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## Costume Design for Adam Rapp's *The Metal Children* at the University of Arkansas

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Costume Design for Adam Rapp's The Metal Children at the University of Arkansas

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts in Theater

by

Melissa Janet Hall  
Wayne State University  
Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theater Design and Technology, 2015

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University of Arkansas

This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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## **Abstract**

The following thesis explains the process utilized to create and implement the costume design for the production of The Metal Children produced at the University of Arkansas University Theatre in the Fall of 2016. Throughout this thesis I will illustrate how the costumes went from initial research ideas to sketches and colored renderings and finally to finished three-dimensional costumes. The design process detailed here includes an analysis of the play, inspiration collage, portrait gallery, research, renderings, production images and an evaluation of the overall process.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction & Personal Design Philosophy

The Metal Children by Adam Rapp is a story of extremes, with those fighting to ban the titular novel, those fighting to uphold the novel's messages, and those caught between the two. Washed up author Tobin Falmouth learns that his young adult novel, which is also called *The Metal Children*, has caused upheaval and rebellion in the teenagers of Midlothia, an unspecified small Midwestern town. Tobin visits the town at his agent's behest and is caught in the crossfire between teenage supporters of the novel and the Christians opponents to the book. Things escalate into violence, and Tobin returns home, a changed man.

The Metal Children was produced at the University Theater at the University of Arkansas in the fall of 2016. Jenny McKnight directed the play, with a set designed by Joseph B. Farley, lighting designed by Emily Clarkson, and sound designed by Tyler Micheel. I designed the costumes for this production, with Patricia Martin serving as my mentor, Valerie Lane as Costume Shop Manager, and Ashley Nolan serving as makeup designer.

This thesis will focus on my costume design process for this production. This process involves multiple steps, including: my thoughts and analysis of the script; research into clothing of the time period; collaboration with my fellow designers and the director; creation of renderings that represent how the costumes should appear; realized costumes and my final appraisal of the design. Designing costumes for The Metal Children allowed me to create costumes that helped solidify and support the characters in the script.

My work on this design included multiple steps that informed me about the world of the script and the characters within it. The first step was to read and analyze the script, documenting themes and motifs that were visually and emotionally inspiring. After recording my thoughts and

feelings, I created an inspiration collage that included imagery representative of these motifs and themes that operated in a visually stimulating way. After creating this collage, I organized a portrait gallery, which is a collection of portraits that express the nature of each of the characters within the play. After presenting both items to my fellow designers and director, we developed a concept that encapsulated our thoughts and feelings about the play. Using this concept as a springboard, I investigated how each character would dress, using images of clothing and accessories of the time period; these were eventually compiled and organized into research boards based around each character. After discussing my research with my fellow designers and director, I created preliminary sketches that combined my research with my personal impressions of each character, showing a concept for what I wanted each to look like. These were presented to the director and my mentor so that I could take notes and suggestions to create final renderings that would display exactly what I wanted each costume to look like. My renderings were then used by the University of Arkansas costume shop to create three-dimensional costumes, either through finding items in our stock of existing clothing or by building individual pieces of clothing. Fittings were documented through photos, and the final costumes are documented through production photos taken while the actors were performing in the theater space.

While this thesis documents all of these steps for my design of The Metal Children, I would like to take a moment to speak about my personal design philosophy. My job as a costume designer is to create characters found in the script, not just make costumes or clothes. I create these characters through reading and analyzing the script, creating a collage and portrait gallery that display my thoughts and feelings about the characters and script, researching clothing that illustrates who these characters are, collaborating with my fellow designers and director, and rendering images of what the final costumes will look like. Costumes are important to the

theatrical process, by allowing actors to become their characters, to truly inhabit the characters' skins (as opposed to just wearing the clothes). When actors truly become their characters, the theatrical event becomes that much more real and enticing, helping the audience to identify the characters and the story they are trying to tell as well as to understand the themes and lessons of the piece.

In this thesis, I hope to take you on my journey through Adam Rapp's The Metal Children and my process for designing the costumes for this play. In Chapter 2 I will proceed through my analysis and thoughts on the script. In Chapter 3 I will share my research and collaborative process and discuss my specific design choices. In Chapter 4 I will evaluate the realized designs and analyze how this production has allowed me to widen my design horizons and develop my eye as a designer.

## Chapter Two

### Analysis of Adam Rapp's The Metal Children

In order to create costumes that speak to the truths found in a play, it's important to know and understand those truths. All designers, actors, and the director should understand the basics of a play, such as where and when it takes place, who are the players, and why this play was written in the first place. As a costume designer, I focus my analysis on understanding the whole of each character, from their views of themselves and their place in the world to their religious beliefs and sexual orientation. I also search for the greater themes of the piece and see how these impact the characters and their fates. I read a script multiple times in an effort to extract every little piece of information I can obtain. I record all of this information in a written script analysis, which includes an action chart that maps out who is in each scene. This chapter sums up my analysis and documents what I discovered about the plot and characters of The Metal Children. My complete analysis can be found in Appendix 1 on pages 23 - 41.

After multiple readings of the script, I found the main theme of The Metal Children to be the negative impact of over-the-top devotion and fanaticism. When people become overly devoted or opposed to a text, person, or object, they can become blind to the wants and needs of others, even to the point of violence. The majority of Midlothia's citizens can't see past their own ideals and desires, and this myopia leads to vandalism, assault, and death.

My initial reading is where I learned the basics of the plot and characters, the very basic "who, what, where, when, and why". Tobin Falmouth, our lead character, is a young adult author in the depths of an unrelenting depression, which his agent, Bruno, attempts to rescue him from. Bruno reveals that Tobin's first novel, *The Metal Children*, is being banned in the small Midwestern town of Midlothia for its more adult themes and an intense battle is raging over this



decision. A town hall meeting has been planned, and Bruno insists Tobin attend in person. The night before the meeting Tobin meets many of the townspeople and learns about both sides of this struggle. The leader of the pro-”Metal Children” forces, 16-year-old Vera Dundee, reveals teenage girls are becoming pregnant as an homage to the novel. After sleeping with Vera, Tobin is attacked by members of the Pork Patrol, teenagers who want his novel banned. Tobin is grievously injured. The town hall meeting proceeds as planned, but is interrupted when it is found out that the teacher who introduced the novel to the teenagers, Stacey Kinsella, has been in a terrible car accident. It’s eventually revealed by the author that *The Metal Children* was written while on a stress-and-drug-induced bender, and that it contains none of the religious or feminist subtext that has been imposed upon it by the public. Tobin visits Stacey, then is confronted by the community leader who is against the novel, Roberta Cupp. She reveals that a student who made a speech against *The Metal Children*, Tami Lake, has committed suicide. Roberta and Tobin argue, and then Tobin is attacked again by the Pork Patrol and sent to the hospital. Tobin finally returns home where he begins to reconstruct his own life, and is introduced to his daughter with Vera.

The location and time of this play are left fairly undefined, as there are no distinct references to year, and it is never revealed what state Midlothia is located in. One explanation may be that The Metal Children takes inspiration from Adam Rapp’s own experiences, as his novel The Buffalo Tree was controversially banned from a school district in 2006. The play premiered in 2010, and references to the year the novel *The Metal Children* is published and the age Tobin was at its publishing lead me to believe that the play is set around 2010 as well. The months and days are directly referenced, as the majority of the play take place in March, while the final scene happens approximately in February of the following year.

Tobin is a remarkably self-centered 38-year-old man, who is focused for the majority of the play on how these events affect him and him alone. Having recently been left by his more successful wife for another man and having fallen months behind on his next manuscript, Tobin refuses to even attempt to fix his problems and only leaves his apartment on the journey to Midlothia to get away from those problems for a few days. He is forced to confront the impact of his writings and decisions, as Stacey Kinsella and Vera Dundee come into misfortune because of their love and dedication to him and his novel. When he reveals that *The Metal Children* has none of the themes and ideals that have been attributed to it, that it's based off a dream he had after taking his wife to get an abortion, we see that Tobin's problems have taken a deep psychological toll on him in both the past and present. The massive amount of support and opposition he receives overwhelm Tobin. His confrontation with Roberta Cupp mainly focuses on how he wishes to just go home and avoid all of this aggravation. When he returns to his home in New York we see that he has begun to change his ways but he still has difficulty confronting his actions, as he makes rather weak attempts to connect to Vera and their daughter.

There are two distinct factions fighting over *The Metal Children*, the Meredith Millers and the Pork Patrol. The Meredith Millers are the teenagers and adults who want the novel kept in the school curriculum and feel the text is a feminist manifesto. These characters include Stacey Kinsella, Vera Dundee, Cooper, and Boy X. The members of the Pork Patrol feel that *The Metal Children* is advocating abortion and sexual promiscuity, and want it banned to keep it from influencing the minds of Midlothia High School students. The Pork Patrol includes Roberta Cupp, Otto Hurley, Tami Lake, and The Boy in the Porky Pig Mask.

Stacey Kinsella is the teacher who introduces the novel *The Metal Children* to the teenagers of Midlothia; he is essential to kickstarting the plot of the play. He is shown to be

deeply invested in his students, choosing to teach in a small Midwestern town to have a deeper and more profound impact than he would have somewhere more liberally minded. It's insinuated that Stacey is having a love affair with the missing school superintendent, positioning him as a gay man in a close-minded environment. This creates a distance between himself and the other adults in town. He misses the town hall meeting because he has been in a terrible car accident, which has debilitated and possibly paralyzed him for life.

Vera Dundee leads the Meredith Millers at the ripe old age of 16. She is shown to be intelligent beyond her years, commenting on how she feels *The Metal Children* is an indictment of modern culture. She has led her fellow teenage supporters to paint their hands, and eventually their bodies, gold and dye their hair blond in homage to characters in the novel who are turned into statues. After some questioning from Tobin, Vera reveals that many of the Meredith Millers have gotten pregnant as a political statement. She eventually "seduces" Tobin, a man over twice her age, in an effort to become pregnant by the creator of her beloved text. Painted gold from head to toe, Vera delivers a brash and biting speech at the town hall meeting that upsets and angers Roberta, Otto Hurley, and Tami Lake. When Vera visits Tobin in the hospital, she reveals her plan to take her compatriots to Idaho to start a commune inspired by the novel. We learn her confidence and drive are dampened by the hardships she faces in Idaho when she visits Tobin to ask for money as well as to present their infant daughter to him.

Cooper is one of the teenage supporters of *The Metal Children*. She is intensely devoted to Tobin, falling to her knees when she meets him. It is likely that she joins the Idaho commune, but this is never specifically stated.

Boy X is the only teenage boy in the town we see defending the novel. He has been chosen to be the sperm donor for all the teenage girls who support *The Metal Children* in their

attempts to get pregnant. He leaves with the group headed to the commune, but according to Vera the hardships of farm life have begun to make him tired and worn out.

Roberta Cupp is a town busybody who is deeply against *The Metal Children*. She feels that it is corrupting the youth with its frank sexuality, and she is horrified by the novel's end, where a girl is depicted committing suicide while simultaneously aborting her fetus. She creates pamphlets against the novel and makes an impassioned speech at the town hall meeting. She later confronts Tobin about the place of art in society, viewing artists as observers who take others' pain and turn it into profit for themselves. While we see that Roberta has good intentions, it's very telling that when Tobin is stabbed by The Boy in the Porky Pig Mask at the very end of their confrontation, she simply runs away instead of helping or calling for assistance.

Otto Hurley is a member of the school board and a pillar of Midlothia's community. He dislikes Tobin, even purposely mispronouncing his name, and disagrees with the themes he sees within the novel. He has an almost flirtatious relationship with Roberta, and they support each other in their disagreement with the novel. He praises Tami Lake for her speech at the town hall meeting, and is deeply disturbed and upset by her death. He mocks Vera for her full gold body paint at the town hall meeting.

Tami Lake is a high school student who attacks the novel at the town hall meeting. She is a deeply Christian young woman, and uses Christianity as her main argument against the novel. She is snippy toward Vera at the meeting, but happily accepts praise from Roberta and Otto. After Tobin visits Stacey in the hospital, we learn that Tami has committed suicide. It is revealed that she was six weeks pregnant, a revelation that puts an interesting and almost hypocritical spin on her indictment of the novel.

The Boy in the Porky Pig Mask is another teenager who is against the novel *The Metal Children*. He wears a Porky Pig mask (a reference to the throwing of pork products in the novel) and baseball cleats. He and his compatriots vandalize the town water tower and Stacey's house and car. He eventually attacks Tobin on two separate occasions, beating and stabbing Tobin to the point that he is hospitalized.

Edith Dundee is Vera's aunt, who has raised Vera since she was two years old. She's a sweet but unobservant woman, wanting to take care of Tobin without realizing she's being overbearing. She's also the owner of the hotel where Tobin stays. She's unsure of where she stands in terms of the politics of the novel, but she's a fan of the book itself. She interrupts the town hall meeting to let everyone know that Stacey has been in a massive car accident.

Bruno Binelli is Tobin's literary agent, the person who urges Tobin to get out of his apartment and see the people who have been impacted by his work. He is horrified and frustrated by Tobin's depraved choices, but does deeply care for him. He's remarkably proud of Tobin's new novel, but appalled at his choice to impregnate a teenager.

Analyzing the script and all of the characters allowed me to understand the overarching themes of The Metal Children, who each of the characters are, and why they act the way they do. After reading the script multiple times I understood how the factions that arose around the novel *The Metal Children*, the Meredith Millers and the Pork Patrol, function in this world, and how Tobin Falmouth responds to the stressors that arise in his life. Using information from my analysis, I was able to develop my design approach and concept for the play The Metal Children, which are documented in the next chapter.

## Chapter Three

### Statement of Design Concept, Approach, and Process

As a costume designer, my main focus with each design is to create a costume that will allow an actor to fully become their character. This is especially true for The Metal Children, where the very divisive issue of abortion creates massive divisions between different characters. My thought was to create characters that weren't just strawmen, but humans who have reasons for the choices they made. Adam Rapp's script refuses to proclaim either side of the debate as right or wrong, and in discussions with my director and fellow designers we decided to respect his decision. I also wanted my design to explore the concept of extremism, both from a religious and secular standpoint. The characters in this play are so devoted to their selected texts and ideals that they are blind to the violence and chaos they are causing.

After completing my analysis, my next step was to create an emotional image collage. This collage allowed me to visually represent the thoughts and feelings I had while reading the play. I wanted imagery that represented fanatical behavior, religious iconography, and violence, all themes found within the play. Some images I selected also focused on books and literature, as the book *The Metal Children* is so important to the play The Metal Children. The collage as a whole helped me to represent my thoughts and feelings visually so I could share my ideas, thoughts and feelings with the rest of the design team. This collage can be found in Appendix 2 on page 42.

Another important step of my design process was to create a portrait gallery. The portrait gallery represents how I see each character in the play. I searched for images that matched all of the main characteristics of each character, such as their age, health, emotional state, attitude, and anything else that can impact this story. This is a tool to help the director and I speak about the

direction we feel the characters should take, both in terms of casting and costume choices. The portrait gallery can be found in Appendix 3 on pages 43 - 44.

At our first design meeting, the director, lighting designer, scenic designer and I sat down to talk about our thoughts and ideas about the play. Jenny McKnight, the director, spoke about how she didn't want to take sides in the central conflict between the Meredith Millers and the Pork Patrol. She didn't want to vilify or commend either group, as she felt they both had sound reasoning for their arguments. She also felt that choosing a certain side might alienate portions of the audience who identified with the alternate position, which would keep them from listening to what the play is trying to say about extremism. The director was very open to ideas from the design team. A big question I brought up was how realistic or unrealistic we wanted the world to become when we follow Tobin to Midlothia. I mentioned the television show *Twin Peaks*, which involves an FBI agent investigating a murder in a small town inhabited by odd and interesting characters. It's very stylistic, feeling like it takes place in a different world. This suggestion inspired both the director and other members of the design team, and we eventually decided to make the bookend scenes in New York City realistic while making Midlothia more stylistic and open as we continue through the play.

After this first meeting, I began my initial costume research for each character. I looked into both styles of contemporary clothing and images of actual people that spoke to each character. This process allowed me to get a general idea of what each person would wear. The costume challenges that I faced included a full body cast, several characters in gold body paint, and a statue that looks exactly like one of the minor characters, Tami Lake. My research included images of what these more complicated costumes would look like and possible ways to create

them. I created a research board for each character and select boards can be found in Appendix 4 on pages 45-48.

At our second design meeting, I presented this research again to the director and other members of the design team. One of our discussion points centered on whether or not we would double the minor roles as suggested in the script or cast each role individually. After talking over the pros and cons of each option, it was decided that we would cast each role individually to allow more students to be cast in the production. We discussed how we would represent the Tami Lake statue, mentioned in the script as looking exactly like her. I talked about how it would be complicated to paint the actress playing Tami bronze, but that there was enough time given in the script to complete this costume change. Joseph, the scenic designer, brought up the idea of dressing a mannequin in similar clothing to Tami and painting that bronze with the option of sculpting a face to resemble the actress once she was cast. The director was unsure of what direction to go, but her thoughts were leaning toward using the actual actress as the statue. She also had the idea that perhaps the statue would be nude with a blanket wrapped around it, which decreased the amount of skin that would need to be painted if we used the actress as the statue.

After this meeting, I began to think of ways to differentiate the groups of characters, especially how to separate the Meredith Millers, the group for the titular novel, from the Pork Patrol, who oppose it. I thought the best way to do this would be through the use of different color palettes. To represent these palettes, I created color collages for each of the factions, plus an additional one to show Tobin's mental progression throughout the play. With the Meredith Millers being a more organized militaristic unit, I wanted them in camouflage. Their color scheme would be darker hues found in nature such as forest greens and browns. The fact the students paint their hands gold is explicitly stated in the script, and I felt that gold would be an



excellent addition to this palette. For the Pork Patrol, I looked to other prominent colors from my inspiration collage, finding yellows, oranges, pinks, and tans. The pink fit in incredibly well with the fact that the teen members of the Pork Patrol wear Porky Pig masks, and I felt the oranges, pinks and tans provided a strong contrast to the darker colored Meredith Millers. I also included some tinges of red to show the Pork Patrols violent methods. In the color palette for Tobin I wanted to show his mental progression, from human disaster to someone who is starting to feel like a whole human being again. He starts in blacks and whites, also expressing the idea that there are black and white sides to the world, but shifts to grays and blues as things become muddled and confused. These color palettes can be found in Appendix 5 on pages 49-50.

After making these palette decisions I began to sketch images of what I wanted each character to look like. My sketches can be found in Appendix 6 on page 51-53. I started with Tobin. I wanted to find ways other than color to show his character arc. In the first scene he's filming a statement to send to Midlothia, where he is expected to look presentable and professional. I dressed Tobin in a button up shirt and tie, but wearing boxers and socks to show his inability to fully put himself together. When he heads to Midlothia he is still refusing to put effort into his appearance or attitude, so I selected a sweatshirt and pants. After Tobin is beaten by members of the Pork Patrol, he must come to terms with the fact his choices have an impact on others and that he really needs to get himself together. I showed this by having him to wear a suit to the town hall meeting, but with clear wounds and bruises from his attack. In the final scene I wanted to show that Tobin is finally on the path to improving himself and beginning to feel comfortable in his skin, but in a way that's still professional. I chose jeans with a shirt and suit jacket. As dress rehearsals began, the director and I realized that the suit jacket was too

formal for an early morning scene in his apartment, so I changed the suit jacket to a sweater that was more professional than just a t-shirt.

Next I focused on the novel-supporting Meredith Millers, starting with Stacey Kinsella, the teacher who first introduces *The Metal Children* to the young people of Midlothia. He views himself as more educated and enlightened than the other citizens, but tries to see their side of issues rather than looking down on them. I wanted to give him a professional but cool look, like a professor you would want to hang out with after class. I chose a tweed suit jacket and paired it with casual slacks and used the colors within the Meredith Miller color palette of greens and browns.

There is a complete shift in Stacey's appearance after his car accident, as he has broken many bones and it is implied that he is paralyzed. In the script it's written that he wears a full body cast, but in discussions with the director we talked about choosing bits and pieces to immobilize the actor. This would help to portray his vulnerability in the scene, both in his physical and emotional state. I selected a neck brace, shoulder brace, back brace, arm cast and casts on both legs to keep him as immobilized as possible, plus a large quantity of bruises and visible wounds. Through fittings with the actor, we realized that the amount of bracing made it almost impossible for him to interact with the other actors in the scene. The director and I decided to cut the neck brace to allow the actor to move his head and neck, but kept the shoulder and back braces to hinder his movement somewhat, creating the impression he is in great pain and very vulnerable.

The teenaged Meredith Millers were predominantly dressed in camo, both to portray them as militaristic and to keep them in the dark, natural color palette. Two other Acolytes were added during the casting process, meaning that two actors featured in other scenes would be

included in the town hall audience as well. This was done to give actors who were in only one scene more to do. Each Acolyte was dressed in army fatigues, with varying levels of distress or customization. While Cooper, Boy X, and one Acolyte had either sleeves missing from their jacket or shorts made from their pants, Vera had a full fatigue jacket and pant. I did this to make her look the most put together and in control, signifying her importance as the leader of the Meredith Miller Movement.

In the final scene of the play, we see Vera after almost a year of her living on the Meredith Miller commune. While she still believes in her mission, she's been beaten down by the challenges of living unsupported on a farm far away from home. I dressed the actor in overalls and sweater, and as the final scene takes place in February, a large overcoat, using layers to protect and insulate herself from the hardship she's facing. I also wanted to show that she had allowed her hair to return to its dark brunette color from its previous blonde dye job, so I stitched a piece of a wig into the stocking cap I had selected that would protrude out of the hat.

I next turned my focus to those looking to ban *The Metal Children*, the Pork Patrol. The main force behind this group is Roberta Cupp, a devout Christian and town busybody. She gave me the impression of being an overly involved kindergarten teacher, closely monitoring and patronizing those she disagrees with. I dressed her in an ill-fitting denim jumper dress, with large floral appliques and rickrack trims, to give it an overly feminine and homemade quality. Underneath was a blouse, and I had her wear calf socks, all in an effort to age the actor. For the outdoor scene where Roberta confronts Tobin, I added a cardigan to alter her silhouette and make it more outdoor appropriate.

Roberta's partner in crime is Otto Hurley, another prominent member of the community and emcee of the town hall meeting. He's a Pat Robertson type of man, who wants others in the

community to follow his moralistic lead. I dressed him in slacks and sport coat, with a bright red tie, making him look professional and put together.

Tami Lake is the young woman who speaks against the book at the town hall meeting, and I wanted to dress her in a more conservative and feminine fashion than the other teenagers in the play. I designed a knee length pleated skirt with a blouse and cardigan over top of that. I had the actor pull her hair back with a bright orange scrunchie, to help showcase that Tami is still a young woman.

The most menacing figure in the play is the Boy in the Porky Pig Mask, who stalks the town wearing baseball cleats. He attacks Tobin on two separate occasions, in his hotel room and at the end of Tobin's confrontation with Roberta. As with the Meredith Miller Acolytes, two Pork Patrol members were added to give a couple actors portraying minor characters more to do. I selected a very bright and cartoony Porky Pig mask, which contrasted with the dark pants and sweatshirts they all wore. Only the Boy in the Porky Pig Mask wore cleats signifying him as the leader of the group, and I decided to use shoes with plastic cleats to make it easier for the actor to move across the stage floor.

In the town of Midlothia, there are couple of people who refuse to take a side, specifically Vera's aunt Edith Dundee and the Nurse. Edith is a comfortable woman who runs a motel, and I wanted to dress her in something utilitarian and moveable. I chose slacks and a polo shirt to give her a neat appearance, and athletic loafers that would allow the actor to move quickly and easily. I chose one color from the Meredith Miller palette and one from the Pork Patrol palette, to signify Edith's indecision in choosing a side. Edith also interrupts the town hall meeting to alert the town of Stacey's accident, and I added a sweatshirt to alter her look so she appeared to be coming from outdoors. The director asked that I add a logo of the motel Edith owns to the

sweatshirt, to remind us where we had seen her before. The other person in Midlothia who won't stand for or against *The Metal Children* is the Nurse, who takes care of both Stacey and Tobin when they are hospitalized. She has no interest in the battle surrounding her and only wants to make Stacey feel better. I dressed her in purple scrubs, keeping her colors away from those of the Meredith Millers and Pork Patrol.

Tobin's agent Bruno Binelli, anchors both Tobin and the audience in the New York scenes. I wanted him to be savvy and slick, so I chose a slim-cut fashionable suit with a shirt with the top button unbuttoned. The colors were not bright or flashy to keep him in a more subdued color palette, placing him in the realistic New York world.

The other inhabitants of the opening New York scene, Lynne and Kong, are both comic relief and representative of the depth of Tobin's depression and depravity. I chose brighter colors than those worn by Bruno to give the two a more clownish appearance. Lynne is a woman who Tobin has been sleeping with, and we meet her coming out of Tobin's bedroom. I dressed her in a bra and panties with long tube socks with two different color stripes, as a way to shock and startle the audience into laughter. Kong is Tobin's drug dealer, with a hip "street style" vibe. I dressed the actor in dropped-crotch sweatpants, a sweatshirt, with a baseball cap in a loud, large pattern, representing his street style.

After completing my preliminary sketches, I presented them to the rest of the design team and the director. These sketches were warmly received and approved by the director. I then added color to my renderings, creating the final images that would be used to create the actual costumes. My final renderings can be found in Appendix 7 on pages 54-58.

The majority of costume pieces were either pulled from our costume stock or purchased online or locally with my \$3000 budget. My costume renderings were a guide for myself and our costume shop to turn my ideas into a three-dimensional reality.

Certain costume pieces were built, specifically Tami Lake's skirt and Roberta Cupp's jumper. Through mock-ups and fittings with the actors, drapers, and myself we were able to create these pieces. It was eventually decided that the Tami Lake statue would be a painted mannequin dressed as Tami, so a second skirt was made specifically for the mannequin. My main responsibility, pertaining to these built items, was purchasing the fabrics and making specific decisions about the details of Roberta's jumper. After the initial fitting, I placed floral appliques where I wanted them on the jumper, so that the draper could attach them. Images from these fittings can be found in Appendix 8 on page 59.

A very important aspect to the look of the Meredith Millers is their blond hair and golden hands. As Vera explains to Tobin, they do this to emulate female characters in his novel, who disappear but return as bronze statues in a corn field. Wigs were used to make Cooper and the Acolytes blond, as the Acolytes needed to have dark hair when portraying their other characters. The actors playing Vera and Boy X both agreed to dye their hair. The makeup designer and I discussed several methods of making the actors' hands and Vera's entire body gold, and settled on a gold makeup powder mixed with a setting liquid. This method was used because it was easy to apply, dried quickly, and was removed by washing with soap and water. It was also latex free, which was very helpful as one actor portraying an Acolyte had a latex allergy.

In this production of The Metal Children, it was important for me to create characters who came alive onstage, humans who had reasons for the choices they made. I developed costumes that would represent who each character is as an individual and as a member of a group

through my process of creating an inspiration collage and portrait gallery, collaborating and conversing with my fellow designers and director, researching, rendering, and costume fittings. I differentiated between the Meredith Millers, the Pork Patrol, and those on the spectrum between the two. In the following chapter I will assess and evaluate the final production, both in terms of the job I did as the costume designer and the final look of the costumes.

## Chapter Four

### Assessment and Evaluation of the Design Process and Final Product

Looking back at the design and production process for The Metal Children, I feel that my designs were successful. I was very pleased with how everything transitioned from ideas to renderings to three-dimensional costumes, with the final outcome sticking faithfully to my vision. Production photos can be found in Appendix 9 on pages 60-64.

The process for designing costumes for The Metal Children went very smoothly. My source of inspiration, the television show *Twin Peaks*, helped to guide me, the director, and my fellow designers into a surreal world of bizarre and almost inhuman characters. We easily and openly discussed ideas, and I felt that I could bring up any comments or concerns that I had and I would be listened to and respected. Through our design meetings, we collaborated well and were able to create a world that felt at varying times real and unreal.

The costume shop did an excellent job translating my designs into real garments. Valerie Lane guided the shop to quickly and accurately complete the notes that I made during the fittings with the actors. Both of my drapers asked questions and made sure that they were carrying out their work in a way that remained faithful to my vision. I was very pleased with every costume, with the unfortunate exception of Tami Lake's skirt. In choosing fabrics for the constructed pieces, I did not choose a fabric that would hold the pleats I had designed, meaning that it would not stay pleated after being sewn and ironed in place. While my draper valiantly tried to stitch and press the pleats into submission, each evening the pleating would loosen from the hem up, causing the skirt to slowly expand. This taught me the lesson to thoroughly research my fabric choices, and to make purchasing decisions early enough so that if there was an issue with a fabric there would be time to find a solution.



Even with this issue I was incredibly pleased with the final outcome of the design, as was the director Jenny McKnight. I was especially happy with how the townspeople of Midlothia turned out. Their designs showed how each was an individual person that fit on a certain side of the issue. The high contrast between the Meredith Millers and the Pork Patrol set them apart from each other, and showed how far apart they landed on the issues brought up by the novel *The Metal Children*. I feel that if I hadn't chosen such contrasting color palettes then it would have been hard to differentiate who was on what side.

Designing The Metal Children was an excellent experience for me. It allowed me to work on a script that refused to take sides, and to collaborate openly and easily with my fellow designers and director. The process of analyzing the script, creating the portrait gallery and the inspiration collage, researching my ideas, rendering, and finally working with a costume shop was a fantastic way to design a production, and I will continue to put this process into practice. My goal was to create characters who came across as fully realized people, putting thought and feeling into the choices that they made, and I feel I have achieved this aim.

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## Appendix 1: Script Analysis and Action Chart

### The Metal Children Script Analysis

#### I. WHERE ARE THEY?

##### a. In what country, city, place, building, room, etc.?

The play as whole takes place in the United States of America. The opening and ending scenes take place in Tobin's apartment in New York City. The scenes in between are in Midlothia, a small town in the heartland (State unspecified). The specifics of the intermediary scenes are as follows:

- Act I, Scene 2 & 3: A room in the Blue Moon Motel.
- Act II, Scene 1: The auditorium of Midlothia Memorial High School.
- Act II, Scene 2: An intensive care unit at an unspecified hospital.
- Act II, Scene 3: The town square.
- Act II, Scene 4: The same hospital room as II, 2.

##### b. How do the characters describe the place they are in?

Descriptions of Tobin's apartment (I, 1):

- "I apologize for the mess" (7)
- "As you can see, I am a profound slob...currently sweltering in my three-by-five bathroom" (9)
- "My apartment's a mess" (18)

Descriptions of Midlothia (general):

- **Edith:** Though the drive is quite scenic

**Tobin:** Yeah, I took particular note of the nuclear power plant theme. I counted at least three pairs of apocalyptic chimneys billowing ominously stagnant disaster clouds.

**Edith:** I was actually referring to the hills.

**Tobin:** The hills were very nice. A little treacherous at times, but nice.

**Edith:** I guess it's true that we've had more than a few cars drive into the ravine" (21-22)

- **Tobin:** What church group?

**Edith:** The GCC. There's a pretty big chapter here.." (23)

- "Midlothia's sort of a dry town. Well, unofficially dry" (28)

- “Oh, great. Now it’s raining” (35)
- **“Tobin:** Jesus. Where the hell am I?

**Stacey:** You’re in Midlothia. Famous for its limestone, nuclear power, and the largest Black & Decker Factory outlet in America” (36)

- “...I guess I thought I could do the most good by walking right into the mouth of the lion” (36)
- “...they represent a fascistic, bigoted element of this community’ (39)

Description of Midlothia Memorial H.S. Auditorium:

- “...lending us their spacious auditorium” (51)

Description of town square:

- “...there was a statue of her [Tami Lake] in front of the library...” (73)
- Contains a bronze statue resembling Tami Lake. WILL NOT BE A COSTUME, but will need to match the costume Tami will wear.

Description of Tobin’s apartment (II, 5):

- “...and manage to clean up your apartment.” (90)
- **“Vera:** ...I imagined it messier.
- **Tobin:** It’s taken me six months to get the place into shape. I hired this entire administrative team to come organize things. It was like watching an archaeology dig. Three long days of sifting through piles that should never be named.” (93)
- **“Vera:** What’s that saying on your bathroom mirror? ‘Be Here Now.’” (96)

c. Is there any special significance to the place they are in?

The town of Midlothia is home to a controversy over Tobin’s novel *The Metal Children*.

## II. WHEN ARE THEY?

a. In what day, month, year, century, season, time of day, etc.?

The play begins in March of 2009, which we know because the month is openly stated, and because *The Metal Children* was published in 1997 when Tobin was 26, 12 years previous (Tobin states he is now 38). The majority of the scenes continue through the month of March, until II, 5 when we skip ahead to February of 2010. The specifics of each scene are as follows:



Act I, Scene 1:

March 17th, 2009.

- "...Next week they're having a school board meeting..." (13)
- "[Stacey's letter]'s dated March fourteenth, three days ago" (15)

Act I, Scene 2:

Stage directions indicate only 5 days have passed, but context clues tell us it's the 23rd, 6 days later.

- "So everyone's talking about the big meeting tomorrow" (21)
- "Oh, great. Now it's raining" (35) i.e. warm enough to be early spring as opposed to winter.
- "...It's about ten-thirty [I assume pm, based on the Pork Patrol prowling about, but I could be wrong], and it's raining" (38)
- "Now we only have about thirty minutes before my aunt starts making rounds of the units [This makes me think it may be 10:30 AM, but I'm unsure]" (47)

Act I, Scene 3:

The night of March 23rd.

- Scene takes place in the middle of the night. There is no dialogue in this scene, but as it involves Tobin being attacked while he sleeps.
- "As you can probably see, I sort of had a, well, a rough night..." (63)

Act II, Scene 1:

March 24th.

- "On Wednesday, March twenty-fourth...open school board meeting...scheduled for seven-thirty in the evening" (16)
- "Good evening, everyone" (51)
- "... obviously confused about what month we're in- the last time I checked, Halloween was at the end of October..." (54)
- "...Thirty-nine students from Mr. Kinsella's Great Books class...holding candles as a kind of vigil" (59)

Act II, Scene 2:

Some point during the day on March 25th.

- "[Tami Lake] disappeared last night. And this morning there was a statue of her erected in front of the library..." (73)
- "Vera never came home last night" (74)

Act II, Scene 3:

The night of March 25th.

- "About an hour ago they found her..." (76)
- "Rough night, huh?" (77)
- "At least you can hear the crickets. They're early this year" (77)
- "Because a few hours [I feel like he means the meeting, but that was the day before] ago I was the visiting werewolf from New York City" (79)
- "When the news breaks tomorrow morning..." (80)

- “...I could sit here and you could stand there and we could probably do this all night. But I’m tired. I’ve had two of the worst days of my life” (81)

Act II, Scene 4:

The next day, March 26th.

- **“Tobin:** When are you planning on leaving for Idaho?  
**Vera:** Tonight. The first van left a few hours ago. Sick letters were forged and delivered to the principal’s office before first period. Most parents won’t even know we’re gone till dinnertime” (84)

Act II, Scene 5:

An unspecified day in February of 2010.

- “I’m calling Nan at Scribner as soon as I get back to the office” (89)
- “Who gets married in February, anyway?” (90)
- “In a little less than a year, you through a brutal stabbing, *The Metal Children* is famously banned...” (90)
- **“Bruno:** How old is [Celia, Tobin and Vera’s daughter]?  
**Vera:** Ten weeks.” (91)
- “It was almost a year ago” (95)
- “She was born December seventh” (96)
- “It’s been on the bestseller list for thirty-two consecutive weeks” (98)
- “Where are you staying tonight?” (99)
- **“Tobin:** When would be a good time for me to come out to Idaho?  
**Vera:** In a few months...  
**Tobin:** So what, May, June?” (101)

b. Do the characters have anything specific to say about when they are?  
See section a of this question.

c. Is there any special significance to when they are? Is it for instance, a national holiday?

None that I could discern, besides the school board meeting to ban *The Metal Children* taking place at the beginning of Act II.

### III. WHO ARE THEY?

- How is this character related to the other characters in the script?
- What is the character’s role in life? Include jobs, professions as well as social and economic class.
- What does the character think of the other characters?
- What does the character think of him/herself?
- Under what form of government does the character live? What is the character’s attitude about the form of government under which he/she lives?
- What role does religion play in the life of the character? Which religion? What is the character’s attitude about their religion?
- What are the prevailing attitudes toward sex, family, marriage and ethical conduct? Does this character live within or rebel against these attitudes?

## 1. Tobin Falmouth

- a. Tobin is one of Bruno's clients, and he purchased marijuana from Kong. Tobin has a sexual relationship with Lynne, but that's about it for them. He creates friendships with Edith and Stacey, though these are more based in the two admiring Tobin. He impregnates Vera, but their relationship doesn't progress beyond this. Tobin is idolized by Edith, Stacey, Vera, Cooper, and Boy X, while being vilified by Otto, Tami, and Roberta. He is attacked on two separate occasions by the Boy in the Porky Pig Mask, and is then treated by the Nurse.
- b. Tobin is a YA novelist who previously worked as a mover. He had previously been commended for his works, but has currently fallen on hard times. Not only has he missed his latest deadline by nine months, he is currently broke.
- c. Tobin leans on Bruno for support and money, and seems to like him a lot (I,1). Tobin also seems reliant on Kong and Lynne, but more for an outlet for his base needs, but otherwise doesn't really care about them (I,1). Tobin forms a fast friendship with Stacey, showing him some of his vulnerabilities and reading to him when Stacey is hospitalized (I,2 & II,2). Tobin likes Edith and Vera and is thankful for their support, but doesn't really take that much interest in them (I,2). After leaving Midlothia Tobin doesn't really think about Vera, but he does care about her and Celia (II,5). He doesn't like Roberta and becomes offended and angry when she attempts to befriend and convert him (II,3).
- d. Tobin realizes that he's a complete disaster (I, 1) but he's still smug enough to think that he's too good to be a YA author (I,1 & I,2) His view of himself gets better after the events in Midlothia as he stops drinking and starts writing again (II, 5).
- e. Tobin lives in the United States of America, so he lives in a democracy. We do not see or hear any of his opinions on the government.
- f. Tobin may have been a Christian, but now feels that Jesus and God have abandoned him and don't love him because his life has gone to shit (II, 3).
- g. The United States has fairly conservative views on sex and marriage, that sex is for a married couple who start a family, and the expectation for citizens is that they will stay within the lines of what society expects of them. Tobin seems to have had fairly traditional views on sex and family while he was married to Miranda. However, after their divorce he falls off the morality wagon, having unprotected sex with several women and doing drugs. He seems to come somewhat back into the fold after his time in Midlothia, as he gets clean.

## 2. Bruno Binelli

- a. Bruno is Tobin's agent and main support system. He receives a letter from Stacey asking for Tobin to attend the school board meeting. Bruno meets Kong, Lynne, and Vera for only a couple of minutes.
- b. Bruno is Tobin's literary agent and is very good at his job. He is well off financially.
- c. Bruno takes pity on Tobin, but is frustrated and minorly disgusted by his lifestyle and actions (I,1). He does still believe Tobin is a good writer and that he can get out of this funk. Bruno is ecstatic when Tobin gets his life back on track (II, 5).

He is also appreciative of Vera and Stacey's efforts to get the novel reinstated and respects them (I,1 & II,5).

- d. I feel that Bruno thinks highly of himself, without being conceited.
- e. We do not hear Bruno's opinions about the democracy that he lives in.
- f. We do not hear or see Bruno's views on religion.
- g. He mostly follows along the societal guidelines of living in the USA, but the character description in the script states that he is gay (this is not referenced in the dialogue of the script).

### 3. **Kong**

- a. Kong is Tobin's weed dealer, and meets Bruno for a few minutes.
- b. Kong sells marijuana and is likely doing fairly well.
- c. We don't hear or see what Kong thinks of Bruno or Tobin, but as Tobin's dealer he is likely neutral towards both of them.
- d. We don't know what Kong thinks of himself, but I would guess that he has a high view of himself since he is a teenager.
- e. Kong's view on the government are unknown.
- f. Kong does not state his views on religion.
- g. As a drug dealer Kong does not fit into society's ethical views, and we don't know anything about Kong's family or sexual relationships.

### 4. **Lynne**

- a. Lynne has unprotected sex with Tobin (possibly on a regular basis), and meets Bruno briefly.
- b. We do not know Lynne's career or job, but she goes from periods of being broke to being loaded.
- c. Lynne is impressed to learn that Tobin is a writer and seems to like him fairly well (I,1).
- d. Lynne seems to be alright with herself, but we never hear her talk about herself either.
- e. We don't know Lynne's views on the government.
- f. Lynne's religion or spiritual views are unknown.
- g. Lynne does not fit into society's views of sex and marriage, as she has unprotected sex with Tobin (likely on multiple occasions). This also likely puts herself outside society's views on ethics.

### 5. **Edith Dundee**

- a. Edith is Vera's aunt who has raised her since Vera was two years old. Edith is a big fan of Tobin's novel *The Metal Children*, but only began to read it after the controversy arose. She seems to have a friendly but not close relationship with Stacey. Edith and Roberta are in the same knitting circle.
- b. Edith owns the Blue Moon Motel, and has worked there/owned it for at least 14 years. She is comfortable financially, but not too well off.
- c. Edith enjoys Tobin's work and appears to care about him even though she doesn't really know him (I,2). She loves her niece Vera very much, and worries about her after she "disappears" (I,2 & II,2). She cares about Stacey and likes him (I,2 &

- II,2). She doesn't care for Roberta after the controversy erupts (I,2).
- d. Edith has a good view of herself, not too self-absorbed.
- e. We don't hear Edith's views on the government, but I feel that she trusts in the government of the US and Midlothia.
- f. We don't really know what Edith's views of religion are.
- g. Edith has never been married, but I feel that she keeps herself within the sexual and ethical guidelines that are set in place by society.

## 6. Stacey Kinsella

- a. Stacey is a massive fan of Tobin's work, and forms a bond with him almost immediately. Stacey seems to have a friendly but not close relationship with Edith. Stacey is one of Vera's (and presumably Cooper's) teachers and backs her up in her protests. I am under the impression that the Boy in the Porky Pig Mask (or one of his counterparts) forced Stacey into the ravine.
- b. Stacey is a teacher at Midlothia Memorial High School. He is financially comfortable enough to own a house.
- c. Stacey idolizes Tobin's work and forms a fast friendship with him (I,2). He supports the cause Vera, Cooper, and Boy X are fighting for, even supplying them with body paint (I,2). He fears the Boy in the Porky Pig Mask and his compatriots (I,2).
- d. Stacey thinks decently highly of himself, that he is bring truth to the community and opening their eyes.
- e. Stacey openly protests against the school board that banned Tobin's novel, but he tries to create change through legitimate means, such as petitions and (attempted) speaking at school board meetings.
- f. We don't know what Stacey's religious views are.
- g. It is implied in the script that Stacey is gay, so he does not fit into the sexual and marital thoughts of society. He lives a moral and ethical life.

## 7. Vera Dundee

- a. Vera is obsessed with Tobin's novel *The Metal Children*, and allows him to impregnate her when they first meet. Vera briefly meets Bruno when she visits Tobin's apartment in New York. Vera is Edith's niece, and she has lived with her at the motel since she was two years old. Vera was a student in Stacey's 'Great Books' class. Vera is friends with Cooper, and they both fight against the Boy in the Porky Pig Mask and the Pork Patrol. Vera speaks at the school board meeting along with Otto, Tami Lake, and Roberta. Tami Lake and Vera are also classmates. Vera briefly meets the Nurse. Vera brings Boy X into her cult to impregnate the other girls, but presumably doesn't sleep with him herself.
- b. Vera is a student and also helps her aunt at the motel. She lives comfortably. After her and her cult move to Idaho they fall onto hard times financially.
- c. She idolizes Tobin and may have fallen in love with him, describing what happened between them as "epic" (I,2 & II,5). She loves Edith very much, but thinks she's a square and that she can live without her (I,2 & II,4). She cares about Stacey as he facilitated her reading of *The Metal Children* (I,2).

- d. Vera sees herself as a freedom fighter who is trying to break down the “fascist” Christian right. (I,2)
- e. Vera fights against the school board, not just with petitions but more revolutionary means. She states that they are fascistic (I, 2).
- f. Vera is an atheist who has an open disdain for Christianity. She begins her own cult based off of *The Metal Children*.
- g. Vera is openly fighting against society’s views on sex and marriage, becoming pregnant with no intention of getting married. She also partakes of some vandalism and peaceful protest.

## 8. Cooper

- a. Cooper treats Tobin like a deity, prostrating herself at his feet when she finally meets him. She was presumably a student in Stacey’s ‘Great Books’ class, where she and Vera began to worship Meredith Miller and *The Metal Children*. Cooper helps Vera fight against the Boy in the Porky Pig Mask and the Pork Patrol. She is a classmate of Tami Lake’s. She likely becomes pregnant by Boy X.
- b. Cooper is a student and seems to be comfortable financially, until she moves to Idaho with Vera and the others, where they fall on hard times.
- c. Cooper also sees herself as a freedom fighter.
- d. We do not know how Cooper thinks of herself, but I feel that she thinks of herself as a revolutionary and a strong, independent woman.
- e. Cooper helps in the fight against the school board.
- f. We do not know Cooper’s religious views, but it’s likely she is also an atheist like Vera. She is a part of the cult of *The Metal Children*.
- g. Cooper follows along with Vera’s ideals, and likely becomes pregnant by Boy X. She also is a vandal and protester.

## 9. Boy in Porky Pig Mask

- a. On two separate occasions he attacks Tobin, once with nun chucks and once with a knife. He or a member of his Pork Patrol cause Stacey’s car to fall into a ravine, after terrorizing him in his home. He and his compatriots vandalize the town in an attempt to scare Vera, Cooper, Boy X, and the rest of that group. He or someone from the Pork Patrol vandalize Edith’s motel as well. He is on the side of banning *The Metal Children* along with Otto, Roberta, and Tami.
- b. He is a student at Midlothia Memorial and is likely comfortable financially.
- c. The Boy in the Porky Pig Mask hates everyone on the other side of the controversy, even resorting to violence.
- d. Boy in the Porky Pig Mask likely thinks that he is a crusader for the Christian right and that he is doing what he feels is right.
- e. He agrees with the school board’s decision to ban Tobin’s novel and fights to keep things as they are.
- f. We don’t know the specifics of the Boy in the Porky Pig Mask, but he is clearly part of the Christian Right and allows that to guide most of his decisions.
- g. He agrees with all of the strict guidelines set up by the conservative town of Midlothia, and lives within those. Except of course for all the vandalism and violence he commits for his cause.

## **10. Otto Hurley**

- a. Otto briefly meets Tobin, but even before he met him he was part of the group who wanted to ban *The Metal Children*, along with Tami and Roberta. Roberta and Otto appear to be on friendly terms. Otto is a member of the school board in the district where Stacey works.
- b. Otto owns a cement company and is a member of the district school board. He is financially well off.
- c. Otto respects Tami and Roberta for speaking up for the Christian right at the school board meeting. (II,1) He respects Tobin's writing, but disagrees with his message (II,3). He thinks Stacey is a ridiculous liberal and he mocks Vera (II,1).
- d. Otto feels that he is protecting his community from the scourge of immorality and that he is very much in the right.
- e. He lives under the democracy of the United States and Midlothia, and he trusts in the system.
- f. Otto is a conservative Christian and lives by that moral code.
- g. Otto fits into the mold society has formed for him in terms of marriage, sex, and ethical standards.

## **11. Tami Lake**

- a. Tami wants to ban Tobin's book. She is a classmate of Vera and Cooper's, and may have a student of Stacey's. While it's not stated that Tami and Roberta know each other, it's likely since Roberta mouths along to the "rap" Tami performs at the school board meeting.
- b. Tami is a student and is likely comfortable financially.
- c. Tami is set against Tobin, Stacey, and those that support *The Metal Children*. She even calls Vera "tainted" after Vera begins to speak at the school board meeting (II,1).
- d. Tami thinks highly enough of herself to speak at the school board meeting, but she is clearly nervous. After the meeting, she commits suicide in the church basement, we find out she was pregnant. It's likely she committed suicide because she was ashamed of being pregnant.
- e. She lives comfortably under the democracy of the US and Midlothia, following the laws and rules set in place.
- f. Tami is a conservative Christian and strives to live up to the standard. It's likely her religious views played a part in her suicide, since her pregnancy would make her a disgrace.
- g. Tami attempts to fit the expectations in regard to sex and marriage, but she becomes pregnant out of wedlock. She appears to fit into the ethical views of Midlothia.

## **12. Roberta Cupp**

- a. Roberta first wants to ban Tobin's novel, but after meeting him she attempts to become his friend and bring him to Jesus. She clearly has a friendly relationship with Otto, but it is never defined. She appears to know Tami, and have helped her before the school board meeting, as Roberta mouths along to Tami's "rap".

- b. We are not told of Roberta's career or job, but she appears to be comfortable financially.
- c. Roberta thinks that Tobin is a smug asshole, but she attempts to convert him to Christianity to save his soul (II,3).
- d. Roberta views herself as a good Christian woman, to the point where becomes a bit conceited.
- e. Roberta lives and follows along with the laws set in place by the governments of the United States and Midlothia.
- f. The Christian religion is the most important part of Roberta's life, to the point she attempts to convert Tobin and is a church leader.
- g. Roberta fits very well into the mold of sex, marriage, and ethics put in place by society. She was previously married.

### **13. Nurse**

- a. The Nurse takes care of both Stacey and Tobin when they are hospitalized. She briefly meets Edith, Vera, and Boy X.
- b. The Nurse is a nurse and is likely comfortable financially.
- c. We don't really know what the Nurse thinks of the other characters, but she is very respectful and takes good care of Stacey and Tobin. She describes Stacey as "...a fighter" in Act II, Scene 4.
- d. We don't know what the Nurse thinks of herself, but she likely sees herself as a good and helpful person.
- e. The Nurse also lives in the democracies of the US and Midlothia, and doesn't seem to have any qualms about either government.
- f. We do not know the Nurse's religion or views on religion.
- g. We don't know anything about the Nurse's live, but she likely fits into society's guidelines of ethics and morality.

### **14. Boy X**

- a. Boy X idolizes Tobin in the same way that Vera and Cooper do. He was chosen by Vera to impregnate the girls in their cult, and has likely gotten Cooper pregnant. He may have been in Stacey's 'Great Books' class, or been in one of his other classes. We don't know if he helped the girls wage war with the Pork Patrol, but I feel that probably has.
- b. Boy X is a student at Midlothia Memorial, and sperm donor to the cult of *The Metal Children*. He is probably comfortable financially until he moves to Idaho with the girls and falls on hard times.
- c. Boy X worships Tobin, and agrees with the "teachings" of *The Metal Children*.
- d. He is likely happy with his position as sperm donor, and seems to be happy with himself as a whole.
- e. Boy X lives in Midlothia in the United States and he disagrees with the school board's decision to ban *The Metal Children*.
- f. Boy X may be an atheist, but it's never stated. His being a part of the cult puts him at odds with the Christian right in Midlothia
- g. Since Boy X is the sperm donor for the 30-odd girls in the Meredith Miller cult, he doesn't fit into society's views on sex and marriage. We do not know what role



Boy X plays in the vandalism and “counter-revolutionary” aspects of the Meredith Miller cult.

#### IV. WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE THE PLAY BEGAN?

Limit your facts to information given in the dialogue but be sure to “listen” carefully; much of what you discover will come from casual clues, which can occur in a variety of contexts.

##### **Tobin**

Tobin had dreams of becoming the next Vonnegut or Updike, but ends up writing YA literature instead, which he views as a “ghetto”. He had been married to author Miranda McCloud for 7 years, where they lived in a shithole apartment that frequently go invaded by a homeless man and his dog. Tobin became an addict after hurting his back at work, causing him to become paranoid and jealous of Miranda’s relationship with another tenant in their building.

After Miranda becomes pregnant, she decides to have an abortion. In his drugged state, Tobin has a bizarre dream where Miranda is a crying statue. After coming to/waking up, he writes *The Metal Children*, his second novel, out of necessity, almost a sort of personal exorcism.

*The Metal Children* is published in 1997, being named a 1997 Best Book for Young Adults and short-listed for the L.A. Times Book Prize. Tobin sobers up and reconnects with Miranda. Tobin writes two more novels.

Things begin to fall apart however, possibly beginning with Tobin missing his next deadline, which occurs 9 months prior to the start of the play. At some point Tobin falls off the wagon, falling into a depressive cycle that likely pushed Miranda away. Approximately 2 months before the beginning of the action, Miranda leaves Tobin for her editor. Tobin becomes even more of a wreck, leaving his apartment to fall into disarray, becoming broke, and leaning more on his crutch of alcohol, drugs, and unprotected sex.

##### **Midlothia and its citizens**

Regarding the controversy of *The Metal Children*, Stacey Kinsella introduces the text to Superintendent Perry Waldvogel (possibly his lover?) who agreed to allow Stacey to add it to his Great Books curriculum. Many students respond positively, but when the controversy begins to brew the school board seizes all of the books to seal in a vault. They also request that Waldvogel resign, which he does, and then he promptly disappears.

Two distinctive groups of students come forward as the controversy continues to take over the town. One is the Pork Patrol, a group of mostly male teenagers who terrorize supporters of the novel, who vandalize property and twist symbolism (or “symbolism”) from the novel to mean what they want it to mean.

The other isn’t named in the play, but they are for the novel and essentially form a cult around the novel’s protagonist Meredith Miller. They begin to paint their fingers (and eventually their entire hands) gold in an effort to emulate the bronzed women, all of this being funded by Stacey. They eventually grow into a counter-revolutionary organization that attempts to stave off the Pork Patrol. The young women also find a

sperm donor (a freshman known as Boy X) who begins to impregnate them, with fourteen knowing they're pregnant before the play begins.

### Edith & Vera

Vera's parents die when she is only two years old, possibly on purpose. Her aunt Edith takes her, where they both live in the motel Edith owns. The principal of Midlothia Memorial rips *The Metal Children* out of Vera's hands, which pushes her to create the petition to reinstate the novel. She becomes the head of pro-*Metal Children* students and the leader of the "revolution".

### Stacey

Stacey received his degree from a small liberal arts college located thirty-five miles north of Midlothia. He applies for a position in the English Department of Midlothia Memorial High, where teaches a course called "Great Books". He may or may not have started a relationship with Superintendent Waldvogel, though context clues point to yes.

### Roberta Cupp

Roberta was previously married to a man named James. They were incapable of conceiving so they considered adopting, until James he was diagnosed with throat cancer. After years of suffering, James dies seven years previous to the events of the play.

V. WHAT IS THE FUNCTION OF EACH CHARACTER IN THE PLAY? (List each character and chose a, b, or c and answer the corresponding questions.)

a. Principal characters:

Who is the protagonist?

Note the primary action(s)

Who is the antagonist?

Note the primary action(s)

What are the functions of the other principal characters?

b. Secondary characters:

What is the function of each?

c. Crowds and functionaries:

Note functions

1. **Tobin Falmouth**

A) Tobin is the protagonist and principal character. He visits the town of Midlothia, impregnates Vera, tells the truth about the "message" of his novel, and returns home.

2. **Bruno Binelli**

B) Bruno is a secondary character. He propels the action by giving Tobin Stacey's letter and a car to get to Midlothia.

3. **Kong**

C) Kong is a functionary. He shows how far Tobin has fallen.

4. **Lynne**  
C) Lynne is also a functionary to show how fucked up Tobin's life has gotten.
5. **Edith Dundee**  
B) Edith is a secondary character. She tells Tobin and the rest of the town about Stacey's accident, and provides plenty of exposition about the town.
6. **Stacey Kinsella**  
B) Stacey is a secondary character who gets Tobin to come to Midlothia by writing him a letter. He is also one of the main supporters of *The Metal Children*.
7. **Vera Dundee**  
A) Ver is a primary character. She's the leader of the pro-*Metal Children* students, becomes pregnant by Tobin, and brings him information of how the commune is doing.
8. **Cooper**  
C) Cooper is a functionary who shows support for Vera.
9. **Boy in Porky Pig Mask**  
C) The Boy in the Porky Pig Mask is a functionary who attacks Tobin to throw obstacles in his way and get him out of Town.
10. **Otto Hurley**  
B) Otto is a secondary character who emcees the school board meeting.
11. **Tami Lake**  
C) Tami is a functionary who shows how heated things have become in Midlothia when she commits suicide.
12. **Roberta Cupp**  
A/B) While I don't see Roberta as a primary character, I do feel that she is the closest this play gets to an antagonist. She confronts Tobin about his novel is gives the main argument for the religious right about the novel.
13. **Nurse**  
C) The Nurse is a functionary that cares for Stacey and Tobin.
14. **Boy X**  
C) Boy X is a functionary who shows how dedicated the young

people of Midlothia are to *The Metal Children*.

## VI. WHAT KINDS OF DIALOGUE DO THE CHARACTERS SPEAK?

- a. Realistic?
- b. Naturalistic?
- c. Literary?
- d. Poetry?
- e. Other?

E. The text contains passages that can be seen as naturalistic, in that they imitate how people really speak without becoming fully realistic, and sections that are more abstract and symbolic (not sure if that's quite the right word), where they are clearly meant to point to audience to a certain conclusion. The best example I can find for the symbolic dialogue takes place in Act I, Scene 2:

**Edith:** Vera's fine, thanks... I have no idea why she just bleached her hair. My niece has this beautiful head of dark curly hair.

**Stacey:** It's what Meredith Miller does in the novel. After the whole town finds out that she's pregnant, she bleaches her hair.

**Edith:** That's right, she does bleach her hair, doesn't she? What do you suppose that means?

## VII. WHAT HAPPENS IN THE PLAY?

Briefly describe the principal events in the play.

Depressed and self-destructive YA author Tobin Falmouth visits Midlothia, an American heartland town that is attempting to ban one of his novels, which has been interpreted as a brilliant text that has themes upsetting to the religious right. Upon arriving, Tobin interacts with townspeople on both sides of the debate, being beaten and impregnating a teenager in the process. There appears to be a culture war going on in the small town, with vandalism and violent incidents running rampant. Tobin meets Vera, the teenager he impregnates, the student leader of the book's supporters, who has essentially started a cult of fellow teenagers who are purposefully getting pregnant in an effort to emulate the protagonist of the novel.

At a school board meeting centered around whether or not the book should be banned, Tobin reveals that he wrote the novel in a state of almost-hysteria, not intending any meaning to be seen in the work but needing to get his dream response to his wife's abortion out of his head. After a young woman who was against the text goes missing, and then is found dead, Tobin has a confrontation with the leader of the books opposition. At the end of that particular scene, Tobin is stabbed by a teenager in a Porky Pig mask, part of a (separate) group that is also against his novel. Almost a year later, Tobin has his life turned around and a new novel freshly completed. Vera visits him in New York City to ask for money for the cult/commune, bringing their daughter with her.

#### VIII. WHAT IS THE PLAY'S THEME?

This will only become apparent when you have read the script **several times**.

I feel that this play's theme is that over-the-top devotion, to the point of hysteria and obsession, with a certain text or topic (be it religion or a novel) will cause people to become blind and violent and ultimately lead to war and destruction.

**Action Chart (w/ certain actors playing multiple roles)**

<u><b>Act I</b></u>			
	<b>Scene 1</b>	<b>Scene 2</b>	<b>Scene 3</b>
<b>Page Number(s)</b>	7-19	20-49	50
Tobin Falmouth	X	X	X
Bruno Binelli	X		
Kong/Tami Lake/Boy X	X (K/10-12)		
Lynne/Roberta Cupp	X (L/12-14)		
Edith Dundee		X	
Stacey Kinsella		X	
Vera Dundee		X (39-49)	
Cooper/Boy in Porky Pig Mask/Nurse		X (C/42-43)	X (PP)
Otto Hurley			

**Action Chart (w/ certain actors playing multiple roles) Continued**

<b><u>Act II</u></b>					
	<b>Scene 1</b>	<b>Scene 2</b>	<b>Scene 3</b>	<b>Scene 4</b>	<b>Scene 4</b>
<b>Page Number(s)</b>	51-67	68-75	76-81	82-87	88-102
Tobin Falmouth	X	X	X	X	X
Bruno Binelli					X
Kong/Tami Lake/Boy X	X (TL)			X (X)	
Lynne/Roberta Cupp	X (RC)		X (RC)		
Edith Dundee	X	X (72-75)			
Stacey Kinsella		X		X	
Vera Dundee	X			X	X (91)
Cooper/Boy in Porky Pig Mask/Nurse		X (N/73)	X (PP/81)	X (N/85)	
Otto Hurley	X		X		

**Action Chart (No actors playing multiple roles)**

<b><u>Act I</u></b>			
	<b>Scene 1</b>	<b>Scene 2</b>	<b>Scene 3</b>
<b>Page Number(s)</b>	7-19	20-49	50
Tobin Falmouth	X	X	X
Bruno Binelli	X		
Kong	X (10-12)		
Lynne	X (12-14)		
Edith Dundee		X	
Stacey Kinsella		X	
Vera Dundee		X (39-49)	
Cooper		X	
Boy in Porky Pig Mask			X
Otto Hurley			
Tami Lake			
Roberta Cupp			
Nurse			
Boy X			



**Action Chart (No actors playing multiple roles) Continued**

<u>Act II</u>					
	<b>Scene 1</b>	<b>Scene 2</b>	<b>Scene 3</b>	<b>Scene 4</b>	<b>Scene 5</b>
<b>Page Number(s)</b>	51-67	68-75	76-81	82-87	88-102
Tobin Falmouth	X	X	X	X	X
Bruno Binelli					X
Kong					
Lynne					
Edith Dundee	X (67)	X (72-75)			
Stacey Kinsella		X		X	
Vera Dundee	X (51-67)			X (82-87)	X (91-102)
Cooper					
Boy in Porky Pig Mask			X		
Otto Hurley	X		X		
Tami Lake	X				
Roberta Cupp	X		X		
Nurse		X		X	
Boy X				X	

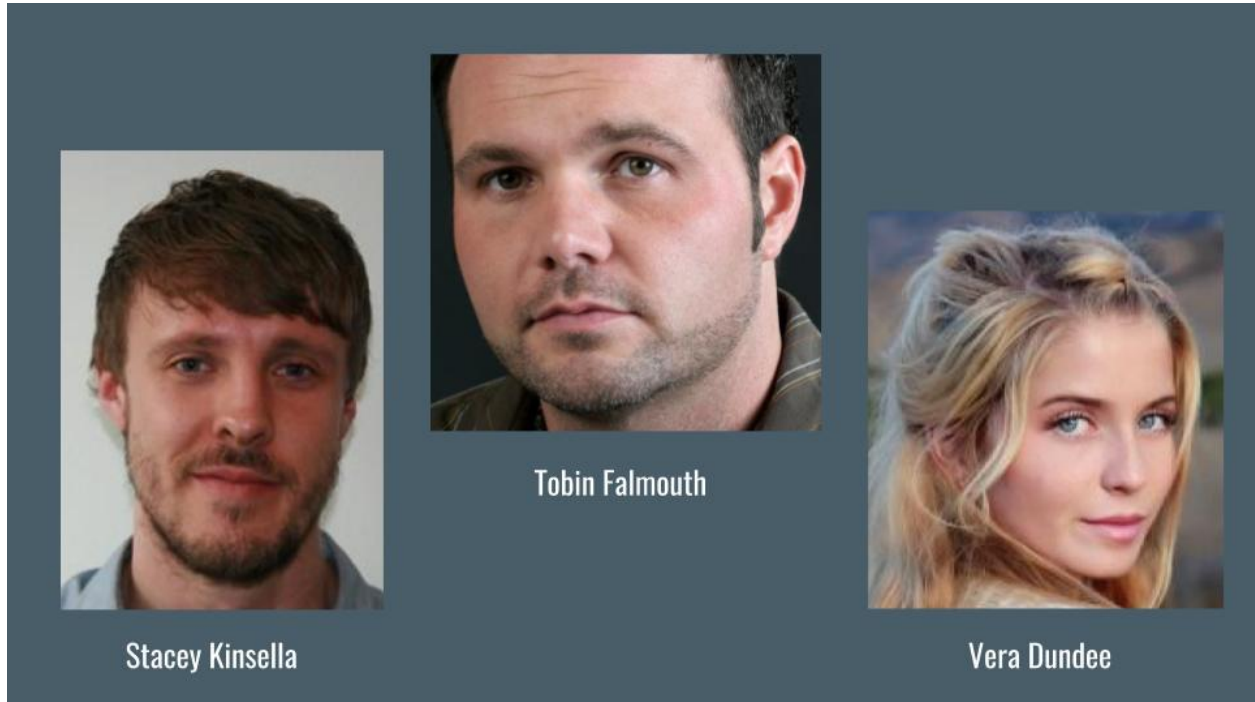
## Appendix 2: Inspiration Collage



See Works Cited, page 22:

From left to right, starting at the top: (“Fire Walk With Me”), (Zilberman), (“Hysterical Woman”), (Dykstra), (“Bible-Symbolism-Hp.”), (Brosch), (Klimt), (Pekthong), (Larin), (Lynch), (Ordonez), (“Screaming Beatles Fans.”), (Senik), (Ibrahim), (Evangelical Fellowship of Canada)

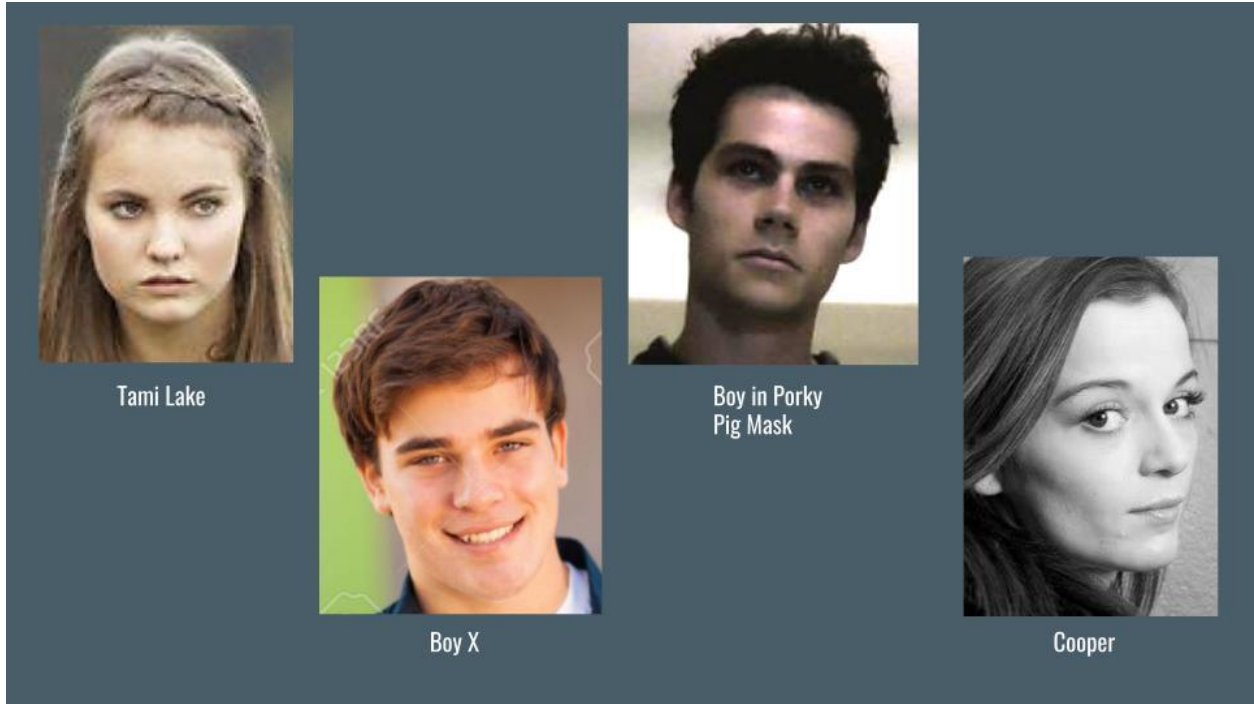
### Appendix 3: Portrait Gallery



See Works Cited, page 22:  
From left to right: (Read), (Molinet), (Avery)



See Works Cited, page 22:  
From left to right: (Celotto), (Young), (“Smiling Older Man.”), (Anime)



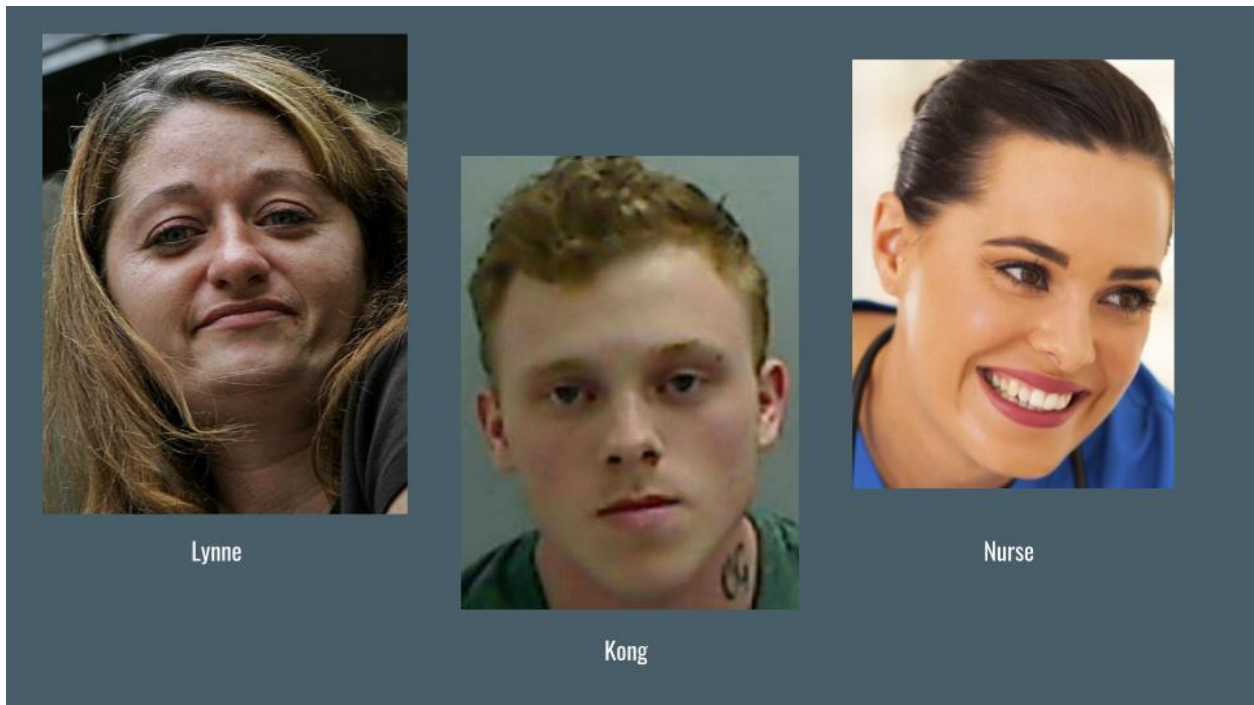
Tami Lake

Boy in Porky Pig Mask

Boy X

Cooper

See Works Cited, page 22:  
 From left to right: (Scribner), (Zhang), (Dylan O'Brien Daily), (Morgan)



Lynne

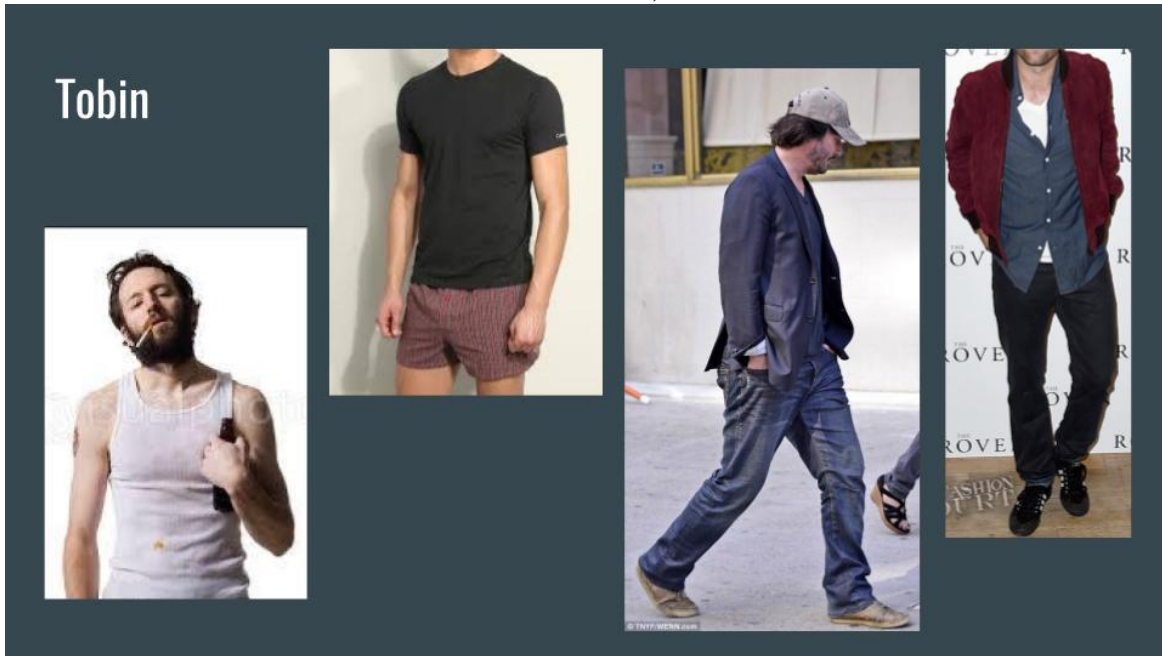
Kong

Nurse

See Works Cited, page 22:  
 From left to right: (Greenlee), (Lightfoot), (Bongo)

## Appendix 4: Selected Research Boards

### Tobin Falmouth, Act I



See Works Cited, page 22:

From left to right: (“Man Standing with Crossed Arms”), (Calvin Klein), (Daily Mail Reporter), (Huffington Post Canada)

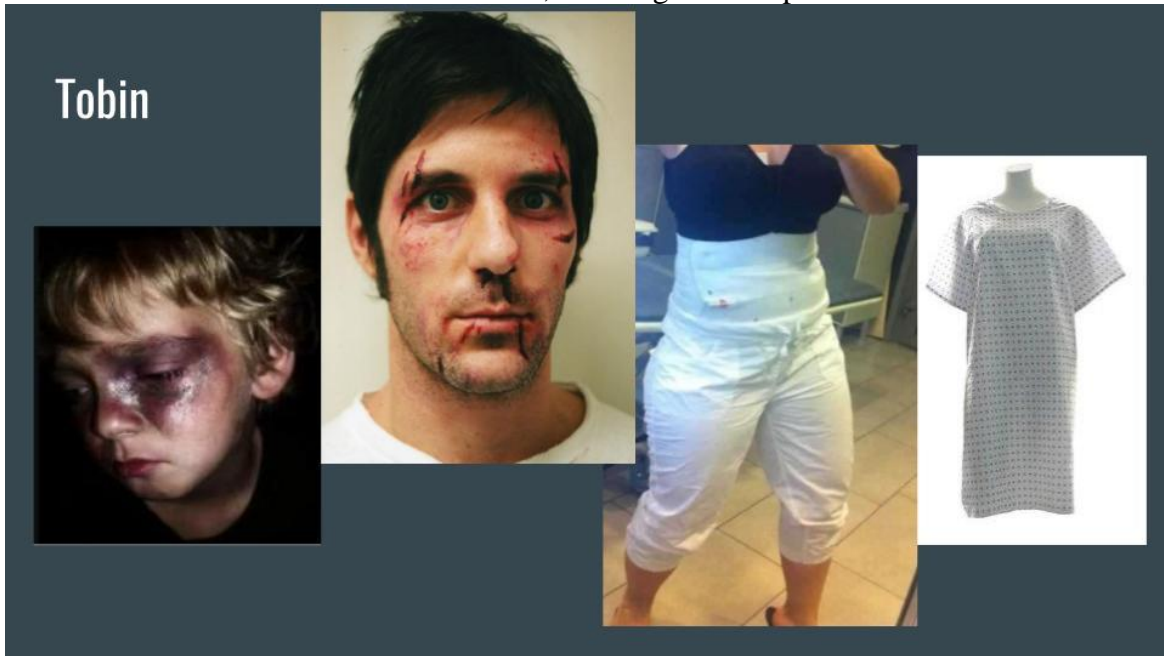
### Tobin Falmouth, Act II



See Works Cited, page 22:

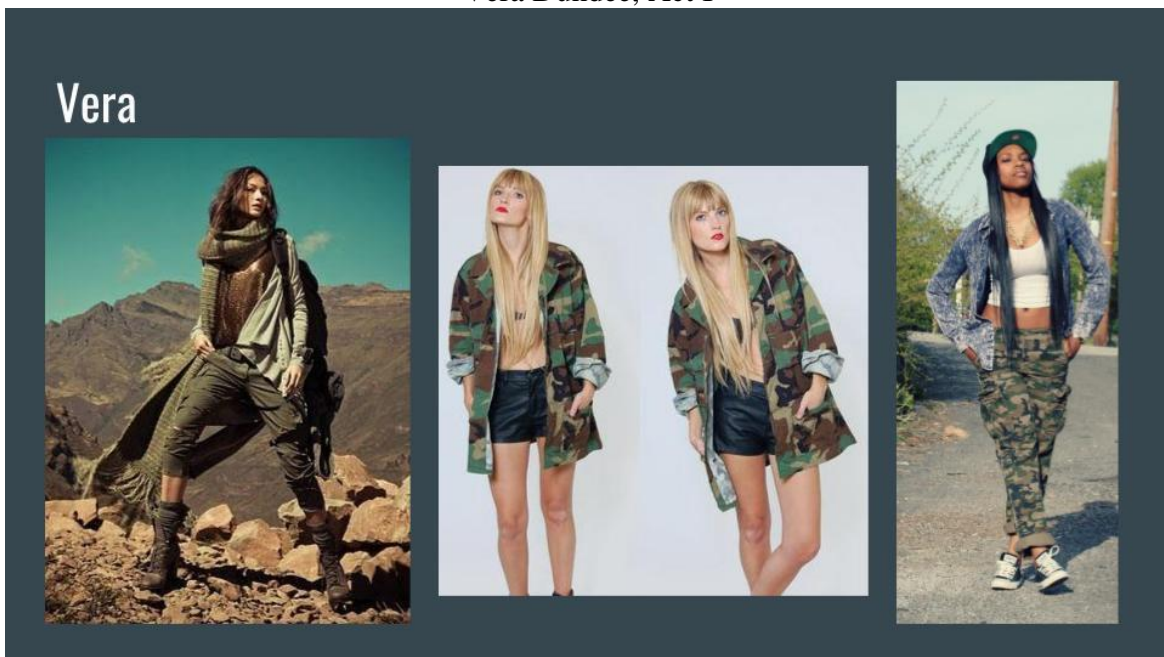
From left to right: (Luker), (Celebrity Reporter), (Of All Threads)

Tobin Falmouth, Bruising and Hospital



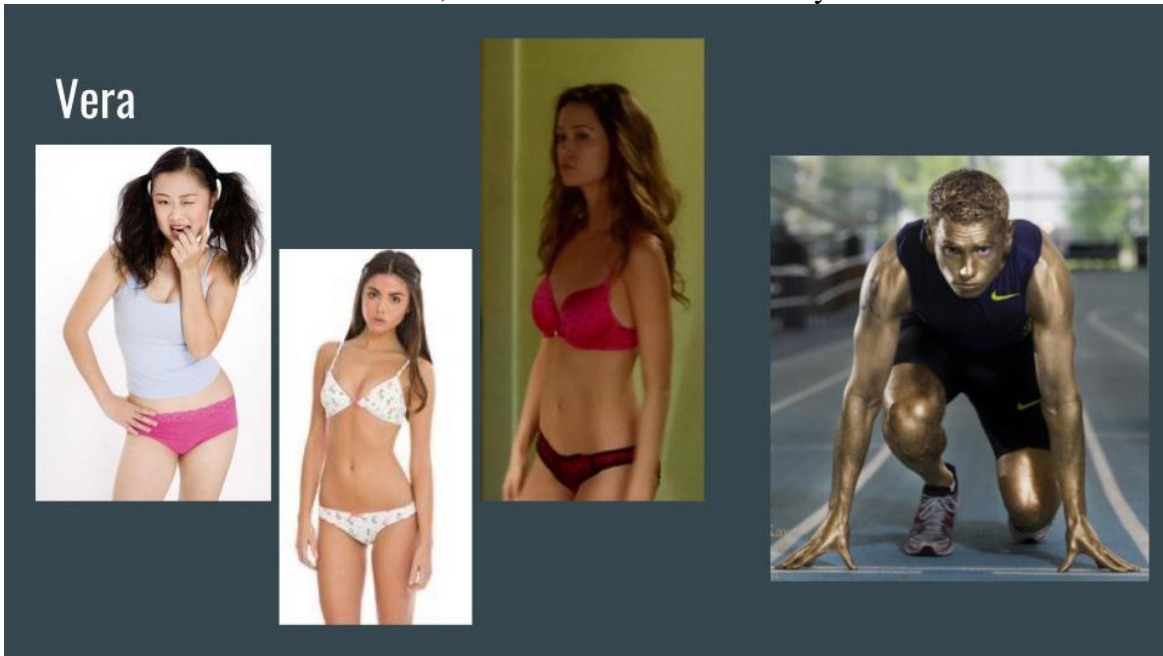
See Works Cited, page 22:  
From left to right: (“Severely Beaten”), (“Man with Minor Face Lacerations.”), (Gray),  
(Nobles Health Care Product)

Vera Dundee, Act I



See Works Cited, page 22:  
From left to right: (Kennedy), (LotusVintageNY), (“Woman in Camo Pants.”)

Vera Dundee, Underclothes and Gold Body Paint



See Works Cited, page 22:

From left to right: (Eastwest Imaging), (Hawkins), (Abraxas366), (McKay)

Vera Dundee, Act 2 Scene 5



See Works Cited, page 22:

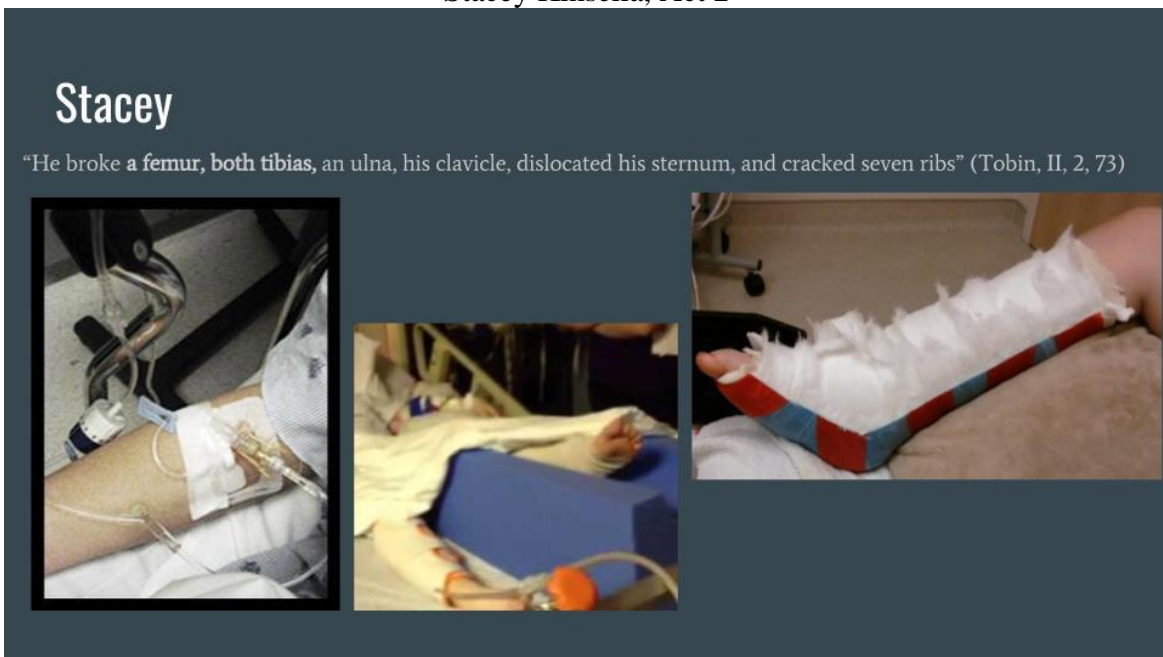
From left to right: (Chan), (“Three Women's Winter Fashion Looks.”), (Mikandlo), (“Sandra Bullock in Black North Face Jacket.”)

Roberta Cupp



See Works Cited, page 22:  
From left to right: (Daily Mail Reporters), (Church),  
("Woman in Blue Denim Jumper Dress."), (Pierce)

Stacey Kinsella, Act 2



From Works Cited, page 22:  
From left to right: (Dagger), (Churchill), (Hartzer)



## Appendix 5: Color Palettes

Tobin Falmouth



See Works Cited, page 22:

From left to right, starting at the top: (“Hysterical Woman”), (Pekthong), (“Men's Backyard Full Zip Hoodie.”), (Larin), (Dykstra), (“Denim - Barkweave - Dark Blue Stretch.”), (Ordonez), (“Bible-Symbolism-Hp.”), (“Rough 'N Rowdy - Blueberry Fabric.”), (Grizzard)

Meredith Millers



See Works Cited, page 22:

From left to right, starting at the top: (“Sunlight through Leaves.”), (Klimt), (“Brown Herringbone Flecked Donegal Tweed.”), (EZ Hybrid Turf), (Menstrosity), (“Forest Camo”), (“Brass Flats.”), (Evangelical Fellowship of Canada)

## Pork Patrol

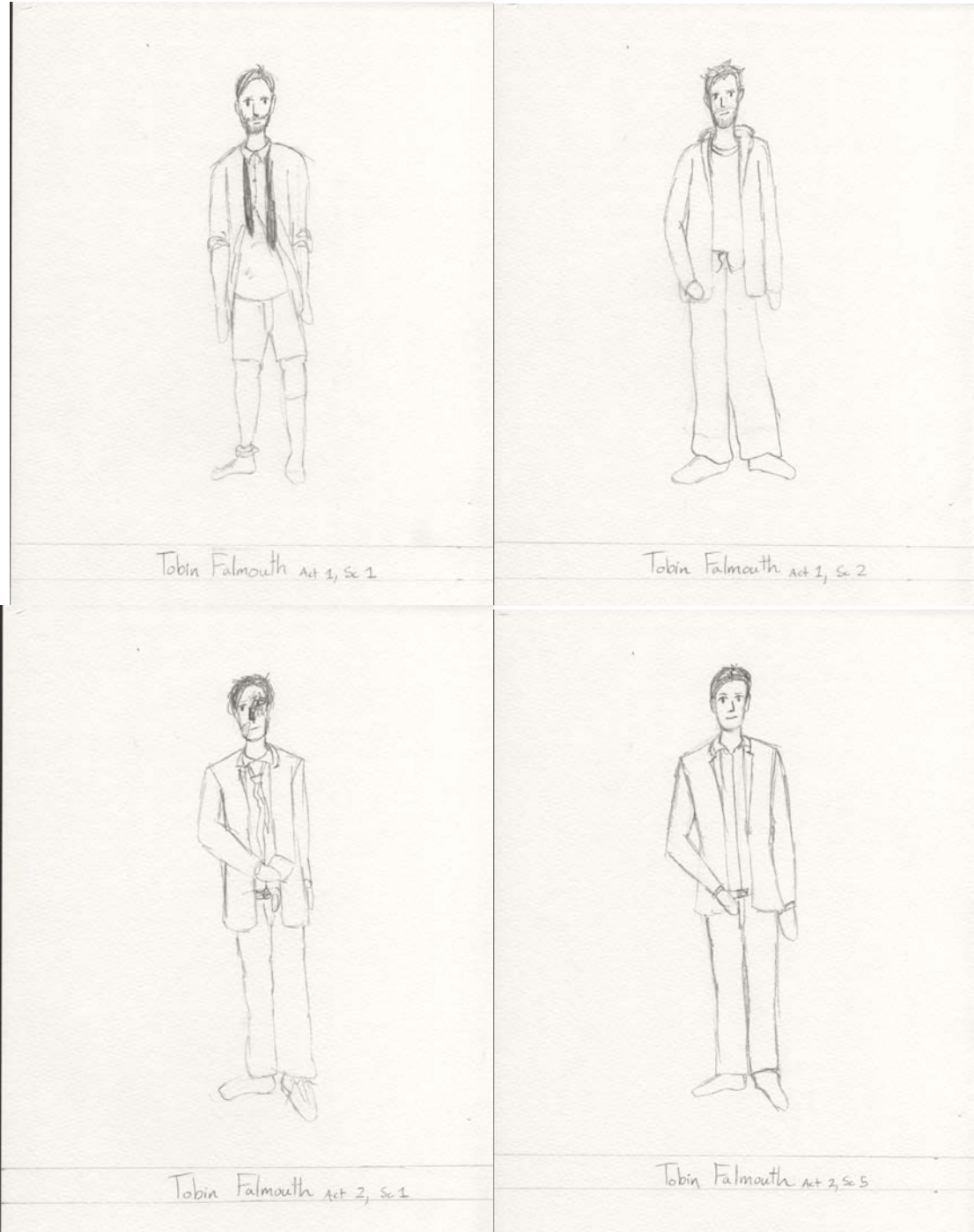


See Works Cited, page 22:

From left to right, starting at the top: (Zilberman), (Gold Key), (Ibrahim), (ABC Photo Archives), (“Modest Ladies School Jumper Dress-2 Lengths.”), (In The Midst 777), (Lynch), (“Oversized Pink Sweater.”), (“Sunbrella Canvas Heather/Beige Fabric.”)

**Appendix 6: Selected Costume Rough Sketches**

Tobin Falmouth



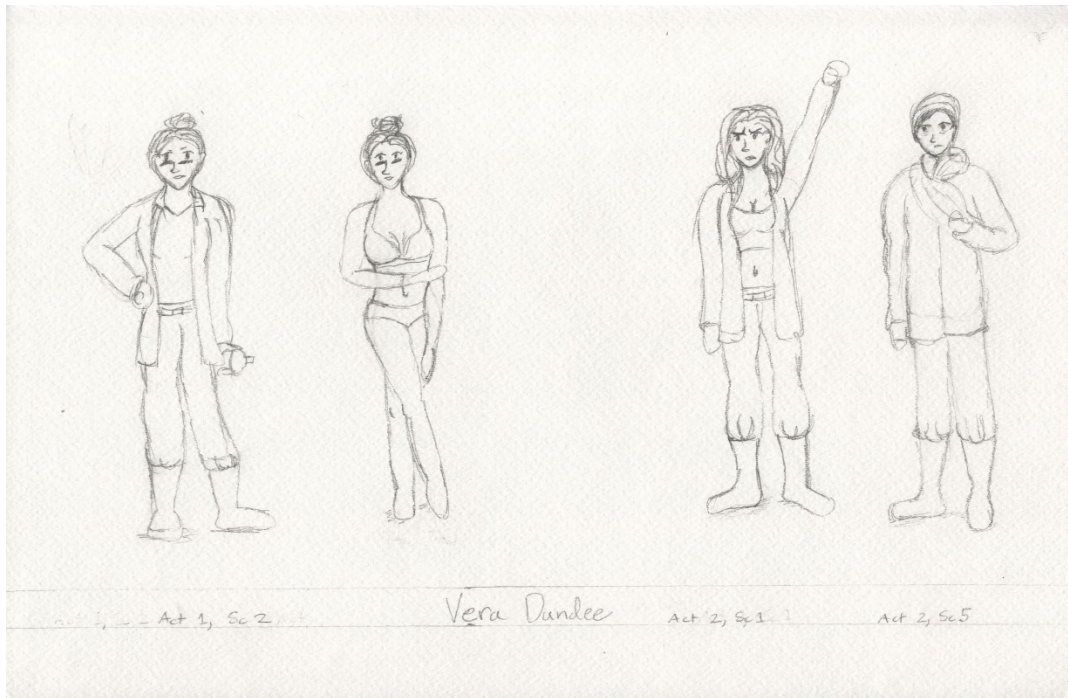
(Sketched by the author)

Stacey Kinsella



(Sketched by the author)

Vera Dundee



(Sketched by the author)

Roberta Cupp



Edith Dundee



(Sketched by the author)

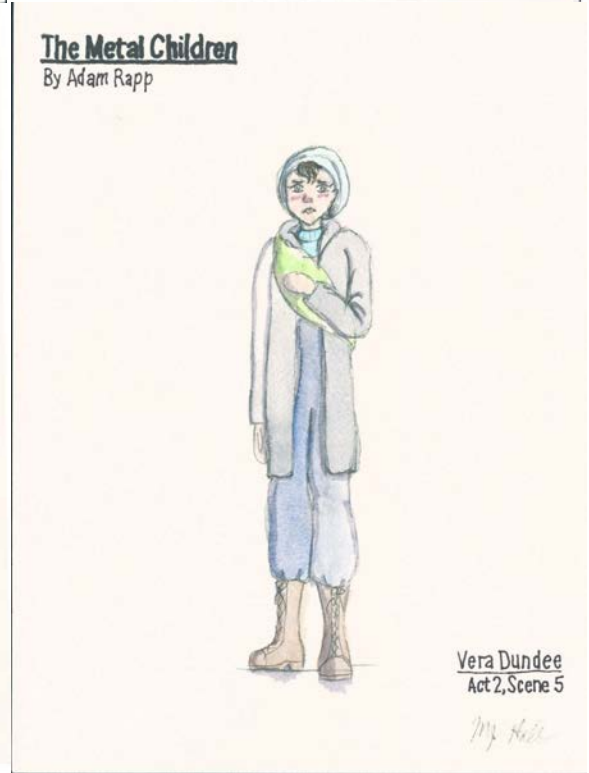
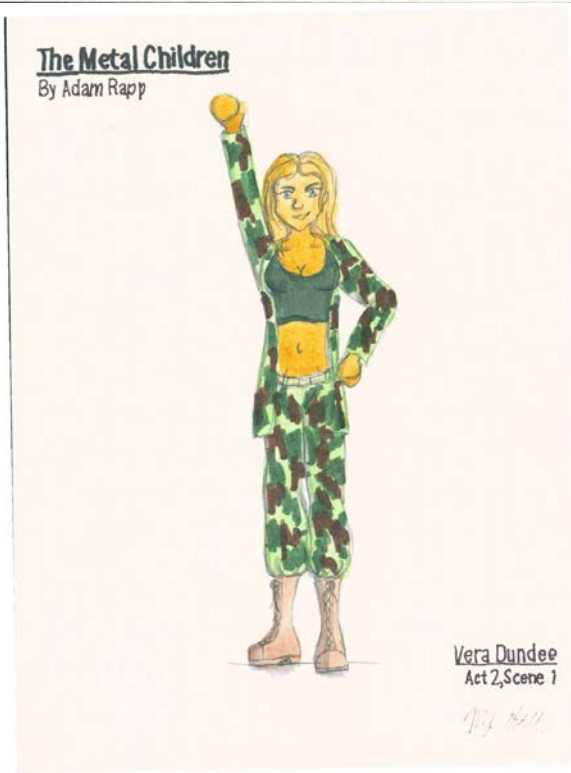
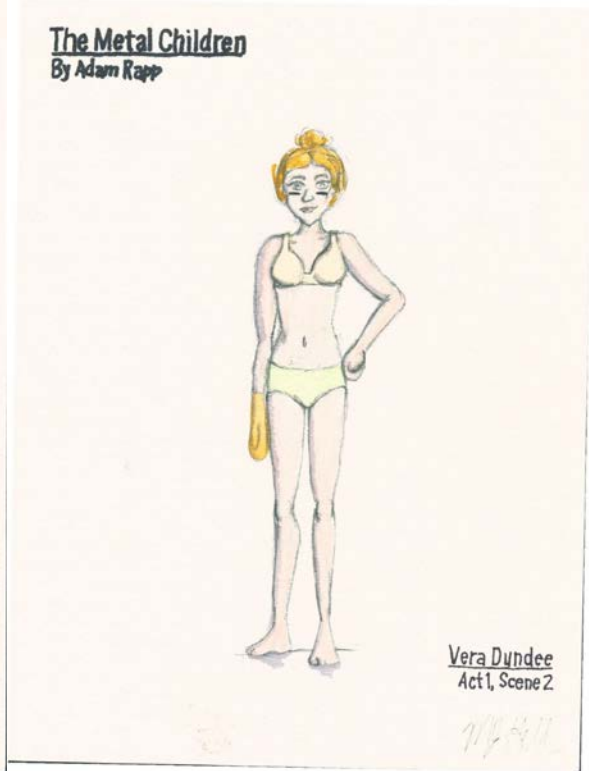
## Appendix 7: Final Color Costume Renderings

### Tobin Falmouth



(Painted by the author)

Vera Dundee



(Painted by the author)



Stacey Kinsella

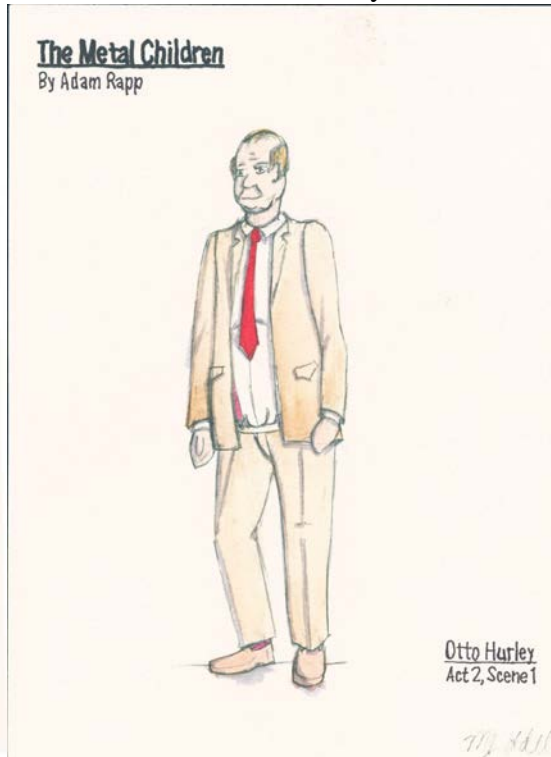


(Painted by the author)

Roberta Cupp



Otto Hurley



(Painted by the author)

Edith Dundee



Bruno Binelli



(Painted by the author)

Cooper



Boy X



(Painted by the author)

Tami Lake

Boy in the Porky Pig Mask



(Painted by the author)

Nurse

Lynne

Kong



(Painted by the author)

## Appendix 8: Selected Costume Fitting Photo Examples

Tami Lake



(Photographed by the author)

Roberta Cupp



(Photographed by the author)

## Appendix 9: Selected Production Photos



“You’re a great writer, Tobin. I believe in you...”  
Bruno Binelli and Tobin Falmouth  
(Photographer: Ashley Cohea, used with Permission)



“I guess that’s the nice thing about having it in a book. You can always open it back up...”  
Edith Dundee and Tobin Falmouth  
(Photographer: Ashley Cohea, used with Permission)



“The novelist might be the only true cultural revolutionary left in America.”  
Tobin Falmouth and Vera Dundee  
(Photographer: Ashley Cohea, used with Permission)



A visit from the Pork Patrol  
Boy in the Porky Pig Mask and Tobin Falmouth  
(Photographer: Ashley Cohea, used with Permission)



“The goal here is to engage in a dialogue, not a diatribe”  
Tobin Falmouth, Roberta Cupp, Tami Lake, Vera Dundee, and Otto Hurley  
(Photographer: Ashley Cohea, used with Permission)



“The message contained within the pages of this book is not a good one.”  
Tobin Falmouth, Roberta Cupp, Tami Lake, Vera Dundee  
(Photographer: Ashley Cohea, used with Permission)



“So you roughed us up a bit. What’s a little pain? That’s why there’s morphine?”

Stacey Kinsella and Tobin Falmouth

(Photographer: Ashley Cohea, used with Permission)



“About an hour ago they found her hanging in the basement of the Good Church of Christ.”

Roberta Cupp and Tobin Falmouth

(Photographer: Ashley Cohea, used with Permission)





“You were having a conversation with your wife.”  
Stacey Kinsella, Boy X, Vera Dundee, and Tobin Falmouth  
(Photographer: Ashley Cohea, used with Permission)



“Vera, we only knew each other for a few days.”  
Tobin Falmouth and Vera Dundee  
(Photographer: Ashley Cohea, used with Permission)