



One in a Million Girl: A fictocritical screenplay for a feminist musical

A project submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Louise Sawtell

Bachelor of Social Science (Human Services), Queensland University of Technology

Bachelor of Fine Arts (Film & TV), Queensland University of Technology

Master of Visual Art and Design, University of South Australia

School of Media and Communication

College of Design and Social Context

RMIT University

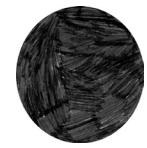
July 2019



ONE IN A MILLION GIRL:

A FICTOCRITICAL SCREENPLAY
FOR A FEMINIST MUSICAL

LOUISE SAWTELL



OPENING CREDITS

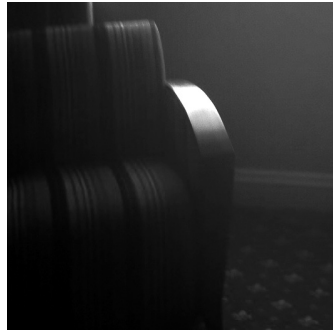


DECLARATION

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the project is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed. I acknowledge the support I have received for my research through the provision of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

LOUISE SAWTELL

July 2019



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following people:

My supervisors, Craig Batty and Bonny Cassidy for encouraging me to tell this research story in an experimental way. I greatly appreciate your support and expertise throughout this project. To Lisa French for her supervision during the early stages of this PhD.

The members of my review panels: Jessica Wilkinson, Linda Daley, Marsha Berry, Stephen Gauson and Adrian Miles, showing me new directions for my research.

The postgraduate community and HELP group at RMIT - Sophie, Stayci, Suya, Tresa, Elizabeth, Rosie, Peta, Mattie, Brie, Indira, Polly, Smiljana, Stephen, Steph and Anne-Marie.

RMIT University and the School of Media and Communication. Corliss and Victoria for your support over the years.

My work colleagues - Ben Charnley, Margaret McVeigh and Sue Cake.

The University of South Australia Online for giving me some space to complete the PhD, especially Tarosh Jacob and Barb Parker. Claire, Di, Kim, Nerida, Paula, Steph, Susannah and Tom.

My parents, Barbara and Alan for their ongoing support. The Sawtells and Hansens. Coco and Bertie.

Paul Hansen, thank you for your support and encouragement throughout this journey.

PUBLICATIONS

During this PhD I have presented aspects of this research project at conferences for the Screenwriting Research Network, Australian Screen Production Education & Research Association, the Australasian Association of Writing Programs and Sightlines. I also co-edited the special issues of the *Journal of Screenwriting* in script development and 'Gender and the Screenplay: Processes, Practices, Perspectives' for MeCCSA's *Networking Knowledge*.

I have written the following peer-reviewed publications about my research:

Bolland, E & **Sawtell, L** forthcoming, 'Subjects of the gaze: Script Development as Performance', *Script Development: Critical Approaches, Creative Practices, International Perspectives*, Palgrave Macmillan, London

Batty, C, Taylor, S, **Sawtell, L** & Connor, B 2017, 'Script development: defining the field', *Journal of Screenwriting*, 8: 3, pp. 225-247

Sempert, M, **Sawtell, L**, Murray, P, Langley, S & Batty, C 2017, 'Methodologically speaking: Innovative approaches to knowledge and text in creative writing research', *New Writing*, 14: 2, pp. 205-222

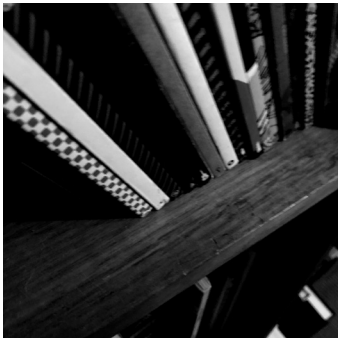
Batty, C, **Sawtell, L** & Taylor, S 2016, 'Thinking through the screenplay: The academy as a site for research-based script development', *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice*, 9:1-2, pp. 149-162

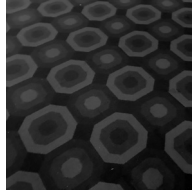
Lee, S-JS, Lomdahl, AM, **Sawtell, L**, Sculley, S & Taylor, S 2016, 'Screenwriting and the higher degree by research: Writing a screenplay for a creative practice PhD', *New Writing*, 13:1, pp. 149-162

Sawtell, L 2016, 'The Paperless Screenplay: Writing on, for and with the SCREEN', *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice*, 9:1-2, pp. 33-46

Sawtell, L 2015, 'Re-crafting the screenplay: A fictocritical approach', E Bacon, D Hecq and A Walker (eds), *Writing the ghost train: Rewriting, remaking, rediscovering*, Australasian Association of Writing Programs, pp. 1-10

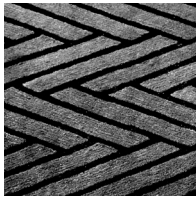
Batty, C, Lee, S-JS, **Sawtell, L**, Sculley, S & Taylor, S 2015, 'Rewriting, remaking and rediscovering screenwriting practice: When the screenwriter becomes practitioner-researcher', E Bacon, D Hecq and A Walker (eds), *Writing the ghost train: Rewriting, remaking, rediscovering*, Australasian Association of Writing Programs, pp. 1-10





CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| OPENING CREDITS | 1 |
| Declaration | 2 |
| Acknowledgements | 3 |
| Publications | 4 |
| Contents | 5 |
| Abstract | 7 |
| INTRODUCTION | 9 |
| ACT 1: Discover a new methodology for practice-led research | 33 |
| ACT 2: Find a screen of one's own | 41 |
| ACT 3: Blend the creative, critical and personal | 53 |
| ACT 4: Show the early stages of script development | 77 |



| | |
|---|------------|
| ACT 5: Include multiple drafts | 105 |
| ACT 6: Make a musical | 127 |
| ACT 7: Break some rules | 143 |
| ACT 8: Experiment with formatting, presentation and design | 165 |
| ACT 9: Change the gaze | 193 |
| ACT 10: Put on a show | 211 |
| ACT 11: Write what you know | 247 |
| ACT 12: Write what you want to be | 281 |
| ACT 13: Challenge the current screen culture | 331 |
| CONCLUSION | 341 |
| CLOSING CREDITS | 347 |
| References | 349 |



ABSTRACT

Through its small acts of resistance, this PhD highlights an experimental, feminist and personal approach to writing screen stories about women. As the latest statistics indicate at the time of this project's completion, only a third of the major characters and female protagonists in mainstream feature films are women (Lauzen 2019; Smith et al 2016). Being a feminist filmmaker, researcher and spectator, I am interested in changing these practices at the earliest stages of a screen work.

This practice-led research project is presented as a new form that I call 'a fictocritical screenplay'. As a document that represents the individual and process-driven script development stage of a screen story, it privileges the writer-director's subjectivity on the page. This project asks, how can a fictocritical screenplay perform a feminist aesthetic and language? How is agency given to the female characters and the author within the construction of a screen story?

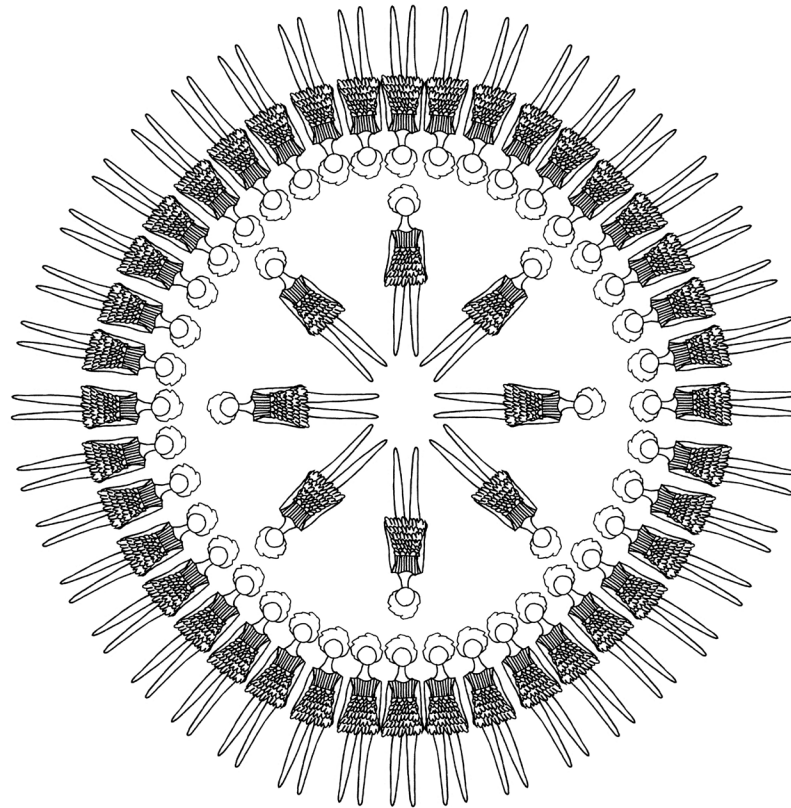
The fictocritical screenplay tells two stories: fiction and process. The fictional story features the scenes for a proposed feminist musical called *One in a Million Girl*. In this story two actresses navigate their changing positions in an industry that favours youth and beauty. The second story focuses on the process and practice of writing in an alternative way. I write myself into the picture by showing a woman's history of cinema and give agency to the multiple female voices in the texts. By giving the screenplay another identity, where it becomes "a subject in process" (Brewster 2005, 400), I produce an alternative form that is *more than* the proposed film.

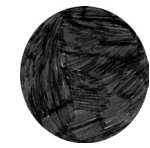
**this research
a kaleidoscope**

**moving
changing**

**each fragment of light
a dancing body**

part of a larger design





INTRODUCTION

AN INVITATION TO ENGAGE

Fragments.

Parallel narratives.

Self-portraits.

An 'in the moment' practice.

A scene-by-scene approach

before an overall narrative

has been decided.

**Now,
we are here:**

Writer-Director

I journey with the characters,

stepping in and out of the scenes,

to perform my part:

a woman's history of cinema,

influences, new understandings.

**Reader
(audience)**

What is said.

What is read.

Each scene

a reflection, illustration.

Prose as dissertation:

an interval.

A language

of process.

How do I begin to tell this story?

I wrote a shorter version a number of years ago.

10 minutes, a mere moment.

It could have been a whole dance number.

Not enough time to get to know an actress, a teacher,
a crooner and a few chorus girls.

I left this film in waiting while I worked on other projects.

Films for other people,

one documentary that showed how hard it was to work
alone.

Now, alone again,

occasionally seeing the light

through my supervisors and writing group,

I wonder how to tell a larger story.

One that might make an impact.

One that I would want to watch.

Enjoy.

How do I tell?

AN ENDING

A large film studio. A grand pair of wrought iron gates with the initials M and P.

THE STAR (40s) and **THE CROONER** (30s) wait behind an old-fashioned microphone. They face a chattering crowd of **JOURNALISTS**, **PHOTOGRAPHERS** and **FANS**. Cameras flash.

The Star raises her hand for the crowd to be silent.

THE STAR

Thank you for coming. (Beat.)

I've had to make a tough decision.

She looks down for a moment.

THE STAR

This will be my last project with the studio.

The crowd erupts. Hands raise. Cameras flash. The Star waits. Another anxious moment.

Hushes from the crowd. One single flash from a camera.

THE STAR

We've made some great films over twenty-five years.

Now, it's time to leave.

Her smile seems forced.

MALE JOURNALIST

What are your plans for the future?

She looks to The Crooner before her response.

THE STAR

I'll be moving onto bigger and better things.

FEMALE REPORTER

Will we hear wedding bells soon?

There are a few oohs and aahs from the crowd.

As The Star opens her mouth to speak...

**I want to break
this wall between us,**

**the camera knows
the camera sees:**

**Me
in the scene.**

THE TEACHER (40s) moves into the foreground to address the camera. The crowd and The Star are blurred figures in the background.

It is quiet for a moment.

THE TEACHER
(to camera)

There is nothing better than embodying a character. An actor's perspective. I'd love to be in her position. Why leave?

We live in parallel. My dream came true through her. I mean nothing to her story, but I am everything in my own.

As you watch, in the dark, you might come to know what it's like to live our lives.

The Teacher turns around.

In the background the gates are now open. The Star and The Crooner leave the crowd behind. A couple of members from the crowd yell out. The cameras flash.

The female reporter
from the previous scene
comes out of the story.
We discuss the process.

A MINOR CHARACTER HAS A VOICE

FEMALE REPORTER You didn't wait for her to answer my question.

LOUISE It's not a necessary part of the story.

FEMALE REPORTER My audience wants to know.

LOUISE This is my audience too.

FEMALE REPORTER Her story is more important than yours.

LOUISE I'm telling two stories. Mine and hers. Both stories matter. (Beat.)
To me, the process is just as important as the final product.

FEMALE REPORTER What does that mean?

LOUISE It is important for me to acknowledge how the screenplay is being
constructed. I question the characters' actions and intentions.

FEMALE REPORTER Including mine?

LOUISE And mine. Every character has a part to play.

FEMALE REPORTER You've made me a minor character.

LOUISE Minor in the sense that you only have a line to say. But it does say a lot
about the roles women play.

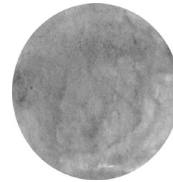
FEMALE REPORTER So, why didn't you let her answer the question?

LOUISE She wasn't planning to answer it. We shouldn't need to justify our decisions.

FEMALE REPORTER But, she is getting married?

Louise walks away...

**I want you to be in the moment of this story.
Stepping in and out of the scene
as ideas are made whole by the research.**



The backstory of my practice highlights the important details of my work as a filmmaker. I write stories about women.

There are influences from popular culture that weave through the work. I use performance techniques, such as improvisation and an actor's approach to character development. I try to extend the possibilities of the form through experimentation and play. The scenes of the story are developed in the moment. I visualise what the film might look like through the illustrations and design. I continue to use these methods of knowing through the development of *One in a Million Girl*.

BACKSTORY

I was happiest on stage when I used to play the part. I could be seen and heard as another person. As a dancer, I could follow a set routine. As an actor, I was the woman I could never be in life. I felt the power of the story in the performance. I lived other people's lives. Childhood. Adolescence. Early twenties. All those years on stages, trying to find my character's journey through the performance.

I moved into filmmaking when I began to feel the lack. As a filmmaker, I could make up the female characters I could never be in life. I appeared in three narrative films and two documentaries during film school. Mid-twenties. A few years to learn about the craft.

And then, I just made films. I no longer needed to play a part within. I took my place behind the camera. Another story could begin.

I have only created a few short films since I left film school. Ten years. Achievements. Mistakes. Awards. Screenings. I can't watch another second. Time. My own money spent. Introspection. Experimentation. Change.



THIS STORY

How do I begin to tell this story? A practice-led research project. Two stories: fiction and process.

The first story, a fiction, features scenes of a proposed feminist musical, *One in a Million Girl*. Two actresses navigate the changes to their positions in a screen industry that favours youth and beauty. Their stories are fragmentary. The Star's life is seen through her memories of the scenes and backstage struggles that have made her famous. In her dressing room, she strips away her constructed identity and star persona. The Teacher moves between the classroom and the fictions her students create when they write their own roles. She journeys with the actresses, giving them, and later herself, agency to tell stories about women. By writing their stories as a feminist musical each scene is able to reflect and project an ideal. As a reflexive film form that is no longer a mainstream genre in cinema, I present these female stories in an alternative way.

The second story focuses on process. I write myself into the picture by showing a woman's history of cinema as female spectator and maker. I highlight the practices and representations of women in early Hollywood musicals before I change them in the text. Now, I am a feminist practitioner-researcher working within a counter-script development. I have agency to experiment and reimagine the screenplay form. This fragmentary work challenges the way a screen story and dissertation is developed, written, presented and read.

As Teresa de Lauretis asserts, "*The construction of gender is the product and the process of both representation and self-representation*" (1987, 9, original emphasis). When I construct these female stories, the fictional and personal, I emphasise how the product and process have been represented. Both stories are featured in a new form. The scenes for *One in a Million Girl*, and accompanying dissertation are a 'fictocritical screenplay'.



A form that is not broken.

**I look at my history of cinema,
viewing, then making.**

**Within a tradition first:
screenwriting and directing.**

Then I push against the walls.

Softly. Slowly. Seeing the possibilities.

I push a little harder.

Boundaries are broken, blurred.

Now, an experimental filmmaker. Experimenting.

Challenging existing systems.

New ways of seeing the story.

A new form is created.



THIS NEW FORM

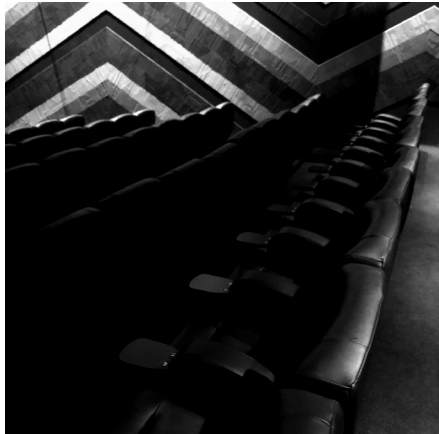
How do I tell a story through its form? It is a subject, not an object.

Until this PhD, my screenwriting practice adheres to the rules of the screenplay form, working against my experimental and multi-layered approach to filmmaking. At the time, I do not see it as a restriction, I simply follow what I know and understand about the craft, typing the scenes into the recommended software. I keep the visual and reflective elements about the story's thematic and creative influences as separate documents to be consulted at any stage of the film's production. This approach works for shorter experimental films that require collaboration or funding. Back then, I choose not to challenge the conventions of screenplay formatting and structure.

In an industrial context, the screenplay is an object, "often ignored, insulted, cursed, fondled, battered, mutilated, victimized, shelved, shredded, and fed to goats" (Kohn 2000, 490). Its purpose is to be a working document or "a static text-based 'thing'" (Batty 2013, 99-100) that will disappear into the screen production. If screenplays are "treated in their own right" (Baker 2013, 1), viewed as worthy and legitimate creative artefacts outside of the industrial chain, but still written for a future work, there is the possibility for an alternative form to emerge. Rather than following an industrial approach that limits the screenplay's agency, I give it a new identity, which has properties of a fictocritical writing style (see Act 3). While experimenting with the function and presentation of the text, I create a new methodology of screenwriting that privileges the personal and process-driven script development stage of a screen work. As "a subject in process" (Brewster 2005, 400) or "subject in process/on trial" (Kristeva 1984), the fictocritical screenplay can therefore be more than the proposed film.



By creating this new form as a feminist text, that has the power to “bear the signature of women” (Thornham 2012, 1) I resist mainstream screenwriting models that I believe favour the three-act structure and hero’s journey. Feminism, as Meaghan Morris claims, “is not easily adapted to heroic progress narratives” (cited in Thornham 2012, 12). When I write female characters for the screen, I question how traditional storytelling approaches and screenwriting manuals, those based on a linear structure or masculine forms of action and conflict, might restrict my female subjectivity and point of view. Linda Seger (1996) suggests women’s films often explore the emotions, behaviours and psychology of the character rather than her actions. So does Helen Jacey (2010) in her alternative guide for writing female characters where the smaller, unique parts of a woman’s experience can be developed before an overall narrative is written. Ramanathan writes, “the inscription of feminist authority in film is a consequence of the filmmaker’s efforts to overwrite forms of cinematic power” (2006, 1), for me, this occurs at the earliest stages of the script development process when I make the private moments public and resist the rules that have been prescribed to the screenwriting craft. With its focus on scenes and process, the fictocritical screenplay embodies a multiplicity of female voices. As a result, both the subjective authorial voice and female characters are given agency in this alternative screenplay form.



Additionally, my fictocritical screenplay is 'in the moment': every detail, both scenes and dissertation, is written in present tense. The experience of writing and reading the text takes place in the moment of its telling. During the screenplay's development, when actions and emotions are expressed, I place myself in the moment of the story like an actor improvising a character. At this stage every individual scene is written without being concerned about the film's structure. This ensures that each character's experience is 'lived' from moment-to-moment in each scene. By being in the moment I am able to "approach things for the first time, each time. This is about moving away from a linear sense of time and seeing each event as unique and of itself" (Lee 2013, 21); the reason why each scene is presented as an individual story with a thematic heading. I experiment and play through my actions and presentation to gradually build the story in a way that feels authentic to my intentions.



If a practice-led PhD is, as Nigel Krauth (2011) claims, “a site for radical experimentation” (2011), then this new form needs a different display. Krauth mentions paralleling and plaiting as an outlaw to the traditional thesis: “new knowledge won’t be made by those who obey, or stretch just a little, the laws or status quo” (Krauth 2011). Therefore, my research extends the possibilities of both the screenplay form and dissertation. Rather than present chapters that would appear in a traditional thesis, I weave thirteen small acts of resistance between the scenes of *One in a Million Girl*. These acts blur the boundaries between artefact and dissertation, allowing a dialogue to happen between them. Micro-fictocritical and reflective texts, including prose, poetry and a series of dialogues in development between the self and fictional characters, are presented between and parallel to the scenes. Illustrations are featured throughout the screenplay to visualise the actions and themes of the scenes, including faceless chorus girls as kaleidoscopes and graphic displays. I connect to a community of practice in the portraits of Agnes Varda and Sally Potter. The fragments of dissertation replicate the sparse and economical language of the screenplay’s scenes. For its presentation on a landscape layout that is intended to replicate a future screen, I design each page as a response to the scene. I consider its visual presentation as being more than words on the page. Through its visual and text-based narratives, the fictocritical screenplay captures the fragmentary and iterative nature of my practice.



THIS STRUCTURE

How can I structure this story? Resist. React. Reflect. Act.

For me, a fictocritical screenplay, as a feminist text, empowers its author to expand the possibilities of story and structure. This happens through small acts of resistance against current screenwriting practices, which have restricted my subjectivity, voice and aesthetic. I argue that a feminist intervention is essential. E. Ann Kaplan writes:

what 'feminism' can mean in any historical period depends upon the specific constraints within which women lived and worked. Like a kaleidoscope, the ideological landscape changes with each feminist intervention as new ways of seeing open up in the wake of prior resistances (2003, 15).

During this research journey I see a shift in the screen industry. Movements such as '#MeToo', 'TIMES UP' and gender parity initiatives (see Screen Australia's 'Gender Matters' and 'Doing It Differently' at the South Australian Film Corporation) are empowering women to speak up and tell their own stories. For my practice, as research outcome and process, a change needs to happen at the early script development stage. Here, in the fictocritical screenplay, I present thirteen acts that challenge and change the screen culture for women. Imparting this new knowledge onto *you* as a female filmmaker, scholar or spectator, I show how these small acts give you agency to change the system.

THESE SMALL ACTS

- ACT 1** Methodology. Practice-led research. Screenwriting. Creative Writing.
- ACT 2** A screen. A space to write. A feminist filmmaker and spectator. A woman's history of cinema.
- ACT 3** Fictocriticism. Defining the field. Defining the form. It is creative, critical and personal.
- ACT 4** Script development at the early stages. A story develops. It's individual. It's personal.
- ACT 5** Process. Multiple drafts. Two sequences. Reflection.
- ACT 6** A musical is defined. A genre. Its history. A feminist musical.
- ACT 7** Why break the rules? Others break rules. I break from the conventions of screenwriting.
- ACT 8** Dialogues with the characters. Eleven experiments. Reflection. Process.
- ACT 9** A male gaze. A female gaze. A woman gazes back. A feminist act.
- ACT 10** The 'putting on a show' musical. A reflexive film form.
- ACT 11** What you know. Write your own role. Personal experience becomes a fiction.
- ACT 12** What you want to be. Write your own role. Helen Jacey's 'Femininity Superthemes.'
- ACT 13** There is movement in the industry. #AskHerMore. #MeToo.

Yes,
another
way
to look.

Read.

ANOTHER WAY

The Star approaches Louise with a screenplay in landscape layout.

THE STAR I'm not sure where I'm supposed to be.

LOUISE Sorry for the confusion.

THE STAR I'm not used to working with amateurs.

No response.

THE STAR I'm happy to show you. Industry standard.

LOUISE All of this is intentional.

Pause.

THE STAR Oh. (Beat.) How should I read it?

LOUISE From beginning to end. Scenes to the right, process to the left.
When you come to a new page see which side you want to read first.

THE STAR Shouldn't the scenes be first? They're the most important part.
For me, at least.

LOUISE It's an experiment. (Beat.) We're so used to reading from left to right.
If the process is on the left, bolded, then it won't be forgotten.

THE STAR Do I need to know these other details? Shouldn't I just learn the lines?
Become the character?

LOUISE These extra narratives reveal a little more.

The Star nods. She flicks through the pages of the fictocritical screenplay.

How do I write a dance sequence?

Do I go through every step?

Step, step, step.

I can't seem to see it yet...

I see the girls swaying,
moving to the melody of the song.

He sings beyond their smiles
to an unseen audience.

Nothing important.

Maybe
some simple movements
up the stairs
as they pose
and perfect
hoping:

Will he choose me?

Will a choreographer
make this scene come alive?

I hope so.

ONE IN A MILLION

Five circular steps leading to a round stage.

The Crooner is in the centre.

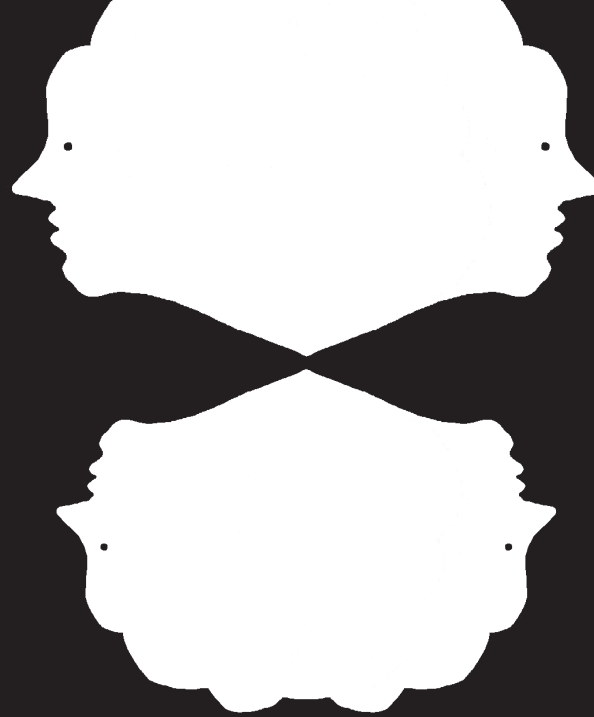
Twenty **CHORUS GIRLS** pose on each of the steps, their arms reaching out to The Crooner.

Ten Chorus Girls glide to The Crooner's outstretched arms, five on each side. They sway in time with the music.

THE CROONER
(singing) So many beautiful girls,
Too hard to choose.
So many beautiful girls,
How can I lose?
You.

The Chorus Girls smile and pose in their line.





A SONG FOR THE GIRLS

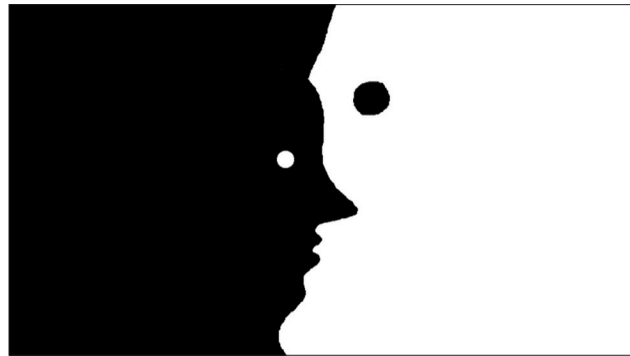
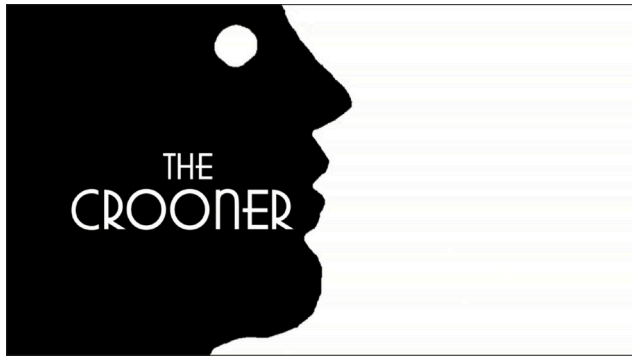
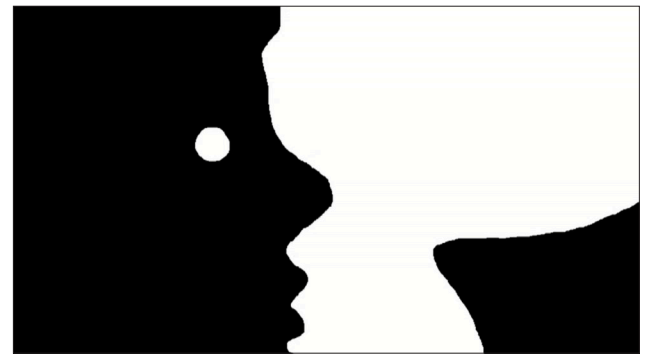
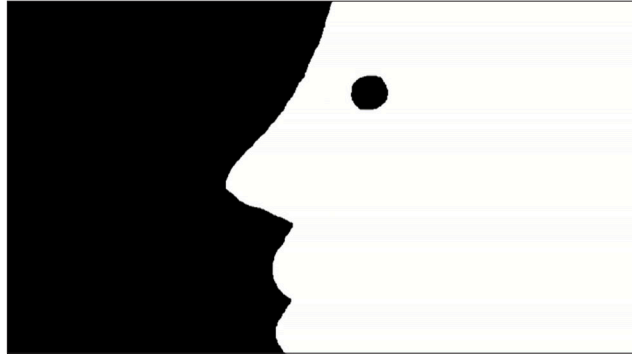
this screen
faceless silhouettes
characters
played
in a film

A title sequence of chorus girls in silhouette.

THE CROONER
(singing)

You will always be my one in a million girl
You will always be the face I see on the screen
You will always be my one in a million girl
A one in a million
One in a million girl

The silhouettes fade into black.



WHO WILL SHE BE?

The set from the previous scene is contained within a sound stage. The camera and sound **CREW** are recording the scene.

WOOD (late 60s) is in a director's chair, his face unseen.

Then from the perspective of the scene camera:

The twenty Chorus Girls pose in a row. The Crooner walks by each girl. He stops at the end of the line.

THE CROONER Who will she be?
(singing)

They hold their positions and smile for a couple of beats, a lifetime to the girls who begin to shake.

WOOD Cut!
(O.S.)

The Crooner rushes off as the Chorus Girls try to latch onto him. He is not impressed.

The Star is waiting for him. The Crooner kisses her deeply. A Hollywood kiss?

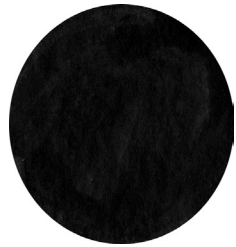
The Chorus Girls stare. If only they were her...

**She represents
every woman
and no one**

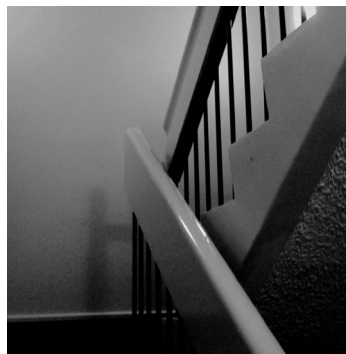
**A select
few
chosen
for your visual
pleasure**

SHE IS...

the facts an actress, a star on the screen,
so far an image of glamour and beauty
talented, driven and successful
in a relationship with The Crooner
leaving the studio



ACT 1:
DISCOVER A NEW METHODOLOGY
FOR PRACTICE-LED RESEARCH



I am writing.

Screenwriting.

Reflecting.

Responding.

Knowing.

The practice.

In the co-authored article, ‘Methodologically speaking: innovative approaches to knowledge and text in creative writing research’, I write about the fictocritical screenplay form:

“By developing a screenplay that interweaves the scenes of the proposed film (creative product), the theoretical understandings that underpin it (critical process) and personal reflections as artist-practitioner, I acknowledge that each part is essential to the whole” (Sempert et al 2017, 5).

THE PRACTICE OF WRITING

The story of my practice-led research weaves the proposed screen story (artefact) with the dissertation (reflections and theoretical influences), so that I am “able to create a dialogue between theory and practice” (Brabazon and Dagli 2010, 36-37). The duality of fictocritical writing allows the fictional and theoretical, or author and text, to speak to one another. I play “the dual roles of the researcher and researched” (Sullivan 2009, 51) in the fictocritical screenplay that features the self in and alongside the scenes. I follow Graeme Sullivan’s broad definition of practice-led research, which “is circumscribed by an equally important emphasis on the artist-practitioner, the creative product and critical process” (2009, 47) in this new methodology for script development. By privileging all parts of this practice-led research project, both the actions and outcomes of the work, and the critical reflections about its making, this PhD moves beyond “existing theories and practices” (Sullivan 2009, 51) to generate new knowledge about screenwriting.

“The research design - *the methodology* - for a creative writing research project does not have to remain fixed, front-loaded or hidden: it can be replicated on the page (or stage or screen), for all to see (or hear). More than this, when fully embraced as both a *frame* and a *form*, methodology can innovate the very fabric of a work through its stitching together of methods, practice, reflections, and creative and critical outcomes” (Sempert et al 2017, 219, original emphasis).

The practice of writing in this project focuses on the development of a new body of work: a feminist musical, as part of a fictocritical screenplay, and my critical responses to the process. Its methodology is the contribution to knowledge: “a way of working that emerges from the incubation of and reflection on a project/practice” (Sempert et al 2017, 206). In this project the form and content are connected. Influenced by feminist film theory, cinema history and the musical genre, both the scenes and dissertation highlight and challenge past and present representations of women in the screen industry. The musical genre, with its moving female bodies and self-reflexivity, provides an opportunity for a female practitioner-researcher to experiment with a new methodology of writing that involves more than words on the page. By presenting the work in a graphic way, this screenplay can present visual displays of women, giving these representations greater power in response to the feminist themes of the proposed work. In a similar way to those musicals that exist in cinema history with kaleidoscopes and long lines of chorus girls, these images and design show how the dances might appear on the screen. As I write with words, images, design, lyrics and improvisations, I move beyond a conventional approach to highlight the themes and unique aesthetics of this proposed feminist musical.

Additionally, this practice-led PhD is based on the idea that knowledge and understanding are found through the act and actions of writing creatively (Harper 2008). The fictocritical writing style is similar to the autobiographical or autoethnographic stories used in the social sciences, which share the personal experiences of a particular culture. Laurel Richardson’s (2000) term, ‘Creative Analytic Practices (CAP) ethnography’, presents the writing process and product, recognising how they are intertwined. Richardson explains, “the product cannot be separated from the producer or the mode of production or the method of knowing” (2000, 930). In her PhD, Larissa Sexton-Finck (2009) takes an autoethnographic journey to find female subjectivity and agency as an independent female screenwriter. Rosslyn Prosser’s fictocritical PhD views the self “inside a wider range of discourses” (2005, 9). By showing the personal experience of a culture, in my case a woman within a film culture, the practitioner-researcher can write many layers of meaning into the text.

In my section of the conference proceedings, ‘Rewriting, remaking and rediscovering screenwriting practice: when the screenwriter becomes practitioner-researcher’, I mention: the ‘knowing screenplay’ provides “an answer to the mystery of writing for the screen” (Batty et al 2015, 9).

With its connection to fictocritical writing, this PhD contributes to the field of creative writing primarily, and screen practice, secondarily. Graeme Harper claims, creative writing is “a significant area of human endeavour, and a considerable avenue for human knowledge” (2013, 246), worth exploring within the academy. The screenplay itself is a contested art form within creative writing studies, not viewed as a literary work, but a template for another art form (Harper 2013). But, it is through the act of writing itself, that screenwriting has its strongest connection to this discipline. As Baker points out, “It is a practice undertaken in the context of a discipline and in ways that mean that writing is informed more by discipline specific knowledge than by the commercial demands or the expectations of wider audiences or readerships” (2013, 4). Furthermore, the screenplay artefact “embodies and performs knowledge by the way it is written” (Batty et al 2015, 5), making it a ‘knowing screenplay’.

As I construct meaning through the writing and creative process, I become a reflective practitioner. In a self-reflexive way I explore “the uniquely human process of making meaning through experiences that are felt, lived, reconstructed and reinterpreted” (Sullivan 2009, 50). I begin to know my practice in a deep and meaningful way. Ross Gibson (2010) suggests that knowing happens when a practitioner-researcher has ‘lived’ the experience and, by coming to an understanding about it, is able to impart this knowledge to others. Gibson explains:

Artist-researchers have the chance to woo two modes of knowing: the implicit and the explicit. They have the chance to entwine the insider’s embodied know-how with the outsider’s analytical precepts. The attraction between these two modes of knowing must be both felt and spoken. And as the world blooms in the artist’s consciousness, the mutual commitment of the two modes can abide and provide (2010, 11).

With ‘critical distance’ the new knowledge that is found through practice-led research can then be imparted to others (Gibson 2010). Those screenplays created through academic script development can be used as ‘data’ for researchers and practitioners to draw from. This could lead “to new and ‘informed’ ways of developing stories for the screen – and potentially innovative ways of writing them” (Batty et al 2016, 158), which is why this screenplay moves beyond conventional practices.

“Through the writing of this SCREENplay I still imagine the proposed film while also privileging the creative process as much as the final product” (Sawtell 2016, 41).

With this new form of screenwriting scholarship, I create a ‘fictocritical screenplay’, a term I use for this project. While alternative models have been used in the work of Stephen Sculley (2017) and Emma Bolland (ongoing), my research across five years suggests this term has not been used before. As its author, I have the unique opportunity to define and shape the form and screenwriting style. With this project firmly planted within the academy, I argue that the form of a screenplay should not be restricted by industrial practices, those specifically related to its role as a ‘working document’ for a future production. Baker (2013) writes that when scripts are only seen as blueprints for productions, they can be read as technical not creative documents. The industry standards that dictate how a screenplay is developed, written and read are merely conventions (Baker 2013) that make it easier for a screen work to be made. However, screenplays have the potential to be a form worthy of investigation in the academy (Nelmes 2007) as “the screenplay functions as both a method of research enquiry and also a research outcome” (Batty et al 2015, 3). Therefore, an academic screenplay can be read as a stand-alone text that can still maintain the functions of a future production (Baker 2013), even when the rules are broken.

Screenwriting as a research practice “is becoming increasingly visible within the academy” (Batty et al 2015, 3), with a growing number of candidates undertaking and completing higher degree by research projects in this area. The practice of screenwriting could serve a different purpose within the academy, which can be “a vital incubator for risk taking, reflexivity and fearless critical thinking” (Batty and Berry 2016, 182). Through experimentation in form and formatting, a new methodology for screenwriting emerges. During this research I find it important to treat the fictocritical screenplay as a research outcome and screenwriting as a research practice (Baker et al 2015), each making a contribution to the methodology. Batty, Sawtell and Taylor point out, “script development in the academy offers a way of freeing oneself of the shackles of industry to pursue ideas and practices based on personal, philosophical and/or practical interests” (2016, 151). The fictocritical screenplay, as an artefact produced through “academic script development” (Batty et al 2016, 151), has the capacity to merge creative and critical texts that are shaped by personal, theoretical and experimental screenwriting practices. As a result, I privilege the process, product and creator through this new methodology.

stories
told
in the darkness

THE STORY OF MY LIFE

The sound stage is empty now. Just a single spotlight on The Star.

She tries to look beyond the spotlight into the darkness of the studio.

A sigh.

THE STAR

How do I begin to tell
the story of my life?

(singing)

The story of my life.
The history
right before your eyes.
A fantasy,
A dream.

She moves out of the spotlight.

her life
in pictures

MONTAGE

Title: A life in pictures.

A quick flash, an image from each of her films.

They preview the scenes to come...

THE STAR
(V.O. singing)

Faces,
places
there upon the screen.

The final image: a close up.

**These private moments made public,
A star's life is not her own.**

**Who watches from the wings?
A camera, a crew, a character?**

The mirror.

**Perhaps for a moment
another reflection is caught.
A flash of another gaze...**

An audience she will never know.

**Undressing,
this space is not her own.**

THIS SPACE IS NOT HER OWN

A dressing room backstage.

The Star takes a seat in front of the dressing table.
There are lights around her mirrored face.

THE STAR Faces,
(singing) Places,
 The history of my life.

She looks beyond her image.

Is there someone in the room with her?

**I see Degas' girls
 dancing in and out
 of frame,
 behind-the-scenes:
 a dance of dreams.
 Then, through
 a keyhole:
 undressing,
 ready
 to bathe.**

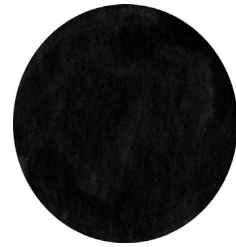
PRIVATE AND PUBLIC

A woman undressing. Another private moment made public, a short film I made, *Wear It Well*.

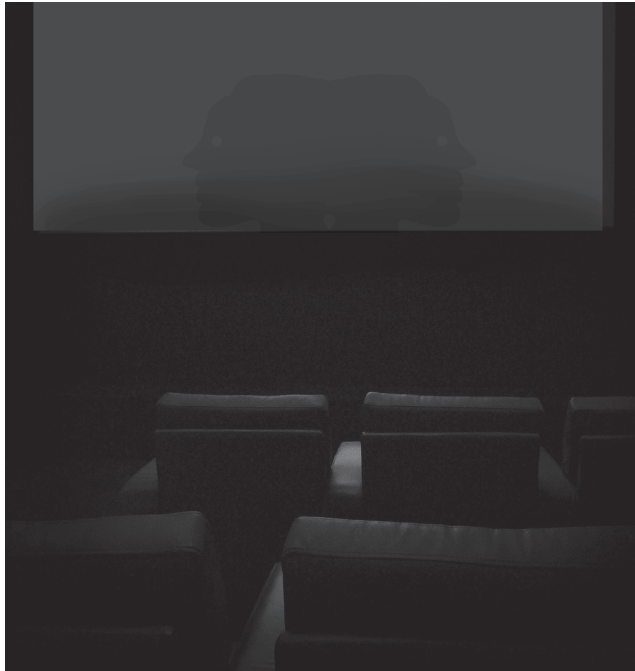
During a screening, a public space, a man mentions his unease. "I shouldn't be watching." This scene is not his own.

As the voice over describes all the qualities of a good hat (replacing a man), the vision shows a woman stripping away a made-up identity. Her clothes left as a shadow of herself on the chaise.

Looking back, viewing the film as an audience member, not a maker, I wonder if this could be a female gaze. This space could be my own.



ACT 2:
FIND A SCREEN OF ONE'S OWN



Imagine,
you are in a darkened cinema, waiting for a film
to begin. There is an audience around you.
Each person eager to view the story.

The white screen changes to reveal pictures of
men in action:
running, grunting, jumping from exploding buildings.
A quick flash of a scantily clad woman.
Two men laughing, farting and
slapping each other on the back. And these are
just the trailers.

The screen goes black. You expect to see
a story about two women, but the screen is
motionless.

A WOMAN'S HISTORY OF CINEMA

At the 2016 Australian Academy Cinema Television Arts Awards (AACTAs) women dress in giant sausage costumes chanting, “end the sausage party” as a protest to the low number of nominations and pre-selected films led by female creatives. For the pre-selection round of the awards, only two out of twenty-eight films are directed by women (Mathisen 2016) and only three feature a female protagonist (Riakos 2016). While female-driven films have successfully won major awards at AACTA in the past, including *The Babadook* in 2014, the number of nominations and pre-selected films are currently skewed towards men.

**I'm an egg in a pan of sausages,
I should be fried by now.
The sausages get in the way:
taking up all the space,
sizzling until they burn, they shrivel
long after they are done.**

During my first experience of making a film at university, I am like a raw egg dropped into a pan of three sizzling sausages. I have no choice of who my team will be and, despite sharing many story ideas, I soon realise that each man's input is more important than my own. We make two films that highlight our developing technical and storytelling skills: one about a man who attempts to remove lipstick traces from a shirt before his girlfriend arrives home, and the other about a boy who learns a lesson by banging nails into a post. Stories about men. With the film's direction, cinematography, sound and editing being controlled by this sausage party, I question my part in its making. If I am unable to have a voice in this team of men, where can I find a space for inclusive collaboration? In the second semester, with a supportive team of women, we make a documentary. Over the next two years of film school women take the lead, filling all the major roles in each of my productions. This practice continues today.

“One of the most powerful feminist fantasies is writing the self in a room of one’s own [...] In staking that claim, feminist cinema creates a new place, which I name the girl ‘hood. [...] The concept of girl ‘hood names the continuum of environments through which women move and in which they act. Girls take up space, but also change it to serve themselves, and connect different places in unexpected ways” (Mayer 2016, 133).

I find a screen of my own when I write *One in a Million Girl*. Sophie Mayer’s (2016) idea of ‘the girl‘hood’ provides a space to experiment and assert a feminist voice that challenges the dominant, patriarchal film culture, “where men rule and where their values [and voices] are privileged” (Chaudhuri 2006, 4). This space can subvert and challenge mainstream cinema, which focuses on “a new film language for which to do so” (Citron 1988, 48). The girl can be a powerful symbol in this space (Mayer 2016), especially when, as Ruti claims, this “girliness as a contemporary feminine ideal transcends age” (2016, 80). The girl in this project moves from object to subject as actresses write their own roles in the story. Rather than viewing women as inferior in the film industry (Haskell 1987), a screen of one’s own values female subjectivity and desire in the cinema. Through a new screenplay form that values the unique aesthetics and voice of the female storyteller, there is an opportunity for women to write themselves into this space.

As a female spectator and filmmaker, I often feel like an outsider in the cinema. I view stories that are not made for me. I attempt to identify with the male hero time and time again, but feel disconnected from their situation. When I have the opportunity, I relish those moments where I escape into a story about a woman. Women. A film made by a woman.

Through a feminist lens, this act of resistance responds to film culture, both on and off the screen. Informed by the duality of feminist film theory (Hollinger 2012), I am both critical of those practices that exist in mainstream cinema and creative in the way I present an alternative through a new screenplay form. Both the scenes of the film and extra-narrative texts sit within a feminist film culture: firstly, as a response to the sexism and under-representation of women in the screen industry; and secondly, I find potential ways of challenging these systems. As Karen Hollinger states, “Feminist film theory always had a dual composition: the critique of mainstream cinema and the advocacy of an alternate or counter-cinema” (2012, 7) since its establishment in the 1970s. Therefore, my roles as filmmaker and spectator cannot be separated.

When I view a film text as a female spectator I question those images and situations of the female characters presented on the screen. Reflexive films that reveal the inner workings of the film industry have been important influences for the screenplay. I watch ‘putting on a show musicals’ (Feuer, 1977) made during the golden age of Hollywood (1930s-1950s), noticing that each narrative reinforces the chorus girls’ sexuality through the ‘to-be-looked-at-ness’ (Mulvey 1975) of the dance. Films about actresses also influence the female characters in this screen story. I shine a spotlight on these practices through the early scenes of *One in a Million Girl*.

“The chorus girls presented in the screenplay highlight the progression of feminist film theory. They change from a unified group of a man’s desires (or ideology) into a diverse group of individuals” (Sawtell 2015, 7-8).

I am critical of the way women are represented, or not represented, in the frame. Feminist critic Jill Dolan claims, “we’re collectively called to see what and who is stunningly, repeatedly evident and what and who is devastatingly, obviously invisible in the art and popular culture, we regularly consume for edification and entertainment” (2013, 20). I notice women’s roles are limited, which is verified in the research. In the 2018 report, ‘It’s a Man’s (Celluloid) World: Portrayals of Female Characters in the Top Grossing Films of 2018’, Dr Martha Lauzen of The Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film finds 31% of the top American box office films feature female protagonists, 36% of major characters and 35% of all speaking characters (Lauzen 2019). Since the start of these research studies in 2002, there has not been a dramatic shift in these numbers within mainstream cinema (Lauzen 2019). The ‘Gender Bias without Borders’ research shows that the lack of female characters is not limited to American films. Across eleven countries (U.S., China, Japan, U.K., Australia, India, France, Germany, South Korea, Russia and Brazil) an average of 30.9% of all speaking characters are female (Smith et al 2014). Both report findings highlight the need for greater parity of female characters on screen.

It is not only the lack of roles (protagonists, major and speaking characters) that contributes to the patriarchal ideal; the type of roles also needs to be critiqued. For early feminist film theorists, “the incessant repetition of negative female stereotypes bolstered the prejudices of male viewers, thereby strengthening the patriarchal status quo” (Ruti 2016, 17). When mainstream filmmaking practices continue to cater to a specific demographic, namely younger men, there is a missed opportunity to tell stories for diverse audiences. Recent figures suggest that film audiences comprise 51% of women in the United States and Canada (MPAA 2018) and an increasing number of older women in Australia (Screen Australia 2015). As Sue Maslin states, “it’s one of the only demographics that is still growing at the moment” (cited in Bizzaca 2015). My aim to write a number of female speaking (and singing) characters in *One in a Million Girl* responds to a need for greater representation of women on screen for this audience.

**“Feminism presents
itself as a process”
(Annette Kuhn 1982, 3).**

At an independent level, where I situate my practice, women writers make up 26% of the total independent films screened at a selection of U.S. festivals in 2017-18 (Lauzen 2019). In Australia, where the industry is reliant on government funding, female screenwriters represent 23% of those who contribute to the films made in 2009-2014 (Screen Australia 2015). Despite the sausage party reflected in these statistics (and my opening paragraph), there can be a solution for increasing women’s participation in the industry. Lisa French, whose research focuses on women in the Australian screen industry claims:

there is a correlation between women in key creative roles and the number of women on the crew as well as in front of the camera - so having more women in these key roles increase female participation in the industry, and increase the female stories told there (2015, 142).

Just like my need to find a likeminded group of women in film school, I can create roles for women to play, whether that is on or off the screen. For me this happens in my own space first. During the early stages of script development the female characters take shape on the page. This shape is alternative, a form that is not restricted by the rules and regulations of the industry. Through the character of The Teacher, I write myself onto the page using my history of cinema and teaching as a guide. I link feminist film theory into practice, understanding there are many types of feminisms and my story needs to focus on ideas, rather than movements or waves. As a result, this feminist text has “no fixed formal characteristics, precisely because it is a relationship” where “the moment of reception is crucial” (Kuhn 1982, 13). Once the individual script development stage is complete, and the process is on display, the fictocritical screenplay can be an invitation to engage with a feminist filmmaking community. As Mayer suggests, “girl ‘hoods are made in spaces and places where girls come together” (2016, 150). Scrambled eggs without the sausages.

**There's something
about this kind of man
in the film industry.**

FRAMING THE GIRL

Wood and Louise stand in the centre of the studio, looking at a line up of chorus girls.

WOOD I like my girls to be a similar size.
Perfectly formed. Beautiful.

LOUISE So they are all the same.

WOOD Yes. Anything else would ruin the formation.

Louise opens her mouth to speak...

WOOD If you were half your age and half your size
I'd put you with my girls.

He moves ever so slowly towards her. Louise takes a step back.

LOUISE No thanks.

Wood laughs.

WOOD Take it as a compliment, sweetheart.

He takes a step forward.

Louise races away.



ENTRANCE

A light switches on in the dark.

Perfect rows of empty chairs sit underneath desks. Two blackboards seem suspended in the air.

The Teacher ventures to the front of the room. Large books are pressed against her chest.

She breathes in and out. Again. Deeper. Calming her nerves.



BEFORE THE SONG

The Crooner's finger taps an old-fashioned microphone that is placed in a tiny, white space.

Tap. Tap. Tap.

The sound vibrates through the room.

A MIRROR IMAGE

**I want to break
this image,**

**the mirror knows
the mirror sees:**

Me.

The Star takes a hard look into the mirror.

She touches different parts of her face:

beside her eye,
the corner of her mouth,
down her neck.

No deep wrinkles yet.

THE STAR
(singing)

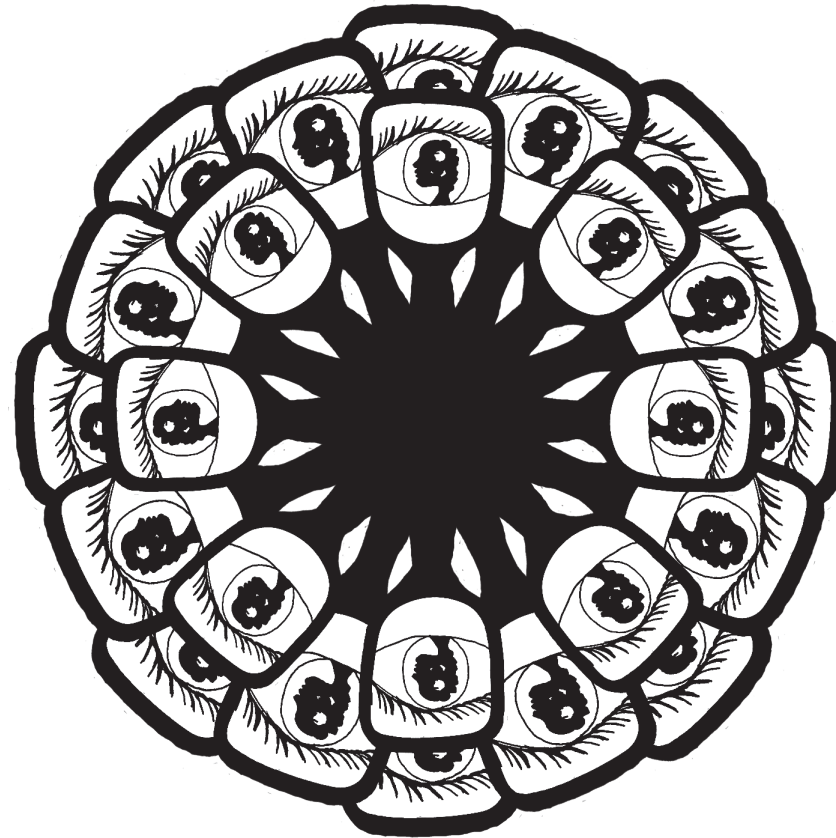
Am I fading?

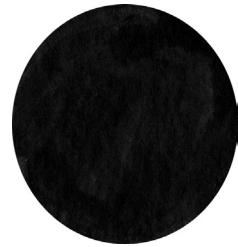
A sigh.

A camera
image
mirrors what is
seen
or unseen.

The choices
in framing
angles
depth
perspective
shatter
understandings.

If I cannot see me
reflected back,
does that make me
invisible?





ACT 3:
BLEND THE CREATIVE,
CRITICAL AND PERSONAL



What makes a work fictocritical?

I turn to those authors who write in this way.

I borrow from a style that has been hard to define.

Multiple Methods. Many Voices.

Creative. Critical. Personal.

Three parts weave together to make a whole.

I read these experimental narratives.

Prose. Poetry. Essay.

A 'fictocritical screenplay'.

“The presentation of scenes and accompanying narratives varies from page to page. I have been able to weave the dissertation (reflections and theoretical influences) within the artefact (the scenes of the film) that reflects the hybrid nature of fictocriticism” (Sawtell 2015, 3).

DEFINING THE FICTOCRITICAL

In my search to understand this new style of writing, one that will enhance my current screenwriting practices, I discover that fictocriticism blurs the boundaries between creative and critical. Amanda Nettelbeck defines fictocriticism as:

a hybridized writing that moves between the poles of fiction (‘invention’/speculation’) and criticism (‘deduction’/explication’), of subjectivity (‘interiority’) and objectivity (‘exteriority’). It is writing that brings the ‘creative’ and the ‘critical’ together – not simply in the sense of placing them side by side, but in the sense of mutating both, of bringing a spotlight to bear upon the known forms in order to make them ‘say’ something else (1998, 3-4).

Nettelbeck suggests merging these ‘known forms’ into a single text. So does Stephen Muecke (2012), who claims that these two distinct practices, the creative and critical, can be broken down during the process of writing in a fictocritical way. In this sense, fictocriticism can be viewed as a ‘dialogic tool’ with its “bending of narrative boundaries and the crossing of genres” that happens in “the intersection of literature and postmodernism” (Nettelbeck 1998, 3). At this intersection a writer has the opportunity to do something different with the text.

**I practice in spaces between.
An intersection.
Is this the place
where the hyphen sits?
A writer-director.
An artist-researcher.**

I notice, and take advantage of, the in-between-ness of fictocriticism. Helen Flavell defines ficto-criticism (with a hyphen) as “writing between” where there is no “organisation, hierarchy or set characteristics to aid identification” (2004, 3). It sits in “the nexus between theory and creative writing” (Prosser 2005, 18). As an experimental form of prose writing, fictocriticism is unlikely to follow the set structure or style of traditional academic writing. Flavell asserts:

By challenging the voice of normative academic writing positioned ‘on high’ from its subject it is argued that ficto-criticism draws attention to the arbitrary nature of objective knowledge thus reflecting on – and contributing to – the critical re-evaluation of academic writing as a way of knowing and representing the world (2009, 1-2).

Fictocritical writing disrupts rather than complies. This approach “both changes and challenges what scholarly work is” (Schlunke and Brewster 2005, 393), which offers new perspectives and understandings not found in traditional practices of criticism and analysis.

I find that each fictocritical narrative is unique and reliant on the author’s interpretation of the topic or theory. As Anna Gibbs notes, when “there is no blueprint”, this style of writing “must be constantly invented anew in the face of the singular problems that arise in the course of engagement with what is researched” (2005, 2). Fictocriticism can then be seen as a “hit and run guerrilla action”, never a replication; “surprise being of the essence, and no two impasses in writing or debate are ever exactly the same” (Gibbs 1997). The resulting text values the creative or personal authorial voice while also acknowledging its theoretical and social context.

In ‘On Ficto-Criticism’ (again, with a hyphen), Noel King speaks about “the stable and separated bodies of ‘fiction’ and ‘criticism’, replaced by compounds, mergings, mutations and mistakes” (cited in Muecke and King 1991, 13). Here, Muecke and King mention Roland Barthes’ later works that blur the boundaries between fiction, criticism and autobiography. In this method, Barthes makes the reader aware of the writing process and the author’s place within its meaning-making. This could occur through “perpetual interweaving” (Barthes 1975, 64) where one moment the author is present through the ‘I’ and the next is outside of the narrative.

In my section of the co-authored article, 'Methodologically Speaking...' I write:

"Through a fictocritical practice I engage with the process of writing the scenes of the proposed film, and by doing so come to understand my place within its meaning making. In the fictocritical screenplay, then, the self is presented in the fragmented narratives that accompany the scenes; side-by-side, read together, they tell the bigger story of the screenplay's development" (Sempert et al 2017, 210).

When writing fictocritical texts "the personal voice is used. It is intensity, performance, and shifting temporalities" (Schlunke and Brewster 2005, 394). The 'I' is ever present in the text. Weaving in and out of the work. Fictocriticism is "a mode of performance" (Nettelbeck 1998, 6) or "gestural writing of oscillation and repetition" (Brewster 2005, 401). The text acknowledges the process of writing and the author is an active participant who negotiates with the subjectivity of the narrative (Brewster 2005). For Jeanne Randolph, "criticism [and fictocriticism] is not simply an objective body of techniques but includes an autobiographical moment of self-criticism, an examination and acknowledgement of one's origins, position, commitments, and antipathies" (2006, 236). In the fictocritical screenplay, I acknowledge my history of cinema and experiences of my practice as a female filmmaker and spectator. The 'I' is situated just outside the scenes, parallel to the dialogue and actions that happen.

I like how Muecke (2008) calls his fictocritical narratives, 'self-portraits'. To me, this opens up the potential for a greater range of representations, those that are both written and visual. This means that fictocritical narratives can be a series of snapshots taken from different angles, just like a scene in a film:

Self-portraits, on the other hand, in writing, are about distortion and expression. They are meant to make you think of the figure of the individual, sure, but there is always a different background. And it is in the relation of figure to field that the self-portrait emerges and hopefully creates something (Muecke 2008, 13).

My self-portraits are presented on the page. They are placed in and outside of the scenes to blur the boundaries between fact and fiction, character and author.

**I move in and out of the
fictocritical screenplay.
Present in the process.
Becoming a character within
the scenes. 'I' as subject as
well as construct.**

If boundaries are broken, there is a freedom to play with the text. Jeanne Randolph, a psychiatrist and cultural critic who first uses the term in her art writing from the early 1980s, imagines fictocriticism is moving “like an unsynchronized pair of pigeons, up, down, and sideways” between various positions as a “deliberate play of psychoanalytic bricoleur with the structure of formal art criticism” (Randolph 2006, 231). Randolph experiments with fiction, non-fiction and autobiography through her texts that “engage so subjectively with the artwork in question that they make a mockery of normative art criticism, and indeed any form of critical, interpretative writing” (Flavell 2009, 5). This style of writing shows that art can be viewed subjectively, through the lens of the critic, “exploring the conditions that brought it [the artwork] into being” (Randolph 2006, 234). In a similar way, the fictocritical screenplay includes my subjective experience as a female spectator who is critical of the film’s position within a larger industrial frame.



With a strong connection to the personal voice, I acknowledge how other women have embraced fictocriticism in the academy “within genres and modes shaped mostly by men” (Gibbs 2003, 309). Poetic and fictional strategies are used to counter conventional ways of reading and writing the text (Bartlett 1994). In this sense, could my fictocritical screenplay be part of a counter-script development? Similar to the works of Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray created through *ÉCRITURE FÉMININE*, the fictocritical texts come from the bodies of women. As Bartlett notes, “‘Writing the body’ therefore plays a significant part in actively inventing new ways for women to speak and write about ourselves as women, rather than through the narrative structures of patriarchy” (1994, 2). By inhabiting ‘the body of writing’ and seeing the culture through a feminist lens, as mentioned in Act 2, the fictocritical screenplay reflects a woman’s history of cinema, changing the frame of female representation in *One in a Million Girl*.

When many voices are presented in a fictocritical text a writer is able to challenge dominant and authoritative discourses. Gibbs (2005) calls it a “‘haunted writing’”: traced by numerous voices which work now in unison at other times in counterpoints, and at others still against each other, in deliberate discord”. There is a tension, then, between the creative and critical, as the text moves from a single position to become multivocal. With multiple female voices, including the self as researcher and self as female characters, I perform many roles through the writing of the fictocritical screenplay. I fight for my place in this alternative space against the voice of authority, Wood, who represents the conventional and patriarchal filmmaking practices I am resisting. By keeping Wood as a one-dimensional character, whose face remains in the shadows, I give him as little space as possible in the story. This gives the female characters, who do speak up in the text, the power to assert their position and write themselves onto the screen.



In this new fictocritical work I have been able to create my own self-definitions as others have done. Both scenes and parallel texts reflect a fictocritical approach to writing the woman in the story that ensures her (my) agency on the page, and later, the screen. This process is not without uncertainty, Rosslyn Prosser confesses:

It is with great uncertainty that the narrative unfolds. How to take seemingly disparate elements of story and attempt to make them into a work that wants incoherence yet demands coherence? There is a desire for closure that is never met, and there is a need to give value, of what use is this work? (Prosser 2005, 63).

In the space of this practice-led research, I question what it is to write in a fictocritical way. With many different styles of writing shaping the fictocritical landscape, and a refusal to be defined by a particular style or convention, I understand that my practice sits in an unknown space. This space of parallels and interwoven texts challenges and changes my screenwriting practice. It is creative, critical and personal.

SPEAKING WITH AND AS THE CHARACTERS

Here, I speak
about my choice
to write
in a fictocritical way.

THE TEACHER

Why did you choose a fictocritical writing style?

LOUISE

At first I wasn't sure how I would write this screenplay, only that I wanted to experiment and use images with scenes. I abandoned the screenwriting software fairly early on and began to research ways of writing creatively in the academy. I was searching for a style that could blend the creative, critical and personal in many different ways.

THE TEACHER

Yes, there are many different texts here. Not only the scenes.

LOUISE

By writing in a fictocritical way, the screenplay has become more than the scenes of the proposed film. My experience of cinema, making films, performing, has influenced my decisions. I felt they needed to be there alongside the scenes.

THE TEACHER

A research journey.

LOUISE

You could say that.

THE TEACHER

I like that you connect back to the personal. I'm trying to teach my students to write from their experiences first before moving into the fictional.

LOUISE

It's something Jason Lee mentions in *The Psychology of Screenwriting*.

Louise looks at her notes.

LOUISE

Here it is. He says: "all writers draw on a combination of their own experience and imagination. The psychology of screenwriting involves in many respects the psychology of the screenwriter and characters we create are going to contain elements of ourselves" (Lee 2013, 13).

**I speak
as the character
in the film text**

THE TEACHER

That's good to know. (Beat.) Fictocriticism can capture the psychology of the screenwriter.

LOUISE

How they view the culture. (Beat.) I like how Sue Gillett (1998) spoke as Ada first. Her fictocritical work, 'Carrying the Song: Jane Campion's *The Piano*' could show a type of inner monologue of this character when she could not speak on screen. This shows the potential of fictocriticism and film. I become the character in the work I am analysing.

THE TEACHER

You can perform the character yourself. Know what it might be like to be in her position.

LOUISE

I think it comes from my experience as a performer. I want to feel the emotion of the character in the moment of a scene. While I am still coming from the place of spectator who critiques these practices, I can also understand what it might be like for a woman in this situation. Then I am able to share this new story with other women. Another perspective, especially when these stories have been shaped by men.

A REHEARSAL

An Actress Prepares:

Voice.

Movement.

Character.

The Teacher paces, paper in hand. She looks down at it for a moment.

To the empty classroom:

THE TEACHER In this class we'll begin with the personal.
How you feel. The experiences that have
made an impact on you.

She pauses. A deep breath.

The Teacher checks the page. Scribbles a few notes. Scratches out a line.

THE TEACHER No. I don't need it.

The Teacher throws her pencil down.

She preps:

moves from side to side,

jumps up and down,

shakes her arms and legs.

THE TEACHER Red leather. Yellow leather. Red leather.
Yellow leather. Unique New York.

She punches the air.

She stops. A moment. Then paces again.

THE TEACHER This is stupid.

She sits down at her desk. Head in hands. A deep breath. In and out.

... She needs a moment.

**Am I writing
my own role?**

Here.

The Teacher looks up to the empty classroom.

THE TEACHER From your life you can write
your own role. One that you
know you can play, because
you've been there yourself.

A **CHORUS GIRL** peeks through a tiny gap in the door. How
long has she been there?

The Teacher doesn't notice her.

SHE IS...

the facts a teacher, a performer
so far full of nervous energy
a little crazy
in preparation for her first class
trying to write her own role

In all of her performances, she has never been lost for words. A script always guides her.

Through the years she believes that her own words do not matter. *They* know better.

She is told how to speak, how to act, how to dress, how to behave in public. They give her pieces of hair.

She is hidden underneath.

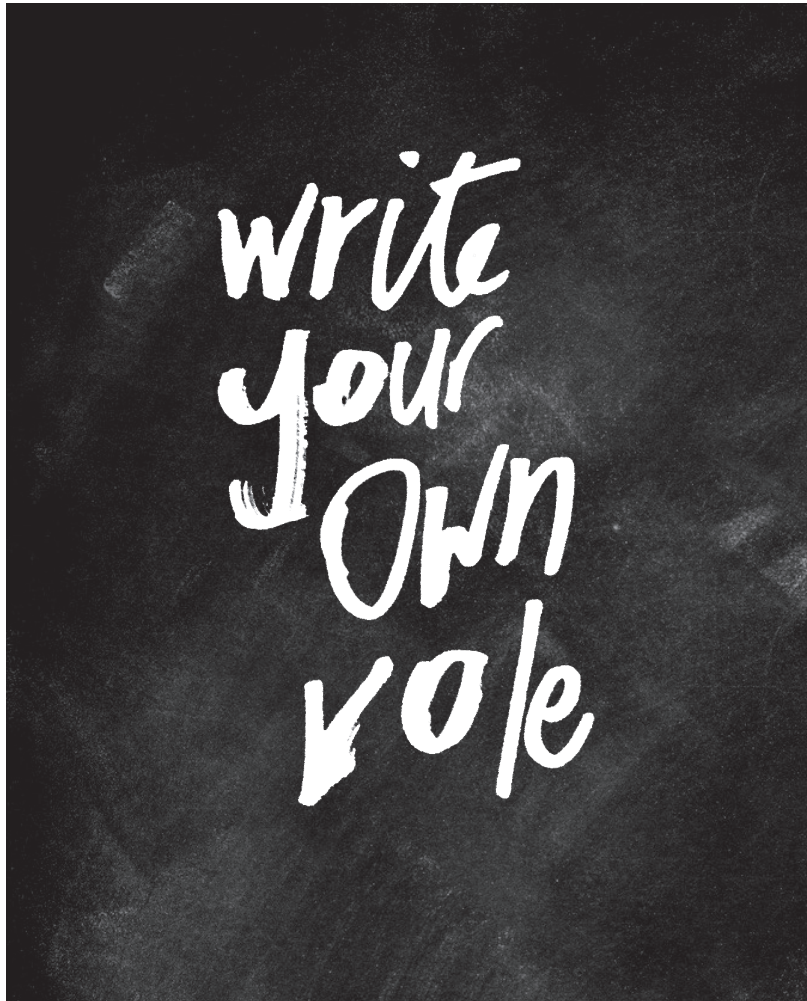
In this moment, she knows how to be a character, but not how to be.

PIECES OF HAIR

The Star looks down at her hands, then back up to the mirror.

THE STAR Why can't I find the words to say?

She unclips her hair piece and places it on the dressing table.



WRITE YOUR OWN ROLE

The Teacher writes with chalk in big, bold letters:

WRITE YOUR OWN ROLE

She places the chalk underneath the blackboard and stands back to view the words. It looks like a child has written them.

She wipes her chalky hands onto her pants.



STUCK IN THE CHORUS LINE?

An animated advertisement.

A line up of Chorus Girls' legs form a tunnel.
They move together and apart like scissors.

Title: Stuck in the chorus line?

WRITE YOUR OWN ROLE!

The legs fall over.

Title: Write your own role

One single girl with an oversized head dances next to the title.



**Does my experience of teaching influence this scene?
The story of my life through the character of The Teacher.**

**I try to make myself busy before the class begins,
hiding behind the computer screen
going through the materials I have prepared earlier.**

**They are in front of screens too. Social media junkies.
Why is this class in a computer lab?**

**I like the idea of going back to a classroom,
a blackboard and old-fashioned desks.**

**Chalky handprints on The Teacher's pristine black pants.
A sign that she is nervous too.**

Me on that first day.

**Did I say welcome?
An invitation to engage.**

WELCOME

The Teacher arranges books and equipment at the front of the classroom.

The sound of sliding chairs and hum of students in the background.

THE TEACHER The story of my life.
(V.O.) The story.
 Hidden.
 For now.

Her back to the students, The Teacher breathes deeply. Pale. Faint. She holds onto her stomach.

Another moment. Seems like a lifetime.

She forces a smile and turns to face the class.

THE TEACHER Welcome.

Sixteen Chorus Girls are seated in chairs behind their desks. They all look the same. A perfect square formation: legs and arms crossed, eyes to the front of the room.



A TAP IN TIME

Bright lights. A sound stage.

Sixteen Chorus Girls pose in rows. A perfect square formation: feet and arms at the ready.

Wood's voice booms from the sidelines.

WOOD And dance!
(O.S.)

The Chorus Girls stomp hard onto the stage. They make music with their feet. Their timing is perfect. They all look the same.

**After her star
diminishes
on screen,
she finds
her voice
again.**

A PART TO PLAY

The Star faces the mirror, but looks beyond her reflection.

THE STAR I am fading.
(singing)

She unclips her earring and places it on the dressing table.

THE STAR I'm too old for you now.
(into the mirror)

She unclips her other earring.

A star fades
at a certain age.
Then,
a new girl
takes her place...



**So,
 how do I transfer
 this task
 into the film?
 It doesn't seem right
 to have her preaching
 to the group.
 The uplifting tale
 of a teacher
 who seizes the day
 to empower her students
 has been done
 too many times before.**

YOUR ROLE

The Teacher moves closer to the sixteen Chorus Girls.

THE TEACHER So, you want to write your own role? It should be easy. You know who you are. Don't you?

Only a quick flash of their faces. Sixteen blank expressions.

THE TEACHER No doubt you have seen many parts you would like to play.

She scans the room, waiting for a response.

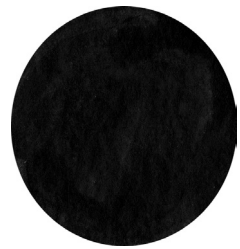
THE TEACHER Maybe not.

She pauses for a moment. Unease.

She looks at the camera for a second. Help.

**I play the role of The Teacher in this research.
I consider how I could develop a class
that teaches actresses the techniques
of screenwriting. Would my art imitate life?
The story of development presented
in the classroom.
The story of my life making films.
The history of a practice and the choices
I have made to tell female stories.
Characters I might want to play.
Women I want to see. There on the screen.**





ACT 4:
SHOW THE EARLY STAGES
OF SCRIPT DEVELOPMENT



A story

develops...

In 2007 I am chosen to develop a screen idea during a pitching session with QPIX, the now extinct organisation for emerging filmmakers. I start with a vivid image of Marilyn Monroe walking with a small suitcase along the highway in outback Australia. The idea of a woman dressing up as a star would be the basis of a short film. An exploration of the character's need to be someone else.

A PERSONAL SCRIPT DEVELOPMENT

I write knowing that a screenplay will become a film. I create the scenes and associated texts to serve the future production, discarding irrelevant details in subsequent versions while keeping a record of their existence. I file away pages and pages of earlier drafts to hold onto the screenplay, a “transitional and transformational” document, so it does not “vanish’ into the film” (Maras 2009, 6). This has been a personal practice, not often observed by others, my early script development performed in isolation before a more polished screenplay moves into the hands of my collaborators. While the fictocritical screenplay is still a relatively polished version of the scenes in development, I also include reflections, rejected ideas, visualisations and other details to acknowledge the process.

Throughout the ‘scripting process’ of a ‘thesis-film’, a similar form to what I am demonstrating here as academic script development, Maras (2004) suggests that ‘story structure’ does not need to be its major concern. Instead, this process could be more performative, like “an idea-matrix that in turn develops and forms part of the conceptual practice and poetics of the film” (Maras 2004, 92). There is less focus on the proposed film as a whole when fragments of ideas for scenes are explored before they are placed together in some kind of order. Both the script and the film can be imagined through its form, what Adrian Martin (2014) calls a ‘cinematic idea’. Martin states, “an initial cinematic idea is a matrix. It *proposes* or *projects* the film to come, envisaging its shape, its formal dimensions and parameters” (2014, 18, original emphasis). This is not necessarily shown through the traditional script as a ‘blueprint’ approach that limits the ideas to a narrow focus on story structure and action (Martin 2014). The restrictions associated with this conventional approach have been discarded in this PhD.

During the process of developing *Too Many Monroes*, the script editor persuades me to change the story's focus. My interest in an experimental narrative style and female identity is replaced with a conventional story where Marilyn Monroe is a muse to a male romance writer. It is now a story about a man.

Rather than writing in a linear way, scenes can be developed as fragments or mosaics. Rolf de Heer handwrites scenes, including dialogue, on cards that he assembles on the wall during “the first 90-95% of the process” (de Heer cited in Bazzica 2017). These cards are often colour coded, depending on the complexity of the project. de Heer mentions, “Say you’ve got half a sentence up on a card and you think ‘I’ll just see what happens if I just fiddle with it and make it a proper scene’. You work on that for a bit and you put it back up [...] and it just sort of grows (cited in Bazzica 2017). Once all of the scenes have been constructed on the scene cards, de Heer types the screenplay.

In the early stages of script development, Margot Nash (2013) argues for a more flexible approach to screenwriting and structure. Nash suggests that writers abandon the strict rules and formulas, valuing the initial, messy process that comes when ideas are being developed. She recommends a ‘discovery-driven script development process’ when a story is being created:

Rather than following a predetermined shape, I try to let structure emerge out of the material and be a response to the ideas. The ubiquitous three-act structure is held up today as a paradigm to be adhered to, even in the very early stages of development, but I strongly suggest that the mysterious and often messy process where ideas need time to ferment be valued, and that the formulas and rules with their neat answers, which are held up as the secret to success, be questioned – particularly during the initial creative process (Nash 2013, 150).

Kathryn Millard (2010) also questions development processes that lose their original integrity and innovation after multiple assessments and drafts. This method of script development that abandons “pre-existing templates” (Millard 2010, 14) is about taking risks and venturing into unknown territory to be bold and creative, a much easier process to explore within the academy, where both Millard and Nash have situated their practices. But, when money is involved, there is far less opportunity to dwell in this exploratory phase.

After each new draft, the script editor tells me what he wants the story to be. I follow his direction, losing agency as a female writer, with the belief that the screenplay will move into production through one of QPIX's initiatives. I am eager to make another film with their funding and equipment, which is difficult to obtain as an emerging filmmaker.

In an industrial context, script development is commercial and creative, where “ideas, emotions and personalities combine with and are contested by the practicalities, policies and movements” (Batty et al 2016, 150) of those who are financing the project. It has been difficult to define because of the “many and varied practices, understandings and imperatives, over just as many different media, cultures and contexts” (Batty et al 2017, 226) that exist in the industry. Peter Bloore (2013) acknowledges that script development is a complex process. While it is often driven by the writer’s creativity, it moves into a team effort under the management of a producer (Bloore 2013) or funding body. When defining the field, Batty et al (2017) discovers that collaboration is a commonality between a number of practitioners’ ideas of script development. One definition, from script and story development consultant, Stephen Cleary also links to film production:

[A] professional collaboration between myself and the rest of the creative team whereby we evolve a dramatically satisfying story through a process of scripting, packaging and financing, which allows the film to be made in a way that is true to our vision, which makes sense in the economic and cultural context of our industry and which, above all, enables the film to reach the audience we have identified for our story (Cleary cited in Batty et al 2017, 227)

Often a screenplay’s development will begin with a treatment or, as Nelmes (2008) calls it a ‘step-by-step outline’. The first draft is a rapid writing process “driven by the initial excitement and passion for the project while the story and characters are still evolving” (Nelmes 2008, 343). A number of drafts will be written and rewritten until the screenplay is polished enough to move into the next phase of production.

Three drafts later, once all traces of the original idea have disappeared, the organisation are interested in producing the film. At the end of this script development phase I have an industry standard version of a story I want to tell. I am excited by the prospect of collaborating with other emerging practitioners as I move into the role of director.

As a writer-director, I work within the five stages of the filmmaking process, including development (where idea generation and screenwriting occurs), pre-production, production, post-production and distribution. These phases of production are applicable to those projects made in the industry or academy. Maras (2009) suggests that 'scripting' does not necessarily stop at the end of the development phase because ideas and events can change throughout a project's life. An example of 'the scripting' process that documents all stages of the production of a film is featured on Sally Potter's online archive, 'The SP-ARK Project'. This archive allows the viewer to get a clear sense of the creative process behind a film's creation. The project highlights the unique voice of the filmmaker, showing working documents that would not usually be available to the public. The early iterations of the screenplay and Sally Potter's handwritten notes are the most useful resources for my research. While the archive only features one film, *Orlando* (1992) from Potter's oeuvre, the project's goal is similar to my own, which can "provide a radically new and revealing experience" for its participants (Sally Potter 2012, SP-ARK section). This archive is a practical resource to understand the entire production process, but do a few pages really give me enough insight into Sally Potter's personal script development?

Then, the devastating news comes: QPIX does not want me to direct my film. They give me no reason for their decision. I understand that the head of the organisation is not a fan of the writer-director role. I have my revenge later in the year when he hands me the Best Independent Film Award for my experimental film, *Adelaide* (2007) at the Queensland New Filmmakers Awards.

A screen idea is present even when a story is not fully formed. Ian Macdonald (2013) calls the idea of a singular project, 'the screen idea', which ensures the film's creation is unified under a number of different collaborators. Macdonald defines the screen idea as:

Any notion held by one or more people of a singular concept (however complex), which may have conventional shape or not, intended to become a screenwork, whether or not it is possible to describe it in written form or by other means (2013, 4-5).

If the screen idea is clear, the film could potentially be made without the usual documentation or script.

My own screen idea is developed through a process-driven and individualised stage of script development, before the involvement of collaborators. Rather than presenting an initial draft of the scenes only, I include other visual and textual details of the story's development. Millard suggests that script development can be multimodal: "the very notion of what it means to write is shifting" (2014, 7). This is evident in the fictocritical screenplay that is exploratory and playful. I develop each event, or scene, in isolation from the overall narrative, where the structure of the story is not determined before the 'first draft' is written. This requires me to dwell in the moment of each scene, improvising the small details of the actions and dialogue that take place. It gives me the opportunity to extend the character's development in the process.

In the end, I realise that in trying to conform to their conventional ideas of a good story, I have lost the essence of my experimental writing approach. I hide the script away with the final words of dialogue ringing in my ears: “There are too many Monroes, stay true to yourself”. When I succumb to the ideas of others, I lose my agency as a writer. By pretending to be a more conventional writer who creates a story about a man, I deny the real story a chance to be told.

A female story.

These early moments of a screen story’s development can be viewed as a type of ‘under-writing’ (Martin 2014; Dooley 2017). This happens when a filmmaker creates a number of texts in written, visual or sonic forms as personal explorations of the work, which are not likely to be seen or published. The extra-narrative texts may include character development through dialogues and interior monologues (Martin 2014). There could be, as Martin suggests, “a mass of material (the entire sensual, intellectual, formal, imaginary world or frame of their project) that will later condense as they approach the shoot” (2014, 17). Kath Dooley’s script development for *Fireflies* includes “the documentation of actor improvisations, character testimonials filmed on mobile phones and the generation of social media content for the film protagonists” (2017, 288). Like my own fictocritical explorations of the scenes and associated influences, this kind of documentation, or ‘under-writing’, provides extra depth and layers to the film, allowing the eventual spectator to feel or sense their development underneath (Martin 2014). Rather than hiding these processes and extra texts, the fictocritical screenplay makes them visible at the earliest stages of the screen work.

A screenplay, and associated documents, can represent a more reflective practice where not only the scenes are imagined through its pages, but the proposed form and shape of the film as well. The personal and process-driven focus of script development performed in isolation allows the writer to explore all the possibilities of the character and drama that shape the screen story. By showing these processes at an early stage of the screenplay’s development, I am able to impart this knowledge to other practitioners.

CHILDHOOD

The Star removes a necklace from around her neck.
A gold heart-shaped locket on a chain. She studies it.

THE STAR Typical stage mother.
Beauty pageants.
Talent shows.

She traces the heart with her thumb.

mother
to daughter
we appear
on stages
we dance

MOTHER

From the perspective of a child,
MOTHER seems larger than life.
Her face unseen.

A lit cigarette between stubby
fingers with nails too long.

She flicks the ash into the camera.

**Mother
smokes,
backstage.
Fitting costumes.
Rehearsals.
One night only
performances.**

**Dancing
in her ashes.**



SEE ME

The necklace is laced between The Star's fingers.

THE STAR Acting. Singing. Dancing.
Never reaching perfection.

She looks down and opens the locket. Her mother on the left, her younger self on the right. Blurry pictures.

THE STAR She didn't get to see it.
See me. Larger than life
on the screen.

The Crooner appears in the mirror.

THE CROONER Da da da da da da da
(singing) dah da da da.

She doesn't see him.

THE ECHO

In the white space The Crooner continues singing.

THE CROONER Da da da da da da da
(singing) dah da da da.

He turns the microphone off.

a supporting hum
an echo
in another scene

growing up
every part
scrutinised
under a spotlight

LOOKED AT

The Star takes a glance at herself in the mirror.
Then back to the necklace.

THE STAR They were all looking at me.

She places the necklace into a jewellery box.

Those awkward,
still growing,
adult-child
teenage years,
magnified:
a close-up
on the screen.

A PICTURE

THE YOUNG STAR poses for photographs.
Cameras flash. Blinded by the light.

THE STAR (V.O.) They kept telling me
I was beautiful.
I didn't believe them.

A weak smile.

TOO OLD TO PLAY

DRESSER 1 and **DRESSER 2** strap down The Young Star's breasts. Her torso has the appearance of a mummy.

The Young Star looks faint and falls into Dresser 1.

Dresser 2 slaps her face. The Young Star flinches and straightens up.

They continue to tighten the bandages around The Young Star.

I am eleven,
ready to perform
in an older dance team.
They want me to look
three or four years older.
Extra padding
stuffed inside a leotard.

I refuse.

I am already developing...

**Just like Dorothy,
she's looking for some colour
in this grey world.**

FROM THIS GREY WORLD

The sound stage features a child's bedroom. On the single bed, The Young Star sits cross-legged, playing with her braids.

She turns her gaze to the window. A fake, grey sky outside.

THE YOUNG STAR
(singing)

If I could fly
From the world inside,
All those grey feelings,
Grey life.
When the world is black and white
The day can turn to night,
Sometimes I'd like to go,
Then maybe I could show
Some colour.

The Young Star gets off the bed. She slides slowly around the room.

THE YOUNG STAR
(singing)

If I could try
To move outside
Of those grey feelings,
Grey life.
When the world is black and white
It's hard to see the light,
A place I'd like to go,
Then maybe I could show...

She reaches the window.

**outside
the narrative
an audience
takes the same journey
as the character**

A FILM FOR OTHERS

In a darkened cinema, an **AUDIENCE** of twenty people watches The Young Star in the same scene.

THE YOUNG STAR All my colours!
(O.S. singing)

Two spotlights appear. One above The Teacher, the other above The Crooner. They react to the scene.

**yet,
there is no colour
here**

SHE IS COLOURFUL

The Young Star is in the middle of the bedroom, twirling around, arms outstretched like Maria in *The Sound of Music*.

Her smile seems forced.

THAT PLACE ON THE SCREEN

The Crooner is under a spotlight in the cinema. He sings as he watches the screen.

he sees
himself
with the girl
on screen

THE CROONER

(singing)

A boy in the dark,
A flicker, a spark.
A girl on the screen,
A vision, a dream.
I fell in love with a girl
In the film world.
I was seven or eight,
Only seven or eight.

The audience sings.

AUDIENCE

(singing)

These are the visions
The sounds in our heads
They live in our memories
We never forget
These are the stories
The journeys we take
They mirror a feeling
The need to escape
To that place on the screen

The spotlight fades. The Crooner is now in the dark.



she sees
herself
as the character
on screen

The Teacher is under the spotlight. She sings to the camera.

THE TEACHER
(singing)

A girl in the dark,
A flicker, a spark.
A life on the screen,
This was my dream.
I fell in love with performing
In the film world.
I was a teenager
Only fourteen.

The audience sings.

AUDIENCE
(singing)

These are the visions
The sounds in our heads
They live in our memories
We never forget
These are the stories
The journeys we take
They mirror a feeling
The need to escape
To that place on the screen

The spotlight fades. The Teacher is now in the dark.



**Her song is dubbed.
No need to breathe deep,
just mouth the words
you've already performed.**

BREATH

On the edge of the bed, The Young Star is out of breath. She struggles to smile and sing.

THE YOUNG STAR
(singing)

If only I could fly
To that place outside.

The Young Star bends over, gasping for breath.

She falls onto the bed, trying to rip the bandages from her chest.



IN THE DARK

It is dark. Only The Crooner and The Teacher remain in the cinema.

THE CROONER
(singing)

Now, a man in the dark,
A flicker, a spark.
Living the dream
On and off the screen...

THE TEACHER
(singing)

Now, a woman in the dark
No flicker, no spark
Not living the dream
That place on the screen....

The screen shows The Young Star looking out of her window. The image fades to black.



BREAK

In the fake bedroom, Dresser 1 and Dresser 2 hold onto The Young Star. They drag her off the set.

WOOD This should be in the can!
(O.S.)

The bedroom is empty now.

PLEASURE AND PAIN

The Star faces away from the mirror.

THE STAR My pain was their pleasure.

She turns back to the mirror to glance at her reflection.

**there is pain
in all
the plucking and sucking,
with no more hairs
or fat
the real self
disappears...**

A PORTRAIT OF AGNES VARDA

She writes for cinema spaces. Vision and sound. She calls it 'cinécriture': cinematic writing. "The movement of sensations" (Benezet 2014, 111) based on emotion, not subject or story. She says:

I have fought so much since I started [...] for something that comes from emotion, from visual emotion, sound emotion, feeling, and finding a shape for that, and a shape which has to do with cinema and nothing else (Varda cited in Quart 1986, 4).

Is this what it is like to write as a woman? I feel an emotion first. An image drawn from memory.

The story has no shape, not in a traditional sense. I imagine and feel what it might be like as a character.

She sees a film through all phases of its production. Emotional writing at all stages. From idea to distribution.

Writer. Director. Later, a producer, cinematographer, editor. Performer?

I make a documentary. All these roles. A voice. A reason.

Her films frame daily events. "Time is seen as a natural milieu of everyday life" (Biro and Portuges 1997, 1).

In the screen space she follows *Cleo from 5 to 7* (1962). "She leads her charming, spoiled heroine through random fragments of events" (Biro and Portuges 1997, 4). On the streets of Paris, dining at a cafe, in the privacy of her own apartment, encounters with friends and a new lover, a singer anxiously waits for her test results, certain she has cancer.

She becomes a gleaner in the *Gleaners and I* (2000). Capturing and collecting portraits of other lives. A purpose in the waste people leave behind. A lens cap moves into the frame. A dance. A mistake other filmmakers would discard.

I capture process on the page.

These small moments in film. Emotional writing.

Her approach is experimental because it is playful. Self-referential. Observing and immersing. Objective and subjective. She says, “Film is a living organism, which is in constant construction” (Varda cited in Wilson 2012, 29).

In darkened cinemas, audiences see new images. A different way of seeing. Feeling. The film makes a connection to their own lives. To mine. She says:

the perception of all these images and sound proposed to us in a typical film narration piles up in our memory with other images, other associations of images, other films [...] they pre-exist. So a new image titillates or excites another mental image already there or emotions we have, so when you propose something to watch and hear, it goes, it works (Varda cited in Quart 1986, 7).

Sensory and intellectual. Political. Feminist. Acts of resistance. Female protagonists. A female gaze. A woman speaks in *Réponse de Femmes* (1975): “I am more than the hot points of men’s desire” (Varda 1975). Women reply.

A woman writes.



HER PERFORMANCES

The Teacher passes a couple of movie posters featuring The Star.

She stops in front of a poster of The Star in close up and the title, 'A Star Shines'.

THE TEACHER
(to camera)

I watched all of her performances as if they were my own. Learning the lyrics of her songs. Some dance routines. A couple of lines here and there.

She dances by a number of posters along the wall. Each one a different musical.

A WOMAN IN THE DARK

The Teacher laughs. The only one.

She turns to see a few **PEOPLE** in the cinema. Faces serious.

She shrugs at the camera. Slides down her seat. Looks up at the screen.

Young Star's face takes up the entire frame. Make up caked on. She smiles.

YOUNG STAR
(singing) I'm gonna make you laugh
So hard you'll bend in half
I'm gonna make you laugh.

She falls backwards. Her bum in the air, legs behind her head.

The Teacher looks at the camera.

THE TEACHER Not one of her finest moments.

The Teacher stares at the screen.

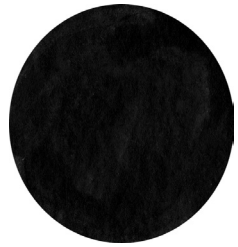
THE TEACHER
(singing) A woman in the dark,
Not leaving her mark,
There on the screen.
This could have been
A reality for me.

She slides further down her seat.

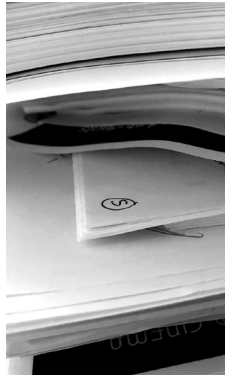
Sometimes,
I feel like I'm the only one
laughing at the funny moments
on the screen.

Sometimes,
I don't know what I'm doing.
Scenes don't make sense
no matter how many times

I write them.
I must be a woman in the dark,
not leaving her mark on the
page...



ACT 5:
INCLUDE MULTIPLE DRAFTS



Pages and pages filed away.

**Multiple drafts,
different versions of a scene.**

It is a process.

A screenplay in development.

“I have lost good ideas. No pen or paper. They have been forgotten in the haze of early morning wake ups. I only recall that some half-baked attack had happened. The details of the spark have faded. I have since moved out of the moment and into the everyday” (Sawtell 2016, 35).

THE PROCESS

In the beginning, to show the process, I present each draft in the order of its development. Each new draft is included in the document. It becomes difficult to show every single change that has happened over time with so many pages and pages of script development that make the document heavy and repetitive. I decide to include the most recent draft of each scene, not in the order of its development, but as the structure of a proposed film. This becomes the final draft of a fictocritical screenplay for *One in a Million Girl*.

I then consider how I might show the process of developing multiple drafts of scenes without adding a significant number of pages to the document. Firstly, I present fragments of the scenes as parallel texts that comment on the process of each scene. Shown next to the most recent version of a scene, these texts include earlier drafts, discarded dialogue and lyrics, and initial notes about character and action. These extra moments of process highlight how the screenplay has been developed over several drafts. Secondly, in this act, I will show the development of two sequences that have significantly changed over a number of drafts. These sequences, detailed over the next eight pages, focus on each character’s experience of cinema. I reflect about the choices I have made to change these sequences with each new draft.

“I think the cinema is a woman... This uterus which is the theater, the fetal darkness, the apparition – all create a projected relationship, we project ourselves onto it... just as we do with women” (Fellini cited in Fischer 1989, 80).

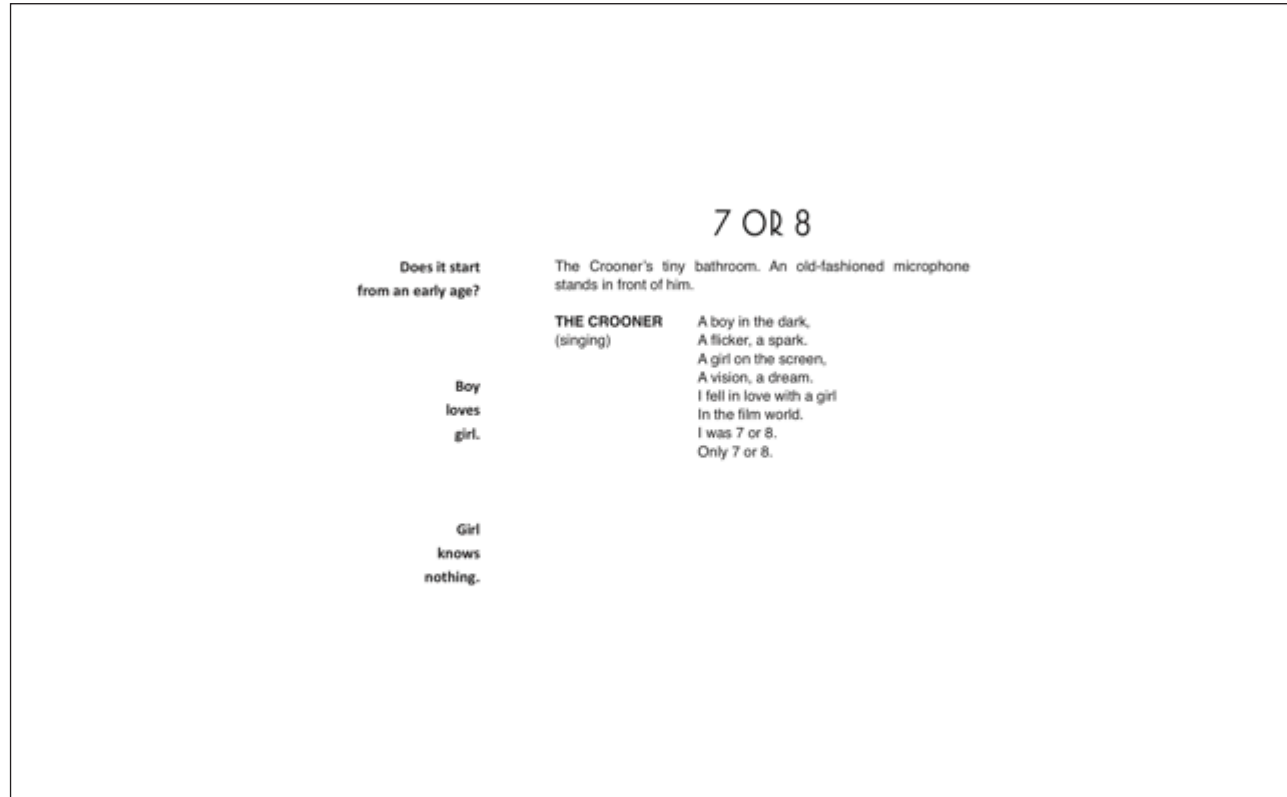
THAT PLACE ON THE SCREEN

For the first sequence, ‘That place on the screen’, featured on pages 95-96, I am interested in exploring the different viewing experiences of The Teacher and The Crooner. Weaving between their moments in the cinema are scenes that reflect the behind the scenes story of The Young Star preparing to play the part. With her torso tightly bound she finds it difficult to breathe and stay in character. Unaware of The Young Star’s struggles, both The Teacher and The Crooner are in awe of this performance, one wanting to be her, the other to be in a loving relationship. Through juxtaposing scenes of the star and spectator, this sequence highlights the way an audience’s experience of a film is different from the performer’s memory of it. As The Star mentions in the final scene of the sequence, “my pain was your pleasure”. This suggests that the performer’s comfort does not matter as long as the audience is entertained.

The reflexive nature of this sequence is part of a musical tradition that includes both the ‘internal audience’ inside the film and the ‘external audience’ who are viewing the film (Feuer 1993, 26). For Jane Feuer, “It’s the intrusion of the internal audience between us and the performance which, paradoxically, gives the effect of a lived – and more significantly – *shared* experience” (1993, 27, original emphasis). This ‘shared experience’ between both audiences, in and outside the film, suggests that the on screen performance is for “all of us” (Feuer 1993, 28). It is this connection that allows the external audience to identify with the internal audience’s subjective experience of the show, which in this sequence happens when The Teacher and The Crooner recount their first moment viewing this performance. While these characters are unaware of The Young Star’s process of making the film, and the ‘demystification’ that happens when “we are taken into the world on the other side of the curtain” where “the aura of stars is reduced when we see them offstage as ‘real people’” (Feuer 1993, 43), there is still the potential for the external audience to identify with the internal one. When the scenes are taken outside of the cinema, as it happens in the first draft of this sequence with the character of The Crooner, it is less likely to reveal the filmmaking process from its production to reception.



This current sequence has changed from my original intention of weaving The Young Star's scenes with The Crooner's song to show how this relationship started: a boy watching a girl on the screen. The scene on the left, taken from an earlier draft of the screenplay, happens after the scene, 'From this grey world' with the final line of the song, "All my colours!" heard as diegetic sound coming from the speakers in the cinema. As 'a boy's first crush' this scene acknowledges The Crooner's first experience with The Star, observing her performance, witnessing her beauty and falling in love with her image. In both the earlier draft of the scene and the most recent one, The Crooner is remembering the first time he sees The Star as a young boy, observing her in the dark, rather than immersing himself in the story.



In the scene that follows, shown in the image on the left, The Crooner is now at home. He sings about this memory of a boy viewing the “girl on the screen”. In this draft he sings outside of the cinema, rather than in it. These lyrics reflect the crush in the previous scene’s title, but I believe they have greater impact in the latest draft when he sings in the cinema. While he still reflects about this moment being a boy, this new scene presents his position as a spectator in the audience. Likewise, in the parallel text, I originally consider how a boy’s feelings for a girl happen from a young age where The Young Star is unaware of her effect on “a boy in the dark”. This is still implied in the most recent sequence, but I do not acknowledge it.

OVERHEARD

The Star puts her head against the bathroom door. The Crooner finishes his song:

THE CROONER (singing, O.S.) A man in the dark,
A flicker, a spark.
Living the dream
On and off the screen...

He turns off the mic.

A PRIVATE MOMENT

Back to the dressing room.

THE STAR I didn't hear this song again.

In the earlier draft, The Crooner is also outside of the cinema in the next two scenes that weave between The Young Star's struggles on set. Once only a dream to a young boy, he now sings of the love he has found in The Star: "So many years from then, I fell in love again". He mentions this love happens "on and off the screen" to show that while he still has a relationship to the woman on screen, particularly when he plays the love interest alongside her, he is also her partner off screen. In the earlier version of the scene, The Star overhears The Crooner's song through the door, linking her memory to his. When the next scene, shown in the image to the left, moves back to The Star in the dressing room, The Crooner's story is tied to hers again.

For the most recent draft of this sequence, I include all three characters in the cinema scene, and a general audience during the chorus of the song, to create a more layered experience of cinema. This shows multiple meanings and emotions associated with viewing a film in the dark. When a character spontaneously bursts into song at a moment of discovery, rather than being separated from it, as The Crooner is in the previous draft, the experience of cinema is magnified as the external audience identifies with the internal one. As the audience chorus suggests, when we have "the need to escape to that place on the screen", we allow that story to "live in our memories" where that first point of contact with a film can carry a deeper meaning. Just like certain films have made an impact on my life, we remember these scenes as our own.

CINEMA EXPERIENCE

A cinema experience. Camera on audience.
Women react to a scene on screen. 3
minutes. Abbas Kiarostami asks, 'Where is
my Romeo?' in *Chacun son cinema* (2007).

A much more involved
scene. Think about
what's reflected on screen.
Does she say something at the end?

THIS IS BLAME

The Teacher sits at the front of the cinema. The light from the screen illuminates her face. The shadows of a few people scattered behind her.

She is mesmerised by the film:

Sounds of a struggle. Objects fall to the floor. A man's laughter. The Young Actress screams. A loud thump. A moment of silence. Heavy breathing. Smashing glass.

THE YOUNG ACTRESS No.

The Young Actress screams again. Hands slamming against a wall.

THE YOUNG ACTRESS No.

The Teacher is upset. She slides down her seat.

A WOMAN IN THE DARK

Likewise, the second sequence, 'A woman in the dark expands The Teacher's viewing experience of The Star, focusing on her relationship to those performances as she makes them her own. Being a struggling actress, The Teacher lives vicariously through the roles The Star plays on the screen. Moving from the classroom to auditorium, The Teacher is a narrator to the external spectator commenting on her emotional connection to the film. This sequence does not work in its current state because this emotional connection is now missing. Earlier drafts show The Star in a more intense role, which has a greater impact on The Teacher's emotional state when she views the scene.

The earliest draft of the scene, 'This is blame', (on the left), focuses on The Teacher's immersive experience with the film, suspending her disbelief and identifying the felt emotion in the scene. Only the sounds from the film, as The Teacher reacts to the scene. I imagine this moment would be in close-up. In the parallel text, I mention Kiarostami's short film *Where is my Romeo?* (2007) that shows a range of Iranian women's faces in the cinema as they watch the death scene in *Romeo and Juliet*. In this first draft I am interested in capturing the power of cinema to make such an emotional impact. At this stage, I believe the scene is not strong enough.

re-imagine these 3 scenes
into persons one.

CRYING

The Teacher cries too.

(don't think that is
needed.

More power if see the
scene 2 then how
she comes out of it

What is happening in this scene?

GLASS

The Young Actress slides down the wall.
A broken window above her. She rests in
the remnants of glass.

Heavy breathing. She cries.

Expand this
scene

These next two scenes do not say much at all. Both characters would be crying, the film moves back and forth between them. I like there is space on the page for them to feel the emotion, but I am still not certain this is enough to convey my intentions. I also question if The Young Star would appear in this kind of dramatic role as she is essentially a musical performer. Moving on.

FEELING SOMETHING MORE

The Actress looks directly into the mirror.

THE ACTRESS

That moment. I felt something.
A connection to character.
Everything else seemed fake
before then.

*A reflection
of The Teacher
in the mirror
allegedly to her
being in the
room all
along*

*Maybe she cries as well
in this scene - no need
for words?*

*It cuts between the scenes
anyway*

*A shared
understanding*

View from the mirror

I then decide that The Star needs to comment about her performance. This takes the scene out of The Teacher's story and into The Star's memory of her performance. Again, I question if she would play this kind of role. After all, she is only a musical star performing her part in a show ruled by men. Again, I am interested in changing the scene.

A CELL

A tiny white room. A cell. A surveillance camera view.

The Young Star bashes her hands into the wall. A dance from wall to wall.

She slides down the door. Knees to chest. A tear-stained face.

THE YOUNG STAR You might think I'm crazy
(whisper singing) But I haven't lost my mind.

She falls in a heap on the floor.

Thirty seconds later:

MR. WOOD Cut!
(O.S.)

The Young Star continues to lie on the floor. A few moments to come out of character.

DISCARDED SCENE:

**The Young Actress slides down the wall.
A broken window above her. She rests in
the remnants of glass.**

Heavy breathing. She cries.

This final example 'A Cell' (on the left) connects the action back to the musical. In this white room where The Young Star has been locked up, there are the moments of sadness and blame that appear in the first version of the scene. Now that I look back on this draft, I think this is the strongest version. The description suggests her struggle, which has been written as a dance. I imagine these movements could be extreme and savage, which would translate well to the screen. If I write the dance more effectively across the space, it could be transferred to a few more pages, suggesting greater time is spent in this moment of depression. It also reflects a similar theme of depression featured in the scene, 'From this grey world' (page 92), but it is far more extreme. Another aspect of this scene is its reflexivity, which is not presented in the earlier drafts. When Wood yells 'Cut!', as he always does, The Young Star takes a moment to come out of character, which shows she has also felt the emotion as a performer. The timing of lying on the floor could also be extended across the page. I think I will bring this scene back into the story.

**The Young Star
knows the scene
isn't funny.**

MAKE ME LAUGH

THE YOUNG STAR It's not funny, is it?

LOUISE I'm not sure how to write funny. It can come out in the performance.

THE YOUNG STAR I haven't done this kind of thing before.

LOUISE It's a musical. You can do it.

THE YOUNG STAR I don't know why this has to be in here. I would never play this kind of role.

LOUISE Would you prefer something more dramatic? This was my original intention. That seems even further away from what you would play.

THE YOUNG STAR Let me play the ingénue.

LOUISE There'll be time for that later. I wanted something different here. Something unexpected. The Teacher has a reaction in the cinema based on my own experience of laughing when no one else does.

THE YOUNG STAR And it has to be me?

LOUISE Yes. (Beat.) Don't worry. It's still in development.

HIGH HEELS

**She wants
to reach
the sky
in her high
high heels.**

The Star takes off
her high heels.

Thud.

Thud.

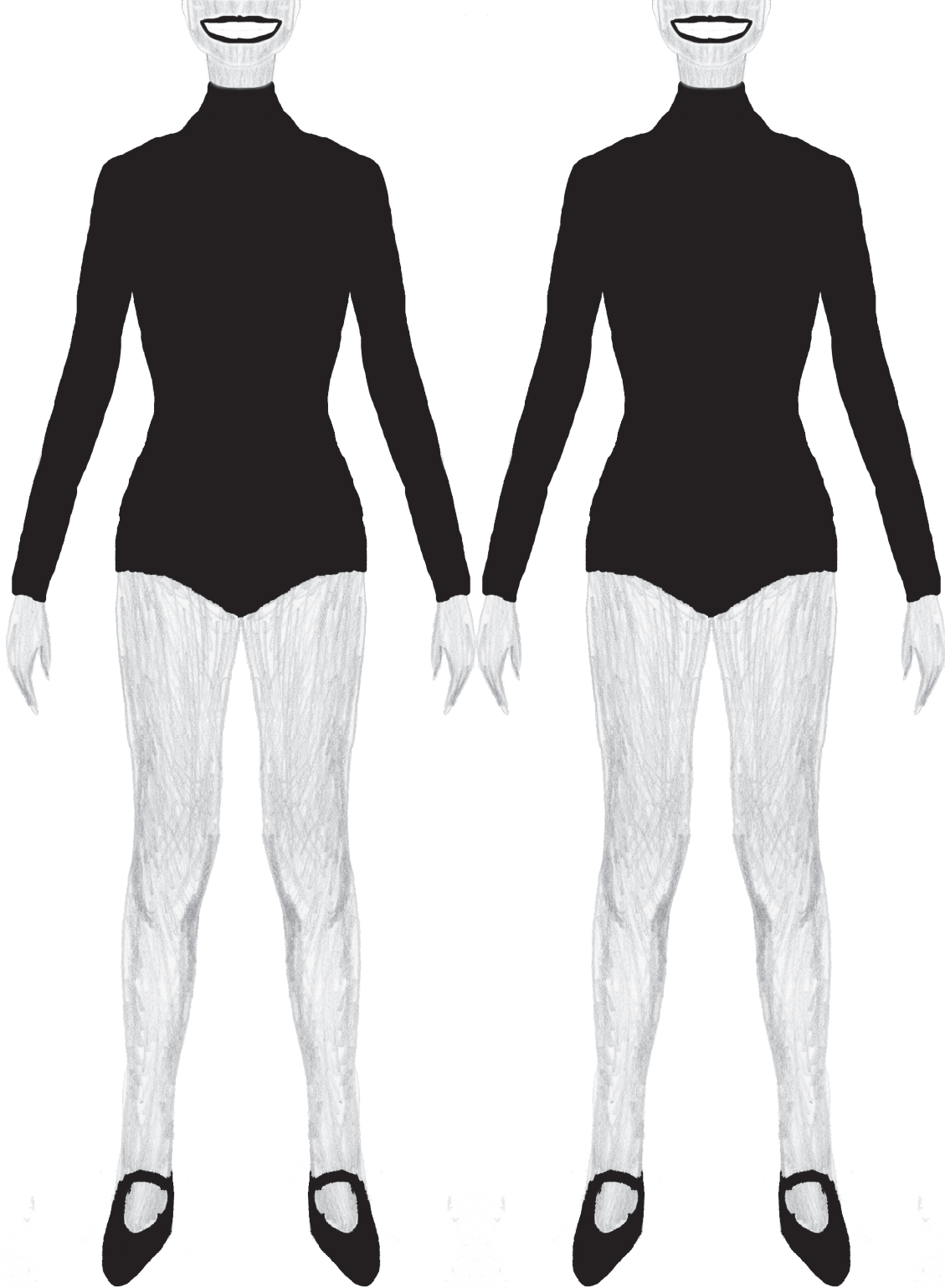


CHARACTER

The Teacher addresses a class of ten Chorus Girls.

THE TEACHER How do you feel when you dance in the chorus? Are you playing a character in the scene?

A flash of nine blank expressions. One girl nods.



MARCHING TO THE BEAT

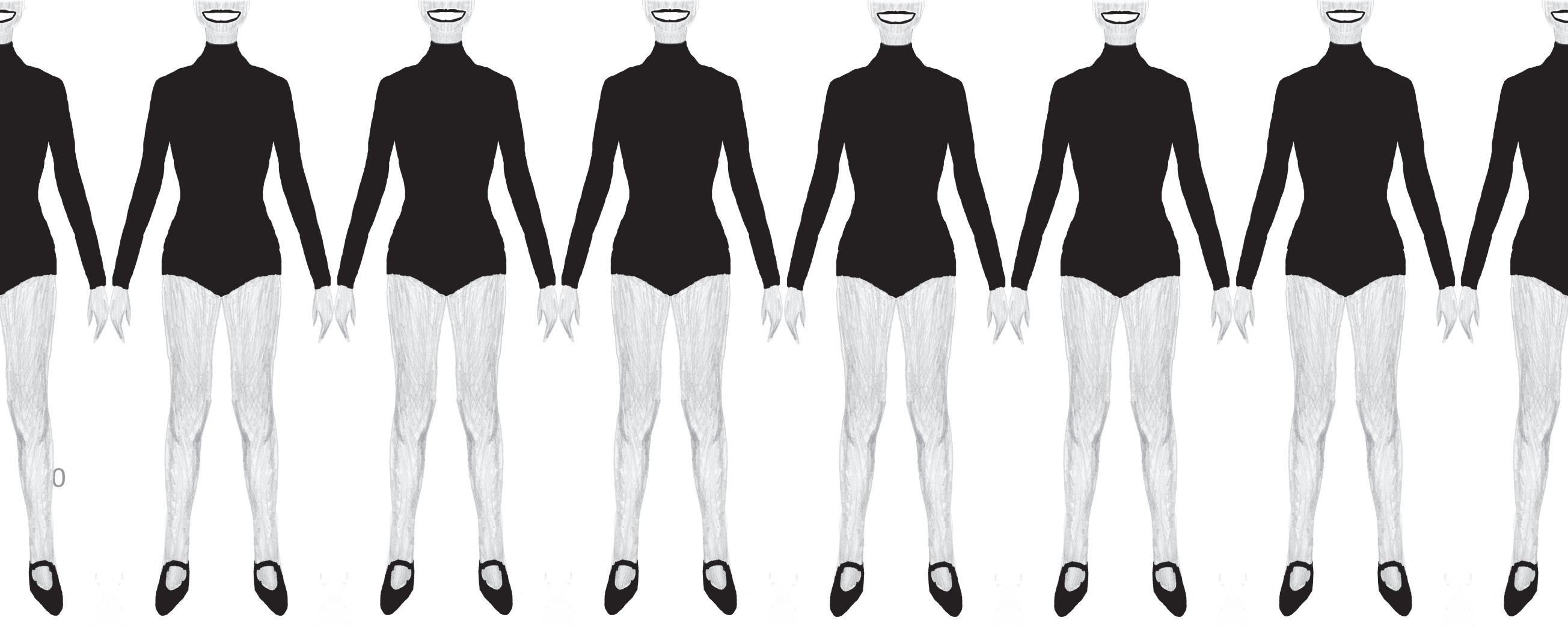
Against a white background ten Chorus Girls march forward.
They are dressed in black leotards.

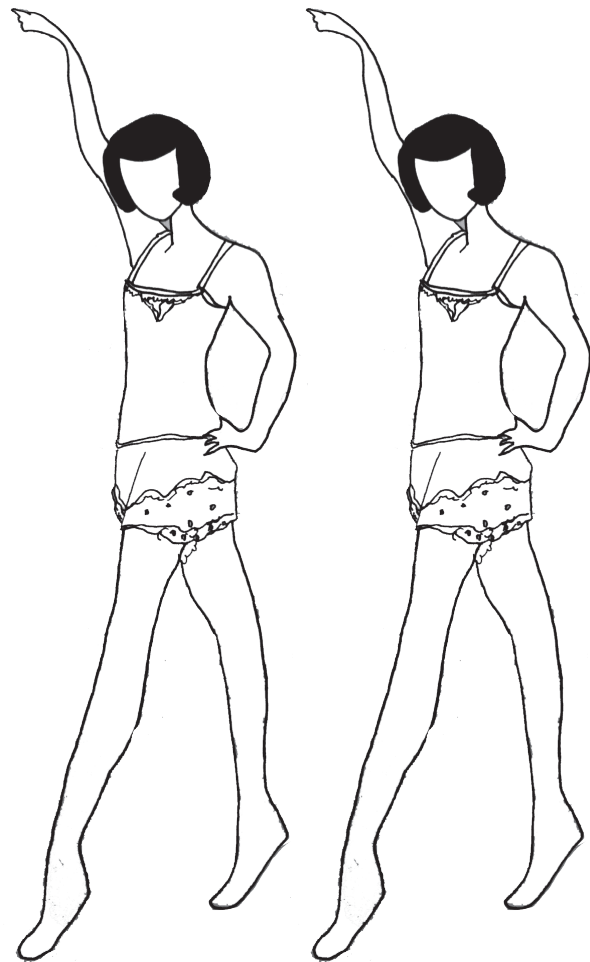
Their steps are aggressive. Perfectly timed.

Their smiles are extreme and savage.

CHORUS GIRLS I will always be your
(singing) One in a million girl.

They stop abruptly. Smiles still exaggerated.





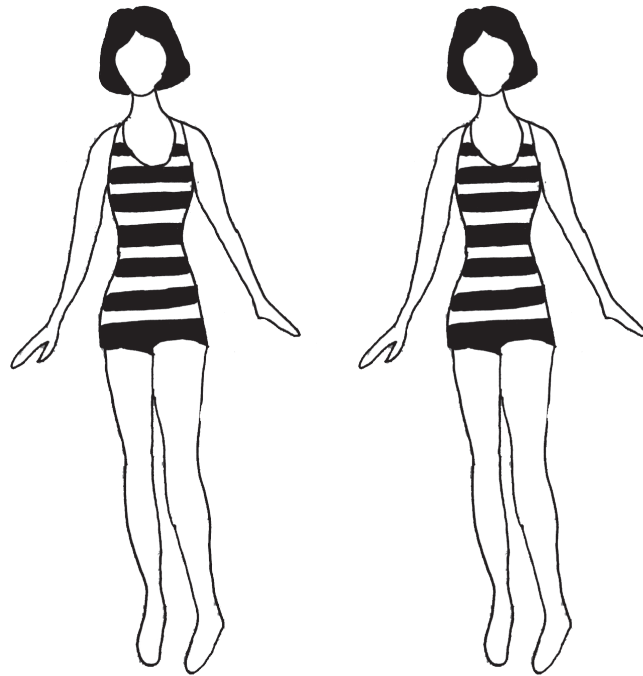
DAMES (1934)

Feathers, frills and flying ladies. Closing in. Close-ups. Smiling into the camera. Smiling at them. Men.

They dance their mesmerising, kaleidoscopic numbers. Patterns on the dance floor. No girl out of time. Moving in and out of circles. They dance for them. Men.

They sing:

*What do you go for,
Go see a show for?
Tell the truth,
you go to see those beautiful dames.*



A CHORUS LINE (1985)

“She’s got one!” they sing.

“One what?” I ask. “One singular look, all dressed in gold, many dancing bodies kicking at the camera. A mirror of their actions behind them.”

Is she a one in a million girl in this act? Or is she one of the millions vying for a part in the chorus? One part that’s almost impossible to get.

I love when they sing about the ballet. It’s my favourite scene. There is a sense of escapism. They’ve had terrible childhoods, yet, at the ballet they could dream.

It’s like me at the cinema. “Everything is beautiful.” Including me.



POSED

Cameras flash.

The Young Star poses for photographs. Smiles broadly.

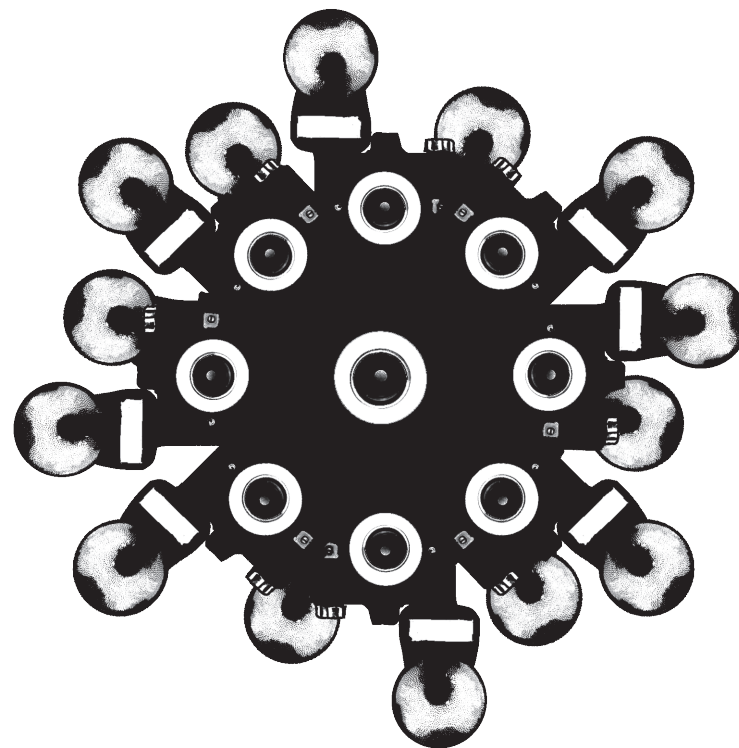
THE STAR
(V.O.)

I learnt to like the spotlight.
All eyes focused on me.

A group of **CHORUS MEN** join her. She smiles at them.
Centre of attention.

A camera
views
every little detail

Zoom.
Flash.
Snap.



**This is almost a mirror image
of the one with The Crooner.
Does she also get to choose?
I'm not sure how to finish it.
Shit.**

ONE AMONG MEN

The set features five circular steps leading to a round stage.

Twenty Chorus Men stand proud on each of the steps.

The Young Star dances down the stairs. The Chorus Men turn their gaze to her.

When The Young Star reaches the bottom of the stairs, The Chorus Men form a line behind her.

She moves to the start of the line.

She spins from one man to another. They don't take their eyes off The Young Star.

The Chorus Men form a semi-circle around her.

THE YOUNG STAR Is it true that a man would do
(singing) All he can for love?

She taps a Chorus Man.

THE YOUNG STAR Would you?
(singing)

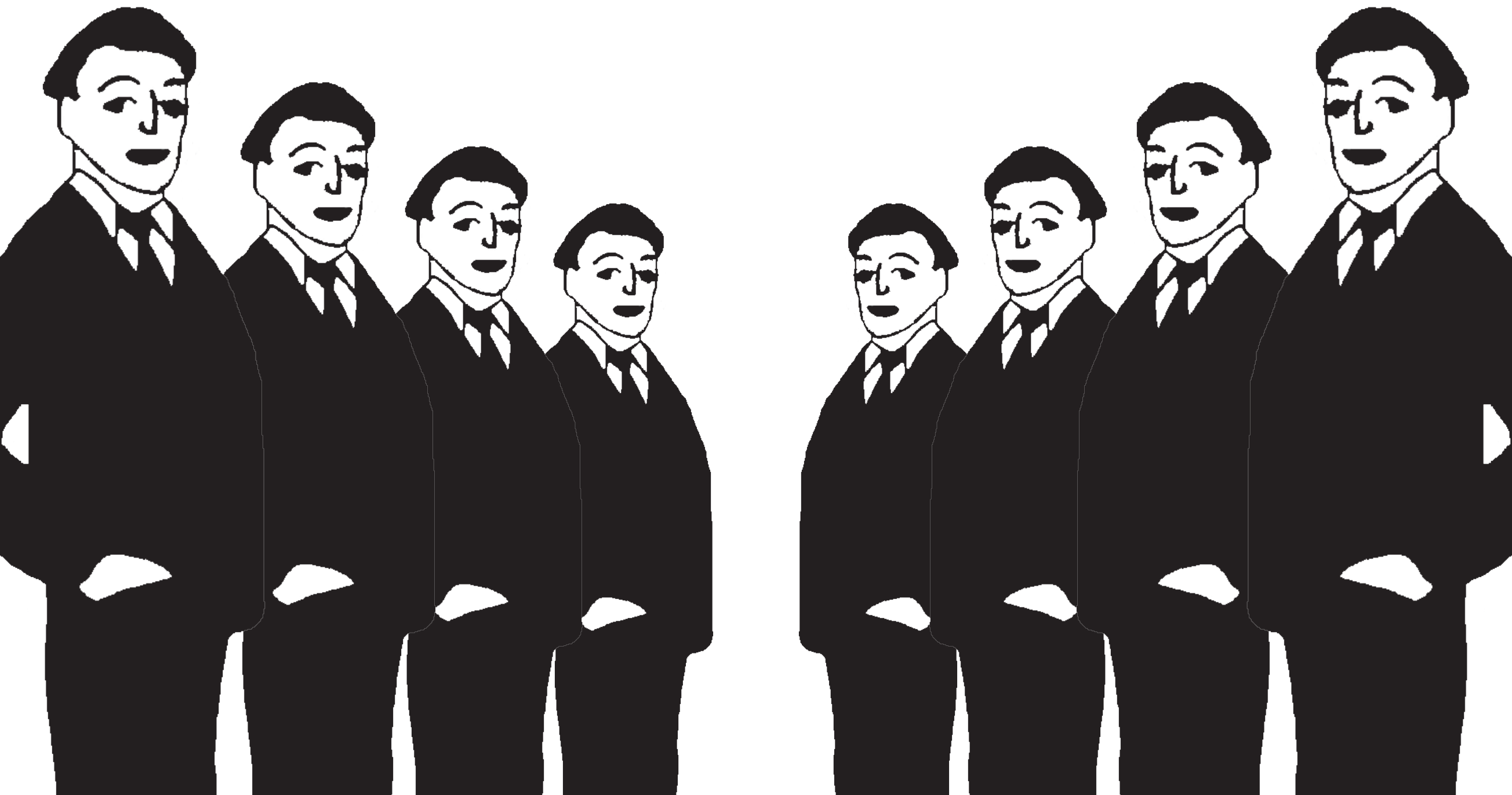
She taps another one.

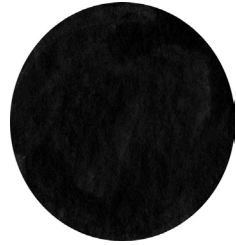
THE YOUNG STAR Would you?
(singing)

The Young Star taps a final Chorus Man.

THE YOUNG STAR Would you?
(singing)

The Chorus Men nod.





ACT 6:
MAKE A MUSICAL



**The musical
is personal.**

To me.

Finally, I am writing a musical. This genre plays on many screens throughout my life. Stages. I can now show this history of cinema, reinterpreting the stories that influence my filmmaking. Songs and dances, a significant part of my work. A musical film. *One in a Million Girl*.

A FEMINIST MUSICAL

The musical has the potential to be an experimental and feminist form capable of highlighting and interrogating the representation of women in Hollywood musicals. A 'feminist musical', a micro-genre I use for this project, draws on musical genre and feminist film theory to influence the narrative. In a similar tradition to the show or backstage musical, the content of *One in Million Girl* highlights "the intersection of the audience's gaze and actor's backstage efforts" (Altman 1987, 207). As a reflexive film form, this new musical takes the viewer behind the scenes with "the world of movies as their [its] subject" (Ames 1997, 2). Before I discuss elements of the musical that make it the perfect vehicle to showcase stories for and about women, I will define the conventions of the genre and place the form within a historical context.

**My first film as spectator.
A musical. I must be
three or four. Hiding on
my mother's shoulder
when the wicked witch
in all her green glory
appears, then disappears
in a fireball. I fear she
will get me and my "little
dog too".**

According to Rick Altman, in *The American Musical*, genres are “ideological constructs masquerading as neutral categories” (1987, 5, original emphasis) where there is an expectation that certain conventions and codes will be presented in the text. By claiming a film is a musical, audiences and critics assume songs and dances will be a key feature in the narrative. But, with the varying types of musicals, including backstage, jukebox, musical comedy, folk, adaptation and integrated forms that have been screened throughout its history, the genre has been difficult to define. Steve Neale calls it “a mongrel genre. In varying measures and combinations, music, song and dance have been its only essential ingredients” (2000, 105). Altman claims any musical definition must acknowledge the “reversal of the image/sound hierarchy” that he calls ‘supra-diegetic’ music when “everything –even the image – is now subordinated to the music track” (1987, 71, original emphasis). This attention to the music above image distinguishes the musical from other films that include songs that still favour image over sound (Altman 1987). For Martin Rubin, the film musical must contain “a significant proportion of musical numbers that are impossible” (2002, 57). These impossible numbers contradict the realism and natural progression of the story. When determining the scope of her doctoral research project about the Hollywood musical, Amanda Louise McQueen has a more inclusive definition:

A musical is a film in which a significant percentage of the overall narrative is devoted to the presentation of song and dance. In these films, the majority of musical numbers are either supra-diegetic or impossible, creating a dual register, and/or the majority of numbers are integrated in such a way that they develop or enrich narrative or character [...] In these films, characters frequently – or exclusively – sing to unsourced music to express their feelings and comment on the narrative situation (2016, 23).

I sing and dance on stages from the age of four. I perform *Sunny Side of the Street* with a group of girls whose smiles are over-exaggerated. Everything heightened so the back row can see our expressions. “Leave your worries on the doorstep.”

This definition, useful for my own practice, includes two types of musical: ‘aggregate’ and ‘integrated’. The aggregate or stage musical has a ‘dual register’ (Altman 1987; Feuer 1993; Cohan 2010) that includes, both performance and narrative spaces, the public and private realms of the show. In these musicals there are two stories progressing in parallel: one focuses on the central narrative, and the other on the performances that often take the viewer out of the story. For a moment, the musical numbers appear impossible in the narrative; for instance, the kaleidoscopic dance sequences choreographed by Busby Berkeley. These numbers performed to an audience positioned in front of the stage could not possibly be the same song and dance routine in the theatre. The spaces are larger than the stage and the camera angles, including the overhead shot, show impossible vantage points that could not be viewed from an auditorium. While my own musical replicates these ‘Berkeleyesque’ patterns, they are not impossible in the narrative as they are projected in a cinema, rather than a representation of what the audience would view on a stage. This does not mean that these numbers are perfectly integrated into these parts of the narrative as they are outside of the central stories of *The Star* and *The Teacher*. As Rubin mentions in ‘Busby Berkeley and the Backstage Musical’, “stressing aggregation rather than integration, it offers a fundamentally different approach to entertainment from those modern forms that oriented toward unity, continuity and consistency” (2002, 53). Constructed as a fragmentary narrative, *One in a Million Girl* experiments with the aggregate musical form of the past, which often values spectacle over realism.

I perform in *Oliver!* An amateur musical. A minor role in the chorus. Moving across the stage in a city scene. Singing, “Oom Pah Pah, that’s how it goes” in a bar.

Alternatively, the integrated musical has no separation between musical numbers and narrative. Feuer claims, “when the number is integrated we may feel like singing and dancing ourselves” (1993, 31). For John Mueller integration happens when “song, dance and story are artfully blended to produce a combined effect” (1984, 28). While integration happens in a number of ways where the musical numbers range from unnecessary to the plot and content, also seen through aggregation, it is those routines that “contribute to the spirit or theme”, or enhance the plot (Mueller 1984, 28-30) that make this style of musical different from the aggregate form. Furthermore, it is through the ‘truly integrated’ musical numbers, which blend seamlessly into the narrative, where integration is most successful (Mueller 1984). This ensures the musical numbers advance the story in a meaningful way. At the end of *One in a Million Girl* there is a song that has been ‘truly integrated’ into the story. When The Star sings ‘Every day’ in the dressing room (page number) it is an in-the-moment expression that is not staged like some of the other musical numbers. With the intention of it being performed in a cappella, the song is a central part of the actions taking place to “progress the story” (Mueller 1984, 30). It is this form of integration “where dance and song numbers *are* narrative” (Altman 1987, 167, original emphasis) contained within the film.

It is not essential to separate these two types of musicals, as integration has been used in theory “to develop closer ties between narrative and musical numbers” and “provides a method for describing the structure and style of individual texts” (Altman 1987, 115). While integration can often be, as Altman claims, “antithetical to the spirit of the genre as a whole” (1987, 115), it is important to have these terms to distinguish the different types of musicals in genre history, theory and criticism. As categories, both aggregate and integrated musicals have a place in cinema history and film theory. According to Feuer, “Such a duality is part of the history of the genre, since musicals with performances integrated into the narrative developed alongside those with proscenium performances. Indeed many films include both types” (1993, 24). In fact, this dual structure allows for the recycling and growth of the genre (Feuer 1993), which has happened throughout its history in cinema, and later, television.

I don't know how many times I view *Singin' in the Rain* over the years. It could be a yearly ritual. I am drawn to those films that show how cinema is made.

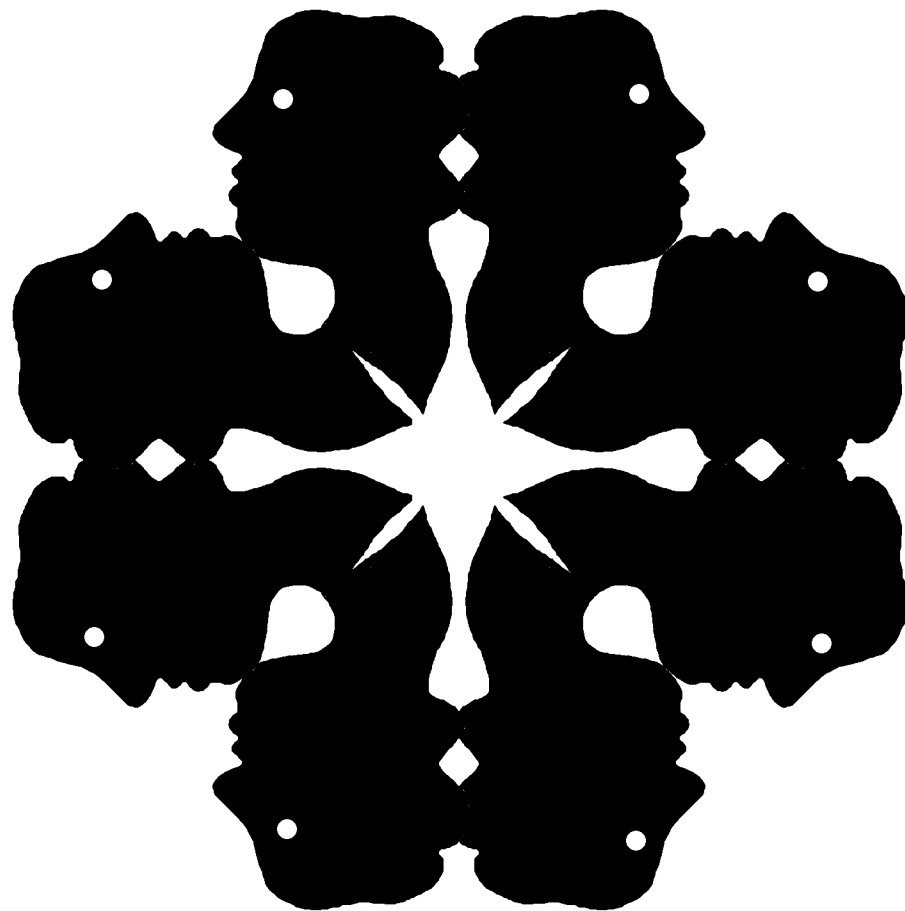
Since the introduction of sound and 'the talkie' in the late 1920s, characters have been singing and dancing in film. At its earliest stage, the films experimented with the technology and narrative as it developed the conventions of its genre. During this period, musicals borrowed from the stage, particularly the show musical where the stories and numbers happened in the theatre. Pye and Hillier claim, "the musical was at the heart of the Hollywood studio system" (2011, 1) with a number of films in this genre being made. The Hollywood musical, a major focus of this research, are musicals produced from 1930s to 1950s as part of the studio system (Wills 2001). Terms such as 'Golden Age' or the classical stage of the Hollywood musical are used to describe this period where the genre developed into a more integrated form. As McQueen notes, this period of the musical's history has often been seen "to best represent the genre's integrated form and, therefore, its aesthetic pinnacle" (2016, 6). During this Golden Age musicals were a key genre in all major studios, including Metro Goldwyn Mayer (MGM) under Arthur Freed, RKO Pictures known for its films with Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers and Warner Brothers where Busby Berkeley was situated (Cohan 2002). According to Pye and Hillier, "musicals showcased, in ways few other films could rival, the remarkable resources and depth of talent in the major studios" (2011, 1) during this time. With the decline of the traditional studio system, the number of musical productions also declined. Suffering "from artistic stagnation" (McQueen 2016, 6), the Hollywood musical borrowed from Broadway through adaptations, such as *Oklahoma!* (1955), and also created low-budget films featuring popular styles of music like those starring Elvis Presley. Feuer (1993) argues that, the musical's success is not shown through only one phase of its history, its mass-production and distribution, but in its ability to transform to the changes in the industry. While it may have declined in the amount of productions made after the 1950s, through "nostalgia for the genre" (Tinknell and Conrich 2006, 7), the musical has continued to be a popular and critical form of entertainment. Recent original musicals, *La La Land* (2016) and *The Greatest Showman* (2017) have drawn from earlier aggregate and integrated traditions as new works of entertainment.

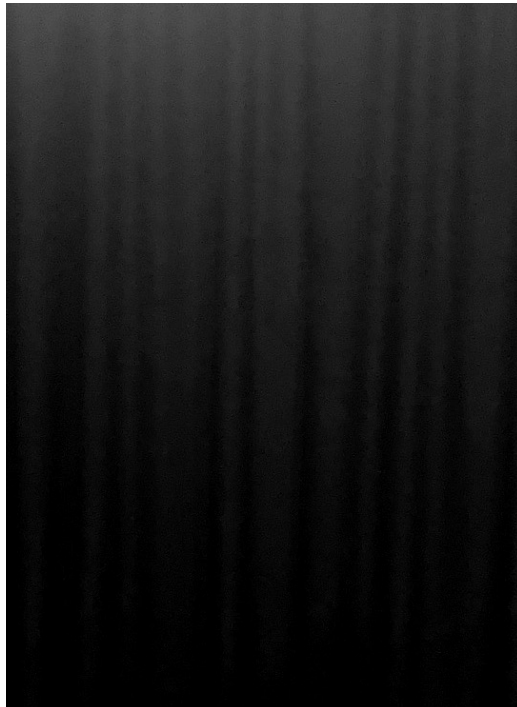
There is no high school musical. Just an a cappella group of women singing a couple of show tunes at a concert for our parents.

Like any genre cycle, the musical changes over time from its earliest experimental phase, through its classical period of stability and purity, to a stage of deconstruction and parody (McQueen 2016). It is this final stage of deconstruction where I believe the feminist musical can be situated. With few backstage musicals being made since the studio era, there is an opportunity to reimagine this reflexive form to comment on patriarchal and sexist filmmaking practices before changing them. As, Nadine Wills suggests, “the Hollywood musical is a genre filled with female bodies” where the women “are repeatedly displayed as spectacle” (2001, 121). By highlighting the spectacle in early sequences, I comment on the history of the Hollywood musical, before the women’s bodies can be empowered in their own dance sequences that are not sexualised. Lucy Fischer suggests the ‘re-make’ can be an effective way of emulating a genre in a new era, being a “mere ‘trace’ of an earlier work” (1989, 7). As a form of women’s ‘counter-cinema’, Fischer (1989) uses Chantal Akerman’s *The Eighties* (1983) as an example of the new show musical. In a similar way to my own work, Akerman “offers us with a ‘disintegrated’ musical, one whose dissolution reveals the poses and prejudices of that generic form” where she is “rewriting the patriarchal Hollywood musical in terms of a feminist cinematic vocabulary” (Fischer 1989, 16). This similar deconstruction process happens in *One in a Million Girl* through The Teacher’s classes where an actress is given agency to ‘Write your own role’. The fictocritical screenplay itself shows a new feminist vocabulary in its experimental presentation, integration of theory and a focus on its process and construction.

I write and perform three characters in a cabaret musical. Mabel, a mute loner with a doll, dresses in a colourful cardigan and is afraid to cross the road. Mrs Snozzright, with a larger than life prosthetic nose, sings about “gain, gain material gain” with her snoozy family when all she wants is the love of a young, strong man. And the Hollow-Hearted Woman, “incapable of being with anyone”, performs her torch song to the sound of a heartbeat. These kooky characters are perfectly placed within the ensemble cast who perform musical numbers and scenes about the human condition.

As Hollinger notes, “film texts work to instil patriarchal ideology in female viewers” (2012, 7). I believe it is therefore vital to write this commentary about women in the film industry for a female audience. While this musical both highlights and interrogates the practices and images inherently featured in the genre, it also has the ability to connect to a female audience because this genre is “not aimed at teenage boys” (Cohan 2010, 3), often the market for mainstream works. Tom Brueggemann (2018) claims the musical has the potential to bring women to the cinema with initial audiences for both *The Greatest Showman* (2017) and *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) being above 70 per cent female. Musicals also play to international audiences, those outside of the United States, including *Mamma Mia!* (2008), which made 76 per cent of the gross box office and *La La Land* (2016) \$300 million (Brueggemann 2018) in the year it screened in cinemas. These recent figures suggest there is a female audience for musical entertainment. Ticknell and Conrich (2006) also assert the popularity of the genre amongst women with its focus on female stars and more conventionally “feminine” interests. With a significant number of females viewing this genre, it is vital that a feminist musical presents “women in a manner which makes them inaccessible to male objectification” (Arbutnot and Seneca 2002, 77), even when those practices have been highlighted. It is through a deconstruction of the genre, as Feuer contests, when the musical can “invert or negate previous generic hierarchies of values” (1993, 107), which happens when a musical tradition is challenged. A feminist musical, through its reflexivity and resistance, can provide a space for women to put on a show.





HER FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE GAZE

The light flickers, then dies. The classroom is quite dark.

The ten Chorus Girls appear like shadows to The Teacher.

She darts between the desks. Pulls open the curtains.

The Teacher jumps back.

Many faces of Chorus Men seem larger than life. They stare at the Chorus Girls who giggle and preen.

The Teacher quickly closes the curtains again.

There is a chorus of sighs.

The Teacher is shaken. She leans against the wall.



**“Stars, they come and go
They come fast or slow [...]**

**Perhaps pretending you never saw the eyes
of grown men of twenty-five,
that followed as you walked, and asked for autographs
or kissed you on the cheek -
and you never could believe they really loved you [...]**

**Some women have a body men will want to see
so they put in on display [...]**

We always have a story...”

Janis Ian (1974)

A RISING STAR

The Star feels for the suspender under her dress.
She unclips it and rolls her stocking down one leg.

THE STAR I became
(singing) a rising star.

She throws the stocking onto the floor.

**“It’s Ruby, the naive young hopeful,
who gets the big chance and wins the
audience, not Rogers or any of the other
hard-bitten experienced showgirls.”**

Marcia B. Siegel (2009, 107)

THE ONE CHOSEN

On a stage with sparkling lights in the background, twenty Chorus Girls pound the floor with their feet.

Tap. Tap. Tapping. Sweat beads forming. Large, cheesy grins.

LEADING MAN weaves through the Chorus Girls to pose downstage.

The Chorus Girls form a line. They fix their hair and adjust their outfits.

The Young Star enters from stage left moving into position between two Chorus Girls.

Leading Man turns to face them. He looks up and down the first one. He moves down the line.

He touches the face of a Chorus Girl in the middle of the line. Not pretty enough.

Almost at the end of the line, he takes the hand of another Chorus Girl. He spins her around. Shakes his head. She moves back into the line.

Then, he faces The Young Star. He stares for a moment. Beams.

Leading Man takes her by the hand to the front of the stage.

The Chorus Girls exit.

Leading Man and The Young Star face one another. Only a moment before he twirls her around.

As she spins her costume changes. From chorus girl to star, she now wears an elegant gown.

On the stage under a spotlight, The Young Star dances.

PLAY

The Star rolls her stocking down her leg.

THE STAR Not a stretch to play.

She spins the stocking around, throwing it onto the floor.

**She doesn't need
to stretch
the truth**

I've got the same song playing over and over in my head.

TYPECAST

The Young Star dances in the spotlight.

THE STAR I got to play a Broadway Baby
(V.O.) two more times.

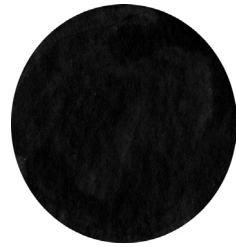
The Young Star spins. Her costume changes, another gown. She dances for a moment.

As she spins again, The Young Star turns into The Star.

The lights go up on stage. It is empty. She performs a song and dance routine.

THE STAR I've got the moves.
(singing) I've got the melody.
Now all I need
Is my man.

Leading Man appears on stage. She jumps into his open arms.



ACT 7:
BREAK SOME RULES



**What if
I break
some rules?**

If I write this screenplay in a different way, moving from industrial conventions, does that mean I will be branded as 'amateur'? I worry that these words on the page, all my work and effort, will not be recognised by the powers that be: those who will fund the picture.

THERE MUST BE AN ALTERNATIVE

Sometimes as I work within the parameters of this new screenplay form, I feel it would be easier to accept the rules of the craft that I know so well and type these screen words into a program that formats a document of continuous scenes. I resist the urge to move backwards because I have felt restricted by these conventions. To me, every page looks the same; the actions seem lifeless and my practice involves more than words perfectly formatted on the page. As an act of resistance, I move beyond the rules of formatting and narrative structure to discover a form that more closely represents the story I want to tell. A form that experiments with the way a screen story is formatted, presented, designed and structured outside of industry requirements.

“Offering a new form of presentation and style for screenwriting practice, the fictocritical screenplay becomes a creative, critical and personal record of script development, as well as a multimodal representation of the intended film” (Batty et al 2016, 152).

When a screenplay is written in the academy, there is further scope to experiment and play with formatting and presentation. Screenwriter-researchers can find their own methods of developing a story without adhering to the technical and commercial pressures associated with the profession. It can be difficult to challenge the conventions when a screenplay is likely to be rejected or seen as ‘amateur’ (Price 2013) if it is not presented in the correct way. Studios and funding bodies expect a certain standard; “Someone who writes in a blissful or wilful ignorance of the professional format will be immediately recognized as unprofessional, and such work will be tossed into the circular file” (McBride cited in Price 2013, 210). A certain doxa is acknowledged in the hundreds of screenwriting manuals flooding the market that “present a number of key strategies for writing screenplays that function as individualizing mechanisms, shaping the writer’s work and their perceptions of what screenwriting can and should be” (Conor 2014, 128). Bridget Conor compares these ‘how to’ guides to self-help manuals that give the potential screenwriter some direction:

By following the steps and filling in the checklists, a screenwriter can produce a screenplay with the requisite number of pages and scenes, the correct font, the essential conflict between protagonist and antagonist, the beginning, middle and end. In many ways, the texts provide the easily graspable tools to bring out the screenwriter in us all (Conor 2014, 130).

While following the rules is easy enough, I have done so for many years; these screenwriting practices leave little room for innovation within the form. Macdonald (2013) also acknowledges the limitations of these ‘how to’ manuals and stresses the importance of why a screenplay is written in a particular way. The manuals tend to focus on the technical and structural specifications without recognising the deeper level of its development. This focus on getting the form right can be unnecessarily restrictive (Price 2013), which is why the academy provides a more open space to think deeply about a screenplay’s development, making any necessary changes that show an individual’s unique style and aesthetic.

“Given that each idea will become a scene of the proposed film, I move between screens, from smaller phone discoveries to a larger computer-generated exploration. As the SCREENidea moves into InDesign, rather than the scriptwriting software, I am able to experiment and visualize with the presentation of the scene using the initial words, images and sounds that have been developed” (Sawtell 2016, 36).

In the academy, practitioner-researchers explore alternative forms that move beyond the conventional formatting of industrial screenplays. Emma Bolland’s *The Iris opens/The Iris closes: Le Silence # 2* is an adaptation of Louis Delluc’s surviving screenplay for *Le Silence* (1920). Part of a practice-based doctoral research project, this script is an act of ‘auto-fictive practice’, where Bolland uses “the material and conceptual space of the screenplay as a site for non-linear language of post-traumatic narratives” (2018, 204). The screenplay has an alternative layout that includes “parallel texts and typefaces that stylistically and visually acknowledge different voices” (Bolland 2018, 208). The script translates the original French and features the writer’s interventions, including “free-associative prose-poem counter-narratives” and “a critical commentary via the use of spoken footnotes” (Bolland 2018, 208). The script’s presentation plays with different fonts and stylistic features to capture a fragmentary version of the story.

Another example of an alternative to the master-scene screenplay used in television dramas is ‘the screen novel’, *Coyne*, created by Stephen Sculley as part of a creative practice PhD. With its position as “a stand-alone text” that might still have “the potential to be reframed as a production document” (Sculley 2017, 11) later on, the screen novel presents the story in a literary way. Sculley (2017) uses language and formatting devices, such as past tense and novelistic style and syntax, to draw the reader’s attention away from the proposed screen work. By featuring thematic images, maps, newspaper headlines and spaces that show scene transitions, Sculley reimagines the “look on the page” (2017, 241) to separate the text from its industrial context.

“Has the play been missing from the page?

Will I find it on the SCREEN?

**A constantly changing
form no beginning or end.**

Yet.

**Ideas are developed. Connections are made. Emotions are
felt.**

**I move words and images, video and sound. Multiple
narratives in a multimodal space. I dream through
the SCREENplay.” (Sawtell 2016, 39)**

In *Alternative Scriptwriting: Successfully Breaking the Rules*, Dancyger and Rush point out, “any screenplay that has life has to be invented from the ground up and has to discover its own rules” (2006, 344). Here, the authors are not offering alternative models, but ways of developing stronger narrative voices where screenwriters can move beyond the rules to create works that have life and meaning. Rodman (2006) asks for screenwriters to remember why they want to write. He asserts, the screenplay “needs to be freed from its utility. It, too needs to forget its planned itinerary – to open itself up to the beauty and terror glimpsed at the periphery of one’s vision, or, perhaps, just around the next” (Rodman 2006, 87). By freeing oneself from the rules early in the process, a screenwriter can explore all possibilities before constructing the screen story in a more traditional way.

The independent film industry, considered to be a creative practice outside the mainstream, provides a creative space for alternatives to the traditional screenplay form. Michael Newman (2011), who focuses on ‘indie’ film culture, acknowledges the value of difference, resistance and opposition that these types of stories bring to audiences. These films have the capacity to be “the product of an individual’s artistic expression” (Newman 2011, 28). J.J. Murphy claims that independent practitioners “choose to take a more innovative approach to their scripts rather than mimic the tried-and-true formulas” (2007, 16). This can include playing with various forms of narrative, such as multiple protagonists, nonlinear, parallel and tandem structures (Aronson 2010), but also less conventional presentations of a screenplay as a working document. In fact, a screenplay can be anything; “a map, sketches, photo-texts, a wiki, a list of scenes that form part of a jigsaw, a graphic novel, a video trailer, a short film – whatever works” (Millard 2014, 184-5). The approach will depend on the type of project that is being developed.

“When I draft each scene in isolation from an overall narrative, I write without rules. If I am too concerned about fitting a story into a screenplay template, I am unable to incorporate the extra narrative material and reflections that have helped shape my practice” (Sawtell 2016, 38).

Writer-directors who work outside of the mainstream systems find freedom in alternative screenwriting methods. By formatting in an unconventional way, Dan Gilroy’s screenplay for *Nightcrawler* (2014) accentuates and plays with formatting. There are no scene headings, or indication of locations and minimal character descriptions. Larger font sizes enhance important or heightened dramatic moments. As Gilroy describes, “There are one-line descriptions of things. It’s like one long run-on sentence. I just wanted to tell the story in a style that captured the energy of it” (cited in Sragow 2015). In an interview with Cosnahan (2015) for New York Film Academy students, Gilroy suggests that a screenplay could develop as a stream of consciousness that differs from a traditional approach focused on structure and turning points. Alongside formatting changes, the story lacks a traditional ‘character arc’:

When I started to write the character I realized, “this guy isn’t going to change.” Every film you’re commissioned to write is all about an arc; usually the arc is that the world creates a change in the character, usually for the better. To not have an arc, the messages and ideas in the film became more prominent. The character is plowing through boundaries, and keeps going (Gilroy cited in Fischer 2014).

While Gilroy’s approach still produces formatted words on a portrait layout, there are other possibilities. Some writer-directors work with proof-of-concept documents, including pre-visualisations, trailers and short films, to generate interest in their works. These work alongside or replace the traditional screenplay form.

In my part of the co-authored article, 'Methodologically Speaking...' I write:

"Fragments. Parallel narratives. Words and images. A screen story in development. A researcher develops. Experimentation. Play. A fictocritical screenplay. Hybrid forms. Spaces between. Industry to academy. PhD to industry. An ending creates a new beginning" (Sempert et al 2017, 212).

Guy Maddin's experiments in script development and screenwriting are similar to my alternative approach for the fictocritical screenplay, particularly the annotated screenplay for *My Winnipeg* (2007). As a published record of the filmmaking process, the script features the voice over narration recorded in post-production. There are no descriptions of scenes, but the pages are full of personal reflections, rejected pieces of narration, striking collages and images of family albums that give a deeper connection to the story. The extra words, images and graphic elements have a dialogue with the narration. Millard describes Maddin's screenplay as "a prototype of what a multimodal screenplay might look like on the page" (2014, 58). Maddin (2009) reveals personal insights about the filmmaking journey through these extra-narrative details. The filmmaker's "use of underlining, of different font, sizes, capitals and bold, visually creates a sense of the cut-and-paste aesthetic of *My Winnipeg*. It conveys a sense of the tone of the film: irreverent and freewheeling" (Millard 2014, 57). I consider his work to be fictocritical; he calls the film a 'docu-fantasia', blurring the lines between fiction and factual, or creative and critical. Rather than focusing on the development of the narrative as featured in my screenplay, Maddin's book is a record of the entire filmmaking process with interviews, essays and reflections about the work. It serves as an inspirational document in terms of its similar presentation, but it might not be the best representation of a screenplay in development.

“I cannot move. No action on the page. These characters do not speak to me. I have not chosen this font, this Courier 12. My words are lifeless, lacking. My own voice does not matter here. Here no author present. Neutral. Industrial. Conventional. Invisible” (Sempert et al, 2017, 209).

The fictocritical screenplay provides a space for writing in multiple ways. This form follows Millard’s multimodal approach to script development where “we now write images, sounds and gestures, as well as text” (2014, 9). Developed as a bricolage of fragmentary texts, scenes and images, the fictocritical screenplay becomes “the polar opposite of the mass production methods of industrial societies” (Millard 2014, 9) where the visual aesthetic of the writer-director has a place alongside the action and dialogue that will appear on screen. I show how words and images work together in the space. Placed in parallel to the scenes are fragments of prose, poetry, in the moment reflections on process, character studies, dialogues, illustrations and visualisations of the story’s themes. These extra texts are able to represent an experience of the film in development. As a result, I design the document to accentuate the visual qualities of the story.

As Millard suggests, “stories are not a set of rules. We *live* with stories, adapting them as we go” (2014, 13, original emphasis). With the inclusion of all fragments, scenes and dissertation, the fictocritical screenplay challenges existing models to create a form that is more closely connected to a personal and scholarly screenwriting practice and script development. The author is presented in the work, which shows the qualities of what Rush and Boughman (1997) call ‘the inflected screenplay’. Without the author’s inflection in the text, the screenplay tends “to be economical, fragmentary, and reactive, reflecting the immediacy of thought, but it is untagged – there is no clear indication who is responsible for it” (Rush and Boughman 1997, 34). This works for an industrial practice where a screenplay can be shaped by many collaborators, but when the writer is also the director of a project, working with alternative methods of development, there is a freedom to “come up with whatever notational combination is useful” (Dancyger and Rush 2006, 245) to the work. The fictocritical screenplay, as a highly inflected text, is able to comment on the story, through the screen language and directorial style (Rush and Boughman 1997), and other extra written and visual texts, bringing a unique narrative voice and perspective to the page.

WRITING A SCREENPLAY

THE TEACHER Are you tired of being told what to do?

LOUISE Yes.

THE TEACHER Tired of the patriarchy?

Yes. **LOUISE** Yes.

THE TEACHER Tired of the rules?

LOUISE Yes.

THE TEACHER Write your own screenplay!



a darkened cinema
almost empty

a few voyeurs
in space

a place
that is not their own

better to be
home...

A WOMAN IN AN AUDIENCE OF MEN

An art deco cinema.

Orchestral music. The credits of a musical play on the screen. They cast a light over the small audience.

The Teacher moves in her seat, trying to get comfortable. She notices seven **MEN** in different positions in the cinema. Each one alone like her.

The credits fade on the screen. An empty stage appears. The music continues.

The Teacher turns to face the screen again.

“... beating out a rhythmic melody in an overt sexual display of bare flesh, flashing legs and seductive smiles.”

Barbara Creed (2009, 73)

MAKING AN ENTRANCE

On screen. An empty stage.

Two Chorus Girls glide onto the stage from the wings. Their backs are to the audience. They appear to be naked on top. Short frilly skirts. Black tap shoes.

They sing a melody of ahs.

As they glide, they sing with their arms outstretched. Their hands are joined to the next girl in line, who holds onto the next girl and so on...

When the first two Chorus Girls reach the centre of the stage, they join hands.

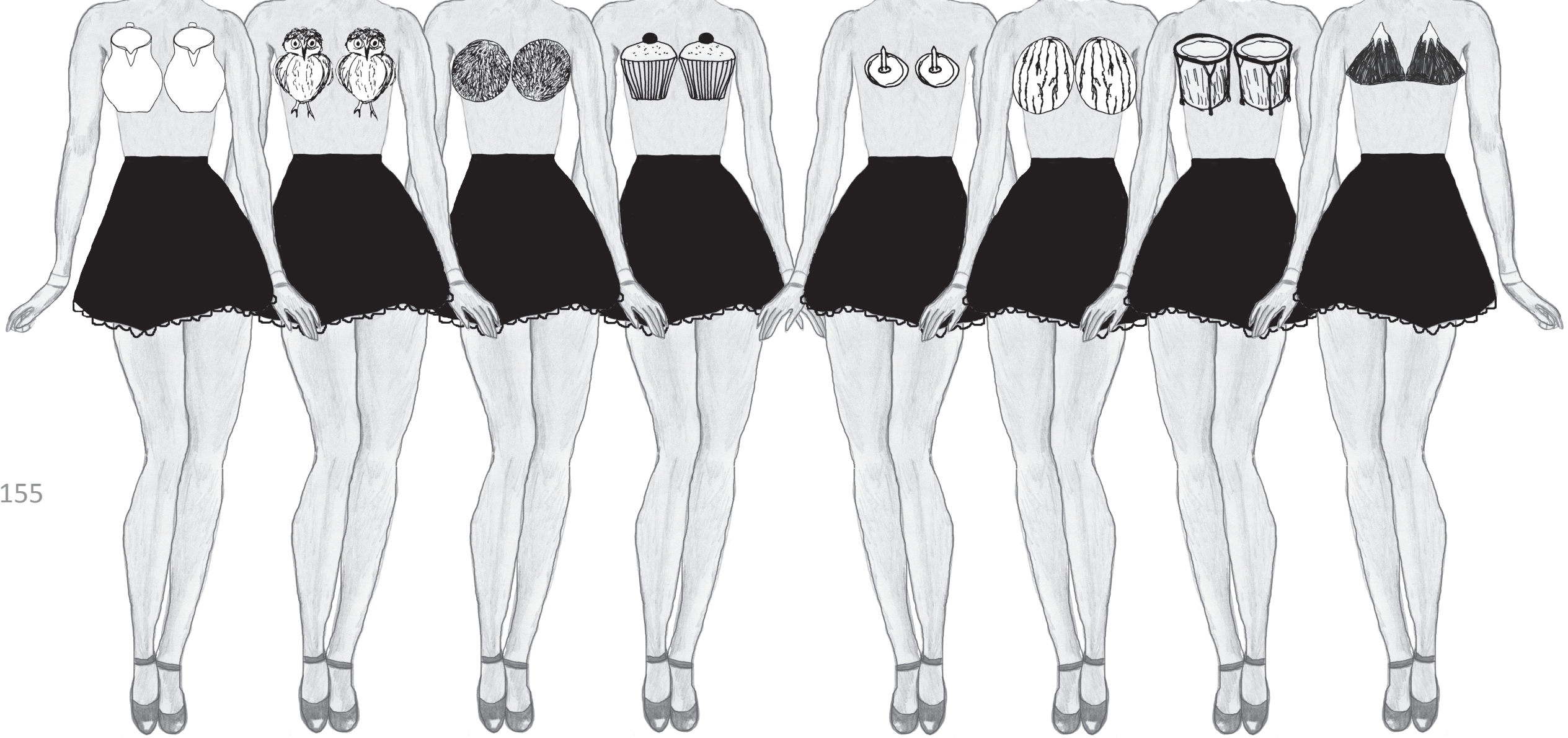
There are sixteen Chorus Girls holding hands across the stage. From behind, they all look the same.

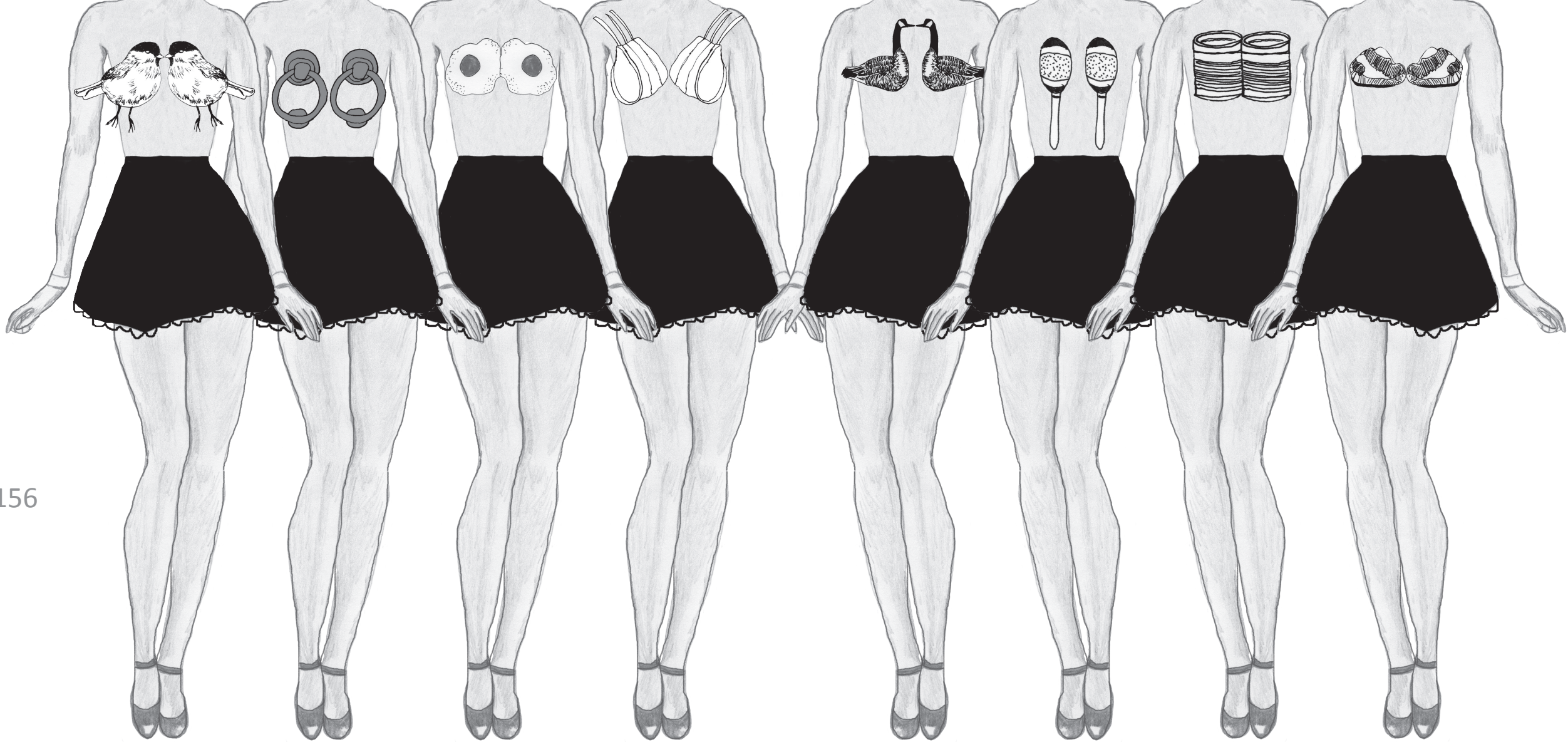
The ahs stop.

They tap, heel to toe, heel to toe, until they make it to the back of the stage.

The Chorus Girls unlock hands.

When they turn around, they have objects where their breasts should be. These are all very different.





FAKE BOOBS (OR IF BREASTS ARE THINGS)

Jugs

What's another name for breasts? I call mine boobs.

Hooters

There needs to be a song and dance routine. Not necessarily a boobie show. What they sing doesn't need to mention their breasts. It's just too obvious. Perhaps an innocent number.

Coconuts

Cupcakes

Something subtle. It could be like the songs featured in the musicals of that era.

Tacks

This life is ours to share

Melons

but I won't have a care

Bongos

when you're beside me.

Twin Peaks

Tits

The girls don't acknowledge their fake breasts as they bounce up and down.

Knockers

I remember a scene in *Beaches* (1988). Yes, it's a daggy choice, but I do happen to love it.

Fried eggs

There's a show about bosoms. Bette plays CC Bloom who plays some strange narrator on stage. A buxom beauty needs a better bra to support her. Otto Titsling knows best. Those women on stage had extreme, pointy breasts. They could poke an eye out.

Rack

Honkers

Maracas

Speaking of using breasts as weapons...

Cans

a number of years ago I write a superhero short film called, *Bazoomgirl*. So much sexual innuendo. It seems appropriate to make it now. I'm still not sure how.

Boulders

Early draft, discarded

The Teacher watches fifteen Chorus Girls enter the room. Each one wearing a different costume that represents the breast. Chorus Girl 1 tries to hide hers underneath a cardigan.

T - This is different.

C - We had a rehearsal.

T - And you didn't think to take your costumes off?

C- So many wolf whistles on the street.

T - Ok.

The girls talk with each other. The Teacher doesn't quite understand.

Note: Why would the girls wear these silly outfits to class?

I hunch over. Ashamed. These breasts are too big for my body. Stop looking. Now.

Rebecca in *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* (2016) sings, "I got them heavy boobs, heavy boobs, dense like dying stars". She lists the objects that easily fit underneath:

stapler

ten pencils

paperback copy of 'Arabian Nights'

dog bowl

remote control

hardback copy of 'Wuthering Heights'

I know what she means.

I wonder how many women in Hollywood decide to get fake ones.

A chorus girl in *A Chorus Line* (1985) sings, "Tits and ass can change your life, they sure changed mine". Her fake boobs get her the parts.

Is The Teacher imagining these fake boobs on the chorus girls? Her need to look at these women in a different way.

A parody?

**They break the wall
between
performer and spectator.**

A BEAUTIFUL PAIR

They dance a tap routine. Their fake boobs bounce up and down.

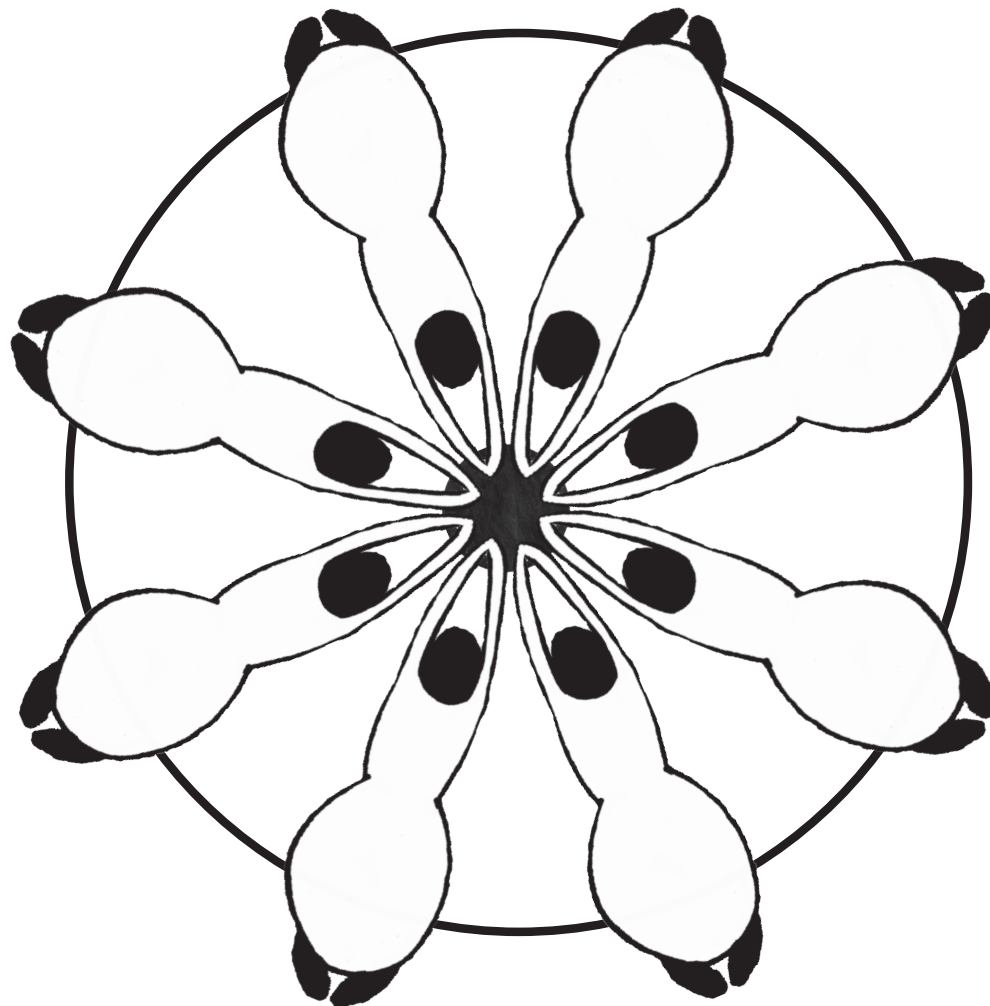
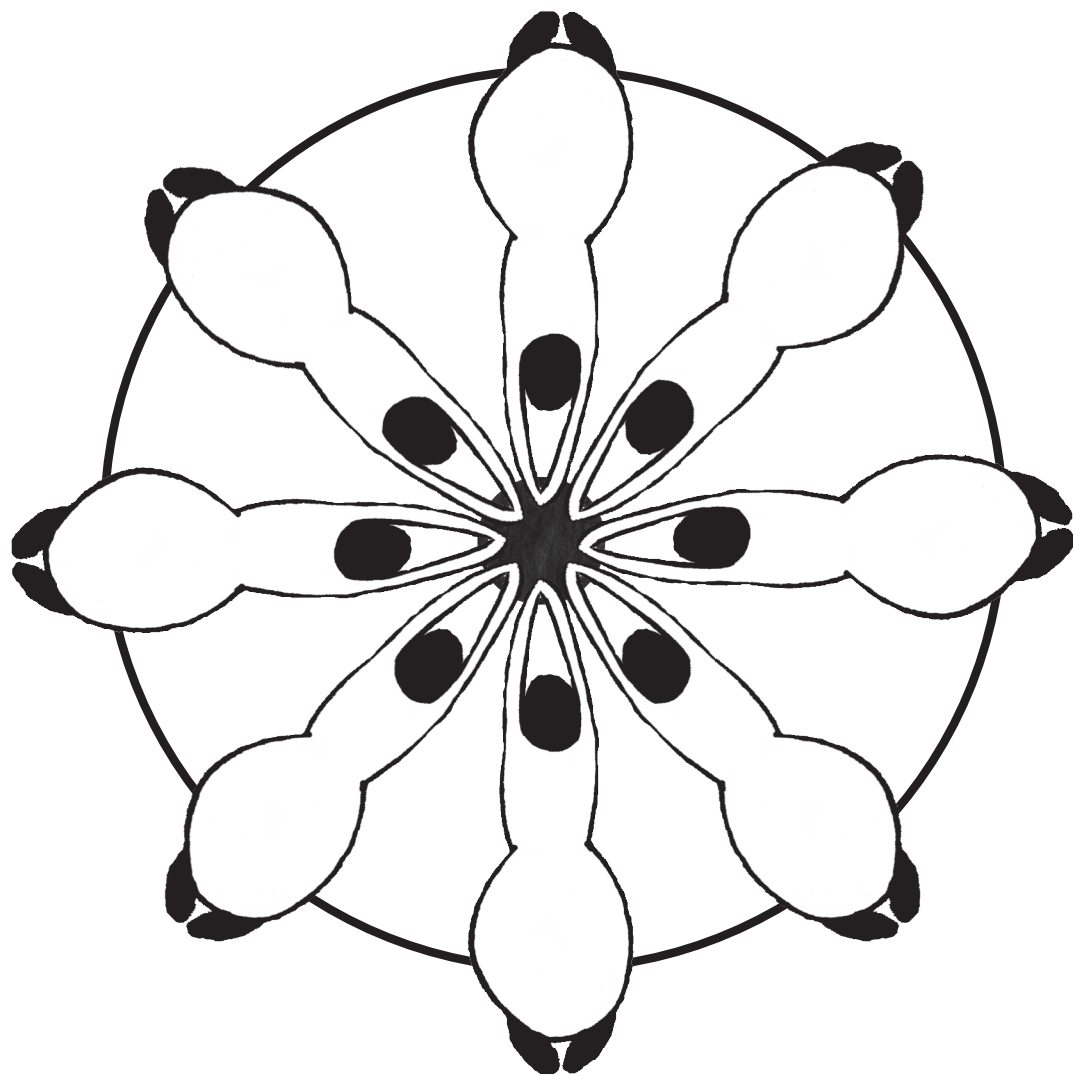
The Chorus Girls are now staggered across the stage. They sing directly to the audience, straight into the camera.

CHORUS GIRLS Don't you think we make a beautiful pair?
(singing to camera) The world might stop and stare
But I won't have a care
When you're beside me.

Ah, ah, ah.

They spin around in two circles. From above they look like a beautiful pair of breasts.

160



A MURDER IN THE DARK

Back to the cinema.

The Teacher suppresses giggles in the audience.

She looks at the Man a few seats over. He gazes lovingly at the girls on screen.

She feels another Man leaning over his chair. Heavy breathing down her neck. He is focused on the screen, almost drooling on the back of her seat.

The Men are hypnotised by the dance.

The Teacher turns back to the screen.

**She knows now
this cinema is not her own.
It is made for them:
Men.**

(a shot in the dark.)

**Each Man sits in the shadows
dreaming
each screen girl is his own.
A witness
to this dance.**

**She might be the victim:
another place,
another time.**

**No eyes
are on her now.**

The mystery has been solved.

“Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only the relations of men to women, but the relations of women to themselves.”

John Berger (1972, 88)

CLOSER

On screen.

The Chorus Girls sit with their legs dangling over the edge of the stage. Each face smiles warmly.

CHORUS GIRLS
(singing)

Don't you think we make a beautiful pair?
This life is ours to share
I won't go anywhere
When you're beside me.

As the song finishes the Chorus Girls remain on the edge of the stage.

An unseen audience claps.



A DREAM COME TRUE

Back to the cinema.

The Chorus Girls move through the screen into the audience. Two girls for each man with one other girl leading the way.

The Chorus Girls dance out of the cinema with the Men.

The Teacher doesn't take her eyes off the screen.

THE SADNESS BEHIND THE SMILE

On screen.

A Chorus Girl continues to sit on the edge of the stage.

Her smile is fake and it slowly fades as she waits for her close-up.

It is Chorus Girl 1.

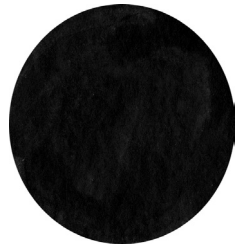
**I smile
for your pleasure**

**on the street
in a show**

I mask my sadness

the appearance of happy

this is not happiness



ACT 8:
EXPERIMENT WITH FORMATTING,
PRESENTATION, DESIGN AND STRUCTURE



Every time

I come to write a scene

I face a blank screen.

I add to the page,

I arrange,

rearrange

the design.

I fit each text

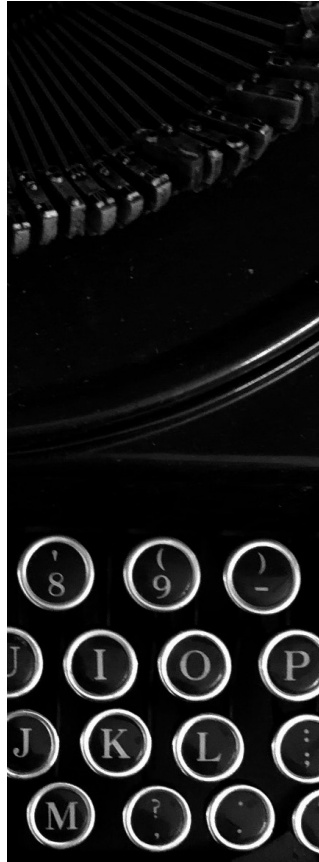
into the landscape.

Words and images.

Later, sounds and videos.

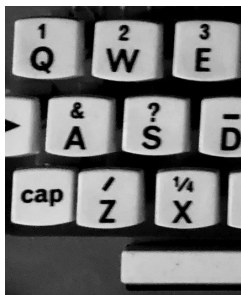
Somehow it works.

It fits.



THESE EXPERIMENTS

From conventional to fictocritical, industrial to personal, this act features a range of experiments with formatting, presentation and design. I break the rules of conventional screenwriting practice to find my own way of writing the characters into the picture. These experiments push the form and function of the text. They question existing practices, offering alternatives for screenwriters who feel restricted by a conventional approach. As highlighted in Act 4, I find it important to explore all possibilities during the early stages of script development. Some experiments work, while others are problematic. I reflect about the methods, triumphs and challenges in an open letter to the conventional screenplay and eleven dialogues with the characters.



AN OPEN LETTER

Dear Conventional Screenplay,

I've decided to leave you. Not for the long run. Just for the duration of this PhD. I want to explore other screenwriting possibilities when developing *One in a Million Girl*.

You've supported me during my time as a filmmaker. I've learnt the craft by writing the actions on the page. I could count on you to be industry ready. Professional formatting and presentation. Each slugline depicting a new scene. Each line of dialogue identified under the character. You've given me the tools I needed to grow as a writer. You were with me through every short film I created.

I will not miss your ugly Courier font, every letter 12 points. I will not miss your restrictive formatting conventions. I have my own methods now.

Thanks for the memories. I'll see you on the other side.

Louise

During the development of this new screenplay form I follow my own path of creative discovery by abandoning industry standard formatting and presentation. I offer an alternative to the screenplay as a 'working document' for production. In this dialogue, Wood, as a one-dimensional character who, in this instance, represents the current screen industry and its screenwriting practices, makes the decision to reject the fictocritical screenplay on the basis that it breaks the rules. He doesn't want to be challenged. Wood is comfortable working within these restrictions. At this stage of its development, I am not concerned about the placement of the fictocritical screenplay within the industry.

1. THIS IS PERSONAL

A single spotlight in a studio. Wood is just outside of the light. Darkened by shadows.

WOOD Who is responsible for this script?

Louise timidly steps forward. Into the spotlight.

LOUISE I am.

WOOD You think you're smart. Think you can break the rules? We don't have time to fix your mistakes.

LOUISE I'm not asking you to fix them.

He throws the script to the floor.

WOOD Why are you wasting my time?

LOUISE Have you read it?

WOOD I glanced at a couple of pages. It looks unprofessional.

LOUISE I'm experimenting with the form, finding my own way through it.

He grunts.

LOUISE I feature scenes as stories on a new page.

WOOD That's why it is so heavy.

**This new form is personal.
I don't take his rejection personally.**

LOUISE Each event is worth exploring. These small acts matter.

He grunts.

LOUISE I know you like the spectacle. That's in there too.

Wood stares at her.

WOOD Where are the sluglines?

LOUISE The screenplay doesn't have them.

He grunts.

LOUISE Locations are mentioned in the descriptions.

WOOD Maybe if you write it the correct way, I can get my assistant to read it.

LOUISE Maybe I don't want you to make it.

WOOD Then why is it in my hands?

Pause.

LOUISE I don't know.

WOOD Then go!

Louise is unable to move.

WOOD Next!

She bends down to retrieve her screenplay from the floor. Louise steps out of the light as Young Man passes her.

“I have a freedom to format the page, and therefore write, in a way that will suit the scene. Although there are now possibilities to develop, format, structure and pre-visualise stories in scriptwriting programs [...] these are still limited by industry-standard presentation and the types of media that can be included” (Sawtell 2016, 38).

2. MY OWN WAY

Louise speaks to a class of actresses. She begins at the beginning of the process.

LOUISE During the development of this new screenplay form, I work without restriction. I abandon the scriptwriting software. I’m sure you’ve heard of Final Draft and Celtx.

Silence.

LOUISE You’ve seen what a screenplay looks like.

Some nods from the actresses.

LOUISE I favour a more organic method of presentation that highlights each individual scene, I break the rules of formatting by not including the technical elements in the screenplay, such as headings, the correct font and placement of character and dialogue. The sluglines, big print, character names, dialogue and parentheticals are easily formatted in these programs. I’m not interested in the ease of this kind of display.

She looks down at her notes before facing the class again. They seem interested in what she is saying.

LOUISE So, the first step for me is to take the scenes out of this software. Kathryn Millard, a filmmaker and academic, suggests, these screenwriting tools “may be serving to restrict the range of possible storytelling strategies on offer” (2010, 21). I work with InDesign instead. I can then design each page to suit the scene.

INT. CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON

The Teacher arranges books and equipment at the front of the classroom.

The sound of sliding chairs and hum of students in the background.

THE TEACHER (V.O.)
The story of my life. The story.
Hidden. For now.

Her back to the students, The Teacher breathes deeply. Pale. Faint. She holds onto her stomach.

Another moment.

She forces a smile and turns to face the class.

THE TEACHER
Welcome.

Sixteen Chorus Girls are seated in chairs behind their desks. They all look the same. A perfect square formation: legs and arms crossed, eyes to the front of the room.

The conventional screenplay

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Does my experience of teaching influence this scene? The story of my life through the character of The Teacher.</p> <p>I try to make myself busy before the class begins, hiding behind the computer screen going through the materials I have prepared earlier.</p> <p>They are in front of screens too. Social media junkies. Why is this class in a computer lab?</p> <p>I like the idea of going back to a classroom, a blackboard and old-fashioned desks.</p> <p>Chalky handprints on The Teacher's pristine black pants. A sign that she is nervous too.</p> <p>Me on that first day.</p> <p>Did I say welcome? An invitation to engage.</p> | <p>WELCOME</p> <p>The Teacher arranges books and equipment at the front of the classroom.</p> <p>The sound of sliding chairs and hum of students in the background.</p> <p>THE TEACHER (V.O.) The story of my life. The story. Hidden. For now.</p> <p>Her back to the students, The Teacher breathes deeply. Pale. Faint. She holds onto her stomach.</p> <p>Another moment. Seems like a lifetime.</p> <p>She forces a smile and turns to face the class.</p> <p>THE TEACHER Welcome.</p> <p>Sixteen Chorus Girls are seated in chairs behind their desks. They all look the same. A perfect square formation: legs and arms crossed, eyes to the front of the room.</p> |
|--|---|

The fictocritical screenplay

Louise brings up a slide (images to the left). She points to each image as she speaks to the class.

LOUISE

These two versions of the same scene show the differences between a conventional and fictocritical screenplay form. As you can see, the obvious variations include the number of texts presented and the change in scene headings. Other experiments involve formatting the action and dialogue in a different way and discarding the standard font choice and size, which is Courier 12 point.

She points to the fictocritical screenplay.

LOUISE

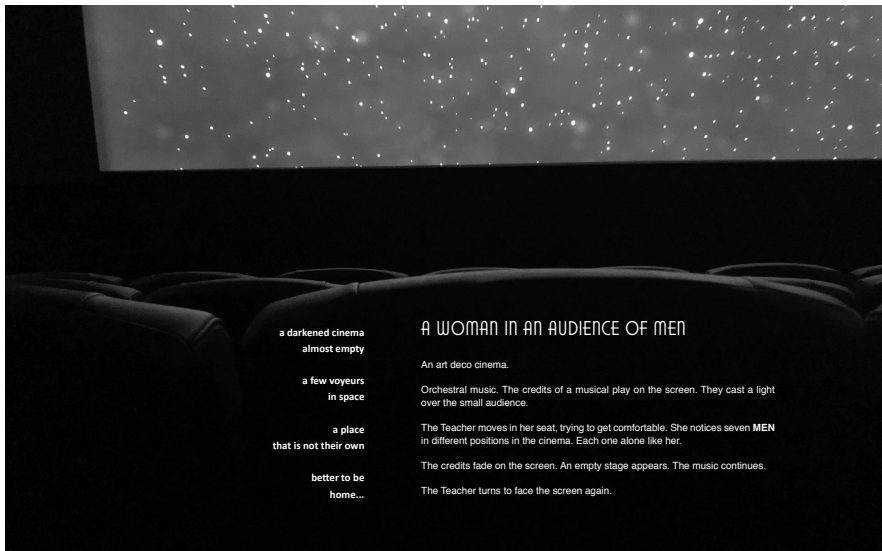
In this instance, a short reflection connects my teaching experience to the character's situation where her nerves and preparation are the focus. Further examples feature images and other process work associated with the scene.

Louise faces the actresses.

LOUISE

You might also like to think about an alternative approach to developing and writing your stories. This can be extremely valuable when coming up with your ideas.

The actresses smile.



3. A LANDSCAPE VIEW

Louise and The Teacher sit at the back of the classroom, viewing a page of the screenplay that takes up the entire frame of the screen.

THE TEACHER I wish all screenplays could be this way. When I read them on a screen I want them to take up the entire space.

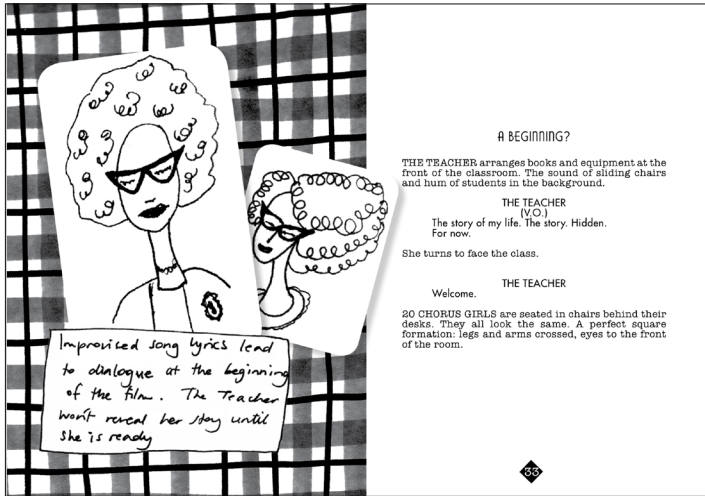
LOUISE This was one of my intentions when I decided to change the script from portrait to landscape. It would represent the future film somehow.

THE TEACHER Almost like watching the film as you read.

LOUISE I think the pages with background images, like this one, work best. These are the proposed visuals for the scene. A still image, not a moving one.

THE TEACHER Yes, but I can still imagine it moving on the screen. The characters could be placed there.

LOUISE I haven't added too many illustrations of the characters.



She changes the slide to an early version of a scene with The Teacher and a picture of The Star.

LOUISE Some of this early work has been left out. I'm not sure how it fits into the larger picture anymore.

THE TEACHER But, you have developed it?

LOUISE There are lots of pieces I've developed. And lost.

THE TEACHER Oh no.

LOUISE My improvised recordings I didn't take off my phone. We raced out of the hotel when the fire sirens sounded. I left it behind. There was nothing I could do.

THE TEACHER The cloud?

LOUISE No space left.

THE TEACHER I hate when I lose work.

LOUISE I need to make sure I back everything up. Multiple times. (Beat.) Anyway, I think we've got off track...

THE TEACHER Landscapes.

LOUISE A landscape view. Where I get to present the work differently.

THE TEACHER Where I'm able to view the work like a frame from a film.



INT. CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON

A light switches on in the dark.

Perfect rows of empty chairs sit underneath desks. Two blackboards seem suspended in the air.

The Teacher ventures to the front of the room. Large books pressed against her chest.

She breathes in and out. Again. Deeper. Calming her nerves.

INT. BATHROOM - EVENING

The Crooner's finger taps an old-fashioned microphone that is placed in a tiny, white bathroom.

Tap. Tap. Tap.

The sound vibrates through the room.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - EVENING

The Star takes a hard look into the mirror. She touches parts of her face: beside her eye, the corner of her mouth, down her neck. No deep wrinkles yet.

THE STAR
(singing)
Am I fading?

A sigh.

INT. CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON

The Teacher paces, paper in hand. She looks down at it for a moment.

To the empty classroom:

THE TEACHER
In this class we'll begin with the personal. How you feel. The experiences that have made an impact on you.

She pauses. A deep breath.

The Teacher checks the page. Scribbles a few notes. Scratches out a line.

4. A CHANGE OF SCENE

Louise stands in front of a row of desks. She speaks to an empty classroom. A rehearsal. A page from a conventional screenplay is displayed on the screen behind her.

LOUISE When changing the scene in a conventional screenplay a new slugline, or scene heading is used. Each slugline reveals information about the location and time of day. Whether it is an interior (INT.) or exterior (EXT.) scene. It's written in a specific order in capital letters.

She motions to the screen.

LOUISE You can see the scene heading clearly distinguishes the production information from the actions and dialogue that will occur in the film. When the film moves to a new location, or a later time of day, it becomes a new scene. This also happens in the fictocritical screenplay, but this detail is presented in a different way.



She changes the slide to show a scene from the fictocritical screenplay.

LOUISE The scenes are separated. My experiments in formatting and presentation ensures the layout of action and dialogue happens in the moment. This is why each scene change happens on a new page. While some scenes are presented over multiple pages, each change is distinguishable by a new title. Each title represents the theme, subject or action that takes place in the scene.

Louise motions to the example on the slide.

LOUISE The example title, 'A mirror image' is about The Star's reflection of herself as she determines if her looks are fading; a possible reason for her retirement from the studio. This title also indicates a return to the dressing room where The Star's present day scenes occur. Due to my focus on the earlier stages of script development, I argue that a screen story can be conveyed without conventional formatting of each slugline. The title can therefore represent the themes and action instead of the production elements, which can be added at a later stage if required.

She takes a deep breath in. Then out.

When I stop
using this font,
I can play.

5. SAY GOODBYE TO COURIER

Louise and The Teacher stand at the front of the classroom.

- LOUISE** I keep telling my students to use the conventions when they write their screenplays. It's so important for them to be successful in this industry. But, I'd still like it if they could break away.
- THE TEACHER** I know what you mean.
- LOUISE** We know that a screenplay is a creative document, but it also includes elements of production planning, such as "information about locations, actors, sets, props, time of day and, most vital of all, timing" (Millard 2010, 17).
- THE TEACHER** Yes, yes. A minute of screen time per page.
- LOUISE** That's if a screenplay is written with the correct font choice and size.
- THE TEACHER** Courier 12 point font.
- LOUISE** So, if we write 90 to 120 pages, this should be a feature film.
- THE TEACHER** Most scripts I've read are about this length.
- LOUISE** This is only an estimate before production begins. Some argue, including Price (2013), that this rule is reliant on the director's cooperation.
- THE TEACHER** Do you agree with this argument?

INT. SOUND STAGE - DAY

Chorus Girls stand in rows. A perfect square formation: feet in taps, arms at the ready.

THE MAN'S voice booms from the sidelines.

THE MAN
And dance!

Chorus Girls stomp hard onto the stage making music with their feet. Their timing is perfect. They all look the same.

**In this conventionally formatted scene it is difficult
to tell how long the dance routine will be.**

LOUISE

I do. *One in a Million Girl* features songs and dances. I haven't written extensive musical numbers or dance steps to indicate their timing. It's difficult to know based on page numbers how long the script really is.

THE TEACHER

Are musical numbers usually written into scripts?

LOUISE

In recent screenplays they seem to be missing. The Coen Brothers left 'No Dames' out of *Hail, Caesar!* But this was the published version I saw. The script I found for *La La Land* online must have been an earlier draft, with notes for the production numbers to be inserted at various moments of the story.

THE TEACHER

Is this because the writer doesn't usually create them?

LOUISE

I think so. (Beat.) Can you believe we keep getting off track?

THE CROONER
What are you afraid to see?

She pauses for a moment.

THE TEACHER
 What do I see when I look back on my life?

I can't even read The Crooner's line here.

THE TEACHER
 had to be made that bit up.

to an end!

A fantasy?

She laughs.

THE TEACHER

THE CROONER
 He is a star.

A different font? hard to read

She puts him in the scene to show its artificial construct.

A note to self about the font.

THE ACTRESS
 Action!

The point of view of the camera as each woman looks into the lens at the audience.

The Actress is too fancy.

THE TEACHER

Fonts.

LOUISE

Fonts.

THE TEACHER

There were some interesting font choices in the beginning. Remember that time when you tried to have a font for each character?

Louise cringes.

LOUISE

I know. It wasn't that long ago.

THE TEACHER

I still don't understand why.

LOUISE

I thought maybe the fonts could reveal something about the characters. A sense of the character through the text. Their personality. (Beat.) A disaster, really.

THE TEACHER

I wouldn't say that. It must have been an interesting exercise to test it out for yourself even if it wouldn't be what you presented.

LOUISE

It was good to play with this idea for a while. Picking out a font based on certain characteristics. Something fancy for The Star, who used to be called The Actress. I wondered how you might be portrayed.

THE TEACHER

I believe you made me Futura.

LOUISE

That's right. (Beat.) Do you think it has a teacher quality?

THE TEACHER

I guess.

They laugh.

A - This will be my last project with Monumental Pictures.¹ We've had a good relationship over the past 25 years. But now, it's time to leave.

Her smile seems forced.

Male Journalist - What are your plans for the future?

She looks to C before answering the question.

A - I'll be moving onto bigger and better things.

Female Journalist - Will we hear wedding bells soon?

There are a few oohs and aahs from the crowd before A can respond.

As her mouth opens to speak, The Teacher moves into the foreground to address the camera. The crowd and A can no longer be heard.

T - Why would she want to leave that life behind? A life I so desperately wanted to have.

Only slight variations in font choices here. Almost the same. Too many characters. This is when I decide to use initials to save space. There are even footnotes.

CG1(V.O.) - My one big chance.

MH (O.S.) - NEXT!

Perhaps different fonts would work if there are only two characters contrasting characters in a script. Their distinct differences shown.

LOUISE

I heard Jim Taylor wrote the two main characters for *Sideways* (2004) in different fonts. Comic Sans for Miles. Chalkboard for Jack (Millard 2010). I can see it. See them.

The Teacher laughs.

THE TEACHER

Why do you think you were unsuccessful?

LOUISE

I can see how it might work for a couple of characters in a smaller film. There are too many here. Too many fonts. Too busy on the page. I got distracted. I wanted the font to speak for the character, but it said nothing at all.

THE TEACHER

I like it better now. I'm glad you didn't use Courier.

LOUISE

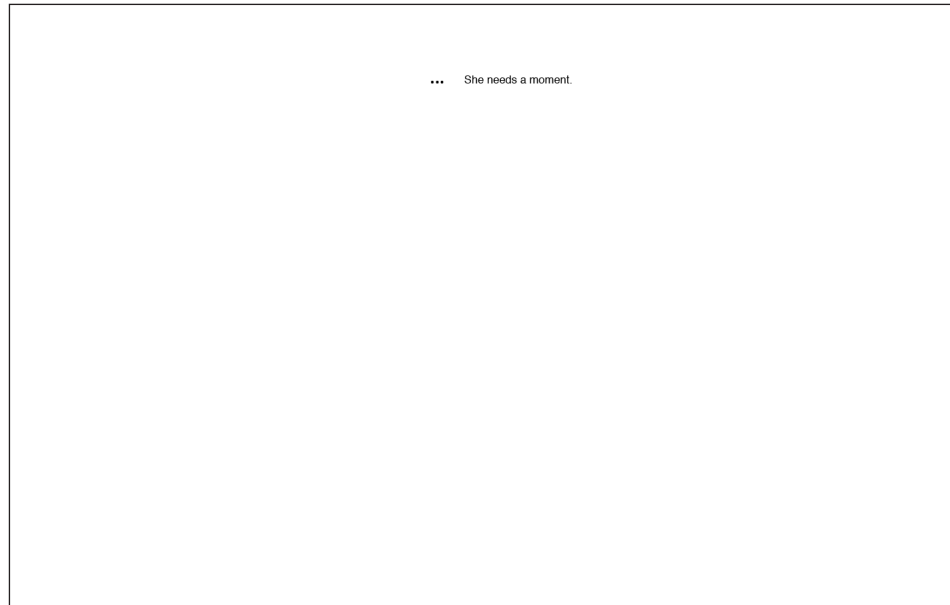
I was eager to break that tradition. It's good to represent the style and theme of the work. As I'm interested in capturing the Golden Age of Hollywood in the earlier moments of the proposed screen story, Modified Gothic works with the Art Deco style of the time. The scene text is Helvetica due to its simplicity and readability on the screen. Calibri for all other written texts. Another simple style.

THE TEACHER

Simplicity is important.

LOUISE

I need to learn not to over-design as my early experiments show. They need to be read while giving an impression of the future film.



6. THAT SPACE ON THE SCREEN

In the classroom, Louise shows an almost blank white screen to her students. she motions to the three black dots and short sentence.


LOUISE I realised that white space on the page could also suggest the timing of an action. Here in this scene The Teacher needs a moment. Time stands still, but the audience stays with her. She is motionless in the space.

The students look intently at this image.

LOUISE I only use the white space like this one more time towards the end. I won't tell you what happens. No spoilers.

They laugh.

LOUISE I just wanted to say that when this technique is used sparingly, these moments in the screenplay can have greater emotional impact. Just like the use of silence in a musical.



HER PERFORMANCES

The Teacher passes a couple of movie posters featuring The Star.

She stops in front of a poster of The Star in close up and the title, 'A Star Shines'.

THE TEACHER
(to camera) I watched all of her performances as if they were my own. Learning the lyrics of her songs. Some dance routines. A couple of lines here and there.

She dances by a number of posters along the wall. Each one a different musical.

A stronger line between the scene and parallel text.

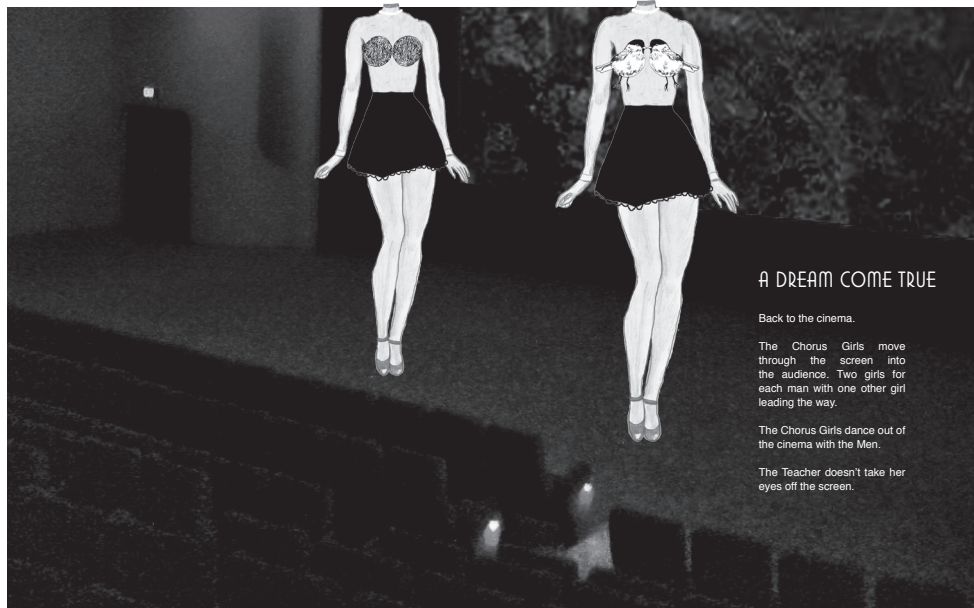
7. WHERE THE CHARACTERS SPEAK

Louise paces around the classroom, reading her notes out loud.

LOUISE

When comparing dialogue placement between a conventional and fictocritical screenplay, there are a number of variations. In the conventional version the character name and dialogue have a specific indentation and spacing that distinguishes what they say from how they act. Character names are capitalised to identify who is speaking. The fictocritical screenplay aligns the character names, in bold and capitalised, to the left where the action also sits. This left alignment for all elements of the screenplay produces a parallel line or space between the scene and accompanying text. This alignment has been chosen for a more cohesive design. When the character speaks, the dialogue appears on the same line as the name. This allows the scene to use less vertical space on a landscape page. When the character sings, the lyrics have been formatted like a song.

She places her notes down.



8. MORE THAN WORDS

Louise is presenting her work as a slideshow, each new image features a different page design. A class of actresses are attentively watching the screen.

LOUISE

I write in multiple ways with words, images and audio. Lessig mentions within our remix culture writing with images, video and sound can express ideas in a more interesting way (cited in Koman 2005). Some elements have been added to the page, others are left out. Recording the songs on my phone was a useful process in the beginning, but I didn't want these added to the fictocritical screenplay. Just images and words at this stage. I do feel that it's beyond the scope of this PhD to include video and sound as I originally intended.

She clicks through the slideshow.

LOUISE

I show how images and words work together on the page. Placed in parallel to the scene are fragments of prose, poetry, reflections on process, illustrations and visualisations of the themes in the work. Here are some early images developed alongside the scenes.



LOUISE I include them here, because I feel they no longer have a place in the work. These collages were originally next to the titles for each act. Of course, they are over-designed, as all my earlier work tends to be.

The actresses are interested in these images.

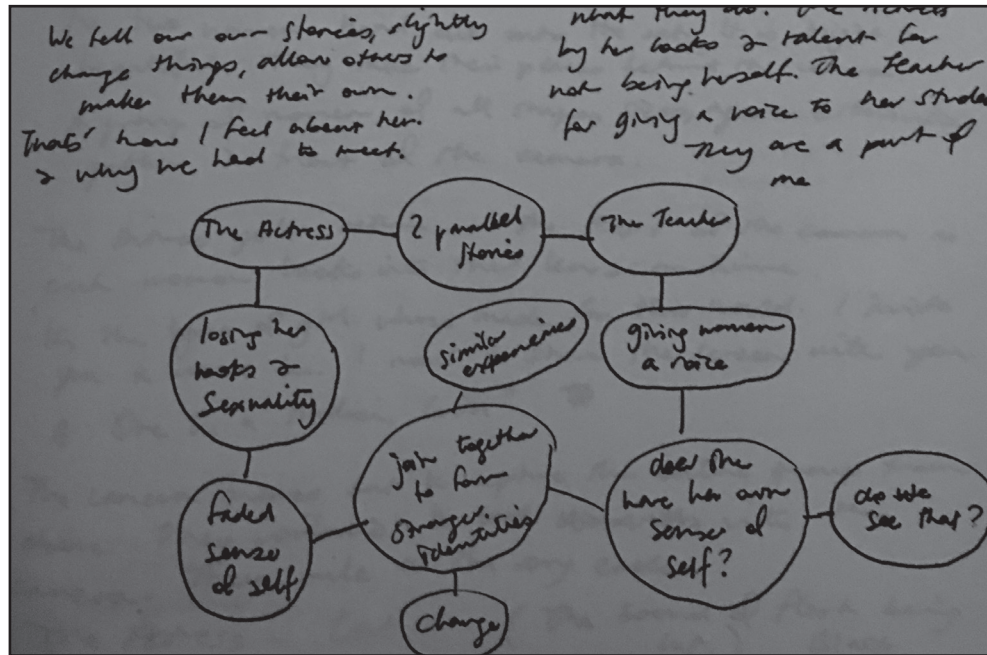
LOUISE I like that these extra narratives and images are able to represent an experience of the film in development. I design the document to accentuate the visual qualities of the story. In this way, the fictocritical screenplay mirrors what Millard (2011) calls a 'design prototype'. She claims, it "places the emphasis firmly on the creative process and the generation and development of new ideas rather than pre-determined templates" (Millard 2011, 155). Everything is valued. Those images that are simple representations of a scene or theme work best.

184



Louise focuses on the final image in the slideshow.

LOUISE The visual is important to tell this story. I believe that words are not enough to show the female representations. When I present an illustration of a chorus line of faceless girls, that image has greater power to reflect the idea that they are not individual agents in the musical. While the girls will have faces in the proposed film, this kind of image can represent the wider idea of woman as object. Cut off heads also bring a sense of violence to the image. They are mere abstractions of a body. And of course, all the men have faces.



early story development

9. MOVING TOGETHER

Louise and The Star stand on the edge of a bright sound stage. The crew are setting up the studio for a musical number.

THE STAR I haven't seen a lot of these kinds of stories. It's usually one story that I follow.

LOUISE There are parallel stories taking place in musicals. Altman (1987) calls them 'dual-focus narratives'.

THE STAR Oh, that makes sense, we dance together as equals.

LOUISE Altman says, "The film progresses through a series of paired segments matching the male and female leads" (1987, 28).

THE STAR That's what happens.

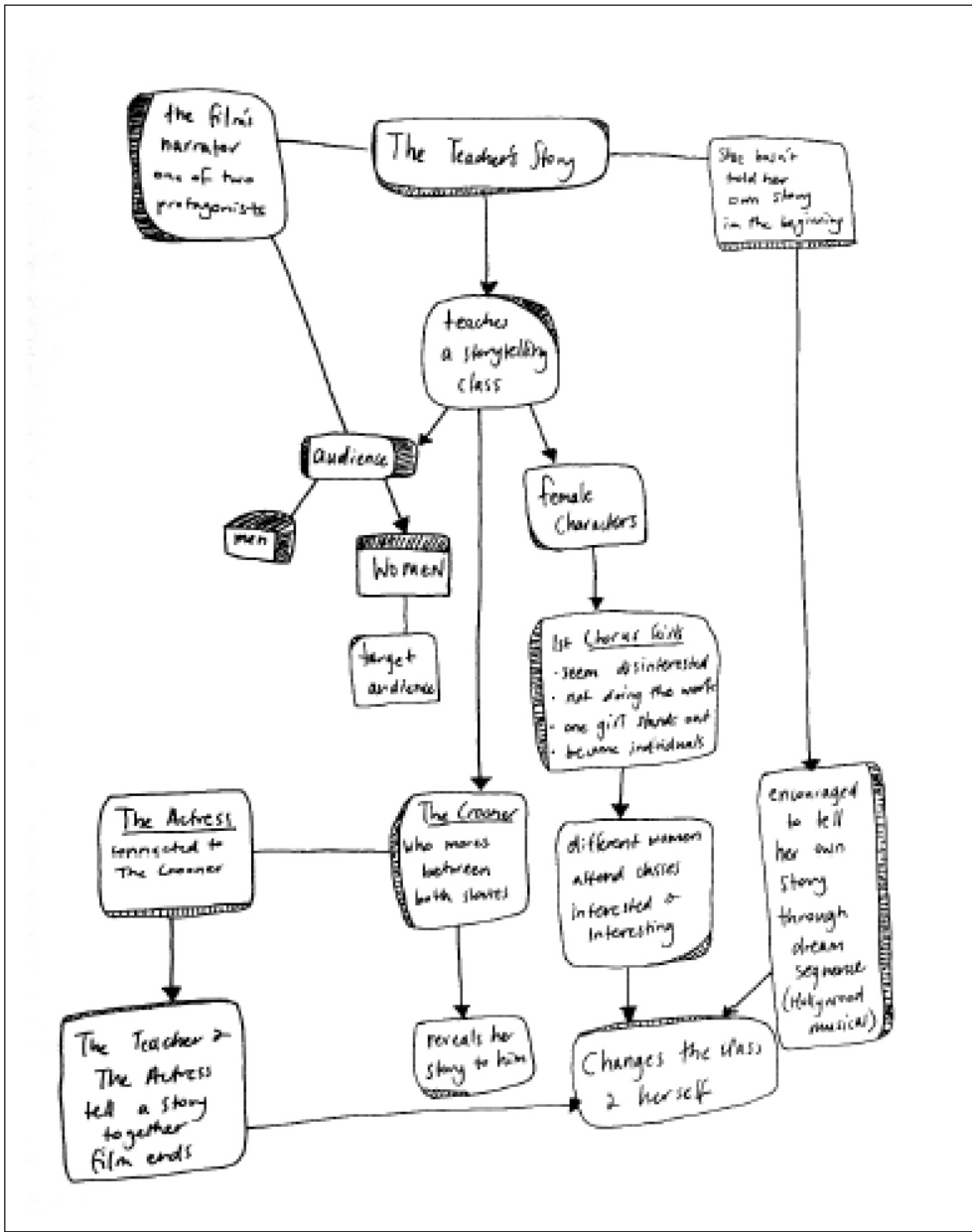
They laugh.

LOUISE For this story that I am writing I use this 'dual-focus' for another purpose. I still bring you and The Teacher together, but there is no romantic attachment as there would be in an American film musical.

THE STAR Why do we come together?

LOUISE All will be revealed at the end.

The Star is disappointed.



early story structure for The Teacher

- LOUISE** In the *21st Century Screenplay*, Linda Aronson suggests there is a future for parallel narratives in cinema.
- THE STAR** Which works for the musical.
- LOUISE** It does. She says, “these days, the film industry is witnessing a noticeable increase in films that use several separate narratives running in parallel, often involving non-linearity, time jumps, large casts, or all of these” (2010, 167).
- THE STAR** I’m not sure about all these different story types.
- LOUISE** There are six different types. *Tandem* shows characters on different adventures, but they are linked by a theme. Multiple protagonists go on the same adventure. Double journeys work in parallel, while flashback moves back in time. Consecutive stories happen one after another in the same film and there’s also a hybrid tandem (Aronson 2010, 172-176)
- THE STAR** So many choices, I wouldn’t know where to start.
- LOUISE** I’ve written the film, so you can both move together in parallel.
- THE STAR** But I’m also looking back to the past. Would this make it a flashback.
- LOUISE** There are flashbacks in each story. Yours and *The Teacher*’s. I like that you both look to the past while moving forward to change your lives. It’s hybrid. It doesn’t have to fit into any set category.
- THE STAR** I’ll be interested to see where it goes.

10. TOO MANY PARALLELS

Louise plonks down on a chair at the back of the classroom.

LOUISE I'm so tired of parallels. Making these connections.

The Teacher stops writing on the blackboard. She turns around.

THE TEACHER Do they have to be presented on every single page?

LOUISE I wanted to add my voice next to the scenes. Reflect about the process.

THE TEACHER If it's not working, don't do it.

LOUISE When I write a reflection straight away, it tends to inform the scene.

THE TEACHER Just make sure it adds value for you and the reader. Otherwise, I recommend leaving them out, including this dialogue.

Pause.

LOUISE Okay.

no parallel

11. STILL IN THE PRESENT

Louise and The Teacher sit at the front of the classroom.

THE TEACHER I notice that everything is in present tense.

LOUISE That was one aspect of screenwriting I didn't want to play with. This is all happening in the moment for the characters.

THE TEACHER I like that the process is present tense as well.

LOUISE I tried to capture the succinct nature of the screenplay but I don't think I was always successful. There needed to be more dense writing to reflect and explicate.

**it could be a slip of the hand
as it slides down a body**

unexpected

unwanted

SMALL ACTS

The door to a fancy car opens. The Star adjusts her dress to gracefully exit the car.

Flashes from cameras.

The Star smiles and waves. Wood slips in beside her. He pulls down her dress at the back. The Star jumps.

Wood takes her by the arm as they move down the red carpet.

DISCARDED DIALOGUE:

THE TEACHER: I've been meaning to say,
I saw your film the other day.
It's not bad.

The Chorus Girls heads turn.

CHORUS GIRL 3: You like it?

THE TEACHER: The dancing was good.

They smile.

THE TEACHER: It was funny.

CHORUS GIRL 2: Funny?

THE TEACHER: That one number.

They giggle.

THE TEACHER: It's strange. The men in
the audience didn't find it
funny.

CHORUS GIRL 2: Were they in love?

More giggles.

THE TEACHER: I think so. I imagined you
came into the audience
to take them away.

A LESSON

Only six Chorus Girls in class.

Chorus Girl 2 fixes her make-up, checking her tiny reflection. Chorus Girl 3 taps out a rhythm on the desk. Chorus Girl 4 peeks through the curtains. Chorus Girls 5 and 6 quietly hum together.

Chorus Girl 1 vigorously writes into her notebook.

The Teacher holds steady in front of the class.

THE TEACHER I saw your latest film the other day.

The Chorus Girls' heads turn.

THE TEACHER I've always loved musicals. (Beat.) I keep getting disappointed.

They look down.

THE TEACHER The stories are all the same. The dance numbers are an exception.

The Chorus Girls look up again.

THE TEACHER Always a spectacle. You were all on display.

They smile.

THE TEACHER But, I wonder if there is another way.

The Teacher faces the camera.

THE TEACHER I'd like to change the scene.
(to camera)

The class moves to...

I struggle with this scene.
I struggle to write about this scene.
Multiple drafts.
Many actions.
Nothing seems resolved yet.

I question how I want to view the Chorus Men.
What is The Teacher trying to say?

It is not a direct role reversal:
men being the objects of The Teacher's desires.
As she directs the scene,
she needs to change it.

How will The Chorus Girls see themselves
after the show is over?

A ROLE REVERSAL

The six Chorus Girls sit in the front row.

The Teacher stands to the side of a screen that features an empty stage. She holds a pointer.

THE TEACHER If men replace girls. What do you think we should see?

Before the Chorus Girls can answer, there is action on the screen. Six Chorus Men glide onto the stage from the left and right. They face away from the audience. They appear to be naked.

THE TEACHER Maybe we would see certain things.

Chorus Men turn around. There are pictures glued to the bottom half of their bodies. The pictures are all very different.

Earlier draft.

T - How do you think men would feel if the roles were reversed?

C - What do you mean?

T - What if the men danced around for the pleasure of women?

The girls smile.

Cuts to:

Twenty Chorus Men stroll onto the sound stage. A beauty parade of men. They have long fake penises dangling between their legs. They bob up and down, side to side, as they dance around in the space. From above they look like a flower.

Back to classroom. The girls are laughing. The dance is a joke.

C - That would be too funny. Men can't dance like us.

T - So they watch instead. A great compromise.

The Teacher looks at the camera. Then back to the blackboard to write something.

The Teacher points to a couple of them.

The Chorus Girls giggle.

Chorus Men leave the stage. The screen fades to black. A chorus of sighs.

THE TEACHER It's not enough to reverse these roles.
Men replacing girls.

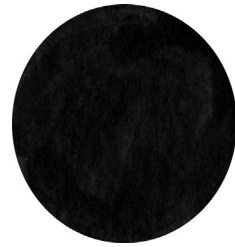
Chorus Men enter the cinema from the left and right. They wear black pants, singlets, suspenders and dance shoes.

The Teacher motions for Chorus Men to take a seat next the Chorus Girls.

THE TEACHER Let's not make the men move for our
visual pleasure. We can focus on their skills
as dancers instead.

The cinema lights go down. The Teacher takes a seat in the front row.

The screen shows six Chorus Men. They dance a tricky routine.



ACT 9:
CHANGE THE GAZE



Imagine,

**You are in a darkened cinema (or maybe a living room),
watching a musical.**

**There are many dancing bodies
moving in the frame.**

**The men appear in long shots, dressed in tuxedos,
their strength, agility and talent emphasised.**

**You see the girls from above, bodies identical,
they make pretty patterns on display.**

**The men in the picture gaze,
as you do,**

**at the girls in close up:
eyes, lips, tits, ass, crotch.**

**Then, the camera moves out again,
inviting the audience to look. Enjoy this new mise en scène.**

**You expect to be entertained,
but this moving image is for their visual pleasure.**

**Now, as a female filmmaker,
you decide to reimagine the musical form.**

**If you gaze at me
beyond the spotlight,
I will gaze at you.
Shoo be de do do.**

A CINEMATIC GAZE

These discarded lyrics originally performed by The Star, but better suited to The Teacher, reference a cinematic gaze. Up until this point in the story, there are three gazes highlighted. In early feminist film theory, which influences the first part of *One in a Million Girl*, this is a male gaze with its focus on visual pleasure in mainstream cinema. As the story progresses, The Teacher, a female spectator, begins to question the representations of women on the screen. She can sing about a female gaze to an audience of women who are able to identify with her situation. Throughout the film, as an act of resistance and empowerment, The Teacher gazes back to challenge how the audience witnesses a moving image. At the end, only after The Star strips away her made up identity and surface image is she able to look back through the screen and sing, “Shoo be de do do”. This cinema is for you.

**He gazes
at the women
on display.**

MALE GAZE

When questioning the male gaze that I believe still pervades mainstream cinema, I focus on two ideas: objectification as seen in the sexualised and stereotypical images of women, and identification through the male protagonist. Both image and story matter in this research. In the early scenes of *One in a Million Girl* the male gaze is highlighted through the song and dance routines that mimic those featured in the musicals of the Golden Age of Hollywood. Girls are part of the spectacle while The Crooner gets to choose. As he sways and sings, “So many beautiful girls, too hard to choose” in the ‘One in a Million’ scene (page 25), The Crooner plays the active role of leading man against the passive row of young, identical chorus girls on display.

In her influential essay, ‘Visual pleasure and narrative cinema’, Laura Mulvey (1975) introduces the idea of a male gaze in cinema. Mulvey claims, “As an advanced representation system, the cinema poses questions of the ways the unconscious (formed by the dominant order) structures ways of seeing and pleasure in looking” (1975, 8). She proposes that the male gaze is part of this ideological system, namely mainstream cinema, which, if left unchallenged, will continue to reflect the heteronormative roles that are assigned under patriarchy (Mulvey 1975). The cinema, with its darkened auditorium and emphasis on a larger than life image on the screen, offers the pleasure of looking. Two possible pleasures are ‘scopophilia’, through both the pleasure of looking and being looked at; and the ‘narcissistic aspect’ of likeness and recognition. Therefore, in the mainstream narrative, including the Hollywood musical, the woman is the image and the man controls the look (Mulvey 1975), which can have a negative impact on the female spectator.

Throughout my history of cinema as a female spectator I learn how to identify with the active stories of a male protagonist, often when there is no woman in the film. If a woman is not invisible, she is often presented as an object. This projected image of a woman takes me out of the story. One way that the camera extends the male's gaze is by framing the female's body in an unrealistic way. Neroni (2016) suggests that cutting a woman's body into smaller parts limits her from being active in the landscape. The representation of the fragments of a female body treats her as a sexual object, never a subject. I notice the way close-ups and mid-shots are used in the films of Busby Berkeley, that emphasise what Mulvey (1975) calls, the 'to-be-looked-at-ness' of the woman. Rick Altman claims that Busby Berkeley's:

camera is constantly aimed at the mid-section of his lovely chorus girls. The famous track along their faces, so that each one can be seen in close-up, thus personalising a seemingly impersonal line-up, is matched by an equally important track, this one undoing the individualisation of the face-level track: I speak of the track between the legs, the voyeuristic movement which equates the eye/camera with the phallus and which reduces each individual girl to the area between the abdomen and the knees (1987, 217-218).

This 'crotch shot', which focuses on the female genital area, moves through the legs of women (see page 241 for how I've played with this shot in the story). For Altman this shot "is the semantic unit par excellence of the show musical" (1987, 218) where the show is a woman and the man is the camera/viewer. Barbara Creed notes its voyeuristic nature as "an exploitation of the female body" (2009, 97). Is it a sexual act? Lucy Fischer claims its "implication of the sexual act [is] transposed to the rhetoric of camera technique" in the form of a rape (1989, 135). Nadine Wills (2001) argues for a different approach to reading this image of women, what she calls the '110 per cent woman' because the musical, and its iconography *depend* on the female body.

The scene, 'Her first encounter with the gaze' (page 137) in *One in a Million Girl* shows an extreme representation of a male audience enjoying the pleasure of looking at the chorus girls through a large window as a substitute for the cinema screen. In this moment, which contrasts with the active role that The Teacher has played in the classroom, the men are now the active bearers of the gaze. While the men are not viewing The Teacher as an object of their desire, they do see the chorus girls for their 'to-be-looked-at-ness'. As the chorus girls are seen as spectacle in the Busby Berkeley musicals, this moment allows the flow of action to stand still while the men simply gaze (Mulvey 1975). Likewise, in the scene, 'A Dream Come True' (page 163), the action freezes to allow the chorus girls to move through the screen into the audience. Now a live fantasy for the male audience who are viewing this musical, they get to experience what it is like to dance with the objects of their desire.

While it appears that both of these scenes are focused on the male gaze, I have written them from The Teacher's perspective as she witnesses the power of this gaze. In the first example of the men looking through the window, rather than aiming the camera at the women viewed as objects of the men's desire, the audience will see through The Teacher's eyes as she reacts to the gaze. The Teacher suggests to the viewer, through her fear of a private moment being exposed for the gaze of men, that a woman has control over how she can be seen. Additionally, in 'A Dream Come True' The Teacher deliberately exposes the male gaze through her reactions. It is her fantasy that is seen when she imagines the girls moving through the screen. She understands that this moment is made for the men in the auditorium, as emphasised in 'Murder in the dark' scene. Once the men leave the cinema with their 'objects of desire', The Teacher can then experience a film for herself. She makes a connection with the one remaining chorus girl on screen, who will write her own role in the later scenes. By questioning the 'to-be-looked-at-ness' in these scenes and others that follow, The Teacher argues for a female gaze in the cinema.

**The woman
is framed
in a different way.**

FEMALE GAZE

What is a female gaze? Is it making the woman visible as subject and spectator? Teresa de Lauretis (1987) poses questions of identification and reimagining the self as subject. She asks:

What formal, stylistic, or thematic markers point to a female presence behind the camera? [...] This is the look and sound of women's cinema, this is its language [...] to ask whether there is a feminine or female aesthetic, or a specific language of women's cinema (1987, 131).

de Lauretis observes Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975), with its focus on small moments in a woman's everyday life, as "a picture of female experience, of duration, perception, events, relationships, and silences, which feels immediately and unquestionably true" (1987, 131). A woman's subjectivity on screen. A spectator's identification in the audience. Akerman mentions:

If you choose to show a woman's gestures so precisely, it's because you love them. In some way you recognize those gestures that have always been denied or ignored [...] I think it's a feminist film - not just what it says but what is shown and how it's shown (cited in de Lauretis 1987, 132, original emphasis).

Lisa French (2015) suggests these gestures are a 'shock of recognition' when she experiences these moments as a woman in the cinema. I argue, if a feminist film embodies those gestures of women that are now made visible, the gaze in the cinema can be female. But what might a female gaze look like in the screenplay and can it be shown in both content and form?

Starting from my experience as a woman, I write small gestures into the story. I give space for the characters to be in the moment. The Star takes her time to tell her story while removing parts of her clothes and surface identity in a dressing room. While her image is still displayed in the mirror, her interiority and subjectivity are also important aspects of her character. In this private space she wonders how her story can be told: “Faces, places, the history of my life”. At the beginning of the story in ‘This space is not her own’ scene (page 39), I question (as the writer), in bold: “Is there someone in the room with her?” This inflection as commentary in the scene exposes the nature of a star’s position in the industry. Is there a ghostly presence gazing at her beyond the mirror image? Later in the story, the answer will be revealed. When her story has progressed, The Star has greater confidence to play in this space. In the scenes, ‘A rising star’ and ‘Play’, The Star strips away her suspenders and stockings. What could be considered a sexualised scene, if filmed as a close-up of the rolling motion of the stocking moving down her leg, is instead a playful moment for the character. She is now dancing with the objects that have contributed to her identity. Then, she discards them.

In *One in a Million Girl*, the classroom is also a space for personal growth and change. At the beginning of The Teacher's story, I extend 'A Rehearsal' scene (page 63) to give The Teacher more preparation time before the class. I pause in the white space as a writer to show the frozen time on screen. A silence. After her frenetic and nervous energy is displayed in a full page of text, this next page with the words, "... she needs a moment" allows the reader to experience what this moment must be like for The Teacher. When it comes time for her to speak again, there is a greater sense of calm for the character as she rehearses for the class. Of course, there is a hint that she might not have been alone after all, when a chorus girl is framed in the doorway.

Additionally, the female gaze, for me, is not about reversing the gender roles assigned in a film, which is why the original focus of male objectification in the scenes before this act do not work to convey The Teacher's lesson to her chorus girl students. Even if, as Mari Ruti claims, "Hollywood movies [today] are filled with men who are displayed - frequently half-naked - for the straight female gaze" (2016, 38), for this moment in the story, when she is educating the students about their 'to-be-looked-at-ness', it is not enough to subvert the display. What if she teaches them that their ideas and talent matter? After all, they did come to her class for a reason: to write their own roles. By showing the chorus girls how silly it is to display the men, with their fake penises, for their visual pleasure, she hopes they will change their attitudes to the way their bodies move in the frame. If, like the demonstration reveals, women are able to showcase their dancing abilities as the men do, they can have greater control over their image. Later, it is one chorus girl who showcases her skills as a dancer. As an aggressive tap routine, it is far from the image she projects when she is an identical member of the chorus.

LOOKING BACK

With her looks through the camera, as an intentional reflexive action to specific points in the story, The Teacher can also educate her audience. She looks at the audience straight away in the first scene 'An ending' (page 12), taking her place as the narrator of the film, she speaks about her relationship to The Star in the story of *One in a Million Girl*. She mentions their lives are in parallel, which suggests the film will also play their stories in parallel. In another direct address to the audience in 'Missing in action' (page 209), The Teacher addresses the audience to say "At least we have each other", adding humour to a frustrating situation. As her external class, they are still with her in this moment. This almost offhanded address links to her role as a storyteller for this audience.

So far, the scenes for *One in a Million Girl* are focused on those performers that appear in Hollywood musicals during the 1930s-1950s. This is a deliberate move to highlight the practices within this historical context where there are predominantly white female performers represented. Early feminist film theory has also been criticised for its essentialism. Lucy Bolton claims the 'abstraction' of a woman through essentialism and reductionism in feminist film thought, "offers no insights into the interiority or consciousness of a woman, concentrating instead on external representations and images" (2011, 11). Joan Copjec (1994) suggests that the cinema screen is not necessarily a mirror for our identification and desire, while bell hooks acknowledges that black women have been excluded altogether from mainstream narratives. hooks invites the black female spectator to have an oppositional gaze where the images can be interrogated, and the black subject of the film can look back. Like the Aboriginal heroines in Tracy Moffatt's, 'Nice Coloured Girls', who "face the camera, speaking directly to it in their own language, looking fierce and confident" (Kaplan 2003, 23), a woman can have the agency to gaze back at the viewer.

I recognise my privilege in this PhD and understand how important it will be in the future for The Teacher's classes to expand their scope beyond the chorus girl. In the two songs 'When I play the lead' (page 285) and 'Try to see' (page 304) I present an invitation to engage with a diverse range of women's voices and experiences. I leave these proposed scenes open for interpretation and further development as I believe these are not my stories to tell. The scene at the end of *One in a Million Girl* where The Star and The Teacher are surrounded by the actresses who now have a voice, continues this invitation to engage. When they look through the camera, they suggest that this cinema is for *you*.

**They sing and dance
through the film**

together

**no one
speaks up**

**they cannot see
the view**

YOUR VIEW

In the classroom, The Teacher moves closer to the six Chorus Girls.

THE TEACHER I'd like you to write for yourselves.
Look beyond your curves and smiles.

Five Chorus Girls slide down their chairs.

The Teacher speaks directly to Chorus Girl 1 who sits up straight.

THE TEACHER This is your perspective. As you write
your story try to move beyond what
you know.

Chorus Girl 1 puts pen to paper. She writes.

The other Chorus Girls put their heads on their desks.

The Teacher sits down at the front of the classroom.

THE TEACHER (to camera) Write. This is your chance
to change what is presented
on screen.

She looks back at the Chorus Girls.

THE TEACHER Class dismissed.

Chairs slide and laughter as five Chorus Girls exit the classroom.

Chorus Girl 1 continues to write.

In the moment, I respond to Yvonne Rainer's 'No Manifesto' (1965), offered as an alternative to dance as entertainment.

NO MANIFESTO

- RAINER** *No to spectacle.*
- SAWTELL** Yes to spectacle. Musical. Tradition. No to making the woman a spectacle.
- RAINER** *No to virtuosity.*
- SAWTELL** In musicals of the 1930s chorus girls move together. No great skill required.
- RAINER** *No to transformations and magic and make-believe.*
- SAWTELL** The characters transform. They pretend.
- RAINER** *No to glamour and transcendency of the star image.*
- SAWTELL** Always glamour. Always a star.
- RAINER** *No to the heroic.*
- SAWTELL** No to men's heroic actions. Yes to writing a woman, a part.
- RAINER** *No to the anti-heroic.*
- SAWTELL** Yes to women taking the lead.
- RAINER** *No to trash imagery.*
- SAWTELL** Nothing is thrown away.
- RAINER** *No to involvement of performer and spectacle.*
- SAWTELL** Yes to performer entertaining a spectator.
- RAINER** *No to style.*
- SAWTELL** Yes to finding my own style.
- RAINER** *No to camp.*
- SAWTELL** The musical is camp.
- RAINER** *No to seduction of spectator by the wiles of the performer.*
- SAWTELL** The characters look through the camera, inviting the audience to engage.
- RAINER** *No to eccentricity.*
- SAWTELL** Yes to the eccentricity of the artist. The strange moments in cinema.
- RAINER** *No to moving or being moved.*
- SAWTELL** I am moving. I want to be moved. Others can be moved too.



PAPARAZZI

The Star and Wood sit in the back of a fancy car.

THE STAR Go be with your beautiful girls.
I'll be there soon.

Wood nods. He hops out of the car.

The Star takes a deep breath in. Out.

In. Out.

She takes out a small flask from her clutch. A small sip.
Not enough. She takes another swig. A deep breath out.

A loud knock on the window startles her. It's a **PHOTOGRAPHER** aiming his camera through the glass.
He takes a shot of The Star.

THE STAR I want to go. (Beat.) Drive!

She rests her head on the back of the seat as the car speeds off.

OBLIGATION

The Star brushes her hair. Softly at first.

THE STAR

I wish they would leave me alone.
I know there's some obligation to
the audience. Sometimes it all feels
too much.

The brush strokes are faster. Vigorously moving through the hair.

THE STAR

I'm helpless. Like my life is not my own.

She puts the brush down.

**I used to be bothered
by my untamed mane,
tangles and frizzes and
hairs in my face. Too
boofy. Being called a
witch.**

**When I stopped feeling
obligated to change my
appearance, I learnt
how to lose control.**

Earlier draft (with a gun)

Up against a wall, The Star waits to strike. Gun held high. She wears a tight jumpsuit.

She cautiously checks around the corner. Nothing. She waits for a second and darts behind some boxes.

DODGY MAN moves out of the shadows. The Star moves her gun into position. She fires at his leg. Dodgy Man falls down, holding onto the wound.

The Star blows on the top of her gun.

She races to Dodgy Man before he can escape.

A WOMAN IN ACTION

A dark alley.

Up against a wall, The Star waits to strike. She wears a tight jumpsuit.

THE STAR I enjoyed being a woman in action.
(V.O.)

The Star cautiously checks around the corner. Nothing. She waits for a brief moment. A deep breath in.

She darts behind some trash cans. Still nothing. She waits. A couple of seconds.

A **DODGY MAN** moves out of the shadows. He holds a camera. Looks to the left. Looks to the right. He doesn't notice her.

He runs down the alley. As he passes the trash cans, The Star leaps on top of him like a cat.

Dodgy Man hits the ground. Hard. Knocked out.



She knows they are not interested in her.

Never have been.

Never will be.

MISSING IN ACTION

The Teacher paces up and down the classroom. There are no students in the room with her.

The clock shows it is twenty minutes past the hour.

She peers through a tiny gap in the curtains.

The Teacher comes face to face with Chorus Men. Larger than life.

Their heads snap with anticipation. Then disappointment. Only The Teacher.

They turn away from her.

She closes the curtains.

The Teacher turns to the camera.

THE TEACHER At least we have each other.
(to camera)

She leans against the window. Eyes closed.

THE TEACHER Da da da da da da dah da da da.
(singing)

She moves out of the moment. Quick. She opens the curtains wide.

No Chorus Men in sight.



PUTTING ON A SHOW

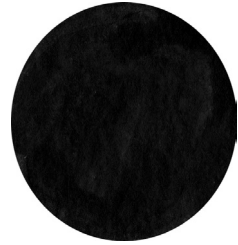
The Teacher is positioned in the centre of the window frame of the classroom looking out to the street. A microphone stands in front of her.

THE TEACHER
(singing to camera) I am putting on a show,
So everyone will know
What's going on here.

I am hiding in the dark.
Ah ah.
Trying to find that spark.
Ah ah.

I am putting on a show,
So I know which way to go.
So you know which way
To go.

The light goes out in the classroom.



ACT 10:
PUT ON A SHOW



**I am putting on a show,
So everyone will know
What's going on here.**

**I am hiding in the dark.
Ah ah.
Trying to find that spark.
Ah ah.**

A REFLEXIVE FILM FORM

In the previous scene, The Teacher takes a moment to perform on her makeshift stage in the classroom where she is framed by the window with a proposed shot taken from outside. Jane Feuer mentions the proscenium can be created in the film to put the character on a stage as she sings, “When the performance is taken outside the theatre, the proscenium is reborn out of ordinary space and the world is a stage” (1993, 24). In the scene that follows, The Teacher will take her song onto the street outside the classroom. While the proscenium can be seen as a barrier between the character and spectator, where they are taken out of the story, it can also be a space for dialogue (Feuer 1993). This happens “when a character addresses us directly, he [sic] breaks the narrative surface, and this makes us aware that we are watching a created fiction, not a world of dreams whole in itself” (Feuer 1993, 36). In this sense, The Teacher breaks the barrier to speak directly to the audience about the show musical and her ability to come out of the dark to find her place as a woman in the industry. As ‘ode to entertainment’ through direct address (Feuer 1977, 36), The Teacher sings about “putting on a show” to the camera (and audience), highlighting the relationship between film and spectator. The idea of ‘distanciation’ where, “the spectator is lifted out of her transparent identification with the story and forced to concentrate instead on the artifice through which the play or film has been made” (Feuer 1993, 35), is useful for this project, particularly during the screenplay stage, where the reader becomes aware of the way the story, and later film, has been constructed.

**I am putting on a show,
So I know which way to go.
So you know which way
To go.**

As mentioned in Act 8, the show/backstage musical is reflexive in the way it celebrates and demystifies this form of entertainment. Ames suggests, “a show musical heightens the self-referentiality already woven into the plot” (1997, 55). In ‘The Self-reflective Musical and the Myth of Entertainment’, Jane Feuer claims the backstage musical became more self-reflexive during the Golden Age (where the earlier parts of the screenplay are situated) “to present sustained reflections upon, and affirmations of, the musical genre itself” (1977, 314). This self-reflexivity can be seen in films such as *Singin’ in the Rain* (1952) that focuses on film production during the introduction of sound, and the making of a musical as a result, and the more recent musical example, *La La Land* (2016) that gives some insight into the audition process and its impact on the actress. While the show musical attempts to shine a light on the making of a production to “call attention to the codes constituting their own signifying practices” (Feuer 1977, 325), whether that be on stage or screen, there are also myths associated with this kind of entertainment. Feuer (1977) suggests there are three: spontaneity, integration and audience.

The self-expression that happens when a character spontaneously bursts into song and dance, like Gene Kelly’s Don Lockwood in the ‘Singin’ in the Rain’ scene, suggests the musical has a ‘myth of spontaneity’ (Feuer 1977). It is far from spontaneous at all, with the extraneous preparation in performance and production, but the end result needs to appear to be improvised. As Feuer notes, “the myth of spontaneity operates to make musical performance, which is actually a part of culture, appear to be part of nature” (1977, 318). To emulate this spontaneous moment of song, The Teacher, in an act of revelation towards the end of the film (page 324), bursts into song and dance on the street. As the lyrics suggest, “if life was a musical” her actions would make more sense. More specifically to the show musical, “the myth of spontaneity operates through what we are shown of the work of production of the respective shows as well as how we are shown it” (Feuer 1977, 317). At the beginning of *One in a Million Girl* this myth happens in ‘Who will She be?’ (page 29) where the illusion from the earlier ‘One in a Million’ scene featuring The Crooner singing to “so many beautiful girls” is now on a set being filmed by a crew. There is one final act of spontaneous movement when Mr Wood yells “Cut” and The Crooner lets go of his character to be with The Star. Rather than showing the musical as “calculated and technological” (Feuer 1977, 318), the myth of spontaneity makes these acts as natural as possible.

**I am putting on a show,
Just a little show
for you, dear.**

Likewise, this scene invites the audience to identify with the collective, the crew making a film, through the ‘myth of integration’ that “seeks to give the audience a sense of participation in the creation of the film itself” (Feuer 1977, 321). Only with the right type of musical performance, Feuer (1977) suggests, is the song able to connect the individual to a unified group. The idea of integration and collective experience is articulated in the final scene of the film (pages 345-346) when each actress changes the lyrics from “my cinema”, as each individual sings in the audience, to “our cinema” when their voices are heard together. This also suggests to the viewer of *One in a Million Girl* that the cinema can be for everyone.

Since the backstage musical already incorporates a relationship between performer and spectator in the narrative with the use of theatrical spaces, the ‘myth of audience’ assumes the performer is sensitive to its needs (Feuer 1977). Through point of view shots taken from the audience, the spectator of the film is able to identify with the internal spectator before they are moved “into filmic space – combining the immediate contact of the theatre with the mobility of perspective of the camera” (Feuer 1977, 322). As a result, this switch to impossible theatrical spaces is justified through camera movement and editing. It is a more believable switch when the internal audience is already situated in a cinema auditorium, for instance, when The Teacher views the chorus girls as a Berkeleysque design seen from above in the scene, ‘A beautiful pair’ (page 159), it is a screen image, not a theatrical performance. According to Feuer (1977), another way to manipulate a response in the audience is through intertextuality where the musical plays with their memories of earlier moments in cinema. When referencing other texts in this new musical, “an audience needs to be aware of the history of the medium to understand all the references that appear in the narrative” (Sawtell 2015, 3). This links to Michael Newman’s ‘form is a game’ approach for independent cinema where “spectators are prompted to regard specific aspects of films as components of a game and to see themselves as the players” (2011, 34). While the screenplay alludes to some of the texts referenced in *One in a Million Girl*, such as *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) in relation to ‘This grey world’ scene, in the future film a viewer has the opportunity to connect these moments to their own experiences of cinema.

I am hitting all my marks.

Ah ah.

Playing this final part.

Ah ah.

For the people in the dark.

Ah ah.

By ‘putting on a show’ “we lift a veil; by pulling aside the backdrop or peeking into the wings we are able to satisfy our natural desire to look beyond, behind and beneath” (Altman 1987, 207). The backstage musical, as Altman suggests, is only a “partial view of reality” (1987, 208) that shows select aspects of the process, such as producing, marketing and performance, rather than the other forms of labour, such as the set building. This focus on the ideal as a form of escapism could be a possible reason for excluding this type of labour associated with the production. Richard Dyer in ‘Entertainment and Utopia’ asserts, “entertainment offers the image of ‘something better’ to escape into, or something we want deeply that our day-to-day lives don’t provide” (2002, 20). Because the musical is a heightened version of realism, it would be appropriate to leave the more menial tasks out. For my proposed musical, there is a chance to look beyond the usual star persona when The Star looks back on her life. Rather than replicating those musical numbers that would feature in her films, I focus on how they have been constructed. By including both musical numbers and their methods of construction, I show how the ‘dual register’ mentioned in Act 8, functions in the narrative.

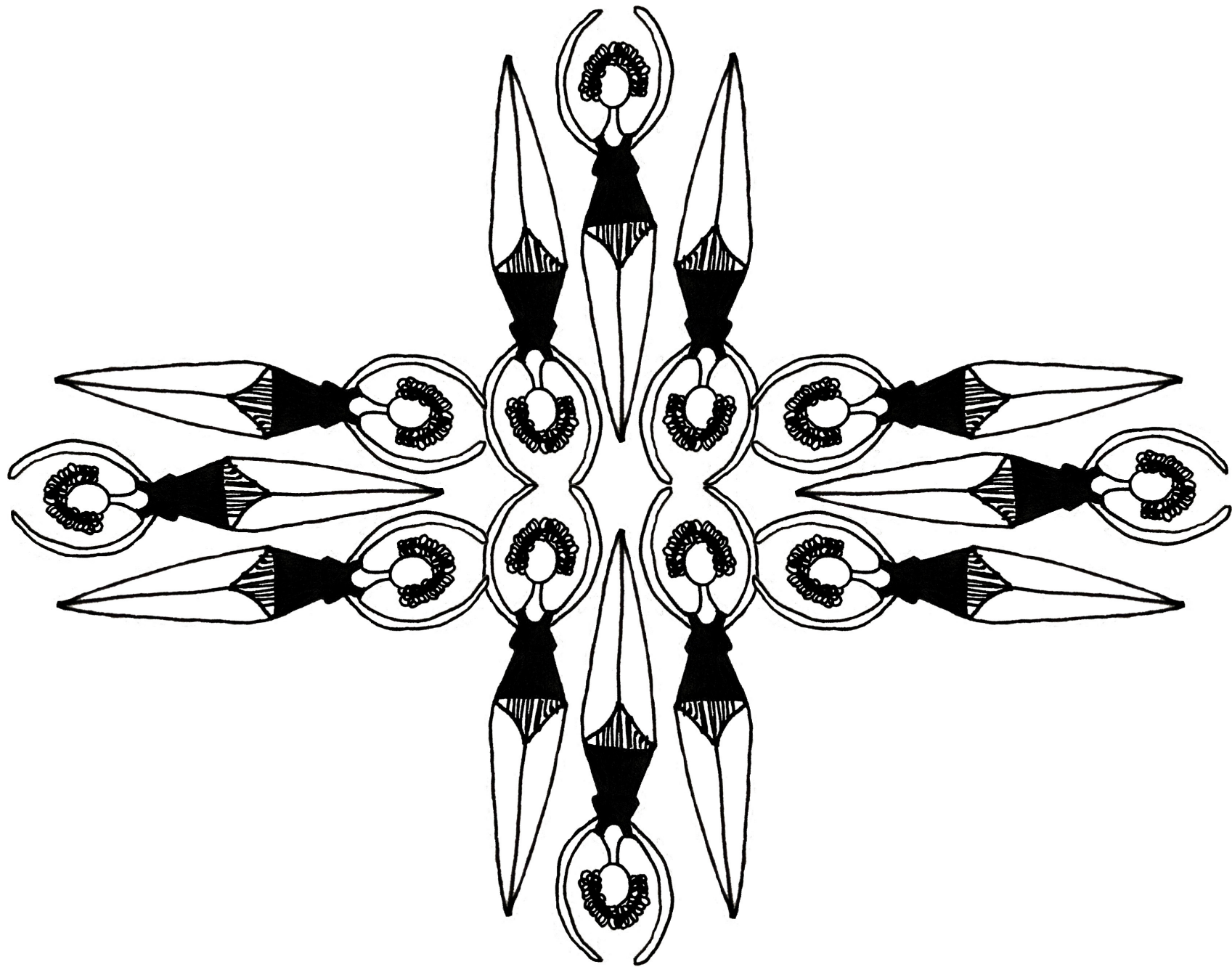
Turning to the structure of a traditional backstage musical, then, Steven Cohan notes:

a narrative about putting on a show is segmented by a handful of numbers. As the film progresses, the numbers, first motivated in the plot as rehearsals or song try-outs, become increasingly longer and more impossible in their size, scope, and temporality. Exploding the coherence of diegetic time and space, visualising the bodies of the chorus as abstract patterning, obscuring the focus of the solo star performer, the big production numbers exceed limitations of a theatrical stage and overwhelm their ostensible purpose as show numbers happening within the world of the story. These spectacular numbers, moreover, are typically ‘stacked’ placed in sequence at or toward the finale, which further ‘overbalances the narrative’ (2002, 7).

**Lights, camera, action,
Here I go.
I am putting on a show.**

This ‘overbalanced narrative’ is evident in the backstage musicals directed and choreographed by Busby Berkeley whose musical numbers are more memorable than the stories, which are often recycled (Cohan 2002). With its dual register, the backstage musical separates its performance space from its narrative one (Rubin 2002) as it does in all of Berkeley’s films. As Rubin suggests, the viewer is taken from the narrative space into “the realms of pure design and abstraction” (2002, 60). In a similar way, these abstract designs of female bodies in *One in a Million Girl* are outside of The Teacher’s narrative. They are part of a separate performance space in the earlier parts of the film, projected on a screen for her to view, but not for her to perform. Just like the external audience viewing a film, these dreamlike sequences are out of reach. Towards the end of the film in one final abstract display of design, a more diverse range of bodies is shown moving in the cinematic space. Still a spectacle, seen from above, this style of choreography is now owned by those who are moving on screen.

When I put on a show in *One in a Million Girl*, I create a story where the artifice of entertainment is questioned. The behind-the-scenes moments in The Star’s story show the struggles, preparation and practice that have contributed to her glamorous screen image and performance. The Teacher, in the classroom and through direct address, gives some insight into writing a role an actress can play.



WHICH WAY TO GO

The Teacher exits, head down. She runs into a **WOMAN**.

THE TEACHER I'm sorry.

The Teacher notices other **WOMEN** posed in different positions along the street. They face the classroom.

She stops.

THE TEACHER I am hiding in the dark.
(singing)

WOMEN Ah ah.
(singing)

THE TEACHER Trying to find a spark.
(singing)

WOMEN Ah ah.
(singing)

THE TEACHER I am putting on a show,
(singing) So you know which way to go.

Women move in different directions. The Teacher stops in the middle of the street.

I am tired

THE TEACHER So I know which way
(singing to camera) To go.

of absent
minds.

The Teacher turns away from the camera. Hurries down the street.

CHORUS GIRL 1 Please forgive my absence today.
(V.O.) Rehearsals have been a nightmare.

I am unfamiliar with the steps. It is difficult to write them down here. Just simple positions to suggest their movement.
I don't belong in this dance.

I discard the original rehearsal scene with a dance instructor. Another character easily replaced by WOOD (short for Hollywood) who can give the same instruction. He yells for them to 'keep up the pace, girls'.

I take out this line of dialogue:
DANCE INSTRUCTOR: Remember this will be filmed from above.

This is a side view now.

A rehearsal for a film within a film, a scene for a featured scene, a rehearsal for the final dance.

Turn the page to see it from above.

OVER-REHEARSED

A small dance studio with a barre against a wall of mirrors.

Sixteen Chorus girls are in the middle of a dance routine.

A **PIANIST** plays a simple number.

Wood stamps his foot.

WOOD Keep up the pace, girls! Move it!

They continue to dance frantically across the space.

Wood stamps his foot again.

WOOD Next position!

The Chorus Girls move together in a clump.

WOOD Too messy. It needs to be perfect.

They reach up to the ceiling.

WOOD Not good enough. Start again!

There is a chorus of sighs.

WOOD Hurry up.

They stand in four rows of four.

WOOD And dance!

The Chorus Girls stomp hard on the floor. They make music with their feet. They all look the same.

Then, focus on Chorus Girl 1 who dances in the back row.

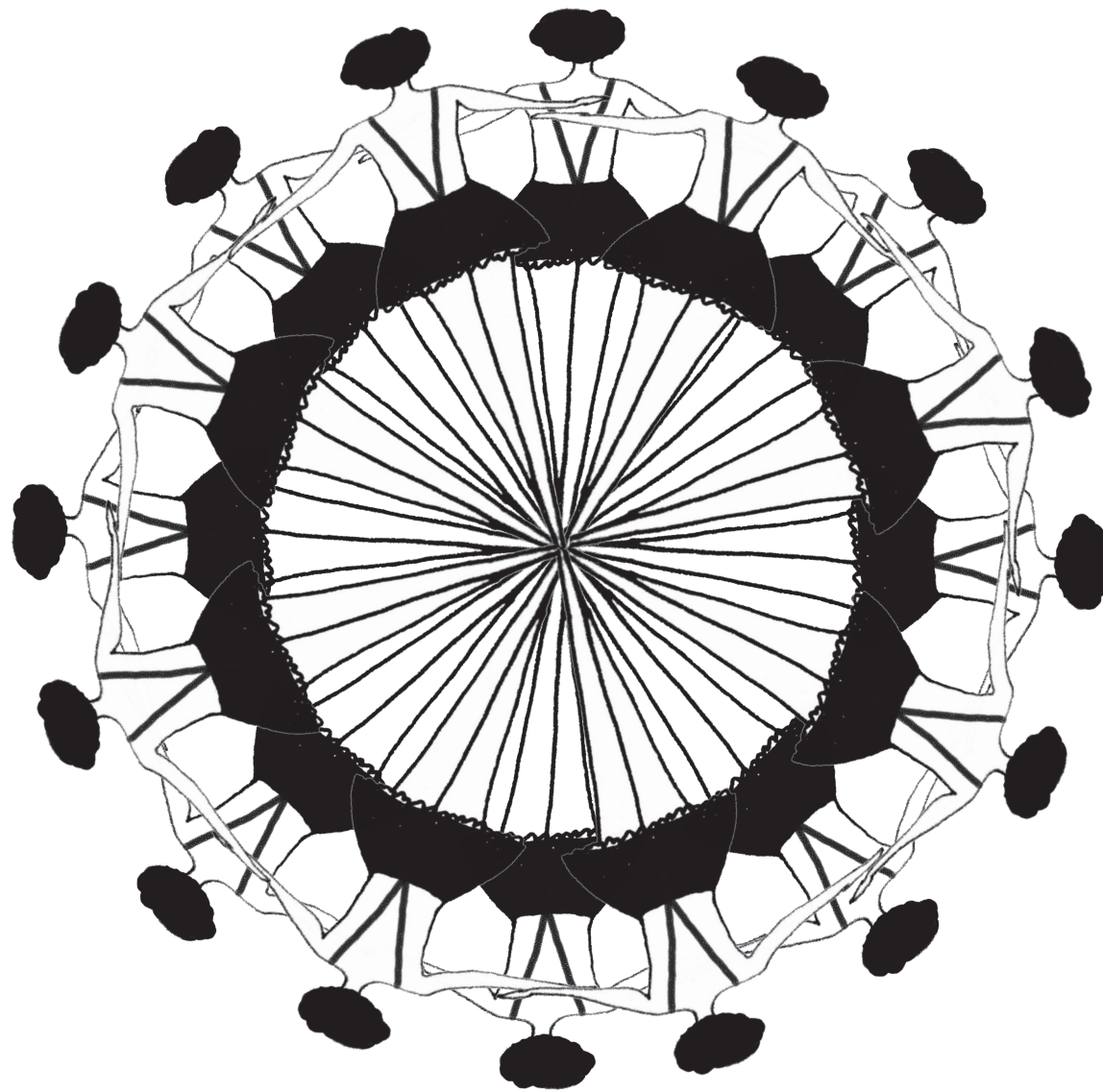


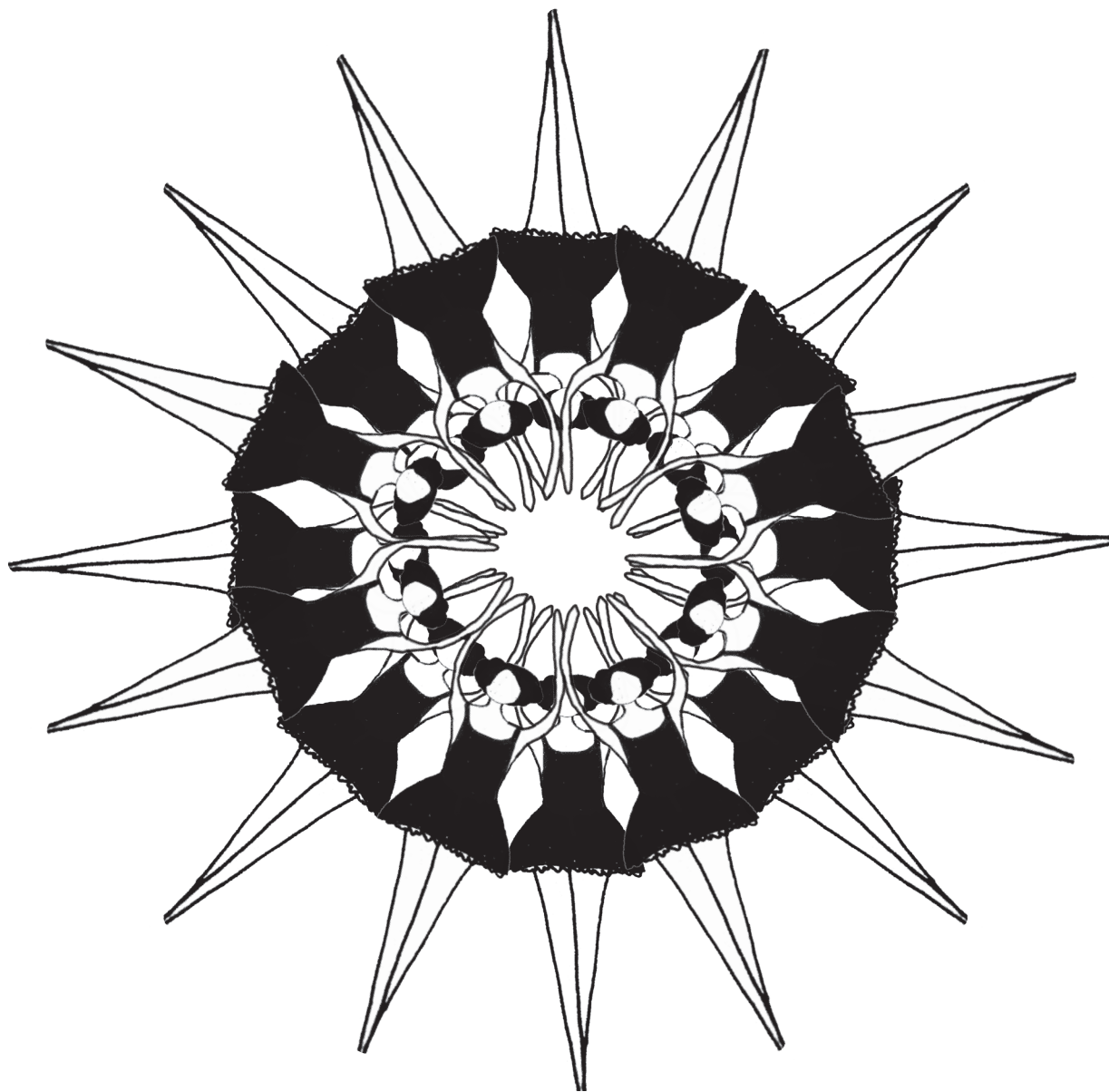
DANCING ON SCREEN

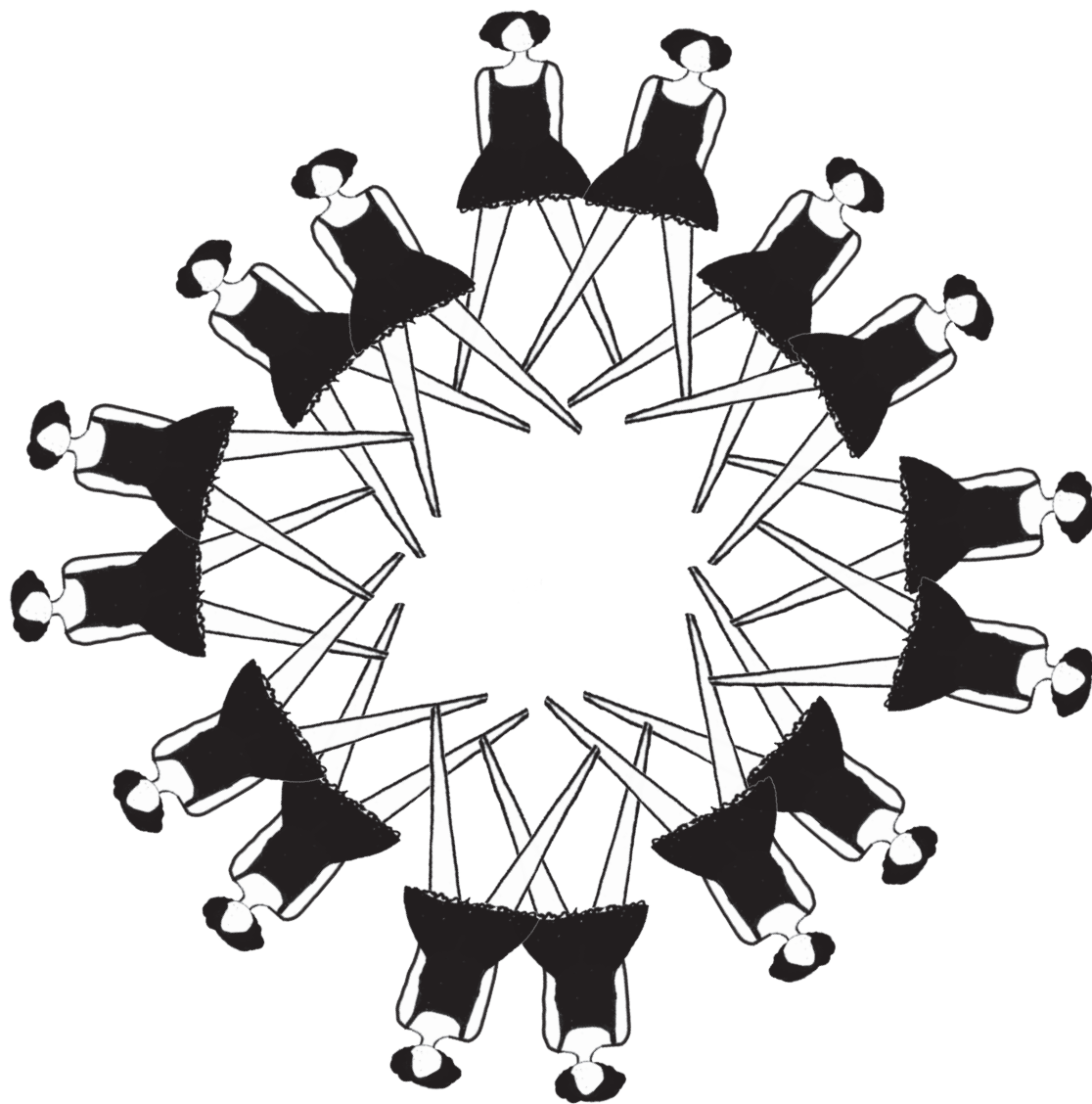
From above, Sixteen chorus girls move from their rows into a circle.

They reach in and out of the circle. Then up to the camera.

Three more formations follow. A kaleidoscope of Chorus Girls.







HAIL, CAESAR! (2016)

I look to others. A dance on the page. A kaleidoscope of women. And a whale.

Halfway through the sequence...

We linger in black. Water surface slowly emerges from the black: we are high above the water now, looking straight down. With our change in perspective the music now blares undistorted.

In the tank below us the bathing beauties spin a formation that goes through constant kaleidoscopic change. In the center of the circle formed by the beauties a dark shape begins to resolve itself: something is surfacing amid the girls (Coen and Coen 2016, 26).

The Coen's are influenced by the underwater numbers featured in Busby Berkeley's cinema. The dance tells a story: The Mermaid finds herself inside a whale, after which she is spurted out of the blowhole. The bathing beauties are supporting her. They dance in and out of the water.

I gain a lot from reading this scene. While my own dance sequences happen out of the water, the same kaleidoscopic description is imagined. The formation changes as they do in my scene, but perhaps I can describe them more vividly.

And what about the mermaid? She messes up a take, unable to hold her composure any longer. When she reaches dry land her true self is revealed, a pregnant actress with a brash voice and brasher attitude: “MA’AM? MISS? Am I married?” And soon she won’t fit into the ‘fish’ ass.

A contrast between image and sound. That voice. A silent, beautiful woman speaks outside of the scene.

In another scene that celebrates the absurdity of the musical, sailors sing and dance in ‘The Swingin’ Dinghy’. There is less description here:

Visible through a high window-well which gives onto the sidewalk are the gams of a girl who has stopped to adjust the seam of one stocking.

Burt, gazing yearningly up at the legs, starts to sing.

*BURT
Oh, we’re headin’ out to sea...*

The production number ‘No Dames!’ begins (Coen and Coen 2016, 26).

The details of this song and dance are missing.



A DANGEROUS WOMAN

The Star unzips her dress at the back. She lets it fall over her shoulders. A slip underneath.

THE STAR Once I was a dangerous woman.

Her dress falls to the floor.

FEMME FATALE

The set features a detective's office.

The Star waits on the sidelines in a sleek gown showing her cleavage. An unlit cigarette between her fingers. A Femme Fatale.

WOOD And action!
(O.S.)

The Star saunters to the office door. She poses in the doorway.

THE STAR Got a light?

She brings the cigarette up to her lips.

The chair turns around. The **DETECTIVE** looks her up and down.

DETECTIVE Sure, sweetheart.

He takes a lighter from his pocket. The Star bends right over his desk, so he can light her cigarette.

Still bent over, she inhales the smoke, deeply. Then blows it into his face.

THE STAR I've got myself into a little trouble.
I need your help.

The Star sits on the edge of his desk.

WOOD Cut!
(O.S.)

The Star comes out of character. Drops the cigarette into the ashtray and heads off set.

She grows
tired
of this routine.

Action.

Cut.

Cut.

Cut.

She plays the leading lady in the classroom.

A starring role.

A part she has never played on screen.

THE GIRLS DON'T WANT TO PLAY

There is a buzz of activity. A circle of ten Chorus Girls seated on chairs. Their legs open and close.

The Teacher spins around in the centre of the circle. She appears quite mad. The Chorus Girls giggle.

THE TEACHER Who would like to share?

Their eyes turn away.

The Teacher spins again. She inches closer to each girl. Her arm points across the circle. Chorus Girl 3 shakes her head.

The Teacher points again. No response.

THE TEACHER Did anyone do it?

Silence.

The Teacher shakes her head. She squeezes out of the circle and heads for the door.

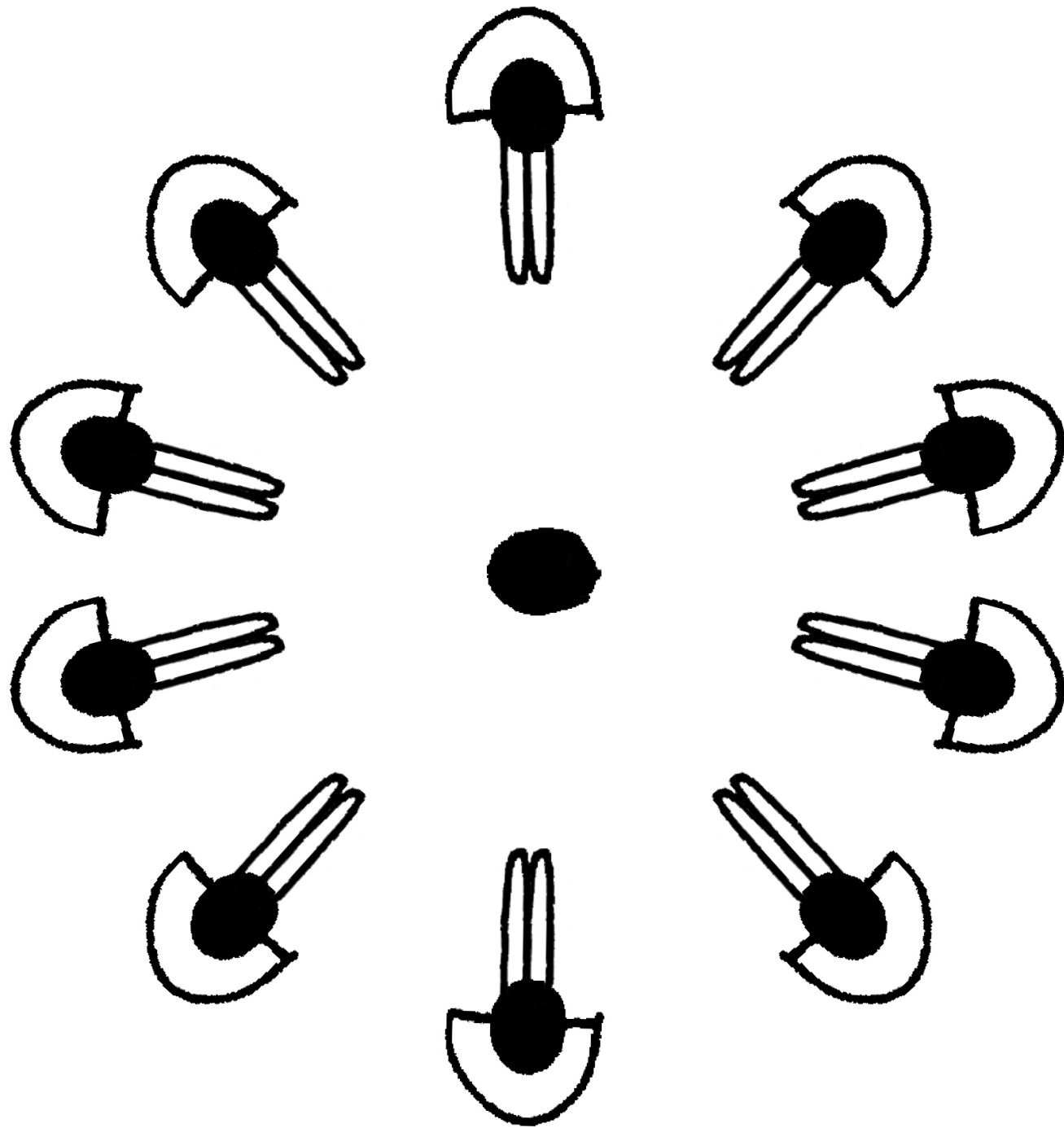
Chorus Girl 1 rises from her seat.

CHORUS GIRL 1 I did it.
(barely audible)

The Teacher turns. A smile.

THE TEACHER Good.

Chorus Girl 1 brings a piece of paper from her bag. It shakes in her hands.



A girl takes her place in the spotlight. Her hands shake. Her voice trembles. She attempts to make her story clear.

I have marched to the tune of others before. Round and round on stage in strange formations, sticking to the rhythm of the group.

Yes, she is one of them. That circling image of youth and beauty. They are a team in that moment as they make their mark on the stage. A kaleidoscope of Busby Berkeley dancers who all look the same.

I have followed the crowd before. Up and down the chorus line on 42nd Street, trying so hard to get noticed.

She wasn't always the lucky one. During two auditions, her thighs are measured for size. She is larger than the next two girls in line.

I have been treated like a piece of meat. A fork stuck in my side. Waiting to be swallowed whole.

Talent is not a factor here. Appearance is all that matters. A girl dances until her feet bleed and blister and sting.

I have scars to show. I will not be beaten yet.

And on her third try, with Spanx slimming her thighs, she claims her prize.

I have danced around in circles under their instruction. Time and time again, waiting for my real life to begin.

THE INNER CIRCLE

Bright lights.

A group of twenty Chorus Girls march arm in arm towards the camera. Chorus Girl 1 is hardly noticed in the line up. They all look the same.

CHORUS GIRL 1 I have marched to the tune
(V.O.) of others before.

The formation changes. A circle of spinning Chorus Girls in the centre of the frame.

CHORUS GIRL 1 Round and round in
(V.O.) strange formations.

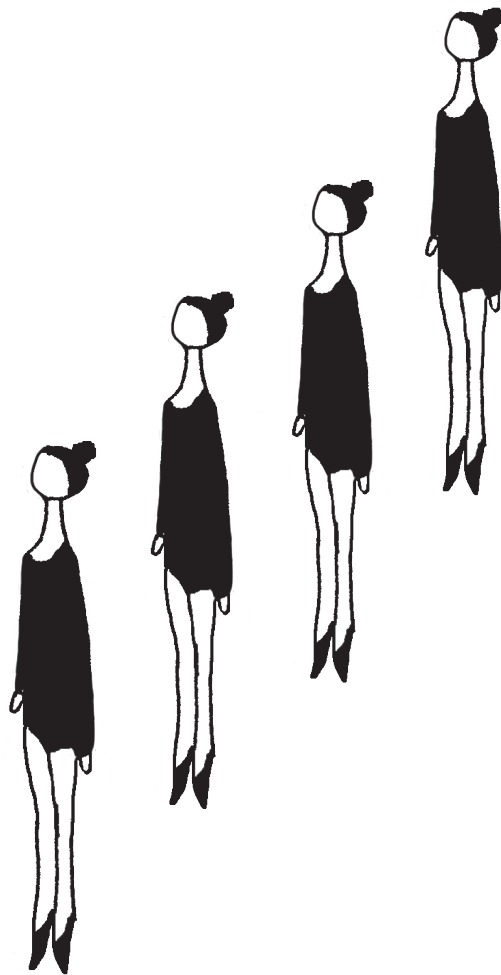
The group changes again. From above they look like a flower.

CHORUS GIRL 1 Sticking to the rhythm
(V.O.) of the group.

They pose, smiling for the camera.

CHORUS GIRL 1 It wasn't always like that.
(V.O.)

Chorus Girl 1 is more visible in the group. When the other girls move off stage, she continues to smile broadly.



ONE OF MANY

CHORUS GIRL 1 (V.O.) I was just one of many who were hungry for a part to play.

A long line of hopeful **AUDITIONEES** wait outside the studio. They all wear black leotards, white tights and shiny dance shoes. Their hair pulled tight in high buns. Faces caked in make-up. They all look the same.

The Auditionees practice dance routines. A soft shoe. The Charleston. One kicks her leg over her head. Another falls gracefully into the splits. Others pose and preen.

As the Auditionees get closer to the studio entrance, they are more still. The nerves have kicked in.

A MATTER OF SIZE

Inside the film studio, Chorus Girl 1 waits in the shadows. She is right at the head of the line.

CHORUS GIRL 1 My one big chance.
(V.O.)

WOOD Next!
(O.S.)

Chorus Girl 1 moves into the spotlight. The brightness blinds her. She covers her eyes with her hands, a shade against the light.

CHORUS GIRL 1 I didn't even get to dance.
(V.O.)

WOOD Measure!
(O.S.)

An **OLD AND WIRY LADY** scurries into the spotlight. She produces a long tape measure from around her neck. She bends down to wrap it around Chorus Girl 1's thigh.

Old and Wiry Lady shakes her head. She scurries away.

WOOD Next!
(O.S.)

CHORUS GIRL 1 What?
(dumbfounded)

WOOD Next!
(O.S.)

Before Chorus Girl 1 can speak again, **AUDITIONEE 1** pushes her out of the spotlight.

my thighs
slap together
inner piece of flesh
rubbed red raw

“My sixteen regular girls were sitting on the side waiting; so after I picked the three girls I put them next to my special sixteen and they matched like pearls.”

Busby Berkeley (cited in Pike and Martin 1973, 64)

Chorus Girl 1 runs into the Chorus Girls who are watching from the sidelines.

CHORUS GIRL 1 Excuse me.

The Chorus Girls look down their noses at her. They giggle in unison.

Chorus Girl 1 moves away, defeated.

Wood can be heard yelling in the background.

WOOD Next!
(O.S.)

Auditionee 1 pushes Chorus Girl 1 out of the way. She sobs loudly.

The Chorus Girls giggle in unison.

WOOD Congratulations! You’ve made it
(O.S.) to the dance round.

AUDITIONEE 2 runs to join the Chorus Girls.

CHORUS GIRLS Not yet!
(singing)

Auditionee 2 takes a step back from the Chorus Girls who whisper to each other.



DANCING CIRCLES

Focus on Chorus Girl 1's feet as she taps out an aggressive routine.

CHORUS GIRL 1 I would have danced circles
(V.O.) around those girls.

She dances in a circular motion around the projected faces of the Chorus Girls on the floor.

But, in close-up, the pictures are multiple versions of Chorus Girl 1.

She stomps vigorously on her own face.



**I hear women
talk
about a thigh gap
An oval
that starts at the crotch
and ends at the knees.
Is this the latest
beauty standard?**

A SECOND TIME

The Old and Wiry Lady wraps her tape measure around Chorus Girl 1's thigh.

CHORUS GIRL 1 I did everything right.
(V.O.) And nothing.

Old and Wiry Lady shakes her head.

WOOD Next!
(O.S.)

Chorus Girl 1 smiles thinly before leaving.

**a diet of sweat
and rabbit food**

PRACTICE

Chorus Girl 1 is out of breath
in the middle of the space.
Sweat dripping down her
face, arms and legs. A puddle
of sweat on her chest.

She guzzles down a glass of
water. Eats the top of a carrot.

She's not sure if she wants it anymore.

A charmed life.

The spotlight fades soon enough.

Left to learn a routine in the dark.

THIRD TIME'S A CHARM

Chorus Girl 1 stands weakly in the spotlight.

WOOD
(O.S.)

Congratulations!

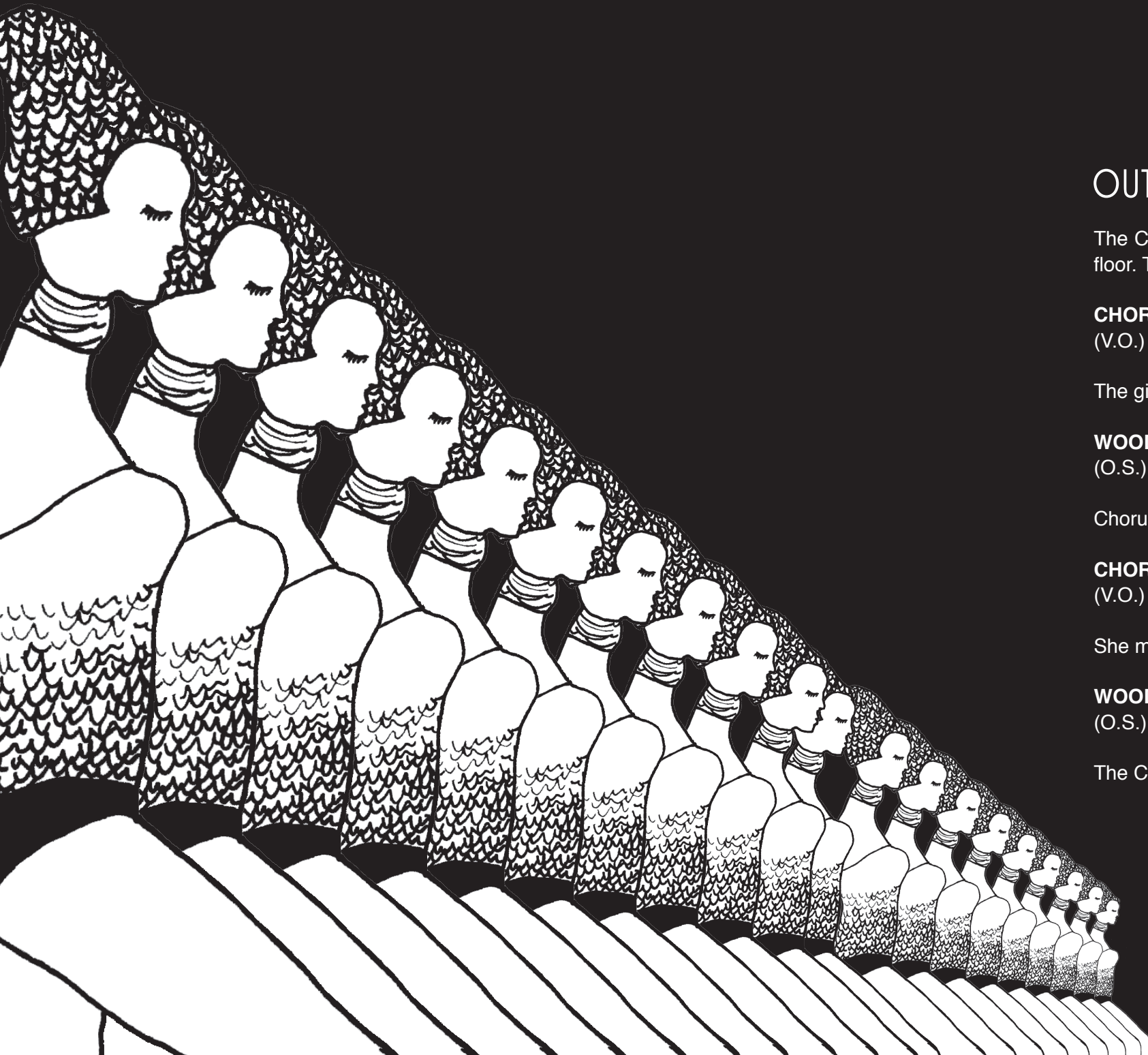
Chorus Girl 1's face is expressionless. Sweaty and out of breath.

CHORUS GIRL 1
(V.O.)

Those times before.

He didn't remember me.

Two Chorus Girls take her by the arms and lead her away.



OUT OF LINE

The Chorus Girls are lined up in a diagonal across a checkerboard floor. The sound stage is dark around them.

CHORUS GIRL 1 (V.O.) I felt out of place. I don't know why.
Treated like a piece of meat.

The girls move into a new formation. Chorus Girl 1 lags behind.

WOOD (O.S.) Hit your mark!

Chorus Girl 1 is frazzled.

CHORUS GIRL 1 (V.O.) I knew how to dance!

She moves back into line.

WOOD (O.S.) Cut!

The Chorus Girls turn to face Chorus Girl 1. She backs away.



A SHOT AT A CROTCH

The Chorus Girls are in a line with their legs spread to form a tunnel.

The **CAMERAMAN** rolls the camera through their legs. He loses control of the camera. It pushes into Chorus Girl 1's crotch.

She cries out in pain, jumping back into the Chorus Girls behind her. They fall like dominoes onto the checkerboard floor. Chorus Girl 1 on top of the others.

WOOD (O.S.) Cut!

CAMERAMAN Sorry, lady.

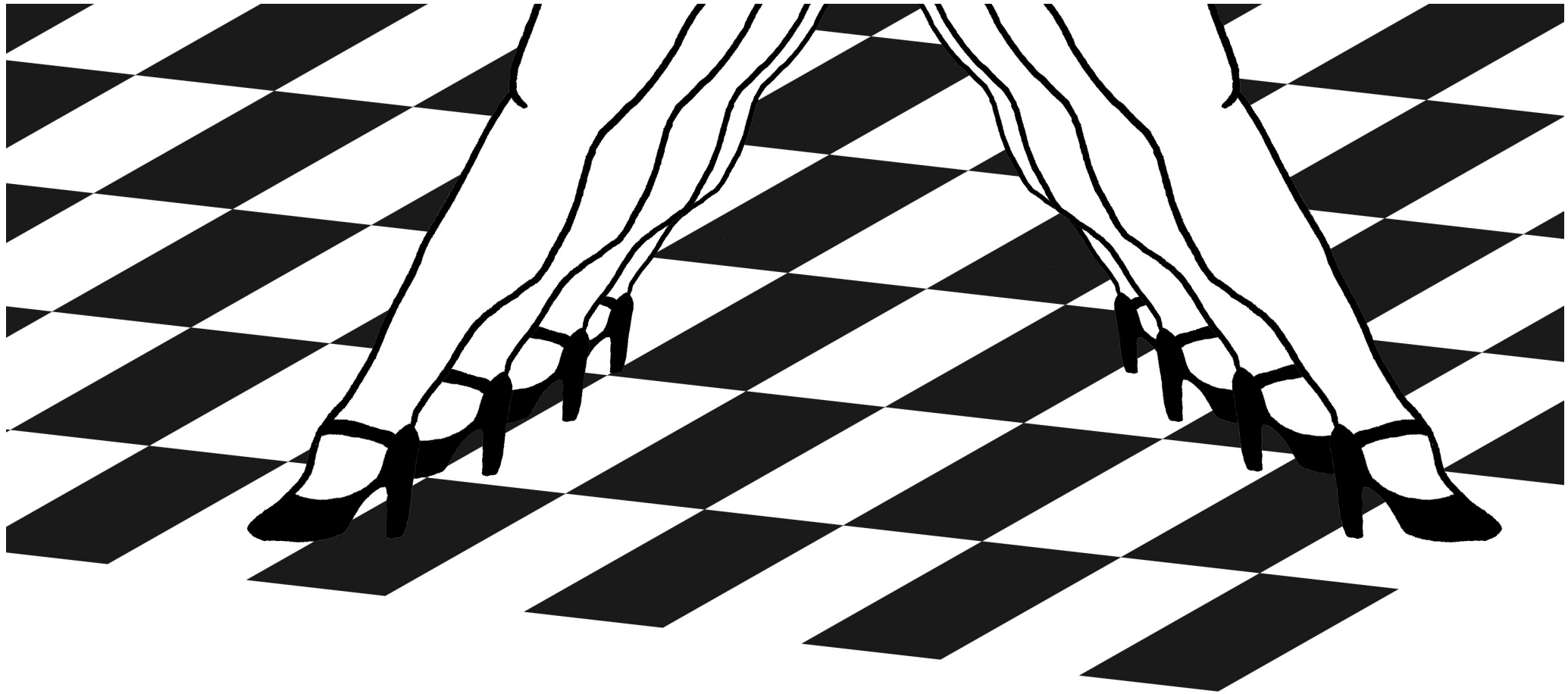
He grabs the camera and rolls it away.

WOOD (O.S.) Can we get this shot
some time today?

CAMERAMAN Give me a minute.

WOOD (O.S.) Will someone get her off the floor?

Two Chorus Girls pick up her feet and drag her off the set.



Before deciding the chorus girls could only sing together.

DISCARDED DIALOGUE:

Some of the Chorus Girls are disinterested. Others giggle.

CHORUS GIRL 2: I remember that.

CHORUS GIRL 1: It wasn't funny at the time.

CHORUS GIRL 3: I was on the bottom. You were so heavy.

More laughter. The others are now taking notice. Chorus Girl 1 seems uncomfortable.

THE TEACHER: Settle down. (beat)
Is that the end of the story?

THE LUCKY ONES

Back to the classroom.

Chorus Girl 1 is now seated.

A couple of Chorus Girls whisper to each other.

CHORUS GIRLS So, so heavy.
(singing)

The Chorus Girls laugh. Chorus Girl 1 is uncomfortable.

THE TEACHER What? (Beat.) Settle down. (Beat.)

Certain eyes roll.

THE TEACHER Let her finish.

Chorus Girl 1 hesitates.

THE TEACHER It's going well.

Chorus Girl 1 nods. Looks down at the page.

CHORUS GIRL 1 I have danced around in circles
(reading) under their instruction. Time and time again. Waiting for my real life to begin.

She lowers the page. The Teacher smiles.

THE TEACHER Thank you. (Beat.) Any comments?

The Chorus Girls shuffle in their seats.

THE TEACHER I think you've done well to capture what it's like for you as a chorus girl.

The Chorus Girls sing a sigh.

THE TEACHER You don't think so?

They shake their heads.

THE TEACHER Each person's experience is different. (Beat.) I guess nothing in your life is worth writing about.

The Chorus Girls cross their legs in unison.

THE TEACHER Maybe you could write about how you are unable to write for this class.

The Teacher moves back into the middle of the circle. Spins to view each one.

THE TEACHER You came to this class for a reason. (Beat.) This isn't easy.

The Chorus Girls cross their arms in unison.

THE TEACHER It's not just about luck.

They uncross their arms and legs in unison.

CHORUS GIRLS We are the lucky ones!
(singing)

THE TEACHER Why? Because you haven't done the work?

She sighs.

THE TEACHER This can't last forever.

They seem disinterested. The Teacher moves out of the circle to her desk.

CHORUS GIRL 1 I want to write a film. I want to dance. My way.

A triple threat.

Actor, singer, dancer.

**Like Gene Kelly and Fred Astaire before her,
she will dance the shit out of this routine.**

I JUST WANT TO DANCE

Chorus Girl 1 improvises a tap dance under the spotlight.

A smile. Not forced, but free.

MY NAME IS DAISY

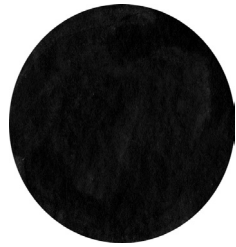
The Teacher looks at Chorus Girl 1.

THE TEACHER Thank you for telling your story. (Beat.)
Daisy?

give her a name

CHORUS GIRL 1 Yes. My name is Daisy.

DAISY smiles.



ACT 11:
WRITE WHAT YOU KNOW



What do I see when I look back on my life?

There is nothing worthy of a story.

No drama, no surprise.

Faces, places I'd rather forget.

Another person's life.

I write about my experience as a teacher. Screenwriting. Working with students to find a voice. I write what I know about teaching. Here, in this moment, I write what I would like to teach actresses.

SHE TEACHES

In The Teacher's class actresses are given agency to write their own roles. When the chorus girls are asked to 'write what you know', their script development starts with their personal experiences. Like my screenwriting practice, where I draw from past moments that have made an impact, The Teacher asks the chorus girls to write a personal experience as a story. In an earlier draft of a scene from *One in a Million Girl*, The Teacher addresses the class with these instructions:

THE TEACHER *So, you want to write a part for yourself. It should be easy. You know who you are, don't you? Perhaps you've seen many roles you would like to play. Maybe not. In this class we'll begin with the personal. How you feel. The experiences that have made an impact on you. It could be a childhood trauma, a work experience, it could be based on an emotion or relationship. You'll write from there. You can then use that to create a fictional story. One that you know you can play because you've been there yourself.*

A sense memory workshop where I become an actor again. Feeling an emotion through a childhood object, a toy. Through the sense of touch, the instructor takes me back. Reminds me of the feelings I have about my father. Multiple memories of him telling me to ‘shut up’. My voice doesn’t matter. Tears fall. I feel this pain. I project this anger and frustration out to my acting partner. Just as Ivana Chubbuck describes the tool of ‘substitution’, I am “Endowing the other actor in the scene with characteristics of a person from your real life who best represents the need expressed in your SCENE OBJECTIVE” (2005, 53, original emphasis). Sobs so hard that my words are stilted, struggling to get out. I forgive my father in this moment of recollection. The instructor tells me to use this sense memory in my performance. Should I use this technique in my writing as well? Is my Dad a representation of the patriarchy? Another Wood? My need to have a voice elsewhere. A film.

When the story development starts with the personal, an emotion is felt by the actress. The moment is written down and shared so it can be further explored. The scene is performed at this raw stage where the emotion is teased out and the character’s motivation becomes clearer. This is a similar process when performing a character, the actress brings her memories to the moment, ensuring that she becomes a living, feeling person in the story with the ability to interact and react to the changes that happen in the scene. As Eric Morris points out, “In order to feel the way the script tells you that the character feels, you must do something to make yourself experience the same life as the character” (1998, 85). As a starting point for writing, a personal experience allows the actress to fully absorb in a *being* (Morris 1998) state as emotions are expressed.

I feel the same pent-up anger and frustration as The Teacher whose students seem disinterested in learning. Knowing what it is like to suppress these feelings helps me to convey the character’s motivation: to encourage her students to write their own roles, or at a simpler level, to teach them a new skill. At the beginning of this sequence, she makes light of the situation, as I do with my students who forget to read or write a text before class. Later, she waits for the students in an empty classroom, which draws on my experience of so many absent minds. Rather than wallow in her disappointment, she moves onto the streets, hoping to find some eager students there, determined to embrace her new role as a teacher. The next stage in The Teacher’s class would be to fictionalise the character in this moment giving greater dramatic tension in the scene. In this instance, a song is used to heighten the moment for musical entertainment.

An experimental film for an experimental film class. A minute of screen time. No limits. *On The Spot* (2003). One of my first films. An autobiographical short. I perform an abstract version of a dark moment in my life. Those red pills, red spots on the floor. My voice over as a reminder, 'Take one pill, daily'. Home movies moving into focus. 'Did you tape me?' On set, the deep emotion hits. Hard. A sadness felt. A release. Then a change. I could be happy in the spotlight.

In *One in a Million Girl* The Young Star wishes to fly to a place of colour away from her grey feelings. While these scenes are influenced by Dorothy as she sings 'Over the Rainbow' in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), there is a deeper connection to my past. By escaping to a world of colour, one featured on the cinema screen, I can fictionalise these personal experiences of depression. This movement into a fictionalised version of events is the next stage of 'write what you know', where an actress can reimagine significant moments for the screen. She is given agency to write her subjectivity through this character. As Linda Seger (1996) asserts, personal, subjective stories are often a feature of women's films. They "change the focus, often emphasising the character's emotions, behaviour, and psychology above the character's action" (Seger 1996, 118). Alone, in the black and white interior of a bedroom, The Young Star sings about her interior feelings in the lyrics, "if I could fly from the world inside, all those grey feelings, grey life". She wishes to venture outside of her mind for a while, where she might show some colour through her exterior. Screenwriter, Robin Laing suggests:

When you don't tell an action story, you have to find the connections of events by digging deeper. Emotion is harder to write down than action. If we have to see emotion, we need to turn it into some kind of physical event for the film. But we have to value it and trust it. (cited in Seger 1996, 118)

If this action is not external, through drama and conflict, as it is often shown in stories about men, then women need to "rethink conflict by looking at their own lives" (Seger 1996, 134). In this sequence with The Young Star, the interior life of the character is much easier to convey through a song in a musical, which already has an emotional connection outside of the action in a scene. Just as this song is influenced by my own internal conflict during a dark moment in my life, an actress can write what she knows as a fiction.

**I am a part of this dance group.
We dance as one. On stage we
march in lines and circles. Body
movements strong and in time.
Feet to a fine point. Heads held
high. Here, in this performance,
I am not an individual.**

Throughout the screenplay, the chorus girls are united in their movements, perfectly formed bodies on the page. In the classroom, the chorus girls are unwilling to look within, preferring to be directed in their current roles as dancers. Influenced by the Busby Berkeley musicals and their visual and sexualised display of women as spectacle (Fischer 1989), I recreate a homogenous group of chorus girls to highlight appearance over talent. Berkeley mentions, “I never cared whether a girl knew her right foot from her left so long as she was beautiful... All my girls were beautiful and some of them could dance a little, some of them couldn’t” (cited in Pike and Martin 1973, 51). This ideology of the chorus girl is shown in Daisy’s story when she questions her position as a dancer in the industry.

Her story is shown in flashback. During the three audition scenes, Daisy’s talent as a dancer is ignored by Wood. Based on a similar scene in Berkeley’s *42nd Street* (1933), where the producers ogle the girls’ gams, Daisy’s thighs are measured for size. Rather than accepting Daisy for her extraordinary dancing abilities that are featured after her first audition, she is cast aside because her thighs are too large. By choosing to write about this audition process, and her eventual role in the chorus, Daisy is given agency to overcome this experience. Just as Lucy Bolton (2011) calls for a representation of ‘female consciousness’ on the screen where a woman’s interiority is valued over her appearance, Daisy is now open to the possibility of writing her own role for the screen, one where she dances on her own terms. In the next stage, ‘Write what you want to be’, she explores how she can be a dancer in a fictional story.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION

An old-fashioned microphone stands in front of The Star who is under a number of bright lights in the studio. The space around her is dark.

THE STAR
(singing)

I am putting on a show,
Just a little show
For you, dear.

I am hitting all my marks.
Ah ah.
Playing this final part.
Ah ah.
For the people in the dark.
Ah ah.

Lights, camera, action,
Here I go.
I am putting on a show.

The lights go out.

**A tortured singer's words
are heard:
'she wore
blue velvet'.**

**She sings of 'Falling'
in love
a single spotlight
in a rough roadhouse.**

**She mouths the words
of a familiar song
another language,
'Llorando',
crying in a club
called 'Silencio'.**

And then she falls.

HER SONG

As an interlude the audience hears. Haunting songs of red-lipsticked women. A story is told through a microphone. An echo of the film. Characters are drawn into the singers' dark worlds. A darkness felt. I have felt the emotion. I am haunted by these narratives.

These are strange moments. A 'Lynchian' influence. I have seen it in the works of others. I see them in my own.

He says: "when I catch an idea for a film, I fall in love with the way cinema can express it. I like a story that holds abstractions, and that's what cinema can do" (Lynch 2007, 17).

When I follow these abstract moments that could never happen in life, I think about how a spectator might experience these images and sounds. In the darkness. Magnified.

WOMEN ADORE MEN

The curtains are open. Eight Chorus Men are framed by the window.

Four Chorus Girls are flirting with the Chorus Men through the glass.

The Teacher is in conversation with Daisy at the front of the room.

The giggling makes The Teacher stand up.

THE TEACHER What are you doing?

They are too distracted by the Chorus Men to hear her.

The Teacher moves closer.

THE TEACHER If you don't want to be here, you can leave.

The Chorus Girls continue to flirt.

THE TEACHER Can you hear me?

The Teacher races to the window. She pulls the curtains closed. All eyes are on The Teacher now.

CHORUS GIRLS Yes!

THE TEACHER Why are you here?

DISCARDED DIALOGUE:

THE TEACHER: **Why are you here?**
CHORUS GIRLS: **Who knows? Who cares?**
THE TEACHER: **I care.**
CHORUS GIRLS: **Men already desire me.**
(singing)
THE TEACHER: **You can leave.**
(calmly)

They don't move.

THE TEACHER: **Go! Leave!**

The four Chorus Girls form a line in front of the curtains.

The classroom lights go dim. A spotlight shines on The Chorus Girls.

CHORUS GIRLS We're never chosen to be
(singing) One in a million.
We're always stuck in the crowd.
We just wanted to be
One in a million.
A leading lady in the show.
Oh oh.

They put their hands on their hips. A powerful stance.

CHORUS GIRLS But, we don't need to be
(singing) One in a million.
Men like us just as we are.
Why should we try to be
One in a million?
We are Chorus Girls in the show.
Oh oh oh oh.

They open the curtains. The Chorus Men look through the window.

The Chorus Girls lean over to kiss the glass.



They turn around and smile.

THE TEACHER You don't have to be here.

The Chorus Girls continue to smile. Unmoving.

THE TEACHER Leave!

The Chorus Girls dance out the door. The Teacher takes a seat.
Her head falls into her hands.

Through the window, the Chorus Girls meet up with the Chorus
Men. There are two men for each girl. The Chorus Men lift each
girl up into the air. They spin around. A quick dance routine.

Daisy watches them through the window.

DAISY Look at them.

The Teacher looks up at Daisy. Then out the window.

DAISY I gave up the chorus. The girls
don't know yet.

The Teacher moves next to Daisy.

DAISY I want to write. I want to learn.

THE TEACHER Great.



Through the window the dance continues.

THE TEACHER Why don't you take the scene home with you. I can check it next week.

Daisy collects her things.

DAISY Same time?

THE TEACHER Yes.

Daisy heads to the door. She turns.

DAISY Thanks. See ya.

THE TEACHER See you then.

Daisy leaves the classroom. She passes the window in front of the dancing in the street.

The Teacher presses her hands against the window.

The Chorus Men lead the Chorus Girls out of the view of the window frame. To the left and to the right.

When they part ways, The Crooner is in the centre of the frame.

He waves at her.

She waves back.

ONE OF THE CROONERS

A nightclub. A band, **THE CROONERS** finish the last notes of a song. Applause.

The Crooner holds onto the microphone. He motions for the audience to settle down.

THE CROONER Thank you.

The Crooners begin to play.

The music fades as the focus changes to The Star and Wood who drink cocktails at a table to the right of the stage. Wood's face is in the shadows.

WOOD We've given him a three picture deal.

THE STAR Really?

WOOD He's got the pipes. He can act.

THE STAR But, can he dance?

WOOD He can move. He'll be your leading man.

They watch The Crooner on stage.

THE CROONER (singing) She had that magic.
Stars in her eyes.

Back to The Star and Wood.

WOOD A perfect pair.

THE STAR He's a bit young for me.

WOOD You're as young as you feel, right?

He laughs loudly.

**I'm not certain of the song
The Crooner should sing here.
This seems a bit sappy.
It might be better to leave it for the pros.**

Four Chorus Girls join them at the table.

THE STAR I'll be back in a minute.

WOOD Don't be long, sweetheart.

Wood holds onto her arm.

WOOD I want you to meet him.

The Star races away.

Wood slides his chair closer to the Chorus Girls. They giggle.

The Crooners finish their song.

THE CROONER She had that magic.
(singing) Stars in her eyes.

Applause.

THE CROONER Thank you. Have a great night.

The Crooner turns off the microphone. He steps off the stage.

Wood motions for The Crooner to join him. The Chorus Girls whisper to each other.

THE CROONER I'll just get a drink.
(yelling)

WOOD They have waiters for that.
(yelling)

The Crooner can't hear him. Heads to the bar.



THEY MEET

He notices The Star at the end of the bar. She's signing an autograph on a napkin.

He waves at her.

THE CROONER Can I get you a drink?

THE STAR What?

The Star hands the napkin to a **FAN**.

The Crooner watches her from the bar. She is now posing for a photograph with Fan.

The Crooner laughs as the **BARTENDER** brings him a whiskey. The Star joins him.

THE CROONER Do you want one?

THE STAR I have a drink at my table.

She looks over to see Wood with his hands all over the Chorus Girls.

THE STAR I don't want to go back there.

THE CROONER The bartender looks busy.
Have some of mine.

Their hands meet for a brief moment as he passes her the drink. She takes a tiny sip.

THE CROONER Have I made the right decision?

THE STAR About what?

THE CROONER Being your co-star. Working with him.

They take another look at Wood with his Chorus Girls.

The Star sips the whiskey.

THE CROONER He made it seem so easy in the audition.
Now I don't know.

THE STAR You'll be fine. He likes you.

She takes another sip of whiskey.

THE STAR It's the girls I worry about. (Beat.)
Thanks for the drink.

The Star hands him the empty glass. She leaves the nightclub.

The Crooner watches her go.

A CROONER IS WELCOME

The door to the classroom is slightly open.

The Teacher is busy collecting some papers from the desk.

The Crooner knocks as he sticks his head through the door. She is startled.

THE CROONER Is the class over?

The Teacher nods.

THE CROONER Damn. I'm...

THE TEACHER I know who you are.

The Crooner laughs.

THE CROONER I was going to say that I'm interested in this class.

He holds out a poster that reads 'Write Your Own Role'. It is folded and slightly torn.

THE CROONER They were tearing it down at the studio. I saved it.

THE TEACHER Thanks.

She takes the poster from him. Places it on the pile of papers.

THE TEACHER Do you want to write your own role?

THE CROONER I know it's aimed at women.

THE TEACHER I don't think you need it.

THE CROONER It's not for me. (Beat.) Someone I know.

The Teacher picks up her bag and papers. They walk out the door together.

SINGING

The Crooner and The Star are in the centre of his small, white studio apartment.

THE STAR You keep a microphone here?

THE CROONER I can always be singing.

She moves up to the microphone. Tap. Tap. Tap.

THE CROONER I'll turn it on.

He clicks the switch.

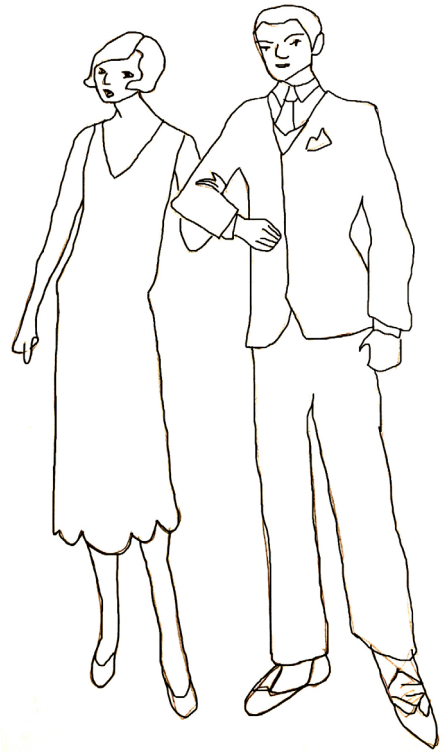
THE STAR Testing!
(singing)

She holds the 'ing', so the note vibrates through the room.

THE STAR Not bad.

THE CROONER I can't wait to get out of here.

The Star moves across the room to a double bed. The Crooner switches off the microphone.



SMILE FOR THE CAMERAS

Cameras flash.

The Star and The Crooner pose together.

THE STAR
(V.O.)

They were eager to see
a new relationship on screen.

The Crooner links arms with The Star. They both smile at the cameras.

SECRET

The Star faces away from the mirror.

THE STAR

She smiles.

We started dating not long after we met. We decided to keep it a secret on set.

AN ACT

The Star and The Crooner are together on set.

THE STAR Our relationship was just an act.
(V.O.)

Wood strides over to them. He slaps The Crooner on the arm.

WOOD You ready, kid.

The Crooner nods.

WOOD Don't be nervous. You're working
with the pros. We'll be ready for you in a few.

Wood rushes away.

The Star squeezes The Crooner's hand for a second.



DANCING

The Star and The Crooner dance the Foxtrot across a stage.

A PORTRAIT OF SALLY POTTER

She sits at a table. Alone in the space.

Imagines a possible scenario, the only colour in a black and white film.

Her imagined female gaze?

She struggles to write. She dances instead.

Is this what it's like to write? I struggle to find the words.

I get caught up in other dances. Another screenplay called, *Write!*

I discover how to write a dance as poetry on the page. My fingers dance on the keys.

I dance, like Sally, through my writer's block.

The Tango Lesson (1997); where she plays a version of herself in the scenes. "Sally is able to take control of her own image and demand an acknowledgement of her 'to-be-looked-at-ness' because such a position is no longer threatening" (Fowler 2003, 59). She owns the space. Moving in the frame.

I too have placed myself within the scenes. Willing to be viewed. Seen.

She knows the cinema space. Her role in the dance. Pablo, her tango partner, is not so sure. She says: “You don’t know how to use your eyes. You only want to be looked at, not to look. That’s why you don’t see, that’s why you know nothing about cinema” (Potter 1997).

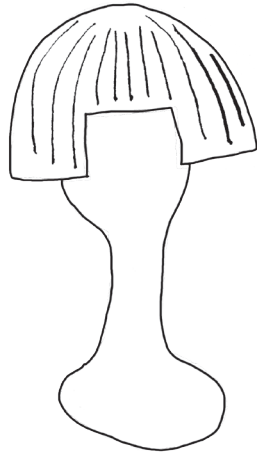
There’s an art in following. She writes: “you must be completely in the present. Without the sheer now-ness you cannot follow at the speed and with the precision that is required” (Potter cited in Mayer 2009, 131). A filmmaker follows like a partner in the dance.

I follow the dance of the story. Rhythms and Beats.

Learning new routines. We are both open, showing the process.

We are both writer-directors. We star in our own stories. Fiction and process. She “explores the personal and professional stakes of the creative process with acute self-reflexivity” (Fowler 2003, 108). Willing to be lost in the moment of the tango. A lesson.

She dances. She writes.



ONE STUDENT

The curtains to the classroom are open. The Teacher notices Daisy pass the window. She meets her at the door.

Daisy is dressed in jeans, singlet, sneakers. A buzz cut.

THE TEACHER Hey. (Beat.) I like the hair.

Daisy runs her hand over her head.

DAISY Thanks. It's nice not to wear all those wigs.

Daisy enters the classroom and throws her bag onto a desk.

DAISY It's just me then?

THE TEACHER Yep.

Daisy takes a seat at the front of the room.

Her first big meal in ages.

Time to let go.

Naughty.

Greasy.

Easy.

It might take a few minutes.

A BURGER

Daisy eats a burger. She lets the juice and sauce drip down her fingers. It's good.

She has a page in front of her. A scene. A drop of sauce falls onto the slugline. Daisy wipes it with the back of her hand.

She continues to eat the burger. Savouring. Each. Large. Bite.

Until there is nothing left.

EARLIER DRAFT:

MR WOOD: Is that a good idea?
(O.S.) It won't help your figure.

The Actress turns to around. Mr Wood stands in the shadows.

THE ACTRESS: I've been this size for years.

MR WOOD: It could all change.

The Actress moves closer to him.

THE ACTRESS: What happened Holl? We used to be friends.

She walks by him without looking back.

FRIENDSHIPS FADE

On one side of the sound stage a table has been set up. Pastries and donuts. A platter of fruit. Plenty of coffee.

Twenty Chorus Girls hover on the edges, not eating.

The Star picks up a pastry. She takes a large bite.

WOOD Naughty. Naughty.
(O.S.)

The Star turns around. Wood stands in the shadows.

THE STAR I know. It's so good.

WOOD There's no reason to let yourself go.

Wood holds onto a plate with a number of donuts and pastries piled high. The Star moves closer to him. She takes another big bite. Chews in his face.

WOOD You're all class.

THE STAR Always.

She looks down at his plate. Swallows.

THE STAR What about you? You're going for the record there?

WOOD I don't need to keep up appearances.

THE STAR Good for you.

She pops the last piece of pastry in her mouth.

WOOD Remember the camera adds at least ten pounds.

He walks away.



DANCING ON SCREEN

The Star and The Crooner dance through three films. The same dance routine, just the backgrounds and costumes change. They kiss when the dance is over.



I won't be
a shadow
of myself.
Seen through the eyes of another.
Cut in half, ripped apart.
Idolised for who I was
and will never be,
again.



I love her
on and off
the screen.

STUDENT INSTRUCTS TEACHER

The desks and chairs have been moved to the sides of the classroom.

The Teacher and Daisy are tapping in the centre of the room. Daisy instructs The Teacher. She shows her a couple of steps. The Teacher tries to copy her. She struggles with some of the moves.

Their feet don't make a sound.

THE TEACHER I think we need taps.

They laugh.

Their feet softly touch the floor.

Two women, **KIT** and **GINA** are frozen in the doorway. Kit is a young black woman. Gina is in her 30s, Italian and overweight. They are hesitant to move into the classroom.

The Teacher spots them.

THE TEACHER Hi!

GINA We must have the wrong place.

The Teacher and Daisy stop dancing.

KIT We're looking for the writing class.

THE TEACHER It's here. Come in.

The Teacher leads Gina and Kit into the classroom.

THE TEACHER I was just getting Daisy to show me a few tap moves. I'm terrible.

GINA It's a small class.

THE TEACHER There were others, but it wasn't quite right for them.

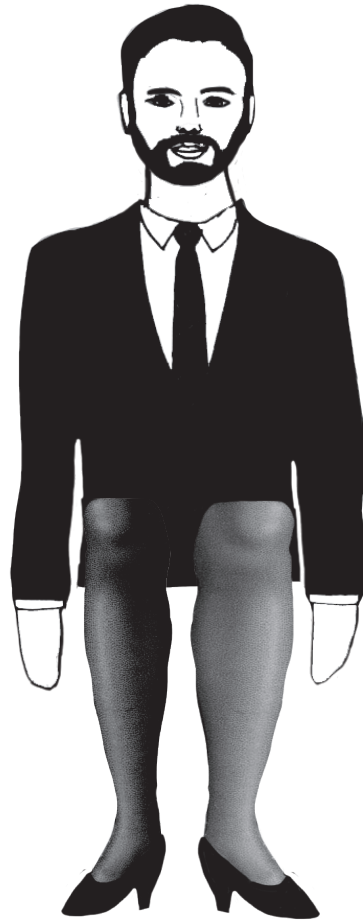
The Teacher drags two chairs into the centre of the room.

THE TEACHER Take a seat.

Daisy brings another couple of chairs to form a circle.

THE TEACHER Welcome.

The Teacher sits down, out of breath.



SUPPORTING OTHER CHARACTERS?

An animated advertisement.

The top half of a man is being supported by female legs.

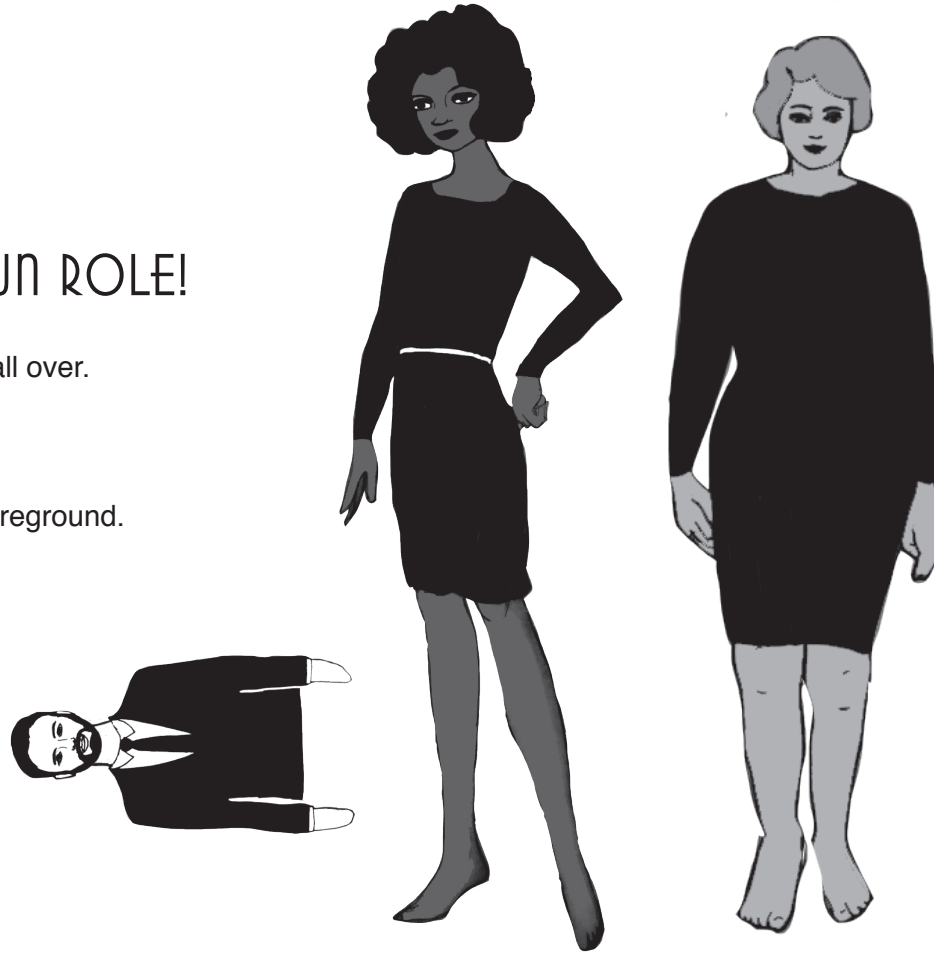
Title: Supporting other characters?

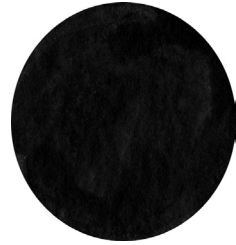
WRITE YOUR OWN ROLE!

The man's torso and face fall over.

Title: Write your own role

Two women dance in the foreground.





ACT 12:

WRITE WHAT YOU WANT TO BE



Who do I want to be in this story?

How can I take the lead?

I have been a supporting player

in these scenes

helping the heroes

on their journeys.

I take a stand behind the microphone

to sing as this female character.

I can be The Teacher in these scenes, helping the actresses to create a character they can play in a fictional story. They ‘write what you want to be’. It starts with a character first. Then, she can take the lead.

SHE TAKES THE LEAD

The scenes featured in ‘Write what you want to be’ are based on the ‘Feminine Superthemes’ in *The Woman in the Story: Writing Memorable Female Characters* by Helen Jacey (2010). As the only book devoted to writing female characters for the screen, Jacey shows how the writer’s desire is influenced by these core beliefs: “A Feminine Supertheme reflects your conscious and unconscious attitudes about women and gender and shapes all your narrative choices” (2010, 5). In the first edition of the guide there are four choices for the female protagonist: familiar, fighting, feel good and future (Jacey 2010). In the following scenes and musical number, ‘When I play the lead’, each actress uses a different Feminine Supertheme: familiar for Gina, fighting for Kit and feel good for Daisy. The core beliefs of each actress are brought to the role they wish to play on the screen. This act will weave between the scenes to show how the Superthemes have influenced their development.

My graduation film. *The Time It Takes for a Picture to Develop* (2004). Eight story snapshots in nine minutes. I write my own role. A challenge. A woman exposed. I become Erin. In the first scene, I sit on the toilet in my underwear. I move away from that moment and into another with my lover. I am trapped in the motions of a relationship with a drug user. Thin and thinner. The story ends and I am a director again. Now, in the editing suite, I no longer see the character. I just see me. A flawed body. I am unable to watch this film again.

A CHARACTER TO PLAY

The Teacher, Daisy, Kit and Gina are in a circle. They hold pens and notebooks.

THE TEACHER

I'd like to know
the type of character
you might like to play.
Who do you want to
be on the screen?

They put pen to paper.

Gina becomes a mother in this song, writing a part she knows that she can play. It's familiar and safe, showing a functional family relationship. She has just given birth to her first child. In the scene that follows, she is breastfeeding. A smaller moment that is not often seen on screen. She celebrates motherhood through this role. This is a 'Familiar Femininity' Supertheme. Jacey mentions:

"it's a bit like you are telling yourself, 'I'm not out to change the world, just saying it how it is.'" You like functional relationships, happy families, and stories with a heart of gold. Most of all, you want to tell a good story, with empathetic leading characters (2010, 6-7, original emphasis).

Through this role Gina shows her heart in a domestic space. An everyday story she can write for herself that can be shared with other women in a similar situation.

WHEN I PLAY A MOTHER

A cinema. The Teacher takes a seat in the first row.

In front of the screen, Gina takes centre stage. She holds onto an old-fashioned microphone.

Daisy and Kit share another microphone to the side of the stage. They begin to 'ooooh'.

Title on screen: A mother

| | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| GINA (singing) | I'll be a mother, A part. |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|

On screen, Gina cradles her baby.

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| GINA (singing) | The domestic space Shows her heart. She nurtures, She cares. An everyday story To share |
|--------------------------|--|

Gina turns to the screen.

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| GINA (singing) | When I play the lead. |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|

FEED

On screen.

Gina rocks in a chair, cradling her crying baby. She adjusts her top, so the baby can breastfeed.

I am 23 or 24 in acting school, chosen to play a mother in five different plays. Yes, I am slightly older than the other actresses. We are only a small group. The teacher pairs me with a man in his 50s who plays the father in two of these plays. With this extreme age difference, does this make me a trophy wife? He must be double my age and definitely not my type. Thank goodness we didn't have to kiss. I wonder if this is a sign of the roles to come. If only I could be cast in a role my own age.

I need to write it myself.

MOTHERHOOD

The Teacher sits opposite Gina.

THE TEACHER I like that we see the character breastfeeding on screen. A private moment made public.

GINA I want to celebrate motherhood through this story.

THE TEACHER Do you think there might be some conflict or controversy? It doesn't have to be much.

GINA I'm not sure I want to take it there. I like a simple story.

THE TEACHER Would she breastfeed in public?

GINA Yes.

THE TEACHER That could work.

Gina nods. She writes.

PROTEST

On screen.

Kit stands at a podium. The sounds of women cheering.

RUTH What gives them the right
(yelling) to decide what happens to
 our bodies?

She raises her fist in protest.

I am never cast as a fighter.
I am young. I don't know
any better. I wait. There is
nothing.

The Teacher is a fighter.
Can she be a nurturer
too? Fighting for the many
women who need to have
a voice. Teaching them how
to write their role.

The Star becomes a fighter
in the end.

As a feminist, I am a fighter
through my work. Even
when I haven't been able to
speak up in public.

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

The Teacher holds onto Kit's notebook.

THE TEACHER

It's great to see your character
fight for what she believes in.
What about her culture? How will
that influence her actions?

KIT

A black woman's perspective.

She takes the notebook from The Teacher. Writes.

Daisy wants to dance. She wants to feel good in a film. Jacey suggests, the 'Feel Good Femininity' Supertheme contains:

a great deal of emotional truth at the same time as they celebrate the more enjoyable aspects of women's lives [...] the equivalent to the male action-adventure. Call it gender escapism. These films take their rightful place alongside the comfort food and shopping binges (2010, 10).

While Daisy isn't exactly the type of woman who would fit within this idea of a woman, she does want to have it all. A dance on her own terms.

She adapts the artist role in *An American in Paris* (1951) for a female lead. She will be a female equivalent of Gene Kelly dancing on the screen. Dancing. Painting. Sipping coffee at a cafe. She might just do some shopping as well.

WHEN I PLAY AN ARTIST

Kit, Daisy and Gina sing together.

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| TOGETHER (singing) | When I play the lead I have a purpose, I will believe When I play the lead. |
|------------------------------|--|

Kit and Daisy switch positions.

Gina and Ruth sing 'oooohs'.

Title on screen: An artist

| | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| DAISY (singing) | I'll be a woman, A part |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|

On screen, Daisy dances. A painted set of a Paris street behind her.

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| DAISY (singing) | Played by a man In the past. She lives by her own terms Art and love. She has it all She knows what she wants |
|---------------------------|--|

Daisy faces the screen.

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| DAISY (singing) | When I play the lead. |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|

PAINT

Daisy stops in front of
a canvas on an easel.
She picks up a brush
and begins to paint.
And dance.

If I decide to adapt or remake a musical, it would be *A Chorus Line* (1985). There are so many ways that I could change the gaze. I would interview performers as they did back in the day when the original Broadway show is written. Documenting their experiences to transform into the screenplay. As they speak of their lives on stage, the camera would move into their personal lives, rather than staying with them on stage. The power of cinema to move into different spaces, not restricted by a single stage. I'd take the viewer backstage, the pressures of dancing for a chorus. Finally, I would change the choreographer to a woman and film the female bodies in a less sexualised way. "One singular sensation."

REMAKE

The Teacher holds Daisy's notebook.

THE TEACHER You've chosen the perfect film to showcase your dancing. It'll be interesting to see a woman replace a man in the role. It's become quite a trend. What will make this story different?

DAISY It could be in the way she dances.

THE TEACHER How would you write a dance routine on the page?

The Teacher looks at the camera. Shrugs.

**the close-up reveals
the character
they want to be**

WHEN I PLAY THE LEAD

Daisy, Kit and Gina sing together.

TOGETHER When I play the lead
(singing) I have a purpose,
I get what I need
When I play the lead.

They climb down the stairs to sit with The Teacher in the audience.
A close-up of each actress appears on the screen.

When the actresses write their own roles they get to choose who they will be in the story. They take control of their futures in the screen industry. When other actresses join them in the space, there are greater possibilities for diverse voices and experiences to be heard. Write what you want to be.

TAKING THE LEAD

Back in the classroom. Daisy, Gina and Kit sing directly to The Teacher. There are twenty more actresses in the space. Pens and notebooks on desks.

TOGETHER
(singing)

When I play the lead
I have a purpose
I will be free
When I play the lead.

When we play the leads.
We'll tell our own stories.
We'll get what we need.
When we play the leads
Our own films.

The Teacher claps.

THE TEACHER A great start. Now you have to write it.

They put pen to paper.

**Is the screenplay
an object
or a subject?**

A WOMAN IS A SCREENPLAY

They say I am beautiful.

Is this true?

I hear it from those who turn my pages. Scanning the surfaces.
A quick glance of judgment.

I hear it from those who've gone a bit deeper.
Beauty is more than skin deep.

I hear it from her, a creator.
I am more than my pages.

Words and pictures on display.

Words. Words. Words.

I hear them every day.

A PLASTIC FACE

The Star and The Crooner are naked in bed. Her face is still caked in make-up.

THE STAR Do I need to have some work done?

THE CROONER I think you need to wear less make-up to bed.

He touches her face. Wipes his thumb across her lip.

THE STAR This is my face.

THE CROONER I do like your face.

She leans back on her pillow.

A moment of silence.

**Every morning,
she leaves
a part of her face
on the pillow.**

THE STAR They're getting rid of me.

THE CROONER I know.

The Star turns to face him again.

THE STAR How long have you known?

THE CROONER They sent me a script about a week ago. All hush, hush. I thought it was strange. I didn't see a part for you. We're a team.

He touches her arm.

THE STAR I guess you'll be paired with someone young and beautiful.

THE CROONER The script is ridiculous. I'd much rather be with you.

THE STAR Don't give it up for me.

Am I invisible now?

THE CROONER I don't want to do it without you.

No need to keep up appearances.

THE STAR I'll be watching from the sidelines.

They sink into the bed.

It reminds me of 'Two Ladies'
 from *Cabaret* (1976):
 "I'm the only man, yah".
 Apparently,
 they all like it.

Here it feels wrong.
 This is not a cabaret.

I need to work on the lyrics,
 weave this song
 between his scenes
 with The Star and The Teacher.

This could imply that he is having an affair.

TWO GIRLS FOR EVERY MAN

The Star is on the edge of a sound stage. This is her perspective.

Five circular steps leading to a round stage.

The Crooner stands in the centre of the stage.
 A Chorus Girl on each arm.

They take a step down the stage.

THE CROONER Two girls
 (singing) for every man.

They sway together.

WHEN HE PLAYS THE LEAD

A cosy cafe. The Teacher and The Crooner drink coffee. Papers are piled on the table.

THE TEACHER I can't believe this script got through.

THE CROONER I don't know how to make this situation better. I signed the contract. I took this role on without her.

THE TEACHER You can change it from the inside. They'll listen to you.

THE CROONER I don't know. Is there even a life for the musical anymore?

THE TEACHER I hope so.

THE CROONER I should go back to singing.

THE TEACHER It would be a shame for you to leave the industry.

THE CROONER I don't like being there without her. I thought this class would be about her experience. It's for me too. I need to write a film for us.

The Teacher touches his hand.

The flash of a camera. She lets go of his hand and looks around.

CAUGHT IN THE ACT

The Teacher holds a tabloid magazine. The cover features The Teacher and The Crooner holding hands in the cafe.

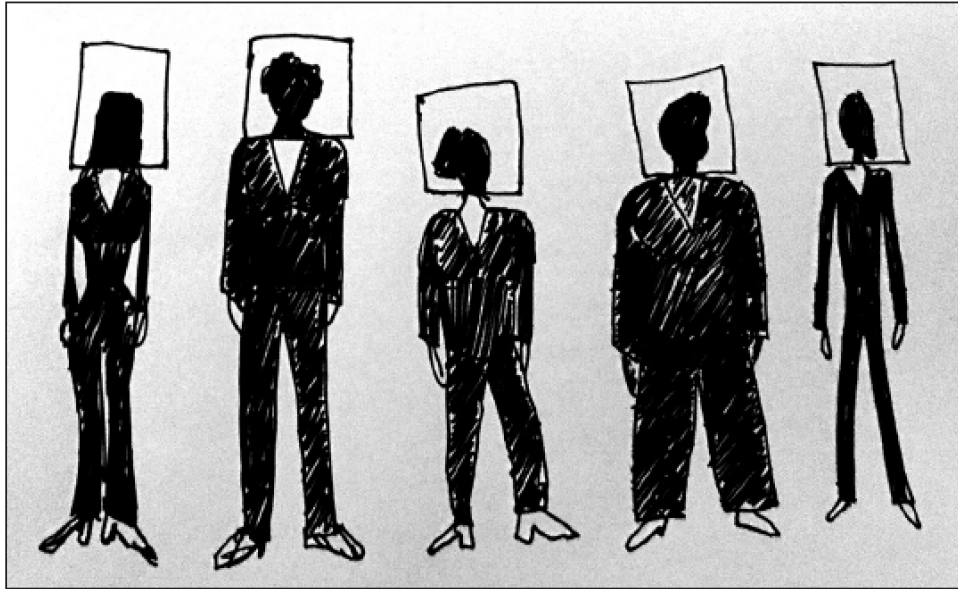
The headline: Caught in the act.

FAME

The Teacher storms through the studio. She passes a line up of sixteen Chorus Girls. They clap.

POLISH

In the dressing room
The Star vigorously
scratches the polish off
her thumb nail.



TRY TO SEE

The thirty **ACTRESSES** are seated on chairs that are staggered across the stage. Their bodies vary in shape, size and colour.

ACTRESSES
(singing)

This is my dance
And it's for you.
Try to understand it.
Try to have some clue.
This is my dance.

This is my dance
And it's for me.
Try to see the purpose.
Try to find the key.

This is my dance.

On and on it goes.
On and on it goes.

They get off their chairs and move them across the space. Each actress will perform their own dance.

WHEN I LOOK BACK ON MY LIFE

The Teacher and The Crooner sit on the desk.

THE CROONER You know, it could be time
to tell your own story.

THE TEACHER To you?

THE CROONER Why not? (Beat.) What's
the first thing that you see?

She pauses for a moment.

THE TEACHER What do I see when I look
back on my life?

(singing) When I look back on my life.
The history, hidden for a while.
In the shadow of a dream.
Faces, places, hidden for a while.
When I look back on my life.

As the song finishes, they are transported to...

This is my story too...



A LIFE ON SCREEN

A darkened cinema.

The Teacher and The Crooner sit together in the auditorium. The Crooner holds onto a box of popcorn. The Teacher sips her soda.

They wait to watch her life unfold upon the screen.

A ballet. A dream sequence. A film within a film. A Hollywood musical tradition. When Gene Kelly sings, 'Gotta Dance', the audience is invited into another story. This film within a film replicates a similar theme that is present in *Singin' in the Rain* (1952): the need for a man to perform.

Just as the fictional Don Lockwood knocks on door after door to flaunt his talents, so too does The Teacher attempt to audition for the part. Only, they look her up and down before she has a chance to show her skills (just like Daisy in her auditions). At least Don 'gotta dance'.

She gives herself agency to be heard.

I COULD BE...

A stage is set up with a hand drawn wall featuring three doors.

A lit up arrow sign: **AGENTS THIS WAY!**

The Teacher strides onto the stage. She is confident as she knocks on the first door.

AGENT 1 takes a peek out the door. His head moves up and down her body.

THE TEACHER I could be the one you need.
(singing)

Her voice is beautiful and booming, but Agent 1 shakes his head.

The Teacher bounces to the next door. A fake smile. She knocks.

AGENT 2 opens the door slightly. His head moves up and down her body.

THE TEACHER I could be...
(singing)

Agent 2 cuts her off with a head shake.

The Teacher shakes off the rejection. She ventures to the next door. The Teacher knocks loudly.

AGENT 3 sticks his head out of the door. He moves his head up and down her body. He shakes his head as she opens her mouth.

Her head is down now. A moment. Then...

THE TEACHER I'll just have to make it on my own!
(singing)

The Teacher runs off the stage.

REJECTION

Just a single spotlight on The Teacher. A number 34 on her chest.

Singing voices in the darkness. Harsh words are thrown. Fast.

The Teacher is emotionless.

VOICE 1 She's not very pretty, is she?
(O.S. singing)

VOICE 2 She would need to lose a lot of weight.
(O.S. singing)

VOICE 3 Are you sure she's reading for the right part?
(O.S. singing)

VOICE 4 She's not very sexy, is she?
(O.S. singing)

VOICE 5 Now there will be a nude scene.
(O.S. singing) Very tasteful. Full frontal.
Only above the waist.

VOICE 6 Maybe with the right lighting.

VOICE 7 Maybe a minor part.

VOICES I know! She could play the chubby best friend.
(O.S. singing)

an actor's life
many rejections

no words
about her performance

The Teacher nods.

ACCEPTANCE

**She used to play
the same old roles:**

No challenge

No risk

No excitement.

Nothing new.

On screen, a quick montage of her
bit parts in films.

- Two best friends.
- A dying patient.
- A cereal commercial.
- A scream into the camera.

**She does take it personally,
these personal attacks.**

MORE REJECTION

Just a single spotlight on The Teacher. A number 56 on her chest.

Singing voices in the darkness. Overlapping. Harsh. Fast.

The Teacher stays composed. Fists clenched, nails digging in.

VOICE 1 She's not beautiful, is she?
(O.S. singing)

VOICE 2 How can she play that part?
(O.S. singing)

VOICE 3 Would men really want to be with her?
(O.S. singing)

VOICE 4 Now there will be a love scene. Very artsy. Lots of close-ups and quick cuts.
(O.S. singing)

VOICE 5 We're looking for a younger woman.
(O.S. singing)

VOICE 6 I wonder how she got this far.
(O.S. singing)

VOICE 7 Maybe we can hide her in the background. An extra.
(O.S. singing)

VOICE 8 Maybe with a lot more make-up.
(O.S. singing)

VOICES I know! She could play the lead's mother in that one scene. Then she dies.
(O.S. singing)

The spotlight goes out. The Teacher is in the dark.

DROWNING

In her own room she cries a river.

**I leave space
for her to cry.**

just waiting for my life to happen

WAITING...

A few tables and chairs in a dark space.

MEN and **WOMEN** sit and wait.

The Teacher has a tray of drinks in one hand. She spins around the space. Keeps the tray steady. Somehow.

The Teacher places a martini in front of The Star who takes a sip.

THE TEACHER I know you.

The Star nods. Another sip.

The Teacher backs away slowly. Step. Step. Step. Until she falls back onto a table. The tray falls into **DRUNK MAN'S** lap.



WRITING

At a tiny desk, The Teacher presses the keys of a typewriter.

Tap. Tap. Tap. Tap. Tap.

She rips the page out.

Places it on a pile of papers and taps it on the desk.

THE TEACHER Yes!
(singing)

The Teacher spins around on her chair, holding the papers in the air.

THE GIRL WILL NEVER BE MAINSTREAM

Back to the cinema. The Teacher slurps the last bit of soda.
Slurp. Slurp.

THE CROONER You started to write?

THE TEACHER Roles for myself first. Short films.
Then I worked with other people.

THE CROONER I'd like to see some of your work.

THE TEACHER It's not very good.

THE CROONER I doubt that.

THE TEACHER Too experimental. You're too
mainstream.

THE CROONER I'd like to be challenged.

THE TEACHER Moving on...

Pause.

THE CROONER What about love?

THE TEACHER Love?

THE CROONER You haven't mentioned anything
about your personal life.

THE TEACHER It's not an important part of the story.

THE CROONER Your audience wants to know.

They look around. Empty chairs.

THE TEACHER You wouldn't really call it love...

Their heads snap to watch the screen again.

**If this scene is meant to be a fantasy,
a fictionalisation of her real life experiences,
then certain aspects need to be stylised.**

**Sailors in waiting.
They are *On The Town*.**

SAILORS IN WAITING (OR A WALTZ WITH MANY MEN)

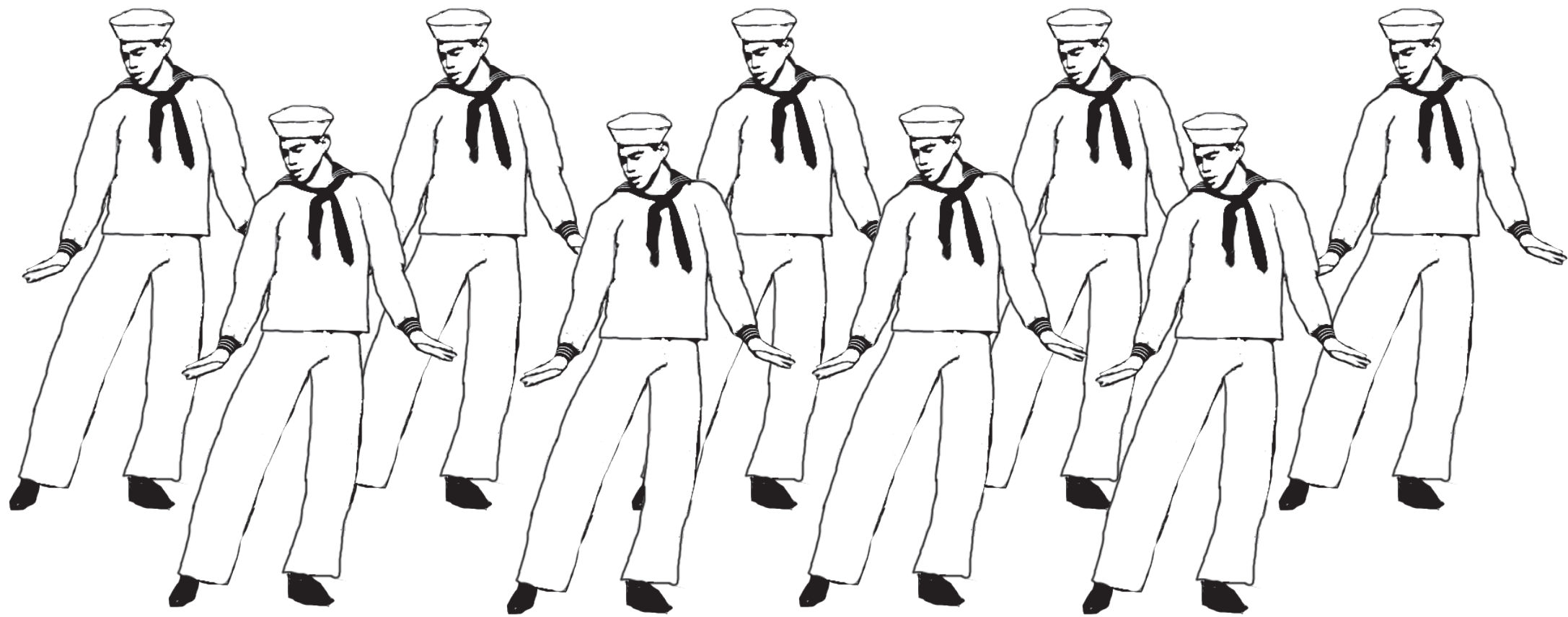
A large dance hall. A band plays, The Crooners,
positioned on a stage at one end of the room.

A sea of **SAILORS** crowd the dance hall. A few
WOMEN, in sailor suits, are scattered between
them.

Framed in the doorway to the side of the room,
The Teacher stands tall.

Waits.

For her moment to strike.



There was a time in her life when she did sleep with many men.

(a few girls.)

If they were to come together they would be like sailors
waiting to score after a long trip at sea.
David Bowie's *Life on Mars*, 'Sailors fighting in the dance hall'
Could they be fighting over her?
Would this be her fantasy?

No, she is the one to leave them
after the act is done.

The music swells.

Her entrance. The Teacher weaves through the many sailors on the dance floor.
She can have her pick.

She chooses **SAILOR 1**. They move into a waltz position.

THE TEACHER If I could call you sweetheart
(singing)

Their pelvises touch.

THE TEACHER And then I'd be gone.
(singing)

The Teacher lets go of Sailor 1. She moves onto **SAILOR 2**. The same action occurs: a couple of dance steps and a pelvis thrust.

THE TEACHER If I could call you sweetheart
(singing) And then I'd be gone.

She frees herself from Sailor 2.

SAILOR 3 now has The Teacher in his arms. They waltz for a moment before she sings.

THE TEACHER Better than
(singing) You call me sweetheart
And then you're gone

Sailor 3 pushes her away. He leaves her alone on the dance floor. The Teacher stands still for a moment in the middle of the room.

THE TEACHER I'd rather be somewhere.
(singing) Anywhere.
Alone.

There is a line from a Kate Bush song,
‘Don’t want your bull shit, yeah,
just want your sexuality.’
Her *Song of Solomon* reminds me of a time
when I didn’t want the complications
of a steady relationship.

Single and sexual.

The Teacher turns to face **SAILOR 4**, a woman. They move into a waltz position.

THE TEACHER If I could call you sweetheart
(singing)

Their pelvises touch.

THE TEACHER And then I’d be gone.
(singing)

The Teacher lets go of Sailor 4 and crashes into **SAILOR 5**. The same action occurs: a couple of dance steps and a pelvis thrust.

THE TEACHER If I could call you sweetheart
(singing) And then I’d be gone.

She frees herself from Sailor 5.

SAILOR 6, a woman, now has The Teacher in her arms. They waltz for a moment across the room.

THE TEACHER Better than
(singing) You call me sweetheart
And then you’re gone.

Sailor 6 pushes her away. All the sailors leave the dance hall. The Teacher stands still for a moment, out of breath, in the middle of the room. The music stops.

THE TEACHER I’d rather be somewhere.
(singing) Anywhere.
Alone.

She waltzes by herself for a couple of counts.

The Crooner appears behind The Teacher. He turns her around. She spins. Then a dip. A quick kiss. The Teacher is dizzy.

A FICTIONAL LIFE?

The screen is dark. The Crooner turns to The Teacher.

THE TEACHER I made that bit up.

THE CROONER A fantasy?

She laughs.

THE TEACHER I thought you might like to be in the story.

THE CROONER How much of this film is a fiction?

THE TEACHER Certain moments. Different scenes. Similar feelings.
Everything's heightened on screen.

The Crooner is disappointed.

The Teacher turns to face the camera.

THE TEACHER We can choose how our lives will be seen.
(to camera)

Is it fiction or fact?



THE FRAGMENTARY NATURE OF MEMORY

My memories are fragmented. My mind is unclear. Faded. Perhaps it is a feeling. A flash of a memory. Then it's gone. Do I fill in these details? Do I make the memory a fiction?

I interpret the past. Or, as Obrst suggests, "I use all sorts of fragments of the past to examine the present" (cited in Millard 2013, 4). Gaps in the retelling. Once a fact, now a fiction. Steiner and Yang claim, "the very process of looking back over time must automatically result in distortions of reality" (2004, 16). I am distorted in the mirror. Shattered.

It's like a black and white flashback. Out of focus. The most dramatic moments are captured on the screen. She looks into the distance. A swell of sentimental music as the present transitions to the past. There in the shadows of the mind a memory is recollected. Made real for the audience.

A GOODBYE

Back in the classroom.

The Teacher and The Crooner are near the doorway.

THE CROONER Are you ready for tomorrow?

THE TEACHER I think so.

THE CROONER See you then.

He kisses her cheek on his way out the door.

The Teacher touches the spot he kissed.

THE TEACHER I could never be your
(singing) One in a million girl
I could never be the face you see
In your dreams.
I could never be...

The song cuts abruptly. The Teacher looks at the camera.

THE TEACHER No. This is not a story about
(to camera) unrequited love.

She grabs her bag from the front of the room.

THE TEACHER Maybe if life was a musical.

A ding. An idea is forming.

THE TEACHER If life was a musical.

She rushes out of the classroom.

I want to make this scene longer to have more yes and no response for The Teacher to sing. It would be like the Björk's music video for *It's Oh So Quiet* (1995) directed by Spike Jonze. The scene ends with The Teacher floating above the street of dancing people. This is her moment of revelation. She has now told her story.

The final lyrics:

And this is my song
in a musical
And I would sing it
out to the world

And this is my song
you can't erase it
from my story
when life is a musical

IF LIFE WAS A MUSICAL

The Teacher leaps onto the cobble stone street.

THE TEACHER (singing) If life was a musical
I could sway to my own secret symphony.
I would burst into song,
A touching melody.

She spins around a lamp post like Gene Kelly in *Singin' in the Rain*.

The Teacher abruptly stops in her tracks.

THE TEACHER (singing) No, life is not a musical
We are not playing a part
In some unrealistic show
No, life is not a musical

Pause.

THE TEACHER But...

A group of **WOMEN** enter the frame from the left and right. They start dancing behind The Teacher. She spins around and smiles.

THE TEACHER (singing) If life was a musical
I could sing and dance all day
The music would never go away
So many roles for me to play
Only if life was a musical.

The group of Women move out of the frame. The Teacher is left alone.

THE TEACHER (singing) No, life is not a musical.
But, it could be so musical.

She walks down the street with a bounce in her step.

SINGIN' IN THE RAIN (1952)

I could speak about this iconic scene, Gene Kelly dancin' and singin' in the street, but I want to focus on Lina Lamont for a bit. I'd like to play her, here:

So, you want to cast me out. Make me stay silent. Well I ain't gonna go down that way. Lina Lamont is here to stay. What's wrong with they way I talk? It's my voice. I like it. I ain't gonna stay silent.

It's either washed-up star or the doe-eyed new girl. Isn't it?

She must be beautiful.

Now, back to singin' and dancin' on the cobble-stoned street...

LA LA LAND (2016)

She nails the audition. Coffee stained shirt under her blue jacket. During an emotional moment she is rudely interrupted. Now, she is out of the moment. Out of the running.

I know what it's like to stand in front of a faceless panel, judging my performance. My appearance. At times, I feel like they don't know who they want to play the part.

Then three consecutive shots, against different coloured walls, similar shot sizes of Mia auditioning for terrible roles. A callback for a television show that's "a cross between *The O.C.* and *Dangerous Minds*". A dangerous mix. She focuses on the tapping fingers on the mobile phone, the movement of papers. And in her own time she says only one line before she is rudely interrupted.

It's not worth auditioning.

She writes her own role. A one-woman show that few people see.

Then, there is that audition for a film still in progress. A performer's dream. Tell a story.

DRESS CIRCLE CLOSED



A SPOTLIGHT ON HIM

The Teacher hurries onto the set. Only one spotlight shines in the dark.

She has made it halfway across the floor when a loud wolf whistle penetrates the silence. She halts.

The Teacher grabs the spotlight and turns it away from her.

Wood, once in the shadows, is exposed. He slouches in his director's chair. He cowers from the light.

She stares at him for a moment.

The light goes off.

**He is just
a voice
in the dark
a shadow
of a man**

EVERY DAY

Slowly, The Star removes her make-up with a cloth. Her reflection is seen from behind. Then through the mirror. Back and forth.

THE STAR
(singing)

Every day,
I look in the mirror,
Put on my make-up.
Dress for you.
Perform for you.

What is it you want from me?
What have I got left?
This is just an act of pretending.

Every day,
I become a little less,
Less than myself,
Less for you.

What is it you want from me?
What more can I give?
This is just an act of pretending.

Every day,
I look in the mirror,
An aging face,
An ageless screen.

What is it you want from me?
What more can I give?
What is it you want from me?
What have I got left?
This is just an act of pretending.

When The Star turns away from the mirror, she faces The Crooner and The Teacher.

this is her moment

This would be the ideal situation for The Teacher. She takes 'Write Your Own Role' to the masses. The Teacher offers an alternative to the screenwriting gurus in the industry. Take that Robert McKee and Syd Field!

THE SCREENWRITING GURU

The Teacher makes her way to the centre of the stage. A cinema full of women and a few men. They applaud. She waits for them to be quiet.

THE TEACHER Thank you for coming.

She smiles, adjusting her notes on the podium.

THE TEACHER I notice there's some men here too.

The audience laughs.

THE TEACHER I'm sure it will work for you.

The Teacher pauses for a brief moment. Takes a deep breath in. She looks down at her notes.

THE TEACHER So, you want to write your own role.
It should be easy. You know who you are.
Don't you?

A few murmurs from the crowd.

THE TEACHER No doubt you have seen many parts you would like to play.

A few nods. A couple of head shakes. Lots of smiles.

The Teacher sees a familiar face in the audience. Daisy. She has the biggest smile of all.

RED CARPET ROYALTY

A red carpet running to an art deco cinema. Lights are pointed to the stars. Cameras flash. Journalists line the edge of the carpet.

The Star joins **REPORTER 1**.

REPORTER 1 We were shocked to hear this would your final film. And now it's ready to be screened. (beat) What have you been up to these past few months?

THE STAR I'm not retired yet.

REPORTER 1 That's exciting. A starring role in another studio?

THE STAR My own production.

REPORTER 1 I never pictured you behind the scenes.

THE STAR So many good actresses wait for the parts to be written. Too often. They're not there.

REPORTER 1 Does this mean you've written something for yourself?

THE STAR We'll see.

The Star smiles and moves away. She is joined by The Crooner. They pose for a few shots. Cameras flash.

As The Star moves down the line...

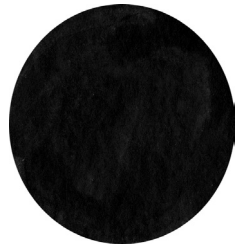
FEMALE REPORTER Who are you wearing?
(O.S.)

The Star doesn't answer.

#askhermore
on the red carpet

try not to focus
on the dress
the jewels
the hair

#askhermore
about her achievements
the roles she has played
the work she has made



ACT 13:
CHALLENGE THE CURRENT
SCREEN CULTURE



Imagine,

It is the near future.

You view so many

diverse stories

across a number of different screens.

You make a choice

to watch a story about two women.

Sit back. Relax. And enjoy.

THE #ASKHERMORE CAMPAIGN

As a social media movement, media advocacy group, The Representation Project launches the ‘#AskHerMore’ campaign in 2014 to encourage “people to call out sexist reporting and suggest ways to re-focus on women’s achievements” (The Representation Project , n.d.). In the previous scene when The Star finishes discussing her new role in the industry, a female reporter asks, “who are you wearing?” as she moves down the red carpet. This question about a celebrity’s appearance at an opening night event or awards ceremony is part of the red carpet culture for women. But, as Reese Witherspoon announces at the 2015 Oscars red carpet, “We’re more than just our dresses” (cited in Siebel Newsom 2015). Likewise, Amy Poehler who hosts The Golden Globes in the same year asks for better questions in her Twitter message:

**On the red carpet
in the previous scene
The Star is more than
the designer dress
she wears**

The #RedCarpet is open and we want the media to #AskHerMore! Let’s go beyond ‘who you are wearing?’ and ask better questions! #GoldenGlobes (cited in Totterman 2015, 74).

While it is worth dressing up for the red carpet and celebrating the designers who make their gowns, this kind of question about appearance is specifically posed to women at these events. It has a sexist tone. During her red carpet interview with E! at the Screen Actors Guild Awards in 2014 Cate Blanchett calls out the cameraman when he slowly tilts the camera down her body, “Do you do that to the guys?” (cited in Totterman 2015, 76). This kind of objectification is directed at women.

Just as the movement has gained traction in the industry with more women discussing their achievements at these events, it gives actresses the power to be “more than mere passive victims of the media’s obsession with image” (Totterman 2015, 77). When The Star chooses to ignore this question on the red carpet, she makes a decision to only discuss the work not her image.

I have been framed before:

**naked
a leotard dangling
from tiny ankles**

**the sound of rustling
outside**

**a man stands
staring through
a gap
in the toilet wall**

ME TOO

THE STAR Me too.

THE TEACHER Me too.

DAISY Me too.

KIT Me too.

The female characters from *One in a Million Girl* speak up. This is their movement too. I imagine, in some way, these actresses have encountered some form of sexual harassment in the industry. There are subtle hints in some of the scenes that suggests Wood is the perpetrator, but I didn't want to make this too obvious in the story.

In 2006 Tarana Burke starts the 'Me Too' movement, a space for survivors of sexual violence to heal (me too. n.d.). Ten years later the phrase is used "as a slogan of the anti-sexual harassment movement" (Chicago Tribune, 2019). The #MeToo causes a flood of responses from women who have been sexually harassed within and outside of the screen industry. 'Silence Breakers become Time Magazine's Person of Year in 2017.

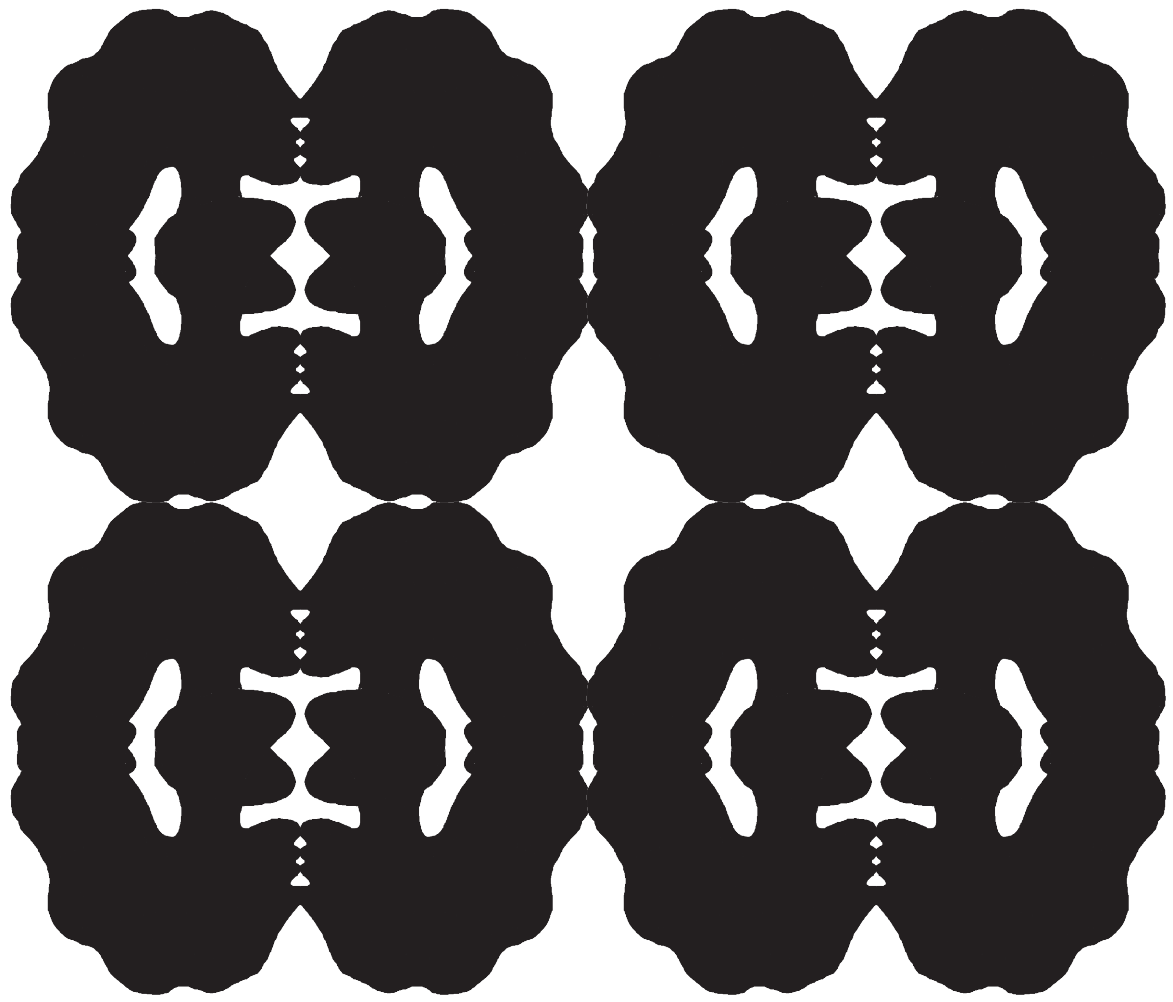
LOUISE Me too.

**In the near future,
could I direct
this film?**

THERE IS MOVEMENT

This final fragment of dissertation. During this PhD, from beginning to end, I notice a shift. The industry is changing. Screen Australia has 'Gender Matters', South Australian Film Corporation with 'Gender Agenda' and 'Delivering Diversity' and 'Brilliant Women' at Film Victoria. Sexist practices called out. More stories for and about women. I need to move too...

moving back into the industry.



SHE DIRECTS A FILM

In front of huge double doors, The Star and The Teacher pause for a moment.

THE STAR All those films. I've never been directed by a woman.

THE TEACHER That doesn't surprise me.

THE STAR What if I don't know what to do.

The Teacher touches her arm to reassure her.

THE TEACHER As soon as you get on that set. You'll know.

They push against the double doors that swing into...

HER SET

The Teacher and The Star swiftly move onto the set. It is bright and white.

The Teacher joins the large group of diverse **ACTRESSES**. They form a circle.

The **CREW** are busy setting up.

The Star takes her place in the director's chair.

HER FILM

From above:

A kaleidoscope of diverse actresses in a circle. It is asymmetrical and uneven as they move into a number of positions.

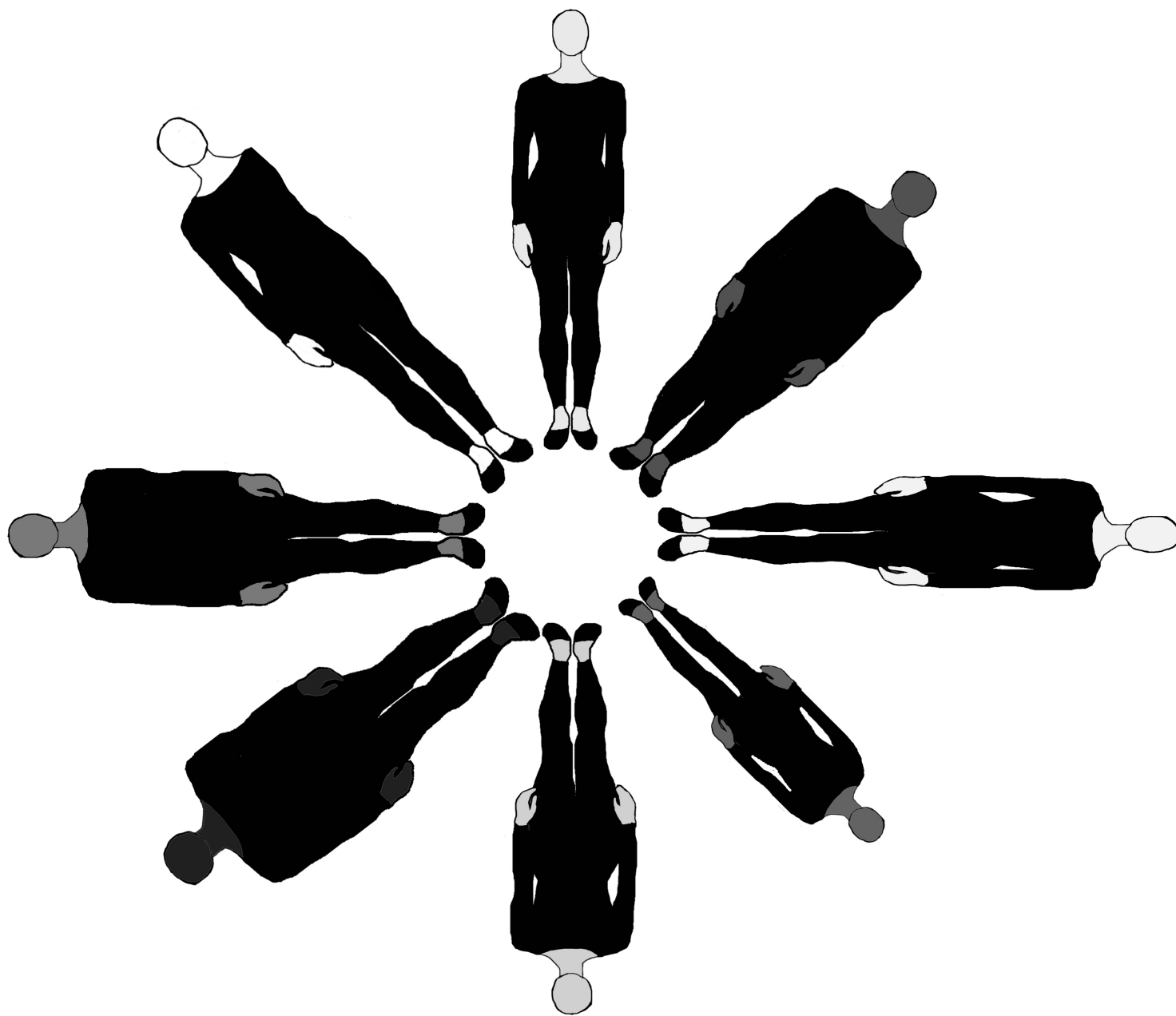
Their timing is perfect. They all look very different.

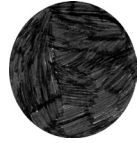
ACTRESSES
(singing)

We want to share
The screen with you
One in a million girls.

They form another pattern on the screen.

I'm not sure they need to be
one in a million girls.
They are not one,
but many.
Could there be a different song
used here?
They share the screen
with other women,
with you as the audience.
Maybe the final line could be:
"The millions of women and girls".





CONCLUSION

THIS STORY

I have told this story in development by choosing a practice-led research project. It is, of course, two stories, braided: fiction and process.

The scenes of the proposed feminist musical, *One in a Million Girl* were developed during this PhD. The reflexivity of the musical genre was highlighted in the scenes, allowing the characters to put on a show and the reader to see how the story was constructed.

Through its narrative I explored how two actresses, The Star and The Teacher, needed to change their positions in the industry. I also featured other female characters in the construction of the story. As an example of early stage script development, the scenes were presented as drafts.

The Star stripped away a made-up identity as she remembered her history as an actress in the industry. When she was able to shed the image that had been projected across her forty-something years, she could make her own moving picture as a director.

I recognise at the end of this project that The Star's story still needs further development. Rather than fleeting moments in cinema, I would like some of the scenes, such as 'Femme Fatale', to be extended or repeated. The repetition of a performance across multiple takes would show a sense of the labour she performs as an actress, giving the film even greater reflexivity. The violent snap of the clapperboard and continuity of her performed actions across the various takes would add to the pressure and anxiety of keeping up appearances. I am interested to see how she might perform in Take 3 *and* 24. The Star's relationship with The Crooner also needs further development as her moments with him off the screen are the only times when she is not pretending or playing a part, even if she does wear make-up to bed.

The Teacher's story is still in development. At the end of this research project, the strongest parts of her story include the earlier scenes with the chorus girls, as she empowered Daisy to tell her story, and the moment when she revealed her own. These sections of the proposed film conveyed my intention to show a woman's agency through the act of writing her own role. With a bit more work, the musical number, 'If life was a musical' could be as revelatory as The Star's song, 'Every day'.

The section, 'Write what you want to be' has the potential to convey a woman's agency in the stories that The Teacher tells. While there are anecdotal scenes presented in 'When I play the lead' and 'Try to see' sequences and the accompanying dissertation about the process, I believe that telling stories about a diverse group of women in these parts of The Teacher's story requires my collaboration and improvisation with real actresses. The purpose of the classes depicted in the story was for women to write these roles for themselves. As a result I only revealed a snapshot of the types of stories that can be told in these moments of the screenplay, and later the film.

In my process story, I reflected on my history of cinema as a female spectator and maker, both highlighting and interrogating the images of women found there. By including my iterative and reflexive moments of writing alongside the scenes, I revealed my subjectivity and agency to write myself into the picture. Like the characters in *One in a Million Girl*, I learnt how to write my own role. This knowledge can be used when I teach screenwriting in the future, giving agency to those voices who have not been heard before.

I extended my practice when I looked for alternatives to conventional screenwriting models. By discarding the recommended software and formatting of a script, I designed each page in landscape layout to replicate the screen of a film. With image, design and parallel texts, I visually displayed the characteristics of the musical genre, including chorus lines and kaleidoscopic dance sequences. These extra elements showed greater possibilities for the proposed screen work.

By moving beyond the story's structure to be in the moment of each scene, I could improvise each character's emotion and lived experience. Bringing certain characters out of the scenes, also provided opportunity to explore the alternative way the story had been constructed. These improvisations allowed me to move between the fiction and process to justify my decisions.

The screenplay was treated as a subject, not an object. The fictocritical screenplay as a new form is the strength of this PhD. It provided me with scope as a writer-director to experiment, play and develop a screen story in a completely different way. As a record of the early stages of a screen story, the extra-narrative texts, both written and visual, presented elements of how the scenes were constructed. With few opportunities to explore the screenwriter's process alongside the scenes, this type of document can be a valuable resource for those interested in extending their practice and experimenting with their own methods of script development. This methodology of screenwriting that privileges the process as much as the product makes the screenwriter visible in the work. For future projects, I would work with the unique aesthetics, content and themes of the proposed screen story in whatever form that might take.

As I come to the end of this story about process, I understand that there are limitations to an individualised script development. While there is a freedom to create in a space with no restrictions, and for the purposes of my practice-led research it worked to display my personal vision and aesthetic as a female filmmaker, I now welcome the opportunity to work with collaborators as *One in a Million Girl* ventures from PhD into industry.

OUR CINEMA

The cinema is full of actresses. The Star, The Teacher and The Crooner are in the third row.

ACTRESS 1
(singing)

This is my
This is mine
My cinema.

ACTRESS 2
(singing)

This is my
This is mine
My cinema.

ACTRESS 3
(singing)


This is my
This is mine
My cinema.

ACTRESS 4
(singing)

This is ours
This is ours
Our cinema.

ACTRESS 5
(singing)

This ours
This is ours
Our cinema.



The Teacher's voice from the cinema speakers:

THE TEACHER Who will
(O.S. singing) she be?

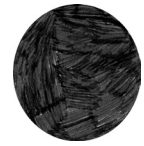
ACTRESS 1 Me.

ACTRESS 2 Me.

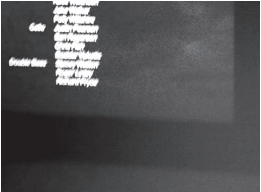
ACTRESS 3 Me.

The Teacher and The Actress turn to face the camera. They smile.

You.



CLOSING CREDITS



**A reference list
is like
the rolling credits
at the end of a film.**

**I cite those
who play a part
in the work.**

REFERENCES

42nd Street, 1993, film, Warner Brothers, USA

Altman, R 1987, *The American Film Musical*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington

Ames, C 1997, *Movies About the Movies: Hollywood Reflected*, University of Kentucky Press, Lexington

American in Paris, An, 1951, film, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, USA

Arbuthnot, L & Seneca, G 2002, 'Pre-text and Text in Gentlemen Prefer Blondes', S Cohan (ed.) *Hollywood Musicals: The Film Reader*, Routledge, London, pp. 71-85

Aronson, L 2010, *The 21st Century Screenplay: A comprehensive Guide to Writing Tomorrow's Films*, Silman-James Press, Los Angeles

Baker, D 2013, 'Scriptwriting as creative writing research: a preface', *TEXT: Journal of writing and writing courses*, special issue 19: 'Scriptwriting as Creative Writing Research' pp. 1-8 <<http://www.textjournal.com.au/speciss/issue19/content.htm>>

Baker, D, Batty, C, Beattie, D and Davis, S 2015, 'Scriptwriting as a research practice: Expanding the field', *TEXT: Journal of writing and writing courses*, Special Issue 29: 'Scriptwriting as Creative Writing Research II', pp. 1-11 <<http://www.textjournal.com.au/speciss/issue29/content.htm>>

Barthes, R 1975 *The Pleasure of the Text*, R Miller (trans.) Hill and Wang, New York

Bartlett, A 1994, *Jamming the machinery: Écriture Féminine and the Practice of Contemporary Women Writers in Australia*, PhD Thesis, James Cook University, Townsville

Batty, C 2013, 'Writing the Screenplay', *A Companion to Creative Writing*, G Harper (ed.), John Wiley & Sons, West Sussex, pp. 98-114

Batty, C & Berry, M 2016, 'Constellations and connections: the playful space of the creative practice research degree', *Journal of Media Practice*, vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 181-194

Batty, C, Lee, S-JS, Sawtell, L, Sculley, S & Taylor, S 2015, 'Rewriting, remaking and rediscovering screenwriting practice: When the screenwriter becomes practitioner-researcher', E Bacon, D Hecq and A Walker (ed.), *Writing the ghost train: Rewriting, remaking, rediscovering*, Australasian Association of Writing Programs, pp. 1-10

Batty, C, Sawtell, L & Taylor, S 2016, 'Thinking through the screenplay: The academy as a site for research-based script development', *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice*, vol. 9, no. 1-2, pp. 149-162

Batty, C, Taylor, S, Sawtell, L & Conon, B 2017, 'Script development: defining the field', *Journal of Screenwriting*, vol. 8, no. 3, pp. 225-247

Beaches, 1988, film, Touchstone Pictures, USA

Benezet, D 2014, *The Cinema of Agnes Varda: Resistance and Eclecticism*, Wallflower Press, New York

Berger, J 1972, *Ways of Seeing*, Penguin Books, London

Biro, Y & Portuges, C 1997, 'Caryatids of Time: Temporality in the Cinema of Agnes Varda', *Performing Arts Journal*, vol. 19, no. 3, pp. 1-10

Bizzaca, C 2015, 'Gender Matters', 6 December, viewed 28 January 2016, <<https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/sa/screen-news/2015/12-06-gender-matters>>

Bizzaca, C. 2017, 'Rolf de Heer on a changing industry', *The Screen Blog*, viewed 16 February 2017 <http://thescreenblog.com/2017/02/15/rolf-de-heer-on-a-changing-industry/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=rolf-de-heer&utm_medium=feb-15>

Bloore, P 2013, *The Screenplay Business: Managing Creativity and Script Development in the Film Industry*, Routledge, London

Bolland, E 2018, 'The Iris opens/The Iris closes: Le Silence #2 Scene Notes 1-13', *Journal of Adaptation in Film and Performance*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 203-216

Bolton, L 2011, *Film and Female Consciousness: Irigaray, Cinema and Thinking Women*, Palgrave Macmillan, London

Bowie, D 1971, *Life on Mars*, RCA Records, London

Brabazon, T & Dagi, Z 2010, 'Putting the doctorate into practice, and the practice into doctorates: creating a new space for quality scholarship through creativity', *Nebula*, vol. 7, no. 1-2, pp. 23-43

Brewster, A 2005, 'Poetics of Memory', *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, vol. 19, no. 3, pp. 397-402

Brueggemann, T 2018, "'Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again": 3 Reasons Why Musicals are Box Office Gold', *IndieWire*, viewed 20 July 2018, <<https://www.indiewire.com/2018/07/mamma-mia-here-we-go-again-musicals-box-office-1201984961/>>

Bush, K 1993, *The Song of Solomon*, EMI, London

Cabaret, 1972, film, Allied Artists Pictures, USA

Chaudhuri, S 2006, *Feminist Film Theorists: Laura Mulvey, Kaja Silverman, Teresa de Lauretis, Barbara Creed*, Routledge, New York

Chicago Tribune, 2019, '#MeToo: A timeline of events', *Chicago Tribune*, viewed 20 June 2019, <<https://www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/ct-me-too-timeline-20171208-htmlstory.html>>

Chorus Line, A 1985, film, Columbia Pictures, USA

Chubbuck, I 2005, *The Power of the Actor: The Chubbuck Technique*, Currency Press, Sydney

Citron, M 1988, 'Women's Film Production: Going Mainstream', ED Pribam (ed.) *Female Spectators: Looking At Film and Television*, Verso, London

Cleo from 5 to 7, 1962, film, Ciné Tamaris, France

Coen J & Coen E, 2016 *Hail, Caesar!* Faber & Faber, London

Cohan, S 2002, 'Introduction: Musicals of the Studio Era', S Cohan (ed.) *Hollywood Musicals: The Film Reader*, Routledge, London, pp. 1-15

Cohan, S 2010, 'Introduction: How Do You Solve a Problem Like the Film Musical?', S Cohan (ed.), *The Sound of Musicals*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, pp. 1-16

Conor, B 2014, 'Gurus and Oscar Winners: How-To Screenwriting Manuals in the New Cultural Economy', *Television & New Media*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 121-138

Copjec, J 1994, *Read My Desire: Lacan Against the Historicists*, Verso, London

Cosnahan, R 2015, 'Oscar Nominated Writer/Director Dan Gilroy Thrills NYFA Students with "Nightcrawler"', *New York Film Academy Blog*, viewed 25 July 2015, <<http://www.nyfa.edu/film-school-blog/oscar-nominated-writer-director-dan-gilroy-thrills-nyfa-students-with-nightcrawler/>>

Creed, B 2009, *Darwin's Screens: Evolution Aesthetics, Time and Sexual Display in the Cinema*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne

Dames, 1934, film, Warner Brothers, USA

Dancyger, K and Rush, J 2006, *Alternative Scriptwriting: Successfully Breaking the Rules*, 4th edn, Focal Press, Oxford

de Lauretis, T. 1987, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*, Macmillan Press, Hampshire

Dolan, J 2013, *The Feminist Spectator in Action: Feminist Criticism for the Stage and Screen*, Palgrave Macmillan, London

Dooley, K 2017, 'Digital "underwriting": A script development technique in the age of media convergence', *Journal of Screenwriting*, vol. 8, no. 3, pp. 287-302

Dyer, R 2002, 'Entertainment and Utopia', R Dyer, *Only Entertainment*, 2nd edn, Routledge, London, pp. 19-35

Feuer, J 1977, 'The self-reflective musical and the myth of entertainment', *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 313-326

Feuer, J 1993, *The Hollywood Musical*, 2nd edn, Indiana University Press, Bloomington

Fischer, L 1989, *Shot/Counter-shot: Film tradition and women's cinema*, Macmillan, Basingstoke

Fischer, R. 2014, 'Interview: Nightcrawler Director Dan Gilroy on Manipulation and Ditching the Character Arc', *Film: blogging the reel world*, viewed 21 October 2016, <<http://www.slashfilm.com/dan-gilroy-interview/>>

Flavell, H 2004, *Writing-Between: Australian and Canadian Ficto-criticism*, PhD Thesis, Murdoch University, Perth

Flavell, H 2009, 'Who Killed Jeanne Randolp? King, Muecke or "ficto-criticism"', *Outskirts: Feminism Along the Edge*, vol. 20, pp. 1-13

Eighties, The, 1983, film, Abilène Productions, France

Fowler, C 2003, 'Cinefeminism in its Middle Ages, or "Please, Please, Please Give Me Back My Pleasure": The 1990s work of Sally Potter, Chantal Akerman and Yvonne Rainer', J Levitin, J Plessis & V Raoul (ed.) *Women Filmmakers: Refocusing*, Routledge, New York

French, L 2015, 'Does Gender Matter?' S Levy & T Mair (ed.), *Lumina: Australian Journal of Screen Arts and Business, Women in Film: Does Gender Matter?*, Australian Film, Television and Radio School, Sydney, pp. 139-153

Gibbs, A 1997, 'Bodies of Words: Feminism and Fictocriticism - explanation and demonstration', *TEXT: Journal of writing and writing courses*, viewed 28 February, 2015 <<http://www.textjournal.com.au/oct97/gibbs.htm>>

Gibbs, A 2003, 'Writing and the Flesh of Others', *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 18, no. 42, pp. 309-319

Gibbs, A 2005, 'Fictocriticism, Affect, Mimesis: Engendering Differences' *TEXT: Journal of writing and writing courses*, vol. 9, no. 1, <<http://www.textjournal.com.au/april05/content.htm>>

Gibson, R 2010, 'The known world', *TEXT: Journal of writing and writing courses*, special issue 8, pp. 1-11, accessed 7 August, 2015 <<http://www.textjournal.com.au/speciss/issue8/content.htm>>

Gilroy, D 2012, *Nightcrawler*, viewed 25 July 2015 <<http://gointothestory.blcklst.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/NIGHTCRAWLER-Dan-Gilroy.pdf>>

Gillett, S 1998, 'Carrying the Song: Jane Campion's *The Piano*', H Kerr & A Nettelbeck (ed.), *The Space Between: Australian Women Writing Fictocriticism*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, pp. 146-159

Gleaners and I, The, 2000, film, Ciné Tamaris, France

Hail, Caesar! 2016, film, Universal Pictures, USA

Harper, G 2008, 'Creative writing: words as practice-led research' in *Journal of Visual Arts Practice*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 161-171

Harper, G 2013, 'Creative writing research', *A companion to creative writing*, John Wiley & Sons

Haskell, M 1987, *From Reverence to Rape: The treatment of women in the movies*, 2nd edn, University of Chicago Press, Chicago

Hollinger, K 2012, *Feminist Film Studies*, Routledge, London

hooks, b 1992, *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, Turnaround, London

Ian, J 1974, *Stars*, Columbia, USA

Jacey, H 2010, *The Woman in the Story: Writing Memorable Female Characters*, Michael Wiese Productions, Studio City, CA

Jeanne Dielman, 23, Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles, 1975, film, Paradise Films, France

Kaplan, EA 2003, 'Women, Film, Resistance: Changing Paradigms', J Levitin, J Plessis & V Raoul (ed.) *Women Filmmakers: Refocusing*, Routledge, New York

Kohn, N 1999, 'Standpoint: Disappearing authors: A postmodern perspective on the practice of writing for the screen', *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, vol. 43, no. 3, pp. 443-449

Koman, R. 2005, 'Remixing Culture: An interview with Lawrence Lessig', O'Reilly Media, viewed 19 May 2015, <<http://archive.oreilly.com/pub/a/policy/2005/02/24/lessig.html>>

Krauth, N 2011 'Evolution of the exegesis: the radical trajectory of the creative writing doctorate in Australia', *TEXT: Journal of writing and writing courses*, vol. 15, no. 1, viewed 2015 <<http://www.textjournal.com.au/april11/krauth.htm>>

- Kristeva, J 1984, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, M. Waller (trans.), Columbia University Press, New York
- Kuhn, A, 1982, *Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema*, Verso, London
- La La Land*, 2016, film, Impostor Pictures & Gilbert Films, USA
- Lauzen, M 2019, 'It's a Man's (Celluloid) World: Portrayals of Female Characters in the Top Grossing Films of 2018', viewed 30 May 2019, <https://womenintvfilm.sdsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2018_Its_a_Mans_Celluloid_World_Report.pdf>
- Lee, J 2013, *The Psychology of Screenwriting: Theory and Practice*, Bloomsbury, New York
- Lynch, D, 2007, *Catching the big fish: Meditation, Consciousness, and Creativity*, Jeremy P Tarcher/Penguin Books, London
- Macdonald, I 2013, *Screenwriting Poetics and the Screen Idea*, Palgrave Macmillan: London
- Maddin, G 2009, *My Winnipeg*, Coach House Books, Ontario
- Maras, S 2004, 'Notes on Genre to Come: Screenwriting and the 'thesis-film'', *Cultural Studies Review*, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 85-98
- Maras, S 2009, *Screenwriting: history, theory and practice*, Wallflower Press, London
- Martin, A 2014, 'Where do cinematic ideas come from?', *Journal of Screenwriting*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 9-26
- Mathisen, S 2016, 'Why we crashed the "sausage party" that is the Australian film industry', *ABC News*, viewed 10 December 2016, <<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-12-08/sausage-fest-that-is-australias-film-industry/8103846>>
- Mayer, S 2009, *The cinema of Sally Potter: A politics of love*, Wallflower Press, London
- Mayer, S 2016, *Political Animals: The new feminist cinema*, IB Tauris, London
- McQueen, AL 2016, 'After 'The Golden Age': An Industrial History of the Hollywood Musical, 1955-1975', PhD thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison
- Me Too, no date, 'About section', viewed 20 June 2019, <<https://metoomvmt.org/about/>>
- Morris, E 1998, *Being & Doing: A workbook for actors*, Ermor Enterprises, Los Angeles

- Millard, K 2010 'After the typewriter: the screenplay in a digital era', *Journal of Screenwriting*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 11-25
- Millard, K 2011, 'The screenplay as prototype' J. Nelmes (ed.) *Analysing the Screenplay*, Routledge, Abingdon
- Millard, K 2014, *Screenwriting in a Digital Era*, Palgrave Macmillan, London
- Muecke, S 2008, *Joe in the Andamans and other fictocritical stories*, Local Consumption Publications, Sydney
- Muecke, S 2012, 'The Fall: Fictocritical Writing', *Parallax*, vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 108-112
- Muecke, S & King, N 1991, 'On Ficto-Criticism', *Australian Book Review*, 135, October, pp. 13-14
- Mueller, J 1984, 'Fred Astaire and the Integrated Musical', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 28-40
- Mulvey, L 1975, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, 16, pp. 6-18
- Murphy, JJ 2007, *Me and You and Memento and Fargo: How Independent Screenplays Work*, Continuum, New York
- Murphy, JJ 2010, 'No room for fun stuff: The question of the screenplay in American indie cinema', *Journal of Screenwriting*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 175-196
- My Winnipeg*, 2007, film, Documentary Channel, Canada
- Nash, M 2013, 'Unknown spaces and uncertainty in film development', *Journal of Screenwriting*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 149-162
- Neale, S 2000, *Genre and Hollywood*, Routledge, London
- Nelmes, J 2007, 'Some thoughts on analyzing the screenplay, the process of screenplay writing and the balance between the craft and creativity', *Journal of Media Practice*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 107-113
- Nelmes, J 2008, 'Developing the screenplay Wingwalking: an analysis of the writing and rewriting process', *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, V, 2, 335-352
- Neroni, H 2016, *Feminist Film Theory and Cleo from 5 to 7*, Bloomsbury, New York
- Nettelbeck, A 1998, 'Notes Towards an Introduction', H Kerr & A Nettelbeck, *The Space Between: Australian Women Writing Fictocriticism*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, pp. 1-17

- Newman, M 2011, *Indie: An American Film Culture*, Columbia University Press, New York
- On The Town*, 1949, film, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, USA
- Pike, B & Martin, D 1973, *The Genius of Busby Berkeley*, Creative Film Society, Reseda, California
- Price, S 2010, *The Screenplay: Authorship, Theory and Criticism*, Palgrave Macmillan, London
- Price, S 2013, *A History of the Screenplay*, Palgrave Macmillan, London
- Prosser, R 2005, *THE P(LOVER) PARADOX: A Fictocritical Poetics of Detection*, PhD Thesis, University of Australia, Australia
- Pye, D & Hillier, J 2011, *100 Film Musicals*, Palgrave Macmillan, London
- Quart, B 1986, 'Agnes Varda: A Conversation', *Film Quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 2, pp. 3-10
- Rainer, Y 1965, *No Manifesto*, viewed 18 October 2016, <<https://conversations.e-flux.com/t/yvonne-rainer-no-manifesto/1454>>
- Ramanathan, G 2006, *Feminist Auteurs: Reading Women's Films*, Wallflower, London
- Randolph, J 2006, 'Out of Psychoanalysis: A Ficto-Criticism Monologue', G Sherbert (ed.), *Canadian Cultural Poesis: Essays on Canadian Culture*, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Waterloo
- Réponse de femmes*, 1975, film, Ciné Tamaris, France
- Riakos, M 2016, "'Crushed" director Megan Riakos blasts AACTA Awards selection process', *IF*, viewed 10 December 2016, <<https://www.if.com.au/crushed-director-megan-riakos-blasts-aacta-awards-selection-process/>>
- Richardson, L 2000, 'Writing: A method in inquiry' NK Denzin and YS Lincoln (ed.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd edition), Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, pp. 923-48
- Rodman, H. 2006, 'What a Screenplay Isn't', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 45, no. 2, pp. 86-89
- Rubin, M 2002, 'Busby Berkeley and the Backstage Musical', S Cohan (ed.) *Hollywood Musicals: The Film Reader*, Routledge, London, pp. 53-61

Rush, J & Boughman, C 1997, 'Language as narrative voice: The poetics of the highly inflected screenplay', *Journal of Film and Video*, vol. 49, no. 3, pp. 28-37

Ruti, M 2016, *Feminist Film Theory and Pretty Woman*, Bloomsbury Academic, New York

Sawtell, L 2015, 'Re-crafting the screenplay: A fictocritical approach' in E Bacon, D Hecq and A Walker (ed.) Proceedings of the 20th Australasian Association of Writing Programs Conference 2015, Melbourne, Australia, 29 November - 1 December, pp. 1-10

Sawtell, L 2016, 'The Paperless Screenplay: Writing on, for and with the SCREEN', *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice*, vol. 9, no. 1-2, pp. 33-46

Schlunke, K & Brewster, A 2005, 'We Four: Fictocriticism Again', *Continuum: Journal of Media & Culture Studies*, vol. 19, no. 3, pp. 393-395

Screen Australia 2015, *Gender Matters: Women in the Australian Screen Industry*, Screen Australia, Sydney

Sculley, S 2017, *The Screen Novel: A creative practice approach to developing a screen idea for the television crime thriller*, PhD thesis, RMIT University, Melbourne

Seeger, L 1996, *When Women Call the Shots: The developing power and influence of women in television and film*, Henry Holt and Company, New York

Sempert, M, Sawtell, L, Murray, P, Langley, S & Batty, C 2017, 'Methodologically speaking: Innovative approaches to knowledge and text in creative writing research', *New Writing*, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 205-222

Sexton-Finck, L 2009, *Be(com)ing Reel Independent Woman: An Autoethnographic Journey Through Female Subjectivity and Agency in Contemporary Cinema with Particular Reference to Independent Scriptwriting Practice*, PhD Thesis, Murdoch University, Western Australia

Siebel Newsom, J 2015, Op-Ed: Reese Witherspoon's Push to #AskHerMore at the Oscars Was a Runaway Success', *ET Online*, viewed 25 February 2014, <https://www.etonline.com/awards/oscars/160254_op_ed_reese_witherspoon_s_push_to_askhermore_at_the_oscars_was_a_runaway_success>

Singin' in the Rain, 1952, film, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, USA

Smith, SL, Choueiti, M & Pieper, K 2014, *Gender Bias Without Borders: An Investigation of Female Characters in popular films across 11 countries*, University of Southern California, Los Angeles

South Australian Film Corporation, no date, 'Gender Agenda', viewed 20 April 2019, < <https://www.safilm.com.au/funding-and-support/gender-agenda/>>

SP-ARK: The Sally Potter Archive, viewed 5 July 2015, <www.sp-ark.org/>

Sragow, M. 2015, 'Interview: Dan Gilroy', *Film Comment*, viewed 21 October 2016, <https://www.filmcomment.com/blog/interview-dan-gilroy-nightcrawler-dan-gilroy/>>

Steiner, B & Yang, J 2004, *Autobiography*, Thames & Hudson, London

Sullivan, G 2009, 'Making Space: The Purpose and Place of Practice-led Research', RT Dean and H Smith (ed.), *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, pp. 41-65

Tango Lesson, The, 1997, film, Adventure Pictures, UK

The Representation Project, no date, 'The Representation Project About', viewed 15 April 2018, <<http://therepresentationproject.org/about-us/>>

The Representation Project, no date, 'The Movement Ask Her More', viewed 15 April 2018, <<http://therepresentationproject.org/the-movement/askhermore/>>

Thornham, S 2012, *What if I had been the hero? Investigating women's cinema*, Palgrave Macmillan, London

Tincknell, E & Conrich, I 2006, 'Introduction', I Conrich and E Tincknell (ed.) *Film's Musical Moments*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, pp. 1-14

Totterman, C 2015, '#AskHerMore', *Lumina: Women in Film: Does Gender Matter?*, Australian Film, Television and Radio School, Sydney, pp. 73-80

Wills, N 2001, "'110 per cent woman": the crotch shot in the Hollywood musical', *Screen*, vol. 42, no. 1, pp. 121-141

Wilson, E 2012, *Love, Mortality and the Moving Image*, Palgrave Macmillan, London

Wizard of Oz, The, 1939, film, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, USA

Where is My Romeo? 2007, film, Cannes Film Festival, France

