

University of Southern Queensland

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Hallwalkers: queering gender and attraction through/in scriptwriting

Abstract:

This creative work (screenplay) is informed by queer theory relating to gender and sexuality and explores the complex negotiations and disclosures that gender non-conforming persons are often forced to undertake in social situations that are largely structured by heteronormativity. The screenplay foregrounds the mutable nature of sexual attraction and actively imagines a scenario in which gender non-conforming persons are not confronted with fraught, and often dangerous, social navigations and disclosures about their gender status. The screenplay foregrounds dialogue and direct address as a subversion of mainstream (masculinist) screen conventions that accentuate the visual (masculine) over the verbal (feminine) and verisimilitude over self-reflexivity. The script also makes a contribution to the rethinking of attraction itself, presenting it as fluid and negotiable rather than fixed. The script deploys these ideas in an accessible way, in the form of a LGBTIQ romantic drama.

Biographical note:

Dr. Dallas John Baker is a Senior Lecturer in writing, editing and publishing at the School of Arts and Communication at the University of Southern Queensland. He has published dozens of scholarly articles and creative works, including, under the pen name D.J. McPhee, three fantasy fiction novels, *Waycaller* (2016), *Keysong* (2017) and *Oracle* (2018). Dallas has also published a number of short scripts in various respected journals. He is special issues editor of *TEXT: Journal of Writing and Writing Courses*, the peak journal for the Creative Writing discipline in Australia. He is convenor of the Scriptwriting as Research Symposium and co-editor of *Recovering History through Fact and Fiction: Forgotten Lives* (2018, Cambridge Scholars Press). Dallas' study and research intersect with a number of disciplines: creative writing, scriptwriting and Publishing Studies. His current research interests are writing for performance, publishing and 'self-making' in cultural practices such as creative writing, reading and performance.

Keywords:

Creative writing – Scriptwriting as research – LGBTIQ drama

HALLWALKERS

Setting

1982. Toowoomba, Queensland. A party in a once elegant timber house that has seen much better days. It is a share house. The interior is slightly dilapidated. The living room is sparsely furnished with an old Genoa lounge suite and a standing lamp. On the walls throughout the house there are some posters of alternative bands from the period such as The Cure, The Dead Kennedys and The Smiths.

The characters

ALLY - A young woman of eighteen years old. She is pretty but does not believe she is. She wears heavy make-up in the style of a 1980s "alternative". She's thin and boyish. Her hair is blonde and unruly, typical of the period. She is wearing a tube skirt with a modified straight jacket as a top.

JIMMY - A good-looking eighteen year-old with unusual auburn hair. His idol is James Dean, whose appearance and serious, melancholy demeanor he mimics.

ADAM - A spikey-haired punk youth, lean and scrappy-looking, reminiscent of Sid Vicious.

JINX - A Goth girl, about eighteen years old.

TITLE UP: TOOWOOMBA, 1983

FADE IN:

1. EXT. DILAPIDATED HOUSE, ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

A large, run-down Queenslander with wrap-around verandas sits in the deep shade of tall trees behind a leaning picket fence. The verandas are festooned with dozens of strings of twinkling fairy lights. A rusty gate hangs open at the head of a weedy redbrick path. The rickety wooden front stairs are flanked by huge hydrangea bushes, the browning bloom heads from their last flowering nodding towards the ground like a crowd of drunks.

The sounds of a small party drift out to the yard from inside.

2. EXT. DILAPIDATED HOUSE - NIGHT

Two young women in their late teens push open the gate and head up the path at a swift pace, one, ALLY, being dragged along by the other (JINX, a Goth girl).

Ally stops mid-way up the path, forcing Jinx to stop as well.

ALLY

What if someone here recognizes me?
What if they know?

JINX

You'll be fine.

Jinx hugs Ally tightly.

JINX (CONT'D)

Now, come on. There are boys here
and they're not going to kiss
themselves.

Jinx drags Ally up the stairs and they disappear inside.

3. INT. DILAPIDATED HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Candle-light flickers on the intricate patterns of a pressed-metal ceiling.

A skull-shaped candle-holder burns in an otherwise cold fireplace, its' eyes flickering orange. The fireplace is ornate, evidence that this house was once quite elegant.

On the wall there are band posters featuring The Cure, The Dead Kennedys and The Smiths.

A group of a dozen or so young alternative-types mill about in the living room. A low-key party is underway. 'Blue Monday' by New Order plays in the background.

Five party-goers, all dressed in black with gravity-defying 1980s hairstyles, are packed tightly together on an old Genoa couch. At the centre of the pack is a scruffy-looking punk guy with spiky black hair, ADAM. He is intently reading a novel. The other four are all looking over his shoulders to read the same book - Truman Capote's *Other Voices, Other Rooms*.

ALLY and JINX enter. ADAM spots them and stands, passing the novel to one of the alternatives on the couch. Jinx crosses the room and immediately falls into his arms. They begin kissing in a frenzied fashion, leaning on the wall to stay upright. Ally looks on, uncomfortable, fiddling with her hair.

4. INT. DILAPIDATED HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - LATER

ALLY has taken up position in the shadow of a vintage standing lamp. 'Just Can't Get Enough' by Depeche Mode is making her tap her feet. She anxiously spins a plastic cup in her hands. Looking around the party, her eyes show her unease at being left alone at this gathering.

Ally looks at the camera for a moment, then shyly looks away, unable to hold its gaze. When she looks back again she speaks directly to the camera:

ALLY
(direct address)
Well, this is crap, standing here
like Nelly No Friends. Still...

She gestures to JINX and ADAM on the floor entangled in a passionate embrace.

ALLY (CONT'D)
...better this than *that*.

Ally looks at her empty cup, pushes off the wall and heads through a door into the kitchen.

5. INT. DILAPIDATED HOUSE, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

A messy kitchen with a single sash window. A battered old fridge rattles in the corner, covered in fridge magnets and fliers for live gigs. A number of posters of James Dean are taped to the kitchen cabinets.

A vintage table with a red Formica top holds a large punch bowl and some party foods: crackers, chips, dips, and a jar of pickled gherkins. ALLY strolls over to the table and scoops out another cup of punch. She spots the pickled gherkins and cocks an eyebrow.

ALLY

Gherkins. A suggestive party food choice.

A young man, JIMMY, comes up from behind and joins her at the table, making her jump. She looks up at him and blinks. He's stunning: tall, lean but well-built with rich auburn hair styled into a rocker quiff. The tight black t-shirt and jeans he's wearing show just how well-built he is.

Ally looks him over and shivers.

ALLY

(direct address)

My heart just did a little roll-over. Not a somersault exactly, more like a kitten showing its belly for a rub.

Jimmy surreptitiously looks over Ally as he pretends to survey the party snacks. He looks pleased that he and Ally are in the same space together.

Both look down at the table, each trying hard not to be caught checking out the other.

ALLY

(direct address)

I sense something momentous is about to happen.

Ally clumsily fishes a gherkin out of the jar.

ALLY (CONT'D)

Would you like a little gherkin?

JIMMY

Nah, gherkins aren't my thing.

Ally promptly drops the gherkin. It lands in the punch. She fishes it out and lays it carefully on a napkin. She looks up at Jimmy, who is watching her with a broad grin on his face.

JIMMY

Jimmy.

Ally glances at the poster of Dean.

ALLY

Yeah, it's a cool poster.

JIMMY

No, my name's Jimmy.

ALLY

Jimmy? I don't believe it.

JIMMY

What? That my name's Jimmy?

ALLY

Yeah, I mean, the Jimmy Dean thing.

She gestures to the posters and to his hair.

JIMMY

My Dad named me. He thinks he's a rebel without a cause.

ALLY

It's too much.

JIMMY

Why?

ALLY

Well, you're not altogether unlike him.

JIMMY

At school they used to call me Spider, you know after the car-

ALLY

The Porsche Spider convertible?

JIMMY

Yeah, the car he was killed in.

ALLY

Pleasant.

JIMMY

Yeah, well, they thought I looked like him... except for the hair.

ALLY

Style's similar.

JIMMY

But the colour—

ALLY

I like the colour; it reminds me of Surfer's Paradise.

JIMMY

I'm not sure if I should be offended or not.

ALLY

I wouldn't be offended if I were you, I love Surfers Paradise. It's over the top and out there.

JIMMY

I may disappoint you then. I'm not all that out there.

ALLY

That's okay; I'm out there enough for everyone at this party.

JIMMY

I noticed.

She looks into his eyes, then to the camera.

ALLY

(direct address)

Is it weird that when I look into Jimmy's eyes I predict futures? A house in a leafy street, two kids, a dog, a cat, a shiny black Mercedes.

(beat)

But I can tell when he looks into mine he can't quite define what he sees.

Ally adjusts her pose. She places her hands conspicuously on a kitchen chair.

ALLY (CONT'D)

(direct address)

It never hurts to flatter your best parts. But how does one flatter one's ... hands?

She splays her fingers erotically.

Jimmy looks Ally up and down, eyebrows raised.

Ally shivers.

ALLY (CONT'D)

(direct address)

His eyes just rolled over me like a wet tongue.

Jimmy steps closer, looking into her face.

JIMMY

What the hell are you wearing?

ALLY

(uncertain)

Huh?

Jimmy tugs on Ally's top, continues with a softer voice.

JIMMY

I can't tell what it is.

ALLY

It's a straight jacket, only I haven't buckled up the arms.

JIMMY

What are you wearing on the bottom?

ALLY

A tube skirt! Haven't you seen a tube skirt before?

JIMMY

No. It looks very, very tight.

ALLY

Well, if you don't like it-

JIMMY

No, I like it. It just looks very tight.

ALLY

It is.

JIMMY

Yeah.

Jimmy swallows, excited and nervous.

ALLY

(direct address)

I'm terrified but the shape of his pectorals under that t-shirt is very motivating.

(beat, then to Jimmy)

You can roll your hands over it, if you want.

JIMMY

(without pause)

My room's out back.

ALLY

You live here?

JIMMY

Yep, me, two punks, a Goth and the hallwalker.

ALLY

What's a hallwalker?

JIMMY

Come to my room and I'll explain it.

ALLY

Can I bring some punch?

JIMMY

Sure. Whatever you want.

ALLY

(direct address)

Never pass up a free drink.

Besides, I really need the courage.

6. INT. DILAPIDATED HOUSE, JIMMY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jimmy's bedroom has a fireplace too, though it sits cold and dark. A mattress on the floor is covered with a jumble of sheets and blankets. A guitar is propped up in a corner. Posters of Jimmy Dean cover the wall.

ALLY raises an eyebrow at the Dean posters - they seem a bit narcissistic.

A stereo in the corner plays a mixed tape of The Cure on repeat. The song currently playing is 'Primary'.

A broomstick hangs from the roof (parallel to the floor) on which Jimmy's clothes hang. Ally runs her finger along the hanging clothes, stopping on a leather Jacket. Her eyebrows arch.

ALLY

(direct address)

I really want to see him in that.
Preferably with nothing else on.

Jimmy turns up the volume on the cassette player.

JIMMY

Do you like the cure? This mixed
tape defines who I am. There's
nothing about me that isn't in the
lyrics or in the music of these
songs.

Ally's eyebrow arches again as she mouths at the camera:

ALLY

Is he for real?

Jimmy leans in and kisses Ally hard. He breaks off, turning his head to listen to the music. He whispers in her ear:

JIMMY

This line... this line really gets
me hot.

ALLY

(direct address)

Best I memorise it then.

Ally takes note of the line in question: 'The very first time I touched your skin, I thought of a story and rushed to reach the end too soon'.

Jimmy leads Ally to the bed. They settle down on his mattress. They start to kiss.

Jimmy nibbles Ally's neck.

Ally looks to the camera, her eyes uncertain, anxious, but also tantalised by the pleasure. After only a moment, she looks away shyly.

Jimmy manoeuvres himself on top of Ally. He presses himself against her. Ally's eyes widen as Jimmy's hands roll up and down her skirt, seeking a way in.

ALLY

(direct address)

Okay, so, on the inside I'm totally freaking out. On the outside I'm playing it like I've done this a thousand times before. Am I convincing?

(beat)

I'm seriously asking, am I?

Jimmy's hand has a hard time getting under Ally's ankle length tube-skirt, but when it does, it starts to travel slowly up her leg, the skirt rolling up with it.

ALLY

(direct address)

I want to push his hand away, but I don't want him thinking I'm frigid.

(pause)

I also feel a little like a banana, being peeled.

She snorts, more from nerves than anything. Jimmy's hand stops where it is. He looks her in the face.

JIMMY

What?

ALLY

Nothing.

Ally gently pushes his hand away from her leg.

JIMMY

What's wrong? Am I going too fast?

ALLY

Well, actually, yes.

He sits up, takes her hand.

JIMMY

Sorry, but you kind of drive me wild.

ALLY

That's me, the deranger of men.

JIMMY

Is "deranger" a real word?

ALLY

Sure it is.

(then, direct
address)

I hope to hell he doesn't have a dictionary in here somewhere.

JIMMY

(after a pause)

You do like me, don't you?

ALLY

Sure, It's not that. It's just that
I-

Before Ally can finish her sentence the door slowly creaks open. They both look up, expecting someone to come in. No-one does.

JIMMY

Must've been the hallwalker.

ALLY

What the hell's a hallwalker?

JIMMY

A ghost, you know that's always walking up and down halls.

ALLY

A ghost?

JIMMY

Don't worry, she's never hurt anyone.

ALLY

She?

JIMMY

Yeah, no-one's ever seen her, but we hear her high-heels click-clacking up and down the hall.

ALLY

Shit!

JIMMY

Yeah, spooky huh. It's okay though, I'll protect you.

Jimmy takes hold of her protectively.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

You're shaking, what is it? Are you afraid of the ghost?

ALLY

(direct address)

I'm not afraid of ghosts. It's just sometimes that's how I feel, like a ghost, unseen, alone, restless, lost.

JIMMY

I shouldn't have told you the stupid story about the hallwalker.

ALLY

That's not why I'm shaking.

(beat)

I have to tell you something. Something about me, something you're not going to like.

JIMMY

What about you could I possibly not like?

ALLY

(after a pause)

Well... Are, are you sure you don't like gherkins, even little ones?

Jimmy blinks, confused by this strange question.

JIMMY

Err, yeah, yeah I'm sure. They're all slimy and bumpy.

ALLY

Oh, okay.

JIMMY

And they remind me of dicks, which is, like, gross.

Ally's face pales.

ALLY

Jimmy... I don't feel well.

JIMMY

(alarmed)

What's wrong? Was it the punch? Do you need some water? Is it something I've done?

Ally doesn't answer, just shakes her head, indicating she can't speak right now.

She looks to the camera, her eyes wide with distress, her whole body shaking.

ALLY

Maybe it is the punch.

JIMMY

You need to move around a bit, and eat something.

He hops up and reaches out for Ally's hand.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Come on, I'll make you some toast.

7. INT. DILAPIDATED HOUSE, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

In the kitchen, the mess of the party, which is still going, is everywhere. 'Don't You Want Me' by Human League plays in the background. ALLY and JIMMY enter, Jimmy steers Ally to the kitchen table and helps her sit. Jimmy finds bread and puts it in the toaster.

Ally takes a series of deep breaths, calming herself.

Jimmy gets her a glass of water, then takes out a plate and knife. When the toast pops, he butters it at top speed. Once done, he pops the plate in front of Ally. He has cut the toast into triangles.

ALLY

Awww, Vegemite triangles. Thank you.

JIMMY

Anything for you, babe. I have mad chef skills.

Jimmy puts more bread in the toaster, for himself.

Ally touches the edge of her plate, looks at Jimmy and smiles. She addresses the camera, though due to her shyness, doesn't look directly at it for long:

ALLY

(direct address)

That thing I tried to tell him, the thing he wasn't going to like, I know I have to tell him eventually. I just couldn't stand seeing the look on his face when it dawned on him what I was saying. He would recoil, probably a lot. And as I explained it further, he might've appeared to be taking it in, accepting it, but, in the end, I knew he wouldn't be okay with it. No-one ever really is.

Ally takes a deep breath.

The toaster pops. Jimmy gets out a plate and begins buttering his toast.

ALLY (CONT'D)

(direct address)

This is how it usually goes: They listen, but are very quiet. Their eyes seem to look straight through me, as though I were a ghost, a hallwalker. Then, like a boxer coming round from a knockout punch, their eyes refocus and they look at me and ask: 'Does anyone else know?'

Jimmy pours himself a glass of water.

ALLY (CONT'D)

Always that question. Then I tell them that only a few close friends know. Sometimes that relaxes them. As if it's okay for them to be attracted to me, to kiss me, so long as no-one else knows what I just told them. And of course that makes me feel wretched and uneasy but I try to ignore it, pretend that it's part of their process of coming to terms with me.

Jimmy sits at the table opposite Ally with his own toast.

Ally looks over at him, plays with the rim of her plate again.

ALLY (CONT'D)

After that they might relax a bit, but most just take off, some pausing only long enough to threaten me not to tell anyone that we ever met. So you'll forgive me for not telling Jimmy straight away.

Ally looks over at Jimmy again.

Jimmy glances at his watch.

JIMMY

Look, I'm sorry, but I've got to go.

Ally looks devastated. Is this because she didn't have sex with him, or because he suspects the truth about her?

Jimmy sees the crushed look on her face.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

To work, I've got to go to work.

ALLY

It's nearly midnight—

JIMMY

I work nights, at the milk factory.

ALLY

(direct address)

The lewd puns I could make about that.

Ally's face softens with relief.

ALLY

What do you do at the milk factory?

Jimmy answers in-between mouthfuls of toast.

JIMMY

Wash. Bottles.

(beat)

Do you work?

ALLY

No. I go to Uni.

JIMMY

Arts degree I bet.

ALLY

Design.

Jimmy snorts.

JIMMY

What kind of job will that get you?

ALLY

A *design* job, obviously.

JIMMY

Of course, sorry. And I'll bet you're great at it.

ALLY

Top of the class. And that's not the only thing I'm good at. I have a terrific memory.

Ally leans forward seductively and whispers Jimmy's favourite Cure lyric in his ear:

ALLY (CONT'D)

'The very first time I touched your skin, I thought of a story and rushed to reach the end too soon'

JIMMY

No, it's only sexy if I say it.

ALLY

Oh. Okay, do you wanna say it?

JIMMY

Not right now, I have to go in like five minutes.

ALLY

Oh, okay then.

Ally's face falls, she clearly feels uncertain, deflated.

Jimmy gets up to leave.

JIMMY

Sorry, I have to head off. Do ... do you want to go out tomorrow night, like, with me?

With these words Ally looks highly surprised, and equally delighted.

ALLY

Absolutely!

As she speaks, Ally accidentally spits out a lump of spittle dampened toast, which lands on the table between them. They pointedly ignore it, but Jimmy's lips twitch as he suppresses a laugh.

ALLY (CONT'D)

Um, where do you want to go?

JIMMY

I don't know, where do you usually go out?

Jimmy is still determinedly not acknowledging the soggy lump that had just missed landing on his hand.

ALLY

The Backroom.

JIMMY

Er, that sounds an awful lot like a gay bar?

ALLY

Really? You think? Gee, nothing gets past you.

JIMMY

I don't really want to go to a gay bar.

ALLY

It's not that scary. I'll protect you.

JIMMY

Suppose that's fair, seeing as I protected you from the hallwalker.

ALLY

Homosexuals aren't nearly as scary as hallwalkers.

JIMMY

That's a matter of opinion.

ALLY

We can go where you normally go.

JIMMY

No, I don't wanna take you there.
(beat)
I mean, you wouldn't like it.

Ally blinks slowly. Is he ashamed of her?

JIMMY (CONT'D)

You're far too nice for that place. It's full of private school jerks getting pissed off of their heads.

ALLY

Well, The Backroom then.

JIMMY

Okay. Can you meet me outside? I don't want to go in alone.

ALLY

Sure. It'll be fun, don't worry.

Jimmy steps closer and bends to kiss Ally on the cheek.

JIMMY

You know, you're really very pretty. I especially like your hair, it reminds me of Debbie Harry, from Blondie.

Ally blushes, faces the camera, looks away shyly for a moment, then back at the camera again.

ALLY

(direct address)

I am just about ready to curl up
and die right now.

JIMMY

Gotta go. See you tomorrow night,
gorgeous.

He kisses her, then walks out, leaving Ally alone, smiling. She plays with the rim of her plate again, then her smile fades and is replaced by a look of distress.

ALLY

(direct address)

I'm going to have to tell him,
aren't I?

Ally is interrupted when ADAM, the book-reading punk who Ally last saw lip-locked with Jinx, staggers into the kitchen, squinting at the brighter kitchen light. His spiky black hair is a little flattened out and he is bare-chested.

Ally quickly wipes the distress from her face, reassembling herself to present a pleasant façade.

Adam sees Ally and acknowledges her with an embarrassed wink.

ADAM

Just been, err...
(he indicates his
bare chest)
...with Jinx.

He goes to the fridge, pulls out a bottle of milk and takes a long swig.

ADAM (CONT'D)

To line the old stomach.

He puts the bottle back and sits down at the kitchen table, lying his head on the Formica table top.

ADAM

Cold Formica is the best for
alcohol head spins. Especially red
Formica. Green Formica just doesn't
cut it.

ALLY

I just drink water, or use aspirin,
myself.

ADAM

Well, that's very grown up of you.
To have aspirin, I mean. I am not a
grown up. I sleep in my jeans and
do not have a job. Thus I do not
have any aspirin. You got any on
you?

ALLY

Sorry, no.

ADAM

Formica it is then.

He presses his cheeks to the cold table top and sighs with
pleasurable relief.

ALLY

Where is she, Jinx?

ADAM

Sleeping like a baby.
(beat)
She snores you know.

ALLY

I know, like a baby hippo.

ADAM

(snorts)
Yeah, girls who snore are hot.

ALLY

You're a total weirdo.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Thanks. Kudos to you, by the way.

ALLY

For what?

ADAM

Bagging Jimmy.

ALLY

Oh, okay. Is it that difficult?

ADAM

For you and me, yes. For girls,
ones with perky boobs, not at all.

ALLY
(nervously)
What do you mean? Are you saying my
boobs aren't perky?

ADAM
Er, if you have them, I'm sure
they're perfectly perky.

A look of dread crosses Ally's face.

ALLY
If I have them? What?

ADAM
Oh, you don't have to pretend with
me. I know who you are.

Ally sits bolt upright in her chair.

ALLY
Please, don't tell Jimmy anything.

ADAM
So, you didn't tell him yourself?

ALLY
Not yet, but I will.

ADAM
No need, if you didn't tell him,
someone already did.

ALLY
What?

ADAM
Yeah, he knows. He's the one who
told me.

ALLY
What?

ADAM

Look, you don't need to freak out. He knows, and he's fine with it. I mean, your pretty as hell, the fact that you've got a wiener is no big deal. No girl is perfect. My last girlfriend slept with all my mates and gave me crabs. My mate's crabs! That's just wrong. I'd rather she had a big ol' wiener, frankly. But I'm bi, so I'm not prejudiced against wieners. I got no issues with the wieners—

ALLY

Stop saying wiener, please.

ADAM

Sure, sorry.

ALLY

So, is Jimmy bi too?

ADAM

Nope, straight, but as I said, you're cute, and cool, and some guys will overlook a lot for a girl they like, even a wie—

ALLY

Don't say it!

ADAM

Sorry.

(beat)

Still, you really should talk to him about it.

ALLY

I know. I always have to talk about it. I'm endlessly talking about it.

(beat)

I didn't lie to Jimmy. I never said I was a girl. I never tell anyone that. They just assume—

ADAM

(smirking)

I wonder why? Perhaps because of the hair and the make-up and the clothes and all the general hotness—

ALLY

That stuff doesn't make me a girl.
It just makes me, well, me. I don't
think of myself that way, as a
girl, or as a boy.

ADAM

Right, sure, well that's
complicated but I kind of get it.
But still, however you think of
yourself, for all intents and
purposes, or incense and
porpoises', whatever that aphorism
is, everybody perceives you as a
girl, including Jimmy, even though
he knows you've got a-

ALLY

Don't say it!

ADAM

Fine, I won't say *wiener*, the point
is, Jimmy knows about your gender
uniqueness and doesn't give a crap.

ALLY

So, he really doesn't care?

(beat)

I can't believe this.

(beat)

I, I feel weird, really weird.

ADAM

Magic mushrooms?

ALLY

No, god no. No, I think, I think
this is what *happy* feels like.

She looks at Adam, bemused.

ADAM

Good for you. Now please excuse me
while I go vomit my intestines down
the toilet.

He gets up from the table and heads out.

ALLY

(direct address)

I'm always so terrified of having to reveal and justify who I am. I've been so afraid for so long that no boy would ever like me, or worse, that once they found out that I'm not, well, not what they think I am, they'd hurt me, maybe even kill me. It's devastating to be terrified of the very people you want to be close to, the people you want to love you.

Ally takes in a deep breath, looks off, trying to work out what she's feeling.

ALLY (CONT'D)

(direct address)

I don't recognise myself without that crushing fear. I feel like, like someone else, someone who can be who they are without having to explain themselves every time they meet someone new. I feel like, just maybe, one day, someone might love me, love me for me.

She tears up, but smiles.

ALLY (CONT'D)

I feel... I feel strangely, surprisingly, *undeniably* happy.

She looks away from the camera, but then back again, her shyness weaker.

The sound of high-heel shoes click-clacking in the hallway grabs her attention.

She looks to the kitchen door, anxious. Is this the ghost?

JINX enters, her hair dishevelled and blinking at the light.

ALLY

(direct address)

Not a hallwalker, just a friend.

JINX

There you are.

Ally smiles broadly at her.

Jinx instantly notices a difference on Ally's face.

JINX (CONT'D)

What happened?

ALLY

Jimmy.

Jinx sits down at the table and wraps her arms around Ally.

JINX

I know, he's mad for you. Aren't you glad I made you come tonight?

Ally nods.

JINX (CONT'D)

Don't be upset with me, but when he told me he liked you, I explained everything to him.

ALLY

(taken aback)

I asked you not to tell anyone. Not anyone, ever.

JINX

I know, but I didn't want you to have to do it yourself. I wouldn't have brought you here if he wasn't fine about it. Do you forgive me?

Ally nods.

Jinx hugs her tighter.

JINX (CONT'D)

Thank goodness.

(beat)

I Love you, Ally, and I want other people to love you too.

Ally smiles directly into the camera. This time, she doesn't look away.

FADE TO BLACK

THE END

Research statement

Research background

The field of Screenwriting Studies situates the screenplay as a research artefact that is able to communicate new knowledge in creative ways. This screenplay is informed by queer theory relating to gender and sexuality and explores the complex negotiations and disclosures that gender non-conforming persons are often forced to undertake in social situations that are largely structured by heteronormativity. More specifically, the screenplay functions as a creative expression of the queer notion of sexual attraction as diverse, fluid and changeable. Both subject matter and form are directly inspired by the critical work of Judith Butler.

Research contribution

Hallwalkers extends the application of queer theory as an analytical tool to its application in creative practice. The resulting screenplay thus takes an innovative approach to the subject matter by foregrounding dialogue and direct address as a subversion of mainstream (masculinist) screen conventions which tend to accentuate the visual (masculine) over the verbal (feminine) and verisimilitude over self-reflexivity. Theoretical ideas and new knowledge are thus deployed through characters, action and dialogue.

Research significance

This script tests normative practices around gender and attraction in an accessible, playful and provocative way and privileges the experience and perspective of gender non-conforming people. It is one of only a small number of published screenworks that are written specifically as practice-led research and that extends the application of queer theory as an analytical tool to its application in creative practice. The script is a wholly original creative work, was double-blind peer-reviewed and published in *TEXT: Journal of Writing and Writing Courses*, a peak journal in the creative writing discipline.