Simply Ceroc

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ABSTRACT

Simply Ceroc is a feature length screenplay involving the protagonist, Julie learning how to cope within the volatile and hostile dance world. Julie wants validation from her peers within the dance world, as both a dancer and a person. Unfortunately, she encounters men such as her partner on and off stage, Greg, who whether through design or not undermines her. The action line follows her as she practices for the Nationals in both a dance team and dance partnership and this her relationships with tend to mirror the chauvinistic style of dancing and Julie struggles to stand up for herself against egotistic men calling the shots. The screenplay follows a classical Three Act Structure with the 1st Act consisting of Julie losing everything and the Second being Julie building herself back again to become the owner her own studio. *Simply Ceroc* deals with themes such as gender imbalance, personal life vs. professional life, deception for personal gain and finally mother and daughter competition. This thesis proposes to attempt a different angle on the dance genre and give and make the focus on the relationships of the characters so the audience is hoping the protagonist will sort her own life out without investing in whether she wins the dance competition or not. In order to write a dance genre, it was imperative to first understand and research dance films. The exegesis discusses the wide variety of themes in *Simply Ceroc* as well as the research conducted on dance films. While there is little literature about the dance genre, the dance films greatly informed the screenplay and were crucial in developing an understanding of the genre. It was this and dance experience gained through years of being in the dance world that enabled me to write confidently about this genre.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed: *Olivia Walker*   Date: 10/10/2017

Exegesis

Introduction

For an audience to connect with a film there must be truths that can be recognised in its content. As Espenson, J (2017), acknowledges that "Any story worth telling relates to life in some meaningful way". When finding my story I had to search for a subject matter that I felt I could understand and convey to an audience. As I dancer it made sense I write about the world of Dance. I grew up in the 1980's with dance movies such as *Dirty Dancing, Flash dance, Footloose* and *Strictly Ballroom,* all of which involve strong character development and plot lines with the dancing being secondary to the character's lives. *Dirty Dancing* and *Footloose* deal with themes such as coming of age, abortion, dealing with grief and loss and accepting yourself even if it means challenging society. Dance movies in the early 21st Century such as *Bring it on* (2000) and *Step up* (2006) demonstrated a change in the dance movie genre. These stories were formulaic and built up to the climax of the movie being a dance competition. They were targeted at a young audience often set at high school. Sequels to these movie franchises continued this formula such as *Step Up* 2,3,4 and *Bring it On* 2,3,4 with the protagonist basically inter-changeable. I always felt that while these movies were enjoyable for the spectacle they did not reflect the rigorous training and complicated lives of dance students. The emergence of *Black Swan* (2010) a dance/psychological thriller the genre changed again. The film follows the dark and twisted mind of the ballerina, Nina as she slowly slips into the complete madness and at the end of the film the audience doesn't care is she dances well or not but whether she will still be alive at the end of it. Even though dance is very important to Nina this is merely a back drop the genre of psychological thriller as we are kept on the edge of our seat wondering if Nina or the Black Swan (her alter ego) will win.

The mixed genre of *Black Swann* has opened up endless opportunities and new directions for the dance genre to evolve. The classic elements of a dance movie can become clichéd and by adding elements of another genre can provide a fresh view of it. I have chosen to use this new direction to create a Dance Drama with dark elements to give a stylised view into the life of dancers. My creative work holds a mirror up to the dance world that I know and upholds a general truth that dancers know; "Dance, when you're broken open. Dance, if you've torn the bandage off. Dance in the middle of the fighting. Dance in your blood. Dance when you're perfectly free." (Rumi). My creative work, *Simply Ceroc,* shows that in the turbulent life of the protagonist, Julie, the one constant is that she continues to dance. The movie shows passion for dance overriding everything else and the fight for balance over personal life and dance.

This thesis will first discuss the synopsis of *Simply Ceroc* and the motivation and process of the work detailing the character arc of Julie and the research in developing the role. It will then discuss the films that have influenced this work in a Literature Review with a brief overview of the history of the Dance genre. Finally it will look at the implications of this creative work on the wider audience and contribution to the Dance genre.

Synopsis

Simply Ceroc is the story of a young and talented Ceroc dancer, Julie, who is desperate to make her mark on the dance world. The film starts with Julie going to a competition with her

boyfriend and dance partner, Greg, and it is evident from the start there is a slight strain on their relationship. As they sign in to the dance competition Greg has an awkward conversation with the receptionist, Amber, Julie is too preoccupied to notice. Julie arrives at the competition to see Clay, her ex dance partner and ex-boyfriend at the competition competing in the same category as her. Sophia, one half of the top dancing couple in New Zealand and Julie's best friend comes over to greet her and they harshly judge some of the competitors on stage. It is then their turn to line up for their heat and they find their dance partners. Sophia's partner Giorgio, and Greg greet each other like long lost friends and muck around in the line waiting to go on stage while Sophia and Julie muse over their partners being stuck in their youth. It is in this line that Julie first realises that she has Clay's attention. The first heat goes well and Julie and Greg leave fairly satisfied with what they have done. Julie cannot stand reading the results board so she makes Greg do so while she goes to the bathroom. In the bathroom she encounters a young dancer, Amy, who has just been dumped by her dance partner. She comforts Amy but is full of dread for herself. She nervously approaches Greg and is very relieved to find that they have made it through to the finals.

Back at the competition Clay and Holly perform to a high level in the finals. Giorgio and Sophia perform seamlessly and then it is Greg and Julie's turn. Greg and Julie have a few stumbles in their dance. Julie tries to stay hopeful that she still may have a shot at the trophy. When the results are being called Julie can't find Greg. Their names are called and she has won 3rd place but as she accepts the trophy she sees Greg making out with Amber, the receptionist, at the back of the room. She storms out of the competition and heads home.

Julie is trying to get her life together after leaving Greg. She is sleeping in her dance studio where she teaches ballet, and looking for a new dance partner. She then finds out that her dance studio is in debt and she will have to close it if she doesn't raise some money. She leans on her best friend Sophia for help and guidance. Sophia suggests that Julie find another dance partner as the money she could win at the National Dance competition. Sophia tells Julie the only person she could win with is Clay but Julie defiantly chooses someone well under dancing standard. Julie also has the idea of putting on a Christmas concert with her ballet students as a fundraiser to keep the studio afloat. She hopes winning the dance competition and the dance show being a success will be enough for her to keep the studio running.

Julie has dinner with her overbearing Mother. She is horrified to find that her Mother, Dianne, is teaching Giorgio how to dance days after they broke up. Julie gets a phone call from Sophia telling her that she has been dumped by her husband Giorgio and goes to her place to comfort her. The dance partnership with Julie and her partner don't work as no matter how hard her tries he is not improving to standard. Julie sees Clay at dancing decides if she wants to save her studio she will have to compete at the Nationals with him. She agrees to dance with him as long as the relationship is strictly professional. Julie's Mother finds out that she is dancing with Clay and is very against the idea. She goes into Clay's restaurant where he works as a chef and demands he stops dancing with Julie. He refuses to stop dancing with her. As Clay and Julie dance more together they get closer and while Julie is still holding a grudge over past events she can feel herself soften towards him. Her interfering Mother sets her up on a date with an incredibly arrogant man who has lots of influence and money. He takes Julie to Clay's restaurant for dinner and is incredibly rude to Clay. Julie is very embarrassed and ends the date early. Clay doesn't show up to dance practice the next

day and Julie feels that she has been unfair to him. She is now left without a partner to dance with and facing the prospect of losing her studio. Her Mother offers her a position on her TV show as a dancer in order to earn money. As she is getting ready for the show she realises that her Mother was the reason that Clay left her when she finds a note that he had written her in her Mother's dressing room. She leaves her Mother's TV show to beg Clay for a chance to be dance partners again. They dance in the competition together and they win the Advanced section. They become romantically involved again and vow never to let anything get in the way of their relationship again.

Julie then has her dance students Christmas recital and they raise even more money than expected from the concert. Julie has enough money to keep the studio and do some much needed renovations.

My Process

The original topic that I chose to write about was accurately dismissed on the first day. It was the story of *Hinemoa and Tutanekai,* a Maori legend which while a beautiful and intriguing story was also a complicated idea to achieve in the time given. I was then given 3 days to come up with a new concept. While seemingly generous, it was a real struggle to identify with a story I liked so much I could live with it for a year. I was sitting in yoga class when it dawned on me. I dance, so much of my life has been about dance that it could only make sense to write about it. The second reason it made so much sense was dance itself generated so much drama and due to the intense social nature that is was not hard to come up with dramatic storylines. I was interested in the power dynamics presented in dance and wanted them to be evident in this storyline.

The process in the first half of the year was to complete a first draft. We were requested to write a synopsis of our story in a clear concise nature. Once this was done we expanded our synopsis from 5 lines to 5 pages for a more in depth proposal of our work. It was during this time we were put into pods to discuss each other's work. It was early on I learnt the value of a collaborative approach to writing as my group provided a fresh outlook and moral support throughout much of the year and was a very valuable tool in the writing process. We were asked to plans of our work in a three act structure. This also pointed out some classic differences between writing a novel and writing a screen play. Writing a screenplay you often feel like a draftsman. You have blueprints of your work and the vision before you set out to do it. I found this approach difficult as sometimes it was hard for my mind to be that organised before I write but it proved a very efficient in helping me clarify my vision. I began to realise, however, what I was trying to achieve and what I was achieving were two different things. I was trying to create a screenplay involved in lies, deception, power struggles and it was coming across as confused. Retrospectively, I feel I was over-complicating the plot and would have achieved more clarity with a simple storyline.

After our synopsis it was time to write a beat sheet. A beet sheet consists of writing down the beats in your screenplay to establish an order of which to write and identify the key moments in your screenplay. To do this I bought a bunch of blank coloured cards and a black marker and wrote all might beats on cards. I found this approach worked for me as being a visual learner it helped seeing the cards laid out before me and being able to shuffle the order of them. I used this method in every draft I wrote. From our beat sheet we submitted a first

draft. There is not much to say about the process of writing a first draft of a screen play except you just have to write. I found I worked best in cafes' where I could drown out the noise and treat it like an office to a certain extent. I tried to keep office hours as it was habit forming and a routine greatly helps writing. After we had finished this we read our first drafts aloud as a class. It was a very useful indication of what I needed to do and the feedback from the class and lecturer was invaluable in structuring a 2nd draft. I repeated the same process again for the 2nd draft and it took me quite a long time to decide the changes I wanted to make but once I had it was a lot easier the second time round. We read through the screenplays as a group one last time and this provided me with enough to go through the changes that I have made in my 3rd draft. During this time my plot changed drastically and whole characters were and another antagonist invented. I realised that I wasn't winning with the power play dynamics and it needed to come from a different direction. The over protective Mother is another dancing stereotype and with her as the antagonist the rest of the characters became clearer. I have really enjoyed the collaborative process of writing a screenplay. I have found that while I really enjoy writing it can be quite an isolating experience at time so it was great to share and listen to others that were going through the same process.

The character arc of Julie begins with her losing her boyfriend and her business being in trouble. She is quite a passive character except when it comes to dancing onstage. These extreme situations and the possibility of losing her business prompt her to take the first act turning point of choosing Clay to be her dance partner in order to win the competition. Clay and Julie rehearsing brings up a lot of old memories and she tries really hard to suppress them but ends up pushing him away by not sticking up for him when her date picks on him. The 2nd Act turning point is when Clay sticks up for himself and refuses to rehearse with her and her rules. This leads to Julie losing her dance partner and the prize money to keep her business. It seems like a lost cause until the 3rd Act climax which is Julie finding out that her Mother had lied to her to keep her away from Clay and it is her that owes him an apology. She has the courage to apologise to Clay and beg him to dance with her again. Their honesty brings them close together and opens up a dialogue between them again. With the prize money she buys the studio and renovates it.

Literature Review

This literature review will address the central themes of the screenplay which are namely power dynamics, deception, and self-discovery followed by a closer look at genre of dance movies. I started by studying the dance genre and watching movies that addressed these themes. As the characters were young in the movie and dealt with Mother/daughter dynamics this was aimed at a younger female audience so movies that aimed at this audience were also pertinent to watch. It will conclude with

There is a universal truth to creating art in any medium, 'Artists don't create society, they reflect it' assets entertainer and novelist, Ben Elton (1996, p.22). The dance movies of the 1940's and 1950's reflected a modernisation of women in the post-war world. (Schmoop Editorial Team: 2008) Women were defining their role in society and these early films showed daring, courageous and cunning women who could take on positions of power in society. The dance movies in the 1980's such as *Footloose* (1984) and *Dirty Dancing* (1987) were products of a world searching for an identity. The war was over, the baby boomers had grown up, there was a man on the moon and there was a new generation eager to make their

mark on the world. Both *Footloose* and *Dirty Dancing* show young people desperate to prove something and make a difference. The late 90's and early 2000's brought shallow and showy dance movies; such as *Bring it on* (2000) and *Step up* (2006). The protagonists are self-absorbed and will stop at nothing to achieve their goal. And finally a more sophisticated genre and smarter viewing audience emerges in the modern day that demands more from its screen writers and that is how movies such as *Black Swan* (2010) emerge. The dance genre is at an exciting time at the moment and there are endless possibilities for creating. *Simply Ceroc* doesn't attempt to be anything other than a 1st attempt at a screenplay but hopefully there are other writers who are writing about dance as well and there will be dance movies that take the genre to the next level.

Power Dynamics

Busby Berkley and Vincente Minelli characterise women of a certain era. These women were shrewd, in control and a power to be reckoned with. In Berkley's *Take me out to the ball game* (1949), the main woman, K. C Higgins, played by Esther Williams, had the role of the baseball club owner who was in control of the men that played. At first the men did not see a threat, however she proves that she knows the game well and is stringent on the rules which gradually earns the men's respect as well as their hearts. Her struggle for power in a male dominated world shows emulates women post war readjusting their identity and roles in society. In *An American in Paris* (1951), directed by Vincente Minelli, a down on his luck painter, Jerry Mulligan, played by Gene Kelly, meets a wealthy heiress, Milo Roberts, who uses her position of power who uses her connections and money to help him progress his career. In return it appears she appears to want something more than professional for this arrangement. This leaves Jerry with an internal dilemma; does he give Milo what she wants to help his career or does he follow his heart with an already engaged Leslie Caron. I use this idea of women making themselves a hot commodity or important to dance with in order to get males dancers attention. This can be through lots of practice, making themselves look aesetically pleasing, and taking the competition out. A cruder example of this in *Simply Ceroc* is the almost expectation of guys to sleep with their dance partners in exchange for their expertise. This is not explicitly mentioned in the screenplay but it becomes evident that a guy and a girl spending a lot of time alone can translate into a romantic relationship as well (the modern day boss screwing the secretary story). The most it is hinted at is when Julie tells Clay to leave during her ballet class and he basically says that if she is without him she is without a dance partner for Nationals. Julie quickly realises that this is the case and reconsiders her approach to him.

Meet me in St Louis (1944), directed by Vincente Minelli, Rose (Lucille Bremer) and Esther (Judy Garland), demonstrate the tools women had to use in those days to order to get ahead in life. This is demonstrated when they find a way to look respectable at the ball and get dates to go as well as getting the men they like. This requires manipulation and looking their best in order to secure the guys they like. They dilemma they have with finding partners demonstrates the upper hand men had at dances as they got to ask and girls have to wait to be

asked. I used this idea in *Simply Ceroc* with the women being at a lower status than the men and have to use tactics in order to dance with the men in order to succeed in the dance world. Julie uses strategies with both her Freestyle dance partners, Clay and Giorgio. With Clay she is all about sex as that is what drives Clay. Lowering her dress and getting changed in front of him is deliberately provocative. With Giorgio the strategy is to be friends and not cross those boundaries. The point is that both relationships are "managed" to an extent.

In *New York Stories* (1989), directed by Martin Scorsese, shows the antithesis of this in a ruthless art industry in New York during the 1980's. This story shows a very successful New York artist, Lionel Dobie, taking a pretty young artist under his wing (Patricia Arquette) and it soon becomes apparent that they both provide something for each other. Patricia needs the guidance and connections to the art world that Lionel could offer and Lionel wants sex from Patricia. Unfortunately this arrangement hasn't lasted and the film starts with what happens when Patricia no longer wants sex with him but still wants his tutelage. Once again this is looking at different gains from the opposite sex. In *Simply Ceroc* Julie is completely aware that she needs to market herself indispensable to her partner. By taking on the Ceroc business she has cemented Giorgio as both a mentor and dance partner.

Dangerous Liasons (1988) directed by Stephen Frears, and in a general sense what *Simply Ceroc* is based on. It is a tale where men and women use each other to get what they want. The story focuses on the Marquise of Merteuil exacting revenge on men by getting the Vicomte de Valmonte to do her bidding in ruining other people's lives and sense of decency. This is a story of strategy taking over emotions and it is not about love but about winning. In France during the 18th Century women were rather constrained in what they could say and do. For an intelligent woman such as the Marquise this was tortuous and boring and her outlet was to get the upper hand on the entitled men. I have used a similar concept for *Simply Ceroc*. In this movie there are different gains in status, competition, love and lust. Julie will dance with Clay even when she does not like him as long as it means she can win.

Simply Ceroc deals with the subtle undermining of women. This is an area of the screenplay I still want to focus on and develop past submission. One of my favourite example of this one on the popular series *House of Cards* is when Francis Underwood (Kevin Spacey) is having a argument with his wife, Claire Underwood (Robin Wright) and completely hurt and frustrated she yells 'You're using me' and he minimizes it by replying 'Is this because of menopause?' This is similar to the scene where Holly is dating Clay and wanting to leave some of her stuff behind and he belittles her by saying 'She forgot her stuff' when he knew full well that she was intending on leaving it there but did not want his Bachelor Pad ruined. They are very small gestures but subtly undermining which is something a high level of women have to go through in the work force.

Dancing Movies

As a dance student I was bought up on dance movies. So when first deciding to create a dance movie I had specific ideas as to what dance films I should learn from. Movies such as *Grease* and *Flashdance* (1983) were watched so much the video got worn out. I was

impressed by the dancing but nothing could compare to the story being told. I was hanging onto the edge of the seat. Would Danny and Sandy work it out? Was Alex (Jenifer Beals) going to make it into the posh ballet Academy? One that continuously annoys me when watching most dance movies is the lack of story and character development. In 1990's movies such as the *Bring it on* franchise and the *Step up* franchise have some very modern and fun styles of dancing but very weak plot lines and character development. As they are targeted at teen audiences it may not be necessary for the characters to have a big journey in order for the film to make money. Personally, this style of dance movie is not to my taste and I found predecessors' such as *Dirty Dancing* (1987) and *Strictly Ballroom* (1992) far more interesting to watch. These are stories where the dancing is secondary to the characters and we see what drives them to dance and they have changed for the better or worse by the end of the film. *Dirty Dancing,* directed by Emile Ardonilo, is a coming of age movie where Daddy's little girl, Baby (Jenifer Grey) meets an older dance teacher Johnny (Patrick Swayze) and forms an immediate crush on him. The rest of the movie follows Baby having to make some very grown up and tough decisions and as she leaves summer camp she is a woman who can stand on her own two feet and Johnny who has never been trusted has finally had someone that believes in him. The story is compelling and honest and relates to a current audience as well as being an icon of a particular era. One thing I am trying to achieve is to create a dance story that some depth to it. *Dirty Dancing* is a coming of age story first and a dancing movie second. This may not always need to be the case but there needs to a character arc and there needs to be something real at stake to create a dance movie that will stand the test of time. In *Simply Ceroc* Julie goes from not having much control over her dancing relationships to owning the Ceroc brand by the end. What is at stake is Julie's sense of self. She needs to make a decision at some point whether she is going to continue disrespecting herself or whether she'll ask for more out of herself.

Strictly Ballroom, directed by Baz Luhmrann, is a search for identity movie in a theatrical display that is signature to Baz Luhmrann. Scott Hastings (Paul Mercurio), a very talented ballroom dancer, fights to dance his own way in a ballroom world that is very restrictive. Scott eventually demonstrates his own identity by performing with novice turned pro character, Fran (Tara Morice) and dancing the way he wanted to dance. The portrayl of the Australian ballroom dance world as stuffy and shallow, especially in the time it was made, was pretty apt and many people watching could understand the wanting to you be yourself in opposition to strict rules and regulations. Julie is taking steps towards this by instead of fighting the beast, so to speak, instead she becomes the change she wants to see. Julie decides that instead of having to play by the rule she can buy the business and make the rules. This is part of her character arc in the story that she goes from not having very much control at all to finding her place in the dance world and comfortable making decisions. Both Scott and Julie achieve the same thing but in different ways.

Footloose (1984), directed by Herbet Ross, is another movie that deal with restrictive issues and search for identity. Set in a town with old fashioned values, a preacher has banned dancing as a result of its links to drugs and alcohol. This is ok until an out of towner (Kevin Bacon) arrives and meets the 'no dancing policy' with derision. Throughout the movie he campaigns against this policy and falls for the preacher's daughter whilst doing so. In the end the preacher realises that he can't stop the kids from having fun and amends his policy. This movie has recently been remade to cater to a younger audience but contains the same

message 'once children get old enough Parents need to step back a bit and let the children work out what's best for them'. The idea of making mistakes and learning is also a reoccurring theme throughout *Simply Ceroc* and Sophia takes on a quite a mothering role in the beginning of the film which then Julie has to find her own feet after that.

The dance genre changed entirely with the emergence of *Black Swan*. The psychological thriller that follows a prima ballerina as she descends into madness shows a very dark side of the ballet world. I think it has provided a fresh look at the dance genre and opened up endless possibilities for film making. It shows a universal truth that dancing isn't always a healthy environment and dancers aren't always nice people. The fact of the matter is dancing is hard work and sadistic at times, and dancing tends to attract many extreme personalities which when all put together can clash. I want *Simply Ceroc* to have a taste of that in the screenplay. A hint that something is a little a little dark, a little twisted about this world. I don't necessarily want it to be overt but I want the feeling of it there lingering in the back of the readers mind. These dance movies are all iconic and have stood the test of time because they have strong story lines, character arcs and deal with tough universal issues; such as abortion and death as well as the glitz and glamour of performing. A dance movie cannot rely on glitz and glamour to get it through alone and needs to focus on the story first and the dance second.

Deception

I originally wanted to use the concept of deception to depict tension between Clay and Julie. As the story progressed I felt it was necessary for the deception to come from Julie's Mother Dianne. To get an idea of deception in dance movies and to understand the genre in a clearer sense I watched a selection of dance movies that dealt with the theme of deception. In *Take me out to the ball game* Dennis Ryan (Frank Sinatra) and Eddie O'Brien (Gene Kelly) try construct a plan for skipping curfew by getting Dennis to seduce K. C Higgins. This backfires when Eddie takes a liking for K. C and stays out past curfew to talk to her and then has to pay her the $50 for doing so. This has the underlying lesson of the risk of deceit when he is caught out in his transgression. In *Meet me in St Louis* (1944), directed by Vincente Minelli, Rose (Lucille Bremer) and Esther (Judy Garland), Esther steals her sisters rival Lucille's dance card and fills it up with losers so her sister Rose is free to dance with her beau, but when Esther finds out that Lucille is not a threat but a nice girl she gives her a better dance card and is forced to dance with the losers herself. This type of deception shows the moral epiphany in the midst of a deceitful action affording the character an opportunity to redeem themselves. Both of these incidents are pretty low level deception where there is not much at stake. Dance is as much about strategy as it is about movement. *Simply Ceroc* plays with the parallels of dancing and dating and relates to *Take me out to the ball game* and *Meet me in St Louis* in using strategy to accomplish it. In *Simply Ceroc* Julie's mother is trying to control who she dances with in order to influence who her daughter would date. This backfires when Julie realises what she has done and is furious at her Mother for manipulating her.

An American in Paris demonstrates a girl being deceitful. Lise Bouvier (Lisele Caron) neglects to tell Jerry Mulligan that she is engaged to be married throughout their courtship. When she does finally tell him his heart breaks and he is miserable to be losing her. It ends

with her breaking off the engagement and jumping out of the car and embracing Jerry. This is a higher level of deception as it plays not to get someone, but is deceptive to someone whose heart you already have. The same can be said of *Dangerous Liasions*. The Marquise is gets the Vicomte to break off his relationship with the only woman he ever loved just to spite him in a hugely cruel and manipulative way. The whole movie concentrates on the Marquise and the Vicomte deceiving many people in order to get what they want. *Dangerous Liasions* inspired me to develop the theme of deception and play with the idea of toying with other people's hearts and keeping secrets. While the people can mess with other people's hearts it catches up with them in the end. They will get emotionally involved and feel the pain inflicted on others. That is a similar vein to *Simply Ceroc* and Julie learns the harsh reality of being hurt by a loved one or family member. Julie's mother is remorseful, however, it is too late to repair the strain it put on them.

I watched *Closer* (2004) for two reasons. First of all, was for the theme of deception. The second was for the style of the screenplay. I really liked the idea of couple swapping in *Closer* in that by being with each other partners there are four sharp perspectives shown and it keeps the story very focussed and contained. It made the story very intimate and each character had a scene with another character. To its detriment or not, I could not get *Simply Ceroc* down to just four characters as I wanted to provide a few different perspectives on the dancing world. *Closer* is all about lies and the confronting of lies. This may be the most interesting part of the deception plot in movies is what happens when the liar is found out. The direct questioning and blunt replies is one of the reasons that *Closer* is such a successful screenplay. I could not emulate the direct style of this dialogue consistently throughout the screenplay as it would not work in context but I did strive to bring out this style in key points throughout the screenplay; namely when the liar was caught out or a relationship broke down. Having watched the cold-hearted movies, based around themes of deception I gradually had a clear element of what I wanted in *Simply Ceroc*. There has to be multiple lies to create a web of lies, there has to be real affections at stake and the dialogue must be sharp and brutal. This is the tone I was trying to get in *Simply Ceroc* and I hope it was beginning to show in this draft.

Awkward humour

There is a particular brand of humour that is pretty well-loved at the moment and this can only be described as 'Awkward humour.' The moment where the audience is cringing from a person doing something really silly or socially awkward or just even not doing anything when they are supposed to be doing something. I was first introduced this particular brand of humour in *Flight of the Conchords* with the loveable but socially awkward duo Brett and Jemaine. Their inability to cope in social situations and sometimes their pointing out the ridiculousness of a situation or social custom makes them both vulnerable and endearing. The same can be said for another New Zealand work, *What we do in the Shadows* where we are faced with the reality of four vampires flatting together in modern day Wellington. The audience laughs at these vampires fighting over who would clean the flat and wanting to go out clubbing but being denied entry to clubs as they are not invited in. Although *Simply Ceroc* is not a Comedy at times it has comic elements. I have deliberately dragged some of the scenes out to make the awkward; moments you don't usually put into a drama. Basically I

wanted to counter balance very dramatic moments with a comic moment to break the dramatic tension. For example; when Julie and Greg break up and Greg says 'what now?' and thinking that he is talking about the break up she replies 'well we're over' and Greg clarifies 'Oh I mean should we go home together or should I get a ride from someone?'. This is an awkward moment that you could perhaps see in real life as even after you break up there are awkward things to deal with but it's not often you see them on film. The other awkward character is Glenn, who seems to have a crush on Julie but comes across as well intentioned and slightly creepy. He is one of those guys that does not know when to leave the room and will outstay his welcome every time. An instance of this is when Julie is on the phone to a friend in her lacy nightie and Glenn walks in to see if she's ok as he heard noise is acceptable. What is not acceptable to Julie is when he takes forever to leave. Glenn is there for comic relief and hopefully relatable to most people who have flatted because there has usually been 'that one flatmate' that everyone shudders at.

The mix of genres in *Simply Ceroc* is to show contrast in the different features and break from the traditional Dance movie structure. The mix of Comedy, Drama and Dance hopefully enhance the story and sometimes surprise the audience. The themes of power dynamics and deception hopefully contrast heavily with dancing, sex and the comedy.

Text to world

Target Audience

The target audience for this screenplay is 16- 25 year old women. This is due to the age, gender of the characters and the content of the work relating to this audience. The work may have appealed to a slightly younger audience but due to language and adult themes I think that 16 would probably be the youngest audience though it would depend on censorship. This film is definitely written with a younger audience in mind as it deals with boyfriend and family issues. The film deals with a young girl, Julie and largely her own struggle to stand on her own feet and distance herself from her interfering Mother. This is a theme a lot of teens in particular relate to and feel they would connect with this as an audience.

Simply Ceroc would be considered a Dance/Drama with comic elements which is quite a broad description. The style of humour could be at times described as 'awkward humour' which is a pretty popular style and quite a unique New Zealand sense of humour at times with movies such as 'What we do in the Shadows'. This quirky style of humour does seem to be appreciated by an overseas audience but there would be two big questions to consider if this screenplay was a reality and that would be music and location. Ceroc is based on popular music and overseas audience would definitely appreciate the hearing songs that they recognised in the movie but with the rights being so expensive it would be highly unlikely to get a recognisable song. The alternative would have to be find something along a similar vein to the popular songs and try to match them as close as you could get. The second would be once again making New Zealand attractive to an overseas audience. Most of the scenes in *Simply Ceroc* are inside but the choice of the dance studios and the locations of the houses will have an overall impact to the feel of the movie. I think overall the New Zealand location will be a positive element for an overseas audience. The type of relationship Drama is something is that is strongly identified for a female audience and deals with changing

romantic relationships in the fast paced Ceroc world. It is a structure that female audiences are familiar with and the unique part of this screenplay is that the relationships are so accelerated due to the nature of the Ceroc world it keeps the pace of the screenplay up and demonstrates a number of things that wouldn't necessarily happen in a social situation. For example Julie would not have talked to or seen Clay had she not run out of options of who she could compete with in the National Competition. The point of this is to demonstrate the Ceroc world is not a normal social setting and that things happen there that are unusual in other social settings.

Scope

The screenplay is intended for an audience of women aged 16-25. This is quite a narrow scope; however, this is quite a big movie going age group and there is potential for older women to enjoy it as well. The appeal for the younger women audience can range from the themes of growing up and taking control as a woman to enjoying the dancing and the appeal for the older end of the spectrum could be the twists in the relationship dramas. The younger quartile of the audience can identify with Julie as she learns about love the hard way. The upper end of the spectrum may identify a younger version of themselves in Julie. The decision to use more adult themes and language was a difficult one as it cuts off a whole section of a younger audience who would also enjoy the dancing and the style of the movie. It was a difficult decision but I felt the screenplay would take too much of a Romantic Comedy feel to it if I didn't and that was not what I was trying to achieve.

Message to the World

I want the young women to be empowered through this screenplay as they see Julie being a complete mess to getting her life together and being responsible for herself. She learns not to depend on her Mother or others to help but begins to understand her full potential and becomes more confident and capable the more responsibility she takes on. I wanted to show the dancing world in a different light and for people to understand the complicated social scene. There are many reasons people go to dancing and I tried to make it

Conclusion

The process of writing a screenplay has been truly rewarding. I have been fortunate enough to write about something I am passionate about and know very well. I hope that this personal experience of living in the dance world has provided a unique perspective on the dance world in the screenplay. I have been greatly informed by the movies that were discussed in the literature review. I found mixing the conventions of dance movies with other genres an interesting exercise and have found that the best dance movies in my opinion, put the story first and dance second. The reoccurring themes in *Simply Ceroc* of deception from a dancer's perspective fit the reality of the dance world well and sex and awkward humour lift the mood. I am hoping that these themes are also relatable to wider audience and that it will resonate with young women from 16-25. The message of the screenplay is to take control of your life and learn from your mistakes and but hopefully faster than Julie does in *Simply Ceroc.*

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