864)
8. Offering special treatment for those taking the oath of allegiance
9. Inspection of barracks preempting Bowles’ escape attempt
10. Escape attempt - Disguised as national guard Maj. (Peel: August 17, 1864)
11. CLIMAX: Realization that the war is not going to end peacefully nor in the favor of the south; prisoner exchanges are not going to happen and life will continue now without hope (Peel: December 31, 1864)
   Recruiting of Oath-Takers: Initial contact (Peel: January 31, 1865)
12. Lt. Abraham Sublet takes the oath. (Peel: January 31, 1865)
13. Death of Lt. William Peel (Peel: February 17, 1865)

Thought: The main action of the play is to show the struggles faced by confederate officers in imprisonment. Upon entering the compound, these “gentlemen,” who are used to being in leadership roles, used to the finer things in life, used to being the ones to whom answers are given, and used to the freedoms of educated people, are stripped of their ranks, privileges, freedoms, money, uniforms and lives. All these men have left are their memories and one choice. The only choice that these prisoners have is whether to escape, assimilate or survive. The action follows Lt. Peel as he and his messmates deal with the drastic change in lifestyle by trying to create familiarity in their surroundings, choose whether to escape, assimilate or survive, act upon their decision and live or die with the consequences of their choice.

Dialogue: The style of dialogue will be drawn from samples of writings by prisoners of the Johnson’s Island Civil War Prisoner Depot. Both dialogue and monologue will be used. Any dialogue that cannot be drawn from actual documentation will be created with the flavor of the period and situation as per research of the island and other prisoner documents.
APPENDIX E

EXAMPLES OF IMPULSE WRITING

F: They have restricted all of the incoming good.
E: You go getting something?
F: Rather clothing that what I am wearing.
E: Qibb suks you!
F: Have you forgotten who you are? For are a lot
in the Congo Army not some joke.
E: Billy never been hit so long to be being to
what has happened.
F: So you have given up already. Well, your haters
still fall in the battle. Best you may have
your land back, so that can clean your
snow.
E: How do you think you can help here. You just as
helpless as an ice cold doc.
F: There will be an exchange.
E: Sure.
F: There will
E: I am been reading too many of Grace "Dike" Perrin.
They call her writing claim that me might set.
But it is all just fleeting from running.
E: So a go gone it a go lost high.
F: Make it.
Feelin' good to be with ya, Nancy. I long for your touch, just to know that you're safe and cared for.

Billy: That's what you gotta keep to make it through. Don't let these things be taking you away from that hope. See ya! Know you need me.

Me: When did you come up with the shell?
Doc: I was able to figure it through the sisters. They won't let my packages through so they have to be some way.

Me: The charge wasn't on mind play? Or are you taking the packet of chemicals to get it.
Doc: Thought we'd need it to make something for
Q: They were coming in search of contraband.
A: What have I to hide? My Diary attests
that I have been honest.

Q: I have much to lose... until now.
A: You speak of losses, but one being deprived
of a good name will lose more.

Good: Reel.
Real: McDowell.

Q: Where are MD?
A: MD are on KP and in the kitchen.

Q: Very well, step out.
(Seperus calls for a boarding pass)

Q: What's in the sack?
A: Freedom.

Q: What are you doing?
A: Painting.

Q: I can't risk you writing about me in your little book.
A: All I'll say is I'm done with the crowd waiting for an exchange. See, South Carolinian.

MD: I have never been so rich.

Q: (executes, waiting for good turn of events)
A: No concern. Looking for the US naval sailing,

MD: How some feets can set that stuff baffle me.
A: I would just like some good common-sense, but I don't expect much.
S: Small Gate!
G: Sir?
S: Small Gate!
G: Sir? I don't recall letting you in here.
S: Perhaps you did not look somebody's dad and I suppose I will pull on your hat to let me out.

Finish last from 281-282
Response: Reader 1

What do you think my play is about?
Prisoner of War camp for officers/leaders from the civil war and what they were forced to endure while being held captive

What parts were you interested in?
I thought it was interesting how differently each of them got through their time in captivity. I also thought it was interesting to see how each of them met their demise or departure from the cell.

What parts were you not interested in?
Can't say there was anything that didn't interest me

Can you say why you weren’t interested?

Was anything confusing or somehow not clear to you?
Possibly would have liked to hear more detail about how each of them got there

Was anything unresolved?
Not really

Respons: Reader 2

What do you think my play is about?
The play was about the arrival, lifestyle, living conditions and inner thoughts of the Confederate prisoners housed at Johnson's Island.

What parts were you interested in?
I was interested in how the prisoners interacted among themselves and how they
managed to hide contraband from the guards.

What parts were you not interested in?
I didn't find any part of the play that I was not interested in--in fact the play
spurred more interest in wanting to know what events took place in the other
prisoners lives and what were some of the other thoughts and feelings, what were
some of the other prison breaks-any of them successful.

Can you say why you weren’t interested?

Was anything confusing or somehow not clear to you?
No

Was anything unresolved?
The only thing unresolved was the peaked interest in wanting to know more of the
history of Johnson's Island.

Response: Reader 3

What do you think my play is about?
The obvious answer is that it's about the Confederate prisoners in the Johnson's
Island Prison. But the themes I felt were present are that of loyalty, accepting
circumstances, and making the best of a bad situation. In the case of some
characters, it's about refusal to accept a situation and thus choosing between
betrayal of one's own beliefs or death. It serves as a reminder that the members of
the Confederate Army felt they were serving their country, not fighting against it.
It has themes of faith, hope, and survival. An intriguing theme is the cohabitation
of acceptance and denial, an eternal struggle humans face.

What parts were you interested in?
My favorite part of the play was the dialogue between Peel and Guy regarding
how people should be named according to their personality traits. It wasn't a
major theme of the play, but I found it truly thought-provoking and personal.

The scene where Bowles poses as Major Durham was exciting and tension-filled.
I read quickly, anxious to find out if he would be successful in his escape. But I
also read with a sense of dread, fearful of what would happen if they discovered
his lie.
I also took great interest in the scene in which they discussed the merits or drawbacks of taking the Oath of Loyalty. It made me wonder how many people are left in society today who have enough loyalty to a cause to be unwilling to take an oath in order to improve their own circumstances.

The surprise ending of Peel's death was fantastic. I never expected the play to end that way. It was sad to then think back of all he had hoped for after his release.

What parts were you not interested in?
I can honestly say I was interested in every scene. I guess if I have to choose something, it's the first scene.

Can you say why you weren't interested?
Only because we don't yet know the characters or have an immediate sense of compassion for them. Historical drama isn't something I would normally choose for myself as entertainment, so I went into the play wondering if I would be entertained, or if I would even understand it. But by scene 3 I was deeply engrossed in the play and its range of characters and personalities.

Was anything confusing or somehow not clear to you?
After the sound of the gunshot, I hope it's brutally clear to the audience in a live production that Bowles was shot in his escape attempt. Since he spends the play plotting his escape, it should be. But I was very surprised to find the final scene was about the death of Peel, not Bowles. However in retrospect, I don't believe anything more needed to be said about Bowles. They all knew what would happen to him, it did not come as a surprise to the cellmates, and I don't expect the audience will expect him to live, either. It gives the message that in his case, death was a better option than life inside the walls of the prison.

In Scene 8 when they discuss the transfer of Guy, Bowles says he (Guy) was lucky because he was sick the day of the inspection and got his name on the list. I wasn't sure exactly to what that referred. The scene of the inspection in this cellblock seemed to turn up nothing since Bowles had thrown his napsack of uniform parts out the window. So I'm unclear on if these cellmates were punished for something that Guy escaped by being sick.

Was anything unresolved?
Scene 2 discussed whether Peel's brother was alive or dead. It was a pretty significant chunk of dialog, but the question was never answered.

I was surprised that Bowles was not killed immediately upon discovery of his guise as Major Durham and was simply returned to his quarters.
Scene 1

(On stage are GUY and BOWLES. GUY is reading the Sandusky Register. BOWLES is playing with a deck of cards. A door is heard opening and PEEL enters wearing drab, weathered clothing and carrying his only belongings - a leather bound diary, writing utensil and a bed roll. There is a long silence as PEEL attempts to take in his surroundings. GUY and BOWLES do not acknowledge PEEL)

GUY

Smell that?

BOWLES

Yup.

GUY

Fish.

BOWLES

Fresh as you can get.

(PEEL stands frozen)

GUY

Maybe we aren’t showing our hospitality.
(GUY spits on his sleeve and proceeds to wipe the seat of a chair and offers it to PEEL.)

(PEEL is still frozen)

(GUY and BOWLES go back to their business)

(PEEL sits and begins writing in his diary)

This one seems to be a man of many words. Probably thinks he knows something more than we do. He’ll learn.

BOWLES
They always do. There is nothing special about any of us once we walk through those gates. Subject to the orders of Pierson, incompetent fool. Damn what has been taken from us. Each time we get a fresh face I’m reminded about why I enlisted. I need to be out there, I need to be fighting these damn yanks, not sitting here under their charge.

GUY
Brilliant, Jack. Get yourself all charged up. Now, put on your coat and go get ‘em. You are the fool. What are you going to do. You as much as tip-toe past the dead line you know they’ll shoot you, and enjoy doing it.

BOWLES
I had forgotten that you had it all figured out. Sit and eat spoiled beef, rats and water, read your books and hope that someone likes you enough to put you on an exchange list. Not me. There’s got to be something better for me.

GUY
There is, a wooden box.

BOWLES
Aren’t you at all concerned about what is happening out there.

GUY
I read the papers. I know what’s happening.

BOWLES
The papers. You mean those yankee rags. Johnny, I thought you were an educated man. You can’t trust a word of that garbage.
They fulfill my need for information. Now fulfill my need for warmth and fetch some wood.

(BOWLES exits)

Lieutenant William Peel, 11th Miss Infantry.

Billy will suffice.

Pardon?

Your name. Billy will be enough. All the other went away with your uniform when you were snatched.

I wasn’t snatched.

No, we never are, are we? Let me guess, you were taken by surprise and they were all around --

Our company was pressing forward toward the Union artillery. We got to about thirty yards from engaging the line hand to hand when I noticed the disarray of my battalion. My men were everywhere, some fleeing the incoming fire but many already victims of it. I found myself to be the senior officer of the remaining thirteen men--

(BOWLES enters, carrying wood)
The lake is nearly frozen over --

PEEL

(continuing) --our options were to take on a few hundred or surrender. I can only hope that our charge served a purpose.

BOWLES

He speaks?

GUY

Billy, Jack. I’m John, John Guy. (to BOWLES) Billy here surrendered at Gettysburg.

BOWLES

What a failure that turned out to be.

PEEL

We had the advantage at first. We had the high ground.

BOWLES

And by the third day our entire army was lying in the valley. Slaughtered. If we would have just continued the initial push that ground could have been ours.

GUY

Their.

BOWLES

Huh?

GUY

Their, that ground could have been theirs. You weren’t there, Billy was, but you weren’t. You were here, with me, remember.

BOWLES

You see Billy, Johnny likes being here, he can survive on what rations are given him, read his books and tell others how ignorant they are, but he is blind to the fact that he has already become one of them. He doesn’t question their orders, doesn’t stand up for what we deserve, short of sayin’ the words he’s already taken the oath.

GUY

And you have one foot in the grave and one in the lake. What makes that any smarter?
So where have they been keeping you ‘til now?

PEEL
Fort McHenry, Baltimore. I was hospitalized there for my knee. My souvenir from Gettysburg. Shot through.

BOWLES
How are the attitudes there?

PEEL
Very uneasy. Many of the prisoners there are fresh. They are still trying to figure out what they are going to do.

GUY
Not all that much different than here.

PEEL
There is a large amount of privates and they are treated as such. This doesn’t appear to be the case here.

GUY
We have our share commodities. But it is certainly still a prison. You will figure out who your friends are, it doesn’t take long.

PEEL
(writing) There is a different air about Johnson’s Island than Ft. McHenry. At McHenry, many of the prisoners trod through the day looking forward to only the next meal or the end of the day. Here there is a different life, there is something to be said about those who though have more now than others, had more taken away that others never had. The air is heavy with discontent, jealousy and uneasiness. My messmates have made quite an impression on me. John seems to be knowledgeable in both the art of war and tolerance. I believe he and I will get along. Jack on the other hand is always looking for what is beyond these walls. There is a strong desire to escape, as if that were the only way he could satisfy himself, the only purpose he has. At this point, I am happy to be alive, healthy. Yes, I am frustrated with my imprisonment, but I need time to sort through all that has transpired in the past few months. Now, I look forward to sleeping on something more than the floor.