This thesis explores Donald Margulies’s play, *Found a Peanut*, and takes steps to dramaturgically link it to Robert Skloot’s Theatre of the Holocaust, through both research and a staged production of the play. The paper examines Jewish Identity in modern American in theatre, specifically in the works of Donald Margulies, and unravels how Jewish playwrights insert trauma into their work. Combining together the theoretical analysis of Robert Skloot’s works, the dramaturgical research of Margulies, and the process of staging *Found a Peanut* at Miami University, this project is an example of how to both mount and direct a modern Jewish American play that lies in the Theatre of the Holocaust.
CRACKING OPEN PEANUTS:
EXPLORING JEWISH IDENTITY AND THE THEATRE OF THE HOLOCAUST IN
DONALD MARGULIES’S FOUND A PEANUT

Thesis

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by
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This Thesis titled

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To Mom and Dad:

Thanks for always making the trip to see me, whether off or on the stage.
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Encountering Identity

*Melody:* You’ll be home three o’clock.

*Mike:* No I won’t. I’ve got Hebrew, Melody, remember? I’ve got Hebrew school four days.¹

– Donald Margulies *Found a Peanut*

Why was I drawn to the Jewish theater, in general, and the theatre of the Holocaust, in particular? Why would I choose to study the Holocaust, a topic that, at its roots, was a horrific period in history when millions of Jews and non-Jews were killed for no reason? And how did this lead me to Donald Margulies? As discussed below, this was the result of my internal search for my Jewish identity, and my desire to connect with my family’s past.

Even though both my parents are Jewish and the community I grew up in, Old Bethpage, had a large Jewish population, I dreaded going to Hebrew School. The two hours spent there, twice a week after school, were unbearable. I was forced to sit in a classroom with other students, many of whom attended middle school with me but were not my friends. I listened to volunteer teachers babble on about subjects in which I had no interest. For several years I sat in classrooms counting down the minutes until my mother picked me up. Finally, in the fall of 2004, I had my Bar Mitzvah, and graduated from Hebrew School. At that time, I had no desire to continue my Jewish studies, and was sure that I would never look back. I was, however, mistaken in that belief.

I only began to really embrace my Jewish identity while attending B’nai B’rith Perlman Camp, a sleep-away camp located in Pennsylvania. The camp, which I went to every summer for eleven years, was my home away from home. Both my parents attended this camp, and they are still close friends with the people they met there. In fact, the children of my parents’ camp friends are now my close friends. B’nai B’rith Perlman Camp, while secular in many of its day-to-day operations and activities, strived to embody its campers with a Jewish identity. At B’nai B’rith, Shabbat Services were not monotonous, as they were at Hebrew School, but were filled with songs and even a puppet show to explain the weekly Torah portion. Reciting prayers before and after each

¹8.
meal was a regular part of the daily routine. This was not something I did at home, and I came to realize that this religious structure was missing from my life outside of camp. Camp was the place where I learned how important it was to be Jewish, where I realized my place in the community, and where I learned that my ethnicity shaped who I was.

In 2009, I graduated high school and attended the State University of New York at Geneseo. Even though I majored in history, I made my home in the Theatre and Musical Theatre Departments. However, unlike the world of Old Bethpage, New York, where I grew up with a large Jewish population, Geneseo was a place in which I was one of a handful of Jewish students. My Jewish identity, which had been growing due to my camp experiences, suddenly went through a moment of crisis. I no longer had a community of Jewish peers with whom I shared a special connection. That’s not to say I did not have an amazing and close group of friends at Geneseo, but to many of them my Jewish identity was a somewhat foreign concept.

Without that community I began to shape my education to fill up that hole. I made a track for myself to study the Holocaust in the history department. I found the subject to be both horrific and fascinating at the same time. I knew stories my Grandmother told me of her own family’s history in Poland, and wanted to research other stories that were lost to time. I enrolled in classes that taught about the Holocaust. I read books like Timothy D. Snyder’s *The Bloodlands*, which discussed Germany under Hitler and Russia under Stalin, and Daniel Mendelsohn’s *The Lost*, in which the author discussed his search to find six members of his family who were lost during the Holocaust, both influenced my identity.

This interest slowly trickled into my theatre classes. I began performing scenes in my acting class that focused on Jewish characters. I studied plays such as *Crossing Delancey, Cherry Docs*, and Arthur Miller’s *Broken Glass*, all of which relied heavily on Jewish values. In my senior year I began researching the Theatre of the Holocaust, and encountered Robert Skloot’s work for the first time. I was drawn to his two anthologies of the Theatre of the Holocaust, and wrote a mini-thesis for my theatre history class on some of the plays within them. I directed a scene from Neil Simon’s *Brighton Beach Memoirs* for my directing class, and found many connections between the works.
Through my studies, I was able to continue my connection with my Jewish faith, even though it was not an ongoing part of my day-to-day life at college.

When I arrived at Miami University, my intention was to fully immerse myself in the Theatre of the Holocaust. I continued to study Robert Skloot and the plays he researched. However, I became torn. While the Theatre of the Holocaust was intriguing to me, I realized that modern day audiences might not be willing to deal with such an emotionally draining topic. In addition, as I began to look for plays to direct for my thesis, I realized that plays about the Holocaust are often too large in scope or, at times, slightly dated, meaning they may be hard for modern audiences to grasp. As such, I focused my research on contemporary playwrights who embraced the Jewish culture as part of their works, and found Donald Margulies.

This purpose of this thesis is to examine Margulies’s first professionally produced play, *Found a Peanut*, as a part of the larger genre of the Theatre of the Holocaust, and how I, as a director, communicated that to an audience. Chapter One, “Examining the Peanut: Exploring Jewish Themes in Donald Margulies’s *Found a Peanut,*” is a close reading of both *Found a Peanut* and the wider breadth of Margulies’s work. In the first chapter, I unravel how Margulies uses Jewish themes in his works, in general, and in *Found a Peanut*, in particular. Finally the chapter looks at reviews of past productions of *Found a Peanut* to see how other directors have dealt with the piece, and if their productions were successful.

Chapter Two, “Theorizing the Peanut: Unpacking Darkness and Memory in *Found a Peanut;*” is a theoretical deconstruction of *Found a Peanut* meant to uncover how audiences may relate to the darker themes in the play. Using Robert Skloot’s definition of the Theatre of the Holocaust and Michael Rothberg’s theory of Traumatic Realism, I discuss how *Found a Peanut* works as a metaphor for the Holocaust. The chapter also includes another close reading of the play, utilizing a post-modern lens to search for connections to the Holocaust, and the ways in which Margulies subverts those themes in the text.

The final chapter, “Opening the Peanut: Creative Approaches to *Found a Peanut,*” tracks my own process as the director of Miami University’s production of *Found a Peanut*. The Chapter is a combination of my findings in the
previous two chapters and reviews how they affected me throughout my process. I question what the role of a director is, and the processes I went through to take the characters out of the text and place them onto the stage. I explain the various issues I encountered, and how I, along with my designer and actors, tackled those problems to create the best production possible.
Chapter One

Examining the Peanut: Exploring Jewish Themes in
Donald Margulies’s *Found a Peanut*

In the preface for his Obie Award winning play *Sight Unseen*, Donald Margulies writes, “I am a playwright who unapologetically writes about what he knows. I am a lower-middle-class, urban American Jew who grew up in the double shadow of the Depression and the Holocaust.”\(^2\) Indeed, a majority of what Margulies has written explores Jewish-American themes, values, and identity. In his play *What’s Wrong With this Picture?*, Margulies portrays how Jewish families deal with the death of a loved one. His Holocaust play, *The Model Apartment*, delves into the Jewish mind to unravel the darkness in Jewish memory, and shows how the next generation of Jews grapple with their parent’s trauma. One of the most recent plays Margulies has written, *A Coney Island Christmas*, takes audiences back to Brooklyn in the 1930s and shows how Jewish religious tradition and mainstream American holiday culture can both clash and work in tandem.

In this chapter, I will examine *Found a Peanut*, Margulies’s first play to be produced by a professional theatre company, as an exploration of Jewish identity and trauma. In order to do so, I will first survey Margulies’s breadth of work to uncover how he explores and examines similar themes. Then, using this knowledge, I will engage in a close reading of *Found a Peanut*, including reviews of its past performances, so as to uncover the Jewishness, or the Jewish heritage and identity, within it, and consider its strength as a piece of Jewish-American theatre.\(^3\)

As a Jewish-American playwright, Margulies has been highly influenced by his ethnic background and the cultural baggage that comes with it. In her work, *Awake and


\(^3\) Throughout this Chapter I use the term “Jewishness” to represent any overall Jewish identity or values a person or play has. Margulies himself uses this word in his author’s note when describing the characters writing, “… keep in mind the inherent Jewishness of the characters but don’t be intimidated by it.” I see Jewishness as an indication of a person or play’s Jewish culture.
Singing: Six Great American Jewish Plays, Ellen Schiff, a Professor of French and Comparative Literature at North Adams College, describes her notion of the Jewish-American playwright stating as follows, “Jewish dramatists … explore some aspect of the American Jewish experience ….” This typifies what Margulies has done in many of his plays. For example, in What’s Wrong With This Picture?, Margulies focuses on a how Jewish father and his son deal with the death of the father’s wife, who magically returns to them the night of her funeral. However, rather than easing their pain, her return forces the two men to face their grief head-on. As with much of Margulies’s work, the play is a dark comedy, blending together emotional and difficult themes, such as death, with humorous situations and characters. The Jewish characters embody these themes, and become the physical representation of them.

Robert Skloot, in his work The Darkness We Carry: The Drama of the Holocaust, expands on Schiff’s thoughts, explaining that Jewish characters serve as metaphors for darkness. Skloot discusses the idea that Jews carry the memory of Jewish persecution, like the Holocaust, allowing their presence in a play to invoke an inherent darkness. In his introduction to Sight Unseen and Other Plays, Michael Feingold points out this element of darkness in Margulies’s work writing, “and your history–like the Holocaust history that sneaks or strides into all of Donald Margulies’s plays–hangs over you, a permanent cloud in even the sunniest sky.”

Margulies’s 1988 play, The Model Apartment, reflects the darkness described by both Skloot and Feingold. This drama, about an elderly Brooklyn couple that moves to Florida to escape their abusive daughter, delves into other aspects of trauma in Jewish memory by exploring the aftermath of the Holocaust and those who witnessed and survived the genocide. The Model Apartment deals with one of the darkest moments of Jewish history as the main character, Max, is haunted throughout the play by the

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5 What’s Wrong with this Picture? would eventually become Margulies’s Broadway debut, opening in 1994 at the Brooks Atkinson Theatre.
7 Michael Feingold, introduction to Sight Unseen and Other Plays, (New York: Theatre Communications Group, Inc., 1995), X.
memories of living in the concentration camps and the daughter he was forced to give up. Max simply cannot escape the darkness that surrounds around him as it is ever present in his life, it “hangs over him.”

Darkness is also found in Margulies’s play *The Loman Family Picnic*, written in 1989, which was inspired by Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman*. It is centered on a family living on Coney Island in the mid-sixties dealing with financial issues as they plan their eldest son’s Bar-Mitzvah. While *Death of a Salesman* follows the struggles of Willy Loman, the family patriarch, *The Loman Family Picnic* focuses on the family matriarch, Doris, who suffers a mental breakdown. In the midst of her suffering Doris is visited by the ghost of her deceased aunt who serves as the representation of Jewish traumatic memory. The ghost’s presence is a physical manifestation of the ever-looming darkness that haunts Margulies’s characters. The play takes a dark twist at the end, as several different conclusions are played out one-by-one. However, the play lacks a succinct ending and we find the characters trapped in a never-ending cycle of unhappiness and darkness from which Doris, in particular, simply cannot escape.

While Jewish issues are a central part in most of Margulies’s early work, another common thread is the location of his plays—Brooklyn, New York, where Margulies grew up. This was an important place for Margulies as his sense of Jewishness was inspired by his childhood years, growing up in the Jewish neighborhoods of Brooklyn. He describes Brooklyn as “… [a] metaphoric home to anyone who has ever seen himself as an outside(r), who has ever been torn between the powerful, atavistic tug toward the traditional and familiar and the magnetic allure of the unknown.” While Margulies mentions that the Brooklyn he grew up in lost the mysticism for which it was known in the post-war years as baby boomers flocked to Long Island, Brooklyn remained to him a source of inspiration and was the setting for his first few major plays.

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8 In an interesting connection between *Found a Peanut* and *The Loman Family Picnic*, the soon to be Bar-Mitzvah boy, Stewie, mentions attending the Bar-Mitzvah of his good friend Jeffrey Smolowitz.

In his next play, *Sight Unseen*, Margulies continues to rely on death and Jewish characters, but takes a step away from Brooklyn. Set in rural England, the play is a commentary on the influence, success and fame can have on romantic and familial relationships. The events of the play follow Jonathan Waxman, a world-famous Jewish painter, who visits his ex-lover Patricia and her husband in rural England. As the play unfolds, we learn that Jonathan and Patricia were almost married years before, but Jonathan left Patricia because she is not Jewish. We later find out he did this due to guilt he felt from his dead mother—a stereotypical Jewish trait, if there ever was one. While the discussion of Jewish values remains prevalent in *Sight Unseen* Margulies begins a subtle shift away from the genre of dark-familial central comedies towards works that is more realistic in its style.

While *Sight Unseen* is set far from Brooklyn, Margulies’s next work, *Collected Stories*, returns to the streets of his childhood. *Collected Stories* tells the story of Ruth, an aging Jewish Professor of English and a writer, who takes Lisa, a promising and talented young student, under her wing as her assistant and protégé. Over the course of the play, which spans six years, Lisa goes from a quiet wallflower to a successful writer. Lisa surpasses the achievements of her mentor by using the information she gathers on Ruth’s affair with Delmore Schwartz as the influence for a novel. However, Lisa did not ask Ruth’s permission to use her life story, and this creates a rift between the two. *Collected Stories* ran on Broadway at the Manhattan Theatre Club, in 1997, and, as a result of its success, Margulies cemented himself as an important Jewish-American playwright, one that would continue to add to, and influence the Jewish world.

Although, through this point in his career, Judaism was an important component of Margulies’s works, Kerstin Schmidt, in her biography about Margulies, warns us that Margulies should not be defined simply as a Jewish-American playwright. In that regard Schmidt writes, “[Margulies] has repeatedly been filed under the rubric of Jewish-American theatre. While Jewish-American culture features prominently in many of his works, a too narrow focus would run the danger of skirting the whole array of other

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10 Margulies received an Obie Award for the play as well as a nomination for the Pulitzer Prize in drama.
11 *Collected Stories* was commissioned by the South Coast Repertory Theatre and premiered on the West Coast in 1996 and had a Broadway run in 2010.
topics that also inform Margulies’s work.”

It seems that Margulies also began to realize this as he sought to separate himself from this “narrow focus” and explore other themes. In 2002 Margulies confirmed his desire to avoid being labeled as a purely Jewish-American playwright, stating: “Some writers are very interested in being an outsider. I am not. I have never relished being the outsider. It has always made me uncomfortable, and sets me on forays into the larger world.”

Clearly, Margulies wants his plays to be viewed with an understanding that they deal with multiple themes and are not to be read entirely as being limited to Jewish themes.

In 1998 Margulies broke away from Brooklyn and his Jewish roots to write his Pulitzer Prize-winning play Dinner with Friends for the Actors Theatre of Louisville. Dinner with Friends, which is Margulies’s first major work that does not deal with Jewish themes or characters, follows the relationships of two couples, Karen and Gabe, and their best friends, Tom and Beth. Over the course of the play, we see Tom and Beth’s relationship fall apart and Karen and Gabe begin to question their relationship. The issues explored by Margulies—in this play—all of them of a personal and not specific to any one culture of another—separate it from earlier plays about Jewish culture and create a piece that goes beyond the exploration of Jewish themes and identity.

While Dinner with Friends lacks any Jewish themes, in 2004 Margulies again returned to his roots and wrote Brooklyn Boy. The play is the story of Eric Weiss, a middle-aged Jewish writer from Brooklyn, whose semi-autobiographical novel brings him instant fame and success, but causes him to forget about his roots in Brooklyn and the people who inspired him to become a writer. At the start of the play, Weiss returns home to visit his dying father and must not only face the people on whom the novel is based on, but also their opinions about how he portrayed them in his book. While Brooklyn Boy appears to be an autobiographical play, both Margulies, and his character Eric, warn us that their works have moments of fiction. In that regard, Margulies stated

in an article in *The Dramatist* that: “None of the conversations in *Brooklyn Boy* actually took place, but they *might have*. Those scenes may convey the verisimilitude of lived experience—of truth—but they are purely speculative. Even if it isn’t entirely my story, *Brooklyn Boy* is unquestionably a deeply personal play.” 15 If so, *Brooklyn Boy* may offer some insight into Margulies’s questioning of his own popularity, and his struggle to balance writing about what is comfortable to him with writing about new and different territories.

Following *Brooklyn Boy* Margulies wrote *Shipwrecked! An Entertainment: The Amazing Adventures of Louis De Rougemont (As Told By Himself)*, which premiered in 2007. Not only did Margulies, once again, leave his Brooklyn upbringing behind, but he also explored utilizing an expressionistic style to tell the story of Louis De Rougemont, a nineteenth century English media sensation who convinces England that he had been shipwrecked on an uncharted island in his youth and had to find his way back home. Upon the publication of his memoirs, Rougemont gains considerable fame and fortune. Later, however, he becomes caught in a web of lies and found out to be a fraud. As noted, *Shipwrecked!* lies far outside Margulies’s other work as it has no Jewish characters and strays away from any form of theatrical realism. In discussing this play Margulies states, “I wanted to write a play that would make no attempt to replicate onstage what television and movies do, but would instead celebrate the uniqueness of theatre.” 16 The play accomplishes this and more, blending together moments of extreme theatricality, and intimate personal tragedy.

In 2012, Margulies returned home, so to speak, and wrote *Coney Island Christmas* which marries elements of his Jewish and Brooklyn themes with some of *Shipwrecked!*’s more theatrical styles. *Coney Island Christmas* follows Sherley

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Abramowtiz as she tells her great-granddaughter Clara the story of a Christmas pageant she took part in as a child during the Depression. Taking a page out of *A Christmas Carol* and *The Princess Bride*, the play’s action begins with Sherley flying Clara back to her childhood in Coney Island where the two watch Sherley’s younger self convince her immigrant Jewish parents to let her play the role of Jesus in her school’s Christmas pageant. In the end, Sherley’s parents learn that the holidays are a time to be shared by all, and that the themes of joy and family ring true across many traditions and religions.

While Margulies’s later works bounce back and forth between plays with strong Jewish themes and values and plays that explore events and relationships that are not specifically Jewish human experiences, his trend towards Judaism is clearly strongest in his early works. Kerstin Schmidt states, “[Margulies’s] earlier plays are explorations of Jewish culture and, in particular, his Jewish upbringing.”

Below are five of Margulies’s full-length plays, and one shorter piece, in which he dealt with Brooklyn and Jewish values:

- *Found a Peanut* (Premiered in 1984 and set in 1962)
- *The Loman Family Picnic* (Premiered in 1989 and set in 1965)
- *What’s Wrong with this Picture?* (Premiered in 1985 and set “Some years ago”)
- *Brooklyn Boy* (Premiered in 2004 and set in “The Present, 2005”)

These plays, which I call “Margulies’s Brooklyn Plays,” follow a similar storyline focusing on various Jewish characters from Brooklyn at different points of life. Although not necessarily written in chronological order, the timeline starts with childhood in *Found a Peanut* and ends with adulthood, death and maturity in *Brooklyn Boy*. Jerry Patch sees this trend, as well, writing, “Margulies’s earlier plays deal with loss, and as he matured as a writer he began to explore “time as an agent of loss.”[^21] As the ages of his characters increase throughout his work, they start to lose their Jewish

[^17]: Schmidt, 183.
[^18]: See Appendix 1 for full list of Margulies’s work.
[^19]: "Pitching to the Star" is a shorter piece, and is set entirely in California, however the main character, Peter Rosenthal is Jewish and a Brooklyn native.
[^20]: Like "Pitching to the Star", *Sight Unseen* is not set in Brooklyn, but the play’s main character, Jonathan Waxman is Jewish and from Brooklyn.
[^21]: Patch, 291.
sense to time, and start to understand their place in the world beyond their singular Jewish identity.

The meaning and influence of the Jewish identity is questioned throughout the Margulies’s Brooklyn Plays as we see the characters struggle to maintain or understand it, depending on what stage of life they occupy. Margulies’s Brooklyn Plays also question how various relationships -- familial, romantic, or platonic -- affect the decisions of his Jewish and, to a limited extent, non-Jewish characters. As discussed below, Found a Peanut is a perfect example of the manner in which Margulies’s Brooklyn Plays focus on how Jewish cultural and beliefs impact the way Jewish children in their formative years deal with death and how they navigate their world. The Jewish characters Margulies developed in Found a Peanut struggle to balance their own desires and those that their Jewish upbringing have taught them.

*Found a Peanut*

*Found a Peanut* was presented at the New York Shakespeare Festival in June, 1984, and produced by Joseph Papp. Margulies met Papp in the early 1980s and Papp became, as Margulies describes, a “spiritual father,” and helped to launch his career.22 Margulies explained,

> At the peak of [Papp’s] affection, I’d run into him in the lobby of the Public Theatre...and I’d stand there and kibbitz with Joe Papp, as I would with any one of my relatives, and have the exciting feeling that there, in Joe’s nurturing hands ... I had somehow arrived.  

While *Found a Peanut* opened to mixed reviews, it launched Margulies’s playwriting career.

Set behind an apartment building in Brooklyn on the last day of summer vacation, in 1962, *Found a Peanut* is about a group of six Jewish children, and two non-Jewish

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22 Joseph Papp is considered today a major name in the theatre industry. The Public Theatre, which he founded, is still producing major new works today. Papp was also the founder of Shakespeare in the Park, which provides free, and often star studded, performances of Shakespeare’s work to avid theatregoers at the Delacorte Theatre in New York’s Central Park. Papp died in 1991.

neighborhood bullies, all trying to find their way in the world. At the beginning of the action we find Jeffrey Smolowitz and Mike Rosen, both age eleven, attempting to get through the day as Jay, their group “leader”, age twelve, has gone to Radio City for the afternoon. Jay’s absence causes the children’s group dynamic to radically change, and we find another child, Scott, age twelve, attempting to fill Jay’s role. On top of all of this, Mike must come to terms with the death of Mr. Schuster, a neighbor of the children, who was found the previous night in his apartment.

The children’s day is filled with dramatic moments that further strain their relationships. Melody, Mike’s eight-year-old younger sister, discovers a dead baby bird, a discovery that fascinates her playmate Joanie, aged eight. Shortly following the discovery, Mike returns to his apartment to get a box in which to bury the bird in. Soon, Ernie and Shane, the non-Jewish neighborhood bullies, age fourteen and twelve respectively, arrive in search of Jay, and torment the defenseless Jeffrey. While the bullies are unable to find Jay, they do find Little Earl, Jay’s younger brother, age five, and take a liking to him. As they leave, Mike re-enters with supplies to dig a small grave for the dead bird. While digging they find an old Carvel bag filled with sixty-eight dollars. Shortly after the money is found, a fight breaks out amongst the children over ownership of the newfound treasure.

While the Jewish children quarrel among themselves over the money, the stakes rise higher when Ernie and Shane learn of its discovery. They find Mike with the money and chase him out of the yard. Jeffrey asks Scott to protect him from the bullies and help get his share of the money. As soon as the two make a deal, Scott makes the same deal

24 While it is apparent within the play that two characters, Mike and his sister Melody are Jewish, the other children never explicitly state their Jewishness. Margulies, however, tells us in his Author’s Note that: “Except for Ernie and Shane [the bullies] all of the children are Jewish.” Found a Peanut 5.
25 In the Dramatists Play Service Inc. edition of Found a Peanut Jeffrey is called Smolowitz both by other characters and in the stage directions. For the purposes of this paper I have chosen to call him by his first name, as every other character is referred to as such.
26 In his character description, Margulies paints a colorful picture of the brother-bully duo describing them as the two, “who together for a syndicate of harassment and violence; sinewy and angular, crewcuts; their knees and elbows wear the emblems of their volatile childhood.”
with Mike, double-crossing Jeffrey. Eventually, the bullies find the Jewish children in
the yard, but Mike refuses to give up the money, prompting a schoolyard fight in which
every character, willingly or not, finds themselves participating. Jeffrey convinces the
bullies to leave the yard, and the children realize their day has completely fallen apart.
One by one, they return to the apartment building, until Mike and Jeffrey are left alone.
With the bullies gone, the yard is safe again and a new stasis is reached, one that has
topped the old leadership system.

At the core of *Peanut* lie the various relationships between its characters and the
“pecking order” and power struggles that they face. Every character has another
character whom they try to rule over, and in the end almost all of the characters’
relationships are ruined by their desire for power and control. Melody dominates her
playmate Joanie, only to be left alone without her. Ernie controls the actions of his
younger brother Shane before Shane punches him in an attempt to be his own person.
Little Earl begins at the bottom of the totem pole, but eventually finds his way to the top,
when Shane and Ernie tell him to punch Joanie. Scott attempts to lead the group in lieu
of Jay, but ends up double-crossing his playmates in his quest for money. We do
however see a relationship that can endure the struggle, that being the one between
Jeffrey and Mike.

The relationship between Mike and Jeffrey is an important part of the play. In the
opening scene, we find Mike drawing out his skelly court and Jeffrey gingerly bouncing
his spaldeen ball and asking Mike to play catch. Mike refuses and seemingly ignores
anything that comes out of Jeffrey’s mouth that is not related to the game of Skelly. As
the day progresses Mike and Jeffrey slowly become closer, beginning to care for the
dying bird together and eventually preparing its grave once it passes. We do see,

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27 Safdie, 137.
28 Skelly also spelled Skully, skilsies, and skelsies was a popular New York City street
game in which players flick bottle caps from square to square on a board drawn in chalk
on the street in an attempt to get from square number 1 to 13. Each neighborhood had its
own set of rules and regulations regarding the set up of the board and game play. See *Found a Peanut* pg. 59 or streetplay.com.
29 A spaldeen is a small, pink rubber play that was prevalent in New York City street
games, such as stickball, in the 1960s. The use of Skelly and the spaldeen evokes strong
childhood memories in those adults who grew up in the city streets in the 1960s.
however, this change when the bag of money is found and Mike claims ownership. In a typical schoolhouse manner, Jeffrey claims ownership of half the money because he helped find it saying, “Finders Keepers. We both found it, we both keep it.”30 This angers Mike and eventually he shoves Jeffrey, leading to a moment where we see Jeffrey’s feelings for Mike come out,

(\textit{Jeffrey starts up the ramp.}31 \textit{Mike follows})

Mike: \textit{(During the above)} That’s right, Baby Jeffrey, run to Scott…
Smolowitz: I though we were getting to be friends…\textit{(Pause. The boys, both hyperventilating, are looking at one another. Suddenly, Mike shoves Smolowitz.)}32

Jeffrey eventually runs off, seeking Scott’s help to get the money back. This leads to the final fight in the end of the piece, in which Jeffrey tricks the bullies to leave telling them there is more money buried in the basement of the apartment building.

Scott, Mike, and Jeffrey are left to evaluate the situation at hand,

\begin{align*}
\text{Scott:} & \quad \text{Mike?} \\
\text{Mike:} & \quad \text{What.} \\
\text{Scott:} & \quad \text{Too bad this had to happen.} \\
\text{Mike:} & \quad \text{Yeah} \textit{(Mike is amused. He laughs and so does Smolowitz.)} \\
\text{Scott:} & \quad \text{What’s so funny?} \\
\text{Mike:} & \quad \text{Nothing} \\
\text{Smolowitz:} & \quad \text{Nothing}
\end{align*}

Having witnessed the events of the day together, Mike and Jeffrey can do nothing but laugh, understanding the ridiculousness of their actions and their newfound friendship. Mike and Jeffrey bury the dead bird, which is clearly a symbol of their burying the hatchet, and starting a true friendship. This beginning of this friendship is cemented in the final moment of the play where we see Mike and Jeffrey playing catch, the game Mike refused to play with Jeffrey in the opening scene. Mike teaches Jeffrey how to play and encourages his efforts, bringing the piece full circle.

\footnotesize

30 Margulies, \textit{Found a Peanut}, 39.
31 The ramp leads to the entrance of the children’s apartment building.
32 Ibid, 40.
While a large extent of *Found a Peanut* is focused on the relationships between the Jewish children, Margulies uses the characters’ Jewish ethnicity as a major source of tension between the Jewish characters and the non-Jewish bullies. Oren Safdie, in his critical analysis of Donald Margulies in *Contemporary Jewish-American Dramatists and Poets: a Bio-Critical Source Book*, explains,

> [*Found a Peanut*’s] bantering dialogue among young children in a mixed Jewish, Irish, and Italian neighborhood in Brooklyn is filled with subtle metaphors regarding Jewish identity in the diaspora and the Holocaust.\(^{33}\)

The metaphors, which I believe are not as subtle as Safdie mentions, are found in the violence and death within the play. In this regard, exploring both the violent moments and the parts of the play that deal with death is important in developing the metaphor.

The violence in the play lies in two places. The first is the violence the bullies inflict on the Jewish children, and the second is the violence the Jewish children inflict on each other. The major acts of violence do not start occurring until about halfway through the play, after the money is found and arguments ensue among the children as to its ownership. Mike believes the late Mr. Schuster buried the money for him, but Jeffrey disagrees with such an absurd notion and demands half of the treasure. Jeffrey attempts to leave the yard, presumably to go tell an adult about the situation, but Mike tries to stop him as the stage directions read simply, “Mike shoves Smolowitz.”\(^{34}\) While this act of shoving may seem simple and juvenile, one must understand that not only is Jeffrey intimidated by Mike, but Jeffrey even has trouble telling younger children to move out of his way and could not be expected to defend himself from an attack like this. As such, Jeffrey leaves the yard in tears.

The most violent moment is found in the schoolyard brawl involving all of the children. This physical violence the children deal with, both as victims and perpetrators, seems never-ending once it begins and a path from which they cannot stray. Without the

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34 Ibid, 40.
watchful eyes of an adult, the children are left to their own devices. The violence the children endure at the hands of one another, and also at the hands of the outsiders, creates a metaphor of the Holocaust, and makes their world a dangerous place to live. 

Death is also part of this metaphor and it turns the children’s world into one that is not safe for them. This is seen throughout the play as the children must face the recent death of a neighbor in their building and the discovery of a dead baby bird. The children become enthralled with the subject of death, not fully understanding it, but attempting to formulate a meaning for it. For instance, when Scott explains to Jeffery what it took to get the old man’s body out of the building he says,

Scott: Well, first of all, you know rigor mortis?...That’s when you go stiff when your dead...When the put the old guy on the stretcher?...They had to do it sideways.. Cause he was shaped like he was sitting down.
Smolowitz: You mean like he was frozen?
Scott: Yeah, like in a cartoon. (Scott demonstrates by falling over and shrieking. He and Smolowitz laugh.)

Scott and Jeffrey’s interpretation of the situation shows their innocence regarding death and their misunderstanding of it, comparing a dead corpse to a cartoon. Mike becomes deeply saddened by this story and explains that he wanted to touch the body or even take a shoelace off of it to save, possibly as a token to remember Mr. Schuster. Mike’s desire to take a material form of Mr. Schuster shows his inability to understand death. To him there is little value in the spirit and soul; instead, it lies in the physical.

Joanie mimic’s Mike’s relationship with death in a story she tells about her grandmother’s funeral. As the children begin to dig a grave for the dead bird, Joanie recounts being at her grandmother’s funeral explaining that when her grandmother died she touched her veins, and when asked what it felt like she simply responds, “It felt like

36 What is likewise interesting here is that Jewish funerals are traditionally closed casket, and touching or handling a dead body is done by a special group of people. For Joanie to be able to achieve this feat she would have had to sneak into the sanctuary alone and physically open up the coffin by herself to touch her grandmother.
a chicken roll.” Joanie, being one of the younger characters, has even less of an understanding of death, and finds nothing truly tangible in her world to which she can compare it.

Likewise, Melody is uncertain about the subject, asking Joanie, “Ich, you touched your grandmother on her veins when she was dead and you weren’t scared?” While Joanie ignores her question, it implies that Melody is fearful of death, not necessary the act of dying, but what is left behind after. In the same conversation, Melody questions how many grandparents Joanie has. Joanie tells her she has three, while Melody comments “Wow. I have four.” Clearly, Melody doesn’t understand that when elderly die, they are gone, lessening the amount of grandparents a person can have.

The constant imagery of death and abundance of violence may seem uncalled for in a play about children, but Margulies mentions the importance of this to his play in his author’s note stating, “the play’s violence, must not be subverted in order to make it sunnier. Much of the journey of Found a Peanut–like childhood itself is dark.” In the first scene, we are introduced to a group of young and seemingly innocent children enjoying their last day of summer, but by the end we see how violent and harmful the children can truly be. Certain reviewers, and even the plays original director, Claudia Weill, compare the play to William Golding’s Lord of the Flies, as both are an examination into childhood and deal with the darkness children face and create in their young lives.

Despite being filled with heavy thematic discussions and strong story lines, productions of Found a Peanut have suffered at the hands of directors who struggle to uncover the truer meanings of its plot. Found a Peanut opened to mixed reviews for its off-Broadway premiere, where it seems reviewers were put off by the simple script and use of adult actors as children. Frank Rich in the New York Times review said that the script was, “too thin ... we learn most everything there is to know about each child in the

37 Ibid, 34.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid, 33.
40 Ibid, 5.
41 For a list of previous productions see Appendix 2.
first 15 minutes.” He likewise mentions that the script is “Peanuts’ with an advanced case of Weltschmertz,” but he mentions that he can sense Margulies’s intentions to create a world in which the audience can sense themselves in the characters. Overall, however, Rich seemed to enjoy the play and, unlike other reviewers, he didn’t mind the actors playing young characters.

A more negative review of a 1988 production at the Blueprint Theatre Company, Sid Smith attempts to point out some of the flaws within the script. Smith writes, “Margulies’ [sic] scheme is to cast eight adult actors who range from ages eight to fourteen. There’s an inherent, condescending flaw to the approach. If we gained nothing from the onslaught of child characters and teenagers in fantasy films of the ‘70s and early ‘80s, it’s that children can convincingly portray themselves. They don’t need adult artifice to tell their stories.” Smith makes an interesting point here in questioning the use of adult actors to portray young children, but I believe that he is overstepping his bounds when he says that the approach is condescending. However, it is possible that by casting older actors to portray young children the director may have been trying to underscore the fact that some of the children in *Found a Peanut* are not as sweet and innocent as they seem, nor are their relationships simple just because they are young. Ernie, Shane and even Little Earl each engage in conduct that is far from childlike.

Helen R. Baker, in her review of the same Blueprint Theatre Group’s production, paints a different picture and seems to have a deeper understanding of the show than Smith. Baker compares the children to the political world of John F. Kennedy, which, while interesting, may be overthinking it a little bit, though she seems to grasp onto the core meaning of the play. “This show,” she says, “also serves as a reminder to adults who have forgotten how complex the relationships of childhood can be.” Here she delves right into the central conflict of the play, and unfolds the deeper meanings inside.

43 Ibid.
In another negative review of the production, Alvin Klein of *The New York Times* says that a weak script plagued a production at Schoolhouse and the Infinite Space Theatre Company in 1996 writing, “While it may have been the Playwright Donald Margulies’s intention to trace the roots of double-dealing, mercenariness, violence, and other adult sports by examining the games children play, he did not quite pull off the trick of recreating and sustaining interesting pre teenage dialogue. More a playwriting exercise than a play, “Found a Peanut,” [lasts an] unnecessary hour and forty minutes with no recess.”\(^{46}\) Klein likewise does not find any light in adult actors playing children, and criticizes the actors for their failed attempts to take on the mannerisms of children.

Overall it appears that reviews either fall in love with the characters and plot line of Margulies’s play, or find it very troublesome. Throughout the history of the play’s productions, two patterns seem to evolve. In the reviews often times Joanie and Little Earl stick out as the characters whose actors tend to shine. *The New York Times* reviewer Frank Rich favorably mentioned Peter MacNichol as Little Earl in the New York City debut, and, in a review of a Los Angeles production, Sylvie Drake mentioned Winifred Freedman standing out as Joanie.

It appears, however, that either certain directors failed to fully integrate the required Jewish flavor into their plays, or certain reviewers missed the plays deeper themes and Jewish importance. As quoted earlier, Margulies, in his author’s note, tells directors and designers how to deal with his Jewish characters,

\begin{quote}
Except for Ernie and Shane, all of the children are Jewish.
Don’t lose the sense of the enclave’s invasion by the brothers. Keep in mind the inherent Jewishness of the characters but don’t be intimidated by it; certainly don’t attempt to have non-Jewish actors “act” Jewish.\(^ {47}\)
\end{quote}

Thus, it is important that the director not lose sight of the importance to bring to light the Jewish background of the young children. The Jewishness of the characters


\(^{47}\) Margulies, *Found a Peanut*, 5.
must be noticed by audiences as it points to the plays dark themes (particularly those bordering on Holocaust themes, which will be discussed in the following chapter). If these are unnoticed by theatregoers, the purpose of the play is lost and we are left to question why these adults are playing children and running around onstage. However, with a proper and in depth understanding of Margulies, his life and how his life influenced his work, as well as the knowledge of the trauma and darkness that find its way into *Found a Peanut*, a director can stage a version of the play that will show why it is an important part of the Jewish-American theatrical cannon.
Chapter Two

Theorizing the Peanut: Unpacking Darkness and Memory in *Found a Peanut*

In the introduction to his play *Sight Unseen* Donald Margulies writes,

> I don’t see myself as a Jewish playwright but rather as a playwright who is Jewish. I bristle when ethnicity is used as an adjective. It diminishes the work and seems to suggest that writing what one knows is tantamount to cheating. If one writes about his people honestly and unflinchingly, he is writing about all people.”

It is clear that Margulies writes about his own identity and experiences, growing up in post-World War II Brooklyn, where the recent memories of the Holocaust lie awake. His earliest professional play, *Found a Peanut*, is a strong example of how Margulies uses his identity in his work as it follows a group of Jewish children trying to find their place in a racist world. The trauma Margulies inserts into the play puts it into the genre of the Theatre of the Holocaust, a term used by Robert Skloot to describe theatrical works that deal with the Holocaust on some level, either directly or metaphorically, to grapple with the darker moments of the past. By exploring Skloot’s explanation of the genre of the Theatre of the Holocaust as well as Michael Rothberg’s theory of Traumatic Realism, it becomes clear how *Found a Peanut* is heavily influenced by Margulies’s cultural background.

In this chapter I will discuss the Theatre of the Holocaust, and explore how it applies to Donald Margulies’s *Found a Peanut*. In doing so I will unpack a term I label as “Trauma Acknowledgement,” which identifies moments in theatrical productions, specifically those that deal with mass or personal trauma, wherein audiences are able to acknowledge and interpret the worlds of the performances they see without actually experiencing those situations themselves. By paying close attention to moments of trauma in *Found a Peanut* I hope to better reveal how the play lies within the Theatre of

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the Holocaust, and how darkness manages to find its way into the writing of Jewish-American playwrights like Margulies.

*Found a Peanut* follows the antics of a group of Jewish children living in Brooklyn, in 1962, on the last day of their summer vacation. Mike, his schoolmate Jeffrey, and an older friend Scott attempt to figure out how to protect themselves from the two neighborhood bullies, Shane and Ernie, as their group leader, Jay, is missing for the day. The three must figure out how to protect not only themselves, but also the three younger children they are charged to watch over: Mike’s sister, Melody, her playmates Joanie and Little Earl. The characters, ages five to fourteen (all of whom are played by adults), are confronted with death, the discovery of money and relationship dynamics, while their world is torn apart by the improper decisions they make. Although *Found a Peanut* does not deal directly with the Holocaust, the play is rather a postmodern metaphor for the event, a Jewish-American play that carries heavy thematic elements pertaining to Jewish memory and culture, but does not seek to answer any universal questions.

Post-Modernism and the Theatre of the Holocaust

Theodor Adorno, a mid 20th century sociologist and philosopher, claims that “To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric.” While Adorno’s statement has been problematized by authors and scholars alike, the message of the statement remains true, as Lawrence L. Langer puts it, “Perhaps what Adorno really meant to say was that to write poems after Auschwitz the way we wrote poems before Auschwitz was barbaric, because the act would foster a lyric impulse nurtured by denial and pretense.” But then how do we write about the Holocaust seventy years after the last camps were liberated? Gerhard Bach suggests that, “Once the Holocaust is made the object of aesthetic pleasure, it is perverted, the materiality of its horrifying singularity being elevated to an aesthetic experience. Thus, the barbarity of the crimes committed against the Jews continue to be

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50 Langer, 124.
legitimized.” Based on Bach’s statement, I would suggest that the choice to utilize the Holocaust as a subject (I will discuss what prompts the Holocaust as a moral subject below), to even write about it, as Bach puts it, legitimizes the experience, and allows memory to flourish.

It is important to begin here with an exploration of modern and postmodern discourse and how they relate to the plays of the Holocaust and Jewish-American playwrights, respectively. Modernism seeks to find a singular answer or truth to modernity, or our current condition or moment of living. In a sense Modernism finds its height in the crematories of Auschwitz where the extermination of the Jews (and other groups the Nazi’s considered undesirable) became a systematic answer to what Nazi Germany perceived as the “Jewish Problem.” As opposed to modernism, postmodernism, as François Loyatard believes, is the realization of, “the failure of all master narratives, such as the myth of progress and the idea of one true religion.”

A modernist framework would prescribe that there is a single universal truth, like the Nazi belief of a single “Volk,” in contrast to a post-modernism which posits that there are many “micronarratives,” as Loyatard puts it, which shape individual understanding.

Postmodernism is a condition of thinking, a place in which we constantly question our surroundings in order to part ourselves from the mythical “truth” that modernism seeks. It is, therefore, fair to say, as Mark Fortier explains, that postmodern art includes all art and art movements that have come before it. If modernism is the strive to move forward, postmodernism looks back by borrowing techniques, themes, images, and thoughts from the past to synthesize new individual meaning. As described by Frederic

53 The definition of the German word Volk is simple the “Folk” or the cultural makeup of a larger group of people. Nazi ideology however skewed the word Volk to instead refer to the shared lost culture of the Aryan race, and its supposed rightful pace atop the imagined hierarchy of cultures, separating those who were considered righteous or a part of the Volk, from those less worthy and incapable of obtaining the idealistic culture, the Jews.
54 Ibid.
Jameson in his work, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, this “looking back” is “pastiche”, or “a borrowing from anywhere without a commitment to anything, satire without any bite.”\(^5\) The past cannot be ignored, but rather embraced and parodied, as Jameson puts it, to seek any sort of meaning.

As such, studying the plays of the Theatre of the Holocaust through a postmodern lens requires a search for meaning, rather than truth. Theatre scholar Robert Skloot took on the task of defining the Theatre of the Holocaust as a genre, in his two-volume work *The Theatre of the Holocaust*, written in 1982 (*Volume One*) and 1999 (*Volume Two*). Using his two works, along with the anthology, *Plays of the Holocaust: an International Anthology*, edited by Elinor Fuchs in 1987, and Lawrence L. Langer’s *Art from the Ashes: A Holocaust Anthology*, published in 1995, we can begin to explore the Theatre of the Holocaust in the postmodern realm and what constitutes a play about or of the Holocaust.\(^6\)

Skloot’s discussion of the Theatre of the Holocaust begins with the reaction in 1945 to the atrocities the Nazi’s committed. He writes,

> In the sunken eyes and broken bodies of the few surviving victims of such terrifying brutality, in the pictures of once living human beings bulldozed into hill-sized mounds or lime-filled pits, and in the images of the frightened, often smug murders, appeared some new human truth, which could not be ignored even if it could not be immediately understood. The implications of that evidence...are shattering: “From that moment, fundamental assumptions about our civilization have no longer stood unchallenged, for while the occurrence is past, the phenomenon remains.”\(^7\)

\(^5\) Fortier, 177.

\(^6\) Skloot begins his introduction to his anthology with a brief explanation of the events of the Holocaust in their historical contexts. While this is not necessary for our study of *Found a Peanut* I believe it is important to note that my mention of the Holocaust refers to those events between 1938 and 1945 in which the Nazi’s systematic destruction of all undesirables, including the Gypsies or Roma, ethnic Poles, political decenters, homosexuals, and people with disabilities (this is in no way a complete list), reached it penultimate moments. For purposes of this study however, I focus mainly on the Nazi attempt to exterminate the Jewish people, and pay particular attention to Jewish sources and interpretation of the Holocaust.

The intense emotions felt by those who were left to witness the destruction lead to the immense amount of literature, art, poetry, and theatre we have about the Holocaust. In response, artists sought to explore the meaning of the “new human truth” that Skloot mentioned. This truth, in the postmodern sense, is less of a modernistic search for an answer, and more of a search for the meaning of the human condition, and the extent people will go to complete their agendas. In the end, the understanding of the “new truth” is that there may not be a definite singular human truth or narrative and that dualities like good and evil have suddenly become complicated.

Artists may, then, seek to write about the Holocaust because its issues are inherently moral ones. There are clear victims and perpetrators, and a dehumanization of groups of people, and we find within these artistic works worlds in which readers and viewers are, as Langer describes, “inclined to mistake [the works] vision for an alien world of fantasy,” because of the nature of the event. Both Langer and Skloot discuss that the Theatre of the Holocaust cannot become a “structured artistic re-creation” of the experience and should maintain that alien-like world of fantasy. They propose that an artistic representation of the Holocaust is permissible so long as it, “engages us in a human and compelling way.” At the core of this engagement is the artist’s refusal to be silent, which Skloot ranks highest amongst his posits for the Theatre of the Holocaust. The artist, playwright, composer, etc. must reject the silence of forgetting the past, and remember both the survivors and the victims. He argues, along with Albert Lindemann that Holocaust theatre requires the, “disciplinary intersection of the historical and artistic imaginations.” Both Skloot and Lindermann believe that it is permissible and, perhaps, necessary that some artistic permission is given in order to explore the human “truth” that Holocaust theatre seeks to explore.

58 Skloot, 11.
60 Skloot, 12.
61 Ibid.
Skloot maintains that the artist has the right to respond as he or she feels fit, depending on his or her own background—Jewish, American, German, Christian, and so forth—so long as they pay homage to those lost and do not desecrate their memory, but rather seek to empower it. In her own studies, Elinor Fuchs underscores Skloot and writes that a Holocaust play, “enacts a rite of mourning for the lost community of Jewry and by extension for the threatened human community whose doom the Holocaust may foreshadow.”

The Darkness of Childhood

Margulies’s identity and those of his characters give them this “darkness” as Skloot calls it, that most Jews carry, a remembrance of the Holocaust, and those who were victims to it’s events. Margulies mentions in the forward to his play, Sight Unseen, that

I am a lower-middle-class, urban American Jew who grew up in the double shadow of the Depression and the Holocaust. My parents weren’t themselves survivors of Hitler and yet these two enormous events, which preceded my birth by several years, seemed to move in and take uneasy residence with us. They helped shape in me that which is known as a Jewish Sensibility.

Margulies’s “Jewish Sensibility,” is the cultural memory he carries within himself, and the darkness that creeps into Found a Peanut.

This darkness represents the doom of which Fuchs speaks, but is also a connecting tissue between Margulies and the Theatre of the Holocaust. Found a Peanut is a particularly dark piece, as the children within the play are forced to deal constantly with racial dynamics and death. From the start they are literally surrounded by death, as the young character Melody finds a dying baby bird, and it is not buried until the conclusion. The six Jewish children, who all live in the same apartment building, are also

63 Fuchs, xxii.
65 Margulies, 385.
haunted by the memory of their neighbor, Mr. Schuster, who was found dead in his
apartment the previous night. The children are encapsulated in a world filled with death,
and their age renders them helpless, at first, to comprehend the meaning of it.

Margulies skillfully packs this entire concept into the title of his play, using the
children’s song “Found a Peanut,” as a reminder of the darkness of childhood, and trauma
that ensues. The tune, sung by Jeffrey to calm himself as he guards the dead bird by his
lonesome, echoes the death that the children are surrounded by. The song itself tells the
story of finding a rotten peanut on the floor, making the decision to “eat it anyway,”66 and
subsequently dying because of it. The finding of the peanut in the song leads to death
and trauma, just as the discovery of the dead bird at the start of the play leads the children
into a metaphorical world of darkness.

As previously quoted in my dramaturgy chapter, Oren Safdie explains

[Found a Peanut’s] bantering dialogue among young
children in a mixed Jewish, Irish, and Italian neighborhood
in Brooklyn is filled with subtle metaphors regarding
Jewish identity in the diaspora and the Holocaust.67

It is apparent that there is some sort of element of the Holocaust in the list of characters
and their ethnic backgrounds. In Found a Peanut we find a group of six Jewish children
living in a neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York City (most likely Coney Island or
Sheepshead Bay, two particularly Jewish areas), and two non-Jewish bullies who harass
and torment the children.

Bodies of Darkness

Looking particularly at the Jewish children, Margulies tells us, in his author’s
note, “Except for Ernie and Shane [the bullies], all of the children are Jewish... Keep in

67 Oren Safdie,”Donald Margulies,” in Contemporary Jewish-American Dramatists and
Poets: a Bio-Critical Sourcebook ed. Joel Shatzky and Michael Taub, (Westport:
Greenwood Press, 1999), 137.
mind the inherent Jewishness of the characters." By imbuing his characters with a Jewish identity, Margulies takes a first step into creating a play with Holocaust themes.

Ellen Schiff, in her book *From Stereotype to Metaphor: The Jew in Contemporary Drama* begs the question, "What is a Jew?" She ponders the construction of Jewish identity, and its effects when attributed to a character on stage. Schiff quotes Jean Halperin, a French professor of Jewish Law and History, who commented on Jewish identity in periods Schiff refers to as halcyon, or past glory days. Halperin writes, "His Jewish existence no longer had any content, except sometimes in a thoroughly negative way, as a reminder of social or professional difficulties." Halperin here is not negating Jewish identity, but rather commenting on the larger traumatic moments of Jewish history, i.e. the Holocaust, Russian pogroms, even as far back as the Spanish Inquisition, which define the Jewish cultural memory. He continues by writing

Persecutions, then the war, finally the establishment of the state of Israel provoked a series of reactions whose effect was to recall the Jewish intellectual’s identity to him in one form or another. There was a kind of return to the Jewish condition, with all the variations that that term implies.

Schiff claims that this “return to the Jewish condition” is what modern Jewish playwrights use in their writing. She finds that the darker moments of Jewish history, of which she includes both the Holocaust and the Dryfus Affair, are maintained in what she calls the Jewish Conscience and Consciousness, or an individualistic understanding of Jewish Identity or the moment when a person can say “I am a Jew.” When a person, or character acknowledges the traumatic past as a part of his or her own identity.

Mike, in *Found a Peanut*, does just this when he explains to his sister, Melody, why he cannot let her into their apartment after school.

Mike: [Mommy’s] not gonna be home when you come home from school anymore, Melody.

Melody: I know. You’ll be home three o’clock.

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68 Margulies, *Found a Peanut*, 5.
70 Ibid, 174.
71 Ibid.
Mike: No I wont. I’ve got Hebrew, Melody, remember? I’ve got Hebrew school four days.\textsuperscript{72}

This is the first moment when a character in the play acknowledges his Jewish identity, and furthermore, embodies his Jewish consciousness. The past now becomes a part of his present.

Schiff explores conscience and consciousness in the Theatre of the Holocaust, and seeks to find where Jewish identity is shaped. She comes to the conclusion, similar to what Halperin found, that Jewish identity is shaped in moments of crisis of conscience, or when a Jewish character is defined, within the world of the play, as an entirely Jewish entity separate from the world around them, just as the Jewish children, in \textit{Found a Peanut}, are different and harassed by the non-Jewish children. In other words, as was the case in Nazi Germany, a crisis occurs when a binary is made and “the who,” or the Jew, “is at odds with the what.”\textsuperscript{73} Audiences, both Jewish and non-Jewish alike must question identity, and its ability to be shaped by those around us.

Remembering Darkness

Linked to the definition of Jewish Identity is what Michelle A. Friedman calls “The Labor of Remembrance.”\textsuperscript{74} She, like Schiff, finds that the Jewish people have a shared moment of identity in which we are

require[d]...to wrestle with what it means to remember and how it is possible to remember what has come to be considered an incomprehensible history; it involves articulating oneself in relation to this history without erasing its “messiness” and complexities.”\textsuperscript{75}

Friedman further links Jewish identity to the Holocaust specifically pointing to the event’s major complexities and “permanent mark.” However, Friedman warns us from completely identifying Jewish identity with the Holocaust.

\textsuperscript{72} \textit{Found a Peanut}, 8.
\textsuperscript{73} Schiff, 209.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid, 98.
She points to what she refers to as “American Holocaust Culture” in literature, and the tendency of writers of the Holocaust to mythologize the event. She explains that “the American Jewish community’s desire to hold tightly to a “precious” legacy that effects how it sees itself and its history,”76 which leads to a somewhat incorrect idea that the events of 1938-1945 completely define the Jewish community. She posits that even the term ‘the Holocaust’ is problematic as it becomes a symbol trying to encompass a myriad of events and as Jacob Neusner puts it, “provides non-religious American Jews...with a special thing that sets them apart from others while giving them a claim upon those others.”77 Freidman here is not denying the identifying elements of the Holocaust, but rather positing a warning of the misuse of understanding of the event.

She discusses Adi Ophir’s essay, “On Sanctifying the Holocaust: An Anti-Theological Treatise,” and brings up Ophir’s pseudo commandment to remember as the staple of Holocaust understanding. Ophir writes, “Remember in order to understand. To understand the technology of power and the modes of ‘excluding discourse which made the Holocaust possible.’”78 Writings of and about the Holocaust, and here I would posit the Theatre of the Holocaust as well, must both critically engage in a remembrance of the events along with an attempt to, as Friendman puts it, “acknowledge...and...articulate...the complicated relationship between past and present.”79 The events of the Holocaust can therefore be part of the identity of a Jewish writer or playwright, so long as they search for meaning within its context.

Skloot maintains that there are limitations on the use of the Holocaust as an artistic subject. He maintains something about which Fuchs and Langer do not seem to offer comment, which is that the Holocaust cannot be written as a metaphor for another event. Skloot uses the example of Martin Sherman’s Bent, which tells the story of a homosexual man persecuted by the Nazis. Skloot claims that Sherman, who is a Jew, uses the Holocaust as a platform to express his own views, rather than exploring the

76 Freidman, 101.
77 Ibid, 102.
78 Ibid, 103.
79 Ibid,104.
80 http://www.thejc.com/arts/arts-interviews/39346/interview-martin-sherman
Holocaust and events therein. In effect he is exploiting the memory of those lost, and trivializing the trauma for his own proposes and goals.

Rather, *Found a Peanut* is a metaphor for the Holocaust; a piece in which audiences can reflect on the events, and have an emotional reaction to them. In particular, Little Earl’s actions highlight the metaphor. One particular moment, mentioned in my chapter about the dramaturgical aspects of the production, serves as a strong example, as we see Little Earl attempt to reconcile with and eventually burn the body of the dead baby bird.

Little Earl: Where’d everybody go, bird? Hm? *(Pause)*
Where’d everybody go? *He goes to the weeded area, knees beside the bird* They left you? Did they leave you home? You have to be by yourself now. Your daddy left and everybody left. You were bad... They all went ‘cause you were bad. You did something bad.

Little Earl’s interaction with the bird can be read as a Jewish response to the Nazi aggression. If the bird serves as a metaphor for a helpless Jew, Little Earl’s unexplained reasoning of calling the bird “bad,” becomes the confusion the Jews had for the Nazi anti-Semitism, which had no foundation or cause. The Nazi’s searched for a scapegoat and found it in the Jews, ousted them out of society, (“You have to be by yourself now”), and blamed them for Germany’s loss in the first World War, and financial troubles, “They all went ‘cause you were bad. You did something bad,” both of which had no reasoning.

Little Earl still continues

You can do whatever you want now. Do you want a pillow? Hm? I’ll make you a pillow. *(He looks around him, gathers some weeds and crumples his dollar bill to use as a pillow. He props the bird upon it, then sniffs his finger to see what a dead bird smells like. Then he puts one of his toy soldiers inside the box to keep the bird company and he leaves his dinosaurs nearby)* There... This guy’s a guard. *(He discovers an old book of matches in the weeds)*
Oooo... Look what I found! Matches! Oooo... *(He tries to strike a match but it rips.)*

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81 Ibid
82 Ibid
Little Earl’s decision to burn the bird provides a parallel to the Nazi practice of cremating gassed bodies in the concentration camps. While I do not want to compare Little Earl himself to a Nazi, his actions are nowhere near as gruesome, his choice to attempt to burn the body of the bird eludes the carelessness the Nazi’s had for their victims bodies. The Nazis hoped their deaths would erase their memory from history, thereby ending an entire culture of people, just as Little Earl attempts to remove the carcass of the bird from the yard.

Beyond the discussion of death, the children are likewise surrounded by a world that does not want their Jewishness to be a part of it. Even the setting of the play, a backyard of an apartment building, is a supposed safety zone, but is quickly made dangerous by Ernie and Shane (the non-Jewish neighborhood bullies), who enter the playing space through hole in the yard’s fence. In fact, Margulies, makes it a point to be very heavy handed in describing the backyard space in the text of the play, mapping out not only the layout he desires but likewise the temperature and humidity, lending the play to be as realistic in style as possible.

The relevant nature of setting is underscored in the manner in which Skloot explores style of plays he considers to be good contenders for the Theatre of the Holocaust, and, in particular, discusses playwrights’ use of realism. As mentioned above in the context of Langer’s contribution to the topic, the strongest connection between the theatrical the representation and the audience occurs when the world onstage becomes alien and fantastical. Skloot brings up a quotation by Susan Sontag, “To simulate atrocities convincingly is to risk making the audience passive, reinforcing witless stereotypes, confirming distance, and creating meretricious fascination.”83 In one sense, to realistically portray these events onstage may cause spectators to become passive and, in a sense, guilty as the bystanders or even perpetrators of the actual events. Skloot problematizes this and maintains that even having a live actor onstage brings with it some elements of realism, and therefore there is inherently some sort of reality in any play written about the Holocaust.

83 Skloot ,17.
There exists a sort of contradiction in the Theatre of the Holocaust, “a realistic approach is a falsification of the subject and...an abstract approach is a betrayal of it.” The art is constantly fighting with itself because of it’s traumatic content. This is what Michael Rothberg calls “Traumatic Realism,” or an attempt to “produce the traumatic event as an object of knowledge and to program and transform its readers so that they are forced to acknowledge their relationship to posttraumatic culture.” Rothberg believes that by using events of mass trauma, specifically the Holocaust, readers (and I would extend this to spectators of theatre) are unable to comprehend the realistic scale of the actual atrocities.

Therefore, the nature of the entire genre of art of the Holocaust is constantly in flux. Its meaning becomes lost between the artist’s or survivor’s ability to fully describe the event, and the possibility of an audience to completely comprehend the event. There is, however, a moment when the audience is able to distance themselves from the material present and apply it to their own world. I will label this moment the “Trauma Acknowledgement,” when meaning appears to the audience in context of their own mind frame. This acknowledgement recognizes our distance from the event and applies any understanding we gain to our “posttraumatic culture” or our current worldview.

I would suggest that the moment of “Trauma Acknowledgment,” could be found in any piece of theatre pertaining to mass or individual trauma wherein an audience did not actively participate, either as persecutor or persecuted, but are able to apply understanding or imbue meaning in their own context. (Perhaps we find this most clearly in the idea that we learn history to prevent it from repeating itself.) Therefore Theatre of the Holocaust relies on the “Trauma Acknowledgment,” the moment when the audience can accept the information they are given and make some sense of it.

Re-remembering Darkness

When looking at *Found a Peanut* through a postmodern lens, Margulies’s rejection of nostalgia can point to how he places his “Trauma Acknowledgment” and

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84 Ibid.
85 Langer, 129.
location of understanding for his audience. Margulies writes in his author’s note, “but neither is the play a “memory play” or a period piece; I advise directors and designers to avoid nostalgia in every aspect of the play’s production.”

The play itself, taking place in 1962, itself lacks any formation of a nostalgic yearning for the past. Only briefly are toys, or actual named objects mentioned (Jeffrey’s Pensy Pinky and Spaldeen, or Joanie’s desire for a Chatty Cathy doll), thereby disengaging the audience from a moment of nostalgia. Ben Furnish, in his work *Nostalgia in Jewish-American Theatre & Film, 1979-2004*, defines nostalgia as a “means to view the past through a certain forgiving haze that ameliorates pain or problems.” In other words, nostalgia is a comforting blanket that rids the past of anguish and permits it to become a safe zone for discussion of problems of the present.

Jameson explains the issues of nostalgia, stating:

nostalgia... restructure[s] the whole issue of pastiche and project[s] it onto a collective and social level, where the desperate attempt to appropriate a missing past is now refracted through the iron law of fashion change and the emergent ideology of the generation.

If pastiche is a proper parody of the past, as Margulies uses, within a postmodern framework, then nostalgia, as Jameson puts is, is a misappropriation of the past because it becomes defined by our modern sensibilities before we can explore the past itself. When nostalgia is present, the “Trauma Acknowledgement” cannot occur because we are already pre-defining the events by our own mindset as opposed to acknowledging that they cannot be defined. Margulies’s decision to set *Found a Peanut* in the past, devoid of nostalgia, takes away the pre-definition and makes it more difficult to enter, or attempt to enter, the world in which the children play in.

Rather, we find the “Trauma Acknowledgement” in *Found a Peanut* in the moments when we see the children making improper decisions, and perhaps this is most evident in the penultimate moments of the play when Little Earl attacks his playmates at

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the request of Shane and Ernie. Prior to this moment Mike, Jeffrey, Melody and Joanie unearthed a bag of money while digging a grave for the dead bird, and could not figure out how to split their findings. Hearing of the discovered money, Scott tells Shane and Ernie about it, and the three team up to steal the money away from the younger children.

However the boys’ covert plan results in a large schoolyard type fight and Mike decides to throw the money up in the air and the following ensues,

Mike. HERE! TAKE IT!! (As all the kids except Mike and Smolowitz scramble for the money, Joanie enters the yard thinking some kind of celebration is going on. Shane, exhilarated by the violence, sees her and wantonly turns on her.)
Shane. Hit her, Little Earl! Hit her! (He’s restraining Joanie who’s screaming.)
Joanie. No! Stop!
Smolowitz. What are you doing?!
Shane. (During the above) Hit her in her tits, Little Earl! (Little Earl punches Joanie several times in her stomach as she screams.) Look at this, big brother!
Little Earl. Ernie... Look... (He continues to pummeJoanie.)

Little Earl’s decision to turn on his friends because of the goading of the bullies is an allusion to how neighbors and friends turned on one another during the Holocaust due to the pressure by the Nazis. In this moment, we are forced as an audience to watch Little Earl attack Joanie. Unable to help Joanie, and stunned by the action that Little Earl takes, betraying his group of friends, we are put in a moment where we become separated from the action, and have the ability to comment on what’s going on through an understanding of our own worldview.

In a sense a physical “peanut” of Found a Peanut represents the separation between audience and action in the play. A peanut’s shell is the barrier providing the boundary between what lies inside (the narrative) and what lies outside (the audience) cannot be crossed. However, we can crush the shell, using our own tools to break open the barrier and discover what lies on the inside. The separation between us, and the world inside of the peanut, can be broken, but only if we use the knowledge we have

89 Donald Margulies, Found a Peanut, 53.
gained from our world around us, can we open it up and utilize the materials found inside.

The Jewish identity of the characters and playwright, along with their clash with the outside forces, and the traumatic moments, in my opinion are two major factors that give *Found a Peanut* heavy thematic Holocaust elements. The “Traumatic Acknowledgment” that I have posited can relate *Found a Peanut* to larger mass trauma events, such as the Holocaust, and open up the path to understand how Jewish identity and darkness can lead playwrights, such as Donald Margulies, to write about what they know: their past and their culture.
Chapter Three

Opening the Peanut: Creative Approaches to

*Found a Peanut*

What is the director’s job? How does good direction cause specific emotions in audiences? How does one direct well? How will I know whether I’m directing well? These were questions I began asking myself before my first rehearsals for *Found a Peanut* a play, by Donald Margulies, a production of which I was scheduled to direct toward partial completion of my creative thesis in the Master of Arts program at the Department of Theatre at Miami University. I knew I wanted to direct a successful show, but was uncertain how, or even whether, I was prepared to do so. Although I had the support of Miami University’s Department of Theatre, including my advisor, Lewis Magruder, professors, and fellow students, I was worried that I would have no idea of what I was doing.

This chapter has several purposes: First, I want to track my progress in the creation and performance of *Found a Peanut*, highlighting moments along my journey that helped to shape my final product. Second, I will explore my methodology as a director and uncover the challenges I met along the way. Third, I will unfold the path I took to finding my thesis question, and how I worked with my designers to help answer that question. In this way, this paper will serve as a self-reflective journal in which I pull together my findings about Margulies and my production process to articulate my directing philosophy.

Before entering my graduate program at Miami University, even before I found out I was granted a creative thesis in directing, I had no knowledge of *Found a Peanut* or any of Margulies’s work. After finding out I would direct a production as part of my creative thesis, I began searching for plays by Jewish-American authors that focused on Jewish identity. While searching for titles, I came across an anthology of Margulies’s work titled *Sight Unseen and Other Plays*. The collection contained *Found a Peanut* and,
upon reading it, I felt moved not by the play itself, but rather by the character Joanie. Her comments about her dead grandmother struck me as both amusing and horrifying. She says, about halfway through the action of the play:

Joanie: When my grandmother died?
Mike: What?
Joanie: When my grandmother died?
Mike: Yeah...?
Joanie: I touched her hand.
Melody: You have a grandmother who died?
Joanie: Uh huh.
Melody: How many grandparents do you have?
Joanie: Three.
Melody: Wow. I have four.
Mike: So...?
Joanie: When nobody was looking I touched her hand.
Melody: You touched her?
Joanie: Uh huh.
Melody: Where?
Joanie: In her coffin. On her veins.
Melody: Ich, you touched your grandmother on her veins when she was dead and you weren’t scared? (Joanie shakes her head.)
Mike: So...?
Melody: What did it feel like?
Joanie: Like... (She thinks a moment.) It felt like chicken roll.90

This moment is the reason I put the play on my list. Joanie’s inability to compare her grandmother’s dead skin to anything in her world besides a chicken roll shows an unintended perversion of Jewish tradition and funerary customs. In a traditional Jewish funeral, the body is not on display, but rather kept in a simple coffin at the front of the synagogue during the funeral service. In order for Joanie to have touched her grandmother, “in her coffin,”91 she must have snuck into the sanctuary by herself, opened the coffin, touched her grandmother, and slipped out unseen.

Joanie’s story struck me as an important moment in Found a Peanut, as she had not yet learned of her Jewish identity. This intrigued me because I was searching for plays that explored identity, and Joanie’s story was a moment in life during which she was beginning to explore her own identity. I became more interested in Margulies, and

90 Found a Peanut, 33-34.
91 Ibid
began to read more of his work, adding another one of his plays, *What's Wrong with this Picture?*, to the list of possible titles to direct. In the end, I chose to include *Found a Peanut* on my short list of plays I hoped to direct. I submitted the list to the Season Selection Committee of the Department of Theatre. In February of 2014, I learned that the faculty of the department had approved the play for production. My journey had begun.

I began reading the play, thinking about the questions I wanted to answer through my production. I knew I wanted to focus on Jewish identity, and pondered where, in *Found a Peanut*, Margulies explores it. Apparent to me at this point was that there was something to be said about the relationship between the Jewish and non-Jewish characters in the play, but it was a little unclear to me. I also understood that the darkness and violence in *Found a Peanut* would have much potential for exploration, possibly providing insight for directorial choices in my production.

In order to begin exploring these questions, I began the textual analysis of *Found a Peanut*. I used a format given to me by my advisor, Lewis Magruder, which split the analysis into two pieces, a character analysis and an action analysis. I decided to tackle the character analysis first, in order to see the world from the point of view of the characters. The major focus of this analysis is to determine the characters specific place within the “world of the play.” I focused largely on each character’s social and psychological state to better understand how they see the world around them, and how they interact with each other. This led me to discover the deeper feelings of each character, specifically things like Jeffrey’s social awkwardness, Mike’s inability to accept and understand Mr. Schuster’s death, and Melody’s mirroring of Scott as a leader for the younger children. These discoveries became important in the action analysis, where I would begin to uncover the structure of the piece.

I explored the relationships the characters have with one another. As I started uncovering these relationships, I realized that the play is built around the different relationship dynamics of the characters. I found that each child is in a struggle with another child for power or attention. I noticed that the relationship between Mike and Jeffery is the strongest example of this. Jeffrey, at the start of the play, believes that

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92 See for example Character Analysis page two.
Mike and he are good friends, but soon realizes Mike cannot be relied on as he thought previously. Their friendship, which at times deteriorates and at other times grows, serves as a major source of the plays dramatic tensions. These discoveries helped me make the connection between character and action.

It is impossible to say that the action analysis was a simple task. I began work on it in early April 2014, and continued working throughout the ensuing summer months. A major goal of this analysis was to help me, as the director, discover for myself the message or meaning the play holds for me and that I would then convey to the audience. The analysis likewise served as a guide to explore the world of the play to aid in my conversations with designers, actors, and any other collaborators I might work with.

I looked closely at the given circumstances of the setting, to better understand the world in which the characters live, and how that might affect their actions. I started with a focus on the economic world, as a turning point of the play concerns the discovery of sixty-eight dollars buried in a Carvel bag. I did a little research and found out that sixty-eight dollars, in 1963, is the equivalent of about five hundred dollars today. This amount was much more than I expected. Considering the different items that the children want to buy with this money–Chatty Cathy, a Humorette, all the comic books in a store, and a teacher to teach them at home–it became apparent that the children didn’t understand the buying power of that much money. Therefore, I knew that the children’s obsession with the money, specifically Mike’s, was rooted deeper than it’s economic face value, and those reasons caused his abusive treatment of Jeffrey following the bag’s discovery.

Following this analysis I explored the social world of the play. The social world is important to the given circumstances because *Found a Peanut* is built around the character’s relationships and their inability to function as a unit. I noticed that the play’s action revolves around two groups of characters, each with a leader: the six Jewish children–Mike, Jeffrey, Scott, Melody, Joanie, and Little Earl–led by the absent Jay and the two bullies–Shane and Ernie–led by elder brother Ernie. Likewise, I noticed that within the Jewish children’s group lies a smaller faction made up of the three younger characters: Joanie, and Little Earl, and their leader, Melody. Over the course of the play, the power structure in each group encounters challenges and, by the end, falls apart.

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93 [http://www.usinflationcalculator.com](http://www.usinflationcalculator.com)
The separation of the Jewish and non-Jewish characters raised the question for me as to whether the play functions as a metaphor for the Holocaust. Certainly, Margulies creates a “ghettoization” of the Jewish characters by separating them from the non-Jewish characters. The two groups cannot live together. The Jewish children are physically separated from the bullies by a fence, and this creates tension in their relationship. I realized the fence is there to keep the bullies out, but also may be Margulies’s attempt to demonstrate a way in which the Jewish children are kept in, and locked away from the outside world.

The next step in the analysis is the breakdown of action, which involves separating the text into specific units of action, or beats, labeling each unit with a title, and discovering each character’s motivation. The purpose of this action analysis is to deconstruct the events of the play into specific units of action, which can be a useful guide when rehearsing the play. Beats help pull audiences into the story, and serve as the building blocks for playwrights, leading characters from moment to moment, unfolding the plot of a play.

Now that the story was becoming clearer to me, I began the next, and probably most difficult, part of my analysis, the action summary. The action summary is a short and concise description of the plot, which makes clear the specific moments that relate to the inciting incident, the rising action, the catastrophe, and eventual climax and falling action of the story. My original action summary turned out to be almost two pages long, and was an overly detailed analysis of the plot. For this initial summary (Appendix 6) I pinpointed the discovery of the bird as an inciting incident, and the discovery of the money as a second inciting incident. These two major plot points, while important, did not seem to highlight the themes of power and group dynamics that I previously uncovered. I returned to the text and edited my action analysis. I soon discovered that the inciting incident was not the discovery of an item, but rather a discovery of information. Guided during a conversation with my advisor, we discovered it to be the moment when Little Earl reveals to Mike that Jay is not going to be around that day, and the group will be without its usual leader. This was the clear inciting incident because the discovery of this information starts the chain of events that eventually leads to the catastrophe, Mike finally giving up the money, and climax, Jeffrey lying to the bullies, of
the play. It gets the ball rolling, and makes the day in the lives of the characters different from any other thus far.

I then decided to travel to Coney Island, and explore the actual setting of the play. While Coney Island in 2014 is different from the world of 1962, the prewar apartment buildings that remain were similar to what I envisioned the apartment the children play outside of. “Appendix 8” contains a few of the pictures I took during my visit. The pictures also served as part of the inspiration I shared with my scenic designer Todd Stuart.

I continued to think about what my thesis question would be. I now had a deeper understanding of the structure of Found a Peanut, and how Margulies shaped the play, but was still unsure of the play’s meaning, so I began to do research. It became important to me to start researching Margulies’s other works, as well as the Jewish aspect of Found a Peanut. Following my analyses I focused on writing a chapter about the dramaturgical aspects of the play, exploring the major Jewish themes in the play and unraveling Margulies’s larger metaphors concerning identity and the Holocaust. I wondered whether Found a Peanut can be read as a part of the Theatre of the Holocaust, and how can I uncover this for an audience? This led me to the important question: is Found a Peanut a Holocaust play?

My question and research formed the basis for the chapter about dramaturgical aspects for the production and thesis, and would later inform my theory chapter. Much of these chapters were devoted to research around trauma, and how the characters and audiences experience it. I specifically researched trauma in the Theatre of the Holocaust, and how highly violent situations portrayed onstage can be relatable for audiences who have not experienced distress to that degree. With the first draft of the chapter completed, I was prepared to begin the creative process of the production, starting with design meetings and my preparation for auditions, both of which began in the fall semester of 2014.

The first of the design meetings took place in early October of 2014, and re-occurred on a bi-weekly basis through mid-November. During these meetings I had a chance to share my thoughts about Found a Peanut with my designers and collaborate with them as they created their elements of the production. These meetings also gave me
the chance to continue thinking about my question as to whether or not Found a Peanut is a Holocaust play, and figure out how my production would answer it. The following section will describe major obstacles and challenges my designers and I faced during this process, and how they influenced various choices leading up to the final product.

The biggest creative challenge that was discussed during the early design meetings was how we were going to utilize the performance space. We were fortunate to have the opportunity to work in Studio 88, which allows some flexibility in seating arrangements and a degree of intimacy between playing space and audience. Spaces such like these are classified as black-box theatres. While Studio 88 is often configured as a thrust theatre, I felt that the play asked for a something different. I played around with several ground plans on my own, and discovered that the most intriguing audience arrangement would be in the round, or placing audiences on all four sides of the stage. I believed this would help enclose the characters within their back lot, creating a sense of containment; something I felt was crucial to the world of the play. While such a configuration in the round would create other obstacles in the future, particularly in scenic design, my designers and I decided to go in this direction. The major reason for choosing this was creating the confinement of a ghetto that I thought Margulies wrote into the play. By placing audiences on all four sides of the stage, they are, in essence, trapped in the space, and unable to escape.

Scenic designer Todd Stuart and I met almost weekly throughout this process to determine what this space would feel like. Margulies, in his author’s notes, writes, “The place of the play’s action is Brooklyn, but “Brooklyn” is just a specific corner in the state of mind called Childhood.”94 Todd and I thought about this and looked back on places from our past were specific areas were incredibly detailed and clear while others had been lost to time. Specifically I thought of my grandmother’s old house from she moved several years ago, I can remember every detail of the basement where my siblings and I would play, but cannot remember what the inside of my father’s bedroom looked like. My memories of it and other aspects of the house were fragmented. With that, we came up with the idea of fragmentation as a way of lending to the production a feeling of childhood loss and memory. The notion of lost memories as fragments in space

94 Found a Peanut, 5.
resonated with both of us. I likewise felt that the fragmentation would aid me in my thesis question. By creating a space filled with lost memory, I hoped to give the space a feeling of loss and emptiness, set just aside comfort and memory. As such, we felt we had landed on an idea for our design.

Once we decided what the theatre space would feel like, we began to discuss what elements would best create that feeling. It was important to me that the space should have as many realistic elements as possible in order to help the audience leave the world of Oxford, Ohio. Specifically, I wanted to see as much of the apartment building behind which the children played as I could because I thought the façade of the building helped place the audience in Brooklyn and gave the space a particularly urban feel. Todd came to me with a series of designs that utilized fragments of apartment buildings to give a realistic urban feel to the audience, but also allowed for the moments of lost memory we had discussed. He decided to build a small portion of the façade of the building and two windows that hung over one bank of the audience. Also, he added fencing around the rear of one-half of the audience to create the feeling of containment for which I was striving. These two major elements together created a space that was able to function as both the site of memory, and a place of enclosure.

Once the scenic elements surrounding the audience were decided, we were faced with the challenge of where and how the bird and bag of money would be discovered. Todd came up with the idea of building a square planter, like a small sand box, that could be filled with dirt and that would allow the actors to uncover the bag of money they find, and eventually bury the bird. The planter became an integral part of my blocking, or staging, and in the end, a major element within the entire design of the piece.

Taking a moment to look back at these decisions I made with Todd, I realized that I may have been ignoring my question a little. I purposefully refrained from having any Holocaust elements in the set, worrying that I would be “hitting the audience over the head” too much with the choices. I decided that my textual analysis was strong enough to make up for that, and that, with proper direction, of my actors that metaphor would come through.

What became important for me was that all the elements of the design lived in the same world, one that I felt needed to have a solid grounding in realism, and have a highly
urban sixties aesthetic. At first, I was not interested in setting the play in the historic 1962, but rather just the past, around the year 1962. However after further research on the period, along with the guidance of my advisor, I realized that Margulies chose that particular year for specific reasons. 1962 was a time of growing up and loss of innocence for America—the death of Marilyn Monroe, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the ongoing Cold War—which led me to set it specifically then. This greatly influenced the costume designer, Cara Hihn, as it became necessary to not only create silhouettes that made the actors appear, on the outside, like children, but also put them in clothing that would remain truthful to the time period and place.

The majority of Cara’s visual research came from her inspiration board on Pinterest, where she discovered silhouettes that she felt best suited the characters. An interesting discovery she made was that children in the sixties were often dressed up to look like small adults and wore outfits that mirrored their parents clothing. This discovery was important to Cara and me. I realized the “Traumatic Acknowledgment,” that I explored in my second chapter, required the audience to both identify with, and be removed from, the action, and Cara’s choice of costumes aided with that. The characters took on a duel nature and became both children and adults at the same time. They looked like the historic children, but at the same time, were dressed like the adults they really are.

I continued to feel that realism should inform the choices I made with the lighting designer, Emma Crowe. I wanted the lights to shift throughout the play to indicate the passage of time. We discussed the possibility of creating elongating shadows on the ground to indicate the setting of the summer sun. This idea came from my own childhood memories of summers on Long Island. This became a challenge for Emma because Studio 88 is a difficult space to light, due to its low ceiling. She came up with the idea to use lights at varying angles with gobos, or patterns, that would cast images of chain-link fences, which would fade in and out, creating the suggestion of time passing. During our technical rehearsals later in the process, when we added lights to the theatre, Emma and I ran into some issues. Her design did not have the focus I was looking for, but we were able to fix that by creating a more drastic shift in the lights throughout the play, starting brighter, and ending in a more intimate and darker space. The lighting that
Emma designed served to aid the audience in understanding the passage of time, and maintain the essence of realism we were living in. It likewise aided in the sense of confinement, by keeping entrances and exits partially lit. Most importantly it created the fragmented mood and feeling that Todd and I had hoped for. The darker areas contrasted with the lighter areas of the stage helped to show how memories and moments could be highlighted while others were lost, and unseen.

Finally my sound designer, Russell Blain, and I began to research songs and sounds we felt best represented the world we were creating. We first decided that some of the sounds, such as the trash cans, should be made live, while a majority of the others, like the thunder, mother’s voice, and pre- and post-show music, would be pre-recorded. While discussing the soundtrack, Russ introduced to me to the song “Declaration of Independence,” by Pete Seeger. While the song was written in 1975, the lyrics and story behind it matched our reading of the play. Seeger took the lyrics from a recording a friend made of his son while taking a bath. We felt the lyrics, shown below, summed up the essence of childhood present in the play:

He will just do nothing at all
He will just sit there in the noonday sun
And when they speak to him he will not answer them
Because he does not wish to
And when they tell him to eat his dinner
He will just laugh at them
And he will not take his nap
Because he does not care to
He will just sit there in the noonday sun
He will go away and play with a panda
And when they come to look for him
He will stick them with spears
And throw them in the garbage
And put the cover on
And he will not go out in the fresh air
Nor eat his vegetables
And he will grow thin as a marble
He will just do nothing at all
He will just sit there in the noonday sun
The broken up storyline of this song fit into the idea of childhood Margulies was writing about; it is both innocent and harmful, and it became the inspiration for our soundscape.

The majority of our choices for came from “easy listening” music of the early sixties. We used songs like Joanie Sommers’s “Johnny Get Angry” and Sue Thompson’s “Norman,” as both have youthful feelings and themes to do with childhood. Once we had a playlist, I needed to decide how the audience would hear the music when they entered the theatre. I wanted the pre-show music to sound as if it were coming from a radio placed in a window of the apartment building. Russ not only did this but also colored the songs with various “radio” noises such as jingles from the sixties general radio static, to give it an extra realistic flare.

With the design process in full swing by mid-November, I began to focus on auditions. While scheduling the auditions was a challenging process—finding a date, and times—my advisor and I, along with other members of the theatre department, agreed on the last week of the fall semester to hold them. With rehearsals starting the first day of classes in the spring semester, it was important to me to have auditions before winter break, and allow actors maximum time with their scripts.

In preparation for auditions, I decided to provide actors with sides, or text from the play, rather than have them prepare monologues. This was to keep the auditions as free of stress as possible, and help encourage non-theatre majors, and freshmen, to audition for the show, as well. Male actors were given the option of reading one of four male monologues excerpted from the script. The four monologues were speeches written for the characters of Mike, Scott, Ernie, or Jeffrey. Female actors were allowed to choose between two monologues, one written for Joanie and the other written for Melody. Additionally I asked all those who participated in the auditions to read a monologue I put together from Little Earl’s lines. I had two reasons in deciding to do this: one was to give the actors the same challenge so that I could asses the different ways in which they responded to the text. The second was to give myself to the option of casting a female

[Seeger Speaks] It was actually written by a four-year-old boy.95

95 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QwTp3BctVL8
actor for the role of Little Earl, in case I could not find a male actor who could play the age.

After an exciting first round of auditions, I decided to call back eighteen actors. Not only did I want to hear these actors again, but also I wanted to see how skilled they were in building characters. To test this, I asked them to bring some sort of toy with which to play an improvisational game. The game required the actors to pick a toy and create a character that was inspired by that toy. I took note of each actor’s creative capacity in coming up with a character and of the sense of play with which he or she engaged with the game.

Following this game, I split the actors up into groups to read scenes I selected from the play. I took time to see various actors in as many roles as possible. This was not because I didn’t know how I imagined casting them, but rather I wanted to challenge certain actors to play a character whose qualities as a person were so different from their own to see how they deal with challenges and obstacles. After a long night, and much discussion with my stage manager and assistant director, I like to talk my decisions out, I had my finalized cast list. On the last day of fall classes my stage manager posted the following cast list:

Jeffrey Smolowitz – Caleb Schirmer
Mike Rosen – Richard Dent
Melody Rosen – Jordan Gravely
Joanie Bernstein – Kaela Smith
Little Earl – Aidan McBreen
Scott – Jeremiah Plessinger
Ernie – JP Horton
Shane – Jacob Groth

I was lucky enough not only to have a strong and excited cast of actors, but also to have students of different ages and majors. While this was not a major reason behind choosing anyone, I felt that the wide range of experience would allow different actors to grow in
various ways, and give me the opportunity to set specific goals for each actor, depending on their abilities.

I did not have the chance to do a read-through with my actors before break, so I gave them a character worksheet to work on during the vacation. They were also told to be comfortably off-book by time rehearsals started in January. I continued to move forward with my own process over the winter, focusing my time on the chapter of about the theoretical aspects of my thesis. The theory chapter took elements from the dramaturgy chapter, and the script analysis I did to unpack Margulies’s use of trauma in the piece. While working on the chapter I found specific moments of the play that highlighted a metaphor about the Holocaust, Margulies included in the play. From these discoveries I realized how important the violence in the play was, and how I would need to focus time during my rehearsal period on shaping it.

I also took time over break to create a rehearsal schedule. I felt it important to be as specific with my time as possible. I set aside a certain amount of pages to block each night, and left time at the end of each rehearsal to run-through what we worked on. I also included four days of character-work at the start of the rehearsal process to give my actors time and me together to work through the text.

After much waiting, the first day of rehearsals began and everything started falling into place. Following a successful company meeting, my actors and I had our first read-through. As they read their lines, I listened carefully for any fresh discoveries. I heard things that had not occurred to me before and began to notice lines that were funnier when spoken. I made marks in my script at those moments to help shape them physically.

Following our day of reading the script we began character work rehearsals, which focused on building the world of the various characters. During the first character-work day, we created the world of the children outside of the text of the script. We began by discussing Jay, the regular leader of the group, and how each child feels about him and their relationship. Instead of each of my actors coming up with their own image of Jay,

96 A company meeting is a rehearsal where the entire company of the production, meet. At Miami University the company meeting is held the first night of rehearsals and is a chance for designers to share their work with the actors and show what the final product might look like.
we built him together. We flushed out all of his details, including his appearance, temperament, and history. From here, we explored their relationships with each other, and other aspects of their lives. I pushed them to make their worlds as detailed as possible, and challenged the actors to build in their imaginations what the inside of the apartment building looked like. We went so far as to decide which floors they occupied in the building, and even what their bedrooms look like. My goal in doing this was to create an intimate bond between actor and character so that choices they made had specific reasons behind them.

My actors also took time to explore their movement and speaking qualities. I led them through a workshop I built for my introduction to acting class, which gave actors the tools to build a character. The workshop has students create original characters from a list of physical and vocal qualities. The purpose of this is to give actors a toolbox to explore how their characters move and speak differently from themselves. In particular this helped the younger actors of the group and helped them become comfortable experimenting with their bodies and voices.

I decided to end character work rehearsals a day early, as I was anxious to start blocking. I tried to prepare myself for the first blocking rehearsal but was unsure of exactly how my process would go. I knew, going in, that I did not want to pre-block movement, as it would stifle my actors’ creativity. At the same time I knew I wanted certain moments to have a specific look or picture to them, and would need to lead my actors into those moments. For each blocking rehearsals I had my actors read through the pages of script we would be working on, then allowed gave them a short amount of time to walk around the performance space. From there, I would give them their entrance and allow them to create the movement themselves. I found that I would start and stop frequently, highlighting important discoveries and moments that worked, while at the same time working through trouble spots.

I soon realized that it became important for me to constantly move around the space during rehearsals. The actors were performing in the round, and I needed to move myself around the space, to see the blocking from all angles. My actors began to become used to the notion of keeping themselves in triangles, to allow audiences on all sides to see them, and as the process continued they became aware of this themselves and would
move accordingly. After the first few rehearsals my cast began to become comfortable with my direction and more and more they found where the text naturally moved them.

While my time management in rehearsals was going well, I found myself not working as much on characterization with my actors, but rather their physical movement qualities and the overall picturization. I was also facing major issues blocking the final scene where the children have their schoolyard fight. While my initial fears about this scene was with the fight itself, the actual problem lay with positioning eight bodies in the playing space. Because Studio 88 is a narrow space it was difficult to place eight actors onstage while maintaining a realistic blocking style, and allow as many audience members to see as much as possible. My actors and I initially had several characters standing in a circle right before the fight, but my advisor pointed out that this choice excluded the audience too much. My actors and I did our best to create triangles as much as possible, and to utilize as much space to create tension. Instead of having several actors on one side of the stage in a circle, we spread people out, and played with levels to fix this issue.

Issues like this continued, but we eventually had the show blocked on schedule. We even had time to do a stumble-through before my fight choreographer, Jonn Baca, came to rehearsals. I had previously given Jonn a list of fights and the emotion I wanted them to display before his arrival (Appendix 7) to help communicate to him what I wanted. This, combined with my actors’ willingness to participate and learn, made the fight rehearsal very successful. I was able to take a step back while Jonn worked with my actors and choreographed the movements for the various physical actions.

With the fights choreographed, we were ready for the designer run, or the run-through for the designers, and our first chance to share our work with others. The run was overall successful and I had a long list of notes to work on during the next two weeks of my process. My advisor also gave me notes to think about, and I synthesized his along with my own to come up with specific things to work on in the following weeks. My list included, vocal life and quality, energy, launching of beats, pacing, physicalization of character and, specificity of choices and intention. It also became apparent at this point that I had to start pushing my actors more on learning their lines, as they were not meeting my expectations.
Following the designer run, I began working larger portions of text each night, focusing specifically on the list I created. I found myself asking my actors what motivated their words and actions. I wanted them to explore the emotions of their characters, and trace where certain motivations came from. Again, I was starting and stopping my actors frequently making sure that almost every discovery their characters were making had meaning.

My actors and I also took the time to do more work on developing character. I created an activity for them to do one rehearsal with the goal of solidifying the physical life of their characters. Like the movement workshop I did the first week of rehearsals, I slowly had my actors build their character through their voice and body. Soon after I had them interact more with space by asking them to walk around the Theatre Building in character. They were given the task to find an object their character thought was interesting and bring it back to the room. They then had to describe, in character, what they found and why they chose that object. This allowed them not only to discover more about their characters, but also to discover more about their relationships. The improvement grew out of the improvisational nature of the activity, which allowed them to interact with each other outside the confines of the script.

This improvisational exercise seemed to put my interactions with the actors on a new level. The activity made them more comfortable with their characters, and helped me to realize who still needed help. Knowing their strengths, I was able to focus on certain areas with which they needed help with. For example one of my younger actors had trouble grounding, or keeping her feet planted on the ground, which greatly affected their vocal, and physical quality. By working with them to plant their feet, and maintain strength, they were able to focus their voice and create the dominance their character required. With another actor I had to work on pulling their emotions from an internal place to a more external place without overacting, or overreacting. With this actor we created a sort of vocabulary between the two of us through which I was able to mention a moment wasn’t working and, using only a few words, I was able to guide them in figuring out how to specify their motivations. While these were only two specific actors, I found things to work through with each actor to try to create three-dimensional characters.
I continued forward with rehearsals, and, before I knew it, the time arrived to bring all the elements of design and technical theatre together: the technical rehearsals, or tech week. Tech became a complicated process for me with so many more people in the room. I was overwhelmed when making decisions at first, having to balance working with actors and various designers at once. Luckily *Found a Peanut* is not a tech heavy show, and besides a few light and sound cues, there was not too much that needed to be added. The simplicity of the technical elements gave me the opportunity to manage my time between the actors and designers, and, slowly my stress dissipated.

We were able to get two full tech runs in our first day, and I had the ability to work with my designers in between the runs to fix any issues. During this time, I worked closely with my lighting designer, as it was the first chance we had to play in the space together. We took time to work on the pre-show look, or what the audience sees when they first enter the theatre, and create the atmosphere I desired to help guide the audience into our world. I was also able to work directly with my sound designer on the pre-show ambiance sound, and decided to add background street noises to the beginning of the action of the play to again invite the audience into the world of the play.

Likewise I had the chance to work on blocking issues, strengthening very specific moments of the play. For example I worked with my advisor on the first moment of the play. Originally I had my two actors playing Jeffrey and Mike enter from the apartment building one after the other. I had Jeffrey begin to play with his ball, and Mike start drawing out the Skelly court. This however led to a long period of silence. Instead I chose to have the two enter during the preshow blackout, and begin their activities in the dark so as to start the show in the middle of their day. The addition of lights in tech also required me to change other entrances, such as the entrance of Ernie and Shane, through one of the spaces vomitoria or corner entrances. Because the lights could not reach all the way into the vomitoria I had to have the two actors enter earlier than blocked, and begin delivering their lines later, once they entered the stage. In doing so both actors were well lit when speaking their lines, instead of hidden in the shadows.

With the end of technical rehearsals, I was able to let go of the show, and give everything over to my actors and stage manager. My cast did an outstanding job throughout the performances, and I was very proud of their achievements and progress. I
made it a point not to give any notes after the show opened, even though there were moments and decisions the actors were making that they did not during the rehearsal process. While I knew these could be fixed, the show was no longer mine; it now belonged to the crew, stage manager, actors and audience.

Following the closing performance of *Found a Peanut* I began asking myself, was this a successful production? Did I do a “good job,” and how would I ever know? I poured my heart into the show, and spent over a year working towards the final product, and suddenly it was all gone. I began to find my answer a few weeks later when talking to a professor about the production. They mentioned the night they saw the show they had a dream about their childhood, which turned into a nightmare, and I knew that I had done my job. While my professor having a nightmare was not my specific goal, the idea that the show stuck with them after seeing it, so strongly that it affected their dreams, meant they were somehow moved by the piece. *Found a Peanut* did not end with the final bow, but rather stayed with them. They continued to think about it sometime later, and some aspect of the production could not leave them. That, I found, was where my success lay. My research, design team, actors, stage manager, and everybody else who helped me in the process helped to create a product that stayed with people even after they left the theatre.

But how does the director do this? What is the exact process that leads to a positive audience reaction? Even after this production, I am not sure if I know the answer, nor do I think I want to. My process as a director changes with each project I embark on depending on its needs. I approach a piece of theatre desiring to convey the message of the playwright as truthfully as possible. While the foundations of my process will remain the same, beginning with close readings of the play and working on analysis and research, once I get into a room with designers or actors my plan of action changes depending on what is required by the project in front of me. Working with more-or-less, experienced actors will result in a different blocking method, just as working with a different group of designers will facilitate different discussions and relationships. I do however know what a director needs. Directors need passion and they need energy, skill, and confidence to drive a production forward.
The work of the director is hard, and I think nearly impossible to define. They are the driving force of a production, its conductor and orchestrator, but come opening night they become unnoticeable, something that lives in the subconscious of the audience. Their job is to bring together collaborators and artists to communicate with audiences and tell stories. *Found a Peanut* gave me this, the opportunity to tell a story that was meaningful to me and to share it with others.

Thinking back on this production, as well as my research and analysis I have come to the conclusion that *Found a Peanut* does lie within the “Theatre of the Holocaust.” The topic of the Holocaust can be made clear through a simple reading of *Found a Peanut*. But I have discovered that it takes the work of a director, along with their entire production team, actors, and in my case, advisor and Theatre department, to make this metaphor clear. No choice that either my designers or I made during this process was arbitrary, the performance the audience saw was a collaboration of well researched and thought-out decisions that would aid me in my exploration of the Theatre of the Holocaust, and *Found a Peanut*. 
Concluding Thoughts: Growing Up

We may never know what the Holocaust was for those who endured it, but we do know what has been said about it...If the Holocaust has ceased to seem an event and become instead a theme for prose narrative, fiction, or verse, this is not to diminish its importance, but to alter the route by which we approach it.  

— Lawrence L. Langer

It is hard to say what Margulies’s exact intentions were in writing *Found a Peanut*. Perhaps Margulies was inspired by a moment from his own childhood, or maybe even a story he heard while growing up in Brooklyn. It is evident, however, that the trauma and violence in the play give it other metaphorical meanings about the Holocaust. Yet, this still begs the question -- how does the play truly become a part of the Theatre of the Holocaust?

Lawrence L. Langer in his anthology, *Art from the Ashes: A Holocaust Anthology*, writes, “Holocaust art provokes dispute more often than it gains consensus, and perhaps this is an affirmation if its enduring importance.” I believe that *Found a Peanut* is an example of this type of art. Other than the bullies who are universally disliked, each of the remaining characters are somewhat of a bully to the other members of their small backyard community, and there is no consensus amongst the audience as to which one to like. Moreover, there is the not so subtle metaphor within the play as we experience the bullies causing the members of the backyard community to turn on each other.

Furthermore, the struggle audiences have with adult actors playing children complicates the issue of Holocaust art. On the one hand, a director hopes the audience will fall into the world of the play and accept the adult actors. On the other, a director with a keen understanding of *Found a Peanut* understands that the adult actors playing children are meant to disturb the audience and provoke a dispute. Their presence creates disorder, the characters are no longer entirely children, but are adults inflicting harm on one another.

Pain is found throughout Margulies’s work, with *Peanut* serving as the genesis of it. As I explored in my thesis, his plays deal with the growing pains most people

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98 Ibid, 479.
encounter. Margulies takes those traumatic moments in life and explores them through a Jewish lens. In this sense, the anti-Semitic bullying the Jewish children in *Found a Peanut* is representative of both Jewish pain and the turmoil one encounters in being an outsider. His play, *The Loman Family Picnic*, is about becoming an adult through the tradition of a Bar Mitzvah, and the coming of age experiences most pre-teens face in their formative years. Even a play like *Sight Unseen* can be read as both a Jewish man’s fear of upsetting his religious mother, and the struggle anyone experiences when dating outside of their religious/ethnic community.

Writing for *American Theatre*, Stephanie Coen summarized Margulies’s breadth of work stating:

Margulies's plays aren't only about what it means to be Jewish. In many ways, his families are Everyfamilies, populated with vaguely disaffected or rebellious children and frustrated, embittered adults. But the universal appeal of the work is expressed through historical and cultural references that give the pathos-laden humor its edge.99

I see the “historical references” Coen mentions as the metaphors Margulies uses. As Margulies mentions in his author’s note, *Found a Peanut* lives in a world free from nostalgia of the sixties. Instead, the looming darkness played through the violence in *Found a Peanut* gives it its historical and Holocaust reference. Likewise, the Jewish children in the play are “ghettoized,” or forced to live within an enclosed area to both protect them and separate them from outside forces. However, just as in the ghettos in World War Two, the “evil” outside forces found their way into the community when violence and trauma erupted at the hands of the enemies and even friends.

What I have done in this thesis is formulate my own approach to Donald Margulies’s *Found a Peanut*. My research and readings of the play have pointed me in a particular direction. I surrounded myself with materials and people that would help guide me to achieve my goals in directing the play. In my writing I set forth what I believe to

http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.proxy.lib.miamioh.edu/ehost/detail/detail?sid=2bc8839f-45c4-49cd-825b-3b01089c8fec@sessionmgr111&vid=7&hid=111&bdata=JnNjb3B1PXNpdGU=#db=ibh&AN=IYH00045031.
be Margulies’s intentions to be in writing *Found a Peanut*—a play that echoes Jewish memories of the Holocaust and shows how a small community of people navigate in a world filled with violence.
Bibliography


Appendix 1
Donald Margulies Works

Full Length

Found A Peanut (premiered 1984, published 1984)
What’s Wrong with this Picture? (Premiered 1985, published 1988)
The Model Apartment (premiered 1988, published 1990)
The Loman Family Picnic (Premiered 1989, published 1989)
Dinner with Friends (premiered 1998, published 2000)
God of Vengeance (premiered 2000, published 2003)
Brooklyn Boy (premiered 2004, published 2005)
Shipwrecked!: The Amazing Adventures of Louis de Rougement (as told by himself)
(premiered 2007, published 2009)
Time Stands Still (premiered 2009, published 2010)
Coney Island Christmas (premiered 2012)
The Country House (premiering 2014)

Short Plays and Monologues

Luna Park (premiered 1982, published 2004)
Louie, Anthony, Joey, Lola (premiered 1983, published 2004)*
Space (premiered 1986, published 1993)
Zimmer (premiered 1987, published 1993)
New Year’s Eve (premiered 1989, published 2004)
Kibbutz (premiered 1989, published 2004)
Pitching to the Star (premiered 1990, published 1993)
Women in Motion (premiered 1991, published 1993)
Nocturne (premiered 1997, published 2004)#
Misadventure (premiered 2000, published 2004)
Two Days: Last Tuesday and July 7, 1994 (premiered 2003, published 2004)

Others, No performance date

Manny (2004)*
I Don’t Know what I’m Doing (2004)*
Somnabulist (2004)*
Father and Son (2004)
Death in the Family (2004)
Homework (2004)
First Love (2004)

* Indicates Monologue
# Indicates Performance Piece
Appendix 2

*Found A Peanut Productions*


Cast:
- Mike - Robert Joy
- Jeffrey - Evan Handler
- Melody - Robin Bartlett
- Joanie - Nealla Spano
- Little Earl - Peter MacNicol
- Scott - Greg Germann
- Ernie - Jonathan Walker
- Shane - Kevin Geer


Production in 1988 at the Blueprint Theatre Co. in Chicago. Directed by Ralph Flores

Production in 1994, Alley Pond Ensemble, at Factory Theater in Chicago.


Production in 2015 at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio.
Appendix 3

*Found A Peanut* Character Analysis

Character: Jeffrey Smolowitz

Traits:

**Physical** (age, gender, race and/or ethnicity, other defining physical characteristics):
- **Age:** 11
- **Gender:** Male
- **Race and/or Ethnicity:** White, American, Jewish.

**Other Defining Characteristics:**

**Educational:** Jeffrey is a smart kid for his age. He has a higher reading level than Mikes, and clearly does well in school. He is not good at math, as he struggles to add up the dollar bills the children find, but he challenges himself to try and do better.

**Social:** Jeffrey is a little socially awkward and is somewhat bullied by his peers. He at times bugs Scott and Mike for attention, and while put down, isn’t too bothered about it as it seems to be a usual thing. It is clear from his actions at the start of the play he does not mind being alone and may even enjoy being on the outside of the group at times.

Along with this Jeffrey is very much a follower and rarely breaks the rules. He is concerned about getting his pants dirty, which may upset his mother, and does not want to have a meeting with Scott and Mike because Jay is not there, and Jay is the usual leader of the group.

What is interesting about Jeffrey socially is that he, by the end of the play, has overcome some of his social awkwardness and has the ability to stand up to both the bullies and Scott, and intervenes in a fight to protect Joanie. He no longer cares about what other’s think of him, and realizes that he does not need to hang with the “cool” kids to have a good time.

**Psychological:** Jeffrey is psychologically sound. He is a normal eleven-year-old child, and is relatively well adjusted for his age. As most other kids his age do, he can easily annoy others, but this in no way is do to a psychological issue.

Jeffrey, more so than some of his playmates, has a very good sense of right and wrong. When the rest of the group goes on flights of fancy about the money they’ve found he struggles about taking someone else’s money. Likewise once the children have realized it may belong to Mr. Schuster, who has passed, he begs Mike for half the money has he was half the group who found it.

Jeffrey is easily scared, and will freeze up in tense moments. When Ernie and Shane come to speak to Jay, Jeffrey remains still and cannot speak out of fear. This changes by the end of the play when he is able to stand up for himself, but in his day to day life, Jeffrey has a bit of cowardice in him, and struggles to overcome it.
Relationships of Jeffery Smolowitz

Jeffrey perceives Mike to be a friend who cannot be relied on.

Jeffrey perceives Scott to be one of the coolest kids he has ever met.

Jeffrey perceives Melody to be controlling and a little mean for her age.

Jeffrey perceives Joanie to be a follower.

Jeffrey perceives Little Earl to be too young to make his own decisions.

Jeffrey perceives Shane to be one of the most obnoxious and mean person he has ever met.

Jeffrey perceives Ernie to be one of the scariest kid he has ever met.
Character: Mike Rosen

Traits:

Physical (age, gender, race and/or ethnicity, other defining physical characteristics):
Age: 11
Gender: Male
Race and/or Ethnicity: White, American, Jewish.

Other Defining Characteristics:

Educational: Mike, like his playmates is educated. He attends the same school as Jeffrey and the rest, but he likewise takes after school classes at a local Hebrew School for a better Jewish education, perhaps to also prepare him for his Bar-Mitzvah. Mike seems to dislike school, and in a breakdown he has he admits he hates line up and P.E.

When Mike was younger he had a teacher named Mrs. Applebaum, whom Joanie now has, and it seems that that teacher greatly stressed hygiene and penmanship that he claims to be good at.

Social: Socially Mike does well for his age. He has a close relationship with older children, and is a leader among those younger than him. Mike is a good older brother to his sister, but that’s not to say they don’t still quarrel. He bosses her around, but at the same time protects her from the dead bird and therefore possibly sadness it would bring her. Like the other children Mike is bullied by Shane and Ernie, and due to the double crossing of Scott Mike actually gets beat up by the two brothers.

Psychological: Mike is very emotional, and easily gets upset by others. While he does have a good head on his shoulder he struggles to deal with the death of his neighbor, and both uses it to his advantage to try and keep the money, but eventually succumbs to it and it forces his breakdown in the last moments of the fight when he throws the money away.

Mike really has a small grasp on the concept of death. Unlike the other children he actually got to see Mr. Schuster dead in his apartment and his only thought upon the police removing the body was that he wanted to take his shoelaces. Like before Mike struggles to deal with this fact. He both uses the information of seeing Mr. Schuester to impress Scott
Relationships

Mike perceives Jeffrey to be somewhat annoying and at times a little useless.

Mike perceives Scott to be not as cool as Jay and therefore not as cool as himself.

Mike perceives Melody to be annoying, but still his little sister.

Mike perceives Joanie to be almost as annoying as Melody.

Mike perceives Little Earl to be a kid who just doesn’t get it yet.

Mike perceives Shane to be a bully, but not one that cannot be handled.

Mike perceives Ernie to be someone who always ruins the mood.
Character: Scott

Traits:

Physical (age, gender, race and/or ethnicity, other defining physical characteristics):
- **Age:** 12
- **Gender:** Male
- **Race and/or Ethnicity:** White, American, Jewish.

Other Defining Characteristics:

Educational: Scott is educated like is playmates and being a year older than them is actually a year wiser. While he does not always make the best decisions, the additional year of age has given him the ability to “play” the children a little bit more and he seems to have a better understanding of how to manipulate people.

Social: Socially Scott does not fit in with the other children in this play. While only being a year older than them he seems more mature (in some but not many ways) and tends to be very bossy. He is not the normal leader of this group and with Jay away for the day he cannot seem to be the leader that the rest of the group needs.

Scott, at the beginning of the play, serves as a role-model for Jeffrey, as he seems to have many traits that Jeffrey desires but lacks. Scott does however push around Jeffrey a little bit, and actually leaves him to watch over the dead bird, knowing it bothers him. We do see however by the end of the play that him and Jeffrey are nothing alike as when Scott is ready to turn on Mike for the money Jeffrey cannot bring himself to turn Mike in for the money.

Psychological: Like the other children, psychologically Scott is where a normal twelve-year-old should be. He does however posses the ability to manipulate, and control, something some of the other children have not figured out quite yet.

Scott does too have a darker side, and unlike his friends, is able to become somewhat of a villain and side with the bullies during the fight over the money. Scott is able to convince both Jeffreay and Mike to fork over some of their money for aid, when in fact he is really just in it all for himself.
Relationships

Scott perceives Jeffrey to still be a little kid, and not worth paying too much attention to.

Scott perceives Mike to be someone who thinks he is older than he really is.

Scott perceives Melody to be not much more than Mike’s sister.

Scott perceives Joanie to be just a kid he lives near.

Scott perceives Little Earl to be a cute naïve kid who's only good for getting in touch with Jay.

Scott perceives Shane to be the aid of the bully, nothing more really.

Scott perceives Ernie to be a bully, but someone who can be used for his own means.
Character: Melody Rosen

Traits:
Physical (age, gender, race and/or ethnicity, other defining physical characteristics):
   Age: 8
   Gender: Female
   Race and/or Ethnicity: White, American, Jewish.

Other Defining Characteristics:

Educational: Melody is educated like the rest of her playmates, but seems to have less of a desire to go back to school than Joanie, the other eight-year-old, does. She makes it very clear however that she does not desire to return to school for the new school year, and like many children enjoys her time outside of class.

Social: Like her brother Mike Melody does well socially for her age. She is able, for the most part, to manipulate her friend Joanie, and serves as a sort of a leader for the three younger children of the group, she even at moments tells Jeffrey off if he is annoying her. She loves playing pretend with Joanie and Little Earl, but only and only when it is on her terms and with whatever game she feels like playing.

Psychological: Joanie’s biggest fear in the world is growing up and gaining new responsibilities. When given the responsibility of having to have keys to let herself into the apartment after school, she looses them, and when questioned always replies that she does not want keys, a sign of aging. Along with this is her disinterest to play games like school and mommies that carry ideas of responsibility and maturity.

   At heart Melody is a true child, and like her playmates while she deals with bigger issues in the world still has child like desires, like her wish to have a Mr. Machine, or just go to the beach on a nice summer day.
Relationships

Melody perceives Jeffrey to be annoying and not as smart as her.

Melody perceives Mike to be an ok big brother, still not as smart as her.

Melody perceives Scott to be just a kid she lives with, really doesn’t serve too much of a purpose in her life right now.

Melody perceives Joanie to be a fun playmate, as long as it’s on her own terms.

Melody perceives Little Earl to be a stupid little kid, who if under control is fun to play with.

Melody perceives Shane to be very mean and nasty.

Melody perceives Ernie to be like his brother: very mean and nasty.
Character: Joanie Bernstein

Traits:
Physical (age, gender, race and/or ethnicity, other defining physical characteristics):
Age: 8
Gender: Female
Race and/or Ethnicity: White, American, Jewish.

Other Defining Characteristics:

Educational: Joanie, like the other children, is well educated and about to enter a new school year after the completion of the play. We do know that Joanie has Mrs. Applebaum this year, and unlike Mike does not have good penmanship and may struggle in her class.

Social: Joanie is a follower, and like Jeffrey, is manipulated by her playmates. Joanie only desires to play games like “mommies” and “school” but because Melody does not want to, she never gets a chance to do so. Joanie also appears to have a school-girl like crush on Mike, fearing to talk to him at times, and taking offense to him when he does not ask her how she is feeling.

Joanie gets a fair share of the fight at the end of the play, being made fun of due to her weight, and getting hit by Little Earl at the behest of Ernie and Shane. At this point she has realized how much she has been pushed around and finally stands up to Melody, almost disowning her as a friend because of the trouble she has gotten her into.

Psychological: Joanie is a run of the mill eight-year-old, who loves to play with dolls and enjoys things like ice cream. She is however much braver than some of her playmates, willing to look at the dead bird and ask questions about it.

What is interesting about Joanie too is her story about touching her grandmother at her funeral. Joanie mentions that she touched her grandmothers hand when she died, and assuming that she saw the dead grandmother at a funeral, Joanie would have had to open the casket without anyone else looking as Jewish funerals are always closed casket. Regardless Joanie is then the only other character who talks about seeing a dead body, and like Mike has that connection to the physicality of human death and what it means to die.
Relationships

Joanie perceives Jeffrey to be a bother, someone she could do with or without, no difference to her.

Joanie perceives Mike to be mysteriously alluring, and amusing to be around.

Joanie perceives Scott to be an average older kid, no one to get excited about.

Joanie perceives Melody to be a bossy pants, who is convenient to play with at the moment.

Joanie perceives Little Earl to be a nuisance.

Joanie perceives Shane to be scary and too big to be around.

Joanie perceives Ernie to be like his brother, someone she should not be around.
Character: Little Earl

Traits:
Physical (age, gender, race and/or ethnicity, other defining physical characteristics):
Age: 5
Gender: Male
Race and/or Ethnicity: White, American, Jewish.

Other Defining Characteristics:

Educational: It is unclear if Little Earl is in school yet or not, but knowing that he lives in the same apartment building as the other children, we can assume that if he is not formally educated yet, he is still raised in a house where the other children are educated.

Social: Being the baby of the group, Little Earl is easily persuaded by the other children, and constantly told what to do. He looks up to all those older than him, and constantly craves attention. He will do almost anything for approval, whether it be playing monsters with the two girls, or listening to the bullies Shane and Ernie.

He is so easily pushed around, he is willing to punch Joanie in the chest at the suggestion of Shane and Ernie, not realizing the consequence of his actions, and his eventual removal from the group.

Psychological: Psychologically out of the children Little Earl seems to have the most baggage with him. His parents are split, and it appears he lives with his mother and dislikes seeing his father. During the current day we see the children his older brother Jay is away with his father. The previous week Jay was unable to attend the father sons outing due to illness, and Little Earl was alone with his father, something he clearly states he did not like.

Little Earl’s troubles at home extend beyond this, during his time alone with the bird, he seems to relate to the dead creature, noting that it probably did something bad and that is why it was left alone, presumably having done the same thing himself. He also attempts to light the bird on fire once inside of its box, something that is the sign of a troubled child.
Relationships

Little Earl perceives Jeffrey to be an older kid who oddly is no fun to be around.

Little Earl perceives Mike to be cooler than Jeffrey, but not quite as cool as Scott, but a close second.

Little Earl perceives Scott to be someone almost as cool as his brother.

Little Earl perceives Melody to be annoying; she is always stopping him from having fun.

Little Earl perceives Joanie to be the older kid who is always willing to play with him.

Little Earl perceives Shane to be someone worth impressing by any means.

Little Earl perceives Ernie to be alluring, he is so different from his brother he is fun to be around.
Character: Ernie

Traits:
Physical (age, gender, race and/or ethnicity, other defining physical characteristics):
Age: 14
Gender: Male
Race and/or Ethnicity: White, American

Other Defining Characteristics:

Educational: Ernie struggles in school. It is mentioned that both he and his brother got held back again this year, and considering the other children succeed educationally, this does not hold well with Ernie.

Social: Ernie is a bully to the other children. He does not like being made fun of, and has a clear grudge against Jay, which has turned physical in the past. Ernie does not have nice things to say to others, especially Jewish children, and relentlessly teases the other children to get what he wants.
Ernie sees how easy it is to manipulate Little Earl and uses that to his advantage, knowing that Little Earl is his enemy’s brother. Ernie even takes a moment to play dinosaurs with Little Earl, and says the kid is cute.

Psychological: Clearly both Ernie and his brother Shane have some sort of psychological issues that causes their treatment of the other children, but it is not clear what exactly those struggles are. Ernie is very physical towards the other children, and likewise these actions must stem from somewhere, but from where we know not.

Relationships

Ernie perceives Jeffrey to be a coward and idiot.

Ernie perceives Mike to be a stupid and annoying little kid who thinks he so much older than he is.

Ernie perceives Scott to actually be a smart person within this group.

Ernie perceives Melody to be a weak little girl who is almost as stupid as her brother.

Ernie perceives Joanie to be a funny looking fat girl.

Ernie perceives Little Earl to be a silly little kid who actually is fun to be around.

Ernie perceives Shane to be stupid, just so stupid.
Character: Shane

Traits:
Physical (age, gender, race and/or ethnicity, other defining physical characteristics):
Age: 12
Gender: Male
Race and/or Ethnicity: White, American

Other Defining Characteristics:

Educational: Shane, like his brother, does not do well in school and is also held back. This is a subject of conflict between Shane, Ernie and Jay.

Social: Like his brother, Shane seems to do nothing but harass the children at play, and seems to have no sense of tolerance. He likewise uses Little Earl for his own uses, and makes the suggestion that he hit Joanie. Shane does have an interesting relationship with his brother, they almost seem to finish each other’s sentences, and know exactly what they want out of the children when they approach them.

Psychological: Again, like his brother Shane probably has a few issues probably at home, but as far as what those are we do not know. It is clear that both him and his brother physically abuse the other children, and seem to have no regrets in doing so. They see violence as a means to gain their ends, and will use it until they get their way.

Relationships
Shane perceives Jeffrey to be a week little kid, who is fun to make fun of.
Shane perceives Mike to be someone with to big a mouth on them.
Shane perceives Scott to be ok, he’s there to help in the end.
Shane perceives Melody to be an annoying prick of a girl.
Shane perceives Joanie to be a punching bag, not worthwhile at all.
Shane perceives Little Earl to be useless; he can’t do anything for him.
Shane perceives Ernie to be just the worst older brother ever. Ever.
Appendix 4

*Found A Peanut* Given Circumstances

I. Given Circumstances

A. Underline lines of dialogue that reveal given circumstances. Some lines may reveal given circumstances explicitly; others, implicitly.

B. Environmental Facts

**Geographic:** New York City, Brooklyn.
**Climate:** Hot, humid. It’s the last day of summer. The stage directions call for sounds of thunder, a summer storm. The days are shortening but still long.
**Date:** August or September of 1962
**Day:** Sunday

C. Economic: The children’s families are comfortable, but not necessarily excessive. It appears this way for several reasons, Jeffrey has new pants for school, and while wearing them today, his parents clearly have the means to buy him school clothing. He also has his own Pensy-pinky ball, which while only costing a quarter is still proof that the children have means to buy toys. Likewise Little Earl is running around with new toys throughout the play, and the two girls have both dolls and fresh ice cream cones showing signs that their parents can spend money on them.

They find $68 in their backyard, which today would have the buying power of about $500, which is an incredible amount of money for children that age. They talk about all the toys they want to buy, and even wanting to hire private tutors to not have to go to school anymore. This also shows their lack of knowledge about the power of money. While the $68 has a large spending power, it will never be enough to not have to go to school anymore.

D. Political: Its hard to find too much discussion of politics within this piece. It is set in 60s New York, and therefore the children live in a relatively liberal world. Being in America too, it is a democratic world as well.

E. Social: The social world of the children is very stratified and in some ways quite detailed. The children have a pseudo-hierarchy group system based on age. The main group consists of the four boys, Smolowitz, Mike, Scott and Jay, with Jay being the toughest and oldest at the top followed by Scott, and Mike and Smolowitz respectively. Without Jays presence during the time of the play, this system is thrown off, and while the boys try and have a meeting, without Jay it cannot happen properly.

Along with this stratification, there is also present a gender separation, as Melody and Joanie do not get involved within the politics of the group, and they two themselves
also have a power system. Melody controls Joanie, and until the end of the play, gets to make the decisions for the two even though they are the same age.

Outside of these two groups lie Shane and Ernie, the neighborhood bullies. Shane and Ernie are able to harass the children the way they do this day due to the absence of Jay, who serves as a protector against the two brothers.

At the bottom of the children’s social world lies Little Earl. As a whole they all care about the young boy, but being so young they use him for their own means. Both the main group of children, and Shane and Ernie use Little Earl for their own means, and disregard any pain it may cause the other side, or Little Ernie himself.

F. Religious: The children are all Jewish, and while it does not explicitly come out, besides when Mike mentions he has Hebrew school this year, there are underlying themes and morals that the children carry with them showing their religious background.

G. Polar Attitudes. These are each character’s subjective attitude toward world, self, and/or other at first and last moments we encounter character in the script. They are expressed as a statement from the point of view of each character.

Jeffrey Smolowitz:

- First Moment: I want nothing more than to prove my self worth and be accepted by the group.
- Last Moment: I only need to be myself to be happy.

Mike Rosen:

- First Moment: I understand the world better than others my own age.
- Second Moment: I still have a lot to learn about life.

Scott:

- First Moment: I can take charge of the group with no problem.
- Second Moment: I need to think about my actions before I make them.

Melody Rosen:

- First Moment: I don’t need to worry about growing up if I don’t think about it.
- Second Moment: Growing up is something that cannot be escaped.

Joanie Bernstein:

- First Moment: Its better to go along with others than make my own decisions.
• Second Moment: In life it’s better to do what I think is right and not what others say.

Little Earl:

First Moment: I can do what I want.
Second Moment: Life and my action have consequences.

Shane:

First Moment: It’s easier to follow my brother in life.
Second Moment: I can make my own decisions.

Ernie:

First Moment: I do what I want to get what I want.
Second Moment: Sometimes it’s easier to listen to others.
Appendix 5

*Found a Peanut* Action Analysis

III. Action
A. Directorial Beats.

1  Can I play?
   • Smolowitz: to stand his ground.
   • Mike: to shoo Jeffrey away from his hard work.
2  Oops, forgot!
   • Smolowitz: to maintain his standing.
   • Mike: to gather important information.
   • Melody: to please her brother.
3  I really don’t want to…
   • Smolowitz:
   • Mike: to ignore Jeffrey and his attempts to join the game.
4  I Can’t find him
   • Smolowitz: to entertain himself.
   • Mike: to gather information about Jay.
   • Melody: to satisfy her brother’s demands.
4a I can’t find them!
   • Smolowitz: to hinder Mike’s attempts to draw a skelly court.
   • Mike: to chastise Melody for losing her keys.
   • Melody: to rid herself of the memory keys.
5  The Skelly Court
   • Mike: To perfect his skelly court.
   • Smolowitz: to indulge in the idea of playing skelly with Mike.
   • Melody: to pursue the mystery of her missing keys.
6  The gang becomes terrified!
   • Mike: to investigate the situation.
   • Melody: to escape the scary creature she saw
   • Smolowitz: to avoid having to see the creature.
7  Its just a bird
   • Mike: to indulge himself in the bird’s current state
   • Smolowitz: to prevent himself from seeing the bird.
   • Melody: to understand the bird’s situation.
8  The beach days are over
   • Melody: to redirect the conversation so she does not have to think about the bird.
   • Mike: to examine the bird.
   • Smolowitz: To keep close eyes on the bird in case it moves.
9  Cant you just go away!
   • Mike: to rid himself of Melody
• Melody: to pester Mike
• Smolowitz: to finally investigate the bird.

10 Dead
• Smolowitz: to continue investigating the bird
• Joanie: to play with Melody
• Mike: to avoid the topic of death
• Melody: to show off her new discovery

11 I’m over this
• Mike: to scare Melody
• Joanie: to prevent Mike from thinking she’s a baby
• Melody: to go play with Joanie and get away from the bird
• Smolowitz: to get away from the bird.

12 I’ve got more friends
• Mike: To show off to Smolowitz
• Smolowitz: to get sympathy from Mike

13 What is death?
• Mike: to analyze his understanding of death.
• Smolowitz: to gather information from Mike

14 He’s not here
• Mike: To obtain more information about Jay
• Little Earl: to divulge what he knows about Jay.
• Smolowitz: to attempt again to play skelly with Mike.

15 ROAR!
• Little Earl: To show off his new toy.
• Mike: to accept the bird’s death
• Smolowitz: to figure out what to do with the bird.

16 The new boss arrives
• Scott: to get a handle on the situation at hand.
• Mike: to control his ire because the game is called off.
• Smolowitz: to be noticed by Scott
• Little Earl: to please those older than him

17 Lets play skelly
• Mike: to convince Scott to play skelly
• Scott: to avoid playing with just Mike
• Smolowitz: to try and get a spot in the game
• Little Earl: to entertain himself.

18 Danger looms
• Scott: to warn the boys about Ernie and Shane
• Mike: to start to come up with a plan incase the bullies show up.
• Smolowitz: to calm himself down
• Little Earl: to play

19 Control is gained
• Scott: to begin to gain control of the group
• Mike: to continue planning
• Smolowitz: to avoid an emotional breakdown
• Little Earl: to reveal what he knows

20 I’m in charge
• Scott: to re-organize the gang under his own rule
• Smolowitz: to prevent getting in trouble in anyway possible
• Mike: to maintain the social order of the group
• Little Earl: to impress Scott

21 This isn’t a good idea
• Mike: to regulate the group’s power structure
• Scott: to blow Mike off
• Little Earl: to satisfy Scott
• Smolowitz: to not cause a stir and stay in his place

21a New findings
• Little Earl: to get Scott to listen to him
• Smolowitz: to get Scott to listen to him
• Mike: to avoid the small scuffle
• Scott: to figure out what to do without Jay there all day

22 Show off
• Scott: to show off all the information he knows
• Mike: to stop Scott from telling lies about his friend
• Smolowitz: to listen to Scott’s story
• Little Earl: to play with Scott

23 I know more
• Scott: to prove that he knows what happened to Mr. Schuster
• Smolowitz: to concentrate on Scott’s story
• Mike: to try and prove he knows more.
• Little Earl: to continue his games

24 The tip of the iceburg
• Scott: to tell the biggest secret of all
• Mike: to divulge in Scott’s story
• Smolowitz: to devour all of Scott’s story
• Little Earl: to continue his games

25 Who cares
• Scott: to ignore Mike
• Mike: to stop Scott’s story telling
• Smolowitz: to engage even more in Scott
• Little Earl: to continue his games

26 A chance to escape
• Mike: to get away from the bird and the thought of Mr. Schuster
• Scott: to prove his point in anyway possible
• Smolowitz: to please Mike
• Little Earl: to play with Scott
26a Hehehe
• Scott: to play with Little Earl
• Little Earl: to escape being tickled
• Smolowitz: to guard the bird
27 BOO!
• Scott: to scare Smolowitz
• Smolowitz: to avoid Scott’s teasing
• Little Earl: to get Scott to continue playing with him.
28 Let me tell you how it is
• Scott: to explain parts of life to Smolowitz
• Smolowitz: to gather even more information from Scott
• Little Earl: to stay by Scott’s side
29 BOO (again!)
• Scott: to scare Little Earl
• Smolowitz: to stop Scott from touching the bird
• Little Earl: to avoid Scott and the bird!
30 Scaredy Cat
• Scott: to tease Smolowitz about being alone
• Smolowitz: to get Scott to stay and not leave him alone with the bird
31 Avoidance at its best
• Smolowitz: to occupy himself with something so he does not have to think about being all alone with the bird.
32 The children enter
• Joanie: to prevent Melody from being in charge
• Melody: to take charge of the younger children
• Little Earl: to get what he wants (a bite of ice cream)
33 Miss Bossy
• Smolowitz: to heard the children away
• Melody: to ignore Smolowitz
• Joanie: to tease Little Earl
• Little Earl: to get that bite of ice cream
34 Miss Bossy takes charge
• Melody: to tell both Little Earl and Joanie what to do
• Joanie: to try to make the decisions
• Little Earl: to really really get that bite of ice cream
• Smolowitz: to prevent a fight with Melody
35 Trouble Enters
• Ernie: to find Jay, Now.
• Shane: to aid his brother in any way possible
• Smolowitz: to protect himself
• Melody: to get away from the bullies
• Joanie: to avoid trouble
• Little Earl: to continue playing
36 They have control now
- Ernie: to entertain himself in harassing Smolowitz
- Shane: to enjoy the fear in Smolowitz
- Smolowitz: to prevent any harm to himself
- Melody: to continue protecting herself
- Joanie: to avoid the trouble
- Little Earl: to continue his games

37 Moving on
- Ernie: to begin to gather information
- Shane: to tease the other children
- Melody: to get the bullies to go away
- Joanie: to hope the bullies go away
- Little Earl: to please Ernie and Shane
- Smolowitz: to continue protecting himself in any way possible

38 A small favor
- Ernie: to get Smolowitz to do his bidding
- Shane: to keep the fear in Smolowitz even after he leaves
- Smolowitz: to appease Ernie and Shane
- Little Earl: to play with Ernie and Shane
- Melody: to avoid the bullies
- Joanie: to stay away from Ernie and Shane

39 Protection returns
- Mike: to analyze the situation he just arrived in
- Smolowitz: to assess what exactly just happened
- Melody: to seek protection from her big brother
- Joanie: to get Mike to notice her
- Little Earl: to be a part of the group

40 The funeral begins
- Mike: to get Mike to start digging a grave
- Smolowitz: to avoid digging as to not dirty his pants
- Melody: to play with Joanie
- Joanie: to play with Melody and Little Earl
- Little Earl: to enjoy himself.

41 Get out of here!
- Mike: to clear the area of burial
- Smolowitz: to vent his anger about the bullies taking his ball
- Little Earl: to investigate the burial of the bird.
- Melody: to get as close to the burial of the bird as possible
- Joanie: to follow Melody in watching the bird

42 Just do it
- Mike: to get Smolowitz to help him dig the grave
- Smolowitz: to enjoy his final day of summer vacation
- Melody: to help her brother dig the grave
• Joanie: to avoid having to talk to Mike herself
• Little Earl: to watch the other children dig the grave

43 Too shy
• Melody: to muster up the courage to talk to Mike
• Mike: to answer Joanie as quickly as possible
• Melody: to make Joanie make her own decisions
• Smolowitz: to dig the grave without getting his pants dirty
• Little Earl: to watch the digging of the grave

44 Another discovery
• Smolowitz: to prevent the opening of the Carvel bag
• Mike: to explore the contents of the bag
• Melody: to collect the buried treasure
• Joanie: to open the bag
• Little Earl: to see what’s inside the bag

45 What’s in the bag?
• Joanie: to prove she has the courage to open up the bag
• Mike: to test Joanie if she has the ability to open the bag
• Melody: to listen to Joanie’s story
• Smolowitz: to get anyone but him to open up the bag
• Little Earl: to join the group in exploring the bag.

46 We can’t do it
• Smolowitz: to call for help
• Mike: to open the bag himself
• Joanie: to stand her ground
• Melody: to support her brother
• Little Earl: to just get the bag opened

47 We did it!
• Mike: To rejoice in his find
• Smolowitz: to tally his new findings
• Melody: to indulge in the money
• Joanie: to revel in the money
• Little Earl: to control his excitement

48 What to do?
• Mike: to imagine what he can do with his money
• Melody: to amass all the new delights in spending the money
• Joanie: to inventory her new toys she is going to buy with the money
• Little Earl: to satisfy his needs
• Smolowitz: to prevent the group from taking this too far

49 Time to take control
• Mike: to regulate the situation at hand so it does not get out of control
• Melody: to extort Mike out of as much money as possible
• Joanie: to follow Melody
• Little Earl: to play with Melody’s money
• Smolowitz: to prevent trouble

50 Who’s is it?
• Mike: to prove to Smolowitz that the money belongs to him
• Smolowitz: to get his fair share of the money
• Melody: to continue playing with her new dollar
• Joanie: to play with Melody
• Little Earl: to play with the girls

51 Appeasement
• Mike: to get Jeffrey to stop nagging him about the Money
• Smolowitz: to prove to Mike that he is wrong
• Melody: to continue her game
• Joanie: to play with Melody
• Little Earl: to enjoy the company of the girls

52 Turing against a friend
• Mike: to gloat to Jeffrey that he is in control
• Smolowitz: to escape the harassment of Mike
• Melody: to eavesdrop on Mike’s conversation
• Joanie: to follow Melody
• Little Earl: to continue playing in his own world

53 Goodbye!
• Smolowitz: to rid himself of Mike
• Mike: to prevent Smolowitz or the other children from telling anyone about the money
• Melody: to tattle on Mike
• Joanie: to protect herself
• Little Earl: to join the other children

54 Danger Approaches
• Ernie: to get Mike to tell him where Jeffrey is
• Shane: to aid his brother in his mischief
• Joanie: to protect herself and the group from Shane and Ernie
• Melody: to decide whether or not to get revenge on her brother
• Mike: to hide the money from Ernie and Shane
• Little Earl: to impress Ernie and Shane

55 Protection
• Melody: to help her brother get away from the bullies
• Mike: to get Melody away from the bullies
• Ernie: to get the information that he needs
• Shane: to tease Mike about Melody

56 Information gathered
• Mike: to protect his money at all costs
• Ernie: to get whatever he thinks Mike has
• Shane: to find out exactly what Mike has

57 Some alone time
• Little Earl: to clear his head of the troubles he is having at home
58 A moment for a breath
• Mike: to hide from Ernie and Shane who are chasing him
• Little Earl: to play whatever game he thinks Mike is playing
59 Ouch
• Little Earl: to stop his knew from hurting
60 Let's play MY game
• Melody: to get Little Earl and Joanie to play her game her way
• Joanie: to try to get a word in as to what game to play
• Little Earl: to play the game with the girls NOW!
61 Reality Strikes
• Joanie: to try and avoid the thought of school
• Melody: to get Melody to continue playing “Monster”
• Little Earl: to cheer up Joanie so the game can continue
62 The game continues
• Melody: to continue playing the game the way she wants
• Joanie: to try to have fun playing the game
• Little Earl: to become the best monster possible
63 The plan starts
• Scott: to get Jeffrey to think that he needs him to get the money back
• Smolowitz: to get Scott to help him get the money back
64 Not a chance
• Smolowitz: to get Scott to help him for free
• Scott: to convince Jeffrey that he needs him
65 Double deal
• Scott: to get Mikes money as well
• Smolowitz: to stop Scott from taking both his and Mike’s money
• Mike: to get protection form the bullies
66 The first hit
• Scott: to rid himself of the annoying children
• Little Earl: to keep playing his game
• Melody: to play the game
• Mike: to support Little Earl, despite his age
• Smolowitz: to try and convince Scott to forget the deal
67 A plan in place
• Scott: to prepare the group for the arrival of Shane and Ernie
• Mike: to aid Scott in preparation
• Smolowitz: to be a part of the preparation
68 Where’s the Money?
• Ernie: to intimidate Mike to get the Money
• Shane: to get the money
• Scott: to find out where Mike has hidden the money
• Mike: to prevent anyone from getting the money
• Smolowitz: to protect himself
• Little Earl: to impress Shane and Ernie

69 The Hostage
• Shane: to get Mike to tell him by hurting Melody
• Mike: to both protect Melody and his money
• Ernie: to provoke Mike to tell him where the money is
• Melody: to protect herself
• Scott: to get his money
• Smolowitz: to sway Mike in the correct direction

70 Explosion
• Mike: to hold onto his money for as long as he can
• Ernie: to egg Mike into fighting
• Shane: to start the fight
• Smolowitz: to continue protecting himself
• Melody: to not get hurt
• Scott: to get the money he wants

70a Its everywhere!
• Shane: to collect his earnings
• Ernie: to gather the Money
• Scott: to finally get what he thinks he deserves
• Melody: to get the Money
• Little Earl: to get as much money as he can
• Smolowitz: to avoid the scuffle
• Mike: to finally rid himself of his burden

71 Pandemonium
• Shane: to get everyone to start fighting
• Ernie: to enjoy the panic in the children
• Joanie: to avoid being hit
• Little Earl: to enjoy his new found status
• Melody: to protect her friend
• Mike: to stop the chaos
• Smolowitz: to not get involved

72 It needs to end
• Smolowitz: to stop the fighting, by any means he can muster
• Shane: to test Smolowitz
• Ernie: to get the information he wants out of Smolowitz
• Mike: to try and catch on to what Smolowitz is doing
• Scott: to get what he has worked so hard for
• Melody: to protect her friend
• Joanie: to start to heal her wounds.
• Little Earl: to try and understand what just happened

73 The Aftermath
• Mike: to assess the situation, now that the bullies have left
• Smolowitz: to make sure that the younger kids are ok
• Melody: to survey the damage and her earnings
• Little Earl: to try and apologize for his actions
• Joanie: to prove to herself that she doesn’t need Melody
• Scott: to understand what has just passed

74 Joanie takes charge
• Joanie: to get Melody to go away
• Melody: to avoid Joanie one upping her
• Smolowitz: to recollect his thoughts
• Mike: to understand what Scott has just done to him
• Scott: to begin to apologize for what he just did

75 An Interruption
• Melody: to avoid having to think about her keys
• Mike: to make sure his sister is ok
• Smolowitz: to ignore what Melody is going through
• Scott: to separate himself from Melody
• Mother’s Voice: to check up on her children, after a while of silence (too long for this group of children)

76 Let’s forget about it
• Scott: to seek forgiveness for his actions
• Mike: to stay strong despite Scotts pleas
• Smolowitz: to avoid falling into Scott’s generosity

77 Help arrives
• Smolowitz: to help Mike with his wounds
• Mike: to stop his nose from bleeding

78 A proper burial
• Mike: to give the bird the burial he believes it deserves
• Smolowitz: to help mike in burring the bird

79 A confession
• Smolowitz: to tell Mike how he really helped out
• Mike: to find out what Jeffrey exactly did

80 Let’s finally play
• Mike: to apologize to Jeffrey about how he treated him
• Smolowitz: to finally play ball with his friend.

**Note character objectives with an asterisk next to them: these are when the character is not within the space of the beat, i.e. when two children play to the side. At the moment it is difficult to give them specific intentions without yet knowing exactly what their business is during that moment. I have instead used general verbs such as play, or enjoy, to show that they are still on stage, and participating in an action, but one that is not relevant to the main beat.

B. Action Summary. Use transitive verbs for each sentence of the action summary, whenever possible. Ascertain that each sentence describes a major event of dramatic
action. For each sentence, identify the function of the dramatic structure: inciting incident, rising action, catastrophe, climax, and falling action. Include enough information about given circumstances so that someone who has never read the play can follow the dramatic journey.

The play, as far as genre is concerned is a dark-comedy. The characters in this are children, and children do silly things. The best way the audience will relate to the adult actors playing children is if the play has comical elements. Seeing a near grown man making childlike decisions should be fun, and in itself relatable. I do however believe that the play has an important darker element, maybe bordering on a sort of childhood tragedy. While the beginning of the play remains light-hearted, once the money is found and the children start their fighting the realities of growing up surround the children and shock their world. In the end almost none of the children are better off than they started, besides the two protagonists Mike and Jeffery, because life has beaten them down. The innocence of their world is shattered and they will struggle to rebuild it or return to where they were.

As far as the mode, this play fits mostly into realism. The play takes place over the course of an hour in the children’s life, and everything that happens on stage can happen in real life. The only acceptation to this is that adults play the children. Because of this I feel that the mode also has elements of expressionism and perhaps a slight amount of post-modernism. The expressionism is due to the fact that because the adults are the children, they are merely representations of youth and not in fact the youths themselves. There are also elements of post-modernism in the play I believe. The actors take on the personas of those younger than them to create a sort to pastiche that exists in this world. The play also seeks to deconstruct our understanding of age and life in general, and in doing so actually uses adults to look back on childhood to find meaning.

C. Motivating Drives

- Jeffrey: to prove to both himself and his group of “friends” that he is worthwhile and interesting, and maybe even get a friend in the process.
- Mike: to prove to the children older than him that he is just as mature to play with them.
- Melody: to maintain the idea that life is a game, and if one tries hard enough one can avoid the future.
- Joanie: to try and
- Little Earl: to impress those older than him to forge a place in the world.
- Scott: to prove to himself that he can lead a group, and when trouble occurs that he is smart enough to handle a situation for himself and his own needs.
- Ernie: to get what he wants, when he wants, and how he wants.
- Shane: to
D. Spine of the Action (central conflict or clash of forces; do not simply repeat the
motivating drives)

Changing yourself to impress others
vs.
Learning to be comfortable in your own shoes

E. Core Meaning (statement of message of play)

You can never avoid growing up.

F. Genre and Mode (Identify characteristics of play that make it a good candidate for
particular genre(s) and mode(s))

The play, as far as genre is concerned is a dark-comedy. The characters in this are
children, and children do silly things. The best way the audience will relate to the adult
actors playing children is if the play has comical elements. Seeing a near gowned man
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Appendix 6

Original Action Analysis

B. Action Summary. Use transitive verbs for each sentence of the action summary, whenever possible. Ascertain that each sentence describes a major event of dramatic action. For each sentence, identify the function of the dramatic structure: inciting incident, rising action, catastrophe, climax, and falling action. Include enough information about given circumstances so that someone who has never read the play can follow the dramatic journey.

Jeffrey plays ball as Mike draws a Skelly court to be used for an important game of Skelly. (Rising action) Jeffrey stands in the way of Mike forcing Mike to draw around his foot and in the end annoying Mike. (Rising action) Melody enters the lot, and forgets that she was sent by Mike to find out where Jay is. (Rising action) Melody rents the lot, remembering the task Mike asked her to do. (Rising action) Melody admits her keys are lost to Mike, and Mike chastises her for losing her keys. (Rising action) Melody plays in another area of the lot while Mike works on the unfinished Skelly court. (Rising action)

Melody finds a bird, and screams. (Inciting incident I). Mike investigates the bird. (Rising action) Mike determines the bird is not dead yet and Melody brings up the death of Mr. Schuster. (Rising action) Mike asks Melody to leave the lot and the bird, when Joanie enters. (Rising action) Joanie, unafraid, inspects the bird and finds it boring, she and Melody exit to play dolls. (Rising action) Mike and Jeffrey discuss Jay and Scott, and wonder where Jay. (Rising action) Mike recalls Mr. Schuster’s death and tells Jeffrey the story of the previous night and his relationship with Mr. Schuster. (Rising action)

Walking in, Little Earl plays with his toys and informs Mike and Jeffrey that Jay is in the city with his father. (Rising action) Scott enters the lot, and learns Jay is not coming that day. (Rising action) Jeffrey fears Jay’s absence will result in harassment from Scott and Ernie. (Rising action) Scott decides a meeting should be held to counteract Jay’s absence and make a plan in case of the bullies' arrival. (Rising action) Jeffrey shows the bird to Scott, hoping he will think its cool. (Rising action) Scott recounts his story about the dead Mr. Schuster, in detail. (Rising action) Scott informs Jeffrey and Mike that Mr. Schuster left money and jewelry lying around his apartment in his old age. (Rising action) Scott upsets Mike with his story, and Mike plans the bird’s burial and leaves to rid his mind of the story of Mr. Schuster. (Rising action)

Scott teases Little Earl and Mike with the bird, and leaves Jeffrey alone to guard the bird. (Rising action). Jeffrey sings “Found a Peanut” to redirect his attention away from the dead bird. (Rising action) Melody, Joanie and Little Earl renter with ice cream and play too close to the dead bird. (Rising action) Jeffrey reprimands the younger children for playing near the bird, but Melody throws his suggestion back in his face. (Rising action) Ernie and Shane arrive in the lot, seeking Jay. (Rising action) Ernie and Shane tease Jeffrey, and question the other children for information regarding Jay. (Rising action) After gathering the
information they require, Ernie and Shane take Jeffrey's ball and exit the lot. (Rising action)

Mike enters the lot, with a box to bury the bird in. (Rising action) Mike and Jeffrey dig the grave for the bird near the grave of Mike's old turtle. (Rising action) Melody questions Mike about his old teacher, thinking forward to school the next day. (Rising action) Mike and Jeffrey find a carvel back buried in the yard. (Inciting incident II) The children do not open the bag as they are all too scared to do so. (Rising action) After Joanie attempts to prove she is brave enough to open the bag, Mike finally opens the carvel bag. (Rising action) To their surprise, the children find two rolls of money inside the bag. (Rising action) Mike and Jeffrey count the money and discover they have found sixty-eight dollars. (Rising action) All the children, except Jeffrey dream of the toys they want, Jeffrey instead thinks the money should go to an adult. (Rising action) Mike bribes Melody with two dollars to leave him and Jeffery alone. (Rising action)

Jeffrey thinks the money should be placed back where they found it, but Mike wants the money all to himself. (Rising action) Jeffrey decides he wants half of the money for helping to find it. (Rising action) Mike refuses Jeffery's request for half the money, and runs him out of the lot. (Rising action) Almost immediately after Jeffery's exit, Ernie and Shane walk into the lot. (Rising action) Melody and Joanie exit the lot in fear of the bullies while Mike hides the money from Ernie and Shane. (Rising action) Shane and Ernie find the money and chase Mike out of the yard in an attempt to get it from him. (Rising action)

Little Earl walks into the yard and looks for his playmates. (Rising action) Little Earl finds the bird, gives it his toys to protect it. (Rising action) Mike runs into the yard and hides himself from Shane and Ernie. (Rising action) Little Earl sees Mike and questions him about what he is doing. (Rising action) Mike pushes Little Earl out of his way, and in doing so bruises Little Earl’s knee. (Rising action) Little Earl then finds matches and tries to light the bird on fire. (Rising action) Joanie and Melody enter the lot, and play Monsters with Little Earl. (Rising action) Joanie decides she no longer wants to play Monsters, and leaves the game. (Rising action) Little Earl and Melody try to cheer up Joanie, but she is too upset about school starting the next day. (Rising action) Melody convinces Joanie to play Monsters again, and the three children continue their game. (Rising action)

As Little Earl, Joanie, and Melody exit, Scott and Jeffrey enter the lot. (Rising action) Jeffrey asks Scott to help him get the money back from Mike. (Rising action) Scott informs Jeffery that he will only help him if Mike gives Scott half of his share of the money. (Rising action) Jeffery afraid of Shane and Ernie eventually agrees to Scott’s proposal. (Rising action) Mike, still chased by Shane and Ernie, arrives in the yard, and Scott surprises him. (Rising action) Mike informs Scott that Shane and Ernie have lost track of him, but he is afraid they will still show up. (Rising action) Scott makes the same offer to Mike he offered Jeffery, but before Mike can decide the children hear a noise. (Rising action) Mike, Jeffrey, and Scott discover the noise is just Melody and Little Earl playing Monster. (Rising action) Scott tells Jeffery to guard the lot while he has a conversation with Mike. (Rising action)

Scott then tries to find out where Mike has put the money, but before he can do so Ernie and Shane arrive in the lot. (Rising action) Shane finds Melody and
hurts her to get Mike to tell him where the money is. (Rising action) Mike finds himself in a pickle, and before he can decide what to do Scott punches Mike, Shane, Ernie and Little Earl join in the fight, and Melody is thrown into it as well. (Catastrophe) Ernie finds a dollar bill in Mike's pants and tries to grab it, in response Mike empties his pants of the money. (Climax) Shane and Ernie enjoying the fight convince Little Earl to punch Joanie in the chest. (Falling action) Jeffrey intervenes in the scuffle and convinces Shane and Ernie to leave by telling them more money is buried in the basement of the building. (Falling action)

Little Earl, seeing the error of his ways, apologizes to Joanie but she does not accept it. (Falling action) Little Earl exits the yard, and Melody asks Joanie to play a game with her. (Falling action) Joanie refuses Melody's request and exits the lot in a fury. (Falling action) Melody and Mike's mother calls down to them to see if they are ok and inform Melody she has left her keys in the apartment. (Falling action) Overcome with emotion Melody leaves the lot. (Falling action) Scott follows Melody out, but before attempts an apology for his actions. (Falling action) Mike sees Jeffrey's nose bleeding, and aids him in ending the nosebleed. (Falling action) Mike has a breakdown and finally buries the bird with the aid of Jeffrey. (Falling action) Jeffrey finds the ball that Ernie and Shane took from him, and he and Scott play a game of catch and exit the lot. (Falling action)
### Appendix 7

**Found a Peanut Fight List**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Nature</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Mike grabs his sister Melody and forces her hands open.</td>
<td>Mike is almost animalistic; he nearly tortures his sister in this moment.</td>
<td>I don't think we will need anyone for this, but I'm listing it just in case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Mike shoves Little Earl onto his knees</td>
<td>Somewhat frantic, Mike is running away from bullies, perhaps somewhat desperate (he needs to push over a 5 year old)</td>
<td>Again, not sure if we will need someone for this, but putting it here anyway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Little Earl slaps Melody</td>
<td>Infantile, Little Earl does this out of excitement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Little Earl (As the monster Frankenstein “chokes” Scott)</td>
<td>Monsterlike, playful.</td>
<td>This is part of the pretend game that Little Earl is playing (He is Frankenstein, and can probably be staged as such.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Scott grabs Mike, to prevent him from running away.</td>
<td>Very controlling, almost feelings of vengeance</td>
<td>Again, this can be done by me, but here just in case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Scott sits on Mike</td>
<td>Again controlling</td>
<td>This is again to prevent him from leaving. I see this more as a push and “mount”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Scott pushes Little Earl down</td>
<td>Almost cruel – Little Earl did nothing to Scott to deserve this. Like pushing little brother down for no reason making them cry.</td>
<td>In the stage directions, this push &quot;knocks... the wind out of him&quot; so needs to read very rough.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Scott puts Mike into a headlock</td>
<td>Confining, domination. Scott is still trying to gain power over Mike.</td>
<td>This is in the stage directions, but can be done another way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Shane hits Mike's hand</td>
<td>Reactionary</td>
<td>Shane is preventing Mike from getting Melody, something I think I can do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>THIS IS THE BIG FIGHT</td>
<td>Raw and Juvenile. This is a back alley fight, and</td>
<td>The following 4 parts are what I am most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Scott punches Mike</td>
<td>Full of Rage – Scott is done with how Mike is acting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>This escalades into the next</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>Mike and Scott start fighting</td>
<td>Painful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>This is the boiling point of their relationship, the above has been leading to this</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>Ernie joins the fight</td>
<td>Visceral and exciting – in a negative way. Ernie is excited to fight those younger than him</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>This is when the fight gets out of control, Ernie is fighting to fight, he is no ones side</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>Shane throws Melody into the fight, using her as a puppet to hit her brother</td>
<td>Controlling and overpowering. Shane is able to use Melody as a ragdoll to hit her brother</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shane like his brother is doing this for joy, and is punching at anyone he can, but particularly uses Melody to punch Mike</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>Ernie tires to pull down Mike’s pants</td>
<td>Rapid and fast paced – Ernie takes no time to try pulling down Mike’s pants once he realizes the money is in there</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>At some point in the fight, Ernie tries to pull Mikes pants down, but he is not successful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Shane restrains Joanie, and Little Earl punches her several times.</td>
<td>Unrestrained – Little Earl punches and hits at will</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>This should be painful for the audience to watch. Little Earl doesn’t understand what he is doing, but is severely hurting Joanie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Mike throws Little Earl off Joanie</td>
<td>Protective</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>He does this to protect Joanie, he does not care about Little Earl at this moment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Shane grabs Mike and “roughs” him up</td>
<td>Tormenting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shane is trying to get answers out of Mike</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Ernie slaps Shane on the back of the head</td>
<td>Older brother like – Ernie is trying to control Shane</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>This is another one I think I can do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Shane punches Ernie</td>
<td>Reactionary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>This is important because it shows the power struggle within the two bullies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 8
Pictures from Brooklyn, New York
Appendix 9

Important Names and Numbers

Names have important meanings. I have compiled below a list of the *Found a Peanut* character’s names and their various roots or meaning. I have likewise included my own interpretation of the name, and how it represents their character in *Found a Peanut*.

Names with Biblical Roots

Jeffrey – “Divine Peace”\(^{100}\) –
Proverbs 3:13 “Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding.”

Jeffrey is the source of wisdom in the play. He is constantly looking to do the “right” thing. He is an empiricist at the start of the play, and only believes what he can see with his eyes. He will not accept Mike’s suggestion that the money was left by Mr. Schuester, because there were no facts to support it. He instead asks to split the bounty, as

Michael – “Who Is Like God?”
Exodus 15:11 “Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?”\(^{101}\)

Daniel 12:1 “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation *even* to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.”

In the Bible Michael is an archangel that leads an army against Satan’s uprising. Without Jay or Scott present Mike is the one who must stand up to the bullies. He becomes the leader of the Jewish children. While he is thrown into his situation only to be beaten up, he attempts to rescue his sister, and eventually understands the error of his ways. He is not perfect, as some say the divine is, and subject to flaws.

Earl – “Reflective Image”
Genesis 1:12 “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.”\(^{102}\)

\(^{100}\) Dorothy Astoria, *The Name Book*, (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1997), 151.
\(^{102}\) Ibid, 96.
Throughout the play Earl imitates what he sees. In his dialogue alone, he often repeats what other characters say. In his actions we see him embodying those around him. Little Earl reflects both the good and the bad that he sees. He at times is brave like Joanie and wants to open the bag, but also calls Jeffrey names with the bullies.

Joanie – “God is Gracious”
Proverbs 4:7 “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding.”

At the start of the play Joanie is a follower. She does as Melody says, and cannot get her way with her playmate. Joanie attempts to have it her way, but until the end all of her attempts are fruitless. After being beaten up by Little Earl Joanie learns that she must rid herself of Melody, and leaves her alone in the yard. Joanie searches for self identity, and by parting from Melody, she gains the understanding that she desires.

Jacob “Jay” – Biblical Meaning “That supplants... the heel.”

While we do not meet Jay during the play, we know that he is the usual leader of the group. He is the force that protects the children, and keeps them tighter. Without his presence, chaos ensues.

Names with non-Biblical Meanings

Scott – In Scottish the meaning of the name is Wanderer

It is interesting that Scott is the only Jewish child with out a Hebrew or Biblical name. Furthermore the meaning of his name is an accurate description of his character. Schott is a wanderer. He strays from the Jewish group, and wanders to wherever he can find security and power. Scott has no alliance to his younger playmates. He double crosses Jeffrey and Mike in an attempt to get more money, but is powerless and fear full against the bullies.

Melody – Music or song, “Flower Child”

Melody’s name has no traditional meaning, simply a song. I am drawn to the definition my thesis reader, Dr. Mary-Jane Berman, gave me, which is “flower child,” like a sort of hippie. Melody does as she pleases. She does not care about the desires of others. Melody lives in a world of make believe and

pretend, and looks for changes to include her playmates in this world, as long as they are subservient to her desires.

Shane – Irish origin

Ernie “Ernst” – English Origin - German Name

I found significance in the backgrounds of Shane and Ernie’s. The names are Irish and German-English, respectively, groups that have anti-Semitic histories.

Numbers

Numbers play a significant role in the Jewish tradition. The Hebrew language does not contain numerals, but rather uses letters of the alphabet to represent numbers. Because of this, numbers carry both a numerical value and a cultural value. One of the most common examples of this is the number 18, which in Hebrew is written, חַי, pronounced chai. Chai also is the Hebrew word for living. Therefore the number represents life, and with it comes a host of cultural values. For example, money is often given as a gift in multiples of eighteen, in hopes of a happy life. One can also often find Jewish people wearing necklaces with the two letters on them as a sign of good life, or identity.

What follows is an examination of numbers that come up in *Found a Peanut* and relatable Jewish cultural meanings associated with those numbers.

Seven

Seven is a missing number in context of *Found a Peanut*. By that I mean, the group of Jewish children usually numbers seven, but with Jay’s absence the group is six. Seven is one of the most powerful numbers in Judaism, representing the seven days of creation, and perfection of the planet. The Hebrew word for seven likewise means luck, and is associated with the phrase “Mazel-Tov” or congratulations and good luck. Likewise, According to My Jewish Learning,

The Bible is replete with things grouped in sevens. Besides the Creation and the exalted status of the Sabbath, the seventh day, there are seven laws of Noah and seven Patriarchs and Matriarchs. Several Jewish holidays are seven days long, and priestly ordination takes seven days. The Land of Israel was allowed to lie fallow one year in seven. The menorah in the Temple has seven branches.

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105 Astoria, 261.
106 Astoria, 105.
108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
With Jay’s absence the representation of perfection is missing, and the other six children are left in a world of chaos and disorder.

32 and 36, and 68

In *Found a Peanut*, thirty-two and thirty-six are the two separate amounts of money Jeffrey and Mike count up as they add up their treasure, sixty-eight dollars.

The number thirty-two has an important Kabbalistic, or spiritual Judaic, meaning. According to Rabbi Adam Jacobs, “The most ancient (and still used) text of the Kabbalah is called the *Sefer Yetzirah* or *Book of Formation*, and its contents are generally attributed to the Biblical patriarch Abraham. The book opens with a discussion of the “32 Mystical Paths of Wisdom,” paths derived from the 10 digits on our hands (quantity) plus the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, which we use to construct language and thereby describe reality (quality). These paths are also reflected in the 10 *sefirot* – spheres of energy that are the building blocks of physical reality yet also relate to character traits as well as states of consciousness.”¹¹⁰ A sort of Freudian id and superego, called the Chochma and the Binah, control the thirty-two paths, and push people into the various states of consciousness, to make either good or bad decisions. Kabbalah teaches individuals to control the Chochma and Binah, to live in spiritual harmony, and navigate through the thirty-two states of consciousness.

Thirty-six also has mystical meanings. According to Jewish interpretation of the Bible, “36” refers to the 36 righteous people on earth, upon whose merits the world exists.¹¹¹ According to this belief in every generation there are thirty-six righteous people on the earth who are hidden among the world’s population.¹¹² Because no man knows if they, or their neighbor, are one of the righteous, Jews are taught to be kind to all people they meet.

Thirty-two and thirty-six represent the ways to lead a good life. Thirty-two means making good decisions and controlling emotions, and thirty-six embodies being kind to others. Interestingly their sum, sixty-eight, means life and compassion. According to, Nicholas Gura, in his work *Divine Wisdom and Warning: Decoded Messages from God*, “The word, ‘life’ (*Chiam*), from Genesis 2:7, has a numerical value of 68. The Hebrew letters that correspond exactly to 68 spell ‘have compassion’ (*Chas*). Compassion is the


essential element for a meaningful and beautiful life.”¹¹³ There is also connection to the Jewish phrase of “Etz Cha’im” which means the “Tree of Life.” This refers to a biblical phrase in Proverbs, which describes the Torah is the fruit of the happy man.¹¹⁴

The numbers that Margulies attributes to the money represent all the good in the world, mankind, and Judaism. What is interesting is he applies it to money, the root of all evil. The money is a metaphor for good, even the divine, but the children do not decode this message, and it leads to their downfall. When thinking about the Holocaust in relation to Found a Peanut, perhaps the coded numerical are a historical warning.

While we are often taught to be good and kind our neighbors to achieve happiness, things get in the way – greed and hatred – that cause people to harm others.

¹¹³ Gura, 8.