PERFORMING PRISON

HOW IS LIFE ON THE INSIDE PORTRAYED TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD?

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores how the theatre can highlight the discrepancies between the representations of women's prison in television and film and the day to day experiences of women incarcerated in New Zealand.

Using Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* as a departure point, this thesis argues that punishment was once a public spectacle but is now a private enterprise, where the public are excluded from the penal narrative. This exclusion means that the images of prison life provided by film and television take on a unique importance as they provide some of the only representations of incarceration the general public see. These images are typically produced to entertain, enforce strict genre conventions and are often constructed for the male gaze. While the screen can be a place of voyeuristic pleasure, this thesis contends that theatre can enable witnessing, wherein spectators are made aware of the highly mediated and constructed process that goes into creating the images they see.

This thesis consists of a nominated creative component, a play, alongside traditional academic research. The play, titled *I Didn't Really Think It Would Be Like This*, juxtaposes the conventions of the women in prison genre with testimony taken from women incarcerated in New Zealand to highlight that the images we traditionally see are not representative of the day to day experience of female inmates

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION

In 2015 I sat down in BATS Theatre in Wellington, New Zealand to watch a performance of an improvisation show titled *Jailbirds* performed by Nelson-based improvisation company 'Bodies in Space'. The promotional material for the show stated:

> It's visiting hour at BATS Theatre with improv on the inside! Inspired by hit TV show, *Orange is the New Black*, the Body in Space Improv Troupe will invent three female prisoners based on audience suggestions. Who will you end up rooting for in this dog-eat-dog world? (*Theatreview*)

Jailbirds was a long-form improvisation show featuring six performers. The three female cast members took on the role of the inmates, while the three male performers played the prison authority figures; the warden, the guard and the prison doctor. Before launching into the story, the female performers asked the audience for suggestions for their characters nicknames and they received the monikers 'Hammer', 'Toaster' and 'Blues'. The stage was now set and the show could begin.

The first few scenes were set within the women's cells and elicited the stories behind the names. The audience learned that Hammer, for instance, earned the nickname by beating her husband's head in with a hammer. I noticed that although this company was made up of New Zealand performers as soon as they took on the role of female

prisoners, their accents changed. The inmates had American and British accents, 'Blues' spoke in a Southern drawl and ‘Hammer’ spoke in a Cockney accent. The story of the show included many elements that one might consider stereotypical of the women-in-prison genre. There was a terrified ‘new fish’, a benevolent guard, a corrupt warden who sexually assaulted the prisoners, a power struggle amongst the inmates themselves. The show ended with Hammer bashing in the head of Warden Badgers with -you guessed it- a hammer. These are storylines that have been seen countless times in films and television programmes set within a women’s prison. However, what was interesting about this particular production was the audience’s reaction to it. Roughly twenty minutes into the show, a group of four women left the theatre. A minute later another two women followed them. Then another group left. By the time the show ended, just over half of the previously packed theatre remained in their seats. Arguably, what had been portrayed on stage that night was tame compared to some fictional representations of prison life. Yet audience members were compelled to leave. After the show, I walked out into the bar and joined the heated discussion of audience members who had left the performance. I found that watching the sexual assault storyline play out live on stage was uncomfortable for them and the primary factor that compelled them to leave the theatre. This storyline of the Warden sexually assaulting the prisoners was played for laughs, which added to the discomfort of the audience members I spoke with. Watching this performance of *Jailbirds* made me realise that the majority of images that the general public get to see of prison life come from film and television. The audience's reaction to the performance also made me consider how confrontational the liveness of theatre can be. This performance of *Jailbirds* inspired me

to explore the ways that theatre could be used to highlight the discrepancy between the way that female prisoners are portrayed in film and television and the experiences of women incarcerated in New Zealand.

Stories have always been at the heart of my work as a writer, though before embarking on this PhD thesis the stories I have worked with have primarily been my own and comedic in tone. The belief that underpins much of my work is that through specificity comes universality and the more honest and detailed you can be in articulating your experience the more you elicit empathy and understanding from the audience. Additionally, in my comedic career I have found that being vulnerable on stage creates a dynamic in which the audience are laughing because they connect with you. This learning came from my experience of running a regular storytelling evening, 'Light to Light' in which I coached people through sharing a story from their own life for an audience. I noticed that the storytellers who were the most willing to be vulnerable on stage and share themselves with an audience, even if it meant presenting themselves as acting badly, were the ones who had audience members flock to them after the show, eager to talk about their similar experiences. I also believe that through this specificity that the personal can become political. The primary example of this from my career is my solo show *HarleQueen* in which I talk about my experiences of sexual harrassment in the comedy community and the impacts it had on me going forward as a comic. With this PhD thesis I knew that I wanted to develop my craft as a writer by working with stories that were not my own while still retaining my ethos of the personal being political. Witnessing the production of *Jailbirds* made me want to hear the stories of

women who have spent time in prison in New Zealand. I came into this thesis as a playwright and comedian who was interested in the ways that personal stories can affect social change. Additionally, I would like to acknowledge that I am a Pākehā researcher, a first-generation New Zealander with parents from the United Kingdom.

New Zealand currently has three prisons built exclusively for women, the Auckland Region Women's Corrections Facility, Arohata Women's Prison in Tawa, north of Wellington and Christchurch Women's Prison (*Department of Corrections Website*). According to the most recent statistics released by the Department of Corrections, there are currently 545 women incarcerated in New Zealand (*Department of Corrections Website*). The majority of women imprisoned are there for non-violent offenses relating to addiction, poverty and domestic abuse (Richie, 439). The ongoing effects of colonisation can be seen in the statistics of the people who populate these prisons. Māori are disproportionately represented within the New Zealand prison system (McIntosh, Workman, 726). Elese Dowden describes incarceration as both a symptom and mechanism of colonisation (88). The most recent review shows 52.7% of New Zealand's overall prison population is made up of Māori inmates (*Department of Corrections Website)*. Māori account for over half of the prison population, despite only making up 16.7% of the overall population (*Statistics NZ).* The fastest growing statistic in the New Zealand prison system is Māori women (Quince, 99). These statistics are strong evidence to demonstrate that racial inequalities and colonisation play an important part in shaping the NZ carceral justice system (Dowden, 88). The causes for

overrepresentation of Māori in prison are complex. McIntosh and Workman argue that these statistics:

> ...must be interpreted in the broader context of colonisation, dispossession of land, Māori urbanisation, the imposition of the Western systems of common law, cultural assimilation and the undermining of tikanga and traditional forms of Māori social control. (727)

Western systems of justice and incarceration do not adequately cater to Māori and have served to perpetuate a myth surrounding Māori as a 'problem people' (Dowden, 98). It's clear from the above statistics that in New Zealand incarceration and colonialism are deeply entwined.

Access to prison and prisoner experience is limited. According to the most recent statistics released by the Department of Corrections there are 8655 people currently incarcerated in New Zealand (*Department of Corrections Website*). This number makes up a very small percentage of the New Zealand population. The majority of New Zealanders will never step foot inside a prison, therefore it is through other sources of information that we put together our image of prison life. While there are some glimpses into prison life through official government reports, occasional news coverage, writing by former or current inmates, and via media appearances by advocates of prison reform, the consumption of these sources can not compare with the popularity of

films and television programmes set within a prison, for example the six million regular viewers who would tune into an episode of ITV's *Bad Girls* (Wilson, O'Sullivan, 8). Therefore, film and television representations of prison life take on a unique importance as they offer some of the only regular images the general public gets to see of what life is like for those people who are incarcerated.

Wilson and O'Sullivan argue that there is a need to take seriously the possibility that representations of prison in film and television are an important source of people's implicit and commonsense understandings about prison (8). This leads to the question of whether the understanding generated through film and television is an accurate one? If films and television programmes are the most common way that the general public get to see within prison walls, then how is prison being portrayed? The aim of most films and television shows about women's prison is not to accurately portray life in a women's prison but to entertain. So, like the production of *Jailbirds* I was witness to, film and television representations of prison life tend to focus on the dramatic or unusual occurrences in prison life. Typical storylines feature plot points focused on escape, violence, corruption and infighting amongst the inmates. Many of the films and television shows that feature women in prison are constructed for the male gaze. For example, the babes-behind-bars subgenre that emerged during the 1970s, which Nicola Rafter argues was primarily concerned with the sexual implications of an all female society (172).

The effect of the highly stylised depictions of prison in television and film means that the public are not engaged or invested in how these worlds operate. But why is it important for the general public to have an intimate understanding of the realities of female incarceration? Caoimhe McAvinchey argues that the perceived access that film and television programs provide gives prison the sheen of familiarity, yet this access is often superficial, telling us little about prison either as a material, constructed site or as an ideological idea (6). She further argues:

> This entrenched normalcy of cultural representation contributes to a vacuum of public and political debate regarding prison's ideological rationale. Safe in the shared assumption that 'we've always had them' we forget to ask, 'What are they for?' (6-7)

Typical depictions of prison onscreen seek to entertain their audiences through a familiar series of conventions and few seek to interrogate the institution of prison itself. Historically films, television shows and plays about prison serve to support narratives that the justice system works by framing prisoners as morally 'other' (Walsh, 109). The enduring popularity of the prison genre gives audiences the feeling of familiarity with the prison space. McAvinchey argues that the idea of prison is embedded in our juridical, architectural and cultural landscapes but theatre and performance can help make visible the institution of prison, allowing us to critically examine its social, economic and cultural impact (15-16).

This thesis asks: how can theatrical techniques be used to highlight the differences between the way women's prisons are represented in film and television and the experiences of women incarcerated in New Zealand? In Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* he argues that punishment was once a public spectacle, but is now a private enterprise where inmates are locked away from the eyes of the public. Because the majority of the general public will never set foot inside a prison, Wilson and O'Sullivan counter that television shows and films set within the prison walls inform the public's commonsense understanding of prison. These images are typically produced to entertain, enforce strict genre conventions and are often constructed for the male gaze. In contrast to film, many theatrical representations of women in prison attempt to capture the reality of life for incarcerated women. But no play has attempted to directly contrast the images of women in prison as portrayed in film and television with a more realistic version of life for incarcerated women in New Zealand, which is what *I Didn't Really Think it Would Be Like This* does. While the screen can be a place of voyeuristic pleasure, this thesis contends that theatre can enable witnessing, wherein spectators are made aware of the highly mediated and constructed process that goes into creating the images they see.

The play I wrote as part of my PhD thesis is titled *I Didn't Really Think It Would Be Like This.* I chose theatre as the form for the creative component of my thesis for a number of reasons. Being present at the production of *Jailbirds* made it clear the power theatre has to viscerally affect its audience. To an extent, the screen protects against discomfort, as Laura Mulvey argues in her seminal essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'. In

this essay, Mulvey makes the case that the magic of Hollywood cinema is in part realised thanks in part to its manipulation of the pleasure in looking (7). Film allows spectators to indulge in the pleasure in looking without the fear that the object of their gaze is aware of it (Mulvey, 8). In theatre, the performers on stage always know that the audience is watching them, and thus at any point could return the audience's gaze. This dynamic creates a unique relationship between the actor and the people watching them. Walsh argues that that theatre has the potential to portray the prison space with more nuance than has been traditionally shown in television and film (113).

I Didn't Really Think It Would Be Like This is not the first play that attempts to broach the gap between New Zealand's incarcerated population and the general public. There have been a number of theatre practitioners who have engaged with New Zealand's incarcerated population and have created work with and about them. A thorough investigation of all of these works lies beyond the scope of this thesis, which is primarily concerned with representations of women's prisons available to the general public. But I will take the opportunity here to briefly address several notable works in order to situate my own play within the context of New Zealand prison theatre. First, there have been a number of significant representations of men's prisons in New Zealand theatre. Miranda Harcourt and William Brandt's 1993 play *Verbatim.* Harcourt and Brandt were some of the first New Zealand theatre practitioners to incorporate Verbatim and Documentary Theatre techniques into their work. They interviewed men incarcerated for violent crimes, the families of those men as well as the families of the

victims (White, *Pantograph Punch*). From this testimony, they created a play that explored the effect of violent crime and incarceration on the perpetrators and victims. *Verbatim* toured extensively in New Zealand playing to both to our incarcerated population as well as the general public. The success of *Verbatim,* inspired the creation of a follow up work *Portraits* (1998) which Harcourt created with Stuart Mckenzie. *Portraits* focuses in on the rape and murder of a young girl and features testimony from the victim's family as well as the perpetrator of the crime. Other highly influential work by a New Zealand practitioner is Bruce Stewart's play *Broken Arse* (1979) which was inspired by his own experiences of incarceration. A recent contribution to New Zealand prison theatre is the play *Cellfish* (2018) created by Miriama McDowell, Rob Mokaraka and Jason Te Kare. *Cellfish* is set during the present day and the focal story is about a female theatre practitioner entering a male prison in order to teach them Shakespeare. *Cellfish* uses theatre to challenge "...the familial cycles of domestic violence and the systemic failings of a highly punitive justice system." (Matata-Sipu, *The Spinoff*). The show explores serious themes with humour and theatricality. For example, in the original production of *Cellfish* actors Jarod Rawiri and Carrie Green play all seven characters and the show features a Fred Astaire/Ginger Rogers style dream sequence. These selected texts amplified the voices of prisoners in New Zealand and represented life in a male prison on stage for the general public to witness.

Alongside these contributions to the field, New Zealand has a robust sector of theatre practitioners who work in prison with inmates. In addition to *Verbatim* and *Portraits* Harcourt has also worked with inmates at Arohata Women's prison and to devise the

play, *This is Life* (1992). Peter O'Connor is another practitioner/academic who has been teaching theatre in prisons for over forty years. In 2017 theatre-makers Kerryn Palmer and Perry Piercy revived the 'Bedtimes Stories' programme in Arohata Women's Prison, initially created by Harcourt. The 'Bedtime Stories' programme provides inmates with children's books and records the women reading them. These recordings are then able to be played for their children on the outside. Finally, I will acknowledge the work of the Te Rākau Hua Ote Wao Tapu trust. Te Rākau, founded by Jim Moriarty and Jerry Banse in 1989, is a theatre company that has worked extensively with inmates in New Zealand. For example, *Te Timatanga Hou - the New Beginning* was created in collaboration with Christchurch Men's Prison. The show used traditional Māori concepts to tell the stories of 23 high security prisoners and was performed as part of the 2002 Christchurch Arts Festival. A full examination of this work is beyond the scope of this thesis, which is primarily concerned with the representation of women's prisons on stage and screen.

The way I decided to approach the collaboration between myself and New Zealand's incarcerated population was to conduct a series of interviews with former inmates. The aim of *I Didn't Really Think It Would Be Like This* was to convey more of the mundane, everyday routine of prison life described in the interviews and then contrast this with the kinds of tropes that prison dramas, particularly on screen, readily resort to. Here I will define what I mean by reality in this context. Terms such as 'authenticity' and 'truth' have long been a topic of debate within theatre scholarship. Daniel Schulze, for instance, argues that every period and culture will have their own notions of what is to be held as authentic or truthful in the theatre, citing that there is evidence to suggest

that Greek theatre was perceived as authentic and moving to a high degree (4-5). The development of Naturalism as a performance style diminished the aesthetic difference between life and theatre (Schulze, 5). But Suzanne Little argues that even the most literal representation of life on stage is seemingly doomed by the inherent subjectivity of representation itself ("Opposed Strategies" 13). Stephen Bottoms concurs with this statement, arguing that Realism and reality are not the same thing and that unmediated access to 'the real' is not something that theatre can ever provide (57). No theatre performance is necessarily 'realer' than any other, yet this does not mean that theatre cannot effectively convey emotions, facts or someone else's perspective. In this particular instance I wanted to use theatre to provide a counter narrative to the way women in prison have been portrayed in television and film.

In order to contrast the way that women's prisons are portrayed in television and film with the reality of women incarcerated in New Zealand I created a two-act play. The first act is a musical, parodying the tropes of the women-in-prison genre and the second act is influenced by Brecht and based on the testimony of former inmates. I conducted a series of interviews with ex-prisoners and asked them questions about their life while they were incarcerated. Representing stories from interviews on stage is a technique that comes with many ethical considerations. For instance, the women I talked to did not wish to be identified within the play, therefore I made the choice to not use their testimony verbatim to reassure them that identification would not happen. Another ethical consideration for theatre practitioners working with interviews is the issue of representation. How do you represent a person's story on stage in a way that is

accurate, yet also making the most of theatrical conventions in order to portray that story in an engaging way? Suzanne Little acknowledges this tension, writing that theatre based on interviews can traverse a number of extremes from highly exploitative spectacles to "ethical" productions drained of theatricality in order to preserve "truth" ("Opposed Strategies" 2). Many of the elements of prison life that we discussed would be difficult to portray on stage with accuracy. For example, interviewees discussed the boredom and utter routine they felt at being locked in their cells for up to twenty three hours a day. Replicating this with complete accuracy would have the audience in the theatre over a twenty four hour period, a choice that is not appropriate for this particular project in which the objective is to produce a play. Therefore, I had to grapple with how to best represent the stories from the interviews within the theatre space.

I looked to Bertolt Brecht and particularly his essay "The Street Scene: A Basic Model For Epic Theatre" in which he argues that Epic Theatre should be built on the same principles as an eyewitness who demonstrates his experience of a traffic accident to a group of bystanders. It is through this figure of the witness that the audience gets a sense of the accident. This essay serves as a point of inspiration for 'Witnessing Theory' which influenced many of the creative decisions I made in the creation of *I Didn't Think It Would Be Like This.* I decided to adopt a Brechtian approach to the second act, as I saw the potential in theatricality as a way to portray what it <u>feels</u> like to be in prison. Robert Leach writes that performance could be seen as "...a kind of gangplank between life and theatre. It exists in both and helps us to understand both" (10). In her writing on Clean Break Theatre (a London-based theatre company that specialises in collaboration with

present and former inmates) Walsh argues that utterly realistic portrayals of prison do not do enough cultural work to politicise their audience, nor to reframe the material conditions of incarcerated women (114). An example of how this would work in practice was the issue of portraying the sense of boredom and routine felt by the inmates. I decided in order to represent this feeling on stage I would construct a series of sequences that run through the average day in prison. This same choreographed sequence is repeated four times within the play in order to portray to the audience the boring and mundane routine of daily life described to me in the interviews. While using theatrical elements to express what it feels like to be in prison I attempted to replicate with accuracy the practical elements of prison life, as described to me by the interviewees, such as the structure of an average day, how food is served, how the phones work, what the first few days of arriving in prison are like. Although Bottoms acknowledges achieving 'reality' on stage is somewhat of an impossibility, my own definition for this project is to convey to the audience some of the practical realities of life in a women's prison while at the same time using theatrical language to evoke what it feels like to be incarcerated.

I will now provide a brief overview of each of the chapters that make up this thesis. In Chapter One I discuss Michel Foucault's book *Discipline and Punish*. In this book Foucault provides a history of the visuals of punishment. Foucault argues that punishment was once a highly visible process. The general public flocked to the town square in order to watch those who had broken the law receive their punishment, whether it be a stint in the stocks, a flogging or even an execution. In these events, it

was beneficial to the authorities to make punishment as spectacular as possible, firstly, to act as an effective deterrent to those who wished to break the law and secondly to emphasize the power of the monarch. Public punishment was highly theatrical. For example, the elements of the executioner's hood, the victim's final words, the possibility of a pardon, all combined to make execution a spectacular event. The general public played a key role in these events, as they served as witnesses. They could spread the word about what happens to people who break the law. They were there to make sure that justice had been done. The spectacular nature of punishment was not done with the criminal in mind, but the audience. However, this form of public punishment was eventually phased out and Foucault documented its decline. The prison walls that were so effective at keeping prisoners in also served to keep the general public out. The prevalence of the prison served to exclude the general public from the punishment narrative. They were no longer required as witnesses and thus the general public now had no way of seeing punishment being done. I argue that the desire to watch punishment enacted accounts for much of the popularity and style of the prison genre. Films and television shows about prison give audiences one of the only opportunities to see punishment being enacted. Many fictional representations of prison life focus on exceptional events, such as riots, escape, corruption and violence. Few focus on the day-to-day drudgery that constitutes much of life in prison. So much about the way women in prison have been portrayed on screen has to do with the desire to look and spectate, and Foucault's theories about punishment theorise an origin point for these desires.

In chapter two, I provide an analysis of the hallmarks and tropes of the women-in-prison genre onscreen and why the representation of women's prisons onscreen matters. I address the way the women-in-prison genre is predicated on spectatorship and use Laura Mulvey's lens of the 'male gaze' to pay particular attention to the way the genre cultivates voyeuristic pleasure. Many of the tropes that constitute the women-in-prison genre (as well as the more general prison genre) are built around spectator pleasure and audience identification. For example, films made during the babes-behind-bars era (1970s-1980s) were explicitly targeted towards the male gaze and featured storylines centered on entrapment, escape, submission and domination. I then consider the effects these pleasures have on the viewer and the types of messages they relay about prison and female inmates. For example, the narrative construction of many prison films serves to demonstrate a pro-prison discourse. Other effects include the way that prisoners of colour are portrayed as inherently more criminal than their white counterparts. The ways in which women's prisons are portrayed onscreen matter because they constitute a majority of the images that the general public sees of prison life. As David Wilson and Sean O'Sullivan argue in their book *Images of Incarceration*, the general public obviously do not take fictional representations of prison life as fact, but it is unrealistic to assume that the ways in which prison is portrayed onscreen have no impact at all on the way we think about prison (16). Fictional representations of women-in-prison onscreen exist to fulfill the voyeuristic pleasures of the audience rather than convey an accurate representation of prison life. They constitute the majority of the images that the general public see of a women's prison and thus have an effect on the way prison presents in the cultural imagination.

In Chapter Three I explore the way that women's prisons have been portrayed in theatre. Unlike the women-in-prison film and television genre, the way women's prisons have been portrayed on stage cannot be distilled into one single group of characteristics. Therefore, in this chapter I argue that these shows can be grouped into three separate categories: plays that uphold the tropes of the women-in-prison genre, plays that seek to challenge the way women's prison has been portrayed in film and television and finally plays that use the prison setting as a metaphor to explore a theme. The largest group of work is group two. Many of the theatrical representations of life for female inmates are created in reaction to the voyeuristic way their world has been shown on screen. This chapter illuminates that while there have been plays that attempt to capture what life is like in a women's prison, there have not been any that provide a direct contrast between the heightened images from film and television and the reality of the women who actually spend time there.

Chapter four concerns 'witnessing theory'. I have chosen to focus on witnessing theory for two reasons. Firstly, I used testimony to inform the creation of my play, and witnessing theory has frequently been applied to the practice of Documentary and Verbatim Theatre. Part of my thesis includes reaching out to women who have spent time incarcerated in New Zealand and interviewing them about their experience and then creating the play inspired by their words. Secondly, witnessing theory concerns the spectorial response to live theatre. The recent scholarship surrounding the witness constructs a viewing position that appears to be the opposite of the voyeuristic spectatorship of the cinema. In this chapter, I will introduce the concept of the witness,

and establish the term's connection to the practice of Documentary and Verbatim Theatre. I will also be examining the techniques used by other theatre practitioners who have used testimony to inform their work. Practitioners of Documentary and Verbatim Theatre have used a variety of strategies to present testimony and documents in a way that attempts to create 'witnesses' of their audiences. The voyeur is a state of audience spectatorship I wish to avoid, particularly because of the way the women-in-prison film genre has been objectified by the camera's gaze. I used these theories to inform the creation of my play, particularly in the way *I Didn't Really Think it Would Be Like This* encourages the audience to examine critically their own spectatorship. The arguments in this chapter guided the way that I have presented on the stage the stories of women who have been incarcerated in New Zealand.

Chapter five, the final section of this thesis, provides an account of my process to create the play *I Didn't Really Think It Would Be Like This*. My aim in creating the play was to emphasize the contrast between the typical images we see of women's prisons and the reality of life for those women incarcerated in New Zealand. Over the course of the interviews I conducted with women who have spent time in prison, I was able to paint more vivid images in my own head of life in a women's prison. This chapter includes excerpts from these interviews of particular moments and sentiments that inspired the play. In this chapter, I also attempt to reconcile traditional playwriting structure, as outlined by theorists such as Joseph Campbell and Christopher Volger, with feminist theatre critics, such as Sue-Ellen Case and Elin Diamond. I used feminist theorists such as Case and Diamond as a guide for creating this work as I did not want *I Didn't Really*

Think it Would Be Like This to objectify the women on stage in the same way that the inmates in the women-in-prison genre were subjected to. Finally, I drew on witnessing theory in order to create a work that encourages the audience to think critically about their own role as a spectator. In this chapter I provide connections between these theories in order to demonstrate the thinking behind the creative choices I made in *I Didn't Really Think it Would Be Like This.*

During the course of my research I have found some answers to the questions that came to me during the production of *Jailbirds*. Films and television series constitute the majority of the images that the general public sees of life in a women's prison. The way that women's prisons are typically portrayed on screen feature stock characters, a heightened sexuality and focus on storylines that highlight the spectacular. It was no wonder that *Jailbirds* featured a storyline about sexual assault; this type of story is a prevalent element in the women-in-prison genre. However, as Mulvey points out, watching someone onscreen is a different experience from watching someone on the stage. The people onscreen are utterly indifferent to the presence of the audience and unable to return their gaze. However, in theatre, this is not the case. The actor can return the gaze of the audience at any moment and implicate them in the act of watching. In this thesis I offer up a theatre experience of my own that serves to counteract some of the images of prison life represented in film and television.

The next section of the thesis is [my nominated creative component] the play *I Didn't Really Think it Would Be Like This*. Present in this play are the conventions and tropes of the women-in-prison genre as well as an act inspired by my interviews with women

who have spent time incarcerated in New Zealand. These elements formed the basis of the content. The style of the play was inspired by the work of Bertolt Brecht, as well as the playwrights Anne Washburn and Young Jean Lee. My intention with this piece was to highlight the discrepancy between the images we see of women's prison in television and film and the reality for women incarcerated in Aotearoa New Zealand.

I Didn't Really Think It Would Be Like This

CASTING SUGGESTION

Actor One- Sophie (Act One)/ Guard One (Act Two)
Actor Two- Prison Lesbian (Act One)/Sophie (Act Two)
Actor Three- Doctor (Act One)/ Wiley Lifer (Act One)/Doctor Miller (Act Two)/ Jessie (Act Two)
Actor Four- Crazyface (Act One)/ Guard Two (Act Two)
Actor Five- Warden (Act One)/ Buddy (Act One)/ Eleanor (Act Two)
Actor Six- Guard (Act One)/ Emma (Act Two)

Act One

Scene One

Sophie enters the stage, wearing civilian clothes.

She pauses, looks around, she is clearly terrified.

The lights come up to reveal the other actors, who stand to the side, watching Sophie. She is unaware of their presence.

With a resounding 'thunk' we hear the sound of the prison door closing behind her. At the same moment, the lights change, the atmosphere is Broadway, theatrical.

The other actors spring into action.

WARDEN: You're the new fish huh?

SOPHIE: My name is Sophie?

WARDEN: No it ain't.

SOPHIE: Sorry?

WARDEN: Your name ain't Sophie. It's inmate 2506.

SOPHIE: Oh God, I'm sorry, I forgot.

WARDEN: Enough of that talk! In here, there ain't no God but me and there ain't no Good Book but the one I got right here.

She brandishes the Prison Rule Book.

WARDEN: Now line it up inmate!

Sophie joins a line of other terrified women, all wearing civilian clothes.

Two guards stroll in.

WARDEN: Get these fish ready for the tank, would you?

GUARD: Inmates! Get in line!

The music starts to pump as the inmates are lined up and stripped of their clothes.

WARDEN: Listen up you little fishies
If you want to survive in the clink
You gotta abide by the rules I set
Or else you're going to sink!

GUARD: Bend over!

The inmates bend over and are cavity searched by the guards.

WARDEN: Rule One: No contraband items
No knives, guns, booze or shanks
No make-up, magazines, chocolate or hose
Not when you're in my tank

GUARD: Hey, I found something!

He pulls a necklace out from its hiding place in one of the inmates' bras.

The Warden examines it with a wide grin.

INMATE: Please, it was my mother's-

WARDEN: This is a pretty serious offense. What do you say boys, another fifteen years?

INMATE: No!

The Warden cackles.

WARDEN: It's fish eat fish in prison

I know that it's not ideal
But a mistake like that, no matter how small
Means you're going to end up a meal!

GUARD: Put these on.

He throws uniforms at the women, who scramble into them.

WARDEN: Rule number two is easy
Only idiots don't abide
You dress how I want, and you go where I say
Don't argue, there's nowhere to hide

Rule number three, you'll love it
It's such an easy thing to do
You eat what I tell you, when I sprinkle it in
Oh I'm too good to you!

GUARD: Line it up!

The prisoners once again form a line and are each handed a card.

WARDEN: Yes, it's fish eat fish in prison
You won't get back the time you've spent
But if prison was a nice jolly holiday
They wouldn't call it punishment!

As the Warden sings, the new inmates turn left, right and front on, getting their photographs taken.

WARDEN: Rule number four's a doozy
No sex while you're doing your time
We can't have you having too much fun inside
Or else everyone will commit a crime!

GUARD: Time for inspection!

The Warden walks down the line, inspecting each of the prisoners.

WARDEN: Now listen really closely
I'm going to tell you 'bout rule five
It's the most important rule of all
Essential if you want to survive

If I hear a little whisper
A little bump or scratch or scrape
You'll be breaking the most solid rule
You must never try to escape!

Inmates that think they're clever
The ones who have just got to go and spoil it
Have only got one thing coming
Flushed down the toilet!

WARDEN: Take them to their cells!!

GUARD: Follow me, inmates.

The new prisoners are led into the cells.

WARDEN: Yes it's fish eat fish in prison!
And you all live here in my tank
Rent free living and three meals a day
So what if you occasionally get shanked?

The rest of the prison, inmates and guards start to join in, singing directly to Sophie.

ALL: It's fish eat fish in prison girl
So you better start putting up a fight
'Cause the way you're looking and the way you're cooking
It looks like we got us a bite!
Looks like we got us a bite
A bite, a bite, a bite

The Warden cackles.

A loud buzzing noise sounds.

GUARD: Time for lock up!

ALL: A bite, a bite, a bite a BITE.

On the final syllable all the lights go out, apart from the one highlighting Sophie's cell.

Scene Two

Sophie is clearly terrified.

The silence is filled by the noises of other inmates.

A cough.

Two knocks on the ground.

An inmate cries out.

Someone drags a cup against the iron bars.

This rhythm repeats until-

GUARD: Hey! Knock it off!!

Silence.

Sophie forlornly leans against the bars of her cell.

SOPHIE: Stuck in a cage
A cage I now live
I don't know how I got here and I'm shivering in fear

Stuck in a cage
With no one who's on my side
I know the truth within me
But there's no-one I can confide

Stuck in a cage
In a place I don't belong
I'm innocent of any crime
I'm doing somebody else's time
But no one will hear me here inside
I'm stuck, stuck in a cage

The Guard raps his baton on the bars of Sophie's cell.

GUARD: OI! Shut it! You're a jailbird, not a canary!

Sophie lets out a forlorn sigh as the lights go out.

Scene Three

With an almighty buzzing sound, the lights come up and the prison doors open.

GUARD: Wakey wakey ladies! Rise and shine! It's another beautiful day…that you will not get to see!

WILEY LIFER: Oh, you think you're funny Screw?

GUARD: A woman in a bar told me I was, so yeah, I guess I do.

WILEY LIFER: Women are liars. You should know that by now.

The Guard violently takes the Wiley Lifer by the arm.

GUARD: You listen to me, enough of your lip, I am funny.

WILEY LIFER: Let go of me! I bruise like a peach!

GUARD: I want you to say it.

WILEY LIFER: Say what? What are you talking about?

GUARD: Say I'm funny!

WILEY LIFER: You're hilarious, a hoot, everything you say is a goddam knee slapper!

The Guard finally releases his grip.

GUARD: Now that wasn't so hard was it?

He walks away.

WILEY LIFER: Asshole.

She notices Sophie, who has witnessed the whole exchange.

WILEY LIFER: What are you lookin' at?

SOPHIE: Nothing! I didn't know they could hurt you like that.

WILEY LIFER: Honey, that was nothing. I got bruises on parts of my body I didn't know I had.

SOPHIE: Oh dear.

WILEY LIFER: It's your first time isn't it?

SOPHIE: Is it that obvious?

WILEY LIFER: Come with me kid, I'll show you the ropes.

The Wiley Lifer and Sophie each grab a tray and find a seat at a table.

WILEY LIFER: So, what are you in for?

SOPHIE: Uh, murder, I didn't do it though! I'm innocent.

WILEY LIFER: Oh sure, we're all innocent in here.

SOPHIE: I really am though.

WILEY LIFER: Look, kid, here's your first piece of advice. I'd keep that shit to yourself if I were you. You don't want people round here thinking you're an easy target.

SOPHIE: So, I should go around telling people I'm in for triple homicide?

WILEY LIFER: Couldn't hurt.

Buddy comes and joins their table.

BUDDY: Every morning the same dilemma. I'm starving, but all the food here makes me want to throw up. Go figure.

WILEY LIFER: Buddy, this is the new fish.

BUDDY: Nice to meet you fishy, a real pleasure. Old Wiley here been showing you the ropes?

SOPHIE: A little.

BUDDY: You tell her about Crazyface?

WILEY LIFER: I'm getting to it, Jesus!

BUDDY: Look, see that woman sitting behind you. The one eating next to the Guard.

Sophie turns.

BUDDY: Don't make it so obvious!!

Sophie tries to look at her out of the corner of her eye.

BUDDY: That's Crazyface. Stay away from her.

WILEY LIFER: She's dangerous.

SOPHIE: Why? What did she do?

BUDDY: What hasn't she done? She knows she's never getting out of here so she's got nothing to lose.

WILEY LIFER: Let's just say she's shank-happy if you know what I mean.

GUARD: Having a real cosy little chinwag, aren't you girls? What are you chatting about?

WILEY LIFER: The usual. Flowers. Nail polish.

BUDDY: Which boys we have a crush on.

GUARD: Well, I only see one boy around here.

BUDDY: You do the math then.

GUARD: Catch you later Buddy.

The Guard saunters off.

WILEY LIFER: Jesus, is that still going on?

BUDDY: What? My parole hearing is coming up. He said he'll put in a good word.

WILEY LIFER: That's not all he's putting in.

SOPHIE: You're sleeping with him??

BUDDY: Hey, quiet down! Yes, I am, ok? He's not the best guy in the world but…he's the only guy in my world right now. Plus he gives me certain privileges.

WILEY LIFER: I'm sure he does…

BUDDY: I can get anything I want. Make up, magazines…controlled substances, he gets it all for me.

WILEY LIFER: For the low, low price of your self-respect.

BUDDY: Don't you judge me, if you were in my position, you would do the same. Plus, it ain't so bad.

Buddy stands up on the table.

BUDDY: I wouldn't say it was love at first sight

Guard stands up on another table.

GUARD: I first saw her under fluorescent light

BUDDY: He held my hand as he took my prints

GUARD: I like to think that she got the hint

BUDDY & GUARD: Love can be found when you're the only folks around. That's a prison romance.

BUDDY: We didn't take it slow, it all moved very fast

GUARD: I didn't know if it was gonna last

BUDDY: Our first date was in my cell

GUARD: Cover up the bars and it could be a motel!

BUDDY & GUARD: Love can be found when you're the only folks around. That's a prison romance.

BUDDY: I don't know I'd like him on the outside

GUARD: She thinks I'm rich and I kinda lied

BUDDY: But for now it's nice to have a fling

GUARD: She's my best girl on the G-Wing.

BUDDY & GUARD: Love can be found when you're the only folks around. That's a prison romance.

BUDDY: Love can be found…

GUARD: When you're the only guy around…

BUDDY & GUARD: That's a prison romance.

A loud buzzing alarm sounds.

GUARD: Breakfast is over ladies.

The women peel away.

Scene Four

GUARD: You, fish, come with me. I'll take you to your cell.

SOPHIE: But I already have a cell?

GUARD: (impersonating her) "I already have a cell." That was a holding cell dumbshit. It's time to meet your new cellmate.

SOPHIE: Cellmate?

GUARD: Yeah. You know I don't often feel sorry for inmates, but today my heart goes out to you it really does. Meet your new cellmate.

The lights illuminate Sophie's new cell, revealing Crazyface.

SOPHIE: She's my cellmate? But she's dangerous!!

GUARD: One of the worst cons we've ever had.

SOPHIE: But doesn't she…kill prisoners?

GUARD: You've been listening to too much gossip. She doesn't kill prisoners. Only one. Her last cellmate.

The Guard shoves her into the cell.

GUARD: Nice to see you Crazyface. I got a new friend for ya. Careful with this one.

Crazyface growls in return.

GUARD: Easy there tiger. Have fun ladies.

He observes them in their cell for a moment.

GUARD: Aww, look at you two there. Two girls, on the cusp of friendship. You'll be braiding each other's hair and telling secrets in no time. That is if you don't kill each other.

The Guard turns to leave.

SOPHIE: Wait! Aren't you going to stay?

GUARD: I'm clocking off honey. Not all of us have to be here 24/7.

The Guard exits.

Sophie stands as far away from Crazyface as possible.

SOPHIE: Do you have a preference of bunks?

Crazyface just stares at her.

SOPHIE: Like top, or bottom or….?

Crazyface continues to stare.

SOPHIE: So if I just took the-

Sophie moves towards the bottom bunk.

Crazyface growls.

SOPHIE: Ok! Ok! I'm sorry.

Sophie hoists herself up onto the top bunk.

Crazyface rolls onto the bottom bunk.

Crazyface begins rhythmically kicking Sophie's mattress.

Sophie tries to ignore it at first.

But Crazyface keeps doing it, kicking harder and harder.

Eventually Sophie leaps off the bed.

Crazyface grins at her.

Sophie goes to sit down at the small desk and table they have in their cell.

CRAZYFACE: Don't!

SOPHIE: What? Sorry!

CRAZYFACE: That's my area, you don't sit there.

SOPHIE: Ok! Ok!

CRAZYFACE: If you touch anything in my area I'll-

Crazyface lifts up her shirt to reveal a shank tucked into her waistband.

SOPHIE: Ok, ok, I understand. I'm sorry.

Pause.

SOPHIE: Is there anywhere I can go…that you feel comfortable me being uh…?

CRAZYFACE: The bed is fine.

SOPHIE: Ok.

Sophie gets back up on the top bunk.

The lights go down as Crazyface starts rhythmically kicking the mattress again.

Lights come up.

GUARD: Morning ladies. Rise and shine! Fish! You made it through the night, congratulations. You turning over a new leaf Crazyface?

Crazyface hisses at him as she leaves her cell.

GUARD: You, fish, come with me. Time to visit the Doc.

SOPHIE: There's so much coming and going here.

GUARD: What did you say?

SOPHIE: Go here, stand there, do this.

GUARD: Well you should have thought of that before you broke the law.

SOPHIE: Yes, Sir, sorry.

The Guard leads Sophie to a small room with a bed.

GUARD: Wait there. He'll be in soon.

Sophie sits on the bed, looking nervous.

Suddenly, the lights change. They become Broadway, theatrical. The Doctor is silhouetted in front of the lights. He wears a white coat and a big pair of angel wings.

THE DOCTOR: You are all bad women
That's why you are here
You spend all day pining in your cells
Hoping a savior would appear

I'm a male caretaker
Get acquainted with me
I can help a young lady
Back to domesticity

You've fallen off the wagon
Fallen in with a bad crowd?
Well I'm here to catch ya
And turn your life around

Don't worry, I've seen it all
I've seen fallen women
Fall as far as you can fall

I'll catch, ya
I'll catch ya
I've caught them all
You can't run from me baby
Not inside these prison walls
I'll catch ya
I'll catch ya
Run as hard as you can
I'll catch up to you
'Cause I'm the man

Hey lady, take a seat
No need to take off your clothes
My diagnosis is complete

Looking at your case
I've become convinced
That what you're really missing is
Some masculine influence

Don't worry, the treatments here
I'll be your man
You have nothing to fear

'Cause I'll catch ya
I'll catch ya
You won't get away
Comply with me
Or in prison you'll stay
Yes I'll catch ya
I'll catch ya
Try as hard as you can
I'll catch up to you
'Cause I'm the man

The Doctor approaches Sophie.

Every so often
I'll get a special case
A lady whose imprisonment
Is a surely a mistake

You've caught me
You've caught me
You've caught my eye
Under this white coat
I'm just a regular guy

I've decided I'm going to be your beau
And the power imbalance means that
You can't say no!

The Doctor sweeps Sophie up in what he believes is a romantic kiss.

THE DOCTOR: I caught ya

I gotcha
I've saved your life
And if you're lucky one day
You might become my wife!
And do my cooking
And cleaning
Whatever I need
I saved you remember
So you can never leave!
Yes I caught ya
I caught ya
I caught ya
And don't you know
Now I've gotcha I'll never let you go.

Final pose!

THE DOCTOR: That's it Sophie. You can return to your cell now.

SOPHIE: Thanks Doctor.

Sophie turns to go.

THE DOCTOR: Sophie, before you go, I just want to let you know…I believe you.

SOPHIE: You do?

THE DOCTOR: I've seen a lot of girls come through here. All of them say they're innocent. But you're different Sophie, you're special. There's something pure about you.

SOPHIE: That's reassuring to hear, but what good is that to me? I'm here. I'm stuck.

THE DOCTOR: I'll make no guarantees but there's a few phone calls I can make.

SOPHIE: Really? You would do that?

THE DOCTOR: I guess I'm just that kind of guy. I can't resist a pretty girl.

He gives Sophie a lingering kiss.

THE DOCTOR: Now hurry back to your cell. I don't want you getting in trouble. Well, more trouble than you're already in.

SOPHIE: Goodbye Doctor…and thank you.

Scene Five

Sophie and Crazyface relax in their cell.

Sophie is fiddling with a piece of paper.

CRAZYFACE: What are you doing?

SOPHIE: It's just silly…

CRAZYFACE: I want to know.

SOPHIE: Ok.

Sophie holds up a Fortune Teller.

SOPHIE: Did you ever make one of these as a kid?

CRAZYFACE: No. What is it?

SOPHIE: It's a little fortune teller game? You know you put numbers on it and in the middle there's answers like, who you're going to marry…how many children you are going to have…stuff like that.

CRAZYFACE: Do me.

SOPHIE: Ok, um…pick a number.

CRAZYFACE: Three.

SOPHIE: Pick another number.

CRAZYFACE: Seven.

SOPHIE: Seven, ok. Um, you are going to live in a mansion and have four children.

Crazyface doesn't say anything.

SOPHIE: It's stupid, it's just a stupid kids' game.

Crazyface snatches the fortune teller out of Sophie's hands and rips it up.

She storms out of their cell.

CRAZYFACE: Breakfast.

Sophie waits a moment before following her out.

Sophie sits down at her usual table.

Crazyface once again sits alone.

BUDDY: Hey, I heard about your cellmate.

WILEY LIFER: Bad luck kid.

BUDDY: I got a shank you can borrow?

WILEY LIFER: I've got a piece of rope. I've been saving it, but I think you should have it.

SOPHIE: I'll let you know.

WILEY LIFER: Oh Jesus, don't look now.

BUDDY: She's back from solitary? Already?

WILEY LIFER: Probably even the walls got sick of her.

SOPHIE: Who are you talking about?

WILEY LIFER: Her.

Suddenly, the lights change. The inmates (apart from Sophie) take their food trays and use them like chorus girls' fans.

They open them up to reveal…

PRISON LESBIAN: Welcome to prison new girl
There's a lot of new stuff for you to know
Some women call me dangerous
But you can call me 'Jo'

Life inside can get hard
Especially with the lack of men
That why I've taken upon myself
To be the Prison Lesbian!

The music kicks up to a higher tempo, the other inmates form a chorus line.

CHORUS: She's the baddest
She's the worst
So masculine and violent too
You better hope fishy
That she sets her sights
On someone other than you!

PRISON LESBIAN: Oh I play my part well
And I really relish in my role
I got a violent streak and
A tendency to lose control.

Oh new girl, don't be scared
Of the physical strength I hold
I'm perfectly willing to give my jacket
To a woman when she gets cold.

Regard my manly garb
And my patriarchal gaze
There's no men in prison, it's the perfect time
For an experimental phase!

CHORUS: Don't listen to her lies
She's trying to get you hooked
Oh little fishy don't take the bait
This woman is a crook!

PRISON LESBIAN: When I find a lady that I want
A lady that fills me with desire
I pursue her ruthlessly because I think
That God loves a trier

I'm a violent kind of gal
I've got a bit of a temper
I suppose that's 'cause I don't conform
To the binary of gender!

I'm more masculine than a man
And I lust for every inmate
And if you dare reject me you're gonna find
I'll scare you till you're not straight

CHORUS: We're not straight!
We're not straight!
She's scared us so we're not straight!

PRISON LESBIAN: Yes, I've got no time for boys
I've got no time for fellows
And if my opinion is a problem with you
Then send me to the gallows!

I'll be there for my girls
Soon you'll forget about men
It's my duty and my honour to be
To be your Prison Lesbian!

Final pose!

The Prison Lesbian steps towards Sophie.

PRISON LESBIAN: Well well well, what do we have here. A brand new fishy, fresh out of the ocean.

WILEY LIFER: Buzz off fly, there's nothing for you round here.

PRISON LESBIAN: If I'm a fly, that makes you shit. Dog shit. Old dog shit, you know the kind that's turned white and crumbly. Not like this one.

The Prison Lesbian comes up close to Sophie.

PRISON LESBIAN: No, you look like a big fresh turd to me.

BUDDY: You always did have such a way with words.

PRISON LESBIAN: Hey fishy, I'm on g-wing. Come visit sometime.

BUDDY: She's not going to visit you. She's got enough common sense!

PRISON LESBIAN: I'd shut your mouth if I were you. Don't you have a parole hearing coming up?

BUDDY: Yeah. What's it to you?

PRISON LESBIAN: Well, I would just hate for someone to tip off the Warden about all the contraband items you got in your cell. And how you came to get them.

BUDDY: You wouldn't!

PRISON LESBIAN: There's not a lot I wouldn't do. Or haven't done. Now fishy, where was I…

GUARD: Alright ladies, break it up, it's time for work detail.

The women break away.

The Prison Lesbian blows a kiss as she walks away.

WILEY LIFER: You had better be careful.

BUDDY: I'm not afraid of her. Come on fish, let's see if we can get you a job in the laundry room.

GUARD: Not so fast fish, the doctor wants to see you.

Scene Six

Sophie waits on the examination table.

The Doctor enters.

THE DOCTOR: Sophie. I've got something to tell you. It may not be much, but I've got a friend in the DA's office who said they might be able to get you a new trial.

SOPHIE: Really? Oh my God, I can't believe it!

THE DOCTOR: Don't get your hopes up, I can't promise anything. I don't make promises I can't keep.

SOPHIE: Ok.

THE DOCTOR: I'm a really good guy.

SOPHIE: I know you are.

THE DOCTOR: But think about it Sophie, you could be free, you could be out of here!

SOPHIE: I didn't even dare to dream!

THE DOCTOR: And it all will have been because of me.

SOPHIE: Yes, and I'm so grateful.

THE DOCTOR: I thought that news might put a little spring in your step.

He slaps her on her butt.

THE DOCTOR: Now run along, I'm sure you have some cleaning to do!

SOPHIE: Thank you Doctor, I won't ever be able to repay you!

Sophie rushes excitedly back to her cell.

The Prison Lesbian suddenly steps in and blocks her way.

SOPHIE: Can you get out of my way please?

PRISON LESBIAN: What's your rush little fishy? You got somewhere to be?

The Prison Lesbian continues to block her way.

SOPHIE: Look, I'm not interested, ok? I just want to get back to my cell.

PRISON LESBIAN: Playing hard to get are we? I like a challenge!

The Prison Lesbian chases Sophie around trying to give her a kiss. Suddenly, Crazyface appears behind them.

CRAZYFACE: Hey. Knock that off.

The Prison Lesbian immediately stops chasing Sophie.

PRISON LESBIAN: You got a claim on this one?

CRAZYFACE: She's my cellmate.

PRISON LESBIAN: That doesn't mean shit.

CRAZYFACE: I told you to knock it off. So knock it off.

Crazyface leans in close to the Prison Lesbian, so she can feel the shank.

PRISON LESBIAN: Ok boss, ok! Jesus. No need to get all stabby. This ain't over fish.

The Prison Lesbian storms off.

SOPHIE: Thank you.

CRAZYFACE: For what?

SOPHIE: For…that.

CRAZYFACE: Don't mention it.

Crazyface walks off, leaving Sophie alone and confused.

Later, she sits down for lunch.

BUDDY: How's it going with your cellie?

WILEY LIFER: You know, I was serious about that rope.

SOPHIE: I think I'll be ok. I don't know…she kind of seems alright.

BUDDY: Alright?

WILEY LIFER: That's the most dangerous woman in this prison. Do you know what she did?

SOPHIE: I know she killed her last cellmate.

BUDDY: That's after she got into prison!

WILEY LIFER: I'm talking about before! What she did to get in here!

BUDDY: She killed her children fish.

WILEY LIFER: The worst crime a woman could do.

SOPHIE: I didn't know that.

WILEY LIFER: Well, now you know it, you might not think she's just 'alright' anymore.

BUDDY: We may be criminals, but we at least got some standards.

A loud buzzing noise suddenly sounds.

WILEY LIFER: What now?

GUARD: PA: All prisoners return to your cells.

Sophie, Wiley and Buddy look quizzically at each other before moving back to their cells.

WILEY LIFER: Hey, what's going on?

GUARD: The prison's gone into lockdown. Someone found a knife in the laundry room.

BUDDY: The whole prison goes into lock down because of one stupid knife?

GUARD: Knives are a banned item, in case you forgot. Now get back to your cells.

Sophie and Crazyface make their way back to their cell.

SOPHIE: Hey, thanks…for before.

CRAZYFACE: I didn't do anything.

SOPHIE: Well, you did, and I appreciate it.

CRAZYFACE: She's a pest.

SOPHIE: Yeah, I'm really glad I'm not celled with her.

CRAZYFACE: Instead you got me.

SOPHIE: I don't think you're so bad.

Sophie limbs up on her bunk.

Crazyface starts kicking her mattress again.

SOPHIE: Can you stop that?

Crazyface grins.

CRAZYFACE: I was wondering when you were going to tell me to cut it out.

SOPHIE: You were just messing with me?

CRAZYFACE: Guilty.

SOPHIE: You asshole!

Laughing, Sophie pulls her pillow off her bed and hits Crazyface.

Giggling, Crazyyface hits her back.

Suddenly, in the commotion Sophie knocks a poster off the wall, revealing a giant hole.

Crazyface's demeanor completely changes.

She scrambles and pulls the poster over the hole.

SOPHIE: Oh my God…is that?

CRAZYFACE: You didn't see anything.

SOPHIE: How long have you been working on that?

CRAZYFACE: Few months.

SOPHIE: When are you gonna, you know…?

CRAZYFACE: I don't know. It's not finished yet.

SOPHIE: Wow.

CRAZYFACE: If you tell anyone about this-

SOPHIE: -I won't, I promise.

CRAZYFACE: Good. Because you know how I killed my last cellmate? Well, she was going to rat on me.

SOPHIE: I promise, I won't say a word.

GUARD: Ok, ladies, lock down is officially over.

He unlocks their cell.

Sophie quickly walks out leaving Crazyface alone.

She encounters Buddy.

SOPHIE: Hey. What about that lockdown huh?

BUDDY: Fish, uh…

SOPHIE: Something wrong buddy?

BUDDY: It's the laundry room…I got you a job in the laundry room.

SOPHIE: Oh you did? That's great.

BUDDY: Only, you gotta go down there right away.

SOPHIE: Right now? Sure.

BUDDY: Good luck.

Sophie walks into the laundry room.

SOPHIE: Hello?

The Prison Lesbian steps out of the shadows.

PRISON LESBIAN: Splish splash little fish.

SOPHIE: Do you mind? I'm waiting for someone.

PRISON LESBIAN: About a job in the laundry?

SOPHIE: How did you…?

PRISON LESBIAN: Like I said, your friend has her parole hearing coming up.

SOPHIE: Buddy, no, she wouldn't have…

PRISON LESBIAN: She did. You don't make friends in prison. Only alliances. That being said, I can be awful friendly…

SOPHIE: Leave me alone.

PRISON LESBIAN: You're all tough now, now you've got your little cellie looking after you. Well guess what? We're all alone down here. I checked.

SOPHIE: Well in that case, I'm leaving.

The Prison Lesbian stops her.

PRISON LESBIAN: Not so fast. You heard they found a knife in the laundry room?

SOPHIE: Sure, I heard that.

PRISON LESBIAN: It's amazing. Incredible. That they only found one.

The Prison Lesbian pulls a knife out from under the table.

PRISON LESBIAN: Now you're going to do what I say or that pretty little face won't be so pretty anymore.

SOPHIE: Guards! Guards!

PRISON LESBIAN: They can't hear you. No one can hear you. I told you, we're all alone down here. Now take off your shirt.

SOPHIE: But I-

PRISON LESBIAN: I said take off your shirt.

Sophie begins to comply when suddenly the Wiley Lifer comes into the room.

WILEY LIFER: Buddy told me-

SOPHIE: Go get a guard, anyone!! Help me!!

Wiley sprints out of the room.

PRISON LESBIAN: You're going to pay for that you little bitch!!

The Prison Lesbian goes to strike but at the last second the Guard rushes in and stops her.

GUARD: Oh no you don't!!

PRISON LESBIAN: I'm going to get what I want, and you are not going to stop me.

The Prison Lesbian lashes out at the Guard who takes out his gun.

She cackles.

PRISON LESBIAN: I'm not afraid of you
I always catch my prey
It's moments like this I get to show
The reason I'm locked away

You think you're quite a man?
Well I got some news for you
I'm twenty times more man than you'll ever be
And had more women than you to boot!

I'm the Prison Lesbian!
You'll never take me down!
Men have tried and failed to get rid of me
And I always stick a-

The Guard pulls out his gun and shoots the Prison Lesbian.

She dies loudly and dramatically.

The Guard pulls out his radio.

GUARD: I'm going to need some assistance in the laundry room.

WILEY LIFER: Come on Sophie, come on.

Wiley leads Sophie away.

GUARD: It was self-defense, right? You'll back me up on that?

SOPHIE: Yes. I saw everything.

GUARD: Good, good.

WILEY LIFER: Come on Soph.

The Wiley Lifer leads Sophie back to her cell. They sit together on the bed.

WILEY LIFER: You know, what's funny is I was coming to give you this.

Wily pulls out a shank and hands it to Sophie.

SOPHIE: For me? Why?

WILEY LIFER: For protection. Everyone has one.

SOPHIE: I don't want it.

WILEY LIFER: Hey, don't be stupid. After what happened today, you need all the protection you can get.

Sophie is still unsure.

WILEY LIFER: Look, I'm not saying use it. I'm just saying take it. You never know when it might come in handy.

Crazyface returns to her cell.

WILEY LIFER: And that's my cue. See you around Soph.

The Wiley Lifer leaves.

Scene Eight

CRAZYFACE: I heard what happened.

SOPHIE: Yeah.

CRAZYFACE: Listen, today is the day. It's ready.

SOPHIE: What? Really?

CRAZYFACE: Come with me. Come with me to freedom.

SOPHIE: I can't, I…I can't. I'm getting out of here. Legitimately.

CRAZYFACE: The Doctor tell you that?

SOPHIE: How did you know?

CRAZYFACE: Listen, kid, he tells every girl with a pretty face about his friend in the DA's office that's going to get you a new trial.

SOPHIE: I thought I was special?

CRAZYFACE: Well you ain't. But you can still get outta here. With me.

SOPHIE: I'm not sure.

CRAZYFACE: But that was the plan. That was the plan all along.

SOPHIE: That wasn't my understanding, I thought-

CRAZYFACE: No, no, no, that was the plan! I show you the hole and you come with me, that's the plan!

SOPHIE: I won't tell anyone!

CRAZYFACE: I can't trust you!!

Crazyface takes out a knife and attacks Sophie.

The two fight viciously in their cell, but eventually Sophie gets the better of Crazyface and stabs her right in the gut.

Crazyface goes down.

Sophie drops the knife in horror.

Everyone rushes in to see the commotion.

GUARD: Another one!!

WILEY LIFER: Sophie!

SOPHIE: It was self-defense!

GUARD: Nice try! I need some help here!

SOPHIE: No, please.

BUDDY: Sophie, I can't believe you would do this.

The Doctor rushes in.

THE DOCTOR: I thought you were special!! Turns out you were a criminal like all the rest of them!

The Guard comforts the hysterical Doctor.

SOPHIE: I didn't I-

WARDEN: Well, well, well, I didn't know you had it in you.

SOPHIE: I didn't mean to-

WARDEN: Guards! Arrest that woman!

The company gathers around Sophie and sings.

CHORUS: What a nice girl!
What a sad tale!

SOPHIE: I tried to resist the criminal life
But alas I have failed!

WARDEN: This woman is a disgrace
Within these walls she's stayed
I thought that she was good
But now I feel I've been betrayed!!

WARDEN: Take her away boys, take her maximum security! Where she belongs!

Sophie is handcuffed by two guards and pulled away. She struggles and fights.

SOPHIE: I wasn't a criminal before
But I guess that I am now
I came in here pure of heart
And these women dragged me into hell!

WARDEN: The evidence is all right here, the DA is on his way. He's calling this one a 'slam dunk'.

THE DOCTOR: I hereby release you
I don't want you any more
I wanted a good wife
Not a murdering whore!

THE DOCTOR: Lock her up and throw away the key!

SOPHIE: Wait no!!

Sophie is dragged offstage.

CHORUS: This is not an indictment
Of the penal system
The system works great
But bad nuts always sneak in

WARDEN: Prison is not the problem

It's stories like this
That reinforce to me
How necessary prison is!

CHORUS: Yes prison's not the problem
It's worked well for years
Why fix what ain't broke?
We need to lock up those we fear

Prison is not the problem
It keeps the murderers at bay
The thieves and the addicts
We'll make sure no one gets away

Prison is not the problem
Some women are just bad
They need to be locked away
Because they're just evil, sick and mad

Yes prison is not the problem
Prison is just great
Prison is one of the best things
Implemented by the state

Let's say it one more time
Prison works real well
Prison is just grand
Prison is the answer
To the question of the bad
Prison is outstanding
Prison is the best
Prison is the only place that
Crime takes a rest
Prison is amazing
Let's say it one more time
Prison's not the problem
You've just got to do your time!

Big, cheesy, jazz hands showbiz finish!

Act Two

All of the actors remain present on stage throughout the play. They move sets, adjust lights and are always watching what is happening.

Sophie, a new prisoner, is hustled onto the stage, escorted by a prison guard. He deposits her in a prison cell.

SOPHIE: Can I have my phone call now?

GUARD: What?

SOPHIE: In the movies, you always get a phone call. I need to talk to someone.

GUARD: Not here. Someone will be back soon.

SOPHIE: But wait, what's going to happen to me?

GUARD: I don't know, I just got told to put you under lock. Someone will be by soon.

SOPHIE: But-

The Guard locks Sophie's cell, walks away, leaving Sophie alone in the cell.

Sophie starts anxiously pacing her cell.

She can't keep still. She sits on the bed, looks out the window, paces.

Suddenly, the Guard walks in with another prisoner, Joan, whom he deposits in a cell opposite Sophie.

Sophie notices the activity. She speaks to the guard through the hatch in her door.

SOPHIE: Hey, hey! Can you tell me anything? Does my family know I'm here? Am I going to get any food?

GUARD: Look, as I said before, I don't know anything, I just get told what to do. Someone will probably come see you soon.

SOPHIE: I'm hungry!

GUARD: Me too.

The Guard walks away and takes up a post between the two cells.

Sophie tries to speak to Joan through the hatch. Joan is just sitting on her bed.

SOPHIE: Hello? Hello?

No response from Joan.

SOPHIE: Hello?

GUARD: Hey, be quiet, don't talk to her.

SOPHIE: I just want to know what's going on!

GUARD: I keep telling you, you'll find out soon. Now just be quiet, it's annoying.

Sophie closes her hatch.

Sophie starts pacing again.

Emma, another prisoner, enters carrying a mop and bucket. She begins mopping the corridor between the two cells. Sophie watches her through the hatch.

GUARD: So, you're the wing cleaner now? When did that happen?

EMMA: Last week.

GUARD: You better do a good job.

EMMA: I have had no complaints so far.

GUARD: You missed a spot, there.

EMMA: I didn't miss it, I was getting to it.

GUARD: What cleaning product are you using?

EMMA: Oh my god, why do you care?

GUARD: Well I gotta work here! It's not good for me if the place is dirty!

EMMA: If you just let me clean it, it won't be dirty anymore!

GUARD: That's talking back, I should write you up for that.

Emma doesn't say anything, she just continues mopping.

EMMA: Is that to your satisfaction, Sir?

GUARD: It's fine. Hurry up, it's almost unlock.

EMMA takes her mop and bucket off. Sophie closes her hatch.

Sophie remains sitting on the floor. Joan is still on her bed. Guard shuffles in place.

Suddenly, a loud buzzing noise goes off.

Guard walks offstage.

Sophie peeks through the hatch.

SOPHIE: Hey! What does that sound mean?

No response from Joan.

SOPHIE: I didn't think it was going to be like this. They took my undies. That's so weird. And I don't have any of my stuff…

There is a loud buzzing sound. The Guard unlocks Sophie's cell.

GUARD: Ok, you're on unlock.

Guard unlocks Joan's cell and she wanders out.

SOPHIE: Where's the phone?

GUARD: You got a phone card?

SOPHIE: Uh, no, can I get one?

GUARD: Your family's got to send you one. Plus you need to get your phone numbers approved.

SOPHIE: How do I do that?

GUARD: Someone will bring round a form.

SOPHIE: I need to talk to my family, they don't know what's happening-

GUARD: You can write them a letter.

SOPHIE: I don't have a pen or paper or anything.

GUARD: I'll look into that for you.

SOPHIE: When can I get my phone numbers approved?

GUARD: Can you just stop with the questions, ok? It's really annoying. How about you just assume that when I have some information pertinent to you, I will share it with you alright?

SOPHIE: Alright. I've just never done this before, this is my first time here and I'm...I don't know.

GUARD: Your first couple of days are going to be weird. But then they'll put you in remand and you'll get a cellmate and you can start building your routines, you'll be fine.

SOPHIE: Alright. Thanks.

GUARD: Now get out of here, you've only got a couple of hours out, don't waste it.

SOPHIE: Ok. Can I go outside?

GUARD: No.

SOPHIE: Ok. Um…

GUARD: Go watch TV. It's over there.

The inmates move the set around to make it a television room.

Sophie walks over to a group of prisoners who are watching the television. None of them are speaking.

Sophie finds herself a seat.

Sophie attempts to make eye contact with Joan, who is sitting next to her, but Joan's eyes remain fixed on the screen.

GUARD: Sophie Treadway?

SOPHIE: Yes?

GUARD: The doctor needs to see you.

The other inmates titter.

SOPHIE: Why?

GUARD: Why do you always ask so many questions? Come on.

SOPHIE: Why did they laugh just now?

The inmates transition the space into a doctor's office.

Sophie sits on a bed, looking nervous.

A female doctor enters the office.

DOCTOR MILLER: Sophie is it?

SOPHIE: Ah, yes?

DOCTOR MILLER: Good. Now how are you doing?

SOPHIE: I'm alright.

DOCTOR MILLER: Are you having any suicidal thoughts?

SOPHIE: Uh, no I don't think so.

DOCTOR MILLER: You should tell me if you are.

SOPHIE: I'm not.

DOCTOR MILLER: Are you sure?

SOPHIE: Yes.

DOCTOR MILLER: We have to ask. It's your first time isn't it?

SOPHIE: Yes.

DOCTOR MILLER: Ok. Well, welcome I suppose. Now, do you have any health problems we should know about?

SOPHIE: I have asthma I guess.

DOCTOR MILLER: Do you manage that with an inhaler?

SOPHIE: I have an inhaler yeah.

DOCTOR MILLER: Ok, we can continue to sort that out for you.

SOPHIE: Ok. I don't know how long I'm going to be here.

DOCTOR MILLER: I have a couple of questions now, that might be a bit uncomfortable but I do need you to answer them honestly, ok?

SOPHIE: Ok.

DOCTOR MILLER: Do you smoke?

SOPHIE: Yes.

DOCTOR MILLER: How many in a day, would you say?

SOPHIE: I don't know, like ten?

DOCTOR MILLER: Do you drink?

SOPHIE: Yeah.

DOCTOR MILLER: How many standards in a week?

SOPHIE: I don't know.

DOCTOR MILLER: Ballpark figure?

SOPHIE: I don't know…not that much, like a couple of six packs?

DOCTOR MILLER: Ok. And do you take any recreational drugs?

SOPHIE: Yes.

DOCTOR MILLER: Which drugs do you take Sophie?

SOPHIE: Uh I smoke weed.

DOCTOR MILLER: Anything else?

A pause.

DOCTOR MILLER: It's important that you tell me so I can help you.

SOPHIE: Methamphetamine.

DOCTOR MILLER: And when did you last use?

SOPHIE: Yesterday.

DOCTOR MILLER: You feeling ok?

SOPHIE: No. Not really.

DOCTOR MILLER: Keep up your fluids alright? I can give you some Panadol as well.

SOPHIE: You don't have anything like…stronger?

DOCTOR MILLER: I'm sorry. Panadol is the best we can do. It looks like you're in ok shape, you should be moved into remand in the next couple of days.

SOPHIE: What's that?

DOCTOR MILLER: Remand? With everyone else, the other prisoners. You'll be fine.

A pause.

SOPHIE: Is that it?

DOCTOR MILLER: That's it. Here's your Panadol. I can only give you two I'm afraid.

The doctor pushes a button and the guard appears.

DOCTOR MILLER: Ok, she's done.

The guard starts escorting Sophie out of the doctor's room and into her cell.

GUARD: You coming out for drinks tonight?

DOCTOR MILLER: Maybe. I've got some work to get through.

GUARD: You should come, it will be fun.

DOCTOR MILLER: I'll think about it.

The guard puts Sophie back in her cell, locks the door, and takes up a position outside.

Sophie once again sits on her bed.

Emma, another prisoner, enters the wing, holding two trays.

EMMA: I've got dinner for these two.

GUARD: Put it through.

The Guard unlocks the hatch to Joan's cell and Emma slides in the tray. She does the same for Sophie.

GUARD: What's for dinner in the canteen tonight?

EMMA: Some mince thing.

GUARD: It's always some mince thing.

EMMA: You're telling me?

Emma exits the wing.

Sophie eats her sandwich, alone in her cell. A ticking sound begins to sound while she eats.

Emma returns and the Guard unlocks Sophie's hatch. The ticking sound stops.

EMMA: Tray.

Sophie is confused.

GUARD: Put your tray through the hatch.

Sophie does this and the hatch is swiftly locked again.

Emma collects Joan's tray and exits once again.

A loud buzzing sound comes over the intercom.

GUARD: Goodnight ladies, sweet dreams.

The lights go dark.

Sophie remains sitting on her bed.

Slowly, the other women walk towards and surround Sophie's cell. Sophie is unaware of their presence.

The Guard leaves and is replaced by Guard Two.

Sophie uses the toilet in her cell while the women watch.

Sophie undresses and gets into bed. The women press in closer to Sophie's cell, watching her intensely.

With a buzzing sound, the lights snap back into a daytime mode and the women return back to their places.

Guard Two opens up Sophie's door.

GUARD TWO: Ok, you've got an hour.

Sophie dresses and then walks uncertainly out of her cell.

The inmates are once again clustered around the television. Sophie takes a seat on the fringe of the group and watches with them.

EMMA walks up with her bucket and takes a seat next to Sophie.

EMMA: I'm just going to take a little break.

SOPHIE: Sure.

EMMA: This your first time?

SOPHIE: Yeah it is.

EMMA: I thought so.

SOPHIE: I just don't know what's happening, I haven't been able to talk to my family, I don't know what the fuck is going on.

EMMA: They'll probably only keep you here for another day, then you'll go on remand.

SOPHIE: That's where everyone is?

EMMA: Unless you're mental.

SOPHIE: I don't think I am.

EMMA: Yeah, I don't think you are either. It's better once you get down there, the food is better, there are more people to talk to, you can get stuff from the shop.

SOPHIE: What about the phone?

EMMA: You just gotta get your numbers approved and a phone card. Mine took two months to come through.

SOPHIE: Two months? What the hell am I supposed to do? My family have no idea what's going on!

EMMA: You can write them a letter, ask the guard for envelopes and paper.

SOPHIE: Will they give them to me?

EMMA: Depends on who it is. You look like a good girl, they'll probably like you.

A pause. Emma and Sophie watch TV.

SOPHIE: Thank you for telling me all that stuff, I've just been completely freaking out.

EMMA: That's alright. I wish someone had done the same for me when I was new.

SOPHIE: How long have you been here?

EMMA: Almost six years.

SOPHIE: Ok.

A pause.

SOPHIE: Is it hard?

EMMA: It's ok. Some of the other women can be a bit…

SOPHIE: Scary?

EMMA: Bitchy.

Guard Two walks past and spots Emma.

GUARD TWO: Hey, wing cleaner, aren't you supposed to be cleaning?

EMMA: I just sat down for one second!

GUARD TWO: You want me to give that job to someone else?

EMMA: No, I'm doing it!

GUARD TWO: You better be, seriously, otherwise that jobs going to be taken off you.

Emma stands up and starts mopping the floor.

Sophie tentatively approaches Guard Two.

SOPHIE: Hello.

GUARD TWO: What do you want?

SOPHIE: Would I be able to get some paper and envelopes, oh and a pen?

GUARD TWO: I could get you a pencil probably.

SOPHIE: That would be fine, I'll take a pencil!

GUARD TWO: Yeah, I'll see what I can do.

SOPHIE: Thank you, I really appreciate that.

GUARD TWO: Don't be a suck up.

SOPHIE: Ok.

Sophie goes and joins the rest of the inmates watching television.

A loud buzzing noise sounds off.

GUARD TWO: Ok ladies, back to your cells, it's time for lock up.

The prisoners move begrudgingly back to their cells.

GUARD TWO: Hurry it up, move.

Guard Two locks the women back into their cells and once again takes up his post.

Guard One strolls back onto the wing.

GUARD ONE: Can you open up Treadway?

GUARD TWO: Sure.

Guard Two opens up Sophie's cell.

GUARD ONE: Alright, come on.

SOPHIE: Where am I going?

GUARD ONE: You've been approved to go to remand. Get your stuff.

SOPHIE: I don't have anything…

Sophie follows Guard One out of the door.

GUARD ONE: You're going to be in G-4. And your cellie is…Parker. Ok.

SOPHIE: Who is she? Is she alright?

GUARD ONE: Yeah, she's alright. Here we are, home sweet home.

Sophie's cell is very small. The other women hold up the three walls, making it feel very claustrophobic.

GUARD ONE: Parker works in the kitchen. She'll be back soon. So you've got bed, desk, toilet and shower and there's your TV.

SOPHIE: Would I be able to get a pen and paper?

GUARD ONE: You can get it yourself, from the commissary. As long as your money's come through.

SOPHIE: I don't know if it has.

GUARD ONE: Well, that's too bad. You can decorate your side if you want. You can put up pictures and stuff if you want.

SOPHIE: Oh I don't really want to do that.

Guard One looks at Sophie quizzically.

SOPHIE: This isn't my home.

GUARD ONE: Well it is. For the time being anyway. Ok, I've got to lock you up now.

Guard One shuts the door on Sophie.

Sophie surveys her new surroundings.

She turns on the television and watches.

Suddenly, the hatch on Sophie's door opens.

GUARD ONE: Hey, I got you some paper and envelopes. Parker should have a pen.

SOPHIE: Thank you!!

GUARD ONE: Don't worry about it. Is Parker not back yet?

SOPHIE: No, she isn't.

GUARD ONE: She should be by now.

Guard One closes the hatch again.

Sophie sits down at the desk and tentatively looks through Parker's things to find a pen. Eventually she manages to find one and she sits down to write, though clearly uncomfortable about using Parker's things.

Guard One unlocks the door and escorts in Eleanor.

GUARD ONE: Parker, this is your new cellmate Treadway.

SOPHIE: Sophie.

GUARD ONE: I'll leave you two to get to know each other.

Guard One locks the door again.

SOPHIE: Hello, I'm Sophie.

ELEANOR: Yeah, you said.

A pause.

ELEANOR: I'm Eleanor.

SOPHIE: Hi. Nice to meet you.

ELEANOR: Are you using my pen?

SOPHIE: Oh yes, I'm so sorry, I just need to write a letter, my family doesn't-

ELEANOR: It's fine. You can use any of my stuff.

SOPHIE: Thank you.

ELEANOR: This your first time?

SOPHIE: Yes.

ELEANOR: You'll be fine. It's not so bad when you get used to it.

SOPHIE: Ok.

ELEANOR: You got any questions?

SOPHIE: I guess I was wondering is there anyone here I should avoid?

ELEANOR: Well, I usually try to avoid Cheryl-

SOPHIE: What does she look like?

ELEANOR: She's an older lady, blonde hair.

SOPHIE: Ok.

ELEANOR: She's really boring. She'll just talk to you about her grandchildren for like half an hour, she won't even care, she won't let you get away.

SOPHIE: I meant more like, is there anyone dangerous?

ELEANOR: Dangerous? No, not really. There's a few crazies, but if they were going to hurt anyone, they'd hurt themselves.

SOPHIE: Oh ok, that's good I suppose. Not that I think it's good that they'd hurt themselves, obviously, that's bad.

ELEANOR: I know what you mean.

SOPHIE: That's quite a relief actually. I thought there might be someone, you know, like a top dog.

ELEANOR: Yeah, there are some people coming in here thinking they have to act all tough, but it's not really like that.

SOPHIE: No?

ELEANOR: Nah, there's no like, 'top dog' or anything like that. Some people try it, but it doesn't really work out. Oh shit, it's 5:30!

SOPHIE: What happens at 5:30?

ELEANOR: It's 'Home and Away'. Everyone watches it.

A knock on the wall comes from the cell next door.

ELEANOR (*knocking back)*: Yeah, I'm watching it!

Sophie and Eleanor settle in to watch the TV.

The other prisoners in the cell also sit down to watch TV.

ELEANOR: What a dick.

SOPHIE: Sorry?

ELEANOR: This guy, he's an asshole. Kate thinks he's hot though. Everyone gives her shit for it.

Eleanor leans down to yell under the door.

ELEANOR: You like that Kate? Your favourite dickhead is back!

KATE: Like you wouldn't kick him out of bed!

ELEANOR: I would! I'd kick him right in the dick!

Eleanor leans back to watch.

SOPHIE: I've never watched 'Home and Away' before.

ELEANOR: I didn't watch it either, till I got in here. And now I'm like, really into it. Everyone is.

SOPHIE: It's kind of silly. Like how come all this stuff seems to happen to just one town? Why don't they just move?

ELEANOR: Hey that's kind of funny. Are you funny?

SOPHIE: Oh I don't know. I try to be sometimes.

ELEANOR: I think you're funny.

SOPHIE: Thanks.

Suddenly, all of the prisoners start clapping and cheering.

SOPHIE: What's happening??

ELEANOR: These two finally got together, they've been dragging it out for ages!

More whoops and cheers.

ELEANOR: You never see anything though. So don't get too excited.

SOPHIE: You don't see any?

ELEANOR: Sex.

SOPHIE: Oh right.

ELEANOR: You see them before, you see them after, never during.

SOPHIE: That's a shame?

ELEANOR: Damn right it's a shame.

SOPHIE: So you watch this every night?

ELEANOR: Yep. And Shorty at seven.

SOPHIE: Every day?

ELEANOR: You'll get used to it.

The lights go out.

The lights come up as if the sun is rising.

The prisoners are fed breakfast (Weetbix) through their hatch.

They eat breakfast.

They return their trays through the hatch.

A buzzing sound.

GUARD ONE: Rolling lock!

The prisoner's doors are opened and they exit their cells.

Some walk off to go their various courses or programmes. Some mingle in the communal area.

Emma goes to use the phone.

EMMA: Hey mum, how's it going? Yeah, it's alright. No, I haven't heard anything. How's Dad? Oh, hi Dad. Yeah, it has been cold.

Another buzzing sound.

GUARD ONE: Back in your cells ladies!

The prisoners return back to their cells and are locked in by the guards.

The prisoners entertain themselves in their cells by watching TV or writing letters or talking together.

Lunch is served through the hatch (a sandwich)

The prisoners eat.

They return their trays through the hatch.

The guards change over.

Eleanor Blutacks a drawing, clearly done by a child, up on her wall.

A buzzing sound.

GUARD TWO: Rolling lock!

The prisoners once again exit their cells and congregate in a communal area.

Sophie approaches the front desk.

SOPHIE: Ah hello, could I get some tampons please?

A buzzing sound.

GUARD TWO: Make your way back to your cells please ladies. Thank you.

EMMA: Hey, I heard that Maggie's going to DTU.

GUARD TWO: Yeah, so?

EMMA: Who's going to have her job in the kitchen?

GUARD TWO: Don't know yet.

EMMA: Well, I'm just saying, for your consideration.

Emma indicates herself.

GUARD TWO: Don't push it Jacobs.

EMMA: Just saying, a great solution, right here.

Emma indicates herself again.

GUARD TWO: I'll think about it. Get back in your cell.

Emma slinks back to her cell.

The guards lock the prisoners into their cells.

The prisoners loll round in their cells.

They are served dinner through their hatch.

The prisoners eat.

They return their tray through the hatch.

5:30pm, it's time for Home and Away. The theme song plays as the prisoners settle in to watch.

A collective laugh, something funny has happened.

A collective groan.

The programme is finished, the TVs go off and the prisoners entertain themselves in their cells. They pluck each other's eyebrows, colour in, play cards.

7pm, time for Shortland Street. The theme song plays as the prisoners settle in to watch.

Ending credits.

A buzzing sound.

GUARD ONE: Ten minutes till lights out ladies.

The prisoners get ready for bed.

The lights go out. The prisoners sleep, or try to.

Lights come up, it is morning again.

The prisoners are fed breakfast (Weetbix) through their hatch.

They eat breakfast.

They return their trays through the hatch.

A buzzing sound.

GUARD TWO: Alright ladies, time for rolling lock.

The prisoner's doors are opened and they exit their cells.

Some walk off to go to their various courses or programmes. Some mingle in the communal area.

Sophie approaches Guard Two.

SOPHIE: Excuse me? My phone numbers haven't been approved yet.

GUARD TWO: Oh yeah, it can take a long time sometimes.

SOPHIE: Well, how long is it going to take? I haven't been able to speak to my family.

GUARD TWO: I'll look into it for you, how's that?

SOPHIE: Ok, thank you.

Another buzzing sound.

GUARD TWO: Bring it in ladies!

The prisoners return back to their cells and are locked in by the guards.

The prisoners entertain themselves in their cells by watching TV or writing letters or talking together.

Lunch is served through the hatch (a sandwich) (again)

The prisoners eat.

They return their trays through the hatch.

The guards change over.

The prisoners spend time in their cells. Some do push-ups, some read.

A buzzing sound.

GUARD ONE: Rolling lock!

The prisoners once again exit their cells and congregate in a communal area.

GUARD ONE: Hey Parker, I heard you got another parole hearing.

ELEANOR: Yeah. It's not going to happen though.

GUARD ONE: Why not?

ELEANOR: Just got a feeling.

GUARD ONE: You've been in here long enough.

ELEANOR: Yeah.

GUARD ONE: I'm sick of the sight of you.

ELEANOR *(Sarcastically*): Ha ha ha.

GUARD ONE: I think it will go alright. You'll see.

ELEANOR: Thanks.

A buzzing sound.

GUARD ONE: Ok, rolling lock over, back to your cells people, look sharp.

The guards lock the prisoners into their cells.

The prisoners loll round in their cells.

They are served dinner through their hatch.

The prisoners eat.

They return their tray through the hatch.

5:30pm, it's time for Home and Away. The theme song plays as the prisoners settle in to watch.

Eleanor doesn't turn on the TV in her and Sophie's cell.

SOPHIE: Hey, it's time for *Home and Away.*

ELEANOR: I'm not really in the mood.

SOPHIE: Ok, that's fine. *Pause.* You ok?

ELEANOR: I'm fine.

The other prisoners cheer at something that has happened on Home and Away.

Kate yells to Eleanor under the cell door.

KATE: You see that Ellie! Drink it in!

Eleanor yells back under the door.

ELEANOR: I'm not watching. This show is fucking stupid anyway.

KATE: Alright, calm down!

ELEANOR: I'm just going to go to sleep.

Eleanor lies down on her bunk.

Sophie reads.

7pm, time for Shortland Street. The theme song plays as the prisoners settle in to watch. Eleanor remains sleeping and Sophie does not turn on their television.

Ending credits.

A buzzing sound.

GUARD TWO: Lights out!

The lights go out.

The lights come up again, a new day.

Eleanor is dressing up Sophie in a toilet paper costume.

ELEANOR: I'm making you like, a fairy.

SOPHIE: Don't make me look stupid.

ELEANOR: You won't look stupid, you look cute!

Sophie and Eleanor laugh as they finished the costume.

ELEANOR: Ok, I'm done!

SOPHIE: Let me see!

Eleanor holds up a small, compact mirror.

Sophie squints at her reflection.

SOPHIE: It looks good actually!

ELEANOR: I told you!

SOPHIE: Yeah!

A pause.

SOPHIE: I guess um…

ELENOR: I'll help you take it off.

SOPHIE: Thanks.

Together, they rip apart the toilet paper costume and flush it down the toilet.

Suddenly, a loud alarm sounds.

The guards listen to their radios.

GUARD TWO: Ok, it's lockdown. We're in lockdown. A knife is missing from the kitchen.

The prisoners groan.

EMMA: How long is this going to take?

GUARD TWO: As long as it takes.

The alarm stops.

KATE: Are we going to get breakfast?

GUARD TWO: Not right now. Just be patient.

The prisoners start to get restless in their cells.

JUNE: Hey! What's happening? When are we getting out?

GUARD TWO: I've got no more information than you.

JUNE: But I've got visitors coming today!

GUARD TWO: Yeah, well, maybe not.

The prisoners remain locked in their cells. They try to entertain themselves, but are clearly restless and feeling caged.

Guard Two receives a transmission on their radio.

GUARD TWO: Ok. Yep. Got it.

Guard Two opens up Sophie and Eleanor's cell.

GUARD TWO: Alright ladies, stand back, I've got to tip the cell.

ELEANOR: It's not in here!

GUARD TWO: Gotta do it all the same.

Guard Two begins turning everything in the cell upside down, making a huge mess. Eleanor and Sophie stand back and watch.

At the same time, Guard One tips another cell.

GUARD TWO: Alright, clear.

Guards One and Two make their way through each of the cells, completely tearing them apart and then leaving.

When all the cells are done, Guard One and Two meet in the middle.

GUARD ONE: You find anything?

GUARD TWO: Just some extra spray bottles. You?

GUARD ONE: No. Nothing.

GUARD TWO: Ok, so you take G-Wing. I'll stay here.

GUARD ONE: Fine.

Guard One slopes off.

Guard Two takes up their regular position.

The prisoners start to clean up their mess. They make up their beds again, put their posters back on the wall and put their items back in their place.

Guard Two receives another radio transmission.

GUARD TWO: Alright. Rolling lock everyone.

The prisoners release a sigh of relief. The guard goes round to each of the cells and unlocks it.

EMMA: About time.

GUARD ONE: Yeah yeah, enough of the mouth please.

Lights down.

Sophie and Eleanor are cleaning their cell. They use a spray bottle and wipe.

ELEANOR: Do it properly!

SOPHIE: I am!

ELEANOR: That's not properly, you need to really get into all the cracks.

SOPHIE: It wasn't even that dirty to begin with!

ELEANOR: Yes, exactly! If you clean it regularly, it doesn't all pile up.

SOPHIE: There, is that good enough?

ELEANOR: Yeah, it's alright.

SOPHIE: You'll accept that?

ELEANOR: I'll accept that.

SOPHIE: Jesus.

Sophie flops down on the bed.

ELEANOR: You're lucky I'm your cellie. There are some real dirty girls out there.

SOPHIE: I saw Trisha's cell the other day.

ELEANOR: Oh Trisha is fucking gross. She's been moved a bunch of times. I'm lucky I've never got her.

SOPHIE: She gets moved around because she's gross?

ELEANOR: Yeah. And for like, having girlfriends and stuff.

SOPHIE: What?

ELEANOR: Well like her and her last cellie got together and you know the screws really don't like that.

SOPHIE: They don't?

ELEANOR: Nah. They'll split you up.

The Guard rushes past their cell.

SOPHIE: What's going on?

ELEANOR: I don't know, maybe someone's hurt themselves?

SOPHIE: Jesus.

ELEANOR: Yep. Hey, I don't know if you heard but I've been given parole.

SOPHIE: Oh my gosh, congratulations!

ELEANOR: Yeah.

A pause.

SOPHIE: So, how do you feel?

ELEANOR: I don't know. It's going to be weird.

SOPHIE: It's going to be great! No more shitty food, no more cells, you get to see your family-

ELEANOR: I just realized, I haven't cooked for three years.

SOPHIE: You'll figure it out.

ELEANOR: Yeah, yeah.

SOPHIE: Is your boyfriend excited?

ELEANOR: Yeah, he is.

Pause.

ELEANOR: It's just going to be weird, you know? Like, how the fuck am I supposed to get around? I don't have a car, I don't know how the bus works. I mean, it's shit in here, but there's a routine, they feed you…I don't know what I'm going to do.

SOPHIE: Do you have somewhere to go?

ELEANOR: My sister's.

SOPHIE: Well that's good…

A pause.

ELEANOR: It's just going to be really hard not to get sucked back into everything again.

SOPHIE: Yeah.

ELEANOR: I'm going to have to completely change like, my whole life.

SOPHIE: You can do it.

ELEANOR: I don't know.

A pause.

ELEANOR: At least you know how to clean your cell properly now.

GUARD TWO: Alright ladies, lights out!

The lights go out, darkness.

Eleanor leaves the stage and is replaced by Jessie.

Sophie and Jessie lounge in their cell. Jessie plucks Sophie's eyebrows.

SOPHIE: Ow!

JESSIE: If it hurts it means it's working.

SOPHIE: Don't do too much.

JESSIE: Oh my god, why don't you trust me? Look at my eyebrows. I'm good at eyebrows.

A buzzing sound.

GUARD ONE: Rolling lock ladies.

The prisoners emerge out of their cells.

EMMA: Hey.

SOPHIE: Hey! I finally got my phone numbers approved!

EMMA: Shit girl, congratulations.

SOPHIE: I just gotta wait for my phone card to come through.

EMMA: They don't make it easy, do they?

SOPHIE: They do not.

EMMA: Next, you gotta get a job.

SOPHIE: Oh yeah?

EMMA: Yeah. Looks really good when you go for parole, it's a fast track to getting out of here-

JESSIE: Sophie! Stop talking to her, come over here,

SOPHIE: What?

EMMA: Why don't you just stay out of it, ok?

JESSIE: She's a good girl, she shouldn't be talking to you.

EMMA: She can talk to who she wants, actually.

SOPHIE: Uhhh-

EMMA: It's ok, go over your cellie.

SOPHIE: But I don't-

EMMA: Honestly, it's fine. I've gotta make a phone call anyway.

Emma slopes off to the phones.

Sophie joins Jessie.

SOPHIE: What was that all about?

JESSIE: Trust me, you don't want to be talking to her, she's fucked up.

SOPHIE: She seems nice?

JESSIE: Emma is not nice, ok? Trust me.

SOPHIE: Ok.

JESSIE: Come on, let's go to the shop.

Sophie and Jessie go off to get their supplies.

Kate approaches Guard One.

GUARD ONE: What do you want?

KATE: We haven't been outside for two weeks.

GUARD ONE: So?

KATE: Well, that's unfair. We need to have fresh air.

GUARD ONE: You don't need it, going outside is a privilege.

KATE: You don't need it? You think it's healthy to be cooped up every single day?

GUARD ONE: Well I'm cooped up too, right there with you, don't you forget that.

KATE: Yeah but you get to go home. You at least get to walk to your car.

GUARD ONE: We're understaffed at the moment.

KATE: So?

GUARD ONE: So, we need more guards to supervise an outdoor session.

KATE: So get more guards then.

GUARD ONE: Wouldn't that be nice.

The buzzer sounds off.

GUARD ONE: Back to your cell inmate.

KATE: Two weeks and one day.

GUARD ONE: Yeah, yeah.

The prisoners return to their cells.

The Home and Away opening theme sounds and the prisoners tune in to watch.

JESSIE: You going for a bit of a minimalist vibe?

SOPHIE: What?

JESSIE: You keep it pretty bare in here.

SOPHIE: Oh yeah, I just…I don't want this to be my home. Because it's not.

JESSIE: But you live here don't you?

SOPHIE: Yeah but…I don't know, it's difficult to explain.

JESSIE: How long is your sentence?

SOPHIE: My lawyer reckons two years.

JESSIE: Two years is a long time.

SOPHIE: I know, ok.

JESSIE: And this is your first time?

SOPHIE: Yes. You?

JESSIE: Nah, my third I think.

SOPHIE: If I got out of here, I would do anything to not come back.

JESSIE: It's kinda harder than you think.

SOPHIE: Yeah I've heard.

Pause.

The closing credits to Home and Away sound.

SOPHIE: I think I'm just going to go to sleep now.

JESSIE: You ok?

SOPHIE: I'm fine.

Sophie gets into bed and the lights go dark.

Suddenly, the sound of yelling and banging penetrates the darkness.

A buzzer sounds and the lights flash on.

The prisoners have been sleeping, they wake up groggily.

JESSIE: What the fuck is going on?

GUARD TWO: We got a tip there's some contraband in here.

EMMA: You can look all you want, you won't find anything.

The two guards proceed to tip Emma's cell, pulling down her pictures, rifling through all her possessions.

GUARD ONE: You find anything?

GUARD TWO: No. You?

GUARD ONE: Nothing.

EMMA: Who told you to tip my cell?

GUARD ONE: We can't reveal that information.

EMMA: Well, I told you that there was nothing in here.

GUARD TWO: We're going to be watching you very closely.

The two guards leave Emma's cell and lock her inside.

Emma begins to slowly repair the damage in her room.

JESSIE: Bit of excitement for your Friday night.

Jessie rolls over to go back to sleep.

Sophie remains awake.

She sits up in her bed and stares at the ceiling. Lights shine down as if she were looking at the stars.

Darkness.

A loud buzzing noise.

The prisoners form a line in front of one of the guards. The guard runs their hands down each prisoner's body, runs their hands through their hair and then looks inside the prisoner's mouth.

GUARD ONE: Ok, you can go outside. Next.

The next prisoner steps up to the guard and they repeat the process.

When a prisoner has been inspected, they step away and then circle back to join the back of the line.

GUARD ONE: Next.

KATE: Can you hurry up? We only have half an hour!

GUARD ONE: Excuse me, going outside is a privilege, you had best be grateful madam.

When Kate steps up to be inspected, the guard takes an extra-long amount of time to search her.

GUARD ONE: Next.

Eventually, the prisoners stop joining the back of the line and all stand in a small clump. Warm light washes over them for a moment and then…

A buzzing sound.

GUARD ONE: Alright inmates, time's up.

The prisoners once again form a line and the whole checking process repeats itself. At last, all of the prisoners have been checked.

GUARD ONE: You happy?

KATE: Could have had longer.

GUARD ONE: You could at least say thank you, I did a nice thing for you.

KATE: I'm not going to do that. It shouldn't be a treat for us to have some fresh air.

GUARD ONE: So ungrateful.

Kate walks away.

Sophie talks on the phone.

SOPHIE: So how was school? Uh huh, uh huh. Did you learn anything new? Wow! No way! That is very impressive. Yeah? Oh um, yeah, uh I'm still going to be away for a while. I know, I know, I wish I could be with you too. I'm not sure, I'm not sure. But I'm working on it. Oh what's that? I'm so sorry, I think the phone is going to cut out, I love you-hello? Damn.

Sophie places the phone back on the hook.

A buzzing sound.

GUARD TWO: Rolling lock is over, back to your cells ladies.

The prisoners return back to their cells and are locked in by the guards.

JESSIE: You ok?

SOPHIE: Yeah.

The theme music to Home and Away begins and the prisoners settle in to watch.

Lights down.

Lights up, a new day.

GUARD ONE: Rolling lock!

The prisoners file out of their cells and into the communal area.

Kate approaches Guard One.

GUARD ONE: Oh Jesus, I can't deal with this today.

KATE: I just wanted to let you know that the laundry round hasn't happened, so this whole wing is stuck wearing their dirty clothes.

GUARD ONE: I wondered what the smell was.

KATE: Are you going to do anything about it?

GUARD ONE: Why should I? It's not my problem.

KATE: You're the one on this wing today so I would say that it is your problem. What are you going to do about it?

GUARD ONE: I'm not going to do anything about it. And you better watch your mouth, otherwise I'll write you up.

KATE: Fine, write me up. I'm just going to tell the truth.

The other prisoners have started to take notice of the fight happening.

Sophie walks over.

GUARD ONE: Tell the truth? What are you talking about?

KATE: That the guards here are so fucking lazy that we don't get to go outside regularly, we have to live in dirty clothes, we get shit food, fuck all support-

GUARD ONE: No one gives a shit!

KATE: Oh, I think there's some people who would give a shit.

GUARD ONE: You can't speak to me like that! I'm going to write you up.

KATE: Fine! Write me up, I don't care!

GUARD ONE: Go back to your cell!

KATE: No! Rolling lock isn't over yet!

GUARD ONE: I told you to go back to your cell!

The Guard grabs Kate by the arm forces her back in her cell.

KATE: Let go of me!!

Kate struggles.

The Guard violently shoves Kate into her cell.

He steps back to find all the other inmates staring at him.

JESSIE: You asshole.

GUARD ONE: Hey! Everyone, back to your cells!

GUARD ONE: Look, I just don't tolerate insubordination. You all know that. Now bring it in.

None of the prisoners move.

GUARD ONE: I said back to your cells! You're on lockdown!

The prisoners slowly move back to their cells.

Guard One locks them all in.

GUARD ONE: (*Speaking into a radio*) Can I get some assistance up here?

Guard Two enters. The Guards quietly confer with each other. Guard One eventually leaves.

The prisoners are subdued.

GUARD TWO: Everyone alright in there?

No response.

It's 5:30, time for Home and Away. The opening music sounds.

One by one the prisoners turn off their television sets, leaving silence.

Sophie takes a photograph out of an envelope and blue-tacks it to the wall.

JESSIE: You put something up.

SOPHIE: I did. That's my daughter.

JESSIE: She's cute.

SOPHIE: She's a little bigger now.

JESSIE: How old is she?

SOPHIE: Five. Just started school.

JESSIE: Mine's only three.

Jessie takes a picture out of her pocket and sticks it on the wall next to Sophie's.

Lights down.

The lights come up as if the sun is rising. A new day.

The prisoners are fed breakfast (Weetbix) through their hatch.

They eat breakfast.

They return their trays through the hatch.

A buzzing sound.

GUARD ONE: Rolling lock!

The prisoner's doors are opened and they exit their cells.

The lights go down.

A new day begins.

Sophie lounges in her cell.

She has a new cellmate, Greta.

The picture is no longer up.

GUARD ONE: Rolling lock!

The prisoner's doors are opened and they exit their cells.

The End

CHAPTER ONE

The Spectacle of Prison

In his article "The Empire of the Gaze: Foucault and the Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought", Martin Jay writes:

> Long accounted the 'noblest' of the senses, sight traditionally enjoyed a privileged role as the most discriminating and trustworthy of the sensual mediators between man and world (176).

Jay's assertion that sight is the most privileged of the senses resonates with the work of Michel Foucault who, throughout his career, has emphasised the connection between power and sight. For example, in his book *Madness and Civilisation,* Foucault argues that insanity is defined through the visual cues provided by observation (Jay, 180-181). Another place in which Foucault connects sight with power is in his 1975 book *Discipline and Punish.* The theories he expresses in this work will be the focus of this chapter. Through the course of my research I have discovered how important the act of looking and watching is to the way women's prisons have been portrayed in film, theatre and television. Film and television representations of women's prison have, for a large chunk of their history, cultivated a male, heterosexual gaze. 'Witnessing theory' informs the way that real stories are presented on stage. In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault lays out an explanation for why the ability to look has become one of the

primary pleasures of the women-in-prison genre as well as chartering the visual history of punishment.

Discipline and Punish was written over forty years ago and in it, Foucault covers a time period from the middle of the seventeenth century through to the 1840s. Therefore, it is a reasonable question to ask: are Foucault's theories still relevant today? I believe it can be argued that they are. For example, Schwan and Shapiro argue that Foucault's assertion that the strategic purpose of prisons is to transform criminals into delinquents, life-long criminals, so that bourgeois domination may be established and consolidated, has particular relevance today (154). Of particular consideration is the rise of the 'prison industrial complex' and the increasing number of privately owned, for-profit prisons running in the US today.

In her article 'Neoliberal Prisons: Revisiting *Discipline and Punish* in the Twenty-First Century', Sarah Pemberton addresses the question of whether Foucault's theories can still be applied to twenty-first century prisons. Pemberton acknowledges the critique of Nancy Fraser, who argues that Foucault's theories are outdated due to the evolving changes in penal policy. Fraser offers the increased number of privately owned prisons, as well as welfare cuts, as examples of the changes in penal policy that render Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* irrelevant (Pemberton, 256). Pemberton concedes these points, writing that prison privatisation is one of the starkest changes to British and American penal policy (257). However, Pemberton does ultimately contend that the

theories expressed by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* do have relevance. Pemberton argues that during the past thirty years criminal justice systems have become more punitive due to a loss of faith in the rehabilitation of prisoners, citing America's 'three strikes and you're out' policy as an example of this (259). But ultimately, taking these factors into consideration, Pemberton concludes that disciplinary techniques, and particularly their relationship to power, still operate in a way that makes the theories expressed in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* relevant to modern modes of punishment.

In this chapter I will summarise the theories expressed in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* and then use them to argue that the enduring legacy of the prison-genre is due, in part, to the privatisation of punishment. I will then specifically examine the women-in-prison genre and how Foucault's theories of surveillance link to Laura Mulvey's theory of 'the male gaze.'

In Foucault's first chapter 'Part One: Torture' he argues that the body of the criminal was once the major target of penal repression (8). This means the infliction of physical pain was used as the primary source of punishment, although Foucault is quick to note that, because this form of discipline was performed in front of a crowd of spectators, it had bigger implications than simply punishing an individual for a criminal offense (8). For Foucault, punishment was a performance and he argues that public executions did not serve to re-establish justice, but to reactivate power (49). The punishment of the criminal's physical body serves to make the general public aware of the power of the

sovereign (Foucault, 49). Foucault justifies this thought by theorising that crime not only causes injury to its immediate victim, but the crime attacks the sovereign personally as the law represents his will (47). Therefore, the Crown needs to not only punish the criminal but establish the power of the sovereign by demonstrating to the people what will happen to those who choose to break the law. The aim of a public punishment is not to re-establish a balance but to reinforce the dissymmetry between the subject who violated the law and the all-powerful sovereign (Foucault, 49). Foucault argues that the spectacle of the scaffold was also intended to act as a deterrent to future criminals as well as to reinforce the power and mercy of the Crown, yet another way that punishment could be considered a performance (49). Prevention of crime was expected as an effect of the punishment and its spectacle (Foucault, 93). Executions were entertainment, performed for the benefit of the public.

Foucault continues to highlight the theatricality of public punishment. The public execution's pomp and awe was created through the criminal's procession through the crowd and the ensuing gestures of expiation (Schwan & Shapiro 58). Schwan and Shapiro summarise by writing that the excessive visual display of torture is one of punishment's purposes; cries of pain are not a shameful side effect but ceremonial justice being expressed in all its force (52).

Foucault writes that all the theatrical touches that are part of the ritual of public execution serve to highlight the power of the monarch. He uses the concept of the pardon as an example of this, as the act of the pardon makes clear that the power to take

a life, or not, ultimately resides with the sovereign (53). Public punishment was highly theatrical. There were conventions, rituals and audience expectations. McAvinchey writes:

> Public torture and execution were choreographed events with staged conventions and a dramaturgical structure adhered to by the state which produced the spectacle, and understood by the public audience who witnessed it (22).

The whole system of punishment was highly performative. Indeed, Conquergood writes that justice can be seen only when it is acted out (343). Conquergood argues that the ritual of executions is inherently theatrical, providing the example that public hangings were the most popular performance genre in 17th and 18th century America (344-355). He goes on to write that every step in an execution is carefully scripted, choreographed, rehearsed and directed (360). Before the privatisation of punishment, the general public were witnesses to a violent spectacle, something which they came to expect. Ultimately the public execution was performed for the benefit of the crowd.

With these points in mind, Foucault argues that in the ceremony of public execution, the main character is not the criminal, but the people, whose presence is required for the performance (57). Therefore, the public were once an essential part of the penal process. They bore witness to public executions in order to guarantee that the punishment had

taken place (58). This was a role that the general public, for the most part, expected and accepted. Foucault writes that a private execution, when it happened, was a privileged one, and was often suspected to have not taken place with customary severity (58). Foucault cites the execution of Marie Lescombat as an example. Protests were incited by the fact that Lescombat was hung with a kerchief over her head. Foucault notes that the public sentiment following this execution was one of distrust; they did not believe the woman hanged was Marie Lescombat (58). As Conquergood writes, justice is a performance; it can only be seen when it is acted out (343). The general public clearly took their role as witnesses seriously and thus it became a problem when they could not guarantee that the appropriate punishment had been carried out. Their participation in public executions was a key part of the performance. Therefore, executions were not carried out for the benefit of the criminal, but for the benefit of the audience.

However, the violent spectacle of public execution was eventually phased out by the end of the 18th century up to and including the French Revolution. Foucault describes several factors which contributed to the privatisation of the punishment process. One of the factors he lists is the way the relationship between the criminal and the spectators changed (68). Foucault argues that the public execution was intended to showcase the power of the Crown, as well as deter those who witnessed the spectacle from committing the same crime (57). The public was summoned to executions to both witness and participate in its terror, so that commoners were brought into contact and union with the King's terrifying authority (Schwan & Shapiro 61). However, Foucault notes that in many cases public execution actually produced the opposite effect and

instead of showcasing the power of the Crown, the ceremony of the public execution often produced a solidarity between the criminal and the people who witnessed their punishment (63). Watching someone endure the torture and horror of an execution led to increased sympathy for the criminal, Foucault even writing that, in a way, criminals became martyrs in the eyes of the public, some even reaching the rank of folk heroes (69). Part of the ceremony of the public execution was the moment where the criminal was permitted to speak, theoretically to repent or to confess to their crimes. However, Foucault notes that this moment became another reason the public flocked to watch public executions, though not for the reason the government intended. Here was an opportunity for the public to hear an individual who had nothing to lose cursing the government, the laws and religion (60). "Under the protection of imminent death, the criminal could say everything and the crowd cheered" (Foucault, 60). This gave the criminal a platform to disparage the government and this worked in opposition to a system which aimed to showcase the power of the sovereign. The spectacle of punishment had begun to run the risk of being rejected by the very people to whom it was addressed (Foucault, 63). These changes coincided with the French Revolution and the growing unrest the general public had with the Monarchy. Therefore, the phasing out of public execution was born not out of a desire to punish law-breakers in a more 'humane' way but rather because it was a step towards limiting the power of the Monarch (Schwan & Shapiro, 67). The state had no desire to make martyrs of their criminals and eventually became aware that while the intention of the public execution was to showcase the power of the monarch, putting the criminal centre stage was a move counter-productive to these aims. Foucault writes that the intent of a public

execution was to show the power of the state but instead, in many cases, it served to glorify the criminal (68). Capital punishment also removed bodies from a potential workforce (McAvinchey, 27). Bearing witness to the torture and horror of an execution created a sense of empathy between public and criminal. This was the opposite effect that the crown wanted to imbue in its citizens.

Another factor that influenced the eventual privatisation of the punishment process was that audiences were no longer content to play the role of witness. Crowds increasingly refused to act in expected ways (Schwan & Shapiro, 61). Foucault cites several instances in which the public intervened in executions they felt were unjust (63). Foucault gives the example of a riot preventing an execution in 1716, when a servant woman was sentenced to death for stealing a bolt of cloth from her master, even though she had admitted her guilt and given it back (62). Thanks to the intervention of the local people, the woman was saved from the scaffold and given a pardon (Foucault, 62). According to Foucault, the final factor which contributed to the end of public punishment was the increased recognition that the same punishment did not have the same effect on everyone and this then led to a need for individualised sentences (98-99). Foucault calls this a move away from generalised punishment (73). Foucault argues that the changing perception of the figure of the criminal, as well as the desire for individualised sentences, led authorities away from spectacular public punishment and towards a more private form of penal retribution. Prison had traditionally always been a part of the punishment process, but was more often used as a temporary device, a place to hold the condemned until it was time for their 'real' punishment (Schwan & Shapiro, 90).

Prison was also used as a substitute for those who were unable to handle the torture of the public scaffold: women, children and invalids (Schwan & Shapiro, 90). Therefore, it was a huge change in societal thinking for prison to become the default punishment for a multitude of crimes.

Eventually the public execution, the great theatre of punishment, was replaced by the uniform machinery of the prison (Foucault, 116). Although this was not a change that happened overnight, Foucault does note that this transformation between historical periods is an uneven process. He concedes that a "trace of torture" still remained for a long time in the modern criminal justice system and uses the rationing of food, sexual deprivation and solitary confinement as examples of this (16). For a time, criminals receiving punishment still remained on view; for example, prisoners performed public works. However, despite some teething issues during the transition, the prison ultimately replaced any form of public punishment.

In his chapter titled 'Discipline', Foucault charts the rise of the modern prison and how power functions within it. Foucault writes that the high walls that surround the prison close in upon the now mysterious work of punishment (116). These walls which are so effective at keeping prisoners in also serve to keep the public out. They are no longer able to bear witness. This is one of the key differences between public execution and private imprisonment and the aspect of Foucault's theories upon which I will particularly focus. Prison became an enclosed space (Schwan & Shapiro 92). The general

public were once part of the penal narrative, playing their part as witnesses to the mighty hand of justice. Because punishment was supposed to teach a lesson, the viewing public was as much a target in the act of punishing as the guilty individual (Schwan & Shapiro 87). The general public was once a key part of the penal process. However, thanks to the increasing popularity of private prisons, the general public are now excluded from the penal narrative and have lost the opportunity to see justice enacted.

According to Foucault, the privatization of punishment also marked a significant change in the judicial system, not just the public's perception of the criminal. The figure of the criminal shifted from the enemy of the monarch to the enemy of the entire social body (Foucault, 90). The move from public execution to private prison sentences achieved more than just excluding the public from the penal process and changing the perception of the criminal; the intention and philosophy of punishment also went through a severe change. As Schwan and Shapiro put it, punishment no longer wants to handle the outside body, but wants to get inside the prisoner's soul (25). The focus of punishment shifted from the desire to enact revenge to seeking the prisoners' reform into productive members of society (Schwan & Shapiro 20). Foucault documents this shift, writing that the body of the prisoner ceased to be the major target of penal repression and the prisoners' individual rights and freedoms were taken from them instead (8). Those who were in charge of punishing recognised that the human individual could be reconstructed to be better and more efficient (Schwan & Shapiro 98). Thus, the change from revenge to reform. Foucault does however put forward the

theory that, although the body is no longer a site of violent punishment, the body of the criminal is still punished through forced docility (136).

Foucault argues that the body of the criminal must first be made submissive and docile before it can be subjected, used, transformed and improved (136). Foucault defines 'Discipline' as the practical and theoretical attempts to make the body both docile and increased in utility (Schwan & Shapiro, 99). Foucault argues that instead of publicly harming the body of the criminal, the prison system now forces its inmates to have docile and disciplined bodies, so that in time they may be turned into efficient citizens (152). He argues that the prison system creates these efficient citizens in a variety of ways, for example, dividing the prisoners into cells and ranking them based on their 'good behaviour' creates a complex space, which is at once architectural, functional and hierarchical (148). In this chapter, Foucault recognises the shift from a form of punishment that aims to physically hurt and deter future criminals to a system of rehabilitation where prisoners are forced to become productive, effective citizens.

Although prison walls serve to hide the work of punishment from the general public, witnessing and sight still play a key part in the administration of justice. Foucault argues that in order to achieve 'docile bodies', a new form of the gaze is used to administer justice behind prison walls (170). Punishment that is performed behind closed doors means that the general public are no longer part of the penal narrative. They no longer serve as witnesses to punishment and cannot guarantee that justice has

taken place. However, that is not to say that punishment within a prison is not witnessed. Foucault argues that the success of disciplinary power comes, in part, from the inmates being under constant observation (170). For Foucault, surveillance is the key to this disciplinary power. This is one of Foucault's ideas that has particular relevance today, with the strides made with video surveillance technology making constant observation even more accessible.

The new form of witnessing and watching functions in this way: Foucault writes that ideal disciplinary power is exercised through invisibility while at the same time it imposes compulsory visibility on those it subjects (187). This means that those who watch are unable to be seen by the objects of their gaze. Discipline is upheld by the use of this gaze. As Schwan and Shapiro write: "Once we enter an observed space, we become subject to a vision that seeks to ensure that we act well and follow certain kinds of behaviour" (118). But it is not just a generalised watching that Foucault believes activates power within a prison. Foucault writes that the perfect disciplinary apparatus would make it possible for a single gaze to see everything constantly (187).

According to Foucault, the panopticon prison is an ideal design for creating docile and disciplined bodies (200). The panopticon was a design for a prison submitted by architect Jeremy Bentham. It is a circular shaped design created to facilitate effective surveillance. The prisoners' individual cells occupy the circumference of the circle and the guard's watch tower is placed in the middle. The design of the panopticon allows

one guard the potential to watch all of the cells; however the prisoners are unable to see the guard or each other. This means that the inmates would never be able to be certain that they were being watched and, once housed in their cells, had no way to communicate with other prisoners. The panopticon design appeared attractive to governments as it addressed the need for an inexpensive mechanism to increase power over larger populations (Schwan & Shapiro 131).The panopticon design induces in the inmate a state of permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power (Foucault, 201). Foucault writes of the prisoner "He is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication" (200). Foucault asserts in this chapter that, while antiquity has been a civilisation of spectacle, our society is one of surveillance (217). In a prison, a permanent gaze controls both the prisoners and the staff. Bentham's prison seeks to both enclose prisoners from the public while at the same time the use of surveillance puts them on full view (Schwan & Shapiro, 129). A different kind of witnessing operates within the prison that assures the automatic functioning of power.

In summation, Michel Foucault's seminal work *Discipline and Punish* charts the way that punishment has changed from a public spectacle to something that happens behind high walls and locked doors. The general public are no longer witnesses to punishment. One of the effects of the privatisation of punishment is that the act of punishment becomes more abstract to us, and we must frequently imagine rather than watch punishment happening (Schwan & Shapiro 19). Though punishment no longer takes

place in the town square, this is not to say that it has become an entirely private affair. Inmates are now controlled via a permanent gaze. In *Discipline and Punish,* Foucault describes the panopticon, a design which allows one guard to subject many inmates to his gaze. In modern prisons, the invention of the video camera allows inmates to be controlled by the same principles; one just has to replace the guard in the panopticon with a guard in the control room, keeping prisoners in a constant state of surveillance.

As Foucault recognises, the general public were once a key part of the penal process. Public executions, torture and traditions such as the stocks meant that the punishment phase was once the most visible part of the judicial process. The people who attended these events played a key role; they served as witnesses and could confirm that justice had indeed been done. Punishment as a public spectacle may have been phased out, but this desire to see justice done still remains. On January 24th, 1989 hundreds waited outside Florida State Prison, and millions more watched from home, for the tell-tale dimming of lights that indicated that serial killer Ted Bundy had died via the electric chair. Families of the victims are invited to watch the executions of the perpetrators of their crimes, in order to gain some kind of closure or sense of justice being served. The privatization of the punishment process meant that the public no longer had the opportunity to witness the performance of justice.

One of the only opportunities the public gets to see behind prison walls, and thus see justice served, is through fictional representations of prison life. Rafter points out that

the prison film is one of the most enduring film genres, as films set within a prison have been released since the silent era and have been made consistently up to the present day (163). Jarvis notes that as incarceration rates began to escalate during the early years of the Depression, a spate of successful prison dramas appeared (165). Examples of these Depression-era films include *Thunderbolt* (1929) *The Big House* (1930) and *Ladies of the Big House* (1931). The prison film continued to be a prolific genre throughout the decades. A handful of examples include *Devil's Island* (1939), *The Great Escape* (1963), *The Longest Yard* (1974 and remade in 2005), *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994) and *Just Mercy* (2019). Televisual representations of prison life have similarly endured. With examples ranging from *Porridge* (1974-1977, 2016-2017), *Bad Girls (*1999-2006), *Oz* (1997-2003), *Prison Break* (2005-2009), *Orange is the New Black* (2013-present) and *Prisoner: Cell Block H* (1979-1986), which ran for a staggering 692 episodes. The enduring legacy of the prison genre could be in part due to fictional portrayals of prison life being one of the only ways in which the general public is able to go behind prison walls and watch criminals being punished.

As Foucault argues, when the public witnessed public punishment, they witnessed a spectacle (8). Part of the intention of public punishment was to act as a deterrent to future criminals, therefore it was in the interest of authorities to make punishment as spectacularly torturous as possible (Foucault, 8-9). In the section titled 'Part Three: Discipline', Foucault writes that causing pain to the criminal's body ceased to be the preferred method of punishment and was instead replaced by the idea of 'reformation'

(136). He goes on to describe how prisoners are disciplined through separation and constant observation in an attempt to make their bodies more docile and therefore turn the prisoners into productive citizens (138). While Foucault notes that the prisoners are constantly observed, the guards that watch them do so out of a desire to regulate their behaviour, rather than to be entertained (164). The life of the docile and disciplined prisoner is one of monotony and routine, a far cry from the spectacle and theatricality of a public execution. Even if the general public were able to witness prisoners serving out their time, it would not be particularly interesting to watch. The use of 'the gaze' functions in a different way.

Fictional representations of prison life affect the way that the general public think about incarceration. Images from films have considerable currency and have framed prison life for generations of movie goers (Britton, 1). The majority of the general public do not have extensive contact with what goes on inside a prison (Wilson, O'Sullivan, 11). Wilson and O'Sullivan write that they do not assume that the 'uninformed viewer' takes fictional representations of prison life to be literally true, but instead they argue that viewers discount the elements that they regard to be dramatic licence and then what remains unconsciously influences their implicit beliefs (16). They use the example of the 1974 BBC sitcom *Porridge* to illustrate this point. Wilson and O'Sullivan use *Porridge* as an example because of the show's popularity and because the realities of prison life, as portrayed by *Porridge*, were radically out of step with what we know about prisons in the 1970s (7). Wilson and O'Sullivan write that, while *Porridge* clearly follows a sitcom format, it needs to retain some recognisable elements of real-world

prisons in order to establish its setting (15). They note that *Porridge* includes a set featuring cells, Governor's office, a hospital wing; that the prison guards wear uniforms; and that the prison is shown as a strict hierarchy from the Governor right down to the inmates (15). Wilson and O'Sullivan argue that through the inclusion of these elements, *Porridge* constructs a view of prison which is intended to approximate an idea of what prison is actually like, but in constructing this approximation, aspects of real-world prison have been left out and modified (15). Wilson and O'Sullivan note that *Porridge* featured no suicides, no solitary confinement, and the relationship between 'screws' and inmates is portrayed as a structured, mild antagonism (15-16). They argue that this is at odds with the realities of prison life in the 1970s, where UK prisons were affected by a wave of riots and roof-top demonstrations, where the prisoners protested poor conditions, inflexible regimes and allegations of officer brutality (16). Wilson and O'Sullivan argue that the criticism of *Porridge* is not that it failed to show the reality of prison but rather that the approximation it showed was selective and sanitised (15). *Porridge* does not show, nor did it intend to show, the reality of what prison was like in the 1970s

The reason that Wilson and O'Sullivan are so concerned with the representation of prison life in *Porridge* is that, according to viewing figures, Slade Prison, the fictional setting of *Porridge,* was the most visited and famous prison in Britain in the 1970s (7). In their book, they make the point that it is inadequate to regard *Porridge* as 'just a situational comedy', that for better or for worse, fictional representations of prison life are an important influence on the general public's views about prison (8). They suggest

that these fictional representations of prison life provide people with imaginative resources which help them visualise or imagine what prison is like (14). Films, television programmes and theatre set within the walls of a prison serve as a replacement for public executions. These fictional representations provide a majority of the images of prison life seen by the general public. Therefore, as Wilson and O'Sullivan argue, they should be taken seriously. The general public are no longer privy to the punishment process, therefore these images from film and television become the only avenue for them to bear witness.

In summation, Michel Foucault argues that the prison has changed from public spectacle to private enterprise. Members of the general public were once a key part of the penal narrative, as they served as witnesses to punishment being done. But since prison has taken over as the primary mode of punishment, the general public has been excluded from the penal narrative and no longer get the opportunity to watch justice being enacted. One of the only opportunities the public gets to see the inner workings of prison life is through fictional representations on the screen, stage and television. However, the public do not want to watch prisoners perform the mundane routines that, according to Foucault, make up the majority of their day. So, in order to entertain, an element of spectacle must be present within these fictional representations of prison life. The way prison is portrayed in film and on television and the stage is significant because, according to Wilson and O'Sullivan, these adaptations frequently mischaracterize the inmate population and do not accurately portray the realities of prison life.

Throughout *Discipline and Punish,* but particularly in his chapter detailing the panopticon, Foucault connects power with 'the gaze'. Foucault writes of the prisoner in a panopticon: "He is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication" (200). Foucault writes that the major effect of the panopticon is to induce in the inmate a state of permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power (201). Therefore, according to Foucault, those who look have power over those who are watched. Another theorist who connects 'the gaze' with the functioning of power is, of course, Laura Mulvey and her essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'. Mulvey argues in her essay that the magic of Hollywood style arose, in part, from its skilled and satisfying manipulation of visual pleasure (7). Mulvey argues that mainstream film, and the conventions within it, portray a hermetically sealed world which is completely indifferent to the presence of the audience. She writes that this process creates for the audience a sense of separation from the people onscreen, and thus allows them to partake in a voyeuristic fantasy (8). Like Foucault, Mulvey argues that those who look have the power over those who are looked at. However, the intention of the look and the effect it produces is where these two theorists differ. While Foucault contends that the look is used to subjugate and control, Mulvey argues that 'the gaze' is used in pursuit of voyeuristic pleasure.

While Foucault divides the watchers and the watched into guards and inmates, respectively, Mulvey argues that it is the women onscreen who are much more frequently the object of the gaze (6). Mainstream film neatly combines narrative and

spectacle, with the male characters carrying the narrative and the female characters providing the spectacle, namely something pleasant to look at (Mulvey, 13). Because the male character is the one whose actions push forward the narrative, the audience is set up to identify with him (Mulvey, 14). Mulvey argues that in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split by gender, into active/male and passive/female (6). The women in mainstream film connote 'to-be-looked-at-ness', that their appearance is coded for strong visual and erotic impact (Mulvey, 9). Mulvey uses the examples of pinup girls, the women from Ziegfeld's Follies and the women from Busby Berkeley films as women who connote to-be-looked-at-ness (6). She chooses these particular examples because she believes that musical song and dance numbers featuring women are an indispensable element of spectacle in narrative film, as their presence works against the development of a storyline and freezes the flow of action for a moment of erotic contemplation. It is a moment of pure spectacle. The audience, who are already set up to identify with the gaze of the male protagonist, watch the woman along with him.

Mulvey argues that traditionally, the woman displayed onscreen functions on two levels, an erotic object for the characters within the story and as an erotic object for the spectator watching the screen (12). She writes:

> A woman performs within the narrative, the gaze of the spectator and that of the male characters in the film are neatly combined without breaking narrative verisimilitude (12).

Mulvey uses Marilyn Monroe's first appearance in *The River of No Return* and Lauren Bacall's songs in *To Have or Have Not* as examples of women onscreen being the object of the gaze of both the protagonist and the audience (7). Mulvey's assessment of 'the male gaze' functions in a similar way to Foucault's description of the panopticon. The women onscreen are in a state of permanent visibility. This same quote could easily be applied to a woman onscreen that connotes 'to-be-looked-at-ness'. She is seen, she is the object of the gaze, but she cannot see the audience and she has no way to return their look.

Mulvey argues that mainstream film, and the conventions within it, has consciously evolved to portray a hermetically sealed world which unwinds, magically indifferent to the presence of the audience (8). Like the world of a film, the world of a prison is also a hermetically sealed space. The prison film is these two spaces working in tandem. The camera allows the audience to see inside the hidden world of the prison. The characters on screen, just as the prisoners in a panopticon, are in a state of constant visibility and objects of the gaze. Like the stars onscreen they are unable to return the gaze of their audience.

Mulvey's theory of 'the male gaze' is not entirely confined to film. Sue-Ellen Case makes the argument that 'the male gaze' can also be applied to narrative structure in theatre. While the camera provides the audience with the lens through which to view the women on screen, the male gaze as applied to theatre is built into the narrative itself. Case argues that female characters on stage are often introduced through the eyes of a male character. While it is possible for the actors on stage to return the gaze of the audience, this is not necessarily enough to entirely combat a voyeuristic gaze. Elin Diamond points out that both theatre and film involve scopic pleasures and the body (83). While the form is entirely different, and theoretically the actors on stage are able to return the gaze of the audience at any point, it is still possible for theatrical productions to encourage a voyeuristic gaze.

In this thesis, I will continue to focus on the theme of looking, witnessnessing and the gaze. In the next chapter, I examine women and prison and how they are portrayed onscreen, looking through Mulvey's lens of 'the male gaze' and paying particular attention to the way the genre cultivates or rejects voyeuristic pleasure. The second chapter looks at the way life in a women's prison is shown on stage, arguing that many of the theatrical representations of life for female inmates are a reaction to the voyeuristic way their world has been shown on screen. Later in the thesis I examine the role of 'the witness' and how it relates and contrasts to that of the voyeuristic gaze.

CHAPTER TWO

‘Visiting Hours’

Women in Prison Onscreen and the People Who Watch Them

One of the main appeals of television shows and films that use prison as a primary setting is that audiences get the opportunity to see behind the prison walls. As discussed in my previous chapter, the general public were once a key part of the punishment process as they served as witnesses to executions. As Foucault charts in *Discipline and Punish,* the emergence of prison as a form of punishment excludes the general public from the punishment narrative. They are now no longer given the opportunity to see justice enacted. Therefore, films and television programmes become one of the only ways the general public is able to see inside the prison space. In this chapter, I analyse the way that women’s prisons have been portrayed on screen, the effect these representations have and why these representations matter. I will first discuss the role spectatorship plays in films and television programmes about prison. The women-in-prison genre was born out of the larger prison genre and the two share many characteristics. The prison genre is one of the oldest film genres, with films about prison being made since the invention of cinema in the 1900s. I will analyze the hallmarks and conventions that have come to be associated with the prison genre, particularly the ones that were then carried over to the women-in-prison genre. I will then provide a brief history of the women-in-prison genre and some of its unique characteristics. Significant films about women’s prisons only started emerging during the 1950s and it was only in the 1970s when the women-in-prison genre started to carve

out its own niche. The babes-behind-bars subgenre established the link between women's prison and the type of voyeuristic pleasure that has come to be associated with the genre as a whole. I will then examine the effects these pleasures have on the viewer and the types of messages they relay about prison. For example, these films and television programmes often fail to critique the institution of prison itself and often represent a version of prison life in which white characters are portrayed as 'innocents' which leaves the people of colour to be coded as inherently more 'criminal'. I will conclude by explaining why these representations of prison life matter. The images of prison life shown in film and television are one of the only ways the general public gets to see incarceration. Therefore, the types of images being shown and the way prisons and the characters that populate them are portrayed affect the way the public think about prison. Spectatorship is a key part of the prison genre. Many contributions to the prison genre focus on delivering versions of voyeuristic pleasure to the audience and few aim to portray an accurate representation of life in a women's prison.

The prison genre is almost entirely born out of voyeuristic desire to see into unseen spaces. As Foucault argues in *Discipline and Punish,* punishment, what was once a public affair is now contained within the walls of the prison. For many audience members, the most appealing thing about the genre is that the prison film opens up this world of the prison and allows them to see inside (Jarvis, 295). Audiences expect a spectacle and that is what the prison genre has typically given them. Jeffrey Ian Ross even coined the term 'prison voyeurism' which he uses to describe the way the general public interacts with

prison life, typically through activities that are mediated and entertaining, such as films, television programmes or guided tours. There is inherent pleasure in getting to see inside closed off spaces and this, coupled with the prison's own internal use of constant surveillance and monitoring, is a recipe for a genre that uses voyeuristic pleasures. Prison is a hidden world, populated by people who have broken the social contract of law and order, which makes it a compelling idea in the public imagination (McAvinchey, 4). Indeed, even before the first fictional prison films were shown on screen, there was a series of non-fiction prison movies in which the general public would get the opportunity to see inside prison walls. For example there were two films released in 1899 titled *Male Prisoners* and *Female Prisoners.* These two shorts showed a line of prisoners (housed in the Detroit House of Corrections) marching into the mess hall (Griffiths, 184). These two shorts provided audiences with a rare look behind prison walls. The early prison film constructed a speculative gaze about penitential life (Griffiths, 191). The penitentiary has remained an enduring if paradoxically elusive image in Western visual practice (Griffiths, 193) Thus, the prison genre has had an enduring legacy as audiences still desire to gaze into this typically hidden world.

The prison genre can serve as a replacement for the type of spectacle previously witnessed by the crowds present at a public execution. Jarvis argues that it may be contended that the prison film and other crime-based genres are contiguous with those public spectacles of punishment, which Foucault identifies as pivotal to the *ancient regime* (173). It is possible to read the cinema of punishment as a dark panopticon that regulates the public gaze on law and order (Jarvis, 173). Films that feature an execution

as a central plot point could even be read as a surrogate for the lost gallows spectacle as it promises, like its predecessor, a convoluted mixture of voyeurism and vengeance (Jarvis, 216). The women-in-prison genre feeds into a particular kind of spectatorship, that of voyeuristic desire, as previously described in Mulvey's theory of 'the male gaze'. Hollywood narratives are constructed so that viewers identify with the male hero and so also identify with his look (Mulvey, 9). Therefore, the women in films are the object of the hero's gaze, as well as the audience's. This is what Mulvey refers to as 'the male gaze'. Mulvey goes on to argue that the male gaze denotes power; to be the object of the male gaze is to be subjected to his will (10). Feminist film criticism has consistently demonstrated that, in classic Hollywood Cinema, the woman is consistently deprived of a gaze, subjectivity and repeatedly transformed into the object of masculine, scopophillic desire (Doane, 163). Kaplan sees the male gaze as being about more than pleasure in the moment. She writes that men do not simply look; their gaze carries with it a power of action and possession that is lacking in the female gaze (210).

These theories are particularly evident in the section of films grouped together as the 'babes-behind-bars' sub-genre. This series of films, which emerged within the context of exploitation dramas of the 1970s, featured women's prisons as their key setting. Titles of this period include the trio of movies *The Big Doll House* (1971), *Women in Cages* (1971) and *The Big Bird Cage* (1972). The posters for these films feature scantily clad women in chains or cages. Taglines include "Their bodies were caged, but not their desires- They would do anything for a man…or to him" (*The Big Doll House*) and "Women so hot with

desire they melt the chains that enslave them!" (*The Big Bird Cage*). These posters, as well as the films themselves, were designed to evoke visual pleasure in the heterosexual, male viewer. There are many layers to the types of pleasure 'babes-behind-bars' films provide. First, there is the pleasure of getting to see inside the hidden world of the prison itself. Secondly, the rituals that make up prison life are primed for the objectification of women's bodies. Searches and pat downs, communal bathrooms plus the process of inmates receiving their uniforms are all aspects of prison life that have been exploited for the male gaze. Carol Henderson (played by Linda Blair) being processed into prison in *Caged Heat* (1983) is an example. By breaking the law, the women-in-prison films are given the additional punishment of being forced to grant unmediated access to their bodies.

In addition, the feminist scholars who theorise 'the male gaze' consider the female spectator and the ways in which her gaze is encouraged in cinema. The concept of the female spectator is pertinent to the discussion of the women-in-prison genre as more recent contributions purposefully try to encourage female viewership. Doane writes that in many ways women appear to be constructed culturally as the perfect spectator as they historically and culturally have been positioned outside of the action, looking on (163). With the heightened awareness of female viewers as an untapped market, producers of film and television started to create content that targeted female spectators. This shift is registered in the creation of the women-in-prison genre itself, as typical narratives established by the larger prison genre were frequently repeated, the only change being that women were substituted for men.

More recent contributions to the prison genre appear to knowingly play into and subvert the genre's preoccupation with spectatorship and voyeuristic pleasure. They also demonstrate a heightened awareness of the female spectator. For example, there is a moment in the first episode of *Orange is the New Black* that acknowledges and subverts the type of voyeurism typically present in women-in-prison genre narratives. Piper, the new prisoner and the show's main protagonist, enters the shower room and witnesses fellow inmate "Nicky" Nicols performing oral sex on another inmate. Piper watches them for a moment, before Nicky looks up at her (and consequently us the viewer) and winks. Piper then stops watching and moves along. Analyzing this sequence using Mulvey's definition of 'the gaze', Piper has taken on the typically male viewing position and through the audience's identification with Piper we take on that viewing position too. When Nicky looks back at Piper (and consequently at us, the audience) she implicates the viewer in the act of watching. Nicky's look back at Piper shows us that she is not an object to possess; she has the power of looking back and watching us too. The viewers' spectatorship is problematised and undercuts what could be perceived as a straightforwardly objectifying moment (Schwan, 478). Katerina Symes analyses this same sequence and adds that this positioning of Piper as a heterosexual proxy…

> …exceeds the masculinist and patriarchal system of desire; it challenges the primacy of the male gaze by making space for women to experience voyeuristic pleasure in lesbian sex (32).

By addressing the camera, Nicky becomes the subject rather than the object of the viewers' gaze. This shower sequence functions as a meta-narrative on a key feature of the women-in-prison genre (Schwan, 478). This moment is a conscious subversion of the spectator expectation of a genre that is predicated on voyeurism, particularly in the women-in-prison genre.

Another example of a television programme that demonstrates a heightened awareness of the visual pleasure associated with the prison genre is HBO's *Oz,* which premiered in 1997. *Oz* is set within the fictional Oswald State maximum security prison in upstate New York. Wilson and O'Sullivan describe the show as:

> …a controversial, hyper-violent depiction of life inside a maximum security prison, complete with a weekly carnage of inmate fatalities, male rape and other prison violence (148).

Oz prided itself on providing a raw, unfiltered and realistic perspective on criminality and its reputation for graphic violence earned it a dedicated following. The promo material for *Oz* features the tagline:

> At Oswald Maximum Security Penitentiary, inmates are considered lucky if they get into the prison's "Emerald City" unit. They're even luckier if they get out alive (*hbo.com*).

The first season of *Oz* largely conforms to a traditional prison movie narrative. The main character is Tobias Beecher, a white, middle-class lawyer with no previous record, incarcerated for a hit and run accident. Beecher's character provides a point of view for the audience as he learns, along with them, about the terrifying and brutal realities of life in Oswald State Penitentiary. The first season follows Beecher's initiation into the prison. He is brutally abused by the leader of the Aryan Brotherhood, Vernon Schillinger. In episode five, "Straight Life", Schillinger forces Beecher to perform in drag for the prison talent show. This scene of spectacle and despair functions as a key transitional moment which sparks Beecher's remasculinization and eventual eruption of violent retribution (Wlodarz, 72). The first season of *Oz* conforms to one of the typical storylines found in prison films. The season ends with Beecher reclaiming his masculinity by beating Schillinger unconscious and defecating on his face. The first season set out to appeal to male, heterosexual viewers.

However, the following seasons of *Oz* complicate many of the traditions of the prison narrative and thus began to transform the type of spectator interested in the show. One of the main storylines of the second season of *Oz* is a romance between Tobias Beecher and another inmate, Chris Keller. Wlodarz writes that the prison genre has not provided a consistent or coherent vision of homosexuality for queer viewers as it typically features both unparalleled queer eroticism and rampant homophobia (70). The development of this romance between two male characters expanded the show's fan base by appealing to women and gay male viewers. Wlodarz argues that the

Beecher/Keller romance narrative encourages atypical viewing positions and complicates the traditional representation of sexuality on television (61). One of the most famous scenes involving the Beecher/Keller relationship is the couple's first kiss, which takes place in the prison laundry room. This laundry room scene destabilised the straight male fans who had previously been set up to identify with Beecher (Wlodarz, 85). Following the introduction of Chris Keller, *Oz* gained a larger following of female viewers. The series' attention to male vulnerability allows female viewers a rare opportunity to express their own pleasure at the collapse of social hierarchies that can occur in the prison context (Wlodarz, 92). After this change that affected spectator identification, many fans took to the message boards to express their anger and dismay about what had happened to their previously hyper-violent and graphic television programme (Wlodarz, 91-92). The way the viewership of *Oz* changed from predominantly white, heterosexual and male to an expansion of female and gay fans is an interesting case of audience identification that contrasts with the way viewing positions have traditionally been held by audience members of the prison genre. It also speaks to the creators' heightened awareness of spectatorship and the way the prison genre can be used to cultivate voyeuristic desire.

The cinematic vocabulary of the women-in-prison genre was first established by the wider 'prison movie' genre. Paul Mason's definition of a prison film is:

> …an English-language film that concerns civil imprisonment and that is mainly set within the walls of a prison or uses prison as a central theme (283)

This is the definition of the prison film that I will be using for the duration of my thesis, although I will also be including television programmes in my discussion.

The 'prison movie' is one of cinema's most enduring genres. Films featuring prison as the primary setting have been made since the silent film era. Indeed, the first recorded contribution to the genre is the 1913 film *Why Am I Here?*. The 1930s remain the most prolific time for prison films, with over sixty films being made during this era (Mason, 285). Jarvis attributes this spate of prison dramas to the escalating incarceration rates during the early years of the Depression (165). These early prison films contain many elements that are still recognisable in the prison films and television programmes that are made today. Characters and storylines present in the 1930s' talkies can still be found, unchanged, in more modern contributions to the genre, such as *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994) (Rafter, 163). As Jarvis writes, the prison film is a repeat offender on the counts of plot, character and mise-en-scene (167). The prison movie typically demonstrates a familiar mise-en-scene of racial/ethnic divisions, organised gangs, the drugs trade and institutional inmate violence (O'Sullivan, 329). The main character is referred to as the 'new fish' or the 'prisoner hero' and is typically white, middle-class and somehow innocent of the criminal offense for which they are incarcerated. This character typically comes from a sheltered background and their survival depends on their ability to adapt quickly to a harsh new environment (Jarvis, 168). Waiting in the wings of the prison drama is a gallery of secondary figures, such as the bad warden, the good guard, the wily lifer, the black buddy and the kid (Jarvis, 168-169, Rafter, 164). These elements are present in prison films across each decade, for example *Cool Hand*

Luke (1967), *Escape From Alcatraz* (1979), *Lock Up* (1989), *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994) and HBO's *Oz* (1997-2003). Many of these popular elements established by early prison films are predicated on providing spectators with a certain kind of visual pleasure. Many of the viewing pleasures associated with the prison genre are targeted specifically towards a (white) male spectator; however these pleasures go beyond the visual. Rafter provides a list of hallmarks that she believes accounts for the enduring popularity of the prison genre. For example, the main character in a prison film is almost always a white male, incarcerated either for a crime he did not commit or for some minor offense. The convention of the 'prisoner-hero' or 'new fish' is used to provide audience members with a point of identification. As the new inmate is introduced to the world of the prison, the audience is too. This character of the 'prisoner-hero' gives audiences the pleasure of identifying with a 'a perfect man' (Rafter, 169). The typical 'prisoner- hero' exhibits physical prowess, moral aptitude, intelligence, bravery and the ability to galvanise his fellow prisoners. No matter how appalling the conditions of the prison itself, it is inhabited by some men who are a little more godlike than the rest of us (Rafter, 170). Rafter's examples of these 'godlike' men include Henri Charriere played by Steve McQueen in *Papillion* (1973), Luke Jackson played by Paul Newman in *Cool Hand Luke* (1967) and Mick O'Brien played by Sean Penn in *Bad Boys* (1983). The casting of these films reinforces the character's heroic stature. Another of the features of the prison genre is that these films allow the audience to participate in perfect friendships. Rafter describes the relationships formed in prison films as ideal companionship, writing that these friendships are more loyal and true than any on the outside (171). The third of the pleasures listed by Rafter is that the prison film allows viewers to

participate in fantasies of sex and rebellion. Although Rafter does not specify, these fantasies of sex and rebellion are almost always set up through the male gaze. This is also the pleasure most explicitly associated with the women-in-prison genre. Prison films are fixated on the sexual implications of an all-female society (Rafter, 172). Many of the pleasures of the prison film are explicitly targeted towards male viewers.

Filmmakers and television producers have traditionally favored male prisons over female prisons when it comes to setting. According to IMDB, there have been ninety-one movies set within women's prisons, compared to the six hundred and fifty-seven set within a male prison (Britton, 13). Prison movies have been predominantly about men and the stock characters found in women-in-prison films have been borrowed from the male genre (Faith, 256). Women have been present in films set in male prisons but their role consists of being figures who motivate the male characters into action (O'Sullivan, 330). The first time women featured as protagonists in prison films was during the 1950s (Mason, 287). Contextually, this could be due to the emergence of the 'women's film' genre, in which female spectatorship was cultivated through female protagonists (Doane, 164). However, these early films do not develop or sustain a women's point of view on incarceration; rather they simply substituted women for men in order to broaden the movies' appeal, without changing their basic nature (Rafter, 175). This is evident in the 1950 film *Caged*. *Caged* follows Marie Allen (played by Eleanor Parker), the typical prison innocent, who is charged with being an accessory to a crime after she runs to the aid of her husband who had been injured in a botched robbery. The film suggests that prison functions as a morally

corrupting rather than reforming force, as Marie Allen leaves prison a cynical, hardened offender (Schwan, 479). *Caged* received three Academy Award nominations, including for Best Actress. *Caged* was followed by *Women In Prison* (1955) although it did not reach the same level of critical success. Other women-prison films made during the 1960s include *House of Women* (1962) which tells the story of a wrongly convicted woman being sent to prison, as well as *99 Women* (1969) and *Love Camp 7* (1969) both of which paved the way for the babes-behind bars subgenre which emerged during the 1970s. These early contributions to the women-in-prison drama largely mimicked conventions of the prison genre, and simply substituted women into the stories in order to broaden the genre's appeal.

It was only in the 1970s that the women-in-prison genre began to develop some specific characteristics of its own. This period of filmmaking is commonly referred to as the 'babes-behind bars' genre. These films, primarily made in the 1970s and early 1980s, shared a distinctive preoccupation with the sexual implications of an all-female society (Rafter, 172). The babes-behind-bars subgenre was part of the wave of exploitation cinema that emerged during the 1970s. Films set in prison frequently use its setting to explore themes such as domination, submission, entrapment and escape (Rafter, 173). A majority of the films of this genre were explicitly intended to be pornography. Film censorship laws became less restrictive in the 1960s thus filmmakers used the setting of a women's prison to portray scenes of sex and fetishism. Examples of films made during this era include *Women in Cages* (1971), *Black Mama White Mama* (1973), *Women in Cellblock 9* (1977) and *Chained Heat* (1983). Despite the focus on sexuality, many elements

of the prison genre remained, particularly the stock characters such as the new fish and the corrupt guard. The era of 'babes-behind-bars' films reached its peak during the 1970s and 1980s. *Freeway* (1996), starring Reese Witherspoon and Keifer Sutherland, could arguably be considered the final babes-behind-bars film. Despite their deliberate sexuality, these babes-behind-bars films still featured many of the same ingredients of the traditional prison movie (Rafter, 166).

From the late 1990s, there has been a steady stream of popular television shows set within a women's prison which have in many ways broken traditions of the women-in-prison genre. Modern contributions to the prison genre have attempted to break radically with the genre's past and comment more critically on the genre itself (Rafter, 177). Examples include *Bad Girls* (1999-2006), *Wentworth* (2013-present), a remake of the long running soap *Prisoner: Cell Block H,* and finally *Orange is the New Black* (2013-2019). These television programmes have all received a good degree of commercial or critical success. For example, at its peak *Bad Girls* had eight million viewers tuning in, and *Orange is the New Black* received nominations for Emmys, Golden Globes and Screen Actors Guild Awards. The re-emergence of the genre could be attributed to the desire to have more diversity on television. The setting of the women's prison provides a homo-social space in which a diverse range of women is present. Indeed, creator of *Orange is the New Black* Jenji Kohan stated that the opportunity to tell the stories of a diverse range of women was part of the appeal of the series (Gross, 2013). Another factor that unites these three television shows in particular is their heightened awareness of the female spectator. While the women-in-prison genre

initially catered particularly to the male gaze, these more recent contributions are targeted more specifically to a female spectator. This shows a radical shift in some of the traditions of the women-in-prison genre.

The women-in-prison genre was born out of the larger prison genre but has developed its own set of conventions and hallmarks. However, the prisoner-hero character functions slightly differently in the women-in-prison genre. When the character is female, she is more often referred to as a 'new fish' or, as Suzanne Bouclin puts it, the "noble lawbreaker" (119). Like the 'prisoner-hero', the 'new fish' is often the protagonist of the story and in order to promote audience identification with them, they are usually innocent or somehow justified in committing their crimes. These films' protagonists are either framed, taking the rap for someone else, wrongly convicted or guilty of a very minor offence, such as vagrancy (Bouclin, 23). The 'new fish' character also serves a practical narrative function as the new inmate allows the audience to be introduced to the world of the prison at the same time as the character. The standard plot involving this character centres around an 'innocent' young woman, thrown into prison with an inmate population of lesbians, criminals and corrupt staff which ultimately destroys her innocence (Faith, 258, Mayne, 115-116, Ciasullo, 197). If a 'male caretaker' is present (a convention I will explore later), the young, naive woman transforms from 'criminal' subject to love interest ready for marriage (Bouclin, 23). This type of plot, as described by these theorists, can be found in many examples from the women-in-prison genre, for example *Chained Heat* (1983), *The Concrete Jungle* (1982) and *Women's Prison* (1955) which

all feature 'innocent' 'new fish' who are thrown into, and subsequently changed by, the harsh environment of a women's prison.

There are two characters in particular that are unique to the women-in-prison genre: the prison lesbian and the male caretaker. The women-in-prison genre provides an access point to male viewers through these two characters. First, I will discuss the prison lesbian. Historian Estelle B. Freedman initially coined the term. She argues that the figure of the prison lesbian has been present since the early 1900s (399). A growing lesbian subculture following World War II heightened the public's awareness of female same-sex relationships and this, coupled with prison overcrowding, contributed to the formation of the prison lesbian in the cultural imagination (Freedman, 403). By the mid-nineteenth century, lesbianism and criminality were associated with each other by virtue of occupying the same space of "degeneracy" (Terry, 131). In the 1950s, the prison lesbian had become a stock cultural character and one that posed a threat to sexual and societal order (Freedman, 405). The prison lesbian became part of the zeitgeist and therefore became a feature of films and television.

Since the character's inception, the prison lesbian has become a regular feature of the women-in-prison genre. Ciasullo argues that the 'prison lesbian' is a requisite character of the women-in-prison genre, comparing her presence in the narrative to the convention of a shoot-out in a Western (198). Indeed, one of the defining features of the women-in-prison genre became the 'promise' of lesbianism (Ciasullo, 200). Indeed, Ciasullo argues that a central interest of the women-in-prison narrative is in

documenting what happens when women are locked up together without the possibility of heterosexual expression (201). The centrality of the prison lesbian varies from narrative to narrative. Ciasullo divides the prison lesbian trope into two character variations: the "pseudo lesbian" and the "true lesbian" (206). Ciasullo defines the "pseudo lesbian" as a character who is heterosexual and simply reacting to the all-female environment of the prison space. Once her sentence is up, she will inevitably return to heterosexuality. Ciasullo defines the "true lesbian" as a character who identifies as queer both in and out of prison. Her appearance is coded as masculine, with a gender-neutral name and Ciasullo argues, a behavior or attitude that designates her as immoral and abnormal. The fates of the "pseudo lesbian" and the "true lesbian" in a standard women-in-prison narrative differ greatly. The "pseudo lesbian" is whisked back to heterosexuality often by the figure of the 'male caretaker' while the "true lesbian" will almost always either remain in prison or die on the inside, thus containing her 'deviant' desire within the boundaries of the prison walls (Ciasullo, 202). A character who fits Ciasullo's description is Franky Doyle from long running Australian soap-opera *Prisoner: Cell Block H.* Franky Doyle has the masculine name and appearance that fits Ciasullo's description of the "prison lesbian" character and her abnormal/ immoral behavior is expressed through her violent temper. Though the series as a whole ran for a staggering 693 episodes, Franky Doyle only made it to episode twenty, dying in a blaze of glory while attempting to escape the prison and thus containing her "deviant" desire forever within its walls. This sort of narrative expresses a fear that the prison lesbian will perminantly spread her perversion to the heterosexual inmates

(Ciasullo, 203). An interesting facet of the 'prison lesbian' convention is the way her character influences spectatorship.

Few men occupy the space of the women's prison, therefore in many instances the character of the prison lesbian takes on the heterosexual male viewing position. The character of the prison lesbian provides a point of identification for male viewers, as she casts an objectifying gaze upon the female inmates. Take, for instance, the first time the character of Franky Doyle is introduced in *Prisoner: Cell Block H.* Franky appears in the doorway of 'new fish' Karen Travers's cell. The camera aligns itself with Franky's gaze as she watches Karen. "You're beautiful" she tells her "I like beautiful things". The prison lesbian's desire to have sex with other inmates means that the male gaze is transferred on to her character, providing a lens through which the females onscreen can be objectified. The gaze of the prison lesbian also has an effect on female spectators. Narratives present in the women-in-prison genre often position women to look at other women in highly erotic ways (Ciasullo, 206). Through the character of the prison lesbian, the women-in-prison genre provides a cultural space in which female voyeurism can exist, without the threat of being considered 'lesbian' (Ciasullo, 206). Ciasullo attributes this effect to the careful cordoning off of the 'true lesbian' from the 'pseudo lesbian' (206). The cinematic gaze is inherently masculine, but through the character of the prison lesbian, female viewers get the opportunity to enjoy female homosexuality (Ciasullo, 2018). The character of the prison lesbian complicates traditional modes of viewing. The lack of male characters present in the

women-in-prison genre means that the character of the prison lesbian has co-opted this viewing position.

The prison lesbian is a character that consistently appears in the women-in-prison genre. However, in more modern contributions to the genre, she no longer conforms to the limitations of the stereotype. For example, *Wentworth,* a remake of *Prisoner: Cell Block H,* features a new version of Franky Doyle. This version of the character does not die within the prison walls; in fact she lasts for six seasons, even becoming the main protagonist from season four onwards. *Orange is the New Black* heightens the character of the prison lesbian to comic effect in its second season. Firstly. the show features a diverse range of characters that identify as lesbian or bisexual. Two notable characters are "Big Boo" and "Nicky" Nichols. Both characters are "true lesbians" proudly identifying as queer both in and out of prison. In season two, Nicky and Big Boo have a competition to see which of them can sleep with the most women in jail. In a sense they are trying to 'out prison lesbian' each other. This storyline makes a mockery of the figure of the "prison lesbian" by taking her "deviant desire" to the extreme. However, another television programme engages more meaningfully with the trope of the prison lesbian and uses a same-sex relationship within the prison walls to specifically engage female spectators.

The British television series *Bad Girls* premiered in 1999 and ran for eight successful seasons. During the show's peak in the early 2000s, *Bad Girls* regularly attracted an

audience of over eight million viewers (Herman, *Bad Girls Changed My Life*, 141). Maureen Chadwick and Ann McManus created the series. The original premise of *Bad Girls* was that this was going to be a realistic portrayal of life in a women's prison from the perspective of both inmates and staff. Chadwick and McManus both publicly identify as feminists and have made explicit in interviews that they intended to promote a feminist agenda through *Bad Girls* (Kregloe, 2007). Wilson and O'Sullivan argue that *Bad Girls* is engaged with the reality of women's experiences of prison and 'does a deal' with its viewers in order to showcase penal realities. Wilson and O'Sullivan believe that simply setting a drama in a prison is not enough to create dramatic interest; audiences need to be 'bribed' into engaging with a realistic account of life in prison. *Bad Girls* does a 'deal' with its viewers, by providing viewing pleasures of the women-in-prison genre in exchange for exposing some penal realities (Wilson and O'Sullivan, 124). They use as an example the opening scenes of the show. *Bad Girls* opens with the Bee Gees "Stayin Alive" playing over a rehearsal for a prison fashion show. Juxtaposed against the images of the fashion show are images of Carol, an inmate, alone in her cell, bleeding and suffering a miscarriage. The fashion show is an element of 'camp fun' which is a viewing pleasure often found in women's prison dramas, but the scenes of Carol show a different side to being incarcerated. *Bad Girls* developed an original way of dramatising prison that both provided inclusive pleasures to the audience as well as providing commentary on penal realities (Wilson and O'Sullivan, 123). As well as using their platform to showcase penal realities, McManus and Chadwick also break with tradition in their treatment of *Bad Girl*'s queer characters.

Bad Girls significantly disrupts the convention of the prison lesbian by portraying its gay characters as heroic figures. In this way, *Bad Girls* centres, validates and normalises lesbian sexuality (Herman "Bad Girls Changed My Life" 142). The protagonists of *Bad Girls* are Nikki Wade, an established prisoner and Helen Stewart, a prison governor. Wade is not a new fish, she has been in prison for some time. However, she does fall into the stereotype of the prison innocent. Her crime, of which she is eventually acquitted, was killing a policeman who attempted to rape her girlfriend. Wade is portrayed as a heroic figure. She is an outspoken advocate for the women in her wing. She is critical of a range of penal realities, such as prison healthcare, the separation of prisoners from their children and the treatment of non-English speaking inmates (Herman, "Juliet and Juliet" 473). Nikki is a moral centre within the prison and is consistently shown befriending and protecting vulnerable inmates (Herman, "Bad Girls Changed My Life" 145). Nikki is what Ciasullo would define as a "true lesbian" as she identifies as queer both in and out of prison. However, as Herman points out, Nikki's sexuality is never treated as a secret; her partner Trish comes to visit her early in season one. This is actually a characteristic of many of the lesbian characters in *Bad Girls;* their coming out stories are assumed (Herman "Juliet and Juliet" 481; Millbank, 457). Stewart is also portrayed as an heroic figure. She fights for the rights of the inmates in her care, within the structure of the old boys network that constitutes the prison's upper management. Helen initially identifies as heterosexual and her questioning of her sexuality became a significant barrier to her romance with Nikki. *Bad Girls* disrupts the women-in-prison genre significantly by having lesbian heroines, which normalises homosexuality both inside and outside the prison (Herman "Juliet and Juliet" 472).

These characters both challenge the cultural baggage that comes with the prison lesbian by being cast as the heroic protagonists of the series.

Bad Girls contradicts Ciasullo's assertion that the fate of the prison lesbian is to be either destroyed or contained. In *Bad Girls* the romance between Nikki Wade and Helen Stewart is given a happy ending. Herman writes that the homosexuality present in *Bad Girls* is presented as both unremarkable and potentially desirable (*Bad Girls Changed My Life,* 143). This is in contrast to the way that homosexuality has been portrayed in traditional women-in-prison narratives, as an erotic spectacle or evidence of deviance. The romance between Wade and Stuart is the central drama of the first three seasons of *Bad Girls.* Stuart is the one who pursues Wade. This is significant as the 'true' lesbian Wade is not the one taking on the 'predatory' role. The first time the couple have sex is in Stuart's home, which subverts the idea that prison lesbianism is purely a result of an all female environment (Herman, "Bad Girls Changed My Life" 150). The Wade/Stuart storyline concludes in season three. Wade is released from prison and Stuart attends her celebration party. After consistently being on the fence, Stuart finally commits to Wade, telling her "I want a woman" (*Bad Girls.* "Coming Out"). They kiss and this marks the final appearances of Nikki Wade and Helen Stewart in *Bad Girls.* The audience is left to assume that the pair are forging a life together, far away from Larkhall Prison. It is significant that these two characters are given a happy ending by *Bad Girls* writers. This storyline disrupts the typically prison lesbian narrative, in which lesbianism is forever contained within the prison walls. Following the airing of season three, Herman collected data from the *Bad Girls* internet message boards. Herman found that many

contributors on the board praised the show for making them feel more confident coming out, entering lesbian communities and reflecting on sexuality more generally ("Bad Girls Changed My Life", 156). The prison lesbian has been a requisite part of the women-in-prison genre since its inception. However, the way lesbianism is portrayed in *Bad Girls* does demonstrate a shifting cultural landscape and a more specific targeting of female viewers.

Another character unique to the women-in-prison genre is the figure of the male caretaker. In many ways, this figure of the male caretaker came to appear in films as a reaction to the prison lesbian. The male caretaker counterbalances the omnipotent, sinister female (Ciasullo, 197). The male caretaker is often present in narratives in which the innocent new fish is released from prison and successfully returned back to the domestic sphere (Morey, 82). This character is especially present during the period of the 1950s to the early 1960s. These early women-in-prison films were often (re)domestication stories in which a young woman was transformed from a criminal subject to a woman ready for marriage (Bouclin, 23). Prison is presented as a place that will help women in their journey to total domesticity, aided by the figure of the male caretaker, who alone is able to save a deviant woman from shirking her maternal duties (Morey, 80). This benevolent male caretaker is often used as a counterpoint to the other crueler members of the prison authority (Ciasullo, 197). The male caretaker is often a 'good man' such as a priest, a prison doctor or a faithful husband (Morey, 87). In contrast, in films of the 1950s and 60s without a male caretaker, the heroines are not successfully rehabilitated back into domestic life. Stories that lack powerful, virtuous

men show women corrupting each other or themselves (Morey, 87). For example, there is no male caretaker in the 1950 film *Caged.* Protagonist Marie Allen, a once innocent new fish, finishes her sentence and decides to embark on a life of crime. In the films of this era, prison is portrayed as a means of regulating deviant behaviour and restoring the outcast to society, on society's terms (Morey, 84). However, if prison fails to discipline women into their more feminine role, it turns them out as ersatz men (Morey, 87). While the male caretaker is especially prevalent in women-in-prison films of the 1950s and 1960s, his character still appears in modern contributions to the genre.

Orange is the New Black includes a male caretaker character, but subverts the trope, ultimately portraying his character as utterly ineffectual. The male caretaker is Sam Healy, a member of the prison faculty. Healy is Piper's assigned counsellor. In Piper and Healy's first meeting, Healy immediately sees potential in Piper as her whiteness and obvious middle-class upbringing makes her, in his eyes, "different" from the other inmates. As the series unfolds, Healy treats Piper as a confidante and encourages her to snitch on her fellow inmates (Enck, Morrissey, 10). He tries to take Piper under his wing by giving her advice on how to survive her prison experience, most notably that she should not engage in any lesbian activity. Healy clearly sees himself as a 'male caretaker' and tries to fulfill this role, but his lack of engagement with the inmates prevents him from effecting any meaningful change. Like Morey's description of male caretakers in the 1950s and 1960s, Healy sees the successful rehabilitation of an inmate returning her to the domestic sphere. He is vehemently against lesbians within the prison system, and Piper loses his support after she rekindles her romance with her

ex-partner. Lesbians pose a threat to Healy's aim to domesticate women; as Freedman writes, they represent the inverse of the suburban housewife, who serves rather than challenges men (415). In his personal life, Healy lives with his wife, Katya, a Ukrainian mail-order bride. Healy is unable to communicate with his wife, who speaks little English and this relationship serves as a metaphor for Healy's inability to connect both with his wife, and the women in Litchfield prison. He is unable to create a perfect domestic sphere of his own. After giving up on Piper, Healy attempts to reform several other inmates and fails each of them in turn. Healy is desperate to play his part as a 'male caretaker' but his aim to return women to the domestic sphere is ineffectual. In the final moment of season one of *Orange is the New Black,* Piper is being savagely beaten by another inmate and Healy serves as the only witness. Ignoring Piper's pleas for help, he turns and walks away. Because Piper did not live up to Healy's expectations, he abandoned her. Sam Healy and his attempts to return prisoners to the domestic sphere is portrayed as out of touch and old fashioned.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF THESE HALLMARKS?

The stock characters, plotlines and themes that have become recurrent features of the prison genre may seem, on the surface, to be an entertaining version of what incarcerated life is like but they do portray messages to the audience about prison life. For example, the stock figure of the 'prisoner-hero' or 'new fish' serves to present the non-white inmates as inherently more criminal than their white counterparts. The number of people incarcerated in the U.S has continued to rise every year since 1980. This increase, however, has not been race-neutral. For example, here in New Zealand,

Māori prisoners account for over fifty percent of the inmate population, despite making up only fifteen percent of the general population (*Department of Corrections Website)*. Though people of colour are over-represented in actual prisons, they are typically under-represented in Hollywood prison films (Wilson and O'Sullivan, 111). Although Black characters are often included within prison films, there are few that offer a representation of the African American experience (Jarvis, 169). Many stories of black inmates involve them aiding the white prisoner-hero in their journey to freedom or rehabilitation. For example, in *The Shawshank Redemption* Morgan Freeman is given top billing, alongside Tim Robbins. However, this casting of Freeman as the co-lead gives the film a feeling of racial equality that it does not live up to (O'Sullivan, 326). *The Shawshank Redemption* capitulates to racist expectations and fictions of redemption, wherein black characters' rehabilitation involves helping the white characters become who they need to be (Caster, 130). This same dynamic is present in other prison movies, for example *The Green Mile* (1999) and *American History X* (1998). The trope of the 'new fish' or 'prisoner hero' also typically paints the main character as an innocent and someone who is different from the rest of the inmates. The effect of highlighting this difference and focusing on a character who is 'not like the other prisoners' serves to cast the other characters who populate the prison (i.e. the people of colour) as inherently more criminal. The 'new fish' character can be used to expose the cruelty of prison life, but it comes at the expense of othering the rest of the prison population (Mason, 618). As long as redemption/rehabilitation is reserved for the exceptional, the mass of the inmate population is, by default, seen as being incapable of reform and unworthy of rehabilitation (O'Sullivan, 330). This effect can also be seen in *Orange is the New Black.*

Here is a quote from Jenji Kohan, the creator of the television show *Orange is the New Black,* talking about the character of Piper:

> In a lot of ways Piper was my Trojan Horse. You're not going to go into a network and sell a show on really fascinating tales of black women, and Latina women, and old women and criminals. But if you take this white girl, this sort of fish out of water, and you follow her in, you can then expand your world and tell all of those other stories. But it's a hard sell to just go in and try to sell those stories initially. The girl next door, the cool blonde, is a very easy access point, and it's relatable for a lot of audiences and a lot of networks looking for a certain demographic. It's useful. (Gross 2013)

It is clear from this quote that Kohan sees Piper as a point of identification for white viewers, as well as a crucial character for communication of the narratives of racial, ethnic and sexual minorities to a more privileged audience (Enck, Morrissey, 3). Piper's character very much fits the bill of a traditional 'innocent' new fish. She is white, middle-class and convicted of a minor drug offence committed many years previously. In the first season, Piper blunders her way through prison life, reminding viewers at every turn that she does not belong in this environment (Enck, Morrissey, 5). Using Piper's character this way serves to 'other' the rest of the prison population. Piper's 'innocent' status is contrasted against the 'criminality' of the other characters, particularly the women of colour (see Enck, Morrissey 3, O'Sullivan 2016, Caputi 2015).

Orange is the New Black is based on a memoir of the same name, written by Piper Kerman, who spent eighteen months at a correctional facility. Like the character Piper, Kerman was convicted of a drug trafficking offence. Kerman's memoir offers an atypical viewpoint as she is anything but representative of the American prison population (Schwan, 476). The memoir, *Orange is the New Black*, is a critical mediation on white privilege. Kerman is acutely aware of her privilege and uses her experiences to share her perspective with the reader in order to provide them with an entry point into prison life (Smith, 276). She respectfully depicts her fellow inmates and denounces the war on drugs as well as the prison's ability to prepare inmates for life on the outside (Smith, 276). Contrastingly, the television series "promotes the narcissism of the privileged white gaze" (Smith, 277). Piper's decline into true criminality is suggested to be caused by her interactions with other prisoners (Smith, 278). Similarly, in *Oz,* the identity of Tobias Beecher does not carry the automatic associations of criminality that burden the racially marked inmates (Wlodarz, 68). The white protagonist character is thrust into the world of the prison, a place where they are shown not to belong. By virtue of being part of the inhospitable world of the prison, it is implied that the people of colour do belong there.

Orange is the New Black puts an emphasis on individual responsibility over structural inequality. This emphasis means that the show often ignores structural inequality, particularly as it pertains to race (Belcher, 494). In season one, Piper tells her mother: "I am no different from anybody else in here" ("WAC Party" *Orange is the New Black*). But this is not true. Piper is different from the other inmates; her whiteness and her

middle-class upbringing are consistently emphasised from the moment she steps within the prison walls. By saying that she is just like everybody else, Piper ignores the structural difference and claims parity with the women of colour and queers who surround her (Belcher, 491).

Although films and television about prison tend to focus on a main character that somehow does not 'belong' behind bars, the institution of prison itself is rarely criticised. The prison genre tacitly accepts imprisonment as a necessary part of the criminal justice system (O'Sullivan, 330). There are always characters who, in comparison with the innocence of the new fish, are portrayed as fundamentally guilty and their presence serves to legitimise the use of prison as an institution of punishment. Othering and dehumanising the prisoners onscreen, particularly in relation to the 'new fish', leads to the construction of a pro-prison discourse (Mason, 618). Portraying the prison population onscreen as dangerous and morally bereft leads to the conclusion that prison is the only institution that can offer a solution (Mason, 619). Examples of this kind of 'criminal' character include Schillinger in *Oz* who commits rape, assault and murder all while behind bars. Another example is the character of Franky Doyle in *Prisoner: Cell Block H* who regularly erupts in violent outbursts. In many instances, the character of the 'prison lesbian' is the one cast in this role. At least one irredeemably bad convict is introduced in order to deflect from a more sweeping institutional indictment (Jarvis, 172). Other films and television programmes feature corrupt or inept staff, for example, the trope of the bad warden. However, cultural anxiety about crime and punishment is directed away from the prison institution and towards the individual, as

the corrupt members of the prison's faculty are portrayed as simply 'bad seeds' (Jarvis, 190). There are however some exceptions of television programmes that do challenge the institution of prison. For example, once *Orange is the New Black* moved away from Kerman's memoirs and into new territory, the show began to critique the prison system. For example, in season three, Litchfield Prison undergoes privatisation and the show demonstrates the consequences this has on the inmates. The prison becomes overcrowded, experienced guards quit and their replacements are given little training. This culminates in a riot which takes place at the end of season four. However, this is a rare case as most contributions to the prison and women-in-prison genre do not critique the institution of prison itself.

Others argue that prison on film directly stands in for the spectacle of the gallows. The development of the prison as a penal sanction altered the symbolism of punishment by replacing the visible punitive measure of the gallows and the guillotine with something more nebulous (Mason, 278). Mason conducted a review of prison films and discovered two broad issues. Firstly, that prison is often represented as a machine. Mason argues that representing prison as a machine highlights the individual fight for survival and the process of dehumanisation that comes with incarceration in the system (289). Mason writes that one of the requisite features of a formulaic prison film is watching the inmate be processed into the prison. The process of giving up civilian clothes, being assigned a number, and being subjected to a humiliating strip search is all part of the dehumanisation that turns men into prisoners (Mason, 291). The second broad issue is the consequent relationship between Foucault's account of the prison and the

disappearance of punishment as spectacle (289). In terms of his connecting the prison film to Foucault, Mason argues that executions at the gallows and guillotine were visible displays of the sovereign's ultimate control over his subjects. This mastering of the body of the condemned is present within the routine that men go through on their entry into a prison (Mason, 291). The way that prison is presented in film and television does have an effect on the way the general public engages with penal realities.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Why does this matter? Why does it matter that women's prisons have been portrayed in television and film in a way that is overly sexualised, highly dramatic and generally pro-prison in the discourse it propagates? It matters because these images are one of the only ways in which the general public is able to see inside a prison.

However, the images that the general public see of prison life are not intended to be, nor are they, an accurate representation of what life is actually like in a women's prison. The images of prison life that these films and television programmes provide are often superficial and tell us little about prison as a material site where people live and work nor do they pose questions about how society chooses to punish (McAvinchey, 6). Voyeuristic sensationalism takes the place of social realities when it comes to the film and television representations of prison life (Brown, 4). The women-in-prison genre in particular has a history of offering up to viewers voyeuristic pleasures of the female body rather than attempting to showcase penal realities. There are some exceptions to this of course; *Bad Girls* and *Orange is the New Black* do attempt to offer critique on the

prison system. However, interspersed with these critiques are many of the same hallmarks that have been part of the prison genre since its inception. For example, the camp elements prevalent in *Bad Girls* or *Orange is the New Black*'s conformity to the 'prison corrupts' storyline. Fictional narratives fuelled by dramatic situations, such as 'the escape' or 'the abusive guard' do not encourage the audience to think critically about prison as a punishment (McAvinchey, 6). The images of women's prison that the public get to see bear little resemblance to reality, yet they inform a majority of the cultural imaginings of prison life.

Yet, film and television portrayals of prison life take on particular importance as they have the power to inform and shape the public's attitude towards penal realities. There are few other institutions that have such a complete divide between their physical realities and the way they are imagined (Brown, 5). For the general public, a majority of which have never been sentenced nor had cause to visit a prison, access to the prison world is entirely mediated by others' representations of it (McAvinchey, 4). Granted there are other resources available, such as government documents, the occasional news article and memoirs of ex-prisoners. But these sources of information cannot compete with the reach of a television show like *Bad Girls,* which regularly attracted an audience of over six million viewers (Wilson and O'Sullivan, 8). Images are rich in visual information and can provide a nuanced understanding of a social situation that would be difficult to achieve through a verbal or written description (Wilson and O'Sullivan, 23). Wilson and O'Sullivan do give some credit to the public and argue that viewers do not necessarily accept fictional representations of prison life as completely true (16).

However, it is equally unrealistic to assume that these representations have no impact at all on the way the public thinks about prison (Wilson and O'Sullivan, 16). Therefore, if the majority of images of prison life that people see come from film and television, then it is fair to assume that these images make up a section of the public's understanding and visualisation of life behind bars.

Fictional representations of prison life make up a large portion of the images that the general public gets to see. Therefore, the way women's prisons are presented on screen is extremely significant. The women-in-prison genre shares many hallmarks with the larger prison genre. This includes such characters as the 'new fish', the 'wily lifer' and the 'corrupt guard', and storylines that feature innocent people being convicted, entrapment and escape as well as rising up against the prison authority. The women-in-prison genre developed some characteristics of its own, including a heightened emphasis on sexuality and characters like the prison lesbian and the male caretaker. These elements certainly provide spectacle and entertainment, but they do not showcase an accurate version of what life is like in a women's prison. They do little to encourage the audience to think critically about prison and its effectiveness as an institution. Nor, for the most part, is it their intention to do so. While more recent contributions to the women-in-prison genre attempt to challenge the conventions that have come to be associated with it, many elements of the prison drama remain. The women-in-prison genre is largely bound up with the voyeuristic pleasures that come with a homo-social space. Despite the fact that audiences do not necessarily take these

images as fact, they do play a significant role in the way the general public imagines prison.

The way that women's prisons have been portrayed onscreen also impacts the way that women's prisons have been portrayed on the stage. While there are certainly outliers, a large proportion of the stage productions about women-in-prison were created in reaction to the women-in-prison genre on screen. In my own play I referenced many of the hallmarks discussed above. Stock characters such as the prison lesbian, the new fish and the male caretaker make an appearance. In a deliberate homage to the women-in-prison genre, I presented prison as a cruel place where the innocent new fish leaves having lost that innocence. Theatre has frequently been used as a medium to showcase a more accurate version of life in a women's prison in order to counteract the way it has been portrayed in film and television.

CHAPTER THREE
'Lights Up'
Women in Prison on stage

As discussed in the previous chapter, the women-in-prison genre has become synonymous with a set of conventions that, over time, have become recognisable to film and television audiences. While not every film or television show about women in prison displays these characteristics, they are prevalent enough that they can be identified and grouped together as a genre. The women-in-prison genre is largely predicated on the audience's voyeuristic desire to see within the prison walls. The women-in-prison genre has come to be associated with heightened sexuality and plots and characters that favour drama over factuality. The same claims cannot be made for theatrical representations of life in a women's prison. From the glamorous and over-the-top portrayals of prison life in *Chicago* to the stripped back, verbatim theatre work of 'Clean Break Theatre', the way that women in prison have been portrayed in the theatre varies hugely in both content and form. As McAvinchey writes, not all representations of prison do the same cultural work; some reiterate narrative tropes and invite responses of shock or titillation while others provoke new understandings and even political action (38). Stage representations of prison life cannot be classified into one clear 'genre'. Firstly, theatre itself is not often categorised into 'genres' in the same way as films and television programmes. But more importantly, there are few elements that connect these plays together, despite them all being set within a women's prison. However, my research has shown that plays set in a women's prison can be broadly

categorised into three groups. The first is theatre that plays into the same tropes of the women-in-prison film genre. The second is theatre that places its emphasis on communicating 'real' stories from women's prisons. These plays tend to provide a counterpoint to the dominant images of women's prisons that come from television and film. The third is theatre that uses the setting of a women's prison as a metaphor to talk about a larger issue. An example of this is Sophie Treadwell's play *Machinal* which uses the prison setting to explore the limitations placed on women during the machine age. In this chapter I will be categorising the plays and musicals that use a women's prison as a key setting as well as examining the ways in which 'the real' is used to inform and create their stories. In the course of my research into theatrical representations of life in a women's prison, I identified several elements used by practitioners that I carried over into my own work *I Didn't Think it Would Be Like This.* These include the way satire was used in *Babes in the Bighouse* by Megan Terry and *Women Behind Bars* by Tom Eyen to draw attention to the ridiculousness of the images that the women-in-prison screen genre provides to its audiences. Other practitioners of interest include the Clean Break Theatre Company, particularly in the way this group fuses together the 'real' experiences of inmates with theatrical storytelling. This chapter provides an analysis and categorisation of women in prison theatre.

Much like the film representations, a majority of the plays about prison are set within male prisons. Women's prisons have not been a particularly popular setting for theatre-makers. The earliest examples of women in prison plays performed in popular theatres are *Chicago* by Maureen Dallas Watkins in 1926 and *Machinal* by Sophie

Treadwell in 1928. These plays could be considered to be 'ripped from the headlines' as they both used real life incarcerated women as a source of inspiration. I will discuss these productions in more depth later in this chapter. After these works, there were few prominent plays set in a women's prison until the 1970s. *Female Transport* (1973) by Steve Gooch is a historical work set on a ship full of female criminals bound for Australia. Other plays from the 1970s were created as a reaction to the babes-behind-bars film genre. These include *Babes in the Bighouse* (1974) by Megan Terry and *Women Behind Bars* (1975) by Tom Eyen. Both of these works satirise the babes-behind-bars genre to comic effect. Indeed, *Women Behind Bars* has become something of a cult classic and is regularly revived and performed in a theatre Off-Broadway. In terms of New Zealand works about women in prison, *Outside In* (1982) by Hilary Beaton remains one of the more prominent works. *Last Meals: A Nine Course Buffet* (2016) by Keely Meechan provides a comic representation of the final meals of women on death row. *Iron* (2002) by Rona Munro is another significant work about women in prison. *Iron* premiered at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and explores the relationship between an incarcerated mother and her daughter. Arguably the most significant period for plays about women in prison appears to be the last decade. Since 2014 there has been a constant stream of plays set in women's prisons. These plays have all had a strong connection to the real, whether they be verbatim theatre, historical fiction or devised with the help of inmates. Titles include *And I and Silence* (2014) by Naomi Wallace, *Key Change* (2015) by Catrina McHugh and *Run on Sentence* by Stacie Lents. There is a potential correlation between these works and the popularity and prominence of the television show *Orange is the New Black.* For example, the title of the

New York Times review for *And I and Silence* is 'Women in prison: the new black?" (Isherwood, *nytimes.com*). *Orange is the New Black* certainly increased the visibility for the issues of women in prison through its accessible semi-comedic format (Walsh, 109). *Orange is the New Black* potentially inspired theatre-makers to explore the prison setting either out of a desire to present alternative images of life in a women's prison or out of curiosity. Overall, the women's prison has not been the most popular setting for playwrights and theatre-makers but there have been a number of prominent productions throughout the decades.

It is impossible to discuss theatre and women's prisons without discussing UK-based theatre company, Clean Break. Clean Break was founded in the 1980s and has consistently produced plays about women in prison since then. Clean Break also has a comprehensive programme of drama workshops that they take into prisons. The theatre they produce in prisons is a significant part of Clean Break's output as a company; however, in this chapter I will be discussing only the work they create that is presented to the general public. Clean Break has produced many works over their forty-year span as a company but for the sake of brevity I will be focusing on only a few of them here. Clean Break was founded by Jenny Hicks and Jackie Holborough in the exercise yard of Durham Prison. The two started writing and devising work while in prison and upon their release decided to launch Clean Break as a workshop and touring company. Hicks' and Holborough's intention was to provide a support group for women ex-offenders as well as a place for them to develop skills for discovering a voice for themselves through theatre (*Unfinished Histories*). The work of Clean Break provides a counterpoint to the

dominant images of life in a women's prison in film and television. Anna Herrmann, the current co-artistic director of Clean Break asserts that "Prisons aren't seen by many people, it's really important that we break down misconceptions." ('A world to escape into", *The Guardian*). Since the company's inception in 1979, Clean Break has grown into a formidable entity and charitable trust, producing theatre, workshops and on-site support workers for women who have spent time in prison. Their website states that:

> Clean Break uses theatre to keep the subject of women in prison on the cultural radar, helping to reveal the damage caused by the failures of the criminal justice system ("Clean Break" website)

Clean Break is considered to be a leading alternative theatre company [and charity] in the UK. Notable productions from Clean Break include *Yard Gal* (1998) by Rebecca Pritchard which premiered at the Royal Court Theatre, *Te Awa I Tahuti* (1987) written by New Zealand writer Rena Owen, *This Wide Night* (2008) by Chloe Moss, which had performances at the Soho Theatre, as well as an off-Broadway season and *BLANK* (2018) by Alice Bircher, a co-production with the National Theatre.

While Clean Break continues to make theatre devised by ex-offenders, for example 2019's *Inside Bitch*, the company regularly employs professional playwrights to create original work about the issues facing women who have spent time in prison. The playwrights commissioned by Clean Break spend up to twelve weeks in regular contact

with a prison facility, where they are given the opportunity to interview prisoners, devise work with them, as well as deliver educational workshops. Lyn Gardner of *The Guardian* writes that a Clean Break commission was once a right of passage for an up-and-coming female playwright, but now they are eagerly sought after ("Clean Break and the Invisible Women", *The Guardian*). High profile writers such as Chloe Moss, Lucy Kirkwood and Rebecca Lenkiewicz have all received commissions from Clean Break. Clean Break commissions playwrights to create writing to stimulate debate, discussion and artistic materials from the prisoners, thus, in this case making the artist rather than the prisoner/participant, the author of the representation of the criminal justice system (Walsh, 111-112) In this chapter, I will pay particular attention to the work of Clean Break, firstly because of the company's significant contribution to the way women in prison are portrayed on stage and secondly because the method by which Clean Break playwrights work mirrors the way I created my own play.

THEATRE THAT USES THE PRISON SETTING AS A METAPHOR

The smallest category I will be addressing is theatre that uses the prison setting as a metaphor for something else. This is the category which least applies to the work that I am doing; however, I do wish to briefly acknowledge some works in this category before moving on to theatre that upholds/challenges the women-in-prison screen genre. Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* is a famous example of a play that uses its setting as a metaphor to address a different issue. In this case, the setting of the Salem Witch Trials became a metaphor for Senator Joe McCarthy's ruthless seeking out of Communist sympathisers. In the same way, the setting of a prison is often used as a kind of cultural

shorthand to discuss themes of entrapment, submission and escape. This category includes plays that use the prison setting as a metaphor with which to discuss another issue. Examples include *Machinal* by Sophie Treadwell, which uses prison as a metaphor for the lack of agency women had during the machine age, and *Her Naked Skin* by Rebecca Lenkiewicz which similarly uses the prison setting to explore themes of women's suffrage.

One of the earliest examples of popular theatre that uses women's prison as a setting is the play *Machinal* by Sophie Treadwell, which premiered at the Plymouth Theatre on Broadway in 1928. Treadwell was inspired to write *Machinal* after the famous trial, imprisonment and execution of Ruth Snyder. Ruth Snyder and her lover Henry Judd Gray were convicted of murdering Ruth's husband, Albert Snyder. Ruth Snyder was executed via the electric chair in Sing Sing prison in 1928. Treadwell took inspiration from the trial and execution of Ruth Snyder. The main character in Treadwell's story (who is only ever referred to as "Young Woman") likewise is convicted of killing her husband alongside her lover and is executed via the electric chair. However, *Machinal* is not simply a retelling of this famous trial and execution. Prison is used as a setting in *Machinal;* however, Treadwell uses it as a metaphor to speak more generally about the theme of women's imprisonment within gender roles. Treadwell uses Expressionist techniques to explore the theme of one woman's imprisonment in a loveless marriage and the machine age (Weiss, 4). Weiss argues that for Treadwell, machines represented a threat to the individual as the institutions of work, home, marriage and maternity, motherhood and even seeking gratification in the modern world are all mechanical (6).

Lutes interprets *Machinal* as being about an ordinary woman who tries to feel the way she is supposed to feel and cannot (359). *Machinal* does not showcase or interrogate the conditions for women in prison during the 1920s. The Expressionist form this play takes means that the original staging was minimalistic and stripped back in order to further highlight the themes of imprisonment during the machine age. It was not Treadwell's intention to write a play that reflected the realities of women's prisons at the time. Instead, her focus was on the way that women are imprisoned by the expectations of their own gender.

Using prison as a metaphor to express themes of sexism and the limitations placed on women is also a theme in Lenkiewicz's play *Her Naked Skin. Her Naked Skin,* which premiered in 2008, was the first original play by a female writer to be produced at the Olivier Theatre at London's Royal National Theatre. Lenkiewicz has previously worked with Clean Break theatre company as one of their commissioned playwrights, but the inspiration for *Her Naked Skin* came from Lenkiewicz's discovery of a second-hand book, *Shoulder to Shoulder* by Midge Mackenzie, which documented the struggles of the British Suffragette movement (Lenkiewicz, programme note). *Her Naked Skin* is set largely in London's Holloway Prison, where Suffragettes were imprisoned. The central emotional drama is a romance between two inmates, the upper class Lady Celia Cain and the working class seamstress Eve Douglas. The majority of the play is set within Holloway Prison, but *Her Naked Skin* is not an exploration of prison conditions. Rather, the prison setting enables the central drama between Lady Celia Cain and Eve Douglas to take place. Themes of entrapment permeate the play. Lady Cain is trapped in a

loveless marriage, while her lover Eve Douglas is trapped within the poverty cycle. Prison serves as a liminal space where these two characters can transcend class boundaries and come together. The set of the original National Theatre Production, designed by Rob Howell, is made up of a series of interlocking steel frames, which Michael Billington interprets as a reminder of the entrapment experienced by Edwardian women (*The Guardian*). Ultimately, *Her Naked Skin* uses the prison setting as a means for Lenkiewicz to explore how female militancy transcended class and sexual convention (Billington, *The Guardian*). In this case, the prison serves as an enabling force that allows these two women of different backgrounds to come together, as well as a metaphor for the lack of freedom the Edwardian Suffragettes were fighting against.

THEATRE THAT REITERATES EXISTING TROPES

There are a number of plays and musicals which recycle the tropes of the women-in-prison screen genre. However, the effect of the use of these conventions varies from upholding the popular culture images of women in prison to satirising them. Examples of theatre which use many of the same tropes as film and television representations of life in a women's prison include *Prisoner Cell Block H: The Musical* (1995), *Women Behind Bars* by Tom Eyen (1975), the musical *Chicago* (1975), *Babes in the Bighouse* by Megan Terry (1974) and *Last Meals: A Nine Course Buffet* by Keely Meechan (2016). It is of interest to note that this selection of plays is largely comedic. This contrasts with the works that make up the other two categories discussed in this chapter. This section analyses two plays in depth: the musical *Chicago* and *Babes in the Bighouse* by Megan Terry. Both of these productions use the conventions of the women

in prison genre in completely different ways. *Chicago* glamorises the figure of the female prisoner. The show highlights the connection between sexuality and violence. *Babes in the Bighouse* has a satirical take on the women's prison setting. The show featured many of the tropes of the women-in-prison film drama, including the sexualisation of prisoners and themes of domination and submission. The effect of using these tropes on stage is jarring to a spectator who is used to watching women's prison through the safety of a camera lens. Terry's choice to use satire in *Babes in the Bighouse* encourages the audience to think critically about the way they have consumed images of women in prison.

Arguably, the most iconic image of women in prison on stage is the six chairs that contain the six "Merry Murderesses of the Cook County Jail" in the musical *Chicago* by Bob Fosse, Fred Ebb and John Kander. *Chicago* is the second longest-running show on Broadway, after *The Phantom of the Opera*, and was adapted into a highly successful 2002 film. A large portion of *Chicago* is set inside a women's prison as the story follows Roxie Hart and Velma Kelly, two women accused of murder in 1920s Chicago. *Chicago* plays into many of the existing tropes established by the women-in-prison film genre. The female prisoners are highly sexualised, to the point where black lingerie replaces prison uniforms. However, while the prisoners themselves are sexualised, there is no hint of lesbianism in *Chicago.* At multiple points the play reinforces the characters' heterosexuality. For example, the "Cell Block Tango" and its refrain of 'he had it coming' demonstrates that heterosexual relationships are the reason that a majority of the inmates in the Cook County Jail are locked up. However, unlike many of the films

set in a women's prison, it is never suggested that lesbianism is the answer to this problem of heterosexuality. Stereotypical characters are present throughout the narrative, such as the prison innocent, 'The Hunyak', as well as the corrupt matron Mama Morton. *Chicago* was never intended to be a platform to discuss and expose the conditions of women's prisons during the 1920s. Rather, Toth argues that the prison setting in *Chicago* is a heterotopic space, a counter-space where the real world is contested and inverted (125). *Chicago* highlights the theatricality and fickle nature of the justice system by creating a carnival like-atmosphere in settings known for their austerity. The glamorous world of the current stage version of *Chicago* is a far cry from the original version of the story. *Chicago,* the musical, is an adaptation of a 1927 play by journalist Maurine Dallas Watkins.

Watkins wrote a series of newspaper articles about the 1924 trials of Beulah Annan and Belva Gaertner. Annan was charged with the murder of her lover, Harry Kalstedt. Though her story changed multiple times, at her trial Annan claimed that she shot Kalstedt in self-defence. It was here she uttered the famous line 'we both reached for the gun'. In her original reporting, Watkins called Kentucky-born Annan the 'prettiest woman slayer'. Annan was eventually acquitted of murder and the way she conducted herself at her trial became the inspiration for the character Roxie Hart. Annan's husband Albert stood by her throughout the trial, investing his savings in a top-notch defence. The day after she was acquitted, Annan announced she would be leaving her husband, because "he is too slow". Albert Annan became the inspiration for the character of Amos Hart. In the same year, Belva Gaertner was accused of murdering her lover

Walter Lore who was found shot dead in his car. Gaertner's quips on the stand during her trial made her a popular subject for the tabloids. Gaertner was also acquitted of murder and served as the inspiration for the character of Velma Kelly. Watkins wrote a series of newspaper articles about the trials of Annan and Gaerther and their popularity inspired her to rewrite her stories into *Chicago.* In her original play Watkins highlights the performativity and masquerade of Roxie and Velma and critiques their public/trial personas, pinpointing them as artificial and deceitful (Toth, 179). Although this critique is evident within the play, at the same time *Chicago* serves to glamourise female murderers. The emotions they display are portrayed as choices they make in order to relate in a particular way to an audience (Lutes, 348). Lutes goes on to argue that Watkins dramatised the link between social privilege and emotionality; only a winning combination of style and class can make feelings legible (353-4). Watkins eventually became cognizant of the fact that *Chicago,* as well as her initial reporting, had served to glamourise Annan and Gaerther to the point where she worried that she had affected the outcomes of their trials. Bob Fosse approached Watkins many times about buying the rights to *Chicago* but she consistently refused. It was only upon her death in 1969 that her estate sold the rights to her work. The musical version of *Chicago* features a new character, Mary Sunshine. Mary Sunshine (traditionally played by a man in drag) is a journalist who gets hopelessly sucked into the stories of Roxie and Velma. Her character was inspired by Mary Dallas Watkins herself.

Though *Chicago* was inspired by real events and people, the musical does little to expose the realities of prison life for women in the 1920s. The stories of Beulah Annan and

Belva Gaertner were used to promote the show's larger theme of the performative nature of the justice system. Walsh writes that a Foucaultian understanding of spaces constitutes a wider disciplinary function thus the prison space can be analysed as performative (115). However, if we view criminal justice as performative it erases some of the political implications of incarcerated bodies (Walsh, 115). The individuality of Beulah Annan and Belva Gaertner's stories was erased in favour of using their lives to explore a larger theme.

In contrast with *Chicago, Babes in the Bighouse* by Megan Terry satirises the women-in-prison genre. *Babes in the Bighouse* (subtitled 'A Documentary Fantasy About Life in a Women's Prison') was first performed in 1974 at the Omaha Magic Theatre, and subsequently completed a three-year tour of the US. The play features many of the stereotypical elements of the women-in-prison genre. For example, the play features a 'new fish' the character "Champ", and a prison lesbian who agressively propositions a new inmate. There are cruel guards, corrupt wardens and a submission/domination scene. However, the parody is evident from the moment the audience enters the theatre. In the original production as the audience arrives a tape is played of answers to the question: what do you think goes on inside a women's prison? Here, Megan Terry describes the process of making the tape as well as the effect the answers had on the overall production:

> While the audience waits, an audiotape plays. We made our tape by going door-to-door and asking people on the street questions about what they think

> goes on inside a women's prison. We found that the majority of responses were influenced by the gross amount of cheap sex novels, "grade C" drive-in movies and personal fantasies, all having to do with women locked up, as punishment, together. Therefore, the actors at O M T were dressed in various combinations of corsets, long gloves, feathers and furs, garters, fishnet hose, spike heels and too much makeup (V).

Babes in the Bighouse heightens sexuality of its characters and, as Rafter notes, is often preoccupied with the sexual implications of an all-female environment (172). Other moments within the play which serve to satirise conventions of the women-in-prison genre include a scene in which the character 'Teresa' has been deemed to be behaving 'too masculinely' lately and is thus 'feminised' by a team of fellow prisoners. 'Teresa's' character is then forced into domesticity by the 'prison doctor' thus fulfilling the role of the 'male caretaker' stereotype, highlighted by Morey (81) and Bouclin (*Feminist Jurisprudence,* 23). *Babes in the Bighouse* uses cross-casting to highlight the way the women-in-prison genre frequently uses stock characters to tell their stories. The actors in the play swap in and out of roles. For example, one actor will play both an inmate and the Warden. Cross-casting can be used effectively to draw attention to the idea of archetypes. Overall, Megan Terry's use of satire and parody is a highly effective tool for challenging the popular images of prison life that have come to inform the general public's view on women in prison. However, while *Babes in the Bighouse* uses parody to show what life in a women's prison is not, it does not offer a representation of what the

reality is. In this next section, I will discuss the theatre that sets out to provide new images of women in prison that more closely adhere to the realities of their life.

THEATRE THAT CHALLENGES DOMINANT IMAGES

There is a history of theatre being used as a vessel for communicating a more authentic version of prison life than the way it is represented in film and television. For example, the play *Justice* (1910) by John Galsworthy actually impacted British Penal Policy. Galsworthy conducted research into prison conditions and found that prisoners began their sentence with three to nine months in solitary confinement, which had an extremely adverse effect on the inmates' health and psyche. *Justice* demonstrated this effect through the character of John Falder, a young legal clerk convicted of forging a cheque. The play was both a critical and commercial success. *Justice* also inspired audience members to write letters to the then Home Secretary, Winston Churchill, asking him to change the way that prisons use solitary confinement. By the end of 1910, the government passed a new legislation that sought to improve the conditions of prisoners. *Justice* demonstrated the capacity theatre has to affect its audience and provoke them into public understanding and political action (McAvinchey, 45). Other examples include Tennessee Williams's play *Not About Nightingales* (1938) which directly references the Klondike massacre in Philadelphia County Prison. In 1938, rebellious prisoners were punished by being housed in a building with banks of radiators. The effect of this punishment left four men dead and twenty-one men suffering critical injuries. McAvinchey writes:

> In *Nightingales,* Williams raises questions about what can be expected of audiences and about the capabilities of theatre to elicit a critical engagement with, rather than an affective response to, the issues addressed (49).

Both Williams and Galsworthy used theatre effectively to transmit stories about prison conditions to a wider audience.

Playwrights have also used theatre as a platform to expose realities about women's prisons. Theatre has been used as a medium to provide an alternative representation to the way women's prisons have been represented in film and television. Examples include *Female Transport* by Steve Gooch (1973) *Outside In* by Hilary Beaton (1982), *And All the Children Cried* by Beatrix Campbell and Judith Jones (2002), *And I and Silence* by Naomi Wallace (2014), *Key Change* by Catrina McHugh (2015) and *Run on Sentence* by Stacie Lents (2016). These theatre productions all have a connection to real life. Many of these productions highlight their verisimilitude but have used several different strategies for telling real stories. For example, *And All the Children Cried* is about Myra Hindley, and uses the facts of her life and crimes as a basis for the play. But the play itself is an imagination of Hindley's life behind bars. Likewise, *Female Transport* takes place on a ship taking female convicts to Australia. Gooch used historical documents to inform his work, but what takes place in the play is entirely imagined. Other playwrights use their experiences of prison life to inform their work. This is certainly true of Hilary Beaton and her play *Outside In* that was inspired by Beaton's own experience of teaching writing workshops in prisons. *Key Change* was developed in

conjunction with the inmates incarcerated in HMP Low Newton. While these plays all have a connection to the real, a variety of approaches have been taken to portray a form of reality on stage.

Here I will focus on some specific productions produced by Clean Break theatre company. Walsh advocates for the style of theatre practiced by Clean Break theatre company, in particular the way the group uses theatricality to effectively challenge the dominant portrayals of crime and criminality. Walsh believes that many fictional representations of prison serve to support narratives that the justice system works by framing prisoners as morally 'other' (109). In contrast to this, Clean Break's intention is to engage with how theatre can both replicate and revise dominant portrayals of crime and criminality (Walsh 110). Walsh believes that performance has a role to play in exposing and subverting the conservative trends that abound in fictional representations of women in prison and that through performance it is possible to witness the subjective agency of prisoners as manifesting prisons as sites of openness and possibility and not merely as sites of containment (112-113). However, Walsh sees the most potential for resistance in non-realistic cultural forms (114). She argues that realistic portrayals of prison do not do enough cultural work to politicise their audiences, nor to reframe the material conditions of women in prison (114). The positioning of women in prison plays and films as 'just like everyone else' erases the specificity of women's backstories (Walsh 116). For Walsh, realism provides unity of meaning while other dramaturgical strategies allow for the possibility of multiple, contradictory, and messy effects they promote (119). Walsh's theory here intersects with

the work of Julie Salverson, who likewise advocates for a more theatrical approach to telling stories on stage. Salverson argues that to be overly literal on stage is a lie, no production is entirely 'realistic' there has always been some element of preparation or rehearsal (Salverson "Lie of the Literal" 184). Therefore, like Walsh, Salverson believes in a more metaphorical transmission of stories. She writes that acts of witnessing within the theatre may be possible through stories that set out to pose questions and not provide answers ("Lie of the Literal" 188). Walsh also believes it is possible to make witnesses out of audience members through a break with cathartic closure, neat narratives and hegemonic dramaturgies (131). Walsh believes that even in a non-realistic model it is possible to create three-dimensional characters with wants, desires and agency. Walsh writes:

> In the spectacle of the law, incarcerated women disappear from the 'real' world and are made to appear in the world of the prison. Yet as these plays demonstrate, their desires, habitus and hopes do not disappear (132)

Walsh argues that, with a theatrical approach to showing incarcerated women's stories on stage, it is possible to unpick the misconceptions and fallacies that the women in prison screen genre showcased up to this point. This may seem like a tall order, but the play *This Fatal Light* from the Clean Break theatre company shows these elements at play. *This Fatal Light* by Chloe Moss is a play about incarcerated women, but it is also a play about the relationship between mothers and their daughters. *This Fatal Light* was

commissioned by Clean Break Theatre and first performed in 2010, as part of *Charged,* a production which featured six original works about women in prison. *This Fatal Light* has a nonlinear narrative. The play begins with the character Maggie getting the news that her daughter, Janine, has been killed in prison. From here, the play jumps forwards and backwards in time and we see both Maggie and Janine and Janine and her daughter Aine before and after her arrest. The play explores the relationships between three generations of women and how incarceration affects so much more than the person in prison. Walsh writes that the reversed structure gives the audience a sense of the fragility of space and time within the prison walls (120). The focus on the relationship between generations of mothers and daughters is refracted through systemic institutional failures (Walsh 121). Walsh argues that the cell is not represented as the 'answer' to a truly unruly woman, but the 'question' as to how Janine, a vulnerable young woman, could be so failed by the criminal justice system (120). Walsh argues that *This Fatal Light* manages to highlight institutional failures, while also creating three dimensional characters with wants, desires and agency.

Outside In by Hilary Beaton is one of New Zealand's only plays about women in prison. As mentioned above, *Outside In* was inspired by Beaton's own experiences of working in women's prisons as a writing tutor. Contextually, *Outside In* was part of a wave of feminist drama released in New Zealand in the 1980s. Other examples of plays created during this time include Jean Betts' *Revenge of the Amazons* and *Ophelia Thinks Harder* as well as Renee's *Wednesdays to Come.* These plays could be seen as a reaction against the

male-centric drama that had permeated New Zealand's theatre scene, such as *Foreskin's Lament.* The homo-social space of a women's prison provided Beaton with a setting that is both rich in dramatic potential and entirely female. The story is centered on a group of inmates and drama that emerges from being locked up with many different personalities. Many of the characters in *Outside In* represent a larger archetype. For example, the characters of Ma and Lou represent the archetype of 'mother and child', the character Ginny represents the 'virgin' and the character of Kate represents a 'whore'. Beaton then deliberately rejects these archetypes, for example the play ends with 'mother' Ma strangling her 'child' Lou. "The play shows how victims destructively mimic the behaviour expected of them by their oppressors (Black, 8)". With *Outside In,* Beaton was not necessarily attempting to showcase an accurate version of prison life for a woman in New Zealand. Rather, the women's prison setting allowed Beaton the opportunity to explore the role women play in society in a more general sense.

In summary, plays that feature women's prisons are varied in their intention and cannot be categorised into one genre in the same way as women-in-prison films. Some theatre upholds the hallmarks of the women-in-prison genre and uses the prison setting for its dramatic potential. *Chicago* sits as the prime example of this category. Other practitioners use theatre to provide an alternative set of images to the ones of prison life perpetrated by television and film. The work of Clean Break theatre Company aims to challenge these images by providing audiences with access to stories that showcase the realities of life in a women's prison. The final category is plays that use the prison setting as a metaphor to discuss a larger issue. For example, *Her Naked Skin* used the

setting of Holloway Prison to explore class and lesbianism in the suffragettes. Women in prison plays cannot be grouped together as easily as their film and television counterparts. However, I believe that these three categories serve to include a majority of the plays and theatre set within a women's prison. The conclusions I draw from this analysis are firstly that the women's prison has had an interesting relationship to theatre. While film-makers have typically used the women's prison as a site to mine the maximum amount of drama and sexual tension from a story, plays about women in prison have not done the same. In fact, what unites almost all of these plays is the lack of sexuality within them. Even in *Chicago,* the play that most closely holds up the tropes of the women-in-prison genre does not even suggest a possible romance between inmates. In general, plays about women's prison mine the setting for its potential to showcase women's stories. The focus of many of the plays discussed in this chapter is the relationships between women. This is as true of an historical play, such as *Her Naked Skin*, as it is of a play set in contemporary times, such as Shelley Silas's play *Mercy Fine.* In terms of how I applied the research from this chapter to my own creative work, I noted that there were plays that satirised the women-in-prison genre and plays that effectively demonstrated the reality of a women's prison but none that did both. This is where I began to see the unique form my own play could take, with the potential to combine both of these elements. In this chapter, I spoke little of the way that spectatorship functions within theatre as a medium. My next chapter will focus primarily on theatrical spectatorship, with a particular focus on the figure of 'the witness'.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Voyeur vs The Witness

The women-in-prison film and television genre has frequently been a site of voyeuristic pleasure. The creators of content such as *The Big Doll House* (1971) buy into this perceived pleasure and use the prison setting to primarily explore themes of entrapment, submission, containment and the sexual implications of an all-female society (Rafter, 172). Likewise, in certain cases, the way that women in prison have been portrayed in theatre has also been a site of voyeuristic pleasure. For example, the hyper-sexualised inmates from Bob Fosse's version of *Chicago* (first performed in 1975) are some of the most famous theatrical images of women in prison. Despite the fact that many films, television programmes and theatre shows are based on or inspired by real-life events, it is still very possible for the stories of women in prison to be exploited and turned into devices of voyeuristic pleasure. The second act of the play that makes up the creative component of my thesis was created using testimony I collected from women who have been incarcerated in New Zealand. I did not want to replicate the same exploitative tendencies as the women-in-prison genre by presenting female prisoners on stage in a way that objectifies their bodies or their trauma. In this chapter, I will be seeking an answer to this question: how can I present these women's stories on stage in a way that prevents the objectifying gaze that has characterised film representations of women in prison? I will argue that the answer to this question can be found in the recent scholarship surrounding the witness, a viewing position that

appears to be the opposite of the voyeuristic spectatorship of the cinema. In this chapter, I will introduce the concept of the witness, and establish the term's connection to the practice of Documentary and Verbatim Theatre. I will also be examining the techniques used by other theatre practitioners who have used testimony to inform their work. Practitioners of Documentary and Verbatim Theatre have used a variety of strategies to present testimony and documents in a way that attempts to create 'witnesses' out of their audiences. The voyeuristic voyeur is a state of audience spectatorship I wish to avoid, particularly because of the way the women-in-prison film genre has been objectified by the camera's gaze. In addition to this aim, I want to create a work that encourages the audience to examine critically their own spectatorship. The arguments in this chapter guided the way that I presented the stories of women who have been incarcerated in New Zealand on the stage.

Film audiences and theatre audiences have two distinct modes of viewing and thus a different relationship to the media they consume. Laura Mulvey contends that film offers its viewers the opportunity to indulge their scopophilia, the pleasure in looking. Mulvey argues that film presents a world in which the people onscreen are indifferent to the presence of the audience. Therefore, spectators can stare at the actors on screen, without fear that they will have their gaze returned. This is in contrast to the theatrical spectator who, while invited to watch the actor's performance, could have their gaze returned to them at any moment. Peggy Phelan argues that unlike film, in theatre the spectator's response to the work has the ability to alter the performance and likewise, the performers are able to respond to the reaction of the audience. Phelan refers to this

effect as "mutual transformation" (575). Phelan argues that this process of "mutual transformation" makes theatre audiences more ethical spectators than film audiences, but Elin Diamond points out that both theatre and film involve scopic pleasures and the body (83). Therefore, the form alone is not enough to entirely combat objectification.

In many ways the 'theatrical witness' appears to be a mode of viewing in the theatre that negates an objectifying gaze. Theatre practitioner Tim Etchells defines what it means to be a theatrical witness in the following way:

> To witness an event is to be present at it in some fundamentally ethical way, to feel the weight of things and one's own place in them, even if that place is simply, for the moment as an onlooker (17).

This definition presents the theatrical witness in stark contrast to the cinematic voyeur. Etchells's definition presents the witness as the ideal spectator; they are engaged, moved and present in an "ethical way". I will return to what it means to be an 'ethical witness' but for now I will establish where the term 'witnessing' comes from, as it applies to theatre. The concept of 'witnessing' has roots in Bertolt Brecht's essay "The Street Scene: A Model for Epic Theatre". Brecht wrote this essay in 1938, but the term had a reemergence in the mid-1990s and has come to be associated with Documentary and Verbatim Theatre and the discourse surrounding these practices (Wake, "The Accident" 82). In this essay, Brecht describes how a traffic accident, one that could

happen on any street corner, provided it is witnessed, could serve as a model for how practitioners should approach theatre. According to Brecht, theatre should be built on the same principles as the eyewitness who demonstrates their experience of the traffic accident to a group of bystanders. For Brecht, when a demonstrator tells the bystanders of what they have seen, they never fully transform into the person they are demonstrating. The bystanders are under no illusion that they are witnessing the accident itself; they are aware that what they are seeing is a re-telling of an event. For Brecht, this is the object of the performance; the bystanders should leave having formed an opinion about the incident. Brecht's interpretation of the witness and how the figure applies to theatre has had ramifications in the theatre world, particularly in the field of Documentary and Verbatim Theatre.

Caroline Wake writes that the term 'witnessing' gained currency in Performance Studies in the mid-1990s, and has come to be associated with "Theatre of the Real" and the discourse surrounding this form and its practices ("The Accident" 83). Both Documentary and Verbatim Theatre fall under the umbrella of "Theatre of the Real", a term coined by Carol Martin to encompass a wide range of theatre practices and styles that in some way recycle reality ("Theatre of the Real" 6). Despite the prevalence of the term, the specific definition of what it means to be a witness in the theatre lacks clarity.

Wake argues that the term 'witnessing' has been used to describe;

> ...practically every participant involved in the process of making and watching theatre: the writer; the actor or performer; the character; the dramaturg; and the spectator ("The Accident" 83)

There is particular confusion between scholars and practitioners who refer to the actor as witness versus the audience as witness. Wake helpfully provides some clarification by returning to Brecht's essay "The Street Scene". In this article, Wake reiterates the difference between the terms 'primary' and the 'secondary' witness. Wake defines the primary witness as the person who witnesses the accident and the secondary witness as the person who is present at the account of the accident ("The Accident" 83). For example, in my own research the women sharing their stories about the experience of being in prison would be the primary witness, while I in listening to these stories would be the secondary witness. Wake also provides some clarification for the term, 'false witness' which she defines as a person who takes up a subject position that does not belong to them ("The Accident" 91). An example of this would be an actor who presents themselves as the primary witness. Wake argues that this kind of false witnessing is not an ethical practice. For example, when a performer acts as if s/he is a primary witness, this encourages the audience to think they are hearing this testimony first-hand, when in fact it is secondhand at best (Wake, "The Accident" 91). Ultimately Wake agrees with Brecht's initial model for Epic Theatre: that theatre works best when it is clearly marked as a retelling of an event.

As Documentary and Verbatim Theatre rely on interviews, transcripts or documents as a primary source for creating the content of the work, the theories Brecht expressed in "The Street Scene" have found purchase in the academic scholarship surrounding this work. But before I unpack this connection, it is prudent to examine the debates surrounding these theatrical forms. Carol Martin provides a definition of Documentary Theatre, writing that the form differs from other types of theatre as it is created from a specific body of archived material, such as interviews, hearings, records, film or photographs. Verbatim Theatre is the practice of recreating interviews on stage. Tomlin defines Verbatim Theatre as texts entirely created from extracts of interview transcripts or testimony that has been edited and delivered by performers (114). These two theatre forms are both included under the umbrella of Theatre of the Real. Contemporary Documentary and Verbatim Theatre often make the claim that everything presented is part of the archive (Martin, "Bodies of Evidence" 9). The theatre techniques used in Theatre of the Real performances could be seen as a way of re-establishing trust and truth after these values have been found lacking in the government and media (Schulze, 195). Documentary and Verbatim Theatre were created to amplify voices omitted from the dominant narrative (Tomlin, 142). Liz Tomlin likewise argues that the revitalisation of documentary forms emerged out of the prevailing climate of scepticism in the final decade of the twentieth century and she registers a shift post 9/11 to a more sceptical general public. Tomlin argues that the fallout from 9/11:

> ...can also arguably be said to have shaped a historical period of enhanced political awareness and agitation that may have contributed to the increase in the

use of verbatim to demystify the official version of events across a wide range of subject matters" (118).

Documentary Theatre is rooted in the idea of truth and authenticity and thus productions in this genre use a variety of theatre techniques to establish these values. Daniel Schulze writes that traditionally Documentary Theatre's scenography and staging choices encourage audiences to endow the performance with authenticity. He argues that Documentary Theatre heavily borrowed techniques from television in order to create what he calls an 'atmosphere of factuality' wherein productions attempt to recreate the original interviews on stage as accurately as possible (263). For example, practitioners such as Alecky Blythe have their actors wear headphones on stage, so that the actors may more accurately portray the interviewees' vocal score. These productions aim to minimise the distance between stage and world as far as possible (Schulze, 201). The connection between Brecht's theories in "The Street Scene" and Theatre of the Real can be found in the figure of the witness and particularly how it relates to the role of the audience.

The nature of Documentary and Verbatim Theatre forms, which often consist of interviewing subjects and performing their testimony on stage, has significant grounding in Brecht's theories of the eye-witness and the demonstrator. However, over time the witness has been cast as a fundamentally authentic and ethical figure. Schulze notes that audiences endow Verbatim Theatre's false witness with authenticity, as they are the connection point between the audience and the events of the play (196). Paget

argues that, unlike documents which have become vulnerable to post-modern doubt, the witness's claim to authenticity can still warrant a credible perspective (235-36). As Brecht wrote in "The Street Scene", the witness was the only one who was present at the event and their demonstration of the accident is the only way the audience can get a sense of the accident. Practitioners, such as Tim Etchells, endow the witness with the role of the ethical figure. To return to Etchells' definition of the witness, he writes that "...to witness an event is to be present at it in some fundamentally ethical way…" (17). As Freddie Rokem points out, the term 'witnessing' has different connotations from other similar terms such as 'eavesdropping' or 'watching' (68). 'Witnessing' feels more accidental and seems to imply an ethical obligation to report what you have seen. There is an implication that the spectator-witness is morally bound to firstly recognise the importance of what they have seen and secondly to report it. Suzanne Little defines ethical witnessing as the audience leaving the theatre with the desire to effect political or social change ("The Witness Turn" 43). This definition of the 'ethical witness' appears to be the opposite of a voyeuristic spectator or purveyor of the male gaze. Those seeking scopophilic release take their pleasure from the objectified bodies on screen while the 'ethical witness' gives back to the cause, by being prompted to further action.

The presumption that the witness is an ethical figure is a divisive one. For example, Wake questions Etchells' assumption that witnessing is an ethical act by asking what exactly is ethical about watching an accident? ("The Accident" 88). Likewise, Little writes that witnessing by being present at the testimony of an actual survivor-witness is considered an ethical activity and one that is of benefit to the survivor- witness ("The

Witness Turn" 49). Indeed, this is the view taken by practitioner Karen Malpede. Malpede advocates for what she called a 'Theatre of Witness'. Malpede believes that the act of bearing testimony allows the individual to reclaim the self and that having that testimony witnessed by an audience reclaims the individual back into society (272). Malpede writes that violence is an attempt to turn a person into a thing, and that the process of being witnessed (and by implication heard) helps to turn that 'thing' back into a person (272). By Malpede's definition, being in an audience that bears witness to testimony is an ethical act; however scholars such as Wake and Little take umbrage with this idea. Little argues that the conflation of knowledge of an event and experiencing the event is ethically problematic ("The Witness Turn" 51). Little also argues that attempting to turn audience members into ethical witnesses places the practitioner in the position of an ethical authority, as well as assuming that audiences are homogenous groups who need to be directed towards ethical behaviour ("The Witness Turn" 58). Therefore, the term 'ethical witness' comes with a fair amount of academic critique. It can be argued that witnessing is not necessarily an ethical activity, but I still wish to further explore 'witnessing' as it pertains to theatre. 'The witness' may not necessarily be an ethical figure but the intention driving practitioners who seek to create witnesses out of their audience mirrors my own intentions with my play. I believe that witnessing theory puts an emphasis on spectatorship and the way work is received by the audience. This is pertinent to my own project, as part of my aim is to encourage the audience to think more critically about its own role as a spectator, particularly in relation to the popular images of women in prison.

Despite the fact that Documentary and Verbatim Theatre both use testimony to inform and inspire their work, the way testimony is used and presented on stage has a huge amount of variation. I am now going to examine various techniques and strategies taken by practitioners who use testimony in their work before returning to the figure of the witness. Suzanne Little argues that Documentary Theatre can traverse a number of extremes, from highly exploitative spectacles to "ethical" productions drained of theatricality, in order to preserve "truth" ("Opposed Strategies" 2). I will begin by first examining those productions on one end of Little's spectrum which take a hard stance on non-interference in the form of 'headphone verbatim'. This is a style of Verbatim Theatre that consists of interviewing subjects and then, through the use of headphones and video recording, recreating those interviews in their entirety on the stage. In many cases the staging of these plays serves to recreate the original conditions of the interview, with the most extreme examples using video technology to allow the actors to mimic exactly the interviewees' vocal and physical score. Wake takes this further by suggesting that this style of theatre is "more real than realism, more natural than naturalism" ("Headphone Verbatim" 326). This is the style in which Alecky Blythe and her production company, Recorded Delivery, amongst others, perform their work, which includes the plays *Come Out Eli, The Girlfriend Experience* and the musical *London Road.* Blythe's company has its actors use headphones on stage with the testimony of the people interviewed being played directly into their ears. The performers then mimic exactly the speech patterns and intonations of the people they are portraying. Recorded Delivery uses visible headphones in their productions, which serves to draw attention to this process. In an interview Blythe explains her use of visible headphones: "The

technique of showing the audience how the play was made helped a great deal in gaining their trust" (Hammond & Steward, 89). Blythe sees the visible headphones as a key aspect of representing a real person and their story on stage in a way that makes clear that the actor is a demonstrator standing in for someone else and draws attention to the constructed nature of the performance (Little, "Opposed Strategies" 6). Like Brecht puts forward in "The Street Scene", the actors from Recorded Delivery draw a clean line between the actor and the person whose testimony they are presenting. They never fully transform into the person they are portraying. The effect of headphone verbatim is that audiences witness a performance that has great fidelity to the original interview. The benefit of this method is that the actors can replicate, with the utmost accuracy, every vocal nuance of the real person they are portraying (Wake, "Headphone" 323). The actors remain faithful to the interviewees' exact words and tone and the use of headphones makes clear that the actors are stand-ins or conduits for the witness themselves.

However, critics of headphone verbatim argue that the practice eliminates theatricality. Little argues that in choosing a hard stance on non-interference, practitioners may deny themselves the ability to use theatrical form to its full potential to engage audiences and in turn arguably do a disservice to the interviewee ("Opposed Strategies" 6). For example, if one interviewee is interesting, dynamic and expressive then the actor playing them will be too, thus contributing to the creation of an engaging performance. If the interviewee is more withdrawn (as is the case with many victims of trauma), this

may have a negative impact on the overall performance (Little, "Opposed Strategies" 6). The close intimacy of a filmed interview naturally tends towards a style of speaking that is also intimate and Little argues that watching someone replicate these moments feels somewhat voyeuristic and remote ("Opposed Strategies" 10). The participants who gave these interviews are often disclosing traumatic or personal information. These intimate moments are then replicated in their entirety on stage for an audience. This creates an unusual situation for the participants. If they are aware that their interviews will be meticulously recreated, this may affect the way they behave on camera. This may, in turn, create moments that are more performative, thus erasing the sense of complete authenticity that headphone verbatim seeks to achieve.

Janelle Reinelt writes that Theatre of the Real has the ability to provide access and connection to reality through the facility of documents, but not without creative mediation and communal spectorial desire (22-23). Within Reinelt's assessment of Theatre of the Real lies another critique Little makes of headphone verbatim, though it applies to Theatre of the Real in general: its editing and manipulation of testimony. Little makes the particular reference to theatre that omits the questions asked by the interviewer. She argues that the choice to replicate the intimacy and non-inclusive gaze of an interview, while omitting the exchanges from the interviewer, means that the practitioners are choosing to perform one side of a communication exchange ("Opposed Strategies" 11-12). Little believes that this one-sided exchange casts the audience as the interviewer, rather than the witness, only as an interviewer who has no agency to question or prompt. Schulze also critiques the way testimony in Verbatim Theatre is

shaped and edited. He argues the scripting and narrative choices of headphone verbatim are often consistent with dramatic form, meaning that complicated issues are given closure by means of theatrical dramaturgy (207). Tomlin likewise argues against Documentary and Verbatim Theatre that adheres to conventional narrative structure. Tomlin writes that the ultimate framing, editing and shaping of the work lies in the hands of the artists, rather than the testifiers (122). She argues that creating a through-line narrative for the stories of real people is problematic, as it has the potential to reduce reality to familiar dramatic fiction (129). Here, Tomlin agrees with Schulze that tying up a piece of Documentary Theatre with a satisfying closure discredits the original testimony. Julie Salverson likewise poses the question:

> If we write a play that presents an uncomplicated portrayal of victims, villains and heroes, what choice do we give to an audience of how to relate? ("Erotics of Injury" 124).

Here Salverson, like Tomlin, warns against a theatrical simplification of real-life stories. Theatre that attempts to mimic 'real life' in its staging also comes with its own ethical considerations.

Like Little, Amanda Stuart-Fisher argues against the idea that Verbatim Theatre is a more 'authentic' or 'truthful' form of theatre (112). Stuart-Fisher writes that the limitation of Verbatim Theatre lies in its ultimate fidelity to its word-for-word

interviews (113). Stuart-Fisher believes that Verbatim Theatre can be great for factual disclosures but questions its ability to authentically portray trauma (114). Stuart-Fisher writes that the experience of trauma is beyond language (114). Therefore, she advocates for less realism and more theatricality when it comes to telling real stories on stage. Stuart Fisher uses two examples to articulate her point. Firstly, she examines the play *The Exonerated*. *The Exonerated* is a Verbatim Theatre play which tells the story of six wrongly convicted prisoners. Stuart-Fisher writes that everything about the play, from the performance of the actors to the set-up of the stage, is designed to remind the audience that what they are hearing is the 'truth' (116). The actors stand behind lecterns and read from a script and Stuart-Fisher writes that this has the effect of the actors appearing to be intermediaries for the voice of the person they are portraying (16). Stuart-Fisher also notes that the play follows a conventional narrative structure, with a beginning, middle and end (17). Stuart-Fisher contrasts the performance of *The Exonerated* to another play about an exonerated prisoner, *He Left Quietly.* Stuart-Fisher argues that the play's use of poetry, metaphor and vernacular language conveys the idea that trauma is unknowable (120). Salverson also leans into a more theatrical take on Documentary and Verbatim Theatre.

A theatrical approach to testimony is not incompatible with witnessing theory. Salverson does not entirely reject the concept of the witness in the Theatre of the Real. Like Malpede, she defines 'witnessing' as listening to someone else's story and allowing your behaviour and attitude to be changed by what you have heard ("Lie of the Literal" 183). However, she also advocates for a more metaphorical transmission of stories on

stage ("Lie of the Literal" 184). Salverson reasons that in theatre, the literal is always going to be a lie ("Lie of the Literal" 184). To link her ideas back to Brechtian concepts, theatre can never be the accident itself. Therefore, Salverson believes that witnessing is possible, but through theatre that sets out to pose questions rather than provide answers ("Lie of the Literal" 188). This idea feeds into Stuart Fisher's argument that the experience of trauma is something that is unable to be expressed through words. These scholars advocate for a theatrical approach to Documentary and Verbatim Theatre.

A practitioner who has had great success in combining testimony with conventional theatricality is British playwright David Hare. In terms of Little's scale of Documentary Theatre techniques, Hare's approach falls at the other end of the spectrum, compared to practitioners of headphone verbatim such as Alecky Blythe. Hare's play *The Permanent Way* (2005) chronicles a series of British rail accidents in the 1990s and the grief and reactions to them. The actors in the original production also served as the interviewers. The interviews were not recorded, so technically, according to Liz Tomlin's definition, *The Permanent Way* is not Verbatim Theatre. Hare referred to the actors as "hunter gatherers" (Merlin in Paget 2009, 230) as the actors would go out to interview a subject and then return to the rehearsal room to present a condensed version of the subject and what they said to the group. These characters were then workshopped and Hare chose a selection of them to include in *The Permanent Way*. In an interview with Hammond, Hare admits that his work inhabits a spectrum between reality and fiction (Hammond, 74). For Hare, the production of a verbatim play must involve certain creative impositions and re-workings by the playwright in order to create a piece of engaging

theatre (Little, "Opposed Strategies" 5). However, Hare's play *Stuff Happens* has become a site of ethical unease, particularly surrounding the truth claims of this work.

Hare's play *Stuff Happens* premiered at the National Theatre in 2004. The characters that appear in *Stuff Happens* are instantly recognisable. Key players include George W. Bush, Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice and Dick Cheney. The play is made up of a mix of verbatim text taken from speeches, press conferences and meetings alongside scenes of Hare's invention. *Stuff Happens* has been the subject of much academic attention. The majority of the criticism stems from the fact that it is not always clear whether the action on stage is taken from a source or entirely fictionalised. Hare does little to distinguish the two. In his introduction to *Stuff Happens* he writes:

> The events within it have been authenticated from multiple sources, both private and public. What happened happened. Nothing in the narrative is knowingly untrue. Scenes of direct address quote people verbatim. When the door closes on the world's leaders and on their entourages, then I have used my imagination. (Hare, "Author's Note")

In his analysis of this statement, Stephen Bottoms writes that there is nothing wrong with a writer presenting history as imaginative fiction, but Hare's claim that "what happened happened" is surely questionable, as Bottoms estimates that 80% of *Stuff Happens* takes place behind closed doors (60). Using recognisable speeches, that

audience members are able to find with a simple google search, also lends credibility to Hare's fictional scenes. Bottoms writes:

> In *Stuff Happens*, it becomes impossible to tell with any reliability where factual reportage stops and political caricature starts: under Hare's all-seeing gaze, both acquire equal status as (dramatic) truth. (60)

Bottom's assessment of the truth claims in *Stuff Happens* showcases the ethical unease that comes with mixing verbatim with fiction, and not making clear distinctions between the two.

David Hare and the headphone verbatim of Alecky Blythe occupy two contrasting approaches to testimony in Verbatim Theatre, sitting at opposite ends of Little's spectrum. Two productions that employ different strategies are *Through the Wire* and *Binlids.* Both *Through the Wire* and *Binlids* use the witnesses themselves to perform the testimony and evaluate the effectiveness of this creative choice. *Through the Wire* is a Verbatim Theatre play devised and directed by Ros Horin. It takes a different approach to presenting testimony on stage. The play premiered in Sydney in 2004 and achieved critical and commercial success. *Through the Wire* tells the stories of refugees detained in Australia, and includes the point of view of Australian characters whose lives intersect with them ("A Playwright Behind the Wire ", *Sydney Morning Herald*). At the end of the play, it is revealed that one of the actors, Shahin Sahaei, has in fact been playing himself

and recounting his own experiences. On the surface, it appears that having the witness themselves present their stories on stage is in keeping with Brecht's theories of the demonstrator. Indeed, this choice also appears to mitigate what Caroline Wake refers to as 'false witnessing' which she defines as a person who takes up a subject position that does not belong to them ("The Accident' ' 9). However, using the witness themselves to share their stories is a choice that is both not available to all practitioners and not without its own ethical considerations. Wake firstly identifies 'the risks of repetition' or the 'ethics of repetition' as the risk of re-traumatising people by asking them to relive their experiences or by making them repeat a story they have told too many times before ("Mimesis" 104). Secondly, Wake also argues that as the production of *Through the Wire* did not feature any cross-casting or role doubling there was little to prevent the spectator from identifying all of the actors with their characters ("Mimesis" 111). Shahin Shafaei's "traumatic reveal" only further serves to conflate all the actors with the roles they were playing thus creating false witnesses out of the audience (Wake, "Mimesis" 111). The 'traumatic reveal' in *Through the Wire* functions in much the same way that Hare's inclusion of real testimony affected *Stuff Happens*: it serves to conflate truth with fiction. Adding further complication to the ethics of playing oneself in a verbatim play is Wake's discovery that another of the interviewees auditioned to play themselves and did not receive the role. Wake imagines that this might leave the refugees feeling that their stories are of more value than they are and that, despite the fact that the stories are theirs, they cannot tell them as well as actors can ("Mimesis" 116). Using the witnesses themselves to share their stories is a strategy that appears to mitigate the ideal of the

'false witness' and uphold Brecht's theory of the demonstrator but, as Wake points out, it is a strategy that is also fraught with ethical unease.

Another play which uses the witnesses themselves to present their stories on stage is the 1997 play *Binlids,* a Documentary Theatre play about the conflict in Northern Ireland, written and performed by women who had lived through the events the play dramatises. Karin Schaefer writes that this production really aimed to create witnesses out of their audience and, in this context, a witness is a spectator whose morality or system of judgement has been pricked by the performance (5). One such technique is the play's structure, which did not follow a linear trajectory, but rather had a fragmented narrative that mirrors the structure of memory (Schaefer, 9). A monologue would begin and then turn into a recreation of that memory. Schaefer writes that this technique elicits from the audience the feeling that the spectator is seeing what the women are seeing in their minds and the shift into recreation makes the images even more vivid (10). Schaefer goes on to argue that testimony, as revealed through this form of dramatisation, may then seem conducive to the formation of the audience as witnesses (12). Schaefer goes on to describe other ways in which the staging of *Binlids* encouraged an engaged form of spectatorship. For example, the audience were required to stand for the performance, which took place all around them in different parts of the theatre. This use of staging encouraged the audience to remain alert and engaged throughout. Schafer used *Binlids* as a case study in order to examine how a witness in the theatre can be created through writing and staging choices. On the surface, *Binlids* appears to be a production that approaches its testimony in an ethical fashion. For

example, Schafer commends the play for using the women who lived through these events as performers. There was no 'traumatic reveal' in this play as there was in *Through the Wire.* Schaefer argues that in the case of *Binlids,* the process of bearing witness gives the individual the opportunity to assume a measure of control over elements and thus 'reclaim' their stories (12-15). However, despite how many 'right choices' were made by the team behind *Binlids*, Schaefer notes that the audience reception to the show was mixed (16). Examining the reviews of the play, Schaefer found that audiences in Northern Ireland reacted strongly and in a manner befitting a spectorial witness, but audiences in London and New York were unable to connect to the material (16). For example, New York Times reviewer, Peter Marks, described *Binlids* staging choices as amateurish and found the play to lack subtlety (Schaefer, 16). Schaefer concludes that any attempt to turn spectators into witnesses is subject to the unpredictability of audience reactions (17). The author can control which viewpoints are shown to the audience and how they are portrayed but ultimately cannot control their reception (Martin, 12).

Through my analysis of plays such as *Through the Wire, Binlids, Stuff Happens* as well the work of Alecky Blythe, I have found that I ultimately see more potential in a more theatricalised approach to testimony. For example, Alywn Walsh, who sees the potential for resistance that non-realistic cultural forms can take (114). Walsh also argues that realistic portrayals of prison do not do enough cultural work to politicise their audiences, nor to reframe the material conditions of women in prison (114). Taking into

consideration Walsh's arguments, as well as the academic scholarship surrounding Verbatim Theatre, a theatrical approach to the testimony I have gathered fits with the aim of my project. According to Wake, this approach also fits with Brecht and the theories he expresses in his essay "The Street Scene". Brecht's theory that theatre should be akin to a demonstrator relaying an accident to a group of spectators remains as a helpful model for theatre practitioners. In her re-examination of "The Street Scene", Wake ultimately ends up agreeing with Brecht's assessment that theatre should aim to be a demonstration. After all, an accident cannot be created or rehearsed or repeated, but a performance can and that is where its strength lies. Two practitioners who I believe are successful at effectively integrating their source material with testimony are Anna Deavere Smith and Moises Kaufman. Through their work these practitioners uphold Walsh's argument that theatricality can be used effectively to create plays with multiple and ambiguous meanings.

The work of Anna Deavere Smith has been lauded for its successful integration of testimony and theatricality. [Deavere Smith is a practitioner of Documentary and Verbatim Theatre.] Two of her notable works include *Fires in the Mirror* (1992) and *Twilight: Los Angeles 1992* (1994). *Twilight: Los Angeles 1992* is about the 1992 riots that took place in Los Angeles, following the announcements of not guilty verdicts for the two police officers who beat up Rodney King. *Fires in the Mirror* explores the Crown Heights Riots that took place in Brooklyn in 1991. Deavere Smith interviewed people involved in the riots, collected a variety of viewpoints and performed the show as a series of monologues. Deavere Smith performed both of these shows solo. She takes on

the roles of each of the characters, and shifts between them, changing her voice and characterisation for each. on stage, Smith performs barefoot in a white shirt and black trousers. She often uses a piece of clothing, such as a blazer, jacket or hat to denote each different interviewee. The characters occupy different spaces, some sit behind desks and some stand. Through these staging methods, along with her skill as an actor, Deavere Smith portrays each of her subjects on stage. Critics praised Deavere Smith's performance, particularly noting the way she holds space as both herself and the people who she is portraying. For example, Richard Schechner praises Deavere Smith for her ability to absorb the gestures, tone of voice and the moment to moment details of her conversations with her subjects, while at the same time never losing herself. The audience is never fooled into thinking that she has truly 'become' these people. Schechner writes:

> Smith's shamanic invocation is her ability to bring into existence the wondrous "doubling" that marks great performances. This doubling is the simultaneous presence of performer and performed (64).

Carol Martin likewise praises Deavere Smith's performance style, which presents and characterises her subjects, while at the same time remains present as Anna ("Anna Deavere Smith" 51). Martin's and Schechner's descriptions of Deavere Smith's performance style brings to mind Brecht's theory of casting of the actor as demonstrator. Deavere Smith brings the testimony of the interviewees to life but never tries to convince the audience that she has truly become these people. The choice to

make *Fires in the Mirror* and *Twilight: Los Angeles 1992* one-woman shows makes the audience watch Deavere Smith changing into various characters, thus showcasing her acting craft and imbuing the performance with an inherent theatricality. Through this staging choice, Deavere Smith becomes the vessel for the testimony of the absent subjects.

Another group of practitioners praised for their simultaneous holding of theatricality and testimony is Moises Kaufman and the members of the Tectonic Theatre Project. *The Laramie Project* is arguably the group's most well-known work. The play explores the reactions to the murder of twenty-one-year-old Matthew Shepard in Laramie, Wyoming. *The Laramie Project* differs from other Theatre of the Real productions in that the company's working process in generating text for the play is an explicit part of the play's narrative (Bottoms, 65). Bottoms argues that the presence of this material invites the audience to question the role and assumptions of the interviewer-actors and writer-director in making this piece, just as they are asked to scrutinise the words of the interviewees (65). For example, there is a moment in *The Laramie Project* where two of the interviewers (Leigh Fondakowski and Greg Pierotti) express reluctance about going to interview Father Roger Schmit, a Catholic Priest (Bottoms, 65). Ultimately, Father Schmit ends up subverting their expectations; however, including the apprehension felt by the interviewers prior to receiving this testimony highlights the inherent bias we all have and gives the audience the opportunity to think critically about the construction of the play itself.

Bottoms praises Kaufman's Brechtian approach to the staging of the original production of *The Laramie Project* (67). Kaufman and the members of the Tectonic Theatre Project created the play using a technique Kaufman refers to as 'moment work' and this process imbedded the play with theatricality. For example, Rich Brown describes one rehearsal in which the 'moment' that day was 'The Fence'. The Fence is one of the key images associated with the murder of Matthew Shepherd, as his body was strung up on a fence following his vicious attack. Greg Pierotti was directing the scene that day, and had his fellow collaborators come forward with a chair, sit down and read a bit of text they have from an interview that pertains to the idea of 'The Fence'. At the end of this moment, the actors stood and spun their chairs around, causing the backs of the chairs to form the visual image of the fence (Brown, 59). This is a striking visual image that was created through a combination of testimony and theatre. Bottoms sees *The Laramie Project* as an excellent example of a Documentary Theatre play that uses theatrical self-referentiality to acknowledge its own dual status as both a document and a play (57).

> Without self-referentiality, documentary theatre plays can easily become exercises in the presentation of truth, while failing to acknowledge their own highly selective manipulation of form and content (Bottoms, 57-58).

Bottoms applauded Kaufman's Brechtian approach to their material, which he believes ensures that *The Laramie Project* never slides into sentimentality (67). The prospect of representing real people's stories on stage is a daunting one. Indeed, Slaverson argues

that the critical thinking surrounding ethics and witnessing has meant that practitioners who use testimony have erred on the side of restraint ("Foolish Witness", 246). However, productions such as *The Laramie Project* and the work of Anna Deavere Smith make the most of theatricality while at the same time foregrounding their own process of representation (Bottoms, 61). The space these productions occupy seems in many ways to be the middle ground between Little's two extremes of highly exploitative spectacles to "truthful" productions drained of theatricality.

In conclusion, the theatrical witness is the ideal spectator. I therefore aimed to approach my work in a way that makes witnesses out of their audience members, rather than voyeurs. Creating work that is not exploitative or problematic is well within a practitioner's reach and not reliant on the audience to interpret it in a particular way. A realistic form of staging also fails to acknowledge the highly mediated and constructed process that goes into creating a play. A more theatrical approach can also be used to represent the unrepresentable, like experiences of trauma. Therefore, a Brechtian approach to a Documentary Theatre play removes the potential of false witnessing and allows the practitioner to make use of theatricality to present experiences that are unable to be expressed in words. Theatre is at its best when, as Caroline Wake puts it, it is a "rehearsed accident." Theatre can strive for truthfulness, and use theatricality to fill in the gaps of the things that are unable to be expressed through words.

CHAPTER FIVE
Writing Women in Prison

In this chapter I will be discussing the choices I made in creating the play, as well as the theory that informed those choices. My intention with this piece was to highlight the discrepancy between the images we see of women's prison in television and film and the reality for women incarcerated in New Zealand. As discussed in the first chapter, women in prison films often invited a voyeuristic gaze that served to objectify the women on screen. In order to achieve these aims, I drew on three key theories to inform my creative choices. Witnessing theory provides a way of thinking practically about encouraging active, engaged spectators. I will also be drawing on Brechtian theory to inform the theatricality of the play. Finally, in order to combat the voyeuristic gaze that often accompanies the women-in-prison genre, I draw on feminist theatre theory, particularly the work of Sue-Ellen Case, as a guide for creating this work. I also took inspiration from two other sources, namely the plays *Mr Burns: A Post-Electric Play* by Anne Washburn and *The Shipment* by Young Jean Lee. In this chapter, I will begin by discussing the broader choices I made in the play's conception, for example the decision to structure the play in two acts. I will then turn to some of the more specific decisions I made for each act, such as characterisation and particular moments in the play. Using Brechtian, Feminist and Witnessing theory together to inform the creative choices I made, my intention was to create a play that encourged the audience to critically examine their own spectatorship.

Before I examine the theory that informed my creative choices, I will first discuss the interviews that I conducted prior to any writing I undertook on the play. My interviews were conducted over the phone with former inmates and I was connected with them through the Arts Access Aotearoa organisation. In the following section I will discuss some of the ethical considerations that come with interviewing former inmates, more details about my method of recruitment, as well as the guidelines I followed within the interviews themselves.

Interviewing people and using their stories to create a work of fiction is a process that requires ethical considerations. For example, Wake identifies 'the risks of repetition' or the 'ethics of repetition' as the risk of re-traumatising people by asking them to relive their experiences or by making them repeat a story they have told too many times before ("Witness Mimesis", 104). Alison Jeffers argues that for participants in Documentary Theatre re-traumatization can occur because the interview setup can resemble bureaucratic spaces in which they have already 'performed' their testimony for government officials, lawyers and case workers (218). In reference to the points made by Wake and Jeffers they were specifically discussing testimony from asylum seekers but the same risk of re-traumatisation also applies to former inmates, who have likewise had to repeat their stories to lawyers, case workers, police and prison officials. During the course of my interviews I did encounter a moment where the interviewee expressed discomfort at being asked to repeat a story she had doubtless been asked to recount many times before. When I asked Inmate M how she came to spend in prison, she said she would prefer me to 'google her name' rather than recount her story. I

agreed, checked that Inmate M was comfortable continuing with the interview before moving on to questions about the day-to-day aspects of prison life. With the benefit of hindsight, I can see that this is a confrontational opening question. Were I to do these interviews again I would instead begin with questions that would allow me to get to know them as a person, rather than as a former inmate. For example, questions such as 'tell me what you were like as a child' or 'where did you grow up?' are a less confrontational start to an interview with a person I have never met.

Another ethical consideration outlined by Wake is an effect she terms "Double Silencing" in which testimony is collected from an interviewee, only to not be used in the final performance ("Witness Mimesis" 104). Little echoes this point, arguing that some interviewees will be dynamic and expressive, while others, particularly those who have experienced trauma, may lack the ability to express themselves in an engaging way ("Opposed Strategies", 6). As the interviewer I had to remember this and take it as a cue that if an interviewee 'clammed up' on a particular topic, it may be because there was trauma surrounding it. For instance, Inmate S would happily talk at length about her job as the wing cleaner and other aspects of prison life, but when the topic of her children came up her answers became monosyllabic. I took this as my cue to move the conversation back into an area where she was clearly more comfortable.

Interviewing former prisoners comes with its own unique set of ethical considerations. For example, I considered the possibility I may receive a disclosure of criminal activity. I

addressed my responsibilities of what to do should a disclosure happen in my Ethics Application. In terms of legal obligations, I was not obliged to report any historic crimes as I am not a prosecuting agency. However, if I suspect that there is an ongoing risk of harm to an individual (such as abuse taking place currently) I was obliged to report this. Another consideration in speaking with women who have spent time in prison is that there may be topics or experiences that in the recounting cause distress. If a participant expressed or displayed any distress, first I would suspend the interview and then help the person to obtain suitable, qualified support as quickly as practicable. It was certainly not my intention to exploit or exacerbate participants' distress for the purpose of collecting interview material. The emotional and psychological well being of the participants was of paramount importance.

My initial plan was to visit prisons in New Zealand and conduct my interviews within the prison themselves. I applied three times to the Department of Corrections but my requests were denied. After the third denial I decided to interview former, rather than current inmates. I applied to the Otago University Ethics Committee to conduct my research and once approved I could begin the process of finding women who would consent to be interviewed by me.

I found former inmates willing to speak with me through the organization Arts Access Aotearoa. Arts Access Aotearoa is an organization that aims to

> …increase access to the arts for people who experience barriers to participation as artists, performers, audience members and gallery and museum visitors (Arts Access Aotearoa Website).

Amongst other endeavors, Arts Access Aotearoa facilitates arts workshops and programmes within prisons. I spoke with Jacqui Moyes, the Arts in Corrections Advisor. Part of Moyes's role within Arts Access Aotearoa was to provide links between former inmates who wish to continue to participate in the arts and connect with arts practitioners. In my phone call with her she agreed to make my email address available to her network of former female inmates who wished to participate in the arts. If they were interested, they could contact me and I would provide them with more information. While waiting to be contacted, I consulted and practiced my interview technique with Hilary Halba and Stuart Young who have considerable experience conducting interviews as part of their verbatim theatre practice. To prepare for the interviews, I also drew on my work in storytelling. I used to run a monthly storytelling event called 'Light to Light'. Each show featured four participants who shared stories from their life centred around a theme, such as "Not a Sprint, but a Marathon" or "On the Fringe". My role was to host the show and meet up individually with the storytellers to help them prepare their story. The show featured a mix of performers and non-performers. This experience taught me a number of things, for example how important specificity is in creating a picture for the audience. It also gave me an appreciation for how difficult it is to be vulnerable and what a privilege it is to be the receiver of someone else's story.

Several weeks after first making contact with Jacqui Moyes I received an email from a former prisoner willing to speak with me. Moyes had provided her my email address. We corresponded by email and I provided her with information about the project. She was comfortable giving me her address and so I sent a hard copy of the consent form as well as a prepaid envelope with the address of the Music, Theatre and Performing Arts Department for her to look over and sign. Once I received her signed consent form, we arranged a time to talk. Inmate J was most comfortable speaking on the phone, so I called her on her mobile. We spoke for just under an hour and she consented for the call to be recorded. At the beginning of the interview I made it clear that she did not have to answer any question she did not want to and at any point she could terminate or suspend the interview. I also made it clear that if any identifiable elements of her testimony were included in the eventual play she would be advised and consulted. She is also empowered to withdraw her testimony from the project at any time. Inmate J wished to remain anonymous and unidentifiable within the play itself and I assured her that this would be the case. From there I proceeded with the interview. To compensate her for her time I sent a twenty-dollar voucher for the supermarket of her choosing. The final question I asked Inmate J was if she knew any other former inmates who would consent to be interviewed by me and encouraged her to pass my email along.

In the following weeks I received an email from a friend of Inmate J who was interested in speaking to me about the project. I followed the same process as my previous interview, initially corresponding by email, sending through a hard copy of the consent

forms, arranging to speak by phone, conducting the interview and then sending through the voucher. I also ended the interview by asking if she knew of another former inmate who would be willing to speak with me and this led me to my next interview.

After I had conducted my interviews and finished a first draft of the play I sent it through to each of the women I interviewed via email. All of the participants I spoke to wished to remain anonymous and unidentifiable in the play, therefore I wanted to know if they felt I had achieved this. I also wanted to check that I had gotten the practical elements of each day right and details such as the way phone cards work were portrayed correctly. Finally, I wanted to know whether they felt that I had captured a fair representation of their time in a women's prison. A majority of the inmates I did not hear back from. Inmate J did read the script and said that it was 'good' but didn't offer any specific feedback or critique. It was reassuring that to Inmate J's eyes there were not any glaring inconsistencies. I also sent through the women a copy of the final draft of the script. I did not hear back from a majority of the women I interviewed. By this time I had discovered that one of them was incarcerated again which could account for me being unable to get in contact with her. Inmate J wrote back to say that she did not have the time to read through this version. While I was anxious for their feedback, I did not want to put undue pressure on them to read the script. Each leads busy lives and have other priorities, for example young children or that some are fairly early in their sobriety journey. While they appeared happy to be interviewed and share their experiences and perspective with me, they did not have a huge interest in the final product.

If I were to do a similar project again, I would attempt a number of strategies to elicit more 'buy in' on the final product from the participants. After my proposal to conduct my interviews within the prisons themselves was rejected by the Department of Corrections I had to recalibrate my approach. I settled on conducting my interviews via the telephone. There were advantages to this medium, it made it highly convenient for the interviewees to speak to me and I was able to interview people from all over New Zealand. However, on reflection, not meeting in person meant I was unable to form as strong a connection with the women as I would have liked which contributed to their lack of interest in the final project. Next time I would endeavour to meet all of the participants in person and preferably with multiple sessions. I believe that having more regular face-to-face encounters with interviewees would be beneficial to building relationships with them thus encouraging their continued engagement in the project. Another strategy I would try would be meeting as a group, with me and all of the interviewees. That way they could share their stories together and form connections with each other, not just with me. If I made the experience of telling their stories amounted to more than speaking on the phone it may entice the participants to have more investment in the final product.

I will now explain in more detail some of the guiding principles which informed the work I did on this play. First I will touch on Feminist Theatre Theory, particularly the work of Sue-Ellen Case, Elin Diamond and Elaine Aston. I used Feminist Theatre Theory as a guiding principle in order to negate the objectifying gaze often cast on

women in prison through television and film. Despite the difference in form, theatre productions can still be a site that encourages voyeurism and scopic pleasure. For example, Case makes the argument that Mulvey's theory of 'the male gaze' can also be applied to narrative structure in the theatre. While the camera provides the audience with the lens to which to view the women on screen, the male gaze as applied to theatre is built into the narrative itself. Case argues that female characters on stage are often introduced through the eyes of a male character. She uses, as an example, Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie* which begins with a monologue from Tom Wingfield, in which he introduces the audience to his mother and sister. Taking inspiration from Aristotle's "Poetics", Case's "new poetics" lays out some ground rules for creating feminist theatre. Case's four tenets for creating feminist theatre offer me a way to create a play that does not cultivate 'the male gaze'. The first tenet is that theatre must be non-realistic (124). Secondly, feminist drama must be non-linear in structure, as the linear mode of storytelling is particular to the male experience (Case, 123). The third tenet of Case's "new poetics" is that the drama must construct women as a subject free from the male gaze (120). Finally, a feminist drama must present audiences with multiple and ambiguous meanings. This final commandment of Case's resonates with the work of Alywyn Walsh. Walsh likewise sees potential in theatre that has multiple meanings (119). A break with cathartic closure, neat narratives and hegemonic dramaturgies in order for the audience to be a witness to the stories represented on stage (Walsh, 131). I therefore used Case's four tenets as an inspiration particularly for creating the structure of the second act of my play. However, I did not adhere to them entirely, but rather used Case's tenets as a guide.

Now I will discuss some of the broader choices I made in the play's creation. The decision to structure the play in contrasting acts was inspired by two particular plays, *The Shipment* by Young Jean Lee, and *Mr Burns: A Post Electric Play* by Anne Washburn. Both of these texts use contrasting acts to explore a question or concept to great effect. For example, *The Shipment* effectively uses satire to draw attention to the representation of blackness in mainstream American media. *Mr Burns: A Post Electric Play* uses its three act structure to explore the effect pop culture has on public identity. What marks these texts as different from other plays that employ a multiple act structure is that both *The Shipment* and *Mr Burns* display complete contrast in form and content of each of their acts. For example, *The Shipment*'s first act consists of a monologue from a stand-up comedian. The second act is written as a vaudevillian minstrel show. The final act is a realistic, living room drama. Each of these acts use their structural form to make a point about the way that Black performers in America are often stereotyped. *Mr. Burns: A Post-Electric Play* likewise is a great example of contrast. The first act of *Mr. Burns* is set in a post-apocalyptic world, in which we hear a group of survivors' struggles to remember the ``Cape Feare" episode of *The Simpsons.* The second act takes place seven years later and follows a band of performers who make their money by travelling around the wasteland performing episodes of *The Simpsons,* complete with adverts. The final act is set seventy-five years after that and shows a world in which the "Cape Feare" episode of *The Simpsons* has become a cultural myth of Biblical proportions. Both *The Shipment* and *Mr Burns* use contrasting acts to explore a central question or theme. My own play likewise explores a central question: how much does film and television

influence the general public's beliefs about women's prisons? Therefore, using a variety of theatrical styles felt appropriate for my own work as I wanted to highlight the difference between the images of women in prison that come from film and television and the reality of life for those women incarcerated in New Zealand.

Like *The Shipment* and *Mr Burns,* my play initially consisted of three acts but I made the choice to eliminate one of them. The first act is a musical, the second act is based on the testimony I gathered and thus is a more realistic portrayal of life in a women's prison and the third act took place in the living room of a family home and be centred around a (fictional) family watching a television programme set in a women's prison. The intention with this act was to draw attention to the act of spectatorship and show how film and television makes up a majority of the images the general public see of women's prisons. I wrote this act, but eventually decided to cut it from the final draft of my play. I made this decision for a number of reasons. First of all, this final act consisted of only one scene. Compared to the previous two acts that span multiple scenes and pages, the length of this third act made it seem inconsequential and anti-climatic. Secondly, the issues explored in act three had already been shown elsewhere in the script. The contrast between the first and the second act already served to highlight the difference between the way prisons are portrayed in film and television and the reality for those women incarcerated in New Zealand. The addition of the third act repeated themes already present within the play, the only difference being that I was drawing attention to them more explicitly. I was telling the audience what the themes of the play were, rather than showing them, or allowing them to draw their own conclusions. Allowing

the audience to create their own meaning motivates the kind of engaged spectatorship encouraged by witnessing theory. Case also emphasises the importance of allowing theatre to have multiple and contradictory meanings. Therefore, I decided that the third act of *I Didn't Really Think it Would Be Like This* was not necessary and in fact contrary to my aims in creating this piece. I will now provide an analysis of the choices I made in creating the two acts that remain.

ACT ONE

The first act is a musical and a satirical take on the women-in-prison genre, with heightened characters and storylines. The intention of this act is to satirise the stock characters and tropes that make up the women-in-prison genre. This act is the piece of writing that is most in keeping with my current practice as a writer. Up until this point I have primarily been a comedy writer and my background is in sketch and stand up comedy. Although I have now transitioned into playwriting, humour has always been an important part of the way I tell stories on stage. I felt that using satire would be an effective way to highlight the unreality of the tropes and conventions of the women-in-prison genre.

Inspired by Megan Terry's *Babes in the Bighouse* (1974) and Tom Eyen's *Women Behind Bars* (1975) I decided the first act of my play would be a satirical take on the women-in-prison genre. Satire is an effective tool for persuading the audience that an idea or image they have taken for granted is ridiculous (Griffin, 1). Satire uses the bold and vivid language of its own time, eschewing dead cliches and stale conventions

(Highet, 3). Highet describes satire as a form that claims to be realistic, but is usually exaggerated or distorted in order to create a piece of work that is shocking, informal and, although it is usually in a grotesque or painful manner, funny (5). These elements were certainly present in *Babes in the Bighouse* and *Women Behind Bars.* Both of these works took the familiar conventions of the women-in-prison genre and heightened them to a grotesque point. Take, for example, the moment in *Women Behind Bars* in which the character Guadalupe is dramatically executed in the electric chair. A New York Times review wrote of *Women Behind Bars*:

> There are plenty of laughs, but they are tempered by an uncomfortable undercurrent. Mr. Eyen's characters are victims of a world they are struggling desperately to understand. Their superficial ridiculousness is humorous, but their plight is a tragedy nonetheless (Frank).

The effect of heightening these familiar characters and the situations often found in women-in-prison films creates the 'uncomfortability' described by Leah Frank in this review.

The voyeuristic gaze of the women-in-prison genre allowed audiences to see behind the closed doors of the prison; however, the world they saw was often pure spectacle. When heightened and placed on stage, moments that are typical features of the genre, such as suicide, rape, abuse and violence become grotesque and the pleasure that comes with

being privy to unseen spaces is erased. Satire can be used effectively to make sure that the audience is not treated to any fixed meaning or satisfying conclusion. For example, in writing about Caryl Churchill's play *Serious Money,* Klaus Muller contends that in using satire and humour;

> Churchill's satirical comedy combines the traditional elements with a typically modern perspective, insofar as her play does not refer to an implicit ideal and a generally accepted morality, but leaves it to the spectator to find ways of improving the present society (357)

Muller's argument that Churchill's use of satire means that the audience is not given a satisfactory conclusion at the end of the play and must therefore come up with their own solutions and meanings is encouraging, as it also connects with two further aims I have in writing this play. First of all, it complies with one of Case's tenets of creating feminist theatre, that it must present audiences with multiple and ambiguous meanings (129). Secondly, leaving the audience to do the work of formulating meaning encourages a form of 'active spectatorship' consistent with witnessing theory. I felt further encouraged to use satire by Ilka Saal's reading of the way satire was used effectively to explore issues of race and stereotyping in *The Shipment.*

One concern that comes with using satire as a device is that the play will fall into simply being entertaining. After all, there is a pleasure that comes from recognising genre

conventions. I wanted to make sure that the satire used in my play encouraged the audience to think critically about their role as a spectator. Once again, I found inspiration in Young Jean Lee's *The Shipment. The Shipment* is a satirical intervention into contemporary discourses on blackness (Saal, 98-99). Saal describes *The Shipment* as a play which thwarts genre conventions and audience expectations (98). This description of Lee's work is pertinent for my own play, as this is what I aim to achieve with my first act. Therefore, I will focus on examining the part of *The Shipment* which functions in the same way; the minstrel show. The second act of *The Shipment* is clearly inspired by the tradition of minstrelsy. In this act, *The Shipment* rehearses the history of black performance in US American mainstream culture as an extended minstrel show, where black performers, regardless of their various attempts to break the mould, are ultimately confined to laughing, dancing and singing for white audiences (Saal, 101). Saal argues that the play seems less interested in drawing the satirical laughter of recognition than in implicating its spectators in this ridicule in an intensely personal and discomforting manner (101). This statement by Saal resonated with me, as this is the exact effect I wish to achieve with my own work. A technique used by Lee to achieve this effect is stage directions which tell the actors to look at the audience "for an uncomfortably long time". The aim of these directions is to make the spectator feel highly self-conscious, both in regard to the show's packaging of racial stereotypes and jokes for entertainment, but more importantly how onlookers and consumers react to them (Saal, 102). The actors returning the gaze of the audience erases the voyeuristic pleasure in looking cultivated by film and television. This is an effective tool for making audiences feel

self-conscious about their role as spectators and disavows them of taking pure pleasure from the enactment of recognisable genre conventions.

As well as intersecting with both feminist and witnessing theory, I believe that the choice to make my first act a satirical take on the women-in-prison genre is consistent with my aim to incorporate Brechtian elements in my writing. Many theorists find a cross-over between feminism and Brecht. For example, Elin Diamond advocates for an intertextual reading of feminist theory and Brechtian concepts. Diamond argues that Brecht's 'alienation effect' (or verfremdungseffekt) could be a powerful tool to draw attention on stage to the performance of gender (83). This theory is echoed by Elaine Aston. Aston agrees that Brecht's theorization of alienation and his practical suggestions to performers on how to demonstrate systems of social oppression through the medium of performance can be brought into play in a feminist theatre context (13). Carol Martin likewise sees the potential for the crossover of Brechtian and feminist theory. Martin argues that Brecht's theories on acting opened a space in which the actor could communicate with the spectator about the character and the actions being performed ("Feminism and Chinese Theatre" 77). For Brecht, allowing the audience to step back from the character and observe the events as an onlooker is an ideal form of spectatorship. Diamond believes that Brecht's alienation effect demystifies representation and shows how and when the object of pleasure is made, thus releasing the spectator from imaginary and illusory identifications (83). In my chapter on witnessing, I discussed Brecht's essay 'The Street Scene' in which he posits the idea that actors should not lose themselves within their roles; rather they should act as a

demonstrator. When the actor 'alienates' the role like this, she 'quotes' the characters' behaviour instead of identifying with it (Diamond, 84). Diamond suggests that this distancing between actor and role combats the pure objectification of women on stage. She argues that feminist theory sees the body as culturally mapped and gendered, while Brechtian theory insists that the body is not a fixed essence but a site of struggle and change (89). If Brecht's 'alienation theory' can be used to draw attention to gender performance, I also see the potential for it to be applied to the performance of genre. For example, Brecht observed how in a performance by Mei Lanfang, he never acted as if there was a fourth wall, thus eliding the audience of the illusion that they were an unseen spectator (Brecht, 92). This is the effect I want to achieve with the audience of my play. I want them to examine critically their own role as a spectator, particularly in relation to the conventions of the women-in-prison genre, which are largely born out of voyeuristic desire. In order to encourage the feeling of distance between actor and role, I opted to not give names to any characters, aside from protagonist Sophie. Instead they are named for the archetypes they represent; 'The Prison Lesbian' 'The Wiley Lifer' 'The Guard'. By not giving the characters names, I hope to encourage the actors to think of their performance as a 'demonstration' and the audience to see them as such as well. It is my hope that taking recognisable storylines and characters and heightening them to a satirical degree will be at once familiar and unfamiliar to audience members. It is my intention that these choices will encourage the audience to think critically about their own habits of spectatorship.

The choice to make the first act a musical was born out of a desire to create a world that was clearly over the top and rife with cliches. Of course, this is not to suggest that all musicals are rife with cliches. Both *The Shipment* and *Mr Burns* had a musical act and I found this to be an effective choice as the change of form provided a large contrast to the acts that followed and preceded it. A musical act would heighten all the characters and story cliches I wished to satirise. I primarily used the songs in the piece to introduce characters, I found that giving songs to the stereotypical characters such as 'The Prison Lesbian' and 'The Male Caretaker' was an effective way of having them introduce themselves, as well as the appropriate cliches that have come to be associated with their characters. The other instance I used songs was for a character to emote how they were feeling, for example the song Sophie sings alone in her cell the first night she is in prison. This song expresses her loneliness and her feelings of helplessness. The most pertinent advice about writing lyrics came from Stephen Sondheim. Sondheim argues that 'content dictates form' (339). What he means by this remark is that the character's personality, aims and emotions at that moment should impact the way they sing. [Sondheim uses the character of Mrs Lovett from *Sweeney Todd* as an example.] Sondheim describes Mrs Lovett as a "glitteringly disorganised chatterbox" who switches mood mid-thought and thought mid-sentence (339). Therefore, Sondheim contends that the "mercurial, eruptive quality" of Mrs Lovett's chatter calls for an irregular song form, with rhymes that pop up sporadically and a tune that feels closer to a rapid recitative than to a song (339). After reflecting on my first draft, I found that many of the characters sang with exactly the same rhythm, cadence and rhyme structure. I tried to remedy this in later drafts by thinking more critically about the

characters' individual voices. For example, I decided that the Warden's song should be fast-paced and wordy, with a neat rhyming structure. This would reflect her no-nonsense attitude, her regard for the rules and her tough demeanour. This song introduces both Sophie and the audience to the world of the prison. In contrast, I saw the Doctor as suave, manipulative and performatively kind. Therefore, his song was more lyrical but with sharp rhymes. For example, this is the chorus of his song:

I'll catch, ya

I'll catch ya

I've caught them all

You can't run from me baby

Not inside these prison walls

I'll catch ya

I'll catch ya

Run as hard as you can

I'll catch up to you

'Cause I'm the man

Overall, I feel the choice to use a musical for the first act of my play served my aim of highlighting the ridiculous images of women in prison that were born out of film and television. This choice also complemented the use of satire that I employed to further achieve this aim.

In terms of how the story functioned, I decided to create a linear narrative consistent with the type of stories typically found in films and television programmes set in a women's prison. This was not particularly hard to do. The women-in-prison genre already has a recognisable narrative that is prevalent in both film and television. Ciasullo describes the 'standard narrative trajectory' of a women-in-prison film as such: a young woman, typically innocent, is sent to prison. She is stripped, searched, uniformed and sent to meet a range of female criminals. She is also quickly acquainted with the authority figures in the prison, including a cruel sadistic warden. Over the course of the narrative, the audience witnesses the protagonist's horrifying prison experience, which culminates in some sort of rebellion, a riot, an attempted breakout, a prison fire. The story concludes with the heroine's release from prison and she is reunited and guided to goodness by the man in her life and swept back to heterosexual bliss (197). There are slight variations in this formula; for example, Mayne offers an alternative conclusion to Ciasullo's 'standard narrative trajectory', writing that by the end of the film the 'new fish' is no longer innocent. Either she is rehabilitated, chooses a life of crime or is determined to release others from prison (Mayne 115-116). Ciasullo writes that this narrative is present in both "high" and "low" culture and indeed, examples of this story can be found in Academy Award contender *Caged* (1950) as well as exploitation films such as *Women in Cages* (1971). Therefore, I decided to follow Ciasullo's narrative trajectory and create a story that followed an 'innocent' new fish, whose experience of being in prison sets her down a path to criminality. This is the type

of story structure that I have found to be the most prevalent in the women-in-prison genre, therefore I decided this would be the more pertinent example to emulate.

ACT TWO

The second act is inspired by the testimony I collected from women who have spent time in prison in New Zealand. I chose to use the testimony as inspiration, rather than as verbatim text for a number of reasons. Firstly, all the women that I spoke with did not want to be identified. Therefore, I felt that creating characters based on them, rather than presenting their testimony verbatim would eliminate any fear they had of this possibility. I also saw the effectiveness of using interviews as inspiration in the work of Clean Break Theatre Company. The playwrights conducted interviews, spent time in women's prisons and then created their play based on their experiences. I found that works such as *This Fatal Light* by Chloe Moss and *Mercy Fine* by Shelley Silas retained the specificity of the women's stories, while still making the most of theatrical storytelling techniques to explore a theme, or portray a feeling. Finally, I felt that I wanted to use this opportunity to develop my craft as a writer. As mentioned above, my work has primarily been comedic, therefore I welcomed the challenge of creating a work that has a thorough grounding in reality.

The purpose of this act is to provide an alternative to the satire of act one by showing, with a degree of accuracy, what life is like in a women's prison in New Zealand. I hope that the contrast between the acts will encourage the audience to think more critically about their role as a spectator. As mentioned above, I decided not to use the testimony

verbatim, but I still wanted to portray a more realistic version of life in a women's prison. I found this act to be particularly challenging, particularly reconciling this aim with Brechtian, Feminist and Witnessing theory. In this section I will be discussing the testimony I gathered, and the specific passages which inspired characters and moments from the play. But first, I wish to discuss linearity and how it came to bear on the second act of this play.

In terms of my own background, working within a structure that did not prioritise a linear journey of character development was a new challenge for me. I studied scriptwriting at Victoria University's International Institute of Modern Letters . Over the course of my studies we were taught about narrative structure, with a particular focus on characters and how they grew and changed throughout the story. The structure we were taught was heavily rooted in the concept of 'The Hero's Journey". This is a very popular structure for dramatists. The way I was introduced to this form was through Christoper Volger and his book *The Writer's Journey.* In this book, Volger argues that all stories, from myths, movies, dreams, and plays consist of a few common structural elements, commonly referred to as 'The Hero's Journey'. Volger was inspired by the work of Joseph Campbell, particularly the book *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* in which Campbell examines the underlying structure of myths. Volger took Campbell's theory and applied it specifically to the dramatic structure found in films. In *The Writer's Journey,* Volger argues that the pattern of 'The Hero's Journey' is universal and found in some form in every culture. The structure of 'The Hero's Journey' follows a hero, who after initial hesitation, leaves their comfortable, ordinary surroundings and commits to

an adventure that challenges them and ends with them returning home changed in some way by their journey. Volger writes that the structure should not call attention to itself, nor should it be followed too closely (19). He argues that a variety of stories, from *Hamlet* to *Star Wars* and *Pulp Fiction* display the formula of 'The Hero's Journey'. This story structure can also be found in many examples of the women-in-prison genre, for example *The Weak and the Wicked* (1954) or *Freeway* (1996).We learned about other narrative structures, for example the work of Christopher Brooker, who argues that there are seven basic plots that are fundamental to the ways we tell stories. Brooker argues that it is virtually impossible for any storyteller to entirely break away from them (6). The plots included in Brooker's analysis include stories of 'Rags to Riches', 'Overcoming the Monster', 'Voyage and Return' as well as 'Tragedy' and 'Comedy'. What unites the theories of Campbell, Volger and Brooker is their linearity. Each of these story forms follow a single protagonist through their journey. The other key element that unites these structures is that the protagonists change; they learn something, they grow and the path that they are on has fundamentally affected their character and in more cases than not, for the better.

However, these traditional dramatic structures have been critiqued as being a masculine form of storytelling. For example, Maureen Murdock became concerned with the lack of space for women within the structure outlined by Joseph Campbell in *The Man With a Thousand Faces.* Having read the text, Murdock wrote to Campbell asking about the role of women in 'The Hero's Journey'. Murdock found herself disappointed with Campbell's reply. Campbell wrote:

> In the whole mythological tradition the woman is *there*. All she has to do is realize that she's the place that people are trying to get to. When a woman realizes what her wonderful character is, she's not going to get messed up with the notion of being pseudo-male. (Campbell in Murdock, 2).

Murdock felt unsatisfied that the role of women in the hero's journey is simply to be *there*. She decided that women need a new model that understands who and what a woman is (2). Murdock then developed her own narrative structure which she calls "The Heroine's Journey". Murdock's 'Heroine's Journey' focuses less on an outer heroic quest and more on an internal quest for women to fully embrace their feminine nature, learn how to value themselves as women and heal the deep wound of the feminine (3). An example of this structural form is *Te Awa I Tahuti* which was commissioned by Clean Break theatre and written by New Zealand writer and actress, Rena Owen. *Te Awa I Tahuti* or *The River That Ran Away* is an autobiographical play written by Owen, in which she draws on her experiences of incarceration in London's Holloway Prison. *Te Awa I Tahuti* is presented as a series of conversations between prisoner Toni and psychologist Mrs Bottomley. Toni's emotional journey throughout the play is one of acceptance. Toni's journey to accept her past is in tandem with her journey to accept her Māori culture and heritage. Toni's connection to her Māori culture is always talked about retrospectively and it has little bearing on her life in the present. However, as Toni confronts the trauma of her past, she begins to connect more with her heritage. I thought about using Murdock's structure of "The Heroine's Journey" to approach my

work, however the form did not seem appropriate. “The Heroine’s Journey” structure fitted well with the personal nature of *Te Awa I Tahuti and* Owen’s personal journey of acceptance. This form fits much better with an autobiographical story. The story I am writing is different. It is not based on my own experiences; I’m telling someone else’s. Therefore, I decided the structure of “The Heroine’s Journey” is not appropriate for this project, and sought other inspiration for the creation of this act.

Initially, I found it very difficult to break out of “The Hero’s Journey” structure. Linear modes of storytelling, such as “The Hero's Journey” structure were ingrained in me and my writing. The first time I wrote act two, I had Sophie refusing to put up any photos or pictures in her cell. I felt inspired by the testimony of Inmate J, who described her conscious decision to make the prison her home;

> At first I was like, my cell was quite empty in there, I didn’t want to make it my home but then I, as I came to accept that it would be for a while and that made it easier to kind of make it my family and my home. Yeah. For a while.

I thought Sophie coming to accept the prison as her temporary home would be an effective throughline for her character. The final image of the play was Sophie putting up pictures of her family on the walls. However, in reading back this draft I realised the linearity of this story progression. Therefore, I decided to end the play by introducing a

new character, a new inmate to give the impression that life in the prison goes on, new inmates come in all the time, even when we are not looking at them.

However, one particular challenge facing me with this specific material is how to reconcile a non-linear form with portraying the progress of time. I thought it would be an interesting exercise to explore how a theatre production could portray what it feels like to serve out an extended prison sentence. Also, many of the women I spoke to felt that their prison experience was overwhelmingly one of tedium and routine. Inmate J described the boredom like this:

> Well, yeah like, I mean like, I used to love plucking my eyebrows because it was really hard to get like a mirror in there and so once I got a mirror I'd love to do that stuff so yeah (*laughs*) it was pretty fucking boring if I got excited about that.

The central focus of many films and television shows about women in prison is often spectacular events, such as escape, power struggles, violence, corruption, riots or exploitation. For the majority of the women I spoke to, this was not their experience. While occasionally there were episodes of violence, these were rare. Inmate J described prison life as an unsettling mix of predictability and unpredictability. She found the daily routine was exhausting in its utter repetitiveness but there was also an unpredictable element to life;

> I just didn't like the unpredictability of it, like you were always predictably unlocked at a certain time but then there was like this unpredictable element where it was like anything could happen and um when it did, it really did, yeah, it would be like a boom! Yeah it would be really big. You know, someone doing something really horrible to themselves or others or like, yeah…it's pretty…I didn't like that part of it.

I played with jumping around in time, but the results of these experiments did not give a sense of the boredom felt by the inmates, the amount of time they spent in their cells nor the lack of control they felt over their own lives. I decided to include a lack of causation, rather than a lack of linearity in the second act of my play. The play is chronological but I chose to abandon character arcs. Events happen and are not resolved. An example from within the play is the scene where the inmates have a toilet paper fashion competition. This was inspired by an anecdote from Inmate J, who spoke about a day where the prison held a fashion show. Each wing made a costume and her wing chose to dress up one of the younger inmates like a fairy. I thought this would be an effective way to display a lack of causation. Seeing the characters spend time creating an outfit, only for it to be ripped up and flushed down the toilet evoked the feeling of killing time and displayed a lack of causation. After using my third draft to explore a lack of causation, I felt this would be the most effective method for presenting the experiences of prison life that I wanted to highlight.

Including a lack of causation within the text was not enough to give a sense of how the daily routine constitutes the majority of prison life. I decided to therefore include a sequence which ran through a typical day for a woman incarcerated in New Zealand. In each interview I asked the women to describe for me their typical day. Descriptions of the prison's daily schedule were largely consistent. The only discrepancy I found was one inmate describing getting up for breakfast, which was served in the cafeteria, while another recounted being served breakfast through the 'hatch' of their cell door. After breakfast, half of the prison population were 'unlocked' which meant they were able to come out of their cell, eat in the cafeteria, attend programmes and doctor's appointments and occasionally get some time outside. They would then be back in their cells and the other half of the prison population would be 'unlocked'. One prisoner describes the daily routine:

> …like we'd wake up, get fed, we'd get fed our breakfast through our hatch and yeah depending who was unlocked yeah, would come out first half would come out for an hour and then the second half would come out for an hour and then it was lunch time and we'd also get our sandwiches put through the hatch if we weren't in the wing um eat our, eat our thing, the only things there were to do was watch TV, talk with your cellmate or talk under the door with others. And then there was a late unlock which I think was from one o'clock till three o'clock so that would also be split into two halves, you'd get about an hour out in the afternoon and then lock up was four thirty the rest of the time.

Prisoners are locked in their cells from four-thirty in the afternoon until breakfast the next morning. This routine was occasionally disrupted. Inmate J describes an incident in which a knife went missing from the kitchen and the entire prison was locked down (not allowed out of their cells at all). Aside from these occasional interruptions, life in a women's prison in New Zealand is dictated by routine. Television played a huge role in the daily lives of the former inmates I talked to, therefore I decided to include this in the 'daily routine' sequence. *Home and Away* and *Shortland Street* were described by inmate S as "real jail programmes" because they were on every day (at five-thirty and seven-thirty, respectively) and they were filled with drama, which meant that these shows were something regular that the women could look forward to and talk about later. Competition-based shows such as *The X-Factor* and *Married at First Sight* likewise gave the inmates something to talk about on the wing. Inmate S describes watching the first season of *Married at First Sight,* with the rest of the wing watching too and people shouting out to each other in moments of dramatic tension. I distilled the women's description of a typical day into a sequence. Here is an example:

The lights go out.

The lights come up. The sun is rising.

The prisoners are fed breakfast (Weetbix) through their hatch.

They eat breakfast.

They return their trays through the hatch.

A buzzing sound.

GUARD ONE: Rolling lock!

The prisoner's doors are opened and they exit their cells.

Some walk off to go to their various courses or programmes. Some mingle in the communal area.

Another buzzing sound.

GUARD ONE: Back in your cells ladies!

This sequence is repeated, with minor variations, four more times. Distilling the average day for an inmate in New Zealand into its essential elements, and then repeating the process, I hope conveys the sense of routine and drudgery described to me by the former inmates. This sequence isn't necessarily 'realistic'; it is a much more simplified, stylised version of a typical day but my hope is that it is demonstrative of what life can be like for women incarcerated in New Zealand.

Specific details bring a world to life. I was very interested in the kind of small, day to day details typically not spectacular enough to be written into a narrative featured on film or television. Therefore, in order to show with some accuracy what life is like in a New Zealand women's prison, I included some specific details about prison life. For example, there are two women in a cell and they sleep on bunk beds. The exception to this is what one former inmate described as 'The Penthouse Suite' because it featured side by side beds instead of bunks. Inmates are allowed a television in their room, as well as a few other personal items, which include an electric kettle, a CD player or radio, a limited number of books, study or hobby material and personal grooming products (*Department of Corrections Website*). Remand prisoners (those who are awaiting trial) are typically allowed to wear their own clothes, while prisoners who have been sentenced are given a prison uniform (*Department of Corrections Website).* There is a small shop where prisoners are able to buy groceries, personal hygiene products, confectionery, stamps and phone cards, as long as their overall total does not exceed $70 per week (*Department of Corrections Website).* [These details were confirmed by testimony of the women I spoke to.] To pass the time inmates kept themselves busy with a number of activities. They would write letters to friends and family; prisoners in drug and alcohol rehabilitation programmes had workbooks to do; read, play cards, chat with cellmates or chat under the door with other inmates. When they were allowed into the recreation yard, the prisoners would walk in circles. These were the elements of prison life that are very often omitted from film and television. I therefore included, where I could, moments of specific domesticity, in order to bring this world to life.

Aside from informing the setting and details of the world, I also used the testimony I gathered from ex-inmates as inspiration for the second act characters. Because the women did not want to be identified, I did not base the characters specifically on any one of them. Rather, I took a few elements from each of the women I spoke to and used them to create the character. In response to the testimony I gathered I was careful to differentiate between prisoners, as the interviews I conducted made it clear that every inmate's experience is unique.

I based some elements of the main character of Sophie on 'Inmate M'. I made the main character a 'new fish' in order to provide a direct point of comparison between the first act and the second. 'Inmate M' had recently completed her first sentence and thus the experience of becoming an inmate for the first time was fresh in her mind. She described in vivid detail her first couple of days of prison life, which I then decided to echo in the first few scenes of the second act of my play. Inmate M found the first couple of days overwhelming and traumatic. She was initially considered a suicide risk and so she was housed within a single cell in the care unit. The care unit is where the prison keeps inmates they consider to be at risk of suicide alongside other prisoners who need more support, such as the sick and the mentally ill. There were no reading or writing materials in her cell and she was not allowed to make a phone call. She recounted to me that during this time she felt "isolated and scared". Inmate M spent three days in isolation in the care unit. She was eventually given a book to read and a phone call. In the meantime, Inmate M's family had been extremely worried, as they did not know how to contact her in prison. After two weeks in the care unit, Inmate M was released

into the general population. The experience of her first few days in prison is mirrored in the character Sophie's initial experience of prison life in the play.

The character of 'Emma', the wing cleaner, was based on the experiences and personality of Inmate S. Inmate S's attitude to being in prison contrasted with the other women I spoke to and I wanted to include her point of view in the play. Inmate S had no desire to make friends in prison; she found other ways of making her time in prison more bearable. Inmate S had two children, aged seven and nine. Contact with them was difficult; it took two and a half months to get her phone numbers approved by the prison administration. She had no visitors for the five and a half months she was incarcerated. Any correspondence she had with her children was in the form of letters.

> …and they didn't write back 'cause one of my babies' dads decided not to tell where I was so I was just writing to him and he was unable to respond.

When on 'rolling lock' (the time where prisoners are allowed out of their cells) Inmate S used the time to phone home, or buy supplies such as pens, envelopes, tampons or cleaning products.

> …whatever I could get I would spend time getting what I need for when I go back into the cell 'cause there was no guarantee we would get unlocked twice a day, sometimes we'd be locked up for twenty four hours if we misbehaved, we'd just get left in there.

Inmate S hated being stuck in her cell, therefore she was very focused on getting herself a job. It took three months for her to be given the role of 'wing cleaner', a prime position. The guards are the ones who decide on job allocation. Whenever another inmate moved out of the wing, or lost her job, Inmate S would put her name forward; "…if the job became available I would hassle them to give it to me (*laughs*)". This tactic eventually paid off when Inmate S won the role of 'wing cleaner'. A role such as this came with a certain number of perks. Inmates were given more time out of their cell, extra milk, respect from the guards and an opportunity to bunk in 'the Penthouse Suite'. Inmate S tried to become a 'favourite' of the guards.

> Yep, yep, I always made sure I behaved myself and was pleasant and didn't ruffle them you know cause I guess it is a reasonably hard job when it comes to violence and stuff like that so, I made sure I wasn't hard work and then they would reciprocate sometimes with doing what we asked them to do (*laughs*)…
>
> ABBY: And what kind of stuff would you ask them to do?
>
> Like if I forgot tampons when I was out in the wing or if I needed some envelopes or Panadol any, anything like that you would have to sort of yell out to them for. Yeah.

Inmate S did not speak at all about the relationships she formed in prison. She had a stream of cellmates, around four or five in total, none of whom she had a particular

problem with. Inmate S was more focused on trying to stay in contact with her family as well as building a good relationship with the guards. The guards had a say when it comes to parole hearings, therefore Inmate S had a vested interest in remaining on their good side. Inmate S showed a focus and determination to get out of prison as soon as possible. This view contrasted with many of the women I spoke to, for example Inmate J, who spoke at length about the importance of the friendships she formed behind bars. Since the point of view of Inmate S differed so greatly from the other women I spoke to, I wanted to create a character inspired by her. Her stories are reflected in Emma's constant lobbying of the guards to give her a job.

An element which came up in every interview was drugs, thus I felt I needed to include it in my play. When I asked the women to describe their arrival at prison, a majority stated that their lack of access to drugs was one of the most frightening elements. Here is testimony from Inmate J:

> Oh it was pretty horrible. Um 'cause I was hanging out for drugs so um I was just a mess, I was a real mess and I just wanted to get out, you know, to get my drugs really.

Inmate S:

> So by the time I got there [to prison] I was maybe 10% relieved and 90% pissed off on that day (*laughs*). 'Cause I was coming off like five years worth of drugs with no assistance.

And here is Inmate M's description of her first day:

> Yeah, and like, I was on drugs um I was high, I got high that morning so I was coming down off that and then um then I was also didn't have a TV or anything like that.

Being without access to drugs was one of the most disorientating elements for many of the women when first arriving in prison. Inmate S described that, upon initially arriving in prison, drugs was the one thing she missed the most. However, the three women whose testimony is featured in the above quotations all attended drug rehabilitation programmes in prison and as of the time that I spoke with them had remained 'clean' for a substantial period. Inmate M does not give a huge amount of credit to the drug treatment she received in prison:

> Well, I've been clean since the day I got to prison, yeah, so I decided when I started praying that I wanted to change my life I wanted to do something different and through the process of it all um DTU [Drug Treatment Unit] didn't tell me that I wanted to get clean, I already knew that before I did DTU um but DTU helped me get my parole…

For the women I talked to, going to prison was the catalyst for their decision to commit to getting off drugs. However, their decision was driven less by a comprehensive prison drug treatment programme and more by a desire to change their lives in a way that would not lead them back to prison. Because it featured so heavily in the interviews, I made the decision to have my main character, Sophie, coming down from drugs when she entered the prison. There was an acknowledgement that a drug culture existed within the prison itself, for example Inmate S shared with me:

> Um, like I did come across some drugs um, and some cigarettes but not a lot in the women's place. Yeah. I didn't use, while I was in there. I just swapped it for…like it became currency, anything you got that someone else could want would become currency and you could swap it for clothes or bras or socks or lozenges. So if I ever got given any drugs I would I would um use it as currency.

However, the women I spoke to either did not participate in the drug culture in prison or chose not to disclose their experiences to me. Therefore, I decided that my main character Sophie would likewise not participate in drugs during her time in prison. I also thought this choice would contrast well with the 'new fish' character in Act One. As described in Chapter Two, one of the qualities of the 'new fish' character is her supposed 'innocence'. Frequently this character has not committed any actual crime, or has done so under duress, the theory being that this would make her an appropriate

'window' character for the audience to identify with. I decided to contrast with this stereotype by creating a main character that is guilty of the crime she was imprisoned for and does not dispute that fact.Overall, I hoped that the difference between the two acts was contrast enough to encourage the audience to think critically about where they get their images of women in prison.

THE READING

On the 4th of July, 2021 a rehearsed reading of *I Didn't Think It Would Be Like This* was performed for an audience, from whom I collected written feedback after the show. Hearing the play out loud for the first time, as well as receiving the response from the audience influenced me to make some changes to the script. I will begin by discussing my personal reflections on the reading and then move on to an examination of the audience feedback.

For the most part, I was happy with how the reading went, although there were elements I would change for next time. I took notes during both the rehearsal and the reading. I paid attention to the actors and made a note of any lines or songs that they struggled with. In the reading, I sat at the back of the venue and observed the audience, making notes of moments that they reacted with laughter, spontaneous applause as well as looking out for physical signs of boredom, for example shifting in their seats, looking down, looking at their phone etc. We had a five hour rehearsal on Saturday the third of July and the reading was performed on Sunday the fourth. The reading was directed by local director Alex Wilson and Beth Waite served as musical director and accompanist.

We used five local professional actors, who were also competent singers. As there is no score, Beth selected a number of chords for each song over which performers improvised their own tune, which worked very well. For the reading, the actors were up on their feet and performing the actions dictated by the play, with their scripts in hand. Alex's vision for the reading was to highlight the contrast between the two acts. He directed actors in the first act to be as over-the-top as possible and then as natural as possible in the second act. For example, in the musical section the actors were encouraged to adopt an American or British accent and in the second act they used their natural voices. The actors played out the second act sequences in their entirety while Alex read the stage directions over the top of the action.

One element I changed post the rehearsed reading was the length of the songs.In hearing the songs out loud, I found some to be very long and at times repetitive. For example, in this verse of 'The Prison Lesbian':

PRISON LESBIAN: When I find a lady that I want
A lady that fills me with desire
I pursue her ruthlessly because I think
That God loves a trier

You better not say no to me
I always catch my prey
And if you try to run you'll soon find out
The reason I'm locked away

In each section she is expressing a very similar sentiment, therefore I felt that the second section of this verse was not needed. I made similar cuts to “The Doctor” and the final number.

This reading gave me the opportunity to experiment with the doubling of roles across the two acts. In consultation with the director, we cast the five actors in roles that we felt were contrasting across the two acts. For example, one actor played the Prison Lesbian in one act, and the lead character Sophie in act two. I found this to be an effective pairing as it served to highlight the contrast between the two acts. The actor went from a high status character to a low status one and from the villain to the protagonist. Other casting I found worked well for the same reason was one actor playing the Doctor across both acts. Cross-casting that I felt didn't work quite as well was the doubling of Sophie/Eleanor and Warden/Guard One. I felt that the characters were too similar to each other and that a more effective pairing would be Sophie/Guard One and Warden/Eleanor. This way the actor would be a prison authority figure in one act and an inmate in the other, thus serving to highlight once again the contrast between Act One and Two. The mixed success of this casting inspired me to include a casting suggestion at the beginning of the play. Additionally, after the completion of the reading, I decided that an additional actor would have benefitted the performance. Some of the actors had to play multiple roles within the same act, which I could see being potentially confusing for the audience. Therefore, my casting suggestion includes roles for six actors.

My primary reflection from the reading itself was that the audience did not laugh as much in Act One as I anticipated they would. As a comedy writer, the amount of audience laughter has become the metric by which I judge a show's success. I had written funny lines into Act One and was fairly confident they would get a response. There were a couple of laughs throughout the reading, particularly at the moments that were clearly satirical. For instance, they laughed at the moment where Sophie accidentally knocks a poster off the wall of her cell, revealing a giant hole. I think the humour in this moment came from its obvious similarity to *The Shawshank Redemption.* Other moments that elicited laughs from the audience were the Doctor's line: "I'm a really good guy" and the lyrics from the final song "This is not an indictment of the penal system". These moments are almost a wink to the audience that signal this is not an earnest attempt at a story about women in prison. Immediately following the reading I felt disappointed that the audience had not laughed very much during Act One. On further reflection, I considered the absence of laughter meant *I Didn't Think It Would Be Like This* was achieving the aims I set out for the project; to make the audience aware of their own spectatorship of women in prison. If the audience were consistently laughing it meant that they were taking the play at face value. The absence of laughter actually could indicate an uncomfortability within the crowd. The audience watching *I Didn't Think It Would Be Like This* witnessed on stage the familiar tropes of the women-in-prison genre which are typically played out on screen. As Mulvey argues, film presents a world in which the people onscreen are indifferent to the presence of the audience. Therefore, spectators can stare at the actors on screen, without fear that they will have their gaze returned. This is in contrast to the theatrical spectator who, while

invited to watch the actor's performance, could have their gaze returned to them at any moment. I had seen this same effect played out in the performance of *Jailbirds* where the audience became incredibly uncomfortable with the theatrical representation of these tropes. So while I initially considered the audience's lack of laughter to be a failure I now consider it a validation that *I Didn't Think It Would Be Like This* is delivering on its aims.

I found that there were more moments in Act Two that I wanted to change after watching it be performed. I thought that Sophie's behaviour in the beginning of the act was very calm for someone who is coming down from methamphetamine and I thus rewrote the scene to express more of her agitation. I also felt that there was more potential to distinguish the characters from each other. For example, Emma now alludes to the problems that she has with some of the other inmates, as well as confiding in Sophie her reasons for working her way up the ranks of prison jobs. Like Inmate S, Emma wants to get out of prison as soon as possible, and she sees proving herself responsible through her work as a fast track to do so. Eleanor now mentions a boyfriend, which adds some backstory to her character. Although these changes seem small, I think that adding these moments give depth to each of the characters and more of an indication to the audience of their motivations.

The experience of participating in a reading of *I Didn't Think It Would Be Like This* made me reflect on the way staging choices could be used to strengthen the plays' themes. For

example, one of the key aims of the piece is that the audience become aware of their own spectatorship of images of women in prison. A staging choice such as having the actors on stage watching the audience as they enter the theatre I believe would encourage the audience to think of themselves as spectators. Additionally, having the audience fill out a feedback form prior to and immediately following the reading forced them to reflect on the types of images of women in prison that they consume. Something similar could be incorporated into a fully mounted production whereby audience members write down an answer to 'what do you picture a women's prison to be like?' prior to the play's beginning. They could once again return to their paper at the end of the play to reflect on if this perception had changed. Or at the play's conclusion, the audience could be invited to kōrero with the creative team. The answers they wrote at the beginning of the night could then serve as a jumping off point for discussion. There are a number of creative choices a director and a team of actors could implement into a production if *I Didn't Think It Would Be Like This* that would heighten the plays themes and encourage the audience to be critical spectators.

As mentioned above, the audience present during the reading were invited to fill out a feedback form. They entered the theatre space and were handed a consent form and a feedback form. The consent form explained the purpose of the reading, contained assurances that their comments would be anonymous and had an area for them to sign. Prior to the reading I completed an Ethics Application so that I may cite some of the comments made by the audience in their feedback forms. The feedback form had four questions: What do you picture a women's prison to be like? Where do you think this

impression comes from? After viewing the play, has your impression of life in a women's prison changed? Did anything in the play surprise you? The audience filled out the first two questions prior to the play reading beginning, and the second two once the reading had been completed. At the end of the reading, the audience members deposited their completed forms into a box by the door. The forms were filled out anonymously and I received eighteen responses.

To analyse the feedback, I adopted a practice as research methodology. I have been a playwright for a number of years and have participated in numerous readings and feedback sessions of my work. I therefore approached the analysis of the feedback on this work in the same way I have traditionally dealt with feedback on my writing. I chose to focus on particular comments and responses that came up multiple times in the feedback as this represents somewhat of a consensus amongst this particular audience and therefore significant. What follows is my analysis of several aspects of the feedback and the effect these comments had on my subsequent rewrite of the play.

The audience responses to the first two questions support Wilson and O'Sullivan's assertion that films and television are an important source of people's implicit and commonsense understandings about prison (8). Fourteen out of the eighteen respondents wrote that film and television helped form their impression of what life in a women's prison is like. The responses to question one also contained imagery consistent with film and television portrayals of prison life. For example, seven

audience members wrote that they pictured women's prison to be an aggressive atmosphere with tension and/or fighting amongst the inmates. Here is a sample of some of the comments:

> "Lots of fighting amongst the inmates."

> "Tough, tattoos, hair dye, working in gangs or groups- violence need to survive."

> "Lots of rivalries and arguments between women."

Fighting between inmates is a trope that can be seen in almost every iteration of the women-in-prison genre from Kitty and Elvira's rivalry in 1950's *Caged* to Frankie Doyle and Karen Travers in *Prisoner: Cell Block H* to Piper and Pennsatucky in *Orange is the New Black.* It is something that is more in keeping with film and television portrayals of prison life than with the way it was described to me by the former inmates. For example, Inmate M spoke of having a fight with a fellow inmate over a pair of shoes but described it as a one-off incident. Extended rivalries between inmates was not something that any of the interviewees discussed or mentioned in their testimony. The audience responses to the first two questions showed that film and television portrayals of life in a women's prison are a significant influence in the way they imagined life for incarcerated women to be.

Sixteen out of the eighteen audience members wrote that the play did change the way they felt about prison. To generalise the feedback, the moments that seemed to resonate with audiences were the very specific feelings or aspects of life shared with me by the former inmates. In terms of elements of the play that surprised people, some examples included the difficulty the inmates had in getting their phone numbers approved, the "lack of animosity between inmates" and the small amount of time they got to spend outside. For example, one respondent wrote:

> "It makes me think more about how the space is actually a home or at the very least a place to live for the time being."

This aspect of Sophie's story was inspired specifically by Inmate J's initial reluctance and then acceptance of the prison as her temporary home. Here is the initial comment made by Inmate J:

> At first I was like, my cell was quite empty in there, I didn't want to make it my home but then I, as I came to accept that it would be for a while and that made it easier to kind of make it my family and my home. Yeah. For a while.

I endowed Sophie's character with the same feelings, which she expressed through her reluctance to decorate her cell. Another comment stated that they were surprised by:

> "The mixed feelings and vulnerability the inmate expressed when faced with parole"

The conflict here in Eleanor's character about being released from prison, was again a specific feeling shared with me by Inmate M:

> I'm still finding it really difficult to reintegrate into the community, um to find friends, stuff like that, it's really really difficult it's yeah…it's really really hard and I thought, and I feel like I'm supposed to be happy but I'm not, I'm struggling.
>
> ABBY: What are the things that are making it hard?
>
> Um like I haven't even bothered job searching or anything like that um just like little decisions on like what to eat, buying stuff from a…a shop, I don't like buying stuff, I haven't spent money in such a long time. I don't, I haven't cooked in two years.

I chose to express M's feelings through Eleanor, who halfway through the act is granted parole. Eleanor expresses her fears about reintegration to Sophie.

I wrote the repeated sequences in Act Two in order to distill the average day for an inmate in New Zealand to its essential elements in order to convey a sense of the routine and drudgery described to me by the former inmates. This sequence is repeated four times within the play. I have never attempted a sequence like this in a play before

and I wondered if it would convey what I wanted to on stage. When I collated the audience's responses to the play, I found that twelve people out of the eighteen wrote that the monotony of daily life within a women's prison surprised them. Here is a small sample of some of the comments:

> "Yes. The second act shows how routine and monotaus (sp?) and how truly undramatic."
>
> "I think the monotony was quite intense, I was surprised by that."
>
> "I definitely felt a stronger sense of the monotony. One does tend to think of things being constantly stressful or tense, but the second act really captures how often there is a sense of quiet normality."

A particular challenge of this play was to portray the sense of tedious routine that the former inmates expressed about their life in prison, without necessarily having the play be boring itself. Before watching the play be performed, these long sequences were the part of the play I was most open to cutting, as I was unsure about how successful they would be. However, as I watched the play I found the sequences to be quite compelling. I found each sequence to be an expression of tedium rather than tedious itself.

Overall, seeing the play performed and receiving the audience feedback confirmed some of the creative choices I made as well as inspiring me to make some changes. My own reflections lead me to cut down the songs, rewrite the beginning of Act Two and add more information and depth to the second act characters. This audience appeared

to receive the play in a way that was consistent with the aims I had in writing it, which was reaffirming.

If I was to sit down and watch the production of 'Jailbirds' now, the production would not raise as many questions as it did back before I completed this thesis. I would understand that what I was watching was the tropes and conventions of the women-in-prison genre acted out on the stage. The storyline involving a corrupt warden preying on vulnerable inmates was born out of the 1970s babes-behind-bars subgenre and that themes of entrapment, escape, submission and domination were prevalent in film and television representations of life in a women's prison. What was so uncomfortable about this performance was that we were watching a re-enactment of tropes, characters and conventions designed for the screen being acted out on stage. When the actors on stage are able to return the gaze of the audience it erases the scopophilic pleasure of watching people who are unaware of your presence. I would understand that part of the reason I was drawn to this production in the first place was because of my desire to see into a world that is typically hidden from me, the prison. This performance was testament to the way that theatre can affect an audience. For me, it raised a multitude of questions about access and spectatorship, for others it made them leave the theatre entirely. Theatre has the potential to affect audiences in profound ways.

There are a multitude of choices that go into the creation of a play. The intention for this one was to create a piece that encouraged the audience to think about their own

spectatorship and the way that women in prison have been portrayed in popular media. In order to do this, I took inspiration from witnessing theory, Brechtian theory and feminist theatre theory, as well as *The Shipment* and *Mr Burns: A Post-Electric Play.* The result is *I Didn't Think it Would Be Like This.* In response to the production of 'Jailbirds', I decided that I wanted to create my own piece of theatre. I wanted to showcase to an audience what I know now that I did not know then. That the majority of images we see of women-in-prison are fictional ones, designed to entertain and they have little bearing on the actual day-to-day lives of incarcerated women in New Zealand. The play I wrote *I Didn't Think It Would Be Like This* highlights the difference between the images of women's prison that come from film and television and the reality of women who have spent time in prison in New Zealand.

As the final word in this thesis, I will return to Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* because I believe he sets out a perfect allegory for what I hope my thesis will achieve. Foucault writes that public executions were conducted to demonstrate the power of the monarch and to act as a deterrent to future law-breakers. He goes on to argue that one of the primary reasons that this form of public execution was phased out was because it did not achieve these aims at all. Instead, the public surrounding the scaffold couldn't help but empathise with the prisoner. The condemned were often given the opportunity to speak to the crowd, and this brief glimpse into their humanity led them to be immortalised as folk heroes. Out of the ceremony of the public execution came solidarity between the criminal and those who were there to witness their punishment often leading to the public intervening if they thought a punishment was unjust

(Foucault, 63). Foucault goes on to describe the phasing out of public executions in favour of those convicted of breaking the law being shut away in prisons. The high walls that are so effective at keeping prisoners in also serve to keep the public out. My hope is *I Didn't Really Think It Would Be Like This* functions in the same way that the speech of the condemned did in those early executions. The play provides a brief glimpse of the humanity of those people who have been caught breaking the law. My hope is that like the people who once bear witness to public executions, this opportunity to hear the voices of the imprisoned will lead audiences to see them not as villains or degenerates but as people.

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APPENDIX

Reference Number: *18/028*
11/07/18

PERFORMING PRISON: HOW IS BEING ON THE INSIDE SHOWN TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD?
INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you and we thank you for considering our request.

What is the Aim of the Project?

The purpose of this project is to create a play set in a women's prison that portrays with a degree of accuracy the experiences of women incarcerated in New Zealand. This section of the project is a series of interviews with current and ex-prisoners, families of women who have been incarcerated, and people who work in agencies and organisations those who have been incarcerated in New Zealand. This project is being undertaken as part of the requirements for Abby Howells' PhD in Theatre Studies, and the material from the interviews may inform both the play and the rest of the thesis.

What Type of Participants are being sought?

Participants will be female current and ex-prisoners, families of women who have been incarcerated, and people who work in agencies and organisations that support those who have been incarcerated in New Zealand. Participants will be nominated by the Department of Corrections, and by agencies and people who work with former prisoners.

What will Participants be Asked to Do?

Should you agree to take part in this project, you will be interviewed by Abby, either in person or via telephone or Skype. You are welcome to have a support person present during the interview. This project involves an open-questioning technique. The general line of questioning will be about your experiences being in prison, or living or working with those who have been incarcerated. The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops. The interviews will be no longer than one hour. Consequently, although the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee is aware of the general areas to be explored in the interview, the Committee has not been able to review the precise questions to be used. In the event that the line of questioning does develop in such a way that you feel hesitant or uncomfortable, you are reminded of your right to decline to answer any particular question(s) and also that you may withdraw from the project at any stage without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind. It should also be noted that admission of any hitherto undisclosed illegal activities occurs during the course of an interview that Abby will be obliged to pass that information to her supervisors, who will then seek legal advice.

What Data or Information will be Collected and What Use will be Made of it?

If you consent, the interview will be recorded on video or audio-tape; otherwise, if you prefer, written notes will be taken. In the event that any quotation from your interview is included in Abby's play or thesis, you will be advised and consulted. You will be able to specify whether or not you are identified in the final play or may even withdraw

your interview completely. Access to the recorded interviews will be restricted to the researcher and her supervisors.

Everyone associated with the project will be asked to sign a Non-disclosure Form. When the play is in its final draft, a legal opinion will be sought about any sections of the play that are comprised of direct verbatim testimony that may identify an individual. Data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Music, Theatre and Performing Arts offices at the University of Otago. According to the Ethics Committee's guidelines, the data will be archived for five years. Professor Stuart Young will be responsible for the eventual disposal of the data. Unless you prefer to remain anonymous, any quotations from your interview or citations of your interview will be acknowledged in the completed research.

On the Consent Form you will be given options regarding your anonymity. Please be aware that should you wish we will make every attempt to preserve your anonymity. However, with your consent, there are some cases where it would be preferable to attribute contributions made to individual participants. It is absolutely up to you which of these options you prefer.

Can Participants Change their Mind and Withdraw from the Project?

You may withdraw from participation in the project at any time and without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

What if Participants have any Questions?

If you have any questions about our project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:-

Abby Howells and Stuart Young

Department of Music, Theatre and Performing Arts

howab390@student.otago.ac.nz stuart.young@otago.ac.nz

0226764217

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph +643 479 8256 or email gary.witte@otago.ac.nz). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.

Reference Number: *18/028*
03/06/18

PERFORMING PRISON: HOW BEING ON THE INSIDE IS SHOWN TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD
CONSENT FORM FOR
PARTICIPANTS

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:-

1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary.
2. I am free to withdraw from the project before its completion.
3. Personal identifying information (e.g audio or video recordings) may be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for at least five years. Everyone associated with the project will be asked to sign a Non-disclosure Form.
4. This project involves an open-questioning technique. The general line of questioning your experiences being in prison or living or working with those who have been incarcerated. The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops and that in the event that the line of questioning develops in such a way that I feel hesitant or uncomfortable I may decline to answer any particular question(s) and/or may withdraw from the project without any disadvantage of any kind.
5. I understand that if I admit previously undisclosed illegal activities, the student researcher is obliged to pass that information on to her supervisors.
6. I know that I may have a support person present during the interview.
7. The results of the project may be performed as a play and may be published, and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand) but every attempt will be made to preserve my anonymity, should I choose to remain anonymous.

I, as the participant: a) agree to being named in the research, ☐ OR;

b) would rather remain anonymous ☐

I agree to take part in this project.

....
(Signature of participant) (Date)

.....
(Printed Name)

……..
Name of person taking consent

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph +643 479 8256 or email gary.witte@otago.ac.nz). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.

I DIDN'T THINK IT WOULD BE LIKE THIS: A READING
INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you and we thank you for considering our request.

What is the Aim of the Project?

This is a rehearsed reading of the play *I Didn't Really Think it Would Be Like This*, which makes up the creative component of Abby Howells's PhD thesis. The aim of this reading is to gauge the audience reception of the play.

What will Participants be asked to do?

Should you agree to take part in this project, you will be asked to provide some brief feedback on the play reading. Feedback will be given anonymously.

What Data or Information will be collected and what use will be made of it?

The feedback you give will be collected and collated by Abby Howells. Only Abby and her supervisors Stuart Young and Hilary Halba will have access to the data.

Your feedback may be quoted in Abby's PhD thesis, but again no material that could personally identify you will be used in any reports of this study.

Your feedback forms will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Theatre Studies Program at the University of Otago. According to the Ethics Committee's guidelines, the data will be archived for five years. Stuart Young will be responsible for the eventual disposal of the data

Can Participants change their mind and withdraw from the project?

Giving feedback on the script is entirely optional, and you may withdraw at any time without any disadvantage to yourself. You are not required to answer every question.

What if Participants have any Questions?

If you have any questions about our project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:-

Abby Howells

Department of Music, Theatre and Performing Arts

Abby.howells@hotmail.com

Or

Professor Stuart Young

Department of Music, Theatre and Performing Arts

Stuart.young@otago.ac.nz

This study has been approved by the Department stated above. However, if you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph +643 479 8256 or email gary.witte@otago.ac.nz). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.

I DIDN'T THINK IT WOULD BE LIKE THIS: READING
CONSENT FORM FOR
PARTICIPANTS

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:-

1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary;

2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any point.

3. My feedback may be quoted in Abby's PhD thesis, but I will remain anonymous.

4. I agree to take part in this project.

.....

(Signature of participant)

……...

(Date)

.....

(Printed Name)

PRISONER INTERVIEW ONE
TRANSCRIPT

ABBY: Um so if it's ok by you shall we crack into it?

J: Yes sounds good.

ABBY: Thank you so much. Um so first of all, if you don't mind, could you tell me how you came to end up in prison?

J: Ah yep, sure. So…was um…which time?

ABBY: Oh, um…

J: The first two times, I think the first time I went was for burglary and the second was for um…well I was arrested for burglary, I didn't actually get done for that but um so that was just being held kind of…I don't know, over the weekend or the week or something. The second time, um, I think it was for…maybe…uh…drugs I think? Or uh maybe theft or something…I think drugs yeah. And then the last time was for supply of methamphetamine and um conspiracy to supply methamphetamine in the location within a decent band or whatever? You know how they define it by the band of the amount? Yeah.

ABBY: And what was, so the first time you went in, what was your first day like? What's that process of you know, getting in?

J: Oh it was pretty horrible. Um 'cause I was hanging out for drugs so um I was just a mess, I was a real mess and I just wanted to get out, you know, to get my drugs really. I think they give you like an interview when you go in there, like to make sure you're not um mental or whatever! And um they kind of…oh this is quite hard, it was quite a long time ago. But I wasn't like scared, like I think the third time I went in, the time when I got a decent lag I was more scared. Um because…of just like, because of the length of time and also not being on drugs. Um whereas when I first got in I didn't give a shit, I just wanted to get out um I didn't care that I'd gotten in, apart from the fact that I was taken away from my supply, really.

ABBY: And um, how long was your longest stint?

J: Uhh…one year.

ABBY: Oh that's a long time. So was it scary at all?

J: Um…I wouldn't say scary, I think, um…more…um kind of empty and low, like hard going in there by yourself um, three cigarettes I think I had, which was my sanity (*laugh*) at the time um yeah. I'd say not scared but um, gutted I guess that I'd been kind of removed from my family that day…um yeah I guess the fear was more around like, 'cause I initially got four years so um the fear was that how long would I do like would I be in there for four years. Um…yeah I think...it was…yeah the fear was more around that stuff. Because I knew someone in there when I got in there and stuff so um it wasn't so much fear of being in jail but just not really knowing how long? Yeah.

ABBY: So you knew someone already in there, did you find you made friends easily or did you keep to yourself more?

J: Yeah no I had heaps of friends in there, really beautiful friends as well so I think that was what kept, one of the things that kept me going was um, just having these relationships with people that were really kind of supportive and real and um…yeah we just kind of made it fun, cause otherwise you get bored and like, so like I had a friend who was like a beauty therapist and like she'd do my eyebrows and um you know, we'd hang out. And then I had my other friends and we'd just sort of sit outside and we'd go walking um I did quite a lot of exercise in there um yeah so…yeah I definitely felt like it was um going to be my home. At first I was like, my cell was quite empty in there, I didn't want to make it my home but then I as I came to accept that it would be for a while and that made it easier to kind of make it my family and my home. Yeah. For a while.

ABBY: So what was a typical day like?

J: Uh so unlock at around eight o'clock we get…like a yoghurt, two Weetbix or some cornflakes or some rice bubbles and thing of milk, like what they'd call rations for the day so like sugar, little bag of sugar um maybe some tea leaves for the unit. Uh so we'd get unlocked and people would be dressed and ready, some people would be you know, in their pajamas um (*laugh)* you know just kind of dragged themselves out of bed but I'd always be up and ready. Yeah have breakfast and then after breakfast it would sort of start calling people for things so like medical is at like nine o'clock, well I don't know what time exactly but like medical was after that so like if you had to go up to medical for anything then you'd go and get your daily script or whatever, go to the doctor or whatever you needed to do and um they would call stuff like programs, so I was in like computer class, stitch group, which is like sewing, arts and crafts um…barista course um Bible studies (*laugh)* um CADS course, AA meetings…So just depending on what day um I would generally, I think I had a course every day like one thing that got me out of the unit to do. Which was um, really good um and…oh we got locked down again at like lunchtime. So lunch was like at eleven thirty AM and dinner was at like three, four o'clock?

ABBY: Really?

J: Yeah, three thirty in the afternoon, yeah, so we got dinner at three thirty and then we got locked in at four thirty for the night and we couldn't get out. Four thirty till eight.

ABBY: Did you get hungry?

J: I didn't get hungry, but I lost lots of weight. I'd eat an apple I think? Like half an apple or something stupid and then like a cup of tea at night maybe after dinner but um yeah just kind of like yeah I think I was forty six kilos when I got out so I probably was hungry (*laugh)* but yep I ate dinner quite um early.

ABBY: So you mentioned that you and your friends would do sort of fun things together to sort of get through, what were uh, what were some of those things that you did?

J: Um…artwork? Well maybe not together but um I'd do like a lot of kind of um, even if I was like tracing pictures and then I'd color them in. Um and I do like, make cards in groups so we did like groups together so we'd like study together and stuff, my cellmate would like read Tarot Cards. Um...yeah we'd do the beauty stuff. You'd just kind of chat in there, do a lot of um talking. There was some stuff like, where we did like a fashion show and each wing would make like a costume we made like this (*laugh*) like really cute like fairy costume with wings and it was all like different colors and we dressed up like this little girl, who was real little and young and she was a little fairy and we had that and um yeah...lot of walking, lot of walking um.

ABBY: Did it get boring?

J: Well, yeah like, I mean like, I used to love plucking my eyebrows because it was really hard to get like a mirror in there and so once I got a mirror I'd love to do that stuff so yeah (*laughs*) it was pretty fucking boring if I got excited about that. But I did heaps of studying. Well not studying but like programs? To keep my mind kind of like busy and then I'd write letters to my family and my friends, I'd do art, I- oh that's right, I did the twelve steps so I had a workbook, I did lots of recovery, like reading um..yeah. Oh we had a TV so I watched a lot of TV, you get, that was fun, watching like, what's that show? The X-Factor with my cellmate, yeah. (*Laughs*) You get to like things you wouldn't like on the outside (*laughs).*

ABBY: Um, what was the hardest part about it?

J: Um, not being able to control my own life really, I guess. Not that you can do that anyway very well um just yeah, having people…I think the fear of like…cause there was no power, really disempowered so things like if a knife goes missing from the kitchen, too bad you all get locked down. I remember getting locked down, and you know how I said that we get locked down at four and then don't get out til eight thirty

but that morning it was like ten thirty and I was really hungry, you know? And it was really frightening and they had the dogs in or something, it was just kind of like that stuff where you didn't know, oh yeah and if there was like violence. I just didn't like the unpredictability of it, like you were always predictably unlocked at a certain time but then there was like this unpredictable element where it was like anything could happen and um when it did, it really did, yeah, it would be like a boom! Yeah it would be really big. You know, someone doing something really horrible to themselves or others or like, yeah…it's pretty…I didn't like that part of it.

ABBY: And what was your relationship like with the Corrections Officers? Were they kind or more like hard line?

J: Uh they were ok. You know, it just depends on who you're talking about. You know some of them have good hearts and are doing it for the right reasons uh but there's definitely like a camaraderie between the prisoners and the screws, you know like its, its um…you know you look after each other? No, not, you know what I mean? Like prisoners look after each other and then the guards look after each other. Yeah…I think it just depends on the person, I can't really generalize 'cause some of them were really kind and could really make a bad day into a good day and then some of them are like, one of them was like very violent and um you know, beat this girl… and stuff. And you know I saw that and so it just depends who you mean. But I didn't see her again so… after that.

ABBY: So was it mostly women screws or a mix of men and women?

J: Men and women.

ABBY: This may sound like a silly question, but what did you wear?

J: Oh for the first half of my lag I wore mufti and my parents kind of sent me in some clothes or I got given some or swapped some yeah. So I used to wear just like this black top, like t-shirt, like tight t-shirt, with um some shorts maybe and then um…I can't remember what in the winter…maybe…nothing too expensive but um then halfway through my lag we got put in uniform so I wore the green polar fleece uniform, yep.

ABBY: What did you prefer, wearing um mufti or the uniforms?

J: I didn't really mind, 'cause you know…yeah it's jail, it's just like, you don't really see many people anyway (*laugh)* you know so I didn't even wear make-up in there. So yeah, I didn't really mind. But, maybe mufti? But I can see why, I can see why they do uniforms but it's also like dehumanizing, slightly though, you know? Yeah.

ABBY: And um, so what was it like to leave? What was your final day like?

J: Oh I was so happy, I was so happy and also really sad, like I was actually like way more sad then I thought I'd be um because I'd surrendered to it being my home and got really close relationships and…but I was so excited as well, like I just, I think um, I really wanted a cigarette because um there was no smoking in there so like the last month, so that just did my head in I just really wanted a smoke so (*laugh)* when I got out I got like a smoke and like a diet ginger beer or something, and then had like a really yummy meal, well it was yummy to me (*laugh*) then um, yeah, my parents picked me up and yeah we went to Newmarket…and then they had… I was very lucky, like so lucky 'cause my parents had like had all my clothes washed and folded and ready for me to…you know? Like and got groceries for me like, so it made things a lot easier, I didn't have to sort out too much um…yeah I was just so excited…it's exciting to get out yeah.

ABBY: Did you um, manage to keep in touch with some of the friends you made in prison?

J: Yeah, yeah and so, I'm friends with maybe three of them on facebook and um I still keep in contact, yeah with those three…and I'll always love them, you know? Um yeah um but then there's people that you just…like I have this friend and she's um…like I'll always love her and she's my bestie, you know, one of my besties in um prison but like when I got out I was driving down um…down somewhere in Auckland and um she was like selling herself again, drugged up you know, to the max or boozed up I think, you know it's just um I mean that's just my um…what do you call it? You know, can't be 100% sure what she was but she was…didn't look like she was living a spiritual life, you know? And so, you know even though I'm friends with her on facebook I wouldn't…I think there's a risk in um in associating with those people um…yeah that's not necessarily healthy for me. Yeah.

ABBY: And um, what was it like, coming out of prison for you?

J: Well, I didn't really have a normal life before prison so I had to change things, I had to change the people that I hung around with. I had to do a lot of stuff on my own you know, like um…I had to work out what I wanted to do in relation to Uni and where I wanted to live and just…like I didn't have to do it on my own because I had like friends and a sponsor and my parents but I felt I had to kind of…kind of had to build my life from…uh 'cause it was just a mess, you know? And um, yeah so it's taken me ages but you know it's really good now? Yeah, it's really amazing if I look back um…to kind of that time and now and I just think I'm so fucking blessed actually, yeah.

ABBY: So what have you, um where are you now?

J: Uh, finished my degree, happy relationship um still clean and sober um yeah, out of jail.

ABBY: Oh congratulations! That's massive.

J: Yeah! Thanks, yeah no it's way…it's so much better, it's good to reflect, I often forget you know?

ABBY: Yeah. And um, you know, I feel like people don't really know very much about what actually goes on in prisons, um so if you had to…what would you want people to know about what your experience was really like?

J: Um…it's harder to get into programs than you'd think um the sentence planners don't uh…I don't even know the name of mine and I don't know what he ever did for me, actually. So um I think that kind of thing, it's just kind of a holding cell. Oh yeah there's a few courses here and there and that but mostly I think it's a holding cell for people um…I think…yeah there is a lot of remorse, there's a lot of remorse but I don't…there's also a lot of people in and out of the doors, you know? Back and forth, um…you know if it's your first…there's not a lot of first time people in there I guess…yeah.

ABBY: Well thank you, that's all my questions, thank you so much for taking this time, I really really appreciate it.

J: No worries!

PRISONER INTERVIEW TWO
TRANSCRIPT

ABBY: Well, shall we get into it then?

S: Yeah that sounds good.

ABBY: Thank you. Um well the first question would be do you mind telling me how you ended up uh being in prison?

S: Ah yup, I got arrested on the 16th of September in 2016 and it was um I was sort of well known to the police, like I was arrested in September and had probably about twenty charges um and the one I got arrested for on the 16th was a burglary charge. So the police um opposed my bail and then I was…yeah the judge went with that and I ended up in prison.

ABBY: Right. And what was your first day like? Could you talk me through that?

S: Uh what happened was…it's a little bit blurry because I was quite out the gate but I think what happened was I got put in what they call the care unit 'cause remand was full, so I got put in the care unit with other women who were just in distress or had mental health problems or were suicidal or not coping. So I got put in that unit, I wasn't classed as a key unit person though so I had, I still had my clothes and blankets and things and stuff like that. Uh I remember being uh quite run down I guess and just over it. So by the time I got there I was maybe 10% relieved and 90% pissed off on that day (*laughs*). 'Cause I was coming off like five years worth of drugs with no assistance.

ABBY: Was it scary at all coming in? Did you know people already?

S: Um I wouldn't say I was scared uh the first time, um a long time ago like maybe five years ago or something I was really really scared. But this time I ended up in there for a substantial amount of time…um so I wouldn't say I was scared, no, that probably wasn't the feeling, I was probably sad, more sad than scared, yeah.

ABBY: And um, you said you had some things with you, what are you allowed to bring in?

S: Ok so if you um are accused, if you haven't got guilty on any of your charges yet you go in there and you can have your shoes, the clothes that you're wearing as long as their not blue or gang related colours or things like that uh basically everything they gave off

you and give you stuff to wear and stuff so, like even jewelry, hair ties, things like that were taken off me.

ABBY: Oh wow. So once you got there and you settled in, could you talk me through and average day? So like, what would an average day be like for you?

S: Oh gosh um so when I was in, after about four days I eventually made it down to remand, the average day in there…ok it was rolling lock which means that um half the prisoners came out and then the other half came out so that meant the communal area was split between two halves. Um so we would either be on the early unlock which was at eight thirty and then we'd be out in the wing for maybe an hour? And then we'd get locked back up um…like we'd wake up, get fed, we'd get fed our breakfast through our hatch and yeah depending who was unlocked yeah, would come out first half would come out for an hour and then the second half would come out for an hour and then it was lunch time and we'd also get our sandwiches put through the hatch if we weren't in the wing um eat our, eat our thing, the only things there were to do was watch TV, talk with your cellmate or talk under the door with others. And then there was a late unlock which I think was from one o'clock till three o'clock so that would also be split into two halves, you'd get about an hour out in the afternoon and then lock up was four thirty the rest of the time. Basically twenty three hours of the day are spent locked up.

ABBY: Oh wow. And did you get to choose your cellmate? Or was it just kind of luck of the draw?

S: Oh no (*laughs)* no, there was not a lot of options, you got put with who you got put with, um, unless there was some real concerns about who you were jailed up with you just had to deal with it.

ABBY: And what were your cellmates like, did you get people you got along with?

S: Yeah I did, I'd like to think I'm a pretty easy-going person um, I had maybe four cellmates the whole five and a half months that I was there so I didn't go through that many and um yeah would just make an effort to get along with whoever I was celled up with. Yeah.

ABBY: Yeah, I guess you were with them a lot so…

S: Yep twenty three hours a day, yep.

ABBY: Um and what was it like making friends? Did you have a group of friends you hung out with regularly?

S: There wasn't really that much time to hang out with other people like, you're only, I was only in the wing for like two hours at best, that's if there was no fights or anything

like that and I would spend that time using the phone to call home or trying to organize what I need from the front desk like tampons or Adaway or cleaning products or pens or envelopes, whatever I could get I would spend that time getting what I need for when I go back into the cell 'cause there was no guarantee we would get unlocked twice a day, sometimes we'd be locked up for twenty four hours if we misbehaved, we'd just get left in there. And if we get left in there the guards were really…it's really hard to get anything from the guards, yep.

ABBY: Yeah, what was your relationship like with the guards? Were they friendly most of the time?

S: They were lazy, that would be the best way to describe them, they were extremely lazy and unhelpful. And unless you were in the know, or had been um in there heaps and they knew who you were, you, and you knew what to say to them um they weren't very helpful at all.

ABBY: Oh wow, ok, that's interesting. For you, what was the hardest thing about it?

S: Um, trying to be patient, trying to be patient. And dealing with powerlessness and feeling out of control…yeah that was probably the hardest thing.

ABBY: Yeah. And what things did you find you really missed from the outside?

S: To begin with drugs. But then once I sort of realized or come, came down from them all my children is what I missed the most and my family yeah.

ABBY: That must have been really hard being away from them.

S: It was horrendous, yep.

ABBY: Did they get to visit you regularly?

S: No, no I got no visits the whole time.

ABBY: Oh, could you talk to them on the phone?

S: Yep, as long as people gave me a phone card or money I could…but even that, it took like two and a half months to get my phone numbers approved.

ABBY: Really?

S: Yep, so any correspondence I had with my children was in the form of letters um and they didn't write back 'cause one of my babies' dads decided not to tell where I was so I was just writing to him and he was unable to respond.

ABBY: Oh gosh that must have been hard, how old were they?

S: Seven and nine.

ABBY: Oh that's a tough age.

S: Yeah, yeah so they understand but they don't, sort of thing.

ABBY: What was, so you did five and a half months in prison?

S: Yeah.

ABBY: What was it like to get to the end of that?

S: So what happened was, I got into the drug court, I could accepted as a participant of the drug court, I went into court one day and the judge said she was going to bail me, but I had to go back to prison and wait for the paperwork to be done. So that night I found it really hard to sleep because I was so excited, 'cause in the morning when I woke up I was getting out, you know? But it was…yeah it was a really good feeling but I was also quite anxious, I had lots of conditions and lots of rules and um lots of things I had to abide by in order to stay out. And I still do, I'm still a participant of the drug court so sixteen months later I'm still abiding by all these rules.

ABBY: That is a long time.

S: Yeah (*laughs*)

ABBY: What was the first thing you did when you got out?

S: I had to go and report down to Oddity in Elim which is like a rehab centre. And just like meet a few people, meet my case manager um, they gave me some clothes and things like that and I got picked up by family. Yeah, so just bits and piece like that so when I was home I was organized for it.

ABBY: Yeah, and what was the food like in prison?

S: I ended up going onto the vegetarian menu because the meat was really…you know it was obviously low grade um meat um it was always cold, you know, because they have to cook it in the kitchen and then roll it down in these stainless steel dishes into the wing and then and then they'd get split up onto plates so by the time we either get it in our hatch of get served it, it was always cold but I mean it wasn't…you know (*laughs*) it wasn't too bad but it wasn't, it wasn't great. Yeah.

ABBY: And what did you wear most of the day, did you have a uniform?

S: Yep, yep, just prison greys. Grey trackpants, grey shorts and a grey t-shirt. That was real…we were only like…we only had like two, two things each 'cause they were quite short on um on uniforms so if you managed to get something that fit properly, you know, you had to hold onto it (*laughs*).

ABBY: And how did it work with washing and stuff, were you in charge of washing your own things?

S: No, we have a laundress in the wing, so there's washing machines on site and there's one lady that ran that, ran that thing and the main washing, like towels and stuff like that would get taken down to the big laundry but personals we got washed on site and dried on site and um yeah its…if you were lucky enough to have some kind of laundry bag then you could put it all in the bag and ask for it to be washed separately to anyone else, but it just depended on who was the laundress and whether she liked you or not, you know? To whether your washing would get done on the same day or at all or taken care of. Yeah.

ABBY: What would happen if it didn't get done on the same day?

S: You just have to wait (*laughs*). And hope that it got done the next day.

ABBY: Did you have a job?

S: No, no, I did eventually work my way up to be the wing cleaner, and that was quite a prime position and you had to prove yourself to the guards that you're not mischief or naughty or breaking the rules in there and kind of work your way up, took me three months to get, to get that job. Yeah, it took me three months of being in that wing to prove myself to not be naughty and get that job so…once I was there I made sure I was doing everything right um, to make sure I didn't lose it.

ABBY: Does having a job make the time go faster?

S: Yep, yeah there was little perks like you'd get unlocked for longer you'd get extra milk, respect from the guards um priority on the, what was called the Penthouse Suite on the wing which was side by side beds instead of bunks. Yep.

ABBY: And the guards just chose who had what job, it was totally up to them?

S: Yep, yep, I put my name forward and then had to keep hassling them every time someone would lose their job or move out of the wing and if the job became available I would hassel them to give it to me (*laughs*).

ABBY: So if the guards just didn't like you…

S: Yeah, even though I didn't get any inside charges, like, they just said that I was mischief.

ABBY: Oh really? What do you think turned them around?

S: Oh just persistence and showing them that I wasn't, yeah.

ABBY: And um , what kind of stuff would you do during the day to get through?

S: Uh I'd write letters, I think I wrote to my mum like every day, I'd write letters, I was talking to a few other people in the other prisons, yeah colour in, I managed to get myself some colouring in books and crossword books and puzzles…anything really, listen to music on the TV. Watch TV programmes…yeah.

ABBY: I talked to someone who said that the X-Factor was really big, everyone was watching it and into it was there any TV show that everyone was watching?

S: Yep, Married at First sight was the main one (*laughs*) it had just stared, the first season, so we were all sort of watching that and um, talking about that in the wing and people would shout out when something would happen… and the standard ones, Home and Away and Shortland Street are real jail programmes.

ABBY: 'Cause they're on every day right?

S: That's right, yeah, and there's drama (*laughs*) and people can look forward to that, their five thirty and seven o'clock programmes.

ABBY: And so with you and your cellmate did you sort of share things a lot, like tweezers and that kind of thing?

S: Yep, yep, everything in our cells we shared, yep.

ABBY: And you said you could talk to people underneath the door, so what did the cell look like if you don't mind describing it?

S: Ok, so there was a door, a big steel door and um the locks would be turned and they would open outwards and if you walked in, and you were just in a normal downstairs cell, to the left was like a tiny little bench and then directly in front of that on the left-hand side was two bunks and then straight ahead was a bench where you could have a chair and put your TV. And then to the right there was another stainless-steel swinging door and if you opened that up straight ahead was the toilet and the shower in front of the toilet and the sink.

ABBY: Did you…was there a window?

S: Yep, yep, where the TV was sitting, where that bench is, above that, there was a big, big window maybe a metre and a half by a metre and a half and that had bars all down it and depending on what side of the wing you were on you would even look at the other wing down there or look up, up towards the office.

ABBY: Did you get much of a chance to go outside?

S: Not really, like I remember at one stage harassing the guards because we hadn't been out in the yard for about two and a half weeks. Yeah, and even then its only ever half an hour. Yeah so I'd say, on average, maybe once a week if we were lucky we'd get outside.

ABBY: That is not a lot of fresh air.

S: No, cause it's a lot of work for them, to get us all outside they would have to one by one pat us all down, take our hair out, put our fingers through our hair, they'd check our bras, check our pockets, check everything. And that's one by one and there's forty in the wing, you know they had to do that on the way out and on the way back in so it was like…my perception is they were just...it was too much work for the guards, they couldn't be bothered.

ABBY: It was a lot of hassle for them.

S: That's right for half an hour of fresh air for us.

ABBY: And was there any guards you got along with, you know any that seemed like their heart was in the right place?

S: Yeah there was a couple like that, one called Michelle uh she was really cool, she was like…when she was on there was always friendly banter and if I asked for something she would make sure that she could get it. So if you became their favourite, you'd be doing alright (*laughs*).

ABBY: That's interesting, did you try and become their favourite?

S: Yep, yep, I always made sure I behaved myself and was pleasant and didn't ruffle them you know cause I guess it is a reasonably hard job when it comes to violence and stuff like that so, I made sure I wasn't hard work and then they would reciprocate sometimes with doing what we asked them to do (*laughs*).

ABBY: And what kind of stuff would you ask them to do?

S: Like if I forgot tampons when I was out in the wing or if I needed some envelopes or Panadol any, anything like that you would have to sort of yell out to them for. Yeah.

ABBY: If it's not too awkward to ask what was the tampon situation like?

S: Yeah, it was pretty sweet, they always had a full supply of them there, you just had to remember to get some and they would always bring some around if you asked. Yep. Or pads. Mostly people would get the pads and use them to clean the floors and stuff. So then they started limiting it to one pack (*laughs*).

ABBY: (*laughs*) Were you in charge of cleaning your own cell?

S: Yep, definitely, definitely there was some real paru, real dirty cells. Any one that I would come into I would Adaway the whole floor, which was like a Jif kind of product and cleaned it all because you don't know how many people have been through it or what they've got…yeah it was pretty yuck. And there's really no time, I mean there's really that much time you mays well have a clean cell, you know?

ABBY: Yeah, and did the cells get inspected regularly?

S: Um, not regularly but they would do like…if there was suspicion that you had something in the cell they would tip them, what we'd call tip them, cause they would just go in there and pull everything apart, turn everything upside down and then just leave it like that for us to put back together.

ABBY: And what kind of stuff would they be looking for when they would tip a room?

S: Um, anything that wasn't supposed to be in there, extra spray bottles, um any weapons, drugs, lighters um any contraband to…like things like little bits of wire and stuff like that that you can put into the plugs to make a spark so they'd be looking for anything, anything that we weren't allowed to have.

ABBY: And was there much of that around like um weapons and drugs and that kind of thing?

S: Not really in remand. Um, like I did come across some drugs um, and some cigarettes but not a lot in the women's place. Yeah. I didn't use, while I was in there. I just swapped it for…like it became currency, anything you got that someone else could want would become currency and you could swap it for clothes or bras or socks or lozenges. So if I ever got given any drugs I would I would um use it as currency.

ABBY: Yeah, and what kind of stuff did you want when you were swapping?

S: Um, mainly lozenges, the nicotine ones. Yeah, yeah, that was the main thing in there with the lozenges, if you got those they were worth five dollars a slide so if I came across any drugs I would just swap them for lozenges (*laughs*).

ABBY: (*laughs*) And um, what about your life after prison, what's that been like?

S: Uh, it's been hard, I'm in recovery now and I've been in recovery and clean of all drugs and alcohol for just over nineteen months.

ABBY: Congratulations, that is huge.

S: Thank you. Yeah! It is it's pretty massive. I completed um pre-treatment centre, I completed higher ground and now I'm the health host at a post-treatment facility. So my life's been pretty full packed with uh just recovery based stuff and trying to sort of suss my life out. And build a good foundation, but I tell you what, it's not easy (*laughs*). It's not easy when my go- to is go back to that life, to do crime, to sell drugs, to do drugs you know and on the hard days its really hard. It's really hard to get through, you know?

ABBY: Yeah, I bet, has it been difficult to find a job?

S: I've got a job , uh cleaning houses with one of ladies from the NA fellowship, so yeah, it's only a few hours a week at the moment but it's enough.

ABBY: And what about your kids? Have you been able to see them?

S: Yeah, I see them regularly now, yep. I'm pretty present as a parent now so that's pretty cool.

ABBY: That's really cool. Look, I think that's all the questions I have for right now, thank you so much for speaking to me I really appreciate it.

S: That's cool.

PRISONER INTERVIEW THREE
TRANSCRIPT

ABBY: So my first question would be, if you don't mind, how did you end up being in prison?

M: Um, so I went to prison on a serious kidnapping charge um uh it was…you can look it up, if you just google my name it will have all the information about that. Um, yeah, so I got arrested and went to jail on that.

ABBY: And how long were you in prison for?

M: Uh twenty-two months.

ABBY: And was that your first time going to prison?

M: Yes.

ABBY: So what was that first day like? Can you talk me through what the process was and how you were feeling?

M: Um, well because from the police station I was…because I've got previous suicide attempts they put me in like this bag thing and that was from the police station to the prison and when I first got there and I was…I was scared and I was just like…I didn't know if I could trust the women I was in the cell with and then they took me through and they asked me these questions and like um 'have you ever tried to hurt yourself before?' And I had to say yes. And they asked me like 'have you um ever….when was the last time you used drugs?' And I said that morning. So they put me in another bag kind of thing and I wasn't allowed my undies or my bra…they took me through to the care unit which was, I don't know if you know what that is, but it's the at-risk unit and um they put you in a single cell and like I was scared, like my charges were really severe um I was freaking out, I knew it could have gone a whole lot worse…I didn't know what was going to happen, I'd never been in any kind of situation like this before and I was just freaking right out really. I didn't know about what I could ask for or why I wasn't allowed my undies or my bras and I was just left sitting in the cell to think about what I had done and why I had gone to prison and it was just really hard, yeah.

ABBY: That sounds like a tough day.

M: Yeah, and like, I was on drugs um I was high, I got high that morning so I was coming down off that and then um then I was also didn't have a TV or anything like that. And the people in the unit that I was in, they were all mental. I didn't get a lot of

time out that day, I got just stuck in the cell, just by myself, wasn't allowed any reading materials or writing materials or…you're not really allowed to make you first phone call so I felt really isolated and scared.

ABBY: And then what happened after that, in the next couple of days?

M: It was more of the same, so for the first three days I just had to sit there in my cell um on the second day I was allowed a book so I could read, which was, I like reading, so I started reading um and that helped me get through the day and um then I was allowed a phone call and meanwhile my whole family's freaking out like not knowing how to contact me or anything um it was just a really hard couple of days, you know, like you don't know the system, you don't know what to ask for or what you're entitled to. Um I tried to just be as quiet as I could and get through it and talk to people where I could, they let me out like for a couple of hours on the first day into the lounge with this other crazy lady who had nits so I got, I got infected with head lice…um yeah it was not, it wasn't very good but um…yeah.

ABBY: Did you get transferred out of care eventually?

M: Two weeks later, yeah I did. It took two weeks to get out of there, um…the jails are just so full that there was no space for me anywhere else anyway um…yeah I was, I think it was useful for those two weeks really, to be in there and get used to the idea of being in prison and um not to be too shaken by the fact that um when I was transferred to the mainstream that it was, that's how it was? Yeah.

ABBY: And when you got into the mainstream, what was an average day like for you? Could you talk me through that?

M: Um so you'd let out for like an hour and a half in the morning um they put me, first they put me straight into a single cell because my charges were quite severe I think they thought that other people were going to pick on me. Um…so they put me in a single cell and be out for an hour and a half in the morning and have breakfast and um…or I'd get fed through the latch um and then…I didn't really eat a whole lot because I was used to only eating when I was stoned um so my appetite slowly increased. I just slept a whole lot um…the other women like picked on me um because I had red shoes and um they were Mongrel Mobs and gang members and stuff. But they got over that after two months being in there and then I was alright after that. I didn't have any fights or anything but it was just a scary place to be and um yeah, I just spent a lot of time reading and um stuck kind of to myself in that first little bit.

ABBY: If you don't mind, what did they do to pick on you? Comments and yelling and that kind of thing?

M: Um…like it was just like they were looking at me and looking me up and down and they'd come over and be like "oh yeah, nice shoes" so I knew what they wanted um and then um they'd make comments like "aw yep, do you reckon they'd fit me?" and stuff and I've got really small feet, like there's no way those big girls would be able to get their feet into my tiny little shoes but um…it was like power games and they didn't do anything, they just like said things that they knew I could hear and um to try to see if I would react I think? Um yeah, 'cause some people I guess would just try to be tough, you know like, some people go into that, into prison with this mentality that you have to be tough, but if you go in there with that mentality then you end up in fights and stuff. And I just thought well I can be quiet and eventually, after a while, they'll get to know who I am and um they'll yeah…they'll see who I am and um that's exactly what happened, I ended up being in that unit for um ten months so I ended up being really well known um yeah and my case was high publicity so everybody knew what I was in there for.

ABBY: And eventually did you find you made friends?

M: Yeah I did, yep, I got moved into a cell with somebody else and I was with her for five months and she was a big fat ugly girl but she was really funny and I I'd just kind of be friends with her for most of the time and then um…um then I started branching out and meeting other kind of oddball people you know? People that weren't like real gangster and tough but that were just really funny and down to earth. And um like they…we just had a laugh and we'd make um like you'd get rations of butter and sugar and outta that we'd make like fudge with our milk in the microwave and so we would just kind of like ask everybody for stuff like that and we'd just eat, eat our junk food together and um yeah, it ended up being quite cool.

ABBY: And what kind of other stuff did you do to get through the day?

M: Sometimes we played cards? But sometimes we'd just talk or when we went into the yard we'd just walk around in circles. Um it was not really a whole lot that we did. Sometimes I'd stay locked in my room watching TV if there was something particularly good on or even if there wasn't, just better than sitting out there talking with dumb people. Um ,we were on rolling lock so um unlocks usually at 8:30 till 11:30…um but half of that time half the unit would be allowed out and the other half of the time the other half of the unit would be allowed out so there was a lot of time spent in our cells. And that was it for the morning and then the afternoon as well so we'd be out for an hour and a half in the morning and an hour and a half in the afternoon. Um so there was a lot of time to spend with my cellmate and we'd play cards or we'd just talk or watch TV or went to sleep, there was not a whole lot to do it wasn't particularly stimulating, there was no courses or anything positive at all it was just, yeah, boring. I read, a lot.

ABBY: What kind of books did you read?

M: Um I like Harlan Coben, Janet Evanovich, Lee Child um yeah, I just started reading everything, Jodi Picault's my favourite I've read her whole series, all of them um just to escape really. I'd read a book every two days or a book a day depending on the size of it, yeah.

ABBY: And um, I've talked to a couple of other people about TV shows you wouldn't have watched outside but when your inside everyone is watching it, like the X-factor or Married at First Sight, was there anything that everyone was watching?

M: Oh yep, Married at First Sight, um yeah everyone used to watch X-Factor but we also used to all watch Wentworth.

ABBY: Oh really?

M: Yeah, we'd all cheer at the end of it and stuff like, um just the Saturday night movies um sometimes we'd watch that Cooking MKR?

ABBY: Oh yeah.

M: Yeah.

ABBY: What did you think of Wentworth? Was it like oh my gosh, this is so dramatic.

M: It was pretty funny like, cause it's not like that but it is kind of like that in some ways. You know like the in people in there don't be like Top Dog and stuff, like sometimes people try it but you know…yeah it's, aw there sometimes is like a Top Dog but it's not like on the TV, like you know? Like there's somebody usually on the unit that everyone is scared of, like there is that kind of thing. But um we just used to like, the dynamics between the women on the TV show and stuff like the relationships and stuff like that.

ABBY: And um for you, what was the hardest thing about it?

M: Um for seven months I didn't see my children um, because it was publicized in the media that I was charged with aggravated robbery and attempted murder which wasn't true um so I was immediately not allowed to see my children for seven months um until their dad came round to understand that that's not that was not the truth um…yeah just that basically and the dramatic change in my lifestyle so like I'd been, I had like my house had my kids 50% of the week and all of that stuff just to like living a day in the life that was just completely foreign to me and um thinking I would get e-bail but not…I didn't end up getting it so I held onto my house for all that time which cost me like, thousands of dollars, trying to get bail and then I couldn't get it and the hope that I held, all that time and then just for it to get pulled away that sucked.

ABBY: Mmm, and what were the things you found you missed the most?

M: My children. Um, being able to um…just my kids really and how hard I could see, it was on my family. Like I knew that I was ok, there was a couple of times I was scared in there because they were picking on me. Um and I just cried and stuff but I could see the pressure that it was on my family and I couldn't help them, you know, cause I had to pay all this money for my rent and I couldn't end up paying it, cause they cut my benefit off so my Mum ended up paying and she had to move my whole house out and all this stuff like I had no control over anything. Um yeah.

ABBY: Yeah, what was that like um, some of the other people I've talked to spoke about the lack of control over your life being…they locked you in your cell when they wanted to, told you when you ate, how did that feel for you?

M: Um, it wasn't nice but I just had acceptance and from the eighth day in prison from when I went up to court um, they said on the TV there I was going to get charged with attempted murder so I prayed and um I just prayed whenever things got hard and I prayed for acceptance to be able to deal with whatever came my way and that's how I kind of moved through that, like instead of just being like, angry all the time I just changed my attitude because um otherwise it was just going to make it more and more uncomfortable for me um I didn't want to work myself up into a state that's not going to help anybody, it's not going to help myself, its not going to help the people around me it's not going to help my family so I just had some acceptance, what I did, what I was a part of is very serious and I just looked from someone else point of view if I did that to somebody, if somebody did that to my sister I'd hope that that person stayed in jail. And that's um that kind of pulling myself out of my victim mentality helped me to be able to get through it.

ABBY: Mmm, so you were in the prison for ten months, did you then change locations to somewhere else?

M: Um I was in remand for ten months and then I went for trial…(*sighs*) and then I was in trial for four weeks and got moved down to the convicted unit and I was down there for five months before I got sent, before I, I got sent to Arohata Prison and I did the DT-oh first I went to Rimutaka Prison for six weeks and then Arohata Prison and did DTU and then I went back to Rimutaka Prison and um then I got parole.

ABBY: And how was DTU for you?

M: Well, I've been clean since the day I got to prison, yeah, so I decided when I started praying that I wanted to change my life I wanted to do something different and through the process of it all um DTU didn't tell me that I wanted to get clean, I already knew that before I did DTU um but DTU helped me get my parole which helped me get into,

when I got my parole, I went to Higher Ground and um Higher Ground helped me look at behaviors, why I continued to hang out with the people that did all the most serious stuff in my case, why I have these behaviors that lead me back to addiction because I can't sit with the feelings that I've got um the DTU program itself wasn't particularly helpful, like it started that thought process, that and it made me realise how much more deep my work needs to be like there's a whole lot of stuff that I'm not…that I need to deal with, yeah it's not going to be, even Higher Ground hasn't um it's got there, like I know now what all my problems are but um it's going to take a long time to continue working on them.

ABBY: Yeah, yeah, so you're out of prison now, what your final day like? What did it feel like to walk out those doors?

M: Uh really surreal, it was scary cause they just, you know like I'd been with someone for twenty- two months prior and then all of a sudden they're like 'ok here's a box for your stuff go get on that plane' and I'm like 'what' like, I've never caught a plane in my life and they just dump me off at the airport so I asked them to please walk me into the airport, even though everybody was look at me because I was I was with two corrections officers um and take me right to the gate because it was scary, it's really scary um I didn't feel like it was real, I cried I didn't want to leave um it had become so familiar, like I actually miss it when things get really hard out here I miss it because it's safe its um, like they feed you, it's routine, so it was reliving to go into another institution like Higher Ground where it was, they feed you at the same time, there's routine, you know what to expect, there's a schedule on the board which you, you know where you're supposed to be and what time and everything. The hardest part is being, was my first week out in the community once I am living in Calgary with S in a support house but um I just cried through the whole first week. I'm still finding it really difficult to reintegrate into the community, um to find friends, stuff like that, it's really really difficult it's yeah…it's really really hard and I thought, and I feel like I'm supposed to be happy but I'm not, I'm struggling.

ABBY: What are the things that are making it hard?

M: Um like I haven't even bothered job searching or anything like that um just like little decisions on like what to eat, buying stuff from a…a shop, I don't like buying stuff, I haven't spent money in such a long time. I don't, I haven't cooked in two years um I um when I went to the doctors and their not given me what I want, because, so I've gone from a situation where I've had these big walls around my emotions in prison and then I've gone to a rehab where we talk all about our emotions and then when I go the doctor and I try to ask for something and I don't get what I want, I just cry instead of what I'd do in the past, I would just yell and scream and demand what I want but now I feel like I just, I ask for what I want and I don't get it and I ask for what I want and I don't get it and then I just burst into tears because I'm like, well this isn't how it's supposed to be and um just little things like that are really hard and sitting with my emotions which is

another thing that they taught us at Higher Ground, I yeah it's just so hard everything's so hard…going places like I haven't been in the community for so long I don't know the area that I live in I don't know how to get around, I don't know the area around me or how to catch a bus or what's around the corner so its taken me about three week to be able to catch a bus…um being confronted by places so in the van the other day, I wasn't driving, but we drove past my house where my crime was committed, I burst into tears um I drove down the street where the girl was kidnapped um stuff like that.

ABBY: Yeah, so do you feel that being in prison changed you?

M: Um…yep definitely.

ABBY: In what ways?

M: Like, I don't feel like I just open my mouth and talk a lot of shit anymore, like I don't like just sitting around talking about other people um because that's what gets you in trouble in there if you just sit around and talk crap um try to focus on myself more and how I react to situations more than um stuff like that um I'm less reactive um I try yeah, to have better conversations with people um I notice the kind of people I hang out with, so in prison like before I went to prison, like I felt like I had no moral compass like I'd just hang out with anyone. But when I went to prison it's about safety so you have to get a moral compass you have to read people and understand what their motives are and their interacts with you and watch how they interact with other people and there is certain people who are dangerous and you can kind of smell it a mile away, there's certain people that will use you to get your food or like anything that they want, like it will be right down to your clothes or the socks you wear or your shoes or anything like that, so you have to be able to stand people like that and um so I feel like I learned to, a whole lot about people like that and then I take that out into the community now um to see the kind of people that I am friends with cause that's…the friends that I hang out with are what lead me to prison in the first place so now I think I'm more careful about the people I hang out with.

ABBY: Mmm, mmm, and so when you were in prison what was your relationship like the guards?

M: Um it was good and not so good. Like I've got all my, I requested a copy of all my information um and they say I've got a big mouth, I demand stuff um because you asked and they'd go 'yeah yeah' and sometimes they don't even write down or do what you say and so I would just demand it um and um some of them were really nice, because some of them like actually did their job when you asked them for stuff they would do it so you know there was mutual respect there but some of them were just really dumb and they didn't do what they say and they were lazy (*sighs*) and so they'd just write me up for it but um I never had any charges in prison or anything like that um for contraband or for swearing and stuff like that but they did write me up for defiance, like they'd tell me to wear a t-shirt and I'd wear a singlet and they'd tell me to

wear a t-shirt and I'd still wear a singlet and they'd tell me shoes on and I'd still wear bare feet just yeah it varied.

ABBY: Oh yeah, and what was the food like there?

M: Um well um it's crap um it's really crap so I went on the vegetarian diet because all, they feed you like eight slices of bread a day totally unhealthy, I couldn't go toilet um because of the amount of crap that they feed you its just utter shit and so I would um, I would, I bought porridge and I just lived off porridge pretty much um I was on a vegetarian diet so I'd eat some vegetarian stuff, but I'd mainly just eat porridge and I'd eat one meal a day, I didn't eat bread so I just changed it, I ended up working out all the time and not um yeah not eating a lot.

ABBY: So did you find you had lost weight when you got out?

M: Yeah, I did, I had lost weight yeah, I went in there 63 kilos, I got out 57.

ABBY: Oh wow.

M: I put on in the first little bit cause I was buying heaps of junk food cause I had heaps of money um I put on like ten kilos but then I lost it all by the end.

ABBY: And did you get regular visitors?

M: When I was in Auckland I did. Um I had visits every single week until they shipped me down to Arohata which was really difficult um but I just had to tell myself I was stepping away from my family to be able to be released into the community with them. Yeah.

ABBY: That would have really hard, cause all your family and friends would been based in Auckland right?

M: Yep. It was hard.

ABBY: And what were the visits like?

M: Um they were, they were alright I guess. Like we were talking about my case um it was constantly we were talking about when I was going to get out, because the whole time we were hoping I'd get off at trial um but then reality started to dawn on me, I didn't think I was going to get out at trail and um…so a lot of it was spent talking about my case um there wasn't enough time I don't think for visits um there wasn't enough contact with my children um yeah it was hard you know? You're not allowed to like hug them and stuff.

ABBY: Yeah, it's like also a really weird situation as well with like guards just over your shoulder watching you, it must be hard to just be natural and in the moment.

M: Yeah and you have to wear these bright orange overalls as well so that sucks.

ABBY: So what was your trial like? It must have been a traumatic experience.

M: It was hideous. Um it was hideous and traumatic yep. Um yeah, you can look it up on the net, just google my name.

ABBY: Um I think that's actually all the questions I have, is there anything you'd want to people to know? People who don't know what prison is like.

M: Um, that it's not like you see on the TV and that um you don't have to go in there with a tough mental like I'm a tough person you know like jail doesn't discriminate, it's like addiction. Um you know there's people that are you know, skinny little white girls, skinny little Asian girls like it, there's people that it wouldn't even look like they would ever go to prison in their lives there's pretty girls, there's naughty girls there's every single kind of person that you can ever imagine. It doesn't discriminate against any kind of people and um you know you get all sorts in there but like it's, prison can be for anyone, you know like everybody has a breaking point and um yeah it's just, it's real just yeah, I don't know what to say.

ABBY: Yeah, no that's great. Thank you so much for taking the time to speak to me, I really appreciate that.

M: That's alright, um if you do look my name up and stuff I'm like…I'm happy that your use what I said but if you're going to use anything to do with my case um would you be able to run it past me? Because I don't want to retraumatize my victim in any way so if you want to know about my case you can look it up, it's public information but yeah, um I just want to not have anything to do with my case in your play really.

ABBY: Oh of course.

M: Unless you can ask me and I can, we can talk about that?

ABBY: Oh of course, no it's all going to be completely fiction.

M: Ok cool, sweet.

ABBY: So please don't worry, I would never do that to you.

M: Ok cool. Alright thank you very much.